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THE EDO ORIGIN OF EZIKEOBA: A REAPPRAISAL

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Abstract

The tendency for societies to create links with flourishing kingdoms and empires is no longer new to history. At the dawn of colonialism, the Europeans saw all decentralised societies as appendages of their centralised neighbours and whatever positive developments found in those societies were ascribed to the influence of their centralised 'civilized' neighbours. By this token, the influence of the Ife, Edo, Igala, Kwararafa (Jukun), Bornu, Sokoto states on their neighbours cannot be overemphasised. As the Yoruba claim the origin of Edo monarchy; the Edo and Jukun claim the origin of Igala monarchy, and the Igala claim the origin of Nupe monarchy as well as lording it over northern Igbo communities and the Idoma of the Benue valley. However, most Igbo societies on both banks of the river Niger claim Edo origin. This has been the dilemma of the study of Igbo history as the pendulum has always tilted in favour of big monarchies like the Edo and the Igala. The proximity of these societies to the Edo kingdom is understandable, but it might be misleading to view all relations in distant past as characterised by domination and suppression of small states by big states. The so-called small states have been labelled village republics, acephalous, stateless among so many other names. The impetus for this study is the postulation that Ezikeoba, the eponymous ancestor of Enugu Ezike was an Edo man. This paper intends to reappraise this claim of Edo origin of Ezikeoba in the light of the available historical evidence, suggesting further investigations rather than the suppression of inconvenient facts.

Keywords: Edo, Ezikeobalogy, Igbo, Origin, Enugu Ezike, Igala.

Introduction

> Small scale societies adjoining ancient kingdoms or empires like Benin were considered, without much argument, as dependencies of those empires, or in any case, the political systems of such small-scale societies were regarded as derivations from the political systems of the said empires. …the histories of these empires, became also the histories of the small-scale societies on their frontiers, or at least the major source for explaining every important aspect of the life of those societies – the origins and migrations of their peoples, their political structure and dynamics, their economic systems, their art, dance and overall cultural heritage (Afigbo 1987: 13).

The weak needed the strong for protection and as a result made putative relationships with them. They, however, were misconstrued to be subjects of such strong kingdoms and their histories and traditions as appendages of those centralised societies. The reason was not far-fetched because of the documentaries of royal historians, which were devoid in the small states. In northern Nigeria, the Bayajida legend appears to be the official legend of origin brandished by most societies. Bornu and Sokoto empires are united in this and because of

their influence; all other small states have imbibed this tradition hook-line-and-sinker. However, it appears that most legends of origin were, in fact, the origin of kingships rather than that of the people. Nonetheless, it appears that in other for the kings to legitimise their rulership over the people, they wove their origin around the people; the people to find favour in the king accept this as official history. This has been the feature in most Nigerian societies, as the interest of the historians in royal courts had been the recording of the idiosyncrasies of the kings as well as his political exploits. Thus, the social and economic lives of the people were relegated to the background as praise singing for the kings takes centre stage.

Among the Igbo, Edo kingdom is also referred to as *Obodo Iduu*. The relationship between the Edo and the Igbo had been from old. There were cultural borrowings and giving among them. The stories about events in the land of *Iduu* were prevalent in Igbo folktales. These tales came as wonders and issues concerning the *Iduu* were portrayed as wonderfully superhuman. Could it be the desire to associate with the wonderful kingdom that informed the claim of Benin origin of some Igbo communities? Onitsha and some other Western Igbo communities claim that their ancestors came from Iduu. For the Onitsha person, Ezechima, their eponymous ancestor came from Iduu and founded Ado n'Idu (Odukwe 2008: 13), the ancient name of modern Onitsha. J.U. Egharevba suggests that people who migrated from Benin founded Onitsha (Egharevba 1968: 29). One may wonder, if the name (Onitsha) was Edo or Igbo and why many towns across the Niger go by it. When did the name Ado N'Idu change to Onitsha and why? In Ohaozara Igbo, there is Onitsha Ohaozara and in Enugu Ezike Igbo, there is Onitsha in Enugu Ezike. For the Onitsha Ohaozara people, they were descendants of an Onitsha Ado N'Idu native doctor who migrated to the area in times past to carry on with his profession (Bosah (?) 17). However, there was no such link for the founding of Onitsha in Enugu Ezike. Be that as it may, A.E. Afigbo was of the opinion that in times past, some Igbo from the Nri-Awka upland migrated westwards across the Niger towards Benin because of population pressure on land. Their recoil from the expanding Benin Empire was what had survived in the traditions of Igbo communities east and west of the Niger in form of origins or migrations or flights from Benin (Afigbo 1981: 12).

It is not out of place for societies to look upon flourishing empires and kingdoms when matters of their origin take the centre stage. As a result, the Kwararafa, Igala, Yoruba and Edo Kingdoms of the Sudan had far-reaching influences on their neighbours. Perhaps, in line with the above, these kingdoms tended to look outside the Sudan for their own histories of origin – Egypt and the Middle East. For colonial ethnographers, these kingdoms of the Sudan could not have been established without input from outside black Africa (Palmer 1931). They upheld that the Hamites introduced the idea of state formation in the Sudan and the result was the establishment of these kingdoms. Thus, the Kwararafa Empire was the harbinger of the Igala and the Idoma as well as the Aro of Igboland. Nevertheless, whereas the Igala formed a big state, the Idoma did not and the Aro, irrespective of their religious, commercial and political influence in Igboland failed to form a kingdom out of Igboland. These hermetic claims, however, had been punctured and discredited over time. What remained was the puncturing of the claim by most societies to derive from the kingdoms of the Sudan. This is the import of this exercise looking through the Enugu Ezike historical spectacle.

The Edo and Igala Influence in Igboland

> Of all the neighbours of the Igbo culture history… the Edo kingdom of Benin and the Igala state at Ida would appear to have had the most far-reaching impact on the evolution of Igbo culture. The influence of Benin was most felt in the West Igbo areas, the riverine region around Aboh and Onitsha. Benin influence was largely political and could be seen in the institution of village monarchies, which exist all through this area. It is also seen in the character of the title system as in the names of some of the titles… Ida's influence is a little more difficult to pin down, though it would appear to have been pushed at the point of the sword like that of Benin (Afigbo 2005: 81).

The Edo and the Igala kingdoms appear to have had a far-reaching impact on their Igbo neighbours. For the Edo, this is evident in the nature of some West Igbo monarchies, titles and material culture. However, the driving force of this influence should be discussed with caution as oftentimes, symbiotic relationships have been sacrificed for nationalistic ego drives. Material and immaterial cultures knew no boundaries as town B can borrow from town A; and C from B; and D from C. Despite the fact that A was the original carrier, D may no longer acknowledge it as the original carrier. It appears for mercantilist reasons; conquest has been advanced to explain the relationships of these kingdoms rather than commonality.

The influence of Benin was felt among the Western Igbo and along both banks of the river Niger; the Igala influence radiated on the length and breadth of northern Igboland. Both influences were prominent in the political sphere of the Igbo but, however, not of the conquest-vassal relationship. Nevertheless, cultural and political relics knew no boundaries and moved easily across borders. For instance, who is the original owner of the bronze mask worn by the Oba of Benin, Ata of Igala and the Eze Nri? The bronze mask, *Ejubejailo* won by the Atta of Igala is worn by the Oba of Benin and the Eze Nri and *Oraeri* in Igboland. In the Igbo Ukwu discoveries, Thurstan Shaw established that bronze workings in the area predated that of Benin. It may be difficult to ascribe the origin of this royal pendant to any of the courts. It is made of bronze and bronze working was developed among the Edo more than among either the Igbo or the Igala. However, the original user may not have made it with bronze. It could have originated as woodcarving or clay mould. It became popular when the Europeans recovered it from Benin, but that does not explain the origin. This had been largely misconstrued to mean suzerainty of these kingdoms and political dominance of their neighbours. Because of the political strength of these kingdoms, their small-scale neighbours looked up to them for strength and courage and that appears to have led to the build–up of putative kinships with them. This was to be misconstrued as conqueror – vassal relationship.

Among the Igbo, Edo and Yoruba traditions of origin, there is the oriental hypothesis, which claims they had migrated from the Middle East to their present abode. For the Igbo, the similitude between their culture and some ideas and practices of the Levitical Code (Basden 1912) tended to inform their claim. Apart from the Osanobua tradition of Edo origin, there is also the tradition of the oriental origin of the Edo. This tradition postulates that the Edo people came to settle in their present location from Egypt (Okpoko & Agbontaen 1988: 215-226). The Oduduwa traditions of Yoruba origin notwithstanding, there are suggestions that the Yoruba migrated from the North-East, particularly Egypt (Talbot 1926: 276; Lucas 1948: 3; Johnson 1973: 3-4; Oguntomisin 227-247). There is the Igala tradition of migration from Apa in the

erstwhile Kwararafa kingdom in the Benue valley and also Kwararafa origin from Egypt (Meek 1931). The plausibility of these claims is not the business of this paper. However, the probable reasons for these claims may not be unconnected with the fact that these places were centres where great civilisations flourished and were widely known. Even among the Igbo, the Aro and the Nri were believed to have derived from an alien stock perhaps because of the level of socio-political organisation they reached before the time of British invasion[1]. No eyebrow was raised as to why the two failed to form an Igbo kingdom. This perhaps points to the superfluous nature of their hegemony and their spurious claims of domination of the Igbo.

The Edo has borders with the Igbo on the east and most Igbo communities on both banks of the River Niger claim to derive their original homeland from Bini. The Edo themselves claim to have been put in the place they are by Osanobua, the High God, deriving from nowhere. The claim of independent origin is also prevalent in most societies as earlier noted. The Yoruba claim that Oduduwa, their eponymous ancestor descended from the sky and established his earthly kingdom. For the Osanobua tradition, Bini was the cradle of mankind and perhaps the biblical 'Garden of Eden'. Therefore, the Bini Kingdom that began an acquaintance with the Europeans in the 15th century must accord herself the right place in the history of the Sudan. They could not have derived from any other state or place around them but believed that their mysterious ancestor had a *tête-à-tête* with Osanobua and Bini came to being. In the 1962 edition of *The Story of Nigeria,* Michael Crowder wrote,

> Benin reached its apogee in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In A.D. 1440, Uwaifiokun usurped the throne from Ogun, the rightful heir. Ogun murdered him shortly after, and took the title of Ewuare. He extended the empire to the West banks of the Niger and became known as Ewuare the Great. He also enlarged the city of Benin. His rule was unpopular and many citizens are said to have migrated to other lands beyond his jurisdiction. This is possibly the origin of some of the traditions of neighbouring tribes like the Urhobo, Western Ijaw, Western Ibo and Onitsha Ibo (Crowder 1962:162).

Here, the authoritarian nature of the Oba made most of the subjects ran away from his kingdom. It is probable these run-away subjects became the founders of the Urhobo, Western Ijaw, Western Igbo, Itsekiri and Onitsha. Edo's greatness was informed by its early contact with the Europeans and the acquisition of muskets. However, the extent of the kingdom may not have gone beyond the neighbouring communities. The argument by the Agbor Patriotic Union against Edo domination is a case. That neighbouring states were a threat to Edo power and they never indeed lorded it over them. For the European anthropologists, the boundary of kingdoms has to be with another kingdom and so long as there were no other kingdoms around, the whole areas were part of the Edo Empire. This was the basis of the spurious claims of dominations by kingdoms and empires.

Not much is said about the era of the Ogisos in Benin history as available literature on Benin had been the literature of the current dynasty of Obas. The height of Benin Empire could not have been attained without the Portuguese influence that provided them with muskets to subdue their neighbours. Since then, Benin stories were reported in superlative terms and this has influenced studies on the influence of the Kingdom. J.U. Egharevba (1968: 29) did not help

matters in his work, *A Short History of Benin*, as he went on to echo the reports of European ethnographers and sociologists on Benin.[2] The Benin Kingdom was the first in western Sudan to ally with the Portuguese and thus was the first to use muskets. The kingdom expanded and its land area encompassed the whole of Edo, Delta, Ondo, Ogun and Lagos states of modern Nigeria. The Niger provided a natural boundary in its eastern frontiers; in the south was the Atlantic Ocean and in the north was the Igala Kingdom.

The Ezikeoba Tradition: the Edo Connection

On descent from the Edo Kingdom, Uchendu affirms that,

> There are traditions confirmed by intrusive culture traits, of peoples who entered Igbo territory in about the fourteenth or the fifteenth century. Of these, there are the Nri in whom Igala influence is marked; and the Nzam and Anam, who combine Bini and Igala traits. Onitsha, Oguta, and the Ezechima group of villages in Western Igbo claim affinity with Bini and have the kingship institution to show "as evidence of descent". Their eponymous ancestor Chima- an Igbo name conclusively demonstrates that these Ezechima people were not Bini but Igbo speaking people once under the political domination of Benin Kingdom. The distinguishing characteristics of these "late comers" include their geographical marginality, kingship institution, hierarchical title system, and *amosu* (witchcraft) tradition (Uchendu 1963: 3).

What else could be said about the Igbo in connection with what had been said about them with regard to the Igala? Various societies in Igboland continue to look forward to both the Edo in the West and the Igala, in the North as their cradle places. Most of the societies that trace their origin traditions to the Edo were often located on both banks of the River Niger. Those who look upon the Igala as their cradle place are in Northern Igboland and in proximity to Igalaland. Uchendu also emphasised that those communities live on the frontier of Igboland and seem to have borrowed political systems. However, one may question why the Edo or the Igala did not derive from the Igbo? The reason is not far-fetched: they are both centralised societies believed to have advanced civilisation.

There was more to Bini-Igbo relations than military conquests and subjugations in the 400 years before British conquest (Afigbo 1981: 61). The myths of origin of Enugu Ezike revolve around a personality, Ezike Oba, whose place of origin may be located between Benin, Ida, or around the Awka area of Igboland depending on the school of thought. In reconstructing the history of Enugu Ezike, two schools of thought emerge. The propagators of these schools although differ in their explanation of the course of migration and place of origin, nevertheless, assent to the settlement of the town and the scion - Ezikeoba. The first school of thought is the Ezikeoba School and upheld by local historians. A second school is that held by colonial historians and adopted by contemporary Igbo historians and ethnographers. G. Jones and D. Forde (1950: 35), A.J. Shelton (1971: xii), Adiele Afigbo (1981), S.C. Ukpabi (1971) among others are pioneers in this field. This is the Independent Settlement School and they believe that the peopling of Enugu Ezike was as a result of

> …early and probably independent …settlement, a centre from which migrants went to settle the plains to the East of the Udi-Nsukka highlands (Forde and Jones, 1950).

This group believes that Enugu Ezike was an area of secondary Igbo migration. They argued that the population density of the area was high because several Igbo groups not knowing that a balance of power had been struck with the Idoma and the Igala continued to pour into the area. What influenced the concentration of Igbo population in this area given the unavailability of rivers and arable land? Rivers as a transport system would have influenced the movement of people to this area and arable land would have sustained their stay in the area that is today, Enugu Ezike. The Anambra valley of northern Igboland has the best soil for agriculture but it did not attract the attention of these Igbo migrants. The Anambra basin appears to be a cantankerous area where the legendary Onoja Oboni ravaged. Perhaps, as a result of the war-torn state of the area, there was emigration from that area of northwestern Igboland. A critical examination of the map of Igboland shows the retreating nature of the area across the Anambra River. One may then ask: what caused the population trap in Enugu Ezike? Why is the population density so high, and adjudged the most populous village group in West Africa?

The claim that the chain of hills caused a population trap in terms of the need for defence and arable land appears not convincing enough because the sandy nature of the soil makes it unsuitable for the cultivation of yam, the Igbo staple crop. The Enugu Ezike area had neither streams nor rivers to attract heavy population and the migrating Igbo from the heartland could have gone back or run northwestwards to the Adada River or the Anambra River and exploit its rich soil in agriculture. Enugu Ezike soil could not have been more fertile than the soil of the Anambra valley of Igboland with its fresh water. With regard to defence, there is no oral record of wars in the peoples' tradition except for the late 19th and mid-20th centuries. The argument that the shape of the map of Igboland looks like an arrowhead at the Enugu Ezike area was a result of the influx of other Igbo migrants into the area. This is speculative history, for no town or group of people designed the shape of their land area. It was all a matter of conjecture. The shapes of the map of African states were not designed by them but by the colonial masters employing the machinery for boundary adjustment. This is why border disputes have persisted.

The Ezikeoba School is woven around a legendary primogenitor, Ezikeoba, who is believed to be a great warrior, hunter and wanderer[3]. It is believed that he left his home either in Ida, Benin or in Igbo heartland and sought for a fortune in the present-day Enugu Ezike. From where exactly did Ezikeoba come from? The answer to this question has led to the three variants of the Ezikeoba School of Thought; the examination of which will lend credence to our argument. Let us look at the three variants.

The Ida variant of this tradition suggests that Ezikeoba was an Igala hunter who shot an elephant and followed the wounded animal to a place called Ugwueka at Amube, where it finally fell.[4] It was believed that at Amube, the Attama Ugwueka encouraged him to settle and influenced his occupational change from hunting to agriculture. C.K. Meek, perhaps alluding to this tradition opines that Ezeke (Ezikeoba) was the son of Attama of Amube captured during an Igala slave raid and taken to Ida where he stayed for some time before he managed to escape and go home (Meek 1931). He believed that during his sojourn at Ida, Ezike learnt the art of governance at Ata's court and when he came back he brought the import of his learning to bear on his community[5].

The second variant, the Benin tradition suggests that Ezike Oba came from Benin. It posits that he was captured during the Benin–Igala war of the 16th century by the Igala and taken to Ida. At Ida, he escaped from captivity and became a hunter. As a hunter, he shot and elephant which he trailed to Amube. At Amube, he met the Atama of Ugwueka.

The third variant claims that Ezikeoba is derived from Igboland. It posits that Ezikeoba's original homeland lay in central Igboland and that due to population pressure on land; most people left their homes in search of arable land. Some went to the Niger and settled. In course of the expansion bids of Benin Kingdom, West Niger Igbo areas were in chaos. The chaotic state of the area later forced many groups to migrate back east of the Niger. It was probably at this stage that most Igbo communities now residing on both banks of the Niger began to claim descent from Edo. Having lived for some time across the Niger, and having borrowed from the Edo culture, they assumed they were of Edo origin. It appears that in course of the chaos that characterised the expansion, Ezikeoba ran back across the Niger, and instead of taking an easterly direction, he took a northeasterly direction and landed at Ida from where he shot an elephant, and followed it to Amube.

All the variants of the Ezikeoba School of Thought allude to Ida as a common denominator. No doubt, this was because the Igala was the most powerful kingdom in the vicinity with tales about the suzerainty of the Atta told in superlative terms. For the Igbo, it was appealing to find such population paying allegiance to only one man. The 'fragmentary' nature of the society made them wonder why an individual would be allowed to wield such powers. Nevertheless, the tradition which associates Ezikeoba to a prisoner of war captured during the Igala/Edo war of the 16th century by the Igala forces and taken to Ida needed close scrutiny. Although this period tallies with the 1530 dating of the founding of Enugu Ezike (Apeh 2012: 69), it may have been a matter of conjecture.

The proponents of the Edo variant based their argument on a similar nomenclature, 'Oba' found in the name, Ezike Oba. Ben Eze had earlier on dismissed this argument for lack of evidence (Eze 1984: 4). The proposition that the putative ancestor of Enugu Ezike is called Ezike Oba, has without reason, simply alluded that it was because they came from Benin. An Enugu Ezike historian on fieldwork in 1977 inquired from Oba Akenzua of Benin on the plausibility of this claim. The answer obtained appeared to be a deliberate attempt to join the history of Enugu Ezike with the famous Benin Empire. The pride of any ruler is the size of his kingdom and influence and perhaps this accounted for the Oba's claim that Ezikeoba was one of his children that left as a result of succession disputes.[6] It is, however, discernible that Edo had a standard order of succession, primogeniture, which made for a little trouble at the demise of an Oba. However, when Edo began the practice of primogeniture, shifting from adelphic[7] patrimony, is still vague. This may have shielded the throne from disputes. The main argument for this theory has been the suffix, Oba found in the name Ezike Oba. The title Oba is used by most societies in Western Nigeria and it was not a prerogative of the Edo alone to address their kings as such. What was more; Oba is an Igbo word for barn or cup and two towns in Igboland go by the name - Oba in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State and Oba in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State respectively.

If Ezike Oba had come from Edo, he would have introduced the kingship system and titles in Enugu Ezike. In Enugu Ezike, gerontocracy holds sway while the Edo has a kingship system

based on primogeniture. The kingship institution in Edo or the paraphernalia of the institution is, in no way found, in Enugu Ezike. However, the only cultural trait common to both societies was the belief that maternity is a fact and paternity, an opinion[8]. In Enugu Ezike, mothers determine the fathers of their children and not marriage or husbands as found in many other societies in Igboland. An Enugu Ezike person may not be married, but may biologically have any number of children who are his bona fide heirs. However, a man who may find it biologically difficult to father a baby may end up not having one. Adoption is not practised in the general idea of it. One may not go out of the family to adopt a child but may adopt a nephew of his agnatic kin, who may become his heir.

On the etymology of Oba, the coconut is '*Aku Oba'* in Enugu Ezike dialect and '*Aku Oyibo'* in other Igbo dialects. Does the name *Aku Oba* portend that it was derived from Benin? There was no way one can relate the name to Benin alone as the Yoruba also has Oba as the title of their kings. The coconut was derived outside Africa and could have been introduced by the Portuguese through the Benin Kingdom who they had the earliest dealings. Therefore, it does appear that it was from Benin that the coconut diffused to the nooks and cranny of modern Nigeria. However, even if it had nothing to do with the origin of Ezike Oba, it may explain the unity of the pre-colonial Nigerian economy and its inherent interdependence.

The Ida theory enjoys more acclamation among the Enugu Ezike people. However, as stated earlier, Ida is a common denominator in the different theories of Enugu Ezike origin. Ida's centrality in Enugu Ezike tradition of origin may be because the former achieved a high level of political development that dominated her environs. Perhaps, as a result of this domination, many societies, "probably for fear of devastating raids from Igala…built up putative kinship with Ida"(Afigbo 1981).

> Confronting the Atta of Igala on the tenability of the above assertion, he explained that,
>
> Those who came to take the Eze title at Ida were definitely Atta's representatives in their respective areas and were, therefore, accountable to him (Eze 1984).

In as much as the Atta, like the Oba of Benin prides on the extent of the Igala Kingdom while expressing the above opinion, it nonetheless did not confirm the belief that Enugu Ezike originated from Igala or sometimes a vassal state of Igala. The Atta's idea of the extent of the Igala kingdom before British intervention was that it extended to Nike and Ogbaru as well as the entire Idomaland. The same thing is applicable to the Oba, who perceives the eastern border of his kingdom as the river Niger. Despite the Niger, the two kingdoms would have been specific on their borders, that is, there would have been encroachment that would have helped delineate their true borders.

For three-fold reasons, some communities tended to associate their origin with erstwhile kingdoms and empires. Prominent among the reasons is the desire for legitimacy among their neighbours. In order to legitimise claims of domination among their neighbours, they tended to strengthen such claims by making putative ties with big kingdoms to find royal ancestry. Two, it was advanced to overrule the claims of their autochthonous neighbours and find a place in the history of a new settlement. Three, it was to validate and justify their history of

migrations and settlement. It was also fashionable to associate with flourishing kingdoms to instil awe on their neighbours, for protection and justification of whatever influence they had over them.

H.O. Eya, perhaps in an attempt to marry the three variants of the Ezikeoba school of thought suggested as follows:

> Enugu Ezike had originally descended from Oba of Benin… and has the name *Enugu Ezike Oba Atta Igara bi Igbo N'ime*. Ezikeoba migrated from Benin to Onitsha through Asaba via Aguleri to Ebenebe and then came to settle at Enugu Ukwu…which has since been known to be the original home of Ezikeoba…there is *Okpuno Ezike* in Enugu Ukwu… from Enugu Ukwu, Ezikeoba migrated through the Anambra River to Igabada and to Ida from where he shot an elephant which he followed to Ugwueka hill at Amube (Eya ?, 38).

Despite the seeming unintelligibility of the geography of this migration, this account should be taken with a pinch of salt. The reason for the migration was not explained but it does appear that it was a period of Igbo expansion due to population increase in the heartland area. This perhaps coincided with the rise and territorial expansion of the Bini Kingdom. Many Igbo communities moved across the Niger and were accosted by the expanding Bini Kingdom. Some ran back to the eastern bank while others were trapped on the western bank. This appears to explain the presence of Igbo communities across the Niger[9] and the claim of Bini origin[10] by some of them. Could Ezikeoba have been among those who retreated? Instead of coming back through the direction of Igboland, took a northeasterly route which took him to Ida, and perhaps, in search of his Igbo brothers, he came to Ugwueka where he was able to communicate to the Attama (Priest) of Ugwueka. The claim of Enugu Ezike link with Enugu Ukwu via the ancestral homeland, Okpuno Ezike was brought forward sometime around 1985 when some men from Enugu Ukwu came to some Enugu Ezike people asking them to stand as a witness for them in a land case concerning Okpuno Ezike[11].

Conclusion

Nevertheless, the case of Ezike Oba's ties with the Edo, which is the subject of this discourse, appears untenable. If the justification of the claimants were because of the suffix 'Oba', one may then wonder what becomes of the prefix, Ezike? The etymology of the name, Ezike, is Igbo and the suffix, Oba has meaning in Igbo. The name Ezike Oba then lends more weight to Igbo than to Edo or Yoruba or Igala. If Ezikeoba was an Edo person, he would have brought with him the kingship pattern of the Edo or their regalia. What seems to be a manifestation of the Edo culture in Enugu Ezike is the idea that a man fathers only his biological children and that every child has a father, which must be known. This may be a cultural conjecture. Be that as it may, looking outside Igboland for the origin of Ezikeoba is a futile search for noble ancestry, be it from Edo or from Igala. Many Igbo societies on the west bank of the Niger has folktales and fables of Benin wars, *(Aya Idu)*, told in different forms by the old, explaining how they were able to contend with the invading Benin forces. These wars may have brought movement in population and migrations (Ijoma manuscript p. 6). If Ezike Oba was among those displaced, was he Edo or Igbo or Igala? Available historical evidence posits he was

more Igbo than either Edo or Igala. This is tenable until more studies in archaeology and history of the area by *Ezikeobalogists*[12] prove otherwise.

Endnotes

The Aro and the Nri were suspected to have been derived from the hamitic race.

It appears the works of Roupell and Talbot, as well as A.G. Leonard influenced him so much.

These had become a professional indices of most founding fathers of societies in Igboland. See also J.S. Boston's "Hunter in Igala Legends of origin"

Most of my informants believed that Ezikeoba shot an elephant and followed it to Ugwueka.

Juxtapose this idea with the propositions of hametic hypothesis on state formation in black Africa.

Succession disputes had always been adduced as the probable reasons for emigration and it appears this also lends credence to the claim of royal ancestry.

Adelphic patrimony is the system of inheritance in Enugu Ezike and this was not the same with other Igbo groups.

Maternity is a fact because only the woman can identify the father of her baby. The man's position in this regard is a mere opinion.

Several Igbo towns are found across the Niger. These include Onicha Ugbo, Onicha Olona, Abor, Asaba, Umunede, Ibusa, Agbor, Ogwashi Uku etc.

The Onitsha people of Anambra State claim to have been of Edo origin from where they migrated to their present location.

Enugu Ezike men that went to stand as witnesses include Nkpozi Simon Apeh (Umuagama), Late Edoga Paul Ugwoke (Ogrute), Chief Henry Eya (Amufie) and Boniface Apeh (Umuagama). Could Enugu Ukwu have been the place Enugu Ezike people used to go annually for feast by people who have usufruct rights on their land? This journey was however stopped when Adukwu became the warrant chief, perhaps, for fear of bringing in other Igbo elements that might question his right.

Scholars interested in the study of Enugu Ezike history and culture.

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