

INTRODUCTION

GENERAL BACKGROUND

This long essay deals with the study of Morphology in Uneme. i.e the study of how words are formed in Uneme language.

The speakers of Uneme are found in Edo state. The language speakers can also be found in Okene area of Kogi State. The other names for the people are Uneme Ineme and Ileme.

According to the informant, it was believed that the name Uneme was derived from Oba Eweka's first child who happened to be a female named INE-EMI meaning "it is not forbidden to have a female as one's first child" whom is believed to be the mother ancestor of the people.

According to Hakeem (2003: 279), Edo State is found in the mid-western part of Nigeria. The Uneme people inhabit a number of villages in the northern and south-eastern part of Kukuruku division. The speakers of Uneme are found in the northern part of Edo state which is located between latitudes 6°45' N – 7°35' N and longitudes 5°55' E, 6°45' E. Akoko Edo is bounded in the North by the present Kwara state and parts of the present Kogi state, in the north-west by the present Ondo state in the south-east by both Etsako west and Etsako north in the south-west by Owan. Etsako local government central is located in the heart of Etsako land. It is bounded in the west by the Etsako West Local Government, in the east by Etsako East Local Government in the north by Okene and in the south by Esan territory.

Also according to Aigbokhaleode (1991:8), Uneme North consists of the following communities Uneme Akpama, Uneme Nekhua, Uneme Ekpedo Uneme Erhurun and Uneme Aki-Osu. While Uneme in the south are Uneme Uzanu Uneme Imiava, Uneme Anegbette, Uneme Udochi Uneme Oghomezie and Uneme Ukpekho. This chapter being the introductory chapter will be discussing the historical background of the speakers, the geographical location, the people, Genetic classification, etc.

1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

According to my informant the Uneme people originated from Ile-ife in Osun state. There was a time the Benin's did not want the natives to rule them so they sent a message to Oduduwa the ruler of Ile-ife appealing to him to send one of his sons to be their ruler. The request was granted and Prince Oranmiyan in the company of his friend Ogundare was sent to Benin. In Benin, Oranmiyan got married to Esimonde who bore him a son named Prince Eweka.

Oranmiyan continued ruling the Benins until the period that he discovered that the Benins were difficult to rule. When Oranmiyan found out that they were difficult to rule; he returned to Ile ife leaving Ogundare and Prince Eweka who later became heir to the throne with the title Oba Eweka 1 of Benin.

Ogundare, Oranmiyan's friend also got married to a Benin woman who gave birth to a child named Ogun. Ogun also got married and gave birth to a son named Ogunola. Prince Eweka also became matured and got married and gave birth to a beautiful girl as the first child named INI-EMI, whom has been mentioned earlier to be the mother ancestor of the Uneme people. It was from her name the Uneme people got the name Uneme from. Ogundare's great grandson Ogunola then got married to INE-EMI who now gave birth to the descendants of Uneme people.

The Uneme people are immigrants from Benin. They left Benin because of the problem that arose as a result of chieftaincy rift between two brothers in the royal house of Benin kingdom, which led to a war that was so tense that everybody started fleeing.

The main Uneme speakers are the Anegbette, Uzanu, Udochi, and Ologua. According to the informant, we were told that these people that spoke Uneme all came from the same father and mother before they broke up into different communities that spoke Uneme. Each community now developed into a larger community which now lived as towns. These towns as mentioned earlier are Uzanu, Anegbette, Udochi and Ologua. These four brothers migrated from Benin because of the war between the two brothers that wanted to become king in Benin. The four brothers settled in a place called Ugbebu. As these four brothers who

formed an independent community grew bigger, there arose a quarrel between two of the brothers Anegbette and Uzanu. As a result of this quarrel, the Uzanu had to move to Etsako East and Anegbette to Etsako Central. The war continued for a longer period and Uzanu was having the upper hand and along the line one of the Anegbette said they should send him to Bida to the Nupe people for assistance. The request was granted and the man eventually left, but since there were no vehicles at that time he had to go by foot.

Later on the war at home was settled, meanwhile the man spent years trying to learn the Nupe language, he got married and had children before he was known and allowed to meet the Oba of Nupe. On getting to the king of Nupe, he explained the reason why he was there to see him. He told the king that some people are fighting his own people (kinsmen) and they needed the assistance of the Nupe warriors in their own war. As said earlier the people at home had settled the war and were no longer fighting, by the time he got home with the Nupe warriors, there was no war to fight. They went to meet Oriola who is the head of the Anegbette then. Oriola said the Uzanu and Anegbette are now friends and can not kill each other again (Oriola is the ceremonial president and the Olotu is the prime minister) and that there was no need for war again, but the warriors that were brought will not want to go back without anything. The Nupe warriors told the Anegbette to divide their land into two and the half be given to them and that Anegbette should retain the other half, but Oriola refused and said it was not possible, to him the only thing he can do is to release them to go into battle with the Uzanu, but the Uzanu were not ready for war because they were not expecting any war. The invaders came and invaded Uzanu, the invaders were almost prevailing before their king (Uzanu) who is known as "Iyema" decided that Uzanu should flee from the portion, so the Uzanu fled and left. Before they could know it the whole Etsako was affected by the invaders and they all fled to different places that's why we have the Anegbette where they are now and Uzanu where they are.

1.2 Sociocultural profile

The following could be observed among the Uneme. The language Uneme is used as a means of communication in the market and it is also used in teaching in primary schools.

Culture:

The Uneme people are united by common traditions of origin. Their traditional craft as smith in their dialects and in other social and cultural features. They are well known for blacksmithing, casting of bronze, ornament, selling and manufacturing of war weapons used for security purposes. In addition to these occupations the southern Uneme engaged in fishing and trading in the Niger creeks while the northern Uneme engage in farming and oil palm production.

The people's favorite food is pounded yam called *ema* with melon soup called *usomhikpigba*. Their best native attire for women is blouse and wrapper while the men dress in *buba* and *sokoto*.

The people:

The people indulge in traditional and religious practices such as sacrifice to ancestors and initiation of boys and girls into manhood and womanhood respectively. They believe in supreme being whom they call "osanobular" meaning God the creator. It is believed that the supreme being cannot be communicated with directly, except through the ancestors who act as link between the supreme being and the people. It is also believed that the Almighty God hears and answers prayer through one's ancestors.

Occupation:

The people of Uneme engage themselves in craft works like blacksmithing, casting of bronze and ornament, selling and production of weapons. They also engage in farming and trading and they also engage in oil palm production and selling of iron implement.

FESTIVAL:

The Uneme people come together to celebrate so many festivals, such as *ogun* festival, *Ukpekinimi* festival, *New yam* festival and *ukpekema* festival.

Ogun festival is the festival of the god of iron while *ukpekinimi* is the festival of masquerades

which is celebrated twenty one days before the new yam festival. The celebration comes up between the month of July and September of every year. Since they are predominantly farmers, this festival precedes the incoming of the new yam. During the celebration, they use the old yam for the celebration after which they are now free to eat the new yam.

ASPECTS OF UNEME MORPHOLOGY

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