

Article

Contested Origins of Ukwuani/Ndosumili Peoples: Historical Claims and Empirical Genetic Testing

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Abstract

This study investigates the origins of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people in Southern Nigeria, where the dominant narrative has favoured Benin (Bini) heritage over alternative origins such as Igbo. Lively debates and controversial arguments surrounding these origins have ensued. This study contributes to the debate from two perspectives. First, archival documents and other materials were employed to reassess accounts of Ukwuani/Ndosumili peoples' origins. Second, an innovative technique of DNA relative matching was applied to select individuals from Ukwuani/Ndosumili communities and clans to help determine whom the people are more genetically related to in Southern Nigeria. Historical accounts from the area suggest that many Ukwuani/Ndosumili communities originated from Benin, conferring an Edoid identity; however, these assertions have been challenged in scholarly work. Evidence indicates that the eponymous ancestors of many Ukwuani/Ndosumili clans originated from the Igbo heartland, a claim established by other scholars and corroborated in this study. An empirical analysis of matched unknown relatives results for Ukwuani/Ndosumili participants who took tests with a direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic company did not suggest that participants have more genetic relatives in Benin or are more genetically linked to the Bini. The DNA relative matching results showed that the study's participants have more recent genetic links – or are more closely related – to others within the Igbo grouping, which downplays the pre-eminent role accorded to the Bini origin narrative for the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people.

Keywords: Ndosumili, Ukwuani, Nigeria, Oral history, DNA relative matching, Ethnicity, Igbo, Benin

Introduction

An inquiry into one's origins is not a luxury – it is a necessity for historical consciousness, and the absence of such awareness cripples an individual's grasp of the present and future (Seixas, 2004). Insightful studies that seek to reconsider and dismantle widely held but poorly substantiated views of the origins of African societies exist (e.g., Ehret, 1972; Atanda, 1984; Klein, 1996). In Nigeria, critical re-evaluations of group origins have deepened the understanding of group identity (Atanda, 1980; Afigbo, 1998; Mordi & Opone, 2009).

Commentaries by Afigbo (1981; 1998) and Atanda (1980) infer that most Nigerians desperately want to know "who they are and where they came from." This yearning is not abstract curiosity. It is rooted in Nigeria's brutal socio-economic realities (Odishika et al., 2022), where group identity and membership are the gatekeepers of political power and economic survival (Igwarra, 1993). For the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people, the stakes could not be higher.

Yet interest in the origins of smaller ethnic subgroups – such as the Ukwuani and Ndosumili – has been shamefully neglected, crowded out by disproportionate attention to



Nigeria's larger ethnic blocs (Alagoa, 1993; Ikime, 2006). These erudite historians rightly cautioned against this oversight. This study insists on a truth too long ignored: in a heterogeneous and fractured nation like Nigeria, social cohesion cannot be achieved when the histories of smaller groups are treated as inconsequential footnotes.

Worse still, where narratives of these smaller groups do exist, they are often polluted. Commentaries on the origins of smaller ethnic subgroups in Nigeria tend to muddy the waters, perpetuating simplistic claims that collapse under scrutiny (Ikime, 2006; Afigbo, 1981). Writings on the Ukwuani/Ndosumili are a glaring case in point: they have wallowed in conjecture, leaving almost no room for empirical reality (Nwachukwu, 2010; Opone, 2017a; 2017b; Ifinedo & Opone, 2024).

One particularly reckless historical claim—propounded by foreign chroniclers, the Benin royal house, and Benin elites—is that the Ukwuani/Ndosumili are mere emigrants from Benin who, by accident of proximity to Igbo land, adopted the language and customs of the Igbo (N.A.I. File No. 28384, 1933; N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Egharevba, 1934). This narrative is not merely wrong; it is intellectually indefensible. The inadvertent—or deliberate—role of the early 1930s *primus inter pares* monarch of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili area, the Obi of Aboh, in entrenching this faulty Benin origin claim is documented in colonial records (see N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931).

Even more troubling is the complicity of some indigenous commentators. Okolugbo (2004) and others have accepted these weakly constructed narratives without questioning their historicity. Too many in this community, as Nwaokocha (2015, p. 25) observed, have been forced to "look at themselves based on how others saw them." Some Ukwuani/Ndosumili people have fought back (see Okafor, 2006; Adewoyin, 2010; Ozah, 2021), working to reclaim their identity. Their rallying cry—"Ukwuani/Ndosumili is NOT Igbo"—demands scrutiny, not blind acceptance. It remains to be seen whether these assertions rest on facts, sentiments, or myths.

And the confusion does not end there. The Igbo heartland adds its own distortions. Nwanze (2020) captured this poignantly:

Some people from this area [Ukwuani/Ndosumili, Enuani, and Ika collectively called Delta Igbo] have pointed out that they have been victims of taunts by some Igbos from the East of the Niger [the Igbo heartland], who have themselves said that Delta Igbos are not Igbo.

The result is an identity crisis—a people torn between conflicting narratives, uncertain of who they are, and rejected by both sides (Ifinedo & Opone, 2024). This study does not pretend to offer a definitive cure for this crisis. But it does something more urgently needed: it demands that the question of origins be settled by evidence, not by tradition, political convenience, or colonial fiction.

The logic is simple. If the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people are Bini (Edoid) in origin and not Igbo, then one would expect a clear preponderance of founding progenitors with Benin connections and Bini names. The oral traditions can be tested against available print and digital sources. If they are Bini, one would expect their modern populations to share significantly more genetic kin in Benin than anywhere else in the region. Conversely, one

would not expect to find substantial genetic relatives in the Igbo heartland – if they are truly not Igbo.

This study, therefore, confronts two piercing research questions:

- a) Where do the eponymous ancestors of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili actually come from?
- b) Based on genetic ancestry data, whom are the sampled Ukwuani/Ndosumili participants *actually* more related to in Southern Nigeria?

This study aims to deliver a decisive blow to the sloppy, self-serving narratives that have clouded the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people's origins and identity. If this endeavour unsettles comfortable myths, so be it. The goal is not comfort – it is truth. This is a contribution to a debate that has raged for too long on too little substance, and to ethnohistorical research that the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people have long deserved.

The Ukwuani/Ndosumili People

Ukwuani (*lowland dwellers*) and Ndosumili (*riverine dwellers*) people live in Nigeria, a multinational country with 250 ethnic groups speaking 520 living languages (Ethnologue.com, 2024). Approximately 500,000 Ukwuani/Ndosumili people reside in the low-lying, swampy, and riverine areas of Delta State, Nigeria, where they engage in farming, fishing, hunting, trading, and weaving (Nzei, 1997; Okolugbo, 2004; Ifinedo & Opone, 2024). Figure 1 shows a map of Ukwuani/Ndosumili land, with a demarcating line between the two sub-units and some of their settlements (towns and villages).



Figure 1. Map of Ukwuani/Ndosumili land

The Ukwuani and Ndosumili tongues are closely related. Their common language, Ukwuani-Aboh-Ndoni, with the code *ukw* (Ethnologue.com, 2024), is classified as Igboïd (Basden, 1938; Forde & Jones, 1950; Nwaozuzu, 2008; Okwu, 2024), a branch of the Volta-Niger family within the core Niger-Congo phylum (Williamson & Blench, 2000). It is worth

noting that the people have an ethno-Ukwuani-Ndosumili identity (Igwara, 1993; Ozah, 2021), preferring a separate ethno-cultural, social, and political taxonomy from the larger Igbo group (Adewoyin, 2010; Ozah, 2021).

The Ukwuani/Ndosumili people share similar cultural beliefs with their neighbours, namely the Ijaw, Isoko, Urhobo, and Bini; however, more conspicuous similarities are found with the mainland or heartland Igbo. Manifestations of such connections exist in cosmology, spiritual practices, religious paraphernalia such as *Ofo* (the supreme ancestral symbol of authority) and *Ikenga* or *Ikenge* (a symbol of one's personality and one's ancestors) (Ojieh, 2003; Opone, 2022), local administrative system, i.e., age grade system (*Otu*) (Forde & Jones, 1950) and rulership through the *Okpala-Uku*, the oldest male in their community (Nzei, 1997; Ojieh, 2003; Opone, 2022), traditional beliefs (*Omenala / Omenana / Odinala / Omenani*) (Ezekwugo, 1991), women's roles in society (*Umuada / Ndiom Imusu* and *Ndiom Omusa*) (Nzei, 1997), speech community or language similarities (Onwuejeogwu, 1975; 1978; Nwaozuzu, 2008; Bright-Ajoku & Okumo, 2020; Boise, 2024), observed market days (*Eke, Ori, Afor, Nkwo*) (Ifinedo & Opone, 2024), and so on.

Nevertheless, there are also cultural differences between Ukwuani/Ndosumili and the Igbo heartland. For example, their descent systems differ even when both practice polygyny (Jack Jackson, 2015). The Igbo heartland employs patrilineal descent systems for kingship, whereas Ukwuani/Ndosumili relies on a combination of patrilineal and matrilineal heritages (Nzei, 1997; Ejiofor, 2015). The worldviews and fundamental cognitive values of people from the Ukwuani/Ndosumili and Igbo heartlands differ markedly. These can be seen in social ideology, ethics, norms, taboos, concepts of good and bad, fairness, and justice (Boise, 2024; Okecha, 2024). For instance, Boise (2024), writing about the Anioma, which includes Ukwuani/Ndosumili, notes that the people are more egalitarian, less individualistic, and less exploitative than those in the Igbo heartland.

Boise quoted the work of the late Igbo author Arthur A. Nwankwo from Ajalli, Anambra State, who wrote *Nigeria: The Challenge of Biafra*¹; therein, it notes that "the principle of Biafran brotherhood was a distant dream in a nation where trampling on everybody else like maggots in the struggle for personal survival, was deeply ingrained in the Igbo national psyche" (p. 57). Okecha (2024) commented that "The [heartland Igbo] worship money, and can do anything and everything to get money. We [Ukwuani/Ndosumili] are not so." To some extent, the presented information suggests that the social norms of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili differ from those of the Igbo in the hinterland.

Traditions of Origins of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili People

Primarily, communities in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land are organised by clans. Thus, stories of clan origins begin with accounts of the migration of a founding or eponymous progenitor (Isichei, 1976). A clan allows community members to claim descent from an apical ancestor who symbolises the clan's unity (Chisholm, 1911). However, some writers (Nzimiro, 1972; Onwuejeogwu, 1978), noting the mixed origins of many communities in Southern Nigeria, argue that more beneficial insight will ensue from efforts that focus on the accounts of the origins of settlements, i.e., towns and villages.

¹ Biafra is a defunct West African state with about 70% inhabitants from the Igbo heartland.

This work heeded this suggestion. Indeed, some clans, such as Utagba or Ogume in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land, are composed of settlements with diverse origins. At the same time, other communities (e.g., Ashaka, Obikwele) have one large settlement without noticeable outreach or extensions.

That being noted, the traditions of origins of Ukwuani/Ndosumili settlements have been documented in many sources, including colonial-era “Intelligence Reports” (e.g., N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1932; N.A.I. File No. 29300, 1939). Other writers have presented information on the origins of some settlements in the area (e.g., Ohadike, 1994; Ogedengbe, 1971; Okolugbo, 2004; Ozah, 2010; Omenuwa, 2010; Izuogu, 2019). Commentaries detailing the origins of settlements in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land are also available from other media (e.g., Uwechue, 2013; Umukoro & Oweniwe, 2022). Complementing these sources are findings from current fieldwork, which includes personal interviews with locals in the area (e.g., Opone, 2017a, 2017b; Opone, 2022; Ifinedo & Opone, 2024).

Table 1 presents summarised information from sources detailing the origins of settlements in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land; the names of eponymous ancestors and their migratory sources or origins are also provided. Ukwuani/Ndosumili’s settlements are many; however, only a select few from which DNA samples were obtained are shown in Table 1. Notwithstanding, all the major clans of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili land are represented.

Table 1. Origins of settlements in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land

Sub-unit	Eponymous ancestor(s)	Settlement/Town	Origins	Sources
Ndosumili	Ogwezi, Ekensu, Esume (Esumai-Ukwu)	Aboh	Benin, Igbo land (Onitsha, Aro, Nri, Awka, Ishiagu), Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	N.A.I. File No. 28384, 1933; N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Egharevba, 1934; Hubbard, 1948; Forde & Jones, 1950; Boston, 1960; Ogedengbe, 1971; Okolugbo, 2004; Ikwuazom, 1993
	Osumili-Ukwu, Dike, Ewa	Ossissa	Benin, Aboh, Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1932; Uwechue, 2013; Izuegbu, 2011, 2012; Ogedengbe, 1971; Okolugbo, 2004
	Etim-Ukwu, Ifite, Achi, Okpala, Okolori	Afor	Benin, Igbo land (Nri, Awka)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Alagoa, 2004; Ogedengbe, 1971; Okolugbo, 2004; Author, name deleted, 2022;
	Ozoma-Ukwu	Ashaka	Benin, Isoko land	Forde & Jones,

				1950; Ogedengbe, 1971; Okolugbo, 2004
	Oduga	Ushie	Aboh, Isoko land (Okpe)	Okolugbo, 2004; Felix-Obianu, 2015
		Aballa	Igbo land (Nri, Onitsha, Isu), Western Igbo (Ogwashi Ukwu), Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	Okolugbo, 2004; Uwechue, 2013; N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Forde & Jones, 1950; Nzei, 1997
	Okpai, Umun, Orishi [Oluchi]	Okpai	Benin, Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Okolugbo, 2004; Boston, 1960)
	Barautchi	Utchi	Igbo land (Nri)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Omenuwa, 2010
	Onuabo, Oche, Azu, Ugwo	Onuabo	Igbo land (Nri), Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Nwaokocha, 2015
	Ase, Ozuem, Ebeneze, Azaga, Omuku	Ase	Benin, Igbo land (Onitsha, Atani), Western Igbo (Asaba), Eastern Nigeria (Ndoni), Isoko	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Okolugbo, 2004; Welch, 1934; Forde & Jones, 1950
	Uwa, Etebuozo, Obruese	Onya	Benin, Eastern Nigeria (Igbo land), Ijaw, Isoko land (Iyede), Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Okolugbo, 2004; Boston, 1960
	Onyah	Azagba	Ijaw (Biseni), Urhobo (Orogun), Ukwuani/Ndosumili towns (e.g., Ogume, Aboh, Ushie), and Isoko towns (e.g., Irri, Okpe)	Izuogu, 2019; Okolugbo, 2004
Ukwuani	Eziza (Ezizanweani), Adamgbodongbo, Ezeti, Ezeodu, Ezemu, and Isulumani, Epumegede	Utagba (Utagba-Ogbe, Oliogo, Utagba Uno)	Benin, Western Igbo (Nsukwa, Atuma-Iga), Eastern Igbo (Egbema, Onitsha, Awka), Ika (Akumazi)	Fordes & Jones, 1950; Izuegbu 2003; Okolugbo, 2004; Nzei, 1997; Author, name deleted, 2017a
		Ogbe-Ani	Ndosumili town (Adaiwai)	Okolugbo, 2004
	Eze-Odu (Ezeodu), Eze-Emu (Ezemu)	Onicha-Ukwuani	Benin, Ndosumili town (Utagba Uno), Eastern Igbo (Onitsha)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Okolugbo, 2004; Nzei, 1997; Author, name deleted, 2017a
		Ugiliamai	Ukwuani town	Blank NEWS

		(Amai), Western Igbo (Ashama, Ubulu)	Online (2014)
Olor, Emu	Emu (Ebendo, Obodeti)	Benin, Ukwuani town (Onicha-Ukwuani), Eastern Igbo (Onitsha), Isoko (Owhe), Urhobo (Orogun)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Forde & Jones, 1950; Okolugbo, 2004; Author, name deleted, 2017a
Ezedogume, Chime, Odumegwu, Agbulu Akah, Ogwezi Olodu; Ossai Ojugbeli, Ogwezi Omai, Mokobia, Okpala Olodu, Ugwua, Ezede Ifeloji (Ifuloji)	Ogume (Ogbe-Ogume)	Benin, Eastern Igbo (Nnewi), Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala), Ndosumili towns (Ase, Akarai, Aboh)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Forde & Jones, 1950; Okolugbo, 2004; Nzei, 1997; Igwara 1993; Opia, 2023; Igwara, 1993
Udei, Okpu, Ezie-Ogoli	Ebedei (Ebedei-Obi, Umueziogoli)	Benin, Ndosumili towns (Akarai, Aboh, Ogume); Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	N.A.I. File No. 26769. 1931; Okolugbo, 2004; Nzei, 1997
	Akoku/Obeti/Umuaja	Ute (Ika), Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala), Ukwuani town (Abbi), Western Igbo (Ogwashi Ukwu)	N.A.I. File No. 26769; Uti, 2006
Effe [Effi], Amai, Ekwum, Nge, Aguma, and Osele	Amai	Benin, Igbo land (Achalla), Aboh; Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Forde & Jones, 1950; Okolugbo, 2004
Amacha, Aninta, Okolo, Ogwazi, Ewolokpo, Okpara Ogwezi, Owolukpo, Udu	Abbi	Igbo land (Achalla)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Forde & Jones, 1950; Okolugbo, 2004
Utu	Umutu	Ukwuani town (Abbi)	N.A.I. File No. 26769; Author, name deleted, 2017a
Ukwata, Ezike, Akwata, Ugbome, Uguru, Obia	Umukwata	Benin, Igbo land (Achalla)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; N.A.I. File No. 29300, 1939; Forde & Jones, 1950; Okolugbo, 2004
Akashiada, Okpor, Onumgbunum, Ossai, Odumegwu, Anie	Eziokpor	Benin, Eastern Nigeria (Igbo land), Western Igbo (Ejeme)	N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Okolugbo, 2004; Umukoro & Oweniwe, 2022

	Akashiada, Ezhie, Onuma, Ossai, Odumegwu, Osele, Ine [Anie], Osumili, Ughomeh, Ezeogbu	Ezionum	Western Igbo (Ejeme, Asaba), Ndosumili towns (Utchi, Afor)	Author, name deleted, 2017a; Nzei, 1997; Umukoro & Oweniwe, 2022
	Akashiada, Ebu	Umuebu	Eastern Nigeria (Igbo land), Western Igbo (Ejeme, Asaba), Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	Author, name deleted, 2017a; Nzei, 1997; Umukoro & Oweniwe, 2022

Table 2 summarises the count for each ethnic group or subgroup from which the forebears of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people originated, as captured in their oral traditions and archival documents shown in Table 1. From the summarised counts, Benin appears to be the source accounting for the largest share of emigration to Ukwuani/Ndosumili. The next source is the Igbo heartland, followed by internal migrations to new settlements from within the Ukwuani/Ndosumili area. The presented information also shows that some early settlers to the Ukwuani/Ndosumili area came from Western Igbo (Enuani/Ika) and Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala). Table 1 also indicates that some early settlers came from the Ijaw and Isoko/Urhobo lands in Southern Nigeria. Information gathered in the field indicates that a few families in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land (e.g., the Okis of Ashaka) have family ties to other ethnicities in Southern Nigeria, including Itsekiri (Yoruboid) land (Ifinedo & Opone, 2024).

Table 2. Breakdown of the sources of the Origins of Ukwuani/Ndosumili settlements

Ethnic or Sub-ethnic group	Count	Percentage (%)
Benin	17	22.4
Igbo heartland	15	19.7
Western Igbo (Enuani/Ika)	10	13.2
Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)	10	13.2
Isoko/Urhobo	8	10.5
Ijaw	2	2.6
Within Ukwuani/Ndosumili settlements/clans	14	18.4

The percentage of origin attributable to Benin sources in the presented data is alarming, given the apparent absence of Bini names in the eponymous ancestors of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people. Ifinedo and Opone (2024) argued that information about the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people’s past might have been concocted to suit certain agendas. The Ukwuani/Ndosumili people do not speak Bini or bear Bini names (Ogedengbe, 1971; Ozah, 2010, 2021); why is Benin overrepresented in their origin traditions?

Plausible answers lie in the prestige of the old Benin Kingdom, which many ethnic groups and subgroups in Southern Nigeria seek to be associated with (Afigbo, 1981; Mordi & Opone, 2009; Okpevra, 2015; Okpewho, 2019). Furthermore, the Benin Royal House seeks to project power and influence in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land (Egharevba, 1934), despite its marginal status in the locality (Ohadike, 1994; Okolugbo, 2004). Importantly, pre-colonial era wars fought between some Ukwuani/Ndosumili clans, and the old Benin Kingdom did not result in the latter's total dominance over the people (Ohadike, 1994).

Another reason the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people clamour for Benin heritage or links may be their folklore, which is replete with awe-inspiring, grandiose, and extraordinary deeds in the Benin Kingdom (Ogedengbe, 1971; Okpewho, 1999). As well as the role of the British colonial ruler, perhaps in the bid to indirectly govern the conquered Ukwuani/Ndosumili people, forged and falsified accounts of their origins to make it easy to place them under Benin sovereignty or sphere in the 1930s (N.A.I. File No. 28384, 1933; N.A.I. File No. 26769, 1931; Ifinedo & Opone, 2024).

The events leading to and during the Nigerian Civil War in the 1960s helped to amplify and solidify the Benin origin narrative; many from Ukwuani/Ndosumili and similar Igboid subgroups in Southern Nigeria, faced with the choice of death, instinctively clung to a false narrative that offered a chance of life in place of death (Mordi & Opone, 2009; Nwaokocha, 2015; Nwanze, 2020).

A shadow of doubt is cast on the many accounts of Ukwuani/Ndosumili's traditions of origin, where the tale of migration always begins in Benin and then heads to Igbo towns around the Niger (e.g., Asaba, Onitsha) before settling in Ukwuani/Ndosumili settlements (Ifinedo & Opone, 2024). This is the case of Aboh, Ossissa, Afor, Ase, Ushie, Utagba, Onicha Ukwuani, Ezionum, Ogume, Okpai, Ase, and others (Okolugbo, 2004; Ifinedo & Opone, 2024). Historians (e.g., Okpevra, 2015) from a neighbouring ethnic group, i.e., Isoko land, have made a similar observation and reached the same conclusion about the veracity of such narratives. The fable does not add up. Perhaps the people concocted aspects of their traditions to justify a link to Benin, which appears like a make-believe afterthought.

Even if Benin were to be accurate as a source of significant migrations to the area, many have shown that migratory parties such as the Eze Chima group originating from Benin to Enuani and Onitsha – many Ukwuani/Ndosumili settlements are linked to Onitsha – were not Bini but people from the Igbo heartland retreating to familiar territories after conflicts with the old Benin Kingdom (e.g., Azikiwe, 1930; Opone, 2017a; Mordi & Opone, 2009; Ogedengbe, 1971; Ohadike, 1994; Ijomah, 2010; Nwaokocha, 2015). The vivid description of the flight of the Eze Chima group from Benin and their awaited fate if caught by the Bini, provided by Azikiwe (1930, p. 475), does not suggest kingship between both groups. Recently, a senior chieftain of the Benin Kingdom (the late Chief David Edebi, the Esogban of Benin Kingdom) further supports this view by noting that “Eze Chima is not Bini” (Nnaa Mehn TV, 2023).

Genetic Testing and Ancestry Tracing

Genetics is the study of genes at all levels, including how they act in the cell and are transmitted from parents to offspring. DNA is found inside genes, and genes are located within chromosomes. Essentially, DNA is organised into 23 separate pieces called

chromosomes. According to NIST.gov (2024), “Human DNA is nearly identical from person to person, but there are small differences unique to each individual” that are tied to health conditions, ancestry, and other information. These differences are called variants, which scientists measure to determine ancestry. In brief, our genes reveal who we are (Elliott & Brodwin, 2002).

Genetic testing comes in different forms, including molecular tests (encompassing genome sequencing), chromosomal, and biochemical tests (MedlinePlus, 2024). Some of these tests have been used to study the migrations and histories of populations worldwide. For example, using genetic testing, Torres et al. (2012) studied the lineages in African American men of West African descent. Yao et al. (2002) established genetic relationships among some Chinese ethnic populations using genetic testing. The history of click-speaking populations of Africa was inferred from genetic analysis (Tishkoff et al., 2007). Many of these studies have used Y-chromosomes and mitochondrial (mtDNA) DNA tests.

In the post-Human Genome Project era, recent advances in genetic ancestry testing have made inexpensive genotyping tools accessible. This has facilitated the emergence of companies (e.g., AncestryDNA, MyHeritage, Family Tree DNA) that offer direct-to-consumer (DTC) personalised genetic services to customers. These DTC companies use their databases and public databases, such as the 1000 Genomes Project, for their analyses. Regalado (2019) indicates that more than 25 million people have taken DTC genetic tests, and over 100 million are expected to take these tests in the next few years. Nonetheless, using the services of DTC companies presents some challenges or limitations, some of which relate to accuracy (as some DTC genetic testing companies do not consider all possible genetic variations) and privacy issues (risks of information disclosure) (Mendoza & Diallo, 2024).

Due to financial resource and knowledge constraints, this study will use a simple genetic testing technique, DNA relative matching, which some DTC genetic testing companies provide. DNA relative matching, utilising the services of DTC genetic testing companies, has been employed in other contexts to determine individuals' ethnicity and kinship (Heinemann & Lemke, 2012; Keung, 2018). It has been used by some authorities and governments to track wanted individuals and confirm the identities of deceased persons (Shah, 2011; McNeil Jr. & Belluck, 2011).

To meet the objective of this study, we selected AncestryDNA, one of the leading DTC genetic testing companies, based on expert opinion (Mendoza & Diallo, 2024). Regarding accuracy, AncestryDNA uses comprehensive microarray-based autosomal DNA testing. For security purposes, the company employs industry-standard security practices to store DNA samples, which are processed without disclosing customer names or other identifying information. The company also does not share DNA data with third parties. Next, we provide information on how the company performs its DNA analysis (and relative matching).

AncestryDNA: DNA Analysis and Relative Matching

Ancestry.com (2024) notes that it “uses an autosomal DNA test that surveys a person’s entire genome,” unlike the Y-chromosome (which reflects the direct father-to-son path) or mitochondrial (which reflects the direct mother-to-child path) DNA tests. The DNA

technology used by AncestryDNA focuses on ethnic history – not ancient history, unlike the Y-chromosome and mtDNA tests, which focus on 10,000 to 50,000 years of history. Thus, studies using Y-chromosome and mtDNA tests report findings on haplogroups, i.e., a family of maternal or paternal lineages that descend from a common ancestor (Veeramah et al., 2010).

Studies of the haplogroups of some Southern Nigerian ethnic groups, including the Yoruba, Igbo, and Cross River natives, indicate few genetic differences among these ethnic groups (Tishkoff et al., 2007; Veeramah et al., 2010). The human Y-DNA haplogroup of southern Nigeria's ethnic groups is *E1b1a1-M2*; the percentage of this gene observed in the Igbo and Yoruba populations is 89.3% and 92%, respectively (Tishkoff et al., 2007; Veeramah et al., 2010). Using another DNA analysis technique, Titilayo et al. (2018) also reported no genetic variations between the Igbo and Yoruba populations. A recent study by Joshi et al. (2023) demonstrated that Yoruba, Ibibio, Bini, Igbo, and Izon [Ijaw] are all genetically similar.

The preceding information permits the use of DNA relative matching to achieve this study's objective. DNA relative matching is the process of sequencing and comparing a person's DNA with that of other individuals in a database. The company website further notes, "Ancestry has more than 25 million DNA samples, which enable us to compare your DNA saliva sample to samples from around the world". An extensive database increases the odds of successful matches.

Information obtained from the DTC genetic testing company, AncestryDNA, used for this study, notes that "the AncestryDNA test results identify places your ancestors may have lived about 5-20 generations ago." Generally, a generation spans 20–30 years. With an average age of 25 and using AncestryDNA's upper limit of 20 generations, we are looking at 500 years. This timeline aligns with this study's scope, as significant migrations into the Ukwuani/Ndosumili area occurred between the 15th and 19th centuries (Okolugbo, 2004; Opone, 2017a, 2017b).

Centimorgans (cM) are units of genetic linkage between two given individuals; thus, the higher the cM between two persons, the more genetically connected they are. The AncestryDNA autosomal test details centimorgans and identifies shared matches throughout a person's entire family tree. Thus, "When a person with a significant amount of DNA that is identical to yours is found, that can indicate that you have a common ancestor" (MyHeritage.com, 2024). The more DNA you share with a person, the more recent your common ancestor; most of the matches found in our study were unknown distant families of the study's participants.

Research Methods

DNA relative matching of Ukwuani/Ndosumili participants

Nigerians are taking DNA tests (News Agency of Nigeria, 2024), suggesting this study would find DNA matches among its participants from Nigerian ethnic groups, including those from the Ukwuani/Ndosumili area. Using convenience sampling, we contacted and recruited thirty-one (31) participants from diverse clans/communities in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land. The settlements (towns/communities) from whence they came are shown in Table 1.

Table 3 presents the participants' demographic information and their respective towns or communities. Information about their DNA Ethnicity Estimate is also provided. AncestryDNA has more than 2,600 global regions with which to compare DNA samples. One of the company's ethnicities is Nigerian; this information may confuse a Nigerian who most likely has matches from the geographical territory of the Nigerian state. On the other hand, an African American whose genetic makeup may vary by several countries (geographical territories) of Africa (Torres et al., 2012) may not find the information confusing. Nevertheless, the information presented in Table 3 confirms that the study's participants are predominantly Nigerian, with a percentage above 95%.

Table 3. Study Participants' Demographics and DNA Ethnicity Estimate

Participant	Gender	Age	DNA Ethnicity estimate					Settlement: town/village
			Nigeria	Nigeria – East Central	Benin & Togo	Ivory Coast & Ghana	Cameroon, Congo & Western Bantu Peoples	
INDI_AA	Male	62	96%		3%		1%	Afor
INDI_BB	Female	43	98%		2%			Amai
INDI_CC	Male	43	99%		1%			Eziokpor
INDI_DD	Female	28	97%		2%	1%		Kwale (Ogbe-ani)/ Umuaja
INDI_EE	Male	52	98%		1%			Ogbe- Ogume
INDI_FF	Female	49	95%	4%	1%			Onuabo
INDI_GG	Male	40	98%	1%	1%			Onya
INDI_HH	Male	60	98%	1%	1%			Ugiliamai
INDI_II	Male	55	100%					Umuaja
INDI_JJ	Male	53	95%	1%	3%		1%	Utchi
INDI_KK	Male	55	95%		2%		3%	Aballa
INDI_LL	Female	53	97%		2%		1%	Ase
INDI_MM	Male	40	97%	1%	2%			Azagba
INDI_NN	Male	56	96%	2%	2%			Obiaruku/ Umuebu
INDI_OO	Male	55	97%		3%			Okpai
INDI_PP	Female	49	95%	1%	4%			Onicha Ukwuani
INDI_QQ	Female	27	99%		1%			Umukwata
INDI_RR	Male	40	94%	1%	4%			Umutu
INDI_SS	Male	63	92%	1%	7%			Ushie
INDI_TT	Male	53	99%		1%			Kwale (Utagba- Ogbe)
INDI_UU	Female	31	97%	1%			1%	Abbi
INDI_VV	Male	60	99%		1%			Aboh
INDI_WW	Male	33	97%	1%	2%			Ebedei
INDI_XX	Male	69	97%		3%			Emu-Ebendo
INDI_YY	Male	53	96%		4%			Ossissa
INDI_ZZ	Male	53	96%	2%		1%	1%	Ashaka/Afor
INDI_AB	Male	55	95%		5%			Emu- Obodeti
INDI_AC	Male	56	96%	2%	2%			Utagba-Uno
INDI_AD	Female	28	99%				1%	Utagba- Oliogo
INDI_AE	Female	55	93%	5%				Ebedei/ Utagba-Ogbe
INDI_AF	Male	39	98%	2%	1%			Ezionum

Notes: Italic fonts indicate individuals with parents from two related Ndosumili/Ukwuani clans or communities.

The study participants were unrelated; only individuals whose parents are from the same community/town were sought. To be included in the study, participants must be able to trace their ancestry to the same clan or community back to their grandparents. Most participants met the set criteria precisely, except for three participants whose parents came from neighbouring communities. Because of the close links existing between their parents' communities (e.g., Umuebu/Obiaruku and Ashaka/Afor), these participants were included in the study.

The study obtained clearance from the Research Ethics Board of the lead author's university. The risks and benefits of participating in the study were communicated to participants, and their informed consent was obtained. As part of signed informed consent, each participant was asked to share the results of their DNA relative matches – copied onto MS Word files – with the study. As the study was voluntary, only consenting participants were included; those who declined were excluded, and new participants were sought.

The study's authors bought DNA testing kits from AncestryDNA, which were given to all participants. Saliva samples were collected from each participant and sent to the DTC company for analysis. One benefit is that each participant owns their test results. Participants were encouraged to contact their DNA matches on the AncestryDNA.com platform individually using its communication tools to help accurately identify their matches' tribal or ethnic groups. Communication between participants and their matches is shared only with the lead researcher.

Participants were asked to record the number of matches (counts) they could correctly classify by surnames to include Ukwuani/Ndosumili and neighbouring tribes or ethnic subgroups: Edo, Isoko/Urhobo, Ijaw, Yoruboid (i.e., Itsekiri), Enuani/Ika, Igbo heartland, and Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala). Using surnames to identify ethnicity or ethnic groups is not novel; past research has used this approach (e.g., Lauderdale & Kestenbaum, 2000; Harris, 2015; Mateos, 2017). For example, Mateos (2017, p. 49) states:

A surname links the bearer with her or his ancestors for many generations, at least those on the paternal lineage. Therefore, a surname “automatically” signals an individual's ancestry and identity. However, when individuals are aggregated together into population groups according to the “cultural proximity” of their surnames, they can be useful as proxies for such shared past and group identity.

The preceding proposition underpins this study's effort. Thus, to be recorded as a match, the following criteria were used: a) Only males with recognisable surnames from the areas of interest were selected; b) females with both first and surnames (e.g., Ngozi Chukwuma or Eloho Ovie) from ethnic groups of interest were included; c) females with English first names and local surnames from all ethnic groups were initially excluded but are considered only when confirmation of their tribal identities is established (done through communication with matches). This is done to avoid identity errors of, say, an Igbo woman marrying a Benin man and taking the spouse's surname; d) matches with surnames from faraway lands and tribes, e.g., Ghana (Mensah) or Efik or Ibibio (Asuquo) were not considered; e) those using alphanumeric identification (Chales123) and generic

nomenclature (Bluesky Mama) were not included in the study, and f) only matches identified as Distant Family (i.e., fifth generation and above) were included in the study. Participants were asked to categorise their matches by tribe, ethnicity, or subgroup. The lead researcher worked with each study participant to remove entries (matches) that did not meet the selection or inclusion criteria. Notably, the researchers are familiar with the nuances of surnames among the Igbooid groups. For example, a surname may vary depending on the region where it is used. For example, someone born on Orié day is known as Okoye in Anambra State, Okoli (in Eastern Igbo areas), Okorie (in most Igbo lands), and Okolie (in Anioma land). When in doubt about a match's origin, participants were asked to contact the match to clarify, as previously noted. Table 4 shows some of the towns/villages and States in Nigeria from which matches came. The researchers also consulted two academics with knowledge of tribal groups in Nigeria (see the Appendix).

Table 4. Some Towns and Villages in Nigeria where Study Participants have DNA Matches

State	Towns and Villages
Delta (excluding Ndosumili/Ukwuani towns)	Issele-Uku, Asaba, Okpanam, Ekuku Agbor, Nsukwa, Warri, Aradhe, Owhelogbo, Ovrode, Ofagbe, Iyede, Igbide, Ozoro, Ellu, Okpe, Orogun, Orerokpe, Isiokolo, Oghara
Anambra	Oraukwu, Adazi, Nnukwu, Ezinkeje, Umuikwu Anam, Abagana, Onitsha, Nnobi, Igbo Ukwu, Awka, Obosi, Amawbia, Nkitaku, Agulu, Ihiala, Akamili Umudim, Otuocha, Umunuko Ukpok, Amichi, Nibo, Nawfia, Aguleri, Ossomari, Oba
Imo	Owerri, Orlu, Urualla, Dikenafia, Obollo, Uga, Amakohia, Umu Ezeala, Amaigbo, Nkwerre
Kogi	Idah, Okene
Edo	Abudu, Ugbeze, Benin City, Ugo, Urhonigbe, Umoghun Nokhua, Ewusse, Ubazogbe
Ogun	Ijebu-Ode, Ode-Remo
Enugu	Mmaku
Rivers	Ndoni
Bayelsa	Oloibiri

Participants sent the lead researcher the final MS Word files containing their matches, which were then shared with the co-researchers. The three researchers also classified the matches by ethnicity. The Appendix provides information on the researchers' classification efforts and assessments, as well as on each researcher's expertise and the external resources used.

Participants' assessments of their matches were generally consistent with those of the researchers, but at other times they differed. We used SPSS 28.0 software to provide Kendall's W^2 statistic for concordance among researchers' assessments. The study did not include participants' assessments in the concordance evaluation because not all participants returned their breakdowns of the ethnic classification of their matches. The results of Kendall's coefficient of concordance among the assessors (Table 5) indicate statistically significant agreement on their categorisation of the matches by tribes, ethnicities, or subgroups.

² Kendal's null hypothesis is $W = 0$ (i.e., there is no agreement among the assessors). If the test statistic W is 1, then all assessors agreed unanimously. If W is 0, then there is no agreement among the assessors.

Table 5. Kendall's coefficient of concordance results for assessors' evaluations

Origins		Yoruboid	Ijobid			Edoid		Ijoid	Northern Nigeria (i.e., Igala)
			Igbo heartland	Ukwani/Ndosu mili	Enuani/Ika	Urhobo/Isoko	Bini		
Statistics	Kendall's W	0.27	0.42	0.51	0.68	0.64	0.43	0.26	0.37
	Chi (x) square	16.46	26.30	31.22	40.99	39.67	26.89	15.90	22.77
	df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Sig.	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

Findings and Discussion

It is important to sound a note of caution: The matches used for this exploratory initiative do not represent the populations of ethnicities or ethnic groups in Nigeria of interest to this study; instead, the matches are a sample of unknown people from select ethnic groups of interest to this study's objective who incidentally took the AncestryDNA genetic tests. That being noted, a study of this nature has inherent shortcomings, which are duly acknowledged.

The assessor's entries (participants' matches) for each ethnicity or subgroup were averaged from the data provided in the Appendix, and a pie chart (Figure 2) was subsequently created. The total number of matches across all ethnicities or subgroups identified by the assessors is 1770.

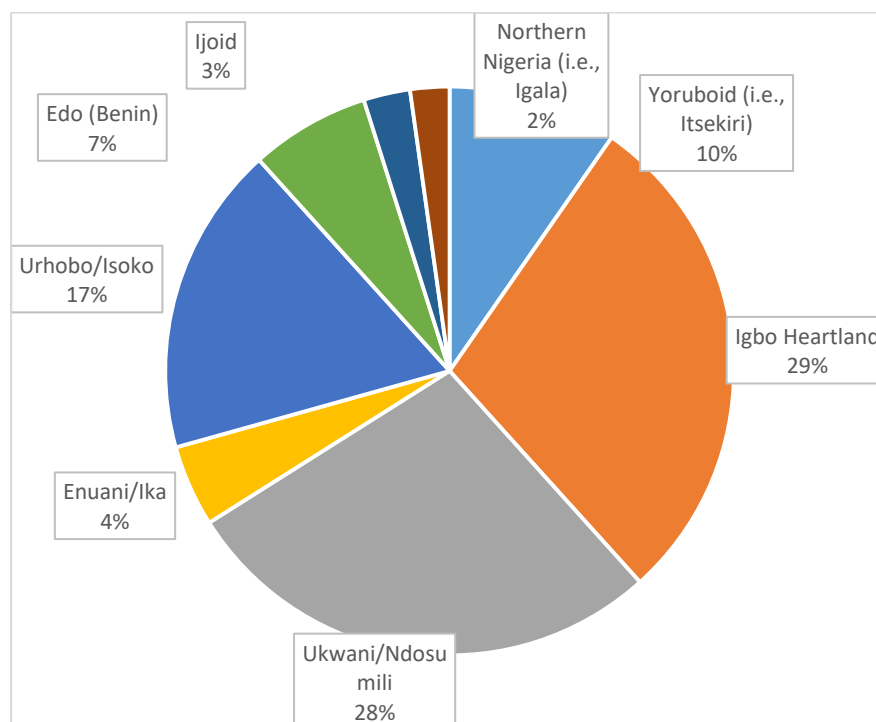


Figure 2. Breakdown of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups observed in the study

The breakdown of matches by ethnic and sub-ethnic groups used in the study is presented in Figure 2. The ethnic group with the highest average number of matches (507.3) among our sampled Ukwuani/Ndosumili participants is the Igbo heartland (29%). This information is consistent with the details in Tables 1 and 2, which show that many of the forebears of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people originated from the Igbo heartland. The next ethnic subgroup with many matches for the study's participants is Ukwuani/Ndosumili (490.6), with 28%. This reality aligns with data presented in Tables 1 and 2, and with expectations.

The third largest matches (312.3) were observed for the Urhobo/Isoko, representing 17% of the total, a result consistent with the information in Tables 1 and 2. The average matches of 4% for Western Igbo (Enuani/Ika) (81.9) and the 3% matches for Ijoid (46.9) agree with the information presented in Tables 1 and 2. The 7% matches for Bini (Edo) (120.5) are at odds with the highlights in Tables 1 and 2. The finding stands out and needs attention.

The high incidence of 10% matches in the study for Yoruboid (i.e., Itsekiri) (171) is inconsistent with the overwhelming consensus on the oral traditions of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili clans' origins (Table 1). Incidentally, no Ukwuani/Ndosumili clan claims Yoruboid (i.e., Itsekiri) ancestry, except for very few families with ties to the Itsekiri land. Nevertheless, a plausible explanation for this anomaly is the greater awareness among Yoruba people in Nigeria about the use of DNA tests (News Agency of Nigeria, 2024). More Yoruba people take such tests than people from other tribes in Nigeria. Additionally, some of this study's participants reported genetic links to the Yoruba land through a parent. This indicates a recent kingship, which is not the focus of this study.

The observed low matches of 2% for Northern Nigeria, i.e., Igala (39.5), do not agree with the information presented in Tables 1 and 2, suggesting that about 13% of the forebears of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people might have come from Igala land. We assert that the low number could be attributed to low participation in DNA testing among people from Northern Nigeria (News Agency of Nigeria, 2024). In the same vein, it is possible that not many Igala from Northern Nigeria have taken tests with the DTC used for this study.

The result showing that the study's participants have more matches or are more closely related to people in the Igbo heartland concurs with expectations. This result somewhat aligns with the reality that Ukwuani/Ndosumili is located within the Igbo culture area (Forde & Jones, 1950; Okwu, 2024; Onwuejeogwu, 1975, 1978; Boise, 2024). As a corollary, the DNA matching results contradict the view that the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people are not Igbo or are not related to the Igbo heartland.

Given the marginally low Bini relative matches observed in this exploratory study, alongside espoused cultural and linguistic dissonance between the Ukwuani/Ndosumili and the Bini (Ozah, 2010; Afigbo, 1980; Ogedengbe, 1971; Northcote, 2017), one is impelled to challenge the putative narrative that the present settlers of Ukwuani/Ndosumili lands are mainly Bini migrants on the land (e.g., Egharevba, 1934; N.A.I. File No. 26769; 1931; N.A.I. File No. 29300, 1939). Evidence from genetic ties, i.e., DNA relative matching, does support this assertion. There is a disconnect between the pushed narratives of Benin origins (and identity) highlighted in Table 1 and evidence from DNA relative matching testing, suggesting that, on average, a Ukwuani/Ndosumili person is likely to have more relatives within their locality and in the Igbo heartland.

The result indicates that the Edoid sub-ethnic group with which the sampled Ukwuani/Ndosumili participants have the third largest matches (17%) or are most closely related is Urhobo/Isoko. Memories and undisputable accounts of past and recent migrations from Urhobo/Isoko to Ukwuani/Ndosumili abound (e.g., Izuogu, 2019; Okolugbo, 2004; Ifinedo & Opone, 2024). To that end, the DNA relative matching analysis suggests that more Ukwuani/Ndosumili people may have stronger genetic ties to Isoko/Urhobo people than to the Bini.

The Igbooid groupings (i.e., Igbo heartland, Enuani/Ika, and Ukwuani/Ndosumili) collectively account for 61% of the study's matches (distant relatives). The DNA relative matching results lend credence to oral traditions, indicating that pre-eminent and most pervasive settlers in Ukwuani/Ndosumili land are generically Igbooid to corroborate observations espoused by others who have challenged the Benin origin narrative for Ukwuani/Ndosumili settlements and people (e.g., Afigbo, 1981; Opone, 2017a, 2017b; Ogedengbe, 1971; Ohadike, 1994; Ijomah, 2010; Nwaokocha, 2015; Ifinedo & Opone, 2024).

Study Limitations and Future Research Avenues

The sample size of thirty-one (31) individuals used in this study is small. However, the sample size is appropriate for a study such as this, which we noted was exploratory. Future studies could consider using larger samples to deepen knowledge. Reliance on the accuracy of results from DTC genetic testing services should be done cautiously (Mendoza & Diallo, 2024). However, the lead authors' attempts to verify the accuracy and reliability of the results provided by the employed DTC genetic testing company are satisfactory. Namely, known relatives of the lead author of various levels (i.e., first, third, fourth cousins, and parent(s)-child) who took the company's DNA tests were correctly identified by the company.

Another area for improvement is that some surnames might have been incorrectly classified. Using several trained local linguists could be a rewarding exercise for this work. Not all potential matches of the study's participants are likely included in this work because, with the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, some locals, including Ukwuani/Ndosumili people, adopted foreign surnames (Odili, 2008).

To advance insights in the area, future research on the subject could consider using other testing techniques, such as Random Amplified Polymorphic DNA (RAPD), a fingerprinting technique based on the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), which Titilayo et al. (2018) note can be used to differentiate closely related ethnic groups. Forensic archaeology could benefit future studies on the origins of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people. Future studies, using any suitable technique, could compare the genes of equal numbers of individuals from Benin, Ukwuani/Ndosumili, and the Igbo heartland to enrich the knowledge of Ukwuani/Ndosumili's past migrations.

Conclusion

This study focused on the origins of one of Nigeria's small ethnolinguistic groups, the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people, which is scarcely mentioned in the literature. Oftentimes, when the history of smaller ethnic groups in Nigeria is told by the people themselves or written for them by others (e.g., Okolugbo, 2004; Nwachukwu, 2010), baseless narratives

are paraded as truths, perhaps to accrue some advantages in a socio-economic context where resource allocation depends on who one is in a fragile polity (Igwara, 1993). In the case of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people, the central hypothesis about their origins or history is that they are Benin immigrants who settled in a *terra nova* close to the Igbo (Mordi & Opone, 2009). Some Ukwuani/Ndosumili elites have argued (and continue to argue) that they are unrelated to the heartland Igbo. Besides, some heartland Igbo struggle to accept Ukwuani/Ndosumili as Igbo. This ensuing confusion informed this study's exploratory investigation, designed to answer the question: Where are the ancestors of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people from, and who are they more closely related to, genetically, in Southern Nigeria?

Information from sourced documents largely suggests that Benin and the Igbo heartland are the two primary areas from which the apical ancestors of the present-day Ukwuani/Ndosumili communities originated. However, the evidence presented in this study indicates that the Benin connection is suspect, as the names of the apical ancestors of many Ukwuani/Ndosumili communities are predominantly Igbo. Attention is also drawn to the work of others who have raised similar doubts regarding the historicity of the accounts of the Benin origins of the Ukwuani/Ndosumili.

The evidence presented in this study does not support the Benin origin narrative as the sole or primary source of migration to Ukwuani/Ndosumili land. Likewise, discounting any past migrations from Benin into Ukwuani/Ndosumili land would be disingenuous. Be that as it may, this study opines that migrations from Benin are marginal at best. The empirical data used in this exploratory study provide partial support for the claim that the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people largely have an Igbo ancestry.

The DNA relative matching analysis of matches (distant relatives) of the study's participants, enlisted from select Ukwuani/Ndosumili communities who took tests with a DTC genetic company used for this study, provides initial evidence that the participants are mainly related to Igbo groupings (i.e., the Igbo heartland, Enuani/Ika, and Ukwuani/Ndosumili) with whom they share more recent common ancestors. Namely, 61% of the study's participants are from the Igbo gene pool, compared with 7% from Benin.

To an extent, this exploratory insight helps dispel the misrepresented, misaligned, or fabricated account that suggests a predominant Benin heritage or identity for the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people. This work deposes proclamations from some Ukwuani/Ndosumili elites, arguing that they have no connection with the Igbo heartland – the data shows otherwise. Likewise, assumptions among some heartland Igbo describing the Aniomas (including the Ukwuani/Ndosumili) as non-Igboids need reconsideration. Insights from this study permit us to note that it would be a travesty of Ukwuani/Ndosumili history to denigrate the import of pre-eminent primordial attributes, i.e., genetics, by discounting their link to their closest ethnic group, the heartland Igbo. Perhaps past prominent Ukwuani/Ndosumili leaders (e.g., Chief F. Oputa-Otutu) and academics (e.g., Prof. B.I.C. Ijomah) who affiliated with Igbo unions in the 1950s and with the 1970s pan-Igbo organisations did so because they knew who they were, and which ethnic groups were blood relations of their people.

This study could serve as a valuable resource for the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people, especially their youth, as they navigate their identity crisis in Southern Nigeria. Importantly, this endeavour provides empirical information about who the Ukwuani/Ndosumili people are, demonstrating that most of their eponymous forebears came from the Igbo heartland, and that many of their present inhabitants have closer genetic links with Igbo people from Enuani/Ika and across the Niger in the Igbo heartland than with the Bini. It is noteworthy that Ukwuani/Ndosumili people have closer genetic relationships with other Delta State ethnic groups, such as the Isoko and Urhobo, than with the Bini. To sum, based on the results from this study's DNA relative matching, archived oral traditions, and cultural affinities, it is posited that the Edoid origins often ascribed to the Ukwuani/Ndosumili of Southern Nigeria are, at best, misleading. This study's effort is not the final word; other perspectives on this matter are needed.

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