



Igbo Society and Islam's Penetration (1970 – 2024)

Chinyere I. Madukwe

Humanities Unit

School of General Studies

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

chinyere.madukwe@unn.edu.ng

Phone: 08035666097

Abstract

The end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, following the cessation of the Biafran rebellion, generated some socio-religious and economic consequences among the Igbo ethnic group. Prominent among them was the desire to realign in the area of religion, partly due to the unacceptable roles played by some Western countries, particularly Great Britain, during the conflict, and also the need to adjust to the new realities on the ground. The Igbo ethnic group, which constituted the major ethnic nationality in the former Eastern region of Nigeria, was once held as 'a homogenous Christian community', on account of their overwhelming acceptance of the Christian faith. However, the events of the civil war brought changes, due to the concerted effort of Islamic proselytization in Igboland, cashing on what may have appeared to be 'a crisis of religious identity' displayed among the Igbo at the end of the civil war. This study uses written materials and other secondary sources, and it is interpretative and analytical in approach. The study reveals that what appears to be a religious identity crisis that came up in Igboland after the Nigerian civil war, and the need to realign to the new circumstances, provided an opening for Islam to thrive and achieve a wider penetration and impact in Igboland, from 1970 onwards.

Keywords: Igbo Society, Islam, Nigeria, Christianity, Western Countries

Introduction

Islam, going by the account of its early extension into the African continent and subsequently into Nigeria before the 11th century, seems to have met in African culture elements congenial for a healthy relationship. This explains why it was easier for Africans and Nigerians, in particular, to adopt the religion and its cultural peculiarities much quicker than the Christian faith. However, in some parts of North Central Nigeria (the Middle Belt), because of the long hostility that had characterized the relationship between the indigenous population and Islam during the 19th century, the coming of colonial rule in the area from the

20th century, saw a wholesale acceptance of the Christian faith, seen as a means of expressing their rejection of Islam in their land (Clarke, 1982:219).

Acceptance of Islam, however, does not entail fundamental changes usually associated with the Christian religion. One could, for instance, become a Muslim and, at the same time, retain certain cultural practices like polygamous practice, or involvement in charms which are unacceptable in Christianity. This equally explains why Islam, at the time of its introduction in Igboland, was able to challenge the Christian tradition bequeathed during the colonial government and has since made some inroads in the land.

Islam's first recorded emergence in Igboland occurred in the Nsukka area of Ibagwa Nkwo and Enugu-Ezike (Doi, 1974:42). Doi's assertions that the event occurred during the 19th century through Igala invasion have been faulted as lacking any historical evidence.

More acceptable evidence shows that it was in the 20th century through the influence of Nupe Muslims that Islam came to the area (Uchendu, 2010:64). As a result of the colonial rule at the time, the impact became widespread by utilizing modern means of communication, leading to the coming of other Islamic clerics and traders from Nupe, Hausa and Yoruba. Thus, there was an increase in awareness of Islam in Igbo land. However, further Islamic upsurge in Igboland can be traced to the activities of a certain Igboman by the name of Nwagui, who, consequent upon his conversion in the 1960s, was able to drive Islamic faith to some Igbo towns and villages. Mr Nwagui, who later became known as Sheik Sulayman Nwagui, hails from Afikpo in the present-day Ebonyi state of Nigeria. During the 1960s, he claimed to have received a mysterious dream in which a turbaned, bearded man appeared to him. The result of that experience was his conversion from his Christian faith to Islam. Having sojourned in Senegal, where the man that appeared to him happened to live, he later returned to his native land in Afikpo. He single-handedly became instrumental to the conversion of some of his kinsmen and notable Igbo Muslims (Doi, 1974:43).

But, a much wider and deeper penetration of Islam in Igboland occurred following the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, with the surrender of the Biafrans. The end of the conflict generated a lot of questions in the minds of many Igbo elite, who began to question and reassess Igbo allegiance to the Christian faith. This arose, partly, due to the perceived unacceptable roles played by some Western countries, especially Britain, during the conflict, in the support they gave to the federal side. Moreover, this time saw the upsurge of Arab nationalism with the power of 'Arab oil', which they used to support Islamic proselytization in Nigeria and Igboland in particular (Ozigboh, 2001:8).

Egodi Uchendu's (2010) work focused on how Islam was introduced in Igboland from the late 1930s, following the conversion of "Garba Oheme from Enugu-Ezike in Old Nsukka Division in 1937". (2010:64). She discussed generally the conversion experiences of a number of Igbo Muslims subsequent to their conversion, and the interplay of religion and ethnicity among the Igbo. The

paper gives vital information on the varied Igbo responses to Islam penetration in the Igboland. However, the present study tries to make a general survey of how global and internal factors contributed to shaping and sustaining Islam penetration in Igboland, especially from the 1970s, which Uchendu's work did not focus on. The present study is of the view that Islam's penetration in Igboland received a boost following the end of the Nigerian civil war, and subsequently, sustained its presence because of the elements of congeniality found between Islam and Igbo cultural practices.

Rahman I. Doi, opines that Islam first emerged in Igboland through the area of Nsukka division, that is the northernmost part of Igbo territory in the 19th century, through the Igala conquest of some parts of Nsukka area (1974:42). This view, however, has no historical backing as available evidence does not support the assertion. Though there are Igala settlements in some parts of the Nsukka area of Ogurugu, and Uzouwani, the Igala community in these areas is not Muslim by any definition. Doi, further points out that from the 1960, Islam got a boost in Igboland through the conversion of "Nwagui an Ibo [Igbo] and a native of Afikpo through a mysterious dream in which an unknown turbaned and bearded African looking like a Muslim summoned him to go to him leaving his present religion" (1974:43). Though, the conversion of Mr. Nwagui contributed to the expansion of Islam in Igboland, by virtue of the roles he played to expand the knowledge of Islam through proselytization in some Igbo areas, like "Abriba, Orlu, Oguta, Umuahia and Aba"; the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, however, could be termed as a watershed in the trajectory of Islam in Igboland, as it led to the opening of Igbo territory to greater Muslim proselytization, which the existence of some areas of common cultural similarities between Islam and Igbo culture, helped to consolidate.

Simon Ottenberg's work focused on Islam in an Igbo village, Anohia, in the Afikpo community. The paper reveals the early contact of Islam in the community through the presence of Muslim soldiers who were among the invading British colonial soldiers during the conquest of Afikpo in 1902. Ottenberg's account reveals that, among the entourage of the invading soldiers were Hausa Muslim traders and harlots, who stayed behind in the Afikpo community after the conquest and continued their trade (1971:236). This early acquaintance was to later create an environment that made Islam penetration in the area favourable, especially with the return of an indigene of the Anohia community, Okpani Egwani, in 1957 from northern Nigeria as a professing Muslim. He later became a major player in Islamic penetration in the area, which saw the conversion of the majority of the villagers to the new religion. The work further reveals how Anohia village, as a result of the wealth of Egwani, was attracted to Islam, convinced of following one of their own to the new religion, which he professes.

Jonas Eze's account of Islam penetration in Ovoko, a community in Nsukka zone of Northern Igboland, describes how the area by 1922 had come under British rule and became the administrative and divisional headquarters of British administration in the zone. However, the commencement of Christian missionary work in the area began in the 1930s. Eze, pointed out that Islam by

1916 has come to Ovoko through Maman Shaib, a Muslim horse trader and a traditional medicine man from Kontagora in Niger State. Through a combination of mutual social and economic relationships that he established with the Ovoko community, in the areas of trade and marriages, he was able to win the confidence of the people, leading to a number of conversions of the people to Islam.

Going by the various accounts of scholars of Islam's penetration in Igboland during the colonial time and the pattern it followed in its proselytization drive, it is however, evident that its activities from the 1970s, after the end of the Nigerian civil war have been grossly neglected, necessitating the current work; which attempts to showcase how the events during and after the civil war, combined to shape the current trajectory of Islam in Igboland, once described as 'a homogenous Christian community'.

The Igbo Socio-Political, Economic and Religious Units and Perspective

The Igbo are of the Negroid stock, with its origin, according to archaeological findings, traced "along the latitude of *Asselar* to the northwest of Timbuktu and Khartoum" (Afigbo, 1999:75). Linguistically, they belong to the sub-group of Niger-Congo family designated as 'kwa group', which also includes other Nigerian ethnic groups like the Idoma, Yoruba, Igala and others. The Igbo people are found mostly in the south-east geo-political unit comprising Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo States of Nigeria. A reasonable number of Igbo people are equally found in Rivers, Delta, Cross-river and Akwa-Ibom states, presently being referred to as the Niger Delta Region. Going by the first national census ever conducted in Nigeria, they are the second largest ethnic group in the country (Oladesu, 2013:43).

Geographically, according to the early colonial account, their land was noted among the most densely populated in Africa. This may indicate a high population ratio in spatial relation to their area of occupation. Their topography depicts high and low mountainous terrain within the tropical rainforest zone. Yearly climatic seasons comprise both the dry and rainy seasons. The rainy season normally sets in from March to around September, while the dry season continues from September to around March the next year. Probably owing to their yearly seasonal periods, they are mainly farmers. Farming was mainly done on the subsistence level, primarily owing to the level of technology used and also because of the nature of land tenure available. Nonetheless, their level of iron technology saw the development of such iron implements as hoes, knives, diggers, and so on, which supported the agriculture of the people. Their main agricultural products include yam, coco-yam, palm kernel, etc. The Igbo natural traits for competition and hard work are usually made manifest during the yearly period of cultivation and harvesting of crops. Individual achievement and prowess were virtues highly regarded and respected in most Igbo society.

Apart from farming, the Igbo society, prior to the emergence of colonialism, had developed in the areas of iron technology and pottery making industries. This has been attested to, based on archeological findings in the areas of Igbo-Ukwu

and in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka farm sites. Archaeological findings in these areas have proven that Igbo society, prior to colonization, was indeed a progressive one, based on individual and community achievements.

The political development and organization of the Igbo people prior to the emergence of colonial government, centred mainly on the '*Umunna system*' of government. '*Umunna*' literally means 'children of the same progenitor'. According to Obiefuna (2009:231), the Igbo society was organized in family, kindred, village, town, and clan levels. The *Umunna* system can be grouped into three levels, comprising the village, the town, and the clan levels. At each of the levels of political authority, matters/issues are arrived at through consensus/agreement and not by cohesion. The elders played prominent roles during such gatherings and their opinions were respected. By and large, every male adult has the right to air their opinion on issues for discussion. Thus, based on what was obtained in traditional Igbo society generally, it would not be out of place to state that their political system of government was a much coherent and ordered one. It is also important to note that at each of the three levels of political authority, there was relative autonomy, without any form of cohesion from either level. This fact may reasonably explain why the Igbo did not develop a centralized form of political authority (Obiefunna, 2009:232). This was so, since their association at any of the above-mentioned levels was basically on the principle of freedom, equality, and respect for the rights of others. The Igbo themselves are in the habit of saying 'Igbo enwe eze,' that is, 'Igbo do not have king'. Ekwunife, (1990:3), opines that:

...the *Umunna* system encourages equality, communalism and egalitarianism at all levels (while) the title associations promote individualism with the prestige, power and authority attached to material achievement.

The Igbo society was not averse to social and recreational life, which equally contributed to the overall development of the Igbo man. Thus, such social recreational activities like moonlight play, wrestling contests, cultural festivals like the New Yam Festival and others, were the norm found in most Igbo societies.

In the Igbo religious pattern prior to their contact with the Christian religion, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship that it exerts on the social, economic, and political life of the people. This was primarily as a result of their world-view, which centres on the obligation of the living to the unseen world and their influence on the living. Thus, they view reality from the prism of life anchored on religious obligation to the Supreme Being through the divinities. Iwuagwu (n.d. 26) opines that, "religion is the Igbo apprehension of the ultimate reality." Moreover, it is what guides the perception of their environment, their conscience, and the reality of history. It also helps to create awareness among the people of their responsibility for an ordered, purposeful, and lawful society (Iwuagwu, n.d., 26). He further opines that,

The religious principles of the Igbo gave custom, order, discipline and cohesion to the traditional society. It created in the people the concept of solidarity in life and of mutual and corporate responsibility in socio-economic matters. It did reveal to the people a deep spiritual culture which had served the traditional society in various ways – (Iwuagwu, 34).

Ultimately, man remains at the centre around which religion and culture revolve in Igbo society, though with a transcendent influence. The Igbo society, prior to the colonial period, was not sterile nor one that stifled development; it was a society conditioned and envisioned to achieve man's ultimate goal of human reality as understood by them. It was a society that recognized the importance of communal, corporate existence within the precinct of religious and social obligations and, at the same time, individual unlimited potential for progress.

This was the pattern of socio-political, economic, and religious development found in most Igbo societies until the coming of colonial rule and its Christian tradition, from the beginning of the 20th century, when most Igbo communities came under the subjection of the colonial administration of Great Britain.

Colonial rule in Igbo land went hand in hand with the activities of the Christian Missionaries, which Ayandele refers to as "the spiritual arm" of colonial rule in Africa. The unavailability of centralized political authority in Igboland, unlike in the Northern parts of Nigeria, especially in the Hausa land, and to a lesser extent in Yorubaland of South West, led to the institution of the "Warrant Chief" political institution in Igboland by the colonial government. The institution was a near failure in Igboland because of corrupt practices associated with the appointed chiefs, and more so, the appointment of "warrant chiefs" did not take cognizance of the sensibilities of the communities with regard to the socio-cultural values of the people. Most of the appointees were men of questionable character, and in some cases, were from the Osu outcast. Crowder notes "that people without any real claim to traditional authority so often became Chiefs was largely due to ignorance of the administration about the nature of African society" (1976:226).

This led to the disdain of the institution and the eventual revolt in 1929, during the Aba Women's Riot over the counting of women, which was perceived to be a design to tax women in the area.

By and large, the activities of colonial rule in Igboland were helped by the work of the Christian missionaries, who were in the vanguard for the establishment of schools, healthcare centres, and hospitals, through which they were able to evangelize most Igbo communities. The activities of Christian missionaries in Igboland continued even after political independence in 1960, when a number of Igbo ministers took over from the foreign missionaries. Thus, for most Igbo communities, they experienced earlier contact with the Christian religion, which came during colonial times. However, in Nsukka zone, according to the

account of the early Muslim converts, they point out that Islam was the first foreign religion in their area, which gave it some form of advantage over the Christian faith in the area. In Ovoko community, an outskirts of Nsukka town, it is on record that by 1916 when Maman Shaib settled in the area from Kontagora (Niger State), there was no foreign religion, until the commencement of British missionaries activities in 1930, in the area. Maman Shaib was a Muslim horse trader and also a traditional medicine man and was instrumental to the propagation of Islam in Ovoko community of Nsukka (Eze, 2012).

Pattern Of Islamic Spread in Igboland

As has been noted earlier, Islam's first penetration in Igboland started in Nsukka areas of Ibagwa Nkwo and Enugu-Ezike through the instrumentality of Nupe Muslims during the colonial rule. Rahman I. Doi's assertion that Islam entered Igboland through Nsukka axis in the 19th century, as a result of conquest (1974:42) has generated varied opinions by those who posit that, Islam's penetration may not have been as a result of cohesion, but rather through trade and cultural assimilation as observed intergroup cultural relations. That the conquest of some parts of the Nsukka area, like Ogururu and others, may not have been prompted by a religious proselytization drive, on the basis that presently most of the Igala people residing in those places are not Muslims by any means. In Anichebe Obiora's (ed). (2008) of *issues in Nigerian peoples and culture*, I made reference to the natural tendency in any social relation of borrowing to occur, in such things as cultural names, languages, etc, and even religion, without necessarily being a result of cohesion. (Madukwe, c. i. 115). but such influences, based on the level of social relation and development that existed, were confined to and constrained by necessity. The arrival of colonial rule, starting from the 20th century, brought with it openness through modern communication and, therefore, a wider room for more interaction among the people. Nsukka area, based on its proximity to the north, and trading activities with Nupe, Hausa, Yoruba, Igala, and Idoma traders, some of whom were Islamic clerics, traders, and healers, created an avenue for early proselytization and conversion in the area, than other Igbo communities. Nnorom notes that there are about 14 mosques in Nsukka zones (2003:17). One could observe such Islamic influence in the names they bear, manner of dressing, facial marks, growth of mosques here and there, and so on. One of the strategies deployed by Islamic practitioners in the area involves the continuous marrying of non-Muslim Igbo women, while refusing to marry Muslim women to non-Muslim men (Doi, 1974:51).

By contemporary account, the recent history of Islam in Igboland that has brought about drastic changes in the equation of Muslim – Christian relations came with the conversion of one Mr. Nwagui from Afikpo in the 1960s. The account, shows that, his conversion has tremendously brought about an increase and a greater awareness of Islam among the Igbo people. Single-handedly, he brought Islam to some leading Igbo towns like "Abiriba, Orlu, Oguta, Umuahia, Aba" (Ozigbo, 1998:149), and the rest. Presently, there is evidence of notable Igbo Muslims in these communities based on his singular effort. The number of Igbo professing Islam has continued to increase, though

unannounced. according to uchendu (2022) at the beginning of the nigerian civil war there was about 200 igbo muslims; by 1984 it was recorded at 3,450; while the 2013 hajj records put the number at 13,500. going by this accounts, there is evidence of silent progression of islam in igbo land.

Ozigbo notes that, the year 1970, which signaled the end of the nigeria – biafran conflict, coincided with the “outburst of arab nationalism” as witnessed in the foreign scene, underpinned by the clout of ‘arab oil’, encouraged the assertiveness of islam in nigeria generally and, igboland in particular (1998:148). he further observes that since 1970, there has been a restored confidence for islam in nigeria, going by its assertiveness “characterized by a highly aggressive and often intolerant proselytism” (2001:8).

Furthermore, going by the roles played by western powers during the nigerian-biafra war of 1967 to 1970, especially britain and the ‘neutrality of u.s.a’, who were supposed to be christian countries, it dawn on many igbo elite to begin to question their allegiance to the christian religion, which in their estimation came from the west, and foreign to their culture. this was quite unlike islam, which, though a foreign religion, has some similarities with igbo culture and tradition, in areas of polygamous marriages, traditional medicine, and the position of male headship in families. these agitations and concerns contributed to some relinquishing their christian faith. the case of the former governor of eastern nigeria, sir. dr. akanu ibiam, who returned his knighthood and other awards from the british monarch queen elizabeth, arising from the unacceptable role britain played during the civil war, is on record.

Moreover, “the aftermath of the war... created more opportunities for muslim soldiers to proselytize their religion among the conquered territories. this led to the conversion of some igbo to the islamic faith. ...on the whole, after the war many missionary schools were forcefully taken over by the government despite the protest of the church” (madukwe, 2005:49).

Questions have been raised as to the reason(s) why islam, which was once looked down upon by igbo people as ‘the religion of the hausas’, has continued to gain ground in igboland, once described as ‘a homogenous christian community’ though uneventful, and is partly addressed by the above factors. however, in trying to understand the events further, other factors need to be considered. The physical geographical location of nsukka zone (being the northernmost part of igboland), to groups like igala, idoma, and so on, who had already been partially influenced by islam, is another strong factor in the penetration of islam in igboland. in addition to that, as earlier mentioned, the cessation of the civil war in favour of the federal side had some effects that added impetus to the islamic thrust in igboland. sequel to the defeat of biafran (igbos mainly) in the conflagration, by the nigerian side, dominated by mainly muslim soldiers of hausa-fulani, yoruba, nupe, and others, igboland became susceptible to all kinds of proselytization activities. the situation even emboldened some igbo, who had early renounced islam during the war for fear of persecution, to return to the faith (doi 1974:46). added to this was the fact that some may have got converted to the faith on account of observing the

muslims in their midst, as they go about their daily religious activities. another boost to the islam progress immediately after the war in igboland could be attributed to the official government policy, as earlier noted, of forceful takeover of christian schools under the care of the religious bodies. this policy had the effect of indirectly lowering the guard of christian control over their faithful and exposing them to other foreign religious teachings. this was so, since by the takeover, the teaching curriculum had to change, thereby weakening their christian conviction with the onslaught that followed. during the period under discussion (immediately after the civil war), there arose some igbo traditionalists and educated elites clamouring for a resurgence of traditional igbo culture not in tandem with the christian faith. to them, christianity was a foreign religion, whose values and doctrines were a foreign imposition that should be discarded and done away with. these kinds of views and opposition by the combined effort of some educated elite, with their traditionalist co-travelers, no doubt, must have weakened the christian faith among many igbo adherents. and in such a zero-sum game that played out, islam, based on its certain traditional acceptance as has been earlier noted, became the beneficiary.

Some Historical Consideration Of Islam Penetration In Igboland

The islamic penetration in igboland is not only confined to a new attitude towards islam, which was formerly seen as a foreign religion, but its ability to erode the formerly held notion of igboland as 'a homogenous christian community'. looking at the historical events that unfolded in igboland during the colonial era and afterwards, it becomes clear that islam seems to have been positioned to make impact in igbo society. islam, as a socio-religious force and a worldwide phenomenon, has its agenda of transforming any society where it survives.

The british conquest of the afikpo community, a subgroup of the igbo group, currently located in ebonyi state, was a fait accompli in 1902. this was a follow-up to the defeat and the destruction of the aro community and their famous oracle - ibini ukpibi in the same year, respectively, with the active support of the christian mission at unwana (ottenberg, 1970: 236). ottenberg notes that the hausa soldiers were accompanied by muslim traders and prostitutes (1971:236). it was further observed that there was a small community of hausa who lived around the area and engaged in elephant hunting and trading, particularly at the middle of the cross river (partridge, cited in ottenberg, 1971:236). the above historical event no doubt brought the knowledge of islam to the communities unintentionally, and perhaps became the precursor to the proselytization and later development of islam in the area.

From what can be gleaned from available records on islam's inroad in igboland, a pattern seems discernible and obvious. islam tends to target prominent and influential igbo men who, in turn, become its agents of proselytization. the case of nwangui from afikpo in the 1960s is a very good example of this. another strategy employed by islam in igboland is the use of monetary inducement, to lure people to the faith. this strategy has been used several times in an attempt

to influence many igbo men, especially from the 1970s, after the end of the civil war. considering the federal government policy towards the erstwhile biafrans, In giving them the sum of 20 pounds only as a start-up to life, and the forfeiture of all their money in nigerian banks. this government policy was followed by the 1972 indigenization policy of government companies, which left the igbo without the financial muscle to participate in buying shares. these government policies left the igbo people at the mercy of religious inducement with the promise of handsome remuneration to convert to islam. the strategy of financial inducement to win conversion to islam has remained a cardinal policy employed by northern political authorities during the post-colonial era (kukah, 1993:21). a number of prominent igbo men in the bid to belong to the ruling authority have fallen to the overturn of changing their religion.

In ebonyi state, for instance, i was authoritatively informed that one of the strategies of islam in the state is the offer of free primary and secondary school under the sponsorship of arab countries like saudi arabia to converts of islam. there exist a school in afikpo known as al nazral school, with about 500 igbo-speaking students. the institution has been in existence for more than a decade at its present site at ntezi. it is meant for primary and secondary school students (nnorom, 2003:17). the idea/goal is still economic, in the sense that if you want free education to such levels, you can simply renounce your faith and become a muslim. and, in a situation where there is general poverty, one would not be surprised that many would accept such an offer. from this, it is very clear that at the root of islamic strategy in igboland lies the use of monetary inducement.

The similarities between islam and igbo culture in certain areas may have played a supportive role in conversion. it may not be far-fetched to argue that others may have also been converted to islamic faith based on either curiosity or the leeway which islam gives to certain traditional practices, like polygamous marriages, traditional festivals that have the tinge of idolatry, which christianity outrightly condemns.

The natural instinct of the igbo in egalitarian and individualistic behavior cannot be ruled out as a key factor in unravelling the current islamic impact in igbo society. the igbo, not generally known to be conservative in response to social changes, would not have continued to manifest a uniform response to the penetration of islamic faith in their midst. some would definitely respond positively, while others would stick to their old belief. but the onus lies with the individual person as a free moral agent and, as a social and a religious being, in making personal decisions.

islamic penetration in igboland to some die-hard christians is an unwelcome development. but, to other schools of thought, it is a welcome development that should be encouraged and supported. as has been noted, one of the major strategies of islamic penetration in igbo territory is through the means of education. this has led to the opening of a number of islamic schools in different parts of igboland, like in afikpo, ebonyi state, enugu, and some other places. the whole aim is geared towards catching as many as they can and influencing them to islam. doi opines that:

... the field of education in particular is one where the giver can strongly influence the recipient: it is a tool not only to inform but also to control and influence people (1974:53).

This they have made concrete efforts to achieve, in addition to the fact that most of these schools are being sponsored by Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia and others, and the schools are usually free to students.

Conclusion

Until the conversion of some prominent Igbo sons to the Islamic faith in early post-colonial time and after the Nigerian civil war, the Igbo ethnic group was generally viewed as 'a homogenous Christian community'. However, with Igbo population estimated at 98% Christian, and Igbo Muslims about 13,500 (Uchendu, 2022), there seems to be a gradual erosion of her Christian identity, through uneventful penetration of Islam in Igboland. Igboland has come within the precinct of the worldwide Islamic drive. The obvious manifestation of Islam in Igboland among others has brought about changes in the religious demography of the area, to showcase elements of a multi-religious community, though the Christian religion remains the dominant religion in the area. How far Islam can go in Igboland is still subject to debate and argument, which is outside the purview of this article. But going by the general overview of Islam performance in Nigeria, in terms of acceptance, its public image in the eyes of the populace, in relations to the constant religious induced killings, maiming, destruction of life and properties, associated with Islam can one honestly say that Islam, has a good prospect in Nigeria and Igboland in particular? The present reality, however, points to some inroads which the Islamic religion has made in Igbo society and may continue to do, the evidence of which is conspicuous and undeniable.

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