

**MYTHS, LEGENDS AND AUTOCHTHONISM IN THE HISTORICAL
RECONSTRUCTION OF THE NIGERIAN SOCIETIES**

BY

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Abstract

Concerted efforts have consistently been made by African historians, particularly, Nigerian historians, to construct and reconstruct their past with a view to reversing its Eurocentric posture that had been characterized by brazen and deliberate distortions and misrepresentations of African past. In the attempt to document Africa's past, they only represented views that would serve their interests and neglected to employ the basic traditional tools that would help to illuminate the past of the people and not to relegate them to darkness. Now that African historians, nay Nigerian historians and scholars are emerging, the onus is on them to right the wrongs, reverse the ugly trends and employ the correct historical tools, including the use of oral traditions embedded in myths, legends and autochthonism, to reconstruct the Nigerian past with a view to placing events in their proper perspectives. Based on qualitative information analysis, consultation of archival material, coupled with the use of primary and secondary sources, this paper therefore, argues that the conceptual roles of myths, legends and autochthonism, should be considered and in fact, constitutes veritable tools in the reconstruction of Nigeria's historiography that will promote unity, intergroup relationships and national understanding.

Keywords: *myths, legends, autochthonism, reconstruction, historiography*

INTRODUCTION

Almost every ethnic group in Nigeria tries to associate its tradition of origin with a legend, myth or both in attempt to establish its descent. Some even claim autochthonous origin to legitimise their existence that is, the idea that they migrated into their present habitation from somewhere; that their dynastic

founders, far from being outsiders were the earliest arrivals or autochthones of a particular area¹. In discussing these origins of the various Nigerian peoples, it is needful to attempt a definition of the concepts- myth and legend. Of relevance also, is the need to highlight some of these stories as vividly as possible, treating each ethnic group on its own merits without bias or contradictions.

Conventionally defined, myth means a traditional story that embodies a belief regarding some facts or phenomenon of experience in which often, the forces nature and of the soul are personified. Most times, myth is characterized by a sacred narrative of a god, a hero, a people or a narrative about the origin of the world. In the words of Edward Clout, myth was the product of man's emotion and imagination, acted upon by his surroundings and it carries the traces of its origin in its more developed forms ².

From the above definition, myth could be perceived to be a thing or phenomenon commonly believed but appears to be more imaginary than real. It is a make-belief that creates an image larger than life character. A myth exaggerates or idealizes a reality. Most myths surrounding traditions of origins were, more or less, misconceptions, fictions and exaggerated.

Some are artificial formulations designed to create a big impression of a thing or event held in excessive or quasi-religious awe³. In essence, myth may not be real or existing materially and cannot be subject to empirical verification.

LEGEND

Legend is a story built around an individual believed to be powerful, brave, fearless or saintly, who lived and did exploits in the past. Most times, it represents a story of unknown origin built around a figure held as a demi-god, or a story used to describe an extraordinary event, purposely to establish and legitimize tradition of origin.

A thin margin separates the two concepts, myth and legend. A close look at them reveals their inter-relatedness as both are attempts to mould or fabricate stories to bring idealism or dreams into reality. Both concepts try to justify and give effects to their claims by linking their origins to extra-ordinary events or super-humans.

With the concepts defined, attempts are now made to investigate the traditions of a few Nigerian-ethnic groups with a view to highlighting the conceptual roles of myths, legends and autochthonism in the re-construction of Nigeria history. These ethnic groups include: Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Bini, Ijo(Ijaw) Jukun, Igala

and Ibibio. Efforts are also made to identify which of the traditions of origins derived from myths, legends or even autochthonism.

ORIGINS OF THE YORUBA PEOPLE

There are two groups of Yoruba people namely: the Yoruba of Ile-Ife and the Yoruba of Old Oyo. Ile-Ife remained the traditional homeland of the Yoruba people, while Oyo had served as the political centre. The Yoruba maintained mythical, legendary and autochthonous stories of origin. They trace their origin to the exploits of one legendary figure known as Oduduwa. According to tradition, Lamurudu, the father of Oduduwa was a native of Quresh in Arabia, the same village with Prophet Mohammed, the founder of the Islamic religion. The story had it that when Mohammed was launching his Jihad against the people of Mecca to accept Islam, Lamurudu, Yaharba and many others resisted and were forced to flee. After wandering for several years in North Africa, they crossed the Sahara and entered into the forest area of the Western Sudan. In the process of journeying and looking for a suitable settlement, Lamurudu and Yaharba, the idol priest died. Lamurudu's son, Oduduwa successfully led the migrant group to settle at Ile-Ife and founded the place sometime in the 10th century and thence, Ife became a dispersal ground for other Yoruba states. In that way for instance, Oduduwa's son, Akanbi whose seven sons left Ile-Ife to found the other seven Yoruba states namely: Owu, Popo, Bini, Saba, Ila, Ketu and Oyo.

The origin of old Oyo was linked to Oranmiyan, the grandson of Oduduwa. There are two contradictory versions to this story. The first version says that Old Oyo was founded by Oranmiyan, who was said to have been sent by his father to go and rule the Bini-people because they had no ruler at that time. Having failed to rule the people, Oranmiyan left Bini and instead of returning to Ile-Ife, he moved north-west to found Old Oyo. The other version says that Oranmiyan and his brothers went on a military campaign towards the northern part of Ile-Ife, leaving behind Chief Adamu to look after the affairs of Ile-Ife. His brothers deserted him.

From the above two accounts, the Yoruba traditions of origins appear to be both mythical and legendary. Mythical in the sense that the story is couched around a long and excruciating journey from Arabia across to North Africa and was led by a legendary figure, who was linked to the founder of the Islamic religion. It also sounds mythical because the story was narrated to cast a kind of quasi-religious awe and admiration to the listeners. Besides, the story sounds legendary because

it makes an attempt to associate the Yoruba origin with a powerful progenitor or super-human in the person of Oduduwa. The Yoruba tradition of origin also lends credence to autochthonism. This is a story that reflects a mythical creation legend claiming that the Yoruba were the original inhabitants of the Ife. According to Stride and Ifeka:

'At the dawn of time, the world was a watery waste. On the orders of the supreme god, Olorun, Oduduwa climbed down a chain from the sky. He brought with him a handful of earth, a cockerel and a palm nut. He scattered the earth upon the water and it formed the land at Ile-Ife. The cockerel dug a hole in which Oduduwa planted the palm nut, and up sprung a mighty tree with sixteen branches, each (formed) the ruling family of an early Yoruba state⁴.'

Carefully analysed, these stories about Yoruba origin suggest the following:

- the various Yoruba states and people have common links and their origin is traceable to one legendary figure, Oduduwa.
- that these Yoruba states and people may have once lived in scattered settlements below the Niger, spoke one language and shared common culture as witnessed today;
- the myth of Oduduwa descending from heaven to create the world at Ife is suggestive of the belief that a Yoruba society and culture existed long before the formation of the kingdoms that lasted in the 19th century⁵ ; and
- that the Yoruba had strong and wider network of connections, either through conquests or through cultural exchange with Igala, Nupe, Bini or Borgu. For instance, in early Nupe history, Sango was one of the mythical rulers, which was corrupted and venerated as the “god of thunder” among the Yoruba.

BORGU TRADITION OF ORIGIN

The Borgu claim to share a common ancestor with the Yoruba, who were believed to have come from the Middle East. The story of Borgu origin centred around one ancestral legend called Ici-sra, who originated from Beghadad in today's Iraq. He first travelled through Asia Minor into North Africa and arrived Bornu where he established the Bornu kingdom. This story is similar to that of Bayajida, the founding father of Habe-Hausa. As far as the Bornu are concerned, the word 'Ici-sra' is a corruption of Borgu title 'Ici-sera' today borne by their kings.

ORAL TRADITION OF EDO PEOPLE (BINI KINGDOM)

There exist two versions of stories of origin of the Edo people of Bini. The first version relates how the early Bini dynasty was founded by a man called Obagodo about the beginning of the 10th Century. The Bini like the Yoruba or Hausa, claim the Eastern origin. It was said by this tradition that after wandering through the Sudan for some years, the Bini migrants, under their leader Obagodo, finally settled in their present location. From the founding of the Ogiso dynasty in the 10th century to the 12th Century, about fifteen rulers had ruled the Bini Kingdom. The last Ogiso ruler was Oba Owodo.

The second version of the origin gives, account of how the kingdom was founded by an Ife prince called Oranmiyan. It was said that Bini kingdom experienced a long period of leadership vacuum after the death of Owodo. In a bid to solve the problem, a delegation of Bini people was despatched to Ife requesting Oduduwa to send his last son, Oranmiyan, to come and rule over Bini. Oduduwa granted their request and Oranmiyan was sent but he found it apparently difficult to rule the people. The people were alleged to be ungovernable and would not cooperate with him. Oranmiyan became frustrated and on leaving, he cursed the land and called it “Ile-Ibinu” meaning the land of the wicked.

Some suggest that Bini derived its present name from this curse by Oranmiyan. Before Oranmiyan travelled back to Ile-Ife, he had a son called Eweka born for him by an Edo woman. It was this son, Eweka that founded the second dynasty in Bini. Oranmiyan when he could not rule the Bini and moved to found Old Oyo.

The second version of the Bini Origin, which ascribed the foundation of the second Bini dynasty to a Yoruba Prince, Oranmiyan, has generated serious controversies among some scholars and has made some Bini historians to probe deeper into their past. Exponents of this move were the young worshippers of Ihogbe, who had tried to re-construct the Bini History in which they claimed a continuity of dynasty, right from the time of Ogiso to the present. They maintained that Oranmiyan was only sent to rule the Edo people after a crisis that led to the banishment of the Ogiso King, Owodo, for his highhandedness but he, Oranmiyan never established a dynasty in Bini. On this issue, Prince Akenzua succinctly noted:

In recent times, issues bordering Yoruba-Benin relationship have been nothing but hot and characteristically disputatious. . . . Controversy seems to trail every account, but no side of the debate would budge. The difference persists because one

appraise history from the standpoint of mythology, while the other fakes the realityoption⁶.

The Bini tradition of origin is mythical as it is legendary. Mythical because it tries to build a story believed to be true from a powerful Yoruba Kingdom that lay west of the land, far away indeed. It is somewhat legendary in the sense that the story is cast around a respectable personality with a royal pedigree in the person of Oranmiyan, who was from the legendary Oduduwa founding dynasty.

The story creates an impression of a royal origin common with most stories of origins among the Nigeria's ethnic groups. However, whether the story of Oranmiyan was a myth or legend, it has successfully established common bond between and among the Edo people and Yoruba. In some respects, there seems to exist common cultural and ancestral connections between the Yoruba and the Edo people of Bini. Again, the story represents the establishment of two dynasties and Kingdoms- the Oyo and Bini Kingdoms.

Then again, there is an evidence that the revisionist historians of Bini Kingdom saw the need to re-examine the stories of their origin in order to get rid of some misconceptions and interpret facts to fit the new status of their Kingdom. It is worthy of note that the old received traditions that emphasised Ife-Bini relations still gain some acceptability up till today.

THE ORIGIN OF THE HAUSA

According to Kano chronicle, the story of the Hausa origin revolves around their founding father called Bayajida or Abuyajida. He was a fugitive prince of Baghdad, who fled from the wrath of his father Abdullahi, after a quarrel between them. Abuyajida first settled in Bornu and the King of the area gave him his daughter in marriage. As the popularity of Bayajida increased, his father-in-law was not happy. Bayajida was thus compelled to migrate further west and stopped at a place called Gala, where he abandoned his wife and his only son. On getting to a place called Daura, he visited Gaya where a blacksmith made him a sacred sword with which he killed the evil snake called "Sarki", which used to disturb the inhabitants of the area from drawing water from the public well.

Impressed by fearlessness and courage of Bayajida, the Queen of Daura married him. The result of the marriage was the birth of a baby boy named Bawo. Bawo had seven sons, who were reputed to be the founders of the seven "pure Hausa"

states known as the Hausa Bakwai. These included: Daura, Biram, Katsina, Rano, Kano, Zaria and Gobir.

Another account of Hausa Origin says that Bayajida had seven illegitimate Sons by a slave woman called Gwari, who later founded the seven “Banza-Bawkai” states which included; Gwari, Zamfara, Kebbi, Ilorin, Nupe, Yauri and Kwararafa(or Jukun). They were regarded as the “bastard states”⁷. It has been suggested that the bastard or impure Hausa states may have been the conquered far-off states that had been politically dominated and culturally influenced during the 19th century Islamic revolution that engulfed most of the northern states of Nigeria.

Whether these states were founded by legitimate or illegitimate sons of Bayajida or whether they were founded as a result of the Islamic movements of the 19th century, the accounts are still subject to historical analysis and criticisms. Be that as it may, the most relevant issue is that these stories reflect the wide use of the Hausa language and culture, which cut across the entire northern Nigeria, and which serve as bond of unity between the Hausa as a people. Today, the Hausa language is spoken over a wider range area of the west coast and sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Benin republic, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Cameroun, Niger, Chad, etc.

Secondly, the Bayajida mythology helps to foster cultural and ethnic unity among the people who speak the language, as the word ‘Hausa’ itself refers more to a language group than a political entity or expression.

Thirdly, another important aspect of this legendary story is that Hausaland was already inhabited by a people, who were organized in village states and had knowledge of iron and who were made up of craftsmen, artisans and leather workers before the advent of the immigrants as could be noted in the story. Then, the assertion that Bayajida arrived on a strange animal at Daura may suggests that the people had been making good use of horses and donkeys as means of transportation.

More importantly, the killing of the evil snake called “Sarki” might connote a religious change which Bayajida represented. Some even interpret the killing of the snake to mean ‘removal of the Daura king from the throne by Bayajida, who now married the Queen. Recall that ‘Sarkin’ in Hausa language means “King’. Finally, the legendary story tries to show that there was division of labour among the pure Hausa states; and this is reflected on the historical development of the states to this day. For instance, Kano and Rano were chiefs of industry,

Daura and Katsina were chiefs of trade and commerce. Zaria controlled the procurement of slaves and kolanuts, while Gobir was the chief of war. Ibn Battuta referred to them as the northern most warlike of all the states and was a trade centre, which waged wars against the Tuaregs. Referring to Katsina, Heinrich Barth, a German geographer who visited Hausa states in 1804, rightly described Daura and Katsina as the wealthiest of all the Hausa states triumphing in trade and commerce and also a citadel of learning⁸. This was the feature of oral tradition of the Hausa states and the meaning that could be read into it.

THE ORIGIN OF NUPE

Nupe was said to have been founded by one of the illegitimate sons of Bayajida, the ancestral father of the Hausa people. However, the history of the Nupe was later dominated by one legendary figure called Tsoede, who united the twelve states of the kingdom. According to oral tradition, Tsoede was a son of an Igala prince, who later became the Attah of Idah. Tsoede's father first lived at Nku in Nupe land where he married a Nupe woman from an Nku chief and this link accorded him a royal connection.

Following a leadership vacuum at Igalaland, Tsoede's father was recalled to become the next Attah of Idah. On leaving for Igalaland, he left behind his pregnant wife with some gifts of a charm and a ring for the child that would be born by his wife. He did this apparently to recognize his son, which he really did when Tsoede came of age and was handed over to the Igala king as a slave tribute from the Nku royal house. His father was happy to see him again. At a time, it was said that he performed the feat of climbing a very tall palm tree and cut down the only fruit which was used to cure his father's ailment. A feat which his half brothers could not perform. Having won the affection and favour of his father by this single action, his brothers became jealous and threatened to kill him. It was said that while cutting down the palm fruit, he split his lips so badly that in today's Nupe tradition, any child born with cleft lip is named after Tsoede.

Now that his half brothers wanted him killed, his father gave him some twelve strong Nupe slaves as guards, a royal rank, a bronze, a canoe, trumpets and fetters and advised him to flee back to Nupeland and rule over the Nupe kingdom. While leaving, his envious brothers followed in pursuit to kill him, but with the assistance of those twelve slaves, they were rebuffed. Tsoede and his followers threw away their bronze and canoe and hid in the Ega Creek from where they proceeded to Nupeland. He conquered them and with the place as

his base, he extended his conquest to other Nupe groups. His slave companions were given control of the twelve Beni towns of Nupe.

This Nupe mythology demonstrates a strong Nupe- Igala relationship as exemplified in the exchange of tributes, visits and rulers, and relationship between them still subsists and is being strengthened by geographical continuity.

THE IGALA ORIGIN:

There have been controversies about the origin of the Igala people because of their complex socio-political and cultural similarities with other Nigeria ethnic groups like the Edo, Jukun, Yoruba, Nupe and even the Igbo.

All the same, the Igala trace their origin from one ancestral figure known as Aganepoje, who was said to have been sent by the gods. On arrival, according to their oral tradition, Agenepoje landed on a rock very close to Idah, the capital city of Igalaland. Even today, the Igala are referred to as the people of Idah. This legendary Agenepoje was said to have had a son called Ayaba whose descendants formed the Igala ruling class.

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN OF THE IGBO:

Like the Yoruba, the Igbo claim autochthonous origin or independent evolution. This is common among many Igbo communities, which claim that they were the original inhabitants of the place they found themselves. A typical example of this autochthonous origin is the Nri tradition which has survived amongst the Nri people today. Elizabeth Isichie made reference to this Nri tradition pointing out Eri as the progenitor of the UmuNri clan⁹. According to this tradition, Eri was the father of their race. Eri was said to have come down on earth by a ladder and settled with his two wives at a watery and marshy area called “Eri-aka” around the “Omambala” river basin. Seeing that the place was entirely covered with water, Eri had to invite an Awka blacksmith, who used his fiery bellow to dry up the area. Eri was then faced with the problem of how to feed the people under his charge. He communed with God and requested for solutions to his problem. He was therefore divinely ordered to kill his two children- one boy and one girl. Eri obediently killed them and buried them in different places. After a few days, a plant was noticed to have sprung up from the boy’s grave and that was a yam tendril, while a cocoyam sprouted from the tomb of the girl. This was seemingly the origin of the recognition accorded to yam as the prince of all food crops, while cocoyam is held as the princess of all agricultural products.

As for the two wives of Eri, the first was called Nono who had seven children. The eldest of the children was called Agulu-eri and was followed by Menri, Onogu, Ogbodudu and then Adamgboo, the only female child among them. According to Nri tradition, it was Eri's descendants that settled along the Anambra river areas, including the area inhabited by the Nri people and other adjoining Igbo towns and villages.

The tradition of origin as has been popularized by some non and amateur historians that the Igbo descended from the Hebrew race has not been accepted by professional historians. Stories of origin linking the Negro race to eastern world is an offshoot of Hamitic hypothesis, which is a racially based hypothesis that attempts to trace great civilizations found in the Negro world to the Caucasoid (light-skinned) race.

Archaeology and linguistics have made invaluable contributions to the reconstruction of the Igbo past. Thurstanshaw's excavation at the Igbo-Ukwu in 1959 dated the settlement of the Igbo to the 9th century. This seems to disprove the story of the 'eastern origin', which tends to suggest that the Igbo arrived at their present settlement in about the 17th century. Also, archaeological discoveries at Ugwuelle in Imo state revealed a bulk of techno-cultural experiences of early Stone Age man in Igboland.

On the part of linguistic evidence, historical and comparative linguistics have helped to throw more light on the early history of the Igbo. This aspect of linguistic study has classified the Igbo language as belonging to the Kwa family of the Niger-Congo group. In the light of this, the Igbo migrated from the Niger-Benue confluence, and not from anywhere outside Nigeria. One of Eri traditions as was told by Emeka Lawrence in his unpublished work relates the story of how the Eri man came paddling his canoe down the Omambala River and settled at Eri-aka. Afigbo had identified three core areas from where the Igbo dispersed to their present settlements namely; Nri-Awka, Isuama-Orlu and Owerri-Ngwa areas. These areas form the nucleus of the Igbo nation from where waves of migrations to other areas started¹⁰.

From the foregoing, the Igbo like other ethnic groups in Nigeria, have their own myths, about their descent and which is that of the Nri mythology. There were also stories of migrations and the Igbo, from the findings of the 1959 archaeological excavation, had occupied their present habitation for about 1000 years ago.

The unifying factors among the Igbo, apart from the mythological story, have been their strong linguistic affiliation, common customs and beliefs. The Igbo in addition are characteristically industrious, republican and egalitarian. They are also known for their marked individuality, adaptability, self-assertiveness and strong dislike of any form of imposition. It is perhaps, for these characteristics as shared with the Jews that led some people to associate them with the Hebrew. Perhaps also, these characteristics of the Igbo accounted for the stubborn resistance to imposition of the warrant chiefs on the various Igbo communities during the colonial era.

THE ORIGIN OF IBIBIO

The Ibibio are Igbo neighbours and they have certain things in common. Like the Igbo, the origin of the Ibibio is shrouded in mystery, not very clear. It is the Aro who called them Ibibi while the Efik called them Ibibio, a corrupted Ibibi. However, it is suggestive that the name Ibibio is Ibibi in origin¹¹. However, the people claim to have migrated from the Ubom area of the present day Imo state due to some economic pressures and aggression by their Igbo neighbours. Later, they settled where they found themselves today, which could be described as Ibibio proper. Here they share boundaries with the Igbo of Arochuku to the north, the Ika to the west and Oron to the south.

Originally, there were four cities here namely: Uyo, Abak, Uruan and Udua. Due to some socio-political pressures, there occurred a second wave of migration during which some Ibibio moved into Anang to the west, while the small city of Udua migrated further south east and settled in Old Calabar and were later known as the Efiks of Calabar.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF MYTHS AND LEGENDS FOR HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

In using myths and legends for historical reconstruction of Nigeria's past, care must be taken because evidence abounds that they might counterfeit history. Although they have some parts to play, but as part of oral tradition, they have their own limitations. Firstly, they are not as reliable as written records or archaeological findings.

Secondly, some stories associated with myths and legends relate haphazardly because parts of the stories may have been a bridged, diluted or forgotten after a long period of time. Some are told in diverse versions as in the case of Yoruba,

Hausa or Igbo oral traditions. Some are even confusing as seen in the case of the Nupe talking about the exchange of Princes from NupewithIgala and vice versa.

Then again, some myths and legends are developed in an effort by some people to re-write their past to suit their present status. A case in point is the Bini when in 1973, a group of Ihogbe worshippers attempted to re-write their history to correct the impression that Oranmiyan established a dynasty in Bini. They imputed that Oranmiyan was only sent to the Edo people consequent upon the crisis that engulfed the kingdom when Owodo the last Ogiso was banished.

Myths and legends could carry conflicting and contradictory stories as could be witnessed in the case of Ijo traditions where many of these stories seem to contradict one another. Some have been written to prove that the Ijo descended from Oduduwa, while some maintained that the Ijo moved to their present site owing to pressures by their Igbo neighbour coupled with some socio-economic circumstances.

CONCLUSION

There exist some interrelations and connections between these mythology and legendary stories and for this reason, they should not be totally discarded as veritable tools in the reconstruction of the Nigerian History.

In the first place, some of these myths and legends link people with others. For example, Yoruba people of Ile-Ife share common ancestral origin with Edo of Bini, although Bini-Ife connection has been contested by scholars like Allan Ryder. The Igbo share stories that link them with Ibibio, Igala and their Efikneighbours. Again, a comparison could be made between the traditions of origins of Ijo, Bini or even Itsekiri, who established links between themselves through mythical stories.

In some cases, these stories make references to the Middle Eastern origin. As has been noted, these stories of external origin have been explored by some writers trying to establish links with races believed to have rich cultural heritage and ancient civilizations. The Borgu, Yoruba, Kanem and Igbo lay claims to the eastern ancestorship.

The stories go a long way to promote inter-state alliances among the various Nigerian peoples. A Kanuri, for example, is regarded in Bussa as an elder brother, whereas the Emir of Bussa and Alafin of Oyo, including the Oni of Ife are regarded as cousins.

Comparisons could be made in terms of political organizations of these early states based on these mythical and legendary relationships. Stories of the Hausa society show some similarities in political organizations. Some offices and titles found in Bornu were common with those that exist in Hausa states; an example is the “Galadima” title meant for a warden is also found in both places. Even the languages spoken by the bulk of Nigerian peoples bear some resemblance and they existed in the pre-historic times.

The Borgu, Hausa, Kanuri, Nupe and Jukun, all belong to the Niger-Congo, while the Edo, Igbo, Igala, Idoma, Yoruba, Ijo, and Efik belong to the Kwa-Group of languages. All these tell us from oral traditions that linguistically, the various Nigerian peoples share many things in common. Language separation between the units of this cluster may have begun between 2000 and 6000 years ago¹².

It is possible to draw some comparisons in the nature of the migrations that occurred giving rise to the present settlements of some Nigerian ethnic-groups. While some stress external conquests as in the case of Kanuri, who were said to be conquered by the Zaghawa, others try to show the process of acculturation by the indigenous culture as evidenced again in the case of Kanem-Borgu whose culture dominated that of the invading Zagawa people.

Finally, some of these mythical and legendary stories try to demonstrate that there have been existing traditions and civilizations prior to invasion by the Europeans.

A typical example is the case of the Bini people who claim that their tradition of origin centre around the Ogoiso dynasty before ever the second dynasty was said to have been founded by Eweka, the son of Oranmiyan. It therefore could be imputed from the foregoing that there exist some relationships, real or imaginary, between the myths and legends of the various Nigerian peoples, which could be helpful in the reconstruction of their past as well as promote unity, peace, cooperation, and understanding among the people. The place of myths and legends in the reconstruction of Nigeria’s past can further be appreciated if we consider the scholarly view of C. Becker, V. Martin and Mbodj, who noted that:

Village traditions provide basic narratives for localities and their environs often in the form of myths with specific items depending on the ethnic groups or countries. They are rich in historical information and legitimise chieftaincies and customary laws- economic, financial, political and religious. They often contain genealogical data on the principal families in the village. They approximate the

founding date of the community by referring to the creation of neighbouring communities or by relating this to the reign of a particular king^{13, 14}.

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