

THE ORIGIN OF THE EGGON PEOPLE OF CENTRAL NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

Origin according to Google is the point or place where something begins, arises or is derived from. Every Person or groups of persons on earth have their origin. Hence, the Eggon people are not exceptional, that is to say the Eggon people originated from somewhere or had their root from a place. Where is that place? A question many Eggon sons and daughters hardly answer.

Knowing the origin gives us some kind of possessive rites, privileges and great value is attached to such a person over and above those that do not know their origin or those that settled in another person's lands of origin.

It is worthy of note that *"when one is not knowledgeable of his origin, he has lost his Identity"*.

Who are these Eggon People? What does Eggon mean? Eggon (Egno, Egno) means 'to hear' also used to refer to those who are native speakers of Eggon language. They are made up of three clans: Anzo, E'hlo and E'hro, a broad categorization that incorporates several dialectical groups, similarity of eclectic settlement, values, customs and religious practices with autonomous social structures peculiar to their existential philosophy.

The Eggon people of central Nigeria are spread across the entire Nasarawa State, having Nassarawa Eggon as their nucleus settlement and the seat of their traditional stool.

The histories of the Eggon people were not properly documented from the origin, but thanks to some reputable Eggon scholars notably are late Kasimu Kigbu, Late Obed Awu, Late Prof. Dauda Musa Enna, Prof. Victor Dugga, Prof. Reuben Embu, Christopher Allu, Chief Ezekiel Ayuba Kuje, Rev. Patience Abimiku and Luka Masin, that made frantic efforts to pen down some information about the traditions of the Eggon people.

The history of the Eggon people was rather mostly told orally from one generation to another through parents. We will examine two accounts in which the history of the origin was told orally, so we can draw a conclusion for ourselves based on who we are and evidences made available.

FIRST ACCOUNT (*MYTHOLOGICAL SOURCES*)

AGBRO -AGBI AWHEN AHOBREN (AGBRO -AGBI CHILD OF GOD)

It was said that **Agbro Agbi** the child of God migrated with two of his brothers namely **Jade-Oka** and **Ambina** towards river Arikya, he found a lost child digging A'vgo (wild yam) he adopted the child and named him **E'hlo** (River) **E'hlo** grew and then moved out to settle in Wana.

Agbro Agbi also fathered a child called **Anzo**, his two children were **E'hlo** and **Anzo** clans. The **Eggon Ero** was said to have emerged as a result of language fusion of the Anzo clan.

SECOND ACCOUNT (*TRADITION OF MIGRATION*)

NGAZARGAMU ENTRENCHED TRADITION / KANEM BORNO EMPIRE

This account has it that Eggon personified in persons of **Anzo** and **E'hlo** migrated together with the Alagos, N'gas, Tarok, Goemai and Rindre from Ngazargamu in the then Kanem Borno empire. The Alagos stopped at Doma while others went to the West bank of the river Arikia. Some proceeded eastward but **Anzo** and **E'hlo** continued to the plains and present day Eggon hill.

WORTHY OF NOTE:

These stories though contained remnant of historical truths, however might not be totally true in themselves, the informants have reasons behind their given versions.

The origin of the Eggon People is debatable because the narrators may just be products of Nineteen or twentieth centuries which may be connected with the influence of the Bari-Bari or Kanuris in Lafia so that the Eggons could also regard themselves as though from Borno for ease of influence of Islam on our people.

This account of Eggon migrating from Ngazargamu was permeated most effectively during the reign of Bashayi. Bashayi as we know was a Fulani man from Keffi whose mother was Eggon. He was the first imposed general leader of the Eggon people as Aren for ease of coordination by the colonial masters.

The Eggon people have always had their leadership in form of **moa Andakpo Odne**, **moa Andakpo Ugu** and **moa Andakpo Ashmu** according to our clan differences. Our great grandparents resisted Bashayi and Alumbgu Tsewhi succeeded him.

Therefore, the probability that the Eggon people migrated from Borno may be untrue, rather we may not be too far from the Niger-Benue confluence.

Greenberg (1963) classified Eggon language as one of the Benue-Congo language families with Bantu roots and they have words similarity with other languages of Middle – Belt of Nigeria within this same group.

For more clarity, on similarities (Omba'oba magazine Vol.1, No 1 Oct. 2002 p. 25) gave examples of some common words like come, go, eat, drink, mouth and head occurring in about six languages of the state and central Nigeria which corresponded and bear the same meanings.

While all ethnic groups of the then Borno Empire and Borno state belong to a family of languages called **Sahara group**, these two language groups are **very different** and **totally unrelated**.

Some scientific and archeological works presented, provide more cohesions of this **Benue – congo language group** with the **Eggon language**.

CONCLUSION

These histories even though brief have provided the Eggon people some information about their origin whether accepted or rejected. One major indisputable fact is that in the fifteen – Sixteen centuries, the Eggon people were already firmly established both at the plains, and on the hills. (The Eggon hills) where they transverse their economic, social and political activities long before the intrusion of the Europeans into their area.

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