

HISTORY, IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND THE INDIGENOUS REPUBLICAN SYSTEM OF THE URHOB0 PEOPLE

by

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Abstract

The Urhobo people are mostly known as a decentralised group. This paper argues that the geographical location, the political and social structures, the economic and religious practices of the Urhobo people portray them not just as a decentralise group but as a post-state people. The paper relies on the cultural studies theoretical framework to advance five major factors which reveal that the decentralised nature of the Urhobo people reflects the features of a post-state group. Evidence and illustrations are drawn from the oral resources and arts of the Urhobo people and the oral narratives of other groups. The paper discovered that the hinterland geographical location of the Urhobo people, their flexible political and social structures, their practice of escape agriculture and self-sufficiency, their oral culture and post-literacy epistemology and adherence to egalitarian religious movements and leaders point to the Urhobo people as a post-state group. The paper concludes that these elements of post-state are deliberate strategies employed by the Urhobo people to avoid the creation of a centralised state by their elites, colonisation by powerful states or incorporation into a centralised state by some mighty neighbours.

Keywords: Urhobo People, Decentralised, Post-State, Post-Literacy, Colonisation

Introduction

This paper argues that the characteristics of a post-state people are exhibited by the Urhobo people, and in this vein, it can be said that the Urhobo people have moved from the level of a centralised group. A post-state culture is not just a culture that is decentralised in terms of organisation. A post-state philosophy and organisation goes beyond this. A post-state group deliberately rejects a centralised system that makes organisation easier to administer. In its stead, the post-state group intentionally adopts the decentralised system in order to make governance complex and disorganised in nature. The opposite of a post-state is the state. A state

refers to an organised community of people that can successfully claim that they have the monopoly of wielding physical force over a given territory that is autonomous (Cudworth et al, 2007, p.1)). In this vein, Scheidel (2013), defines the state as a “centralized institutions that imposes rules, and backs them up by force, over a territorially circumscribed population; a distinction between the rulers and the ruled; and an element of autonomy, stability, and differentiation. These distinguish the state from less stable forms of organization, such as the exercise of chiefly power” (p.7).

There is also the notion of a nation. A nation is different from the state because, whereas the state has the elements of “political-legal abstraction” (Sheidel, 2013, p.8), the nation is more of a cultural conglomeration. This is because the nation does not have the weapons of coercion like the state. Also, the nation lacks organised geographical boundaries that states have (Samuels, 2013, p.46). Tilly (1992) defines the state as “coercion-wielding organisations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise a clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories” (p.1). In the definition by Tilly, institutions like “tribes, lineages, firms and churches” are not included as the state. Instead, Tilly (1992) concludes that the state “resembles a form of organized crime and should be viewed as extortion rackets” (p.2). This implies that the state, as an instrument of coercion, aims to take from the citizen and give to the state authority. The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States treaty of 1933 declares that the “state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states ... the federal state shall constitute a sole person in the eyes of international law”.

The Urhobo people are found in Delta State in Nigeria. They inhabit an area that is divided into twenty-four clans or kingdoms. The political and socio-economic system of the Urhobo people is based on the family and the village system. This means that the Urhobo people identify with their villages more than the clan or the kingdom. This paper argues that the Urhobo people have experimented with statehood and have come to the conclusion that statelessness or post-state is the best option to preserve their identity and enhance survivability. The paper relies on the cultural studies theoretical framework, and it draws illustrations from the oral arts and narratives of the Urhobo people and their neighbours.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This paper adopts cultural studies as its theoretical framework. Cultural studies is multidisciplinary in nature; it encompasses areas like the arts and anthropology to explore how culture is created, interpreted, contested and shared. Williams (1958) observes that cultural studies utilises elements of culture like language, traditions, customs, values and behaviour of individuals and the society to interpret the relationship between culture and social realities. Kennedy et al (2005) explore another angle to cultural studies when they observe that cultural studies is “above all, a political enterprise that views literary analysis as a means of furthering social justice...Cultural studies reject the notion that literature exists in an aesthetic realm separate from ethical and political categories” (p.2245/2246). The implication of this argument is that cultural studies uses the imaginative nature of literature to create artificial models through which the study of culture as it impacts on power relations can be developed.

The evolution of cultural studies is aided by the ideas of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Tony Bennett, and the role of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in England in 1968. In its use in this paper, cultural studies enables the analyst to relate the culture of the Urhobo people to the role of power in propagating class domination in the narratives of dominant cultures and how this ideology is constructed as the dominant ideology in a group. The acceptance of the ideology and representation leads to hegemony, where the ideas of the dominant class are internalised by the people through epistemic narratives and education. Thus, Mambrol (2016) explains that “in cultural studies, representation is a key concept and denotes a language in which all objects and relationships get defined, a language related to issues of class, power and ideology, and situated within the context of 'discourse’” (p.6).

In this paper, the cultural studies theoretical framework also enables the paper to relate the deliberate choices of the Urhobo people in the areas of the geographical location of their settlements, socio-political system, and religion to be interpreted as means of avoiding hegemony and centralisation. Therefore, the paper employs the analytical method that is both ethnographic and library-based research with oral data such as narratives and other Urhobo oral arts like proverbs and songs, which are carefully selected based on their thematic alignments to the argument of the paper. These are collected from in-depth interviews and observations. The stories are transcribed and translated from the Urhobo language to English.

The State and the Burden of Liberty

The relationship between geographical location and the ideology of a culture is studied by Scott (2009). In his work with the cultures of the Zomia people of South East Asia, Scott relates two distinct cultures that are shaped by the geographical location of the people. The first is the culture he refers to as the Valley peoples. These people are able to organise themselves into a state. According to Scott (2009), the more favorable and extensive the setting, the more likely a state of some size and durability would arise there (p.42). This is the case with the valley people of South East Asia who are able to develop into a state due to the favourable geographical location that is expansive in nature with wetlands and irrigated fields. Unlike the valley people, the Hills people of South East Asia are not centralised. Scott’s argument is that the lack of centralisation among the Hills people is deliberate and due to a lack of organisational skills. Thus, Scott can argue that “much of the population in the hills has, for more than a millennium and a half, come there to evade the manifold afflictions of state-making projects in the valleys” (p.22).

This situation of the Zomia people is reflective of the Urhobo people. The Urhobo people dwell between the deep rainforest region and the edge of the mangrove swamps of the Niger Delta. The River Ase and River Patani are like a fence to the south of Urhoboland, while the River Ethiopie serves as a bulwark to the north of the territory of the Urhobo people; suffice to say that the Urhobo people reside in the western Niger Delta. Against this choice of territory, it must be observed that the Benin Empire, a mighty and vast kingdom ruled by an enigmatic Oba-king lies to the north of the Urhobo territory. This brings the argument of this paper to the fore in terms of the geographical location of the Urhobo people. Why not become part of the Benin Empire with its centralised political system and well-developed economy? Also, why

did the Urhobo people not develop a centralised system in the territory of their choice? The answers to these questions can be established with a look into the origin and movement of the Urhobo people to their location.

Ekeh (2007) details the migration of the Urhobo people from Benin. In order to comprehend the scale of the arduous movement that leads to the founding of the Urhobo territories, it is necessary to reproduce the extract of Ekeh's argument.

The ancient history of Urhobo in those dark centuries was one of survival. In effect, some migrants dared the environmental inhospitality of the Western Niger Delta and gradually conquered its territory. The size of the pioneering immigrants, who challenged the wild and the unknown of the Western Niger Delta hinterland, was likely to be small. The notion that a team of men, women, and children left some comfortable kingdom in Benin and escaped as a large convoy of happy émigrés into the untested jungle and streams and rivers of the Western Niger Delta was most probably not the case. It was more likely that long distance hunters surveyed the new territory and that hardened teams of adventurers prepared these unknown territories to receive women and younger members of families. In any case, the conquest of one of the most difficult regions of Africa, namely, the hinterland of the Western Niger Delta, was a major accomplishment.... (p.21)

The major import of Ekeh's description of the movement of the Urhobo people to this obscure and unforgiving territory is that it offers security. In the words of Ekeh (2007) "a major feature of ancient Urhobo was that it was isolated" (p.22). The isolation becomes a quiet and secure place to research new ideologies. One of such ideologies is the decentralised republican system. The argument here is that the movement of the Urhobo people to the western Niger Delta, with its numerous streams, swamps and hazards, is a deliberate choice to avoid being co-opted into some form of a centralised state.

One way this deliberate choice of obscurity is manifested is through the advancement of myriads of traditions of origins. When asked about the tradition of origin of the Urhobo people, some of these traditions discussed below will pop up. The first is the autochthonous tradition of the Urhobo people, which says that the Urhobo people have occupied their present geographical location from the beginning of time. Onigu Otite (1982) corroborates this view when he opines that the Urhobo people "were the aborigines coming from nowhere but living in their territories from time immemorial. This tradition is without documentary or archaeological evidence, yet it recurs among the Urhobo respondents, and it may not be brushed aside" (p.25). This tradition is documented as the creation myth of the Urhobo people. According to Egere (2012), Osonobruwhe, the Almighty God, created the world and a land known as Udo; this Udo is not the present name of a town in Edo state. Then Osonobruwhe created a man called Urhobo.

In the words of Egere (2012), Osonobruwhe "instructed Urhobo to jump down from a tree which he had caused to grow in the midst of the water" (p.69). The myth relates that Urhobo

jumped down from heaven and proclaimed “wado-o”, a word which is a mark of appreciation among the Urhobo people. This autochthonous tradition is documented in a song whose lyrics is reproduced from the original song by Okparan Aki Bubu, a former Okparan Uku of Orogun Kingdom.

Eghwo, Eghwo, Damukeleghe	Eghwo, Eghwo, Damukeleghe
Eghwo, Eghwo, damukeleghe	Eghwo, Eghwo, Damukeleghe
Oke me vwo rhiakpo, damukeleghe	When I came to the World, damukeleghe
Enu mama-a, damukeleghe	Sky had not been formed, damukeleghe
Otor mama-a, damukeleghe	Earth had not been formed, damukeleghe
Urhe ovor’odo, damukeleghe	The only tree in the midst of the deep,
damukeleghe	
Meda cha me da muo, damukeleghe	I used to fly and perch, damukeleghe
Eghwo, Eghwo, damukeleghe	Eghwo, Eghwo, damukeleghe
Eghwo, Eghwo, damukeleghe	Eghwo, Eghwo, damukeleghe

Egere (2012) explains that “damukeleghe” in Urhobo means to stand up alone, while “eghwo” is an interjection meaning strength (p.70).

Apart from the autochthonous creation tradition, there are several migration theories by the Urhobo people. Scholars like Otite (1982) see most of these migration traditions “at face value, near fiction,” but at the same time, it will be an utter academic blunder and disservice if we should summon haste to dismiss or even ignore this set of traditions. These include the migration traditions of Urhobo coming from Egypt; the North-South migratory pattern of the Urhobo of the Oduduwa legend where Egere (2012) explains that “three princely brothers came from North Africa. The brothers are Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yoruba people, Igodomigodo the progenitor of the Bini[s], and Urhobo the ancestor of the Urhobo people” (p.73).

Arawore foregrounds these migration traditions as he sums up the migration trajectory of the Urhobo people when he says that “the Urhobo for the first time came from Egypt, left some of their people on the shores of Lake Chad, halted for a time at Ile-Ife, had a permanent abode at Benin and finally were driven to the swamps of the Niger Delta” (Otite 1968, 28).

The import of these many traditions of origin is that the Urhobo people have woven a complex history of their origin, which does not point to a particular location or migration pattern. This is aimed at creating confusion and aiding the inability to explain who the Urhobo people really are. This idea is embedded in saying that “*mi yen Aka, mi yen Isi, me je mre orhe ro vwe egba ovo*” (I have travelled the Benin Empire, I have been to distant lands, but I have never seen a plantain trunk bearing only one seed). This saying explains the decentralised nature of the Urhobo as one that is borne out of an intentional and calculated attempt to avoid statehood or singularity. More so, this complex singularity extends to the political and social fabrics of the Urhobo society.

The Urhobo people pride themselves on being Republicans. Thus, their political and social organisations are structured along individualism. This argument finds traction when the political ideology of the Urhobo people is placed vis-à-vis the operations of the republican

system. In centralised societies, the power devolves from the top to the bottom. This pattern is observed in the centralised neighbours of the Urhobo people, like Benin. According to Ikime (1969), “the Oba of Benin was a powerful ruler who was regarded with deep veneration as a near-deity” (p.13). But the case of the Urhobo people is different. In Urhobo culture, power devolves from the bottom to the top. The implication is that power is concentrated in the villages, which are the most powerful political and administrative units. Contrary to claims that the Urhobo people practice gerontocracy, the research carried out by this paper reveals that the government at the village, sub-clan and clan/kingdom levels are more of an aristocracy than a gerontocracy. Though at the village and sub-clan levels, there is the presence of the most elderly man in the government, he is more of a symbolic figure, as the most senior title holder known as *Otota* has the final say in any deliberation.

Egere (2012) argues that the Urhobo people have at one time in the ancient past lived “in proximity under one king” (p.100). Egere asserts that “it implies that at a certain period of their history, they all practiced a common socio-political system ... during this period, Ekpako (Elders) helped Ovie (king) to rule the suburb through the process of delegated power. The prolonged interregnum later encouraged the permanency of the republican culture among the Urhobo people” (p.100). Egere’s argument that the Urhobo people have experienced the centralisation of socio-political forces before lends support to the argument of this paper that the Urhobo people are a post-state people. This means that they have experienced the advantages and disadvantages of centralisation but have opted for the decentralised system in order to retain an identity that will enhance their survival and independence as a group. The advantage of the republican system is that the power that belongs to a village, sub-clan or clan is retained by the individual. Thus, in case of emergency, the system is highly mobile and built on resilience in case of dispersal. Scott (2007) explains that this “social structure could fairly be called escape social structure since it was designed to aid dispersal and autonomy and to ward off political subordination” (p.23).

As I have noted from the outset, the Urhobo people lived in the heavy rain and mangrove forests region of the Niger Delta, the people practice agriculture as the mainstay of their economy. Scott (2007) also distinguishes between two types of agriculture that centralised and decentralised states practice. While the centralised state engages in permanent monocropping, the post-state economy relies on widening agriculture. According to Scott (2007), “the necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for the rise of a substantial state was the existence of a large alluvial plain suitable for the cultivation ... and hence capable of sustaining both a substantial and concentrated population” (p.50). In the case of the Urhobo people, the geographical location, which is isolationist in ideology, is suitable for escape agriculture. One of the techniques of escape agriculture is swiddening. Takasaki et al (2017) explain that “swidden agriculture – known also as shifting cultivation and ‘slash and burn’ agriculture – is one of the most extensive and controversial land uses in the tropical world” (p.40). Shifting agriculture or swiddening is the major agricultural technique deployed by the Urhobo people in the rainforest.

In order to align their economy with the isolationist identity they have deliberately chosen to pursue, the first step in creating an autonomous economy is the establishment of the slash-and-

burn practice of agriculture. This entails the felling of a mighty tree that dominates the forest to give space for the sunlight to heat the earth. Once the canopy created by the foliage of the trees has given way for sunlight, then slashing and burning of twigs and other plants can continue. When cleared, the farm is ready for planting. After the cultivation of the land for some years, the owners will move to a new land, and the process repeats itself. The adoption of the shifting cultivation practice is important for the Urhobo people. The existence of a large forest means that the people can expand their settlement in alignment with their autonomous and independent ideology. What this means is that once a settlement becomes overcrowded, then extended groups will expand into new forests and form their own settlement, which will be named after them. Thus, the Urhobo people have a saying that “*ohwo ro she egbo ye rie erere roye* (the one who deforests a place enjoys the rewards).

Apart from locating a settlement after the deforestation, other parts of the deforested land are used for farming. The crops the Urhobo people plant are also heavily tied to the concept of escape agriculture. Maat et al (2024) define escape agriculture as:

a specific farming technique, developed in response to repression from governing powers, and a foundational practice for establishing different ordering principles for the economy and society. Escape farming techniques involve the avoidance of visibility through sparse use of fire, using multiple fields at different locations and hiding crops by reduced clearing and weeding of other vegetation. Escap agriculturalists cultivate a range of different crops and crop varieties, enabling subsistence and sociality in relative isolation. (p.1143)

The advantage of escape agriculture, according to Maat et al, is that “these fields, unsupervised by plantation overseers and tended during off-hours, are not often in the canonical historical record. Information about what was grown, by whom and how is scattered and indirect (p.1143). Though Maat et al’s work focused on the people of Suriname in central America, the definition of escape agriculture aligns with the practice in Urhobo land. Unlike plantation farming in most states, which enables the production of food for stable populations, which is the bedrock of the state, escape agriculture is tied to the principle of subsistence farming.

The adoption of escape agriculture by the Urhobo is a means of enhancing their isolationist and autonomous identity. Thus, most of the crops that are planted by the Urhobo are those that take three months to mature. In the words of Egere (2012), “the major crops produced by the people include yam, cassava, corn, pepper, cocoyam, spices, tomatoes, groundnut, and beans ... (p. 10). It must be pointed out that though Egere lists cassava as one of the crops, the fact is that cassava is a recent entrant into the food crops of the Urhobo people, as the Portuguese who brought it from the Americas came in the 14th century. Cassava takes a whole year to mature, so a person involved in escape agriculture will not plant cassava. Instead, crops that generally mature within three months and whose products can be used as food for survival are usually planted. The essence of planting these crops is that a mobile Urhobo man in search of a place

to deforest can plant and harvest these crops in temporary abodes till he or she finally settles. More so, the root crops can be cleared and the tubers left behind in case of an invasion; once cleared, the invaders will not see the crops above the ground as the tubers are underground. Later, when the invaders are gone, the people can come back and meet their crops intact in the ground.

An advantage the forest vegetation gives to the Urhobo people is the abundance of wild palm trees in the area. With time, the Urhobo people discovered this natural edible fruit, and they utilise almost all the parts of the palm tree to their advantage. The milky liquid the fruit yields when crushed becomes the main ingredient for the making of the *Amiedi* (Banga/palm fruit) soup (Unuajohwofia, 2024, p.21). According to Unuajohwofia, “amidst this advantage of having low cholesterol ... the palm fruit is readily available in its season. In the Urhobo and Isoko areas, the oil palm tree produces fruits in large quantities from November to early May every year (p.21). Other products derived from the palm tree include a broom from the twigs, pomade from the kernel, soap from burning, filtering and refining the residue of the bunch when the palm nuts have been extracted and a sponge from the fibre in the stem of the tree. The versatility of the palm tree becomes the inspiration that made the Urhobo people develop an indigenous technology for extracting the *Ofigbo* (red palm oil) from the fruits. In the words of Egere (2012), “a critical study of the palm oil production and extraction in the western Niger Delta will no doubt amplify the creative prowess of Africa's traditional technology of this group (p.10).

Perhaps, the articulation of the knowledge of the complex socio-political and economic epistemology and intellectual base of the Urhobo people in oral literature is the most fascinating and compelling reason that the Urhobo people are a post-state people. States thrive on the accurate records of events, especially economic production and the utilisation of labour. Therefore, most centralised states have advanced writing skills with which to document state records and also amplify the ideology of the elite. But this is not the case in post-state cultures. In order to maintain a deliberate isolationist ideology and also obscure a trail of their history, most records and traditions are preserved in their memory and transmitted orally. Thus, among the Urhobo people, the orality skills are so developed that it accounts for all of their records, history and literature. One area where this oral ability is well developed is the documentation of their religion.

As a post-state people, the Urhobo people are monotheists in nature. This means that they serve one God called Oghene. Nabofa explains that the almighty God (*Oghene*) is the supreme God in Urhobo land. His representative abode on earth is a shrine made up of “Newboldia tree (*Oghriki*) planted in the centre of every compound.” (p.40). Further, Ojaide (2004) foregrounds that Urhobo people see the world in a binary form. In the Urhobo philosophy of the world, beauty coexists with ugliness, order with disorderliness and these binaries are locked in a constant dynamic motion where man, in his struggle for survival, utilises the force of nature for his own good. Also, the Urhobo people believe in the existence of two worlds. These are the *Akpo* (physical world), which embodies the world of mortals and other living things, and the *Erivwin* (metaphysical world), where the spirits and ancestors reside. In the belief of the Urhobo people, in these worlds, evil co-exists with good, and both are in constant struggle for

dominance. But between man and evil, there are the *edjo* (gods) and *ebo* (medicines) which help man to counteract evil (Ojaide, 2004, p.75). All these thoughts and philosophies are documented in the oral literature of the Urhobo people.

The importance of the oral transmission of records in a post-state culture is closely linked to its ability to be mobile and resilient. The post-state culture is always in anticipation of cases of emergencies, which can be in the form of internal implosion, external attacks or a natural disaster. In such scenarios, the epistemology and literature of the people can be mobilised quickly and sent to another location. In this regard, the post-state culture utilises the open democratic transmission of knowledge to all groups. There are no special elites that hoards and conserve knowledge. This is why the myth, legend and folktale thrive so well in a post-state culture with no sanction attached. This liberal, open and democratic transmission of history and literature in turn leads to an obscure identity. In this case, there is no definite or clear dimension of the truth or veracity of the information. This is geared towards weaving a complex and obscurantist framework for the outsider; in this scenario, history and identity become enamoured. An instance of this obscurantism is the story of Ubiesha Etarakpo, who founded the Igbe Religious Movement in the late 19th century.

In one version of the oral story of the founding of the Igbe Religious Movement embedded in the folktale titled *Princess Oyeghe* narrated by Cousin Onofekohwo and translated by Godini Darah, the story goes thus:

Narrator: Ubiesha Etarakpo of Kokori
Was emptying his bowels
On the outskirts of the town.
By accident, Ubiesha walked into the battle zone.
There, Ubiesha witnessed Arhwaran's war dance.
And when Ubiesha got back home,
He gathered poles and built a temple
At Urhievwurie section of Kokori.
When he completed the temple,
Ubiesha went to Kokori market to buy white chalk
And a fan made from animal skin.
By next morning, he started to perform the new ritual dance.
Whilst he did this, Kokori people jeered at him, saying:
"What type of strange dance is this?"
Ubiesha took note of the insulting remarks.
The songs Arhwaran sang to do battle,
Ubiesha inherited them.
This was the origin of the Igbe Religious Movement.
Whenever you grow shorter, I too grow shorter
Whenever you grow shorter, I too grow shorter
I say this was how Ubiesha healing movement began.
Whenever he performed the ritual dance,
He would take brief rest after a performance sequence

And make offering of white chalk powder (orhen).
Soon, news of Ubiesha healing powers reached Benin people.
Whoever had festering sores came for treatment.
Those with leprosy also came for cure.
With chalk powder only as medicine,
Life-threatening leprosy were healed in seven days.
In seven days, big sores were healed completely.
A religious movement developed from this practice.
A religious movement was Arhwaran's gift to Ubiesha.
Ubiesha acquired great fame through this inheritance.
Ubiesha lived long and died.
But his religious movement became a universal one.
The initial disparaging remarks
Kokori people used to scandalize him
Made Ubiesha to pronounce a curse before he died:
"Whoever will succeed me will be a foreigner
My mantle will fall on Igugu of Ugono
He will swear loyalty to me
Another disciple will be Agege of Orhomuru community
He too shall pledge loyalty to me
Yet another disciple will be Omotigbe
She shall acknowledge my supremacy
At Aboh, Johnny shall be the leader
He too shall pay tribute to me
At Oghwe, Adjanugha will be a disciple
He too shall be my faithful heir
At Abraka, Bokpo will be in charge
He too shall call me "Lord"
To all my disciples and followers, blessings"
Since that time, all branches of the Igbe Religious Movement.
Wherever they are found, all swear loyalty to Reverend Ubiesha.
To the whole world, Ubiesha gave a religious movement.
A war dance that was giant Arhwaran's gift,
Developed into a universal religion.

Another version of the story of Ubiesha Etarakpo and the founding of the Igbe Religious Movement was narrated by Ogute Otan from the Udu area of Urhoboland. This version goes:

A man call Ubiesha, a native of Kokori,
He founded the Igbe Orhen Religious Movement and gave it to the world.
The English has a proverb that, "suffer before pleasure";
The story of Ubiesha captures this statement.
Ubiesha in his early years was married and had children.

The eldest son is named Akpokovo; the second is Ibodje, while the youngest is Akpobome.

Ubiesha is a master in naming his children.

At that time, in Ubiesha's sleep,

He always sees Orhen in his dreams.

Orhen said to Ubiesha: "I will marry you.

But I will also trouble you for seven years before I will manifest. Please hearken to my words! ...".

The different versions of the same event become confusing to the outsider, and the exact story of the Urhobo people becomes enmeshed in a puzzle; this is the hallmark of the post-state culture.

Conclusion

The Urhobo people have deliberately woven their philosophy and literature in a mesh that portrays them as a post-state culture. The Urhobo people's choice of a hostile environment located in the marshes and forests of the Niger Delta is an isolationist tactic to cut them off from a potential threat from their centralised neighbours. The socio-political organisation of the Urhobo is built in an anti-pyramidal structure that deviates from the pyramid nature of centralised structures. The practice of escape ideology in the economic organisation of the villages, sub-clan and clans is geared towards a mobile economy that is complex and resilient. The fluid nature of the preservation of knowledge that is kept in people's heads makes the culture intractable and able to withstand complete damage. This is the structure of a post-state culture that the centralised culture finds difficult to understand, and they often refer to post-state people as crude, unrefined and uncivilised. The centralised state cannot comprehend that this is an intentional strategy to enhance survival in a hostile environment.

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