

# **CONVERSION TO ISLAM: A STUDY OF THE CONVERSION MOTIFS OF THE IGBO CHRISTIANS TO ISLAM**

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# Background

- Last century, Christianity was established in Igboland. In this way they came to be a predominantly Christian people.
- The Igbo remained immune from the Islamic contagion. **BUT**
- Today they exist a growing numbers of well-educated Igbo converts to Islam in Igboland.  
**THUS THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY**

# **Problem of the Study**

*To identify the reasons the Igbo  
Christians give for their  
conversion Islam*

## **Research Question**

**What reasons do the Igbo Converts to Islam give for their conversion?**

# Related Work

- Previous work on religious conversion concludes that it is a complex phenomenon because it has different meaning to different religions and disciplines (Rambo 1989; Rambo and Farhadian 2014).
- It is better studied interdisciplinary.

# Interdisciplinary perspective

- **Anthropology** views it as a religious change. They identify and analyze the main factors in conversion process of people changing their religion” (Gooren, 2014, p. 84)
- **Sociology** studies the social environment of converts and the resulting changes in their personality” (Rink, 2007, p. 26).

# Interdisciplinary perspective (cont)

- **Psychologists** argue conversion occurs if a person experiences negative psychological condition like anxiety, depression, guilt, unhappiness, and related feelings (Paloutzian 2014, 212).
- **Christianity** views it as turning from evil ways and returning to God through Christ in repentance and faith.

# Methods

- **Qualitative**
  - \* In-depth interviews with 30 Igbo converts to Islam
  - \* Observation
- **Purposive sampling through**
  - \* snowballing
  - \* referral
  - \* personal recruitment

## **Challenges:**

1. Gender imbalance
2. Duration for data collection

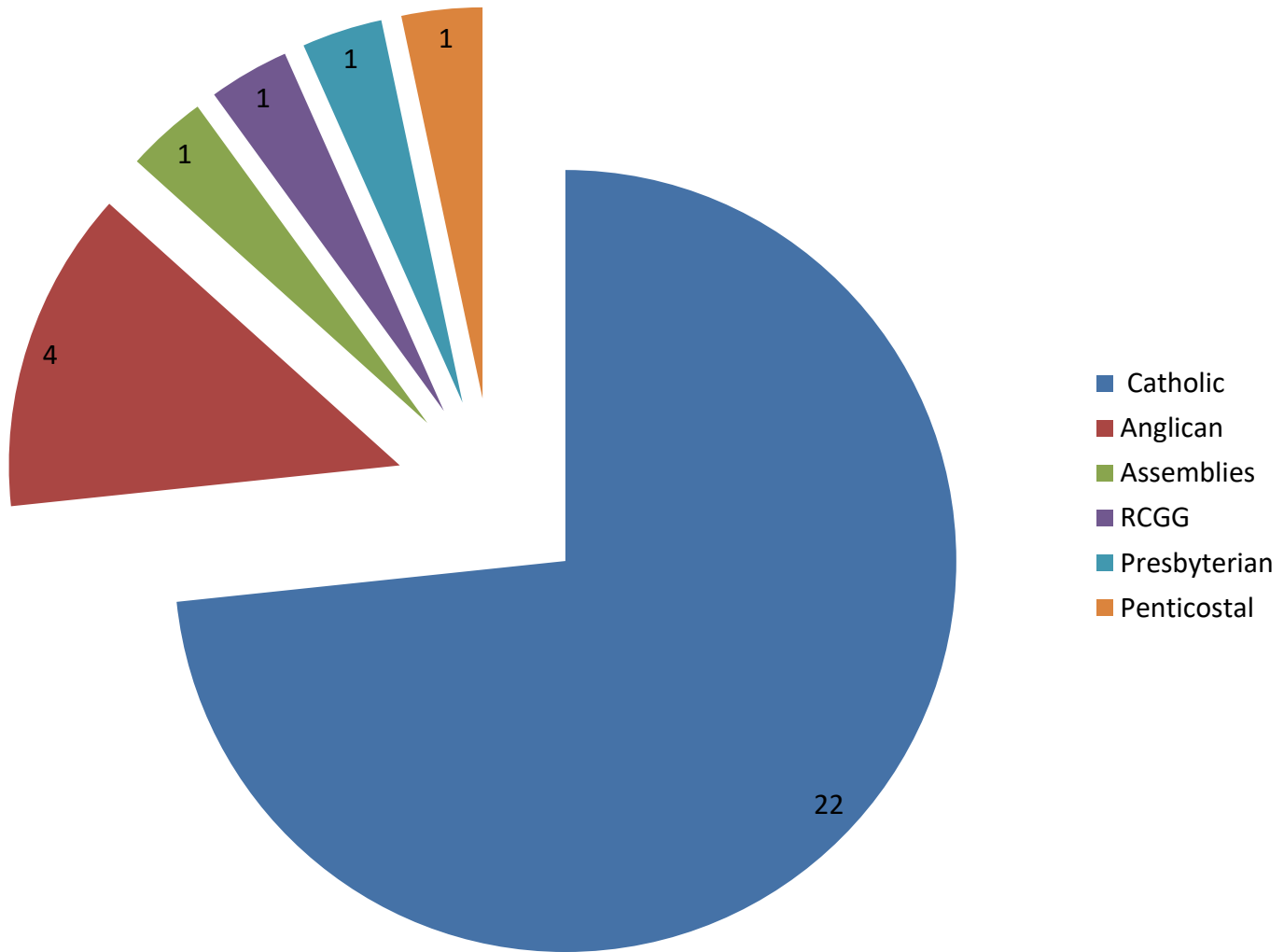


# Findings

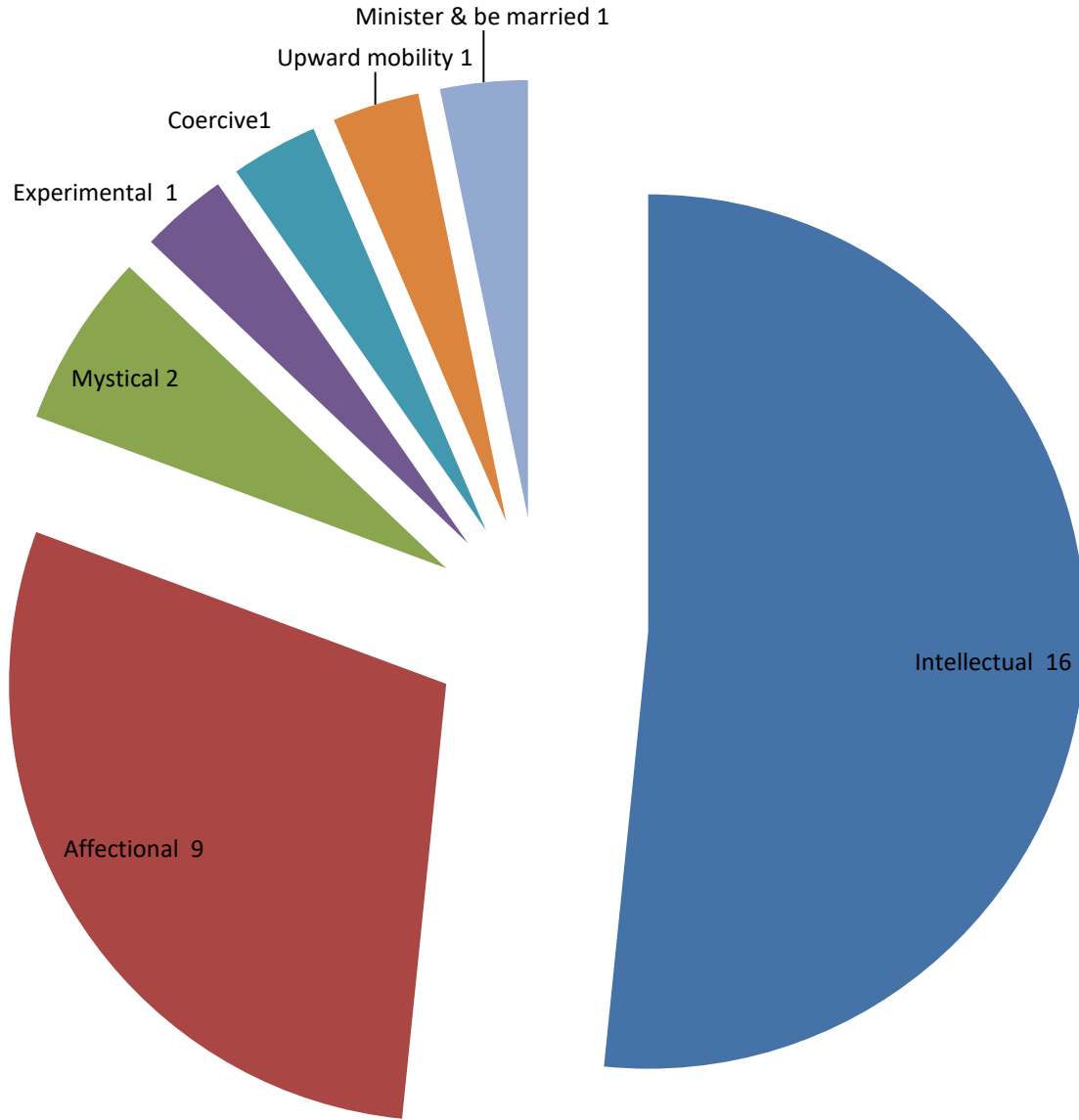
## Descriptive elements of the converts

- ❖ ***Gender:*** 23 males and 7 females
- ❖ ***Education:*** Majority of them are educated (PhD – first school leaving certificate)
- ❖ ***Occupation:*** They were gainfully employed and had a means of livelihood.
- ❖ ***Marital status:*** 22 converts were married, 6 unmarried, 1 engaged while one did not specify his marital status.

# Church affiliation



# Reasons for conversion



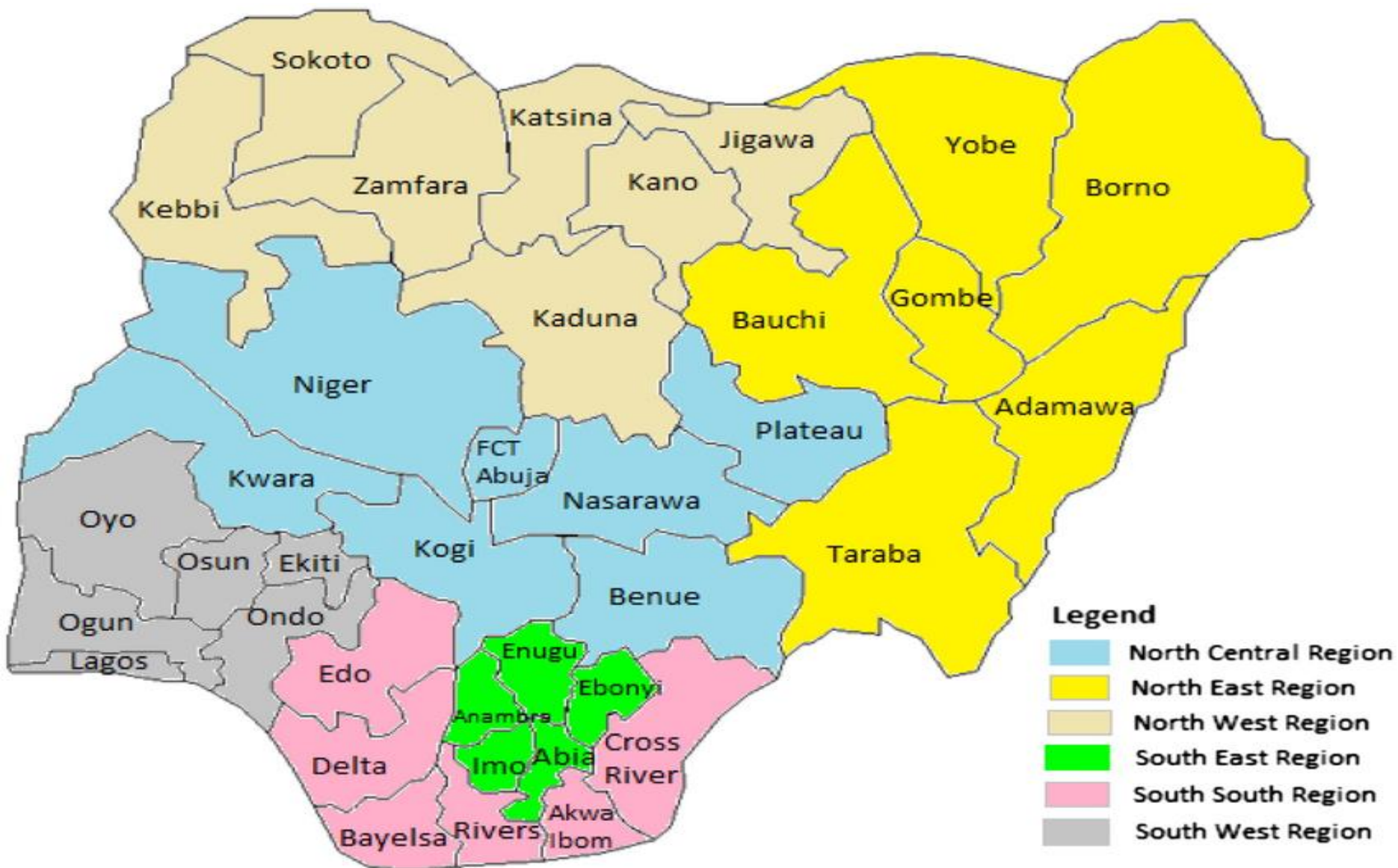
# *Intellectual*

- They read Islamic books, materials, Qur'an and listened to preaching and discovered that Islam is reasonable, rational, and logical.
- The irrational and the hypocritical life of the church and some pastors.
- The ethical, moral, and consistent life of Muslims as stipulated in the Quran.

# *Affectional*

- Marriage especially among women
- Caring attitude of Muslims
- Muslims' benevolence via scholarship, gift, and healing

# Igbo Region in the Map



# Conclusion

- In general, the Igbo converts to Islam were well educated and appeared to have been successful in their businesses and jobs prior to conversion.
- All the converts described themselves as Christians prior to conversion but their commitment to the religion differed.

## Conclusion (Cont)

- In most cases their contact with Islam was through friends, colleagues, neighbors, relative, and spouses.
- 17 nominal Christians became transformed in Islam
- 13 claimed committed were disillusioned and exchanged their Christian belief with Islam



## **Conclusion (cont)**

**Intellectual and affectional motifs were the most motivating factors for Igbo converts to Islam.**

# Recommendations

- Christians as children and adults need to know what they really believe and be well disciplined.
- The Christians need to be taught specifically about Islam and how to counter Muslim claims and misunderstandings.

# Recommendations

- The church in Igboland must be aware of the emerging trend in Igboland. Islam is penetrating Igboland through Igbo not Hausa. She should wake up from her slumber, nominalism, prosperity Gospel, and unnecessary financial dues imposed on the members.

**THANK YOU!**

# Discussion Questions

- How should the church (especially Roman Catholic and the Anglican) respond to this phenomenon?
- What are the solutions to the trend of Christian women converting to Islam because of marriage? Is polygamy an option?
- How would you describe the conversion of those converts that became transformed in Islam? Do you think there is salvation outside Christian faith?