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INHERITANCE AND MATRILINY AMONG THE OHAFIA IGBO: A STUDY IN CULTURAL CHANGE

RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.Sc) DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR NKOLI EZUMAH

DECEMBER, 2010
INHERITANCE AND MATRILINY AMONG THE OHAFIA IGBO A STUDY IN CULTURAL CHANGE
This research work was approved and duly supervised under the Department of Sociology/Anthropology University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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EXTERNAL EXAMINER  ___________________________
DEDICATION

To my parents Mr. and Mrs. Ozua, Uche Kalu for their encouragement all these years
of my academic pursuit.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work will not be complete without mentioning academic rigor I got from my supervisor Professor Ezumah, Nkoli who tirelessly ensured that this work was successful. The glaring objective criticisms which she insisted on, were invaluable to the accomplishment of this work. Credit also goes to Dr P-J Ezeh of Sociology / Anthropology Department who spurred my interest in this particular field of the discipline.

My deepest gratitude goes to God almighty whose infinite mercy guided me through this academic stint. Also warmth thanks go to all those that contributed in different measures to the success of this work.
ABSTRACT

This study looks at inheritance and matriliny among the Ohafia Igbo. The study aims at bringing to light the essence of inheritance and matriliny in the traditional culture of the Ohafia Igbo. This work focused on identifying whether Christianity and westernization threaten the existence of inheritance and matriliny in Ohafia. The study also investigated at the changes that have taken place in the traditional practice of inheritance and matriliny in Ohafia and other cultures. The researcher adopted the qualitative method of data collection and analysis. The results showed that Christianity, westernization and the *ikwu* matrilineal relations now encourage that the inheritance of a deceased matrilineal relation should be given to his wife and children for their up-keep. The training of children in school by their fathers was also discovered to be on rise in Ohafia.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Matriliny is a form of kinship system where descent is reckoned through the mother’s side. Inheritance of material property may also be reckoned through the same line. Barnard and Spencer (1996) observe that through the rules of matrilineal kinship, a man is reproduced not through his wife, but through his sisters; he inherits from his mother’s brother and rears children who will belong to his wife’s brother.

Prior to the advent of westernization and Christianity in Nigeria, the Ohafia Igbo people practised matrilineal system of kinship. As a member of the matrilineage (mother’s people) one is expected to inherit certain specific types of property or rights. The Ohafia Igbo matriliny has these essential features:

1. Rights are inherited basically through the maternal descent
2. Allocation of farmlands is the sole responsibility of mothers brothers from the maternal descent
3. Everybody belongs to the same matrilineage as his/her mother
4. No one may belong to the same lineage as his father.

The introduction of westernization and Christianity has brought with it diverse cultural changes in the lifestyles of the Ohafia Igbo. Cultural transformation is being experienced in the area of conflict that may arise in allocation of farmlands (right of inheritance), due to western style legal explanation of the appropriate person that would inherit the property of a deceased person. Mair (1969) citing Colson (1950) highlights that conflict is beginning to arise in some matrilineal societies where men who have property and their sons are resenting the right of sisters’ sons to inheritance. Ezeh (2002) citing Kalu (2002) equally notes that a lady of Edda origin has found out following a recent participant
observation that property inheritance that was previously through the maternal agnates is being replaced with a pragmatic strategy favouring Western style legalistic system.

Thus, the study examines whether westernization and Christianity are challenging some of the traditional ways of reckoning matriline as well as inheritance among the Ohafia Igbo. The study also examines whether disagreement in the area of right of sister’s sons to inheritances, practice of ritual headship of the matriline etc. have led to a change in the system of Ohafia matriliney

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The proselytizing Christian missionaries and westernization that came to Ohafia in the nineteenth century had a goal for more than teaching the theology of Christianity. They wanted nothing less than a change in the system of right of inheritance, ancestral succession, and the complete destruction of matriliney in Ohafia. Autochthonous hereditary right, like the authority over the land of a matrilineage, which rests on the mother’s brother was alien to them. Westernization to some extent therefore meant a complete change of that system.

Yonariza (2004) observes that, today in the matrilineal belt of Central Africa there has been a general drift from matriliney towards patriliney or bilateral descent under the influence of colonization, Christianity and increasing involvement in money economies. Also, the matrilineal Akan people of Ghana have also noticed the lowering of status of the previously powerful women as a result of westernization.

Nsugbe (1974) earlier notes similar transformation where the secular headship of a matrilineage which carries the responsibility for protecting the property and the resources of the matrilineage will remain in the matrilineal line while the ritual headship vested in the female head of the matrilineage is likely to vanish as more and more Ohafia Igbo
females (in whom lies the hope of perpetuating the office) become better educated or come to accept the Christian faith. Westernization and Christianity today have transformed the traditional belief of the Ohafia Igbo on matriliney and this change is in conflict with the autochthonous matrilineal system.

Equally, Oyeoku (2006) indicates that, it has been noticed that Ohafia women nowadays decry the situation where their men abandon the responsibility of taking care of their children, only to concentrate on the care of their sisters’ children and when it time for giving out their daughter’s in marriage they will claim all the material property used in their daughters marriage.

Therefore the study, examines matriliney and inheritance in contemporary Ohafia so as to find out whether the changes generated by Christianity and westernization have led to the disintegration of matriliney and inheritance practices like, ritual, headship, alteration in roles and right in matriliney

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions are raised in the study

1. Are there rules of inheritance in Ohafia?
2. Are rules of inheritance applied in contemporary Ohafia society?
3. What are the changes occurring in Ohafia matriliney?
4. What are the consequences of such changes?
5. Is there a conflict on the application of inheritance in contemporary Ohafia?
6. What is the present state of inheritances in Ohafia?
1.4 **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to examine inheritance and matriliny among Ohafia Igbo; in order to determine whether the changes threaten the existence of matriliny.

The specific objectives are as follow:

1. To determine the rules of inheritance in Ohafia
2. To ascertain the changes on inheritance and matriliny
3. To determine how the changes affect those people that still practice matrilineal inheritance in Ohafia
4. To examine whether the rules of inheritance on matriliny are applicable in contemporary Ohafia
5. To find out if there is a conflict in the application of inheritance in contemporary Ohafia
6. To identify the socio-cultural implications of the findings for the future of matriliny in Ohafia.

1.5 **Significance of the Study**

The present enquiry will have both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the study will add to the already existing body of knowledge and literature on matriliny and cultural change in Ohafia. It will also shed more light on the pristine cultural practices of the Ohafia Igbo. It is hoped that the study will also stimulate further research on this field of study.

Practically, the study will be of relevance to anthropologist, social workers and policy makers who will be interested in comparative study of other matrilineal societies. It will also give insight on the role such practices play among the Ohafia Igbo.
1.6 Operationalization of Concepts

Avunculocal: This refers to marriage involving post-marital residence with a woman husband’s mother’s brother. This form of residence is common in strong matrilineal societies in which men control the affairs of each matrilineal group and marry out the women through whom they are related.

Cultural Change: Ryan (1968) in Igbo and Anugwom (2002) define cultural change as modifications of the body of knowledge of a people or their tools, or their idealized patterns in contrast to the actuality of their behaviour. Therefore, cultural change in this study will refer to the modifications experienced in the people’s idealized patterns i.e. changes in their pristine way of life different from their actual behaviour.

Ikwu - Uchendu (1965) used the term Ikwu belt to explain the Igbo subgroup located in many Abia and Ebonyi State communities along Cross River, in the present Cross River State. They are a double-descent subgroup who trace descent from the oldest woman in a matrilineage

Lineage- this refers to those through whom one descended directly. This for example the father of your father, your father, your son, the son of your son are all your lineage

Inheritance: This denotes property transferred from one generation to the next, usually upon the death of its owner. For the purpose of this study, inheritance is the practice of passing on property and obligations (in the case of ritual headship vested on the female head of the matrilineage) upon the death of an individual to his matrilineal group.

Matrilineage: This refers to descent that is traced to a female ancestress usually from the mother’s side. It is the lineage formed on the basis of matrilineal descent where descent is traced starting from the first female in the lineage.

Matrilineal: Scot and Marshal (2005) define matrilineal as unilineal descent groups that claim real or fictive kinship through maternal ties or
common ancestress through known genealogical links. In matrilineal systems, inheritance is controlled from the maternal uncle (mother’s brother) to the nephew (mother’s son). The tendency is to preserve the economic and political identity of the sibling group.

**Matriliney:** This is the formation of descent group from the mother’s lineage. Matriliney is a female dominate culture, which may have such features as matrilineal marriage and matrilineal descent.

**Matrilocal:** It means the mother’s place of residence in a loose sense. The term is sometimes used as a synonym for uxorilocal residence, which implies the place where a married woman is living. In stricter sense matrilocal may be taken to imply residence in a matrilineal group generated by uxorilocality repeated through generations.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of Empirical Literature

This chapter reviews extant literature on the following topics:

- Land tenure and inheritance in Igbo land
- Culture change
- Changes taking place in certain cultural practices in other societies
- Descent in some African societies
- Descent in some African Societies which include: Patrilineal groupings, matrilineal groupings and double descent groupings.
- Theoretical literature
- Review of relevant Theories
- Theoretical framework
- Research Propositions

2.1.1 Land Tenure and Inheritance in Igbo land

A land tenure system refers to the rightful holding of a piece of land by a person or group. It gives access to and control over the land, which is granted by custom or law. Land in Igbo tradition is sacred and handed over from one generation to another. Traditional classifications of right to land in Ohafia are of four types:

(a) Patrilineal land right
(b) Matrilineal land right
(c) Village land right and
(d) Right to private land.

The matrilineal land right is usually controlled by the head of the matrilineage to protect and take care of the resources upon them. Such lands are exclusively under the control of members of the matrilineage
and membership of a particular matrilineage is a criterion for benefiting from such land.

Basden (1966) observes how land under indigenous law was not customarily alienated from the family as the head acts as trustee of the property, sometimes permission is freely given to tenants to cultivate land or build upon it, but the ‘Head’ always lays claim to proprietary rights. The occupier is seldom disturbed so long as he is prepared to acknowledge the ground landlord. Rent in residence or cultivation is not usually demanded, the tenancy being confirmed by the offering and acceptance of *ojji* kola nut at the time permission to occupy the land is granted.

Also, under the autochthonous Ibo system, land could be definitely transferred from one owner to another either as a gift or by purchase; also land could be seized in lieu of debt, or confiscation for some infringement or custom. Moreso, personal property descends to the eldest son or to the eldest brother or male relative. Dispute arising about inheritance refered to in Igbo as *Ilu-Ogu* are usually decided at the second burial rites (Basden, 1966).

### 2.1.2 Culture Change

Culture has been defined as an embodiment of things, ideas and behaviour patterns transmitted from generation to generation through the process of learning. Ferraro and Trevathan (1994) observe that such a view of culture focusing as it does on continuity among the generations tend to emphasize its static rather than dynamic aspect.

Also, Theodorsen and Theodorsen (1970) define culture change as any aspect (material or non material) of a culture, whether by addition, subtraction or modification of culture traits or complexes. Therefore, culture change may come from any source, but most often it occurs
through contact with other cultures, inventions or the internal adjustment of culture.

Consequently, from the foregoing, a basic principle of all cultures is that change is constant; while some culture particularly in small-scale societies or non-western societies changes slowly, others experience rapid culture change. Ferraro and Trevathan (1994) also note that culture changes according to two basic processes such as internal changes (innovations) and external changes (cultural diffusion). Innovation which is the ultimate source of all culture change can be spread to other cultures while cultural diffusion which is responsible for the greatest amount of change that occurs in any society is the spreading of a cultural element from one culture to another.

2.1.3 Changes taking place in certain cultural practices

Vidyarthi and Rai (1985) remark that matrilineal societies have been found to have changed through the ages to patriarchy and this process is making a progressive in road into the remaining matriarchal societies which are coming into contact with the outer world. Roy (1964) also maintains that due to the activity of Christian missionaries during the past century and the development of a dynamic native Christian church, the culture of the Khasis has been radically altered and thus has accepted ‘new lives for old.’

Equally, Gough (1962) in explaining the disintegration of 15 matrilineal descent societies observed that; contact with the western industrial nations via market economy is primarily the reason for the disintegration of a matrilineal system. Present day market economies entail involvement in cash crop farming, wage work and migration. Therefore, the descent groups gradually disintegrate and are replaced by elementary family which emerges as the key kinship group with respect to residence, economic cooperation, and legal responsibility.
However, UNESCO (1983) notes that, involvement with the market economy has yet to result in the disintegration of the matrilineal system; because the matrilineal system has been able to accommodate economic change without affecting traditional land arrangements, women’s status, the inheritance system, land tenure system and marriage patterns. These are the patterns of the matrilineal system and the deterioration thereof will result in the disintegration.

Nsugbe (1974) reports that Ohafia Igbo themselves say, they now seem to resent their rule of inheritance, which channels practically all property through the matrilineal line. They speak rather disapprovingly of the way members of the matrilineage ‘sweep clean’ the house of a deceased relative when they come to lay claim to his property.

According to Gough (1962) the integration of matrilineal societies into an expanding market economy brings about the breakdown of matrilineal system. Cash crop farming can generate wealth above, subsistence, the individual wages and cumulative wealth of the men ran counter to the traditional hierarchy of political status. Also, the migration changes matrilineal residence among migrants. As a wage earner, the father acquires new rights over his children, resulting in the patrilineal inheritance and patrilocal residence that replaces matrilineal ones. The changes in dwelling group pattern results in the decline of the solidarity of the maximal lineage and overall decline in the observance of exogamy of the clan and of traditional sub-clan activities.

Syiemlieh (1994) writes that the Khasis and their matrilineal system have due to some basic reason recorded a transition in the matrilineal set up in Meghalaya. This transition in the matriliney society is due to the changes in the overall set-up, such changes can be the result of factors like the intermingling with other neighbouring patriarchal
communities, the advent of missionaries and spread of Christianity among these group.

Also, Mahumita (2008) observes that changes are occurring in the inheritance of property by females, currently as daughters are mostly found to move out to form new local families, the family property is either divided or all is given the daughter or. It is given to the son if he is going to stay with his parents at home. They feel that it is not wise to restrict the son to get anything as even sons can also take care of their parents equally well.

Also Gyang (2004) remarks that previously, Akan women have much power and independence and had their own sources of wealth from trading but seem to be experiencing a changing inheritance pattern as more of their man are beginning to engage themselves in wage earning.

2.1.4 Descent in some African Societies:

Patrilineal Groupings:

According to Barnard and Spencer (1996) patrilineal descent refers to common kinship traced consistently through male ancestors, the father, father’s etc. Male dominance is the norm there as it is traditionally in most societies and property is mainly controlled by men. Ottenberg (1968) drawing mainly from a research conducted among the Afikpo Igbo notes that among the Afikpo Igbo the major lineage in their patrilineal group is named a corporate group lacking a role of exogamy and claiming descent from a single male ancestor, its founder. The descent group can usually be referred to by the word *ezi* meaning (compound) employed when referring to the residential unit and also *ndi* meaning (people) used in reference to descent line. The major patrilineages are usually from two to four minor lineages. They trace descent to the first son of each wife of the founder, the lineage of the firstborn son being the most senior.
Equally, Schlegel (1972) remarks that in patrilineal societies the organization of the domestic groups reinforces the organization of the descent group. Therefore, the household serves as the minimal segment of the descent group and only non lineal kin of importance within it, the wife/mother, has little or no official voice in running its affairs. Consequently, the descent group is maintained and perpetuated by the very men who are in authority within the domestic group. Also, Ezeh (2002:122) paraphrasing Goody (1969) reports a preponderance of patriliney in Africa, which he classified as 44 percent for the system in Africa.

Matrilineal Groupings:

Colson and Gluckman (1949) writing about the Ambo matrilineal group states that the matrilineal group is composed of those people who have the right to inherit from each other to choose one from among themselves to replace a dead member of their group by taking his name (Kylaizana) and his spirit (Kwangwa muzunu). It is the matrilineal group and not the clan, which acts in inheritance, which provides and shares bride wealth, which accepts responsibility for its members.

According to Ottenberg (1968) among the Afikpo Igbo matrilineal ties are primary because most productive property is matrilineally controlled and inherited. The term for any matrilineal relative regardless of the nature of the relationship is *ikwu*. It is used by the Afikpo Igbo to refer to ones matrilineal relative or *ikwu-nne* (matrilineal relative mother) to his father’s matrilineal relative *ikwu nna* (matrilineal relative father). Also, Ezeh (2002) citing Ottenberg (1968) makes a typology of matrilineal clan which he ambiguously named the *Ada* group as: Akpoha (his Okpoha,amasiri, Uwana, Akaeze, Nkpo).
Equally, Uchendu (1965) points out that the matrilineal kinship belt lies in the mid Cross River State. It stretches from Okpho Amasiri, Edda in the north to Abiriba, Ohafia axis in the south. The western boundaries are approximately Akaeze, Nkporo borderlines. Nsugbe (1974) observes a type of avunculate relationship that exists among the Ohafia Igbo matriliny in contradistinction to other patrilineal Igbo group. Here, the mother’s brother and sisters son stands in respect of mother’s brother who by obligation exercises considerable authority over him.

Furthermore, Douglas (1969) presents eight inherent features of matriliny, which she regards as the key to its strength and resilience; matrilineal descent groups are at a disadvantage for recruiting by birth compared with patrilineal groups; they are organized to recruit members by other means additional to direct lineal descent; as a corollary to this there is lack of genealogical discrimination; in recruitment comes a characteristic quality of openness in texture of effective descent groups; it is men who straddle exogamous descent groups and men who have dual residence; and dual loyalty.

McCall (2000) also buttress the fact that in Ohafia Igbo rights were inherited primarily through the maternal descent group and the allocation of farmlands were mainly determined by the elderly men of the maternal descent group. By allocation of farmland, McCall refers to the fact that right of inheritance was usually taken care of by the mother’s brother in Ohafia.

Barnard and Spencer (1996) note that in order for the mother’s brother to exert authority, a mother’s brother has to be able to control his sister’s sons, hence the rules governing where married couples live in relation to the place of residence of the wife’s brother are crucial considerations. Nsugbe (1974) also reports that apart from the matrilineal land right the maternal descent group also has claims to movable property.
and lands which have been purchased outright especially when a man dies within Ohafia.

**Double Descent Groups:**

Barnard and Spencer (1996) define double descent as the combination of both systems of unilineal decent, allocating different social functions to each. Ezeh (2002) maintains that the concept of ascendancy and complimentarity of lines descent are necessary to ensure a proper understanding of double descent, accordingly, a person can trace his descent through the line of one of the parents and is still related to the other parents. Therefore, if matriliny confers right on a person it is termed to be ascendant while the person’s father’s lineage is complimentary.

Onwejeogwu (1992) citing Forde (1937) observes that among the Yako who are of a semi-Bantu linguistics group; individual claims to land and economic resources are established within the patrilineal kin group. The matrilineal kins groups claim all movable property and raffia palms. Although matrilineal kin have no farming rights on land, the general economic activities of the group are controlled by the priest of the matriclan who are in charge of the shrine and the fertility cults.

### 2.3 Review of Relevant Theories

The study reviews the under listed theories which are deemed to be relevant in the explanation of inheritance, and matrilineal. These include functionalism, structuralism, and non-marxian conflict perspective.

#### 2.3.1 Functionalism

The main proponent of the functionalist theory is Bronislaw Malinowski. Functionalism sees a society as an organic whole. It is the analysis of social and cultural phenomena in terms of the functions they perform in socio-cultural systems. Here, society is conceived as a system of interrelated parts in which no part can be understood in isolation from the whole. Haralambos (2004) observes that functionalism views society
as a system, that is, as a set of interconnected part which together form a whole. The basic unit of analysis is society and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship to the whole. They argued in the same way that understanding of any part of society requires an analysis of its relationship to other parts and most importantly its contribution to the maintenance of society.

Malinowski (1944) states that functionalism is concerned with the clear understanding of the nature of cultural phenomena, before these are submitted to further speculative manipulations. Functionalism is interested in the nature, the cultural reality of human marriage and the family, of political system, an economic enterprise or legal procedure. Sherman and Wood (1982) defines functionalism as the investigation of how each social institution such as family, religion and governments operates in relation to the survival of the whole society.

Equally, Malinowski (1944) explains that function means, therefore always the satisfaction of a need, from the simplest act of eating to the sacramental performance in which the taking of the communion is related in a whole system of beliefs determined by a cultural necessity to be at one with the living God. Parsons (1951) confirms that, social life is characterized by mutual advantage and peaceful co-operation rather than mutual hostility and destruction. Rex (1961) summarizes by presenting an important contribution that the whole essence of the functionalist effort is devoted to showing why things are as they are.
2.3.2 Structuralism

Structuralism as a theoretical abstraction deals with the study of the knowledge of the underlying course in thought and language. Claude Levi-Strauss and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure contributed immensely to the structuralist school. Ezeh (2000) states that for the structuralist of the Levi-strauussian tradition, the only feature that distinguishes man in nature and man in society in other words animal of the species homo and human beings, is that human beings make use of language whereas the animal does not. The language distinguishes man as a member of particular society. The structuralist propound that the ways the culture bearer manifest his culture is the same when one speaks, one projects into the external world the concepts in one’s mind.

Ezeh (2000) quoting Sperber (1985) enumerates the contributions of Levi-strauss as: what he seeks to understand through cultural symbolism is neither in primitive stage in human intellectual development nor, the underlying ideology of a specific culture area, but a mode of thinking shared by all humans, irrespective of time and place. Also Levi-strauss (1973) notes that he was not concerned with ascribing a single interpretation to each symbol but rather with showing that symbols are open to a great variety of different and complimentary interpretation. More so, he was interested with systematic relationship between symbols: the abstract level of interpretation is a means of establishing these relationships rather than an end in itself.

2.3.3 Non Marxian conflict perspective

The chief proponent of the non Marxian conflict perspective is Max Gluckman. According to Gluckman (1959) conflict encompasses conflict but not limited to the sense it is usually spoken of in everyday parlance, namely rivalry of interest or views or verbal or physical aggression. In the same vein it is evident that no society or a setting
involving cross-cultural or inter-group relations at any level may be free of conflict it is encountered in societies with the simplest of technologies and in those with the most advanced technologies.

Equally, Ezeh (2008) states that classical theorists on conflict such as Dahrendorf, Coser, and Gluckman used conflict from the view of non-existence or absence of consensus, or concord. He observes that it is the social conflict that social anthropologist are interested in and goes on to explain, conflict refer to oppositions compelled by the very structure of social organization. I know that conflict in everyday use can describe surface disturbances of social life.

Gluckman (1959) who draws much of his evidence from situations from Africa concedes the tendency of societies to retain their structures in spite of conflict but also demonstrate that other possibilities have also been observed. According to him evidence indicates changes and break-up of states in Africa, but these processes work through elaborate institutional arrangements, which have clearly evolved through long periods of time,

In the same vein, Gouldner (1980) writing about the contradiction in social theory explains that it should be related to the structural component of social systems and at the same time, should be differentiated from any version of functional incompatibility. Finally, the main thrust of the Gluckmanian non-Marxian perspectives is that conflict are a part of social life and custom appears to exacerbate these conflicts but in doing so custom also restrains the conflict from destroying the wider social order (Gluckman: 1955)

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Gluckmanian non-Marxian conflict perspective as its theoretical framework. The non-Marxian perspective of Gluckman is concerned with the importance of conflict within a cultural
group. The theory emphasizes on the importance of various and sometimes conflicting loyalties. The non-Marxian perspectives is interested in how men disagree in terms of certain customary allegiances but are restrained from violence through other conflicting allegiances which are also enjoined on them by custom. This can be illustrated by the working of feud or hostilities to authority, witchcraft accusation and ritual in some African societies which lack officers with established powers to enforce decisions to legislate and take administration, yet these societies have such well established and well known codes of morals and law of convention and ritual, that even though they have no histories, we may reasonably assume that they have persisted for generations.

Therefore, this study focuses on ascertaining how these societies are organized into a series of groups and relationship, that people who are friends on one basis are enemies on another. Thus, lies the social cohesion, rooted in the conflicts between men’s different allegiances.

The non-Marxian perspective is suitable in this study because it deals mainly with cultural change in African societies. Thus, matriliny can be likened to a social institution undergoing disagreement between Christians and those that still want the practice to be sustained but are prevented from resorting to violence by its custom, hence the existence of social cohesion.

2.5 Research propositions

1. There are inherent advantages existing in the practice of matriliny in Ohafia.

2. Changes are occurring in the traditional practices of inheritance among the Ohafia Igbo

3. The contradiction between the educated, economically independent and the employed in Ohafia is in the area of right of inheritance and ritual headship of matrilineage.
4. There is disagreement between the Christians and the adherents of traditional practices of matriliny.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive technique was employed in the study. A descriptive study entails the systematic collection and presentation of data to give a clear picture of a particular situation (Eboh, 1998). The descriptive method was used in obtaining data. Descriptive method is usually suitable in basic ethnographic studies because it provides such detailed information regarding time, place, actions, conditions etc. Thus it serves as an effective source of validation for such research findings. The descriptive methods are suitable in understanding research findings, which are well needed in translating social and behavioural research findings into culturally acceptable intervention than the quantitative methods. The major instrument for data collection was participant observation with other methods like, focus-group discussion and in-depth interview.

3.2 Area of the Study and Ethnography

The research was carried out in Ohafia community in Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State. There are twenty-six villages, which are grouped into autonomous communities that make up Ohafia. The communities share the Ohafia Local Government with Nkporo and Abiriba people. The 2006 population census puts the population of Ohafia at 225, 144. It covers an area of about 1,050 square kilometers. It is bounded on the north by Nkporo, on the south by Arochukwu, Abam and on the west by Abiriba, to the east by Edda in Afikpo South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State and on the Northeast by Ere in Akampa Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Numerous streams wash through both eastern and western sides of Ohafia community. The streams to the east usually empty into Cross
River; to the west the streams drain first into Uduma River, which directly flows south to join Igwa and Inyang rivers from Eyong Creek. Ohafia community is moderately hilly and is broken in places by a narrow and steep valley.

Today, the best approaches of Ohafia are the modern road, which follow the ridge through Bende town in South West into Ohafia. This is approximately 60 kilometers. Another route passes through Uzuakoli into Ohafia and this is approximately 70 kilometers from the west. There is an existing route from the East through Edda. This vegetation cover of Ohafia can be described as orchard bush light forest on the hills and thick vegetation in the valley. The people of Ohafia are known to be warriors.

Ohafia community is moderately hilly and is broken in places by narrow and steep valleys. They are known for their hard work and heroic tendencies. Each town and village is virtually independent but respected scrupulously the common ancestry of the Ohafia people.

Presently, both town and village dwellers get news from electronic and print media. The village dwellers get more information on matters affecting their lives as many times as possible a day through the town criers, depending on the availability of such news.

Ohafia is an Igbo community spread over a large territory. Oyeoku (2006) reports that Ohafia is made up of 26 autonomous villages and towns. These towns and villages were already highly organized entities by the time the British intruded directly into their history at the first decade of the 20th century.

There is no centralized power base in Ohafia. The Ohafia community is very segmented and receptive to change to new ideas and new culture. The most powerful agent of socialization is the age-grade system. The system exists in many other cultural areas of Igbo land but with varying degrees.
Nsugbe (1974) reports that the regulation of political relations in the village is the responsibility of age-based associations. This responsibility is shared. In Ohafia, as in these other groups, the associations are constituted on the two principles of age and selection. By the age principle, boys and girls are grouped into age sets when they are about three years old.

Azuonye (2000) observes five age-grade systems in Ohafia; *Uke* and *Ukeji Ogo*. They are the two most junior age grades, with age of 16-25 and 26-35 respectively; it was from these two grades that the fighting forces of the communities are drawn. Then the *Akpan*; 36-45, they perform police duties in the village. There is also the *Umuaka*, 46-55 with female counterpart known as *Ikperikpe*, they are a consortium of wise elders who serve the community as political leaders, judges and public orators. And lastly the *Ndi-ichin* age grade 55 and above who serve as senators and advisors to the younger generation.

The Ohafia Igbo venerate brave warriors in their lifetime and such respect continues in their death. According to Azuonye (2000) men who attain respectable rank of *Ichin* in their earthly existence continued to be honoured after death. Therefore, such men constitute the highest rank in the hierarchy of sprits of the dead and are shown as *arunshi* (i.e. ancestral as opposed to ordinary spirit). Basden (1960) observes that in Igbo country, traditional religion whether referred to as religious belief or superstition was deeply ingrained in the minds and lives of the people. The adherents blindly accept these tenets and no questions are raised as to why. They are part and parcel of life itself, given the fullest allegiance and acted upon in sincere faith and loyalty.

Nsugbe (1974) observes that ancestral symbols are very much in evidence in Ohafia and on the whole are well preserved, they consist of natural objects, such as a rock outcrop, or a piece of log, that have come...
to be associated with the founders of local groups. The other type comprises man-made monuments, such as *Obu* or an *Uduudu*.

More so, in Ohafia while all spirits influenced the living in many ways, the influence of the ancestral spirit is the most positive, being directed at ensuring that men do not fall short of the high ethical and moral standards, which is the basis of peaceful progress and stability in society. Therefore, violation of social order attracts sever punishment. Azuonye (2000) opines that, ancestors are piously courted by the living through regular sacrifices and communion involving pouring of libations in which the dead are invited to share with the living and guide their ways, which is a general Igbo practice.

However, Arua (1951) confirms that in Ohafia Igbo community all had in common such religious feature as initiatory rites including ablutions and sacramental meals, emotional satisfaction for the individual and assurance of a blessed immortality. Life after death is still strongly believed and even till now many dead persons are still buried with most of their belongings due to peoples’ belief that they would enable them to live comfortably in yonder world.

### 3.3 Population of the Study

Ohafia community has a projected population of 225,144 people and it covers an area of 1,050 square kilometers. (Ohafia Local Government Area Statistics Office 2006). The population of the study will cover the adult members of the community who are aged 30 years and above. The researcher is of the opinion that such categories of people are participants in one cultural activity in the village or the other, thus, equipped with the information about the culture of the people.

### 3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

In ethnographic research of this nature, one cannot predict ones respondents because it is not possible to have a first hand knowledge of
people that will provide useful information. Therefore, the whole population of the community will serve as the respondents, in other words all the culture bearers are potential informants.

### 3.5 Method of Data Collection

The study used the qualitative method of data collection. They are:

1. Participant observation
2. In-depth interview
3. Focus-group discussion

In using participant observation method the researcher was a complete participant among the cultural group, in complete participant one is a member of the group one investigates. In participant observation the researcher attempts to see through the eye of a member rather than an outsider; mentally pose questions about what he/she feels, sees and hears; write copious and frequent notes about his/her observations; and attempts to synthesize from those observations a formulation of a problem and a solution. (Smith, 1989). Effort was made by the researcher to modify this strategy by revealing the intention of the research which helped in the study of inheritance and matriliny which have cultural components. The researcher as a participant observer was a complete participant observing Ohafia cultural activities during which period the researcher was residing in the community for the purpose of the research.

The researcher carried out a careful study of the different stages, performances and rituals that took place before cultural festival in Ohafia like; *Iri-agha, Ike-ekpe*, and *Ududu* which are rich in cultural knowledge of Ohafia so as to watch their behaviour, reactions during these activities. The researcher generated information from the participants of these festivals.
Six in-depth interviewed sessions were conducted in a conversational manner to cover the six autonomous communities that make-up Ohafia. Since their custom is the same in-depth interview was used to facilitate the explanation of questions on issues that would otherwise have remained unanswered. The respondents included two traditional rulers, two male opinion leaders and two female opinion leaders who grew up in the community and have lived there up to ten years. The communication was in two ways English and Ohafia dialect. This is due to the fact that some of the culture bearers may not be literate. Unstructured questions were used to understand the real feelings of the respondents. The researcher is of the opinion that these categories of respondents had the ability to articulate verbally about the socio-cultural situation in Ohafia.

Eight focus group discussion sessions were conducted so as to enable the participation of the groups involved. The focus group discussion sessions were divided into eight segments of six discussants each. The discussants in each segment comprised of; young adult literate males, young adult literate females, young adult non literate females, adult literate males, adult literate females, adult non literate males and adult non literate females. The focus group discussions enabled groups to interact among themselves and respond freely to questions. The groups was constituted in Ohafia community and all the discussion was made to coincide with the period of Ohafia cultural festival like Iri-ji, Ike-Ekpe and Ududu. The researcher sent invitation letters to those selected to notify them on the time, date and place of the focus group discussion.
3.6 Instrument for Data Collection

For the participant observation segment of the inquiry, audiotape, field notes and photographs were used. In conducting the in-depth interview and focus group discussions, note taking and audiotape recorder was adopted.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive and narrative techniques were used in the presentation and analysis of data. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Respondent information, field notes and transcribed audio recordings that were generated from the in-depth interview, focus-group discussions and observations were coded and organized according to categories in order to facilitate the analysis of the data.

Data that were generated were used to conduct a comparative explanation of cultural situations that were taken note of in other matrilineal societies. Interpretations of areas of consensus and disagreement were highlighted.

3.8 Field Experience

The study centered on inheritance and matriliny among the Ohafia Igbo, a study in cultural change, it is pertinent to give an explanation of the techniques adopted in the collection of ethnographic data for the study. Participant observation was the core strategy used in the inquiry with the aid of still photographs, field notes and tape recorder which were used to cover the events. This was also supplemented with two other instruments namely in-depth interview and focus Group Discussion (FGD).

The field aspect of my inquiry started in the community on July 2010, I took up residence of *Amaekpu* one of the autonomous communities that make-up Ohafia and one of the communities investigated and lived there from July to December 2010. I decided to settle there because such residence will enable me to have close
interaction with the respondents and be able to observe and participate in their cultural activities. Also Amaekpu has a proximity to Elu- which is the cultural/traditional capital of Ohafia and also one of the communities to be investigated, it also has close contact with other Ohafia communities that harbour other pan-community celebrations like Achichi in Elu which is believed to be the cradle of Ohafia origin and other processions, rituals and other cultural performances.

Amaekpu is also of strategic importance because of the centrality of its market square, which is usually a beehive of social activities in the community. My residence was situated near the village square which is important in several respects in the social life of the community. During the period of my stay I observed ten ceremonies that were related to inheritance and matriliney like Ike-ekpe and Ududu festivals. My familiarity with the indigenes, their dialect, values, and norms facilitated my using the limited time to achieve my aim. I have been interacting and living with the indigenes since birth thus equipped with the knowledge through participation as a member of the community, therefore, complete participation aided me to carry out the research.

I was faced with some constraints though I am a culture bearer on this community. I was faced with problem in taking photographs on some important sites that harbour things that are related to inheritance and matriliney, for instance I was constrained in taking some snapshot in one compound in Amaekpu (Ndi Odike) that habours Ududu ancestress pots for native doctors which they warned that certain rituals and performances must be done before such snapshots can be taken. I explained to them the purpose of the research and the need for the photographs after which the eldest native doctor performed the ritual and the photographs were taken. Equally, getting some key respondents was problematic. The Eze Ogo (King) of Amaekpu was down with illness and
so could not sit for a long time which prompted me to seek the help of the aides to assist him. The Eze *Ogo Elu* kingship was a matter of litigation and as such, he was always busy going to court, more so, getting the opinion leaders was difficult to contact, the problem was that many of them thought that I might have collected huge fund for such research project and as such demanded for money but after explaining to them I was able to convince them to take part in the interview.

I experienced a near frustration in getting sufficient numbers of participants for the Focus Group Discussions. This was as a result of the obvious expectations of material benefits the participants had expected from the researcher. The FGD’s were previously was slated to commence in June prior to the commencement of the new yam festival, but with the option of rescheduling the Focus-Group Discussion to coincide with the new yam festival which was coincidentally the period for the routine August meetings and puberty ceremonials which were usually work-free in the community and the period the locals from various Ohafia villages would have their mass meetings/returns,

The Focus-Group Discussion sessions turned out to be a success. The discussant realized at the end of the Focus-Group Discussion session that the aim was actually to promote their culture and for academic purpose. I served them palm wine, hot drinks and some malt drinks.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of six respondents in the in-depth interview

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<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Community</th>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>70 years</td>
<td>Amaekpu Ohafia</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>4 Male opinion leader</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>Trader</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50 years</td>
<td>Elu Ohafia</td>
</tr>
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<td>6 Female opinion leader</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59 years</td>
<td>Ebem Ohafia</td>
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Fieldwork 2010
Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents for the Eight Focus-Group Discussions.

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| Occupation | Civil Servant | Member Co-operative Society | Civil Servant | LGA Staff | Civil Servant | Civil Servant | Civil Servant | Treatment

Field work 2010
4.2 Inheritance and Matriliny in Ohafia

Culturally, inheritance and matriliny in Ohafia are related. A married man in Ohafia that begets children will have those children tracing their matriliny from their mother’s matrilinage. Biologically the children belong to the man but their matrilineal inheritance can only be traced from their mother’s side. In Ohafia, inheritance and matrilineal right commences two weeks after the demise of a man. The children of a dead man like the Okwara first born male child and the Ada first born daughter inherit some property of their dead father, the ikwu matrilineal relations also inherit some of their deceased brother property like land, cash crops etc. In an in depth interview one of the interviewers putting it more succinctly emphasized that,

In Ohafia, on the demise of the father of the house who gave birth to the Okwara (first born), the Ulu (last born) and the Ada first daughter, the inheritance goes like this, the Okwara will inherit the fathers cutlass and hoe, which he used to farm with. The hoe and mbila wateryam will go to Ada, The Ikwu matrilineage will also inherit something because they are the people that trained the man. In Ohafia it is not only the children that buried the father, the Ikwu also partake, that is why they also get a share in the inheritance. This was the practice in the olden days but in recent times the man of the house may decide to will his property to the children whom it will be in their custody to take care of his inheritance. (IDI, male opinion leader, Amaekpu)
4.3 Changes on Inheritance and Matriliny

Recently, Ohafia people are beginning to disapprove of the traditional way of reckoning inheritance, the Ohafia Igbo believe that there are changes creeping into the practice of inheritance in Ohafia. In ohafia igbo today fathers are beginning to train their children in schools and the ikwu do not collect all the inheritance alone. The wife as well as the children of the deceased inherit some properties. In an in-depth interview one of the traditional rulers argued that:

Our traditional practice of right of inheritance is not so good, there was a reason why it was introduced in the olden days but things are changing nowadays, father’s are training their children, it is generally believed that husband and wife are the same so that they can stay together and take care of their property, the practice of a man leaving the care of his children to his Ikwu is no longer practiced and the olden days practices are no longer acceptable where the fathers kinsmen collects all the inheritances to the detriment of his wife and children. It is beginning to change in Amaekpu and other Ohafia communities. (IDI, traditional ruler, Amaekpu)

Fig 2; The Ikwu In one of the burial ceremonies of their deceased relation (Amaekpu Ohafia Nov 2010).
Another woman opinion leader also suggested that;

In recent times due to modernity things are changing, women are now getting inheritance from their matrilineage on the death of the man of the house; the Okwara (First born son): Ada (First daughter) and ‘Ulu’ (Last son) get inheritances. (IDI, female opinion leader, Ebem)

![Image](image.png)

**Fig 3: The Researcher interacting with some Ohafia women in the market square (Amaekpu Ohafia, 2010)**

### 4.4 Inheritance and Matriliny in Contemporary Ohafia

In Ohafia tradition, the first group that usually comes to lay claim to a deceased man’s property is the *Ikwu* who always claim that they were responsible for his training. There are cases where the *ikwu* traditionally claim right to their deceased brother property while the children of the deceased man also claim right over his property. In an FGD session, a male member in Ohafia community argued that:

After the *Ikwu* must have trained and helped in training of their kinsmen, so on his death they will readily come to partake in his property sharing because they have a hand in the training of their late brother. (FGD, male member, Amaekpu)
In addition, another male member noted that:

There are incidences of the *Ikwu* and children having problem over inheritances because the children will be claiming right over their father’s property while the *Ikwu* will claim that tradition has been there, but in future there may be a way to solve this problem.

(FGD, male member, *Amangwu*)

![Image of researcher with some members of *Ikwu* matrilineage](image)

**Fig 4: The researcher with some members of *Ikwu* matrilineage**  
(*Amangwu Ohafia 2010*)

Traditionally, in Ohafia Igbo, the *Ikwu* matrilineage and *Umudi* patrilineage makes the decision about what are involved in Ohafia rules of inheritances.

### 4.5 Decision Making in Ohafia Inheritance and Matriliny

Among the ohafia igbo, the umudi patrilineage, the *ikwu* and the *Eze obodo* usually oversee the sharing of the property of a deceased person. The children of the deceased man usually present wine to announce the death of their father to the *ikwu* and that they want his property to be shared.
A male member of an FGD session highlighted that:

In preparation for making decision about rules of inheritance, the person’s *Umudi* patrilineage must be present, *Ikwu* matrilineage must also be there and also the children, the *Eze Obodo*, chief in counsel will all be in attendance to witness the sharing and also see what the *Okwara, Ada, Ulu* brought to support the fathers burial, all the property will also be taken note of to know who is to inherit what. (FGD, male member, Elu)

Fig 5: The *Ekpe* masquerade usually displayed in Ohafia festivities *Amangwu* 2010

Another Female respondent of the in-depth interview asserted that:

The children of the deceased usually bring gin to the *Umudi* and *Ikwu* so that the property will be shared to the children, it is when a man has numerous properties that the *Ikwu* can inherit but if his property is limited it is only the children that inherit. (IDI, female member, Amaekpu)
Fig 6: The researcher was photographed as a participant in one of the burial ceremonies (Amaekpu Ohafia, 2010)

4.6 Impact of christianity on traditional practices of inheritance and matriliny in ohafia.

The Ohafia Igbo traditional practice of matriliny is still intact excerpt in the area of matrilineal inheritance where some changes are occurring. In ohafia igbo today, the Christians encourage that a woman should inherit the property of the deceased husband and that the daughters should inherit some of their deceased father’s property.

According to one of the community leaders in an in-depth interview:

Matriliny is still manifest in Ohafia but the pristine way of practicing it is gradually experiencing change due to people getting more enlightened. (IDI, traditional ruler, Elu)
Another woman opinion leader pointed out that:

There are changes because Christianity now abhors not allocating inheritance to woman simply because she is a woman. The church now emphasize that daughters should inherit some of their fathers property. (IDI, female opinion leader, Amaekpu).

4.7 Matriliny Practices in Ohafia and Associated Problems

Christianity in Ohafia does not encourage the traditional practice where the *Ikwu* matrilineage comes to inherit all there brothers property on his death. Christianity in Ohafia today favour using the property of the deceased to take care of the children. In Ohafia Igbo, matriliny is like an inherent thing and is not likely to change, the area that are facing problem is on the *ikwu* coming to claim the property of a deceased person abandoning the children. The problem arising from inheritance in Ohafia is that on the death of a man and his properties shared, previously after sharing of the inheritance it will be binding on everybody, but nowadays some people who are not comfortable with how the sharing of the property was done ,will insult and accuse the *ikwu* of bias.

The Ohafia Igbo today allows the children of the deceased man to use the property of their deceased father to train themselves. Equally, if there is any problem that arises from such, the *Eze Obodo* usually wade in to mediate in such dispute.

According to a male community leader in an in-depth interview,

I can’t say for sure whether Christianity encourages the traditional application of right of inheritance or not but there is a case in point where the case of inheritance was taken to the church and the church ruled that the property of the deceased should be used to take care of the deceased children. (IDI, traditional ruler, Asaga)
Another female member of an FGD asserted that;

Why they encourage allowing the children to inherit is that it is not good for one to have children, the *Ikwu* will now come to lay claim on his inheritance, it is not good that is why the church encouraged that inheritance should be left with the children.

**Fig 7: The *Ududu* pots shortly after the new yam festival where food and wine have been given to the ancestress for protection (Ohafia,)**

Nsugbe, [1974] earlier noted that areas that are likely to shift are particularly with regard to rules of inheritance and female headship of the matrilineage *ududu*. The *Ududu* consist of pots that are kept on the abode of the eldest woman of the matrilineage. The pots are kept according to seniority of deceased ancestress and are given yam and palm wine during this *Igwa Ududu* sacrifice ceremony that usually takes place during New Yam Festival. The *ududu* pots represent each ancestress according to their line of descent. The eldest woman of the matrilineage reels out their names during the *Igwa Ududu* sacrificiatory rite. Female pots are not
stationary rather they are move from place to place, following each elder whose responsibility to take care of them next [Nsugbe, 1974].

This account of Ududu female pots raise a lot of questions on whether it is still practiced in Ohafia. My investigation led me to discover that through increase in female education and participation in Christianity in ohafia, there are still trappings of such practices in existence in Ohafia communities though the practices is on the decline.

A male respondent in an in-depth interview opined that:

Matriliny in Ohafia is like an inherent thing and is not likely to change but where the people are discouraging are the Ikwu partaking in inheritance of the deceased.

Another male member of an FGD remarked that:

It is still practiced because the Ikwu matrilineage are still training their relations more than the father of such children, father’s usually bore children and leaves them at the mercy of the matrilineage Ikwu. (FGD, female member, Akanu)

In Ohafia, there are no many problems in the practice of matriliny. The area that is facing problem is on the rule of inheritance.

A male member in an in-depth interview commented that:

There is no much problem arising in matrilineal where problem is arising is on the Ikwu coming to claim this inheritance of the deceased person living the children to suffer. (IDI, male opinion leader, Amaekpu)

Another male member of an FGD remarked that:

The problem arising from inheritances in Ohafia is that on the demise of a man and his inheritances are shared, previously after the sharing, the inheritances will be binding on everybody, but nowadays after sharing it, some disgruntled people may start to insult and accuse the Ikwu lineage of not giving them a fair share of the inheritances. (IDI, male opinion leader, Amaekpu)
Yet another point on how people are handling the situation, a male member of an FGD suggested that:

The situation have led to much dispute even death but a way out is for the inheritance to be left for the children of the dead man to use it and take care of themselves, also the Ikwu should know that these children are their own and ensure that those inheritances are used to train these children rather than scrambling for it. Also if such problem arises the Eze Obodo should wade in to arrest such disputations. (FGD, male member, Ebem)

Fig 8: The researcher was photographed in the Ekpe dance during Igba Ekpe ceremony (Amangwu Ohafia 2010)

4.8 Future of Matriliny Practice in Ohafia

The Ohafia Igbo matriliny will likely stand the test of time; it is not likely to go into extinction. The problems usually arise from disagreements among the Ikwu claiming that their deceased brothers do not contribute to their training. Matriliny in Ohafia Igbo today are
reckoning descent through both matrilineal and partrilineal descent groups. In Ohafia Igbo the Christians who abandon the affairs of the *ikwu* because of their new found fact may be ostracized if they have problem because they do not participate in the affairs of their *ikwu* members.

According to a Female member of an in-depth interview she revealed that:

> The future of matriliny lies in our youth because problems that usually crops-up is that many *Ikwu* have division because they claim of their deceased brother not contributing to their up-keep. (FGD, male member, *Elu*)

Another male opinion leader suggested that:

> Matriliny in Ohafia is like an inherent thing and is not likely to change but where the people are discouraging are the *Ikwu* partaking in the inheritance of the deceased. (IDI, male opinion leader *Amangwu*)

**Fig 9; The Igba Ekpe Dance For The New Yam Festival 2010.**
Also, another male community leader in the in-depth interview reported that:

Matriliny in Ohafia is not likely to be abolished, but nowadays the Ohafia Igbo group are reckoning descent through both matrilineal and partrilineal. (IDI, female opinion leader, *Ebem*)

Yet, another male member of an FGD session commented that:

The Christians who tries to abandon their *Ikwu* (matrilineage) because of their new found faith, if they have problem that the *Ikwu* will not come to their rescue, because the person does not participate in their meetings and they are viewed as outcast in Ohafia. (FGD, male member, *Ndi Nku*)

Fig 10: The researcher discussing with one of the traditional rulers at *(Amangwu, 2010)*
The findings showed that Ohafia Igbo view the rule of inheritance as something to be shared among the *ikwu* and the children of the deceased person. I also observed that the Ohafia Igbo viewed matriliny to be an inheritance thing may not face extinction as the story of the original of Ohafia matriliny suggest that it was not borrowed but a part of their tradition.

Rules of inheritances are now being modified to favour the children more in Ohafia, so that children of a deceased man can use such inherited property to sustain themselves. The result also showed that Christianity and westernization seemed to conflict with some aspects of inheritance in Ohafia where the *ikwu* will come to claim the property of their dead member leaving the children to suffer. The changes noticed in Ohafia inheritance and matriliny were in the aspect of inheritance alone. For the matriliny aspect there seemed not to be any significant change.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DISCUSSION

The findings of the study reveal the following:

- In Ohafia the children of the dead man like the Okwara and the Ada inherit some properties.
- There are changes creeping into the practice of inheritance in Ohafia like fathers training their children and the wives benefiting during the sharing of their properties.
- The ikwu and the children of the deceased person usually claim right over the properties of their deceased person.
- The ikwu umudi and eze obodo usually preside over the sharing of the properties of the deceased person.
- Christianity in Ohafia encourages that wife of a dead man should inherit the property of her dead husband and that daughter should be allowed to inherit their father’s properties.
- In Ohafia people that are not satisfied with how the properties are shared in Ohafia usually accuse the ikwu of bias, also the ikwu are now discouraged from claiming the property of the deceased person.
- Rules of inheritance are now modified to favour the children more in Ohafia and that Christianity and westernization are in conflict with some aspect of inheritance in Ohafia.

In Ohafia Igbo, children of the dead person like the Okwara and the Ada inherits some properties like cutlass, hoe etc is in contrast to the findings of (Gyang, 2007) who noted that among the Akan matrilineal group of Ghana, the decent group inherits the wealth of the deceased and may allocate its usage, eg living in a house, to various members. The spouse of the deceased is not a member of the lineage and does not inherits. Children of the deceased if they are male do not inherit. Even if
the deceased has made a will giving the wealth to the spouse, the lineage will usually dispute the will and usually win.

There are changes creeping into the practices of inheritance in Ohafia like; Fathers training their children and the wives benefiting during the sharing of the properties. This was in contrast to the earlier findings of (Kalu, 2002) that revealed that in Edda, a widow has no right to the property of her deceased husband and whatever rights she may exercise, she is deemed to be doing so on behalf of her children for the man.

The study revealed that in Ohafia the *ikwu* and the children of the deceased person usually claim right over the property of their deceased person. The above result supports the findings of (Eke, 2009) that matrilineal inheritance under customary law is clearly understood when a man dies without making a will interstate succession. Under this system matrilineal relations of the deceased will succeed to his estate to the children of the deceased.

The study also revealed that Christianity in Ohafia upholds that the wife of a dead man should inherit the property of her dead husband and that daughters should be allowed to inherit some of their father’s properties. The findings of the study are also in line with earlier findings of (Roy, 1964) that similar practice among the khasis, through education and Christianity had some how changed the traditional inheritance system in many respect.

The study also showed that people are not satisfied with how the properties are shared in Ohafia and they usually accuse the *ikwu* of bias. also the *ikwu* are now discouraged from claiming the property of the deceased person. This above findings was supported by (Kalu, 2010) that today, the Ohafia rules of inheritance are now provide as fully as possible for their sons and daughters while still alive, they prefer to educate their
children to give them what no matrilineage can take away namely, knowledge and education. (Kalu, 2010)

The findings of the study also reveal that in Ohafia the rules of inheritance are now being modified to favour the children more in Ohafia and that Christianity and westernization are in conflict with some aspect of inheritance. The result of the findings of the study was also supported by (Eke, 2009) that presently in Ohafia westernization has mitigated this ugly state of affairs nowadays one finds both parents catering for the welfare of their children and enjoying the benefits there from, yet among some communities one still find fathers who still holds the archaic, outdated view that their children are the property of mothers relations and do not deserve the parental care that is their right. Also (Khapadia 1966; Syiemlieh 1994) also noted that the spread of urbanization and urban development along with the spread of Christianity have changed the perception and altitude of people among the khasis.
CHAPTER SIX
6.0 SUMMARY/CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION
6.1 Summary

The study examined inheritance and matriliny among the Ohafia Igbo a study in cultural change. The researcher investigated inheritance and matriliny in Ohafia with the view of finding the changes that have taken place and the social-cultural implication of such changes. The responses gathered from the in depth-interviews and focus-group discussions revealed the following;

Matriliny practice in Ohafia is still part of their tradition though it is experiencing modification due to contact with westernization and Christianity. The *ikwu* like in most societies serve as social-security agent for their matrilineal relations since they help in the training of their sister’s sons and daughters more than the father of the children.

Rules of inheritance are gradually changing from the traditional practice of the *ikwu* coming to claim the property of their deceased brother to the modern practice of allowing the children of their deceased brother to claim the properties so that they can use it to train themselves. The extent of father’s participation in the training of their children in Ohafia was also discovered to be increasing gone were the days when father’s left the upkeep of their children to his *ikwu*.

Women were also found out to be getting inheritance from their husband’s matrilineal relations on the death of the man of the house. Christianity support that the children of the deceased person as well as his wife and daughters should have an assess with his property so that they will use it and train themselves. The *ikwu, umudi* and the *Eze obodo* were also found out to be playing a vital role in the decision
making process on who should inherit any property on the death of the man of the house.

6.2 CONCLUSION

Inheritance and matriliney in Ohafia recently are becoming topical in the culture of the Ohafia Igbo. This stems from the importance matrilinial relations attach to their members. Inheritance in Ohafia tradition covers both movable and immovable property in which right of inheritance is through mothers or female matrilinial relations

Traditionally the Ohafia Igbo rules of inheritance permit certain inheritance to be given to a deceased person matrilinial relations although cases of *ikwu* matrilinial relations trying to usurp the inheritance abound. Matrilinial relations on the other side usually serve for its Ohafia Igbo members as a fortress in time of distress and a forum for the maintenance of cultural values and traditional knowledge.

Christianity and westernization have impacted on the customs of the Ohafia Igbo. Presently rules of inheritance in Ohafia are experiencing some modifications, the adherents are now encouraged to allow the children of the deceased to inherit their deceased fathers property, fathers are now training their children, women are also found to be inheriting some of their deceased husbands’ property while the matrilinial relations are still adhering to the basic values enshrined in matriliny.
6.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations shall be useful in surmounting the challenges faced in Ohafia rules of inheritance and matriliney;

1. Martiliny should be encourage among the Ohafia Igbo since it promotes the maintenance of cultural values and knowledge.
2. The matrilineal system where the matrilineal relations help in the training of their sister’s sons and daughters should be encourage among the Ohafia Igbo.
3. The ikwu matrilineal relations should be encouraged more to allow the children, wife of the deceased man to inherit his property so that they can use it to train themselves.
4. The gap that exists in the Ohafia Igbo’s father-child relationship should be bridged so that his children will not be seeing him as an alien as such a member of another matrilineage.
5. Ohafia fathers should try and bequeath on their children lasting inheritance that the ikwu cannot take away from them like education, willed property so that they will be informed on what is their right.
6. There should be well-documented will, which shall guide traditional rulers, chief in councils and the Umudi on how to share inheritances.
7. The matrilineages should strive to borrow those aspects of matriliny that will benefit the whole matrilineal relations and eschew the practice of claiming right over a deceased inheritance.
8. Christians should continue to promote programmes and preaching that will reflect on the need to allow the children of the deceased to inherit their deceased father’s property.
9. The ikwu, umudi and the Eze obodo should not be partial during making decisions on the sharing of the inheritance so that it will reflect that their training depend on the inheritance.
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APPENDIX A

In-depth Interview Guide:

Section A: In-depth Guide indicating what is involved in the right of inheritance in Ohafia

1. What do you understand as the right of inheritance in Ohafia? (Probe for; what this entails, including all that is inherited, who inherits what?)

2. How do you view right of inheritance in Ohafia? (Probe for specific aspects of inheritance; land, moveable property and immoveable property, productive property, for opinion, reasons for expressed views, future prospect of matrilineal inheritance?)

3. Who makes decision about what are involved in Ohafia rules of inheritances? (Probe for key persons involved, what roles they play?)

Section B: In-depth Guide showing if there are any changes in traditional practices of right of inheritances in Ohafia

4. Do the Ohafia Igbo still adhere strictly to traditional practices of inheritance and reckoning of land right through the matrilineage? (Probe for specific practices and resistance to this practices, changes that may occur, reasons for the changes?)

5. Does Christianity encourage the traditional application of right of inheritance in Ohafia? (Probe for the specific right Christianity encouraged, reasons for such view?)
Section C: In-depth Guide for the problems and prospects of matriliny in Ohafia

6. To what extent is matriliny practiced in Ohafia? (Probe for specific aspect that are practiced, who are those that adhere to matriliny, reasons for adherence and non adherence?)

7. Are there problems arising with practice of matriliny? (Probe for how people are handling the situation, suggestions on how to handle the problems?)

8. What is the future of matriliny in Ohafia? (Probe for what is likely to be happening, what are the problems, reasons?)
APPENDIX B
FGD GUIDE

Section A: FGD Guide indicating what is involved in the right of inheritance in Ohafia

1. Do you understand what constitutes right of inheritance in Ohafia? (Probe for what this involves, including all that is inherited, who inherit what?)

2. What do you view as right of inheritance in Ohafia? (Probe for opinion, reasons for expressed view, aspect of inheritance, future prospect of the matrilineal inheritance?)

3. Are there people that make decision about what is involved in Ohafia rules of inheritance? (Probe for key persons involved, what roles they play?)

Section B: FGD Guide showing if there are any changes in traditional practices of right of inheritances in Ohafia

4. Are the Ohafia Igbo still adhering strictly to traditional practices of inheritance or reckoning of land right through the matrilineage? (Probe for specific practices, reasons for the practice, changes that may occur, reasons for the change?)

5. Does Christianity encourage the traditional application of right of inheritance in Ohafia? (Probe for the specific right Christianity encouraged reasons for such views?)
Section C: FGD Guide for the problems and prospects of matriliney in Ohafia

6. What is the extent of matriliney practices in Ohafia? (Probe for specific aspects that are practiced, who are those that still adhere to matriliney, reasons for adherence or non adherence?)

7. What are the problems arising with the practice of matriliney? (Probe for how people are handling the situation, suggestions on how to handle the problems?)

8. Are there any future for matriliney practice in Ohafia? (Probe for what is likely to happen, what are the problems, reasons?)
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION GUIDE

1. To observe the things that constitute Ohafia rules of inheritance.
2. To observe whether the rules of inheritance on matriline are applicable in contemporary Ohafia society.
3. To observe whether Christianity and Westernization conflict with the process of inheritance and matriliney.
4. To observe the verbal and non-verbal communication of the people when performing such rituals.
5. To observe the changes on inheritance on matriliney in Ohafia.