

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Ekwulobia is one of the towns that benefitted from the coming of the European missionaries and their religion, Christianity in 1913. Christianity is no longer a new phenomenon in Ekwulobia. The process of Christianization in Ekwulobia which brought these two different religions and culture into contact and conflicts experienced reciprocal shocks. Agha (1996) stated that conflicts are abound to occur when the old and new meet because each will claim superiority over the other (p.16). The people of Ekwulobia gradually embraced Christianity. Christianity has demonstrated in its human character that it is the custodian and promoter of human values; though one may not rightly assert that Christianity has always played this role flawlessly. Before the advent of Christianity in Ekwulobia, the indigenes of Ekwulobia were very religious. Mbiti (1969) explains this clearly:

Wherever the African man is, there is his religion, he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop, and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school. Wherever he is going, he has his religion and culture with him. (p. 24).

Leonard (1986) supported this view saying, “Igbo people are truly and deeply religious people of who it can be said that ... they eat religiously, drink religiously, bath religiously and dress religiously” (p.38).

When Christianity came to Ekwulobia, the indigenes gave a cold reception to it because most of the people they came to evangelize looked at the new religion as a threat to their own religion as in the case of Anglican and the coming of Catholic Church in Ekwulobia. They saw Christianity as the importation of the white man's culture which cannot easily mix well with their own culture.

Before the advent of Christianity, Ekwulobia was governed by traditions and custom. Ekwulobia people did not know that there were other cultures and traditions which were different from their religious beliefs and worship. There were traditions that were given high positions in Ekwulobia like *Iso-ebe, Igba-eke, Igba-udo, Okponi, Igochi Umunwaanyi, Achukwu* masquerading, *Oriri Uto, Ezeasika, Ilo-uwa, Iju-ase, Ogwu, Mgborogwu na Mkpaakwukwo* and so on. Through this culture and tradition, they organize their life, style and worldview.

There was a cultural clash between the western culture vessel in which Christianity has been conveyed to Ekwulobia and the authentic values of Ekwulobia culture because the people of Ekwulobia find it extremely difficult to abandon their way of life for a new way of life that is yet to prove a superior alternative. Even some of the converts and practitioners of Christian faith seem not yet ready to let go of some aspects of their culture. This is so, because the Christianity that was brought was fully engulfed in western culture: western philosophy, theology and cultural values such as monogamy, rituals and ceremonies and also western names. All these posed a serious problem for the establishment of Christianity at the initial stage and also the reason why all the efforts to

have deep touch of the Christian message in the lives of the people seemed to be shallow. The missionaries came with their own brand of religion called Christianity that was headed by Jesus Christ. This brand of religion was regarded by the missionaries as the best way of worshipping God and by this they implanted the message of Christ in the minds of Ekwulobia people especially those that accepted their religion. For them, Ekwulobia traditional religion ought to be discarded since it was no religion at all and religion entails the conception of the abstract which Ekwulobia people could not do. According to Ludwig (1980) “how can the untutored Africans conceive God that is not seen”. Ebelebe (cited in Ekwunife, 2016) added that the missionaries were praised for the developments brought all over Igbo land; he also blamed them for not taking cognizance of the people’s culture. Rather what they left was Irish church structures and practices transplanted into Igbo land. Christianity came to Ekwulobia in the year 1913 through the Anglican missionaries, while the Roman Catholic faith was brought through Adazi in Anaocha in the year 1925 by Rev. Fr. C. Liddane C.S.S.P. who was then the Parish Priest of Adazi. When Christianity came to Ekwulobia, the missionaries forgot that the people of Ekwulobia, before they came, had their own mode of worship and belief in the Supreme Being. The white missionaries did not consider all these rather all the religious artifacts were branded idols, fetish and everything about them was referred to as heathenism.

The coming of Christianity to Ekwulobia is more or less an encounter of culture with another culture. In this encounter, the system of religious beliefs is being evaluated.

Christianity had an encounter with the cultural environment in Ekwulobia and the good news is that the two religions have distinct ethical imperatives and most often Christianity claims superiority over the cultural, social, and political environment in Ekwulobia, and this creates more problems.

The culture and traditions of the people of Ekwulobia determine to a very large extent the way in which they have understood their faith. The missionaries did not help matters at all because they made no efforts to understand Ekwulobia or to seek ways of incorporating Ekwulobia culture with Christianity. According to Iwe (1985) "they never appreciated effectively the positive elements of our culture and religion, the white missionaries erroneously believed the African continent as being in 'darkness', lacking the rightful religion" (p.16). Kenyatta (1938) also opined the same:

In the early days of European colonization, many white men, especially missionaries landed in Africa with pre-conceived ideas of what they would find there, and how they would deal with the situations. As far as religion was concerned, Africa was regarded as a clean slate on which anything could be written. It was supposed to take whole heartedly all religious dogmas of the white man and keep them sacred and unchallenged no matter how alien to its mode of life. (p. 269).

If the early missionaries had given enough time to the study of Ekwulobia culture and custom especially as it affects the area, they would have noticed that they had been worshipping God, though in their own way and as they understood. Total condemnation

of what the people of Ekwulobia were doing by the missionaries provoked those they had come to evangelize. The indigenes were very reluctant to have anything to do with those that brought Christianity to them since they believed that they knew nothing. However, as time went on, there were gradual changes on both sides, each trying as much as possible to soft-pedal in order to accommodate the other. As they continued to understand and accommodate themselves, good rapport for evangelism was created. Ekwulobia generally is well known for their generosity and that is why the town was named “Ekwulu-obia” because they are open to anyone who wished to co-operate with strangers. To support the point made above, Iwe (1985) has this to say:

We notice the remarkable and corporate generosity of the Africans towards the Christian missionaries. The early conflicts and bloody disputes with the European colonialists did not contaminate the good will and friendliness of the African natives towards the missionaries. (p. 7).

From 1914, the indigenes of Ekwulobia always maintained the friendliest relations with the missionaries, never molesting them in any way, but on the contrary showing the greatest eagerness to be on the most cordial relations with them. It was this singular and profound kindness of the natives of Ekwulobia towards the Christian missionaries that prompted them to make liberal grants of tracts of land and other donations and gifts in cash and kind to them for the success of their mission. Despite the initial negative approach towards evangelism, the missionaries later developed keen interests towards the winning of souls. The fact is that the indigenes of Ekwulobia were probably not unaware

of the elementary fact that the acceptance of "new forms" may only increase the range of alternatives available to them. This unfortunate uneasiness of being a Christian and at the same time having unrestrained attraction to traditional practices has to be properly addressed. This led Chikwe (1992) to remind us thus: "Every serious evangelizer is therefore called upon to make the message of Christ at home with the culture of the evangelized and at the same time bring the culture of the people in line with the gospel message" (p.25). In fact, this is a clarion call to have a serious, sincere and deep look at the traditional culture, to situate it in the context of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to objectively allow it to be transformed by the radiance of Christianity.

From the year 1914-1920, the indigenes of Ekwulobia have been responding both positively and negatively since their contact with the 'white man's' religion. The interaction between the traditional culture of the people and Christianity brought about drastic changes in the lives of the people. There was confrontation between traditional moral values and Christian ethics, between Western norms associated with Christianity and Igbo concepts of norms and values, which gave rise to the rapid socio-religious change. Churches in Ekwulobia were not dormant towards this issue especially the Catholic Church. From the year 1978-1990, churches in Ekwulobia have done a lot towards inculturation especially the tremendous efforts made by Late Fr Martin Maduka; nevertheless a lot needs also to be done in order to alleviate double allegiance of faith among Christians and establish deep rooted Christianity in Ekwulobia cultural environment. The researcher is convinced that despite the fact that the people of

Ekwulobia accepted Christianity, one needs to know the impact Christianity has created in the lives of the indigenes. There is the need to ascertain the extent their traditions have been bastardised, sustained or restructured by Christ and his teachings. Since the missionaries that brought Christianity to Ekwulobia did not consider their culture before imposing theirs, there is the need to find out the culturally poignant issues that hampered the church from realising its goals in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. This makes it imperative for a thorough investigation of the advent of Christianity in Ekwulobia, and the relationship that exists between Christianity and the cultural environment in Ekwulobia.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ekwulobia town witnessed the insurgence and the revolutionary forces of western religion, Christianity, western commerce, western medication, western education and western communication system which create a field of interaction. The Christian missionaries made converts and created a distinctive and great change in the area. In doing this, the traditional instincts of Ekwulobia people were either ignored or at best dismissed. Things began to take a new shape. Things that were thought to be helpful were said to be harmful, things that were thought beneficial were said to be detrimental and things encouraged were condemned. However, Ekwulobia culture was of no relevance and they thought that they could build the Christian faith and practice on a totally different factor; the changed phenomenon. With time, they realized that this complacent

and recipient people are sorting things out on their own. The ideas, producing power and activity of the people were almost untouched.

In other words, the contact between Christianity and Ekwulobia culture created many socio-cultural problems for the indigenes. For no culture remains the same when it comes in contact with another culture. Most of the people that accepted Christianity accepted it from the social angle and that is why Madu (2017) says “Igbo Christian has no qualms in wearing the cross on his neck and wearing the talisman made by Awka blacksmith on his waist”. Obiefuna (1985) added that “after hundred years of Christianity in Igbo land, Christianity was only skin-deep among Igbo Christians” (p. 7). Christianity in Ekwulobia is one sided and is not balanced. It was observed that Christianity is on the lagging boundary of culture, rather than on the leading edge. The missionaries that brought Christianity failed to minister creatively because they were plagued with cultural paralysis. The missionaries failed to balance its spirituality to conform to a certain agreed culture of the people of Ekwulobia. The traditions and culture of Ekwulobia were negated. For it to be balanced some of our culture ought to be imbibed into Christianity, nature does not allow vacuum, any vacuum must be completed. The researcher strongly agrees with Madu (2004) in his statement:

For a resurgence of the status quo ante, a radical challenge of Christian tradition must be launched, we have to discard all the discardables in Christianity (accidents) and accept all the acceptable (the gem). And the “gem” must have to be traditionalized to fit into the lens of African

cosmology. The missionaries have created a vacuum by devaluing the culture of Ekwulobia people and this brings in crisis of faith or double allegiance. (p.61).

For over a hundred years, Christian influence has not penetrated deeply enough the fabrics and the psyche of the Ekwulobia society, the new generation are feeling challenged and threatened. For instance, despite the presence and successes of schools, colleges and other institutions of higher learning, with Bishops and, multiple professors in diverse disciplines, one discovers that the Ekwulobia society has not been properly served by her potentials while some of the traditional forces are still powerful as ever, so much thirst for old ways of doing things. Why? This research work is poised to examine the reason for this problem. Also Churches in Ekwulobia, especially the Catholic Church, have done a lot to see that some of Ekwulobia cultures are incorporated into Christianity in order to ensure deep rooted Christianity in Ekwulobia but the attention given to this is not considerable as far as Ekwulobia is concerned, and that is the gap in knowledge which this research proposes to investigate.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Christianity and Ekwulobia culture have had so many conflicts with it. These conflicts were as a result of negation of some of the culture and traditions of Ekwulobia people by the missionaries which led to Christian message not taken deep root into the

rank and file of the people. The attention given to this is not considerable as far as Ekwulobia is concerned. Based on this fact, this research has the following objectives:

1. To investigate the reason behind Christianity not properly grounded within Ekwulobia cultural context, regardless of one hundred and five years of existence in the area.
2. To examine the cultural atmosphere in Ekwulobia prior to the coming of Christianity and how their traits contributed to the nature of their response.
3. To make an analysis of the encounter between Christianity and Ekwulobia culture, and see how far this formed the basis of the encounter.
4. To create a conducive environment between the traditional culture of Ekwulobia people and Christianity by adopting a tolerant and accommodative attitude towards one another.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This work is strictly limited to a geographical area called Ekwulobia in Aguata Local Government Area, Anambra State, a sub-cultural group among Igbo society. The researcher is aware that this type of study may cover Aguata Local Government but due to financial constraints, lack of adequate time and transportation problems, the scope of the research is restricted to Ekwulobia town in Aguata Local Government Area in Anambra State. The researcher is convinced that what obtains at Ekwulobia as a case study will go a long way in its application to some other Igbo communities within the state as they reasonably share related religious and cultural influences.

This research is strictly centered on the historical survey of Christianity and its activities and impact on the traditions of Ekwulobia people and the reasons behind Christianity not taken deep root in Ekwulobia cultural area. Moreover, ascertain in details how Christianity and the cultural practices of the people of Ekwulobia have co-existed within the period Christianity came in Ekwulobia in the year 1913, which covers the year the missionaries came with this new religion called Christianity to the year 2013 which also covers hundred years of its existence in Ekwulobia. It also covers the missionaries' activities in Ekwulobia and the efforts made by the Christian churches to see that there is cordial relationship and dialogue between Christianity and Ekwulobia culture.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research work shall serve as an insight for the people of Ekwulobia and the general public to be aware that the traditional culture of Ekwulobia is the basis for their political, socio-economic and religious institutions as well as the interpretation and expression of their religious beliefs including Christianity. It will help to revitalize the interest of the people in history so that Christianity and the culture of Ekwulobia may be as expected.

This research is of great importance both to the Christians and non-Christians alike so far they desire to know more about Ekwulobia and impact of Christianity on their traditional culture, for this will help the people face the challenges of the future. It will rekindle faith in good spirited Christians to accept the good traditions of Ekwulobia for the good of all.

It will enable the churches in Ekwulobia to take pro-active measures through inculturation in order to better the religious lives of the people of Ekwulobia since they serve as the integral part of the society. The study will also add to the existing knowledge about Christianity and traditional culture with general implications for the rest of the country. It is of great importance to any church historian who may wish to add to their knowledge about this particular people. And it will serve as a base for further studies.

1.6 Research Methodology

Every research requires a method to be a scientific work. The research method involves certain procedure or pattern adopted by the researcher to achieve the purpose of her study. This study adopts historical research design in the collection of data since it focuses on examining the past in order for present phenomenon to be explained through the past information obtained. This aspect of research although it looks at the past, is used to explain the present and make projections concerning the future. The primary data was collected through oral interviews and participant observation. The researcher made extensive use of oral tradition collected from some of the living aged church members and natives at home. It is worthy to note that conducting a research of this nature is not an easy task. Much has not been written about Ekwulobia and its culture, so one need to search for those who witnessed the coming of the church. The researcher had made a serious effort to present a work coherent enough to serve as an aid to other future work on Ekwulobia history and its encounter with Christianity. The secondary sources were textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines, church documents and unpublished

materials. The data so collected was analyzed phenomenologically in order to give a picture of the people, their culture and traditions. This method of research, although popularized by Edmund Husserl has gained the confidence of many prominent researchers in the science of religion. It applies the principles of suspension of judgment, a listening attitude, impartiality and the essence and structure of facts, to present the researcher with adequate knowledge for establishing the state of affairs as it concerns the matter under discussion. It examines things as they present themselves. This approach enabled the researcher to uncover without bias the tenets and practices associated with Christianity and Ekwulobia culture.

1.7 Definition of Terms

It is of great importance that the key words that are used in this research work are defined to enable proper understanding of the work. The words include: culture and Christianity. They are explained as follows:

1.7.1 Culture

Culture appears to be one of the very common issues of human existence. Its emergence in human history is traced back to the time of the early Homo Sapiens. Since then it has been impossible to live without a culture or for a culture to emerge without human beings. This makes culture a concomitant of human existence. The concept “culture” was derived from a Latin verb “Colere” or “Cultus” meaning to draw borderlines. Culture is what gives meaning to us as we relate with the external world. It is

through the things that we do, that is our culture, which allows us to express the values we hold. Therefore, as our values change, so will our culture. Culture is a concept that is acknowledged universally. Its phenomenal relevance varies from society to society. What is acceptable in one society may likely be an abomination in the other. This view derives from the fact that culture is an all embracing concept as far as man is concerned. It encompasses every bit of man's experience. This, perhaps, is why the concept has attracted various definitions from different scholars, but these definitions revolve round a similar meaning. This research work agrees with Brown in Aggarwal (1981) that:

The culture of a people is the way of life of that people, the things they value and the things they do not value, their habits of life, their work of art, their music, their words, their history, what they are, what they do and what they like. (p. 285).

It is the totality of what we believe and practice, our language, religion, mode of dressing, even what we eat and our world-view. Bullon (2000) sees culture as the way of life of a society. Culture distinguishes human society from animal group since the inception of mankind. The ideas, custom and attitudes shared by a group which make up its culture are transmitted from one generation to another by learning processes. Ezeanya (cited in Okafor, 2015) posits that:

We all know that every people no matter how backward they may be, no matter at what stage of civilization and development they may be, have a culture, a way of life peculiar to themselves and the

characteristic features of such a way of life. In that particular culture can be found elements that are naturally good, just and beautiful, elements that promote the general welfare of humanity as God's creatures. (p. 6).

Culture is all embracing and can be simply defined as the totality of people's way of life. It includes ideas, language, and the way they reason, all come under the umbrella of culture. According to Fichter (cited in Nmah, 2016), sees culture as "the total configuration of institutions that the people in society share in common" (p. 270). Sagarin (cited in Nmah, 2016), defines culture as the complex whole that consists of all the ways people think and do everything they were as members of society. Hogan (2006) states that: "culture is the way of life of a social group" (p. 100). For Ogionwo and Otite (1979), it is "the complex whole of man's acquisitions of knowledge, morals, beliefs, art, custom, technology, traditions and skill which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation" Culture includes not only the material things we see but also immaterial expression which includes the language of the people, their singing and dancing and all other social activities taken by the people. The material aspect of culture include material achievements of people as in production of food, water supply, clothing, housing, weapons, arts, literature, science and technology. It embraces also music, songs, games, modern crabs, ethics and all elements of activities of a people. That is why culture has been defined as the sum total of people's way of life. According to Scupin (cited in Nmah, 2016), the human capacity for culture is based on our linguistic and cognitive

ability to symbolize. Culture is transmitted from generation to generation through symbolic learning and language. Culture is the historical accumulation of symbolic knowledge that is shared by a society. This symbolic knowledge is transmitted through learning and it can change rapidly from parents to children and from one generation to the next.

In this research work, culture is seen as the sum of how we conduct ourselves and this is expressed in language, actions or the arts. It is part of what we mean by being human. One may say that culture is what we do around here that gives us meaning. Other ways of putting it are: a set of common understandings for organizing actions and language and other symbolic vehicles for expressing common understanding. Culture is religion made visible; it is religion actualized in the innumerable relations of daily life. Culture is what gives meaning to us as we relate with the external world. Besides, the following are the characteristics of the concept of culture under discussion. Culture is stable and dynamic, explicit and implicit, shared and learned, ideal and manifest, covert and overt, organic and supra-organic, corruptible and reforming. An African person inherits a cultural heritage from the preceding generation which they use, add to and pass on to the succeeding ones.

Moreover, culture of a people is the way of life of that people, the things they value and the things they do not value, their habits of life, their work of art, their music, their words, their history, what they are, what they do and what they like shall form our working definition.

1.7.2 Christianity

Christianity as a noun connotes Christian faith, religion, the religion based on the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. Summers and Lea (cited in Nmah 2012) posits that Christianity as a noun connotes Christian faith, religion, being a Christian character or the religion based on life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Achunike (cited in Nmah 2012) holds that Christianity is a way people or ethnic group exhibits or practices its Christian faith. Okonkwo (2000) opined that Christianity could be looked at as a religion based on the teachings and life of Jesus Christ engulfed with love for one another, respect for human dignity and peace (p.12). According to Wordweb Electronic Dictionary (2013) Christianity is a monotheistic system of beliefs and practices based on Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ as embodied in the New Testament and emphasizing the role of Jesus as savior. Gresham (1997) sees Christianity as “a great movement that originate a few days after the death of Jesus Christ, in a sense Christianity originated still farther back in old testament when the promise was first given concerning a salvation to come” (p. 8). Louis (2013) supports this definition that Christianity is a monotheistic system of beliefs and practices based on the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus as embodied in the New Testament and emphasizing the role of Jesus as saviour.

Christianity could also be looked at as a religion that is able to influence a country that the values and standards of Jesus Christ permeate the national culture, the national culture includes such things as: its consensus on moral questions; the equal regard that it pays to men, women and children; its defense of marriage and family; its respect for the

sanctity of human life including that of the unborn, and the handicapped; its administration of justice and conduct of business; the education of youth; recognition of human rights; its concern for the homeless, the unemployed and for people trapped in a cycle of deprivation and poverty; its attitude to dissidents and its treatment of criminals; its stewardship of the natural environment and its use of power. Christianity possessed highly developed concepts of the Supreme Being.

For the purposes of this research, Christianity is seen as the world leading religion. The word Christianity was first used in New Testament at Antioch in Syria where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians meaning the followers of Christ (Acts 11:26). Christianity is based on the life, teaching and the death of Jesus Christ the founder of Christian religion. In line with this Ituma (2003) argues that Jesus is the foundation of the New Testament and that New Testament itself is the foundation of Christianity.

The tenets of Christianity are recorded in the book of books called the “Holy Bible.” It has different sects such as the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, Aladura, Christ Living Faith (Winners), Zoe Ministry, Christ Embassy, Deeper Life, Church of God Mission, Grace of God Mission, Lord Chosen Charismatic Revival Movement and many others.

1.7.3 Historical Survey

Historical survey could be analyzed as the examination of the contributions of an individual or community's previous contribution overtime. Historical survey method enables the researcher gather information or data from a large group of population. This is done through assessing historical documents, interview and other sources. This method is usually used by historians to gather information from principal, original or primary sources in order to recount or reenact past events. Furthermore, historical survey attempts to examine the past and this is done through critical and in-depth analysis of historical information. It could be done either qualitatively or quantitatively.

In summary, the theme "Christianity and Ekwulobia Culture, 1913-2013: A Historical Survey" focuses on Christianity and the socio-cultural environment, Ekwulobia, the inter-mingling, synthesis, conversion, inculturation, the traditionalist obstinacy and the way forward.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of review of related literature cannot be over-emphasized, for it affords the researcher the opportunity of knowing what areas that have been covered, what remains and what techniques to employ in his investigation. It provides the necessary foundation and theoretical framework for the researcher to move forward. However, to the best of my knowledge, not much have been written and published on Ekwulobia Christianity that is our object of discussion, but there are many other literatures that bear indirectly on the topic and will necessarily serve as resource materials for this study. In other words, a study of the opinions and views of some of the scholars in related study will be of immense help to a better understanding of this work. This is therefore done under the following headings:

1. Conceptual Framework;
2. Theoretical Framework;
3. Empirical Studies and Summary.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The term, concept could be seen as ideas. In other words, concepts are ideas with which the scientist talks about the world. It could be referred to as words or terms. Concepts have meanings given to them irrespective of any implied common sense notions. Every concept has its own attributes. It is from the concepts that the system of

reporting is being presented. According to Ogunyiriofo (2002), “In analysing a concept, therefore, one may attempt to reveal how the concept is normally used in everyday life, or how it is used by professionals, or how it is casually used” (p.4).

The conceptual framework of this research work shall treat two basic issues in respect of the topic and they are culture and cultural encounter.

2.1.1 Culture

Culture is a concept that is acknowledged universally. Its phenomenal relevance varies from society to society. What is acceptable in one society may likely be an abomination in the other. This view derives from the fact that culture is an all embracing concept as far as man is concerned. It encompasses every bit of man’s life and experience. This is perhaps why the concept has attracted various definitions from different scholars, but these definitions revolve round a similar meaning. For Tylor (1958), he sees culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom or any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. To Malinowski (1931), culture is a functioning, active, efficient, well organized unity, which must be analyzed in components institutions in relation to the needs of human organism, and in relation to the environment, man-made as well as natural. Drawing an inference from the above, culture is an all embracing concept having a broad interpretation. Culture embraces religious beliefs, languages, dresses, style of living, political organization and all other aspects of life. In the context of this dissertation, culture is used as the totality of the way of life of African people including their tangible

and intangible products, habits, customs, thoughts as well as the arts, technology, music, literature, theatre, health, drama and education.

Cultural encounter is a phrase to describe events of very different countries' cultures mainly introduced to each other and then having some significant event following. These significant events can vary depending on the cultures and how they interact. For example, the Christian culture combating against the Ekwulobia culture. It could be seen also as being aware of other cultures beyond your local community. Cultural encounter could also be described as the diffusion of a central dominant culture to peripheral civilizations. Cultural encounters have often taken the form of war or conquest, submission and/or exploitation. However, `also more apparently peaceful Christianization processes such as mission and the diffusion of religious houses may be viewed as examples of cultural encounters.

Cultural encounters can also be said to have taken place internally, that is inside civilization. Here cultural encounters can take the shape of clashes (or at least opposition) between groups in society, bringing problems like the relationship between individuals and collective, or the marking of specific groups as 'other' to the fore. Categories such as language, behaviour, ethnicity, gender, social classes and power are central to this perspective. According to Nwafor (1997), cultural encounter could be seen as the interaction between Christianity, which could be regarded as an alien, and the traditional Culture of a particular people. The interaction usually influences the socio-economic, the political, religious and every other aspect of the people's life. As a result of the

interaction, the traditional culture of the people will witness the penetration and the revolutionary forces of Western education, Western commerce and communication media, western system of government, western system of worshipping God and the rest of them. Udoka (1995) sees cultural encounter as the interaction or confrontations between traditional moral life and Christian ethics, between the western norms associated with Christianity and Igbo concepts of norms and values learnt through organized traditional community life and religion.

In line with this, Frame (2001), stated that there were many conflicts between the Christian, and the traditional believers, between Christ and human culture often rising to the level of persecution. Christians often saw themselves at war with the surrounding culture. Christianity and culture are opposites, opposed to one another, at war with another. Mugambi (2002) opined that Cultural encounter can also be seen as an interaction between the traditional cultural heritage of a people with the new religion, already expressed in terms of another culture, acquired and developed a new way of life which was distinct from, but also related to, both the old(local) and the new (foreign) cultural backgrounds. In this interaction, each group acquired the cultural characteristics of another through direct contact and interaction. The translation of Christian teaching into practical living could not be done without cultural reference and cultural interaction. In support of the above, Shorter (1973) wrote thus:

What happens is that Christianity in one cultural dress encounters a non-Christian culture, and then tries to incarnate itself in the new culture. In doing this, it challenges and transforms the culture. Two processes are

involved: the ‘undressing’ of Christianity from the foreign culture simultaneously- because you cannot have a naked Christianity. (p.69).

Moreover, Chigbogu (2004) looked at cultural encounter as cultural clash that exist between Christianity and African traditional religion. The interaction that exists between the two often result to conflict, both of them may have survived the encounter but not without blemish. The researcher adopts the above definition as her working definition because it is relevant to the work.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theory presents a systematic way of understanding events, behaviours and situations. In other words, it is a set of interacted concepts, definitions, and propositions that explains or predicts events or situations by specifying relations among variables. According to Muyiwa (2005), “it is the basic assumption of the average scholar that every attempt at explaining reality or part of it, must begin with a theoretical framework” (p.41). He goes to add that the task of a theoretical framework is to provide the basis for reaching what may be considered an objective conclusion.

There are many theories that could be employed for the purpose of this study, but the researcher decided to use the theory of Inculturation, Symbolic interactionism and theory of Functionalism.

2.2.1 Inculturation theory

The co-existence and the attendant conflict between Christianity and other cultures can be traced back to the time of Christ and the subsequent apostolic period. This is to say that the relationship between culture and religion is not a modern development, rather it predates the modern times. According to John Paul (cited in Obineche and Ojo, 2013) “split between the gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time” (p.276). It is not surprising that Onwubiko (1997) said that inculturation is a new vision of an old problem in the church or a new approach to a solution of an old problem. According to Metuh (1996), the concept was probably first used in a theological sense by Joseph Masson, a professor of the Gregorian University Rome. Schineller (1990) avows that the exact origin of the word as it functions in the theological community is unclear, but he points to its use by Cardinal Sin of Manila at the synod on Catechesis held in Rome in 1977 and its first insertion into papal Documents by John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis on October 1979. Since then, the concept has become a common place and was frequently used by the John Paul II during his visits to Africa. Metuh (1996), views the origin of the concept of inculturation from a secular perspective. He maintains that the term is borrowed from cultural anthropology where it denotes the process by which a person is inserted into his culture. It is in this regard that Schineller (1990) says that “at its best, the term combines the theological significance of incarnation with the anthropological concepts of enculturation and acculturation to create something new” (p.21).

Numerous works have been written by African scholars on the process of Christian inculturation or indigenization within an African context. Since Nigerian independence from Great Britain in 1960 and the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-70, many Nigerian theologians and pastors, both Catholic and Protestants, have written on the state of Igbo Christianity and need for spiritual and theological renewal. Inculturation could be seen as the presentation and re-expression of the gospel in forms and terms proper to a culture. This process results in the reinterpretation of both, without being unfaithful to either.

As a term Inculturation designates the process by which the gospel takes root in local values, discovering and using their richness, as well as purifying their deficiencies. Ezechi (2011) stated that inculturation is a process or attempt to find or root Christianity in different cultures of the world. It is a process whereby cultural values can be transformed through their exposure to the Christian message and the insertion of Christianity into indigenous cultures. Duncan (2014) sees inculturation as a movement for the africanization or indigenization of Christianity in Africa. This became necessary following the failure of the European missionaries to root the gospel message solidly unto the African word of meaning, reality structure, survival thrust or the African conceptual framework. Discussing this fact, Wambutda (1978) observed that the Christianity as imported from Europe and America contains strange and sometimes disgusting features of alienation with which Africans are most uncomfortable. According to Obilor and Chukuegwu (2000), inculturation as a term was coined by the Society of Jesus and

popularized also by them. The church from ages past has practiced inculturation as a unifying term for the sacred and the secular, but lacked the appropriate terminology for it till the recent time when the term inculturation was adopted. In religion especially to Christianity, inculturation means the presentation and re-expression of the gospel in forms and terms proper to a culture and not the juxtaposition which may lead to syncretism. According to Walligo (1986),

Inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his Gospel of salvation ever more understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It is the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought patterns of each people..... It is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity truly feel at home in the cultures of each people. (p.11).

In the contention of Arrupe (1990):

Inculturation is the incarnation of christian life and christian message in particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the cultures, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation. (p.6).

Inculturation as a concept is as old as man and his religion. As an idea, it is as old as conscious religious activity of men as a proselytization in human migration. The

attempt of the early man to understand whatever he believed and to practice same as a religious being is seen as the practice of inculturation in human history. The search by the early people to dialogue with the invisible God who must be respected, obeyed and worshipped within the ambient of human culture is homoreligious activity of man under the guise of inculturation. Schineller (cited in Iheanacho and Abdulrazaq, 2013) see the New Testament as the origin of inculturation especially in Christianity. He held that the reality of inculturation goes back to the life of Jesus and the preaching of the early church as seen in the missionary activity of Saint Paul. It is rightly said that Christianity transcends every culture yet it is impossible to practice Christianity without a culture. Although Christianity needs another culture for its transmission, it is a culture of its own. This is why the missionaries at any given time could not spread the gospel independent of their own cultural milieu. This is also the reason why inculturation as the unifying term for both secular and sacred has become for the church, the defining term for the reality which the church has for ages taught and practiced, even when she did not have the adequate words or terminologies to express it fully.

The Old Testament contains several efforts made towards inculturation by the patriarchs to synthesize polytheism with the worship of the one true God in a dialogue between faith and culture, the New Testament especially Christianity, is but a new way of continuing the old dialogue. The main purpose of the first council of Jerusalem was to decide whether or not to include Gentiles and probably to inculturate Gentile culture into Christianity. This council brought about the inculturation of the Jews and the Gentiles as

friends in the Christian faith on the basis of their faith in Christ and not on their tribal ideologies. Nevertheless, the cultural conflicts between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians were not totally solved until Christianity incorporated the Graeco-Roman cultures. It was in the heat of the argument to inculturate and accommodate the two cultures that made Paul, in one of his famous declarations said that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile.

In the contemporary Africa, the subject of inculturation has become a fascinating central focus of attention as championed by the Catholic Church. According to Ekarika (2001), the Papal exhortation that followed the special African synod of 1944 in Rome, was a vivid indication that inculturation was the central issue at the synod. Inculturation was described as an urgent priority and the greatest challenge for the church in Africa. Since the opening of this project by the second Vatican Council, a lot has been achieved. Today, local languages and songs, local musical instruments and dancing have become common features at the celebration of mass in many African churches. African arts and symbols have rapidly replaced the European ones in many African churches.

It is also observed that it was not long after the initial focus of Christianity was embedded in the Jewish cultural worldview, than the so called Gentile nations entered and accepted the Christian faith and became the focus of the Christian mission as well. Hence, the good news became thus interpreted from some cultural perspectives other than the Jewish. This gospel universality is evident in the various languages into which the

Bible has been translated; from Hebrew to Greek, Greek to Latin, and to English. Today, the Bible has been translated into many languages as there are cultures.

Theory of inculturation is used in this dissertation as a process in which Ekwulobia culture could be transformed by faith and introduced into the mystical body of Christ, which is the church. This theory becomes possible because human cultures reflect divine truth. According to Aylward (cited in Iheanacho, 2013), theologians have ways of explaining this transformation of culture by faith; one way he said, is to situate the process in what is called the mission Dei “ God’s mission” which is all about his loving and saving dialogue with his entire creation. The theory of inculturation is synonymous with some basic terms like contextualization, africanization and indigenization. This phenomenal rate of expansion of Christianity in Ekwulobia has revealed that the Christian faith as professed by Ekwulobia people ought to find expression in terms and configurations that originate from Ekwulobia cultural values and life experience. It is this effort to reason out faith in the living God through Christ, which reflects authentic Ekwulobia perspective that has led to the quest for inculturation tagged “African Christian theology”. In spite of the generally negative western evaluation of indigenous African religions, it has become an open secret that virtually all leading African theologians though trained according to western models in theology, have focused their research and writings on those very religious traditions of the African “past” which highly considered to be theologically significant in the growth and existence of African Christianity. This trend of inculturation according to Mbiti (cited in Iheanacho and

Abdulrazaq, 2013) recognizes that historically, Christianity is very much an African religion.

The theory of inculturation has received a world-wide recognition wherever and whenever the gospel is been propagated and it is no longer an Ekwulobia phenomena. Inculturation has remained a vehicle through which the gospel has been transmitted from one culture to another. It is one of the ways of achieving a viable and responsible church that will meet the demand and yearning of Ekwulobia people. This failure of Christianity to be deeply rooted in the lives of Ekwulobia people and their soil impelled them to study their religion in order to see how much features of indigenous worship could be grafted on the pure milk of the gospel. The gospel reveals how human being is put right with God within his culture and religion. It is difficult to separate them. The culture of a people often indicates their mode of worship and colours their pattern of faith. In this work, Inculturation does not encourage unscriptural mutilation of the Christian doctrine, but that the contents of Christianity should be interpreted to suit the culture of Ekwulobia community which will help them embrace Christianity without having double allegiance of faith and also ensure that Christian presence in Ekwulobia satisfactorily penetrated inside the rank and file of Ekwulobia society.

However, inculturation goes beyond mere adaptation of and to situations. It has to do with transformation of cultural realities and this kind of qualitative change goes to affect the social, religious, political and economic life and attitude of Ekwulobia people and its environ. For inculturation to take a good shape in Ekwulobia community and in

the lives of the people, churches in Ekwulobia should take a close look at the culture of the people and be able to identify their values and disvalues of which has to do with the whole life of the people as a community. This is the most important step to take in order to see that the cultural make up of the people are closely looked into. The researcher deemed this as a very viable tool in ensuring that Christianity takes its full and deep shape both in the lives of the people and the community at large. It will be very difficult to parcel a Christianity that has no place for a Christian celebration of such events in Ekwulobia like *Achukwu Ukpo* Masquerade Society, Traditional marriage ceremonies, *Ozo* title taking, *Oriri Uto*, *Iso-ebe*, *Igba-eke*, *Igba-udo*, *ilo-uwa*, Polygamy, *ogwu*, *Mgborogwunamkpaakwukwo*, and *iju-ase*, among others. The above events make-up the Ekwulobia community. The missionaries in Ekwulobia should take Jesus Christ as a role model and imitate his actions while on earth, as the Supreme head of the church, Jesus identified with his people and their cultural environment, he accommodated some of their culture that are good and tried convincing them on the best option for the ones he thought are not good to go. But the missionaries in Ekwulobia thought that total condemnation of these cultural values in Ekwulobia will ensure deep touch of the gospel message. If all these are accommodated in the Christian realm, Christianity in Ekwulobia will penetrate deeply into the rank and file of the community.

The task of inculturation is quite difficult in Ekwulobia, but not impossible. If the first European missionaries did a proper rooting of Christianity in Ekwulobia *alb initio*, there will be no problem. The task of inculturation is similar to the task of reintroduction of Christian faith in Ekwulobia in the manner that would reflect the way Ekwulobia

people see things, their value systems, and thought patterns. It is indeed an imperative task that the Christian faith should be made indigenous and develops from within the culture of the people. The faith should be made a way of life of Ekwulobia people in which their experiences are appealed to and aspirations met. Inculturation provides the fertile ground for incorporating the culture of Ekwulobia people into the life of the church. This disconnects evangelization with the missionary concept of evangelization as a one-way traffic and connects to a process that is interactive and complementary. It is through inculturation that the church would reappraise her evangelizing mission so as to maintain and exceed the present successes and redefine its orientations and goals. With all these explanations, the researcher sees inculturation theory suitable and appropriate for this work.

2.2.2. Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction theory is one of the several theories in the social sciences. Blumer is the first one to use symbolic interaction theory. For that reason he is also named as the founder of symbolic interaction theory. The foundation of this theory is meanings. According to this theory, people live both in the natural and the symbolic environment. Symbolic interaction is a process that is enlivened the reciprocal meaning and values by aid of the symbols in the mind. Meanings constitute of reciprocal interaction between persons. Objects don't have meaning on their own. But objects get their meanings from the social actors. Consequently symbolic interaction is a process of "interpretation of the action". Dewey, Cooley, Mead, Blumer and several other theorists

attribute to this theory. Although all of them explain the certain aspects of human behaviour, they all differ among themselves regarding the relative significance of interactionist perspectives. Symbolic interaction theory examines the meanings emerging from the reciprocal interaction of individuals in social environment with other individuals and focuses on the question of “which symbols and meanings emerge from the interaction between people.

Symbolic interaction theory has developed in the light of the theorists such as Dewey (1930), Cooley (1902), Parks (1915), Mead (1934, 1938) and so on. All interactionists agree that the source of data is human interaction. Schenk and Holman (1980) stated that symbolic interaction is a dynamic theory because according to this theory objects feature meanings within themselves and individuals formulate their activities in the direction of their evaluation of themselves and also people and objects around them. Thus, it is the social actors that attribute meaning to objects according to this perspective. The most important theorist of symbolic school is George Herbert Mead. Mead is a pragmatist and anti-dualist philosopher. He believes that mind and ego are products of society. Ashworth (2000) posits that Mead assumes that symbols develop mind and they are used as means for thinking and communication. According to Korgen and White (2008), theory of symbolic interaction focused on how people interact in their daily lives and how they create order and meaning. According to Blumer (1969), meaning is a condition that emerges as a result of the interaction of group members and not an intrinsic feature of the object. Consequently, meaning is created as a result of the interaction between people, and meaning allows people produce some of the facts

forming the sensory world. These facts are related to how people form meaning. Thomas (1928) says it is not important whether interpretation is accurate or not. He believes that fact is based on personal perceptions and changes in time.

Symbolic interaction theory acknowledges the principle of meaning as the center of human behaviour. Language provides a meaning to humans by means of symbols. It is symbols that differentiate social relations of humans from the level of communication of animals. Human beings give meaning to symbols and they express these things by means of language. Consequently, symbols form the basis of communication. In other words, symbols are indispensable elements for the formation of any kind of communication act.

Symbolic interaction is based on three basic propositions according to Blumer:

(a) Humans develop their attitudes towards things according to the meanings that things propose to them.

(b) These meanings are inferred from the “interaction of one of them from its addressees.

(c) These meanings change within an interpretive process.

Objects, humans, conditions and events don't feature an intrinsic meaning. Meaning is attributed to these elements by means of human interaction. For instance, the methods employed by the missionaries in their evangelization in Ekwulobia can be defined as a means of education utilized in order to demonstrate the message of Christ to them. If an Ekwulobia convert uses one of these methods in order to ascertain what Christianity is all about, then it is defined as a source of entertainment and enjoyment. Similarly, Berg, (2000) stated that for people in a jail watching the films sent by their families, this device shall be defined as the window opening to the outer world. As it can be understood from

this example, humans form meaning as a result of their own experiences. These experiences are not random or unrelated. Symbolic interaction is a process including the interpretation of actions because symbolic meanings might be formed differently for anyone. This theory, as also stated by Udeh (2001), is an “American” idea that stresses the freedom of the individual and limited role of the society. According to Slattery (2007):

This theory pictures meaning as something emerging by itself during interaction under a certain condition. It doesn't take into account the basic social context in which the interaction is positioned. Consequently, it doesn't produce the sources of meaning. Moreover, symbolic interactionism doesn't perceive any social reality beyond the one that humans create with their interpretations and for that reason it denies explaining society on a more general level.(p.338).

In summary, the principal condition for the formation of a meaning is the existence of an event. The following condition is the experience of these events. As Blumer points out; ‘the meaning of things directs action’

In order for the missionaries to understand Ekwulobia cultural and traditional behaviors, it is necessary for them to understand definitions, meaning and processes formed by the people first. Elements such as social roles, traditional structures, rules, laws, purposes, and so on should provide raw material to the people of Ekwulobia for forming definitions. In this dissertation, symbolic interaction stresses social interaction that ought to exist between the Christian churches in Ekwulobia and the people of Ekwulobia and their cultural environment as well since culture is the social framework

wherein an individual or group interprets the information or events of one's experiences. As a social framework, it collectively created patterns of meaning, form a basis for understanding why Ekwulobia people behaves or reacts in one manner or another. Consequently, Christian experience or "Christianity" as a religion, like any other religion (be it indigenous or foreign), must be realized within Ekwulobia cultural and social environment if it is to be relevant and meaningful in any way.

2.2.3. Theory of Structural Functionalism

Theory of Structural-functionalism is a perspective in sociology that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. Functionalism developed slowly over time with the help of many sociologists in different parts of the world. Perhaps the most significant contributors to the initial development of this theory are [Émile Durkheim](#) and [A.R. Radcliffe-Brown](#). In the United States, functionalism was formalized in sociological thinking by Talcott Parsons. Herbert Spencer, an English sociologist, was a forerunner of formalized Structural Functionalism. It asserts that our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behaviour. Social structures give shape to our lives - for example, in families, the community, and through religious organizations. And certain rituals, such as a handshake or complex religious ceremonies, give structure to our everyday lives. Each social structure has social functions, or consequences for the operation of society as a whole.

Thus, one of the key ideas in Structural Functionalism is that society is made-up of groups or institutions, which are cohesive, share common norms, and have a definitive culture. Functionalism is about the more static or concrete aspects of society, institutions like government or religions. However, Ekwulobia town being large enough to be a social [institution](#) is included in Structural Functionalist thinking, from religious values to sports clubs and everything in between. Structural Functionalism explains that the way Ekwulobia as a society of its own is organized is the most natural and efficient way for it to be organized.

Another key characteristic of Structural Functionalism is that it views society as constantly striving to be at a state of [equilibrium](#), which suggests there is an inherent drive within human societies to *cohere* or stick together. In other words, Christian Churches in Ekwulobia cultural environment should strive toward equilibrium, not through dictatorial mandate or by showing superiority to Ekwulobia people but rather strive to conceive in their minds that the social structure of Ekwulobia people encourages equilibrium.

Furthermore, for Christianity to take full flesh in Ekwulobia, [social cohesion](#) must be encouraged since it describes the bonds that bring people together in a society. In order for Ekwulobia people as a group to be cohesive in a social context, positive membership attitudes and behaviours have to be produced and maintained by the Christian Churches. Social cohesion can be looked at on both an individual and group level. Individual-levels include: an individual's desire or intention to remain a part of a

group, her attitudes and beliefs about the group, the individuals' intention to sever, weaken, maintain, or strengthen her membership or participation in a groups, and her susceptibility to group influence. The higher the level of integration between the Christian Churches and Ekwulobia cultural environment, the more cohesive Ekwulobia environment will be as a whole. The absence of social cohesion can result in greater violence toward others and one's self.

Moreover, [interdependence](#) is a central theme in structural functionalism; it refers to the parts of society sharing a common set of principles. Institutions, organizations, and individuals are all interdependent with one another. In other words, Christian churches should encourage interdependence between the Christian missions and the people of Ekwulobia for a deeper and meaningful penetration of the Gospel message in the lives of Ekwulobia people. The Christian missions should also strive to maintain equilibrium in Ekwulobia cultural environment. In a social context, it is the internal and external balance in a society. While temporary disturbances which could emanate from Ekwulobia traditional beliefs may upset the equilibrium of society, because of social structure, Ekwulobia as a society of its own will eventually return to a balanced, orderly state. That society strives toward equilibrium also means that changes happen slowly.

Again, the focus for structural functionalism changed to be more about the ways that social institutions like religion in society meet the social needs of individuals within that society. In Ekwulobia, there are some social needs that need urgent attention by the Christian Churches in order to ensure full incarnation of the gospel message in the

peoples' lives. These include the following: Achukwu Ukpo Masquerade, Igba-udo and so on. Durkheim theorized that shared values, common symbols, and systems of exchange functioned as the tools of cohesion in these societies. In essence, members of society performed similar tasks to keep the community running. In more modern and complex societies individuals are quite different and they do not perform the same tasks. However, the diversity actually leads to a different form of solidarity - interdependence. Durkheim referred to this as "organic solidarity. Organic solidarity leads to a strong sense of individuals being dependent on one another. For instance, while a construction worker may be able to build homes for people, if he is injured on the job, he will turn to a doctor for treatment (and probably a lawyer to sue his employer). The division of labor in society requires specialization, and the result is organic solidarity. The solidarity between the Christian missions and Ekwulobia people is nothing to write home about. Due to a variety of factors, the people of Ekwulobia had lower social solidarity than the Christian missions, and their weaker bonds resulted in higher rates of syncretism. Thus, solidarity helped maintain societal order.

The Christian missions in Ekwulobia should strive on how best to integrate into the missions the social structures of Ekwulobia people, thereby, find how they fit into the different aspects of society on their own. They should not be reminded of the norms and values of Ekwulobia community, which binds him to society. The people of Ekwulobia are, therefore, motivated to reach personal goals that are defined by their cultural system and simultaneously these goals benefit society as a whole.

2.3 Empirical Studies

Some of the most important researchers in the area of Christianity and culture were reviewed here. Christianity and culture is a topic many scholars have written about. In the process of carrying out this research, the researcher discovered four scholars who have devoted a chapter or two of their works to discussing this subject matter. Consideration will be given to books written by N.S.S. Iwe, (1985), Edmund Ilogu, (1974), Bolaji Idowu, 1965, Adrian Hasting (1976), Kalu (1978), Nmah(2006), Sydney (1974), Azumah (1998), Ibenwa (2014) and Babalola, E.O (1988).

One of the most remarkable scholars of this group is Iwe (1985), the thrust of Iwe work is on the cultural clash or conflict between the western cultural vessels in which Christianity has been conveyed to Africa and the authentic values and honest institutions of the African culture. He identified factors responsible for this conflict. First, he was of the opinion that Christianity that came to Africa was fully soaked in western personnel, western culture, western philosophy and western theology.

Although, the above assertion may be true, but the fact that Christianity that came to Africa was fully soaked in western personnel, as opined by Iwe should not be taken hook line and sinker. This is because it is a known fact that missionaries activities in some parts of Nigeria for example Yoruba and Igbo land were basically carried out by the returning slaves such as Crowther, Jonas and Taylor from Sierra Leone. Even in the Niger Delta, missionaries' activities did not start, until it was initiated by the African

converts themselves. However, this is not to say that the evangelization of Africa was solely carried out by the natives themselves.

Furthermore, Iwe also claimed that the failure of the Christian missionaries to effectively appreciate the positive elements of African culture and religion must have led to the cultural clash. Thirdly, he opined that Christian missionaries in their anthropological ignorance of the Africans, conceived or seen to have conceived their mission as that of importing not only the Christian religion but also culture and civilization and western culture precisely.

Fourthly, he opined that we must realistically recon with the fact that the customs, laws and institutions of the early and pre-Christian Africans was in the state of cultural coma and impotence deeply afflicted by in articulation, incommunicability, and defenselessness. The African culture, Iwe maintained, at the early stages of Christianity, have no documented or literally tradition in evidence and defense of its identity and integrity. The African culture had no sophisticated apologists and well groomed elites to defend it against the unwarranted incursions of the west.

However, this study disagrees with Iwe on the fact that African culture has no sophisticated apologists and well groomed elites to defend it against the unwarranted incursions of the west. Nevertheless, it depends on what Iwe meant by the above. As far as history is concerned, African rulers like king kosoko of Lagos, king Jaja of opobo and a host of other African rulers of that time, were sophisticated men in the real sense of the word and could be comparable to most European kings at that time. But Iwe is optimistic

about the African culture. According to him, it is fortunate that the voice of those demanding or requesting a thorough going africanization of Christianity is becoming audible and appreciably effective. To him, the gross cultural disabilities of the early period have been overcome and our cultural stage is sufficiently matured and ready for systematic and institutional indigenization of Christianity. Iwe is of the opinion that we must insist on African Christianity, for we are Africans. He exerts that Christianity must recognize the authentic and honest conceptions, customs, institutions and values of our African culture. On the other hand, he believed that the realistic fusion of the spirit and basic institutions of our culture with Christianity will ensure religious vitality, fruitfulness and stability. On a final warning note, he advised that it has become an urgent task with which our African ecclesiastic must grapple in order to ensure for the African Christian, religious sense, stability and fruitfulness.

However, despite the detailed attention Iwe gave to this subject matter, he did not limit himself to a particular culture, neither did he discuss the impact of this phenomenon on the African Christians, nor the future of African Christianity based on indigenization or inculturation. Therefore, in an attempt to discussing africanization of Christianity, it is these shortcomings pointed out above, which will be inclusive in this work, that will make it distinct from Iwe's.

Furthermore, Edmund Ilogu (1974), among other things, discusses Christianity and African culture. To him, three themes are of paramount importance, namely: polygamy, the extended family and lineage duties and the *Ozo* title. Ilogu started by

highlighting several Igbo customs which have become part of Christians practices in Igbo land which include second burial memorial for dead father, uncle or brother, *inemuwo* (celebration connected with child birth), initiation into the lineage masquerade society or lineage dance group. All these are enculturation of Igbo culture into Christianity. However, he pointed out that some clergies frown at some of them but do not seem to have sufficient reasons or authority to stop such Christians. He exerts that there is no theological or historical reasons to suggest that Christians should not take part in any of these. On the questions of belief in the community of the lineage through a link that connects the dead, the living and the children of the future. Ilogu maintained that such belief is a very strong and healthy cultural feature of Igbo land. However, he pointed out that Christianity has removed irrational fear of ancestral spirits as the source of evils like sickness, barrenness and epidemics. He however opined that, Christianity has been able to destroy the belief in the existence of some unexplainable link between us and our forefathers. Ilogu recommends in the light of the above that, all Igbo Christians as well as non Christians acknowledge this link with their patrilineal ancestors in the pouring of libation and in the giving of kola nut. He posited that if the non Christians in Igbo towns and villages will agree to fix their big celebration in honor of their ancestors on all saints day, then all should have a big celebration indeed (that is Christians and non Christians). While All Saints Day, he pointed out, should remind Christians primarily of the labours of love in faith of those through which the gospel reach us – Saint peter, Saint Paul, Crowther and Nweje and so on. It should in addition, Ilogu argued, remind us of

those who founded our clans and villages and lineages, without which humanly speaking we could not have had a church or the gospel.

On the issue of polygamy, Ilogu distinguishes between people who were converted into Christianity while they still have many wives and secondly those who after marrying one wife as Christians slide back into polygamy and still retain their membership in the church. On the question of Ozo title, Ilogu recommends that Christians irrespective of denomination should take the title. On a general note, Ilogu's work is commendable as it is confined to a specific culture and treats the basic themes of polygamy, ancestor worship and Ozo title in detail. However, it should be pointed out that Igbo is a very vast ethnic group to be effectively covered in a study of this nature. And he also did not mention some of the cultures prevalent in Ekwulobia since it is an Igbo speaking tribe. Having this shortcoming in mind, this work will be confined to a smaller community and inclusion of the traditional cultures prevalent in Ekwulobia community of which led to Christianity not having a deep root in Ekwulobia will also be a necessity.

Adrian Hastings (1976) discussed a number of ways Christianity has been indigenized in Africa. According to Hastings, in January 1972, a new law was promulgated in Zaire, in which all Christian names were abolished. Only purely African names were henceforth to be used. He cited an example of a well known priest, author and theologian, Vincent Mulago who became from that moment Mulagogwa Cikala Mushar Mina. This decree, according to him is the most striking expression of president

Mobutu's policy of authenticity- the assertion of African cultural values over the European culture whose standards has been normative throughout the colonial period.

He also gave instances in other countries especially Nigeria where some individual Christians have been abandoning their European names or at least, refusing to have their children baptized with any other names other than traditional ones- generally names with deep traditional religious meanings. Hastings was also of the opinion that there is a cultural revolution currently going on in churches in Africa. One area where he believes that traditional African culture has infiltrated into Christianity is title taking. According to him, Christians in Igbo land take chieftaincy titles such as that of 'Ozo'. This indeed, according to him, the Catholic Church in Nigeria has recognized. Another area where traditional African culture has crept into the church, he opined, is in terms of polygamy. From his statistics, he claimed that over 20% of all Christians in Africa are in polygamous marriages. He believes that the imposition of monogamy is seen as essentially an instance of western cultural imperialism- condemning the marriage practices of Africa in favour of those traditional Europe without any biblical warrant and indeed in contradiction to much Old Testament witnesses. Hastings believes that no word of the Bible certainly condemns polygamy and it is true as well, he opined that Christianity has spread among people far more in polygamy than most African people.

One can strongly share the same view with Hastings on the above issue. There is nowhere in the Bible where there has been an explicit or outright condemnation of polygamy. Instead there are renowned persons who have practiced it; and there is also an

allusion to polygamy (see Isaiah 4:1). However, Hastings like Iwe treated this important topic within the African context. He did not limit himself to a particular culture and that is the problem with his work and the gap which the researcher will fill.

Bolaji Idowu (1965) discusses the issue of adapting Christianity to the Nigerian context. He carried out an exhaustive research into Yoruba beliefs. According to Idowu, the main obstacle in the way of an indigenous church in Nigeria is by some irony, ultimately Nigerians themselves. He argued that the church in Nigeria must not continue in its present state unless it is deliberately causing disaster for itself. Idowu argued that things are changing rapidly around the church and that it has to take account of the phenomenon of change. He further argued that if the church in Nigeria must survive, without perishing, it must never remain a foreigner and must belong to the environment in which it lives. Idowu posited that for the church to realize that in order to be effective in its mission in Nigeria, it must respect, preserve and dedicate to the glory of God anything that is of value in the culture and institutions of the country. The purpose of Christianity, Idowu pointed out, therefore, is to fulfill, and not to destroy; to make free; and not to enslave. He also argued that as the church in Nigeria, it should bear the distinctive stamp of the country, although, in essence it must preserve full allegiance to the Eternal, Cosmic, Unchanging Christ, who is her only Lord.

Furthermore, Idowu argued that the church in Nigeria must be ‘the church in Nigeria’ and not a fabricated structure designed specially from overseas to enable Europeans to carry on in Nigeria what Forsyth describes as a ‘kingdom-of-God-industry’.

According to him, apart from the fact that the damaging association, or even identification, of the church in Nigeria with a European cult has given the misleading impression that it has no profitable relevance for Nigerians, the European structure of the church has to a large extent, made for spiritual sterility in the life of the church. Idowu pointed out, that the reason for this sterility is that the church is not really speaking to Nigerians in their spiritual needs. Rather, he argued that, the church speaks in strange idioms which make its language of evangelism and the speech of its devotion somewhat unintelligible to its Nigerian converts. It is primarily the revolt against this foreignness that has led to the emergence and growth of independent, syncretistic churches under charismatic African leadership. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a universal one, and the church in each place must reflect at one and at the same time the universality of its faith as well as the application of that faith to the cultural climate and cultic needs of the people in that place. This means that the church of Nigeria must undertake the tremendous task of retranslating the bible into the vernaculars in an idiom that communicates effectively, rewriting their liturgies and hymns, taking into account both the psychological needs of the people and the wealth.

Idowu's work, no doubt is highly commendable by the researcher. However, unlike Iwe and Ilogu, Idowu confined himself to a specific culture using Yoruba belief system. He treated this phenomenon of accommodating traditional culture of a people with Christianity generally within the Nigerian context and Yoruba belief system which has nothing to do with the Igbo let alone Ekwulobia traditional beliefs in particular.

Therefore, this research work will discuss such using Ekwulobia culture specifically as a case study and proffer solution to the issue at stake by employing the theory of inculturation as a viable tool.

Kalu (1978) made a tremendous effort by treating extensively the Nigerian story in the evangelization process and efforts and also the place of Christianity in African continent. Regardless of the efforts made by Kanu, he did not remember to bring Anambra as a state into focus let alone Ekwulobia as a cultural area. And this remains the gap which the researcher tends to fill.

Nmah (2006) carried out a study on Christianity and Awka socio-religio-cultural identity crisis. The main thrust of his work is on ethnic identity. The church and Awka people are competing for superiority complex of which revolves around church practices and socio-religious and cultural identity of Awka people. The cultural encounter between Christianity and Awka people is not devoid of conflict. The advent of Christianity in Awka did not make Awka people to disvalue their most cherished cultural heritage of which include *Imoka* festival, *ikponyeajan'ili* (to shovel sand) and *Okukuonyeuwa* rite (hen sacrificed to idol) which are believed to have some links with the community deities. The failure of the Christian missionaries to appreciate the positive elements in Awka cultural values and religion led to the conflict.

Nmah's work is highly commendable since he limited his work to a particular cultural area- Awka. But taking a close look at the work, one will not be astonished to see that he made no mention of Ekwulobia or any of their cultural values rather than *Imoka*

festival, *Okukuonyeuwa* rite and *Ikponyeajan'ili* and that is the gap in knowledge the researcher wants to fill in this research work.

Ibenwa (2014) also carried out a research work on influences of Christian religion on African traditional religion and value system. The work beams its search light on the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria, although references are made to other parts of the continent. This work aims at identifying the cultural values of Igbo people with a view to reviewing them in the light of Christian religion and culture, and in the end proffer suggestions that will help to make the traditional belief systems a homemade religion. The findings of the study validated the fact that there are some practices in the Igbo traditional society that needed to be dropped completely, practices like Caste-system (osu-one dedicated to a deity), Slavery (ohu), killing of twins, and albinos, burying of chiefs /kings with slave, witchcrafting, nude dressing and certain practices against women and widows, some to be amended and some to be retained because of their rich qualities. It is crystal clear from the review that there are some practices in the traditional African belief systems that has undergone some changes by superior belief system preferably Christianity. The changes have brought new lease of life by exposing the people to new frontier or horizon of living (Christian/western cultures) different from their ancient faith, although not without some disadvantages. Some the adherents of the primal religion are now mixing the two thereby engaging in syncretism. That in spite of the influx of foreign cultures and values the core values of the people still remain in Igbo land.

Ibenwa has made a great effort in analysing the cultural encounter between Christianity and African traditional religion but Africa and the whole of Igbo land is too vast to be studied in a research work.

Furthermore, Azumah (1998) carried out a study on African Indigenous Religions and Interreligious Relationship. The thrust of his work centered on the view that any constructive inter-religious engagement has to recognize and acknowledge the resilience nature of the African religious beliefs and its cultural expressions as well as some of its values. Christianity and African traditional religion in do encounter each other, leading to an inevitable exchange. She argues that despite the outward conversions of members of the indigenous religions to Christianity, the traditional religious beliefs and cultural practices still persist in these converts and continue to inform and shape their religious experience. African Traditional Religion was not just a house of cards that collapsed at the instance of change, but that it has the potential to adapt on its own, in response to changes that take place around it. Azumah was too general in his research work, and he did not limit his work to a specific culture rather he worked on Africa as a whole.

Sydney (1974), in his book *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith* critiques the European religious and cultural forms in which Christianity was encapsulated and presented to Africa through evangelization and the establishment of the Christian church. He calls for the removal of this façade, which he terms western fetishes so that Christianity could be expressed in authentic African religious experience and cultural forms by Africans. Sydney Williamson was a British Methodist Missionary, who worked in Ghana from 1933 to 1959. The book is primarily a comparative study on the mutual

impact of the religious and cultural life of the Akan Ethnic group of Ghana, with a particular reference to the Ashanti and the Christian faith that was introduced by the various European Christian denominations in the country. While observing some of the failures of the church, Williamson brings into focus, at the same time, some of its positive achievements in terms of being an agent of change in the provision of schools through which some of the early nationalists who championed the independence struggle of the nation were raised. He highlights in his work the positive impact of the church's teachings as well as European governance that helped to transform some of the negative religious and cultural practices of the Ghanaians. Of particular interest, as far as this study is concerned, are the observations Williamson made, on some of the European Missionary attitudes towards the indigenous religion of the Akan and the description made of it at that time. The religious system of the people was not considered worthy of any religious sort; a pagan system that did not have value for human consideration, a perception, which Williamson felt was wrong: "The people to whom Europe offered its faith were themselves possessed of religious practices and rites which came to bear a variety of descriptive names.

However, he raises the important issue of the churches failure to naturalize within the Akan and the Ghanaian environment in general, and thereby seeing the church planted in Ghana as the carbon copy of those in Europe. This failure, he thinks was one of the factors which made it difficult for the Akan people to understand the thrust of the Christian message and faith, and for them to have come to terms with the relevance of the

new faith for their lives. He thus touched on the vital issue of indigenization, which the church in Africa still struggles with. It does touch on some of the core issues relating to this study, namely, the Christian encounter with the Ekwulobia indigenous religion and culture and its cultural implications for the people. This notwithstanding, Williamson examines this relationship with particular reference to the Ashanti among the Akan, who inhabit the middle belt of Ghana, while mine is a case study focusing on the Ekwulobia people, a cultural area in Igbo land. In addition to that, his work looks at the relationship between the Akan religion and the Christian faith, but this research takes alongside their history.

Babalola (1988) discusses Africanization of Christianity. He was of the opinion that in addition to affirming its claim to Christianity by colonization, participation in missionary evangelism, and struggling for autonomy in the mission founded churches; Africa has also shaped its own life in the Christian message brought to it. He asserts that the independent churches grew up all over Africa in response to the desire for a church where Africans may feel at home. This desire, he argued, also shaped the worship, beliefs and practices of the traditional churches to make these churches distinctly African.

Africa as a continent is so vast to be discussed; he did not limit his work to a particular cultural environment and besides what does a Yoruba man know concerning Igbo cultural values and disvalues let alone Ekwulobia cultural environment.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review

Literature in the light of Conceptual Framework, Theoretical Framework and Empirical studies had been treated strictly to generally give a bearing to the work. Many concepts by different scholars have been treated such as culture, cultural encounter and Christianity, as it relates to the double allegiance of faith and Christian presence in Ekwulobia not having a deep root into the rank and file of the society after one hundred and five years in Ekwulobia town in Anambra State. Issues about Inculturation theory gave the work a focus on the negation of cultural values by the missionaries in Ekwulobia town. This theory is discussed in a way that it will assist in discovering the relative problem of negation of the cultural values of the Ekwulobia people by the missionaries and assist in giving a lasting solution to the problem.

This theory relates to the negation of cultural values in Ekwulobia by the missionaries as it brings out the erosion of a people's traditional beliefs, which led to the destruction of that society because its foundation has been shaken and the centre could no longer stand for things have fallen apart. The rope that held the people scattered. And the only way to close that gap is to employ a radical change by using the tool of inculturation, traditionalization or accommodation of traditional values of Ekwulobia people by Christianity. More so, theories of symbolic interaction and structural functionalism were used also since both of them aims at bringing the people together and closer to each other through interaction and communication.

In respect of the Empirical studies, it is discovered that the relegation of the African (Igbo) traditions by the missionaries through the imposition of the Euro-Christian tradition contributed so much to double allegiance of faith by today's Christians and this has led to christianity not taking full flesh in the lives of the people they evangelized. All the authors as discussed in the empirical studies have come out with various proposals on how Christianity can be made incarnate in the lives of the people in Africa or rather Africanization of Christianity. Yet in all, no author tends to limit this important subject matter to a particular culture. They tend to discuss it within the African context. In line with this, the researcher deemed it necessary to study this subject matter by limiting it to a particular cultural environment which is Ekwulobia. Also, looking at the efforts made by the different authors cited in the empirical studies, they made mention of some of the values and disvalues in Africa and Igbo land generally skipping almost all the cherished traditions of Ekwulobia people and their community, neither did they discuss the efforts the Christian missions had made to ensure that christianity takes full flesh in the lives of the evangelized but failed especially that of Late Martins Maduka (Nnadiesube). And with these limitations, the researcher deemed it necessary to close that gap created by bringing into focus those things they failed to include in their work.

CHAPTER THREE

EKWULOBIA PEOPLE: ITS BRIEF ETHNOGRAPHY

Ekwulobia is an Igbo speaking town in south eastern Nigeria. It is the fourth urban city in Anambra state, after Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi. It is the headquarters of the present Aguata local government and the headquarters of the old Aguata Local government that comprised the present Aguata Local government and Orumba North and south local government. From the early times, the founder of Ekwulobia, “Ekwulu”, was described as a man highly respected for his generosity and magnanimity especially in welcoming strangers to the town. This behavioral trait has been interpreted and paraphrased as Ekwulu who welcomes strangers, “*Ekwulu na anabata ndi obia*”. This assertion is still valid today in view of continuous influx of strangers and their acceptance by people of Ekwulobia. Ekwulobia has nine villages notably divided into two traditional division; Ezi and Ifite. The villages under Ezi are Umuchiana, Umuchi, Okpo, Nkono, Abogwume and Ihuokpala and the villages under Ifite are Agba, Ula and Eziagulu. Indeed writing about the historical origin of Ekwulobia is an uphill task. There are many towns that make up Ekwulobia with a number of stories concerning the founding fathers, who were different people migrating from different places, hence the name “Ekwulobia”. They occupied a vast area of land as they came at different places. Each people had settled, hunted and farmed where they found suitable and, mainly along the spurs, valleys and hills of the area they occupied. Ekwulobia is well known for its special masquerades called “*Achukwu*” which displays especially during Christmas and

Easter celebration, special town events like new yam “*iwa-ji*” and the burial of elderly /titled men.

3.1 Traditional Religious Beliefs and Practices

Ekwulobia, like any other African traditional society, has a lot of religious beliefs and practices which, of course, are embedded in their culture. However, some of these beliefs and practices have been discarded or drastically amended due to the influence of Christianity and western civilization. Since there abound many of these religious beliefs and practices, for the purpose of this research, the researcher considered it necessary to limit these religious beliefs to the major ones such as those relating to the religious life of the people. Among these are the beliefs in the Supreme Being, reincarnation, polygamy, Achukwu Ukpo masquerade, Igochi Umunwaanyi, Okponi, Isoebe, Igba-udo, and Igba-eke.

In order to appreciate and understand the religious ethos and philosophical perception of the Ekwulobia people, it is necessary to outline the structure of their belief system. Ekwulobia people belief so much in Supreme God known as “*chiokike*” that is God the creator, “*Obasi bi n’elu*” meaning controller of all things and they placed him at the apex of their hierarchy. They have a very strong belief in the God of Heaven who is the only Almighty God. They reverence Him as the only great and mighty God, who should be approached with fear and trembling. Ekwulobia people believe that human beings should not disturb this great God, so they choose to meet Him through the numerous divinities which abound in the area. Some of such important divinities are as

follows: *Otalu, Ezejingu, Eke, Udo, and Isigwu* among others. Each of these gods and stationary objects were kept in small buildings, or the base of Iroko trees, *Akpu, ngwu* and others. They were attended to by juju priests. The worshippers paid homage to the priest both in kind and gifts to show their respect and allegiance to the juju priests and the idols they worshipped.

Directly behind these divinities are the lesser spirits. They are the souls of the long departed ancestors who have long been forgotten. This can be diagrammatically illustrated as follows:

The Supreme Being (Chiokike)
Divinities
Spirits
Ancestors
Man

The above hierarchy agrees with the description of Ademola (1980) when he pointed out that “in African traditional societies, there is always the belief in the Supreme Being, although called by various names by different tribes, followed by divinities, spirits and ancestors. Man is always at the bottom” (p.30). Prior to the coming of the

missionaries, the people of Ekwulobia believe in the Supreme Being. Their ideas about the Supreme Being could be deduced from people's names; their attributes or qualities they give to god, in works of arts and general works of the people. They see God as a great God, the source of all beings, solution to human problems, sustainer and preserver of the world. They believe in the existence of other divinities but Chukwu is above other divinities both in status and function. The people of Ekwulobia before the coming of the missionaries engaged in private and public worship. Chukwudebem (personal communication, 3rd November, 2018) confirmed that this worship are usually done by the head of a household as daily offering to the ancestors at the shrine in kola nuts, lines of white chalk and prayers for protection, prosperity and well-being of the family, while holding up the ofo stick. Sometimes, occasional worship is done when ordered by a diviner as a result of his being consulted by the individual concerned. Sometimes some rituals are performed in order to seek favour from the ancestral spirits; to seek protection from the divinities, to seek the gift of children, to propitiate neglected or angered divinities and to seek healing from an illness or defilement.

Before the coming of the missionaries in Ekwulobia, the people of Ekwulobia immersed themselves into their own world. They were totally dipped in their culture and tradition that they did not know that there were other cultures and traditions different from their religious beliefs. They never operated in a religious vacuum. In addition to the prevailing traditional worship and the caste system, social condition was aggravated by the uncivilized behavior of the people. Gabriel (personal communication, 20th September,

2018) narrated that the people then were involved in slave trading, cannibalism, killing of twin babes, insecurity and suspicion. The unsafe behavior of people in Ekwulobia attracted the attention of the missionaries to face the challenges that existed. The ancestors were constantly called upon in prayer and through incantations to participate in family discussions and ceremonies. There were traditional religionists who continued to uphold the traditional religion. They were the custodian of culture and morality. They insisted on the perpetuity of Ekwulobia culture. R. Udeh (personal communication, July 6, 2018) said apart from idol worship, the caste system, "osu", was prevalent. These were human beings offered to idols. People do not intermarry or socialize with them. In fact it was a social, cultural and religious taboo to have anything to do with someone in that system.

Before the coming of the missionaries, jealousy and hatred was the order of the day especially if a person was progressive in farming. Joseph (personal communication, 24th December, 2018) pointed out that his father Mkpuruonyekuru when he was alive, was progressing so well in his farming work than his blood brothers and because of his progress in the farming work, he was murdered in cold blood by his brothers. Then, it was not uncommon for people to kill each other through the use of poison. Prior to the coming of the missionaries, Ekwulobia women were not given equal rights, opportunities and recognition with the men. E. Ezekwe, (personal communication, 20th September, 2018) narrated that the women does all the house chores, they believed that the women were made for the kitchen and not to be heard among men. The women were given out to

marriage without their consent by their parents. Women were regarded as the property of their husband. Again, any woman that sleeps around without the husbands consent, and cooks food for the husband after the adulterous act kills her husband without knowing so far the husband eats the food, if the woman gets pregnant for another man without the husband's consent will not deliver that unborn child until she confess to her husband. This law was only made for women only and not for the man of the house.

Their farm work has an epitome of festivals which depicts their religion either to appease the deities for good harvesting or thanksgiving to deities for giving them a good harvest. In their traditional marriage, people marry according to traditional custom. Mgbechijikwe (personal communication, 20th September, 2018) posits that they invoke the blessing of the ancestors, break kola and show appreciation to the deities. In other words, cola and palm wine are used to thank the gods in a traditional prayer. During burial, certain rituals must be conducted in order to ensure the diseased reaches the world of the dead safely and some of the rituals ensures reincarnation. There are also some rituals that are conducted before going for hunting and when preparing for war. Human sacrifice was the other of the day unlike today people are now aware of the implication and so they turn into using animals for sacrifice.

Before the coming of Christianity, the people of Ekwulobia patronized masquerading which they refer to as "*Achukwu Ukpo*" uptil now, J. Mkpuruonyekuru (personal communication, 24 November, 2018). Boys still get initiated even when they were

Christians. They believe that masquerades are personification of the ancestors; they visit people and the people they visited offer things to them and also dance with them.

Another important religious belief of the people is reincarnation. Ezegwu (personal communication, 20th September, 2018) explained that this is evident in the names they give their children, like *Nnennam* (that is my father's mother), *Enyinnaya* (her father's friend). Both names mean that the child is the incarnate of her father's mother and that the child is the incarnate of his father's friend. A host of other similar names exist such as *Nnennem* (that is my mother's mother) and *Nwannennam* (my father's brother).

The people believe that whatever one does in this life, he will reap in equal measure in his reincarnation. This is the law of cause and effect. Therefore, what one is in this world depends to a large extent on what he did in his previous life. Concerning this belief of the Ekwulobia people, Elechi (1982) says that “a woman who is wicked to her children in this life, will be childless in her next life, a wicked rich man will be poor and miserable, a cold blooded murderer will also be helplessly deformed and so on” (p.6). This negates the findings of Babatunde (1987) when he wrote that, “In African traditional religion, it is those who had lived very good lives, married and had children and lived to a very good old age are entitled to reincarnate” (p.125). Concerning some of the religious practices in Ekwulobia traditional society, before the advent of Christianity, the worst tragedy that could turn the much cherished happiness of child birth into sorrow and agony is the deliverance of twins, triplets or quadruplets as the case may be. This was applicable

to what was obtainable in pre-colonial Ibibio society. Writing on this, J. Ezekafor, (personal communication, August 15, 2018) said: our people before the coming of Christianity were barbaric, damaging the fruit of the womb in the name of culture. Who knows how many children and mothers that have been dumped in the forest to die and rot away? When twins were delivered, in Ekwulobia, the family concerned performed all the necessary sacrifices to cleanse the earth and the family of any misfortune the birth may have brought. The possible interpretation for this is that, a normal human being is not supposed to give to more than one child at a particular birth and that is only animals like dogs, goats, pigs that do so. For a normal human being to do so meant that she has defiled herself.

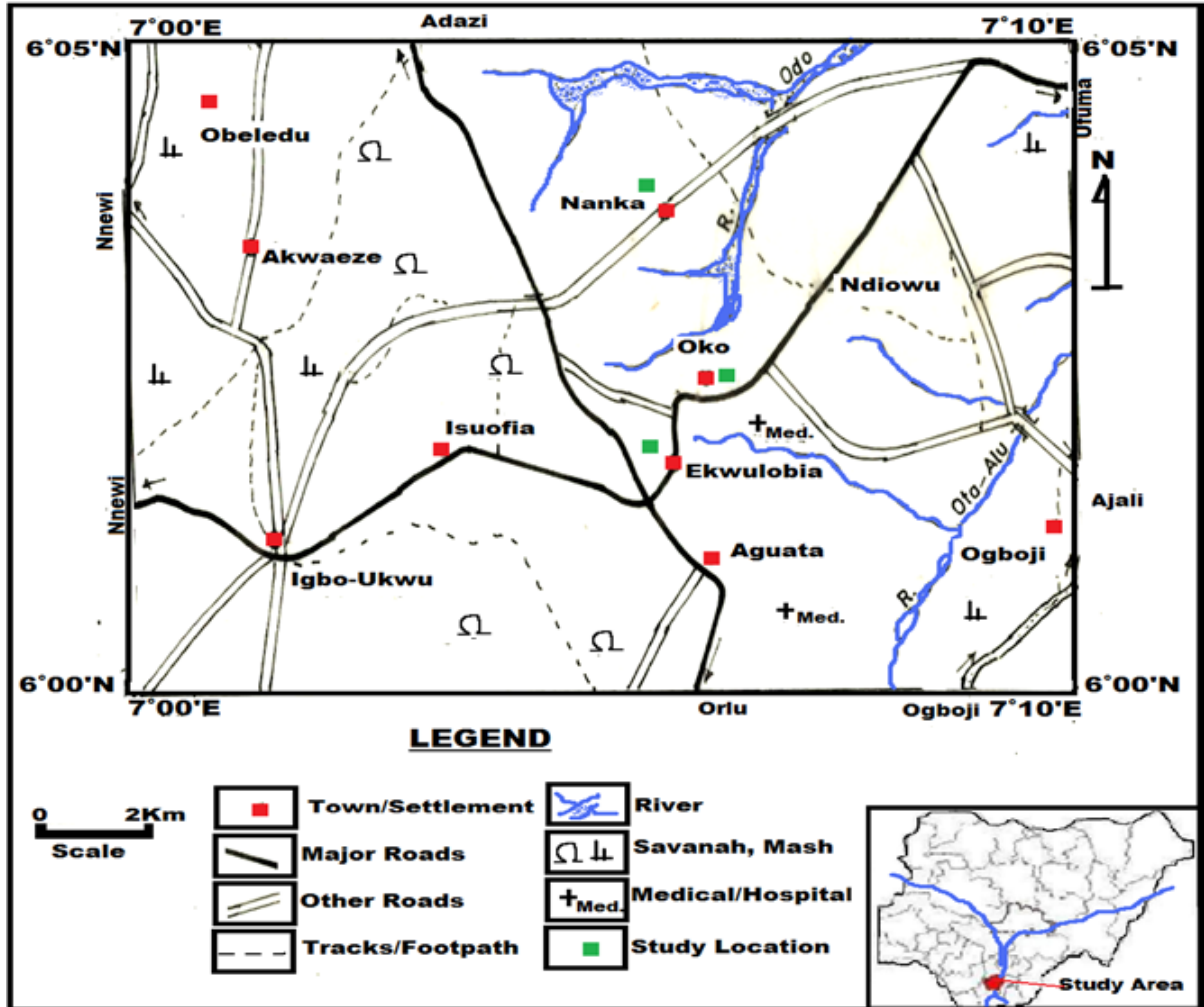
Another important religious practice of the people is the burying of important chiefs with slave (s). This practice is otherwise known as slave immolation. This is not limited to Ekwulobia people. Rather it was a common practice in most pre-colonial Igbo societies. Concerning this practice, E. Raphael, (personal communication, August 16, 2018) said: I watched with dismay as my people buried alive a young slave with a dead chief. This will go a long way to throwing more light on the religious beliefs of the people on life after death, since the dead is not only buried with slaves, but with other personal effects like walking stick, valuable clothes, jewelleryes and a host of others.

3.2 Geography and Physical Features of Ekwulobia

The geographic coordinates of Ekwulobia are 6° 01' 28 North, 7° 04' 45 East. The study area lies between latitudes 6° 10' 1N - 6° 05' 1N and longitudes 7° 00' 1E - 7° 08' 1E. It

covers the western flank of the Anambra Basin. According to Offodile (1975), the dominant geological formation is the Nanka sands, which lies conformably on the Imo Shale of Paleocene age and overlain by the Ogwashi-Asaba formation. The Basin delineates the southern border (or section) of the Benue Trough which was formed (along with the Afikpo syncline and Abakaliki Ridge) during the santonian tectonism. According to Nigerian Meteorological Agency (2007), the study area lies within the humid tropical rainforest belt of Nigeria with an average annual rainfall of 1800mm. There are two marked seasons of the year, the dry season and rainy season. The vegetation of the area consists of luxuriant evergreen type. The soil is very fertile and is drained by a number of brooks and streams. The result of this is that the majority of the population practice farming as their major occupation. These farmers are able to produce enough subsistence crops like yams, cassava, coco-yams, maize, melon, okro, breadfruit, plantain, palm oil, oranges and other fruits, vegetables and the rest of them. The people of Ekwulobia are successful farmers. Their barns are something else. It is a place of attraction and sightseeing, with exhibition of varieties of yams. Ekwulobia is part of the Igbo geographical area. According to Ekwunife (1989),

Modern scholars call a geographical area a culture area. By culture area is meant a geographical area occupied by people whose culture exhibits a significant degree of similarity with each other as well as significant degree of dissimilarity with culture of others. (p.3).



Physical Location Map of Ekwulobia (www.maphil.com)

Culturally, Ekwulobia describes a people who share similar pattern of life and dialect of the Igbo people. There are some basic traits for identifying them as one. These include the linguistic, the social, the political, the economic, the ritual, and cultural traits. The totality of these traits is the same. Ekwulobia is the fourth urban city in Anambra State, after Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi. It is the headquarters of the present Aguata local government and the headquarters of the old Aguata Local Government that comprised the present Aguata local government and Orumba North and South local government.

Ekwulobia area is made up of nine villages notably divided into two traditional division; Ezi and Ifite. The names of the villages are *Umuchiana, Agba, Umuchi, Ula, Okpo, Eziagulu, Nkono, Abogwume and Ihuokpala*. The villages under *Ezi* are *Umuchiana, Umuchi, Okpo, Nkono, Abogwume and Ihuokpala* and the villages under *Ifite* are *Agba, Ula and Eziagulu*. The traditional ruler or *Igwe* is Chief Sir. Emmanuel Chukwukadibia Onyeneke. There are many evidences of oneness and corporate existence of Ekwulobia people, which can be seen in their everyday life activities ranging from social, religious, economic and political spheres of life. They are largely of the same stock, speaking a common language and have the same name for it. Ageless kingship and cultural relations existing among villages, village groups, clans and other agglomerations are celebrated in common traditions and legends in myths and songs, in maxims and adages. All these provide further universality of interest and of outlook on the life of the people of Ekwulobia of Anambra state.

The town houses the Anglican Cathedral called the Cathedral church of St. John Ekwulobia and a proposed Roman Catholic Cathedral Called the St. Joseph`s pro-cathedral Ekwulobia. The town also houses a Central park, a large daily market, various primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, hotels and resorts, a prison, several hospitals and clinics notable among which include the General Hospital Ekwulobia and so on. Ekwulobia is also known for its special masquerades called the "*Achukwu*" which displays especially and during Christmas and Easter celebration, special town events like new yam "*iwa-ji*" festival at the burial of elderly/titled men.

[Ekwulobia](#), the largest town in Aguata, is expanding rapidly to a population of about one-hundred thousand people. It is the major commercial town in the area. Most Nigerian Commercial banks maintain their branches there. It also boasts of a stadium, a Federal Prison (part of which falls into Ezinifite) and a major market, *Eke* Market. Several new agricultural factories established around Ekwulobia town have also attracted workers into the town. Ekwulobia is also a major transit hub from where travelers can connect to other far flung cities in Nigeria. There are public transport vehicles that run from Ekwulobia daily, to [Onitsha](#), [Awka](#), [Port Harcourt](#), [Lagos](#), [Abuja](#), [Enugu](#), [Abakaliki](#) and so on.

Ekwulobia is indeed a Beehive of activities especially during the festive period, it always attracts thousands of visitors during this periods. Ezenachi (personal communication, 15th October, 2018) stated that the famous and legendary 'Achukwu' masquerade which the nine villages that make up Ekwulobia have is a beauty to behold. In the area of hospitality business, the town has few hotels such as Orthon Palace Hotels and in recent times Chicago Hotel, Vonic hotel and resort and logart hills hotel. All these and many other features have made Ekwulobia a must visit for many visitors as well as other neighboring towns in the area. Ekwulobia Development Union is the mother union of all branches of Ekwulobia Development Union both home and abroad even in the diaspora, with Lagos branch which is the strongest of all the unions.

3.3 Religion and philosophy of Ekwulobia Before the Advent of Christianity

Before the advent of Christianity in Ekwulobia, Ekwulobia people already had a clearly-defined system of customs in both religious and secular areas although they did not distinguish the two as separate entities. In practice, there was no clear line drawn between secular and religious life. For example, local agriculture production, community government, titles for elders, and the naming of children all had and have religious significance. Traditionally, Ekwulobia people are religious people. Religion remains a unifying factor preserving the unity, culture and the norms governing the land. It is a vital element that enhances mutual understanding and keeps them as an entity. Nnamani (2009) opines that: “the norms and religion were meant to regulate the conduct and behaviour of the citizenry in order to maintain societal peace, harmony and co-existence” (p.19). The religion of Ekwulobia people serves as a core part of their culture and features in almost everything they do. Ekwulobia people believe in ancestors, deities and Almighty God (*Chi-ukwu*), “*chi*” generic name for God and “*ukwu*”- great. To the effect that Ekwulobia people believe in the existence of other deities but *Chukwu* is above all other deities in both status and function. Also “*Chineke*”- name of Supreme Being among Ekwulobia people, meaning the Supreme god that creates.

As a whole, Ekwulobia people possess a strong belief in the Supreme God, *Chukwu*, and acknowledge the existence of gods/spirits (both lesser and greater) as the cause of most events. *Chukwu* (the Great God) also referred to as *Chineke* (the Creator God), is the creator of everything, primarily transcendent, regarded as always good and

benevolent, and not the cause of harm to humankind. According to Arinze (19), in Igbo thought, *Chukwu* “rarely receives sacrifices but is regarded as the ultimate recipient of the sacrifices offered to the inferior [lesser] spirits.” However, Ilogu (1974) notes that public and private shrines to *Chukwu* (or *Chineke*, the creator God) exist throughout many parts of Igbo land. Although definitions of *Chukwu* are fairly uniform among Igbo scholars. In Igbo cosmology, the deities/spirits were created by *Chukwu* and, since they are closer in proximity to humans, may become immanent (but not contained) within the air and in objects, such as rocks, trees, and bodies of water. Dualism is central to Igbo religiosity. The gods/spirits—what Ilogu calls “god lings”—mitigate and govern circumstances that encompassing all aspects of life. For example, *Ani or Ala* (also written *Ali, Ana*), the goddess of the earth, is watchful over nature. She is the Great. Nwachukwu (personal communication, 15th August, 2018) noted that *Ala* is the most prominent deity throughout Ekwulobia community and revered by nearly all traditional Igbo society. The deities/spirits are above humans but below *Chukwu*. Furthermore, Ekwulobia people also possess a strong belief in the power of the ancestors to influence and affect daily activities.

Every Ekwulobia has his or her own *Chi*, or personal deity/power. The *Chi* functions as *Chukwu*’s witness to the destiny selected before the individual’s birth. An individual’s *Chi* is different from the *Chi* of another. Furthermore, in Igbo thought, there are as many *Chi* as there are Igbo. Although similar to the Western concept of fate or destiny, obedience to one’s *Chi* in cooperation or partnership with and demonstrated by the individual’s initiative determines achievement in life.

The goal of Ekwulobia religiosity is *Ezi-Ndu*, the good (viable) life. True salvation in Ekwulobia society is to obtain a “good life” or “fullness of life” and to become an ancestor. Salvation is not a heavenly or spiritual concept alone; rather it is concept encompassing both heaven and earth. As Achebe (1975) notes, nothing in the Igbo world stands alone, “there must always be another thing standing beside it” (p.44). In other words, salvation cannot entail only the heavenly or some future eschatological understanding of a world to come, but also encompasses the here and now—the present life. Okorochoa (1987) identifies the “concept of *Ezi-Ndu* as the key to understanding Igbo cosmology”. (P.97). It must be noted here that success in life for the Ekwulobia people is a consequence of the spiritual power. If one desires the success, blessing, or victory of another, then one must acquire or discover the spiritual power that enables the success or victory because the goal of life and cosmology are so closely linked together. According to Elosionwu (personal communication, 30 December, 2018), the Igbo is inclined to “discard” a former religious system in favor of what she deems “more realistic.”

Sacrifices and offerings were part of the permanent features of the Ekwulobia traditional religion. They also practice *igbaafa* as a way of obtaining answers to enigmatic issues mainly conducted by the traditional priests or diviners. Ofo remains a symbol of authority in Ekwulobia. It serves as the messenger and interpreter who bear all prayers to the gods and ancestors. It also serves as an instrument of control. It serves as a vital object of Ekwulobia consciousness and ritual life and serves as a medium of contact between the people of Ekwulobia and the spirit world. There are major abominations in

Ekwulobia which include a married woman sleeping with another man especially in Ula village, stealing of yams, women and young girls looking at Achukwu masquerade in the face or identifying a masquerade publicly, getting pregnant while mourning a dead husband, climbing of palm tree by a woman, suicide of any kind poisoning of any kind and so on.

3.4 Socio-political Setting of Ekwulobia Before the Advent of Christianity

Ekwulobia social life includes traditional marriage. Marriage is a very important institution in Ekwulobia. Marriage cannot be contracted without an involvement of the society. It is a means of procreation. It was established in Ekwulobia that a sacrifice could be offered to appease the fore-fathers of the couple for the blessing of such marriage or else the couple would be struck to death. Marriage is contracted through the middle man (*onyenfuta*) who is set as a link or an intermediary to make that marriage a success. Yams and palm wine were used as a bride price in pre-colonial days.

There are a lot of social activities that abound in Ekwulobia but one of the greatest activities that can bring the highest number of people together at a given time is usually *Achukwu Ukpo* masquerade dancing. This was confirmed by G. Alagboso (personal communication, 15th October, 2018). It is the impersonation of ancestors or the dead through the use of mask. According to Parrinder (1975), “maskers speak in guttural voices, impersonating the voices of ancestor who are considered as having broken noses” (p.129). *Achukwu Ukpo* masquerade feature during funeral ceremonies, new yam festivals, or during feasts like Christmas, New Year or Easter. According to Ugogbuzuo

(personal communication, 10 October, 2018), *Achukwu Ukpo* perform political, social and religious functions. They guard the village thieves, collect fines from people, pronounce guilty of offences and help in seeing that '*aru*' (crimes) are not hidden. Other social activities in Ekwulobia include new yam festival, naming ceremonies and the most colourful and spectacular is the outing of a new dance group.

No leadership can function in any society, primitive or modern without some sort of organizational structure. Leadership organization embraces both men and women, but makes a clear cut distinction between male and female organizations. From the beginning of time, Ekwulobia people have very unique, social and political organizations. The political system in Ekwulobia before the advent of Christianity was, and upto now is a democratic form of government. It was a source of unity with the accepted customs and laws. Political institutions in Ekwulobia are similar with political institutions in any Igbo community, although may differ only in structure. Rather than destroy it, Christianity encouraged the system. Initially, the warrant chiefs were the ruling power. The warrant chiefs were those individuals hand-picked by the District Commissioners to represent the interest of the Whiteman's administration as well as the village groups in the court area. In the appointment of the warrant Chiefs, the white District Commissioners disregarded and overlooked the traditions of the people on matters of political office and the process of appointment. In the community, most traditional rulers were not appointed because the District Commissioners only selected those men who represent their interest. Presiding over the whole community was an Igwe who had an Ekwulobia title. Initially, it was in

the hands of the warrant chiefs. And as time goes on, another traditional ruler takes over. C. Nkeonyemetalu (personal communication, 15th October, 2018) narrated that the first central traditional ruler in Ekwulobia was Igwe Ezekannagha Ezenwabachili, the second traditional ruler was Igwe S.N. Ezenwa and the current traditional ruler in Ekwulobia is Igwe Emmanuel Chukwukadibia Onyeneke. The Igwe was assisted by his council members representing all the nine villages in Ekwulobia. In each village, we have the family, the Umunna, the compound council, the village council and the community. The delegated authority which exists is vested in adult males in general, and particularly in the older and mature minds, who are greatly respected, especially those who show ability in leadership and of high moral standard. It was broadly this political arrangement among other things that accounted for solidarity and unifying elements that operated on a large scale among Ekwulobia people.

The family has been identified as the nucleus of any community or society organization. If the family is well organized, other segments of society will have less organizational problems. When the family is strong and stable, the larger society will be strong and stable also. In Ekwulobia traditional society, family is organized in such a way that no single member of the family lives on his own. This makes the Umunna group or the compound administration less burdensome. Each lineage is made up of a number of village kin-based extended family called “Ikwunne or Ikwunna”. The oldest person is always appointed as the head of each lineage. In Ekwulobia, family system, we have two lineages- Patrilineal lineage (Ikwunna) and matrilineal lineage (Ikwunne). In the

patrilineal lineage, kinsmen live together in compact village units, while in matrilineal lineage; kindred's are found in almost all the village units that constitute Ekwulobia community. Inter-marriage system which is common in the community has been identified as the only cause for social order. Although they have these two family systems Ekwulobia but they practice more of matrilineal lineage. Ekwulobia people are more related to their maternal relations than their father's relations. So, maternal relations are more regarded as ones blood relation than paternal relations. In case of marriage, one may marry someone from his father's relation but cannot marry someone from his maternal relation.

In times of trouble, it is one's maternal relations that will be held responsible for one's actions. For instance, if one commits murder, all his maternal relations will run away, if not, any of them can be used to pay the price either by killing the person or burning the person's property. While one's paternal relations will not be held responsible for any one's action. In terms of administration, the oldest surviving generation is always made the head of the family. It is also important to note that the oldest surviving generation who now acts as the head of the family also serves as the connecting link between the old generation and the new in terms of family history, achievements and failures. He is also believed to be the channel of communication between the living and the dead (ancestors) members of the family. His duties include: maintenance of the inherited property; maintenance of peace within the extended family; settle family disputes and distributes family farmlands to members of the family. In time of calamity

or disaster, the family head leads other members of the extended family (Ikwunne) to perform necessary rituals or sacrifices of appeasement to the ancestors or the gods of the land. Considering his age and position as the authorized link to the world of the dead, he sends and receives messages from the ancestors on ways to avert future calamities and disasters.

At the arrival of the church to Ekwulobia, the missionaries adopted the Ekwulobia system of government in order to be able to reach the natives with the gospel of Jesus Christ. According to Ifebuche, T. (personal communication, 20th August, 2018), Ekwulobia traditional system of government became the veritable tool for the white missionaries in their quest to establish and run mission schools in the community. Age groups were used in the recruitment of pupils into mission schools. Age groups were also used as the police of the church by arresting children of school age who refused to be enlisted into mission schools. The church adopted the traditional pattern of leadership in which those who were advanced in age are chosen and appointed to lead the rest of the people. The church appointed men who were advanced in age into leadership positions and called them by the same traditional title of leadership “Elders”. By this action of the church, majority of the natives began to open up to the teachings of the church. The natives also saw the church’s grouping of her members into districts as borrowing from their traditional compound arrangement. To the natives, it was a welcomed development in the sense that they have something to offer the church.

3.5 Worship in Ekwulobia Traditional Religion

The idea of belief is an object of worship. It is that object of worship that draws the subjects who are worshippers to action. Such object of worship can be given various descriptions to various religions. Therefore worship in essence is an impression of man's attitude to God and other spiritual Beings. It is act of communication and communion between human being and super-sensible world, a means of retaining God-man relationship and man-man relationship. Worship in Ekwulobia in most of the shrines is usually done on Eke market day. In which case, all the adherents of Otalú, Ezejingu, Eke, Udo, and Isigwu among others converge in their respective shrines. Worship is predominated by incantations in esoteric languages, invocation, drumming, singing and dancing. Traditional musical instruments such as *ogene* (metal gong), *Nkwa* (animal skin drum), and *udu*. Sometimes worshippers clap, sing, drum and dance, at the height of which members become possessed and see vision.

According to R. Onyejiaka (personal communication, 15th October, 2018) stated that apart from the worship that usually holds on every *Eke* day, adherents of the traditional religion occasionally worship their deities. They do so when confronted with misfortune or when the wrath of the deity is upon them. In which case, they would be required by the priest to offer sacrifices to appease the deity. Every life event is interpreted religiously by the people. Therefore, in the traditional setting, the people do not know religious vacuum. Their daily activities are interwoven with religious rites and every phenomenon is explained mysteriously and spiritually. There is hardly any material

explanation for events. The dependence on divinity for explanation, prediction and control of the forces of nature is, however, brought about by the presence of numerous vices and ills, which continually plaque the traditional Ekwulobia community and which are far beyond human explanation. Such vices and ills include the mysterious death of young and healthy people through the activities of witches and sorceries and those caused by famine and epidemics.

In the next chapter, missionary enterprise in Ekwulobia was examined.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY OF EKWULOBIA CHRISTIANITY, 1913-1970

4.1 The Advent of Christianity in Ekwulobia

Christianity has a historical arrival in Ekwulobia area. It is alien rather than traditional; something the people came in contact with at a stage in their existence as a people. Christianity is with unimaginable followership, and not of one and “holistic brand,” “a thousand and one” denominations under the umbrella of Christianity. We cannot discuss all the denominations within the scope of this study but three selected ones are to be examined, namely; Roman Catholic Church, the Church Missionary Society (Anglican Church) and National Evangelical Mission.

4.2 The Historical Origin of Church Missionary Society in Ekwulobia, (CMS), 1913

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was a child of the 18th century Evangelical Revival. According to Anozie (2009), Church Missionary Society was formed in 1799 (p.66). This revival attracted followers from various bodies as well as members of the Church of England. The Church Missionary Society was from the onset a purely Anglican Association which aim was to take the gospel to the remotest part of the world. Omoyajowo (1994) opined that “the injunction to spread the gospel was to all Christians as individuals and not merely to the church as an organization” (p. 124). They insisted that evangelization required one to be within the context of a church because the converts would eventually need to be constituted into a church, a branch of an existing church.

The first resolution adopted by the CMS puts the fundamental principles of the society thus: that it is a duty highly incumbent upon every Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of the gospel among the traditional worshippers. This implies that if the church could not move, individuals could move. Thus the formation of the society was justified. The CMS was solely interested in the conversion of the traditional worshippers in Africa and Asia. The policy of the CMS was to establish indigenous churches on self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating basis. This policy on native church organization was formulated by Henry Venn in 1851. Adiele (1996) says that on Monday July 27, 1857, the first CMS church in Igbo land was planted and on Sunday August 2, 1857, the first church worship was held by the Rev John Christopher Taylor. By this event, Onitsha became the gate way and bridge –head for the church missionary society in the Eastern part of Nigeria.

There is a general agreement that Church Missionary Society was the first Christian missionary body to arrive Ekwulobia. According to N. Nwankwo (personal communication, July 8, 2018), said Christianity was first brought to Ndikelionwu in the early missionary days through the efforts of one Mazi John Ogonnia Kanu of Ndikelionwu in the year 1908. In other words, he could be described as the life wire of early Christianity in Ndikelionwu town and beyond. It was through his evangelistic thrust, drive and leadership that the gospel was spread to Ekwulobia and other towns and communities in Aguata. J. Onyekachiukwu, (personal communication, 15th October, 2018), narrated that Evangelist John Kanu in spreading the gospel from town to town in

the olden days met Nwankwo Ekwelibe of Eziagulu village in Ekwulobia in the year 1910. Nwankwo Ekwelibe was converted and baptized in the Christian faith by Mazi John Kanu of Ndikelionwu town and he was baptized by an ordained priest. His name was changed to Samuel Nwankwo Ekwelibe. According to Ekwulobia Home and Abroad Handbook (2013) “it was said that evangelist John Kanu helped to conduct services at Ekwulobia and the name St John was named after him- John. In those days changing to Christian or foreign name was an indication of accepting Christ as well as status symbol.

It was through the fruitful efforts of Samuel Nwankwo Ekwelibe that the good news of Christianity reached Ekwulobia in the year 1913. This continued to cement the cordial relationship between Ndikelionwu and Ekwulobia people to date. M. Ezefunamba (personal communication, 15th October, 2018), says that Samuel Nwankwo Ekwelibe started displaying his new faith and life style to the admiration of his friends and new converts. They decided to join him in the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ as opposed to idol worship, lifeless images, eating of human beings as well as indulgence in other anti-social behaviors which were prevalent in those days. In the year 1914, the first church compound was established at Eziagulu. They made up to twelve converts led by John Anyaoku of Obosi. These new converts include: Nwankwo Ekwelibe, Ezeonwu Nnoli, Anaekezie Udude, Ezeobi Okonkwo, Ibe Udude, Onuora Afunanya, Ezeofe Onwumelu, Okonkwo Ayika, Uligwe Uzoezie, Okeke Ilo, Achufusi Okafor and Okafor Ezekegbo. John Anyaoku lived in Agba and came to Eziagulu to teach. All attempts made to plant CMS at Agba failed. Nevertheless, Chief Ezekannagha

Ezenwabachili was never a Christian but he allowed his wives and children to become Christians. He used his authority as the warrant chief to allocate some portion of land, such as the palm plantation now bishops court. He also encouraged his friends to allocate their lands to the church and school authority. It was then that a vernacular school was cited at the place presently occupied by the Local Government stadium. All these took place when Mr L.M. Uzodike, the late Bishop Uzodike, was the headmaster of C.M.S Central School, Ekwulobia.

The new converts devoted all their time and efforts in the spread of the good news. They travelled far and near spreading Christianity. Attendance on Sunday church services started to grow with pomp and pageantry and at an alarming crescendo; it grew steadily at the average of 97 per Sunday to the admiration of the members. L. Onyejiaka (personal communication, 20th August, 2018), posits that Sundays that fell on Eke days (uka eke) were particularly set apart for open air evangelism. The church teacher led the congregation in open air evangelism involving preaching, singing and testimonies among others. The role of music in evangelism must be appreciated. It is important to point out that acceptance to the new faith was very stringent. The church has its laid down procedures which every member must attain to before becoming a full member of the church. The stages include: catechumen, baptism and confirmation among others. A widow would swear to the Bible that she would not make new babies before admission as a full member of the church. A Christian was not allowed to participate in traditional

dancing and related social gathering that were considered unchristian. But these days, because of competition and proliferation of churches the rules have been liberalized.

The people of Ekwulobia had their well-established way of life. They cherished their age- long traditional values, culture and norms, and it was likely that they would reject any form of religion that was opposed to their well established beliefs. The church on its own side has its policies that were opposed to the peoples established values. Accepting the new religion shows that the people would renounce their established way of life. These opposing points posed a serious challenge in the conversion of new converts. This led to the slow growth and spread of the gospel message.

The growth of the church then attracted the growth of the school because both of them go together. According to E.A. Ezeobi (personal communication, August 15, 2018), said, As a result of these, Church Missionary Central School was established in the year 1920 by Rev. G.T. Basden, the manager of the C.M.S Schools at Awka. Ezekeke, Fidelis (personal communication, 20th August, 2018) confirmed that the pupils that attended the school then came from various towns including *Umuchu, Achina, Uga, Nkpologwu, Ezinihite, Igboukwu, Nanka, Oko, Ndikelionwu, Ndiowu, Aguluezechukwu, Ichida and Ndiokpaalaeze* among others. The school at *Enugwuabo Ufuma* was transferred to the Central School Ekwulobia and one Mr Joseph Onwudiwe was in charge of it. It was discovered that the school population was increasing everyday because of influx of pupils from other towns, and in 1921, a new site was established at *Ula* village headed by Mr. Abel Okoye. In the year 1922, Rev Dr Basden moved the school from *Ula* to its present

location. This famous school has graduated some notable figures like late Dr Alex Ekwueme, former vice president, late most Reverend Jonathan Onyemelukwe, former Bishop of Asaba, late Prof. Clifford Ezeilo, professor of Mechanical Engineering Leeds University, England, late Gabriel Mbionwu of the ministry of Agriculture, Engineer Clement Onyemelukwe, former Chairman Electricity Cooperations of Nigeria and so on.



THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST JOHN, EKWULOBIA, DIOCESE OF AGUATA

SOURCE: EKWELIBE, CHIKA NKIRU

4.3 The Historical Origin of Catholic Church in Ekwulobia, 1925

It was in 1885 that Rev Fr. Lutz, the leader of the Holy Ghost Fathers chose Onitsha in preference to Gbebe as the location of the Roman Catholic Church to the lower Niger. The Anglican Church had stayed for twenty- eight (28) years before the arrival of the Catholic Church. The church had penetrated into the interior areas of Igbo land, though some of the towns they entered never received them warmly. The advent of Catholic Church in Ekwulobia started in the year 1925. According to K.E. Okafor (personal communication, July 5, 2018), Catholic Church came to Ekwulobia some years after the Anglican Church has taken ground in the town. The Catholic Church migrated from Adazi in Anaocha Local Government Area in 1925 through Rev Fr. Bubenduff who was then the Parish priest of St Andrews Catholic Church, under Archbishop Herrey who was the Diocesan bishop of Onitsha. According to Golden Jubilee Anniversary magazine (2017), the people of Ekwulobia who accepted the new faith used to trek far and near places in search of faith from the white clergy. They attend Sunday mass at St Andrews Catholic Church, Adazi. They did this several months before they assembled themselves together and pleaded with the white clergymen to manifest the Catholic faith in Ekwulobia. In 1925, as said above, the white clergy men accepted to establish Catholic Church in Ekwulobia. The church was initially situated at Agudo Umuchi which was now a police station. The officiating priests there were Rev Bubenduff and Rev Fr Liddane, the overall head was Rev Bubenduff, issuing instructions from there and also reports

were being brought to him from other stations within his jurisdiction. The two priests usually came from St Andrew's Parish and St Charles Parish, Achina.

The land of Agudo Umuchi was donated by late Ezekafor Nwadayi and Ezekafor Okeke, both from Umuchi. The pioneer Christians were Albert Okolocha, Ruben Ogwatta, Hezekiah Ezeuchu, Alfred Ezechukwu and Moses Nwosu. Others were: James Ike, Ezekiel Nwankwo, George Nwankwo and Peter Anojue. These were the first converts baptized in the year 1926. The progress of Catholic Church in Ekwulobia was considerably high despite the fact that it arrived late in comparison with Church Missionary Society. As the number of converts was increasing rapidly, the need for a bigger site arose. A mighty bush at Agba village was given to the Church with the assistance of Rev Bubenduff. The land that was given to them, according to J. N. Ike (personal communication, July 8, 2018), was an evil forest land and dead bodies were discarded there. The members were afraid to enter the land for clearing until Rev Fr. Liddane who was an assistant Parish priest started clearing the bush, trying to prove to the members that there is nothing to be feared. During the clearing, a lot of things were found there like dead bodies, pots of concoction and other things. After the clearing, they erected the first mud church which took the position where the Grotto of our mother Mary situates now. They also built the headmasters house at *Agu- Eke* and the church catechist then was Patrick Okolo.

In the year 1932, they found a land for school at *Agu- Nwaagba*. The school was called "*Nta-akara*" (kindergarten). J. Onyenkuzi (personal communication, 17th August,

2018) stated her earlier teachers were: Emmanuel Ezeagu from Adazi, David Ogbuabu of Adazi, Thomas Okafor from Nnobi, Stephen Ezeanya of Adazi, Richard Isidienpu of Nteje and Henry Akwaanya from Nteje. This group of persons also acted as catechists to the church. They nurtured the school and fanned the flame of faith of the pupils into a blazing fire. Despite the challenges witnessed, the Catholic Church in Ekwulobia has produced so many indigenous priests such as Rt Rev Msgr. M.O. Maduka in the year 1953, Rev Fr. Dr Augustine Onyeneke CSSP, 1965, Rev Fr. Anthony Okafor, 1967, Anthony Onyeji, 1974, Rev Fr. Paul Okoli CMF, 1983, Rev Fr. Peter Okonkwo CMF 1990 and so on. She has progressed tremendously, grew with might and power and its school was very superb.



ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, EKWULOBIA, AWKA DIOCESE

SOURCE: EKWELIBE, CHIKA NKIRU

4.4 The Historical Origin of New Religious Movement in Ekwulobia, (1970)

The new religious movement has been seen as an aspect of Igbo response to Christianity. According to Anozie (2009), “Pentecostalism is seen as a genuine attempt by Igbo Christians to make meaning out of the faith which had been introduced to them by the Europeans” (p. 83). The ground for this view point is the contention that the Christian evangelists failed to understand the culture of the Igbo’ before the coming of the Christian religion on them. Pentecostalism took its momentum in Igbo land in the year 1960 and 1990 respectively. This new religious movement spread in every nook and cranny in Igbo land. Kalu (1978) supports this view that “every nook and corner in Nigeria is endowed with a couple or more spiritualist sects posed like pubs on London streets” (p.309). Clarke (2003) posits that “the upsurge of new religious movements is a worldwide phenomenon and it has greatly influenced the liturgical operation and practices of the mainline churches” (p. 169).

Many factors gave rise to the upsurge of this new religious movement. One of the factors was the persistent ill-treatment of the Nigerian clergy of the CMS. According to Anozie (2009) the curious missions had established and carried on with evangelization through European missionaries, but the situation changed when the CMS priest appointed was unpopular with the European missionaries, but popular with the Africans. Through the conspiracy of the European traders and missionaries, Bishop Crowder was discredited and his Niger mission condemned. For this reason, Bishop Crowder was succeeded by a European as the Bishop of the Nigeria mission. This heightened the struggle between the

blacks and the whites, culminating in the emergence of the African Church under African control. The Africans regarded the maltreatment on Crowder as a slight on their Bishop, and felt that this was a challenge to African leadership which must be fought out successfully.

Another factor that led to proliferation of new religious movement was the failure of the missionaries to adapt the gospel to suit the traditional society. The coming of the Christian mission aroused widespread hopes among West Africa. Their message enjoyed extra-ordinary response. As a result of their large membership in the early days, the missionaries were often overwhelmed by their task of church building and had little time to see the rationale in adapting their message within the context of West African indigenous beliefs and system of thought. Horton (1971) in support of this view posits that:

The proliferation of independent churches has been due to the reluctance of Christianity to accept its role as a mere catalyst. Rather Christianity insists on the individuals total and unconditional acceptance of official doctrine and at the same time renounced the functions of explanation, prediction and control. The result was incompatibility between the churches and the adherents. Hence break away (p. 103).

It is also important to note that Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) played a major role to the rise of these new religious movements in the entire Igbo land. Due to pressures of the civil war, the main line churches began to lose grip of their members and as a consequence people started moving from one to another looking for religious solace.

Thus hardship, social tensions, dreadful diseases like kwashiorkor, refugee life style and psychological problems which the mainline churches could not offer solution to, diverted the responses of many of the Igbo Christians towards Aladura church and prayer houses. These insurmountable hardships facing the people forced them to join these new religious movements. Madiebo (cited in Anozie, 2009) supports this view stating that “as a result of lack of material force to prosecute the war successfully, many people resorted to spiritualism and prayers as the only alternative way of surviving” (p. 357). These new religious movements are springing, and the rate at which people are patronizing them in Ekwulobia is very remarkable. The most popular and the first to come to Ekwulobia is National Evangelical Mission.

National Evangelical Mission is not the only Pentecostal church in Ekwulobia. There are others like Assemblies of God Church, Deeper Life Church, Winners Chapel, Dominion City, Grace of God, The Lord’s Chosen and Faith Tabernacle. But the researcher has chosen to write on National Evangelical Mission because they are the first to enter the land of Ekwulobia and paved way for others. The researcher chose it because of her tremendous growth and impact on the lives of the people of Ekwulobia and beyond. National Evangelical Mission started in the year 1970. According to R. Udeh (personal communication, June 28, 2018), confirmed that National Evangelical Mission started in 1970 with very few members at Onyenwe’s store situated at Agba village, Ekwulobia. The church started as a follow-up gathering organized by one Rhoda Muoghalu from Agulu- Ezechukwu. She was assisted by Edwin Obeke from Umuchiani

and Clement Okafor who was then Onyenwe's house boy. The presiding pastor then was Rev Ositadimma Dominic from Agulu-Ezechukwu. They threw their doors wide open for their neighbors to join the daily prayer session. N. Mgbeoji (personal communication, 17th August, 2018) explained that when they started making converts, growing in size, they relocated from Onyenwe's store to Obeke's sitting room from Umuchiani village in Ekwulobia and that was in the year 1974-1975. As they were increasing day after day, Edwin Obeke donated a plot of land to them and they built a small hall there. National Evangelical Mission spreaded like a wild fire evangelizing the whole land in Ekwulobia and beyond without the presence of the church. The growth of the church was surrounded with so many problems emanating from the villagers. The church went into conflict with the culture and traditions of the people of Ekwulobia. P.Z. Otaaluka (personal communication, July 20, 2018), stated that they undergo serious persecutions from the villagers, the houses of their converts were destroyed, their church was burnt down, and one of the masquerades in Ekwulobia known as "*Achukwu*" destroyed their goats and fowls. They also went to the extent of destroying the houses of Edwin Obeke. Their women members were segregated from the Umuada and tagged as non- members. Although as time goes, most of them grew up in having a wider conception or understanding concerning issues of *Umunna*, *Umuada*, and *Inyom-ona*, and they started taking part in their meetings.

They were seen as offenders of the traditions guiding the people of Ekwulobia because of their refusal to adhere to the culture and traditions like the issue of having hair

cut and putting on mourning cloth by the women who were bereaved of their husbands, they were at log heads over this until the emergence of EFAC, and Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 1980's, National Evangelic Mission looked at their counter- parts and succumbed to this tradition by allowing their members who wish to adhere to this particular tradition, although is rare to see any of their members indulging in it even till date. Onwuatuegwu (personal communication, 17th August, 2018) lamented that they were also fought against for not allowing the traditional drink known as “*Nkwuocha* (palm wine) and beer” in traditional marriages. They went through so many persecutions because they were against masquerading, *Igba-eke*, and so on.



NATIONAL EVANGELICAL MISSION, EKWULOBIA

SOURCE: EKWELIBE, CHIKA NKIRU

Indeed this church has spread in almost all the villages in Ekwulobia and beyond. They have their general headquarters in Onitsha and Ekwulobia is their South- East region. Their regions have their co-coordinators. The general over-seer of the church is Rev Bishop Ositadimma Dominic. They have so many pastors and assistant pastors helping out at *Ihuokpala, Ula, Umuchiani, Eziagulu and Agba*. There is no Pentecostal church in Ekwulobia in terms of population, finance and magnificent building like National Evangelical Mission. Their members give them financial support in a tremendous manner unlike other churches. They share food in the church after church service, they also share bags of rice, yams, garri and envelopes to their members. Indeed this church has challenged Anglicanism and Catholic Church in Ekwulobia because they touch the lives of the people and has made so many impacts.

In the next chapter, the encounter between Christianity and Ekwulobia culture was discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTIANITY AND EKWULOBIA CULTURE, 1913-2013

Ekwulobia traditional religion is strongly embedded in the culture of its people. No other culture or religion was known to them before the advent of Christianity. However, the advent of Christianity marked a turning point in their cultural set up. On arrival, Christianity disrupted their socio-cultural life. It is a well-known fact that when two cultures come into contact, they are bound to influence each other. This, however, was the case between Ekwulobia culture as embodied in its religion and the Christian culture. Christianity was nurtured in the typical European society with European background, culture and values. The cultural values of the Ekwulobia people as rightly observed by the researcher were different from that of Christianity and when Christianity arrived, this gave birth to what one would term, a cultural clash. The value systems in the two cultures were outrageously different and sounded strange and ridiculous to the two parties.

Hence, Christians and missionaries felt superior to the Ekwulobia non-Christians and subsequently attempted to superimpose the Christian culture over that of the Ekwulobia people. J. Onyekanne (personal communication, 3rd January, 2018), said that the traditional religion of Ekwulobia people was influenced with two possibilities: modifications, adaptations or even extinctions. In recognition of this, Idowu (1973) opined that “one or two things happen to man’s religion in any given situation, modification with adaptation or extinction” (p.203). What happened in Ekwulobia was

more of modification and adaptation than extinction as Okolo (1985) rightly observed that:

Christianity has three tasks to tackle with regard to culture. First, it endorses the basic canons of culture; Christianity is to transform but not to destroy. There are good things in every culture and it is a Christian obligation to become cultured according to the best standard of one's society. For Christ respects their culture to the core. Secondly, Christianity impregnates culture with its own principles. Christianity purifies culture by purifying its ethics. It humanizes culture by infusing it with Christian love. Thirdly, it challenges and rejects that which is evil and irredeemable. (p. 27).

Indeed, the arrival of Christianity marked a turning point in the cultural set up of the Ekwulobia people. Though the traditional aspects of the people's belief have been considerably weakened through the influence of Christianity and rapid growth of the modern times, they still persist till today and it constitutes a constraint to Christianity in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. Some of these culturally poignant issues that debarred the church from reaching its goal in the proclamation of Christ include the following:

5.1.1. *Achukwu Ukpo* Masquerade society

Achukwu Ukpo masquerade is the most important and highest respectable secret society in Ekwulobia. It performs political, social and religious functions. They guide the villages against thieves, collect fines from people, pronounce guilty of offences and help in seeing that crimes (*aru*) are not hidden. If it pronounces a verdict, it stands. They entertain people during festivals; they help in maintaining discipline in Ekwulobia environment. Historically, according to U. Nnaemeka (personal communication, 15th November, 2018), the famous *Achukwu* masquerade came to Ekwulobia through Ezemba (the father of Alfred Ezemba); Asuhuzu (father of Victor Asuhuzu) and Udojindu Nweke, all from Ime Agba Ekwulobia. These three illustrious sons of Ime-Agba went to Ukpo town in Njikoka Local Government Area, and learnt the *Achukwu* masquerade dance in its various ramifications. That is why the masquerade is known today as *Achukwu Ukpo* and not *Achukwu Ikpo* as people ignorantly believed.

With the coming of the missionaries, *Achukwu* masquerade was condemned. According to Okafor and Onebunne (1996), “*Achukwu* masquerade had a pagan connotation and this was where Late Fr Martin Maduka courageously and doggedly affected a pure revolution” (pp. 11-12). The destruction of *Achukwu* took its form by some notable Christian figures like Martin Maduka, Julius Okeke, Stephen Ezenwa, Pius Ezekeke, Gabriel Ezechukwu, Eugene Onyebuchi and Ambrose Okafor. Martin fearing the inherent danger in allowing the Christians to join the masquerade group with its pagan practices suggested to his Christian brothers of the need to have their own

Achukwu masquerade. This they unanimously agreed to implement. *Achukwu ndi uka* became an end to be achieved through some legitimate means. Louis (personal communication, 3rd January, 2019) confirmed that *Achukwu ndi uka* was officially launched on 27th December, 1947 at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Ekwulobia. Late Monsignor Maduka also allowed his congregation of the Little Brothers of Jesus and Mary to have their normal masquerade. The peculiar thing about this "*mmanwu*" is that it had the inscription "*OTITO DIRI JESU*" boldly carved at the back. This as usual sparked off public anger and condemnation but Monsignor Maduka did not recognize the agitation of the people. The masquerade faded off when the congregation was disbanded.

Nevertheless, traditional *Achukwu* masquerade is still functioning and *Achukwu ndi uka* is no more since the death of Monsignor Martin Maduka which shows that Christianity has not actually penetrated deep into the people's hearts.

5.1.2. *Igba-Eke*

Igba-eke are one of the traditions that were predominant in Ekwulobia before the coming of the missionaries. It is usually done on *Eke* market day. It is usually performed by the community women in Eke market square. It is a celebration of thanksgiving to *Arusi eke* for his guidance and protection, and for granting them good sales of their farm produce. I. Bernadette (personal communication, 27th December, 2018) puts it that on that eke day, each family will come with their children, different native foods are cooked especially Ekwulobia favorite food "*aniga*", women usually dance "*ikon-nko*" dance in

the market square, eating and drinking, singing praises to *Arusi eke* and they also exchange pleasantries.

It will do the church some good if they will look closely into the details of this festival and source for a proper way of appreciating the event and how best to the gospel message will prove good news to the people. It could be reshaped to Christian gathering in thanksgiving to God for his divine protection and provision. For the celebration, “*Inyom-ona and umuada*” makes some contribution of their farm produce and other things they can afford, come to the church for thanksgiving.

5.1.3. *Igba-udo*

Igba-udo is a traditional religionist feast that usually takes place every year. It is a big ceremony in thanksgiving to *Arusi-Udo*, for its favour throughout the year. *Igba-udo* could be likened to “*imenwaafo*” in Ogidi. M. Onyeneke (personal communication, 27th December, 2018), confirmed that *Igba-udo* is usually done at *Isigwu-Agba*, a big shrine at Agba village, Ekwulobia. Prior to the coming of Christianity in Ekwulobia, this tradition was at its apex but with the arrival of Christianity everything about *Igba-udo* was put to the mud. Late Martins Maduka (Nnadiesube) fought against it single handedly and later succeeded in replacing it with what he referred to as “*Oriri Uto*” He made it a social feast free from any traditional practices so that Christians may participate in it. Martin did this in order to stop the youths from engulfing themselves with all sorts of evil practices and rituals engulfed in this festival. E. Chukwumezieokwu (personal communication,

30th December, 2018) stated For Maduka; the church should substitute and not obliterate or destroy people's culture.

With the demise of late Fr Martin Maduka, *Oriri Uto* returned back to its formal position which shows that a lot needs to be done and that christianity has not taken full flesh in the lives of Ekwulobia people. Up till now, *Igba-Udo* is still observed by some people in Ekwulobia.

5.1.4. *Okponsi*

Okponsi is also one of the cultures of Ekwulobia. It is a big festival that is done before the new yam festival. It is done before *Nguma* shrine. According to O. Ezennajike, (personal communication, 27th December, 2018), the traditional men- *Nze na Ozo*, *Okoro*, and their wives makes that day very remarkable and enjoyable too. Before *Okponsi* celebration, each family will cook yam and *Ukpaka* and eat, then after eight days, *Okponsi* will be celebrated. Before the shrine, each family will give a fowl to their first daughter and the fowl will be killed, the blood spread on their doors as a sign that they are celebrating *Okponsi*. After *Okponsi* celebration, the next cultural celebration will be “*ahuhaa*” and cultivation of yam and celebration of new yam festival. Any family that engages in *Okponsi* is on a safer side to eat new yam (*ji ohuru*) or take part in the festival. In this regard, the Christian mission should know that this festival mean a lot to the people. It may therefore be suicidal to mishandle this festival.

There may need to think of a catechetical option that will make Ekwulobia people happier than they feel with *Okponisi* celebration. There is need as well to acknowledge the strong position Ekwulobia people have *for Okponisi*.

5.1.5. Isoebe

Isoebe is also part of Ekwulobia culture that was relegated to the floor by emergence of Christianity. *Isoebe* is also a pagan tradition in reverence to the gods of the land. It is an important rite, a rite to full womanhood, usually performed by young girls yet to marry. The young girls will pass through “*mbubu*”. *Mbubu* has to do with separating and preparing the young girls away from the people, movements are highly restricted and the person stayed in a secluded place, well attended to with all sort of food. According to O. Afamefuna (personal communication, 27th December, 2018), *Isoebe* is a period we inform our young girls that they have reached a stage of maturity and it is indeed an event of joy and feasting. On that day of celebration, young men searching for wife to be are also invited. Marriage engagements are welcomed on that day. Sacrifice, incantations and rituals to *Chiukwu* are performed for the young girls to equip them with power and blessing they would use as fully fledged women and for them to enter a good family and for the fruit of the womb when married. The young girls, well dressed with beads would go round the *Eke* market square and finally appear before the *Udo* shrine. Girls who have defiled themselves as virgins are not allowed inside the *Udo* shrine, they would be asked to go back. This is done in order to discourage the other young girls from

defiling themselves before marriage and the essence of maintaining their virginity till they get married.

This is so in Ekwulobia because marriage has a great position in Ekwulobia social life. According to Basden (1996), “it is popular upon the horizon of every maid and youth as an important function to be fulfilled with little delay as possible after reaching the age of puberty” (p.213). Marriage rites were very strong and are still being performed with vigor and commitment in Ekwulobia. This is because marriage is so important in Ekwulobia and is all embracing, in fact, it is a sacred institution.

However, with the coming of Christianity in Ekwulobia, *Isoebe* is no longer strong as it used to be, and this is causing a serious problem in the lives of young girls and marriage institution in Ekwulobia as well. Before marriage, most of the young girls had already defiled themselves, some even give birth to children in their father’s house before getting married, pregnant women are being given out to marriage together with their unborn child, desecrating the land of Ekwulobia with what M. Ukatu referred to as “*aru*” for her it is a taboo to accept bride price on the head of a pregnant women (personal communication, 27th December, 2018). It is a well known fact that some Christian mission wed even the heavy pregnant women on the altar of God with their white and beautiful wedding gowns which signifies purity of body and soul, some will even go to the extent of covering their face with white veil, which signifies that they do not have carnal knowledge of their spouse. And that is one of the reasons there are so many divorce cases in Christian marriages today unlike when *Isoebe* was at its apex. It becomes

so important to highlight such key tradition of Ekwulobia people and something ought to be done in order to see that rate of marriage separations that are being entertained today in Ekwulobia are relegated to its lowest ebb. Christian missions in Ekwulobia should sought for a way to bring in the good aspect of this tradition into the Christian folk so as to ensure good and stable family system and well groomed and responsible adult girls.

5.1.6. *Igochi Umunwaanyi*

Igochi Umunwaanyi is also one of the traditional practices in Ekwulobia. It is usually performed by aged women in Ekwulobia, from seventy years and above. This tradition is done in thanksgiving to the deities of the land for their guidance, protection and provision. They also lay their complaints to him and ask for one favour or the other from the gods. Women invites their daughters who are married, they will come from their husbands' house to the place of sacrifice. Bitter leaf soup (*ofe onugbu*) is cooked that day .one thing special about the soup is that, it is cooked without salt and little water and they refer the soup as “*Iku ukpum*”. After sacrificing to the deities, feeding them with the onugbu soup without salt, then they will eat and drink with their daughters and enjoy themselves to the core. If one contributed to the making of the society, lives an exemplary life, and if one loves and is being loved by many, the person will be celebrated more than others on that day. This celebration encourages the old ones among the people that their own people loves and appreciates them for being alive and strong for them. According to E. Chimezie (personal communication, 28th December, 2018), it is good and memorable to celebrate our old ones when they are still alive and active, it gives them

more joy that the celebration that would have taken place when they are no more are done in their presence than when they are dead.

However, this type of celebration should be encouraged in the Christian mission, appreciating the old ones in the congregation and not taxing them with one levy or another that if they cannot pay them, at their demise, their family members will clear those debts, if not so they will not be buried by the priest. And this has been one of the major problems bringing down the spread and deep appreciation of the Gospel in Ekwulobia town.

5.1.7. Ezeasika Tradition

Ezeasika tradition is one of the respected traditions in Ekwulobia town, specifically in Ula village in Ekwulobia. *Ezeasika* is all about a married woman living with her husband in her husband's house sleeping around with other men outside her matrimonial home. If such a woman cooks food for the husband without the husband's consent of her way-wardness, her husband will fall sick and die. Again, if such a woman gets pregnant from such evil act, she will not deliver that baby until she confesses openly to the husband and her husband's relations. This is accompanied with some rituals by the dibia consulted by the family. No amount of prayer and speaking in tongues can save such a woman and the husband.

This tradition is very strong in Ula village in Ekwulobia uptil now; missionaries had fought to destroy it, but their efforts was not enough. According to R. Onuegbu

(personal communication, 2nd January, 2019), *Ezeasika* took its bold step when the able men of the people of Ekwulobia started dying prematurely. People were worried about the sudden departure of their dear ones and husband. Many women became widows at daily bases. Men were dying like fowls without a trace of what led to their death. When the situation could be controlled, bold men went into divination (*iju ase*) in order to know the cause of their problem. When the cause became clear to the people, they engaged in “*Igba ndu*” (oat taking), that any woman that sleeps with another man other than the husband and gets pregnant in the process will not deliver that baby until she confesses to the husband and the family she is married to. Again, if the husband of the adulterous woman eats of anything cooked by the woman knowingly and unknowingly, he will die. Since then it has been that way regardless of over hundred years of Christianity in Ekwulobia. Looking at this issue of *Ezeasika*, it would be difficult to have a close relationship between the Christian faith and Ekwulobia traditional values if the minds of the people are close to some beliefs and practices.

It is therefore necessary for the Christian missions to look deep into the traditional contents of Ekwulobia people and see whether they agree or disagree with Christian beliefs and practices. It may not be easy but with time, everything will take its normal shape. Obiefuna (2015) supported this view in his statement:

With time, the catechized would adjust accordingly. All may not adjust at the same time. Values are hard to drop. Core values are harder to drop. No building is ever finished with one size of block. Every building, like the church, is made up of

many different sizes of block. It took Christianity many years to turn the celebration of the festival of the sun god in Rome to Christmas (birth of Christ) celebration. (p.8).

5.1.8. Iju-Ase

Iju-ase could be looked at as a method use by diviners in finding out the unknown, by means of pebbles, numbers, water, reading the palm, throwing dice and many other methods. Iju-ase is been conducted by the diviner. A diviner is a medicine man or woman that deals with the question of finding out why something has gone wrong. They tell who may have worked evil magic, sorcery or witchcraft against the sick or the barren. They find out which spirit may be troubling a possessed person, what it wants and what should be done to stop the trouble. Diviners like other religious leaders, often have their own language. Sometimes they get in touch with spirits directly or through the help of mediums who often work with them. They also use their common sense and good imagination. They are consulted at birth, before marriage, during serious sickness, to obtain a job, to pass an examination and so on. According to Awolalu and Dopamu (1979), “divination is the practice of attempting to foretell the future, reveal the unknown or find out the wish of a divinity or spirit” (p.147).

The consultation of oracle and diviners in Ekwulobia is not strange. People consult them to find out the strength of their relationship with the spirit world, to appease, to maintain the ontological balance. Metuh (1999) posits that “diviners are consulted at all important occasions in a person’s life” (p.229). The diviners use a four value kola-nut.

The values are thrown or cast on the ground and the way in which they fall gives the answer to the diviner's questions. Iju-ase gives an authoritative backing of the spiritual world to whatever decision and course of action one may want to take on one's own situation. Thus they provide confidence and certainty in a world of anxiety and doubt. According to Ifesieh (1989):

Diviners are in every village in Igbo land and the known oracles include the following Ibini Ukpabi of the Aro, the Agbala of Enugwu-ukwu, the Odo cult of Nsukka, Igwekala of Umunoha, the Edo of Nnewi, the Udo of Umunze and the Onyiliora of Ezira. (p. 53).

Iju-ase has raised a serious problem for Christianity in Ekwulobia. It is done in the secret and most Christian churches have no approval of it. But if this could be copied and brought inside the church, it will go a long way in breaching the gap of Christianity on top of iju-ase. The fake prophesy some Christians receive from their fellow Christian brothers that claim to be real prophets had rocked the foundation of Christianity in its entirety. There is no love again. In childless situation, death or mishap, one member of the family would be alleged to be responsible. Many Christian families has been torn apart by false prophesy. Despite this fact, many people still consult the diviners. In line with this Madu (2004) added that: "Nominal Christianity seems to be the order of the day. With no qualms of conscience Igbo Christians patronize both the traditional diviners and the Christian pastors" (p. 157). Ekezuike (1980) described the ambiguity of the modern Igbo Christian believer, thus:

The Igbo Christians plays a dual role. Christianity is outwardly practiced, and paganism in secret and more precautions too. He puts on the mask of Christianity on top of paganism. The new Christian inwardly believes in Osu, ogwu, ogbanje, afa, witchcraft, charms and so forth. They do not prevent him at the same time from believing in the blessed Trinity, the bible and the Dogmas of the church. But his actual faith comes to light when temptation comes. Imagine he does not get a male child or is completely childless. What does he do? (p. 32).

Iju-ase therefore serves a good purpose to the people of Ekwulobia. In moments of community clashes, sudden death and other spiritual problems, divination plays an important role. The missionary needs this detailed information to be able to ensure deep rooted Christianity in Ekwulobia land.

5.1.9. Ilo-Uwa

Common to Ekwulobia people is the belief in *ilo-uwa*. In English, it could be referred to as “reincarnation”. The concept of re-incarnation emanated from the Latin word “re- incarnates” meaning back to life or born again. The Igbo call it “*Ilo-uwa, Inu – agu, Ibia ziele*” In other words; ilo-uwa is the occupation by the soul of a new body after the death of the formal one. According to Metuh (1987) “the Igbo believes that the body decays at death and the soul of the good ancestors are in the land of the spirits “*Ala Mmuo*” and that the “*Eke*” is sometimes referred to as the shadow of each person. “*Eke*” is the guardian spirit that brings one to life though as an agent of the creator. It is the

spiritual qualities of that person that are believed to reincarnate and not his personal spirit or his person which remains with the ancestors. It is believed that at death, the soul is set free from the body. If the person lived well and has a dignified burial ceremony as befits the dead, he is permitted by the creator “*Chineke*” to return back to life as a human being. This is what is called “*Ichie*” that is “to return” and all those who are involved in this process are called “*Ndiichie*”. It is believed that the soul and not the body that is directly involved in *ilo-uwa*. It is the soul that influences the child that passes through him into the world and put his characteristics into the child.

The belief in *ilo-uwa* could be attested to in Ekwulobia, firstly by consulting a diviner soon after birth to identify the ancestor who has been reborn in the new baby. Secondly, reincarnation is established by judging the circumstances surrounding the birth of a person. When a baby boy is born soon after the death of a husband, it is generally believed that the husband has come back to the family. Thirdly, through mere resemblance. If a new born baby resembles a dead ancestor from the way he or she appears or through the contours of his/her nose or eyes, the child is declared a reincarnation of the dead ancestor or relative. Finally the dreams about his coming back to the family are associated with anybody born immediately into the family. The issue of reincarnation still persists in Ekwulobia because of its link ancestral cult. Ancestors had a very important place in Ekwulobia traditional society. Madu (1997) notes that “the ancestors in Igbo land are referred to as ‘*ndiichie*’ (those of old), ‘*Nna anyi ha*’ (our fathers), ‘*Ndi mbu na ndi abua*’ (the first and the second people- those of antiquity), ‘*Ndi*

gboo’ (the people of long age)’’ (p. 67). I. Ezenagu (personal communication, 27thDecember, 2018), stated that the Ekwulobia people just like other Igbo people believe that it is the ancestors that reincarnate. One will see a father calling his son *nnam* (my father) because he believes that his father reincarnated in his son. A married woman will be calling a two years boy *dim* (my husband) because she believes that her late husband reincarnated in that child. This is still in vogue and with great belief attached to it in spite of Christian presence in Ekwulobia.

Christianity is totally against the belief in *ilo-uwa*. They strongly believe that it is unchristian. According to the teachings of Christianity as recorded in second Corinthians chapter 5 verses 1 -5, when man dies, the soul goes back to God as an individual entity or soul and remain as angels and each individual will come back to take back his body at the last day. The problem with the belief in *ilo-uwa* in the Christian belief is the problem of identification at the resurrection on the last day- how will the soul that has undergone several incarnations be clothed?, what body will it put on?, since it has come under several persons who will it stand for ?. It was argued that the classical doctrine of reincarnation does not give credence to the continuous work of God. That is if there is reincarnation, then it is fallacious to say that God creates. If a soul is reincarnating, how can we account for the different individuals on the face of the earth. Christians believe that they shall be united with their loved ones at the resurrection of the dead, and if that is so, *ilo-uwa* would not hold any value or credence for them.

The missionaries need to be conscious of this issue of life after death which is reincarnation while relating with Ekwulobia people. In this regard, the Christian missions should know that the issue of *ilo-uwa* mean a lot to the people, they should therefore sought for how best to apply the mission to the situation.

5.1.10. *Ogwu, Mgborogwu na Mkpaakwukwo*

The Ekwulobia people like other Igbo people believe in *ogwu, Mgborogwu na Mkpaakwukwo*. According to Anyika (1992) “charms or medicine are any concrete objects possessing mystical powers which can be used for positive and negative purposes” (p. 172). Many Ekwulobia people use *Ogwu, Mgborogwu na Mkpaakwukwo* in various forms to solve their problems. The *Ogwu, Mgborogwu na Mkpaakwukwo* could be a root, a leaf, the back of a tree, a feather, a rag or a cowries’ shell which is held tenaciously by virtue of its association or connection with an invisible force or forces such as God or gods. According to Little (1954) “charms or medicine can be used to offer protection to life and property, to detect and check evil doers and for a peaceful settlement of cases” (p.127). Many people wear them enclosed in their pockets, or write them over doors as protection, or place them beside fields or in trees to prevent stealing. The medicine men believed that they do their work by the powers given to them by their ancestors. They prescribe a cure which may include herbs, religious rituals and the observance of certain prohibitions or directions. Before the advent of Christianity, the medicine men are consulted and they acted as counselors. They acted not only as doctors but also as listeners to people’s multifarious problems. According to Basden (1996):

It was a general belief that before any traditional burial ceremony, medicine men and diviners would be consulted and charms obtained to protect the bereaved family and ward off any evil spirit or men that would try to disrupt the ceremony. (p. 125).

They also acted as priests and prayed for their communities. They took the lead in public religious rituals and in many ways symbolized the wholeness or health of their communities. In Ekwulobia, we have notable medicine men in various villages. According to A. Oduenyi (personal communication, July 10, 2018), in Agba, we have Okoye Idika (Ohama-eziokwu), Anakwuorom (Agba), Okwuanaasoanya (Umuchiani), Nwaforezebiagwu (Umuchi), Okorinweudele (Eziagulu) and Ogwudire(Okpo). They are very powerful and they make use of rituals, incantations, sacrifices and herbs in dealing with various problems. They know the history of their people and can easily tell them stories about their ailments or predicaments which can be believable. They are always nearer and available to their people. Thus they are not expensive. Their services are very cheap and at the disposal of their people. Unlike the modern doctors whose consultation fees and treatment charges are not at the disposal of every member of the society. Above all, they are the sons of the soil, living in various villages in Ekwulobia.

With the emergence of Christianity in Ekwulobia, the missionaries brought in doctors who were specialists in so many medical fields. The doctors were referred to as *dokinta ndi uka* by the people of Ekwulobia. People consult them whenever they are sick. Ekwulobia people were taught that their illness could be cured by these medical professionals and not by any ritual ceremony as they believed. Most Christian converts

dance to the whims and caprices of the traditional medicine men and charms regardless of their belief in God as the healer of man and in the Christian medical doctors as instruments use by God to heal his people.

5.1.11 The Churches Destructive Strategies on the Culture

Christianity has been able to do away with some of the rich cultural heritage of Ekwulobia people through the help of certain features of western origin that go with Christianity. These include education, science, urbanization and proliferation of churches. Through education for instance, the missionaries exposed some Africans to the Western Culture and these people turned back to see African traditional religion as primitive and full of barbaric practices that should not have been allowed to remain on the face of the earth. With this, their ethical values changed running across the highly valued traditional ones. The missionaries wanted to give Christianity a root through creating local Ekwulobia elite through an imaginative and energetic educational programme.

Science also followed education and this has to a great dimension influenced the traditional religion of Ekwulobia people. Many people now have scientific approach to the solving of their problems. Diseases such as small-pox, tuberculosis, yaws and the rest of them which were hitherto mystified by the religion could now be medically explained and cured. Other phenomena in nature which are religiously respected have been blended them in such a way that they looked attractive. They talked about witchcraft, sorcery, magic, *Ogbanje*, visions just as in traditional religion. This has been a big temptation for some Ekwulobia people who run into them as a means of seeking practical solution to

their problems .On the whole it is worthy and instructive too to assert that the impact of Christianity has not been as positive and overwhelming as to totally swallow the traditional religion. The traditional religion is well rooted in Ekwulobia and even beyond before the advent of Christianity, it still thrives in spite of all it has suffered at the hands of Christianity and their different methodologies employed in order to silence Ekwulobia cultural heritage. The impression was that of a cultural vacuum which Christianity could not fill. The situation is still largely the same and the Ekwulobia people cannot but go back to some aspects of its religion to fill the cultural vacuum. The implication is that commitment to Christianity is not total and in fact that the people's religion is still alive in them.

Closely related to the above is the fact that the Ekwulobia person does not know how to exist without their cherished religion. Religion comes into every aspect of their existence as a cultural area; they could not therefore feel satisfied with Christianity; the tendency is always to fall back on some aspects of his old religion. This cultural baggage (i.e. education and urbanization) served as the sweet pills with which Ekwulobia people were enticed and captured. Ozigbo (1988) stated that Christianity in collaboration with Europe brought European language and culture and western science and technology (including imported goods) as supportive gifts (sweet pills) to the redemption and salvation mediated by Christ.

5.1.12 Revival and Protection of the Culture

Cultural patterns are passed on from one generation to another through time by means of education. By education method, we do not here mean only that sort of learning which takes place in school rooms namely formal school learning. All traditional societies had methods of education long before Europeans brought western formal education to them. Some of it was formal, that is fixed and laid down in established patterns, as in the bush school initiation rites of certain societies. Other aspects of it were informal, that is, arising out of day-to-day situations, not predetermined. But whether it was formal or informal, the function of education was to pass on the accumulated wisdom of the society to a new generation. Every society has, in the course of its history, found ways of dealing with problems, and passes them on to its young. If, as an African, you tell your child that the unity of the village is more important than anything else, more important even than his own individual pride, you are educating him in the accepted ways of your culture. There is thus no single pattern of behaviour which can be called culture. Humans learn by observing classmates, teachers, parents, friends, and the media. Obviously, the form of learning that is most important for culture is known as symbolic learning. Symbolic learning is based on our linguistic capacity and ability to use and understand symbols, arbitrary meaningful units, or models that humans use to represent reality. They are the conceptual devices that we use to communicate abstract ideas to each other. We communicate these symbols with each other through our language.

Humans learn most of their behaviors and concepts through symbolic learning. Symbolic learning has almost infinite possibilities in terms of absorbing and using

information in creative ways. Most of our learning as humans is based on this symbolic learning process. Instruments of social control include: Taboos, swearing of oath, making of blood pact, trial by ordeal, oracles, vows, secret societies and the meticulous observation of customs and traditions. .Thus, as in other parts of the world, God did not leave himself without revelation and witness in Africa (Onyeidu 1999). Parrinder in Onyeidu (1999), in his attempt to quantify the strength and membership of this ancient faith said that probably over 50,000,000 people in Africa keep to this indigenous religion, and that many more mingle it with the new scriptural religions. With special reference to Igbo land, Jordan in Onyeidu (1999) observes that “A whole system of taboos and ritual ordinances controlled native life”

5.2. Effects of Christianity on Ekwulobia Cultural Environment

It is a noticeable worldwide phenomenon that the appearance of Christianity in any culture has always been accompanied by encounters, conflicts, tensions, compromises, recognitions, victories and surrenders. As has also been observed, Christianity in one cultural dress encounters another culture and then tries to incarnate itself in the new culture. In doing this, however, it challenges and transforms the culture. It also incorporates some authentic aspects of that cultural heritage to the enrichment of the Christian culture. However, there are always reactions whenever an attempt is made to bring about a positive change in any aspect of culture. Since it is impossible to shed off

all aspects of one's cultural heritage as a result of encounter with a new culture, compromises are made.

This section tries to look at the part played by foreign religion (Christianity) towards the changes that have occurred in the Ekwulobia society. Christianity is a foreign religion imported into Ekwulobia while the traditional religion is the indigenous faith of the Ekwulobia people. According to Onyeidu (1999), Christianity has in time past and at present impacted so much on African culture in general both positively and negatively and it is still doing so now. Against this backdrop, Ugwu (2002) said, although the imported world religions have brought in some positive influences or effects on the Nigerian communities, they have also dealt a staggering blow on our social, economic, religious and political systems. However, change is the only thing that is constant in human life and as such it is inevitable in human interaction. Hornby (1999) defined change, as act of passing or making somebody or something pass from one state or form into another. Therefore, Ekwulobia society like any other one is a dynamic one; hence it is susceptible to change.

There are some impacts of Christianity on Ekwulobia culture and Ekwulobia Christians as well. Therefore, in any part of Ekwulobia, it had always had its own attendant impacts on the people and the church. It is in this light that we shall examine the following:

5.2.1. Positive Effects of Christianity on Ekwulobia Culture

There is no doubt that Christianity has greatly shaped the character of the Ekwulobia Christians towards the toleration of some of the culture of his people. In other words, Christianity is trying to create unity between the church and the positive and authentic traditional values of the people of Ekwulobia. Today, the Ekwulobia Christians have shed off almost all gruesome and cruel aspects of their culture, which prompted the missionaries to adopt a general negative attitude towards them. Such gruesome and cruel cultures include the following: killing of twins, maltreatments that were been meted on the widows, evil practices during burial, killing and sacrifice of virgins during rituals and so on. Therefore, Christians than ever before can now participate freely in their traditional dances without any feeling of guilt. They can freely accept titles, from their traditional rulers and on the following Sunday organize a thanksgiving service whereby they thank God for giving them the rare privilege of serving their people and being recognized in the multitude of other deserving and illustrious sons of Ekwulobia community. One hundred and ten years ago in Ekwulobia, this would have sounded quite incredible.

Talking about how Christianity influenced Ekwulobia culture and the natives positively, one must surely not forget to talk about the tremendous efforts made by Late Monsignor Martin Okeke Maduka (Nnadiesube). Late Monsignor Martin Maduka was a native of Agba village in Ekwulobia. He was a devoted Catholic priest. Nnadiesube understood inculturation as the Christian's contextualization of the faith and worship

within the local culture; and correspondingly, it is the Christian's evangelical immersion or insertion of his local culture in Christ and his church. For him inculturation is not just a question of our cultural inferiority; it is persons, Christ and the believers, who are primarily essentially inculturated, immersed and united. This attitude was decades before inculturation became the evangelical refrain of it. The Irish missionary clergy of those early days seemed not to have understood this traditionalist and prophet very well. He was also misunderstood by his very own, by his indigenous superiors. Efforts were made to derail him from his inculturational crusade; but he did not relent. His inculturation tenacity and fidelity unto death vindicated him. He knew where he was coming from, whom and what was prompting him, and where he was going to. The Late Monsignor Martin Maduka began a ground work on giving the church in Ekwulobia a real foundation based on what is original to the Ekwulobia people that is their cultural beliefs and practices. For him the missionaries that brought the message of Christ did their best but they stifled the good cultural heritage of Ekwulobia people thereby making Christianity a foreign religion instead of a foundational one. E. Maduka (personal communication, 16th June, 2018) confirmed that "One thing very unique about Fr. Martin is that he is a man of action". Once he reflects on something and finds it convincing and worth doing, he effectuates it. He is a man of praxis.

He rekindled the light of Christianity which was not properly lighted by the missionaries who mistakenly saw our custom as child's play, crude and primitive. It was at this apostolic era that he organized and formed his own cultural dance which he

identified with till his death. This “Akwa n’eché enyi” dancing troupe performed at Awada-Onitsha, during the epic visit of Pope John Paul II to Nigeria in the year 1982. Late Monsignor Martin Maduka plunged himself into other aspects of Ekwulobia life including their social and economic life. He infused sanity and order into their mode of funeral celebrations and upgraded their catechetical instructions, thereby, making it richer and more interesting. He assiduously tried to make them disciples of Christ. B. Onwuegbuchula (personal communication, January 3rd, 2019), posited that Monsignor Martin Maduka successfully crusaded for an authentic African Christianity, in a language and mode in which people will understand and appreciate more. In a social and simple way in which people can easily emulate and become good Christians. He is simple and content with himself and Ekwulobia cultural heritage. With that, he worshipped God. R. Ezeakafor (personal communication, 3rd January, 2019), this is his life and message designated often thus: Fidelity to Christ and Africa. On this his pastoral aphorism and acumen hinged all his priestly ministerial message to all his places of apostolic duty, Ekwulobia case, his maternal and fraternal home, will not be exceptional to this.

With the dawn of Christianity in Ekwulobia, *Nkwa- nkwa* dance was remolded, and every pagan attachment to it was shed off. D. Eze (personal communication, 15th November, 2018) explained that “*Nkwa- nkwa* dance is a cultural dance in Ekwulobia community”. It is usually performed by *Inyom-ona and Umuada. Uko or otosi* is usually used as the musical instruments for the dance. The village that is well known for the dance is Agba village. It is used in entertaining people during festivals like new yam

festivals, *Igochi Umunwaanyi*, during traditional marriage and so on. Sacrifices and some rituals are attended to before the dance will be displayed. *Nkwa- nkwa* dance was changed from its pagan connotations and a pure revolution was effected. This was actualized by Late Rev. Fr. Monsignor Martin Okeke Maduka (Nnadiesube); he fought in ensuring that we have Ekwulobia people who are fully Ekwulobia and fully Christian. According to Okafor and Onebunne (1996), in repeating the words of Late Maduka states that: “our culture must contribute to the establishment of God’s kingdom amongst men, God must reign in our culture” (p.xi). He introduced this dance into the church, and wiped everything pagan from the dance. During some celebrations in the church, *nkwa-nkwa* dance is employed for entertainment and in the village setting also; it is also used for making people happy.

In spite of all the odds, the glorious influences and practical utilities of Christianity cannot be overemphasized. Prior to the advent of Christianity, Ekwulobia people practice polygamy. The word polygamy is the antonym of monogamy. It is a more complex system of marriage than monogamy commonly found or practiced in Africa. Polygamy is derived from two Greek words: ‘poli’ and ‘Gami’. ‘Poli’ denotes many, several, whereas ‘Gami’ means marriage. Polygamy has thus been defined as, ‘the rule, custom or condition of marriage to more than one person at a time. Mbiti (1969) agrees with the above statement when he described Polygamy as, “a state of marriage in which there is one husband and two or more wives” (p.142). According to Agha (2003),

Polygamy is a system of marriage in which a man has more than one wife who were married at different times and dates. These wives may not live together, in which case the man has to visit each of them from time to time. (p.102).

This is also the opinion shared by Henshaw (1984) when he defined polygamy as, the custom, practice or condition of having a plurality of wives, or the habit of mating with more than one female (p. 28). It is also defined as, a custom of having several wives at the same time. Technically speaking, however, the term polygamy should mean what its Greek components imply, marrying many wives, or husbands. The proper terminology for the type of marriage described by the scholars above should be ‘polygny’. Polygny is a type of marriage custom that is common among Africans and Ekwulobia people as well prior to the coming of Christianity in the area. Mbiti (1969) stated this categorically when he wrote that: ‘getting married to two or more wives is a common custom found all over Africa’ (p.6). According to E. Ezegwu (personal communication, 28th December, 2019), ‘when Christianity came to Ekwulobia, the heathen chiefs were highly promiscuous, Keeping many wives as their sexual desire permits. Therefore, standing as obstacle to the spread of the gospel. And making it impossible for many to see the light’.

With the advent of Christianity in Ekwulobia, the missionaries brought along with them a new marriage system which was diametrically opposed to that of the people of Ekwulobia. To the missionaries, monogamy was judged the ideal system. They therefore, condemned polygny in all its ramifications. The new church preached monogamy and

refused to compromise with the polygynous marriage custom of the Ekwulobia people. To be converted into the new religion did not only involve turnaround from ones sins, but it also involves the total denunciation of one's cultural heritage. Christianity, in order to back up its hold on monogamy as the ideal marriage system, often refers to the Bible for clarification. According to O. Ezeike (personal communication, 15th October, 2018), confirmed that direct reference was made to the biblical text which states that, but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him (Genesis 2:20). The emphasis is laid on the singular verb- a helper. It is argued that if God wanted polygny, he would not have used the singular verb; instead, it would have been replaced with pluralistic verb- helpers. Okoli Ezeike has it that God wanted monogamy from the onset, hence he provided Adam with only one helper. Thus he quoted, therefore, shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24).The greatest expectation of the missionaries for its members was to see how best they would be able to fashion out the natives of Ekwulobia to look like their white missionary leaders in both religious and social matters.

The Ekwulobia Christians found it difficult to phase out polygamy from their life pattern. For the polygamist, Christianity is good, but the only impossible barrier was its stance against polygamy. The traditional worshippers affirm that the life of polygamy as practiced by their fore fathers was more suitable to them than that introduced by the new religion. However, there are more monogamous marriages today in Ekwulobia than there are polygamous marriages.

Christianity influenced Ekwulobia people and their environment and has shown great deal of accommodation in the adoption of traditional names. Names usually are words or expressions by which a person is known and spoken of. They are symbols of identification and they go a long way to account for the personality of the individual. According to I. Ezedumeje, (personal communication, 27th December, 2017) posits that the name given to a child in any Ekwulobia community is characterized by the circumstances surrounding his birth. Therefore, names in Ekwulobia tend to explain one circumstance or the other. According to Mbiti (1969), nearly all African names have a meaning. Sometimes, the name of the child may depend on the day of the week, or the season, the child was born. For instance, Ekwulobia has a very big market popularly known as *Ahia Eke*, any child born on that *Eke* market day will be named after the market as in Nwaeke, Ekedima and so on. Sometimes traditional Ekwulobia names may go beyond this, to describe the character and personality of the child. More so, the name a child bears may depend on the ancestor whom the people believed to have reincarnated in the child, especially if the family observes certain traits in common between the child and a particular ancestor. Hence, people bear such names as *Nnennam* (her father's mother), *Enyinnaya* (her father's friend). Both names mean that the child is the incarnate of her father's mother and that the child is the incarnate of his father's friend respectively.

In essence, this is to show that in traditional Ekwulobia names, there is always a deep rooted meaning. And Mbiti (1969), made it clear when he wrote that “ some names may mark the occasion of the child's birth, for example, if the birth occurs during rain,

the child would be given a name which means ‘rain’ or ‘rainy’ or water” (p.53). However, this nullifies the European or western concept that nothing is in a name. Hence, Europeans bear some names just because a popular person bears such names. For instance, there are such names as Jackson, Blackwood, Bush, and Bluebird and so on. Most Europeans bear these names not because they have deep rooted meanings, but based on such flimsy excuses that they are names of popular stars, easy to call or pronounce. However, when Christianity arrived Ekwulobia, it became the avowed aim of the missionaries not only to convert the natives, but to fashion them to look as much as the missionaries in all aspects of life, including the names they are supposed to bear. Hastings (1976) noted this practice among missionaries in Africa when he wrote, “there were missionaries who encouraged the adoption not only of Christian names but of European family names as well” (p. 33). It is little wonder that in the early days of Christianity in Ekwulobia, the name one was known by went a long way to determining whether one was a Christian or not. Native names became something that must be discarded in order to embrace Christianity. Baptism into Christianity became an avenue for one to shed off all his identity including his native name which was supposed to identify him as an Original Igbo man from Ekwulobia community. Names like Peter, John, Paul, Maria Gorretti, Angela Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel became ready substitutes for Igbo names.

Therefore, it was surprising that the new converts denounced their traditional names and readily picked biblical and European ones in order to become ‘real

Christians'. However, this was not to be the case for long. With time, many of the converts started falling back to their native names. Their zeal for biblical and European names began to dwindle. Most of them have started turning back to their traditional names which they formerly rejected. This they did in order to embrace traditional names with deep religious implication. Those who previously could not entertain combining Christian names with traditional names, now give their children traditional names that have deep religious implication. According to Ekechi Alagboso (personal communication, 29th December, 2018), as time went by, Ekwulobia people began to understand that most European names are meaningless, and are mainly associated with saints. He therefore wondered why Ekwulobia Christians cannot bear the names of their ancestors who lived exemplary lives. At a time, things began to take its shape with regards to use of traditional names in replace of western or Christian names. According to O. Ukatu (personal communication, 3rd January, 2019), when the missionaries saw what was going on in the Christian arena with regards to name selection during baptism and confirmation, they gave room for those that wish to use traditional name instead of Christian or western names. As it is now, the natives of Ekwulobia now use their native name for baptism, although it is not compulsory. We now have people that answer Onyedikachukwu Nweke, Nnaemeka Mgboji, Onyinyechukwu Ezeobi, and Mgbori Ezekannagha and so on. Even the researcher attests to this since she is by name: Ekwelibe, Chukwukaodili Nkiruka.

Christianity has made tremendous impact on the culture of Ekwulobia people through its faith, its teachings, its ideals and the schools and hospitals which often accompany the preaching of the Christian gospel. It was in these schools that majority of our leaders of today were educated. It is also by the Christian ideals of justice, human dignity, love and brotherhood that our leaders were inspired to fight against inhuman attitudes that are perpetuated in Ekwulobia. Since the advent of Christianity in Ekwulobia, the Christian missions have had great impact on the life of the people. There is no doubt that the activities of the Christian missionaries are of outstanding significance in the emergence of modern Ekwulobia community. Christian missionaries did not confine their activities to preaching and building churches. They have contributed immensely to the religious advancement of Ekwulobia. The pre-Christian society of Ekwulobia was dominated by the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the clan. Religion determined and influenced the value system and served as the principal means of integration, cohesion and unity of each community.

The belief in the ancestors and the sacredness of Ala gave rise to a system of laws and customs. Everybody was expected to build up his personality according to these laws and customs. But today, things have changed. Religion is now pluralistic and society permissive. No one religion controls the society. The pre-Christian unity is no more there. Each community is divided between Christians and non-Christians, between one denomination and the other. Any form of human sacrifice like killing of twins and dedication of human beings to gods were abolished to an appreciable degree order of the day. Before the coming of Christianity in Ekwulobia, nudity was order of the day.

Gradually, nudity changed hands with the covering of the entire body with European made cloth.

Christianity has brought a lot of changes to the way of life of the people of Ekwulobia through education. Prior to the coming of Christianity in Ekwulobia, there was nothing like formal education. Education then was informal. Children were encouraged to emulate good models and virtue in the society. Learning was by never pre-planned. However, Christianity brought a tremendous change in the educational arena. As soon as they arrived they started building schools, for example, Ekwulobia Central School, community Primary school, St Joseph, Agunwaagba Primary School, Nwannebo Primary School, Ofosie Primary School, Umuezenneofor Primary School and Eziagulu Primary School to mention but a few. The schools established by the missionaries were not only educational centers but also used as catechism centers. In other words, people were not just taught how to read and write but also to read the bible. The missions did not encourage education beyond the point needed to make one a good reader and teacher of the bible, a situation that led Ayandele (1996) to regard the educational curricula of the missions as “religion oriented and less creative, emphasizing only the three R’s- reading, writing and arithmetic” (p. 228).

The missionaries considered education as the easiest tool to achieve their aim of conversion using the schools when the children had not become fully involved in the traditional beliefs of their various cultures. The missionaries believed that if children who at their impressionable stages of development were exposed to the catechisms and Christian teachings would be of greater assets than adult who were already ‘juju’ priests.

In line with this view, Adiele (1996) posits that “at least, it is quite clear that these missionary bodies had common aims and especially shared the philosophy of education as the sharpest instrument for effective and resulted oriented evangelism” (p. 48). One of the objectives of the early missionaries was to educate the natives on how to read and write. This they believed will enable the people of Ekwulobia to read the bible and possibly help others in future about the love of Christ. There is no doubt that this type of education affected the development of Ekwulobia, if not Ekwulobia will still be lagging behind in the education sector. Many of our great men and women owe their quality education they received to this church.

Christianity contributed also immensely to the social change in Ekwulobia. In the pre- Christian days in Ekwulobia, there was nothing like the business tycoon, the influential politician and the school teachers. The *Ozo* titled men and the *Ofo* holder played the key roles in each village because the divinity selected them. With the dawn of Christianity, Ekwulobia town now have influential business men, teachers, lawyers, technicians, medical doctors who dominate the social life of the town without any sacred legitimization. The traditional Ekwulobia people had no opportunity for women to rise to any high social position. Women were regarded as the property of the men. But with the dawn of Christianity, this phenomenon drastically improved for better. Women can now be seen and heard. They are no longer regarded as mere chattels to given out in marriage according to parents’ decision. The educational opportunities have now been extended to women. There are now women teachers, engineers, professors, medical doctors, politicians and so on.

Christianity encouraged the political system in Ekwulobia. Ekwulobia people practiced democratic form of government. It was their source of unity with the accepted customs and laws. In various communities in Ekwulobia, we have the family, Umunna, villages and the community levels of political structure. With the promotion of education, the missions helped to produce the Ekwulobia elites who became the leaders of some of our villages. As it is now, our traditional rulers are selected from the learned men in the town. In Ekwulobia, we have great leaders of thought that comprises of educationists, graduates from all fields, business men and successful artisans from various endeavors. They are powerful and very instrumental to rural electrification, drilling of bore-hole and award of scholarship to their youths.

Furthermore, Christianity helped in character modification of Ekwulobia children and made our young ones imbibe such virtues like love for one another, truth, obedience and respect for elders, parents and people in authority. Similarly, Kanu (2004) expressed thus: Numerous Nigerian heads of state at one time or the other ordered that there should be ethical re-orientation. The church has also through the Sunday school cared for the youths, adults and elders and not just the erring children. With government takeover of schools, the only ways the Church influences the young ones ethically is through Sunday school and moral instruction in Schools. Through this way help to develop the young ones who are leaders of tomorrow. On the issue of spirituality of every Ekwulobia man, it must be said that Christian religion helped greatly in building up almost every Ekwulobia man spiritually. Attesting to this fact, Aristotle (1964) asserted that: the end of the state is not mere life. It is rather a good quality of life. Similarly, it is not the end of the state to

provide an alliance of mutual defense against all injury. In line with Aristotle's view, Nnadi (2004) wrote that:

The development of a nation such as we envisage cannot be achieved by the mere accumulation of material things or the procurement of a life of comfort and ease often to a limited few. This alone will not make man really happy for the simple reason that man is not mere matter. He has a spiritual part which matter is too base to satisfy. (p.101).

On the issue of widows, widows are seriously discriminated against in Igbo land. They are meant to mourn their husbands for a long period of time with black clothes. They are compelled to shave their heads and on several occasions to sleep on the floor. Any widow suspected of killing the husband will be made to drink water used in washing the dead husband's body as a way of proving her innocence. It was on the people's contact with Christian religion that these human acts were checkmated. The Christians did a lot in ameliorating the sufferings of the widows. Writing on this, Okoli (2008) said that Christians recognize the low status of widows and their suffering and make provision for them and warns against their maltreatment as evident in Deut 14: 29b "...the stranger, the fatherless and the widow who are within the gates shall come and shall eat and be satisfied that the Lord thy God may bless them in all the work of their hand which thou doest"

Furthermore, in Ekwulobia, children are regarded as gifts from God. Hence childbirth is a thing of joy. Any marriage that gives birth to a baby assumes a new status. Before the advent of Christianity, the birth of twins was no cause to be celebrated. It was

regarded as an abomination and the twin babies and their mother were regarded as people who have desecrated the land. In fact, the woman that gave birth to a set of twins needs a special sacrifice and cleansing and the twins would be killed. The elders believed that if cleansing rites were not performed, to ward off the evil, or if the people involved were not killed, misfortune would befall the whole community. It might be poor harvest, epidemics and so on. Ilogu (1974) noted that:

A woman giving birth to twins would therefore need a special cleansing sacrifice and the twin children would be destroyed, otherwise, the land thus abominated would incur the wrath of the ancestral spirits which would plague the community because the „natural“ harmony between man and the spirit world and the cosmos in general had been destroyed. (p. 64).

Twins, triplets and quadruplets born in Ekwulobia were killed for it was considered unnatural for human beings to be born more than one at a time. Only lower animals like goats, pigs, dogs and cows could give birth to more than one at a time. This act was widespread practice in Ekwulobia and the surrounding towns. The missionaries that evangelized Ekwulobia were so much concerned about this and it created a problem to them. They resolved to fight restlessly to stop this “inhuman” practice. They condemned this and persuaded the people to see that there was nothing unnatural about giving birth to set of twins, triplet and quadruplets. Today in Ekwulobia, this ugly practice is nowhere to be found; hence Christianity has succeeded in saving many lives.

Development of industries and markets, centralization of administration and travelling facilities on roads has been experienced as a result of the introduction of

Christianity in Ekwulobia land. The introduction of Christianity has actually changed and improved the economic life of the Ekwulobia.

. 5.2.2 Negative Effects of Christianity on Ekwulobia culture

Before the advent of missionaries in Ekwulobia, the people of Ekwulobia had well-established religious beliefs, practices, norms, values and worship of God. They know the Supreme Being-God but did not know Christ. There was an equally already established social system. The missionaries failed to understand this and never bothered to take a close look on the Ekwulobia cosmology. The missionaries' right from the onset unconditionally condemned the Ekwulobia belief system and practices. The whole society was seen as citadel for gods and spirits. Sacrifices of any kind to these gods were totally castigated and forbidden by Christians. They failed to understand the true nature and validity of the Ekwulobia traditional religion. The condemnation of Ekwulobia traditional religion in its totality implied renunciation and destabilization of the moral codes, principles and ethics of life of the people that have been long engraved on their mode of existence.

Christianity on encounter with the already established institutions of marriage and family life, title-taking, masquerades, and the caste system and so on, they engaged in a possible strategy to ensure that it does not infiltrate into their system. The missionaries used so many strategies to get the people to discard their much cherished tradition which has been source of conflict and disorderliness in Ekwulobia land. The natives of Ekwulobia who accepted to convert to Christianity were to relinquish their cultural affiliations and take up European lifestyle including means of identification-name.

Boahen (1985) asserted that “to be admitted into the church, an African man had not only to be baptized but had to change his name” (p. 42). The converts took western names which bears no root or meaning to the people, hence the names; Mariagoretti, Ambrose, Philip, Mary Angela, Mary Clair and so on. Baptism replaced the traditional naming ceremony. Whatever dealing the missionaries had with the people of Ekwulobia, had no bearing with the Ekwulobia culture which they do not understand and never bothered to. Family system of polygny was rejected and monogamy type of marriage was lifted up. Christians were to marry only one wife, a very conflicting issue. Those who have more than one wife were to wed with only one. What happens to the others? This created a lot of confusion and irreconcilable situation.

The missionaries imposed both the Christian religion and western culture on the Ekwulobia people and the entire Igbo land surrounding Ekwulobia like Achina, Nanka, Isuofia, and Umuchu using various strategies that suit them at the expense of the peace, unity, social and economic welfare of the people of Ekwulobia. The people of Ekwulobia assimilated and adopted the western culture embodied in the Christianity they received. Achunike (2002) stated that “the new Christian converts seemed to work against the traditional belief and against the very communities that raised them up” (p. 47). In the course of eradicating the killing of twins, human sacrifice, social outcast, slavery and burying dead kings with human beings concluded that the Ekwulobia culture in its totality was evil. The Christian faith influences the daily activities in the traditional office. Some have done away with traditional symbols kept by their fore-fathers in the Obi and replaced them with crucifixes and statues of saints. Some have built chapels on

the compounds where masses can be celebrated by the priest. Visitors to the Igwe's palace can equally visit the chapel and pray there.

The above is an indication that the place of traditional worshippers is phasing away in Ekwulobia traditional setting. Ekwulobia traditional religion has a very rich cultural heritage and this rich values and virtues have sustained Ekwulobia people for so many years before the advent of Christianity. Jordan (1948) wrote that a whole system of taboos and ritual of ordination has controlled the entire life of Africans particularly the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria. These whole systems of taboos and ritual of ordination that controlled the entire life of the Igbos were expanded by Onyeidu (1999) to include: swearing of oath, making of blood pact, trial by ordeal, oracles, vows, secret societies and the meticulous observation of customs and traditions. Unfortunately, these whole systems of taboos and rituals are no longer strictly observed because of the influences of Christian doctrines and this perhaps explains why there are so many crimes in the traditional communities today.

Another area that has been eroded and discarded was that of oath-taking. People now take oath according to their religious inclination and no longer on the basis of their original rich cultural heritage. This undoubtedly, has provided room for moral decadence and other vices in our society.

In terms of politics, Ekwulobia traditional political leaders no longer follow religiously the laid down rules and ritual practices that guide their offices because of their contact with the west and this is causing serious problems among the so called His Royal Majesties (HRM), the Igwes and their subjects. According to Ugwu (2002), the king is

brainwashed and indoctrinated into accepting that rulership has no meaning here on earth and that nobody rules except God.

Undoubtedly, pattern of dressing has changed immensely. Children now wear western dresses at the expense of local made dresses. The architectural designs of resident houses are not left out in this movement. It is only in the most remote parts of Ekwulobia today that you will see people building houses with sticks, red sand and roofing their houses or huts with elephant grass and palm fronds as against block cement and zinc. The greeting patterns of Ekwulobia people have been influenced also. People no longer bow or prostrate while greeting, rather they prefer to wave hands and to say” hi.” The occupation of Ekwulobia people is no longer the usual farming work of cultivation of crops and rearing of animals. People now prefer white-collar jobs in the urban areas and this has led to importation of virtually everything in Ekwulobia today and overcrowding in the urban areas.

Most of the valuable objects are burnt from time to time. Such Objects, worthy of mention, are the rich artistic and symbolic works of our forefathers which after been burnt would be hard to recover, and put in our museums. This makes meaningful and fruitful research practically impossible for scholars. According to Ugwu (2002), the powers of most of the divinities and deities are thereby undermined, underrated and consequently treated with contempt and levity.

With the coming of Christianity in Ekwulobia, Ekwulobia beautiful languages have been polluted that there is no Ekwulobia man that can speak the vernacular without mixing it with English language or the “pigeon English stuff”.

Ekwulobia people are well known for being hospitable, loving and welcoming. But with the coming of Christianity in Ekwulobia, one will not be astonished to see that, that spirit of oneness, love and accommodating visitors is gradually going down because of denominational rivalry brought about by the emergence of Christianity in Ekwulobia.

The interaction and relationship among the churches in Ekwulobia reminds us that there are more than one missionary body that took part in evangelization of Ekwulobia. The presence of different missionary bodies implies different undertaking of Christianity and approaches. This bred rivalry as each mission struggled to show their mastery and superiority over others. Where there was understanding, co-operation superseded rivalry. Inter-denominational relations were not cordial, each mission discrediting the work of the other. Indeed, it was not uncommon to hear even from those who had not been to school to remark that all schools, hospitals and institutions except those run by their mission were of low quality. The love of Christ was not present here and people who were of the same blood were now torn apart by Christianity forgetting their cultural ties and solidarity that had been holding them together. At a stage, Christians of one denomination would neither marry nor attend wedding by members of the other denomination. Children attended only hospitals and schools of their own mission no matter the distance from their homes. It was clear that if you marry or give a hand in marriage from another denomination that was not yours, the person would receive penance or punishment. I. Chukwubueze (personal communication, 15th August, 2018), narrated how Ichie Nnaji for Joseph of Umuezemeghege Agba Ekwulobia refused to give her daughter's hand in marriage to an Anglican member because he was a knight of

Roman Catholic Church. Muonye (1969) summarized the relationship by presenting a wiry-looking elderly man who said; “that is what we find in Umudioha these days. Brothers fight one another and would not even attend one another’s funeral or marriage just because they go to different churches” (p. 58).

As a result of these, a lot of people in Ekwulobia were denied their choices. A lot married out of fear. What is clear is that the content presented a poor image of Christ and his gospel to the people. To the Ekwulobia people, the gospel did not go deep in the people, and as a result, poor quality Christians were bred in Ekwulobia. On a global dimension, the relationship and interaction between these mission churches and the independent churches was not cordial. Oguike (1997) has this to say: “the relationship of the new religious movements with the mainline churches has been far from cordial..., they made most of their converts from the mainline churches” (p. 11). Up till now the mainline churches have not been integrated properly with the new movements. In fact they call them *Ukammaputa*. Members of the new generation churches would not want to associate with the mainline churches so as not to entangle themselves with sinners. Even if they do, it is lip service attitude. This watered the gospel of Christ message to the citizens. Where is then the place of the Holy Spirit in the evangelistic move of the church? Are the schools, hospitals and other institutions of the churches, the gospel message we received? The interaction and relationship that exist between the denominations has not shown that they are all one in Ekwulobia, with effect that the sword of Christianity divides us and tears us apart.

5.2.3. The prospects of Christianity in Ekwulobia

As has been rightly pointed out, the process of evangelization and Christianization in Ekwulobia had brought Ekwulobia and European cultures into contact and that both cultures had experienced reciprocal shock. It is beyond doubt, that Christianity that came to Ekwulobia was clothed in western culture. Thus, western philosophy, western theology and western thought system all became the media through which Christianity in Ekwulobia could be professed. In other words, Christianity became incarnate in western culture and the later became the vehicle through which the former was brought to Ekwulobia. Hence, the missionaries were seen as not only imparting the Christian message but also western civilization. This was, however, borne out of the erroneous view held by the missionaries those non western cultures are repugnant to civilized ideas and therefore incompatible with Christianity. True, as it may be, it will be difficult for the missionaries to bring in abstract Christianity wholly detached and disengaged from western culture because Christianity has always been incarnate within a culture, first from Hebrew, then Greek, then Roman and finally western.

On the other hand, the missionaries were at a lost to realize that there are certain traditional elements that prepare the way for foreign religions. For instance, there are the authentic and positive elements of Ekwulobia culture, of course, their traditional religion. However, be it as it may, a people who accept Christianity must undergo certain changes in their beliefs, practices and attitudes. Such changes may be more or less profound according to the people concerned. Generally, when a typical Ekwulobia indigene is

converted to Christianity or any religion other than his own; he does not completely turn his back against the authentic and cherished institutions of his culture and accept the new faith lock and key with a blank mind. He may abandon the gruesome and inhuman aspects of his culture which do not conform to biblical standards. However, he will continue to uphold with a renewed zeal his indigenous world view and philosophy of life, which he discovers to be in harmony with Christianity. Therefore, evangelization, even in its purest form must produce a shock to the culture it brings the doctrine of Christ to and also must have a reciprocal shock in return. In becoming a Christian, every culture undergoes a transformation or conversion. It must accept new elements and purge and correct and even abandon certain institutions.

Therefore, to satisfy the needs of Ekwulobia Christians, Ekwulobia Christianity shall continue to integrate all the good elements to be found in the Ekwulobia culture and mentality. It should be borne in mind that Christian values are human values expressed in specific cultural forms. In the inculturation process going on in Ekwulobia, Ekwulobia socio-cultural values expressed in the indigenous religion shall continually be adapted into Ekwulobia Christianity, as long as such values do not conflict with the scriptures. This will help to satisfy the curiosity of Ekwulobia Christians. It is beyond doubt, that the contents of the bible is inspired and therefore, cannot be changed and manipulated to suit individual whims and caprices. Each culture expresses the Christ event within its cultural milieu and at the same time, without distorting the basis of the Christian message. There is nothing that belongs to the regular pattern of life of an individual or a group that is

excludable from its particular cultural amalgam, though some things in it are more peripheral and transitory, some are basic and central. No group can conceivably change its deep religious beliefs and philosophy without noticeably changing its culture. Conversion to Christianity was to bound to bring this with it. But just as after a religious conversion, there is a reality, that a very considerable measure of continuity between the culture of the preceding state and the culture of the subsequent.

It is little wonder, that when a typical Ekwulobia man is converted to a religion other than his own, he does not completely turn his back against his erstwhile beliefs; he still has to grapple with the honest conceptions, customs, institutions and values of his people. With the present inculturation and dialogue blowing through Ekwulobia churches generally, Christianity in Ekwulobia in no distant future, a new Christian order will surely emerge. This will be a new Christian order totally stripped of its western attire and re clothed in Ekwulobia culture, theology and system of thought. Christianity has to study the anthropology or worldview of Ekwulobia. Christianity in Ekwulobia, in the near future will be expressed in a truly indigenous context. Ekwulobia culture will no longer be judged by Christianity. Instead, the authentic aspect of the people's culture will take precedence over western culture, which for long has been disguise as Christian culture. However, Ekwulobia Christianity will not be isolated from historical Christianity which is biblically based. In any case, this will lead to the emergence of Ekwulobia Christianity which will be regarded a part of 'African Christianity', based on and expressed in African

Christian theology. And as Amadi (1982) pointed out: “this movement will continue until a fairly, respectable and appealing hybrid religion emerges” (p.94).

Next chapter deals with the summary and conclusion which ends the research work.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Summary

The process of evangelization and Christianization in Ekwulobia brought Ekwulobia and European cultures into contact. Consequently, both cultures had experienced reciprocal shock. This research has also revealed that the pre-Christian Ekwulobia community, no doubt, had a well articulated society with well defined and co-ordinated code of conducts as well as established beliefs and practices acceptable to the indigenous people of Ekwulobia. Hence, there existed laws, customs, set forms of behaviour, regulations, rules, observances and taboos. All these contributed the moral code, ethics, beliefs and practices of the pre-Christian Ekwulobia community. The researcher's findings have also clearly shown that the Ekwulobia people were conscious of their traditional values and cultural heritage, and to some extent, it was a taboo to break them. One's inability to abide by the traditional beliefs and practices could lead to some disastrous consequences such as famine, epidemics or even death for the individual or community. Therefore, the traditional order was religiously kept, to ensure peace, solidarity, economic growth and the social welfare of the people.

Nevertheless, the missionaries that brought Christianity to Ekwulobia came with the intention of uprooting the people from their traditional environment into a new world; a world quite distinct from where the traditional Ekwulobia man lived. However, like the

typical Ekwulobia man in his religiosity, did not waste time in embracing the new faith. That notwithstanding, Ekwulobia traditional religion, as a system of belief, remained. A typical Ekwulobia man in his religious outlook has an adaptive potential which responds to the impulses of change, and yet holds strongly to his own. This was repeated by Ezenweke and Madu (2007) who quoted Ezezuike, thus:

The African Christian plays a dual role. Christianity is outwardly practiced, and paganism in secret, and more precautions, on top of pagans. The new Christian inwardly believes in Owu, ogwu, ogbanje, witchcraft, charms and so forth. They do not prevent him at the same time from believing in Blessed Trinity, the bible and the dogmas of the church. To manifest his sincerity, he puts on as many medals as possible, finger rosary, and scapular and pays his church dues but his actual faith comes to light when real temptation comes (Pp.273-274).

Furthermore, Ezeanya (1970) decries that the frequency and ease with which some Christian converts return to those “pagan” practices which are opposed to Christianity and which they firmly renounced when they became Christians. Pastors often are disappointed to see or hear that those they count as fervent Christians secretly consult diviners or oracles to ascertain some hidden events, perform pagan sacrifices to obtain some favour from gods or ancestors and wear charms and amulets for protection (p. 20). For Africans, there is nothing like a person becoming converted to embrace a religion because, life is impossible for anyone who is not religious from birth. This cannot be in

existence, not to talk of a person making any headway in life if he divorces himself from religion. Madu (2001) reiterated that “there is no gainsaying the fact that the African Christian is in a dilemma. Trapped within two worlds, he finds himself under pressure from both sides. Is he strictly a Christian or strictly a traditionalist or a hybrid?” (p. 174). Madu remarks that evidence abounds everywhere that the African Christian will occupy the front seats in the church and also patronize the diviners and fortune-tellers at night. That is why Christians in Igbo land and Nigeria at large would tie in one side of their handkerchief, a rosary and on the other side talisman of pagan antiquity. This practice shows endurance of convictions in a convert and a sure indication that Christianity and the traditional religion must necessarily co-exist. Madu observing that African church is suffering from its cultural alienation suggested that we must indeed have our African Christianity. He decries, let us allow fresh air to enter the church. Let us be sincere to our culture and this is the meaning of authenticity. Telling a polygamist to renounce all his wives except one amounts to hypocrisy and man’s inhumanity to man. It is optimistic that the on-going clarion call for inculturation in all over the Christian world will be a gesture of encouragement to the African church to stand on her own, in her own soul and culture. Nzomiwu (1985) said that the first council of the church, popularly referred to as the Jerusalem council conceded certain basic cultural values and ideas for the Gentile Christians, for instance, freedom from circumcision. This gesture should be allowed to the African churches as well. He recommends that it is wise that the church has to reconsider some of her doctrinal formulation which are not consistent and coherent with the yearnings and aspirations of the African Christians.

The move towards inculturation is an essential venture if Christianity is to communicate with the Ekwulobia cultural heritage. As a universal religion, Christianity has to find an expression within the Ekwulobia cultural context which aims at providing a link between the Ekwulobia cultural and Christian underpinnings. The attitude of early missionaries towards the Ekwulobia cultural and religious heritage is nothing to write home about. Early missionaries were much involved with their own culture (colonialism included), did not understand much of the Ekwulobia culture, and worked hard to destroy what they did not understand. According to [Mugambi \(2002\)](#):

This error resulted in the perception of the Christian identity as equivalent to the western cultural and religious heritage. Following western precedence, conversion was determined by behavioural norms, in which African converts had to abandon their traditional African customs and adopt the western ones (p.502).

[Oduro et al. \(2008\)](#) supports the above view, stating that: “In that context, African converts were forced to live double lives (p.37). On the one hand, they accepted the norms introduced by the missionaries who saw nothing valuable in Ekwulobia culture. On the other hand, the Ekwulobia converts could not deny their own cultural identity. They could not substitute their denominational belonging for their cultural and religious heritage. Yet they could not become Europeans or Americans merely by adopting some aspects of the missionaries’ outward norms of conduct. The strain of having to live by double standards for Ekwulobia converts brought about some difficulties in the

appreciation of the Christian identity. The principal concern was: “What should be the proper relationship between Christian identity and a Christian’s cultural identity?” As expected, there were no simple answers to this enquiry. But suggestions towards the consideration of inculturation of Christianity in Ekwulobia. This approach sought to make Christianity more communicative with the Ekwulobia cultural and religious heritage.

Christianity” is regarded as an institute which affirms the Lordship of Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, who brings about the process of reconciliation between humanity and God. Against this background, Christianity is taken to be a “non-cultural entity”, which only finds a sense of expression within a cultural medium. [Mugambi \(2002\)](#), further asserts that: Christianity began within the Jewish culture.(pp. 517–18). That culture became incapable of sustaining the Christian faith because the leaders of Judaism believed that the new faith was a threat to the Jewish culture. Christian missionaries should seek ways to make it become difficult for Ekwulobia people to plainly choose between Christianity and their traditional practices. Christianity connects them to God while Ekwulobia traditional practices provide a lasting bond with their ancestors. This is because the elements of culture are closely aligned to those of the religious heritage. In that sense, it is difficult to separate the cultural from the religious heritage. They are both intertwined. This entails that when an Ekwulobia convert becomes a Christian, they carry both their cultural and religious heritage with them, and these are often incorporated to their new Christian way of life.

We have tried to show that Ekwulobia culture is fundamental to any meaningful Christian practice in the area. This stand is based on the backdrop of Ekwulobia cosmological beliefs which undergird her value system and attitudinal orientations. It has been argued that unless these values and ideals are incorporated into Christianity, the Christian practice will continue to be shallow in Ekwulobia. If Christianity that came to Africa had Jewish, Roman and or Hellenistic elements, then it must also incorporate some Igbo (Ekwulobia) elements. The Ekwulobia culture in the mind of the researcher is the wheel on which the Christian message and practice will rotate. The churches must be prepared for greater degree of flexibility and adaptation and the abandonment of their dream of a homogeneous Christian culture devoid of all Ekwulobia elements.

The churches in Ekwulobia should imbibe the culture of dialogue in sensitive issues that affect the people if they will stand the test of time in this era of technological pressure and knowledge, it is of utmost importance that all hands must be on deck in order to ensure that the message of Christ takes full flesh in Ekwulobia.

6.2. Conclusion

The culture of Ekwulobia as well as their religion is so valuable and indispensable to them that they will find it difficult separating themselves from it. Christianity did not only compete with Ekwulobia culture as a whole, but it threatened its very existence. Christianity and Ekwulobia culture have existed together since they came into contact and they have influenced each other both negatively and positively. Ekwulobia culture is

fundamental to any meaningful Christian practice in the area. Unless these values, beliefs and ideas of Ekwulobia people are incorporated into Christianity, the Christian practice will continue be shallow in Ekwulobia. If Christianity that came to Africa had Jewish, Roman and Hellenistic elements, then it must also incorporate some Igbo /Ekwulobia elements. For the researcher, the culture of Ekwulobia is the correct wheel on which the Christian message and practice will rotate. The churches must be prepared enough for greater degree of flexibility and adaptation and the abandonment of their dream of a homogeneous Christian culture devoid of all Africa elements.

Outwardly, Christianity had made a lot of impacts, churches were built, schools established, education flourished and there grew hundreds and thousands of converts who appeared fashionable and civilized but inwardly the converts are not truly touched. Nevertheless, outward change did not portend inward change. The inner dynamics remained untouched. And this leads to syncretism or double allegiance of faith. And has also did not pave way for a deeper touch of the gospel message in the lives of Ekwulobia people.

Indeed, the missionaries that came to Ekwulobia were not interested in Ekwulobia culture. Ekwulobia culture was not important to them and they thought they could build the Christian faith and practice in vacuum. This was really a wrong approach and we do not hesitate to say that this false assumption underscores the shallow type of Christianity in Ekwulobia. The churches in Ekwulobia should be able to see the need in making the people feel at home with the gospel message of Christ. This could be achieved by rooting

the gospel in the culture, language, habits and thoughts of the people by employing inculturation as a viable tool in achieving this. It became obvious that any church that has not worn the garb of the culture of the Ekwulobia community in terms of relevance, development and motivation cannot serve any meaningful purpose in the community. Therefore, all our shouts and cries of shallow Christianity will continue until we dismantle the walls of exotic theologies, rituals and symbolisms which hitherto characterize Christendom in Ekwulobia.

Since Ekwulobia traditional religion and culture permeate every aspect of the people's life, it stands the reason to say that it is the Ekwulobia culture and religion that must be Christianized so as to appreciate that Christ came for them also. The harmonization of their traditional cultural values and ideas with Christianity will surely enhance the principles which Jesus enunciated, namely, love of God and love of one's neighbour. If Christianity continues to look at Ekwulobia values and ideals in a negative way and their practice in Ekwulobia continued to be threatened by Christianity, they would not imbibe anything of Christianity.

6.3. Recommendations

Inculturation should serve as a viable instrument for ensuring skin-deep Christianity in Ekwulobia since it represents also in the minds of some that sense of willingness of Christianity to undertake dialogue with the culture and to enter into culture via a dynamic process in order to come to its full expression. Total break away of Ekwulobia people

from their cultural roots and religious beliefs is almost an impossible mission. This is because the traditional culture and religious beliefs of Ekwulobia people form part of their identity. Therefore, a contact approach should be encouraged.

That faith would adapt or accommodate itself in a limited fashion to the exigencies of cultural expression for the sake of the communication of the message. "Incarnation" came to be popular in missiological thinking immediately prior to and during the Second Vatican Council. The analogy is with the incarnation of Christ, who emptied himself and took on flesh as one of us. Christian faith, therefore, must imitate its Lord in becoming truly part of a human culture.

Perhaps the most significant of these is the respect that is to be accorded to non-Christians and non-Christian cultures. That respect is to be extended to their beliefs as well, at least to those who participate in the great literate religious traditions, and certainly to all who try to follow the dictates of their consciences as best as they can. This tone of respect for cultural formations created the environment in which inculturation could take place. The concern for the evangelization of cultures, and not just individuals within a culture, underlines how much humans are cultural beings and how much, therefore, culture has to be taken into consideration in any theological reflection.

The task of assimilating the essence of the gospel message and of transposing it, without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth, into the language that these particular people understand, then of proclaiming it in this language. The researcher makes the point that this process of transposition cannot be effected by the evangelizers but is

ultimately the task of the members of the culture themselves. There is the need to take culture seriously in the evangelization process. This is because the synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith. A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been thoroughly received, not fully lived out.

Inculturation of the Church should be the integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal. Moreover, reflections on faith and culture should be encouraged in the lives of priests and evangelizers. A more social-science-oriented concept of culture, an awareness of a more dialogical relationship between the Church and culture, and the role of the local church as the prime agent of inculturation.

Critical evaluation of how Christianity can fully be expressed or practiced within the cultural context should be attended to. Even though it is apparent that Ekwulobia yearn to experience Christianity within their cultural setting, it still remains to be established how Christianity can best be communicated within Ekwulobia cultural context. Christianity in Ekwulobia should not only consider the positive or negative aspects of the Ekwulobia cultural and religious heritage, but should also take into account the nature of such a cultural and religious heritage. This is because the cultural and religious heritage of

Ekwulobia people in particular serves as their worldview—that is, the way they see the world, understand wellness and get to maintain balance in their lives.

The church in Ekwulobia is of age and she can now stand on her feet. Hence, she can chart her own agenda. In this case, the researcher recommend that Ekwulobia people should respond for the Christian message in accordance with her existential situations, be it political, economic, spiritual and cultural. There are some cultures that need to be modified and there are others that need to be maintained and treasured for posterity in order that their human dignity and identity as Ekwulobia people may be maintained. There is need to treasure those things that make them unique or distinguish them from other Igbo communities such as simplicity, honest life and trust, not desiring to acquire money or wealth by all means or at the expense of human life, ethics of hard work, cultural dances and games. It is important that they disengage their minds from the erroneous concept that money is better than good names. Honesty had been a part of Ekwulobia culture. We should allow the light of Jesus to enter into our culture. The light will make our culture to stand tall and above all, stand the test of time.

Every Ekwulobia citizen should be proud of his or her native names for it is on that you can boldly claim your identity. There is no gain saying the fact that many today find a curious compensation under gross oppression and exploitation striving to expunge their antecedents and identifying themselves with alien cultures. The consequence of that is the death of their native culture and identity. The adoption of foreign names by the young ones at the expense of their native names needs to be re-examined. Maintain full native

names in order to uphold and maintain your identity, dignity and family tree. That is their culture.

The converted Ekwulobia people should be concerned in making the people feel at home with the gospel. This can be achieved by rooting the gospel in the culture, language, habits and thought-form of the people. This involves intellectual, emotional, spiritual and religious interests. In evangelization and conversion process, “Anglican” or “Roman Catholics” or the “Pious Brethren” should be removed from Ekwulobia Christianity. The common denomination should be Ekwulobia Christian. All human calculations of gains and losses must be rejected in the discourse of the movement of the gospel in Ekwulobia. Without this the problem of denominational rivalries will remain with us till the end of time. In fact, examine people have to examine their consciences seriously on denominationalism.

We need as a matter of urgency to review and expand the curriculum of studies in the seminaries and theological institutions to include the department of African studies. In this department, African traditional religion must be studied in its own right without bias and prejudice. The African Christian priests should know that they are Africans firstly and priests secondly. Hence, the would-be priests would proffer solutions to such questions as what is the mission of the church in Africa. As we are all aware, some of the knowledgeable repositories of Ekwulobia oral tradition have all died and more are at the verge of dying out. This research therefore recommends that they begin to retrieve as much culture of Ekwulobia people as we can, and preserve it in written documents.

Finally, the researcher recommends that in future, anything like worship or synod proceedings should be held, using the Ekwulobia language. It is absurd worshipping in foreign language. Allied to this recommendation is the need for Bishops' conferences in Nigeria to invite from different categories of Christians like former politicians, Christians of double standards, polygamists, successive monogamists, concubines, single mothers and single fathers, so as to know their mind in matters concerning them in the Christian practices. Moreover, there are some Ekwulobia cultural values the church can incorporate in her liturgy to help expand God's kingdom in Ekwulobia. Learning the things of God through stories and traditional proverbs, poetry, songs and dancing is also a good one.

6.4. Suggestions for Further Research

In any given field of study, one research work usually leads to other investigations. It is often said that a researcher's weakness is another researcher's strength. In view of the noted limitations of this study, the following suggestions are adjudged by the researcher as appropriate as they may contribute to the expansion of knowledge.

1. A similar study could be carried out in other local government areas of Anambra State. Such a study will create room for comparison.
2. A new approach towards Christianizing Ekwulobia or any other cultural area's values that will enrich Christianity.

3. Researches should be carried out on the modalities for ensuring friendly co-existence between Christians and non-Christians.
4. Gospel message and culture of a particular cultural area: An analysis.
5. Inculturation and the Christian faith: A theological discourse.

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Appendix 1

List of Interviewed Persons

S/N	NAME	AGE	DATE	PLACE	OCCUPATION
1	Ezekafor, James	70	15 August, 2018	Agba	Trader
2	Chukwumeremeze Ezenachi	60	28 July, 2018	Agba	Farmer
3	Udeh Raphael	74	6 July, 2018	Nkono	Teacher
4	Mkpuruonyekuru Joseph	67	24 November, 2018	Agba	Teacher
5	Raphael Eze	55	16 August, 2018	Abogwume	Barrister
6	Dom Nwachukwu	43	16 August, 2018	Nkono	Teacher
7	Elosionwu Gilbert	55	30 December, 2018	Umuochuba	Farmer
8	Ugogbuzuo Nnaemeka	44	10 October, 2018	Agba	Trader
9	Nwankwo Dozie	56	8 July, 2018	Eziagulu	Civil servant
10	Ezeobi E.A.	70	15 August, 2018	Eziagulu	Contractor
11	Ike John	63	8 July, 2018	Ifite	Religious
12	Udeh Raphael	54	28 June, 2018	Umuchi	Consultant
13	Otaaluka P.Z.	60	20 July, 2018	Umuchi	Farmer
14	Ugogbuzuo Emeka	56	15 November, 2018	Eziagulu	Trader
15	Ezennajikechukwumezieokwu	74	30 December, 2018	Agba	Priest
16	Oduenyi Afamefuna	45	27 Dec., 2018	Abogwume	Trader
17	Ezennajike Onyeka	57	27 Dec., 2018	Okpo	Trader
18	Mgbafor Ukatu	71	28 Dec., 2018	Okpo	Trader
19	Ike Kingmexico	64	28 Dec., 2018	Ihuokpala	Business man
20	Onuegbu Rosaline	42	2 Jan., 2019	Ula	Farmer
21	Bernard Onwuegbuchula	39	3 January, 2019	Eziagulu	Farmer
22	Ezekafor Rose	51	3 January, 2019	Ihuokpala	Civil servant
23	Ezekeke Ezegwu	68	28 December, 2018	Agba	Trader
24	Okoli Ezeike	85	15 Oct., 2018	Ula	Traditional Ruler
25	Ekechi Alagboso	61	29 Dec., 2018	Ula	Business man
26	Okeke Ugwu	59	3 January, 2019	Abogwume	Trader
27	Ezedumeje Ifeoma	48	27 Dec., 2018	Umuchi	Medical practitioner
28	Eze Daniel	61	15 Nov., 2018	Umuchiana	Trader
29	Maduka Ephraim	39	16 June, 2018	Umuchi	Farmer
30	Ikemere Ezenagu	58	27 Dec., 2018	Okpo	Trader

31	Onyeneke Michael	55	27 Dec., 2018	Nkono	Teacher
32	Ike Bernadette	67	27 Dec., 2018	Umuchiana	Trader
33	Luwisco	80	3 January,2019	Ihuokpala	Business man
34	Onyekanne Jude	47	3 January,2019	Umuchi	Surveyor
35	Mgbeoji Nnaemeka	54	17 August,2018	Ifite	Civil servant
36	Onyenkuzi Joseph	50	17 August,2018	Eziagulu	Farmer
37	Ezekeke Fidelis	75	20 August,2018	Okpo	Priest
38	Onyejiaka Linus	69	20 August,2018	Ula	Priest
39	Ezefunamba Moses	81	15 October, 2018	Agba	Traditional ruler
40	Onyekachiukwu Jeremiah	70	15 October, 2018	Umuchi	Trader
41	Onyejiaka Raphael	92	15 October, 2018	Okpo	Traditional ist
42	Nkeonyemetalu Cyriacus	67	15 October, 2018	Agba	Business man
43	Alagbaoso Gideon	59	15 October, 2018	Ula	Farmer
44	EzenachiOluebube	55	15 October, 2018	Nkono	Civil servant
45	EzegwuAfam	43	20 September,2018	Umuchi	Civil servant
46	Mgbechijikwe Ikemere	53	20 September,2018	Abogwume	Lawyer
47	Ezendu Gabriel	64	20 September,2018	Agba	Trader
48	Ezeonwu Chukwudebem	56	3 November, 2018	Agba	Businessman
49	Onwuatuegwu Ignatius	56	15 August, 2018	Agba	Priest
50	Kenneth O.	44	23 June, 2018	Agba	Priest
51	Chukwubueze, I.	35	15 August, 2018	Okpo	Business man

Appendix II

Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. Where do you live?
4. What is your occupation?
5. How old are you?
6. Are you a Christian or a traditional worshipper?
7. What do you know about Ekwulobia people?
8. What do you think is their major occupation?
9. When did Christianity enter Ekwulobia?
10. Describe life in Ekwulobia before the emergence of Christianity in Ekwulobia?
11. Who were the people that brought Christianity in Ekwulobia?
12. Name the different denominations in Ekwulobia?
13. Do you know that Church Missionary Society was the first to arrive Ekwulobia?
14. Could you please name the changes that Christianity brought in Ekwulobia?
15. Do you know that the missionary enterprise in Ekwulobia is over 100 years already?
16. Do you think that the missionary enterprise in Ekwulobia is successful?
17. Why is it that for over 100 years of missionary enterprise in Ekwulobia, Christianity has not penetrated deeply into the lives of the people?
18. Is Ekwulobia town a cultural area?
19. Can you describe Ekwulobia people as religious?

20. What is the relationship between Ekwulobia culture and their religion?
21. Do you think that the encounter between Christianity and Ekwulobia culture is devoid of any cultural clash?
22. What do you think is the remote cause of the conflict?
23. Do you think that Christianity created any impact on Ekwulobia people?
24. Does the impact affect the people of Ekwulobia both positively and negatively?
25. How much of Ekwulobia culture and traditions do you know and loves its existence?
26. Do you think that the missionaries can do away with Achukwu Ukpo masquerade?
27. What viable tool do you think could be employed in order to ensure deep penetration of the gospel message in the lives of Ekwulobia people?
28. Do you think that inculturation could serve the purpose?
29. Are you ready to ensure that this tool is utilized by performing your own part as the son of the soil?
30. Do you think that the tool of inculturation must permeate our homilies, retreat talks and seminars?