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Esanland, Edo State, Nigeria: An Ethnographic Study of the Origin of the Tribe and Tribal

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ABSTRACT This study re-examines the origin of the Esan tribe and tribal. It was informed by the observed problem of submersion preponderant in Edoid ethnographic studies. The mono-causal Benin hypothesis of Esan origin propagated in leading ethnographies on the Edo speaking peoples is ahistorical. It traced Esan tribal origin to the 15th century. Using the historical research methodology and the case study research design, this study debunked the “Esan fua” and other Benincentric traditions of Esan origin as distortions. The study explored linguistic and archaeological evidence to demonstrate that Esan autochthonous origin predates 1400 C.E. Linguistic study shows that the Esan language was arguably separated from the Kwa language group of the Western Sudanic language before Bini. The archaeological study of Esan moats proved that they were constructed by Esan people long before the 15th century. It concludes that tribal protectionism is critical to preserving mini tribes in Nigeria, and curbing ethnographical distortions.