Socio-Economic Transformations in Nigeria: The Role of Church Missionary Society (CMS) Schools and Social Stigmatization in Onitsha Province, 1904 – 1975

Mathias Chukwudi Isiani¹, Uche Uwaezuoke Okonkwo¹ and Ngozika Anthonia Obi-Ani¹*

Abstract: The missionary education curriculum had been hotly debated among African scholars. They argued that they taught subjects which subverted African indigenous knowledge and culture. Thus, in their haste to produce court clerks, interpreters and catechists, they produced alienated Africans who looked down on their culture and tradition as “barbaric and heathen.” However, at the outset of the missionary educational establishment, the pioneer students were largely stigmatized. This was attributable to two factors: first, because the children sent out to study the ways of the white man were lazy. Second, many rich farmers sent out their slave’s children to test the intention of the white men who largely subdued them through force of arms. The social ostracism suffered by these pioneers of western education in Onitsha Province is unknown in scholarship. It is this gap in scholarship that this paper intends to fill. Employing qualitative and quantitative methods of historical inquiry through the use of primary and extant secondary sources, the study interrogates the different problems and confrontations encountered by the missionaries during the British heydays in Onitsha. The paper will also examine the colonial schools and their contribution to the development of the present-day Onitsha megacity. The

ABOUT THE AUTHORS
Mathias Chukwudi Isiani is an Urban and Environmental Historian with focus on economic development, resource control and sustainable African cities and communities. He has published both in local and international journals. He is a member of Lagos Studies Association and Member, Historical Society of Nigeria.

Uche Uwaezuoke Okonkwo is a Social Historian with focus on Gender, alcohol, sexuality, religion/ Pentecostal history, animal rights and historiography. He teaches in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. His published in over 35 articles in journals and books.

Ngozika Anthonia Obi-Ani is a Social-Political Historian with focus on Gender, migrations and war issues. She teaches in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She is published in over 25 articles in journals.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
The missionary education curriculum had been hotly debated among African scholars. They argued that they taught subjects which subverted African indigenous knowledge and culture. Thus, in their haste to produce court clerks, interpreters and catechists, they produced alienated Africans who looked down on their culture and tradition as “barbaric and heathen.” However, at the outset of the missionary educational establishment, the pioneer students were largely stigmatized. The social ostracism suffered by these pioneers of western education in Onitsha Province is unknown in scholarship. Despite their molestation and intimidation from the society against these schoolboys in colonial schools, they later formed the bedrock of professional bodies in Onitsha urban city. Conclusively, the training and skills these pioneer schools’ boys received from the mission schools and Cambridge college contributed to the development of the modern Onitsha city.
cultural imperialism theory of Herbert Schiller complemented by the social exclusion theory advanced by Rene Lenoir will be appropriated for this purpose. The research concludes that the physical and social stigma experienced by these pioneers later formed the bedrock of professional bodies in Onitsha urban city today.

Subjects: Urban History; Urban History; Religious History; Social & Cultural History; Economic History; Environmental History; African History; Hinduism

Keywords: CMS; missionary schools; colonial boys; Onitsha; cultural imperialism; stigmatization

1. Introduction
The origin of missionary education in Nigeria has been traced to the sixteenth century when a Portuguese seminary was established at Sao Toma off the Nigerian coast in 1571. It was from there that the missionaries were sent to Warri in Niger Delta, Nigeria to teach the people of Itsekiri on how to read and write (Fafunwa, 1974; Ogunsoya, 1974). However, missionary education in Africa has been hotly debated just like the arguments on the abolition of the slave trade. Eurocentric writers have argued that the main thrust of the British (missionary) educational policies in Africa was to “civilize and Christianize” primitive Africans. Thus, subjects taught in missionary schools were modelled by the British government in London to train Africans who will serve effectively in the colonial project (Amucheazi, 2015). Today, African writers are contesting on the subjects and topics taught in colonial schools as a cultural imposition from the British government to the people (Ndille, 2020). These contestations were mainly from the civic-trained students who graduated from the same colonial mission schools or those who were sponsored by the missionaries to study outside their country (Animalu, 2020). To this, Dike (1975) avers that:

The African leadership which led and directed our struggle for liberation and independence were all educated in schools founded as a result of missionary enterprise. Not only in West Africa, but in East, Central, and Southern Africa, the leaders of the African revolution of the twentieth century belong to this category. They constitute a formidable array of illustrious men and women who owe their education in whole or in part to missionary enterprise. (Dike, 1975)

To African scholars, the missionary/colonial education was squarely economically motivated for the effective harnessing of the economic potentials of the colonies. The training of Africans in schools was for them to be interpreters, serve errand for transporting the palm produce from the market to the coast, and clerks for keeping records in courts (Obioma, 2020). Njoku (2014) also argued that western education was part of the instruments the colonial government in Nigeria deployed to achieve their ultimate economic goal. To further broaden this observation, Njoku further reiterated (Njoku, 2014) that:

The colonized people especially their leadership, had to have some level of Western literacy to enable them to speak the language of their colonizers … Besides, the administration needed low-level manpower to discharge clerical jobs and run other lowly errands. In particular, the colonial courts needed recorders and interpreters as well as messengers. On their own part, the Christian missions needed to ensure that their coverts and wards were able to read the scriptures. (Njoku, 2014, pp. 211-212)

However, it should be recalled that the establishment of schools in Africa was majorly one of the economic motives of the colonial missionaries who started by translating the English Bible into local languages. In Nigeria, for instance, the missionaries such as Rev. S.A. Crowther and others worked on translating the English Bible to Yoruba language, Hugh Goldie did the same on Efik, Archdeacon Dennis on Igbo while Dr. Walter Miller on Hausa language. For most missionaries, especially the CMS missionaries, proselytization of the gospel was the initial plan but had later in 1899 as advocated by Archdeacon Dennis to open up a school in Onitsha where English would be
the medium of instruction (Nduka, 1976). These schools, according to him, were to serve as the highest place where “teachers-catechists” are to be produced. Thus in 1911, “advanced education (was to) be limited to Training Colleges where candidates accepted for C.M.S (or Native Pastorate) work were received for preparation as Evangelists, Teachers and Pastors” (C.M.S E/AC/1, 1911). Western education and conversion to Christianity were inseparable as one cannot be a student without being a convert. In Onitsha Province, the CMS activities gave birth to schools such as: St. Monica’s College Ogbunike (established in 1896), Awka Training College (established in 1904), and Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha (established in 1925). The early pioneers were regarded as ohana (slaves), osu (outcasts), anye ume ngwu (lazy person) in various communities where these schools were located. Some of these students were sent out to the British/missionary schools without recourse by their owners on what could happen to them or their whereabouts (Ogbuka, 2020), this was because of their social status—near rejects of the society. They were seen as pests as people often abused them because of their strange outfit (uniforms) and change of names (Animalu, 2020). Ogugua (2020) posited that “there is no school especially during the early colonial contact in Onitsha that the students were not physically abused.” Some of the students devised the strategy of hiding their school uniform on the way to and fro their schools while some stayed in the church (Ezeani, 2020). This study, therefore, focuses on CMS schools in Onitsha Province which are located in the present Anambra State, Southeast region of Nigeria. Emphasis is placed on the various subjects and students’ stigmatization during this epoch of British rule in Nigeria.

2. Literature review

Onitsha urban is the entrepôt of Church Missionary Society in Southeast Nigeria (Figure 1). Their activities, which mainly constituted the establishments of mission churches and schools coupled with colonial infrastructure, attracted people to the city. Thus, schools were established to train young men and women to work with the missionaries and also provide the colonial government with requisite clerks and interpreters while at the same time providing catechists for the church.

---

Figure 1. Map of Southeast Nigeria showing Anambra State.

Source: Onyemechalu—Department of Archaeology and Tourism, University of Nigeria.
This paper is aimed at exploring the experiences of the pioneer students of the Church Missionary Society who were stoned, stigmatized and abused for following the “white man’s” way instead of abiding by the ways of their forefathers. To understand the early missionary educational activities in Onitsha, literature relevant to the discourse is reviewed below:

Bosah (1979) contended that the Church Missionary Society settled in Onitsha on 27 July 1857. The church was able to acquire parcels of land where they erected churches, hospitals and the famous Dennis Memorial Grammar School (DMGS) in 1925. Thus, it took the church 68 years to establish its first High School in Igboland which only trained boys who could study abroad under CMS scholarship. Thus, Odukwe (1985) and Mbojekwe (1991) argued that the missionary activities attracted colonial infrastructures in Onitsha, where the establishment of DMGS and St. Monica’s college opened waves of migration into the city. In the same vein, Obi-Ani and Isiani (2020) also identified that the establishment of colonial schools and infrastructure increased the wave of Onitsha urbanization. Thus, the sprout of slums in a different part of Onitsha has marred the original town planning. They advised that to avoid human and material catastrophe in the future, the government should revert to the town’s original plan.

Animalu (1975), Nduka (1976), and Onkonwo and Ekebusi (2018) evinced that the coming of the Church Missionary Society facilitated the growth, development, and advancement of education in the East Central States of Nigeria. The CMS at first translated the English bible into the Igbo language as a sign of their preparation for educating the local communities (Onkonwo & Ekebusi, 2018). Although it took the CMS 68 years to build the first Grammar School in Igboland (Ezekwesili, 1975), the schools became a transformative place for young people. Subjects and topics taught in CMS schools provided the requisite educated personnel for the ever-increasing activities of the church and of the colonial government (Ezekwesili, 1975; Animalu, 1975; Marsden, 2013). Thus, researchers are yet to explore the experiences of these pioneer students of CMS from their kiths and kin.

Ajoyi (1965), Ayandele (1966), Ekechi (1972), Ozigbo (1988), Gray (1990), and Kalu (2003) explored the origin of Christianity in Igboland, Nigeria. These scholars argued that there was a kind of similar practice of African Traditional Religion with that of Christianity, such as the naming ceremony and life after death. These similar practices were abrogated in favor of the new religion. They also identified that markets, schools, and churches as an offshoot of the missionary activities fostered rural-urban migration (Kalu, 2003). Schools like St. Monica College, Ogbunike (formerly known as Women Teachers College) under the leadership of Mrs. Edith Ashley Warner trained clergy wives, female children, and newly married women in handicraft, home management, weaving, and spinning. Awka Training College was strictly for training teachers, and catechist (Ayandele, 1966; Kalu, 2003). Again, speaking good English language became a sign of those who attended mission schools in Eastern Nigeria (Achebe, 2012). Nevertheless, these mission schools produced pioneer-educated elites in Igboland who later became the foremost nationalist in Nigeria as Achebe (2012) noted that schools built by Anglican protestants of the Church Mission Society, the Methodists, Baptists, and Roman Catholic Missions were an indication of British development in Eastern Nigeria. In the main, training alienated natives who began to see anything Africa as heathen. This made Afigbo (1981) to agree that the colonial missionary incursion into Igbo communities bastardized the originality of African culture, norms, and values especially through the constructions of colonial offices, schools, hospitals, seaports, roads and courts in places like Onitsha, Aba, Umuahia, and Enugu. However, their focus is more on the clashes between the two religions whereby they neglect the stigmatization of these schools’ frontiersmen in Igboland.

The triangular British mission in Africa: Churches, schools and economic imperialism were tools for the subjugation of Africa. Thus, Fanon (1963); Hopkins (1973); Chinweizu (1978), and Njoku (2014) exposed the colonial exploitation of Africa by the British through these avenues. The thrust of their arguments is that the establishment of schools and colleges in Africa was for the British authorities to train personnel that would assist them with their trade in palm oil, kernels, groundnuts, cocoa, timber, and other economic items in the hinterland (Hopkins, 1973; Njoku, 2014). The
educated elites through whom Africa gained her independence were self-centered and had fought for independence to gain offices and portfolios, thus the trained nationalist was a replica of the British overlords as the expectations of the people for gaining independence were suspended in limbo afterward (Chinweizu, 1978; Fanon, 1963; Rodney, 1972).

Outside Nigeria, scholars like Naranjo (2019) and Ndille (2020) explored the colonial subjects and curriculum of mission schools in Sudan and Southern Cameroon. They argued that the curriculum only subjected the students to learn and understand the British environment which will in a long run take off their minds from developing their society. It was a culturally induced strategy by the missionaries in taking advantage of African best brains in achieving their aim and objective. This imposition of colonial epistemology left the students to act like Europeanised Africans. Naranjo (2019) notes that:

The perception in the new government was that the educational system had been adapted from a foreign model without relation to the cultural roots of Sudan. So that most, students who completed the secondary school bore Sudanese features and British minds. (Naranjo, 2019)

The above study, though not on Onitsha, shares the same historical experiences as any other part of Africa.

However, the common indices of the above literature are that none of them examined the social stigmatization suffered by pioneer students of both mission and colonial government schools in Africa and Nigeria in particular. It is this gap in scholarship that this paper, using Onitsha as a paradigm, will fill the gap in mission school's epistemology in Africa. (Figure 2)

3. Theoretical framework

This research is hinged on the theory of cultural imperialism by Herbert Schiller in which he described cultural imperialism as the “sum of processes by which a society is brought into the modern world-system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominant center of the system” (Schiller, 1976; Sparks, 2012; Zhang, 2015). It argues that domination could be in class relations, international media flow, educational sector or even cultural system (Golding & Harris, 1997; Sparks, 2012).

Schiller’s theory of cultural imperialism reveals that certain nations or nation-states may be forced or pressured into another stronger nation mode of communication, government or culture. In Nigeria, just like in order parts of British colonialized countries, the colonies were pressured to accept British culture and were dominated by British indirect rule system.

In educating the colonial boys through the opening of technical, primary, and secondary schools in Onitsha, history as a subject was centered on European exploration and development of modern culture against the” barbaric and primitive” Africa society (Afigbo, 1981; Kalu, 2003; Njoku, 2014). Mungo Park was said to have discovered Niger River whereas Onitsha indigenes had farmed, bathed, swim, and traded in the River and its banks before the arrival of the colonial authorities (Ezeani, 2020; Nwora, 2020; Obioma, 2020). Dressings, belief system and method of eating in Onitsha were jettisoned by the Europeans who believed that Africans were still primitive and should adopt British lifestyle (Okechi, 2020). With the development of Onitsha as a trading center for transportation of raw materials from the hinterlands to the coast gave rise to taxation in Igboland, which subsequently incurred several agitations and riots as adult males in Onitsha who refused to pay were imprisoned (Obi-Ani & Isiani, 2020, p. 5). On the other hand, those who were attending the British schools were seen as traitors for exposing the Igbo culture and norms to the Whiteman (Ezeonyemalu, 2020).

However, to complements Schiller’s theory of cultural imperialism, Rene Lenoir (1974) avows that society oftentimes wholly or partly excludes individuals and groups from full participation in
the society by virtue of particular biases, poverties, locations or identities. To this, Batilwala and Veneklasen (2012) postulate that the groups identified by Lenior (1974) are “socially excluded” not based solely on economic status but on societal biases against their physical impairment. In this context, the pioneers of colonial schools in Onitsha were classified as “abused children, delinquents, and asocial persons” in the society. They were abandoned and willingly given to the colonial missionaries to train in Awka College, DMGS, and St. Monica’s college because they could not farm (Nworah, 2020). However, these early colonial school students became pacesetters and pioneers in the development of Onitsha urban city. The above theories form a nexus in
understanding the activities of CMS, stigmatization of the pioneer students in Onitsha Province within the period under study.

4. Research questions
The research questions for this study are to essentially investigate the social, economic, and cultural impacts of colonial schools in Nigeria, especially the colonial mission schools in Onitsha province, as well as demonstrating the teaching policies, curriculum, and topics in these colonial schools in Onitsha. Apart from this main question, other questions culled from the study include

(a) How did the colonial missionaries transfer knowledge to Nigerians in schools?
(b) What were the responses of Onitsha indigenes to the opening of mission schools in Onitsha?
(c) What were the experiences of the pioneers of these schools?

5. Research hypotheses
(a) Colonial mission school's curriculum and policies did not significantly affect the culture, traditions and norms of Onitsha people.
(b) Colonial mission schools did not significantly lead to the development of Onitsha city.
(c) Onitsha indigenes did not significantly stigmatize the early colonial schoolboys in Onitsha.

6. Research methodology, data collection, and design
The research interrogates the establishments of colonial mission schools in Onitsha province, its policies, the pattern of teachings, curriculum and subjects of study as well as how the establishment of these schools led to the social and economic development of Onitsha into an urban city of reckoning today. This is because Onitsha was and remains one of the British legacies that accelerated and provided employment opportunities, adequate educational facilities, thereby booming trade and commerce in Southeastern Nigeria (Eyeh, 2015; Obi-Ani & Isiani, 2020). This study further reveals that as the products of the CMS schools became part of the colonial project, wielding enormous influence on their people while it seems they held the magic wand to the language of the colonizers, schools such as Dennis Memorial Grammar School (Figure 3), Awka Training College (Figure 4), St. Monica's College Ogbunike (Figure 5) witnessed an upsurge in school enrollment. This became a major pull factor that led to the massive migration of people from their rural dwellings to Onitsha for educational and job opportunities. The study made use of ethnographic research design and field survey methodology by obtaining opinions, feelings, and attitudes from the indigenes and settlers in Onitsha on the subject matter. Both methodologies agree with Agbegbede (2013) and Obi-Ani and Isiani (2020); that survey is a means of measuring what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person thinks about a society (belief or

![Figure 3. Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha (Authors, 2020).](image-url)
primary and secondary sources of data collection were used for this research. Onitsha province, the study area is located in the present Anambra State, Southeast region of Nigeria and covers the present Onitsha city, Awuku, Ogbunike. The primary sources were collected through archival sources, memos, letters, minutes of meetings, in-depth interviews of 130 informants who are living in these aforementioned areas to seek opinions and accurate judgment on the CMS schools in Onitsha. Individuals interviewed were aged men and women from the study period, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labourers, clergy, men, teachers, as well as alumni of the schools. The interview was carried out in an informal setting where the informants expressed their feelings, attitudes and thoughts without any form of threat, molestations, intimidation, and harassment. Both researchers and informants observed 2 meters of social and physical distance, wearing face masks and adhered strictly to the World Health Organization (WHO) and Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) guidelines on COVID-19. In addition to the above, 150 questionnaires were used and 120 were used to validate the research as 30 questionnaires were not returned from the informants.

The secondary sources used for this research include published books, online sources, unpublished project reports, thesis and dissertations, journal articles, magazines and newspapers of the study period. Content and descriptive techniques such as frequencies and percentages were used to obtain and analyse the data with the assistance of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) tool.
The research design used in the study includes case study design, descriptive design and survey design (Agbegbedia, 2013; Grunow, 1995; Obi-ANI & Isiani, 2020; Vaus, 2002). In analyzing these designs, the independent variables were sourced through the qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative techniques of the research describe the researches as being active participants in the research. The researchers had lived in Onitsha and also attended colonial mission schools in Onitsha. The survey design was chosen to reach out to vast numbers of those living in Onitsha and accommodate the majority of the inhabitants who were willing to answer questions. Informants were permitted to withdraw their statements or names if they found it uncomfortable. Its descriptive approach was to accommodate the divergent views and feelings among the populace in the study areas which would help the researchers in understanding why Onitsha indigenes or migrants stigmatized the early colonial school students in some selected mission schools in Onitsha during the epoch of this study.

7. Discussions—Pioneer students and social stigmatization in Onitsha Province

The laws of the British administrators spurred the British missionaries, explorers, and merchants to farther their movement into the hinterlands. The conquistadors made Africans to accept British culture, government, means of exchange and on a large scale her method of worship and education. One of the aims of the indigenous people was to learn the “secrets” of the White man’s power and knowledge through acquiring his techniques and methods of learning (Nduka, 1976). Before attending mission schools, the indigenous people must at first become Christians which was the main objective of the colonial missionaries in Onitsha since 1857 (Okeke, 2003). Nduka (1976) observed that all over Igbo-land the missionaries went with zeal for the opening of churches and of course schools. Through items like gins, clothes, and drugs, the missionaries were able to lure the local peasants into school and churches (C.M.S. G3/A3/0: Memorandum on Education). Those who accepted the gifts mopped up their children into mission schools to serve as errand boys, interpreters, and lay readers to the missionaries. Basically, in Onitsha, the first set of colonial boys in mission schools were regarded as slaves or outcasts and lazy children who could not farm.

These pioneer students were humiliated, ostracized and physically stigmatized by their loved ones as they believed that they were not able to uphold the African culture of farming and trade. Girls who attended St. Monica’s college were either orphans or maidservants (Nworah, 2020). An informant shared his experience as a student of Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha thus:

The first set of colonial boys in DMGS was heavily stigmatized and was occasionally called *aturu ocha ndi ocha*² because of their sparkling white shorts and white shirts which was different from African dressing. (Animalu, 2020)

Another informant avows “that there was never a time, we didn’t hide our clothes when going back from school because people always come out to look and laugh at us” (Ogbuka, 2020). This means that the British colonial missionaries in Onitsha maximize the people’s ignorance to indoctrinate the students further on the evil of their tradition by teaching them British tradition which upholds individual freedom and free will. This could also be a part of the reasons the postcolonial teachers from CMS schools maintained a British-like approach to teaching and its curriculum as they pictured the African system as harsh and inhuman. The content of postcolonial teachers who benefitted from CMS schools adds that:

But by the late 1940s and early 1950s after the Second World War, the wind of change got a grip of those who did not go to school in Onitsha especially attending DMGS … some of the DMGS graduates were sent to Cambridge to further their studies; some were sent to Awka Training College to complete their pastoral training; some were retained in DMGS as teachers … As we (including me) walked down Old and New Market Road Onitsha, children, adults called us *umu ogalanya*² because they have understood that the CMS missionaries meant well for the Igbo through education. (Amucheazi, 2015)
Another group of beneficiaries of the CMS school in Onitsha demonstrates how the stigmatization of students in Onitsha later turned around to be a gift against the so-called cultural imposition of colonial authorities to the indigenous people. They reveal that:

Those set of colonial boys in CMS schools at Awka Training College and DMGS, Onitsha upon graduation from Standard VII travelled to England on colonial mission grants . . . they came back and became the founding elites in Onitsha and Nigeria. These include Kenneth O. Dike, the first indigenous Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan and Professor of African History; Edmund Ekwulugo, the first Onitsha Chief Magistrate; C.O. Odilakosa, a well-known agriculturalist; Alfred Bovi, an educationist, Theophilus R. Yirenki, a Pharmacist; Daniel Ouwugbuzia, Customs Officer, Dr. Walter Eze, Medical Doctor, A.O. Animalu, International Physicist, Professor Ezeilo, Professor of Mathematics and Vice-Chancellor University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Emmanuel Ifeajuna, the first Nigerian international high jumper and Commonwealth gold medalist. (Focus Group Discussion, 2020)

To further consolidate the impact of the missionaries on this first set of students, Animalu (1975) an alumnus of DMGS, Onitsha noted that “in the field of educational development in Onitsha, DMGS missionary founders did not disappoint in establishing the school to liberate mankind from its uncivilized nature of stigmatization and occasional ostracization.” Dike (1975) further avows that:

In the field of secondary education, Eastern Nigeria owes a great debt to the pioneering mission of the DMGS. Many young men went out from her to teach in the mission schools. Some of the senior staff and old boys of the DMGS continually moved out to aid the growth of new secondary schools like Okrika Grammar School; St. Augustine’s Grammar School, Nkwerre; Oraukwu Grammar School; Dirabi Memorial Grammar School, Bori Ogoni; Anglican Grammar School and Nsukka to mention a few had as their first principals, former senior staff or old boys of the DMGS. (Dike, 1975)

The efforts of the missionaries towards the development of Black Africa are dispassionately assessed, especially from African scholars who had not refuted the stigmatization and humiliation of the pioneer pupils in Onitsha (Animalu, 1975). It would be seen that the mission contributions to the spiritual, educational and material development of Onitsha are not negligible and may 1 day be seen by future historians to constitute the greatest heritage of the century with the Whiteman.

8. British educational policy, curriculum, and patterns of teaching in Onitsha Province

Eurocentric writers have argued that the British educational policies in Africa were a positive mission to “civilise” the people (Kipling, 1962). Over the years, the Afrocenric writers tagged the era of British occupation as “economic imperialism” which had cultural effects on the colonized. British educational policy, as well as its curriculum, accordingly emanated from the seat of colonial office and was strictly forced on the local people, most especially those living within the purview of colonial settlements. Onitsha was one of such places owing to its proximity to the River Niger (Animalu, 2020).

In Nigeria, the memoranda and ordinances on education were prepared in Lagos, which was then the British headquarters. Capturing the details of the memorandum as prepared by the colonial office, Ndille (2020) reveals that:

It was the common practice for the colonial office to draw up an initial memorandum on a subject and then to circulate it to the respective colonial governments for comments. Their responses were then incorporated, where appropriate in a revised memorandum which was then printed for general or restricted distribution. Each colonial territory was then to use the general principles to establish legislative for education in their territory. (Ndille, 2020)

Furthermore, the 1925 Memorandum of Education and the 1926 Nigerian Education Ordinance defined the roles of the British colonial schools in Nigeria as its constitutions, architectural designs and curriculum must have the outlook of those who control the affairs of the people (Ndille, 2020).
For instance, DMGS was and still is very imposing, with its red earth-brick, limestone-and-wood colonial architecture accentuated by Doric columns (Achebe, 2012).

In Southern Cameroons, then under Nigerian colonial administration, the 1926 ordinance proposed a uniform educational system for native administration and mission schools. This decision of the government was aimed to inspect, supervise and model schools in local content thereby through this medium promoting local languages in schools (Colonial Office, 1925). However, this was not the case with Onitsha’s educational policy as students were taught European histories against her “primitive, fetish, and barbaric culture” in classrooms (Animalu, 2020). Songs sung at the assembly ground were praising the British authorities for winning the First World War (Ezeani, 2020). Thus, these schools in Onitsha province were modelled in British style and have remained a replica of the British school system long after independence. As Kwabena (2006) observed that Eurocentrism undermined the African identity and personality which have repudiated the traditional African way of life. School uniforms were designed in the British model, especially at DMGS, where white shorts and shirts represented purity as Jesus Christ projected as to be of White origin (Animalu, 2020).

The CMS curriculum in Onitsha was a carbon copy of the British schools in Europe. One would have expected the introduction of history, geography, poetry, and other subjects would teach significant topics on how Onitsha indigenes would advance and develop just like the transformation going on in Europe through the industrial revolution but the curriculum differs (Kipling, 1962). The curriculum of the mission schools was centered on subjects like geography, Latin, history, literature, songs (Focus Group Discussion, 2020). In line with this observation, J.N. Cheethan reports states that:

In conformity with the policy adopted by the missionaries between 1905 and 1915, three types of schools were in existence: (i) “bush” schools – the unrecognized efforts of catechists; (ii) “village” schools reading up to Standard II (the predominant type of educational institution) and (iii) “central” schools, reading up to Standard VII. (C.M.S. G3/A3/0: Memo of interview with Mr. J.N. Cheethan)

To set up these missions or central schools, the Educational Committee of the Parent Committee in 1914 powered and resolved the curriculum suitable for the schools at Onitsha which will model the students in a pattern suitable for the missionaries. From the archival reports, the curriculum for mission schools in Onitsha was to be as follows:

**Obligatory**

Colloquial English, Reading, Elementary Grammar, Literature, Writing, Dictation and Composition; Arithmetic; Hygiene and Sanitation, Drawing, Shorthand; Geography; History, preferably General History of the World rather than English History; Natural Science; Singing, Drilling and Physical Exercise.

**Optional**

Mensuration; Latin; French or German; Algebra, Geometry; Typewriting (C.M.S. G3/A3/0: Minutes of Executive Committee, January, 1912).

It is obvious from the above that building central schools and the curriculum by the missionaries were patterned (Plans for Advance, C.M.S, 1913; Ogbuka, 2020).

Subjects such as history and geography were mostly streamlined with British topics. Topics such as Lander Brothers and Mungo Park discovered River Niger were overemphasized (Animalu, 2020). This was an indication of cultural imperialism as the people living on the banks of the River in Onitsha had been cultivating, bathing, fishing and swimming in the River Niger before the arrival of Mungo Park. Topics taught in African history only picture Africans as primitive and have a barbaric
culture and fetish religious belief system. Teachers, including the principals and headteachers, would narrate that “African students look like the Devil but the only difference was that we have got no tail and two horns” (Animalu, 2020). Classes like Class IV or V were taught the “glorious impact” of Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce, Christopher Columbus, Mary Slessor, Lord Fredrick Lugard, Ralph Moor to Africans (Afocha, 2010). The approved books used in CMS schools in Onitsha as documented in the Minutes of the Executive Committee that from January 1911 all the CMS schools in Onitsha will be using the following books:

Readers: (1) Indian Readers (to be adapted for use in Africa)
(2) Tropical Readers
English Grammar & (1) Davidson & Alcock’s Grammars
Composition: (2) McDougall’s “Line upon Line”
Geography: Lawson’s Geographical Series
English History: Ransom’s Elementary English History
Hygiene: Dr. Strahan’s Hygiene (C.M.S. G3/A3/0: Minutes of Executive Committee, February, 1910).

The reasons adduced by the missionaries were to spread good tidings, to free Africa from evil practices like idol worship, to end taboos such as the killing of twins, to civilize Africa, to end the slave trade, to redeem Africans from primitivism and educate the Africans (File 343, 1935).

Topics taught in geography included the Tropical forests, Savannah forest, Mediterranean, Temperate forest, Indian hot forests and how the White man has affected the lives of inhabitants’ livings in these areas. African geography was viewed only from the aspect of hunter-gather “just as we were taught that the Bantus and Khoi-Khoi in South Africa were looking like apes until the Dutch explorers came to their rescue” (Animalu, 2020). This was also clear evidence of cultural imperialism as the Bantus and Khoi-Khoi were communally living together, practicing a democratic system of government (kingship ruling), planting and harvesting of crops, rearing of animals especially elephants and had engaged in long-distance trade with her neighbours before the arrival of the Dutch East Indian Company in 1652. Thus, the temporary and later permanent occupation and settlement of the Dutch and Britain government shifted the already peaceful human co-existence among the Bantus and Khoi-Khoi to slaves, mining gold, diamond and steel for the economic wealth of the British government in Transvaal and the Orange Free States until her independence in 1994.

In religious studies, the topics were culled from the Bible and were narrated to the Africans to jettison their belief system in favour of the Europeans. The main thrust of CMS schools in teaching religious studies was to “prepare the students in the way of Christ who would redeem them from the sins of their fathers through salvation and redemption through the blood of Christ” (Ezeani, 2020). If one believes in Christ, one is saved from going to hell fire where the unrighteous Africans were predestined to be (Animalu, 2020). The Roman Catholic Missions that followed the CMS pattern in Onitsha through the opening of Christ the King College (CKC) in 1939 and St. Charles College Onitsha in 1928 strictly gave her students “rosary or crucifix of Christ” as a sign of repentance and weapon to fight African religious practices (Nworah, 2020). Pictures brought to the classroom by teachers of religious studies had “Angel Michael as a White Man with a sword killing the Devil which was depicted in Black, often without clothes having ram-like horns and monkey-like tail and the ruthless, tricky disposition of a propagator of sin and destroyer of soul (Animalu, 1975; Ezeani, 2020; Ndille, 2020). Mission-trained boys and girls were baptized in schools or the church and warned not to participate in any traditional festivals or would be given a heavy punishment at school (Amucheazi, 2018).

This same situation was demonstrated in subjects like literature where novels, poetry and prose read were from authors like Shakespeare, Dickens, D.H. Lawrence, and Shaw. In English Grammar, comprehension was only on the British environment, British wars, and its exploration in Asia and Africa. An informant reveals that in DMGS, “we were taught how to write in Latin and understand
Shakespearian English” (Animalu, 2020). These picture the act of cultural imposition of the colonial authorities to Africans through instilling European’s superiority of languages into Africans who could be raised to be like the British and educate their offsprings in British pattern.

The arguments here are that the curriculum did not attempt to adopt the African way of life; rather, it imposed its epistemology to the students who transferred the same to subsequent generations. Teachers of history, to date, also regard African precolonial histories as primitive and fetish, thus sustaining the teachings and topics of the colonial missionaries (Nworah, 2020). Bash (2018) argues that the British colonial education system was purposefully designed to prepare future leaders by instilling in them those values which were to provide the underpinning for an imperialist consciousness. This also supports the lines of Hobson in Ashcroft et al. (2007) that the curriculum exported to Africa through British merchants and missionaries was a “natural overflow of nationality.” This would conclude the fact that British educational policies were part of the British imperialism and exploitation of African human resources through the pressured and forced topics. The documents and resolutions of the education board in Onitsha avers that the missionaries had no regard for sustaining the traditions of Onitsha in schools. Summarizing, the imperial impact of colonial schools in Africa, Aka (2002) upheld that:

It was outrageous to teach monstrous superstitious, false history … (the schools in British colonial territories) must continue teaching English language, literature, history, geography, culture and values. This is the only way for native territories to enter the modern world by absorbing those British cultural riches and by being assimilated insofar as it was possible to English values. (Aka, 2002, p. 66)

The adaptation of British curriculum is subject to no change in Onitsha because the trained students from these missions in Onitsha, Ogbunike, and Awka had after independence opened and established other CMS schools in Onitsha such include Anglican Girl’s Grammar School Onitsha in 1963, Patterson Memorial Grammar School Onitsha, St. Christopher’s Junior Seminary 3–3, Onitsha, Holy Innocents Juniorate Convent, Nkpor, All Saints Primary School, Onitsha, Holy Cross Primary and Secondary School, Onitsha in British pattern and model of teaching and instruction.

9. Results and presentation of findings—Percentage and frequencies of data
This study was carried out in a bid to unveil the impacts of colonial missionaries, cultural imperialism, and social stigmatization on pioneer students of colonial/missionary schools. Table 1 shows an analysis of the data collected. Three hypotheses were generated through the research questions and tested to analyse the subject of this study. The results of the study are organized in a tabular form to show the frequency derived from the responses to questionnaires shared.

| Table 1. Descriptive statistics | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---------------------------------|------|----------------|---|
| Colonial Curriculum             | 2.30 | 1.892          | 120 |
| Mission Schools                 | 2.99 | 1.907          | 120 |
| Stigmatization                  | 2.38 | 2.205          | 120 |
| Onitsha Province                | 2.50 | 1.928          | 120 |

From Table 2 above, it is observed that the colonial curriculum in Onitsha obtained a mean of 2.30 and a standard deviation of 1.892. Mission schools in Onitsha obtained a mean of 2.99 and a standard deviation of 1.907. Stigmatization of colonial students also obtained a mean of 2.38 and a standard deviation of 2.205. Nevertheless, the 120 persons who were interviewed for and against missionaries opening of schools and the stigmatization of colonial students in Onitsha
|                | Colonial Curriculum | Mission Schools | Stigmatization | Onitsha Province |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Colonial Curriculum | Pearson Correlation | 1               | .286<sup>a</sup> | −.212            | −.153            |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                 | .010           | .049             | .021             |
|                 | N                   | 120             | 120            | 120              | 120              |
| Mission Schools | Pearson Correlation | .286<sup>a</sup> | 1              | .074             | −.173            |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .040            |                | 1.125            | 1.031            |
|                 | N                   | 120             | 120            | 120              | 120              |
| Stigmatization | Pearson Correlation | −.212           | .074           | 1                | .057             |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .049            | 4.15           | 1                | .033             |
|                 | N                   | 120             | 120            | 120              | 120              |
| Onitsha Province| Pearson Correlation | −.153           | −.173          | .057             | 1                |
|                 | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .061            | .031           | .073             |                  |
|                 | N                   | 120             | 120            | 120              | 120              |

<sup>a</sup>Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  

Isiani et al., Cogent Arts & Humanities (2021), 8:1922154  
https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2021.1922154
Province obtained a mean of 2.50 and a standard deviation of 1.928. From the foregoing analysis, a result is accepted when it is more than 0.5 and is rejected when it is less than 0.5.

From the table, three independent variables and one dependent variable were tested to get the significant relationship between missionaries and Onitsha Province. The above table will be discussed in the findings below.

10. Discussion of findings and results of data presentations
Whenever the table value is less than the calculated value in statistical analysis, the hypotheses are to be rejected but when it is greater, the hypotheses are to be accepted. The findings of this research work were upheld, as the first and third hypotheses were rejected, while the second hypotheses were accepted. The first hypotheses which state that “colonial mission school's curriculum and policies did not significantly affect the culture, traditions and norms of Onitsha people” were rejected because the results show that the significant level was 0.021 which is less than 0.05 (.021 < .05). This shows that the colonial curriculum significantly affected the indigenous culture in Onitsha. What this evinces is that there was a shift in culture through the western policies in schools in Onitsha Province.

The second hypothesis which state that “colonial mission schools did not significantly lead to the development of Onitsha city” was rejected because the result shows that the significant level was 1.031 which is greater than .05 (1.031 > .05). This shows that colonial schools significantly transformed the once traditional society into an urban centre. The advancement of Onitsha is based on trained students from colonial mission schools. The third hypothesis, which states that “Onitsha indigenes did not significantly stigmatize the early colonial schoolboys in Onitsha,” was rejected because the result shows that the significant level was .033 which is less than .05 (.033 < .05). This result demonstrated that Onitsha colonial boys were stigmatized by the indigenous people during the period of study. This served as the opportunity the colonial missionaries maximized in training the students in a British-like manner.

11. Conclusion
The study has demonstrated the contributions of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to the Onitsha Province. One of the recent developments in the study of modern African history is the reappraisal of the role of the Christian missions in the European conquest and colonization of Black Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries. Beginning with the Portuguese advent in the 15th century, history is replete with examples of repeated efforts by the Christian churches of Europe to Christianize Africa and to bequeath to Africans the Gospel of Christ and what they considered the “fruits of Western Civilisation.” With the Christianization of the Onitsha Province, the colonial authorities established schools for the training of African boys mainly for interpreters, errand boys, and court clerks. However, due to the social strata of the Igbo people, the society regarded the pioneer school boys as slaves, outcasts, lazy persons, and those who could not upload the African culture. Parents and relatives were willing to give out any person whom they found lazy. Some of these students were trained at Awka Training College as catchiest and at Dennis Memorial Grammar School as teachers and skilled professionals who could travel to Cambridge after the high schools. The pioneer boys in Onitsha were seen as pests as people often abuse them because of their uniforms and white man’s name. Some were stoned and abused on the road for accepting the traditions of the colonial authorities. Despite these molestation and intimidation from the society against these schoolboys in colonial schools, they later became the founding professional bodies that transformed the societal norms and values of the people. The training and skills these pioneer schools' boys received from the mission schools and Cambridge college contributed to the development of the modern Onitsha city.
Acknowledgements
The outcome of this study forms a part of the planning for the centenary anniversary of Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha. We appreciate the assistance of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka Librarians, and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) archives.

Funding
The authors received no direct funding for this research.

Author details
Mathias Chukwudi Isiani(1)
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2202-6634
Uche Uwaesuoke Okonkwo(2)
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8551-6625
Ngozika Anthonia Obi-Ani(3)
E-mail: ngozika.obiani@unn.edu.ng
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0219-7460
1 Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

Citation information
Cite this article as: Socio-Economic Transformations in Nigeria: The Role of Church Missionary Society (CMS) Schools and Social Stigmatization in Onitsha Province, 1904 – 1975, Mathias Chukwudi Isiani, Uche Uwaesuoke Okonkwo & Ngozika Anthonia Obi-Ani, Cogent Arts & Humanities (2021), 8: 1922154.

Notes
1. Aturu ocha ndi ocha literally means White man’s sheep. The students in DMGS were seen as followers of colonial missionaries without destination.
2. Umu Ogáldanya literally means rich children. The students of DMGS were called rich children for attending the prestigious Grammar School.

References
Achebe, C. (2012). There was a country: A personal history of Biafra. Penguin Group.
Afigbo, A. E. (1981). Ropes of sand: Studies in Igbo history and culture. University of Nigeria, Press.
Afocha, O. (2010). Trader. Personal communication, 10th December.
Agbegbedia, A. O. (2013). An assessment of the methods of managing conflicts between pastoralist and farmers in Benue State, Nigeria. Ph.D. Dissertation University of Ibadan.
Ayaij, J. F. (1965). Christian missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The making of an Elite. Longman.
Aka, E. A. (2002). The British Southern Cameroons, 1922 – 1961: A study in colonialism and underdevelopment. Inkemnji Tech.
Amucheze, E. (2015). The Dengramite: Unveiling the Giant. Snoop Press.
Amucheze, E. (2018). Professor, personal communication, 25th September.
Animalu, A. O. E. (1975). The Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha: Golden Jubilee Album. Cudagographics.
Animalu, A. O. E. (2020). Professor, personal communication, 10th June.
Ashcroft, B., Griffith, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). Postcolonial studies: The key concepts. Routledge.
Ayandele, E. A. (1966). The Missionary impact on modern Nigeria, 1842 – 1914: A political and social analysis. Longman.

Bash, L. (2019). Changing patterns of imperialism and education: The United Kingdom. Revista Espanola de Educacion Comparada, 31(1), 111–129. https://doi.org/10.5944/reec.31.2018.21590

Batilwala, S., & Veneklasen, L. (2012). Social exclusion and access to resources: Expanding our analytical framework.
Bosah, S. I. (1979). Groundwork of the history and culture of Onitsha. np.
C.M.S/EAC/1: Report of educational sub-committee presented to executive committee, January/February, 1911.
C.M.S. G3/A3/0: Memorandum on education for the C.M.S. Education Committee, 9 May, 1907.
C.M.S. G3/A3/0: Minutes of executive committee, February, 1916.
C.M.S. G3/A3/0: Memo of interview with Mr. J.N. Cheethorn, 22 April, 1914a.
C.M.S. G3/A3/0: Minutes of educational committee, 25 June, 1914b.

Chinweizu, (1978). The West and the rest of Us. NOK publishers.

Colonial Office. (1923). Memorandum of education policy in British tropical Africa. Her Majesty’s Stationery Office.
Dike, K. O. (1973). DMGS: A heritage from the Niger mission. In A. O. E. Animalu (Ed.), The Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha: Golden Jubilee album (pp. 70–80). Cudagographics.
Ekechi, F. K. (1972). Missionary enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857–1814. Frank Class.
Eyeh, E. T. (2015). History of Igbo enterprisers in Kanu, 1960-2007. Ph.D. Dissertation University of Nigeria.
Ezeani, N. (2020). Retired civil servant, personal communication, 14th July.
Ezekwesili, E. C. (1975). A history of the Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha. In A. O. E. Animalu (Ed.), The Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha: Golden Jubilee Album (pp. 45–65). Cudagographics.
Ezeonyemalu, F. (2020). Trader, personal communication, 11th June.
Fafunwa, A. B. (1974). History of education in Nigeria. NPS Educational Publishers.
Fanon, F. (1963). The wretched of the earth. Penguin Books.
Golding, P., & Harris, P. (eds). (1997). Beyond cultural imperialism: Globalization, communication and the new international order. SAGE.
Gray, R. (1990). Black Christians and white missionaries. Yale University Press.
Grunow, W. B. (1995). The Research Design in Organization Studies: Problems and Prospects. Organization Science, 6(1), 93–113. https://doi.org/10.1287/orc6.1.93
Hopkins, A. G. (1973). An economic history of West Africa. Longman Inc.
Kalu, O. (2003). The embattled gods: Christianization of Igboland. 1841-1991. Africa World Press.
Kipling, R. (1962). The white man’s burden. In T. S. Eliot (Ed.), A choice of kipling verse (pp. 101–145). Anchor.
Kwabena, O. A. (2006). The British and curriculum development in West Africa: A historical discourse. International Review of Education, 52(5), 409–423. http://www.doi.org/10.1007/s11159-006-9001-4
Lenoir, R. (1974). Les Exclus: un français sur dix. Paris. Editions du Seuil.
Marsden, W. (2013). The School Textbook: History, Geography and Social Studies. Routledge.
Mbajekwe, P. (1991). “Trade and economy of Onitsha, 1900 – 1960”. MA Thesis University of Lagos.
Naranjo, J. C. (2019). The development of Catholic Schools in the Republic of Sudan. HSE: Social and Educational History, 8(1), 83–111. http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/hse.2019.3611
Ndile, R. (2020). Schools with invisible fences in the British Southern Cameroons, 1916-1961: Colonial curriculum and the ’other’ side of modernist thinking. Third World Quarterly, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1744431
Nduka, O. (1976). Background to the foundation of Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha. Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 8(3), 69–92.
Njoku, O. (2014). Economic history of Nigeria, 19th-21st centuries. Great Ap Express.
Nworaoh, S. (2020). Artisan, personal communication, 11th June.
Obi-Ani, N. A., & Isiani, M. C. (2020). Urbanization in Nigeria: The Onitsha experience. Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning, 104(104), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102744
Obioma, I. (2020). Trader, personal communication 10th May
Odokwe, M. E. (1985). The Ozo title in Onitsha: A brief historical study. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Nigeria.
Ogbuka, S. (2020), Artisan, personal communication, 11th June.
Ogugua, V. (2020). Professor, personal communication, 10th June.
Ogunsola, A. F. (1974). Legislation and education in Northern Nigeria. University Press.
Okechi, S. (2020). Farmer. Personal communication, 10th March.
Okeke, E. (2003). A political and administrative history of Onitsha, 1917-1970. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Nigeria.
Okonkwo, U. U., & Ekebusi, C. C. (eds). (2018). A centenary of Archdeacon T.J. Dennis Union Igbo. Gregory University Press.
Ozigbo, I. R. A. (1988). Roman Catholicism in Southeastern Nigeria, 1885-1930: A study of Colonial evangelism. Etukokwu Press.
Plans for Advance. (1913), chapter IV. C.M.S.
Rodney, W. (1972). How Europe underdeveloped Africa. Howard University Press.
Schiller, H. (1976). Communication and cultural domination. International Arts and Sciences Press.
Sparks, C. (2012). Media and cultural imperialism reconsidered. Chinese Journal of Communication, 5(3), 281-299. https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2012.701417
Vaus, D. (2002). Surveys in social research (5th edition). Routledge Press.
Zhang, Y. J. (2015). China’s quest for soft power: A comparative study of Chinese film and online gaming industries. MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University.