THE CALABAR HISTORICAL JOURNAL
Vol. 13, No. 1, June 2024, pp. 119-149. ISSN: 2315-8816
https://thecalabarhistoricaljournal.com/

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF BETTE INDIGENOUS INSTITUTIONS IN OBUDU, 1930-1960

USHIE, Kingsley Obudu
Department of History and International Studies
University of Calabar
kingsleyushie1@gmail.com

&

USHIE, Franca Okey
Department of History and International Studies
University of Calabar
okeyfranca@gmail.com

Abstract

Between 1930 and 1960, the Roman Catholic Mission emerged as one of the most consequential external forces reshaping the indigenous institutions of the Bette people of Obudu, in what was then Ogoja Province of colonial Nigeria. Extending from the mission station founded at Ogoja in 1921 and consolidated after 1932 under the Irish St. Patrick's Missionary Society, the Mission entered Bette country alongside, and frequently in tandem with, the apparatus of British indirect rule. This paper argues that Catholic evangelisation functioned as more than a religious undertaking: it operated as an agent of colonial change that reorganised Bette political authority, religious cosmology, education, and family life. The argument is developed through, rather than merely alongside, a sustained reading of the relevant scholarship. The paper sets the Obudu material against four bodies of literature: the Nigerian mission historiography descending from Ajayi and Ayandele; the long debate over the explanation of African conversion opened by Horton and contested by Fisher and Ifeka-Moller; the scholarship on colonial rule, custom, and the limits of invention associated with Afigbo, Ranger, and Spear; and the Comaroffian account of consciousness together with its critics. It argues that the Obudu evidence supports a layered, rather than single-cause, explanation of change, and that the thin European presence in an under-governed province makes the Bette catechist, not the European priest, the primary agent of institutional transformation. Drawing on colonial intelligence reports, regional mission historiography, and an emerging body of Bette ethnolinguistic scholarship, the paper situates Obudu within the wider historiography of Christian missions in Nigeria while addressing a comparatively understudied corner of Cross River history. It concludes that the Bette encounter with Roman Catholicism illustrates a broader pattern in which mission and the colonial State, though institutionally distinct, worked as complementary engines of change along Nigeria's minority-ethnic peripheries.

Keywords: *Roman Catholic Mission, Bette, Ogoja Province, indirect rule, social change*

THE CALABAR HISTORICAL JOURNAL
Vol. 13, No. 1, June 2024, pp. 119-149. ISSN: 2315-8816
https://thecalabarhistoricaljournal.com/

Introduction

The historiography of Christian missions in Nigeria has, since Ajayi's foundational study of the Niger and Yoruba missions, gravitated toward the country's major ethnic blocs.[1] Ayandele's equally influential account of missionary impact likewise focused on the elites produced in the more populous, better-documented south.[2] Eastern Nigeria has fared somewhat better through Ekechi's study of Owerri. Yet, the historiographical centre of gravity still rests on the Igbo, Ibibio, and Efik peoples whose numerical weight made them more visible to missionary societies and, in turn, to historians.[3] The Bette people of Obudu, in the mountainous north-eastern corner of Cross River State along the Nigeria-Cameroon frontier, occupy no such place in this literature. As John Manton observes, the territory that housed the Bette, administered for most of the colonial period as Ogoja Province, was known among British officials as the lost province, a periphery so marginal to colonial priorities that it attracted scholarly neglect matching its administrative neglect.[4]

This paper addresses that gap by examining the Roman Catholic Mission's role in transforming Bette indigenous institutions in Obudu between 1930 and 1960, a period bounded at its opening by the consolidation of a permanent mission presence under the newly formed St. Patrick's Missionary Society and, at its close, by Nigerian independence. Within this window, the paper argues, the Mission functioned as considerably more than a purveyor of new doctrine. It operated as an agent of colonial change: a body that, working alongside and sometimes at cross purposes with British administrative officers, reorganised Bette political

[1] J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite* (London: Longmans, 1965), 16.

[2] E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis* (London: Longmans, 1966), 7.

[3] Felix K. Ekechi, *Tradition and Transformation in Eastern Nigeria: A Sociopolitical History of Owerri and Its Hinterland, 1902-1947* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989), 12.

[4] John Manton, "'The Lost Province': Neglect and Governance in Colonial Ogoja," *History in Africa* 35 (2008): 328.

authority, recast indigenous religious practice, introduced Western education as a new pathway to status, and unsettled customs of marriage, naming, and kinship.

The claim that mission and colonial state acted as complementary engines of change is not new. What has been missing is a demonstration of how that relationship worked in a setting where neither institution possessed the personnel, revenue, or infrastructure that the existing literature, built largely on better-resourced fields, tends to assume. Obudu is valuable precisely because it inverts those assumptions. The Mission there was thinly staffed, dependent on Bette catechists and interpreters, and operating in a province the administration itself regarded as expendable. Reading the Nigerian and wider Africanist mission literature against that setting is therefore not a preliminary to the argument but a substantial part of it, and the extended review that follows is offered in that spirit.

At the same time, this paper resists the tendency to read the mission encounter as a simple imposition upon a passive population. It treats the Bette encounter with Catholicism as a negotiated process in which converts and catechists exercised real agency and indigenous institutions proved more resilient than a straightforward narrative of disruption would suggest. The paper draws on Stoddart's 1932 intelligence report, the regional historiography of Ogoja Province, and a growing body of scholarship on Bette-Bendi language, culture, and naming to reconstruct this encounter.[5] It proceeds through an extended review of the empirical and theoretical literature; a statement of sources and method; a reconstruction of Bette institutions before sustained mission contact; an account of the Mission's advent and consolidation; a thematic examination of religious, political, educational, and social transformation; a discussion of continuity and resistance; and a concluding assessment of what Obudu contributes to the wider historiography of Christian missions in Nigeria.

[5] Joseph A. Ushie, "Language as a Fossil of History: Bette-Bendi and Bantu," in *Essays on the History, Language and Culture of Bendi*, ed. Joseph A. Ushie and David L. Imbua (Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2011), 139-66.

Literature Review

Four bodies of scholarship bear on the questions this paper asks, and each carries a specific and contested set of claims that the Obudu material is well placed to test. The review below treats them in turn: the empirical historiography of Christian missions in Nigeria; the long-running debate over how African conversion should be explained; the literature on colonial authority, custom, and the limits of colonial invention; and the Comaroffian account of missionary influence on consciousness together with the criticisms it has attracted. A fifth subsection assesses the thin but growing literature on Ogoja, Obudu, and the Bette themselves, and states the gap this paper addresses.

Mission Historiography in Nigeria: Three Phases and Their Limits

Nigerian mission historiography has moved through three broad phases, and it is worth separating them, because each answers a different question and each leaves a different residue of assumptions. The first is the nationalist scholarship of the Ibadan School. Writing against a missiological literature that had treated Africans largely as the objects of evangelisation, Ajayi placed African agency at the centre of the story, arguing that evangelisation produced a new, Western-educated elite whose position depended on literacy and mission schooling rather than inherited status.[6] Ayandele extended the analysis into the twentieth century, arguing that missionary societies became deeply entangled with colonial administration, sometimes restraining its excesses and sometimes serving as its instrument.[7] Their achievement was decisive, but two features of it constrain its usefulness here. The unit of analysis was the emerging nation, which drew attention toward the large and well-documented ethnic blocs; and the archive was substantially the correspondence of European missionary societies, which produced an account strongest on elite formation and weakest on institutional change in the

[6] Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, 136.

[7] Ayandele, *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, 62.

village. Their chronologies compound the difficulty: Ajayi closes in 1891 and Ayandele in 1914, both well before sustained Catholic work began among the Bette. The classic literature, in other words, stops roughly where the Obudu story starts.

A second phase turned toward social-structural explanation. Ifeka-Moller's analysis of conversion in eastern Nigeria between 1921 and 1966 located conversion not in theological persuasion but in the social incentives of schooling, trade, and colonial patronage that Christianity offered communities newly drawn into the colonial economy.[8] Ekechi's study of Owerri traced how mission Christianity and British administration, though not always in concert, together reconstituted the sociopolitical order of a rural Igbo hinterland comparable in character to Obudu.[9] His earlier work on Igboland had already established a related point of direct relevance here: denominational rivalry was itself a motor of missionary expansion.[10] Ogoja is instructive as the contrast case: Catholic work there faced no comparable Protestant competitor, and the absence of rivalry may help explain both the Mission's slow initial expansion and the near monopoly it later enjoyed over schooling. Omenka's study of Catholic education in eastern Nigeria supplies the closest institutional precedent for the educational argument advanced below, demonstrating how thoroughly the school became the instrument of Catholic evangelisation rather than merely its accompaniment.[11] Kalu's account of Igbo Christianisation qualifies the picture from another direction, insisting that indigenous religion remained an active party to the encounter rather than a receding background.[12]

---

[8] Caroline Ifeka-Moller, "White Power: Social-Structural Factors in Conversion to Christianity, Eastern Nigeria, 1921-1966," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8, no. 1 (1974): 55-72.

[9] Ekechi, *Tradition and Transformation*, 51.

[10] Felix K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1972), 35.

[11] Nicholas Ibeawuchi Omenka, *The School in the Service of Evangelization: The Catholic Educational Impact in Eastern Nigeria, 1886-1950* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 23.

[12] Ogbu U. Kalu, *The Embattled Gods: Christianization of Igboland, 1841-1991* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), 37.

A third phase, drawing on the wider Africanist literature, has reframed conversion as translation and appropriation. Peel's study of the Yoruba encounter with the Church Missionary Society is the fullest Nigerian statement of this position, arguing that it was precisely through the mission encounter that the Yoruba came to know themselves as a coherent people, and that African catechists and agents shaped the message they carried.[13] Meyer's work on the Ewe of Ghana makes the mechanism explicit: the vocabulary missionaries introduced was reworked by converts into meanings the missionaries neither intended nor controlled.[14] Broader syntheses by Hastings, Isichei, and Gray have consolidated this emphasis on African initiative across the continent, while Vaughan has shown how deeply religious institutions became embedded in the making of Nigerian political order.[15] This phase matters most for the present study, because the structural conditions it presupposes, a thin European presence and heavy reliance on local intermediaries, describe Obudu with unusual accuracy.

Taken together, these three phases leave a specific gap. Each has been elaborated principally on Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, and Ibibio material. None has taken as its central case a minority community of the Cross River periphery during the years between the wars and independence, when Catholic institutional expansion in Ogoja was at its most rapid. The point is not that the existing literature is wrong about the Bette; it is that it has not been asked about them.

[13] J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 289.

[14] Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 52.

[15] Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); Richard Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Olufemi Vaughan, *Religion and the Making of Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

Explaining Conversion: Intellectualist, Structural, and Translational Accounts

The second body of literature concerns the explanation of conversion itself, and it is more sharply divided than summary treatments usually acknowledge. Horton's intellectualist theory proposed that African cosmologies had been organised around a bounded social microcosm served by lesser spirits, with a supreme being remote from daily affairs; as colonial administration, markets, migration, and wage labour widened that world into a macrocosm, the logic of the cosmology itself pushed the supreme being toward the centre, and Christianity and Islam acted as catalysts of a change already under way rather than as its cause.[16] Fisher's rejoinder challenged the sufficiency of this account, insisting that the world religions brought genuinely new content, institutional discipline, and scriptural authority that no internal adaptation of an indigenous cosmology would have generated on its own.[17] Horton's two-part reply refined the thesis without abandoning it, conceding a larger role to the specific doctrinal content of the incoming religion while maintaining the priority of the macrocosmic shift.[18] Ifeka-Moller's structural account represents a third position, and one directly opposed to the intellectualist emphasis: in her reading, conversion in eastern Nigeria tracked the distribution of colonial power, schooling, and employment far more closely than it tracked any cosmological logic.[19]

This paper does not adopt one of these positions to the exclusion of the others, and the Obudu evidence suggests why it should not. Horton's model accounts well for the timing of change. The Bette macrocosm did not widen gradually; it opened abruptly, with military contact after 1907, incorporation into Ogoja Province, and the extension of roads, taxation, and

[16] Robin Horton, "African Conversion," *Africa* 41, no. 2 (1971): 89.

[17] Humphrey J. Fisher, "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa," *Africa* 43, no. 1 (1973): 33.

[18] Robin Horton, "On the Rationality of Conversion," pt. 1, *Africa* 45, no. 3 (1975): 223.

[19] Ifeka-Moller, "White Power," 60.

courts through the 1930s, and a universalising religion arrived precisely as the older cosmological frame was being asked to explain a world it had not been built to describe. It accounts less well for the distribution of conversion. Those who came first to the catechist were disproportionately the young, the mobile, and those positioned to benefit from literacy and Native Authority employment, which is the pattern Ifeka-Moller predicts and Horton does not. Fisher's objection retains force for a third reason specific to Catholicism: sacramental obligation, the confessional, and the insistence on monogamous and indissoluble marriage were not extensions of anything present in Bette practice, and their disruptive force cannot be derived from the internal logic of the indigenous cosmology. The explanation adopted here is therefore layered: Horton for timing, Ifeka-Moller for distribution, Fisher for content, and Peel and Meyer for the process by which Bette intermediaries translated that content into Bette terms.

Colonial Rule, Custom, and the Limits of Invention

The third body of literature addresses what colonial intervention did to indigenous political institutions, and it has undergone a significant revision that the present study takes seriously. Afigbo's account of the warrant chief system remains the indispensable regional study, showing how indirect rule across south-eastern Nigeria, Ogoja Province included, repeatedly failed to map colonial authority onto indigenous structures with any precision, producing new and often illegitimate forms of local leadership that missions and mission-educated intermediaries were well placed to fill.[20] Ranger's essay on the invention of tradition supplied the strongest theoretical formulation of the same insight, arguing that the customary

[20] A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929* (London: Longman, 1972), 61.

institutions colonial officers claimed merely to record were frequently constructed through the act of intervention itself.[21]

That formulation has since been substantially qualified, including by Ranger himself, who came to regard invention as too monolithic a term, preferring the language of imagination and conceding a far larger role to African participation in the making of colonial custom.[22] Spear pressed the criticism further, arguing that colonial states in Africa were generally too weak, too thinly staffed, and too dependent on local collaboration to invent tradition at will, and that what emerged was better described as neo-traditionalism, a negotiated settlement whose limits were set by what African communities would accept and enforce.[23] Dorward's study of Anglo-Tiv relations offers a model of the resulting process that is geographically proximate and analytically apt, describing a working misunderstanding in which each party interpreted the other through its own categories and a functioning arrangement emerged from the mismatch.[24] Ochonu's account of colonial rule exercised through subordinate African agents on Nigeria's middle-belt peripheries describes a comparable dynamic of mediated authority.[25]

The revised position fits Ogoja better than the original thesis does, and this has consequences for the argument developed below. A province the administration itself treated as marginal, staffed by a handful of officers who could not reach much of it in the wet season, did not possess the capacity to invent Bette institutions outright. What it possessed was the

[21] Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211-62.

[22] Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa," in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A. H. M. Kirk-Greene*, ed. Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (London: Macmillan, 1993), 82.

[23] Thomas Spear, "Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa," *Journal of African History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 15.

[24] D. C. Dorward, "Ethnography and Administration: A Study of Anglo-Tiv 'Working Misunderstanding,'" *Journal of African History* 15, no. 3 (1974): 461.

[25] Moses E. Ochonu, *Colonialism by Proxy: Hausa Imperial Agents and Middle Belt Consciousness in Nigeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 57.

capacity to insist that Bette authority be rendered in a form legible to the Native Authority system, and to reward those Bette actors who could perform that rendering. The mission-educated catechist, literate and familiar with both registers, was ideally placed to do so. The transformation of Bette political institutions is accordingly read here not as colonial invention but as a negotiated neo-traditional settlement in which Bette intermediaries were active parties.

Consciousness, Hegemony, and the Case Against Overreach

The fourth body of literature concerns the depth at which missionary influence operated. The Comaroffs' study of the London Missionary Society among the Tswana argues that the most consequential missionary work often preceded formal conversion, lying instead in new categories of time, labour, domestic space, and personhood that effected what they term a colonisation of consciousness well before, or entirely apart from, a formal profession of faith.[26] Their second volume extends the analysis into the everyday material practices of dress, agriculture, and the household.[27] The thesis is attractive for Obudu, where formal baptism in the 1930s and 1940s often lagged the quieter reorganisation of daily life brought about by catechetical schooling.

It has nonetheless been forcefully criticised, and the criticisms are pertinent here. Landau argues that the thesis credits missionaries with a coherence, reach, and ideological unity they did not possess, and that it reads a later hegemony backwards into an earlier and far messier encounter.[28] Peel's objection runs in a related direction, holding that an emphasis on consciousness as something done to Africans under-reads the intentionality of converts who

[26] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1, *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 128.

[27] John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 2, *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[28] Paul S. Landau, "Hegemony and History in Jean and John L. Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*," *Africa* 70, no. 3 (2000): 505.

had their own reasons for what they did.[29] This paper therefore borrows the Comaroffs' attention to time, work, and domestic order as a set of questions to put to the evidence, while declining the strong hegemonic claim. In a mission field where a handful of Irish priests depended on Bette catechists for every act of communication, the proposition that a coherent missionary ideology colonised Bette consciousness cannot be sustained, and the surviving sources would not demonstrate it if it were true.

A word is owed to frameworks not used. The vocabulary of postcolonial critique associated with Fanon and Mbembe has an established place in African historical writing, but its analytical objects lie elsewhere. Fanon's concern is the psychic structure of settler colonialism and the violence of decolonisation, and Mbembe's is the constitution of sovereignty and its relation to death in the postcolony. Neither is calibrated to a thinly staffed Catholic mission in an under-governed interior province during the interwar decades, and the frameworks selected above are preferred here because they were built to explain the specific encounter under study rather than because they are more congenial.

Ogoja, Obudu, and the Bette: The State of a Thin Literature

The literature bearing directly on the case is small, and its components have not been brought into conversation with one another. Manton's work on Ogoja, comprising his doctoral study of the Mission's leprosy scheme and his article on the province's administrative marginality, is the most substantial scholarly treatment of the Roman Catholic Mission in this province and the foundation on which the present study builds.[30] His object, however, is provincial governance and public health rather than the indigenous institutions of any particular community, and the Bette appear in his account as inhabitants of a governed space rather than

[29] Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 292.

[30] John Manton, "The Roman Catholic Mission and Leprosy Control in Colonial Ogoja Province, Nigeria, 1936-1960" (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2004); Manton, "'Lost Province,'" 329.

as the subjects of institutional change. Adie's history of Obudu supplies an indispensable local chronology, particularly for the sequence of colonial contact, though it is a work of local history rather than a study framed by the historiographical debates surveyed above.[31]

The strongest recent scholarship on the Bette is ethnolinguistic and literary rather than historical. Ushie's reconstruction of Bette-Bendi origins through language and Imbua's account of Bendi economic practice remain the best guides to the precolonial order.[32] Aboh's analysis of ethnic identity in Liwhu Betiang's fiction, the study of Christianity and the gendering of personal names by Aboh, Mensah, Inyabri, and Ushuple, and the work on naming and female identity in Bette-Obudu together constitute the most direct evidence available for the transformation of naming and domestic institutions.[33] Their limitation, for present purposes, is that they are largely synchronic. They document the outcome of a historical process with considerable precision while leaving the process itself, its chronology, its agents, and its contested moments, substantially unreconstructed. Abasiattai's regional volume situates the Obudu highlands within Cross River history more broadly but does not treat the mission encounter at the level of detail attempted here.[34]

Stoddart's 1932 intelligence report occupies a particular position in this literature, since it is at once the earliest systematic European description of Bette social organisation and an

[31] Michael Ugiobe Adie, *Groundwork of Obudu History, 1600-1960* (Calabar: UNICAL Publishing Press, 2015), 12.

[32] Ushie, "Language as a Fossil of History," 140; David L. Imbua, "Underpinnings of Bendi Traditional Economic Practices: Lessons and Challenges," in *Essays on the History, Language and Culture of Bendi*, ed. Joseph A. Ushie and David L. Imbua (Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2011), 43.

[33] Romanus Aboh, "Beyond Loan Words: Bette-Bendi Ethnic Identity Construction in Liwhu Betiang's *Beneath the Rubble*," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 6, no. 8 (2014): 195; Romanus Aboh et al., "Christianity and the Gendering of Personal Names among the Bette in Southeastern Nigeria," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 53, no. 1 (2023): 65; Liwhu Betiang, "Naming and the Reconstruction of Female Identity in Bette-Obudu," *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13, nos. 2-4 (2019): 357.

[34] Monday B. Abasiattai, ed., *A History of the Cross River Region of Nigeria* (Enugu: Harris Publishers in association with University of Calabar Press, 1990), 53.

artefact of the process this paper analyses.[35] It was compiled to render the Bette-Bendi clan legible for Native Authority purposes, and the categories it fixes, clan boundaries, lines of descent, and the location of authority, are precisely those that Ranger and Spear teach us to treat as products of the encounter rather than as neutral records of what preceded it. The report is used here as evidence but read as a document with an administrative purpose.

The gap this paper addresses can now be stated exactly. The historical literature on Ogoja Province does not take Bette institutions as its object, and the Bette-focused literature is not historical. This paper joins the two, testing the claims of the Nigerian and wider Africanist mission scholarship against a minority community of the Cross River periphery and arriving at three commitments that shape the analysis: a layered rather than single-cause explanation of conversion; an account of institutional change that follows Spear's qualified neo-traditionalism rather than the strong invention thesis; and the treatment of the Bette catechist, rather than the European priest, as the principal agent of transformation.

Bette Indigenous Institutions on the Eve of Mission Contact

The Bette are the largest of the clans occupying the Obudu highlands, sharing the wider geo-cultural area with the related Obanlikwu, Bendi, Utuwang, Ukpe-Alege, and Utanga-Becheve clans.[36] Bette tradition and linguistic classification situate the people within a wider Bantoid dispersal from central Africa and the middle Benue Valley, with Bette and Bendi remembered as descendants of a common progenitor before separating after a conflict at Itemkwel in the early nineteenth century.[37] Colonial ethnography corroborated much of this: Stoddart's 1932 intelligence report on the Bette-Bendi clan, compiled while he served as

[35] A. F. R. Stoddart, "Intelligence Report on the Bette-Bendi Clan, Obudu District, Ogoja Province," 1932, CSE 1185/4674, File No. ED8880, National Archives, Enugu, 5.

[36] Ushie, "Language as a Fossil of History," 140.

[37] Ushie, "Language as a Fossil of History," 140.

Acting District Officer of Obudu Division, recorded a similar genealogy and remains among the earliest systematic European descriptions of Bette social organisation.[38] Following the reading of that document set out above, the corroboration should not be pressed too far, since the report and the tradition were not independent of one another; Stoddart recorded what Bette informants chose to tell an officer whose purpose they understood.

Bette political organisation was decentralised and kinship-based rather than concentrated around a paramount chieftaincy, with authority resting chiefly in lineage and village elders. Land, forest, and palm produce were held and exploited communally, a structure Imbua describes as underpinning a broadly egalitarian precolonial economy of reciprocal labour and even distribution across families.[39] This decentralisation, and the relative absence of a stratified, tribute-extracting hierarchy, would later complicate British efforts to graft a system of warrant chiefs and Native Authorities onto Bette society.[40] The difficulty was structural rather than local, and Afigbo's account of its recurrence across the acephalous societies of south-eastern Nigeria establishes that Obudu was a regional instance of a general problem rather than an anomaly.[41]

Ritual life was similarly embedded in kinship rather than a formal priestly hierarchy. Bette cultural memory, as reflected in Aboh's analysis of Bette-Bendi identity in the work of the novelist Liwhu Betiang, recalls masquerade institutions such as the Ikwom-Ishor and a warriors' dance, Ikpatemana, which were historically performed by men returning from intercommunal conflict and were central to precolonial ceremonial life.[42] The absence of a separate priestly caste matters for what followed, since it meant that Catholic evangelisation

[38] Stoddart, "Intelligence Report on the Bette-Bendi Clan," 5.

[39] Imbua, "Bendi Traditional Economic Practices," 43.

[40] Imbua, "Bendi Traditional Economic Practices," 45.

[41] Afigbo, *Warrant Chiefs*, 61.

[42] Aboh, "Beyond Loan Words," 198.

did not confront an organised religious profession with an institutional interest in resisting it, as missionaries encountered elsewhere in Nigeria; ritual authority was distributed across the same elders who held political authority, so that pressure on one register was felt immediately in the other.

Naming carried further institutional weight: Bette proverbial personal names encoded genealogy, moral instruction, and social commentary, functioning, as recent ethnolinguistic scholarship argues, as a mechanism of memory and social control in a largely non-literate society.[43] In a society without writing, the naming system performed the work that archives and registers perform elsewhere, which is why its later reorganisation under Christian influence had consequences well beyond the devotional.

British contact came later, and more unevenly, than along the coast. Colonial forces reached Obudu only in 1907, and the area was not fully pacified until shortly before 1912, a chronology set out in Adie's dedicated history of Obudu.[44] Obudu was folded into Ogoja Province and administered, as Afigbo's account shows, in a way typical of the wider region through clan and village councils that British officers struggled to reconcile with existing elder authority.[45] Manton's account of Ogoja underscores how marginal this pacification left the province within colonial priorities: chronically under-resourced and crossed by terrain restricting wet-season travel, Ogoja remained something close to a lost province well into the interwar period.[46] It was into this unsettled, administratively marginal environment that the Roman Catholic Mission began sustained work among the Bette around 1930.

The Advent and Consolidation of the Roman Catholic Mission in Obudu

[43] Betiang, "Naming and the Reconstruction of Female Identity," 363.
[44] Adie, *Groundwork of Obudu History*, 12.
[45] Afigbo, *Warrant Chiefs*, 7.
[46] Manton, "'Lost Province,'" 334.

Roman Catholic missionary work in the Cross River basin traced its origins to the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, whose Nigerian mission was led from the 1900s by Bishop Joseph Shanahan, and it was from the Holy Ghost Fathers' base at Calabar that activity pushed northward into the interior during the 1920s.[47] Diocesan priests recruited through Shanahan's 1920 appeal to seminarians at Maynooth College reinforced this expansion, and by the end of the decade a substantial number of Irish priests worked the Calabar and Ogoja fields.[48] Hogan's survey of the Irish missionary movement situates this recruitment within a wider Irish Catholic mobilisation whose personnel, seminary formation, and assumptions about schooling were carried into Nigeria largely intact, a point that helps explain the shape Catholic institutions took in Ogoja.[49] From the mission station this expansion established at Ogoja, Catholic evangelisation was carried into Obudu, Tiv country, and Ikom, extending a mission whose personnel remained thin on the ground and dependent on local catechists and interpreters to bridge the language barrier separating European priests from Bette speakers.

The institution serving Obudu changed considerably across this period. What began as an extension of Holy Ghost Father activity was formalised in March 1932 with the canonical establishment, at Kiltegan in Ireland, of St. Patrick's Missionary Society, whose own historical account records that its initial concentration of personnel was in Calabar and soon after in Ogoja.[50] Obudu, as a mission field administered from Ogoja, thus passed by the early 1930s into the hands of a new generation of Irish Kiltegan Fathers just as this paper's period opens. The Prefecture of Calabar, which had encompassed Ogoja Province, was itself divided in 1938,

[47] St. Patrick's Missionary Society, "History," accessed 11 September 2026, https://www.spms.org/history.

[48] St. Patrick's Missionary Society, "History."

[49] Edmund M. Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement: A Historical Survey, 1830-1980* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 28.

[50] St. Patrick's Missionary Society, "History."

when Ogoja became a separate Apostolic Prefecture under Monsignor Patrick Whitney, before being raised to a full Diocese in 1955 under Bishop Thomas McGettrick.[51]

This consolidation unfolded within an environment Manton's research characterises as exceptionally marginal even by the standards of Nigeria's rural peripheries. Ogoja Province was so lightly resourced that mission personnel frequently performed quasi-governmental welfare functions the colonial state could not undertake, a pattern Manton documents through the Mission's leprosy control scheme, launched in 1945 with the Medical Missionaries of Mary after nearly a decade of delay.[52] Though organised province-wide rather than focused on Obudu alone, the scheme illustrates a dynamic highly relevant here: in a periphery where government presence was thin, the Mission became one of the few institutions capable of sustained contact with rural communities, giving its priests, catechists, and teachers an influence over daily life exceeding their formal religious mandate.[53]

Two features of this configuration deserve emphasis, because they distinguish Obudu from the settings on which the standard literature rests. The first is the absence of denominational competition. Where Ekechi shows Protestant and Catholic rivalry accelerating the multiplication of schools and stations across Igboland, Ogoja offered no comparable spur, which plausibly accounts for the Mission's unhurried early expansion and for the near monopoly over schooling it subsequently enjoyed.[54] The second is the ratio of European personnel to population, which was low enough that the effective unit of missionary presence in Bette villages was not the priest but the catechist. That fact governs much of the analysis that follows, and it aligns the Obudu case with the translational scholarship of Peel and Meyer rather than with accounts that treat the missionary as the author of change.

[51] St. Patrick's Missionary Society, "History."

[52] Manton, "Roman Catholic Mission and Leprosy Control," 14.

[53] Manton, "Roman Catholic Mission and Leprosy Control"; Manton, "'Lost Province,'" 338.

[54] Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry*, 48.

THE CALABAR HISTORICAL JOURNAL
Vol. 13, No. 1, June 2024, pp. 119-149. ISSN: 2315-8816
https://thecalabarhistoricaljournal.com/

The Transformation of Bette Indigenous Institutions, 1930-1960

Religious Transformation

The most immediate arena of missionary impact was indigenous religious practice, though the impact is better described as reorganisation than replacement. Before 1930, Bette communities understood ancestral spirits, minor deities, and a distant supreme being as an interconnected cosmological order embedded in daily and seasonal life rather than confined to discrete ritual occasions.[55] This is recognisably the configuration Horton describes as the bounded microcosm, and the chronology of its disturbance in Obudu follows his model closely: military contact, taxation, courts, roads, and labour migration widened the world the cosmology had to explain within a single generation, and a universalising religion arrived as that strain became acute.[56]

Yet the Obudu evidence also bears out the criticisms Horton's thesis has attracted. Fisher's insistence that the incoming religion brought content irreducible to indigenous adaptation applies with force to Catholicism, whose sacramental system, confessional discipline, and doctrine of indissoluble marriage had no Bette analogue and could not have emerged from the internal development of Bette cosmology.[57] Ifeka-Moller's structural account explains what Horton's cannot, namely why the earliest adherents were disproportionately those with access to schooling and colonial employment rather than those with the greatest cosmological need.[58] The explanation offered here accordingly treats the intellectualist and structural accounts as complementary: the first illuminates why the period 1930 to 1960 was receptive to a universalising religion at all, the second why particular Bette individuals and lineages entered it when and as they did.

[55] Aboh et al., "Gendering of Personal Names," 57.
[56] Horton, "African Conversion."
[57] Fisher, "Conversion Reconsidered," 30.
[58] Ifeka-Moller, "White Power," 60.

The transition was neither smooth nor uncontested. Catechists and priests confronted existing ritual specialists and masquerade institutions such as the Ikwom-Ishor and the warriors' dance, Ikpatemana, and colonial administrative pressure, alongside missionary discouragement of practices associated with warfare and paganism, which contributed to the decline of at least some of these institutions during the decades under study.[59] Kalu's insistence that indigenous religion remained an active party to such encounters rather than a passive casualty is a useful check here, and the persistence of Bette ritual vocabulary and observance alongside Catholic practice suggests the Obudu case supports his reading rather than a narrative of supersession.[60]

The Comaroffs suggest the deepest transformation often lay not in these confrontations but in the quieter introduction of new categories of time, labour discipline, and domestic conduct through catechetical instruction.[61] This helps explain why formal baptism among the Bette in the 1930s and 1940s often lagged behind the more gradual reorientation of everyday practice introduced through catechetical schooling, with its rhythms of instruction, its emphasis on literacy over oral transmission, and its insistence on monogamous, church-sanctioned marriage. The formulation is retained here as a description of what catechetical schooling did, not as an endorsement of the hegemonic claim Landau contests, and the distinction is material: what the Obudu evidence supports is that new disciplines of time and domestic order were introduced and unevenly adopted, not that a coherent missionary ideology captured Bette consciousness.[62]

[59] Aboh, "Beyond Loan Words," 198.

[60] Kalu, *Embattled Gods*, 43.

[61] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:31.

[62] Landau, "Hegemony and History."

THE CALABAR HISTORICAL JOURNAL
Vol. 13, No. 1, June 2024, pp. 119-149. ISSN: 2315-8816
https://thecalabarhistoricaljournal.com/

Political and Administrative Transformation

The Mission's political impact cannot be separated from the indirect rule system within which it operated. As Afigbo demonstrates, British administrators, confronted with societies like the Bette that lacked a paramount chieftaincy, frequently invented or reshaped local offices to administer tax collection and native courts, producing warrant chiefs and Native Authority councils whose legitimacy bore little relationship to precolonial elder authority.[63] Ranger's account of the invention of tradition captured this dynamic in its strongest form, holding that the customary structures colonial officers claimed merely to record were substantially constructed through the act of intervention itself.[64]

The revisions that account has since undergone matter for how the Obudu case should be read. Ranger's own reconsideration and Spear's critique of the invention thesis both stress that colonial administrations lacked the capacity to impose custom unilaterally and depended on African acceptance and enforcement for anything they established.[65] In Ogoja that dependence was acute. A province the administration regarded as marginal, with officers unable to reach substantial portions of it for months at a time, could not manufacture Bette institutions; it could require that Bette authority be presented in a form the Native Authority system recognised, and reward those who could present it. What resulted is better described by Dorward's notion of a working misunderstanding than by unilateral invention, with each party reading the arrangement through its own categories and a functioning settlement emerging from the mismatch.[66]

This is where the Mission's significance lies. Mission-educated catechists, teachers, and clerks were among the few Bette individuals equipped with the literacy Native Authority

[63] Afigbo, *Warrant Chiefs*, 61.

[64] Ranger, "Invention of Tradition."

[65] Ranger, "Invention of Tradition Revisited"; Spear, "Neo-Traditionalism."

[66] Dorward, "Ethnography and Administration," 460.

administration demanded, positioning them, in a pattern Ajayi identified as characteristic of mission Christianity across Nigeria, as a new intermediary elite whose standing rested on schooling rather than lineage.[67] Their importance was not merely that they staffed the new offices but that they performed the translation on which the whole arrangement depended, rendering Bette authority in administratively legible terms and colonial requirements in Bette ones. The neo-traditional settlement that emerged in Obudu was therefore largely their work, precisely the African authorship of colonial custom that Spear's revision recovers and the original invention thesis obscured.

This created real tension between older elder authority and an emergent, mission-educated leadership whose influence derived from its usefulness to the colonial apparatus, mirroring the dynamic Ayandele traced across Nigeria more broadly.[68] The Mission thus operated both as an instrument stabilising indirect rule in an under-administered province and as an independent authority that could complicate the Native Authority structures the government was attempting to build, a doubleness that Ayandele identified as characteristic of mission-state relations and that the Ogoja material illustrates with unusual clarity precisely because the state was so weak.[69]

Educational Transformation

Education was the institution through which the Mission exercised its most enduring influence. Catechetical instruction, initially organised to produce interpreters who bridged the language barrier, expanded across Ogoja Province during these decades into primary schools and, from the late 1940s, teacher-training institutions serving the wider province of which

[67] Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, 102.

[68] Ayandele, *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, 45.

[69] Ayandele, *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, 62.

Obudu was part.[70] Omenka's study of Catholic education in eastern Nigeria establishes the wider pattern into which this fits, showing that the school was not an adjunct to Catholic evangelisation but its central instrument, and that the Church's educational commitment was strategic rather than incidental.[71] What distinguishes Obudu is the absence of the Protestant competition that shaped Catholic educational expansion further south, which left the Mission with an unusually unchallenged position in the formation of the first literate Bette generation.[72]

This reoriented Bette understandings of status: where standing had rested on lineage seniority and ritual knowledge, mission schooling offered advancement through literacy, catechetical credentialing, and employment as teacher, clerk, or catechist. The mechanism is the one Ifeka-Moller identifies as decisive for conversion in eastern Nigeria, and the Obudu case supports her emphasis, since access to the school and access to the Church were in practice the same access.[73]

This shift carried real costs for existing knowledge transmission. Bette elders had traditionally served as custodians of genealogical, legal, and ritual knowledge, often encoded in naming practices, but schooling increasingly positioned the classroom and catechism, rather than the elder's instruction, as the authoritative site of a young Bette person's formation.[74] The effect, consistent with Ajayi's broader thesis, was the gradual emergence of a Western-educated stratum whose literacy and administrative familiarity increasingly rivalled, and in some domains superseded, the authority once vested exclusively in lineage seniority.[75] The Obudu case does not simply confirm Ajayi's thesis, however; it qualifies it. The elite Ajayi described was national in orientation and drawn from communities with decades of mission

[70] St. Patrick's Missionary Society, "History."

[71] Omenka, *School in the Service of Evangelization*, 24.

[72] Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry*, 48.

[73] Ifeka-Moller, "White Power."

[74] Betiang, "Naming and the Reconstruction of Female Identity," 368.

[75] Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, 143.

schooling behind them, whereas the Bette stratum that emerged by 1960 was small, locally bounded, and formed within a single generation, which suggests that the timing and density of mission education, rather than its mere presence, governed the kind of elite it produced.

Social and Familial Transformation

Perhaps the most intimate register of transformation occurred within family, marriage, and naming. The study by Aboh, Mensah, Inyabri, and Ushuple of Christianity and the gendering of personal names among the Bette demonstrates that Christian practice measurably reshaped one of the community's most fundamental institutions: the proverbial naming system through which Bette families encoded genealogical memory and moral instruction.[76] Christian naming, oriented toward biblical and saints' names rather than proverbial Bette names, introduced a parallel and at times competing system whose adoption signalled religious affiliation as much as personal identity, illustrating in miniature how Catholic practice penetrated even the most intimate registers of Bette life.[77] Work on the reconstruction of female identity in Bette-Obudu further suggests this naming transformation carried a gendered dimension, since naming had long been a site through which Bette women negotiated identity and voice within a patriarchal order.[78]

Read against Meyer's account of religious translation, the naming evidence acquires a significance beyond the devotional. Meyer shows that the categories missionaries introduced were reworked by converts into meanings the missionaries neither intended nor controlled, and the Bette layering of baptismal upon proverbial names is a precise instance of that process.[79] The outcome was not the replacement of one onomastic system by another but the creation of

[76] Aboh et al., "Gendering of Personal Names," 65.

[77] Aboh et al., "Gendering of Personal Names," 69.

[78] Betiang, "Naming and the Reconstruction of Female Identity," 370.

[79] Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, 19.

a dual system carrying two registers of meaning simultaneously, which is a form of appropriation rather than of submission.

Marriage practices came under similar pressure. The broader historiography of Christian missions in Nigeria, from Ayandele to Ekechi's study of Owerri, documents a consistent missionary preference for monogamous, church-sanctioned marriage over the polygamous unions and bridewealth arrangements structuring kinship across rural Nigeria, including, this paper argues by extension, the Bette communities of Obudu.[80] Because Bette kinship and labour obligations were organised around the extended family rather than the nuclear household the Mission promoted, this shift touched the very organisation of land tenure and labour exchange central to the precolonial Bette economy.[81] This is the point at which Fisher's objection to the intellectualist account is most clearly vindicated, since the Catholic doctrine of indissoluble monogamous marriage was not an extension of anything in Bette practice and its consequences for the descent group cannot be derived from any internal adaptation of Bette cosmology.[82] Yet, as the following section argues, this transformation was neither total nor uncontested.

Continuity, Negotiation, and Resistance

To read this transformation as a simple, one-directional imposition would misrepresent both the record and the theoretical literature reviewed above. Peel's study of the Yoruba encounter offers a corrective: it was precisely through the mission encounter that the Yoruba came to articulate a coherent sense of themselves, suggesting that mission contact could consolidate rather than purely erode communal identity.[83] Something comparable appears in

[80] Ekechi, *Tradition and Transformation*, 28.

[81] Imbua, "Bendi Traditional Economic Practices," 44.

[82] Fisher, "Conversion Reconsidered," 29.

[83] Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 288.

the Bette case. The archival record documenting the Mission's disruptive impact, Stoddart's report chief among it, was itself part of a broader process of record-keeping that helped fix Bette and Bette-Bendi as recognised categories in ways that arguably strengthened, rather than dissolved, a shared identity across the six clans of the Obudu area.[84] The parallel should not be overdrawn, since the Yoruba case involved a century of literary and linguistic production in which converts themselves were the principal authors, whereas Bette categories were fixed substantially in administrative documents written by others; what the two cases share is the mechanism, not its scale or its authorship.

Bette communities, moreover, were far from passive recipients. The Mission's dependence on local catechists and interpreters to overcome the language barrier meant the actual, lived practice of Catholicism in Obudu was shaped and translated by Bette intermediaries themselves, consistent with Peel's argument that African converts were never merely passive vessels for a fixed message but active agents in its local elaboration.[85] The structural condition is worth stating in its strongest form: in a field where European personnel were too few to conduct routine instruction, the content of Bette Catholicism was determined in the first instance by what Bette catechists understood, selected, and could render in Bette. This is the sense in which the catechist, rather than the priest, should be regarded as the principal agent of religious change in Obudu, and it is a conclusion the translational literature predicts, and the Comaroffian emphasis on missionary agency tends to obscure.[86]

Indigenous naming, similarly, did not disappear under Christian pressure but persisted alongside and in creative combination with the new onomastic conventions, since Bette Christians continued and continue to bear proverbial names layered with baptismal ones.[87]

[84] Ushie, "Language as a Fossil of History," 140.

[85] St. Patrick's Missionary Society, "History"; Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 289.

[86] Landau, "Hegemony and History," 511.

[87] Betiang, "Naming and the Reconstruction of Female Identity," 377.

Resistance also took more direct forms, rooted in the same tensions that Afigbo identifies between an imported warrant-chief system and the decentralised, elder-centred order the Bette had practised before colonial contact.[88] Spear's argument supplies the general principle at work: where colonial and mission authority depended on local acceptance for its operation, the refusal of that acceptance was itself an effective instrument, and the limits of transformation in Obudu were set as much by what Bette communities declined to adopt as by what the Mission sought to introduce.[89]

None of this changes the paper's central claim that the Mission functioned as a significant agent of institutional change among the Bette. It does, however, insist that this change be understood as negotiated and contested, leaving considerable space for Bette agency and selective adaptation rather than producing the wholesale replacement of one order by another.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the Roman Catholic Mission functioned as a significant agent of colonial change among the Bette people of Obudu between 1930 and 1960, reorganising religious practice, political authority, education, and family life across the full range of Bette institutional life. Extending from Ogoja and consolidated after 1932 under the Kiltegan Fathers, the Mission operated within a colonial structure that Ogoja Province's own officials regarded as a neglected periphery, a position that paradoxically enlarged its practical influence over daily Bette life even as it constrained the resources available to pursue that influence systematically.

[88] Afigbo, *Warrant Chiefs*, 64.

[89] Spear, "Neo-Traditionalism."

The argument has been developed by testing the Obudu material against four bodies of scholarship, and the results are worth stating as findings rather than as framing. Against the conversion debate, the Obudu evidence supports no single school: Horton's intellectualist account explains the timing of religious change, Ifeka-Moller's structural account explains its distribution, and Fisher's objection explains the specifically Catholic content that neither could generate. Against the literature on colonial custom, the case supports Spear's qualified neo-traditionalism rather than the strong invention thesis, since an administration as weak as Ogoja's could not impose institutions and depended on Bette intermediaries to construct them. Against the Comaroffian account, it supports the attention to time, labour, and domestic order while declining the hegemonic claim, for the reasons Landau advances and the thinness of the European presence in Obudu reinforces. The cumulative implication is that the Bette catechist, not the European priest, was the principal agent of the transformations described here.

At the same time, this paper has resisted a framing that would reduce this transformation to simple imposition. It has read the Bette encounter with Catholicism as negotiated, one in which mission-educated intermediaries, naming practices, and communal institutions retained genuine agency even as they were substantially reshaped. The transformation is thus best understood neither as the death of an authentic precolonial order nor as its untouched survival, but as an active, creative process of institutional renegotiation.

The Bette case also carries a broader historiographical implication. Christian mission historiography in Nigeria has concentrated disproportionately on the country's major ethnic blocs, and its central claims have accordingly been calibrated to well-resourced fields with competing denominations and long mission histories. The Obudu material suggests that those claims behave differently at the periphery: weak administration amplifies rather than diminishes mission influence, the absence of denominational rivalry slows expansion while concentrating control, and a thin European presence transfers authorship of the encounter to

local intermediaries. Testing the standard accounts against minority communities is therefore not merely a matter of filling gaps in coverage but a means of establishing the conditions under which those accounts hold. Future work drawing more fully on the National Archives at Enugu, surviving mission and school records for Obudu, and oral testimony from Bette communities would considerably deepen the account offered here; this paper is best read as an invitation to, rather than a final word upon, that fuller history.

Bibliography

Abasiattai, Monday B., ed. *A History of the Cross River Region of Nigeria*. Enugu: Harris Publishers in association with University of Calabar Press, 1990.

Aboh, Romanus. "Beyond Loan Words: Bette-Bendi Ethnic Identity Construction in Liwhu Betiang's *Beneath the Rubble*." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 6, no. 8 (2014): 186-203.

Aboh, Romanus, Eyo Mensah, Idom Inyabri, and Lucy Ushuple. "Christianity and the Gendering of Personal Names among the Bette in Southeastern Nigeria." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 53, no. 1 (2023): 53-77.

Adie, Michael Ugiobe. *Groundwork of Obudu History, 1600-1960*. Calabar: UNICAL Publishing Press, 2015.

Afigbo, A. E. *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929*. London: Longman, 1972.

Ajayi, J. F. Ade. *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite*. London: Longmans, 1965.

Ayandele, E. A. *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*. London: Longmans, 1966.

Betiang, Liwhu. "Naming and the Reconstruction of Female Identity in Bette-Obudu." *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13, nos. 2-4 (2019): 357-78.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution*. Vol. 1, *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Comaroff, John L., and Jean Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution*. Vol. 2, *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Dorward, D. C. "Ethnography and Administration: A Study of Anglo-Tiv 'Working Misunderstanding.'" *Journal of African History* 15, no. 3 (1974): 457-77.

Ekechi, Felix K. *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857-1914*. London: Frank Cass, 1972.

Ekechi, Felix K. *Tradition and Transformation in Eastern Nigeria: A Sociopolitical History of Owerri and Its Hinterland, 1902-1947*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989.

Falola, Toyin, and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Fisher, Humphrey J. "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa." *Africa* 43, no. 1 (1973): 27-40.

Gray, Richard. *Black Christians and White Missionaries*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Hastings, Adrian. *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Hogan, Edmund M. *The Irish Missionary Movement: A Historical Survey, 1830-1980*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990.

Horton, Robin. "African Conversion." *Africa* 41, no. 2 (1971): 85-108.

Horton, Robin. "On the Rationality of Conversion." Pts. 1 and 2. *Africa* 45, no. 3 (1975): 219-35; 45, no. 4 (1975): 373-99.

Ifeka-Moller, Caroline. "White Power: Social-Structural Factors in Conversion to Christianity, Eastern Nigeria, 1921-1966." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8, no. 1 (1974): 55-72.

Imbua, David L. "Underpinnings of Bendi Traditional Economic Practices: Lessons and Challenges." In *Essays on the History, Language and Culture of Bendi*, edited by Joseph A. Ushie and David L. Imbua. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2011.

Isichei, Elizabeth. *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.

Kalu, Ogbu U. *The Embattled Gods: Christianization of Igboland, 1841-1991*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003.

Landau, Paul S. "Hegemony and History in Jean and John L. Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*." *Africa* 70, no. 3 (2000): 501-19.

Manton, John. "'The Lost Province': Neglect and Governance in Colonial Ogoja." *History in Africa* 35 (2008): 327-45.

Manton, John. "The Roman Catholic Mission and Leprosy Control in Colonial Ogoja Province, Nigeria, 1936-1960." DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2004.

Meyer, Birgit. *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

Ochonu, Moses E. *Colonialism by Proxy: Hausa Imperial Agents and Middle Belt Consciousness in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

Omenka, Nicholas Ibeawuchi. *The School in the Service of Evangelization: The Catholic Educational Impact in Eastern Nigeria, 1886-1950*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989.

Peel, J. D. Y. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Ranger, Terence. "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 211-62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Ranger, Terence. "The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa." In *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A. H. M. Kirk-Greene*, edited by Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan, 62-111. London: Macmillan, 1993.

Spear, Thomas. "Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa." *Journal of African History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 3-27.

St. Patrick's Missionary Society. "History." Accessed 11 September 2026. https://www.spms.org/history.

Stoddart, A. F. R. "Intelligence Report on the Bette-Bendi Clan, Obudu District, Ogoja Province." 1932. CSE 1185/4674, File No. ED8880. National Archives, Enugu.

Ushie, Joseph A. "Language as a Fossil of History: Bette-Bendi and Bantu." In *Essays on the History, Language and Culture of Bendi*, edited by Joseph A. Ushie and David L. Imbua, 139-66. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2011.

Vaughan, Olufemi. *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.