

ERINMOPE:

A HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY
OF AN EKITI CITY



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THE ORIGIN AND EXPANSION ON CHRISTIANITY IN ERINMOPE-EKITI

Bòsèdé Akande & Mattew Oyerinde

Introduction

The origin and the expansion of Christianity in Erinmope-Ekiti cannot be justifiably analysed alone without looking at Africa as a whole. Africa continent had its own indigenous religion handed over to them by their fore-fathers. The history of Christianity in Africa as a whole was pioneered by Latin Missionaries between the periods of 15th-19th centuries. Several efforts were made between 1514- 1641 by Portuguese Missionaries to evangelise Africa. They evangelized various places in African countries like Gold Coast (Ghana), Equatorial Guinea, etc. With the abolition of slave trade, Freetown in Sierra-Leone was founded as a centre for freed slaves. Through the efforts of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), an active Christian society was developed. From this community came some ex-slaves who participated in the coastal trade that brought some of them to Badagry and Abeokuta which they discovered to be their home towns. Through them the seed of Christianity was planted and it spread to other parts of Yoruba land.

Kudos should be given to the missionaries who risked their lives and worked tirelessly for planting of Churches in Nigeria and Africa at large. Some of them were: Rev. and Mrs. David Hinderer (1851), Rev. Charles Philip (1870), Rev. Birch Freeman (1837), Hope Waddell Harris (1846), Bishop Ajayi Crowther (1858), among others. The issues that surrounded the origin of Christianity in Erinmope and how Christianity came to Ekiti State as a whole call for full discussion. The torch of Christianity did not reach Ekiti until 1894 because of the sixteen years of Ekiti Parapo or Kiriji War between 1877- 1893. The war later turned to be a blessing in disguise because during the said Civil War, the Ekiti indigenes who were captives of the Ibadan merchants received the Christian faith and became converted. On their return to Ekiti, these ex-slaves sowed the seed of Christianity to different towns and villages of which Erinmope was not excluded.

Late Chief Abraham of Ile-Qbanla Oji Street in 1902 brought Christianity to Erinmope-Ekiti and spearheaded the establishment of the first Church, which was Saint John's Anglican Church in 1902. Some of his co-founders were Pa Jacob Omole (Oji), Chief Kolawole (Ibamiya), Pa Giwa Ojo (Ijewu), Pa Ezekiel Babatunde (Odo-Ikole), Chief Asogun, Pa Daniel Ajayi, Mrs Dada Faluyi, Mrs Abigael Famoye (Iloye) and others. Late Chief Abraham Ajiboye brought Christianity from Odo-Owa through Late Pa David Rotimi Babalola the father of Apostle Ayodele Babalola the founder of Christ Apostolic Church (CAC). All the Christians in Erinmope then lived at Igbo-Okò in Odo-Owa in Kwara State. They came to Erinmope every weekend for service on Sunday and they usually worshipped at Late Abraham Ajiboye's house at Oji Street, Erinmope-Ekiti. In fact, early Christians in Erinmope-Ekiti suffered and faced stiff opposition and persecution from the people who regarded Christianity as an abomination. Due to this hatred, Erinmope people disallowed them from marrying their daughters, refused to give them land to farm, they lived in isolation and that was the reason why they vacated Erinmope to Igbo-Okò in Odò-Qwa.

Expansion of Christianity in Erinmope

The emergence of Christianity in Erinmope in the year 1902 was a gradual process that led to the spread of Churches everywhere in Erinmope-Ekiti. The expansion that we are talking about today was a very difficult task that some icons who were adherents of the new faith used everything they had to pay for the price. Some of these founders such as Late Abraham Ajiboye (Anglican Church), Late Pa John Olajide (Seventh-Day Adventist Church (S.D.A), Late Pa Ojo Giwa (Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C), Late Pa Julius Towoju (Catholic Church), Snr. Mother-in-Israel, Prophetess Adesola (Cherubim and Seraphim), among others actually suffered but they refused to be discouraged. We shall now briefly examine how some of these Churches came into existence in Erinmope-Ekiti.

Saint John's Anglican Church was the first established Church in Erinmope in 1902. The Church was founded by Late Chief Abraham Ajiboye. Some of the Co-founders were: Pa Jacob Omole (Oji), Chief Kolawole (Ibamiya), Mrs Abigael Famoye (Iloye), Mrs Dada Faluyi and a host of others. Other new converts were encouraged to establish their own churches of which most of them were Anglican members before they left.

Seventh Day Adventist Church (S.D.A) was brought to Erinmope by Late Pa John Olajide in 1928 through his boss Pastor W.G. Till, a Whiteman who lived at Oke-Ogba, Otun-Ekiti. (1923-1945). Late John Olajide was working with Pastor W.G. Till as an apprentice. He introduced the Church to his friends and eventually the church was established in 1928. Some of the early Adventists were: Late Pa George Abioro (Ibamogun), Late Pa Alabi (Iworo-Aro), Late Pa Oyerinde Ajipadidun (the then Owalogbo of Ijewu) and others. Late Pa Olajide appealed to the then Owalogbo to allow them to be worshipping in his house and he agreed. His house at Ijewu was the first Church for SDA. Members worshipped under a canopy made of palm fronds on rotational basis to all members before it was organized in 1968. Some of earliest pastors were: Pastor Olomojobi, Pastor Adeogun, Pastor Alabi among others.

Christ Apostolic Church was established in Erinmope by Late Pa Ojo Giwa from Ijewu in 1930. He brought the Church to Erinmope through Apostle Ayodele Babalola from Odo-Owa. Some of the co-founders were: Late Pa John Dada (Oji), Late Pa Ajisegbede a.k.a Jesu-O-seun and others. The first Catechist of the Church was Babatope from Ilogbo-Ekiti. The Church has three parishes today.

Saint Jukes Roman Catholic Church was established through the age groups in Ibido Street in Erinmope. They organized themselves to form an association in the early 1944. They met regularly in the house of Late Oyewole Ajedi and Late Pa Abegunde Ajoloko respectively. Late Pa Julius Towaju, a native of Aye-Ekan in Kwara was a carpenter and he introduced Ibido association to start the Church. All the members of the association were converted and Catholic Church was founded in 1946 by this carpenter from Aye-Ekan.

The Holy Order of Cherubim and Cherubim Movement Church was established by Snr. Mother-in- Israel, Prophetess Adesola in 1955. She brought the Church from Omu-Aran. God sent her to deliver a message to Ijewu people, but she alone could not deliver the message thus, Pastor Michael Ayo from Ido accompanied her to the then Owalogbo's house. She delivered the message and prayed for Ijewu, the Owalogbo was impressed and he therefore gave his house for use as the Church. The first set of

people that joined the Church were: Chief James Ajetunmobi Asaolu, Late Gabriel Kolawole Asalu, Late Mother-in-Israel Oyebola Victoria, Snr. Apostle Julius Areola, Mother-in-Israel Comfort Ajisafe and others. In the year 1957, Late Special Apostle Olayemi Olalere joined the Church with others in 1958. The Church moved to Ile Adura at Oke-Oleyo in Ijewu. After the clearing of "Igbo-Awo" in August 16, 1959 the Church bought some portion of the land and erected the Church in 1965. The Church installed the first Chief in 1966 and Apostle M.O. Adeoye from Aramoko-Ekiti became the Vicar-in-charge.

Conclusion

The origin and expansion of Christianity in Erinmope-Ekiti began in the 20th Century that is 1902 precisely. Kudos should be giving to all the early Christians, i.e the indigenes of Erinmope that summoned courage and brought the light of Christianity to our town. Though, in the process, they faced different challenges that claimed lives of some of them, but today their legacies still speak for them. In Erinmope-Ekiti today, we have fifteen (15) churches of different denominations of both Orthodox and Pentecostal. In fact, the expansion of Churches in our community brought some positive and great changes to the town. Formal education brought the great light of progress in Christ to the people and till date there are more Christians in the town than adherents of other religions but they all live together peacefully.