

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF DESCENT SYSTEM IN CONTEMPORARY EDDA, EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: Descent is a recognized link between a person and his/her ancestors. It is the system by which members of a society trace kinship over generations. Many societies of Africa especially within the southeastern region of Nigeria are predominantly described as patrilineal, however, few of such societies especially in Abia and Ebonyi States have been identified to have traces of matrilineal and patrilineal characteristics according to Anthropologists. However, many old literatures erroneously described these few societies as matrilineal which have affected the perception of these societies as abnormal by the predominant patrilineal societies. This study was aimed at identifying in a survey the current state of descent of these societies using the indicators of descent like community membership, inheritance, residence, succession and authority in Edda community in present-day Ebonyi State. The study purposely sampled 130 respondents made up of titled men and women, opinion moulders male and female and youth groups male and female who formed focus group discussants and interviewees from four randomly selected villages (Amangwu, Osisioma, Nguzu and Ekoli) of the eleven Edda villages that has a population of about 4,350,000 projected from the 2006 population census. It found that Edda is 80% patrilineal and 20% matrilineal with a future descent towards fully patrilineal and therefore moves away from the findings of Otterberg (1968) who described the society as matrilineal.

Keywords: Double-descent, Inheritance, Succession, Matrilineal, Patrilineal, Edda

INTRODUCTION

Ethnographic studies view every human being as a product of two sexually different persons, a man and a woman, who are regarded as the parents. The human being maintains affiliation to the relations of both parents and forms a bond with all other relations of their parents. People of various societies trace relationship to the relations of their parents over time as some Americans and other westerners have made attempts to trace their ancestry to Africa.

The tracing of relationship through parents to one's ancestors is called descent. If tracing of descent becomes well perfected in societies, as is the case in simple societies of hunters and gatherers with undifferentiated roles, it performs a lot of functions in such societies and constitutes a vital part of a society's social structure. Descent is, therefore, a recognized link between a person and his/her forebearers. Macdonald and Plummer (2005:705) define descent as "the system by which members of a society trace kinship over generations".

Scott and Marshall (2005:150) define descent groups as "kin groups who are lineal descendants of a common ancestor". There are various ways of tracing descent in the world. In Africa in particular, descent is traced in three major ways according to Scott and Marshall (2005:221).

It is traced through the male line, from a father to the apical ancestor. This type of tracing descent is referred to as patriliney. It is also traced through the female line, from a mother to the apical ancestress. This type of tracing descent is referred to as matriliney. Finally, descent in Africa is traced simultaneously through both the male and female lines, from father and mother to the apical ancestor and ancestress. This type of tracing descent is referred to as double descent, Scott and Marshall concluded.

The community of focus in this research is Edda in Afrikpo South L.G.A of Ebonyi State in the South-East region of Nigeria. This community and other communities like Ohafia, Abiriba and Abam in present day Abia State, and Yakkur in Cross River State were erroneously portrayed by ethnographic literature of the colonial and immediate post-colonial Nigeria as a matrilineal group (Ottenberg, 1968; Nsugbe, 1974). Ethnographic literature of old, here, refers to literature that was created by researches conducted in the past, especially during the colonial stage of our country's development.

A matrilineal society, as stated earlier, is a society in which descent is traced through the female line, from mother to apical ancestress. In a matrilineal society, as Kottak (2004:497-498) has hinted, "people join the mother's group automatically at birth and stay as members throughout life. Matrilineal descent groups therefore include only the children of the group's women". Ezeh (2002:123) has reported that "although a greater percentage of the communities that make up the Igbo ethnic group are patrilineal, a number of exceptions with traces of matriliney (Ohafia, Abiriba, Abam, Edda and Afikpo) exist. On the same subject, Eze (2002:123) further reports that Nsugbe (1974) and McCall (2002) attributed matriliney to the Ohafia-Igbo while Nzekwu (1963) concluded that Edda is a purely matrilineal society based on their literature findings.

Descent is man-made. It is socially or culturally constructed, that is why it constitutes a society's social structure, determines people's belief, and explains behaviour. As Henslin (2009:331) has explained, "no system is natural. Rather each matches a group's ideas of justice and logic". One of the basic facts about social structure is that it is subject to change over time. Social structure, as a cultural issue, varies from time to time to reflect the changing needs of its society and the thinking of its people. This necessitates periodic restudy of communities/societies to find out their current ethnographic status for updating of knowledge regarding them.

The above is the major underpinning of this Ethnographic study of Edda clan to discover its contemporary descent status, which has been wrongly grouped as matrilineal society with some other societies like Ohafia, Afikpo, Abiriba, Abam, etc that have same features as obtained in Edda, tagged the *matrilineal belt* of Nigeria. Specifically, the following are the objectives of the study:

1. To ascertain how community membership is determined in contemporary Edda, i.e. whether an Edda child belongs to the community of his/her father (patrilineage) or the community of his/her mother (matrilineage) or both
2. To find out how the issue of inheritance is handled in the community i.e. whether a son inherits his father or mother's brother or both,
3. To establish how residence constitutes community membership i.e. whether a son builds his residential house patrilocally or matrillocally

4. To ascertain how succession is determined in the community i.e. who succeeds a man when he dies; his son(s) or his sister's son(s)
5. To find out who wields family authority in the community; the man (husband) or the woman (wife).
6. To establish who wields family authority in Edda clan; a man or a woman.
7. To identify the future of descent in Edda clan i.e. which descent system is Edda clan likely to operate in the future.

Problem Statement and Justification

It is usually said that every society has its social structure and social structure is something that is put in place by members of every society to make the society a recognizable place and for the members to be of predictable behaviour, according to Onwuka (2010:134). Descent system, the subject matter of this study, is a socio-structural issue. As important as social structure is, its understanding in many societies is poor, especially by non-members of societies. This is because these non-members depend on what they read about these societies in books and other published works for their knowledge of the structure of communities. The dynamic nature of social structure requires that regular updates be made to ensure currency. If this is not the case, as observed in many simple societies, people continue to live in the past with attendant bias, prejudice and stereotypes against people.

Research sponsorship is uncommon in developing societies hence people consume obsolete information about cultures of societies found in books that are published many years ago (Okereke, 2013:45). For example, our knowledge of the descent system of such non-patrilineal Nigerian communities/societies as Ohafia, Edda, Yako, Jen, Kanakuru, etc, is based on research efforts and outcomes of colonial administrators and researchers such as C. K. Meek, P. Talbot, Evans Pritchard, and G.T. Basden, to mention but a few (Onwuka, 2010: 89). A situation such as this is not only dangerous to the individuals in the society, but to the society as well. It is obviously an impediment to social development.

The fact being stressed above is that despite the need for recurring ethnographies and for updating of data on cultural facts, it is worrisome that this is not the case in our society, so much so that colonial ethnographic results are still being consumed in our midst, with current literature still referring to such societies in the colonial attribution and have impeded more findings. This amounts to living in the past and wallowing in obsolescence and therefore calls for current researches to reveal contemporary statuses of communities and for updating of cultural facts, social structure and institutions that contribute to descent system in Africa ethnographic studies, hence, this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by August Comte's theory of social dynamics. Comte sees the society as made up of social statics and social dynamics which should be seen as always co-existing in every society. Social statics represents order or stability. It is the study of a society as it is at any given moment. Through social statics, therefore, we get impression of how things are at any moment in time. But it is a fact of life that things do not remain as they are forever. Things change inevitably in the course of time to become something else that is different, to a small or large degree, from what it was originally.

It is in appreciation of the fact and constancy of change that Comte places social statics side by side with social dynamics, which is the study of things or groups as they change and develop. He likened the two to “order” and “progress” “for order consists ... in a permanent harmony among the conditions of social existence, and progress consists in social development” (Cosser, 1977:10).

Based on the above, Comte theorized on the Law of Human Progress or the Law of Three Stages. Societies necessarily evolve from the theological stage to metaphysical stage and finally to the positive stage, each successive stage in the evolution growing out of the preceding one.

Societies, their institutions, practices, etc, undergo evolution over time. Edda descent system, portrayed in the ethnographic literature (Ottenberg 1968 & Nsugbe, 1974) as a matrilineal group, is not immune from societal evolutionary processes, hence the need for this study to unravel its present evolutionary stage in descent practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey. Theo (2009:407) defines survey as “a research method that involves asking questions about opinions, beliefs, or behaviour”. As a survey, the study afforded the researchers the opportunity of asking questions to indigenes of Edda that had the capacity to reveal the current descent status of the clan. The responses, which were later analyzed for findings, were accepted as volunteered by the researchers. However, the oral instruments used, interview and focus group discussion, provided further opportunity of probe questions to ensure clarified responses.

Study Instruments

Two qualitative instruments of data collection, Key Informant in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used for this study. The main reason prompting the use of the two instruments was to find out the amount of corroboration that could be established between the findings from both as a measure of the authenticity of such findings or otherwise. Again, as a study of a simple society with a majority of non-literate and semi-literate indigenes, the use of such instruments that permitted the use of vernacular language fruitfully was considered imperative.

Study Population

The population for this study comprised adult indigenes of Edda community living at home. Adults, unlike children, have stayed long enough at home and have acquired sufficient insights into the past and present cultural practices of the community, especially descent-related matters. Purposively, however, the following four categories of the people were studied; titled men, titled women, opinion leaders men and opinion leaders female. Survey teams met these research subjects at their various locations in Edda and collected data for the study. This translated to eighty (80) interviewees and one hundred and thirty (130) FGD discussants, yielding a target population of two hundred and ten (210) Edda indigenes.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Simple random sampling was employed to select four communities which include Amangwu, Osioma, Ekoli, and Nguzu from the eleven communities that make up the Edda clan. Again, non-probability quota sampling was employed to select the ten indigenes that served in each of the two interview teams per community, and fifteen discussants that comprised each of the two focus group discussion sessions, also in each of the four communities. The respondents were both male and female, between ages 60 – 80, with about 60% illiterate, 30% semi-literate and 10% of them literate.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

This study which made use of two qualitative instruments of data collection (interview and focus group discussion), correspondingly generated qualitative data. By design in research, qualitative data are processed qualitatively. The study adopted a verbatim transcription technique using QDA miner software qualitative data analysis tool. Hence, the opinion of all, or majority of the respondents in an interview, or discussants in FGD, is regarded as the popular opinion and forms a basis for decision making on the issue being analyzed. Therefore, the opinion of five to ten respondents in an interview session formed the basis for decision making in favour of the issue at stake. Similarly, the opinion of eight to fifteen discussants in an FGD formed the basis for decision making in favour of the issue at stake.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revolve around the six sub-themes of investigation, which constitute the standardized variables or indicators of descent system within this study, namely: community membership, inheritance, residence, succession, family authority, and the future of descent system in Edda. The first five sub-themes are the major indicators of descent system in Anthropology.

1. Community Membership: Edda, the community of this ethnographic investigation, is portrayed in the anthropological literature as a matrilineal community as hinted earlier. This suggests matrilineal community membership and *matrifiliation* for children (sons and daughters) of the community.

All the men interviewed in this survey, irrespective of village or community, responded that they belong to the village of their fathers and that their children also belong to their village and not the villages of their wives. The women interviewees corroborated the men's opinion by saying, with one accord, that their children belong to the village of their husbands and not their own villages.

Similarly, all the focus group discussants said that they belong to the village/community of their fathers and that their children belong to their village and not to the villages/communities of their (the children's) mothers. A female discussant in Ekoli community captured the situation this way in the local dialect

“Owu ishi ogo nwe nwa” (a child belongs to his/her father's community/village), while her male counterpart from Nguzu community put it

this way, *Aruzuru yaa aruu – si nwanta o bu onye Nguzu, obu nna nwe nwa* (it is not in doubt, the child is from Nguzu, the father owns the child).

Other discussants in Amangwu and Osisioma, respectively quoted as saying:

gweeyiii! o bu isiogo nwee nwaa ogo anyi oo, o nna nwoo nwa; nwanta wuu nkee nnaya, obughii nne yaaaa Osisioma anyiooo. (Exclamation!, it is the community that owns the child here, the father owns the child not the mother in this our Osisioma community).

The above is in response to the focus group discussion (FGD) guide item one which asks, ‘is it the village/community of the man (husband) or the village/community of the woman (wife) that owns the child in this Edda?’

Community membership, in anthropology, is one of the indicators of the descent system in the sense that the allocation of people to communities is the responsibility of a people’s kinship system, based purely on the circumstances of a person’s birth. The question of where one comes from is answered, in reality, by the kinship or descent system in operation in one’s society and not by the person. Hence, a person belonging to a patrilineal society belongs to the kingroup and society of the father, whereas the one belonging to a matrilineal society belongs to the kingroup and society of the mother.

The finding above shows that Edda is patrilineal in community membership which is one of the factors determining descent in Africa. This is because men and their sons, and by implication daughters, belong to their fathers’ kingroup (patrilineage) and not the kingroups of their mothers (matrilineages). This goes contrary to popular representation of Edda in Anthropological literature as a matrilineal society. Kottak (2004:G12) defines matrilineal descent as a “unilineal descent rule in which people join the mothers’ group automatically at birth and stay as members throughout life”. Unilineal descent rule simply means that people belong to “one line” only. Throwing more light on descent system, Ezeh (2002: 121) states that the importance of a descent system is that “it is the door to membership of a traditional society”. The belongingness of Edda men and children to their fathers’ kingroup shows that it is patrilineal on community membership as a descent indicator or determinant.

2. Inheritance: Inheritance is another descent determinant used in this study. This is because in a matrilineal society, a man is inherited by his sister’s son(s) or by his mother’s relation(s) or both. In a patrilineal society, on the other hand, a man is inherited by his son(s) or by his brother(s) or both.

In response to the interview item “who inherits a man in this village/community after death”, the following information were obtained:

(i). A man’s son(s); (ii). A man’s maternal relations, *ikwu nne*; and (iii). A sister’s son(s)

This means that inheritance in the community is through both father’s side (sons and brothers) and mother’s side (sister’s son(s) and maternal relations (*ikwu nne*)). Focus group discussion reveals that inheritance goes through the following relations of a deceased man in Edda:

1. Son(s);
2. Brother(s);
3. Sister’s son(s) and
4. Maternal relations (*Ikwu nne*)

Specifically, the discussants revealed that son(s) inherit such property as house, personal landed property at home and abroad, agricultural products, debts, etc, while the brothers of the same mother inherit land that is owned by maternal kins (ikwu), personal items bequeathed to them by sons of the late man, clothing and some rooms in the man's house to be relinquished when the children grow up, any property given to them by the man while alive, maternally owned land held in trust by the late man. Sister's sons inherit permanently, maternally owned land and property; some domestic properties like clothing and pots given to them by the deceased while alive; land, especially farmland that is maternally owned; land under the late man's control; property given to them freely by the man while alive; property the dead owns collectively with them; small portion of the man's property discretionally given to them by the sons of the man if they are economically comfortable; anything given to them by the late man while alive; land that is owned by the maternal kins, etc.

All the above boils down to the fact that inheritance in Edda is done paternally (sons and brothers) and maternally (sister's sons and maternal relations (ikwu nne)). This is indicative of double descent system as both sides of a man's parentage are involved in inheritance. This is contrary to the claim that Edda operates a matrilineal system of descent. In a matrilineal group, as Edda is claimed to be in the literature, inheritance beneficiaries are exclusively people who are related to the dead maternally (mother's relations and sister's son(s)). In such a society, children are not brought up in their patriclan, but in their matriclan, where they reside permanently as indigenes. Explaining what happens to inheritance in matrilineal societies, Scott and Marshall (2005:396) hold that "in matrilineal systems, inheritance is traced from the maternal uncle (mother's brother) to the nephew (mother's sons). The tendency is to preserve the economic and political identity of the sibling group". Again, referring to how inheritance is done in a typical double descent society, Nwanonobi (1992:22) holds that among the Yako, a double descent society in the present Cross River state, "descent is reckoned patrilineally for the purpose of inheriting fixed property, while moveable property is transmitted matrilineally". The analysed data show that show Edda is double descent on inheritance as a descent indicator.

3. Residence: Residence, in the context of this survey, is a house a man builds as a dwelling place for self and household in a place he calls his native place or ancestral home. Generally, in societies, especially African societies, residence is patrilocal in patrilineal societies and matrilocal in matrilineal societies. Patrilocal residence, as Kendall (2010:574) explains is "the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the husband's family". Conversely, matrilocal residence is the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the wife's parents (Kendall, 2010:573).

Interview data from this survey show that people build their residential houses in the villages/communities of their fathers. This is to say that residence in Edda, as revealed by interview data, is patrilocal. A female respondent from the IDI opined that:

A young man who is of age and has gathered the wherewithal goes to his father to request for a parcel of land for building purpose. He may go with local gin just to show respect, but this is not compulsory. He is shown where to build in his father's village, close to his father's house.

Similarly, Focus Group Discussants (FGDs) all agree that a man in Edda builds, in his father's village/community and not in the village/community of his mother. As a female FGD discussant in Amangwu community put it in the local dialect:

“ewoo nwanta ananugi arulo nezi mma ya wo, maka ojenughi ebizuru ebe o”
(a son cannot build in his mother’s compound because he cannot live there nor be regarded as a member of such a compound).

Again, as a male discussant in Ekoli community revealed,

“It is the traditional right and privilege of the first son in Edda to build at the ancestral land space (*Okpulo*) in the compound where the apical resided, if his father lives there till death, or if the father has not built on such a land space”.

It was also recorded, however, that a person’s maternal kinsmen can allocate a piece of land to him for building and occupation purposes. Such a gesture, however, is a privilege somebody enjoys courtesy of his reputation, but such a house cannot be inherited by the children of the person but forfeited upon his death. Further revelation has it that if a man wants to buy a piece of land for a residential purpose, perhaps due to inability of the father to allocate one to him, it is in the village of the father that such purchase is made.

The above interview and FGD findings permit our conclusion that Edda is patrilocal as a man builds in his patrilineage. Patrilocality, as said earlier, is the cultural practice that requires a married couple to set up their residence close to the family of the husband. Matrilocal residence is found in many matrilineal societies and a number of matrilocal societies in Africa have been identified; Akan of Ghana, Bamenda of Cameroon, Bijagos of Guinea Bissau, Imazighen of North Sahara and Ikan San of Southern Africa. Wikipedia (2006). list of matrilineal societies (<http://en.m.wikipedia.org/histofmatrilocalsoceities>)

4. Succession: Succession is the act of taking over from someone to continue a process. A person who succeeds another takes over from him to the extent of inheriting his assets and liabilities. People in communities necessarily succeed in life, especially after death, to ensure continuity in society. Four succession determinants in traditional societies are used in this study as follows:

1. Burial responsibility for a dead man
2. Responsibility for paying off debts owed by the dead man
3. Receipt of money from the debtor(s) of the dead man
4. Title inheritance

Among the Igbo, a man’s successor is he who undertakes the above responsibilities to the benefit of a dead man. Interview respondents in this survey, irrespective of category, revealed a laid down order of responsibility for the burial of an Edda man: sons (especially first son) and maternal kins. However, the involvement of maternal kins is in an auxiliary capacity. The primary responsibility is shouldered by a man’s first son, assisted by his brothers.

In the same vein, a man’s creditors are reimbursed by his first son, with other sons assisting him. In the event of the man having no son, it is also revealed that his brothers or his maternal kins (*Ikwu nne*) take full charge. Correspondingly, it is the unshared responsibility of sons to receive monies from the debtors of their late father. Sometimes maternal relations or paternal

relations intervene on how the monies are shared among sons in order to guarantee amicability and keep quarrel at bay. On title inheritance, the interviewees were at one among themselves in declaring that sons inherit titles of their fathers. It was also revealed that title can be inherited by the elderly person of the compound.

FGD data on the issue of succession are not markedly different from the interview data.

On the person who bears primary responsibility for burying the dead, the discussants said it is the sons, who may be assisted by the maternal relations especially if the children are young and dependent. Sons also settle the creditors of their fathers and receive monies from their fathers' debtors. In the above activities by sons, they receive the assistance and co-operation of maternal and paternal kins. For instance, maternal or paternal kins do receive money from debtors on behalf of sons, if they are minors. On title inheritance, the discussants said that titles are not inherited in Edda. In elaboration, they distinguished three types of title: *Compound-based titles*, *Community-based titles* and *Personal titles*.

According to them, compound-based titles and community-based titles are not inherited in Edda. Upon the death of such a holder, the title goes back to the compound /community and it will be in the custody of the head until the next heir is determined by the compound or community. But if the title is hereditary, the first son of the man may inherit it. They emphasized that hereditary titles are rare in Edda, noting that achievement of an inheritor is of important consideration.

Going by the above discoveries in Edda inheritance practice, it is summed that the community is patrilineal on inheritance matters as a descent system determinant. This is because of the dominance of sons in such issues. Sons dominate in the burial of their fathers; in settling creditors, and in receiving monies from his debtors. Maternal relations only play auxiliary, not primary, roles on such matters, especially if the children of the deceased man are still dependent.

On title inheritance, the dominance of compound and community heads is still a patrilineal feature as it is male-oriented. The reverse of all these is the case in matrilineal communities which are female (mother)-oriented. In the Ashanti kingdom of central Ghana, a matrilineal society for example, "a king traditionally passes his title and status on to his sister's son. A king's biological son does not inherit the kingship because he is not a member of the ruling matrilineal family group" Wikipedia (2006). Matrilineal ties. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wikimatrilin.453754>.

5. Family Authority: Authority is power that is recognized by the law or custom of a society or group. Family, as a social institution, recognizes someone to be in charge and to exercise authority on behalf of others. Usually, in a patrilineal society, it is the man (husband) that exercises authority on behalf of others while it is the woman (wife) that does so in a matrilineal society. This is to say that while patrilineal societies are patriarchal, matrilineal societies are matriarchal. Interview data of this study speak eloquently that:

1. The husband (father), not the wife (mother), is the head of family in Edda.
2. Man, not woman, is the head of a village.

3. Man, not woman, is the head of a community.
4. Man, not woman, is the head of Edda clan.

The above findings, without exception, are replicated by the focus group discussion (FGD) findings. To show the extent of rejection of matriarchy in Edda is the vehement expression of a female discussant in Amangwu community:

Chineke ekwe tukwa nwamii iwu ishi ezin'ulo (God forbid a woman as the head of the family in this our community).

Also emphasizing the fact of a man being the head of Edda clan, a male discussant in Nguzu community said in English

the man you are looking at on that throne is the man in question while pointing at the Traditional Ruler on his seat. "When he passes on to be with our ancestors, this community will choose another man whose family will rule over the entire Edda on the same seat".

Given the above, we conclude that patriarchy reigns in Edda and that Edda clan is patrilineal on family authority as a descent system determinant. Matriarchal societies are uncommon in societies. Due to obvious disparity in physical energy between men and women to the disadvantage of women, matriarchy as a rarity, not only in Nigeria but elsewhere. Kottak (2004:544) holds that "for the last century...scholars have searched both human history and the continents to find a matriarchy... Most have concluded that a genuine matriarchy does not exist, perhaps may never have existed".

Future of Descent System in Edda

Finally in this survey, an endeavour was made to find out the descent system Edda is likely to operate in the future. The last item of the interview instrument poses the question, "all things considered, which descent system do you think will reign in Edda in future? Focus group discussion instrument, on the other hand, asks which descent system do you think Edda is likely to operate in the future?"

Table 1 below summaries the data collected with the two instruments from the four communities covered by this study.

Table 1: The Future of Descent System in Edda

Descent system	No of Results in favour (communities)
Matriliny	1
Patriliney	6
Double descent	1
Total	8

Field survey data from the 4 Edda Communities studies in 2022.

The table portrays patriliney as the descent system that will prevail in Edda in future according to the survey subjects. This, according to them, is hinged on a few considerations one of which is the contemporary emphasis on the nuclear family which isolates father, mother, and their children, thus making the influence of the man more impactful and noticeable as he concentrates on his immediate family. Again, according to them, individualism that characterizes modern society has made children to lean more on their father than on their maternal uncles. In fact, the full interpretation of the table is that Edda relinquished matriliney long ago, is peripherally double descent, about to become full patriliney.

Major Findings of the Survey

It is time to see how the five descent traits or determinants used in this study have fared so as to determine the state of descent system in contemporary Edda

Table 2 below shows Summary of the Findings

Serial No	Descent trait	Descent status
1	Community membership	Patriliney
2	Inheritance	Double descent
3	Residence	Patriliney
4	Succession	Patriliney
5	Family authority	Patriliney

Table 2 shows that inheritance is the only descent trait used in this study that has a double descent status because the beneficiaries of inheritance are people (relations) that come from both sides of a dead man's parentage; sons, brothers, maternal relations, and sister's sons. All the other four descent traits (community membership, residence, succession, and family authority) have patrilineal status, meaning that all the issues pertinent to them are handled patrilineally through sons, brothers and kinsmen.

Despite the dominance of patrilineal status in this survey as discovered and recorded on table 2, the presence of one double descent status in the case of inheritance forbids the conclusion that Edda is a patrilineal clan at the moment. In other words, due to the fact that all the descent system traits of this investigation have not come out with a clean slate "patrilineal" result, the final pronouncement (finding) is that Edda is a double descent clan.

Side by side with the above is another finding that patriliney is the descent system that Edda is likely to operate in the future due, among other reasons, to contemporary emphasis on the nuclear family and the associated individualism.

Summary and Conclusion

This ethnographic study has employed five descent traits or indicators to enquire into the status of descent system of contemporary Edda clan in Afikpo South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The descent traits are community membership, inheritance, residence, succession, and family authority. Community membership was found to be predominantly patrilineal, residence is patrilocal, succession is patrilineal as paternal kins decides on succession to certain statuses and social positions, family authority is patrilineal, because patriarchy is the dominant authority pattern in families and community groups in Edda, while

only one variable, inheritance has “double descent” rating, which is both fathers and mothers’ side. Future descent system in Edda which can also apply to some of the societies earlier attributed in literature as matrilineal shows that patriliney is likely to dominate. Based on the above, the researchers conclude that Edda is 80% patrilineal and 20% matrilineal. The study, therefore, moves away from the findings of Otterberg (1968) by revealing the extent of the patrilineal practice and the extent of the matrilineal practice in Edda and goes further to predict that patriliney will completely take over Edda and similar societies like Ohafia, Abam, Abiriba, Yakkur in future given the findings of this study.

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