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INSTRUMENTS OF GOVERNANCE IN THE INDIGENOUS USAKEDET SOCIETY, 1895 – 1977

BY

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Abstract

Before the advent of the colonial instrument of courts and Christianity, Usakedet people have developed home-made methods and instruments of indigenous administration of their society with the consciousness that no society could thrive in lawlessness, injustice and poor social standards. Also, the sustenance and maintenance of law and orders with the intention to impact the people's ways of life for the purposesof nation-building, development and protection of the society from both external and internal attacks, constant communication with the ancestors and socio-ethical trainings. This study examines the unsung innovative attempts by the Usakedet traditional society to evolve indigenous method of governance. The studymade use of the primary and secondary evidencesnoting that Usakedet's nation-building would have been more formidably globalized but for colonial incursion.

Keyword: Instrument, Usakedet, society, administration, socio-ethical.

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INTRODUCTION

The Afrocentric historiography which emerged from the 1950s to the 1960s when most African countries had independence was an attempt by African scholars to make objective view-points and assertions to prove the Eurocentric writers wrong of their perspective that Africa was devoid of civilizing mentality before the advent of imperialism and colonialism. It is necessary to globalize an interesting aspect of the historical antecedents of the Usakedet people which predated the whiteman's ideas forced on the people, hence, the justification of this study. Interestingly, this study is on the aspect of Usakedet history which identifies that indigenous political, social and economic civilizations have been in practice in the area which was, however, a major traffic-centre of migration and cultural dispersal.

The rivers (Ndian and Meme) which flows, through the Rio Del Rey *Akpa Usakedet* or *Asiantum* and upland villages of Oron, Amato, and Efut Inwang (Bateka) paramount chiefdoms. Other villages include Massaka, Archibong etc. which have been annexed partly as Oroko territories by the Efut or Balundo stocks. Usakedet, officially recognized as Isangele by the Cameroonian authority, is located in Ndian Division of the Southwest region of the Cameroons and is historically acclaimed as a major channel of inter-ethnic migration, evolution and dispersal of various cultures of the lower cross people inhabiting the Akwa Ibom, parts of Rivers and Cross River States of Nigeria. The Batanga and parts of the Bakoko, Balundo and Bamusso which now formed themselves as parts of the Oroko confederation of the Bantu negro race, migrated from Usakedet during the eras of massive migrations and dispersals accentuated by inter-tribal wars, slaves-raids and voluntary movements in search of cultivable lands.[1]

[1]Godwin O. Ikwuyatum. The Pattern and Characteristics of Inter and Intra Regional Migration in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Vol. 6. No 7. 2016. Pp. 114-124.

Like other African nations, the Usakedet indigenous society was made up of village republics with acephalous webs of socio-political, religious and economic organizations which were the instruments of indigenous governance which equallyplayed pervasive roles in the making and development of Usakedet society, hence, this study specifically discusses the place of judicial and social instruments in the rulership and administration of the indigenous Usakedet society.

Location and peopling of Usakedet

Usakedet is located in the Ndian Division in South West Region of the Cameroons. It is privileged to be among the 18 councils out of 360 councils having been created and renamed as Isangele on 29th June, 1977. Usakedet is located at the order, at the Cross roads between Cameroon and Nigeria, hence, the area has become the melting-pot of various ethnic populations, not only from those two nations but equally from other west and central African countries[2].

Usakedet (new Isangele) has a population of Oron 5,000 inhabitants and is currently governed by a council of 22 official headed by a mayor named Caroline Offiong Usim, daughter of late Anje Usim who was beaten and tortured to death by instalment by late Isaac Boro of the Nigerian Army during the Nigerian civil war[3].Usakedet is bounded in the North by Mundemba, South by Kombo Abedimo, West by the Atlantic Ocean and East by Ekondo Titi, and Kombo Itindi. Also, the main settlements include: Oron Paramount Chiefdom, Amoto and

[2]Tengwan Ambe Frederick. Free Cameroon: Postcard from Isangele. https//emerging cameroonsnow. blogspot.com accessed 18/3/2021.

[3]Ericson Effi Usim. Aged: 72. Retired Forestry Staff. Interviewed at Atakpa Roads, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.

Bateka (Efut Inwang) Chiefdoms. Besides those 3 upland communities are riverine villages such as *Edek Ukogho*, Rio Del Rey, Atinok, Ine Eteya, Mbedmong etc.

The dominant vegetation is the forest and over 60% of Usakedet is covered by the mangrove forest which is continually washed by creek waters form the ocean, streams and Ndian and Meme rivers. The creeks are excellent breeding grounds for fishes and other aquatic resources while the mangroves provide woods for buildings and fuel[4]

Social and Political Organisations of Usakedet Society

Prior to the advent of the German colonisers in Usakedet area, the Usakedet people permanently settled and organized themselves into village republics. In fact, the society was politically segmentary and the village remained the highest political unit. Though independent and autonomous, a group of villages might be linked together by certain common interests such as market, defence and communication but no common government was recognized as each village maintained its identity and separate existence. By and large, these villages could be referred to as "village states or village republics.

***Umuo Obie*(Village Head)**

As a segmentary society, the governmental unit in each village called*Obie* consisted of *Umuo Obie* a title reserved to the supreme ruler in every Usakedet village.In each of the numerous villages the *Umuo Obie* was the centre of the administration because he performed both secular and priestly duties. Also, he was the custodian of the village lands. In that capacity, he shared out portions of land to the inhabitants of the village, presided over the

[4] Tengwan Ambe Frederick. Free Cameroon: Postcard from Isangele. https//emerging cameroonsnow. blogspot.com accessed 18/3/2021.

village court and settled all major disputes, hence, he wielded much authority and was highly honoured and respected[5].

The *Umuo Obie* in his capacity as the natural ruler, enjoyed a number of prerogatives. He had, for instance, "the right to claim women in marriage and to dispose of them to others". Additionally, he had the right to select his personal servants *Oyen ufok* most of whom lived just near the palace called *Ufok Umuo* and were pensioned off with wives and compounds after long services.

***Kombe* or *Ibani Obie*(women group)**

This was asociety exclusively for women and was another essential socio-political institution which constituted the governance of the area. Membership of the group was opened to all adult females especially those who were married and had experienced more than two births. Its leadership was monopolized by the most elderly woman. Its activities were secret and not open to males irrespective of their socio-political status in the society.[6]

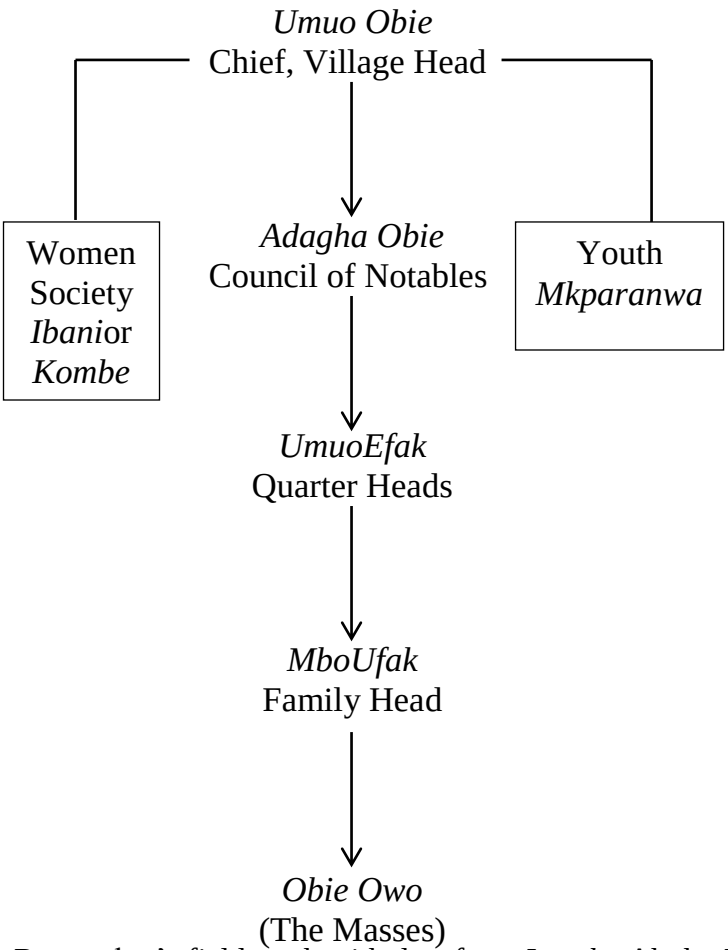
Like the *Adaka Obie* and *Ubo Ufak, Kombe* participated actively in the political, social as well as economic matters of a chiefdom. For instance, its representatives sat in *Usam Obie* and made contributions on matters affecting the chiefdom. One of its important function was that it regulated women's activities, behaviour and morals. In economic matters, it ensured that food crops as well as farms were not destroyed by stray animals like goats, pigs and fowls. Its members had the right to kill and share among themselves any animal that destroyed the crops and farms of each of their members. Such an act was meant to punish the men who could not control their animals. Whenever they killed such destructive animals, they sent their sacred

[5]Aboko Ita. Aged: 120. The *Iyamba* and Cup-bearer of Usakedetland. Interviewed at *Iyamba* Palace, Anwang Street, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.
[6]Aboko Ita. Aged: 120. The *Iyamba* and Cup-bearer of Usakedetland. Interviewed at *Iyamba* Palace, Anwang Street, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.

parts like the heart and liver to the palace *Ufak Umuo*. It was therefore, an important regulatory institution throughout Usakedet area.[7]

Among the Usakedet people, the village remained the sole political unit in which the inhabitants worked together for the interest and progress of the chiefdom. The *Umuo Obie* ensured peace and unity which was very instrumental for the survival and economic development prior to the advent to European colonialism.

Social and Political Structure in Usakedet



Sources: Researcher's field work with data from *Iyamba* Aboko Ita

***Akparanwa*(Youth Group)**

[7]Aboko Ita

Youths were actively involved in the administration of villages in Usakedetland because of their significant roles during wars, sanitation, fight against crimes and other anti-social activities. As an integral part of the *Adagha Obie*, the youth leader*Umuo Mkparanwa*was usually a participant in the meetings, ceremonies and festivals. In most cases, he would attend such functions alone and report back to the *Adagha Mkparanwa* for actions.

***Obeh* or *Ekpe*(Leopard Cult)**

The name given to the most powerful institution in each of the villages, was a regulatory society composed of initiate male members. Its membership was hereditary and was reserved strictly to the important family heads, assumed to be the descendants of the founding fathers of the village. Its inner circle was composed of seven members. Its membership was hereditary and was reserved strictly to the important family heads, assumed to be the descendants of the founding fathers of the village. Its inner circle was composed of seven members headed by a cupbearer called *Iyamba*. One of the strictest rules of this group was that the *Umuo Obie* and the ordinary *Adagha Obie* members must not participate in its rituals[8]. Of its many functions, the most essential was the installation of the *Umuo Obie* whenever a *Umuo* died. It was the *Obeh* or *Ekpe* that enthroned a new one. It was, therefore, a *Umuo*-making body. Also, it took important decisions on political, social as well as cultural matters of the chiefdom. Its members met weekly in a special section to examine matters affecting the village. After taking a decision, it was assisted the *Umuo Obie* in settling major disputes, making and amending laws, conferring or renouncing title and maintaining diplomatic relations

[8]Aboko Ita. Aged: 120. The *Iyamba* and Cup-bearer of Usakedetland. Interviewed at *Iyamba* Palace, Anwang Street, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.

with other chiefdoms. In actual fact, they constituted the chief's closest collaborators, companions and members of his entourage[9].

Though the actual origin of *Obeh* is still being contested by historians, majority opinions hold the origin of *Obeh*was traced to Usakedet where it dispersed to old Calabar area in 1720 as a result of the migration of the seven (7) families of Efut (Abua, Ekondo, Ibonda, Ukem, Idundi, Nkpara and Ifako) who are today known as the Efut Calabar[10] people in the aftermath of the second Batanga war to the present location of Efik territory[11]. However, the arrival of the Quas or Efut families in what is now Efik territory, predated the occupation of the Efiks[12]who did not live in their present location as at 1668 when the murder of a certain English sailor occurred[13].The occupation of the Efik occurred towards the end of the 17th century[14], however, according to oral tradition in Usakedet, it is said that a certain Usakedet man named Archibong Ekundu brought *Obe* or *Ekpe* to Calabar in the 18th century and sold it to Edidem Essien Ekpe Oku who further instituted it in line with the orders and arrangements prevalent in Usakedet.

The central reason surrounding the deprivation of Usakedet of the right of origin of the *Obe* or *Ekpe* institution stems from the fact that following the subjugation of the people by the

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[9]Aboko Ita.

[10]Ute Roschenthaler. *Purchasing Culture: The Dissemination of Associations in Cross River Region of Cameroon and Nigeria.* New Jersey: Africa World Press. 2011.

[11]Inyang Bassey and Charles Ekpo. "Evaluating the Place of the Ekpe Traditional Institution as a tool for Nation-Building in Pre-colonial Cross River Region". *Historical Research Letter*. Vol. 49. 2019. Pp. 10-25.

[12]Kannan K. Nair. *Politics and Society in South Eastern Nigeria, 1841-1906: A Study of Power, Diplomacy and Commerce in Old Calabar*. London: Frank Cass. 1972. Pp.3-4.

[13]Aboko Ita. Aged: 120. The *Iyamba* and cupbearer of Usakedetland. Interviewed at *Iyamba* Palace, Anwang Street, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.

[14]P. Amaury Talbot. *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria: A Sketch of their History, Ethnology and Languages with an Abstract of the 1921 Census (Vol. 1).* London: Frank Cass and Company Limited. 1969.

more powerful and war-like Efut Oroko or Balundo people coupled with the control of Usakedet land during slave raids and trade in the Sawa and Oroko area which led to the migration of the various clans and people of Usakedet nation, her cultures, peoplehood and traditions became automatically submerged and acculturated into those of Efut (Balundo) and Ekoi (Ejagham)[15].

Talbot (1926) noted that the importance of *Obe* or *Ekpe* society was obvious even to the most casual visitor to any land where it has gained a foothold. The judicial and social relevance of *Obeh* was derived from its political primacy in the traditional Usakedet society. Legislative functions were equally influenced by the *Obeh* whose head, the *Iyamba,* was the oldest[16] official who must approve all political legislative, judicial, economic and social decisions and appointments made by the Village Head, the *Umuo Obie* and the *Adagha Obie,* Council of Notables. The *Obe* in conjunction with the Council of Notables *Adagha Obie* met in *Usam Obie* to enforce laws and punish offenders as well as ensure proper and orderly maintenance of social events[17].

Obe, Ekpe was a society of influential disposition founded by Usakedet women as *Ekombie* but was forcefully wrestled from then by men who later renamed it *Obe*, a name which reflected the daring mood, temerity, influence and status of a typical lion or leopard *Mfri Ekpe* in which men were known to have ritually and supernaturally transferred their spirits into

[15]Aboko Ita. Aged: 120. The *Iyamba*and Cupbearer of Usakedetland. Interviewed at *Iyamba* Palace, Anwang Street, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.

[16]Aboko Ita. Aged: 120. The *Iyamba*and Cupbearer of Usakedetland. Interviewed at *Iyamba* Palace, Anwang Street, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.

[17]Ambeno J. Ambeno. Aged: 51. Chairman, Amoto Paramount Chiefdom Council, Amoto, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon. Interviewed at Amoto on 2/12/2020.

in order to cause havoc, undertake revenge or vengeance and also inflict great fear on non-initiates or strangers and breakers of laws of the land[18].

Every aspect of life in Usakedet was subdued by *Obe* or *Ekpe* whose intimidating personality would cause a law-breaker or accused person to swear by it, promise by it and consult it on difficult matters. All discussions of social, political and judicial dimensions brought before the *Obe*-in-Council took place in its shed or hall (Palaver House) erected close to the *Usam Obie*. Since the *Umuo Obie*-in-Council could only exercise maximum authority over all other members of Usakedet land through the *Obe,* all who mattered in the land had to voluntarily become members of *Obe* to enable them be regarded as the blood sons of the land and consequently have the privilege to participate in the deliberation of the affairs of the land. *Obe's* laws were prompt and totally sacrosanct in formulation, adjudication and execution. Decisions passed by *Obe* were final and binding on all the citizens[19].

The founders of *Obe, Ekpe* saw it as "effective governmental institution" capable of engendering conflict resolution and management. He notes that on 15th February, 1850 a general proclamation of *Obe* or *Ekpe* law was issued in old Calabar region abolishing human sacrifices during funeral and obsequies of men of high status in the society. Also, *Ekpe* law was also invoked to forbid the holding of markets on Sundays and it was promptly obeyed[20].

[18]Effiong Matthias Asuquo. Aged: 81. Secretary of *Nyamkpe* Cult. Interviewed at Atakpa Road, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 3/12/2020.

[19]Christopher O. Ayongha. Aged: 84. *Osam Obe* Elder at Usakedet. Interviewed at Anwang Street, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon. On 4/12/2020.

[20]Monday Efiong Noah. *Old Calabar: The City States and the Europeans, 1800-1885.* Uyo: Scholars Press (Nig.) Ltd. 1980. P.46.

In Usakedet and elsewhere where *Obe* was well-established, members of the cabinet *Adagha Obie* were heads of the different families who held high position in *Obe*[21]. And though they had only advisory powers, the Village Head or King *Umuo Obie* could never be an absolute autocrat. This was because *Obe* stood out clearly as an instrument of check and balances whose authority headed by the *Iyamba* was capable of putting to rest any form of civil strife, factional squabbles, chieftaincy disputes, mal-rulership and crimes that threatened the peace of the land. The outstanding citizens and members of *Obe* felt a common sense of commitment and patriotism to preserve the sanctity of the cultures, norms and traditions of the land to sustain stability of Usakedet Land[22].

Disputes between individuals, age-grades and families due to divorce, adultery, fornication, sharing of communal projects, lands and crimes were arrested through the instrument of *Obe* before such crisis developed to uncontrollable magnitudes[23]. From 15th – 18th centuries when Europe and the Americans global economic enterprise tagged: the Atlantic slave trade become[24] the pseudo avenue of the unholy intermarriage between Africa and Europe, the Americas, *Obe* was used to keep the slaves disciplined and orderly[25]. The *Obe* enforced most judicial proclamations by the planting of gathered bunches of leaves called *Afang Obie* at the locations of any dispute to signify its authority and influence.

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[21]Kannan K. Nair. *Politics and Society in South Eastern Nigeria, 1841-1906: A Study of Power, Diplomacy and Commerce in Old Calabar*. London: Frank Cass. 1972. P.14.

[22]Anjeh Ambo Daniel. Aged: 75. Village Council Chairman, Oron Paramount Chiefdom, Southwest Cameroon. Interviewed at Oron, Usakedet on 2/12/2020.

[23]Kannan K. Nair. *Politics and Society in South Eastern Nigeria, 1841-1906: A Study of Power, Diplomacy and Commerce in Old Calabar*. London: Frank Cass. 1972. Pp. 29-50.

[24]Babacar M'Baye. The Economic, Political and Social Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa. *The European Legacy*. Vol.11. No. 6. Pp. 607-622.

[25]Chinweizu. *The West and the Rest Us*. Lagos: Nok publishers (Nigeria) Ltd. 1978. Pp. 14-26.

Social and Judicial Instrument of Governance in Usakedetland

***Ucha*(The Ancestral Stone)**

This stone is known in Balundo or Efut language as *Bole bwa ngomo* and was (still) planted at the middle of the village square in front of the *Usam Obie* in Oron Paramount Chiefdom of Usakedet (now Isangele). The reason for planting the Ancestral stone in the village square in front of the *Usam Obie*or Town Hall was to make it conspicuous to everyone since all public traditional ceremonies and activities were held there.

The stone had the power of causing the accused person(s) to confess to his or her crime when brought before it for oath-taking. The refusal of the accused person/s to openly tell the truth, resulted in severe consequences such as epilepsy, insanity and other incurable sicknesses. Also, should one commit himself or herself to oath by swearing falsely to the Ancestral stone, the person would incur the anger of the gods and died mysteriously after a few days. The present stone planted in the Village Hall *Usam Obie* square was donated to Usakedet people by a German named Biernatzki on 12th December, 1911[26].

As an instrument of judicial administration in Usakedet land, accusations of great magnitude capable of causing breakdown of peace and order were usually brought before the ancestral stone for determination and attainment of justice in the event of such accusations such as witchcraft, adultery, fornication, stealing or robbery, rape and other crimes winked at by the gods and society. Since the ancient stone was imbued with supernatural and mysterious powers, it was the most trusted and reliable instrument of determining justice in the traditional Usakedet society. It is believed that the ancestors resided within the ancient stone through

[26]Ericson Effi Usim. Aged: 72. Retired Forestry Staff. Interviewed at Atakpa Roads, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.

which they communed and communicated with the livings. Certain rituals and libations were usually offered at the base of the stone before ceremonies, and adjudication processes were carried out to ensure that the ancestors were amply appeased and consulted to rise up to any occasion; such appeasements and consultations were usually displayed and conducted by elders *Adaka Obie* and led by the Village Head *Umuo Obie* and the *Iyamba* who must be the oldest indigene of the village and head of the various traditional cults of the land. During the ceremonies the *Adaka Obie* would assemble around the ancient stone, communed and carried out incantations with one heart and spirit as they sang and danced in harmony[27].

***Usam Ubie* (Village Court or Hall)**

This was a house located in the centre of each village in Usakedet. Major meetings, receptions, diplomatic discussions between the people and other communities were sorted out in *Usam Obie.* Equally, judicial cases of grave implications were dispensed in *Usam Obie* which was itself the traditional court house of the people. For political, social and religious issues which had secret or classified connotation, *Usam Obie* was not open to everyone except those initiated into the various grades of cult groups such as *Obe*, *Akata* and membership of outstanding ritual groups like *Ukpafut Umiaku*and *Nkedan*[28].

Usam Obie also played such role as the storehouse or museum of the people's artefacts and other ancestral materials, hence, it was like a tourist centre to whoever needed dependable information on Usakedet indigenous endeavours[29]. However, following the advent of Christianity and colonialism, most aspects of Usakedet's cultural and judicial institutions were

[27]Anjeh Ambo Daniel. Aged: 75. Village Council Chairman, Oron Paramount Chiefdom, Southwest Cameroon. Interviewed at Oron, Usakedet on 2/12/2020.

[28]Anjeh Ambo Daniel. Aged: 75. Village Council Chairman, Oron Paramount Chiefdom, Southwest Cameroon. Interviewed at Oron, Usakedet on 2/12/2020.

[29]Anjeh Ambo Daniel.

undermined and declared anti-people since they were not in tandem of tenets of the new faith and colonial administration[30].

Nkeden Nkawo

Nkeden Nkawo was and is still regarded people as a deity with a very potent force of visiting wraths and punishments on whoever contravene the norms of the society. For example, *Nkeden Nkawo* was noted for vengeance on intruders, invaders and criminals who would unleashed their acts on Usakedet society and people.

*Nkeden Nkawo*was (still) a spirit located in an evil forest and entry into the forest was not opened to everyone except the priest because it is believed that casual entries into the forest could render the spirit impotent. As instrument of governance, all matters of critical magnitude were usually placed before the spirit named *nkeden nkawo* whose duty it was to equally choose in the "spiritual realms" who must be the king and who must not be. Ayongha asserted that the popular *Ekpo Nkawo* sexual promiscuity cult among the Ibibio and Annang people of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria took its origin from *Nkeden Nkawo* of Usakedetland[31].

***Akata* (Night Ghost or Lampoon Crew)**

As vividly corroborated by historians,*Akata*, known among the Efut (Oroko) as *Bwiande* was a male secret societywith the moral fibre of the Usakedet society. It acted as the watch-dog or conscience of the society. It wasthe combination of social, entertaining and judicial roles. Akata usually operated at night from 10pm to about 4am during their chosen

[30]Ericson Effi Usim. Aged: 72. Retired Forestry Staff. Interviewed at Atakpa Roads, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 5/12/2020.
[31]Christopher O. Ayongha. Aged: 84. *Osam Obe* Elder at Usakedet. Interviewed at Anwang Street, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon. On 4/12/2020.

days[32]. It melodious voice and music entertained the men, women and children as they relaxed in fear on their bed to listen to Akata didactic and satirist renditions, abuses and instructions or warnings.[33]*Akata* was believed to live in the ghost forest and was a watch-dog against the perpetrators of such crimes as stealing, adultery, fornication etc.*Akata* would denounce those societal ills, gossips and their perpetrators (no matter his or her status) and put such individuals to shame through songs[34]. According to Nair, the *ekrpi akata* which met at right hand the duty of reporting gossips to villagers. Fines or charges were levied on the suspect or accused person who must complied before dawn to enable the *Akata* (night ghost) escapes to its Ghost forest which was unknown to ordinary citizens or non-initiates.

It was also the duty of the *Akata* to abuse lazy indigenes whose part-times were rumour peddling and drunkenness. It also taunted those male and female villagers who were up to marriage ages but did not marry. *Akata* was like a 'moral-corrector' and secret agent of Usakedet land because at the end, the breakers of the laws of the land would never return to the perpetration of the same immoral act or crime. Explaining on the powers and significance of the *Akata* among the traditional Usakedet and Cross River Basin people. Uya asserted that:

> Members of *Akata* were regarded as "spirits" and therefore, ubiquitous and thus capable of knowing all scandals committed in thesociety. The main function of *Akata* was therefore the detection of anti-social behaviour, the popularization of the crimes, and the ridiculing of the culprit into correction[35].

[32]Okon Edet Uya. *A History of Oron People of the Lower Cross River Basin.* Oron: Manson Publishing Company. 1984. P.46.
[33]Edet A. Udo. *Who Are The Ibibio?* Onitsha: Africana-Fep Publishers Limited. 1983. Pp.139-140.
[34]Kannan K. Nair. *Politics and Society in South Eastern Nigeria, 1841-1906: A Study of Power, Diplomacy and Commerce in Old Calabar*. London: Frank Cass. 1972. P.14

[35]Okon Edet Uya. *A History of Oron People of the Lower Cross River Basin.* Oron: Manson Publishing Company. 1984. P.46

Akata played a key socio-judicial role in the tradition Usakedet society, thereby showing that before the advent of modern Newspapers, the people were well-organizedunder strong ethical moral standards which predated Christianity, modern police and press.

Politically, *Akata* was significant in the governance of Usakedet Land or society as it was a veritable agent of checks and balances to those in the traditional rulership of the area.Oral interview, in Usakedet society no chief or ruler *Umuo Obie* and his council of Elders *Adagha Obie* had an unlimited power because *Akata* was always ready to expose their excesses, weakness and misrule. Again, *Akata* played significant roles during wars, selection and installation of new kings etc[36].

Conclusion

The study examined instruments of Usakedet's traditional government and administration truncated by the advent of western methods of administration, justice and social systems in Usakedet in particular and Africa generally. The quest for the traditional Usakedet man to live in peace and stable society naturally informed the laudable evolution and application of the various tenets of rulership through the instruments of the Ancestral Stone, *Obe* or *Ekpe* and *Akata* (night ghost and satirist). Like the people of Usakedet where a number of cultures, traditions and people dispersed, Akwa Ibom people of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria also applied similar instruments, especially the *Obe* or *Ekpe* and *Akata* in the day to day judicial and social administration of the various acephelous and segmentary village – based structures enhanced by their indigenous initiatives and knowledge systems put in place before the colonial bifurcation of a coherently integrated traditional civilization and people.

[36]Effiong Matthias Asuquo. Aged: 81. Secretary of *Nyamkpe* Cult. Interviewed at Atakpa Road, Oron, Isangele, Southwest Cameroon on 3/12/2020.

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