

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM IN ORAL TRADITIONS AND MIGRATION OF THE PEOPLE: THE OTO-ESAN EXAMPLE

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Abstract

Extant studies have established that the dialectical historical relationship between man and the natural environment is one of the areas of human knowledge where history and environmentalist/geography share common borders, especially as it relates choice of selection of area of settlement and establishing strong economic base. While it has become almost impossible to complete any serious historical study without emphasizing the role of relevant environmental factors, among environmentalists as well as in geography this relationship is emphasized in the study of history and establishment of human settlement. This paper is thus an attempt at using some oral traditions among the Esan people at providing some historical examples based on knowledge of environment which over the years have affected (and still affecting) the selection of area for settlement among the various Esan people (as contained in the Oral Traditions of the people). Data obtained from primary and secondary sources (literature review and content analysis) were deployed to carry out the study with Environmental determinism and analytical/narrative historical method. Findings indicates that there is a dialectical historical relationship between man and the natural environment. It shows that (although not taken serious among western scholars), the oral tradition of the people considers the role of the environment in selecting area for human settlement especially in term of establishing strong economic base. Oral tradition on migration also identifies the great role played by the environment in regulating the relationship between occupational groups.

Keywords: Esan, Environment, Settlement, Economy, Traditional, Determinism.

Introduction

Extant studies have established that the dialectical historical relationship between man and the natural environment is one of the areas of human knowledge where history and environmentalist/geography share common borders, especially as it relates choice of selection of area of settlement and establishing strong economic base. While it has become almost impossible to complete any serious historical study without emphasizing the role of relevant environmental factors, among environmentalists as well as in geography this relationship is emphasized in the study of history and establishment of human settlement.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms: Space and Time

Esan is an Edo speaking territory, which belongs to the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family of languages. The people are referred to as Ebholo, their language is Esan and land, Oto-Esan. It is

are bounded on the Northwest and North by the Ivbiosakun and Etsako section of the Northern Edo; On the West and Southwest by the Benin city; On the South and Southeast by Aboh and Igbo speaking people, and the East by the River Niger and the Igala speaking people. There is therefore some linguistic and cultural overlapping in each of the frontiers. Thus the territory of the Esan is located in the northern part of Nigeria rainforest (Bradbury, 1957). The indigenous economy of Esan in particular and Nigeria in general was both agricultural and industrial, which supplied the food requirement of the people as well as raw materials for the local industries as well as for the markets. Some of the chiefdoms includes Ewohimi, Amahor, Ebelle, Ogwa, Egoro, Ekpoma, Ekpon, Emu, Ewu, Ewatto, Ewossa, Ido, Igueben, Irrua, Ohordua, Okalo, Okhuesan, Opoji, Oria, Orowa, Uromi, Ubiaja, Udo, Ugbegun, Ugboha, Ugun, Ujiojba, Ukhun, Urohi, Ekekhenlen and parts of Ozigono as well as Udaba

In African society, it is difficult to understand or comprehend migration pattern, choice of settlement, Economic life, religious belief and moral values as they affect the people, unless it is viewed in line with the environment as preserved in the tradition of the people. This is because to the average African the environment affects and influences his history. In this way, the environment relates to the totality of both the tangible and intangible world which surrounds, influence and affect man and is in turn influenced and affected by man. The tangible environment refers to the palpable aspect of the environment such as the physical phenomena like lake, climate, mineral, soil types, rivers, flora and fauna, while the intangible environment on the other hand refers to ideas that might permeate the society from adjacent cultures and incidence of epidemic diseases such as influenza, small pox etc. (Ukwedeh, 1987).

Scholars have argued that the above is well represented in the tradition of migration of societies in Africa. In the case of the Esan people, it explains why the primary settlers of the Esan plateau were worshippers of the earth. It was because of the central position that the earth holds for the people as agriculturists. In fact most communities revere the earth for various reasons, as well as the reasons for which certain fruits, leaves as well as animals in the forest are revered and regarded as totem. For example, among the Yoruba people of Oyo the people could sentence an erring Oba to commit suicide by pronouncing on him a rejection by the earth, sky and the people (Okoduwa, 2013)

Tradition of Origin and Migration

For an advancement of study and knowledge of the people of Esan and how they have come to be what and where they are today (the role of traditions of origin as well as its significance in directions in term of migration, settlement pattern as well as economic life), there is the need to focus attention on a discussion of the traditions of origin and migration of the people. As far as Akubor (2005), is concerned, this is very much necessary for the following reasons.

In the first place, it will enable us ascertain from the traditions, both direct and indirect evidence relating to the antiquity of population settlement in the area; Secondly, it will furnish us with the necessary information regarding the movement of people to and fro the area, and the factors that explain the movement, their passionate attachment to traditional religion, their amusement and fun, their non literacy but nonetheless system of vocations and ethical education, their interfamily and inter clan relations, ways and means of curing diseases, their social welfare schemes and humanitarian concepts, their cosmological idea as well as economy.

It is on the basis of the above therefore, that the paper have a clear definition of tradition of origin and migration.

Tradition of origin is the history of origin of any group of people, which has been preserved in oral form or transmitted from generation to generation in the same manner. In most cases, orally preserved information, which has been documented in written form, have been regarded by modern historian as part of oral evidence. Historically, oral tradition of a people tells the story of the hectic and hedious task of state formation. In the case of the societies around the Lower Niger region, the story revolves around how the people over time have been able to interact meaningdully with their natural environment, to produce sustainable economically developed state (Akubor 2005, 2010, 2013).

Migration, on the other hand is a form of mobilization or spatial movement in a geographical setting between one unit and another, generally involving a change of residence from the place of origin or place of arrival. This type of migration is refered to as a permanent migration, and it is necessary that we are able to distinguish it from other forms of migration that are close on temporal basis. Thus, the concept of migration becomes only very relevant when reference is made to relatively settled people (Bingel, T.B, 1991, Akubor, 2005)

The Quest for Economically Suitable Environment in Tradition of Origin and Migration

A critical analysis of the tradition of migration of the various people indicates that the focus and direction have always been on establishing themselves in an environment that is most suitable for economic activities. This in the view of this paper is in line of the three basic consideration of any economically conscious mind which includes good land, availability of water and well fertile soil which is able to sustain the livelihood of the people as well as provide sufficiently for exchange.

The essence of the above, especially as it relates to the environmental considerations in these traditions is summed up in the view of Rodney (1973) thus:

Every people have shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature;...A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organised. Taking a long-term view, it can be said that there has been constant economic development within human society since the origins of man, because man has multiplied enormously his capacity to win a living from nature. The magnitude of man's achievement is best understood by reflecting on the early history of human society and noting firstly, the progress from crude stone tools to the use of metals; secondly, the changeover from hunting and gathering wild fruit to the domestication of animals and the growing of food crops; and thirdly, the improvement in the character of work from being an individualistic activity towards an activity which assumes a social character through the participation of many;... Africa, being the original home of man, was a major participant in the processes in which human groups displayed an ever increasing capacity to extract a living from the natural environment.

Migration, Environment and Economy : Migration into the Esan Area

Traditions of migration into the various areas which constitutes the present day Esan community shows that, while other issues may have been involved, what was paramount in the minds of the progenitor of the present day people was the issue of economically sustainable environment and society. For instance, among the various traditions of the people inhabiting the area, most seems

to agree with the view that the existence of water bodies around the area, provided the necessary impetus for the emergence of human societies. As far as the traditions are concerned, the navigable waterways along side it providence, encouraged movement into the area, while at the same time strengthening inter/intra group relations.

Considering some elements of the Ebu people found at the fringes of Esan territory especially around the southeastern part around the well water Illushi area, Asenime (1998) argued that their emergence was influenced by the numerous waterways. Citing the oral tradition of the people, he argued that the tradition of the people holds that they migrated from Igalaland to their present site during the period of political crisis within Igalaland. During this period, there was no central authority, under any particular individual and the people lived in separate settlements. According to the source, the crisis which erupted during this period that led to migration of some people, was centred on the struggle of the various settlements within Igalaland to control the major trade routes and centers within Igalaland. As a result of this, there was great loss of lives and properties, and so some settlements, especially, the one considered weaker migrated to more peaceful areas along the River Niger banks and one of these migrating groups was led by a man known as Kiri. It further argued that, Kiri and his followers fled through the Niger to a place called Ode, where they also met some group of people also fleeing from one great king in Bini, whom they tried to oust out of office, but could not succeed. Emphasizing the role of water resources, Asenime 2005 continued:

...Kiri became so popular as a veritable priest of mammon and was fond of building huts along the river Niger bank for the worship of his Ebo (gods/deities). Through his activities, and vast knowledge of the gods, he gained for himself the title of the Chief Priest of the settlement, and people came from far and near to worship in his shrines.

On the establishment of other settlements around the area, Asenime argued that as a result of the fertile area as well as suitability for human activities, the population continued to grow, so much so that it became clear that there was the need to move further into the interior. On the movement into the interior and how the new settlements were also influenced by waterways, Asenime (2000), wrote:

As a way of resolving this both Kiri, Ebu and Ginuwa decided that it was necessary that some settlements would move further to the interior, thus Kiri and Ginuwa moved their people towards the Niger Delta area in search of new land, while Ebu remained on the original land for sometime, but later moved with some of his followers for reasons not quite certain (to other more favourable land/settlement). Among his followers were basically the Igala, Bini and some Ode people. They journeyed along the Niger up to Illushi and here some of Ebu followers got weary and decided to settle here, i.e, Illushi, Ugboha and other neighbouring areas, while others moved on with him to the present day Ebu land. At their present site, they met the Okpanam (an Igbo speaking group), whom they expelled from the land and settled, while they intermarried with others. This is said to be responsible for the mixed language presently spoken among the Ebu and Inyelen people.

As far as Asenime (2000) is concerned, the Ebu elements found among the Esan communities around Ugboha and the Illushi area, considered the well watered area, the fertile soil as well as their traditional worship of water deity in the selection of area to settle down.

The case of the Agbacha Iwogun (Ifeku) migration into the Esan area is not too different from the case of the Ebu. The Ifeku tradition also recognised the role of fertile soil and water bodies with aquatic resources in the selection of area of settlement by the people. In his analysis, Akuba, P.A. (2003), argued that the river bank bordering Esan southeastern area in southern Nigeria attracted a large chunk of the migrants especially Igala people from Central Nigeria as a result of the resources it was able to provide for the people who were escaping from the oppression of Attah in Idah. Quoting the traditions of the people, both Akuba (2003) and Oiko (2024) argues that this tradition as it concerns migration to the bank of the river, dates for back into the pre-colonial period, during the reign of a great king in Ane-Igala, who sent some people out in search of building materials to build a befitting palace for the king. This group when were traditional architects, specifically went searching for a specific type of building rope (iku) . During the search, some people moved towards the rich and well watered area of Illushi/Ozigono (which later became a trading centre in Oto-Esan, serving as a melting pot for the Esan, Igala, Igbo, Bini, Usobo and Ijekiri). At Illushi, the search team was able to acquire the needed Iku (rope), which they took back to Idah (the seat of the Attah), after which they returned to the “new found land” with their kith and kin, and so this span of land was renamed Efa eku (Efa-Pull, Eku (Iku) – rope) meaning land of those who came in search of rope. This has been corrupted to Ifeku. Since that period till date, the area has continually attract people due to its richness in aquatic resources.

Other scholars have argued that apart from establishing settlements around the southeastern part of Esan land, some elements from Ifeku have been able to establish settlements in the interior part of Esanland. For instance, Okoduwa (2013), citing the traditions of some Esan communities wrote that Amilele who was a man from the Ifeku area established the Irrua community. The tradition talks about his fancy of the area for its ability to produce crops which was necessary for human survival. This obviously referred to the rich soil and clemence weather suitable for existence. In his analysis of the tradition, Okoduwa opined thus:

What is obvious in this tradition is that like all those who migrated into Irrua from Ifeku Island, Amilele was a Kyede man who belonged to the predynastic peopling of Esanland. That traditions believe that he returned from Benin to Irrua with a wife shows that he was earlier recognized as the leader of Irrua including Akho village inhabited by the worshipers of the earth. Migration traditions in the village of Eidenu also in Irrua show that both the founder and many of the settlers were Nupe in origin. It is more accurate to refer to the Nupe of Ifeku Island in the Niger as Kyede. Since these so called Nupe were riverine people they were the river transport people of Kyede. Their influence was very strong in the development of the village of Eidenu where the people worship Amese, the god of stormy weather to this day. It would seem that Kyede element persisted for a long time in Irrua and was responsible for a number of unique Irrua customs. Three great Kyede warriors were instrumental to the founding of the village of Eidenu. All three were deified and “are worshipped during the yearly festival of Eidenu” Even more obvious is the Kyede influence in Amese, the god of stormy weather and his priestly line whose title is Ohen Amese, an institution that is unique to Irrua. Gods of stormy weather are far more important to canoe people than they are to agriculturists. The canoe culture was adapted and perpetuated among the land cultivators or agriculturists of Irrua (emphasis are mine).

Also in considering the villages of Egbele and Arhue, the issue of land, its ability to sustain the people and their activities have is also reflected in the traditions of migration of the people. Commenting further, Okoduwa (2013) wrote,

Another example is in the chiefdom of Uromi where the villages of Egbele and Arhue were peopled from Ifeku Island in the Niger, originally inhabited by Igala. While the

village of Unuwazi in accordance with Esan custom carries out earth purification exercises for all Uromi, the village of Egbele carries out a similar excise of earth purification Oto-Egbele only for the village. However, a newly installed Onojie was required by custom to visit the Alu-Oto-Egbele shrine for his final installation. Egbele's role in Uromi is synonymous to Eidenu's religious role and position in Irrua except for the fact that Eidenu did not compete for the position of being earth worshippers. In fact, Egbele's prerogative to carry out annual earth purification rites just for the village may be derived from her religious disposition. Egbele possessed the only land shrine in the district known as Okhiole made up of Onojie's seat Eguare and Onewa, Utako, Egbele, Arhue and Unuwazi.

Commenting on mentorship for good governance among the Ekpoma and their neighbours, Okoduwa (2013) opined

...in Ekpoma, where traditions have it that the birthplace of the original founder of Ekpoma was the Island of Ifeku on the Niger. One Ogiöhe left there in the dim and distant past, and travelled to Uhe where he "met God and learnt all the tabus." From Uhe he went to Benin, where he lived for sometime and here his son Ogoihe was born, who was in turn the father of Uda. Uda was given the title of Onogie by the Oba of Benin and was sent away to found a settlement of his own. He came through the bush to the high Ekpoma country and chose the place where Eguare now is. Here he built his house, and in due course his family and extended family formed the nucleus of the Ekpoma village group. Meanwhile, the people of Igor village claim that they migrated from Igala or Ighanlan.

Traces of some of the ingredients as contained in the traditions of origin and migrations can also be found in some of the local traditions even within the Esan communities of expeditions into some remote forests and in some cases in search for livelihood. An example of this, is the tradition that tries to explain the emergence and adaptation of the Igbobnelimin dance. According to extant literature on the Esan people, Igbabonelimhin is coined from two esan words *Igbabo* which means "to clap" and *elimhin* which means spirit. Combining both words together means "clapping for the spirits." Historicizing the origin of the Igbabonelimhin Masquerade dance and its role in the entertainment life of the Esan people, Osaremhen, T (2023), argued based on Esan mythology, that the Igbabonelimhin dance was discovered by a hunter during one of his hunting expeditions. He opined that while on that particular expedition, the hunter (while on top of a tree) saw gorillas coming out of the forest, forming two groups. According to the source, while one group were making sounds by beating hollow trunks with woods and sticks to produce a rhythm, the second group somersaulted skillfully in the air to the timing of the beats. It was said that the hunter was amazed by what he saw, and so he went back to his village where he reported the strange occurrence to his people. Doubting the account, it was said that three other hunters were asked to accompany him back to the forest where he saw the strange event to confirm the truth of his story. The men returned home and affirmed the story of the hunter. The community decided to learn and preserve the dance, acknowledging it as the will of their ancestors. It was said that the hunters taught the able bodied males of the community the dance steps. With the course of time, the dance was developed and accompanied by well-balanced music.

In a more graphic and elaborate form, both Osakue S. O, and Oseghale F (nd) (citing Pascal 1999), gave a specific and detailed account of same story thus,

this man went on a hunting mission at a crucial time when animals hold the animal "meeting". It happened that while he was on top of a tree, waiting to fire at one of the

animals, he saw the greatest shock of his life. Suddenly, gorillas started coming out from various directions in the green forest. Idalogho, the hunter was stampeded and could not fire any of them. Later, he saw something wonderful. The gorillas, immediately divided themselves into two groups, one of the groups producing an unusual rhythm from hollow wood and sticks, while the other group started to somersault in the air skillfully and wonderfully to the amazement of the hunter. They somersault either forward, backward or in a circular manner; what confounded the hunter most was the manner in which the acrobatic display by mere gorillas, unbelievably synchronized with every beat that their hollow wood and sticks emitted. After the dance and the exit of the gorillas, Idalogho, the hunter came down from the tree and ran away. On getting home, he narrated to his family and the community members what he experienced in the forest. The story was taken with a pinch of salt. Thus, in order to authenticate his story, three famous and experienced hunters accompanied Idalogho to the place in the forest which the people now called the “land of wonders”. The party returned home and narrated the same story to the people. So, in order to preserve this dance for posterity, the able bodied male children of the community were gathered together and made to study and perfect the congeries of style, nuance and pattern of this mystical dance which was later called Igbabonelimin.

Some communities in Esan has also adopted the said forest where this discovery took place as their ancestral home. It is therefore not surprisng that some communities see themselves as the original owners of the dance. However, this has in no way created any crises among the people, as they accept some origin and ancestry. Coincidentally, the instruments and other related materials used by the Igbabonelimin group as well as other entertainment groups (costumes) were sourced locally, while the experts' for production were the indigenouse people (mostly males). Some of these instruments includes *Ufiere* (flute), *Ekegan* (drum), *Agogo* (gong), -these are instruments made from provisions of the environment. For instance, the costume was made from local wood which was cultivated in the area and made into multi-colour cloth material known as *Ukpon-Ododo*. As for other wooded instruments, the location of Oto-Esan and it heavily wooded forest influenced it sculptural tradition. Wood Carvers locally known as *Ekanemi* scattered around the villages and settlements of Esan made use of the timber obtained from the Esan forests (Akubor, 2024). from this activities professional groups emerged (hunters, carvers, builders among others).

A historical analysis of the cited traditions of migration into the area exhibits the fact that these settlements were established without shedding of blood or warfare, which indicates acceptability of the migrates by the original people who may have occupied the area before their arrival. In the case of the people from across the Niger, the interaction/inter group relations between the duo in the pre-colonial days further strengthened their contact and led to the formation of groups claiming both Igala and Esan origin. This remains the case of the Agbacha Iwogun in Uzea Esan, Ugboha Esan, Anagbette area and the existence of Edo communities in Okwuoshim, Ukopodo, and Okpatawo area of Ane-Igala (Akubor, 2005, 2007, 2010).

It is important to note that over the years especially from the precolonial period the Esan area has remained an agriculturally viable area especially when seen in the light of the aquatic and flora resources, which have sustained the people even till present time. Describing the various forests in Esan and their usefulness in the economic life of the people, Okoduwa (2013) argues:

Esan has rich vegetation made up of the moist deciduous forest. It has timber and other forest woods. In some parts of the plateau and the lowlands, forests were thickly wooded and inspired awe from the Esan people. Sometimes, the forests were held sacred and at

night without the backing of *ebolo* or strong medicine even the bravest of hunters feared the wild forests. Only few dared risk the strange noises and terrifying experiences of venturing where they believed the evil *azen* or witches were operating in treetops. They also believed that even the lesser *ihoholele* or dwarf like human beings found in the deep forests could kill if they ran between the legs of an individual. Thus the forest, thickly wooded, cold and unreceptive was generally dreaded especially at night. In the day-time, the forest and its products were highly valued for their innumerable contributions to everyday living. The forest was vital to the life and culture of the Esan.

As a source of medicinal value as well as food product, the source continues:

There were medicinal preparations from the forest for leprosy, gonorrhoea, loose teeth, fevers, abscesses, black tongue, childbirth and purgatives. There were potions prepared from forest products to put people to sleep, charms to make yams grow and poisons for ordeals and to put on arrow tips. Different timbers were used for nearly every aspect of house building and there were a variety of woods for making tools, native harps, tobacco pipe, and traps and for collection as firewood. Burnt wood derivatives included charcoal, potash, salt and ashes for native soap and native dye. There were adhesives, sponges for polishing house walls, rope, bowstrings, dance rattles etc. In the forests there were special sticks that were used for staking yam vines as well as special trees that were used as chewing sticks. There were also many fruits, seed, roots and leaves that were gathered from the forests. Food stuffs, such as wild beans, wild yams, edible fungi, palm wine, palm fruits, snails and honey from wild bees could be gathered from the forests.

In term of its rich fauna resources, the sources continues:

In the same vein, hunters caught various games including bush pigs *esi*, giant pouched rats *eluo* and grass-cutters *okhaen*. Part of the forest riches can be gleaned from a description of a 15th century market in Benin area, which had "... roasted baboons and monkeys, bats and large rats, parrots...". With suitable vegetation and good ecology, early Esan settlers and agriculturists substituted and modified their environment by various methods to provide suitable conditions for growth. They domesticated cultivars in place of the wild ones they destroyed during the process of clearance; and eventually created much food to sustain viable socio-political entities that evolved in the area.

Indeed the farming activities around the area is a testament to the fact that the traditions of migration into the area took seriously the issue of economic suitability. For instance, Scholars have repeatedly analyzed the network of interlocking markets on the river, a structure that is clearly mirrored in the description of early European observers. Traders from Brass and other coastal states brought European goods to Esan at the trading station on the Niger (Illushi), where they were exchanged originally for slaves and later for palm oil. Also Igala traders in far ranging canoes, carried goods up the Niger to Esan where they met traders from Benin, Nupe, Sapele and Itsekiri land, the Esan traders cross over to Amalu, up to the Onitsha area with their farm produce. In general, all the traders met at a market called Ega-Oria (later called Illushi), which till date act as a converging pot /port for economic activities. Esan and Ifeku people generally controlled the operations of the market and it was their source of slaves and market for their saleable goods. Baikie and Hutchinson observed in 1854 that, the people were primarily agriculturalist, who fully exploited the resources of the land and water bodies, which they channeled into trade. Through this, they lived comfortably from the ample produce of their extensive farms/water resources and sold surplus, supplying Onitsha and Aboh with yam and cotton.

Summary and Conclusion

From the discourse so far, it is safe to argue that in considering place for settlements, movement into the Esan area has always been guided by the thought of economically sustaining societies, especially one with the natural resources to support a growing society. This was not however peculiar to the Esan area, as examples of history have shown similar traits in other societies. Thus, apart from the Esan people, examples of such is classically embedded in traditions of origin of some Nigerian societies, such as the legends of Saif bin Dhi Yazan, the founder of the Saifuwa dynasty of Kanem-Borno, who considered the fertile area around the well watered bank of Lake Chad to establish his people; Bayajida also argued to be the founder of the Hausa Bakwai and Banza Bakwai city-states around a well in Daura, that served as sources of water to the farming community and the Oduduwa myth of creation among the Yoruba, which revolves around the creation of the earth, filling it with good soil from which sprang the first palm tree representing each Yoruba group. These traditions have not been fully explored of their historical contents. Nonetheless, they now at least present a common rallying point for the different concerned groups' identities and largely act as an important reference point for self-projection of these societies in the Nigerian enterprise and their quest for livelihood (Smith 1987; Hallam 1966; Smith 1970; Smith 1971; Smith 1983; Lange 2004). Therefore, when the examination and analyses of other national legends are made professionally, it will add new historical information about the other peoples of Nigeria and it will be an asset to our national knowledge base, which could be used for the promotion of peace (Smith 1987; Atanda 1980). Furthermore, an extensive assessment and objective interpretation of these legends is imperative. More so, as they specifically speak of historical narratives of times since 'the beginnings', after the original culture-founders had departed their earthly lives to assume positions of spiritual advisers, an aspect that is still beclouded in mystery. However, the humanisation of these legends by linking them to human progenies, who are currently identified as ruling houses, dynasties, priests our title-holders deeply involved in the actual running of their societies speaks a lot about a yet to be decoded intellectual history of pre-colonial Nigeria. Indeed, it also pinpoints to the historical mindset that provided the base for the self-sufficiency of pre-colonial Nigerian societies (Stevens 1978; Smith 1987; Lange 2004; Abubakar 1996).

Although, some have argued that some of these traditions cannot be historically situated, however, analysis of a large chunk of these traditions have shown that they actually contain facts of the hectic task of how the people sojourned in quest for economically sustaining society taking into consideration the productive capacity of the environment and how it can help in socioeconomic and political development over time. It is therefore in line with this that the paper argues that in any historical analysis, by using the proper techniques and processing of oral data, original and authentic information could be derived from custom, opinion or belief handed down to posterity especially orally or by practice (Curtins 1968; Stevens 1975; Sutton 1979; Ajayi 1980, Newbury, 2007). These include the process of handing down established practice or custom as well as literary principles based on experience and practice, theological doctrine or a particular doctrine that claimed to have divine authority without documentary evidence.

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