

Democracy in a World of Change: A Philosophy of Muslim-Christian Relations in Ebonyi State Metropolis, 1999-2017

Amiara, Solomon Amiara, I.K Nwokike and Elom Ogonna

*Department of History and International Relations
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki*

Abstract: 1999 is historic in the political landmark of Nigeria because it marked the transition from military rule to civilian democratic rule in Nigeria. By implications, it means that the military with their tyrannical tendencies would cease from being the instrument for governance in the country. This is because, democracy is widely perceived as the best form and system of government that provides a framework for expressing one fundamental rights ranging from the rights to association, expression and worship among others. Its values are found on how it provides social services to the people while promoting healthy relationship between Muslim and Christian faithful that made Ebonyi State one of the states in Southeastern Nigeria that has had religious tolerance despite its Islamic conflagration. Against this background, this paper examines the pattern of this cooperation that has been found on constructive dialogue and peace-making among the faithful of Muslim and Christian in which religious crisis seems impossible despite its vulnerability. Preliminary investigation reveals that religious intolerance can be averted if government at all levels can preach moral values built in understanding, love and unity of one another. Therefore, this paper further concludes by arguing that democracy has much to do with the propagation of religious tolerance in which one can be appointed into political office despite one's faith as demonstrated by the Ebonyi State Government in 2016.

Key words: Democracy, Change, World, Philosophy, Metropolis

Date of Submission: 28-11-2019

Date of Acceptance: 13-12-2019

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of democracy has been a very controversial one. Scholars who have attempted a conceptualization of the subject matter have always been confronted with one problem or the other thus, making the definition of the concept a difficult task. In its attempt, it could be understood that the ambiguity or its correlates are responsible for its under definitions or more precisely the neglect on the basic features that are prevalent for any democratic government or state. Democracy in a world of change has gone beyond a system of government to include an ideal state of perfection, tranquility and tolerance. In this way, it would be instructive to know that democracy shares with peace and religious tolerance of different people as both work to project government as a democratic one.

In defining democracy, Ugumanim B. Obo posits that it is a way of life that involves freedom to make choice about what one does, where he lives and how he uses his earnings, the operation of institutions-the home, the church, local, state, federal governments; the right of justified property ownership, social justice and fairness, the absence of social barriers, equality of opportunity, and the solution of common problems through the exercise of the free-will of the people.¹

The above definition is suggestive of the fact that individuals in a state are protected by the law governing that state. In its practice, emphasis is always on the role of government to which democracy is instituted; therefore democracy is a system of government to which the rights and privileges of people are protected under the law. In fact, democracy or democratic state encourages full participation of people in the governance of the state. In other words, it sees the citizenry as an act of governance. Its implication shows that the degree to which democracy and its principles and values are entrenched is dependent upon the enforcement of law otherwise known as constitution. Constitutional democracy therefore is a system of government in which the limits of political authority are clearly stated and the electorates have the power to remove poor performing governments. Indeed countries that adhere to the political system of a constitutional democracy usually have a legal framework, such as a constitution that governs the country. Its main objective is to offer an inclusive political system as checks and balances are in place to ensure that the different branches of government remain as independent as possible from each other, while the opposition helps to keep the ruling party honest. Meanwhile, it is important to understand that constitution stabilizes the political system by promoting inter-party

dialogue, cooperation and development hence, there is no other system, the relationship between Muslims and Christians can be explained other than under constitutional democracy.

Democracy according to Abraham Lincoln is the government of the people, by the people and for the people. This implies that under democracy, the supreme authority and power of a state is vested on the people. By this, the power to guide government against dictatorship rests on the people. However, since in 1999 when Nigeria transitioned and adopted a democratic system of government and began to promote democratic principles such as; freedom of religion and worship, and freedom of association, the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Abakaliki increased. This relationship could be seen on the number of Christian apprentices to some Muslim traders at Hausa settlement in Abakaliki. This is why, whenever there is religious uprising in South-eastern Nigeria, Abakaliki will remain very peaceful with business activities sustained. This is because, peace and democracy teaches moral values and conduct which are considered quintessential to the progressive development of the state and cooperation needed to attain this development. The reasoning is that, development is possible when all the institutions of government are working in accordance with the provisions of law which to a large extent are the principle of democracy. Therefore, democracy ensures that individual's freedom such as freedom of speech, association, worship among others are guaranteed and exercised.

In this paper, efforts were made to unravel the pattern of relationship that has been existing among Christians and Muslims in Abakaliki and the reason why this relationship has been there despite various religious wars that have occurred in other sister's states. In other words, a brief history and geographical location of Abakaliki were attempted to determine the period of Muslim settlement in Abakaliki.

Geographical Location and Brief History of Abakaliki

Abakaliki is located in the present day Ebonyi State of Nigeria. It is bounded to the North by Benue State, to the South by Afikpo North and Ohaozara Local Government Areas, to the West by Enugu State and to the East by Cross River State. Abakaliki is a name of a place and as well people whose Igbo dialect is quite distinct from the rest of other Igbo groups. As a geographical name of a place, Abakaliki, on the creation of Ebonyi State on October 1, 1996 assumed the capital of Ebonyi State. It was a senatorial zone in Enugu State before it was merged with Afikpo zone of the then Abia State to become Ebonyi State.

Within the context of this study, Abakaliki has eight gazetted local government areas. They are: Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Ezza North, Ezza South, Ikwo, Ishielu, Izzi and Ohaukwu. As a capital city in Ebonyi State, Abakaliki has a population figure estimated at 1.5 million. As a name of people, it refers to mainly the three major clans of Izzi, Ikwo and Ezza with Ohaukwu as a minority clan. Other clans such as Effium, Ntezi, Eyon, Okpoto, and Nkalagu that are found in Ishielu and Ohaukwu are partially referred to as Abakaliki geographically.² Many of them are non-Igbo speaking people but are found within the geographical location of Abakaliki areas. Abakaliki is almost completely a flat undulating land, some 120-180 meters above sea level.³ The rainfall is about 1800-2000mm per annum with heavy erosion that has exposed some volcanic rocks as in Ugwu Elom Onele and Abakaliki Hill in Abakaliki city. The rain fall is usually the heaviest between mid March and July with a short dry spell that appears in August, and another short wet season that comes in September and October. From November till March is always the period of long dry season amidst hamattan. The average temperature is about 27degrees Celsius while the natural vegetation is generally the type found in the Guinea Savannah. The area was mainly a high forest zone but has been completely destroyed with farming and agricultural products flourishing among the people of the zone.

Brief History of Muslim Settlement in Abakaliki

It is difficult to really determine when the Muslims began their settlement in Abakaliki. Some writers attributed their early settlement to 1930 when two Muslim merchants; Alhaji Gambo and Alhaji Momo Tailor migrated to Abakaliki. These Islamic faithful could be among the bands of Muslims who traveled to found Islamic School at Enohia in Afikpo North Local Government Area. However, these Muslim merchants were said to have settled closer to Gunning road on arrival and founded Hausa Settlement called "Ugba Hausa". These people were named after Gambo and Momo streets in "Ugba Hausa" of Abakaliki today. Although prior to their arrival, Christianity had already found its way to Abakaliki metropolis with Rev. Fr. Gunning as the Catholic Bishop in charge the Diocese. Gunning was named after Gunning Road to mark his reign in Abakaliki. Within this period, the two religions had existed in peace with one another with also, the two streets belonging to the Muslim merchants and Christian prefecture lying adjacent each other.

Muslim-Christian Relations: The Abakaliki Example

Islam and Christianity are the two dominant and opposing religions in Nigeria with so much antagonism. They have influenced the political setting of the country such that they induce relations crises of different magnitude in the country. In other words, the unhealthy relationships that exist between these two religious groups have resulted to series of religio-political crises in Nigeria. Example of such was the religious

crisis that occurred at Kafanchan in Kaduna State in 1987, which later spread to other parts of the country, leading to the burning of places of worship, with many lives and property worth millions of naira lost.⁴ The situation which later got out of hand led to the killing of many Christians in the Muslim dominated Northern cities such as Kafanchan, Kastina, Kano, Funtua etc. And as a reparatory measure, many Muslims were killed in some Christian dominated states in Eastern States like Imo, Anambra and Abia as well.

Another indices of Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria could be viewed from the recent and constant religious crisis in Jos. Little did any Nigerian believe that Jos, a city of peace and tourism would be the next target of any form of religious crisis in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the crisis in Jos has continued to spread like wild fire into villages and some Local Government Areas of Plateau State. Some of such villages attacked of recent include Dogo-Nahauwa Village in Jos South, Maza in Jos North, Vom in Jos South, and Riyom Local Government Area.⁵ Despite the efforts of both State and Federal Governments in promoting inter-religious dialogue in the Country, every day, we hear of peace education and inter-religious Conferences on the Radio, Television and other media agencies, but the problem of the two religions keep increasing daily. To that extent, Abubakar Gummi declared in what many scholars of inter-religious dialogue considered very erroneous and negative "that a closer unity between Christians and Muslims is against God's will. Indeed, and for him, dialogue between Muslims and Christians is dangerous and should not take place. Gummi's pronouncement pointed to the fact that there was in both a deep rooted suspicion on both sides, that dialogue was simply an attempt at proselytisation.⁶ In fact, the Catholic Church which was the foremost in its attempt to pacify suspicions among the adherents of the two religions and bring a genuine attempt to encourage mutual contact with Islam has never succeeded. Their efforts were usually truncated by some selfish religious zealots who often benefit from fuelling religious crisis in Nigeria. Consequently, a similar situation has occurred in some other parts of African Countries experiencing the same religious crisis like Nigeria. In such cases, Andrew Rutasi writes that "the co-operation of Christians with Muslims is not always common.⁷ In Nigeria to be precise, Muslims and Christians remain unfriendly, suspicious of each other and at times visceral enemies. In other words, the peace that is supposed to be the main message of the both religions has given way to age-long quarrel and antagonism, often categorized into the uncomfortable North-South dichotomy or what is generally known today as the Muslim-North and Christian-South in Nigeria.

On the contrary however, the Abakaliki in Ebonyi State is one of the towns in the entire South-East or in Nigeria at large where Muslims and Christians have maintained a very cordial relationship to an extent that both have never engaged themselves in any kind of altercation prior to 1999. This relationship began as early as 1930 when two Muslim merchants migrated to Abakaliki. These Islamic faithful are late Alhaji Gambo and Alhaji Momo Tailor. Although prior to their arrival, Christianity had already found its way to Abakaliki metropolis with a Catholic Bishop, Rev. Fr. Gunning, who the present Gunning Road in Abakaliki is named after was already there. Although, because of the generosity of these Muslim brothers to both indigenes and Christians, it was possible that Islam could be welcomed and accommodated by the people in the Abakaliki town. Today, two of the major streets in Abakaliki like Gambo and Momo streets in which land was given to them in those days were named after. These Streets are all in Hausa Quarters at Abakpa Main Market in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State. Thus, the cordial relationship that exist today between Muslims and Christians in Abakaliki could be traced as far back as 1930s, when these Islamic faithful migrated to Abakaliki; and it was their generosity that led to that accommodation and subsequent relations with Christians within the town.

Furthermore, there were other instances to which Muslims and Christians have demonstrated strong relationship towards each other in Abakaliki. This time was during the Nigeria-Biafran war of 1967-1970 in which large concentrations of damages were targeted at Christian Igbo who were seeking salvation from the ill-fated Muslims in the North. Although, while it could be said that the war was indirectly referred to as Muslim-Christian war by some Nigerians, the prosecutors of the war (Ojukwu and Gowon) despite being Christians were more concerned in the secession, salvation and preservation of the country. To that extent, it could be noted that the foot soldiers had different intensions as some churches and Mosques where they believe they could get many Christians and Muslims were targeted for destruction. Unlike what was happening in other towns during the war, Muslims in Abakaliki were not harmed instead, Abakaliki indigenes looked for a way to protect them until the Muslims safely returned to their homes in early 1968.⁸ The indigenous people who deemed it necessary and ensured the protection of these Islamic faithful at that time were: Nwiboke Odude from Nteziaba, Nwogbaga Alo from Amike-Aba, Echegu from Ameguizi, Nwiboko Obodo from Isieke, Idike Igboji from Igbegu, Oyoke Abara from Ezza, Nnabu Nweze from Ezza.⁹ These men were all well-known fore-fathers of Abakaliki people. Though, some of them were already Christians at that time, they still made sure that not even a single Muslim living in Abakaliki was harmed during the war.

Against this background, Muslims in Abakaliki after the Biafran war have maintained that they would continue to reciprocate this show of love by encouraging and promoting good relationship with Christians in the town. In 1999, when Nigeria began to experiment a democratic government: democratic principles such as; freedom of religion, freedom of association, freedom of worship that enhanced Muslim-Christian relations were

adopted in her constitution. To this extent, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was by 1999 promulgated in chapter 4, section 38, sub-section 1, 2 and 3, inter alia: Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change one religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observation.¹⁰ In other words, Abakaliki is one of the towns in Nigeria where freedom of religion as provided in the 1999 constitution is fully practiced.

According to Ibrahim Amah, Abakaliki is one of the most peaceful towns in Nigeria in terms of religious tolerance.¹¹ This peaceful coexistence arises out of the cultural practice and values of the people. The Abakaliki people are very hospitable and accommodating. They treat every foreigner as an indigene hence they were branded saboteurs by the Biafra leadership at the end of the war. However, Muslims and Christians in Abakaliki have maintained unusual cordial relations different from what is obtainable in other towns in Nigeria. This aspect of their relationships is seen in their political, economic and socio-cultural activities among which they both share in common, including an inter-religious dialogue often held by the government of Ebonyi State with them. As a result, vast hectares of land have been given to these Muslims which they developed as trade centers. Up till today, those areas acquired by Muslims in those days are the major market centers and as well the heart of the town in Ebonyi State. This is an event that cannot be seen in other towns, especially Christian-dominated towns, as Muslims are often relegated to an isolated part, to avoid having any kind of contact with the majority of Christians in those towns. In other words, religious scholars maintained that what we see today as Muslim-Christian relations in Abakaliki is nothing but a continuation of a mutual understanding that had existed between the early Muslims and Abakaliki indigenes prior to 1999.

The Role of Ebonyi State Government

The Ebonyi State Government has provided a fundamental framework for domesticating Muslim-Christian relationship in Nigeria. This could be found on number of pilgrimages the Ebonyi State Government has sponsored to Muslims in the state and political appointment given to them. Beginning from 1999 when the first civilian government was inaugurated in Ebonyi state after its creation in 1996, the then governor of the state Dr, Sam Ominyi Egwu constituted Islamic Pilgrimage Board to oversee Muslim welfares and pilgrimages to Mecca. In 2007, the government of Chief Martin Nwanchor Elechi in the same vein inaugurated Islamic Pilgrimage Board with Alhaji Usman Ogah from Ikwo as the Chairman.

In making sure that Muslims and Christians enjoy mutual relationship, indigenous Muslims such as Alhaji Idris Okon of Ezza, Alhaji Bello Amadi from Ezzamgbo, Alhaji Obasi Amadi from Ezzamgbo too, Alhaji Yusuf Ozokpo from Iboko in Izzi Local Government Area, Alhaji Shaibu Oroke Ajah from Ezza, Alhaji Ali Nwankwo from Ezza, Alhaji Musa Nwankwo from Ezza and Alhaji Muhammad Oken among others were sponsored in 2002, 2003, 2006, 2011, and 2012 respectively. As part of appreciation to the state government, the Ebonyi State Pilgrimage Board advised members of the pilgrims to buy a pilgrimage gift to be presented to the State Governor as a gift. Similarly, in 2016, the Ebonyi State Government further appointed Muslims into State Executive Cabinets. Those appointed into the Executive cabinet as Technical Assistants to the State Government include: Alhaji Salisu Mohammed and Alhaji Haladu Ismain as technical assistants to the Governor on herdsmen, Alhaji Sule Mohammed as technical assistant to the governor on sports, Hajiya Asmau Gambo and Lawal Hamajoda as liaison officers to the governor.¹² This gesture was highly appreciated by the Muslims in the State who stated that the people of Ebonyi state have demonstrated great love and have been hospitable to the Muslim settlers in the state. Hence, we will continue to live in peace and support the Government of Ebonyi State to ensure that this understanding continues to strengthen our peaceful coexistence.¹³

In keeping with this cooperation, the government of Engineer Dave Umahi reiterated that the State Government would continue to support Muslims by providing enabling environment to enhance mutual understanding between the two faiths. According to him, the Ebonyi State Government has resolved to sustain peace in all parts of the state because peace is the panacea to achieving development.¹⁴ Thus, he urged the traditional rulers, town union president and leaders of Miyati Allah to sustain the peace that has binding on them.

Muslim Expansion and the Contributing Factors to Muslim-Christian Relations in Abakaliki

Islamic expansion in Abakaliki is promoted by a lot of factors that range from population growth, cultural contacts, corporate understanding among the religious groups and availability of space for Muslim settlement. In Ebonyi State, particularly the Abakaliki, the above named factors promoted Muslim expansion in the area. This is because, Crowther argues that Islamic religion came to Igboland probably during the mid nineteenth century. It was spread to Nsukka through cultural contact by Igala and Idoma people, whom the Igbo share borders with.¹⁵ From Nsukka, it could be possibly that the religion expanded to other parts of Igboland.

In this context, Islamic religion in Abakaliki began with the first set of Islamic faithful that arrived in 1930.¹⁶ Its expansion began with the cultural contacts with the Muslim traders consequent upon the intermingling people of Abakaliki with the Muslim traders- Alhaji Gambo and Alhaji Momo Tailor who first

sojourned to Abakaliki in 1930. However, Gambo was a trader who traded on liquor and herbal medicine while Momo was a tailor. They were the first set of Muslims to arrive Abakaliki and invited others into the area by using trades as instrument of propagation. Apart from trading however, they were other factors that promoted the spread of Islam in Abakaliki such as the economy.

Economic contact between Muslim traders and the people of Abakaliki contributed to the spread of Islam in Abakaliki. The economic activities of both Muslims and Christians have promoted Muslim-Christian relationship in the town. For instance, farm products such as water melon, groundnuts, beans, rice, carrots and onions produced in Northern region are highly consumed in

Abakaliki. Other items such as cows, donkeys and goats are also in great demand. By this, indigenous Christians who are in close contact with Muslim traders have flourished in this business and equally learnt how to travel with their Muslim counterparts to Kaduna, Kano, Zakibiam and Zamfara, Jos Adamawa to purchase these commodities. They buy these goods in bulk and come back to Abakaliki to sell them. Meanwhile, there were instances where a Christian who accepted to serve as apprentices to a Muslim trader got converted to Muslim. An example of such person is Alhaji Shaibu Oroke Ajah who became a Muslim while serving under Alhaji Ali Nwankwo as an apprentice.

Another important factor that helps to strengthen Muslim-Christian relations in Abakaliki is the socio-cultural contact. The socio-cultural contacts between the Muslims and Christians are seen on the number of several feasts being organized by the Muslims. For instance, during the Muslim feast, all the Muslims in the state usually pay *sallah* visit to government officials. Cows and ram are donated as *sallah* gifts to Executive Government of the state. In 2011, the governor of Ebonyi State, Chief Martin Elechi promised the Muslim faithful in the state that he would assist in building standard mosque for them at Afikpo as a reciprocity of the gesture they paid to him when they visited him during *Sallah* celebration.¹⁷ Again apart from the socio-cultural contacts to the expansion of Islam in Igboland with Abakaliki inclusive, the activities of women have helped to spread Islam from Nsukka to other parts of Igboland. For instance, the first convert to Islam in Alor Agu was woman renamed Zainab. She was given in marriage to Chief Momoh from Nupe and after the marriage Zainab took along young brother to Momoh's house where they embraced Islam with the brother Abubakr Ugwuanyi as a name.¹⁸ Similarly, commercial activities in Abakaliki were said to have promoted inter group or faith relations between Christians and Muslims. According to Ottenberg, a report on Abakpa settlement at Abakaliki division of Ogoja Province before 1920 sheds more light into the nature of the interaction between the north-east Igbo and the Hausa strangers up to this date. He further stresses that the Izzi, and probably some Ezza, used to come to the growing Abakpa market to sell yams and other foods, but the relationship with Abakpa inhabitants was at best a shy one. Until the end of World War 1, Muslim hunters, probably Nupe and Hausa, mainly from Bida and Sokoto, brought ivory and elephant tails to sell at the Abakpa market, where among others, wealthy Izzi and Ezza bought them for ceremonial dress. Muslim traders living in Abakpa married Muslim women from the north. At this time the men did not attempt to proselytize. Females rarely traveled with the trading groups except as wives or as prostitution.¹⁹ In this context, it is imperative to note that Abakpa which is a commercial centre for trade activities has been the hub for promoting Muslim-Christian relationship in Ebonyi state. Trade on agricultural commodities such as beans, water melon, carrots, onions, sugar cane, tomatoes, apple, ginger and garlic just to mention but a few are in great demand in Abakaliki where the people constitute the highest consumers.

Challenges to Christian-Muslim Relationship in Abakaliki

In spite of the growing cordiality among the Christians and Muslims in Abakaliki, there are several challenges to their relationships. One of such challenges is political. In this case, the Muslim settlers in Abakaliki have been reduced to political followers who are not allowed to vie for any position except for 2019 elections that a Muslim was elected a councilor of Abakpa ward. This implies that they have been politically excluded in other previous elections held in Ebonyi State. In all other elections, the principle of indigene and non-indigene was often applied to disqualify the Muslim candidates from standing in for an election. This is against the principle of Nigerian secularity and the fundamental right to live, vote and be voted for. This exclusion still creates little fear that the Muslims in the state would one day be attacked. However, most of them feel that despite Ebonyi being one of the most peaceful in the Christians dominated states, the level of cooperation and friendly relations existing between them does not foreclose that the clash of arms is a matter of time.

Another challenge to Christians-Muslims relationship in the state is the social discrimination. Most Christians in Ebonyi state don't associate with the Muslims. There is a sharp demarcation between Muslim settlements from the areas occupied by the Christians. Within these areas, Muslims locations are called *Ukpa-Hausa*, there is no church established in that area except mosques where the Muslims worship. This has negative implication on their cultural contacts which does not allow for inter cultural fertilization or integration. More so, apart from non existence of church in *Ukpa Hausa*, the area is often perceived as a slum where prostitutes and

criminals live and most people rarely go there except on occasions they want to buy cooking ingredients. In other words, it is believed that no reasonable Christian could allow his or her ward to go there because of high immoral live prevalent in the area. Most often, policemen go there to raid criminals who had run there to hide from being arrested. Though, there is high tech surveillance often mounted by the young Hausa vigilante to protect the traders and their businesses despite the occasional raids from the team of Nigerian Policy Force.

Another fundamental challenge to the Christian-Muslim relationship in Abakaliki is the lack of education. Education all over the world is fundamental to the development of human's social relations. There is because to teach is to transmit knowledge therefore, education breeds love and fosters peaceful relationship. It further enhances growth and development in the society and serves as a means in which good moral values are inculcated in people. However, in Abakaliki metropolis, there are no higher institutions with Islamic religious curriculum, all the higher institutions study Christian religion in their curriculum except few kindergartens where young children within the age of 5 are being taught Koran at *Ukpa Hausa*. In this context, most parents prefer to take their children to Afikpo where they are being taught Islamic religion at Enohia while prevailing on state government to include Islamic education in their school curriculum. The consequence of this is that, there is no primary or secondary school in Abakaliki metropolis that teaches Islamic education, all the schools teach Christian religion knowledge and this has negatively affected the growth of Islam in the state and as well limiting their knowledge of Islamic doctrine, values and beliefs.

Implicitly, the Muslims in Abakaliki are virtually uneducated as many became vulnerable to prostitution, begging, kidnapping, robbery and hawking along the streets. Therefore, it is instructive to note that education is important hence Immanuel Kant affirms that to educate is to endeavour to assure the development of all the capabilities (physical, intellectual and moral) of person.²⁰ Through education, it becomes essential to enable individuals, alone or with others, to meet, particularly through culture, the challenge of life, both personally or collectively.

Again, the Christian-Muslim relations in Abakaliki have further been challenged by the unwillingness of the people to accept Federal Government Ruga project. There have been constant internecine wars between herders and farmers in most parts of southern Nigeria. These wars have resulted to several killings and maiming of people as herders continue to take their cows for grazing. The war is premised on the fact that the federal constitution allows free movement of person hence the Muslims usually cite the constitution provisions that allow them to take their cow to graze anywhere they could find foliage, thus exacerbating Christian-Muslims hostility in the country. To soothe this problem, the federal government advised state governments to open up cattle colonies or ranches in all the 36 states of the federation for the herders. This proposal was heavily condemned as all the Southern states voted vehemently against it consequent upon the lingering crisis between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria.

II. CONCLUSION

The case of Christian-Muslim relationship in Ebonyi state has exemplified what an ideal democratic state should be. However, democracy has been conceptualized as the government of the people with prevalent majority opinion, fundamental human rights of expression and movement. However, this is realistic when all the institutions of government including the citizens are in agreement with the constituted authority and willing to pursue peace while putting aside ethno-religious interests and doctrines. This is usually impossible in a plural society like Nigeria but Christians and Muslims in Abakaliki have shown that despite the varied doctrines and values attached with their faith, cooperation and understanding are keys to social harmony. The implication of this is that, since democracy preaches freedom both Christianity and Islam are also religions of peace. Therefore, Christians and Muslims in Abakaliki have demonstrated peace that relates to freedom from antagonism to one another. This relationship and peaceful disposition is promoted by a lot factors among which are political, social, economic and commerce. For instance, the appointment of Muslims as members of the state government executive in a Christian state like Ebonyi state is quite unprecedented. Therefore, this implies that government has been supportive in promoting this relationship all ramifications.

Again another factor that promotes Christians-Muslims relationship in Abakaliki metropolis is the corporate understanding between the two groups. Both of them have engaged one another in a constructive dialogue and have understood that peace rather than conflict is the bedrock to social development. Therefore, both have endured religious intolerance, hatred and discrimination and have continued to be supportive to one another hence, the endurance however, have translated to a lot of compensations such as allocation of large hectares of land for Muslim settlement, appointment of Muslim politicians into political offices and pilgrimage sponsorship. This relationship is however challenged by number of factors hence the Muslims themselves are appealing to government to continue to provide them with enabling environment that will continue to strengthen their relationship in the state.

END NOTES

- [1]. U. B. Obo, *Democracy in Nigeria: Government of Whom, By Whom and For Whom?* African Journal of Political and Administrative Studies, Vol. No.1, Abakaliki, 2004, p. 163.
- [2]. A. S. Amiara and I. K. Nwokike, *Traditional Conflict Management Strategies Among The Abakaliki Igbo, 1850-1970*, Afro-Asian Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. IX, No, II, Quarters, ISSI: 2229-5313, in <http://www.onlineResearchjournal.com>, 2018, p. 2.
- [3]. C.O. Mgbada, *Who are the Abakaliki People? A Study in the Origins, Migrations and Settlement of Nigerian Peoples*, in C. O. Mgbada and C. U. N. Ugoh (eds), *Issues in Nigerian Peoples and Culture*, Vol. one, Enugu, PAQON(Press) Services, 2004, p. 38.
- [4]. I. Nwanaju, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Abakaliki*, Ikeja, Free Enterprise Pub, 2005, pp. 121-147.
- [5]. N. O. Badmus Abdul Azeez, *Perspective in the Advent, Spread and Consolidation of Islam in Igboland, The Role of Jihad and Jihadists*, Pub., 2010.
- [6]. See the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, Section 38 sub sections 1-4.
- [7]. I. Obiahu, c55, Trader, Ugba Hausa, Abakaliki, Interview, 11/4/ 2018.
- [8]. I. Amah, c70, Trader, Ugba Hausa, Abakaliki, Interview, 4/5/2018.
- [9]. IASU, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* Vol. 7, June 2007, 69.
- [10]. See the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, Section 38 sub sections 1-4.
- [11]. Celestina O. Isiramen, Friday J. Imaekhai and Benson O. Igboin, *Religion and the Nigerian Nation: Some Tropical Issues*.
- [12]. E. O. Solomon, *Muslim-Christian Relations: A Focus on Abakaliki Town, 1999-2017*, Being a Research Project Submitted to the Department of History And International Relations, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, 2019, unpublished.
- [13]. E. O. Solomon, *Muslim-Christian Relations: A Focus on Abakaliki Town, 1999-2017*, Unpublished, 2019, P. 30
- [14]. B. Nworie, *No Cattle Colony in Ebonyi, Governor Umahi insists. This Day* at <https://www.thisdaylive.com>. Retrieved on 9/6/2019.
- [15]. M. Crowther, *The Short of Nigeria*, London, Faber and Faber, 1978, p.8.
- [16]. B. J. Charles, *The View from Mars Hill. Christianity in the Landscape of World Religions*, Cambridge, Cowley Publications, 2005, p. 168.
- [17]. J. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1997, Pp. 378-379.
- [18]. A. Shelton, *The Igbo-Igala Borderland*, xiv; Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*.
- [19]. S. Ottenberg, *Farmers and Town people in a Changing Nigeria,: Abakaliki during Colonial Times 1905-1960*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 2005, pp 9-10.
- [20]. See Oasis International Foundation on Religion and Society: *Christians and Muslims and the Educational Challenge*, in <http://www.oasiscentre.eu/e.../7/72010>.

I.K Nwokike. "Democracy in a World of Change: A Philosophy of Muslim-Christian Relations in Ebonyi State Metropolis, 1999-2017." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 24 no. 12, 2019, pp. 17-23.