



THE ROLE OF THE SPONSOR AT BAPTISM VIS-À-VIS THE NEOPHYTE (UGBARI) IN RUKUBA CULTURE

Peter Danjuma Uchu, PhD

Catholic Institute of West Africa, Rivers State

Uchu@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the role of the sponsor in Christian baptism in relation to the ugbari (neophyte) within Rukuba culture. It argues that sponsorship offers a meaningful point of encounter between Christian initiation and Rukuba traditional initiation, where an experienced community member guides the initiate and attests to their character and commitment. Drawing on biblical accounts, early Christian writers, theological perspectives, and Rukuba customs, the article traces the sponsor's historical and pastoral responsibilities. In Christian practice, sponsors accompany candidates through preparation for baptism and support their growth in faith; in Rukuba tradition, the uni isol kikuru helps the ugbari learn and live the community's values through initiation and beyond. The article highlights both parallels and differences between the traditions. Christian baptism incorporates the neophyte into the Church and signifies new life in Christ, while Rukuba initiation establishes belonging and responsibility within the community. It also considers the qualifications expected of sponsors in each setting, emphasizing maturity, good character, and active participation in the community. The article argues that sponsorship should be understood as an ongoing commitment to guidance, instruction, and example, rather than a ceremonial role limited to the initiation itself. Finally, it proposes that the Rukuba emphasis on communal participation can enrich Christian practice in Rukubaland. The Church is encouraged to celebrate baptism more visibly and communally, while recognizing that the sponsor's work is supported by the wider Christian community. Such an approach can foster culturally grounded Christian formation and strengthen the neophyte's sense of belonging and responsibility.

Keywords: Sponsor, Baptism, Neophitem, Christianity, catholicism

Introduction

To become a Christian through baptism is to join a community of people who believe that Jesus Christ brought eternal life into this world and who celebrate together their sharing in that life while they are waiting for it to be fully realised when Jesus comes again. Believing in life and celebrating the wonder of it is a good description of what it is to be a Christian and a member of the Christian church. Belief is brought about and expressed in words. The celebration is invited and expressed by rite. The rites of initiation into the Christian community are specially concerned with life because they mark the first giving of the fullness of life in Christ which is proclaimed and made available in the Christian community.⁶⁰ One of the most significant aspects of baptism is that the parents occupy the central place in its celebration. Nevertheless they can and should be supported by sponsors who represent both the extended family, which can be of such support to parents and children in a world

⁶⁰ Robin, Jensen. *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012) 3



that is increasingly impersonal, and the Christian community which should be the first to show their care for them.

Challenge

Faith does not grow in a vacuum but grows on what nature has given to humans. This was why, Jesus began his ministry by saying emphatically that he came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:7). When St. Paul went to Athens, he had to build or begin from the elements of faith that they had and knew. Paul then brought the message of Christ to them whom they had his way but did not know and when he had opened the eyes of their faith, they saw and became true believers (Acts 17:22-34).

Before Christianity came to Rukubaland, the people had their belief system. Being part of God's creation and being created in God's image and likeness, they had developed the norms and values in their culture. This is because, when Christianity came to Rukubaland, like any community in Africa, it was considered an illicit religion. Joining the new religion, therefore, required renouncing the traditional gods and taking on this new identity, and that was risky. In some circumstances, the Christian, refusing to honour the gods of the land was seen as sedition, treason, or betrayal to family relationship. Receiving baptism into Christianity undeniably required a new understanding of family relationships and civil loyalties. Becoming a Christian also meant having dual citizenship or identity; both as Rukuba and Christian. Members of the baptized community soon found that they conflicted loyalties and one was set over the other. One of the changes for the Rukuba person was the realization of the similarity of functions at the initiation rites was the role of the sponsor. In both religions the neophytes were expected to obtain sponsors who would guide them through the process and vouch for their sincerity and character.⁶¹ This article sets to analyse the function of the sponsor in both religion and the need for the Rukuba to accept that of Christianity for a possible element of inculturation. We shall begin by clarifying some pertinent terms, a brief historical overview of the role of sponsors a brief theological reading of Christian Initiation. The need of the sponsor at the initiation rites will be looked into and the criteria for choosing the sponsor will be outlined. An attempt will be made to see to the morale for this cultural value. Finally we shall look at how this value can contribute immensely to Christianity and its impact in Rukubaland.

Clarification of Terms

Baptism is one of the commonest religious rituals. It is understood as a means by which one is initiated into the group. It is an external washing that signifies purification. Etymologically, the English word baptism is derived from a Greek noun, *baptisma* which means, "washing," "dipping," or "immersing."

The Latin word "sponsor" has a fiduciary connotation, akin to guaranteeing a note or posting bail. The sponsors are also known as godparents. The godparents are like foster parents, they supervise the growth of the child, spiritually and makes sure the parents give the child enough attention.

The term "candidate" is closely tied to sponsor or godparents. It is a person who is being considered for baptism or initiation into the a new culture.

From the Greek word neophytos, a neophyte is a beginner, novice, or a person newly converted to a belief. A person who has recently changed their faith or joined a religious group.

⁶¹ Liam G. Walsh. *The Sacrament of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988)



Culture originates from the Latin cultural meaning to cultivate and care for nurture. Humans cultivate a way of life, which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law and customs.

The Historical Understanding

The threat of persecution caused the Christians to be careful about accepting others into the community. The fear was such that someone could infiltrate and identify their members to local officials. Saul is an example of the kind of person the Christians sought to avoid. Even after his conversion to become Paul, the disciples were worried about him. He had to be introduced by Peter as sponsor because 'when he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple' (Act 9:26)

Christians were cautious and worshipped covertly. Anyone who wanted to join their community was carefully evaluated and vetted before he could be allowed. Each person who came forward, called an inquirer, was always accompanied by someone who is already Christian, a sponsor, who would ascertain for the inquirer. The sponsor specifically attested to the person's sincerity and moral character.

St Hippolytus (170-237) in his discourse, *Apostolic Tradition* wrote: "New Converts to the faith, who are to be admitted as hearers of the word, shall be brought to the teachers before the people assemble. And they shall be examined as to their reason for embracing the Faith, and those who bring them shall testify that they are competent to hear the word."⁶² Having received the testimony of the sponsor, the Church leaders would further evaluate the one seeking to become a Christian. Thus, the role of the sponsor was essential.

Tertullian is especially concerned that sponsors realize that they may themselves be put in peril should their candidates subsequently develop an evil character and fail in their promises. For this reason, Tertullian urges those who wish to be baptized to delay until they are firmly established in their convictions and able to live the life expected of them after baptism, including the observance of sexual continence. He emphasizes that 'those who understand the burden of baptism will fear obtaining it more than postponing it.'⁶³

John Chrysostom lays out the duties and responsibilities of sponsors, comparing their situation to cosignatories to loans. Like Tertullian, he warns that those who act as surety for others' debts put themselves at even greater risk than the debtors do, as they are responsible for the whole sum if the borrower defaults. Yet if the borrower proves worthy, his good credit reflects on his guarantor. Thus John urges sponsors to encourage, instruct, counsel and correct their candidates. This paternal approach earns them the title 'spiritual fathers' (*pateres pneumatikoi*) and those whom they sponsor are called 'spiritual sons' (*tekna pneumatika*).⁶⁴

Similar to Cyril of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia entreat candidates to strive to be citizens of a new and great city, and appointed person who registers their names. And, as elsewhere, the registrar will probe, asking about their habits and character to see if they meet the requirements for heavenly citizenship. Theodore recognizes that a candidate for baptism, like any stranger desiring to be admitted to citizenship of an earthly city, would need a specially appointed

⁶² Lucien Deiss. *The Springtime of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1979) 137

⁶³ Tertullian, *Baptism* 18.6, (CCSL: 1. 293. 39)

⁶⁴ John Chrysostom *Catechism*, 2.15-16.



person or sponsor: someone who is from the city and knows it more, and who can testify that the stranger is worthy of being received.⁶⁵

Theodore, however, changes the role of sponsor slightly, saying that it does not include their taking responsibility for any future misbehavior of the baptized. He also notes a few additional ritual details in regard to their role. According to Theodore, sponsors' names were inscribed in the church's registry along with their candidates', and after the first sealing (on the forehead – following the initial renunciation of Satan), sponsors were privileged to spread linen stoles (*oraria*) over their kneeling candidates' heads and raise them to their feet.⁶⁶

Augustine asks sponsors to be responsible for helping candidates memorize the creed.⁶⁷ Because the creed was kept a secret, it could not be written down. It was delivered orally by the bishop and explained in a series of lectures, referred to as the handing over of the symbol (*tradition symboli*). Just before Easter, the candidates stood before the bishop and repeated the creed from memory (*redditio symboli*), a ceremony that often took place on the Saturday before Holy Week. Egeria likewise observed candidates reciting the creed before the bishop of Jerusalem, and she notes that their sponsors accompanied them as they did so.⁶⁸

The views of theologians

The sponsors or godparents are secondary agents to the Christian formation of the infants. Besides, the rite treats them as direct cooperators with the parents in the upbringing of the infants, the inquiry is about their willingness to help the parents in their duties. They are auxiliary parents – *in loco parentis*.

According to J.D. Crichton,

It is the parents, not the sponsors, who publicly ask for the baptism of their children, they sign him on the forehead at the rite of admission, they renounce evil and profess the faith, the mother hold the child at the font, the father holds the lighted candle and at the end there is a blessing for each of them.⁶⁹

Thus, the current rite of infant baptism places the Christian formation of the infants on the parents first before the godparents. Although the parents take on a more significant and active role in the rite in bringing their infants to the waters of baptism, they are by all means to be supported by the presence of godparents or sponsors in a world that is becoming increasingly impersonal. The support of sponsors is indicative of the ecclesial care for the infants.

As a custom, sponsorship did not originate in the practice surrounding infant baptism; it was more a requirement for adult baptism, they stood in testimony of adult converts to Christianity. Dujurier agrees to this when he wrote that 'sponsors were originally those convinced Christians of the early centuries who persuaded their friends or colleagues to be converted, who, after they had brought them to the catechumenate, continued to lend them fraternal assistance until they were fully initiated.⁷⁰ These sponsors far from being the latest arrivals on the process of conversion and their

⁶⁵ Theodore of Mopsuestia, Baptisma homilia, 2.

⁶⁶ Theodore of Mopsuestia, Baptisma homilia, 2.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *Sermon*. 213.11. Here Augustine uses the term *parentes* rather than *sponsores*.

⁶⁸ Egeria, *Itinerary*. 46.

⁶⁹ J. D. Crichton. *Christian Celebration: The Sacrament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1980) 73

⁷⁰ Michael Dujurier, "Sponsorship" in *Concilium Theology in the Age of Renewal*, Vol. 22, (New York: Pauline's Press, 1967) 47



role remain of prime significance, even during the period of catechesis. In this wise, Bouyer opines that 'it is the sponsor who introduces the candidate for baptism to the baptism, stands as a guarantor of the sincerity of the candidates desire for faith and baptism.'⁷¹

In this article, 'Sponsorship' Michael Dujarier identified two types of sponsorship, the personal and communal sponsorship. The Personal sponsorship is the choice of a person or two persons, male and female who are selected to stand in for a candidate or an infant for baptism. This person, according to Dujarier, is a witness of Christ in his daily life to those men of goodwill who are seeking God.

This, the person or sponsor does, throughout the period. He continues to witness and give evidence to the Christian community of the serious intention of the adult candidate for conversion and reception of baptism and assistance to the parents in the upbringing of their child in the Christian faith.

As a guide, the sponsor is responsible for introducing his godchild to the city of God, showing him the usages and customs of the people of which he is becoming a member.

Communal Sponsorship, on the hand, is the role played by the entire Christian community in witnessing to the faith. Dujarier asserts that 'all the faithful, in one way or another, make up the human entourage of the catechumen.'⁷² This understanding brings to the light the missionary spirit of the church, whose responsibility it is to bring men the good news of salvation, welcome them to the halls of the faithful, sustain them with the sacraments and educate those who eventually become members in the faith of the gospel. In this sense, but to all Christians, who by their words and example guide the candidates not only to the waters of baptism but to lead the Christian life.

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It is the conviction of Dujarier that one person may not be enough to establish all the conditions necessary for new converts. The task of Christian formation does not belong exclusively to the sponsors, or even primarily to him. All Christians have a part to play in the maternal care and catechetical formation of the new convert. Thus, all should be concerned in all the actions and ceremonies that introduces the new subjects into the people of the covenant. Nevertheless, the presence of the whole church does not amount to dispensing of the actual sponsor. His part remains indispensable, because 'the church makes him not merely her delegate, but the visible and efficacious sign of her sponsoring action.

The Rukuba Society⁷³

For the Rukuba society the candidates are dedicated to the community life. Several processes and methods are being observed as a means of marking the transition. Teenage are recruited through a series of teaching that cover every aspect of life. The aim of this exercise is to shape the young ones into responsible adult and these teachings are led by the sponsor (*ugbari*). Some of the teachings are explained as follow and the periods that are appropriately taught:

⁷¹ Louis Bouyer. *Liturgical Piety* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978) 164

⁷² Dujarier, 49

⁷³ The stages of initiation rites is an interview that Philemon Aditik Atabat had with the Chief of Igbak, Itara Ajina and Amala Imba while Yakubu Uchu took the notes. The magnificent and scholarly centenary compendium (The Fall of the Ritual Drum and the Triumph of the Cross) of the History of ECWA in Rukubaland, edited by our revered and erudite scholar Dr. Gideon Aduk Amuga was consulted in the writing of this article.



1. The first is called *kugo* which observed at the beginning of new calendar year. It is performed after every 14 years. The young recruits go to touch the ritual stone and after which two goats will be sacrificed. The black goats is offered as a sin offering and the white goat is offered as a peace offering.⁷⁴ **The lesson is: beware of the good and evil even though your sin has been taken away.**

2. One of the aspects of initiation is called "Izaru". It the exercise of circumcision of all the male children in the land. The candidates are taken to the river and are sprinkled with water **to signify that water is everything to life** and it is a kind of traditional baptism.

3. **Ici:** The male is seen as the bread winner, the custodian of the tradition and the provider of security. The society needs to nurture him into assuming these responsibilities. The traditional rites performed upon him are called "Ici." This ritual is performed on an interval of three years consecutively on prospective candidates. The aim and objective of Ichi is to instill discipline and inculcate good moral values on the male child.⁷⁵

Points of Convergence

The need for sponsor

For the grace of initiation to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of sponsors (godfather and godmother) who will help the newly baptized in the road of life having established the fact that they are firm members. Their role truly is fundamental, as it is truly a communal function.

The Rukuba culture too, no doubt sees the role of sponsors as a fundamental one. No wonder the child is not only committed into the hands of the parents and the community but insists that the neophyte needs a sponsor (godparent) who can stand by him as he grows and matures in the values of his culture. This in a very significant way renders eminence and nobility to the role of sponsors. It can, therefore, be contested that sponsors garbed with a role so sensitive that if not properly executed can lay a shaky foundation to maturity in the values of the culture.⁷⁶

Sponsors are Guarantors of Faith

Those who act as guarantors for money accept a greater responsibility in the debtor who receives the money. If the borrower proves generous he lightens the load of the guarantees, but if not he prepares a great crash for him. It is for this reason that the Wise man offers his advice; "if you offer yourself as surety, stand as surety for money are responsible for the full sum. Those who guarantee that others will pay their account of virtue in matters of the spirit have an even greater duty to show vigilance advising, counseling correcting with a paternal affection."⁷⁷

The rukuba culture enjoins sponsor that, he should not consider that what he is doing is not a routine action, rather, he should be fully aware that he would share the credit if he guides the charges to the path of virtue by advice, but that if he negligent then grave condemnation will fall upon him. For if it is a noble thing for the *uni sol kikuru* to lead the *ugbari* who is in no way connected with him to the desire of virtue, he has a much greater duty to fulfill this obligation to whom he has received to

⁷⁴ Amuga Aduk Gideon. *The Fall of the Ritual Drum and the Triumph of the Cross* (Jos: Yakson Press, 2015) 48

⁷⁵ Amuga, 48

⁷⁶ Bulbs, Adik, Adumo. *Bace Cultures and Traditions* (Jos: Corporate Heights Press, 2022) 53

⁷⁷T.M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate West and East Syria* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1927) 77.



the position of a spiritual form.⁷⁸ To sum up, negligence brings no small danger to the neophyte by the one who is acting as sponsors.

The *Uni isol kikuru*, as Evangeliser

The initiation rite of the rukuba culture insists that the sponsors must be vital indeed, must be constitutive of the life of the whole people. In particular, it presumes that within every community there are enough young men to apprentice the neophytes in the intricate art of cultures of the people. The Rite of our people's Initiation has cogently put it: one learns how to appreciate one being, pray and bless, refute, celebrate, and serve the good of ones' neighbours less by being lectured on those matters than by close association with people who do these things with regular ease and flair.

Concerning these, the neophytes should choose his/her godparent through their parents as they proceed and as the candidate's faith and perceptiveness deepen. Those sponsors then become the more intimate examples of community living for the neophytes. They go through all the stages of the initiation together. But their role does not stop here. It should continue after initiation as mere neophyte at least until such time as the *ugbari* is finally matured enough in cultural values and to stand firm on his own feet in times of adversity.⁷⁹

The *Uni isol kikuru*, as a Teacher

The role of sponsors comes handy when he set out as a teacher to give some guidelines on the Rukubanness of Rukuba for the *ugbari*. He not only follows him all through the rite but he involves himself too so that he becomes part and passel of the candidate.

The sponsor, according to the Rukuba culture also acts as a teacher from two points of view; from teaching tradition of the Rukuba and the new insights gained in the in their history and secondly from the life experience of the modern society as known at the present time. The cultural design must be on the importance that the *Uni isol kikuru*, (godparent) chosen by the family, be matured enough to accept this responsibility, has received the initiation, is an active member of the clan.⁸⁰

Conditions for choosing a sponsor in the Church

According to the most ancient tradition, as mentioned earlier, the person to be baptized should have at least a sponsor. In adult baptism, the sponsors or godparents are chosen by the candidates; while at infant baptism, the parents choose who plays this role for the infant, and their relationship with the infants is rather indirect as the infants are naturally always with their parents. The Code of Canon Law regulates the requirements of a godparent or sponsor. The law allows for one male, one female, or one of each to serve as sponsors. It requires that the must be least 16 years old (unless an exception is made), he or she must be fully an initiated Catholic who is baptized, confirmed, a communicant, and not bound by canonical penalties.

The presence of *bani isol akuru* is very ancient custom in the Rukuba culture. The *bani isol akuru* are members of the community who are of good repute, assist *bagbari* by helping them to persevere the beliefs and life of the people. It is of paramount importance that the sponsor is chosen by the family and must be mature enough to accept this responsibility. The *uni isol kikuru* must have undergone all the stages of initiation and had lived them in the community, in other words the *uni*

⁷⁸ Adik, 54

⁷⁹ Amuga, 32

⁸⁰ Adik, 45



isol kikuru must be an active member of the community. He must be a married man, must be Rukuba person who is well known in his clan and has a history of uprightness.⁸¹

Points of Divergence

Significance of Initiation Rites to the Neophyte

The initiation rites empower the neophyte to have dual citizenship or identity. He acquires a potential heavenly citizenship to add to the earthly citizenship that he has already, being a Rukuba person as well as being a Christian. Through baptism the Christian participates in Christ's death and resurrection through the ritual of baptism sets the ritual in a paschal context (Rom 6:5). Again, there is the Johannine declaration that one must be born again from above in both water and the spirit (John 3:3-5) introduces the idea of spiritual rebirth. Both passages, however, suggest that baptism is a new birth in this world as well as in the next and bears the promise of resurrection for both present and future.

That is why the neophytes were expected to obtain sponsors who would guide them through the process and vouch for their sincerity and character. Apart from that, most of the Christian baptismal ritual actions were purificatory and therapeutic. These actions aimed to help them remain steadfastly faithful and armed against backsliding into sin, idolatry, or other bad habits. The sanctified water by the Invocation of God, used for baptism, has the power to wash both body and spirit. Sin resides in both, according to Tertullian.⁸²

A person belonging to another tribe is not in any way allowed or admitted to be *uni isol kikuru* at the cultural initiation, not even as witnesses. It is clear that a person who has not been initiated into the cultural rites even as a Rukuba person cannot appropriately fulfill the requisites for being a *uni isol akuru*.

The Rukuba initiation rites of ritual purification make the neophyte a property of their culture. The belief is that, he was born impure and so needs the ritual cleansing, without which, he is lost. Through the ritual cleansing, he does not only belong to the culture, but now, a stake holder in the system. The initiation rites is like a contract submission to the society, here on earth. There is no mention of heavenly belonging like Christianity.⁸³

Way Forward

After about 100 years of Christianity in the as Rukuba people what do we learn from all these. What element can we borrow from our cultural initiation to enrich Christianity? Or we may ask directly: what is our contribution to Christianity via our culture. A step back into history may help us here.

When Abraham came to the land of Canaan his family learn from the Canaanites culture how they left their houses and travel for months without locking their houses. All they did was to put the blood of animals on their door post and nothing will happen to the house until they come back. The Israelites used that at the Passover meal in Egypt and God spared their first sons. Jesus finally made that his own when he ate the Last Supper with his disciples. A pagan feast Christianized.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Amuga, 45

⁸² Jensen, 99

⁸³ Amuga, 45

⁸⁴ Adolf Adams. *The Liturgical Year: its History and Its Meaning After the Reform of Liturgy* (MN, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981) 33



Among the Greeks comes the word liturgy which came to be inculcated in the name of the church. This was the result of their culture encountering Christ the Lord. They succeeded in giving us the first language of the church. The New Testament and some of the Old Testament were in Greek language. It was also through the Greeks that we had the first outline of the Eucharistic celebration. When we come to the Romans, there so many contributions that they made to Christianity through their culture. Suffice here just to mention a few: the Christmas celebration from the birth of the Sun-god to the Son of God. Workers day that is observed world wide is a contribution to Christian world from the Roman culture of the god of rust.⁸⁵

Coming this far we shall like to proffer some suggestions on some symbolic elements that we mentioned or came across in the cause of this write up. In the future we shall expound on them in other *fora*. These suggestions are for our meditations on our way forward. They are to spur us into critical thinking and more research on the beauty of our culture.

Baptism: We have seen that through the elaborate celebration of the initiation rites in our culture, the whole community is involved. The initiates are for the good of the society. They belong to all. Everybody has to contribute to their growth. Their failure in life is the failure of the community. Their success in life is the success of the community, as such all are involved-men and women, young and old alike.

Our submission here is that the Christian church should celebrate baptism with joy and pomp fare in Rukubaland as the Rukuba culture celebrates initiation rites. Get parents, relations and the whole community to come and witness of the reception of the neophytes into the Christian faith. Let us demonstrate that we shall live for one another in the salvific faith that we have received gratuitously from Christ. Invite people from the other denomination without discrimination to come and witness this great celebration.

One may wonder why we are making such emphasis for the need to celebrate baptism and give it the place that it deserves among Christians in Rukubaland. The Rukuba people of old never had the teaching on the resurrection the way we have it today but through their initiation and guided by its norms they only had the hope of being rewarded as ancestors when they die. For us Christians we are a resurrection people and alleluia is our song and yet we have little or nothing to show for it.

Communal Sponsorship, on the hand, is the role played by the entire Christian community in witnessing to the faith. Dujarier asserts that 'all the faithful, in one way or another, make up the human entourage of the catechumen.' This understanding brings to the light the missionary spirit of the church, whose responsibility it is to bring men the good news of salvation, welcome them to the halls of the faithful, sustain them with the sacraments and educate those who eventually become members in the faith of the gospel. In this sense, but to all Christians, who by their words and example guide the candidates not only to the waters of baptism but to lead the Christian life.

It is the conviction of Dujarier that one person may not be enough to establish all the conditions necessary for new converts. The task of Christian formation does not belong exclusively to the sponsors, or even primarily to him. All Christians have a part to play in the maternal care and catechetical formation of the new convert. Thus, all should be concerned in all the actions and ceremonies that introduces the new subjects into the people of the covenant. Nevertheless, the

⁸⁵ Thomas Talley. *Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997) 45



presence of the whole church does not amount to dispensing of the actual sponsor. His part remains indispensable, because 'the church makes him not merely her delegate, but the visible and efficacious sign of her sponsoring action. Here are we Christians being promised life eternal and we do not regard it as anything serious. Our submission on this point is that if the end of the baptism is a feast in heaven, we should begin it with a feast in the spirit of the Rukuba culture.

Conclusion

Having had an extensive study of the role of the sponsor in the Rukuba culture, we are assured of the fact that this practice has its history. We have also come to terms with the fact that this practice as perpetuated in the Rukuba culture are of fundamental importance to the life of the people and it is through the *ici* that brings the young one into the Rukuba family. In this case however, it is more pressing to see it as that which implants the belief in the *ugbari* who relies on the belief of the parents, *uni isol kikuru*, and the entire Rukuba community, for the nurturing and sustenance of their beliefs. We are also treated with the fact that various roles must interplay if the neophyte is to attain its desired goal. We are certain to conclude, therefore, that the role of the *uni isol kikuru* is indeed treasureable in the Rukuba community.