Re-interrogating Uromi Traditions of Origin and the Hegemony of a Benin Establishment

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Abstract

Nigerian historiography is divided into three phases: the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Whereas the pre-colonial history is dominated by the political and social activities of the Nigerian people, its pre-colonial political aspects mainly focused on the establishment and growth of communities. Many historians have argued that the pre-colonial establishment of the Uromi community was occasioned by the activities in the Benin kingdom. This paper re-assesses this age-long historical position that the Uromi community of Esanland and the whole of Esan were established by migrants from Benin kingdom. The paper also questioned the intellectual foundation for such popularly accepted account that has determined the nature of Edoid historiography. Though the paper argues that some Benin migrants settled in the Esan area of Nigeria and subsequently influenced Uromi socio-political structure, it is however not enough to conclude on that basis that the Esan area, where Uromi is located, is a total creation of Benin. The thesis of this paper therefore questions the widely accepted claim of a Benin hegemonic establishment of Uromi and concludes that such traditions of origin rest on unsubstantiated assumption.

Introduction

Afigbo in his work titled ÒThe Bini ÒMirageÓ and the History of South Central NigeriaÓ asserts that;

Thus in the South-Central Nigeria, the rise and expansion of the Benin empire has often been treated as the most important single factor in terms of which much of the history of those other peoples inhabiting the zone, whose societies were organised on a smaller scale, could be explained. It is this historiographical tradition or phenomenon that is here described as the ÒBini Mirage.Ó

In conceptual analysis, mirage is understood as an appearance; something unreal; it is a conception of a non-existing event. It is also a refraction of object. In appearance and reality discourse, philosophers have demonstrated that appearance is not reality, and does not constitute reality because it is purely an illusion and therefore untrue. Mirage could be understood as a deceptive reality. From Afigbo’s perspective therefore, the glorious hegemonic accounts of Benin history needs to be re-interrogated because there are no cogent historical
facts to substantiate many claims. Afigbo highlights the need for scholars to interrogate established traditions of origins in order to understand their true nature in relation to the growth and development of Nigerian communities. However, Osadolor provides explanation as to why the region's history is Binized. Osadolor explains that two related concepts have influenced early historical writing in Benin; these are the concepts of Edorisiagbon and Obayanto. These complex concepts mean that Benin is the progenitor of the human culture/trace and therefore the Oba of Benin is the possessor of the whole earth. It is this skein of historical writing that has determined the understanding and interpretation of the history of other Edoid communities in Nigerian historiography.

Even in the twenty first century, identity study has not attracted much scholarship among Nigerian historians because of its potentials of provoking, most often, unscholarly reactions. This has been the practice for quite some time. Otoide recognises this in his public lecture delivered on the 12th of November, 2011 to mark the 20th coronation ceremony of the king of Uromi. The lecture raises some fundamental issues among which are the origin of the people and the nature of Uromi-Benin pre-colonial relations. Otoide therefore warn that the lecture touches on very provocative areas, where angels fear to tread and perhaps too, an affront to the protectors of the establishment.

The lecture might be considered provocative because it questions the existing accounts of the traditions of origin of the Uromi people and could also be understood as an affront to those historical and intellectual institutions that have sustained a stereotyped tradition of Uromi origins. Otoide therefore concludes: I hope my lecture rather than attracting a reprimand would positively compel people to rise up to the challenges that it may invoke. In the same light, this paper is intended to draw scholars' attention to the neglect in identity study within the Edoid culture space. By Edoid culture, we refer to Natufe's grouping of the following communities that share similar cultural entities such as the Bini, Etsako, Esan, Owan, Urhobo and Isoko, all in the former Bendel State of Nigeria now Edo and Delta States.

The deterministic explanation of the formation of pre-colonial states in Nigeria irked Ekeh as he comments: Nigerian historiography is infested with what I would like to label as the fallacy of the regal origins of societies and cultures. It is the false assumption that societies and cultures have grown from kingdoms that were built by immigrant princes. Ekeh's observation is not different from Afigbo's query as it relates to the Benin Kingdom. Benin's historiography is primarily concerned with the accounts of how the Benin kingdom of glorious past dominated the historical landscape of other Edoid communities, especially in the aspect that bordered on the creation of states and its governmental apparatus. The contention of this
paper is not to refute the claim that the Benin Kingdom influenced Uromi pre-colonial socio-political institutions, but to emphasise that the Benin intervention in Uromi historical development should not be regarded as the origin of the people and community. The paper therefore seeks to address two issues. Firstly, to continue the debate on the genesis of the early development of the Edoid communities, and secondly, to put in clear historical perspective the gamut of traditions of origin as they relate to the Uromi people.

Professional historians still own a great deal of debt to non-professional historians for their interest and compilation of communities’ events in the form of history. Though most of their works are deficient in historical methodology and craft, professional historians more often depend on the accounts of African and European non-professional historians to construct, de-construct and re-construct African past and traditions of origin. We, however, recognises that non-professional historians have the tendency to over blow events and most times subject such events to mysticism and fantasies, but their accounts should not be disqualified as inauthentic. Rather, they should be accepted as history by amateurs or as source material. This paper relies on the accounts of non-professional historians to reassess, understand and interpret Uromi traditions of origin within the Edoid history because non-historians have greatly written on the origin of the Edoid people.

**Uromi Traditions of Origin**

Uromi is one of the earliest settlements among the present 36 kingdoms in Esan (misspelled as Ishan). The Esan section of the Edoid group is on the east of Benin City. The Uromi community is composed of three sub-groups of Okhiode, Obiyuan, and Oberhuan. These groupings are later developments that defined the people political and social evolution. Its boundary neighbours are the Kukuruku (Owan) in the north, and the other Esan villages of Irrua in the north-west, Ugboha and Ubiaja in the south, Ugbegun and Igueben on the south-east. The 20 villages that make up Uromi community are located approximately on a landmass of not more than 60 square miles. These villages are Amedokhian, Arue, Awo, Ebhoiyi (Ewoyoma), Efandion, Egbele, Eguarre, Ekhue, Eror, Idumoza, Ivue, Obeidu, Onewa, Oyomon, Ubierumu Ne-uwa, Ubierumu Ne-oke, Ukon, Unuwazi, Utako and, Uwalu.

Butcher, in his intelligence report records that Uromi derived its name from one of the sons of Oakha from the Benin royal household. That the consequences of a family feud compelled Oakha and her three sons to flee from Benin, and on their way eastward, one of the sons called Uromi decided to settle down in the region now refers to as Uromi. Okojie did not
give details, but posits that Uromi as a name was introduced by Benin immigrants in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{15} Omorogie also share the opinion that Uromi derived its name from the Benin word Uromhen, meaning "my gate or my door."\textsuperscript{16} For Ojiefoh, rather than attribute the origin of the name Uromi to Benin sources, he argues that it was Ekhenoa from the village of Ivue, who migrated from Ivue due to dynastic quarrel at Eguarre with the expression "Irie-uromenô meaning my father's door, or better put, I am going to my father's door."\textsuperscript{17} Door is used here to represent home. That, with time, Iriê Uromen changed to Uronbhon and later Uromi. From the above accounts, it becomes imperative to posit that the name Uromi, is either derived from powerful influences of a migratory force, or it symbolises a change in the political structure of the region. However, the various accounts established that the name Uromi is not autochthonous to the people of Uromi.

There are several traditions of origin in Uromi that could be logically reduced to three core related traditions. These are the Benin factor, Benue-Niger tradition, and the accounts of the aborigines. According to Bradbury, some Esan groups such as Uromi, Ewohimi, Ewu, and Ekpoma believe they descended from the sky; some rose from the ground, while others emerged from the rivers.\textsuperscript{18} By this, Bradbury's position identifies three channels through which migration entered into Uromi and other parts of Esanland. These channels of passage, though appear mythical, reveal in clear terms a proper understanding of how to appreciate the various traditions of the origin of Uromi. A correct interpretation of Bradbury's account will give us an understanding that those who claim to have descended from the sky represent the group that believe their ancestors migrated from Benin.

It is believed to be so because the early Benin kings of the first period in Benin monarchical history are referred to as the Ogiso-sky gods,\textsuperscript{19} and it is only Benin, among the various groups below the Niger that this concept of sky god is mentioned in their tradition of origin. Therefore, those who claim the sky-god tradition of origin in Uromi are most probably migrants from Benin either in the first or second period of Benin dynastic history. The groups that claim that they emerged from the ground attest to the aborigines in Uromi. They are like Alagoa\textsuperscript{20} "the son of the soil" concept. This group has lost the history of their origin as it represents the original inhabitants of the region, and as such the mentality of the son of the soil gives the group the privilege to be the custodian of their communities' gods as in the case of the village of Egbele housing the Alu-Oto-Egbele shrine.\textsuperscript{21} The river origin tradition indicates the migratory history of those who came from across the Niger River region, because Esan has no big river of significance. However, this discussion will limit itself to the most popular and
generally accepted Benin hegemonic establishment of Uromi as postulated by Jacob Uwadial Egharevba.

The Benin Factor and Uromi Traditions of Origin

Egharevba’s *Ekhere Vb’Itan Edo* published in 1933 and was later translated into English as *A Short History of Benin* in 1936 with the last edition published in 1968. This work, like an iron clad, determined the traditions of origin of other Edoid groups. In the work, Egharevba attempts a record of some major historical events concerning Benin's socio-political developments but focused more on the royal history of the Benin monarchy. His account situates other Edoid cultures within Benin’s cultural practices in Diaspora.

Nothing much is really said about events in Esan or Uromi to justify the powerful assertion that Benin migrants founded Esanland where Uromi is located. Egharevba divides Benin’s political history into three periods of the Ogiso, Oranmiyan, and Eweka. But he repeatedly states that the early people of Esan or Ishan were Bini emigrants from the first and second periods of the Benin Empire. According to him, the activities of the Ogiso and other royal parties made some people to migrate to Ishan (Esan) and other parts of Benin axis. That, Esan is the name of the first man who migrated from the city of Benin and became the founder and progenitor of Esan. Therefore the Ishans are early Benin people . . . [because] their Enigie or Enige were mostly princes of Benin, sent there as Chiefs by various Obas.

Our attention should be directed at the reasons stated for Egharevba’s conviction that Esan are Benin people by extension. His belief is simply because of the pre-colonial socio-political relationship between Benin and Esan people. Other accounts on the nature of relationship between Benin and Esan have not fundamentally deviated from Egharevba’s established version. For example, Okojie has provided three conflicting accounts of the origin of the Uromi people. Firstly, he argues on one hand that some communities such as Uromi, Irrua, Ekpoma, and Ubiaja were already in existence and known as such before the Esan region was christened Esan. He explains that the nomenclature Esan was used to describe, in the Benin language, the act of jumping or fleeing out of Benin in the reign of Oba Ewuare in the 15th century.

Our understanding of Okojie’s position will be that Benin migrants did not establish Esan or Uromi but their presence influenced why the region is referred to as Esan. Secondly, due to what we may call fallacy of similarity in culture, Okojie believes that Bini migrants to the Esan region were banished princes or chiefs, criminal, fugitives etc, who inhabited the present Esan country at the earliest time. Therefore, for him full Esan people came directly
and indirectly from Benin as could be seen from the uniformity of their features, language and custom.\textsuperscript{28} To further justify his assertion, Okojie narrates the circumstances that made Prince Egbele, the son of Oba Egbeka of Benin to establish the first recognised community in Uromi after he escaped from Benin with his two brothers, and mother named Oakha.\textsuperscript{29} This position would definitely mean that even if the Esan region was so named in the fifteenth century, it does not invalidate the accounts of the Benin establishment of the region. Thirdly, and most contradictory to his earlier statement, though typical with non-professional historians, is Okojie\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} announcement that the history of the Ruling Houses [in Esan], that is the Enijie, is quite different from that of the subject or commoners\textsuperscript{\textcopyright}. Practically all the Ruling Houses of Esan came directly from Benin to rule the people they found who were already firmly established.\textsuperscript{30}

What do we make out of such pronouncement? What Okojie probably means is that scholars should differentiate between the traditions of origin of the people from the origin of the monarchy. Okojie clearly implies that there are two distinct histories: the regal history and the subject history. The regal history is associated with Benin monarchy while the subject history relates with aborigines. If this interpretation suits Okojie\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} intent, it would mean that there were aborigines\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} upon whom the princes of Benin ruled over. This will clearly mean that Benin did not found Esan but only related politically, assuming a powerful status. Such lapses in Okojie\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} interpretation of the origin of Uromi have not deterred other Edoid writers from continuing with the mono-causal establishment of the Esan and Uromi societies.

So, it is not surprising as Eweka and Ojiefoh share similar thoughts with Okojie. Eweka, with a high level of magisterial ambience specifically posits that the people of Uromi came originally from Benin. Both their language and culture are based on that of the Benin. Their Enigie owe their origin to Benin.\textsuperscript{31} Eweka\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} justification is based on the similar socio-cultural and political realities between Benin and Uromi. Ojiefoh continues the discussion that Uromi as a region came into existence at about 1025 AD during the reign of Ogiso Ere (the second Ogiso) of Benin. According to Ojiefoh, through divination, it was revealed that witchcraft activities were responsible for the outbreak of small pox that ravaged the Benin community.

The Ogiso ordered a total hunt and elimination of confirmed witches and wizards, an order that resulted in the murder of so many people. Accordingly, Ojiefoh said that those who escaped ran into the jungle until they found themselves on the tableland now called Uromi.\textsuperscript{32} Ojiefoh goes further to reiterate the Egbele and Oahka\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} migratory account with her three sons when she was accused of witchcraft and adultery in Benin at about 1055 AD.\textsuperscript{33} The question
that should prink our collective intelligence is how did Egharevba and other succeeding writers arrived at the ‘sacrosanct’ conclusion that the people of Esan in general and Uromi in particular exclusively derived their existence from the Benin Kingdom? To answer the question, we have to go back to colonial accounts of the traditions of origin of the Uromi people in the Esan region.

**Colonial Intelligence Report and the Benin Factor**

J.U. Egharevba’s first account in 1933 was published a year after the compilation of the colonial intelligence report on Esan in 1932. There is no evidence yet to suggest that the colonial report might have coloured Egharevba’s perspective on the Esan people, but there are possibilities that both accounts might have derived their information from similar sources or similar assumption. Be that as it may, Egharevba definitely believe in the hegemonic manifest destiny of the Benin kingdom. Butcher compiled the intelligence report of the various Esan communities in 1932 and recorded in the case of Uromi that Oakha and her three boys are early founders of Uromi as they migrated from Benin and moved eastward to avoid being murdered by the then king of Benin. On their way, the second born son of Oakha named Uromi decided to settle down in the region later known as Uromi.

Interestingly, Butcher stated that the Oakha tradition of origin was not supported by both Uromi and Benin traditional authorities. The then Onojie of Uromi, Okojie II, refuted the Oakha tradition and told Butcher that there was no evidence to suggest that Uromi people migrated from Benin. The Oba of Benin, Akenzua II also rejected the Oakha story because it lacked merit on the side of Benin royal records. In spite of these rebuttals, one wonders why Butcher, without any cogent traditional evidence documented for posterity that Uromi people were in the main Benin origin either directly or indirectly [because] the tribal marks are Bini, and the language is a dialect of Bini. Uromi culture is based on that found in Benin. Butcher might have reached that conclusion because he relied without thoroughly questioning an earlier colonial account that erroneously, but deliberately documented a badly rendition of Uromi traditions of origin.

In 1916, Edward Morris Falk, the District Officer in the Ishan Division between 1915 and 1916 was instructed by the Commissioner (later Resident), Benin Province to undertake a study and compile an intelligence report on the various communities in the Esan region. The purpose of the study was to determine the scope and chairmanship of the proposed Native Administration because the colonial authorities were not sure of who among the Esan kings would command respect from other Esan royal colleagues to be appointed as the chairman of the Native Administration. Among other issues, Falk commented in his report that the people
of Uromi acknowledged that their Enogie was confirmed by the Oba of Benin before such succession was valid. However, when Falk asked the people for actual historical facts, I found they very little was known or told to me ô (sic).³⁸

The issue here is not to dispute the fact that the Oba of Benin played that prominent political role in pre-colonial Uromi, but to draw our attention once again to the colonial deliberate falsification and conjunction of facts based on presumption and assumption as shall be noticed further in the report. Falk only visited 18 out of the 32 Esan towns and recorded that by the time I had reached Ugboha I had come to the conclusion that the Ishans really knew very little of their actual history. They all had the legend in common that their forefathers had come from Beniné.³⁹ Therefore, since it was difficult to recognise a single Esan king as overlord, and all tradition point to a Benin pre-colonial over lordship, it became expedient for Falk that there can be no doubt about the fact that nothing would [be] easier than to restore Benin supremacy (sic) To enable matters to work smoothly Ishan would have to be incorporated in the Benin Division.⁴⁰ Falk arrived at that dubious conclusion because he based his findings on assumption derived from scattered statements and observation, and therefore ignorantly rested his report on presumed hypothesis. Falk’s report on Uromi reads:

I vainly sought for traces of any past constitutional method of governing, or any permanent council existing in bye-gone days, of any officials who performed definite functions unconnected with war or ceremony or worship, such as the trial of offences and disputes, the collection of revenue or whose duty it was to direct the affairs of the township. Not a vestige have I discovered at Uromi of any other form of government than that based on force, slave heading and superstitious human sacrifice guided and overshadowed by the power of Benin. ⁴¹

It is reasoned that due to colonial racist arrogance and ignorance of the workings of pre-colonial societies in Africa, Falk convinced himself that the Uromi people had no form of government as they lived in circumstances not better than Thomas Hobbes state of nature. For the sake of clarification, Hobbes wrote Leviathan to advocate for a strong government that would impose authority needed to curtail the effects of the 1640-1660 English Revolution that resulted in heavy collateral damage.⁴² Falk compared Uromi with such squalid European situation in order to justify the imposition of colonial policies in the community. It is important to quickly state that at the time the British were experiencing such upheaval in the seventeenth century, the Uromi people had fully cemented the processes of state formation and identity before the imposition of Benin monarchical rule in the fifteenth century.
However, in the covering memo to the Commissioner, Falk was sincere enough to admit that it was impossible to obtain facts from which a chronicle of Ishan might have been compiled all that could be done was to get an insight into the state of Ishan in pre-government days. Falk's self admission that his report was a sham did not deter the Commissioner (later Resident) to recommend to the Secretary, Southern Provinces, that the Native Administration be composed of some prominent Esan Enogie (including that of Uromi) headed by a Bini chief to be appointed by the Oba of Benin. The Resident referred to the ancient connexion between BENIN and ISAHNÉ based on the findings of Falk. The colonial authorities definitely knew that their accounts of Uromi traditions of origin were based on falsehood and half truth in order to achieve colonial political and economic goals. That deliberate mischief has resulted in the twisted traditions of origin of the Esan people in general and Uromi in particular.

Let us take time to ponder on the twin-reasons given to suggest that the Esan and Uromi people are Benin. Firstly, the degree of cultural similarities between the Bini and Esan has been over cited to justify the fallacy of a Benin hegemonic establishment of Uromi. We would not waste much ink on that because evidence of socio-cultural similarities among a certain group of people should not necessarily be accepted as an indication that such people may have had a common ancestral antecedent. Otherwise we can as well argue that the people of Esan either came from Ghana or the Ghanaians migrated from the Esan region because both cultures exhibit similar traditional dress pattern. However, in the case of the Edoid culture, we share Osadolor's position that where such cultural similarities exist, it could be as a result of diffusion of ideas, migration of people or consequences of military conquest.

In the case of Uromi, the presence of some element of Benin cultural practices among the people are as a result of socio-political and economic contacts other than military conquest. There is no account of repute before us to claim that the relationship between Uromi and Benin was determined by military engagement. The only popular account of armed conflict between Uromi and Benin resulted in the death of Oba Ozolua of Benin and the disappearance of King Agba of Uromi in circa 1503. It is within the purview of the colonial and Edoid accounts of Uromi traditions of origin that this paper argues that there is need to further re-interrogate the Benin hegemonic establishment of Uromi so as to have a clearer understanding of the nature of Uromi-Benin pre-colonial relations.

Secondly, the other reason that has been vigorously canvassed is the impact of the Benin monarchy on Uromi kingship institution. We have earlier stated that the Uromi kingship institution was introduced by the Benin monarchy. It should be said from the outset that there
was a system of government in Uromi before the imposition of kingship institution and colonial rule. Details of Uromi pre-colonial political structure has been discussed elsewhere, but it is important to briefly summarise the nature of Uromi pre-colonial political development before the imposition of the Benin style monarchical institution.

The pre-Benin political institution began with the family patriarchal unit (Uelen) headed by the Odion–Azagba or Odefen or Ominjiogbe. The unit was composed of members of the same ancestral lineage. The Ominjiogbe was not a gerontocratic system; rather it was by primogeniture whereby the eldest surviving son in a family assumed headship of the family after the demise of his father who also inherited that position with the death of his own father. As the Uelen began to increase and expand, it evolved into the quarter (Idumu) unit. The Idumu system was an improvement upon the Uelen practice as appointment to headship of the Idumu was based on non-rotational gerontocracy. The head of the Idumu was called the Odion (plural Edion). The emergence of the Idumu unit did not affect the relevance of the Uelen as they served as complement to the Idumu. The Idumu later metamorphosed into the village (Igue) unit of administration. The village unit (Igue) is made up of various Idumu. The Igue emerged as a result of kinship and exogamous relationship. Gerontocracy was retained as the head of administration was called Odion of the village he headed. Due to the growth and development of several villages, the people decided to federate the villages which resulted in the evolution of a federate unit of a-three village groups.

The federated units of Okhiode, Obiruan, and Obiyuan were headed by war captains known as Ekakulo (singular Okakulo) in Esan language. This stage in Uromi political evolution could be considered as the early attempt to institute monarchical order in the community. That was the pre-Benin political reality in Uromi before the imposition of the Benin style monarchical system of traditional governance in the era of Oba Ewuare of Benin (1440–1483). According to the available Esan accounts, the Oba invited the various political heads of Esan to Benin in order to address the challenge of the impact of emigration in his kingdom. Ekehoa represented the Uromi community in the Oba’s palace and was eventually commissioned as the Oba’s ambassador (Onojie) to assume political headship over the whole of Uromi.

In that wise, any account that situates the presence of kingship institution in Uromi before the fifteenth century maybe considered as spurious. J.E. Miller, in his dissertation on Ishan-Benin Relations c1455-1509 wonders why he could not locate or trace the succession list of Esan kings before 1455. The absence of a king list of Esan origin before 1455 re-enforces the
position of this paper that monarchical institution in Uromi and Esanland is not as old as it is generally speculated. There is however a fascinating account that we have decided to call the Idu tradition of Uromi origin.

**Omorogie's History of Uromi: A Contextual History on the Evolution of Uromi in the Esan-land Section of Benin Empire 1050-1960 A.D** attempts to trace the evolution of Uromi. Omorogie narrates that the emergence of Uromi as a geographical reality is ascribable to the history of the Idu civilisation that began in 599 AD. Omorogie explains that Idu civilisation traced its origin from the Uhe civilisation that thrived on a plateau somewhere across the Niger in about 550 AD, under the leadership of Idu. That the death of Idu in 599AD sparked off persecution against Idu’s household, which prompted Idu’s descendants to migrate from Uhe toward the shores of River Niger where they settled. Akka, one of the seven children of Idu, headed this wave of migrants; other children were Efa, Emehi, Uwa, Iro, Ehi, and Ose. It

In their migratory journey, Esan, the son of Ehi decided to remain in the region where Akka his uncle died and was buried in 600 A.D. The region became known as Irrua, a corrupted version of the Benin expression Irrowa- meaning ì am at home, I am in comfort. Omorogie further narrates that Irrua, therefore, becomes the centre from where migrants moved to other parts of Esan-land including Uromi in the first instance, while other Idu children continued the migratory journey until they settled in Ubini (Benin) at the close of 600 AD. However, Omorogie concludes that the stem of traditional power, political collectivisation, economic collectivisation, [and] military pre-eminence aided Benin’s advancement over Esan and other parts of the Edoid. If credence is given to this account, it will fundamentally reverse Egharevba’s popular views even when the writer of this account intends to situate an understanding of Uromi history within the prism of Benin civilisation.

**Conclusion**

The kernel of the discourse is to establish along lines of other professional historians that cultural similarities and socio-political relationship among Nigerian communities do not constitute enough grounds to draw a connection of hegemonic establishment. Ikime acknowledged the fact that people migrated from Benin to Esanland, but posit that the migration in the reign of Oba Ewuare should not be considered as the "primary and founding migration" of Esanland as "Benin migrants must be seen as the last to arrive in the area". In the case of Uromi, the discourse has demonstrated that any tradition of origin that attributes the establishment of Uromi to a mono-causal factor of Benin progenitor is no longer a valuable historical currency. From the accounts of Uromi traditions of origin already discussed, professional historians should therefore not feast on historical accounts that justify hegemonic
establishment of communities based on mainly cultural affinity, but rather should re-
interrogate such accounts..
Endnotes

3. See full text, A.E. Afigbo, "The Beni \textit{Miragenth} and the History of South Central Nigeria"
8. O.I. Natufe, "Use and Abuse of History: A Critique of Ademola Iyi-Ewetk\textit{a} Re-joinder to Professor Peter Ekeh\textit{a} Egharevba Memorial Lecture\textit{a}" Published by Institute for Benin Studies, Monograph 3, 2001, p.50.
23. J. U. Egharevba, \textit{A Short History of Benin}, p.84.
24. J. U. Egharevba, \textit{A Short History of Benin}, p.84.
33. A.P. Ojiefoh, *Uromi Chronicles*, p.3.
40. National Archive Ibadan (NAI), BP 437/1916 *Ishän Towns Relations of, to Benin*.
41. National Archive Ibadan (NAI), BP 437/1916 *Ishän Towns Relations of, to Benin*.
43. National Archive Ibadan (NAI), BP 437/1916 *Ishän Towns Relations of, to Benin* covering memo from Falk to the Commissioner, Benin Province, dated 26th October, 1916.
44. National Archive Ibadan (NAI), BP 437/1916 *Ishän Towns Relations of, to Benin* covering memo from the Resident (formerly Commissioner), Benin Province, to the Secretary, Southern Provinces, dated 4th August, 1917.
45. National Archive Ibadan (NAI), BP 437/1916 *Ishän Towns Relations of, to Benin*.
46. The *Kente* dress is Ghana's popular traditional dress just as the *Gbulu* among the Esan people. Both dresses are hand woven, similar in texture, colour, and mostly wore by men as they drape the dress around their bodies before hanging it on the shoulder. At first glance, it will take some time to differentiate between both patterns of dress.
52. No specific date can be speculated for the conference, the identity of the Uromi ambassador and his political and social status are yet to be established.