

**A DISCOURSE ON TRADITIONAL CIRCUMCISION IN MODERN
EBONYI STATE SUB-CULTURAL ZONE OF IGBOLAND**

BY

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**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN RELATIONS
FACULTY OF ARTS
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD
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**FACULTY OF ARTS
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA
ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA**

OCTOBER, 2019

CERTIFICATION

I, Nwanchor, Otubo Edwin, with Reg. No. 2015097006F, hereby certify that this dissertation is original and has been written by me. It is a record of my research and has not been submitted before in part or full for any other diploma or degree of this University or any other institution or any previous publications.

Nwanchor, Otubo Edwin
(Student)

Date

APPROVAL PAGE

We ratify that this Dissertation carried out under our supervision, has been examined and found to have the regulations of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. We therefore approve the work for the award of PhD Degree in Religion and Human Relations (African Traditional Religion).

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External Examiner

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Lord my God and to the blessed memory of my beloved parents, Chief Ede Ukworu and Lolo Rose Chukwu Ede.

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I give God the glory for His grace, mercy, providence and protection during the course of this study. I am most grateful to my God who enabled me to get to this height in academics.

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Nwanchor, Otubo Edwin

Date

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation is titled: “**A Discourse on Traditional Circumcision in Modern Northeastern Sub-cultural Zone of Igboland**”. The background is dependent on the sorry state of affairs in Northeastern Igboland as occasioned by circumcision. A situation where the traditionalists had to attach all the social, economic, political, cultural and religious privileges to ritual circumcision which is the rite to adulthood, calls for investigation. This insistence brought about conflicts, breaking of law and disorder, destruction of property and court litigations. The aim of the research is to investigate circumcision in the Modern Northeastern Sub-cultural Zone of Igboland comprising the Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi and Ngbo clans. To determine the meaning, contents and origin of the custom, analyze the effects of circumcision in the socio-cultural life of the people. To evaluate the spiritual and material value of the rite and the impact of the Church and the younger generation on the practice of the custom. The work will be of great benefit to the Igbo people, the political class, researchers, institutions and the cultural archives. Data was collected from the primary and secondary sources and the method of data analysis or interpretation incorporated the multi-dimensional and area-culture approaches. The researcher made the following findings in the course of the study: that both male and female circumcision is still relevant and strictly observed by some members of the culture area; that the custom has a meaning but the origin cannot be authentically traced; that the rite defines adulthood among the people of the clan and that the youths and the Christian converts reject the rite. The research recommends circumcisional renaissance, cultural re-orientation of circumcision, discarding of the harmful aspects of circumcision and the need for the adherents of the rite, the Christians and the younger generation to re-adjust to accommodate each other for amicable co-habitation in their different cultural areas or communities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Among the Ebonyi State people of Igboland, the practice of circumcision of both males and females was strictly observed. It was one among the aspects of their custom which they jealously cherish. However, the worry arising from circumcision in Ebonyi State of Igboland in recent time could best be described with Achebe's (1959) assertion "now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one, he has put a knife on the things that hold us together and we have fallen apart" (p.5). The Christians insist that circumcision is a heathen practice that should be phased out.

On the contrary, the traditionalists insist that all the social, political, economic and religious privileges must be attached to ritual circumcision to adulthood. This indeed generates conflicts between the traditionalists (the stakeholders of ritual circumcision), the church members and the youths which on many occasions result in arms struggle, burning down of residential houses, church buildings, destruction of farmlands and denial of social and political rights as well as denial of freedom of worship. An example is the incident that happened at the Assemblies of God church Onunwode Echara in Ikwo Local Government Area in 2010, where the issue of circumcision led to a clash between the church and the traditionalists. The clash brought about the destruction of the church building and other communal property. Members of that particular Assemblies of God

church were denied land for farming and participation in communal gatherings. This was followed by litigations in the court of law.

On several instances, co-existence is threatened. Individuals, families, the Church and traditionalists end up in court litigations that linger for years. In these years of litigation, as in the instance in the above, resources that could have been used for the social development of the community and the improvement of the individuals are wasted in the court. Communal and family lands, property and other belongings are sold to fund court cases.

Apparent also is the identity crises often generated by the struggle between traditionalists and Christians over circumcision among the North Eastern Igbo people. People are pulled apart. The church disciplines any member that undergoes the process of ritual circumcision while the traditionalists subject non initiates to untold social, political and religious hardships. Odey (1986) affirms that:

Any Ezza man who is not ritually circumcised remains a virtual social outcast for life. He lives in the community, tries to identify himself with it, but in return he receives only a cold indifference from the members of the community including his nearest kiths and kins. Even within his family his voice is not reckoned with. If a junior brother of his happens to circumcise ritually before him, the custom requires that he should surrender his birthright (seniority) to the former who has now become his senior, (p. 15).

The truth about ritual circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land is that anybody who does not perform it is comparable to an "osu" in other parts of Igbo-land. He could be the richest, most honest, most educated and endowed with the best leadership qualities. As long as he is ritually uncircumcised, the custom requires he should not be given the opportunity to prove his good qualities.

It is also observed that the ritual circumcision in the sub-cultural area has placed the Christians here at war paths with the traditionalists who insist that the ritual is for all, an insistence that has led to unsavoury and deadly consequences. Circumcision has raised issues that are yet to be resolved socio-culturally. There are cases in Ezza area where the church was accused of destroying the culture of the people and desecrating their traditional rituals. The matter made the traditionalists to ostracize the accused members of the Roman Catholic Church at Onueke Ezza Parish of the church. Odey (1986) corroborates this thus:

Woe betides you if you are an Ezza man and you are not ritually circumcised. A ritually uncircumcised man cannot dig the grave of a dead person. Neither can he touch the dead person. He is free to go to the place where somebody is dead. He is free to mourn for the dead. But that is all he can do. There is however an exception to this custom when the uncircumcised happens to be the first son of a dead father. In this case two aspects of the one and the same custom come in to conflict, each contesting for predominance over the other. Eventually a "higher custom" requires that there is no other person who should dig the grave first except his first son as long as the latter is alive and available, (p. 16).

It is worrisome that the issue of ritual circumcision could generate the above story state of affairs in a sub-culture area that is expected to live in harmony and peace. It is therefore the intention of the researcher to investigate this rite in order to resolve the unhealthy state of affairs occasioned by ritual circumcision and restore peace and harmony in Ebonyi State.

This research work therefore sets to address the above issues by delving into the cultural analysis of the significance of circumcision in this generation and particularly in Ebonyi State of Igboland.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The ritual practice of circumcision in Ebonyi State has created a disturbing ugly state of affairs in the area. There are individuals who for various reasons have refused participating in this rite of initiation. Such persons are subjected to serious molestations, mockery, social and economic discriminations by the traditionalists of the community. This development in some places in Ebonyi State of Igboland has led to unrest and communal disturbances as cited above at Onunwode Echara in Ikwo.

Political positions have been used as a strong weapon against the un-circumcised in most communities in Ebonyi State of Igboland. This is because the ritually un-circumcised is not allowed into leadership positions or representations. This obnoxious rule has hindered the area from assessing the leadership potentials of their sons and daughters.

The rate of economic deprivation occasioned by denial of right of ownership of certain property brought about legal actions against the perpetrators. The deprivation sometimes ended up in Police and undue litigations that wasted individual and communal resources. It also breeds hatred and enmity in the community leading to the retardation of development of the area. Privileges as ownership of farmlands, economic trees, appointment to political positions, participation and recognition in socio-political matters were hinged on circumcision. This discriminatory action of the traditionalists deterred the socio-economic and political development and improvement of the society and the individuals.

Circumcision has become a problem in Northeastern Igbo-land due to insistence that every member of the culture area must participate in it in order to be full-fledged member of the society. Objection to insistence has led to conflicts in the past and at present and subsequent litigations, provocations and destruction of property. In 2015, the degree of insistence on circumcision in the cultural area could be understood by the wave of dispute that ensued which made the Ndufu Ikwo Parish of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria to convene its Session to hold extra-ordinary Session in an effort to resolve the matter. This was captured by Njoku (2015) thus:

The Session of Ndufu Ikwo Parish of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria to hold two meetings of Session on 3rd July 1994, at Agubia Presbyterian Church and at Ekco Farm Ekpelu respectively. The Session resolved to report the matter officially to the police station at Agubia and Ndufu Echara. The District Police

Officer (DPO) at Noyo Alike Ikwo and the State Security Service (SSS) Abakaliki as well as the Presbytery, Synod and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria were appealed to. The report of the delegation to the police read thus: "we on behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Ndufu Ikwo Parish in Ikwo Local Government Area wish to formally report to the police the case of our members in Ekpelu community like Emmanuel Nwenewo (elder) and Simon Ozo (member) were being kidnapped and assaulted by some members of Ekpelu community. This action which we see as a threat on the life and fundamental human rights of the individual has created a state of civil unrest and likely to result in loss of lives and property, (p. 10).

There are so many instances of conflicts between the church and the traditionalists because of circumcision. The resultant effects of these conflicts are disorderliness, religious wars, lack of progress, loss of lives and property. Odey (1986) lamented,

Ritual circumcision at the Ezza axis of the Northeastern Igbo-land created tension that warranted the youth conference to be held by all Ezza Catholic Youths resident at Onitsha, Anambra state in August 12, 1984, The youths resolved to remain resolute against native law and custom of the practice of ritual circumcision (p.68).

Odey (1986) went further to narrate the experiences of the church in Ezza area of Northeastern Igbo-land with this information:

In February 21- 25, 1984 there was Roman Catholic retreat held at St Aidan's Catholic Church, Okafia that strengthened the faithful against ritual circumcision.

The traditionalists averred to stamp out Christianity in the area. Following this determined stand of the traditionalists, the Vicar General of the Roman Catholic Church, Abakaliki Diocese issued a bull that directed the natives to stay on their own and allow the church to be on their own in July 17, 1985. The ecclesiastical warrant indicated that the Roman Catholic Church shall not interfere with the traditional life of the native people unless such traditionalists desire to be part of the church, (p.92).

The most recent was the occurrence in 2013 when people were deprived to own land, harvest the rice they planted, beaten up, kidnapped as well as forcefully brutalized for circumcision evidenced itself at Ekpa-Omaka in Ikwo Local Government Area of Northern Igbo-land. It took the intervention of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Ebonyi State Chapter to restore peace and orderliness in the area.

Ritual circumcision has destroyed the peace and harmonious existence of the people of Northeastern Igbo-land. The practice of the has subjected the ritually un-circumcised to abject poverty in this sub-cultural area people and caused harm to the people of this area. The research work will consider these research questions:

What is the meaning, contents and origin of circumcision globally and within Northeastern Igbo land in particular?

Are there some effects of circumcision in the socio-cultural life of Northeastern Igbo in this age of globalization?

Have circumcisions any spiritual and material significant in the life of the people?

What are the challenges confronting the practice of circumcision in modern Northeastern Igbo society?

Are there impacts or views of the church and the younger generation on traditional ritual circumcision as performed by the people?

Can solution be proffered to the observable sorry state of affairs as occasioned by ritual circumcision in Northeastern Igbo land?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Every research has a purpose. The aim of this study is to investigate the cultural significance and the application of circumcision in Ebonyi State. The objective of this research then includes the following.

To investigate the meaning, contents and origin of circumcision globally and within Ebonyi State in particular.

To analyze the effects of circumcision in the socio-cultural life of the people of Ebonyi State in this age of globalization.

To find out whether circumcision has any spiritual and material significance in the life of the people.

To examine the challenges confronting the practice of circumcision in modern Ebonyi State society

To assess the impact of the Church and the younger generation on traditional circumcision as performed by the people.

To proffer solutions to the observable sorry state of affairs in Ebonyi State as occasioned by ritual circumcision.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research work is expected to be of great benefit to the following group of persons. People of Ebonyi State: It will benefit them by unveiling to them the modernized way of practicing their valued circumcision. The work will also equip them with the strategies on how to preserve their religious and socio-cultural values from any external or internal negative influences.

The Initiates to Circumcision: will benefit from the study as it will expose the relevance of the initiation to them, for example, it will lift one from adolescence to adulthood and adult member of the community.

Students and Researchers: will benefit as this research is for the promotion of further research, students and researchers will gain as they will be prompted to study other aspects of circumcision using this work as reference.

The General Public: will benefit in that the work will redirect the minds of the Africans to the core values of the Africans (Igbo) peoples' cultures especially its religious and cultural values. The elites who are the leaders of the people are expected to transmit the benefits gained from this work to the led. By so doing, the greater number of people will be aware of the need of circumcision in Igbo socio-cultural life.

The Igbo: will benefit in this because it serves as motivating factor towards their cultural renaissance as this research will awaken their cultural zeal.

Others: the research work will be relevant to ethnographers, cultural anthropologists. Missionaries, government and non-governmental organizations not only in understanding the people's cultural practices but in their developmental plan for the people of Northeastern Igbo-land and other places.

The Church: will benefit in that it can blend the biblical circumcision with the peoples ritual circumcision as to adapt and discard certain aspects of this ritual custom thereby bringing peaceful relationship among the people.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This research will focus on an aspect of the culture of the people. The work is basically on traditional circumcision at the modern time with emphasis on Ebonyi State sub-cultural zone of Igbo-land. Ebonyi State zone of Igbo-land comprises of the following clans, Ikwo, Izzi, Ezza, Ohaukwu, Ngbo, Onicha, Okposi, Oshiri, Agba, Ntezi and Isu. The research never delved into a holistic study of the people's culture. It simply discusses circumcision and its cultural significance at this modern time to the people using the aforementioned clans.

Though the work does not claim to have exhausted everything there is to be known about the topic, it has provided enough information about Ikwo, Izzi, Ezza, Ohaukwu and Nebo.

1.6 Methodology

The sources of data collection will be basically primary and secondary. The primary sources of data will come from discussions, interviews with resource persons and stakeholders and personal observation of the practice by the researcher. The secondary sources of information will be lifted from text books, encyclopedia, journals, periodicals, internet materials relevant to the area of study. The method of data analysis or interpretation incorporated the multi-dimensional area-culture approach since African traditional religion is one that incorporates all the fabrics of life of the Africans- social, cultural, historical and religious. By so doing coherence, order and meaning are infused into an otherwise uncoordinated data from multifarious sources. Phenomenological method was also used to complement the multi-dimensional approach in the interpretation of data.

1.7 Definition of Terms as Used in the Work

For-clarity and good understanding of this work by the reader, the technical terms or the local or the traditional terminologies or names were defined. All the definitions are based on the contextual meaning and usage of the term in this work.

1.7.1 Circumcision.

Circumcision comes from the Latin word, *circum* and *caedere* meaning ("around and "to cut"). Circumcision therefore is the cutting around of the foreskin of the glans penis. It is an operation in which part of the entire foreskin covering the glans penis is removed.

Circumcision in males is the surgical removal of all or part of the foreskin of the penis usually performed formerly and usually during adolescence, while in females it is the surgical removal of the clitoris and sometimes the *labna*.

Religious male circumcision is considered a commandment from God in Judaism. In Islam circumcision is widely practiced and most often considered being mandatory. The Christian faith has records of circumcision, Luke 1; 59-6. Traditionally the practice of circumcision is a rite of passage and an initiation rite from childhood to adulthood. In fact, it is the climax of initiation. The prevalence of circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land is mostly with religious affiliation and sometimes cultural identity. Most circumcisions are performed during adolescence for cultural or religious reasons, in some cultures, and recently they are more commonly performed at infancy. In the area of our study, circumcision was mostly done at adolescence but due to the dangers inherent in it, it is now performed at infancy. This is done to reduce the risk death while the rituals are observed when the child attains adolescent age.

1.7.2 Tradition

Tradition in the words of Macdonald (1979) has been seen as handing over, oral transmission from one generation to another. Transmission could be a tale, belief or practices that had been handed down. It could also be taken as anything bound up with or continuing in the life of a family, community or ethnic group, (p.142). Circumcision as the people's tradition was passed from the ancient generations to the present generation. Following the passage of time, changes had influenced the traditions.

Tradition deals with the people's heritage and their way of life. It connotes the collective social consciousness of a people about the past-life their ancestors lived, the lives of the present generation and perception of the life of future generations. The timelessness of tradition could be traced to the persistence of the past in both the present and future traditions. Its dynamism has been portrayed by the way people live their lives in time. Tradition seems to be an approved Igbo way of looking at things, living in society, sanctions, regulations as operational words to doing things as a seal of ancient usage and backing of reverend authorities.

Circumcision therefore is the tradition of the Northeastern Igbo for it has been in practice since the settlement of the people in this land of their occupation.

1.7.3 Culture

Culture as a complex whole consists of belief systems, customs, morals, arts, knowledge, laws and other habits acquired by the members of the society.

Arcnsberg and Niehoff (1984) opined that culture is "the sum total of what individuals learn in common with other members of the group to which they belong"

Culture can actually be said to be a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbiotic forms by means of which human beings, communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes towards life.

Culture is universal in the sense that there are certain elements of culture that are found in all human society example marriages, family, religion, dressing etc.

However, the exact form defers from one society to another. The researcher agrees with Onyia (1999) that, whatever a group of people that inhabit a defined geographical area do to live their lives, is their culture, the language they speak, the type of food they eat, the type of house they build, how they greet one another, how they govern themselves, how they worship, how they perform certain rites or rituals and such other custom. All people in the world have their philosophy of life, which guides them on how to put that philosophy into practice. This is their culture to that people. Circumcision falls within all the definitions and is rightly captured as a suitable culture of a people.

1.7.5 Modern

The word, modernity is coined from the French root, *moderne* and from the Latin word *modernus*, all meaning just now. The word is used in line with the 21st century dictionary definition that it means belonging to the present or to the recent times, not old or ancient, of techniques, equipment, involving, using or being the very latest available.

1.7.6 Time.

According to the 21st century dictionary, time is a particular point in time expressed in hours or minutes, or days, months and years and as can be read in from a clock or watch or told by a calendar. As used in this work, time here is a particular period in man's existence when certain things happen as influenced by that age. It is necessary to note that changes in an environment possibly due to some factors as globalization or urbanization affect and determine what happens in a particular season or time. Time and

season are strong factors that determine when and how religio-cultural events are observed or celebrated.

1.7.7 Ritual.

Ritual is derived from the Latin word *ritualis* which is coined from the Latin *ritus* rite. According to the 21^s century dictionary, ritual is rendered as the set order or words used in a religious ceremony. As used in this research, ritual is a religious act such as sacrifice, libation or invocation that is performed regularly, habitually or a routine for certain social rites, religious or other rites or rituals. It is a must do in certain rituals or rites as circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land.

1.7.7.1 Ebonyi State in Igboland

The Igbo as an ethnic group occupies the Eastern part of Nigeria. It is presumed to be the third largest ethnic group in Nigeria. The Igbo comprise of five states-Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi. Igbo language is the mother tongue of the people. Nwangama (2011) grouped North-eastern Igboland into the following clans, "Ezza, Izzi, Ikwo, Ngbo, Isu, Onicha; Oshiri, Okposi, Ohaukwu, Ntezi and Agba". Linguistic evidence suggests that these groups (clans) have resided in this area for a substantial period of time. And again they are presumed to have a common ancestral origin. These clans also have relatively common culture and share so many other things in common.

Ebonyi State is historically classified as Northeastern Igboland according to Kalu (1998). In this research, Ebonyi State is used interchangeably with Northeastern Igboland.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review concerns itself with the review of related and relevant works by scholars. No one delves into any research work without going into the related literature of some scholars. The novelty of any topic notwithstanding, scholars must have written either on the same topic or related topic. It is on this basis that this study x-rayed some of the related works relevant to this research. This was done under the following subheads: conceptual framework, theoretical framework, empirical studies and finally the summary of the literature review.

2.1 CONCEPTUL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework discusses views or definitions of different scholars on the concept, circumcision. This will make for easy understanding of the work. In this framework, the opinion of groups, bodies and nations will be highlighted with view to making the research work more comprehensive.

Geoffrey (2002) defined circumcision as the custom of cutting off the foreskin (prepuce) of the male genital organ usually as a religious rite but today often simply hygienic (p. 18). Gollaher (2001) says circumcision cuts off the foreskin which is usually the sensitive sleeve of tissue that normally covers and protects the head of the penis (p.274). For the female, WHO (1997) describes the female circumcision as "all procedures

involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons". The popular term used to describe female circumcision is FGM, meaning female genital mutilation.

There is a strong relationship between male and female circumcision in traditional Nigerian ethnic groups, especially in Igbo land. Circumcision (male) and clitoridectomy (female) are common and widespread rites of initiation. Although the cultural surgical removal of the clitoris and parts of the *labia minora* is more radical and more dangerous than male circumcision, both forms are understood to be important means by which gender is culturally defined:

Rizzi, Nagvi and Hassan (1999) are of the view that "cosmogonic myths" justify the surgery as reiterating primordial acts that promoted fecundity; the myths thus define the sacred status of sex and fertility (p.91).

Various views have been advanced to explain the origin of genital mutilation. One of such concepts postulates that circumcision began as a way of "purifying" individuals and the society by reducing sexuality and sexual pleasure. Human sexuality was seen as dirty or impure in some societies; hence, cutting off the pleasure producing parts was obvious way to purify someone (p.95).

DeMeo (1989) says that "geographical patterns of global distributions of the male and female genital mutilation among native, (non- western people) along with history and archeology, suggests their genesis in the deserts of Northeast Africa and the near East,

with a subsequent diffusion outwards into sub-Saharan..." This then suggests that the practice of male and female genital mutilation is far older than the Biblical account of Abraham (Gen. 17) (p.86). Bigelow (1992) insisted that "the Jews adopted circumcision as a religious ritual and preserved this prehistoric practice into the modern times (p.37).

The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion (1997) narrates that "the circumcision of Abraham removed only the very tip that extended beyond the glands penis. Moses and his sons were not circumcised (Exodus 4:25). For Moses apparently prohibited circumcision during the 40 years in the wilderness, (Joshua 5:5) Joshua reinstated circumcision at Gilgal after the death of Moses (Joshua 5:2-10). It is interesting to note that after the Israelites were circumcised, they immediately became soldiers in Joshua's army for the conquest of Palestine (Joshua 6:1-3) (p.856).

In contrast to the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans, according to Gairdner (1949) "placed high value on the prepuce. The Romans passed several laws to protect the prepuce by prohibiting circumcision. The laws applied to everyone and were not directed against the Jews" (p.63). Tiemey (1997) in the "Catholic Encyclopedia" states

The Christians took a strong stand against circumcision in the first century. Christians rejected circumcision at the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, taught parents that they should not circumcise their children (Acts 21:25). In a reference to the old practices of genital mutilation, St. Paul warned Titus to beware of the "circumcision group. (Titus 1:10-16). (p.742).

Circumcision in Igbo land and especially in the Northeastern Igbo area is held as a socio-cultural tradition of the people. Eze (2011), writing as an indigene of the Northeastern Igbo-man, points out specifically that:

Circumcision is an initiation rite in Ikwo. Initiation ushers one into an adult member of the community. If not initiated through circumcision one remains a child till death. And as a child, you are denied some political rights, denied certain community social gathering, denied land allocation, barred from fetching water from community ponds, treated as a child, and at death, buried as a child, (p.246).

In the Northeastern Igbo area, all the medical reports, World Health Organization declaration and any group or body publications that are negative to the practice of circumcision are regarded as just a threat. According to Eze (2011), circumcision in Ikwo as it is in the entire Abakaliki area, is a celebrative culture. That circumcision especially the second phase which is ceremonial (ritual) in nature is marked with celebrations and joy of entry into adulthood: In Northeastern Igbo-land, circumcision is always done in two parts. The first part is the real physical cutting of genital organ of the male or female. It is this part or aspect of circumcision that is being confronted, rejected and attacked by the medical experts as being brutal and deadly (p.264). Eze argued that health organizations and health personnel regard circumcision as an unnecessary practice that exposes people to health hazards and risking human lives but culturally it is rather a test

of good moral life and an initiation rite. However, the second aspect has no any form of risk; it is about eating, drinking, dancing and rejoicing. It is a period for the initiate to be in the fattening room. The initiate is made to be eating all sorts of good foods in the fattening room. In the Northeastern Igbo area, the first aspect of circumcision is never separated from the second. The tradition of the people does not permit one to jump the first to do the second one (p.267). It is followed in an orderly manner. The two traditional customs are accorded the same regard in the cultural area. The first stage of circumcision is being confronted by the medical experts and the social activists, while, the second stage or aspect of circumcision is attacked by the Christians, the western teachings and some elites from amongst the people of Northeastern Igbo-land. According to Njoku and Nworie (2010) circumcision in all the places where it is practiced and mostly in the Northeastern Igbo-land has some reasons for its practice. It has been variously proposed that it began as a religious sacrifice; as a rite of passage marking a boy's entrance into adulthood or a stage next to adulthood, (p.1 17).

Gollaher (2001) postulated that circumcision was done as a means of enhancing sexual pleasure for the male, as an aid to hygiene where regular bathing was impractical, in some cultures it serves as a means of marking those of higher social status, it was a measure to humiliate the enemies and slaves by symbolic castration, a means of differentiating a circumcising group from their non-circumcising neighbours. Circumcision is a means of discouraging masturbation and other socially prescribed sexual behaviours. Is a means of removing excess pleasure especially for the female, a

means of increasing a man's attractiveness to the women. Circumcision is a demonstration of one's ability to endure pains, (p.287). .

2.1.1 Circumcision in Different Cultures

This is arranged in the following order, the African, Jewish and American cultures.

In the African Culture

Wagner (1949) said "The distribution of circumcision and initiation rites through Africa, and the frequent resemblance between details of ceremonial procedures in areas thousands of miles apart indicate that the circumcision ritual has an old tradition behind it and in its present form is the result of a long process of development/' (p. 127). Wagner (1949) explaining further stated thus:

African cultural history is conveniently spoken of in terms of language group. The Niger-Congo speakers of today extend from Senegal to Kenya to South Africa and all points between. In the historic period, the Niger- Congo speaking peoples predominantly have and have had male circumcision which occurred in young warrior initiation schools, the schools of Senegal and Gambia being not so very different from those of the Kenya Gikuyu and South African Zulu. Their common ancestor was a horticultural group five, perhaps seven, thousand years ago from an area of the Cross River in modern Nigeria. From that area a horticultural frontier moved outward into West Africa and the Congo Basin. Certainly the warrior schools with male circumcision were a part of the ancestral society's cultural repertoire.

Amongst the Gikuyu (Kikuyu) people of Kenya and the Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania, male circumcision has historically been the graduation element of an educational programme which taught tribal beliefs, practices, culture, religion and history to youths who were on the verge of becoming full-fledged members of society. The circumcision ceremony was very public, and required a display of courage under knife in order to maintain the honour and prestige of the young man and his family. The only form of anesthesia was a bath in the cold morning waters of a river, which tended to numb the senses to a minor degree. The youths being circumcised were required to maintain a stoic expression and not to flinch from the pain.

After circumcision, young men became members of the warrior class, and were free to date and marry. They became a fraternity which served together, and continued to have mutual obligation to each other for life. (p. 131).

The above is the same in most of the Igbo cultural areas especially in the Northeastern Igbo-land, the practice is fairly the same.

Wagner (1949) emphasized that in the modern context in East Africa, the physical element of male circumcision remains (in the societies that have historically practiced it) but without most of the other accompanying rites, context and programmes. For many, the operation is now performed in private on one individual, in a hospital or doctor's office. Anesthesia is often used in such settings. There are tribes however, that do not accept this modernized practice. They insist on circumcision in a group ceremony, and a test of

courage at the banks of a river. This more traditional approach is common amongst the Meru and the Kisii tribes of Kenya. (p.132)

Wagner reiterated that despite the loss of the rites and ceremonies that accompanied male circumcision in the past, the physical operation remains crucial for personal identity and pride and acceptance in society. Uncircumcised men in these communities risk being "ousted", and subjected to ridicule as "boys". There have been many cases of forced circumcision of men from such communities who are discovered to have escaped the ritual, (p. 132).

Essentially, according to Odey (1986) circumcision means the cutting of the loose end of the male penis and the cutting of female clitoris. However among the Northeastern Igbo people, circumcision is more than mere physical operation. It is rather a combination of physical operation and ritual ceremonies attached to it (p.78). It could be necessary to ask how did the ritual aspect of circumcision originate in Northeastern Igbo-land? What were its aims and objectives? What were its functions in the social, political and religious live of the people. Admittedly the ancestral fathers of the people originated the act of circumcision. Their ancestors, their children and grand children performed their physical circumcision at an adult age; As a result, there was a high risk of bleeding and death.

Odey(1986) had this to say, that, what led to the dead of some of them in those days was that there were no modern medical facilities as it is today. Leaves of some local shrubs

soaked in hot water were administered to the gaping wound left by circumcision mark as first aid. Red and yellow cam-wood known as "*uswe*" and "*odd*" respectively were then applied to the wound as major healing agent. It did not take too long before the wounds got healed, (p.4).

Gradually it became an established custom that whoever got circumcised would not only rub red and yellow cam-wood on the wounded part but on the whole body. With the passage of time people began to feel more concerned about the high risk of bleeding and the eventual death inherent in adult physical circumcision. Consequently it dawned on them that physical circumcision could more conveniently be performed during childhood in order to ensure that the circumcised did not bleed to death. This feasible solution gave rise to another immediate problem to which an equally immediate solution was needed. Physical circumcision at an adult age had become vitally important for the Northeastern Igbo people. It determined the social, political, cultural and religious status of the circumcised. Since a child could now be circumcised a few days, weeks or month after birth, the people thought it necessary to establish another means through which the passage from childhood to adulthood could be established. Odey (1986) affirming these stages maintained that "it consists of symbolic cutting of the foreskin or clitoris since they had been cut at childhood. This was outwardly marked by a ceremonial rubbing of red and yellow cam-wood a practice known as "*ohu-Iwhe*". (p.5).

This was how ritual circumcision in northeast Igbo land began. It was a gradual transition that eventually became an established custom of the people. It is also a concerted effort to

substitute something tangible in the place of adult physical circumcision that had been abandoned for health reasons. To this Isupka in Odey (1986) wrote:

Conscious of the pain associated with adult circumcision and the flow⁷ of blood, the elders developed rites round it. Each rite was given an interpretation which made the whole affair have symbolic meaning, (p.6).

Circumcision as a major part of the culture of the people, passed through many stages to get to where it is today.

According to Odey (1986),

On the appointed market day, having dressed gorgeously in the customary approved circumcisional pattern and fashion, the man who makes the visit walks elegantly to the market square, accompanied by a boy escort. He carries a dane gun on his shoulder as he goes along. On reaching the market, he walks around it. In the process, relations, friends and other admirers present their gifts to him. His boy escort is solely charged with the duty of collecting such gifts. Having gone round the market he finds a strategic position towards the edge of the market where he sits expecting more acknowledgement and presents from the public. (p.13).

Odey pictured the real practice of the people's custom. The people did not only celebrate circumcision but were keen to observe all the rituals involved. The ritual bathing as well as the public outing and visit to the market were done in the open and in the day time. These outings marked the climax of the event. And it attracts great crowds who would

come purposely to admire the celebrants (initiates). It is always a season of eating and drinking, drumming and dancing.

In recent times, however, it became apparently observed that some people refuse visiting the market after the ritual bath. Among these are some who claim to be Christians. Others refuse to go because of their social status as high ranking government officers. There are those who avoid attaining the climax due to shame and social dishonor inherent in the ceremonial costume and appearance of the individual. Some evade the outing because of the legal implication of bearing the dane gun and marching around the open market in accordance with the custom of the people. There are also some ancient traditions that do not agree with the modern social standards of the time. Such stands as a barrier in the real practice of circumcision. One of such is parading oneself around the market with customary attire that brings scorn rather than praises. Whatever the case, the visit to the market brings ritual circumcision to an end.

According to Steensel (2009) in the past, circumcision was performed by untrained non medical personnel, mostly old men or women with crude implement or sharp objects like stone or metal blade (*agube*) that was not sterilized (p. 163) circumcision went on from one stage to the other and every stage bring change that hinges on improved health and safe condition. Steensel (2009) holds that:

Circumcision, "*ebu ubvu*" is closely related to marriage in (Izzi). In the past boys and girls were circumcised as teenagers. This circumcision was surrounded by many rituals. For girls it usually happened when they were mature, "with full

breasts "female circumcision is an important part in the rite of initiation into full womanhood. In it both vulvae and clitoris are being removed. It is considered as necessary- in order to be able to bear normal and vital children. Boys were also circumcised with their age-grade at the moment they liked to enjoy the pain of physical circumcision, (p. 163).

In the words of Steensel (2009) who made an in-depth study on circumcision in the Northeastern Igbo land and especially in Izzi stated that nowadays, boys are usually circumcised some two weeks after birth and girls before primary school age. The rituals for girls however, still take place during adolescence. For boys the rites and rituals are usually never observed anymore, (p. 163).

Rituals are involved in actual circumcision in the Northeastern Igbo land according to Stenseel (2009) is practiced for definite aims and objectives. Mostly importantly it serves as an initiation rite into the concrete way of life of the people. It also accords to a Northeastern Igbo man sense of belong to the community, socially, religiously and politically. After the ritual the circumcised will then enter the fattening room. Many years back, this would last for months. Nowadays, many of those who perform the ritual are either government workers,-students, or are engaged in private or public businesses that don't allow them such a long time in the fattening room. As a result of this, the person can remain only a day or two indoors and take off for his/her work or school the following day. This continues until the ritual bathing culminating in the visit to the market, (p. 167).

Odey (1986) further stated that the bathing ceremony usually takes place in the barn. Some years ago when western culture had not yet penetrated deep in to the people's culture, the circumcised did not bath as long as he/she remained within the confinements of the fattening room. Things have changed greatly today. The circumcised can bathe as often as he/she likes as against the original order. That notwithstanding, the ceremonial or ritual bathing is still being observed. It marks the end of the fattening period, (p. 167). All these observed developments have led to the near collapse of ritual circumcision.

In the Jewish Culture

Drumsuir and Gordon (1999) were of the view that circumcision is practiced in many cultures today. Among the Jews, the tradition is to circumcise boys eight days after birth. The *bris* (ritual male circumcision) is a joyous occasion to which guests are invited from near and far. If possible, ten men constitute a *minyan*, or quorum required under religious laws, to conduct worship services. The parents select a god mother and a god father (*sandak*) for the ceremony. The mother hands the child to the god mother, who in turn passes him to the godfather, whose job is to hold the child during the *miloh* (cutting). (p.412).

Drumsuir and Gordon further maintained that the oldest documentary evidence for circumcision comes from ancient Egypt. Circumcision was common, although not universal, among ancient Semitic peoples. In the aftermath of the conquests of Alexander

the Great, however, Greek dislike of circumcision (they regarded a man as truly "naked" only if his prepuce was retracted) led to a decline in its incidence among many people that had previously practiced it. (p.427).

In the opinion of Drumsuir and Gordon (1999), circumcision has ancient roots among several ethnic groups in sub-equatorial Africa, and is still performed on adolescent boys to symbolize their transition to warrior status or adulthood, (p.435).

The 1st century author Philo Judaeus (20 BC-50AD) defended Jewish circumcision on several grounds, including health, cleanliness and fertility. He also thought circumcision should be done as early as possible as it would not be likely to be done by someone's own free will. He claimed that the foreskin prevented semen from reaching the vagina and so should be done as a way to increase the nation's population. He also noted that circumcision was performed as an effective means to reduce sexual pleasure. "The legislators thought good to dock the organ which ministers to such intercourse thus making circumcision the symbol of excision of excessive and superfluous pleasure" (p.49).

The Jewish philosopher Maimonides (2003) insisted that faith should be the only reason for circumcision. He recognized that it was "a very hard thing" to have done to oneself but it was done to "quell all the impulses of matter" and "perfect what is defective morally." Sages at the time had recognized that the foreskin heightened sexual pleasure. Maimonides reasoned that the bleeding and loss of protective covering rendered the penis weakened and in so doing had the effect of reducing man's lustful thoughts and making

sex less pleasurable. He also warned that it is "hard for a woman with whom an uncircumcised man has had sexual intercourse to separate from him (p.1135-1204).

Gollaher (2001) commenting on the world most controversial surgery -that is circumcision, postulated that in history, prevalent male circumcision is probably one of the oldest of all surgical procedures. Male circumcision preceded female genital mutilation, both operations existed long before Judaism and Islam was introduced. In the absence of any historic, medically confirmed documentation, the origins of the practices have provided much room for speculation but have revealed very few facts. Although the origin of the practices is not entirely clear, it almost certainly began as a religious rite and practice (p.326).

Gollaher (2001) maintained that in all societies where female genital mutilation is practiced, male circumcision is also performed. But throughout history the male operation has existed in many more societies than operations on females. Currently, approximately one -fifth of the world's male population is circumcised, particularly on religious grounds (p.342).

The Catholic Church condemned the observance of circumcision as a mortal sin and ordered against its practice in the **Council of Basel- Florence in 1442.**

Edward Gibbon (1999) had referred to it as a "singular mutilation" practiced only by Jews and Turks and as "a painful and often dangerous rite" (p.99).

In 1753 in London there was a proposal for Jewish emancipation. It was furiously opposed by the pamphleteers of the time, who spread the fear that Jewish emancipation meant universal circumcision. Gibbon (1999) urged men to protect:

The best of your property and guard their threatened foreskins. It was an extraordinary outpouring of popular beliefs about sex, fears about masculinity and misconceptions about Jews, but also a striking indication of how central to their sexual identity men considered their foreskins at that time. (p.99).

According to Gibbon, by 1910, the entry had been turned on its head: "this surgical operation, which is commonly prescribed for purely medical reasons, is also an initiation or religious ceremony among the Jews and Muslims": now it was primarily a medical procedure and only after that a religious ritual. The entry explained that "in recent years the medical profession has been responsible for its considerable extension among others than Jewish children... for reasons of health" (p.115).

Gibbon (1999) further argued that by 1929 the entry was much reduced in size and consists merely of a brief description of the operation, which is "done as preventive measure in the infant"¹ and "performed chiefly for purposes of cleanliness". Ironically, readers are then referred to the entries for "mutilation" and "Deformation" for a discussion in its religious context (p. 117). Non- religious circumcision in English-speaking countries arose in a climate of negative attitudes towards sex, especially concerning masturbation.

In the United States of American Culture

Paige (1978) wrote: "In the United States, the current medical rationale for circumcision developed after the operation was in wide practice. The original reason for the surgical removal of the foreskin, or prepuce was to control 'masturbatory sanity'- the range of mental disorders that people believed were caused by the 'polluting' practice of 'self-abuse'" (p.49).

"Self-abuse" was a term commonly used to describe masturbation in 19th century. According to Paige (1978), "treatments range from diet, moral exhortations, hydrotherapy and marriage, to such drastic measures as surgery, physical restraints, frights and punishment. Some doctors recommended covering the penis with plaster of Paris, leather, or rubber; cauterization; making boys wear chastity belts or spiked rings; and in extreme cases, castration." Paige details how circumcision became popular as a masturbation remedy (p.64).

One of the advocates of circumcision was John Harvey Kellogg. He advocated the consumption of Kellogg's corn flakes to prevent masturbation and he believed that circumcision would be an effective way to eliminate masturbation in males. Kellogg (1975) stated:

Covering the organs with a cage has been practiced with entire success. A remedy which is almost always successful' in small boys is circumcision, especially when there is any degree of phimosis. The operation should be performed by a surgeon without administering an anesthetic, as the brief pain attending the operation will have a salutary

effect upon the mind, especially if it be connected with the idea of punishment, as it may be in some cases. The soreness which continues for several weeks interrupts the practice, and if it had not previously become too firmly fixed, it may be forgotten and not resumed. If any attempt is made to watch the child, he should so carefully be surrounded by vigilance that he cannot possibly transgress without detection. If he is only partially watched, he soon learns to elude observation, and thus the effect is only to make him cunning in his vice (p.72).

The South African children's act (No. 38 of 2005) has made the circumcision of male children unlawful except for medical or religious reasons.

The National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC) was formed in 1986. The mandate of NOCIRC is to provide accurate information regarding male circumcision, to promote children's rights, and to shed light on the medical mistakes of the past Professor George C. Dennitson, founded Doctors Opposing Circumcision (DOC) in 1995 to promote the health advantages of genital integrity within the medical community.

The Circumcision Information and Resource Pages (CIRP) were created in 1995 to provide a source of accurate information about circumcision on the World Wide Web. The development of new information in the medical literature since 1975 caused the AAP to revisit the matter of circumcision in 1989. A new task force under the chair of Edgar J. Schoen examined new data about neonatal pain, behaviour changes, and loss of sexual sensitivity secondary to neonatal circumcision. New data also conclusively established

the role of the human papillomavirus (HPV) in the pathogenesis of genital cancers. This removed any lingering belief that the prepuce somehow caused cancer. The Canadian Paediatric Society revisited the matter of neonatal circumcision in 1996. A new evidence-based policy statement was issued that strengthened its 1975 recommendation, stating that circumcision is medically unnecessary. The CPS recommended: "Circumcision should not be routinely performed."

The incidence of neonatal circumcision in the United States has continued to decline, and stood at only 60% in 1996. In the same year, the Australian college of Paediatrics (ACP) reported that the incidence of neonatal circumcision in Australia has continued its decline to 10%. The ACP termed circumcision traumatic, a possible violation of human rights, and called for parents to be provided with full and complete information about circumcision before making a decision.

Taylor and colleagues (1996) published a landmark article that described original research into the anatomy and histology of the foreskin. The research showed that the foreskin is highly innervated tissue with the characteristics of a sensory organ designed to provide erogenous sensation (p.235).

The Council on Scientific Affairs of the American Medical Association issued a policy report in December 1999 that re-classified neonatal circumcision as a "non-therapeutic" procedure. This may have a medico-legal impact.

The ratio of boys circumcised to boys preserved intact continues to decline in America. In 2001, it had further declined to a ratio of 55 percent circumcised, while the percentage of boys preserved intact had risen to 45 percent.

Male circumcision has been performed on boys and young men for many years, primarily for religious and cultural reasons or as a rite of passage to mark the transition to adulthood.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ideas about phenomena are codified into theories or constructs for easier understanding, analysis and application of hypothesis or statements of fact as the problem presents itself. Many rules and observations constellate together in a particular area to form a theory. Theories are meant to close gaps in existing body of knowledge or offer explanation to advanced knowledge and comprehension in a specified field of study. Nnabude, Nkamnebe and Ezenwa (Eds), (2009) state as follows:

A theory is an analytic structure designed to explain a set of observations. It defines this set of distinct observations as a class of phenomena and makes assertions about the underlying reality that brings about or affects this class. Theories provide workable models or constructs for in-depth analysis of issues or problems on ground'. It springs up from problem conceptual ideas, general or particular problem concerning a noted phenomenon. These may be in the sciences, humanities, arts, social sciences and applied sciences. Theories are therefore

employed by researchers and investigators of natural problems to produce accurate and predictive description of phenomena, (p.117).

Ndukwe (1993) gave more insight to the term "theory". For Him theory comprises propositions which try to explain some phenomena. A theory according to Zima (2007) is a contemplative and rational type of abstract or generalized thinking or the results of such thinking. Depending on the context, the results might, for example, include generalized explanations of how nature works. The word has its roots in ancient Greek, but in modern use it has taken on several different related meanings (p.74).

A theory is not the same as a hypothesis. A theory provides an explanatory framework for some observation and from the assumptions of the explanation follows a number of possible hypotheses that can be tested in order to provide support for, or challenge, the theory.

For Meriam (2007), a theory is a coherent group of tested general propositions, commonly regarded as correct, that can be used as principles of explanation and prediction for a class of phenomena (p.89). From Meriam's view above, a theory could be seen as a proposed explanation whose status is still conjectural and subject to experimentation, in contrast to well-established propositions that are regarded as reporting matters of actual facts.

Theories have also been described by some scholars as "educated guess", mindsets that we make up about how the world works, about why things happen that help us make sense of realities around us". They provide a sensible framework for understanding the

information we are constantly flooded with. Similarly, people are uncomfortably trying to hold lots of disconnected details in mind; but when they fit together into a larger structure (when the items are all in a basket that you can carry as a single object), then it is easy to remember them all. Baskets not only enable man to carry things more easily, they also enable him carry more of them. So a theory, is a coherent framework for organizing what we know about the world, it not only lets man manage more comfortable the things he knows, it also lets him know more, by offering mental places to put it all.

Since the social and political world are full of uncharted and undiscovered terrains, the social scientist engaged in the analysis of data needs a point of entry and a direction-a guide or mental map, before stepping out of his private world into scientific world of enquiry. Hence, theories could be described as frameworks, a mental map and or lenses for identifying, analyzing, researching and describing social or political phenomena. It is a general strategy, a conceptual scheme and above all a grand model for studying any phenomena. In this sense, the terms theory, approach and model could be used interchangeably as analytical lenses in data analysis.

Faleti (2014) made allusion to this when h maintained that "a theory' is an idea or belief about something arrived at through assumption and in some cases a set of facts, propositions, or principles analyzed in their relation to one another and used, especially in science to explain phenomena (p.137).

It is true that the idea and notion of circumcision is a universal phenomenon, but its prevalence varies. It is pertinent therefore to discuss the various theories used in the

work. The theories that are treated are: Evolutionary Theory, The Theory of Tribal Mark or Badge and The Theory of Theonomous Culture.

2. 2.1 Evolutionary Theory:

Affirms the "Historical Evolution of Cultures from the Simple to the Complex" Lewis Henry Morgan (1818- 1881), an American Presbyterian Lawyer and Edward Tylor, a British educator according to Hiebert (1999) were credited with the formulation of the "Theory of cultural Evolutionism" which states that, there was "A historical Evolution of cultures, from the simple to the complex, all from the primitive origin" (p. 70).

The goal of Morgan and Tylor as captured by Hiebert (1999) was to reconstruct the total history of mankind in the most general terms in order to better understand present human conditions. These two anthropologists divided human history into series of progressive stages. Morgan, on his side-traced the evolution of material culture, such as subsistence techniques and technology. He was also interested in changes that take place in social organization of families, kinship systems and societies. Tylor was more interested in the development of religious ideas and rituals (p. 415).

In Northeastern Igbo-land, circumcision which is as old as the people dates the pre-historic period in the primitive age. Morgan and Tylor's postulation agrees with the cultural principles and practices of the Northeastern Igbo people. The people's communal setting comprises the kindred units and families. The religious ideas and rituals are

classified into community owned, and the family. Most religious or cultural rituals are performed either at the family level or in the larger community or jointly done by both the family and the community. Circumcision is one of the religious and cultural rituals that are practiced by the people at the family and community levels.

The Northeastern Igbo people in the ancient period performed the physical operation of cutting the prepuce of the male penis, and the female clitoris in accordance with the tradition of the people. Thus, in the family level, this was done by an expert old woman using a sharp object in the manner as stated by Geoffrey (2002) of the ancient Israel when flint stones were normally used in the operation (Exodus 4: 25, Joshua 5: 2) (p.672). This gradually changed with the use of a 'V shaped blade called "*agube*" and today, the medical instrument for circumcision is being used in tandem with the progressive evolution of culture. The ritual circumcision with its accompanying ceremonies that were done in the primitive way has been restructured to meet with the current cultural changes. The people of this cultural area have modified a lot of practices in both the physical and ritual aspects of circumcision. However, Njoku and Nw^forie (2010) lamented that the modifications as physically observed have removed some important aspects of the custom. The removal; of such elements of circumcision e.g., the ritual bathing, visiting the community market with all the cultural attire has weakened the custom and subsequently leading to its gradual extinction (p.212).

Furthermore, many early anthropologists like Hiebert (1999) were interested in classifying information on strange customs from around the world and explaining the bewildering variety of human activities they discovered (p.369). Classification schemes were developed for houses, dresses, tools, families, kinship terminologies, religious systems and other cultural traits and complexes. This is also relevant to the people of Northeastern Igbo-land as their circumcisional dress code or attire and cultural appearance during the initiation has changed from simple to complex. This possibly may be to modernize the custom. Hiebert (1999) stressed that models of cultural evolution like Morgan's provided more than a description of historical development in terms of man's increasing rationality and human progress. Stages of development for particular traits were not determined primarily on the basis of historical evidence, but on the assumption that there was a logical evolution of cultures from primitive to civilized, and from simple to complex (p. 414).

Hiebert (1999) postulated that Morgan and Tylor were interested not only in describing change but also in explaining it. One of the crucial questions they faced was how to explain the development along similar paths of widely separated cultures. An alternative to evolutionary schemes at their time was the contention that discoveries and inventions are rare occurrences and that diffusion is by far the most common means of people acquiring new cultural patterns (p.414).

While discussing further, Hiebert (1999) reiterated that Morgan and Tylor recognized the importance of the diffusion of ideas they held that the evolution of human culture around

the world is a result of series of similar independent inventions in different societies. In other words, given a certain stage of development, a society was bound to progress to the next stage in development. This can be explained in part, they said., by the fact that human mind operate in much the same way in any society (p.415).

The prime movers of history, according to Morgan, as asserted by Hiebert were subsistence patterns. As they become progressively more sophisticated, people moved to the stages of savagery to barbarism and, finally, to civilization (p.415). Circumcision (physical and ritual) in Northeastern Igbo land has passed through the stages historically from the primitive period to this modern era. All the stages brought changes in the entire process and act of circumcision in the cultural life of the people.

2.2.2. Theory of Tribal Mark or Badge

This theory states "Circumcision as being for "a" or "the" token of a covenant, between Yahweh and Abraham".

Sir Robertson Barton was the proponent of this theory. This theory in the words of Njoku (2015) is defended on the basis of (Gen. 17: 10- 12, Exod. 4: 24- 26, Exod. 12: 443- 44) for the Hebrews at least in part as being 'a' (or "the") token of a covenant between Yahweh and Abraham (p.47).

Njoku (2015) quoting Hasting argued that:

It may well be objected that the concealment of the part of the body affected by such a mark renders this explanation of the theory

improbable, yet there is no doubt even granting this objection that there was circumcisional operation not only among the Hebrews, but also among many primitive people to produce a heightening of tribal pride and consciousness of tribal unity, as it is evidenced by haughty contempt for all who are uncircumcised. (p.47).

It must be admitted that nowhere except among the ancient Hebrews is the contextual interpretation of Gen. 17: 10- 12 most appropriate.

Circumcision means different things in different cultures. Some see it as a tribal mark or badge, mutilations (tattooing, equivalent to removal of the teeth and so forth), partly sacrifice and partly means of recognition. Njoku (2015) maintained that for Barton, such initiatory rites were open to frightful ordeals, in which the neophite's courage was severely tested (p. 48).

Barton according to Njoku further opined that circumcision was "originally a preliminary to marriage and so a ceremony of introduction to be fulfilled by the man or woman about to marry. In Exodus 4: 25, Moses is represented as being in danger of his life because he had neglected the proper preliminary to marriage. In Genesis, on the other hand, circumcision is an external sign of God's covenant with Israel and later, Judaism now regards it in a symbolical sense (p. 48).

The origin of the rite among the Jews is in Genesis 17, which was placed in the Abrahamic period and from all events it must have been very ancient, for flint stones were used in the operation- Exodus 4: 25 and Joshua 5: 2.

Circumcision in the opinion of Geoffrey (2002) was a kind of tribal mark which enabled one member of the tribe to recognize another and thus avoid injuring or slaying a fellow tribesman. Since such a mark was usually hidden, this suggestion does not seem to be valid although the custom of the stripping for combat may have been practiced (such was not, however, normal in historical times). If, however, one thinks of circumcision more as an initiatory rite, whether into the tribal group or into the state of full-manhood, it becomes easier to see how the concept of the tribal mark might function. For the Hebrews the initiation, which was connected with the covenant, took place in infancy although normally the effect of the rite was unseen, its presence or absence provided the basic identification for every Hebrew man (p.702).

Geoffrey's stand coincides with the position of Barton that circumcision is a mark of identity in every tribe that practices the custom. Barton's view of circumcision as a theory of tribal mark or badge totally represents ritual circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land. Circumcision is a covenant between the initiate and the ancestral gods of the land. Kze (2011) emphasized that very significant in the rite is the tattooing of the initiate (lady) from the neck to the lower abdomen, which is called "*ode mbo*" in Ikwo dialect. Some decorate the face and the arms by tattooing them. The act is as painful as physical circumcision itself. It is a sign that a woman is married and should not be approached for immoral behavior (p. 126).

Generally, in Northeastern Igbo-land, ritual circumcision defines manhood and womanhood and marks them as distinct from other members of the society. The rite

makes men and women eligible for communal assignments. As full-fledged members of the community, they are accorded special privileges in any communal ceremony and special gatherings. In Stenseel's (2009) view, different clans use different styles of tattooing as an outward sign of ritual circumcision. It identifies the initiate as belonging to a particular clan or community or even ethnic group. Circumcision with its attendant physical signs is a mark of identity and maturity into adulthood (manhood and womanhood) (p.73).

2.2.3 The Theory of Theonomous Culture:

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) stands prominent among the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century. Tillich, according to Len Hansen (2007) was a popular theologian that propounded the theory of Theonomous Culture, which states that "Culture is a dimension within the multi-dimensional unity of life, the self-creativity of life under the dimension of spirit" (p.155).

Implied in Tillich's notion of "theonomous theory" is the presence of the spirit in culture. The "Spiritual Presence" is his way of talking about the spirit as the revelatory symbol for "God present" in all spheres of life fulfilling an actualization mode towards overcoming and healing life's ambiguities (p. 156). The spirit is not only present in culture, but is actively present in directing culture towards its ultimate aim. Building upon the force of humanism as concerned with "the development of all human potentialities", Tillich describes "theonomous culture" as "spirit determined and spirit

directed culture" that is not anti-humanistic but rather has the humanistic indefiniteness about the 'where to' (turned) into a direction which transcends every particular human aim (p. 158). As a key to the interpretation of history, theonomous theory is part and parcel of contemporary society. Its victory is always fragmentary because of the existential estrangement underlying human history and its defeat is always limited by the fact that human nature is essentially theonomous (p. 158).

Tillich proceeds to offer some qualities of a theonomous culture. Firstly it communicates the experience of holiness of something ultimate in being and meaning in all its creations. Evidence of the impact of the spiritual presence in culture is discernable symbolically in how "cultural creation expresses the ultimacy of meaning even in the most limited vehicles of meaning- painted flower, a family habit, a technical tool, etc.(p, 159).

Secondly, a theonomous culture is affirming of the autonomous forms of the creative process (p. 159). Tillich is careful to point out that autonomy is not about "the freedom of the individual to be a law to himself. On the contrary, it concerns "the obedience of the individual to the law of reason, which he finds in himself as a rational being" (p. 154). Tillich holds that the spiritual presence drives towards the conquest of ambiguities of culture by creating theonomous forms in the different realms of the cultural self creation of life.

The cultural position of Tillich agrees to a great extent with the belief and practice of circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land. Ritual circumcision as a culture of the people has

a focus and that is to produce an adult member of the society. Ritual circumcision transforms an individual from childhood to adulthood with all the responsibilities associated with it. Njoku and Nworie (2010) maintained that circumcision suppresses all the features of a child in an individual for age does not count as long as one subjects to ritual circumcision. It confers on the initiate the physical qualities of a full-fledged man or woman with all the benefits and privileges in the society, (p. 127)

The researcher prefers this theory because of its relevance to this study as it unveils that Circumcision is controlled by spirits. Circumcision is controlled by spirit.

Circumcision as a culture of the people is infested with a numerous spirits and rituals. Rituals and sacrifices are performed to pacify the spirits. This according Stenseel (2009) is to avoid the hostile attack of the spirits to cause havoc. It is a taboo for an initiate to die in any stage in the process of attaining an adult member of the society (p.3 7). Initiation through circumcision is a ritual. The rituals and sacrifices involved in this custom indicate the presence of the spirits. The spirits direct every aspect of circumcision. The spirits protect the initiate against any danger. The graduation of a person according to Njoku and Nworie (2010) from a child to an adult is not a mere physical exercise rather it is a spiritual activity that manifest in the physical actualization of manhood or womanhood. Ritual circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land is in some cases done to ward-off the spirit of childlessness in a man or a woman (p. 120). Sometimes a couple that had no children before ritual circumcision starts having them after performing the custom as may be demanded by the gods (p. 134). It is required by the tradition of the people that

the initiated husband and wife be ushered into full manhood (*Nnajiufu*) and womanhood (*Unwurukpo*). All these show that the spirit is not only present in culture but actively present in directing culture towards the ultimate aim of the society.

Eze (2011) insisted that the initiatory rites in the zones are performed as prescribed by the tradition. It is observed through shaving of hairs, feeding the circumcised into manhood with traditional spoon and leading the initiating woman who had not given birth to a child into separate forest according to communities during outing ceremonies. Circumcision in this context confers the right on the initiates to institute their own shrines, gods, deities etc. After circumcision, one is deemed to have been accepted into all the intricacies of the fabric of traditional societal life and as such is expected to conform thereto (p.238).

2.3 EMPIRICAL STUDIES.

Empirically, circumcision as experienced by many people now is not what it used to be in the past among the Northeastern Igbo people. Many factors have contributed to this. The values and custom of the people have been changed by the forces of Christianity and western education.

Research is the hallmark of scholarship studies in any observed phenomena, be it social, cultural scientific or technological or other areas of interest. It tries to see a relationship between what is observed and what is really practiced as the case of socio-cultural events

and the actual behavior or characteristics of the people concerned. This work is focused on circumcision among the Northeastern Igbo people.

2.3.1 Odey (1986) in his book: "Ritual Circumcision in Ezza and the Christian Faith" emphasized, that, among the Ezza people, the practice of circumcision of both males and females is strictly observed. It is one among the aspects of their custom which they jealously cherish. Circumcision is the cutting off of the loose end of the male penis and the cutting of the female clitoris. Among the Ezza people, circumcision is more than mere physical operation. It is a combination of both the physical operation and ritual ceremonies attached to it. It is rather unfortunate that these ritual ceremonies are themselves regarded as circumcision proper, According to Odey (1986), the church does not frown at physical circumcision. About the origin of circumcision, there is no consensus and general acceptable place of origin of circumcision. Odey traces the origin of ritual circumcision called "Ugvu ogerinya (adult circumcision in Ezza back to the progenitor of Ezza people, Ezekuna). He recounts that initiation (ugva ogerinya) in Ezza Abankaleke was for the purpose of convenience or historical necessity traced back to Ezekuna. Odey (1986) quoting Isukpa (1982) argued thus:

When tracing the origin of things, it is necessary to trace it toward the first being. In mapping out how life began, human beings, aware that they are not makers of themselves, take recourse to the Supreme Being. Also when man tries to find out how evil came he traces it to the first man. So in the same way, the leaders of Ezza are not

wrong when they trace the origin of "*Ibu Ugvu*" to Ezekuna, the first man of Ezza, it is one of those normal ways of doing things. This is done to make the issue more binding, complex, traditional and impelling on non-conformists (p.78).

Since there is no evidence to disprove the authority of Ezekuna in establishing circumcision in Ezza, it is reasonable enough to credit him with its origin.

Ezekuna, the father of Ezza clan with his children and grand children performed their physical circumcision at an adult age. As a result, there was a high risk of bleeding which often ended one in the grave. To reduce the risk, red and yellow cam-wood known as "*ufse*" or "*Odo*" respectively were applied to the wounds as a major healing agent. This agent made healing not to take long time. It is to this effect that Odey (1986) wrote and said:

Conscious of the pain, associated with adult circumcision and the flow of blood, the elders developed rites round it. Each rite was given an interpretation which made the whole affair have symbolic meanings (p.91).

In Ezza as other part of Northeastern Igbo land, there is the initiation rite. In Ezza, ritual circumcision is practiced for definite aims and objectives. The first and the most important of these is that it serves as an initiation rite into the concrete way of life of the people and secondly it accords the Ezza man a sense of belonging to the community- socially, religiously and politically. Odey (1986) summarized this as follows

"Ugvu ogerinya" is the bedrock of the society. Not only is it a social institution, it is a compendium of the people's life, history, life experiences, moral values, social sanctions aspirations, fears, likes and dislikes. It is a means of maintaining the tradition and the custom of Ezza. It is a school of personality formation of the new life of the community, (p.103).

In view of this, it would not be a mistake to say that its binding force far exceeds that of blood relationship in the traditional set up and the communal life of Ezza people. The Ezza people of Northeastern Igbo area recognizes and practices both male and female physical circumcision and ritual circumcision with all the ceremonies attached to it.

Concerning their culture, the Ezza people are so rigid and conservative that the traditional community can scarcely give any credit to anybody who has not measured up to their fixed ideas about customs no matter the magnitude of such a persons' achievements. Odey went further to say that this is one of the reasons why many prominent Christians in Ezza have so easily succumbed to ritual circumcision contrary to their baptismal promises. To do otherwise, would mean losing their political status in an age where political right confers a person with claim of rights. Odey (1986) quoting the traditional elders of Ezza, stated'

There is no doubt that circumcision in its pure nature attracted some traditional worship that is foreign to the accepted norms of Christianity, but this anti-Christian worship has gradually died out. (p.20).

From the above, Odey arrived to a conclusion and took his stand as Roman Catholic priest and declared:

The time has not come and will never come, when the Catholic Church will recommend ritual circumcision in Ezza for her faithful members. Ezza traditional worshipers have the full right to uphold it as their cherished custom. We Christians do not object to that. But our appeal is that they should not impose it on the faithful Christians, (p.48)

Odey, insisted that one of the functions of circumcision is the initiation into adulthood. And since *ibu uhu* also serves this very function, it is often difficult to understand the need for its absolute necessity in the people's custom after a person had circumcised - ritually. To the Christian, marriage is also an occasion of great joy. The book ended in a dialogue between the Christians and the Ezza traditionalist in their effort to come to a compromise on ritual circumcision and Christianity in Ezza community.

Odey (1986) concentrated on Ezza clan only and neglected other clans in the cultural zone. He created more gaps-as he failed to suggest possible ways for peace and harmony among the cultural inhabitants of this Igbo zone. The researcher considers this as a serious omission that need to be addressed and hence this research aimed at tackling this observable gap.

2.3.2 Njoku (2015) in his book: "Theories and Practice of Circumcision in North and Central of Ebonyi State" discussed circumcision in both North and Central part of Ebonyi state. Coincidentally, it is the area of coverage of the researcher's work.

Njoku (2015), asserted that, both oral tradition and archaeological remains believed that Enyi nwegu founded and migrated to the sphere of Ebonyi North and central with his children. Ezekuna became the ancestor of Ezza, Noyo ancestor of Ikwo, Olodo ancestor of Izzi. Ngboejogu was the ancestor of Ngbo people (p.4).

Northeastern Igbo zone comprises majorly of Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi and Ngbo. These four clans have the same ancestral origin. As a people of common ancestral descent, they also share common cultural heritage. Geographical location and influence of neighbouring towns may have affected their culture, yet the core of their original culture still remains. Njoku disagreed with the view that there is no place in Abakaliki where circumcision is more than mere cutting of the foreskin and the clitoris. He rather holds that there is the physical circumcision and the ritual circumcision with their attendant ceremonies. Njoku (2015) in his study of the circumcision practices in both North and Central of Ebonyi state arrived at the conclusion that, the ritual circumcision in Ebonyi North has a lot of similarities to that of Ebonyi Central mode of ritual circumcising. Ebonyi North and Central have identical practical in both physical operation type of circumcision and ritual the ceremonies. Some little differences may be due to some cultural influences and modernization. Njoku (2015) maintained that there is a slight contrast with adult circumcision in Ebonyi North and Central cultural zones which does not only involve the

operation of the foreskin but ritualistic in nature. Adult circumcision in the cultural areas is the second circumcision "*ugvu ogerinya*" which has biblical backing for which the church and any faithful Christian would not allow himself to be lured into it. Again both the physical and the ritual circumcision of the female folk have no backing and lack merit in the first instance. Abraham's wife was not circumcised neither should the Christian females be included in either circumcision. Cutting of the clitoris as a form of circumcision is dangerous to human life, inhumane and violence to human right.

He opined that the Christians are fully in support of the physical operation of the male foreskin but frown at and totally reject the ritual aspect of male circumcision. This according to him is because ritual circumcision (p.23). The ritual form of circumcision according to him is fetish and involves sacrifices. This had led to the disagreement between the church and the traditionalists. It also led to litigation among the church and the traditionalists (p.26).

He outlined some theories of circumcision, discussed them but did not point out who propounded the theories nor stated the theories. The theories discussed by Njoku are as follows:

The theory of drums of affliction

The theory of social distinction

Theory of circumcision as test of endurance

Circumcision as a theory of tribal marvel

Theory of increased sexual pleasure

Circumcision as theory of hygiene

Circumcision a theory of mark of subjection

Circumcision a theory of observation of peril from sexual relationship

Circumcision as a theory of limitation

Furthermore this author outlined the implications or importance of circumcision to the people of North and Central zones of Ebonyi state. Such implications include cultural, social, economic and political impactions. The book is a seven chapter book and ended with the heading "Pros and Cons" of circumcision in North and Central Ebonyi state. He still argued among other issues that circumcision is a means of accepting one's membership in traditional communities of North and Central of Ebonyi state. That circumcision is a societal yard stick for enumeration in the communities. That tradition and culture frown at any one who fails or resists to be numbered as a member of the community through circumcision.

Njoku rejected every aspect of female circumcision because it has no biblical and medical backing. Again it breeds conflict between the church and the people's traditional culture. He quoted the ethnologist (those who study human race) who denounced female circumcision with a tag "ethnographic nonsense" and based on this, Njoku (2015) rejects female circumcision saying "it's a bad custom" and its battered effect led to the hospital theme designated "remains after circumcision". He appealed that:

Those who want to practice the tradition and custom of circumcision are free while Christians should be allowed to keep their faith and their doctrinal practices without compromise. That none should be denied their right and privileges in North and Central Ebonyi for reasons of ritual circumcision, (p.23).

Njoku in conclusion maintained that the important feature of female circumcision is that it serves as an aid to chastity. This assertion is supported by the traditional practice of the people. In the tradition of the people, the ritually circumcised woman makes confession open if she committed adultery. The shame of open and public confession serves as a check on the circumcised woman against adultery. And such adulterous woman will be made to perform certain sacrifices before her husband eats her food. Njoku asserted that ritual circumcision qualifies a man to set up his personal earth deity (*Alobu*) with his ritually circumcised wife that had earlier set up her shrine god the creator (*Okeke uwa*). The author ended with this question, "And what becomes of those who are not ritually circumcised, how can they truly belong?" That is circumcision as Njoku viewed it as an indigene of Northeastern Igbo-land.

Njoku (2015) covered fairly the entire Northeastern Igbo-land; however, he had an opening that needs to be filled. Njoku in his book failed to give good detail of the problems of ritual circumcision in this cultural area. He did not proffer solutions to the already existing problems occasioned by circumcision. He did not address the negative medical implications of physical circumcision. Njoku also failed to suggest how the

people of Northeastern Igbo-land can live peacefully together amidst their different beliefs and cultural inclinations. Therefore, this is the gap the project intends to fill.

2.3.3 Mbiti (1969) says in his book: "African Religions and Philosophy" that the initiation of the young is one of the key moments in the rhythm of individual's life. Through such initiation, the individuals have their rights and obligations which the society expects fulfillment. The above statement of Mbiti is factual and relative in the Akamba (Ghana) setting. Mbiti recognized that circumcision of boys and girls at Ghana (Akamba) were performed by specialists according to sex. Among the Akamba people, while the wound was healing relatives visited the initiates and presented gifts which agrees with the pattern tenable in Ghana (Akamba) setting. Furthermore, there is no set period between the first and the second initiation and Mbiti emphasized that outing ceremony lasted four or five days in Akamba. However, the relativity of what is obtainable may not be compared with some other places for it is peculiar to Akamba. People are prompted by-varying circumstances for instance when marriage is childless, there is the tendency that after circumcision of the wife, the next year would be initiation into adulthood, yet in other cases years could elapse before the initiation into adulthood. He further opines that circumcision took place every four to five years at Massai and all that were circumcised formed a lifelong age group as an expression of solidarity. He analyzed initiation rites in "Nandi" that at the age often, girls and boys sleep together, such that no woman would get married without being initiated. Before circumcision, girls

were examined for proof of virginity. If the girl is found to have lost her virginity the situation then brings shame to the parents, a loss of goodwill to the girl as well as loss of material gifts which virgins received like gifts of cow or sheep. Mbiti portray that "Nandi" people accepted that circumcision is an initiation into adulthood. The importance of circumcision as an initiatory rite could be understood from psychological premises. The study shows that anyone who refuses to go through the ceremony is committing a great offense to the entire Nandi society.

The practice at Nandi is at variance with the practice in Northeastern Igbo-land. In the Northeastern Igbo society, girls were only circumcised after they had been given to marriage. The news of the loss of virginity is normally broken by the husband in his first meeting with the wife. The shame of the loss of virginity brought on the parents and the possible loss of life of the girl in question. Circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land is not only accepted as initiatory rite for the fact of psychological implications but also for the sacrifices it envelopes in both phases youth and adulthood. In other words, it may not be ruled out that circumcision as a passage of rite to adulthood involves an element of fetish practice. However, the custom is upheld as the tradition of elders in Northeastern Igbo-land.

Mbiti wrote on a cultural background far different from the Northeastern Igbo people's culture. Due to the cultural differences between Ghana and the Igbo of Nigeria Mbiti could not reflect properly on the discrimination and disagreement occasioned by ritual

circumcision in Northeastern part of Igbo-land. Again, it may be for cultural background that he created a vacuum by failing to discuss ritual circumcision as a type of rite of passage. Also he did not discuss the significance of ritual circumcision in a particular cultural setting. This gap, then this work intends to fill.

2.4 EVALUATION OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is grouped and discussed under these sub-divisions- the conceptual frame work, theoretical framework, empirical studies and the summary of literature review. The conceptual framework further discussed different views about circumcision such as the circumcision in- the Ancient near East in the Jewish view, circumcision as captured in the Old Testament, and the New Testament and finally it looked at the Igbo traditional view on circumcision. All the different views except Igbo tradition views accepted male circumcision as a custom of the people as supported by God's command that was issued to Abraham. In this command, Abraham was directed by God to circumcise himself and all the male children in his house. The female was not included in the command. However, the Igbo traditional view on circumcision as a matter of tradition and custom holds firm both male and female circumcision. The Igbo tradition supports circumcision in an orderly sequence of both physical operation and the ritual ceremonies attached to it. To the Igbo. female circumcision carries the same value and significance with the male.

Furthermore this chapter outlined some theories under the theoretical framework. Here, the following theories were discussed- The Evolutionary Theory, The Theory of Tribal Mark or Badge and The Theory of Theonornous Culture.

All these theories are in agreement with the fundamental beliefs of the Northeastern Igbo people's practice of circumcision. These theories are the foundation and strength of the Northeastern Igbo people's strong belief and courage in the practice of circumcision. To them, circumcision is not just a custom, but a tradition based on facts and theories. Finally, the empirical studies reviewed the following books: Ritual circumcision in Ezza and the Christian faith by John Odey, theory and practice of circumcision in North and central Ebony State by Donatus Njoku and part of African Religious and Philosophy by John Mbiti. The first two authors John Odey's and Donatus Njoku's books reflected the totality of Igbo traditional view of circumcision, w⁷hile John Mbiti's book refers to the view of another African country (Ghana) on circumcision. According to Mbiti, the Akamba people of Ghana's cultural style and practice of circumcision is not far from the Igbo view and practice of circumcision.

The summary of the literature review highlighted the major facts from related and relevant literatures to this research. The vacuum created by the three authors whose books were reviewed has become an anchor for this research. All the scholars whose books were reviewed took different dimensions but none wrote about circumcision in modern Ebonyi State of Igboland.

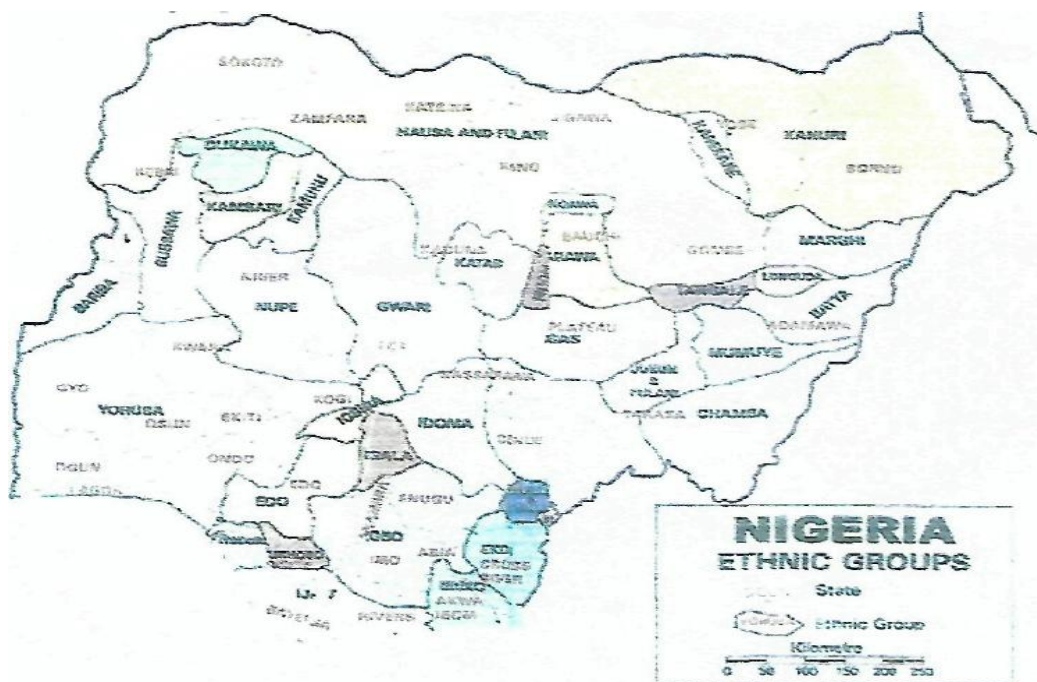
CHAPTER THREE

THE SETTING OF EBONYI STATE OF IGBOLAND

This chapter discusses the setting of Northeastern Igbo-land, the ancestral origin of the clans. Northeastern Igbo-land comprises the following clans- Ikwo, Ezza, Izzi and Ezzambgo. Maps showing the historical and geographical origin of the peoples are shown as follows;

Fig 1: Map Showing the Different Ethnic Groups in Nigeria

The map of Nigeria showing the Igbo race found in Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu and Ebonyi State together with other ethnic groups.



Adopted from Hutchinson Atlas of the World. (Hillary Mc-Glynn, 2001:107)

Fig 2: The Map of Igboland Showing the Difference Ethnographic Regions

The map of Igboland showing the Igbo nation comprising of Nsukka. Enugu (Enugwu), Abakaliki (Abakeieke), Awka (Oka), Agvuu (Ogwu), Okigwe, Owerri (Owerre), Onitsha (Onicha), Ihiala, Obiaruku, Elele. Igarita, Ahoada and Aba.

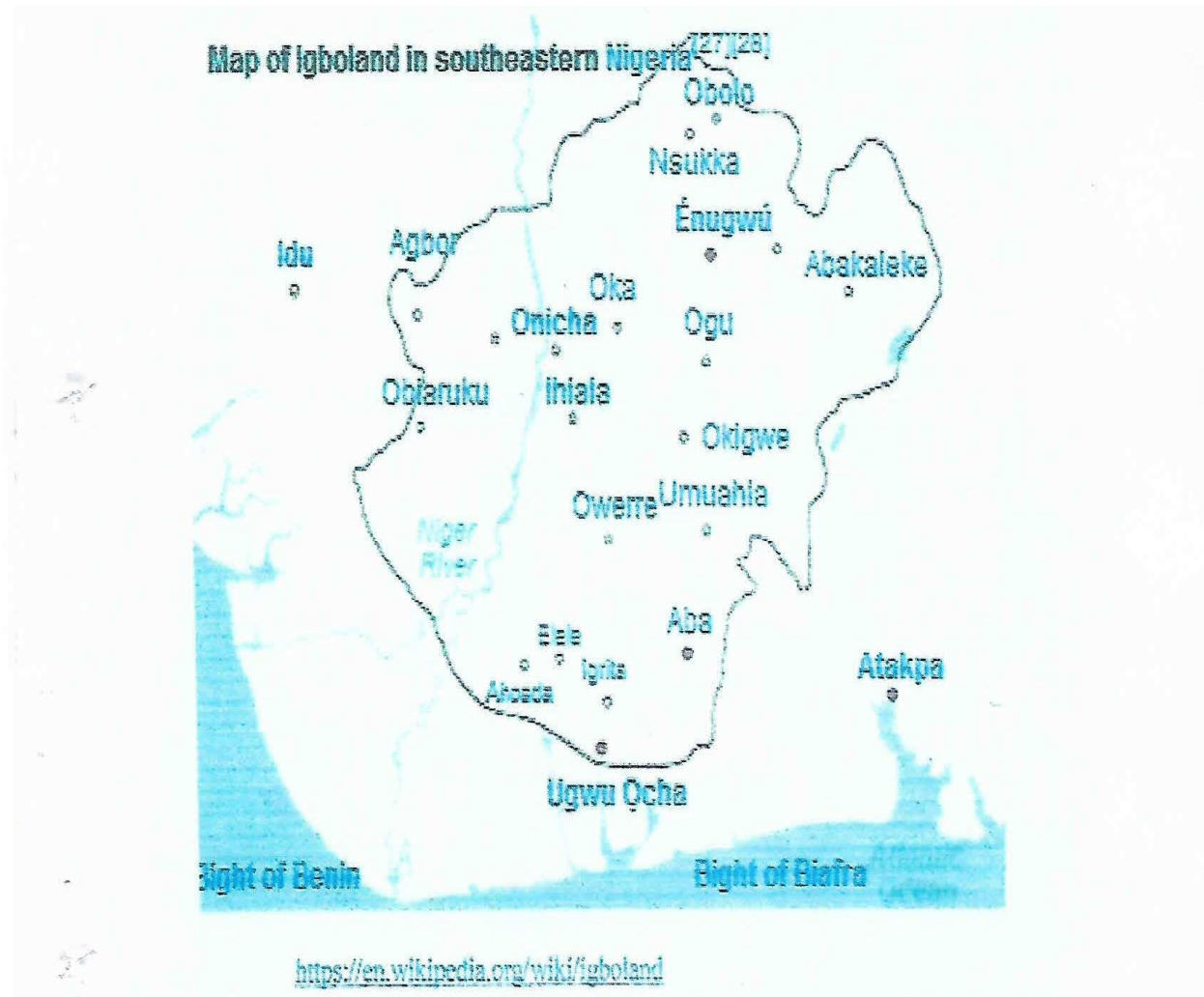
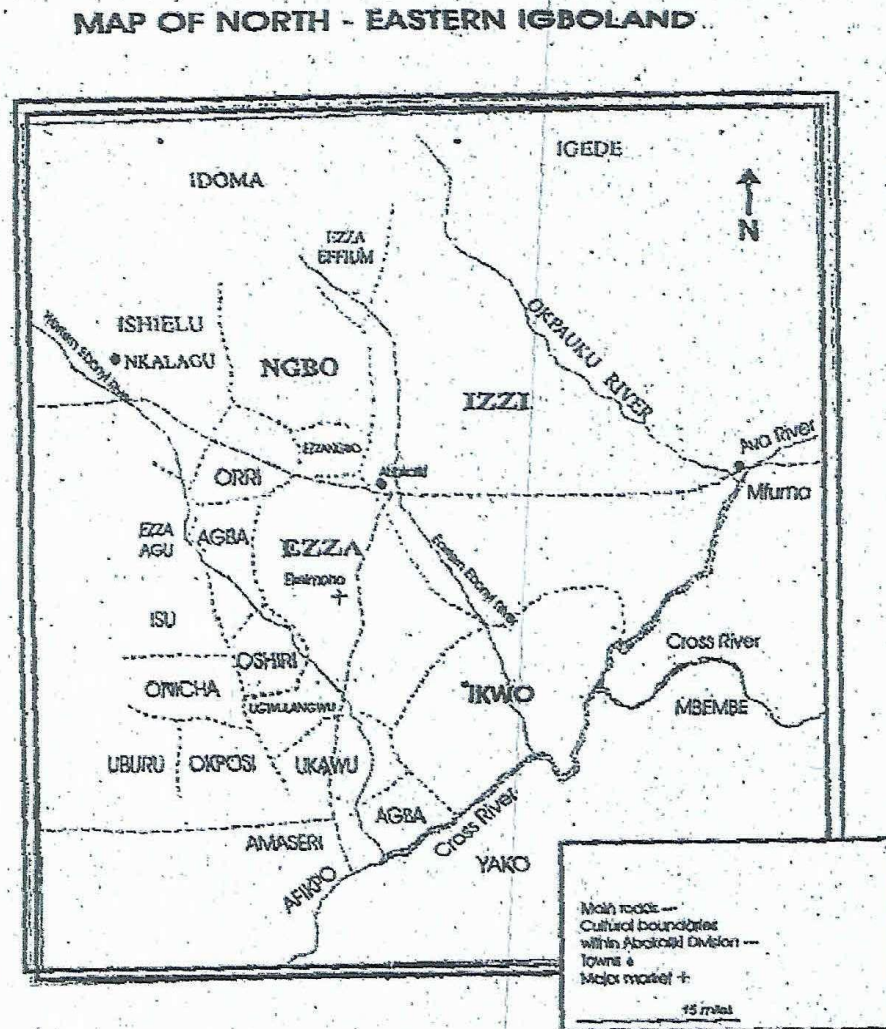


Fig 3. Map of Northeastern Igboland

This maps shows the major clans (groups) that make up the Northeastern Igboland. The major clans includes: Ezza, Izzi, Ikwo and Ngbo.



Adapted from Map of Abakaliki Division 1960 (Ottenberg, 2005:7).

Fig 4. The Map of Ebonyi State Showing Local Government Area

The map of Ebonyi State showing the various local government areas where the different clans area located.

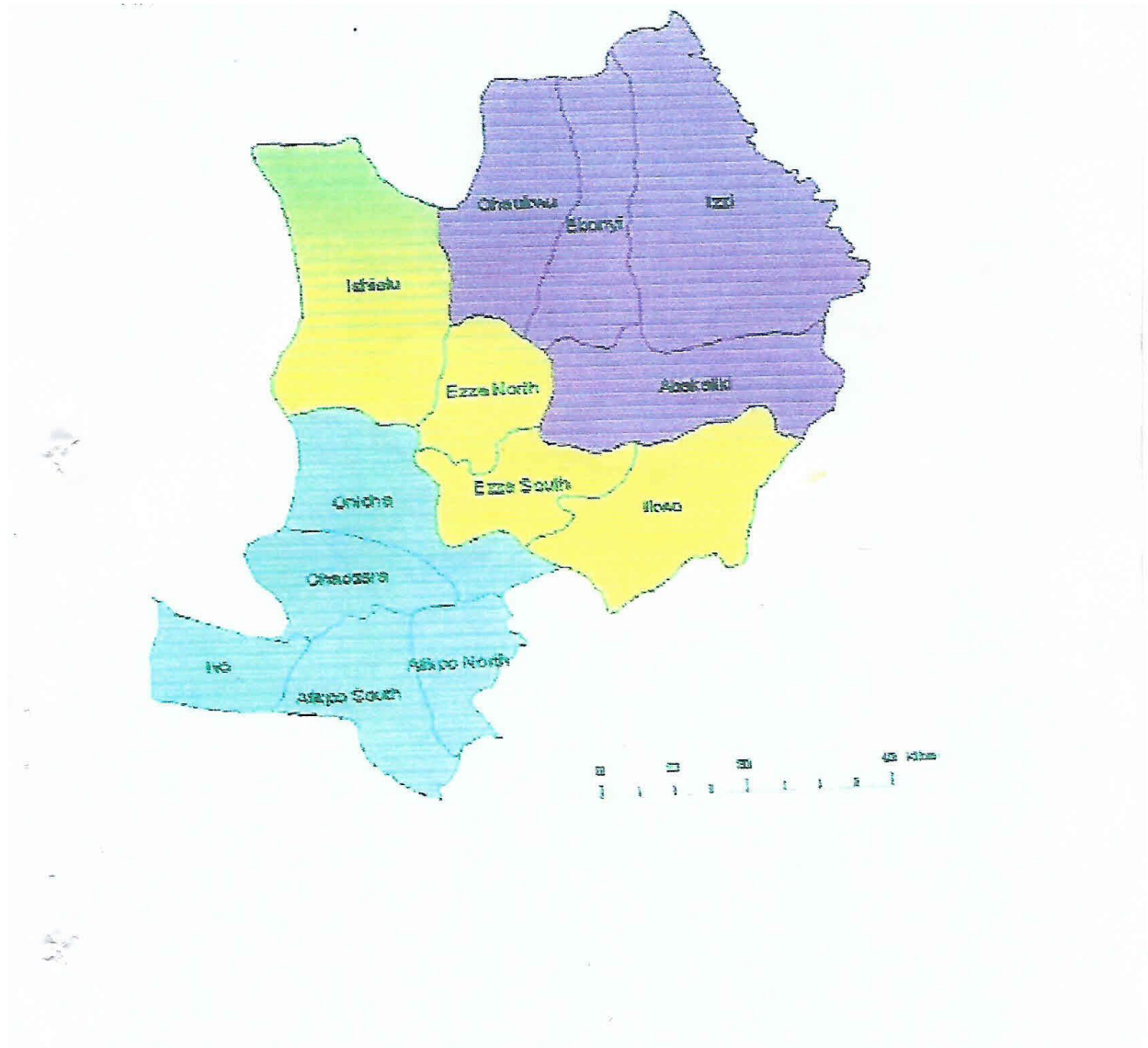


Fig 5. Map of Ezza, Izzi, Ikwo and Ngbo Clans.

This last map separates Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi and Ngbo from the rest of their neighbours in Ebonyi State. These clans Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi and Ngbo are historically and politically grouped to form the entity called Abakaliki.



3.1 THE PEOPLE'S HISTORICAL SETTING

Historically, the Northeastern Igboland consists of Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi and Ngbo clans. They are so classified because in the beginnings, these clans had been one in culture, religion, and in all other life activities. In language, settlement patterns, land ownership and agricultural system, these group of clans that make up Northeastern Igboland are closely related.

This chapter substantiates that claim that Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi and Ngbo clans have common ancestral descent as well as share common geographical, agricultural, political and social institutions. It also provides enough background information about the area of research. According to Nwangama (2011), the Ezza clan occupies the Northeastern edge of the Igbo territory that was formerly in Enugu State but now in Ebonyi State of Eastern Nigeria. Ezza clan occupies an approximate land mass of 854.37 and 1941.75 square kilometers (Echegu, 1988). Ezza shares boundaries with the Izzi people to the North, the Ikwo and the Agbo in Cross Rive State to the East, the Akpoha, the Okposi, the Ugwulangwu and the Oshiri to the South and the Agba, the Ezzamgbo, the Orri, the Ntezi and the Okpoto to the West (Nwangama, 2011).

Njoku and Nworie (2010) narrated the even thus, the Ezza people believe that the legendary ancestor of Ezza is Ekumaenyi. Though very little is known about the personality of Ekumaenyi, oral tradition believes that Ekumaenyi was the grandfather of Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo people. Ekumaenyi gave birth to Ezekuna, Olodo and Noyo who

Njoku and Nworie (2010) narrated the event thus, the Ezza people believe that the legendary ancestor of Ezza is Ekumaenyi, Though very little is known about the personality of Ekumaenyi, oral tradition believes that Ekumaenyi was the grandfather of Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo people. Ekumaenyi gave birth to Ezekuna, Olodo and Noyo who were the ancestral fathers of Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo respectively. In other words, Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo were brothers and grandchildren of Ekumaenyi with Ezekuna being the father of Ezza,; Noyo, the father of Ikwo and Olodo, the father of Izzi (p.78).

However, Njoku and Nworie (2010) noted that, contrary to Ezza's belief that Izzi is her brother from the same father and mother; the Izzi people believe that Ezza has the same father with them but not the same mother. This legend makes Ezza the half-brother of Izzi (p.53).

Echegu,(1998) subscribes to Odey's account of the origin of Ezza. However he added a slight difference by presenting Ekumaenyi as the ancestor only of Ikwo and Izzi. According to him, Ekumaenyi had two sons, namely, Noyo and Nodo and a daughter called Anyigor, all from one wife. Noyo settled at Ekpelu where he founded the Ikwo; Nodo settled at Amegu and founded the Izzi clan; whereas Anyigor, their sister got married to Ezekuna an outsider who settled at Anmana where he founded the Ezza clan. In this slight variation, Ezekuna is not the half-brother of Ikwo and Izzi but their in-law (p.98).

In the present day Ebonyi State, Ezza people live in two large local government areas, namely, Ezza North and Ezza South. Ezza South is the ancestral home of their founder-Ezekuna Ekumaenyi.

According to Okeworo (2012) Ikwo Noyo occupies the south Eastern flank, sharing boundaries with Izzi in the North, North East and North West; Ezza in the West; Abaomege in the South West and Cross River State also in the South West, South and South East. Eze who quoted Chapman alludes that the Ikwo people occupy an area of approximately 270 square miles (p. 12) Ikwo clan has varied versions of their genealogy. Okeworo (2012) opined that Noyo was the son of Enyi Nwegu who' migrated from Igaia in Benue State of Nigeria. According to Okeworo, Noyo was the captain of a band of warriors who raided and defeated the semi-Bantu races of "Osopo", "Igbo Abali" and "Orri" who riginally dwelt in the place called Ikwo today. He gave birth to Omaka (the father of Ekpeli, Ekpaomaka and Awoke Omaka), Agom Ugbala (the father of Alike), Mkpoke (the father of Echara) and Enyinwegu named after his grandfather (and the father of Inyimegu, Amegu and Igbudu (p. 18).

Eze (2011) opined that:

Ikwo, Ezza and Izzi are said to have originated from one father called Ekumaenyi. Eze gave a clue of the person of Ekumaenyi as one of the descendants of the early Israelites who were displaced and then moves

towards West Africa from the Northern part of Nigeria to the Northeastern part of Igbo-land, When he finally settled down, he gave birth to Ezekuna, founder of Ezza; Noyo, founder of Ikwo and Nnodo, founder of Izzi. For Eze, Enyi Nwegu (mighty elephant of the area) must have been a nickname given to Ekumaenyi due to his prowess within the geographical area. (p.48).

Izzi clan according to Ogbodo (2006) is located in the world map between longitude 80 20oE and 60 30oN. Izzi is bounded by Ukele and Osopong of Cross River State in the East; Tiv and Idoma of Benue State in the North; Ezza. Effium, Ngbo and Ezzamgbo in the West; and in the South by Ikwo and other Ezza people (p.23).

Steensel (1996) claims that Izzi clan covers a land mass of about 900,000 and about 2,264 square kilometers. Most of the Izzi people live in the Northern part of Ebonyi State. They are spread over three local government areas, namely; Abakaliki, Ebonyi and Izzi Local Government Areas. Other parts of Izzi clan live in Ado and Oju local government areas of Benue State and some in Iyala Local Government Area of Cross River State. The Izzi are part of that entity often referred to as "Wawa" people, which include Ikwo, Ezza and Ngbo (p. 137).

Omogo (2012) asserted that the Ngbo belong to the Northeastern Igbo group. The exact time they migrated to their present place of abode is not known. However historians agree that they migrated under a common ancestor named Ejeogu. Ejeogu was a hunter who in his hunting expedition settled at a place known as Ngbo today (p.41). Another version, according to Omogo, is that due to the harassment of the Izzi people by the Ezza from the South and Otobolo, a warlike people from Benue State of Nigeria, a tremendous migration was made by Izzi people towards the West. They later divided themselves into groups. One group led by Ngbomu Onyeukwu settled at Ngbo while the other groups led by Obo Echara Ugo settled at a place now called Unwuegara Izhia (p.54). Omogo did not lose sight of the legend which claims that Ngbo people were heterogeneous in the beginning but through the process of regeneration, procreation and evolution, they came to speak one dialect. Accordingly, the Ngbo migrated from various places which among others include; Ijinke in Nkanu Local Government Area of Enugu State and Okposi in Ohaozara Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Some were said to have migrated from Ikwo Local Government Area, Izhiamgbo and Agala in Benue, Ntezhi, Ezhilo, Iyonu and Nkeleha (p.60).

According to Eze (2011), Ngbo is a brother to Ikwo. Eze traced the Origin of Ngbo to a time Izzi invited Ikwo warriors to help her push back encroachers from Benue. Tradition, according to Eze, holds that many Ikwo warriors died due to talisman planted against them.

The Izzi people buried the Ikwo warriors in a mass grave and then gave Ikwo people land around the mass grave to live till this day (p.77).

Eze (2011) also traced another origin of Ngbo quoting Isichie who claimed that the Original Ngbo came into being as a result of migration of Nchita from Ekpelu to the tumultuous zones of Izzi and Ezza to show his strength. Nchita Omaka was the greatest Ikwo warrior of the time. He migrated to Effium and settled there with a handful of "*Okonko*" members who served as his bodyguards. This accounts for the yearly visit which Nchita used to pay to his father Omaka in Ikwo with a live cow and which the Ngbo people continued after Omaka's death till much later. It is important here to recall that the Ikwo and the Ngbo people do not shed each other's blood. This is because of the covenant they entered into not to harm each other for any reason as brothers (p.79),

Steensel (1996), in his own version opined that Obo Echara Ugo, a grandson of the eldest son of Ngbomu Eze, the founder of the Isheike sub-tribe of-Izzi left his community and settled more to the west which is now called Izhamgbo. He, therefore, became the founder of Izhamgbo clan. As they multiplied, they became the Ngbo clan. Still considering another version of the Ngbo origin, steensel wrote that the origin of Ngbo was ascribed to Erege, whose first son was "Onyeupfu" Onyeupfu Erege settled at Ekwashi and was the founder of the Ekwashi community (p.139).

Stenseel (1996) in his narrative stated that the second son, Ezeta Erege, became the founder of the Unwuogudu community. Other sons of Erege formed the other five communities of Ngbo.

Steensel did not lose sight of the third version which maintains that Ngbo originated from Ejeogu, the son of Egara of Izhamgbo. Egara was an immigrant to Izhamgbo from Amegu Izzi. He was a hunter who came to settle at Ekwashi to hunt. From his sons the several Ngbo communities descended. This accounts for why there is no land boundary between Izzi and Izhamgbo and they cannot shed each other's blood because they are brothers (p.145). Generally, the Northeastern Igbo people are warlike. This is because of their common descent from Ekumaenyi nicknamed Enyi Nwegu (the elephant of the area) because of his warlike character. The progenitors of Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi and Ngbo expanded their territorial frontiers through war and infiltration. They were always in quest of land till date.

Kalu (1996) in his discuss about the Ezza clan, described the Ezza people thus:

They live in scattered clusters separated by open, rolling dry land. Yam determines every aspect of their life and history and this combined with the habitat structure to create land hunger. The people are at present warlike, wild and turbulent, they are fighting for the necessities of existence. They were constantly at war with their neighbours; the Izzi and Ikwo for land and from such acquisition build up a new community. (p.87)

Isichie (1977) asserted that " the Ikwes (Ikwos) were the fierce fighting tribe of the district, who used to raid their neighbours, but were themselves so unlikely to be attacked that they arranged their dwellings with more regard to space than security" (p.240). Eze (2011) explained the reason for the constant raid of neighbours and pattern of settlement of the Ikwo people, thus:

Land for Ikwo man was synonymous with wealth, since he is predominantly a farmer. The quantity of land a man had by implication determined the much of farmland that could be available for his agricultural activities in addition to his enterprising spirit. He also needed a farm land and grazing land around home for easy access to food, other than the public ones which may be at a distance from home. (p.60).

Chapman (1930) in one of his reports emphasized the quest for land as a major reason for the constant wars between Ikwo and her neighbours. He observed that:

The advance of the children of Noyo is remarkable; the descendants of Noyo appear to have found little difficulty in forcing the indigenous population to retreat, until they reached Ebonyi River on the East, the Izzi clan on the North and Ezza on the West. Later as the population increased and the desire for more land arose, the warfare began afresh beyond Ebonyi and the state of continual interplant warfare with Ezza began (p.8-9)

Muoneke (2006) maintained that the first white man visited Abakaliki in 1898 and some years after, Abakaliki came under British incursion. With government station built at Abakaliki, it became an administrative division under the former Ogoja province. When Nigeria became independent in 1960, Abakaliki became independent in 1960, Abakaliki became a province with Alikpo and Obubura division added to it (p. 12). This development brought part of Cross-river - (Obubara) to be part Igbo land. This was political arrangement made for easy administration purposed.

These four Izzi and Ngbo, the Ezza and Ikwo clans in present political dispensation make up North and Central senatorial zones of Ebonyi State.

Following the Local government system in Nigeria, the above four major clans are divided into Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Ishielu, Ohaukwu, Izzi, Ikwo, Ezza North and Ezza South Local Government Areas (p. 20).

Izzi, Ikwo Ezza and Ngbo clans though fragmented into different local government areas today, share common ancestral lineage as well as language, culture, religion, political and socio-economic experiences.

The Abakaliki ancient kingdom, presently comprise the Ezza, Ikwo, Izzi and Ngbo clans. These clans are bound together by a common cultural heritage. Their ancestral parents handed d own all their c ore cultures to them as a t radition. All these cultures w ere securely kept until recent times when cultural adulteration or infiltration through contact with foreign cultures contaminated the people's rich culture.

3.2 Socio-Cultural Setting

Circumcision is a socio-cultural practice of the people of this cultural area. The Northeastern, Igbo people value ritual circumcision because of its importance in their socio-cultural life.

"P. Nweke (personal communication, May, 24, 2017), has this to say that the-relevance of circumcision to the social life of the people can never be over emphasized. It is highly regarded and observed by the people of this sub-cultural area.

The commencement of (*Ishiugvu*) initiation to adulthood starts in Ikwo with the Ekpeli, the ancestral home of Ikwo. *Ishiugvu* initiation ceremony in Ikwo is very significant to the people because it has so many other cultural activities linked with it in a cultural calendar year. When *Ishi-ugvu* Ekpeli initiation takes place on Nkwo- Igboji market day, all that got initiated in the' in Ekpeli would rob red cam-wood and proceed to Igboji market the following day. Igboji market is the largest Eke market in Ikwo that holds "every two Eke days (*Idzu Ikwo*), which is eight days of Ikwo week according to their traditional calendar. Igboji market is so important and strategic to the people's culture. The traditional calendar of the people is tied to the market. Every Igboji day counts as the end of the weekdays in Ikwo.

The rite of circumcision is tied to the traditional calendar of the people. Eze, (2011) collaborating, opined that the significant appearance of Ekpeli people in the market

serves as a public announcement and a sign of authority to every community in Ikwo to commence their own *Ishi-ugvu* initiations from the subsequent Nkwo market days. The public appearance of *Ekpeli Ishi-ugvu* initiates to Igboji is significantly referred to as "Outing of Ekpeli to Igboji or Outing of the bar-head to Igboji" (*Ekpeli lufuru Igboji or Ishiocha lufuru Igboji*) (p.435).

It was observed (Eze Ogo N. Ngele, the traditional ruler of Oriuzo Ezza Autonomous Community, personal communication, June, 19, 2017), that the relevance of ritual circumcision to the social life of the people is very significant and so many of them.

Example, after initiation into adulthood, one is expected to continue to climb the social ladder through the taking of titles and other social activities. Such titles are "Ogbueswi". "Ogbuinya" "Njeke" "Iphe Ogbo" "Ogbu-ishi". Title taking is an economic investment in our place (Abakaliki). It is an insurance that sustains the holder and his children for generations. Often families are accessed and honoured by the number of titled men they have. Title taking gives one the privileged of being listened to in the public gathering. It enhances one's chances of ascending into political positions in ones community. Title holders are always entitled to a lion share of communal land. In public gathering, they are given special seats. At death, they are buried inside their houses and are thereby assured of good places in the world beyond. As part of befitting burial rites, funeral processions of titled men are taken to the market places for the world to see

3.3 Occupation/Traditional Pattern of Farmland Allocation

In Northeastern Igbo-land, the economy revolves around agriculture. The people are predominantly farmers. The people practiced the system of shifting cultivation until recently when land became scarce.

A Nwede (personal communication, May, 10, 2017), commenting on how agricultural land is shared among the people for farming, declared that both now and then land was allotted to members of the community by the age grade responsible during such period. Land allocation for farming or for other good purposes was only for the ritually circumcised adults.

The uncircumcised were regarded as children no matter their age and so were not 'entitled to own land for any use. Njoku and Nworie (2010) echoed that the uncircumcised are infants and are not qualified to own a parcel of land rather they can buy from others for purposes of farming or building. Land is valued in Ezza and therefore should not be given to children (p.28).

C. Ugama (personal communication, June, 11, 2017) had this to say, that the uncircumcised cannot own land. He explained that the ritually uncircumcised cannot belong to an age-grade. The land both for farming and for other uses is shared by the age-grade and the allocation is done according to age-grade in an orderly manner. This simply

means that ritual circumcision qualifies one a member of the age-grade which grants one the authority to ownership of land in Northeastern Igbo-land.

P. E. Ede (personal communication, June, 15, 2017), discussing the secret behind the rich agricultural life of the people and the connection between farming and circumcision in the cultural farming life in the area, he maintained that in earliest period, there was no mechanized agriculture as may be seen in some places today. It was manual agriculture with mutual aid as a means of increasing speed and large farms. People organized themselves in groups, age grades, work-groups and in families and work for each other in turns. Land for farm work was owned by families and also communally and was shared to age grades for farming. This is how the people made large farms and prospered in farm products. The unfortunate -situation is that the ritually uncircumcised were not to take part in the organized labour system of work. Thank God for the church that is fighting some of these orders. Before this time the uncircumcised can only join farm work group on the level of assistance to someone or in the name or place of another person.

It has been observed (J. U. Amiara, personal communication, June, 15, 2017) that, the people do not farm only for feeding but for various other reasons including, economic, social and cultural. And he, said, farming is given a place of prominence in our place. Social status was revered and social position was determined by the large yam barn, domestic animals like cows, number of wives and children. Prominent positions were meant for the circumcised adults who were also rich farmers.

Farm products can be sold for money. In the people's culture, poverty is attributed to laziness.

3.4 Traditional Administrative System

Steensel (2009) observed that the Council of Elders was the body of Lawmakers while the age grades implemented decisions and policies of the clan. There was no friction over functions. This was because there were checks and balances through which peace and security was ensured while patriotism was inculcated in the people (p. 127). Ban-. U. Onwosi (personal communication, June, 12, 2017) in a reaction to the notion, "traditional administration" argued that administration is one and the same everywhere provided it has a legal backing.- He stated that Ngbo clan like other communities and c .ins, as one of the cultural clans in Northeastern Igbo-land has administrative set-up made up of the Council of Elders as the Supreme body. There are the title holders, the age-grade, the priests/fortune tellers and the Council of women. In the tradition of the people it is a taboo to include (*akpapi*) the uncircumcised in the administration of the land. Even the bible said "woe is the nation whose king is a child". The ritually uncircumcised are not elected or appointed into leadership positions. They are not allowed to participate in communal work, contributions, worship/sacrifices etc.

Eze (2011) asserted that the ritually uncircumcised are excluded from every public

activity as cleaning/clearing the markets, playgrounds, ponds, shrines, roads, and such other important public place's (p.442). The ritually uncircumcised are adults in stature but infants before the culture. The people's culture has no place or future for the ritually uncircumcised.

N. N. Ede (personal communication, May, 27, 2017) in his view on how communal administrative meetings are summoned in his place, said, that the village, community or clan meetings for any purpose was summoned through the town crier with instruments such as iron gong (*ngogo*), flute (*upioku*), whistle (*wushiri*), wooden gong (*ekwe*) and drum (*nkwa*). He went on to say that the town crier would first beat his drum or blow his flute to attract the attention of the people before announcing his message. It was compulsory for all concerned to respond to the town crier's summons.

Eze (2011) echoed that such meetings were moderated by the Council of Elders which also discharged legislative, executive and judicial functions. In the council is the - "*Ishiali*" or *Ezeogo* who might not be the eldest in the community but was always the eldest man from the direct line of the ancestral founder of the village. The *Ishiali* according to Eze (2011) offered sacrifices to the community deities, spirit agents and the community ancestors. The elders could suggest policies to the *Ishiali* to approve. The *Ishiali* was invested with legislative, executive and judicial powers. The priest also played significant roles in the running of the society as he remained the oracl or mouthpiece of village deities, spirit agents and the ancestors. His word was law and was obeyed to the letter by everybody including- *Ishiali* (p.451).

CHAPTER FOUR

CIRCUMCISION IN EBONYI STATE OF IGBOLAND

Ritual circumcision is a major traditional custom in Ebonyi State of Igboland, It is as old as the people. The people inherited the custom from their ancestral parents. However, it is done differently in the different clans that make up this cultural zone. The method and the application of ritual circumcision in one clan differ from what is obtainable in another clan. The timing ranges from July to September every year. By implication, the different clans celebrate this ritual within these three months but at a separate and distinct cultural season according to the custom of a particular clan. This arrangement is made in other to accommodate an inter-cultural visit and participation during the celebration.

One of the strong facts about ritual circumcision in Ebonyi State of Igboland is that it does not change with time or modernity. Accordingly, its original practices have remained the same. Social changes have not influenced it. The traditionalists and other stake holders of the custom have refused any form of modifications in the practice of the custom.

M.N. Oginyi (personal communication, May, 3, 2017), reacting on the question, "Is ritual circumcision still of any value of your people" explained that in the people's worldview, ritual circumcision is a string or rope that holds the people's life.

A change or modification of the rite of circumcision in any form amounts to sacrilege and therefore renders the whole practice inefficacious and unacceptable to the gods. Oginyi contended that ritual circumcision has no past and no present forms but remains relevant and acceptable to the people at all times.

Child circumcision is the societal foundation of the cultural area of the Northeastern Igbo-land. As observed concerning the social, spiritual and political "benefits of ritual circumcision to Ezza people (S. A. Igboke, personal communication, May, 7, 2017) that the recognition of an individual male or female begins at the celebration of ritual circumcision. The historical reckoning of such individual's moral, ethical, social sanctions and aspirations becomes effective from the point of ritual circumcision. The cultural orientations and inductions during circumcision are all geared towards the preservation of the culture and traditions of the cultural zone. S.A. Igboke corroborating with the people's popular stance, maintained that circumcision is the tutelage stage for personality formation of the new life of the community.

4.1 THE PROCESSES OK PHYSICAL CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision, generally follow some traditional patterns or processes in a systematic way according the custom of a particular culture. In this process, one stage follows another in a traditional sequence. During the olden days, physical circumcision was done at the

adolescent age of the initiate in Northeastern Igbo-land. It was observed traditionally by both male and female in the entire cultural area.

This culture was a must to do-for all the inhabitants of this Igbo cultural zone. The observance of this ritual is a global matter, though the pattern may differ according to the people's custom. In all the Clans of Northeastern Igbo-land, the same process is followed in this order:

4.1.1 Female Child Physical Circumcision ("*Ugyu egirima Unwanyi*")

According to the tradition and custom of the people of Northeastern Igbo land, female child is not circumcised unless she is married and the husband returns her for the circumcision.

I. Nwokwa, who is the traditional Ruler of Ekpaomaka autonomous community (personal communication, June, 10, 2017), said, that there are traditional steps or preparations towards female circumcision according to the custom of the people. He further noted that before a husband sends his married wife to be circumcised she might have conceived or has stayed up to a year without conception with the husband. In Ekpaomaka of Ikwo Local Government Area, there is cultural fattening of young girls ("*Otsutara*") about to be married and in their outgoing ceremonies they dance in the playground as gifts are given to them after which they join their husband's family representatives to her marital home.

The second aspect or form of circumcision of the female child is performed at the early stage of the first pregnancy and such circumcision of the pregnant lady may be prone to danger of bleeding to death.

He asserted that in either case, the traditionalist husband consults a native doctor to ascertain what will be the fate of his wife as she undergoes the rite. When the husband gets to the in-law, the father in-law would ask what findings the man had made about the circumcision and thereafter, the father in-law will consult another native doctor to find out or confirm the findings of his son in-law. The shrine of god of fertility that created human beings would be set lip for her in her father's compound and sacrifices offered on the eve of the circumcision.

At what age is a girl presumed mature for circumcision, was the discussion question to R.N Oke (personal communication, June, 10, 2017), In response, she argued that the age of the circumcision of a female child varies and depends on whether the girl was given into marriage very early in life or whether the girl took-in immediately after marriage (*"Omipko Ite ophe mobu O.gboso jee bu Ugvu"*). But where she remains for sometime without being pregnant, the parents would request that she be brought for second circumcision (*"Elenya ebuugvu"*). Recently, some people started indulging in circumcising their female child within the first week of birth or the first month of birth and in the clinics or hospitals in other to avoid bleeding to death and other hazards

N. Eche (personal communication, June, 21, 2017) addressed the issue of the real meaning of Circumcision and how it originated in other parts of the world or in Northeastern Igbo-land?

Eche reiterated that before he became a Christian he participated in all the stages of circumcision. That circumcision was for both male and female. It has a primitive origin which the modern generation never cared to trace but they do it because their forefathers did it and handed it over as a core cultural value to be kept and observed. It may not be easy to fix the time and place of its origin or how or who started it. What is important is that it is an ancient cultural practice that guarantees an individual a place and position in the community of one's birth. Other parts of the globe may be experiencing the same problem of origin like us here. Originally circumcision was done at puberty here in Ikwo as a cultural measure to control or maintain virginity among girls.

F. Uwa, a retired Nigerian Army and an indigene of Ezza, (personal communication, June, 22, 2017), stated that circumcision originated from their ancient forefathers, "Ekumaenyi". He circumcised himself and his children and commanded the practiced to his lineage. Though the exact date cannot be traced but the practice has come to stay in Ezza land. The medical risk is traditionally regarded as a threat not a reality.

4.1.2 Male Child Physical Circumcision ("*Ugyu Egirima Unwoke*")

For a male child to be circumcised, the parents must ensure that all necessary precautions are taken to avoid loss of life. C. Okiri, (personal communication, May, 7, 2017) in a chat reiterated that there are necessary traditional precautions to be taken before the physical circumcision of the child or adolescent male or even female is carried out. He responded that the father of the child consults a native doctor (*Njibia*) to enquire if the child is circumcised, whether things will go well with the child? In most cases, sacrifices were offered to the child's playmates (*Ndogbo*) in the spiritual world so that such spirits allow the child to live. D. I. Njoku (personal communication, August, 10, 2017) echoed to this fact and said that the sacrifice could be offered with a puppy (small dog) and (personal god for the child) will be set up ("*Obashr*") while traditional fathers could go further to set up the god that drives away spirit of born to die ("*Obu Ukwa*"). In the days gone by, the male child circumcision was done when people had grown up and advanced in years but now, most people;" circumcise their male children at primary school age, eight day of birth to one month old and first day to eight days depending on the health of the child and level of parental awareness. This in the people's slogan is called "*obu utsu unwu sukulu*" pupil's circumcision. It is so called because no traditional practices or ceremonies are involved until the child is grown and qualified for the ceremonies.

N. Egbe, the traditional ruler of Echara autonomous community (personal communication, 19, 2017) had this to say concerning the necessary traditional preparations towards the physical circumcision of a male child. According to the culture

and custom of their land, before a child's circumcision, such a child must have been presented to either one of the family shrines (*"Agashi or Nwanyi-Igwe mobu Ohenwata ,mobu Ohe-nwa"*) on the eve of the operation for protection. The operation is normally carried out behind the mother's house, sometimes in the father's barn by a traditional specialist, where the father or mother is a specialist, then he or she can equally carry it out on their child (*"Nwanyi'O bu Ugwu lee eshi-jiya lee nwa-ya"*). Literally if one claims to be a traditional specialist one must have circumcised one's own child first. Male circumcision is a must to our people because it is a test for manhood and preparation for Courage and endurance. It is training for courage at the face of any danger. He concluded by saying that it is manly to be circumcised.

N. Egbe went further to explain how the operation is done, as he affirmed that before a boy is operated, such a child will be made to sit down on the ground and lean backwards on somebody while others hold his hands and legs. The male specialist uses two mid ribs of palm branches passed through fire (smeared through fire) twisted together to tie the foreskin from the genital pod and a hole is dug in between the child's legs for the blood to gush into. The specialist demands for hot water that would be brought immediately after pressing the genital pod, the specialist opens his bag and brings out special herbs he had picked, squeezed it and pressed some drops on the wound. Then the specialist selects other special herbs which he had picked smear them through fire and use them to wrap the male genital organ.

The circumcised is immediately led into the house and made to sit on the mat while other people fan him and yellow cam wood or white chalk would be smeared on his body. The specialist would return to the place of operation and pick the foreskin to bury it between the lined up trees demarcating the mother's backyard from other parcel of land that surrounds the home stead. The burial of the foreskin is significant as it is a major part of the body.

The wound would be attended to every morning and evening consequent upon which oil could be applied to the wound, while others may wish to apply iodine and bandage or local medicinal herb is squeezed and applied to the wound.

In recent days, children especially the males in the words of N. Egbe can be taken to the hospital for circumcision in order to avoid the risk of bleeding to death at adolescent. This would not be regarded as the physical operation (cutting the foreskin or clitoris of the male or female organs respectively until the person is fully grown to perform the outing ceremony or given into marriage and the husband fulfills all the rites). The exercise is an interim measure carried out on primary school pupils (*"Obu utsu Unwu sukuliT*) not traditional circumcision as required by the custom or tradition of the people.

4.1.3 Male Child Circumcision Outing Ceremony (*Ofuu Utsu Egirima*)

For the outing ceremony of the boys, traditional dance is arranged within each village for the young men to dance.

Concerning some cultural or social significance attached to the outing ceremony of boys A. A. Orogwu (personal communication, June, 27, 2017) observed that in the course of the outing, ceremony of the boys, their families, friends, other admirers and in-laws give them gifts. To conclude the outing ceremony, the young men usually with their female folk, would be expected to have sexual inter-course among themselves as an expression of their maturity ("*Ogbu oku lee utsu*"). This they jokingly confess among their feminine and masculine groups with whom they associate themselves. However this exercise is now silent or never observed again today.

Child circumcision announces the acceptance of the circumcised into the cultural society. According to Orogwu, whatever happens to such a person after the circumcision is taken seriously and has actually not only affected him as a person but also the entire society to which he has been admitted through the rite. Child circumcision serves as preparatory stage into martial life. The male who has been circumcised would be accorded recognition by the society and as such has gained the rights and privileges of the society. The cultural zone accords to all who are circumcised traditional right to own land. Such persons can then be admitted to belong to the most junior age grade in the society mainly charged with the responsibility of clearing grasses on the road, in the playground and around the village shrines located in the forest or near a body of water or the ancestral home.

D. I. Njoku (personal communication, August, 10, 2017) lending his voice opined that when the circumcised faults either in his family or village he will be fined according to the degree of the offense. After a child's circumcision, the circumcised can be numbered among tax payers. Child circumcision in traditional society conveys on the circumcised the right to choose a portion of land where he can build his own house and live to raise a family. Apart from being circumcised as a child, the' tradition holds that if the uncircumcised happened to have any sexual relationship with a woman that would amount to sacrilege which could lead to death of one or both parties and in any case, the land shall have to be appeased.

4.2 STAGES AND PROCESSES OF RITUAL CIRCUMCISION IN NORTHEASTERN IGBO-LAND.

The ritual circumcision is quite different from the physical type. The child physical (male and female) circumcision graduates the child from childhood to a traditional legitimate male or female. This level of traditional recognition leads to the stage of adulthood through the processes of the act of ritual circumcision.

It has been observed (A. Nte, personal communication, May, 19, 2017), that the church had done much harm to their culture. According to him there are two forms of circumcision in their clan (Ikwo), the real cutting of the foreskin of the penis and the

cutting of the clitoris of the female organ, and then the real circumcision which is the ritual circumcision. Both male and female fully participate in the ritual. The custom of ritual circumcision is performed in stages in Ikwo as in other component clans that make up this part of Abakaliki cultural identity.

Nte, highlighted that because of the nature of female initiation ritual, taking pictures are not permitted by the stakeholders of the rite. Nudity and some other stages that are done in the night made it disrespectful and uncivil to take such pictures. Taking a picture of a nude woman is a dishonour to womanhood.

It was gathered from (N. Eche, personal communication. June, 21, 2017) that for female circumcision, both the physical and ritual have almost gone to total extinction in the entire Northeastern Igbo-land. The practice is very rare today. It is becoming a thing of the past. Generally, there are stages in both male and female circumcision that taking pictures and videos are not allowed. The video and picture coverage of all the stages of the ritual is difficult. However, the good thing is that the story of circumcision is well known by both young and old in the cultural area. It can simply be narrated by almost every indigenous member of the clans who is resident and interested observer of the practice when it is performed.

4.2.1 Female Genital/Ritual Circumcision

According to (A. Nte, personal communication, May, 19, 2017), the tradition of the .people maintains many stages or processes from physical to ritual circumcision, which culminates in the final stage of ritual bath and outing ceremony. These initiation stages into womanhood have been compressed to four major stages.

The first stage: This is the-stage of actual genital mutilation - that is the real cutting or removal of the clitoris - *Ugvu Egirima*.

The second stage: The stage of the real act of ritual circumcision - *Ugvu Ogurenya*

The third stage: Is the stage of ritual shaving of the woman's head - *Okpuishi Ugvu*

The fourth stage: The stage of ritual bath and outing - *Ofuu Aswa*

The first stage: the stage of the real cutting or removal of the clitoris.

A. Nte, in continuation with the discussion stated that the initiation process into womanhood begins with genital mutilation which is the removal of the clitoris. This takes place after a girl has got married and not while she is still with her parents. It is the husband that sponsors the cost of her wife's circumcision into womanhood. The man who is prepared to initiate the wife into womanhood takes the wife back to his in- laws with the prescribed items which vary from village to village and from clan to clan. This is done between November and December, which are the fourth and fifth months in Abakiliki calendar. The news of the girl's return for circumcision thrills the village. On the appointed day for the circumcision, everybody around the vicinity looks forward to know whether the girl will cry or not.

The mother of the girl will usually advise the daughter to be courageous and endure the pain.

O. N. U. Eze (personal communication, March, 21, 2017)) added that palm wine tappers are always attentive early in the morning of the day of the physical circumcision, while on top of the palm trees, waiting for the cry of a girl who may not have courage to bear the, pain of the operation. The painful cry of the girl when heard • by the palm wine tappers attract their shout and alert to other men who will join in making jest of the girl(s). Children also join to shout on top of their voices mocking the girl as a weak-minded fellow. Those who are able to endure the pains are praised and celebrated as heroines by the husband's relatives and friends. This is because bravery was considered a virtue in the past. Girls who exhibited the heroine qualities of endurance during the physical circumcision are marked for bravery.

A. Nte went on to stress that the cutting of the clitoris otherwise called genital circumcision "*Obufu Akpapi*" is carried out traditionally and locally by an elderly woman who is an expert or has good knowledge of the act though without training. She is always helped by other older women who held the girl for the operation.

The instrument for the operation was the local V shaped object (knife) called "*agube*" but, today razor blade can be used. From the day of circumcision, the girl will enter the fattening room till the next stage of initiation. While the girl is in the fattening

room, she is cared for lavishly by her husband, relatives, friends, close associates and admirers with items like plantain, banana, groundnut, pawpaw, fish, goat meat, different kinds of meat, etc.

He further stated that it has been alleged that circumcision is associated with bleeding and death since its inception. One may wish to ask why then are the people still interested in the practice? This is because to bleed or death in the process or as a result of circumcision is a taboo in the people's culture. If, a boy or a girl bleeds during circumcision such a person will be made to make confessions of either an immoral act or any other evil committed. Bleeding during circumcision or death resulting from circumcision is a taboo. Bleeding or death cannot ordinarily occur during or immediately after circumcision. The gods are always there to secure the initiate from any harm or danger. If everything is right and normal, the gods cannot watch an initiate bleed to death. One thing that stands out during the genital circumcision is the proof of moral or virginity innocence or guilt of the girl to be circumcised.

It has been observed (O. N. U, Eze, personal communication, March, 27, 2017) that the circumcision process normally reveals to the women whether the girl has been promiscuous or not. Traditionally, the girl is not expected to have had sex, not even with the husband before circumcision, but that was then, for now anything can happen and will be explained as the lifestyle of this generation. In the tradition of the people, where the girl is found guilty of immoral act, the story is told everywhere to the relatives and

friends, hold their faces in shame. This restriction from sex before circumcision is to maintain morality which is the hub of the traditional society.

When the wound sustained during the removal of the clitoris has healed, the girl will yield herself to her husband for the first time for sex.

J. O. Nte (personal communication, May. 7, 2017) commenting on the innocence or guilt of the girl maintained, that if the husband during this first sex discovers that the wife is still a virgin, he celebrates her with his friends and this had always attracted a lot of regard for the girl, her parents and friends from the society. The healing of the wound and the end of the fattening is always marked with a ritual bath. In villages where the genital circumcision is separated from the second initiation, the girl may return to the husband while preparing for the second initiation. For villages where the circumcision is joined to the second initiation, the girl after the ritual bath marking the end of the circumcision period stays back with the parents for the second initiatory rite.

In his observation (O. E. Nweke, personal communication, May, '23, 2017) maintained that in their clan Ngbo, the girls in their ritual bath ceremony process in group from one village to the other until all the villages in the entire clan were visited.

The ritual procession always attracts multitudes of admirers who line along the road to admire the initiates. This ceremony takes days and will only be concluded when all

the villages in the clan are visited. He lamented that the female physical circumcision with all the accompanying ceremonious activities has totally died in their clan.

The second stage: the ritual circumcision stage "*Ugvu Ogurenya*". The second initiatory rite always called "*Ugvu Ogurenya*" according to (O. N U. Eze, personal communication, March, 27, 2017) comes after the clitoris has been removed. Husbands often hasten to see their wives pass through the second stage because of the desire to leave youth status and all the denials associated with it. Furthermore, the second initiatory rite forbids a woman from extra- marital affairs for there is a punishment that awaits the woman caught in the act.

This second stage is the only stage that never involves any operation. This traditional ritual does not take place just anywhere except in the yam barn. He reported on how ritual circumcision is done in his traditional culture and how the ritual adds value to the cultural life of the people. It is now celebrations all through. That in the event of the ceremonies, there are chains of cultural rituals and feasts that are observed. However the celebrations can never start until the traditional ritual circumcision into adulthood is fully completed. The actual initiation follows thus: The father or guardian gives directives to a young boy who climbs a palm tree, cuts off the palm fronds including their boughs. Two boughs ("*Isiku-Ugbongu ebo*") are placed for the woman to place her genital behind her mothers or step mother's fire wood shade ("*Azu Nkpata nku*"). Her hair shall be shaved leaving the center of the head untouched where she has some days -

to stay before the family will come to perform .the rite. But where one has to place her genital on the palm tree boughs a night preceding the performance of the rite by the family, one's hair will only be shaved that day proper. On the fixed day between middle of July and early September annually the whole family will gather at the compound of the father or guardian of the woman to perform the rite.

C. Nwoke (personal communication, May, 10, 2017) commented and said that in Izzi clan his home, that in the yam barn, two or four boughs "*Ishiku Ugbongu*" would be placed together for the initiate to sit (briefly) while nude until the ritual is completed. A promiscuous woman may pretend to have sat on the boughs even when she had not. This could be to avoid the gods catching or punishing her if she indulges in adultery after initiation into womanhood. During this initiation, the husband, parents and friends of the woman can kill goats for her. The goats will be skinned and the skin dried and kept for the outing ceremony. The skin of goats form part of the "woman's attire on the final outing ceremonial day.

Eze-ogo N. Ngele, the traditional ruler of Ezza Oriuzor autonomous community (personal communication, June, 19, 2017) in the discussion about the significance of the barn in the rite of ritual circumcision to adulthood, said, that it is unfortunate that western culture has denied us of our rich culture. However, in ritual circumcision, the yam barn is symbolic. The barn is the abode of the fertility god and the personal guardian god "*Uwa*" of the

members of the family. It is a sacred sanctuary for our people and other clans of this area. They believe that the god of fertility grants fertility to the adherents who approach it. This is why the rite of the "*Ugyu Ogurenya*" and the ritual bath is done in yam barn. This position agrees with A. Nte's assertion on the issue of ritual circumcision and bath. He contended that the yam barn is symbolic in every form of circumcision because it is the abode of the fertility god who gives and sustains life.

The third stage: The level of shaving of the woman's hair - *Okpuishi Ugyu*

Following the second stage is the level called **shaving of the hair** "*Okpuishi ugyu*".

This forms the third stage in the process of ritual circumcision.

In this stage Eze-ogo N. Ngele, further posited that on the third day of the third stage of the initiation into womanhood which is marked by the shaving of the hair is traditionally called *okpuishi ugyu* certain items are provided by the husband of the woman. These items are customarily provided in accordance with the tradition of the people. The materials are itemized under the matters of ritual circumcision.

For D. I. Njoku (personal communication, August, 10, 2017), the "*Ishi ugyu*" ritual begins with an old woman in the family shaving the hair of the initiate. She would also shave the hair of a small girl who would act as the initiate's maid. After the shaving of the hair, kola nuts are broken into pieces, put in a wooden tray and shared into eight portions. The striped frog "*Usokpo*" and the rat meat "*Ewali*" are also shared and placed beside the eight portions of kola nuts while an elderly man traditionally prays over the

kola. The prayer is followed by the initiatory oaths administered by another elderly man who collects in a wooden spoon one of the portions of the kola and meat and hands the same to the initiate, the man will ask; **which is the greater, the future or the past?** The initiate while accepting the kola and meat will answer that the future is greater.

When the initiate is administered with the circumcisional ritual oath, what happens to the remaining portions of the initiation items, as was observed by (P. Ogbuebo, personal communication, July, II, 2017) who began by rejoicing that the days of bondage were "over. She declared that she was talking out of experience. That she participated in the rite before she became a Christian. According to her this third stage is the stage of oath taking for the initiate before the officiating celebrants who are also witnesses. The initiate is expected to receive the first portion of the meat and kola with her mouth while she receives and keeps aside the subsequent three portions with her hand. The old woman who shaved the hair receives three of the eight portions in the tray while the last portion goes to the old man who said the prayer. The initiate's maid also receives kola and meat following the same process. The remaining kola nuts, meat, cooked food, yam and drinks would be shared among the ritual barber, elders, title holders and the rest of the kindred " members present. This marks the end of the initiatory oath- taking.

The Fourth Stage: this is the stage of ritual bath and outing - *Ofuu Aswa*

The fourth stage is the ritual bath and outing which is of two forms. The first form is what O.N.U. Eze (personal-communication, March, 27, 2017) called "*Ofuu aswa ejii*" which is undergone by barren men and women whose guiding spirit is wicked.

Consenting with Eze above, F. E. Udeogu (personal communication, June, 15, 2017) captured a detailed discussion of the scenario of what ritual bath is and how it is done in his cultural setting, that circumcisional ritual bath is the concluding part of the initiation to adulthood. It is in every sense a ritualistic bath. In the early hours of the day of the ritual bath, the female initiate bathes and is led by an old woman to the designated place for the ritual outside the home. According to him an elderly woman takes the lead, carrying a small bowl of molded yellow cam wood and two lumps of molded ash while the old man follows behind the initiate. This arrangement is not only for ritual purposes but for the security of the initiate. At the ritual ground, they will hide behind a bushy corner and the old woman will silently offer to the initiates the lumps of cam wood and ash. The initiate is taught to reject the offer silently by simply shaking her head left and right each time the lumps are offered to her. After the ritual of offering and rejection, the initiate is led round the mound "*Ogiji*" in the community playground four times. He emphatically affirmed that after this, the initiation into womanhood is said to have been completed. The initiate is led back home before day break because of her nudity. This first form of ritual bath and outing is not usually celebrated because it is associated with mixed feelings of barrenness and bad omen. It is never celebrated because it is a sad incident. This one is called the sad outing - *Ofuu Aswa Ejii*

The second form of ritual bath is the celebrated one. It is performed by those who had children before the initiation and those whose creator or "*Uwa*" are good. In the second form of ritual bath and outing, according to R. A. Nwuzue, (personal communication,

June, 15, 2017), in her narrative, she indicated that she rejected to participate in the ritual, though she affirmed having good knowledge of the ritual because every free born of the clan knows the story very well not minding if you are an initiate or not. She narrated that the initiate is led to the play ground at dawn dressed with wrapper around her waist and decorated with dry goat skins killed during her fattening rite. She is also accompanied by her circumcisional ritual maid. People gather at strategic points to admire and hail her as she matches to or returns from the place of ritual outing. At her parent's home, it would be all celebration and thank's giving to God who saw the initiate and her family through the days of initiation. It is a taboo for an initiate to die while in the process of initiation.

Later the same day, preferably during the evening, the husband of the initiate would send his family members and friends to go and bring his wife home as a fully fledged woman. She maintained that at the husband's compound, celebration will continue. Having graduated into womanhood, the woman is now accorded independence from the mother-in-law. This independence is marked by the ritual called "*Okpobe ekfu*" or erecting and cooking on a tripod stand. After this ritual of independence, the woman and her husband would erect their own earth goddess which is traditionally called "*Alobu*", the earth - goddess of morality.

K. Uwa (person communication, June, 17, 2017), still on the processes and events of ritual circumcision, made this comment that in the past, the initiate was not to bathe during the fattening period but rubbed with the yellow or red cam wood only. However, today the tradition has changed. The initiate now bathes as often as she wished while the

ritual bath takes place on the last day of the fattening. The normal bathing for hygienic reasons does not replace the traditional ritual bathing.

Njoku and Nworie (2010) reported that in Ezza, the bathing ceremony of the female initiate is followed by gifts of wrapper which symbolizes a new birth and transition into womanhood whereas all the wrongs she committed at childhood are overlooked and regarded as child's affairs. She is now made to become conscious of herself and is held responsible for her moral conducts (p. 123).

The customary covering is not ordinary. It is significant in the ritual rites of womanhood. Ikwuagwu (2001) postulates that the covering of the initiate with a wrapper further signifies that her body solely belongs to her husband who covers her nudity (p. 96).

4.2.2 Male Ritual Circumcision

Adult male ritual circumcision follows four traditionally stages as the female. The stages form the process involved in ritual circumcision. The male adult ritual circumcision or initiation to manhood in Northeastern Igbo-land is the bedrock of the traditional society. "This is because without ritual circumcision, the society will be rid of adults and as a result the whole system in the society will collapse for lack of adults to sustain it. The recognition of an individual as a potential ancestor and a mark of the beginning of the adult life are engrossed in the practice of ritual circumcision. There are some important facts concerning circumcision that, before a man is initiated into adulthood, such person

must have been married even if at the point of such a rite the person be a widower or that the wife eloped and not married at the time. Tradition permits an arranged marriage that would be divorced after the rite is accomplished ("*Aluta-achi-fu*"). This was observed by (F. Nteoma, personal communication, June. 27, 2017), who elaborated on the traditional practice that permits a man to initiate with another woman who is not his legitimate wife and he explained that legally it is not proper but in the people's culture, there is a traditional provision for such a situation since this rite is a must do in our culture. Tradition provides that there are sometimes some husbands whose personal gods (*uwa*) may have not permitted to use their legitimate wives to get initiated or they will die. In such a situation, a mock marriage with a widow is arranged to perform the rite and after the ritual the mock marriage is dissolved. A man, who is unable to marry or keep a legitimate wife but wants to escape the dangers of not being initiated, can as well arrange a mock marriage with a widow and get initiated. However he must provide all the required traditional items for marriage to the parents of the widow. This links the other stages with the next level of the process of ritual circumcision.

N. Ochenu, a traditionalist (personal communication, October, 17, 2017) reacting to why there are restrictions to where and how the initiation can take place and the social impacts of the place of the initiation, pointed out that the initiatory rite is performed at the compound of the man's father or compound of the guardian where the father is deceased or in a situation where the father relinquishes his right to the guardian. The rite into adulthood in the zone is performed by the family of the man, which involves two actors

and two actresses. The activities performed by these two men and two women do not contradict rather they complement the other. However, before undergoing through those rites, native doctors are consulted in order to ensure that the initiate does not get hurt or run into any danger or death while the period lasts for that would mean a taboo. Sacrifices are offered as the native doctor directs and gods (idols) set up to avert and appease the aggrieved spirits. There is an idol which the uninitiated cannot set up until he has completed the initiation into adulthood. One of which is the setting up of earth deity which becomes the haul mark that he has been fully initiated. The rite is normally performed yearly between the middle of July and early part of September (before "*Nnesweoha*" - end of traditional year festival or festival at the end of cultural year). The place where the ritual is done matters so much because it confers on the initiate the right inheritance in such compound or family. The initiation activities start with the family of the initiate gathering to plan the rite.

Picture on page 104 shows this event.

He went further and added more facts that in traditional societies initiatory rite into adulthood, involves the women folk of the man's family to prepare porridge which they present to the entire family tree and guests of the initiate ("*Ine echa-ogwo* "). **The picture on page 105 expresses this.** The father or guardian presents to the family kola nuts, meat of rabbit, frog (*Usokpo*); white chalk with traditional spoon in front of the eldest man of the family for invocation. The host requests his guests to initiate his son or step son into adulthood. Traditionally this type of request is always accepted and performed because it is a process to the initiation. Where any of these minor steps

Fig 6: A life picture showing a man (an initiate) in a cultural meeting, in a customary setting with his age mates and friend's, planning for the ritual circumcision ceremony (see page 104).



Source: *Ogbuagu Graphic/Publication, Abakaliki 13 – 09 – 2017.*

Fig 7: Shows a Cross-Section of the family (*Umunna*) meeting to start the process of the initiation rite. Before them is the traditional Kola-nut, pepper dish (*Ukpara*) with kola nut, grinded pepper, fish, dried meat, chalk, (*ndzu*) for the initiation (activities) rituals, (**view it 02 page 105**).



Source: *Ogbuagu Graphic/Publication, Abakaliki 13 – 09 – 2017.*

are omitted then the initiation is null and void for the gods will reject it and in such a case sacrifices are made to pacify the gods to restore the act of initiation.

Again, according to him, the man is required to sit in the middle of the semi-circle that the people had formed. The eldest in the family will take the white chalk to make a circle and invoke the ancestors to be present and assist them in the rite they are about to perform. Then he takes up the kola nut, picking one that has four lobes after breaking, picks its parts, pick part of the rabbit and prays to their ancestral fathers, the land and the high god who lives on high and at the conclusion of his prayer he drops those things at the center of the circle he had made with the white chalk.

It was observed that, the cultural implications of these processes of male initiation to adulthood (F.N. Elem, personal communication, June, 28, 2017), P. Igwe (personal communication, June, 21, 2017) and S.E. Nweke (personal communication, June, 22, 2017) shared almost the same view with Elem's opinion above. He said that, a woman is invited to shave the man with the traditional blade ("*Agube*"). **The picture is on page 107.** Then a man will feed the man with the traditional spoon for four times and in each case he puts it into his mouth while the initiate transfers it into his palms for three times but in the fourth round he has to chew the kola nut. Rabbit and frog before the family. In continuation of the process another woman is called as narrated by these men interviewed, now to smear the head of the initiate with red cam wood and from that moment, such initiate would not be beaten let alone given a knock on the head rather should only carry loads on his shoulders until the outing ceremony is carried out. Such initiate becomes a special person in the community ("*Nwenu ote uswe mobu unwu ophongu*"). The family members share their kola and eat the food communally

Fig 8. Shows the more elderly among the living family members (*Unwanna*) gathered for traditional (ritual shaving) of the man (initiate's) hair. In front of the family are jars of wine, and other materials for the ritual shaving. (See page 107).



Source: Ogbuagu Graphic/Publication, Abakaliki 13 – 09 – 2017.

Fig 9. This shows the initiate, partly in an attire for the traditional ritual. (as in page 108).



Source: *Ogbuagu Graphic/Publication, Abakaliki 13 – 09 – 2017.*

as well as drink wine; at the end, the eldest will take the dirge to pour libation at the middle of the circle he had made with the white chalk to establish the act as irrevocable.

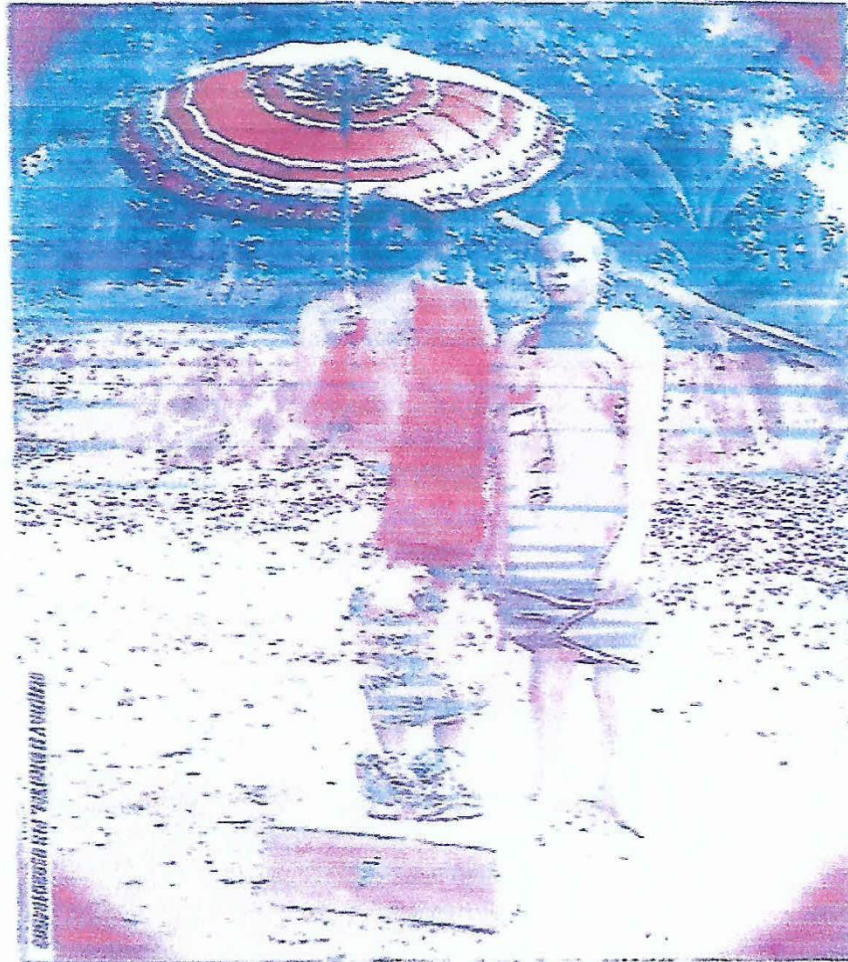
The men take their bath and are properly dressed up in the traditional attire. **The pictures on page 107, 108, 110 and 111 describe the activities.** The father or guardian presents kola nut and meat to the initiate to welcome him into adulthood and the ancestors are prayed to ask their spirits share in the kola nut.

O.N.U. Eze (personal communication, March, 27, 2017) said that, before the incursion of Christianity the circumcised were equipped with loaded local gun and traditional knife ("*Okpu ungara*") and a bag. The circumcised holds the traditional knife while his attendant carries his bag which contains grinded tobacco poured into small containers, prepared by his friends and relatives that he had invited previously and hosted to do the job ("*Ogwe enwure* ").

This bag according to him also contains among other things, tobacco leaves and sliced yams (four pieces). The local gun in those days was carried by one of those that would join to escort the initiate to where he will perform in the forest. As a result of geographical spread all initiate into adulthood cannot come to one place.

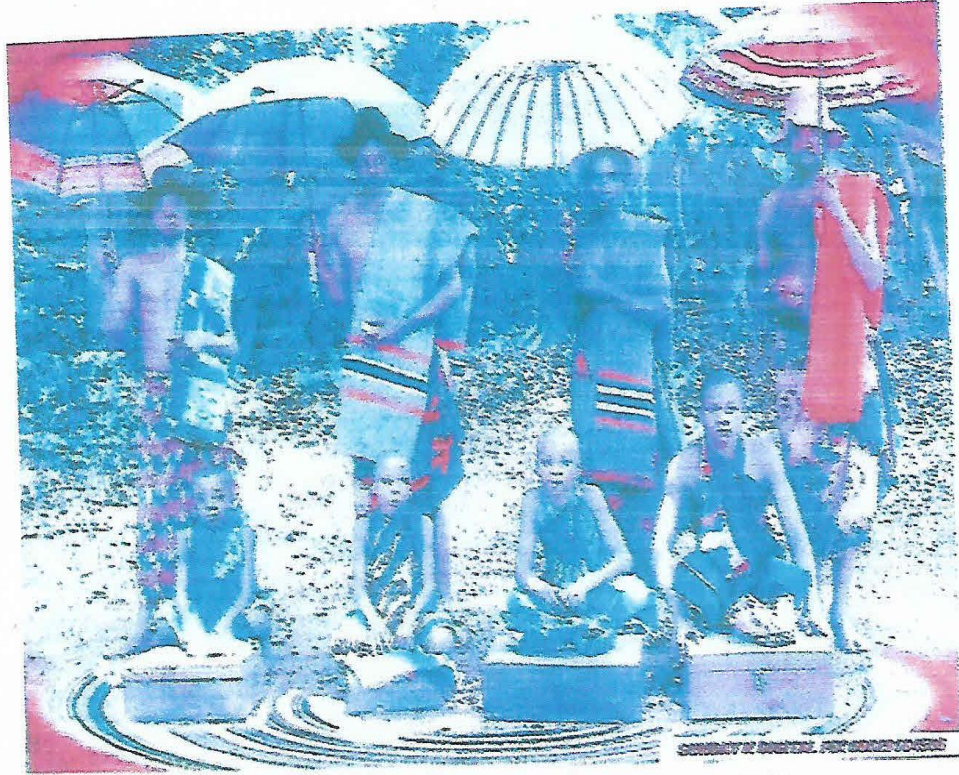
J.E. Ede (personal communication, June, 27, 2017) in his explanation about where or the place of the outing, stated that, the initiates from Ekpelu and Ekpa Omaka travel to

Fig 10. Showing the initiate and his errand boy in an outing traditional attire, in readiness for the traditional outing ceremony. (see page 110).



Source: Ogbuagu Graphic/Publication, Abakaliki 13 – 09 – 2017.

Fig 11. The initiate and his colleagues in traditional outing regalia. This is the final stage of the initiation to adulthood in Northeastern Igbo land. (as in page 111).



Source: *Ogbuagu Graphic/Publication, Abakaliki 13 – 09 – 2017.*

Nchonu. Others from Ndufu Umuota, Aguinyima, Ndegu Umuota and Ezeke go to Ekoyo .while "Amaeka" goes to "Nkwor" yet "Echara Ukwu" travels to "Edukwu Okpoto". "Alike" goes to "Mbamako" while "Echara" travels to "Enuewo and Amagu", Igbudu and Inyimagu, Akahufu, Ndegu travel to "Ukwu- Achi mobu Nchonu mobu Ofsa Udomowo.

He further postulated that this visit to the forest is the most crucial part in the whole process of initiation to manhood. There are points in the procession to the forest. At each of these points, the initiates take their rest, dance and share grinded tobacco (snuff). Then the journey continues until some distance before a dug pit in the forest and behind the pit is a drummer kept specifically for this ritual purpose. The attendants will open their bags and bring out the sliced yams and set them in twos. The circumcised had been taught at home how to hold the traditional knife in his right hand with the left leg in front while the right leg goes backward.

Then the beating of the drums sounds four times and the circumcised take four steps to synchronize with the drumming and each time he takes off with the right leg and ends with the left which rhymes with the action of the traditional knife in front of the pit. He does not turn to return to base but returns while moving backwards, an action that he performs four times. At the end of the traditional dance, the attendant boy the ritual maid .presents a container of the grinded tobacco to him, which he opens and pours some quantity into the pit and fills the palm of the drummer with the grinded tobacco to his satisfaction and all the principal leaders that stand behind him.

"The initiates may be successful or may fail in the traditional ritual dance, as observed by I. N. Elom, (personal communication, June, 16, 2017) who agreed with the opinion of the subsequent contributor above pointing out that the drummer will allow the initiate a share of the sliced yams while the initiates give to the drummer a leaf of tobacco but where he had missed the step or turned in an effort to return to base, he will lose his share of the sliced yams. If he loses his share, it signifies bad omen and the crowd that had come to cheer him will start to pity him, his parents would wonder into the future of his life and family. While those that had perfected theirs would start jubilating in dancing and shooting their local guns as they return home. While on their way, people gathered along "the roads leading to their various homes to ask for the grinded tobacco and which they pour out to them in their palms. It raises the tempo of the occasion as people scramble to receive from the newly initiated adult men for the year the grinded tobacco (*"Enwuru unwu ophong" mobu "enwuru ofuaswa"*).

Moreover, in his further contribution, he asserted that on reaching home, the father of the initiates will accept the newly admitted man with presentation of kola, and his entourage will be served with food and drinks. People can present gifts to him. In the evening, the newly admitted adult would assemble and visit people in their homes and offer them their (grinded) snuff while various gifts could be received in return.

They can arrange to visit markets within the locality and celebrate their admission into adulthood. Initiation into adulthood is never completed in our (place, Ngbo) cultural setting without the initiates setting up their earth deities (*"Alobu"*).

This deity as he puts it is responsible for the protection of the man's home stead and subjects every action of the man and his wife or wives to its scrutiny. It is after initiation into adulthood that confessions to adultery becomes very rife and are normally viewed more seriously and settled with rituals or sacrifices.

4.3 The Matter and Form of the Ritual

"This sub-head discusses the matter- which is the material used in the act of performing ritual circumcision and the form- which are the words uttered in the process of the ritual. The materials and words are used symbolically and in conformity with the tradition and custom of the people. As was observed by A. Nte, (personal communication, December, 11, 2017), that there are significant and symbolic items required especially for the ritual circumcision. He enumerated the items of the matter for ritual circumcision as follows:

A big dry meat of bush rat (*Ewali*)

Striped frog (*Usokpo*)

Eight pods of kola nuts. "Two thighs of dry meat (*Utafcfu anu labu*)

A head of tobacco (*Ishi enw'uru*)

Four or five gallons of wine

The parents of the woman would on their part provide:-

Four pods of kola nuts,

Thirteen plates of dry cocoyam and yam porridge (twelve plates are the actual, while the thirteenth serves as an extra)

and at least two tubers of yam

According to O. Mbam, (personal communication, December, 17, 2017), discussing from Izzi background, itemized the components of the matters for ritual circumcision in this order:

Materials for the husbands visit

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 4 coconuts | - | Akumba |
| A bar of green soup | - | Ogu ncha ewu ewu |
| A new wrapper | - | Ukfu ekwa |
| Killed a cock "to take away, the dirt" | - | Ogbu oku le'utsu Parents will kill a goat |

for the daughter Other materials

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|--------|
| Yellow cam-wood | - | Odo |
| Red cam-wood | - | Uswe |
| Waist beads | - | Olokpo |

Materials for taking the girl home by the husband

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| A goat | - | Eghu njishi eja |
| A big basin | - | Ezefere |
| 4 plates | - | Ezefere nkuwa eno |
| A kerosene lamp | - | lie oku |
| An Umbrella | - | Ncha anwu |
| Soap | - | Ncha obo |

Ubvii [Ugvu] ogerenya	-	Ritual circumcision
20 coconuts	-	Ukporo akumba
4 big yams	-	Nji eno hanshin
2 brass rods	-	Igwe ebo
4 Jars of palm wine	-	Ipoti nme eno
2 heads of tobacco	-	Ishi enwuru ebo
A head of potash	-	Okanwa
One fat goat	-	Nne eghu hanshin
Dried fish and Kola nut	-	Ema amiri amimi

4.4 The Phenomenology of the Rituals

Phenomenology has to do with what practically can be seen, heard or touched. This aspect of the research deals with the practical application of the ritual objects (matter) and the ritual words (form). The objects or materials used in ritual circumcision are phenomenological demonstrated to reflect on the people's value of certain objects in the rite. The ritual words (form) are the statements or responses or recitals or declarations uttered in the process of ritual circumcision. The objects and words are culturally performed as the tradition of the people. It is the outward demonstration of the ritual circumcision which has some ancestral and spiritual powers or forces.

The Ritual Objects (Matter)

- Words spoken constitute the form
- Materials used constitute the matter and there are two major categories of matter- the edible- the materials that are eaten or drunk and the decorative- the ones rubbed and the one that is worn as cloths. There are also portions for the human beings and that for the spirits (ancestors)
- The type of matter determines the form or utterances that follow
- The matter and form are matched because they go together to archive a ritual purpose.

Ritual materials or objects are discussed in two broad perspectives — the materials for the physical circumcision (*ubvu nwata*) and that of ritual circumcision (*ubvu ogerenya*) for both males and females.

4.4.1 Circumcision (*Ubvunwata*)

Female and Male Child Circumcision (*Ubvunwata*): Circumcision "ebu *ubvu*" as was observed in the practice of the people according to O. Mbam, (Personal communication. December, 17, 2017) is closely related to marriage in Izhi. In the past, boys and girls were circumcised as teenagers. This form of circumcision was surrounded by many rituals. For girls it usually happened when they were mature "with full breasts". Female circumcision is an important part in the rites of initiation into full womanhood. It is considered as necessary in order to be able to bear normal and vital children.

Boys were also circumcised with their age-mates (age-grades) at the moment they liked "to enjoy the pain". Nowadays, boys are usually circumcised some weeks after birth and girls before primary school age. The rituals for girls however, still take place during adolescence, -For boys the rituals are usually not taken seriously anymore or totally not observed in some places (clans). That the boys' own are not taken seriously does not mean that the tradition of the people has adopted it. Mbam asserted that it is unacceptable custom to the people, it is a taboo and it is a sacrilege. And it is attributed to some of the effects of the modernization on the people's culture.

The first ritual is called "*ubvu mvata*", which takes place in the rainy season. The husband will lead the girl to her parents "*edudu*". He has to buy food items, which the

wife will be eating throughout the circumcision period. As the required items (matter) are presented an old woman from the initiate's family will receive them with some utterances (form) as each item is being received. Some of the instances are as follows:

Matter

Form

One basket of yam tubers- One basket with coconut, Forty (40) big yams, One big pair of fishes, the old woman will say, these items will not only, make your stomach big but your stomach will be big for a child. You will not eat the food alone but you will share it with your baby, (nnanu nnanu obodo eji, Nwoke akari)

One basket with coconut:- as the coconut fluid is sweet, so shall your marriage be sweet (Ehu upete)

Forty (40) big yams:- as the family (*unwunna*) share these tubers so shall you share that of your own children in your husband's house. (Ojeje oje)

One big pair of fishes:- just as the fish swims joyfully in the river so shall you marry in joy. (Ehu mpho mele Ehu Otsena)

About five gallons of palm wine:- wine represents merriment on any occasion. Your family is drinking the wine to share in your initiation merriment. What will bring sorrow will not come to you. (*Egono bee lodu oo*). so shall it be. An old man then pours libation with some invocations for blessings. (Eswa eswa ooo)

Two Crates of mineral

the form is the same as above even as the children, women and others share in the merriment.

Three Cartons of beer,

the form is same as above.

Two Loaves of bread and two packets of biscuit

this is not given as mere food but as an attraction or incentive to children in the world of spirits. These matters serve to bring children into the marriage. Bread and biscuit are for the children.

Also a big goat should be given for the namesake (*eghu ogbo*). If she has died already, the goat will be used for sacrifice. If this is not done, "the woman may bleed to death" during the physical circumcision.

The girl is expected to behave courageously. They, will utter these statements before the time for the circumcision proper: "let us go, let us go"! (*Tugbu ga anyi je, tugbu ga anyi je*) while the traditional circumciser follows behind the initiate with the materials for the physical circumcision (operation). It was considered shameful to cry during the operation. About a week after the operation, when the girl has recovered a bit, a message is sent to the husband that she has been circumcised. He will come and will bring certain materials. The items brought by the husband have the same significance as other items already mentioned above. The words uttered (form) remains the same as above for the

items (matter) brought by the husband. The husband's visiting items will include the following:

Four heads of coconuts

A bar of soap

And a new wrapper (s)

He also kills a cock "to take away the dirt off the wife"

The parents have to kill a goat for their daughter. In addition to the ritual aspect of the items is the celebrative aspect of it.

4.4.2 Ritual Circumcision (*Ugvu Ogerenya*)

According to Mbam, the actual ritual is performed using the matter and accompanied with suitable utterances (forms). Mbam further stated that, if the girl is already pregnant she will some weeks later be led (*eduba I'ubvu,*) to her parents' compound for the final part of circumcision ceremony, called *ubvu ogerenya*. The rituals take place in higher speed to prevent her from delivering before the end of the circumcision rituals. This speed makes at the same time the process go faster and a bit cheaper. This may be why people wait with the *ubvu ogerenya* till the woman is pregnant. When the girl after about three years has not yet become pregnant she will return to the father's compound for the *ubvu ogerenya*.

Ubvū ogerenya is the second stage of the circumcision ceremony, which makes the girl a real woman and makes her to leave her circumcision period. Again the husband has to bring food, like: 20 coconuts, 4 big yams, 2 brass rods, wine, tobacco, "okanwa" [added to tobacco to make it stronger] and a fat goat for the feast meal. The father invites the *ishi-uke* and his servants and the village men to come for ceremony called *afū l'ubvū*, the circumcisional outing ceremony.

The ceremony is fixed at certain *ophoke* a market day in Izzi. The man will explode *okpolali* to announce that the ceremony is about to start. On this day, the girl invites other girls to form a group that will lead her while she puts the vulva cloth "*mgbā*". The invited girls are treated in a special way. They must be given coconuts, a rod, one leg of a goat, a pot of water which represents wine and a pair of dried fish. The girls normally will complain that the gifts are too poor and they will continue to ask for more kola and threaten not to lead the girl if the husband will not grant their request. All the girls will be rubbed with red cam-wood and they surround the wife. It is believed that if the girls are not treated "kindly, things will not go well in the woman's childbearing.

Two old women will also be sought who bathes the initiate, together with her flower-girl *nwanyi mgbewo*. This is done in the night. After bathing they will be rubbed with red cam-wood "*uswe*" and the yellow cam-wood "*ododo*" in preparation of being led to the playground or evening market by the two women and girls.

The *uke* who performs this ritual need to have the cow title *uke*, "*kwaru I'eswi*". There are two groups of *uke* involved in the ritual. These two *uke*, sit down on two stools

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The *uke* who performs this ritual need to have the cow title *uke*, "*kwaru I'eswi*". There are two groups of *uke* involved in the ritual. These two *uke*, sit down on two stools

okposhi, facing the same direction. The *uke* from Unwuerwa takes the dry meat and "breaks it in smaller pieces and gives to the *uke* from Igbojima, who puts them on the ground and prays: e g "You the land, the maker of man; today this couple is wedding. Today Nwigwe Uguru is wedding his wife Nwophenshii. Bless them by giving them children, wealth and good health. Let nothing be difficult for them in life". While praying he pours some wine on the pieces of meat on the ground. He docs this four times. The fourth time he drinks to drop from his mouth on the meat on tht: ground, The oilier *uke* and the elders present echo the prayer: "*Oo yaa ool Noo g'o du-oo!* Then the uke asks: "Who is the friend of (the name of the initiate), his friend *n spor ds* and says: I am here. The uke says: Come and cover this blessing *opho* with this basket and carefully look after it; let nobody tamper with it, until your friend comes with his wife to match on it. The friend of the initiate agrees "Leave it for rne".

Mbara stress that if the girl is pregnant, they will lead her to the playground "edukfu", if not pregnant, then they will lead her to the market "aswa". The trip from her father's' compound to the playground or, to the market is accompanied with singing and at the compounds they pass, they sing, "Come out and embrace". The people will come out and eat some coconut and give the woman some money, When they enter the playground they walk around it and at every corner, the woman will stand with her mouth tightly closely and the two elderly women will touch dry meat on the mouth, but the girl will snatch it way before she can eat it. Returning to the compound they will take another away than the one followed when going to the playground or market. When tie escort girl, the two

elderly women and the girl-friends arrive, the husband will embrace his wife with a pair of dry fishes. The mother of the initiate does the same. Then the man will shoot his gun at the compound entrance to welcome his wife.

Mbam added that, after this, the couple will go to the elders and *uke*. They will sit in a circle around the *opho*. Within this circle is the kola dish *ukpara* with dried meat, tobacco and kola, a calabash and a stone for the tobacco. The *uke* instructs the couple to touch the basket of the *opho* with his right feet twice and with his left foot too. The woman does likewise. They hold their hands together during this ritual. This feet-ritual is an assurance that they have received the blessings from the ancestors and *All*. The *uke* says: "you are now wedded as husband and wife. Go and live in peace. "Everybody, including the couple can now go home. The materials (matter) of the blessings are left outside till morning.

4.4.3 Installation of Three Cooking Stones" *Akpo epfu*"

Mbam further observed that in the morning of the following day, the wedding ceremony is completed by the ritual called *akpo epfu*. This is performed by two elderly women, one from the Igbojirna and one from the Unwuerwa lineage. It is the installation of three cooking stones *epfu* (the three stones on which the cooking pot stand) in a corner of the veranda of the house of a lineage member of the husband.

On Azua day-in the evening, the husband will look for a small boy to accompany him to the bush to collect six or eight stones. The two women prepare the ground and put the three stones. These stones represent *Ali*. Only three will be used. The two women receive

two (2) yams, soup ingredients, fish, cow-skin and one foreleg of the goat. This food the women cooked will be sacrificed to the stones; they put some porridge "*onu*" and pieces of fish on the fireplace. The couple is not allowed to eat the sacrificed food but other people around are free to eat it. After the cooking the old women will wash the stones; so that the couple now can cook their own food on it. After pouring the water over the stones "*ago mini*" and some ashes are put on it, the foot-ritual is done; the husband puts his right foot two times on the cooking place and then the wife. The old women then go home and the couple will stay and sleep there. They will go home the next morning and will leave the stones there forever. From that moment the woman becomes "*nwanyi okpo epfu*", which means a fully married woman, she is now ushered into full womanhood. She has immediately been incorporated among the women.. After the *akpo epfu* the hair of the woman will be ritually (symbolically) shaved "*ada attwo .ishi*", otherwise she is not allowed to carry anything on her head, like water, firewood etc.

If a woman commits adultery, after the ritual, *Ali* can punish her with madness or sickness or the children will all die and open their eyes after death. The earth has to be appeased and the woman cleaned in the ceremony called removal of the three cooking stones "*akpofu epfu*". A woman who has committed adultery cannot eat together with her husband again till she has performed this *akpofu epfu* ritual. The relatives of the woman will gather in the compound of the husband, tie the woman up and beat her till the husband is satisfied. The remarriage ritual will be performed and is very simple: together with an old woman the woman goes to another place, even in another community *onu egu*

ozo. There the man on whose compound the ritual is being *carried* out will be given some money. He will strongly blame the woman for the bad thing she has done. Then they can *return; the ground is* now appeased. No stone is touched *in the* akpofu epfu ritual. The next day she has to do what is called pouring of water, "awushi mini" with her husband in her own village and that restores the marriage (remarriage).

For the boy's ritual circumcision, (UbvU Ogerenya), Mbam, who is occupying the traditional stool of Izzi-Unuhu autonomous community, stated that in the olden days boys also went through the physical circumcision "ubvu nwata" and the ritual circumcision "ubvu ogerenya". Nowadays these rituals still happen in some places or communities or clans, *though* the actual *circumcision* had taken place as *infants*. They (the initiates) ritually rub their body with red and yellow cam-wood and go around through the village almost without clothes for some months. They do not have to do any work. The relatives have to feed them very well and to slaughter some goats for them. When they finally come out of the circumcision period afu Vubvu, they are led to the playground like girls.

The boys prepare on Nkwegu day; they select a child that will assist them as escort attached to each of them. They wear no clothes except the towel anamu and the boy will put wood fibers egwo around *his waist*. *They will rub their body* with cam wood and so look completely red. The next day Ophoke the elders are invited on the compound. They are offered a gallon of palm-wine, tobacco, four (4) kola-nuts, and dry bush-meat. They

will invoke the ground "*ali*" and ancestors and the gods to bless the person *ago opho*. Then they go with many children to the playground. They will lead yon singing and playing "*upyi*".

Nwoke I'ete uswe; hoo; hoo hool

Pfua ntu; g'anyi eje I'egu; hoo! hoof hoo! Putukumu!

They go to the playground and go around there, at every entrance to the playground they put dry meat on the initiate's mouth, but the children flock around him to snatch it away so that he will not get a bit of it. They return to the compound through another route (road) different from the departure route. When they arrive to their compound, and after a brief ceremonial welcome, everyb3dy who accompanied then- disperses to their different homes.

In conclusion he asserted that in the olden days the *afu I'ubvu* ritual for members of the "*o-gbu-ishi*" human head title holders' in the society was done differently. The elders and members of the society will gather in the morning; the elders will invoke the earth and the ancestors,- etc. He would dress as a warrior in a wrapper and rubbed with white chalk "*ndzu*" and then in daylight be led to the market or playground. All the way he would demonstrate his power and how he defeated his enemy and captured his head. The *O-gbu-ishi* members will bear their "staff "*mgboro*" and wU loudly praise him. In the market they will drink and after wards process in honour to their home. Nowadays boys are usually circumcised as infants and there ire no circumcision rituals later on anymore.

Also girls are already circumcised at young age, yet the rituals and the periods of seclusion has become much shorter (the whole period may be only one week or at most about two weeks)

Reasons why the rituals for girls are being preserved while those for boys have almost gone into extinction could be the importance of the ritual for the health of the children she will bear; the gifts that the husband has to give to the in-laws and his wife: the psychological effects of the ritual to help the girl in taking the role of a woman from then onwards.

4.5 Transcendental Intentionality of the Matter and Form

This sub-theme discusses the spiritual relevance or purpose of the materials used and the words used or recited and the responses made while performing any form of circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land. The spiritual intensions of the matters and forms are imbedded in the actual practice of traditional circumcision as performed by the people. The ancestral spirits and other spiritual forces that are in-charge of all forms of circumcision are invoked to be present at the rituals of circumcision. It is the presence of these spirits that authenticate the realities of this act. The effectiveness and authenticity of circumcision depends on the strict adherence of the order and the systematic presentation of the matters and forms of circumcision. In the same vein circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land is not without spiritual backing or interpretation. All the materials (matters) of circumcision have one spiritual or religious interpretation or the other. For instance, the

kola nut serves as a means of communicating with the world of the spirits. The invocation with the kola nut is an invitation to the spirits for the purpose of the covenant of circumcision.

Water and wine serve as a means and a way of making merriment for both the spirits directed circumcision and the human society organized circumcision. Wine as liquid makes soft and smooth the fertility of the couple, after the ritual of circumcision. The spirits join the people to rejoice after drinking the wine to mark the celebrations. The meat or fish used in the process of circumcision at various stages connotes peace and appeasement to the gods for sweet celebrations of the rite the red and yellow cam-wood act as cooling, soothing and healing agents for the injuries inflicted in physical circumcision on both male and female.

The coconut also provides for the good health and fattening of the woman. The same with and other items like groundnut, pears, *udara*, etc as provided during circumcision. It is the belief of the people that the spirits share mystically with all the materials provided in the process of circumcision. Mbam, insisted that there are other materials like yam tubers, tobacco, potash and such other items as already listed are all necessary for human and spiritual needs in circumcision. This is because the spirits and the ancestors together with the human beings share in the materials for ritual circumcision. There is the part for the spirits to eat, like the blood of the animals while the meat (flesh) of the animal belongs to the human beings. It is for this reason that both the spirits and man long for the ritual circumcision with its celebrations and rituals.

The blood of goat and fowl stand as a seal of the covenant of circumcision. It is this covenant seal with the blood that confirms the act of ritual circumcision in the spirit world. The initiates enjoy the meat while the spirits eat the blood in acceptance and confirmation of the rite.

Circumcision is a symbol of both spiritual and societal status recognition. This status is attained spiritually first by the provision of all the materials for circumcision. The physical attainment then follows, which is achieved at the last segment of the rituals of circumcision to adulthood. All the materials (matter) that are necessary and made available for circumcision have a religious or spiritual relevance or interpretation in the people's cultural life.

It is as a result of the above, that circumcision is regarded as spiritual act among the people. Eze, adds that the culture and religion of this cultural zone holds that a man who fails to be initiated into adulthood, is denied frill and befitting burial rite even if he is married with children. He also remains with the youngest age grade for life. When such individual dies, his corpse is thrown into the evil forest (*Ikirikpo*) where the childless and evil people are thrown at death. However, the man who dies with children but without initiation to adulthood (*IshiUvuu*) is buried behind the compound and denied befitting burial rites. His children are not regarded as his but are given to his father and his name may from there phase out in the family tree.

According to him, that in the Northeastern Igbo traditional society, to be recognized as a full-fledged man or woman, is something more than just getting married. Until you

undergo the necessary initiations, you are still a girl or a boy as the case may be, no matter how old you are. In Ikwo cultural setting, you are treated as a boy, or girl, should you not even be able to marry at all and or fully initiated into adulthood. You remain a child in this world and in another world to come.

There are so many denials in this physical world and in the ancestral world, including:

Not graduating into older age grade.

Not getting portions of land in the village.

Not digging grave, should somebody die.

Not having the right of sharing with people of same age of birth who have been initiated in your kindred, village or community level.

Those who have been initiated are automatically your seniors, not minding how many years you senior them by birth. Since you will never be allowed to leave the youngest age grade, you will continue to participate in the cutting of road parts grass and other public works, meant for the youngest age-grade. These practices were so powerful that every male folk struggles in life, not to remain in this group. Every ma:i struggled therefore, to get married and undergo the necessary initiation that would graduate him into manhood (*Nnajiufu*) and womanhood (*Unwurukpo*) and attract for him all the benefits therein. The most important of these initiations is (*Ishi-ubvu*). Both male and female undergo this initiation to become a full-fledged man (*Nnajiufu*) and women (*Unwurukpo*) respectively. He concluded with one of the practical instances-the religious and spiritual implications **of *odobe alobu*:**

This is the final initiation and ritual that can be performed for a full-fledged man and woman and the inauguration of a new home. After this, both the wife and the husband are highly restricted from extra marital sex. It is believed that if they do, a calamity ranging from sickness to death can befall them. This includes sickness or losing their child to death. For the ritual of *odobe Alobu* to be performed, the edible cotton leaves (*Ekwo Akputo*) and another draw leaves of another plant called *Obo otu* and fresh eggs are made available. About four or more elderly men are invited. A small hole of about six inches is dug, usually at the center of the compound. The items are put into it and water is also added. The wife and the husband and the elderly man present, put their hands into the hole and jointly squeeze the leaves with the fresh-egg into pieces and gummy drawing substance before washing their hands.

On the following day, the couple would jointly carry a lump of stone that is kept by and place into the hole partly, leaving some part to show on the surface. A fowl is now killed by the husband and the blood is sprinkled on the stone. The woman having graduated to "*Unwurukpo*" womanhood and having started cooking for the husband, she would pill the yams at the base of the shrine and prepare pounded yam food. Chicken is used to prepare the soup that is used to serve the meal. The pounded yam with the chicken soup is presented and the man will cut some lumps of it, dip in the soup and make incantations

for his protection, his wife and the children. Thereafter the food is shared to the elders, members of the family and others present.

Should a married woman who had performed *Alobu* rituals with the husband commit adultery for whatever reason and does not want calamities visit her or if already inflicted by way of signs or sickness, including difficulty in child delivery, she confesses to the husband or anybody in the family. After the confession, she goes to the man who committed the adultery with her and requests for a cock and four tubers of yam. She brings these items to the husband's place for sacrifice.

Elders are invited to perform the cleansing rituals with the materials collected by the woman from the man she committed adultery with. Sequel to this she buys fowl and gives to the husband to offer as sacrifice to *alobu* to appease it. The husband kills the fowl to the shrine. After the woman had completed cooking, the man sacrifices to *alobu* shrine small quantity of the meal and the remaining will be shared to the elders and others present at the ritual sacrifice.

CHAPTER FIVE

SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUAL CIRCUMCISION IN EBONYI STATE OF IGBOLAND

This section dealt with the significances of circumcision in the cultural area of Ebonyi State of Igboland. The significance of circumcision as the traditional custom and culture of the people cannot be over emphasized.

5.1 Trado-Cultural Significance

The cultural and traditional significances of circumcision in Ebonyi State of Igbo area is that the youth is prepared for marital life through child's circumcision.

In Njoku's opinion, grown up girls could not avoid submitting to circumcision despite the dangers inherent in it and if the marriageable girl will decline circumcision that means that no traditional man would marry her or if married would be divorced by her traditional husband. But today Christian bachelors go for spinsters who have not submitted to the ordeal of circumcision. Today there are cases of girls who have put to bed with being circumcised and they are still living with their husbands. Njoku (2015) maintained that:

The cultural and traditional significances of child's circumcision carried out in the parent's homes and the foreskin buried either behind the mother's house or in the ban is to establish claim of the circumcised over the piece of land as his land of birth where his

foreskin has been buried. The traditional implications of circumcision warrant the setting up of idols for children. The cultural implications of circumcision become more glaring when it is into adulthood. The implication of performing the act in the compound of the parent of the child who has become an adult has been geared to inform the ancestors that the young man whose foreskin was once buried in the father's compound has become an adult.

The implication here is that neither the man or woman's genitals would be tempered with in the adult age stage but purely ritualistic in the sense that the ancestors are invoked to participate, their hairs are shaved, fed with traditional spoon and are smeared with red cam wood the symbol of initiation and sealed with the pouring of libation by the eldest man of the family who is nearest to the ancestors (110).

What else is ritual circumcision with cultural and traditional significances? The significances heightens when those admitted into adulthood are led into the forest to perform rituals otherwise one is not accepted as being fully an adult and qualified to setting up his earth deity ("*Alobu*"). *This Odey* (1986) emphasized that it is the climax of ritual circumcision. It is this traditional feature if successfully done that qualifies the initiate as an adult.

5.2 Social Significance

Social significance of circumcision at childhood level reveals that it is the fundamental bases for societal acceptance.

Circumcision has become a determinant factor of status in the society for which the right to lay claim on any bequeathal of parentage is hinged.

The salient significance will be deduced in Odey's (1986) assertion that when one infers and considers the fact that some people are mainly circumcised, within the first day of birth to one year in Northeastern Igbo-land (*"Obu Utsx ur.wu sukulu"*) and such circumcisions are not traditionally recognized until those involved perform outing ceremony without which such people will remain unrecognized and severed from their mates.

The social significance of circumcision into adulthood is that it confers the right of full membership of the society to the ritually initiated. Odey (1986) reiterates that the rite becomes the gateway to the social ladder of the traditional society by which such initiate could attain the status of horse title holder, (*Ogbuinya*), yam title (*"Otsunji"*) Chief and His Royal Highness (*"Igwe, Eze ndi Obodo"*) (p. 14). The ritually circumcised has come of age that such person could lift up his head in the gathering of the society. The uncircumcised is not ritually admitted into manhood. As circumcised juniors become seniors and uncircumcised could be treated with disdain. The uncircumcised is subjected to the belief that he does not possess any good quality as such is regarded as one who cannot compete with his age grade. Ritual circumcision is the most authentic symbol of traditional attainment in Northeastern Igbo-land that commands communal solidarity (Odey, 1986).

Formerly according to Odey (1986) the uninitiated through circumcision into adulthood in the cultural area cannot dig the grave nor touch the corpse of a dead person who was ritually circumcised. However, with the passage of time, tradition requires that the first son should be the first to dig the grave of his parents. Culture hangs in cases where the first son has not been circumcised culturally, unless traditionalists deploy the service of a cultural guardian to play the role. In other words the traditionalists may permit the ritually uncircumcised to dig the grave or deploy the services of a cultural guardian. While ritually circumcised people stand for communal solidarity so also none ritually circumcised stand far segregated (p. 16)

5.3 Economic Significance

The economic significance of ritual circumcision is the placement on the ritually admitted into manhood over and above the non-initiates. An initiate has right to the family land, and commands influence in the community land allocation. Such circumcised people own economic trees and dictates economic pace of others who are not positioned by the rite of initiation into manhood. It is a gate way to several social and political positions that sources of finance and other economic advantages. An instance is the titled men or women, who are paid salary in some states like Ebonyi. The people's tradition does not allow a non-initiate to be a title holder. There are certain political positions reserved to people who are initiated to adulthood. If an individual is not initiated through circumcision into manhood or womanhood, he or she stands to miss traditional titles and political positions or

appointments and all the economic benefits attached to them.

5.4 Political Significance

The fundamental political unit in the cultural area of Northeastern Igbo-land is the age grade which (lie ritually circumcised belongs. Through ritual circumcision, a Northeastern Igbo man assumes responsibility of all his actions. The intrinsic significance of this rite of passage is that it fuses self-confidence on the ritually circumcised. He pursues life with optimism and as full member of the society attracts supporters in communal gatherings or political rallies.

Njoku (2015) says that circumcision as initiation rite entails the "initiate to marry" but in many tribes, full political, cultural and religious status are often attained after adolescent age.

The political significance of circumcision either child circumcision early circumcision ("*Ugyu egirima*") or adult circumcision ("*Ugvu Ogerinya*") in the area of study entails the right of participation at the age grade at village levels which paves way to leadership position culminating to societal representation. Some clans in Northeastern Igbo-land still deny political appointments, representations and elections to non-ritual circumcised individuals.

However, Njoku (2015) maintained that those who circumcised in the flesh ("*Ugvu egirima*") without performing the outing ceremony as well as those who were not ritually circumcised have denied themselves the political benefits due to the ritually circumcised,

The rights of participation at all levels of administrative cadres are denied such absentees and life becomes cumbersome or difficult even at the family level, as such persons are always disregarded based on cultural point of view (p. 120). Failure to be ritually circumcised has been variously used as political weapon in the Northeastern Igbo-land. Political opponents use the traditional political sentiment to gain cheap popularity at the corridor of modern politics. The economic and political deprivations have been so tailored to produce religious compensation. Hence some Christians within Northeastern Igbo land stagger and operate double religious standards (syncretism) that is partial Christians and partial traditionalists or re-affirmative traditionalists. Ritual circumcision fits one properly into the political setting of the people of this cultural area. The ritually circumcised is conferred with the power and privileges of appointment and election to political positions at all levels in the society or even the government of the land

5.5 Religious Significance of Circumcision

The cultural, traditional, social, economic and political significances of ritual circumcision have engineered greater attention to the religious imperatives of the rites. The question one may likely ask could be what are the religious significances behind outing ceremony in Northeastern Igbo cultural zone either as early circumcision ("*Ugvu egirima*") or adult circumcision ("*Ugvu Ogerinya*")? In his view Njoku (2015) asserted:

The "Kikuyu" people fear the consequences of the first sexual relations in their own like or fashion. Many central African tribes believe that both sexes must

sustain sexual relations as soon as may be possible after initiation or such absences would lead to death in considering Kafir boys who by circumcision, have the right of sexual intercourse with any unmarried woman "immediately, a practice that prevails in Congo and Senegal, (p. 122).

The practice at Kikuyu does not relate to Northeastern Igboland but the relativity of Kafir boys call attention especially to child circumcision ("*Ugwu egirima*") and outing ceremony of boys in Northeastern Igbo cultural area. In other words, Njoku argued what the people mean by the statement "*Ogbu Oku le Utsul* Literally translated, could be "to" kill fowl on the male genital organ". Although this aspect does not hold sway today, but research with the aged traditionalists showcased that it means- the first sexual intercourse a newly circumcised man had with a female preferably a spinster. This marks the end of the outing ceremony.

However, since it seems as forgotten in history, why do the traditionalists emphasis that unless one conducts the outing ceremony one cannot be recognize as haven been circumcised? It infers that there are some cultural antics behind the outing ceremony.

The other aspect of religious significance of outing ceremony poses a question in Eze's (2011) view concerning the significance of the ritually circumcised to be led into the forest, to dance taking four steps four times before a pit and goes backward each time without turning back. Research as Eze (2011) pointed out:

Has shown that its religious implication is to cause a change in one's destiny or improve the destiny for better. It equally connotes the fact that such places had

been the home of the legendary ancestor of the various communities and also constitutes a return to the ancestral home and reunion with the dead. The implication could be seen further, from the fact that " unless a ritually circumcised sets up earth deity ("*Alobu*") such person cannot be traditionally regarded as circumcised. At the setting up of the earth deity ("*Alobx*") the initiate calls on earth goddess, the ancestors and also on his "*Alobu*" for the protection of himself and all his possessions within and outside the homestead, (p.294).

The ritually circumcised is one that has set up the deity who will be accorded full traditional burial rite at death. Those who had been a standard in the society would be canonized as an ancestor in life, the ritually circumcised can attain the status of traditional priest or priestess as such wields religious influence. Eze (2011) reiterated that, the ritually circumcised husband and wife or wives are traditionally bound to present wine, food, money, fowl or anything that the community Driest would prescribe to be offered to the community earth deity ("*Alobu edukwu*"). At the family level, the ritually circumcised family offers kola, wine, food and animals to their dead father and consults the gods of the family freely although there are ones designated for the family headship (p.298).

But the un- ritually circumcised stands in dependence to the ritually circumcised to consult the gods and cannot set up the earth deity ("*Alow*") neither can such uncircumcised be buried inside the compound but behind the homestead, much less to enjoy full traditional burial rites. However, Eze (2011) opined that, confession of adultery

made by the ritually circumcised husband and wife when caught by earth deity - ("*Alobu*") is both cultural and religious. Such confession to adultery is rife and requires a lot of rituals to appease the earth deity before the husband can eat the food prepared by the adulterous wife (p.299).

Confession to adultery has been the basis on which people criticize Christianity as being morally lacking and has no strong force to check immorality among its members. This leads the church into frowning at initiation into adulthood. However the position of the traditionalists does not imply that women were canonized prostitutes before they were initiated into adulthood through ritual circumcision.

5.6 Traditional Titles and Beliefs (Miscellaneous) Significances of Circumcision

In the people's cultural practices, circumcision is a necessity towards traditional titles, chieftaincy titles, entitlements, initiations, coronations, beliefs and social acceptance and relevance. Circumcision defines and confers an individual with traditional status and recognition. With circumcision, one is classified in the community. By the belief of the people, circumcision is a determinant factor in choosing a candidate for chieftaincy and other titles, traditional entitlements, recognitions and positions. The act of physical (operation) circumcision is still traditional in most parts of Igbo land despite heated medical controversies. This is because of its traditional significance to the people. The physical operation is followed by the ritual aspect of circumcision. Eze (2011) postulates that:

Circumcision is basically a conservative rite of passage. There is a strong relationship between male and female circumcision among the Igbo traditional ethnic groups. In Igbo traditional setting, circumcision is a common rite of initiation. Physical cutting of the genital organs of male and female and the ritual ceremonies accompanying it were understood to be important means by which gender is culturally defined (p.206)

The Igbo as one of the Ethnic groups in Nigeria has practiced circumcision many centuries as a rite of passage preparing young girls for marriage and womanhood. Young men are also prepared traditionally through this custom for marriage, manhood and bravery.

Ritual circumcision is a traditional pivot upon which other customs or traditions in Northeastern Igbo culture revolve. There is the connectivity between circumcision and other cultures in this cultural zone. Circumcision has a link with all other traditions among the people. Ritual circumcision is the qualification and a sine qua non for an individual to enroll or participate in the people's traditional customs. The areas where circumcision is traditionally connected in the people's custom are- marriage, child bearing (ownership), burial, traditional social status-as title taking- like *Ogbo ishi* society, Cow title taking (*Ogbu eswi*), Horse title taking (*Ogbu inya*) Yam title (*Njioke* title). Steensel (2009) declared that:

The Izhi man will do "anything" to get prestige and popularity in the society, not just to increase his wealth, but in order to be respected and recognized by the entire public.

Some people also display their wealth ostentatiously before they eventually gain popularity and prestige, (p.70).

Ritual circumcision qualifies a man for polygamous family title taking, *ogbu inya* title, *ogbu eswi* title, *njioke* title, chieftaincy title, *ogbu ishi* title, entitlement (traditional ownership) of one's biological child, agricultural farm and, participation worship, associations and rituals. In Izhi (Izzi) according to Steensel (2009) all title takings are done sometimes after ritual circumcision. Title taking renders both economic and social benefits to the people concerned (initiates). These benefits are respect, storage of wealth, privileges on village level, prestige and popularity. In Izhi a person who has the title *erne jioke* or *anma inya* is highly esteemed by everybody. People cannot address him carelessly or treat him like an ordinary man. (p.70).

Ritual circumcision was viewed by the traditionalists not just as a rite of passage and an initiation to adulthood but a channel or a means to traditional title-holding status and a means of accumulation of wealth. In the past it was difficult or impossible to take money to the bank. People had to look for a way of saving money. The traditional stakeholders in Northeastern Igbo-land came up with the institution of title taking. Title taking was a means of storage of wealth. They (like *jioke* titleholder or *ogbu inya* titleholder) can share their money among the (*unwunna*) a little group of wealthy (same titleholders) people and get back a share every time. The person and even his children or descendants after him will continue to receive the shares of the title as long as they exist. Steensel (2009) summed it thus: every *inya* titleholder *m jioke* titleholder is quite sure that he has

provided his children with a source of income even after his death. In Izhi, there is a common saying that "*onye ukpa, merujioke te nwedu tekr onyibe rwuhukwaduru iya*" This saying stresses the point that how poor a man may become after his inya or jioke title, he will always retain the name *onyibe* (great man). He will always receive the honour due to a titleholder (p.70).

A titleholder is greatly privileged in this cultural zone. They are given a larger share in communal land be it farmland or for residence. Title holders get lion shares of whatever is shared in the village. They are given special seats in public gatherings and they are exempted from village manual work. When a titleholder dies he will be buried inside his house .by his title group with special rites befitting to him according to his title.

Circumcision in the worldview of the-people of Northeastern IgDO-land is important and at the core of their custom. Other customs, traditions and rites jire hinged on the rite of ritual circumcision. Circumcision transfers one from childhood and admits same into adulthood and without these processes the society will denied some important social status. Genep (1909) noted that most societies have ritual marking the transition of an individual or a group of individuals from one important status to another. Some of these are associated with the biological circle of birth, maturation, procreation, and death are found in most societies, although obviously they are celebrated differently (p. 149).

Circumcision' as an initiation rite links other rites, initiations, titles and social status in Northeastern Igbo-land. Ritual circumcision is often closely associated with the biological processes of maturation however it primarily symbolizes a change in social

status. In some areas, the transition is celebrated only for males, in some only for females or for both and in others, such rites are absent altogether. Most clans in Northeastern Igbo-land celebrate it for both males and females. Many who accept ritual circumcision today do it because of the socio-cultural and political benefits associated with it, especially as everyone wants to be recognized and honoured.

5.7 Clinical (Medical) Significance of Circumcision

Mohamed AH al-Baar (2010:76-79) says in his book, "al-Khitaan" (circumcision) circumcision of new born boys (i.e. within the first month of life) brings numerous health benefits including:

1. Protection against local infection in the penis:

This actually may result from the presence of the foreskin, causing tightening of the foreskin, which may result to retention of urine or infections of the gland (tip) of the penis - which require circumcision in order to treat these problems. In chronic cases, the child may be exposed to numerous diseases in the future, the most serious which the cancer of the penis.

2. Infection of the urethra:

Many studies have proven that uncircumcised boys are most exposing to infection of the urethra. In some studies the rate was 39 times more among uncircumcised boys. In other

studies the rate was ten times more. Other studies showed that 5% of the children who suffered from infections of the urethra were uncircumcised, whereas the rate among circumcised children did not exceed 5%. In children, infection of the urethra is serious in some cases. In the study by Wisewell on 88 children who suffered infections of the urethra, in 36% of them, the same bacteria were found in the blood also. Three of them contracted meningitis, and two suffered renal failure. Two others died as a result of the spread of the micro-organisms throughout the body.

3 Protection against cancer of the penis:

The studies agree that cancer of the penis is almost non-existent among circumcised men, whereas the rate among uncircumcised men is not insignificant. In the US the rate of penile cancer among circumcised men is zero, whilst among uncircumcised men it is 2.2 in every 100,000 of the uncircumcised population. As most of the inhabitants of the US are circumcised, the cases of this cancer there are between 750 and 1000 per a year. If the population were not circumcised, the number of cases will reach 3000. In countries where boys are not circumcised, such as Uganda, China and Puerto Rico, penile cancer represents between 12 - 22% of all cancers found in men; this is a very high percentage.

4 Sexually transmitted diseases (STDS):

Researchers found that the STDS which are transmitted via sexual contact (usually because of fornication/adultery and homosexuality) spread more among those who are not circumcised, especially herpes, soft chancres, syphilis, Candida, gonorrhoea, genital warts. There are numerous modern studies which confirm that circumcision reduces the

possibility of contracting AIDS when compared to their uncircumcised counterparts. But that does not rule out the possibility of a circumcised man contracting AIDS as the result of sexual contact with the person who has AIDS. Circumcision is- not a protection against it and there is no real way of protecting oneself against the many sexually transmitted diseases apart from avoiding fornication cum adultery, promiscuity, homosexuality and other repugnant practices.

5 Protection of wives against cervical cancer.

Researchers have noted that the wives of circumcised have less risk of getting cervical cancer than the wives of uncircumcised men.

Barley R.C. et. al (2007) opined that if circumcised is being done for reasons other than the treatment of a specific medical problem, the health benefits are primarily preventing, and may only be realized long after the procedure. Circumcision may reduce the risk of acquiring some infections and related complications, but does not guarantee complete protection. Some of these conditions are common, while others are less so, and the degree of risk of the individual is likely to depend on his behaviour and where he lives.

Although the strength of the evidence varies by disease, the Benefits of circumcision include the following:

- It is easier to keep the penis clean

- There is a reduced risk of urinary tract infections in childhood

- Circumcision prevents inflammation of the glans (balanitis) and the foreskin (posthitis)

Circumcision prevents the potential development of sea; tissue on the foreskin, which may lead to phimosis (inability to retract the foreskin) and paraphimosis (smelling of the retracted foreskin resulting in inability to return the foreskin to its normal position).

There is a reduced risk of some sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially ulcerative diseases, such as chancroid and syphilis.

There is a reduced risk of becoming infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

There is a reduced penile cancer

There is a reduced risk of cancer of the cervix in female sex partners

Other benefits of male circumcision include a reduced risk of urinary tract infections in childhood, a reduced risk of ulcerative sexually transmitted diseases in adulthood, protection against penile cancer, a reduced risk of cervical cancer in female sex partners, and prevention of balanitis (inflammation of glans), posthitis (inflammation of the foreskin), phimosis (inability to retract the foreskin) and paraphimosis (inability to return the retracted foreskin to its original location). Complication rate following male circumcision are very low when it is performed by well-equipped and trained health care providers. Numerous regional and global studies since the 1380s have noted a lower risk of HIV infection in circumcised men, as well as lower HIV prevalence in populations where male circumcision is common.

Health benefits of circumcision were not very much known to the people of Northeastern Igbo-land, yet they enjoyed the benefits of this custom in so many ways. They were in good health, lived long life possibly for the reason of circumcision and other useful practices. It is a novel discovery that circumcision has clinical advantages. However, the real purpose of circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land is cultural initiation to adulthood. Health significance of circumcision is a new discovery to the people.

Risks

As for any surgical procedure, there are risks associated with circumcision. While the benefits of circumcision may be wide-ranging and long-term, many problems generally occur during or soon after the procedure. They include:

Pain;

Bleeding;

Hematoma (formation of a blood clot under the skin);

Infection at the site of the circumcision;

Increases sensitivity of the glans penis for the first few months after the procedure;

Irritation of the glans;

Mastitis (inflammation of the opening of the urethra);

Injury to the penis;

Adverse reaction to anaesthetic used during the circumcision

These complications are rare when circumcision is performed by well trained, adequately equipped, experience health care personnel, and are usually easily and rapidly resolved.

Data from controlled trials show that fewer than 1 in 50 procedures result in complications.

There is currently great interest in the role the male circumcision in preventing HIV infection. Research studies have shown a risk of infection in circumcised compared with uncircumcised men, as well as lower prevalence of HIV infection in populations where male circumcision is common. These data led WHO and UN AIDS to recommend that male circumcision be promoted as an additional method of HIV prevention and that countries or settings with generalized HIV epidemics and low prevalence of circumcision should urgently scale up circumcision services.

In Northeastern Igbo-land, male circumcision had been their practice long before now. This may probably be the reason why there is low prevalence of HIV infection in the area. The medical advice is that females should not be circumcised. Probably that is why no research about the female as relating to circumcision and diseases.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter takes care of the summary of findings in the course of the research, the recommendations of the study to knowledge and finally the suggestion for further studies.

6.1 Summary

The following findings were made by the researcher in the course of this study.

- The cultural significance of the physical cutting of both the male and female genital organs and the accompanying ritual circumcision are still relevant but not generally accepted or observed by the entire people of Northeastern Igbo-land as used to be in the years past.
- The meaning, content and origin of circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land and other parts of the globe is beclouded with varied beliefs and speculations. The origin of circumcision has not been established, though it is traced back to the forest zones of Africa, but in Northeastern Igbo-land it is being linked with the ancient forefathers of the people. Male circumcision is a global phenomenon. Female physical circumcision and ritual circumcision that are acceptable in Northeastern Igbo-land is not a general practice in other parts of the world.

- Circumcision that is claimed by the traditionalists as a cardinal cultural practice because it is a major rite of passage that determines and defines adulthood among the people of Northeastern Igbo-land is being challenged and rejected by both the youths and the Christian converts because it is discriminatory and not socially relevant any longer.
- The spiritual and material significance of circumcision made the people to tie the social, economic, political and cultural life of the people to ritual circumcision. The result of this is the incessant litigation, denial of farm lands, economic trees and sometimes the destruction of valuable property and buildings belonging to individuals or groups.
- Circumcision, especially the ritual aspect is being challenged by combined forces of Christian converts and modernization. This leads to clash of interests and enmity among the traditionalists and the aggrieved groups. This is an unhealthy development in a communal setting.
- Some youths and some Christians deride and reject ritual circumcision because it is obsolete or out of fashion as it does not meet the social standards of the time. This reaction leads to brutal clash between the custodians of the tradition and their opponents. This threat on circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land is a threat on her entire culture. This is because circumcision is the pivot upon which the people's culture revolves.

- The traditionalists in Northeastern Igbo-land have insisted on both male and female physical circumcision against medical warnings and advice on the dangers or risk of bleeding and death resulting from circumcision. This is because Northeastern Igbo people associate bleeding and death of an initiate to immorality or evil committed by the individual against the gods. It is a taboo to die during circumcision in this cultural zone.

6.2 Conclusion

The cultural significances of circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land are tremendous. Adult physical circumcision and ritual circumcision with its accompanying ceremonies were the people's way of life. The cultural practice of circumcision is as old as the people of Northeastern Igbo-land.

Circumcision to Northeastern Igbo people is not traced to the biblical Abraham rather they linked the origin of circumcision to their ancient parents who started the practice in pre-historic period.

The act of both physical operation of the male genital organ (cutting of the foreskin or prepuce of the penis) and the cutting of the clitoris (FGM- Female Genital Mutilation) and the ritual aspect of circumcision are still relevant and acceptable custom of the people of Northeastern Igbo-land.

The warnings and all medical advice by the World Health Organization and other-medical bodies could not stop the practice of physical and ritual

circumcision as performed-by the people. However the risks of bleeding and high death rate occasioned by circumcision led to the adoption of infant physical circumcision for both males and females in most of the clans of the cultural zone. However, ritual circumcision remains unchanged because it has no risk of bleeding and death.

The ritual practice of circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land marks the people out from other clans or ethnic groups. Ritual circumcision is their cultural identity and pride. It reminds them of their traditional origin and ancestral practice. Ritual circumcision introduces an ordinary member of the society into full adult member with all the rights and privileges. Ritual circumcision is tie only legitimate cultural process to adulthood in t Northeastern Igbo-land. There are hierarchies of benefits associated with ritual circumcision. It enhances admission into the various titles recognized within the clans of Northeastern Igbo-land. The non-initiates voice is never reckoned with in the family or community. He is never appointed to political offices in the community and he is regarded as a religious outcast because he is barred from offering sacrifices or participating in public or communal sacrifice to communal gods or deities. A man who fails to be initiated into manhood is denied a befitting burial.

Circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land accords a man the light to social, religious and political participation. It is the hub upon which the people's life history,

experience, moral values, social sanctions, aspirations, fears, likes and dislikes revolve. It is a school for personality formation into the life of the community.

In the place of these, the people now desire and pursue western values, norms, virtues, moral principles, western cultures, languages and dressing codes that do not agree with their cultural background. Thus, the Northeastern Igbo people today, either consider everything about ritual circumcision as fetish, satanic and unchristian or simply integrate Christianity into the practice and manage the two together.

Whereas, this work does not advocate discarding everything in the people's cultural or ritual aspect of circumcision, it does not also advocate retaining everything in the practices of the ritual practices of circumcision in the Northeastern Igbo-land.

However, it advocates that people should be wise and selective in their cultural inclination or enculturation, specifically in the practice of ritual circumcision. Like every other natural entity, Northeastern Igbo people have something special and rich in their cultural practice of ritual circumcision that others can appreciate and emulate, They must strive to save the social and cultural future for their children by repackaging and preserving every good aspect of circumcision for posterity.

The work contributes to the restructuring of the custom of physical circumcision to meet with the international standard as recommended by the World Health Organization,

The research contributes to the cultural re-orientation of the practice of ritual circumcision as to accommodate and be accommodated by modern socio-cultural life style since culture is dynamic.

The research reveals that circumcision is valued *by* the people of Northeastern Igbo-land because it impacts on their religious, social, political and cultural life.

This work notes that both conferences and seminars on circumcision both by the Roman Catholic church and other churches and even litigations has not brought an end to the problems of circumcision in the cultural zone.

The research reveals that the observable resistance and conflicts caused by circumcision is simply a response from a people whose essence and cultural identities under severe threat of extermination and that can also happen elsewhere if not checked.

The study reveals that the people of Northeastern Igbo-land have wholly adopted Infant physical circumcision in place of the adult physical circumcision its risk and hazard to life.

The research unveils that physical cutting of the male genitals is natural and culturally acceptable worldwide, while the adult or adolescent physical cutting of the genitals is condemned by the medical world due to the risk to life. The ritual circumcision is still an issue of contention between the traditionalist on one side and the youths and the Christians on the other side.

The work reveals that physical circumcision of the male child is a check on the menace of HIV spread.

The work is a contribution to the academic world as both reading and reference material.

6.3 Suggestion for Further Studies

This work suggests the following areas for further studies.

1. Ritual circumcision and the challenges of the 21st century generational impact. This is necessary to arrest the incessant attack on the practice by the youths and the Christian converts.
2. The challenge of ritual circumcision in the (generation) of cultural decline: the case of Northeastern Igbo-land. This is necessary because it will help to identify the challenges and the remedy.
3. Medical implications and the values of female circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land. The research will discover why people still insist on female circumcision even when there are warnings about its danger by the ministry of health.
4. The imperativeness of cultural renaissance in the Northeastern Igbo zone. There is a need to revive and restructure some cultural practices in Igbo-land.
5. The socio-religious significance of red/yellow cam-wood and tattooing in the practice of cultural circumcision in Northeastern Igbo-land is not properly defined.

6.4 Recommendations

The following are recommended

1. To maintain the significance of circumcision to the people, the traditionalists should discard all the ritual and risky aspects of the custom as to accommodate other members of the traditional community in the practice of the custom.
2. The meaning, content and origin of circumcision will not impose any problem if the harmful and discriminatory aspects of circumcision is played down or scrapped for the interest of all.
3. The Christian converts and the youths should tolerate traditional beliefs and cultural practices not inimical to human rights, progress and development.
4. The custodians (stakeholders) of traditional beliefs and cultural practices of circumcision should not compel the youths and the Christians to walk against their belief but should be allowed to practice their faith without fear of intimidation, harassment, denial, molestation or excommunication.
5. The Christian converts should not perceive the people's culture as an obstacle to their Christian faith.
6. The votaries of the custom of circumcision and other cultural practices should remove some beliefs and practices that make their practices fearful, discriminatory, incriminatory, unhygienic and socially unacceptable to the younger generation and the Christians.

7. The custodians and the adherents of the traditional circumcision should adhere to the medical advice and warnings to avoid further incidents of bleeding and the resultant death in Northeastern Igbo-land.
8. The Federal, State and Local Governments should enact laws that will enforce peaceful cultural co-habitation and harmonious living among the people. Laws should also be enacted to abolish harmful cultures in every community.
9. Christians, the younger generation and the traditionalists should eschew - bitterness and violence as a means of resolving their differences and jointly develop their communities.
10. Culture (ritual circumcision) and religious affiliation should not be part of social recognition and political campaign, appointment or employment as it aggravates conflicts, disorder and destructions in the community.
11. The work recommends that there is need for circumcisional renaissance and cultural re-orientation on circumcision for better understanding and incorporation of all segments of the society in the practice of circumcision.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED DURING FIELD WORK

Ikwo Clan

S/N	NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS	DATE OF INTERVIEW	INTERVIEWER
1	Eze Ogo Nwakpu Egbe	87	M	Traditional ruler	Echara Ikwo	19:05:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
2	Chief Hon Fred Udeogu	53	M	Politician	[nyimegu	1:5:06:2017	Nwanchor O- Edwin
3	Chief Oliver Eze	67	M	Retired civil servant	Ekpelu	1:8:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
4	Elder Nwode Eche	68	M	Retired Principal	Ndufu	21:06:2017	Nwanchor O 'Edwin
5	Chief Azogbu Nte	97	M	Farmer	Echara	19:05:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
6	Elder Mrs Rose Nwuze	64	F	Business	Inyimegu	15:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
7	Chief John Nte Xlvore	69	M	Farmer	Vduoduma	07:05:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
8	Elder Isaiah E	74	M	Farmer	Nzashi	15:06:2017	Nwanchor O E
9	Mr Aloy A Orogwu	53	M	Teacher	Vdegu	27:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
10	Mr Pius Ede	68	M	Farmer	Ndegu	15:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
11	Mr Cyprain Okiri	66	M	Civil servant	Unwueka	07:05:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
12	Mrs Regina Oke	55	F	Farmer	Omego	1D:06:2017	Nwanchor O , Edwin
13	Ezeogo Igwe Nwokwa	87	M	Farmer	Ekpomaka	10:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin

Izzi Clan

S/N	NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATIO N	ADDRESS	DATE OF INTERVIE	INTER VIEWER
1	Mr Alex Nwede	58	M	Civil servant	Amachi	10:05:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
2	Mr Emeka Nwoke	53	M	Civil servant	Nwezenyi	10:05:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
3	Chief Francis Elem	63	M	Politician	Nwida	28:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
4	Mr Moses Oginyi	54	M	Farmer	Odagerida	03:05:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
5	Chief Patrick	86	M	Retired Principal	Okpitemo	24:05:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
6	Barr Friday	57	M	Barrister	Inyimegu	27:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
7	Mr Joseph Amiara	57	M	Policeman	Nnodo	15:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
8	Com Patrick Igwe	51	M	Civil servant	Amachi	21:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
9	Rev Dr Donatus	59	M	Clergy	Ndufumuta	27:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
10	Rev Dr Nte Nome	54	M	Clergy	Ndoduma	26:05:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
11	Rev Mrs Iteshi Utsulor	49	F	Clergy	Okpera	15:04:2017	

Ezza Clan

S/N	NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS	DATE OF INTERVIEW	INTERVIEWER
1	Ezeogo Nwite Ngele	89	M	Traditional ruler	Oriuzo Ezza	19:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
2	Col Fidelis Uwa	86	M	Retired Army	Idembia	22:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
3	Mrs Patricia Ogbuebo	72	F	Retired Teacher	Onueke	11:07:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
4	Mr Nwonu Ochenu	74	M	Farmer	Achcgu	17:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
5	Elder Kenneth Uwa	68	M	Retire Principal	Ogbuoji	17:06:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin
6	Dr Stephen Alo Igboke	72	M	Lecturer	Achiegu	07:05:2017	Nwanchor O Edwin

Ngbo Clan

S/N	NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS	DATE OF INTERVIEW	INTERVIEWER
1	Mr Okwashi Emma Nweke	78	M	Security man	Ntsurekpa	23''06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
2	Mr Fidelis Nte Nwoke	47	M	Farmer	Umuebe	27:05:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
3	Mr Sunday Nweke	45	M	Teacher	Ntezi	12:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
4	Barr Onwoshi Uwafouekohye	57	M	Barrister	Okpoto	12:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
5	Mr Chimezie Ugama	47	M	Business	Ezilo	11:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin
6	Mr James Ede Edukwu	58	M	Farmer	Umuegara	27:06:2017	Nwanchor Edwin