

# **An Ethnographical Study of the Ika People Group: Missiological Approaches for Witnessing the Gospel in Delta State, Nigeria.**

**Chinedu Evidence Ugbedinma, Ph.D.**

---

## **Abstract**

This research undergoes ethnographical study of the Ika People group of Delta State, Nigeria. Exploring missiological approaches relevant to witnessing the gospel of Christ to them. It is observed that Ika people understand God's existence in their religious worldview prior to the emergence of Christianity. The study adopted a historical, descriptive method. Primary and secondary sources were used to collect data. Primary sources are archival materials. The observation method was used to elicit relevant information for the study. Furthermore, interviews were also conducted. It investigated Ika's people group geographical location worldview, tracing the origin of the name beliefs and practices. The research provides missiological approaches to witnessing the gospel among the Ika people group. To enhance a practical, efficient, lasting impact that will help mission agencies, missionaries, gospel ministers, and anthropologists reach them. Findings revealed that for effective witnessing of the gospel, missionaries should be rooted in the knowledge of the word, speak and understand Ika language, discipleship cum discipline approach, authentic contextualization of the gospel, power evangelism, book publications, and translating to Ika language, relational missions approach, and empowerment program and sponsorship. The study recommends that missionaries and ministers representing Christ in Ika land should not compromise their faith for material gain.

**Keywords:** Ethnographical, Ika People, Missiological Approaches, gospel witnessing.

## **Introduction**

Throughout history, Christians have lived in particular cultural contexts, varying degrees through acceptance and rejection. Not considering a positive or negative attitude toward their surrounding culture, Christians must respond to their immediate context to spread the Gospel to reach the people group. Therefore, this study examines the ethnographical study of the Ika people of Delta State, Nigeria. People's ways of life regarding religion, worldview, value system, norms, feelings, songs, and dress greatly influence how they respond to the Gospel.

However, the burden of the researcher is based on his observation as a one born and brought up in Ika land over three decades. Despite the modernization, civilization cum enlightenment through Christianity in the Ika nation, some still hold to a high esteem African traditional beliefs and practices resulting in an un-Christianized lifestyle, such as witchcraft, materialism, commercialization of the Gospel, and cultism. In an interview, prominent Ika minister Joseph Igbodo lamented that native doctors have taken over the Altar of God, deceiving people by pursuing vain things instead of spreading the Gospel of Christ.<sup>407</sup>

Micheal affirms that the ideology of the clergy more importantly of the Pentecostal brand, has contributed to the uncritical character of the church, with lack of cross-checking the teachings, theologies of their churches and their denominational beliefs.<sup>408</sup> This challenges the land and

---

<sup>407</sup> Joseph Igbodo, *Interviewed by Ika Weekly Newspaper* on December 7th, 2016, retrieved from Facebook 23rd, 2025

<sup>408</sup> Matthew Micheal, *Christianity and the Church in Africa* In African Public Theology Eds, Sunday Bobai Agang , Dion A. Foster and H. Jurgens Hendriks HippoBooks Africa Christian Textbook Bukuru Nigeria 2020), 372.

Christian faith. A clear understanding of the people of Ika nations would help profess lasting missiological approaches to help re-evangelize them with the Gospel that this research proposes.

### **Conceptualizing the Gospel**

The gospel originates “in Christ before the foundation of the world.” This was contained in the “promise” God made before the foundation of the world. (Tit. 1:2) The “gospel,” the “good news” or “good tidings,” is the declared fulfillment of that promise.<sup>409</sup>The Greek word “*evangelion*” is translated as “gospel” in the King James Version. This word, together with its rendering of “good tidings,” “glad tidings,” and “preach the gospel,” occurs some one hundred and eight times in the New Testament, none of which intimate anything less than “finished redemption” in Christ.<sup>410</sup> Ugbedinma posits that gospel is to be preached to all people and must be understood as the fulfillment of all people’s expectation of God’s divine intervention as the answer to the needs of humanity and nature across the universe in every time and space.<sup>411</sup>In the context of this study, gospel is witnessing Christ to the people of Ika contextually in a way manner that it will not lose its relevance.

### **Geographical Location of the Ika People Group**

Geographically, the Ika dialect people are located northwest of Delta State of Nigeria. They share boundaries and language in the west with the Edo speakers, in the north with the Ishan speakers, in the East with the Aniocha tongue speakers, and in the south with the Ukwuani speakers. Politically, Ika speakers

---

<sup>409</sup> <https://media.thegospelcoalition.org/static-blogs/trevin-wax/files/2009/09/Gospel-Definitions.pdf> Accessed 23rd of June 2025

<sup>410</sup> Ibid,

<sup>411</sup> Chinedu Evidence Ugbedinma, “Impacts of Contextualizing the Gospel on African Christianity” *Journal of Religious and Culture (JORAC Uniport)*, Vol 22, No 1 2022), 166

are mostly found in two local government areas, Ika North East and Ika South local government areas, produced in 1991 from a single Ika Local Government Area in Delta State. Ika South and Ika North East local government areas inhabit a land area of 117.45 square kilometers with a total populace of about 240,000 people”.<sup>412</sup> Other Ika-speaking people support outside the Ika Northeast and Ika South local government areas. The precise population of speakers of the Ika language or those with Ika as their mother tongue is not identified since this information was not included in the 1991 census result. Ika people do not have any shared physical uniqueness that is distinctive from other ethnic or language groups in Delta State.

In the Ika nation, there are some Ika language-speaking areas (i.e. Igbanke) outside these two local government areas.<sup>413</sup> The Ika people are made up of eleven self-governing groups, which the writer will refer to as clans and a metropolitan area. All eleven Ika clans speak a general language, the Ika language, with a collection of dialects belonging to the Igbo group. There are “no significant differences between these dialects but mainly phonological and lexical variation.”<sup>414</sup> The Igbo and Edo people greatly influenced the culture of the Ika people. The Igbo influence is evident, which may be due to the strong missionary and commercial role of the Igbo people, whose presence and impact were seriously and deeply felt among Ndiowa (part of the Ika people). The Edo influence had to do with the language and culture.<sup>415</sup>

---

<sup>412</sup> <https://deltastate.gov.ng/ikapeople> Accessed on March 26, 2022

<sup>413</sup> <http://www.nairaland.com/251901/ika-people> Accessed on March 26, 2022

<sup>414</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ika\\_North\\_](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ika_North_) Accessed on March 26, 2022.

<sup>415</sup> Blessing Uenoson Okoh, “Contextualizing Ingratitude in Luke 17:12 – 18 Among the Members of Pentecostal Churches in Ika Land” *NIU Journal of Social Sciences Nexus International University* ISSN: 3007-1682; 9(2): 2023), 290

## **Ika People Origin, Structured, Worldview, Beliefs and Practices**

Ika is an ethnic group in the Delta State of Nigeria. The area is made up of eleven major clans. Ika, Owa, Ute-OKpu, Abavo, Umunede, Idumuesah, Igbodo, Otolokpo, Akumazi, Ute-Ogbeje and Mbiri. Ika lies some 47 kilometers west of Asaba, the center of Delta State's operations. Ika has some common borders with her neighbors: the east Aniocha North and Aniocha South Local Government Areas, the North and West Edo State, and the South Ndokwa and Ukwuani Local Government Areas. Ika people are homogenous and speak the Ika language as their native tongue. The people are mainly peasant farmers; only a few are traders and civil servants.<sup>416</sup>

The origin of the name Ika is embedded in obscurity and ambiguity. According to a colonial document written by Forde and Jones (1967:49), the present Ika group was used to represent inland parts of the four groups that make up the western Igbo group (Aniocha, Oshimili, Ika, and Ndokwa) found in the present Delta State away from the shores of river Niger. However, some people from the Agbor clan refer to the name Ika as an integrated kingdom of Agbor, the meaning and origin of the name Ika, and the present Ika community.

Within this Ika group, the present Ika community was classified as Northern Ika, along with Aniocha and Oshimili. In contrast, the Ukwuani group was classified as Southern Ika.<sup>417</sup> Nevertheless, the source and meaning of the name Ika and when only the current Ika community and their language began to be known and referred to by that name, which they keep hold off until today, is not clear. However, this dual origin or history was presented as the Bini factor and the Nri factor,

---

<sup>416</sup> F. A. Onyekpeze, *People, Culture and Socio-Economic Interest of the Ika Nation* Ika: Crisbec. (2003),

<sup>417</sup> Ifeanyi Joseph Onyeche, *Ika People Culture*2009.

<https://www.nairaland.com/251901/ika-people> Accessed April 16, 2022.

respectively.<sup>418</sup> This document shows that the Bini factor seems capital or dominant in the founding and forming a majority of the clans.<sup>419</sup>

Still emphasizing that "Ika" is from the Bini language, "Eka," Onyekpeze notes that the name itself came to be. Its etymological essence is rooted in the sagacious remark by Oba Ewuare (1440) about his fleeing subjects, "Soghai Eka no," by which he meant, "Leave them, they are deserters". Oba Ewuare thus used the name "Eka" to refer to a group of deserters from his kingdom.<sup>420</sup> This is the first place and time in history when Eka was used to refer to a group of people. This is, thus, the origin of Eka in Ika history.

The leadership structure of the Ika people is similar to that of most other African structures; Ika North is a patriarchal monarchy and has had a succession of rulers since the beginning. The traditional monarch of Agbor is known as Eze or Obi. The present Obi of Agbor is Benjamin Ikechuku, Keagborekuzi I, who goes by Dein, the identity of his ruling family, instead of the Obi or Eze. Dein is an Igbo word by tradition used to address older men as a mark of reverence. Dein is the dialectal alternative of "De" and "Deede" used in other Igbo areas. In Agbor and several other Igbo communities, the word "Dein" evolved to become a respected name for the oldest man in the community. In numerous areas of Igbo land, Umude or Umudei or Umudein means the lineage that produces the King, descendants of the King.<sup>421</sup>

---

<sup>418</sup> Jane Anwuli Olomu, "Music in Osiezi And Igwe Festivals of Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State: Potentials for Tourism" *Degree Of Master Of University Of Nigeria, Nsukka Department Of (Music 2014)*, 44

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, 44

<sup>420</sup> F. A. Onyekpeze, *The origins and Bini/Igbo factors of the Ika people: Agbor: Royal Pace publishers. (2011)*, 6

<sup>421</sup> <http://www.ikaworld.com/index.php?mod=article&cat=IkaHistory&Tradition&art>

The drive to establish the Ogele Dynasty, the first "dynasty of rulers of Agbor and lasted between 8000BC and 1260 AD, essentially started in about late summer of 701 BC. The most recent was Ogele XIV".<sup>422</sup> The end of the Ogeles' reign leads in the period in office of Regents. With the transitory on of the last regent, Ebogie, the regency time ended, and monarchy returned, but this time with the royal title of Dein, beginning with Ebonka as the first Dein of Agbor. That is how the Dein family, which is on to date, started in 1260 AD.<sup>423</sup>

Economically, Ika people, according to Onyekpeze, have a maximum rainfall of 240cm.<sup>424</sup> The dominant features of the vegetation are deciduous and evergreen forests. The forest used to abound with economic trees such as Iroko, Abura, afara, Opepe, Obeche, silk-cotton tree, and many others.<sup>425</sup> All these beautiful trees have been destroyed due to farming activities. About eighty percent of the population produces root crops such as yam and cassava, and in Delta state, the Ika people are one of the greatest producers of yam and cassava. The cereal crop that has thrived among the people is maize.

Vegetables such as okra, tomatoes, fruited pumpkin, and melon are also cultivated. Even though the rainforest belts livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats, etc., local draft species of these animals resistant to the disease caused by tsetse flies have thrived. Due to the destructive nature of the local cattle on root crops, the people are gradually doing away with it. Birds such as fowl, ducks, and pigeons are allowed to range freely, thereby exposing them to severe danger. The people of the Ika ethnic

---

icle=207 Archived 2016-03-13 at the Wayback Machine. Accessed on March 28, 2022

<sup>422</sup> Obi Efazomor II fiamu Qiama, *Patterns of Growth and Development in Owa Kingdom*, (Agbor: God gift Press, 1979), 56

<sup>423</sup> <https://critiquenewsdotcom.wordpress.com/2016/03/17/the-origin-of-agbor/> Accessed April 16, 2025.

<sup>424</sup> F. A. Onyekpeze. *An outline of the Ika people, culture, and social-Economic Interests of the Ika Nation*. Agbor: Krisbec Publishers. 2008], 5

<sup>425</sup> Ibid,

group are major farmers and the wealthiest people engaging in the palm kernel business with red oil extraction. The Ika boast of being the home to the sweetest African Palmwine or other forms such as palm wine tapping.<sup>426</sup>

Observably, the Ika people have also developed large areas of plantation agriculture. Palm plantations are found in large quantities across the various Ika clans. Uzuyem asserts that Palm oil, which was once the source of revenue in the southern part of Nigeria during the colonial era, was part of the contributory effort of the Ika people.<sup>427</sup> Even rubber plantation was not left out. However, due to their low demand, it was left to concentrate on palm plantations, which is believed to be more economical. However, most rubber plantations have been destroyed due to the increase in the rubber trade. Even though urban drift and the nonchalant mindset of the youth and healthy men towards farming in current times, one cannot say that the whole agricultural possibility of the area is being strived nowadays.<sup>428</sup> Ika people, to a large extent, is dependent on agriculture,

Culturally, Ika culture is vibrant. It contains the Odinali Ika, the rules and regulations handed down orally from generation to generation. Although the towns are not codified, they deal with the land laws as practiced by their ancestors. Observably, Ika culture, in general, has bowed so much to the influence of Western civilization and considerable changes. The indigenes of Agbor township who are of Ika descent and speak the Ika language, with some Bini and small Igbo influence, have a very rich cultural heritage. The different festivals experienced by the people provide an opportunity to showcase the various aspects of the people's culture. Some of these festivals, such as Igbose, which Dein, Ebonka instituted in 1270 AD to mark God's

---

<sup>426</sup> <https://www.pulse.ng/lifestyle/food-travel/ika-tribe-a-brief-walk-into-the-lives-of-this-ethnic-group/zjh1dz9> Accessed April 16, 2025

<sup>427</sup> John Ugbedinma Uzuyem, *Interview* by the researcher on June 23, 2024

<sup>428</sup> F.C. Okoli, *Politics of Development And Underdevelopment: Theories of Development*. Enugu: Ingenious Creation Services; 2007), 3

appearance to him in Ozanogogo, are unique to the people of that area.<sup>429</sup>Meanwhile, Festivals that the entire people of Agbor celebrate are Igue, Iwagi (New Yam Festival), and the Osiezi. Igue and Iwagi are celebrated yearly, while Osiezi is celebrated every three years.<sup>430</sup>The culture of the Ika people is too broad that the researcher chooses to limit it here.

Religiously, Ika people groups Beliefs and Practices according to Onyeodu's observation that initially, the primal, primordial, native religious experience of the people of Ika before the coming of Christianity is African traditional beliefs.<sup>431</sup>It was a collective heritage of the people from their ancestors. African tradition is polytheistic and culture-bound. It is an unwritten religion rich in rites and symbols. The adherents regard it as a part of their culture and way of life into which they are born. Traditional religion permeated the people's day-to-day activities, from the cradle to the grave.

Ika people believe in the Supreme Being and worship it through lesser gods or intermediaries; that is to say, the traditional religion in Ika combines the idea of one Supreme Being or God with the belief in the worship of many environmental deities in Ika traditional religion, God is given priority in all life endeavors. However, individual prayers are widely practiced, especially in times of exceptional necessity. God is in the resort of the desperate when all else has failed. Then, despite his greatness and distance, he can be appealed to directly without special

---

<sup>429</sup> K. Williamson, *Development of Minority Language: Publishing Problems and Prospect*. In "Multilingualism, minority language and language policy in Nigeria" Ed; by Nolue Emenanjo, Agbor: Central Books limited, 1990), 21.

<sup>430</sup> [http://www.edoworld.net/Origin\\_Of\\_Agbor.html](http://www.edoworld.net/Origin_Of_Agbor.html). Accessed on March 28, 2022.

<sup>431</sup> S.O. Onyeidu, *Christianity and Islam in Nigeria the Colonial Factor* Enugu (Pillar Publishers 2002), 220

formulas or intervening priests or godlings.<sup>432</sup> Continuing, he opines that the belief in prayers to names and myths about God shows clearly that all Africans do 'conceive of God' so do Ika people of Delta state.

Echinim asserted that the belief in life after death is also responsible for the second burial. So the departed parents may live well and be happy among our ancestors, there arose the need for a second burial".<sup>433</sup>He further opines that the people of Ika North have a strong belief in life after death; this is why great attention is paid to the burial of the dead. Because of this, "the children must shave their hair on the death of their parents."<sup>434</sup>

All these gods are symbolized in carved wooden or metal images and shine through which the chief priests and diviners venerate them. Each kingdom has a local deity in Ika land by which the community is known, feared, and respected. In Agbor, it is called Nwobu, Mbiri Alagba, and at Owa, it is Odele, Ute Okpu Aja, Owerre Qiubor it is Edofi while Qtilokpo Nze, and Umunede Akpai.<sup>435</sup>These divinities are regarded as protectors of the village as a whole and as a guardian of morality and oath. In the days of tribal warfare, they were carried like the Israelites' arks to war. The people attribute their creation and earthly existence to the Supreme Being or God. In his attributes, the Supreme Being is regarded as the creator, sustainer, ruler, and final judge.

In the context of marriage, Ika people believe in terms of marriage; they believe in procreation and respect for human dignity. Significantly, Ika people believe that for procreation,

---

<sup>432</sup> Ejime D Banwune, *The Interaction of Christianity with Ika Culture: A Reflection*. *J. of Arts and Contemporary Society*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (2016), 69

<sup>433</sup> K. O. Echinim. *Ndiowa and their Monarchs*. (Benin: Mindex Publishing Company, 2009), 61

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid*, 61

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid*, 71

continuity of human/community, and or perpetuation of the family line, there has to be the union of two persons (man/woman) that is male/female in the Homo sapiens family. Different conditions guide the coming together or the union of man and woman; for both companionship and procreation. In all societies, the man in the union is the husband while the woman is the wife. This union of man and woman or husband and wife as spelled out by respective customs is known as Marriage is refers as Igi Okpohokwadi? (Nwunyen. Or I-luMgba ? marrying a wife.<sup>436</sup>

Marriage in Ika land is a rich cultural heritage that guarantees unity, joy, and peace among the people. Polygamy is cherished in some circles, especially those who can afford it. Earlier, before the advent of the missionaries, before the introduction of white weddings to the church in Ika, and colonial government, numerous wives to one man sustain a family. First Knocking at the Door Requires: Kola nuts (ogi Agbor) -9 Nos, Alligator Pepper -1No, Bottle of Gordon's Gin -1No, Bottle of Schnapps-1N, Palm wins -1Keg. Presently, their bride price is 10,100, though vary depending on the family, and they also give a certificate.<sup>437</sup>

### **Missiological approaches for Witnessing the Gospel among Ika people Group of Delta State Nigeria**

As ethnographical in missions, research deals with the ability to immerse in new cultures; thus, this session will provide a possible missiological approach to how missionaries and ministers can witness the Gospel to the Ika people group. Schnabel's classification of missionary work sounds like an equal note: first, missionaries communicate the news of Jesus the Savior to people who have not heard or accepted this news. Second, missionaries should speak a new way of life that replaces, at least partly, the social norms and the behavioral

---

<sup>436</sup> <http://ikaworld.com/319/> Accessed April 17th 2022.

<sup>437</sup> <https://infoguidenigeria.com/traditional-marriage-process-ika-delta-state/> Accessed 17th April 2025

patterns of the society in which the new believers have been transformed. Lastly, missionaries incorporate the new believers into a new group of people.<sup>438</sup> The following are the missiological approaches to reach the Ika people group.

### **Missionary must be rooted in the Word /Understanding Ika People Language**

It is pertinent to note that anyone reaching a people group must be well-rooted in the word of God. The Word of God progressively transforms our minds as it reshapes our worldview. It transforms our affections as we grow to delight in the things that delight God and to hate the things God hates. It transforms our will as we learn to obey God's commands out of willing hearts.<sup>439</sup> Language is one of any culture's most necessary and distinguishing aspects. The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (UDLRs) held in Barcelona, Spain, in 1996, states that "Language is the key to the heart of a people; when one loses the key, we lose the people. UDLRs (1996) states, "A lost language is a lost tribe, a lost tribe is a lost culture, and a lost culture is a lost civilization. A lost civilization is an invaluable knowledge lost...the whole vast archives of knowledge and experience in them will be consigned to oblivion".<sup>440</sup>

Nigeria is a linguistically prosperous nation. Shows that Nigeria has about five hundred and twenty (520) distinct languages. Among them, three major languages command regional dominance.<sup>441</sup>Therefore, the missionary sent and

---

<sup>438</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategy and Method* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 28

<sup>439</sup> International Mission Board <https://www.imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Foundations-2022-FINAL-FILE-spreads-0623-opt.pdf> Accessed 23rd of June 2025.

<sup>440</sup> UDLR. "World Conference on Linguistic Rights" Barcelona Spain <http://www.linguistic-declaration.org/versions/angles.pdf>, accessed April 5, 2025

<sup>441</sup> J. C. Eyisi, E. Omazu, O. Akaegbobi, "Language and National Development" (2012), pg 32

commissioned the Gospel to the Ika people must consider their Language. Language is not only the group's spoken Language but also its jargon, idioms, tone, written word, and dialects. Language is the most complex and most important hurdle when a missionary seeks to reach a culture for Christ.<sup>442</sup>In addition, the person should seek to identify himself as closely as possible with the people you serve to remove any visible and invisible hindrance from their attending to the Gospel and following it.<sup>443</sup>

### **Discipleship/Discipline Approach**

The word discipleship, derived from the Latin word *discipulus* and the Greek *mathētēs*), is also made up of many facets that add to its meaning. At its uppermost level of definition, discipleship is a lifelong relational process authorized and modeled by Christ himself for the calling, gathering, developing, and equipping of his beloved followers throughout the world.<sup>444</sup>Jesus' last command to his disciples was "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"<sup>445</sup> (Matt 28:19-20). The goal of the Great Commission is clearly to make disciples. Teaching and baptizing those who believe are the means of achieving this goal. Unfortunately, the baptism of new converts is generally perceived as the goal and the measure of success in many missionary engagements. Apart from focusing

---

[http://www.nou.edu.ng/NOUN\\_OCL/pdf/SASS/ENG%20453-1.pdf](http://www.nou.edu.ng/NOUN_OCL/pdf/SASS/ENG%20453-1.pdf), accessed April 5, 2022

<sup>442</sup> J. Farnham Mark, *Effective Cross-Cultural Ministry CBTJ 812* (Fall 1992), 59

<sup>443</sup> Harold R. Cook, *Missionary Life and Work* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), 63

<sup>444</sup> Richard J. Bosshardt, "The Case for Incorporating Evangelism Into Discipleship: Paul's Ministry to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1-4:12)-" *MA Thesis*. (2009), 5

<sup>445</sup> <https://surgeproject.com/blog/3-ways-to-fulfill-the-great-commission> Accessed April 16, 2022.

on the church's fundamental beliefs, little teaching is done after baptism to nurture new converts steadily.

At the cause of discipleship, there is a need to discipline anyone who fails to assimilate; three things are most significant: the truth dimension, cognitive understanding of biblical truth, and leading the people to specific knowledge of scriptural truth. Also, with the rigorous intellectual task of Bible study very often employed by the truth dimension, students of the Bible can easily fall into reliance on study rather than reliance on the Holy Spirit.<sup>446</sup> As a result, if new converts are not well taught how to apply their intellectual knowledge to their day-to-day challenges, the discipleship has not achieved its goals; the missionary must sacrifice his time, to teaching Ika people.

Secondly, the Allegiance dimension with Loyalty to Christ is an ongoing process that starts at conversion and moves the translation into a closer relationship with Christ and other believers. The goal of this procedure is to grow in the similarity of Christ. Ellen G. White avows that unless believers choose only the disposition of Christ, that is, unless Christ's interests are identified with theirs, they are not fit to be called disciples.<sup>447</sup>

Thirdly is the power dimension. The Bible contains a series of divine power manifestations. Two famous Old Testament power demonstrations are found in Exodus 5-12 (Moses and Pharaoh) and 1 Kings 18 (Elijah and the prophets of Baal). Jesus' ministry also included power demonstrations to challenge and defeat the powers of Satan. His whole ministry was a power demonstration because he was at the center of the Great Controversy.<sup>448</sup> A spiritual combat is and was a natural part of

---

<sup>446</sup> John Wimber, and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2009), 187.

<sup>447</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages Book 1* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 110

<sup>448</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 257.

Christ's ministry.<sup>449</sup> According to Luke, it was Jesus' usual practice to heal the sick and deliver people from demon possession soon after entering a new territory (Luke 4:33-35, 39; 5:13-15; 6:6-10, 18-19).

Therefore, the missionary must use this means to disciple the Ika people. Emmanuel Egbunu rightly observed that the neglect of thorough follow-up to conserve the fruits of evangelism has been the significant factor for the prevalence of untaught Christians whose ideas of Christianity are a travesty of biblical discipleship.<sup>450</sup> For example, the missionary reaching Ika people can start up two-year discipleship. It should be a comprehensive discipleship curriculum.

### **Critical Authentic Contextualization of the Gospel**

Critical Contextualization is a term coined by Paul Hiebert in his effort to answer the subsequent questions: What should an individual do with their old cultural ways when they become Christians, and how should the missionary respond to these traditional beliefs and practices.<sup>451</sup> Critical Contextualization calls for an exegesis of culture, exegesis of Scripture, critical response, and functional substitutes.<sup>452</sup> Contextualization involves transmitting or translating the Gospel message using local idioms, Language, and culturally recognizable methodologies.<sup>453</sup> God's self-revelation will uniquely be linked to concrete history, the history of a select nation that belongs

---

<sup>449</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," in *Perspective on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: Institute of International Studies, 2009), 407.

<sup>450</sup> Emmanuel Egbunu, "To Teach, Baptize, and Nurture New Believers," in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 25.

<sup>451</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 1985), 171.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid*, 186-190.

<sup>453</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000).

to a particular culture, time, and geographical region. It was in the past and throughout times past that God showed himself. It was the history of God's enduring dealings with them for over a thousand years. God had to work with their ability to understand their Language and cultural background.

The biblical history of God's salvation work in Christ, the story of the evangelist, and those being evangelized: Songs, stories, drama, and dance are the best forms of communication. Visual aids like flashcards, flannel pictures, and film slides would help people understand the gospel message. Crossing cultures can help the missionary learn valuable lessons in principles such as honor, respect, relationships, love, discipline, work ethic, and more.<sup>454</sup> Therefore, there is a need for the missionary to create a chance for personal and corporate growth by learning from each other, by evaluating.

Meanwhile, to reach the Ika people, the research believes that the missionary understands His own culture and others' culture. That is to say, for effective communication to take place, the deep knowledge of the Gospel, the sender, and the receiver is essential. In avows to that, cross-cultural communication must begin with understanding creation, culture, and worldview.<sup>455</sup> Even cultural differences, such as language, food, dress, attitudes toward time, work habits, and social behavior, are rooted in worldview and can cause frustrating or successful intercultural contacts.

### **Relational Missions Approach**

God is love (1 Jn 4:8), and love found a church through the missions. Mission belongs to God because the initiation and action come from him. The task is also what God is in his

---

<sup>454</sup> Stefani Varner, 8 Guidelines for Crossing Cultures with the Gospel <https://www.imb.org/2017/01/20/8-guidelines-crossing-cultures/> Accessed, April 5, 2022.

<sup>455</sup> Emmanuel Aye, "Christian Perspective on Intercultural Communication," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 35: No. 4, (2007),6.

deepest self: perfect love and affection, creating, healing, and redeeming. God gave his Son without holding back and kept pouring divine goodness into the world. Ugbedinma opines that the Son was the incarnation of the Mission that conveyed cum poured out His lifestyle to the disciples through the disciples, to the world.<sup>456</sup> The Mission began to have a church, which extends who God is. The church fails to express its core being if it is not the matter. The proclamation of being founded by God himself then becomes a claim without essence or substance.<sup>457</sup> The church is incarnational, and as the body of Christ represents the *missio Dei* in any community and culture it finds itself in.<sup>458</sup>

The Mission is fueled by nurturing relationships, driven by the Holy Spirit from the heart of God. God loved the world sufficiently to send his Son on a mission to build a redemptive relationship with his creation. The task cannot be successful without building relationships with those not living in a relationship with Christ or even opposing Christ's belief.<sup>459</sup> The true and perfect relationship model lies within the Trinity and the Godhead, modeling and illustrating the Mission through the Trinity's life.<sup>460</sup> The main thrust is for the missionaries or minister to build relational missions at achieve a positive result in the task of reaching Ika people, are relationship centered in order to redeem them to the saving Grace.

---

<sup>456</sup> Chinedu Evidence Ugbedinma, "Missiological Approaches to Reaching Commercial Sex Workers in Umunede Kingdom Of Delta State" *M.Th Thesis Missiology* Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho 2021), 87.

<sup>457</sup> B. Bevans, & R.P. Schroeder, *Prophetic dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission today*, Orbis, New York. 2011), 13

<sup>458</sup> [www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext=S2074-77052013000100037](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext=S2074-77052013000100037) Accessed 27th March, 2025.

<sup>459</sup> N Cole, *Organic church: Growing faith where life happens*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. 2005), 1496-1498.

<sup>460</sup> D. Balia, & K, Kim, *Witnessing to Christ today*, Series, vol II, (eds.), Regnum Books International, Oxford. 2010), 20

## **Power Evangelism**

Power Evangelism involves the manifestation of miracles, signs, and wonders in the name of Jesus Christ, who intends to win souls for the Kingdom. Power Evangelism Power evangelism is a presentation of the gospel message accompanied by a persuasive demonstration of the power/dunamis of God. Power evangelism combines the rational with the trans-rational.<sup>461</sup> White asserted that Power evangelism "is the idea that signs of God's power open the hearts of the unconverted to the Gospel, it is a sort of evangelism where the unsaved are compelled to pay attention by unmistakable evidence that a God of supernatural power is present."<sup>462</sup>

The missionaries must pray and seek God's power daily because some ministers in Ika land are commercializing the Gospel and are seekers of power in the wrong source, instead of hold to Christ. But, when the people discover a genuine manifestation of God's power through His word, Ika people will accept the Gospel. You have supernatural manifestations like healings, miracles, signs, and wonders at that moment. Signs, wonders, and miracles accompany evangelization and church planting when people see that.<sup>463</sup>

---

<sup>461</sup> George. Bama, *Evangelism That Works* Ventura, CA: Regal, 1995), 81

<sup>462</sup> John. White, *When the Spirit Comes with Power* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 178, 181

<sup>463</sup> Jester, Stephen. "The Spirit's Role in Mission: Narrative Pentecostal Theology in West Africa." *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology* 5 (2017), 101-102

## **Writing Books and Translating to Ika People Group Language**

One way to reach Ika people is through writing because some are educated and can easily read. Then, please post it in their weekly newspaper, Ika, journal, and use their Agbor College/University Library. For instance, the dedication of the long-awaited Ika Bible Translation was on Sunday, March 24, 2019, as the people of the Ika nation witnessed the unveiling/presentation of the entire Holy Bible translated into Ika Language at the Cathedral Church of Ascension, Church of Nigeria – Anglican Communion, Ika Grammar School, Boji-Boji Owa, Delta State. The Ika Bible translation project started in 1999 that is about twenty years ago, through a medical doctor and his wife, Dr. & Mrs. C.O. Anya, who, in their tenacity to ensure the continuity of the project, sold their parcel of land when the financial situation became frightening as the printing was about to commence.<sup>464</sup> Missionaries must ensure to learn, speak and write books in Ika language, looking at the effort of this medical doctor and his wife.

### **Empowerment programs and Sponsorship**

Empowerment is generally accepted as a multi-dimensional concept, although all its dimensions need not necessarily correlate to the same set of determinants or outcomes. Empowerment implies giving authority, enabling a person or group to gain power over their limitations or overriding circumstances.<sup>465</sup> One of the major problems affecting Ika people is the desperation to make money and be relevant, which has laid most of the youth in internet fraudsters (Yahoo Yahoo)

---

<sup>464</sup> The complete Bible now in Ika Language  
<https://www.ikaweekly.com/complete-bible-now-in-ika-language/>  
Accessed April 5, 2022

<sup>465</sup> Oghenekohwo, Jonathan E., and Young D. Tonunarigha. "Empowerment Programmes of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and Socio-economic Well-being of Members in Yenagoa Community, Bayelsa State, Nigeria" *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 7, no. 4 (2019): 193.

youths are no more ready to work, be involved in farming in Ika land. So, for the missionaries to reach them, they must be empowered. Patrick Okoh affirms that empowering Ika people may not be easy. However, it requires intensive financial Sponsorship.<sup>466</sup> Sponsorship is the act of supporting a person's organization or activity by giving money, encouragement, or other assistance.<sup>467</sup> This empowerment cut across health, education, trading, agriculture, skill acquisition, computer centers, and opening ball holes for the people.

## **Conclusion**

This study has examined the ethnographical study of the Ika people group by surveying their worldview, value system, norms, beliefs, and practices. It investigated the origin of the name Ika: Language, political structure, leadership development, economic life, cultural life, religious life, and marriage life. It is a reality that the Ika people understood God's existence in their religious worldview before the coming of Christianity. The study finds that despite the civilizations and the emergence of Christianity, some people still believe and practice syncretism, even among ministers. Also, the study reveals some missiological approaches to witnessing the Gospel among the Ika people group.

The researcher submits that adopting and applying these approaches, which include missionaries, ministers, and anthropologists being rooted with the word of God, and understanding Ika language and speaking, discipleship and discipline, critical authentic Contextualization of the Gospel, power evangelism through writing book and translating to it to Ika language, relational, missions approach, and empowerment programs and Sponsorship it will bring a lasting impact on the people; It recommends missionaries, ministers should contend

---

<sup>466</sup> Patrick Okoh, *Interview Online* by Researcher April 17, 2022

<sup>467</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sponsorship>  
Accessed March 18, 2022

for the Christian faith and not compromised the Gospel amidst changing world.

## Sources

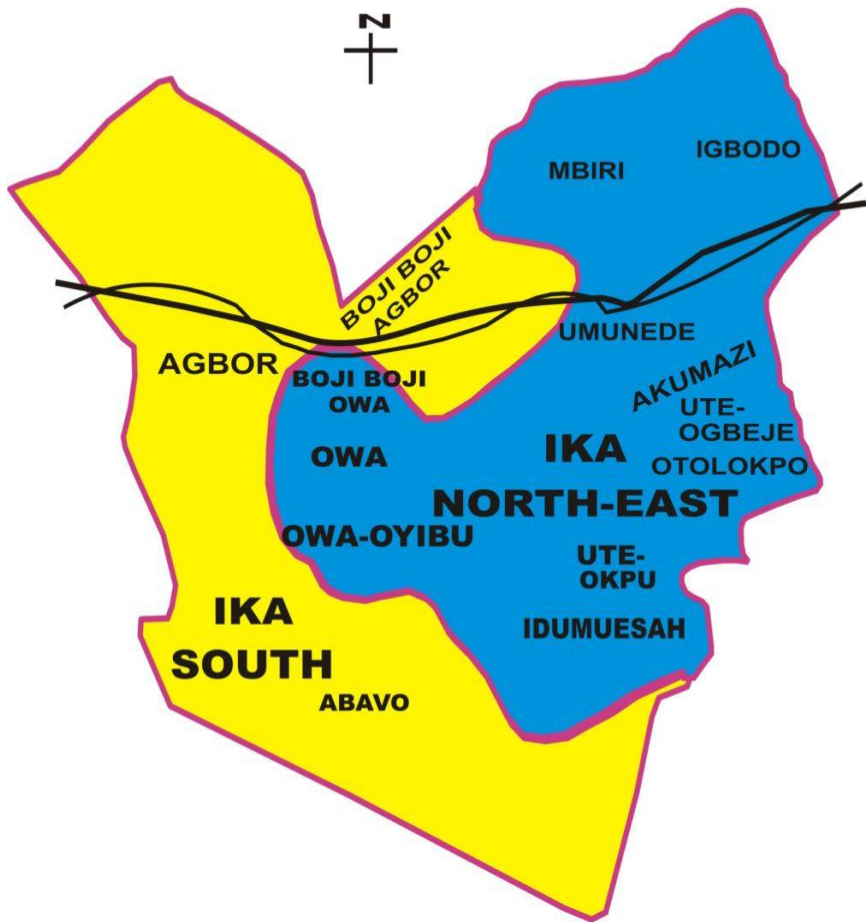
- Ayee, Emmanuel "Christian Perspective on Intercultural Communication," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 35: No. 4, (2007),6.
- Balia, D. & Kim, K. *Witnessing to Christ today*, Series, vol II, (eds.), Regnum Books International, Oxford. 2010), 20
- Bama, George. *Evangelism That Works* Ventura, CA: Regal, 1995.
- Bevans, B. & Schroeder, R.P. *Prophetic dialogue: Reflections on Christian mission today*, Orbis, New York. 2011.
- Bosshardt, Richard J. "The Case for Incorporating Evangelism Into Discipleship: Paul's Ministry to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1-4:12)-" *MA Thesis*. (2009), 5
- Cole, N. *Organic church: Growing faith where life happens*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. 2005,
- Cook, Harold R. *Missionary Life and Work* Chicago: Moody Press, 1959.
- Echinim., K. O. *Ndiowa and their Monarchs* (Benin: Mindex Publishing Company, 2009.
- Egbunu, Emmanuel "To Teach, Baptize, and Nurture New Believers," in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008.
- Hesselgrave, David J. and Rommen, Edward *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000.
- Hiebert, Paul G. "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," in *Perspective on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: Institute of International Studies, 2009), 407.
- Hiebert, Paul G. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 1985.
- <http://ikaworld.com/319/> Accessed April 17<sup>th</sup> 2022.
- <http://www.ikaworld.com/index.php?mod=article&cat=IkaHistory&Tradition&article=207> Archived 2016-03-13 at the Wayback Machine. Accessed on 28 March, 2022
- [http://www.edoworld.net/Origin\\_Of\\_Agbor.html](http://www.edoworld.net/Origin_Of_Agbor.html). Accessed on 28 March, 2022
- <http://www.nairaland.com/251901/ika-people> Accessed on March 26, 2022
- <https://critiquenewsdotcom.wordpress.com/2016/03/17/the-origin-of-agbor/> Accessed April 16 2025.
- <https://deltastate.gov.ng/ikapeople> Accessed on March 26, 2022
- <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sponsorship> Accessed March 18, 2022.
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ika\\_North\\_](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ika_North_) Accessed on March 26 2022.

- <https://infoguidenigeria.com/traditional-marriage-process-ika-delta-state/> Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> April 2025
- <https://media.thegospelcoalition.org/static-blogs/trevin-wax/files/2009/09/Gospel-Definitions.pdf> Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2025
- <https://surgeproject.com/blog/3-ways-to-fulfill-the-great-commission> Accessed April 16, 2022.
- <https://www.pulse.ng/lifestyle/food-travel/ika-tribe-a-brief-walk-into-the-lives-of-this-ethnic-group/zjh1dz9> Accessed April 16, 2025
- Igbodo, Joseph *Interviewed by Ika Weekly Newspaper* on December 7<sup>th</sup> 2016 retrieved from Facebook 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025
- International Mission Board <https://www.imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Foundations-2022-FINAL-FILE-spreads-0623-opt.pdf> Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2025.
- Jester, Stephen. "The Spirit's Role in Mission: Narrative Pentecostal Theology in West Africa." *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology* 5 (2017), 101-102
- Mark, J. Farnham *Effective Cross-Cultural Ministry CBTJ* 812 Fall 1992.
- Micheal, Matthew *Christianity and the Church in Africa* In African Public Theology Eds, Sunday Bobai Agang , Dion A. Foster and H. Jurgens Hendriks HippoBooks Africa Christian Textbook Bukuru Nigeria 2020.
- Oghenekohwo, Jonathan E., and Tonunarigha, Young D. "Empowerment Programmes of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and Socio-economic Well-being of Members in Yenagoa Community, Bayelsa State, Nigeria." *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 7, no. 4 (2019): 193.
- Okoh, Blessing Uenosen "Contextualizing Ingratitude in Luke 17:12 – 18 Among the Members of Pentecostal Churches in Ika Land" *NIU Journal of Social Sciences Nexus International University* ISSN: 3007-1682; 9(2): 2023), 290
- Okoh, Patrick *Interview Online by Researcher* April 17<sup>th</sup> 2022
- Okoli, F.C. *Politics of Development And Undevelopment: Theories of Development*. Enugu: Ingenious Creation Services; 2007.
- Olomu, Jane Anwuli "Music in Osiezi And Igwe Festivals of Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State: Potentials for Tourism" *Degree of Master of University of Nigeria, Nsukka Department of Music* 2014), 44
- Omazu, J. CE. Akaegbobi, O. "Language and National Development" (2012), pg 32 [http://www.nou.edu.ng/NOUN\\_OCL/pdf/SASS/ENG%20453-1.pdf](http://www.nou.edu.ng/NOUN_OCL/pdf/SASS/ENG%20453-1.pdf), accessed April 5, 2022
- Onwaniban, Evelyn Ika: Igbo or Edo [https://www.academia.edu/42798338/IKA\\_IGBO\\_or\\_EDO](https://www.academia.edu/42798338/IKA_IGBO_or_EDO) accessed April 5, 2022.
- Onyeche, Ifeanyi Joseph *Ika People Culture* 2009. <https://www.nairaland.com/251901/ika-people> Accessed April 16, 2022.
- Onyeidu, Ejime D Banwune, The Interaction of Christianity with Ika Culture: A Reflection. *J. of Arts and Contemporary Society*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (2016), 69

- Onyeidu, S.O. *Christianity and Islam in Nigeria the Colonial Factor Enugu* (Pillar Publishers 2002).
- Onyekpeze, F. A. *An outline of the Ika people, Culture, Social-Economic Interest of the Ika Nation.* Agbor: Krisbec Publishers. 2008.
- Onyekpeze, F. A. *People, Culture and Socio-Economic Interest of the Ika Nation* Ika: Crisbec. 2003.
- Onyekpeze, F. A. *The origins and Bini/Igbo factors of the Ika people:* Agbor: Royal Pace publishers. 2011.
- Qiama, Obi Efazor, *II fiamu Patterns of Growth and Development in Owa Kingdom,* Agbor: God gift Press, 1979.
- Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategy and Method* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 28
- The complete Bible now in Ika Language  
<https://www.ikaweekly.com/complete-bible-now-in-ika-language/>  
 Accessed April 5, 2022
- UDLR. “World Conference on Linguistic Rights” Barcelona Spain  
<http://www.linguistic-declaration.org/versions/angles.pdf>, accessed April 5, 2025
- Ugbedinma, Chinedu Evidence “Impacts of Contextualizing the Gospel on African Christianity” *Journal of Religious and Culture (JORAC Uniport)*, Vol 22, No 1 2022), 166
- Ugbedinma, Chinedu Evidence “Missiological Approaches to Reaching Commercial Sex Workers in Umunede Kingdom Of Delta State” *M.Th Thesis Missiology* Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso 2021.
- Uzuyem, John Ugbedinma *Interview* by the researcher on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024
- Varner, Stefani 8 Guidelines for Crossing Cultures with the Gospel  
<https://www.imb.org/2017/01/20/8-guidelines-crossing-cultures/>  
 Accessed, April 5, 2022.
- White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages Book 1* Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958.
- White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages* Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940.
- White, John. *When the Spirit Comes with Power* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 178, 181
- Williamson, K. *Development of Minority Language: Publishing Problems and Prospect.* In “multilingualism, minority language and language policy in Nigeria” Ed; by Nolue Emenanjo, Agbor: Central Books limited, 1990), 21.
- Wimber, John and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* Ventura, CA: Regal, 2009.
- [www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext=S2074-77052013000100037](http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext=S2074-77052013000100037) Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2025.

**Appendix I<sup>468</sup>**

# MAP OF IKA LAND



---

<sup>468</sup> Evelyn Onwaniban Ika: Igbo or Edo  
[https://www.academia.edu/42798338/IKA\\_IGBO\\_or\\_EDO](https://www.academia.edu/42798338/IKA_IGBO_or_EDO) accessed April 5, 2022.