

Indigenous Historiography and Clan Authority in Izzi (Izhi) Abakaliki, Nigeria: An Analytic Auto ethnographic Study

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ABSTRACT

Memory remains a central medium through which many African communities construct and transmit history, not as a static record of the past but as a living practice that shapes identity, regulates belonging, and authorizes claims about land, kinship, and moral order. In Izzi communities of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, history emerges through the interaction of memory, clan authority, and oral performance. This article examines how memory becomes history in Izzi social life, how clan institutions authorize and contest historical narratives, how insider positionality shapes interpretation and ethical responsibility, and how contemporary pressures such as schooling, migration, Christianity, and digital circulation reshape transmission. Methodologically, the study integrates analytic auto ethnography with oral history interviews, conversational elicitation, and observation in funerals, meetings, naming rights, and dispute contexts. Fieldwork was conducted in Ebonyi State across study centres in Abakaliki LGA, Ebonyi LGA, and Izzi LGA over 30 days, scheduled three days per week, and engaged 80 participants (50 male and 30 female) aged 50 to 90 years. Findings show that historical credibility in Izzi contexts is produced relationally through who speaks, where speech occurs, which genres are permitted, and how correction is exercised. Genealogies and land narratives operate as instruments of social governance, while ritual speech and proverbs transmit moral history. The article argues that analytic auto ethnography, when paired with triangulation and ethical restraint, provides a rigorous approach for studying indigenous historical systems while clarifying how clan authority functions as an epistemic structure of history.

Keywords: Izzi, Izhi, Abakaliki, clan authority, oral tradition, African historiography, Ebonyi State



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INTRODUCTION

In Izzi communities of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, history is not preserved only as a record of past events but is continually produced through the interaction of memory, clan authority, and lived social practice. While Izzi oral

tradition is often described as a remnant of the past, in everyday life it functions as a present tense system of remembering through which people locate themselves within lineage, land, and moral order. Memory is carried

through genealogical recitations, land boundary narratives, proverbs, ritual speech, dispute accounts, and songs that circulate in households, clan meetings, funerals, and seasonal gatherings. In these settings, oral tradition does not operate as decorative culture or informal storytelling. It serves as a disciplined medium through which historical knowledge is authorized, contested, and transmitted across generations.

This article understands oral tradition as one dimension of a broader historical ecology in which clan institutions organize memory and give it social force. Belonging is established through remembered genealogy, legitimacy is negotiated through land narratives, and moral norms are reinforced through ritual speech and proverb. In this sense, Izzi history is not simply remembered but governed. Credibility emerges through recognized custodians, public performance, and communal evaluation, including the authority of elders and lineage representatives to affirm, correct, or restrain narrative claims. These processes enable historical knowledge to remain sufficiently stable to regulate social life while remaining adaptable to new pressures such as migration, schooling, religious change, and digital circulation. Approaching history in this way aligns with African historiographical perspectives that emphasize indigenous modes of knowledge production and challenge the assumption that written archives are the sole measure of historical validity (Finnegan, 2012; Vansina, 1985).

The study is grounded in analytic auto ethnography, a methodological approach that is especially suited to examining clan-based systems of memory and authority from within. Analytic auto ethnography combines insider positionality with systematic analysis and sustained engagement with theory, allowing personal memory to be examined as a product of collective frameworks rather than as self-sufficient evidence (Anderson, 2006). In Izzi contexts, access to history is shaped by kinship obligations, social trust, and ethical restraint. Analytic auto ethnography therefore enables the researcher to reflect critically on how personal experience is formed, authorized, and sometimes corrected within communal processes of remembering, while also subjecting that experience to triangulation through conversations, observation, and comparison across narrative settings (Ellis et al., 2011).

The article has three interrelated aims. First, it situates Izzi history within interdisciplinary debates on memory, oral tradition, and African historiography, with particular attention to the role of clan authority in shaping what counts as historical knowledge. Second, it examines how memory becomes history in everyday Izzi social life through regulated oral genres such as genealogy, land narratives, ritual speech, and contested origin accounts. Third, it demonstrates the possibilities and limits of analytic auto ethnography as a rigorous and ethically attentive method for studying indigenous historical systems where the researcher is personally implicated.

The article does not seek to provide a comprehensive ethnography of Izzi society, nor does it attempt to resolve competing historical claims. Rather, it focuses on showing how history is lived, governed, and made meaningful through the dynamic relationship between memory, clan, and oral tradition in Ebonyi State.

Study setting and historical cultural background: Izzi Nnodo clan in Ebonyi State

This study is situated in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, with fieldwork conducted through study centres in Abakaliki LGA, Ebonyi LGA, and Izzi LGA. The wider analytical focus remains on Izzi people and, within Izzi, the Nnodo clan whose cultural centre at Amegu is widely treated as a major symbolic site for communal w, expressed through lineage, land memory, and regulated storytelling. Locating the research across the three local government areas strengthened comparative access to narrative settings while keeping the study grounded in the Abakaliki region of Ebonyi State. Scholarly writing on Abakaliki communities has repeatedly shown that oral narratives are not merely entertainment. They function as social evidence in boundary claims, in conflict histories, and in the moral maintenance of community life (Amiara, 2019; Ani, 2024; Nwangele, 2024).



Figure 1: Map of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, where Izzi LGA is located

The Nnodo focus matters for method because clan history is not told in a neutral vacuum. It is told within a moral order in which elders, lineage custodians, and ritual authorities regulate what can be narrated, by whom, and in what setting. In analytic terms, Izzi Nnodo oral tradition can be approached as a living archive whose credibility is

produced through internal correction, public performance, and the social costs of false speech (Portelli, 1991; Vansina, 1985). This article therefore treats history not primarily as a single settled origin account but as a community practice of historical reasoning. Competing versions, silences, and careful omissions are interpreted as part of that reasoning system rather than as simple research problems.

Historical consciousness, migration accounts, and boundary memory

Across the Abakaliki area, collective identity is often narrated through migration accounts and settlement memories that connect kinship to land and land to legitimacy. A local historical analysis of migration wars in Abakaliki describes how intergroup movement, land disputes, and boundary crises have shaped relations among neighboring groups, including Izzi, Ikwo, and Ezza, and how these histories continue to surface in modern conflicts and displacement (Amiara, 2019). Such scholarship is valuable not because it settles every original claim, but because it shows the historical pressures that make oral tradition socially consequential. When history is attached to land, the story becomes a moral claim, and that claim can be contested. For Izzi Nnodo, the ancestral homeland is frequently narrated as Amegu, and this site also appears in recent civic and public culture reporting, including the existence of the Izzi Nnodo cultural center (Vanguard, 2017). The point for this paper is not to treat newspaper mentions as primary proof of deep history. The point is that a recognized cultural center signals the continuing public relevance of clan identity, and it provides concrete settings in which oral tradition is performed and corrected. Nnodo history is carried not only through spoken accounts but also through rhythms of return, especially during major communal festivals.

Language and dialect as carriers of Izzi historical meaning

Izzi is both a people and a language variety within the wider Igbo linguistic world. Linguistic work that explicitly studies the Izzi dialect describes its sound system and provides evidence of distinct features that shape how speech is produced and perceived, especially in contact with English and Standard Igbo (Awa & Ugwu Nwani-Grace, 2018). Such work supports a central claim of this article: oral tradition is not detachable from language form. Meaning is carried through tone, phonological patterning, and proverb structure. When language shifts under schooling and migration, the tradition does not simply lose words. It can lose the rhetorical force by which authority is recognized. For scholarly clarity, this study uses Izzi terms sparingly but deliberately, keeping them in their local form and then glossing them in

context. The aim is to preserve semantic density while remaining accessible to an international reader. Examples include local soil categories used in agricultural memory, such as agbirigba for laterite, utso for clay, ofutu for a clay laterite mix, and uda for swampy clay soil (Imakwu, 2015, as cited in the Okezie and Musetta, 2025). These terms are not decorative. They show how environmental knowledge is embedded in speech and how land is conceptualized in everyday life (Okezie & Musetta, 2025). A parallel example is the pottery term *ura*, used for the clay that is central to indigenous pottery production in Izzi communities. The use of *ura* illustrates how language holds together ecology, labor, gendered skill, and cultural identity (Okezie, 2024). When the word is retained, it carries the material world of Izzi women potters into the academic text.

Culture as a social system of remembrance

Izzi culture is often most visible at moments of gathering: funerals, naming rites, dispute forums, and seasonal festivals. These events are not simply occasions. They are institutional spaces where history is rehearsed and checked. Oral tradition in such contexts includes genealogy recitation, origin narratives, land boundary accounts, proverbs, ritual speech, and songs. In analytic terms, culture here functions as an infrastructure of memory. A vivid example appears in yam centered cultural practice and its moral regulation. A detailed cultural ecological account of yam production among Izzi describes rules that treat yam as more than food. It is a status symbol and a moral object. It is taboo to eat new yam before elders declare it fit for consumption, and the prohibition is enforced by community discipline rather than private preference (Okezie & Musetta, 2025). In this kind of setting, memory is not an individual act. It is a communal rule system.

The same source provides concrete detail about the Ojiji festival as a key communal site of unity and ancestral return. The festival is associated with rites at the *enya ojiji* shrine located at Anmegu, called Nteogogu, and the elders involved include titled custodians referred to as Ndiuke and Ishiuke (Okezie & Musetta, 2025). The narrative adds that the festival is often timed after the new moon is sighted and that market rhythms such as *lboko* day structure the public announcement of communal readiness. The significance of this paper is methodological. Such details demonstrate that the festival is a regulated memory system with recognized sites, actors, and temporal markers. Food practice also carries memory. The same account names fermented cassava as *utara*, and it describes pounded yam served with benniseed sauce that is locally called *essence*, alongside palm wine, communal visitation, and public dance performance such as *okweregede* war dance (Okezie & Musetta, 2025). These are not merely colorful details. They show how history is embodied in tastes,

sequences, and the material organization of celebration.

Religion, theology, and moral tension in contemporary Izzi life

Religious life in Izzi settings is layered. Indigenous religious categories and Christian commitments often coexist in dynamic tension. A peer-reviewed study on totems and taboos among Izzi people identifies Ojji and Otutara as central ritual realities and describes how they are perceived as challenges for some contemporary Christians in Izzi land (Ogbonna & Michael, 2023). Whether one adopts the authors' theological framing or not, the work is important for showing that indigenous religious categories remain socially relevant, and that Christianity does not simply erase them. It often reframes them. For this article, theology is approached as lived moral reasoning. Otutara is glossed in that study as ancestral anamnesis, a communal remembrance of the dead, and the debate about it demonstrates how memory practices are interpreted through different religious lenses (Ogbonna & Michael, 2023). This matters for an autoethnographic account because an insider researcher inevitably inhabits these interpretive fields. When a narrator chooses to call Otutara remembrance rather than veneration, the choice is not only semantic. It signals a moral location within contemporary Izzi theological debates. Christianity also intersects with kinship ethics. Research on maternal experiences in Izzi clan contexts highlights the social value attached to male children for lineage continuity and community representation and shows that African cultural norms and Christian perspectives jointly shape family expectations and trauma narratives (Nwube, 2024). This scholarship supports a central theme of the present article: clan history, gendered expectation, and religious interpretation are not separate topics. They shape how memory is narrated, whose stories are told, and what is regarded as shameful or honorable.

Philosophy and cosmology in Izzi oral tradition

A philosophical reading of Izzi oral tradition begins with its relational understanding of personhood. Clan membership is not only social identity. It is moral ontology. A person is someone in relation to ancestors, land, kin, and communal obligation. This relationality is visible in the way genealogies function as public truth claims rather than private family records. It is also visible in the way land is narrated. Land is not simply property. It is a remembered moral space, with boundaries linked to covenants like agreements, sacrifices, and the authority of elders to declare what is legitimate. Cosmology appears in the way the world is experienced as morally inhabited. In the yam festival account, for example, an earth goddess is named Ali, and ritual purity rules govern the elders who approach the shrine, including restrictions

on what may be eaten or drunk (Okezie & Musetta, 2025). In a Western academic frame, one might reduce such detail to belief. In an Indigenous epistemic frame, it is more accurately understood as a moral ecology: land, harvest, ritual discipline, and communal wellbeing are tied together. The methodological implication is that some knowledge is restricted not because it is secretive in a trivial sense, but because speech about sacred sites and rites is understood to carry moral consequences. Izzi cosmology also appears in everyday constraints. When a community regulates who may harvest yam first, who may speak in dispute settings, and how the dead are remembered, it is enacting a cosmology of ordered life. This is why the present paper treats oral tradition not merely as text to be collected but as a moral system to be respected, especially in a publication that will circulate beyond the community.

Anthropological notes: authority, gender, and transmission

Authority in Izzi oral tradition is structured and gendered. Not every voice has equal right to narrate a genealogy or to correct an original narrative. Authority is often tied to age, title, ritual role, and lineage responsibility (Table 1). At the same time, scholars of Igbo gender systems have long argued that women's authority can be overlooked when analysts focus only on patrilineal public structures (Achebe, 2011; Amadiume, 1987). For Izzi Nnodo, the implication is clear. A serious account must listen to women's memory work, which may be carried out in domestic narration, food ritual, naming interpretations, market networks, and song. If the study only interviews lineage custodians, it risks turning clan history into a male-only archive. Material culture provides one path to gendered knowledge. The pottery study of Izzi craft notes that women predominantly practice pottery, and it describes pottery as both utilitarian and ceremonial, a medium that holds symbolism, storytelling, and social value (Okezie, 2024). From an anthropological perspective, pottery is not only an object. It is a way memory moves through the hands, through apprenticeship, and through the household. The threat to the craft posed by plastics and modern wares becomes, therefore, a threat to a memory pathway, not only to an economy. Transmission pathways today are under pressure. Historical conflict dynamics across Ebonyi communities and inter-communal wars affect displacement and can fracture the social settings where oral tradition is corrected (Ani, 2024; Nwangele, 2024). Education and migration shift language registers and reduce time with elders. Christianity can reshape ritual calendars. Digital media can circulate narratives outside their regulated contexts. These pressures do not necessarily produce loss only. They can also produce new forms of narration, including diaspora return stories, online cultural promotion, and new genres of public

Table 1: Key Izzi terms used in this article and how they function as evidence.

Some Izzi terms	Working gloss	Why it matters for analysis
<i>agbirigba</i>	laterite soil	shows ecological classification embedded in language
<i>utso</i>	Clay	connects land knowledge to farming and craft
<i>ofutu</i>	clay plus laterite	expresses local environmental reasoning
<i>Uda</i>	swampy clay soil	ties settlement memory to river basin ecology
<i>Ura</i>	clay used for pottery	preserves craft knowledge and gendered labor memory
<i>Ojiji</i>	New yam festival complex	major site where history, unity, and moral order are performed
<i>enya ojiji</i>	<i>Ojiji</i> shrine site	shows that memory is attached to place and ritual authority
<i>Ntegogu</i>	shrine location at <i>Anmegu</i>	locates sacred geography in oral tradition
<i>Ndiuke and Ishiuke</i>	elder custodians	identifies recognized sites of narrative correction
<i>utara</i>	fermented cassava	shows embodied memory through food practice
<i>Ali</i>	earth goddess	signals cosmology of land, harvest, and wellbeing

Sources: Okezie and Musetta (2025); Ogbonna and Michael (2023); and Okezie (2024).

history. But they do change the conditions under which a story is considered authoritative.

Rationale and Scholarly Stakes

A major scholarly risk is to treat oral tradition as folklore, meaning as a cultural artefact valuable for identity but unreliable for history. That framing, common in older approaches, can unintentionally reproduce a hierarchy in which written archives count as history while oral narratives count as culture. African historiography has long challenged this hierarchy by showing that oral tradition has methods, conventions, and internal checks that can support historical reconstruction when used carefully (Vansina, 1985). Oral historians also argue that the value of oral narratives is not limited to factual detail. They also reveal meaning, moral imagination, and social tensions that may be absent from official documents (Portelli, 1991). Reducing Izzi oral tradition to folklore carries at least three consequences. First, it can flatten living traditions into decorative material, ignoring how they function as governance of belonging and responsibility. Second, it can obscure the epistemic authority that communities themselves assign to certain genres and custodians. Third, it can accelerate erosion by implying that oral accounts are disposable once modern schooling or digital media becomes dominant. Memory studies suggest that when the social frameworks of memory weaken, what is lost is not only information but also the communal practices that sustain identity and continuity (Halbwachs, 1992; Connerton, 1989).

This is where insider scholarship matters. An insider does not automatically produce better scholarship, but insider positionality can enable access to restricted contexts, fine-grained understanding of genre and meaning, and sensitivity to ethical boundaries. At the same time, insider work requires careful reflexivity because proximity can shape what is seen, what is assumed, and what is withheld (Anderson, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). Analytic auto ethnography is particularly suited to this tension because it demands systematic analysis of

self within social worlds, rather than offering only personal testimony. It keeps the researcher visible as a participant, while also requiring transparent engagement with theory, method, and evidence (Anderson, 2006). Auto ethnography is sometimes misunderstood as writing that is merely evocative or confessional. This article follows analytic auto ethnography in which the self is a site of data and interpretation, but the aim remains scholarly explanation of cultural processes (Anderson, 2006). In practical terms, my own memory work is treated as one stream of evidence, placed in conversation with oral history style engagements with elders, lineage custodians, women knowledge holders, and other senior participants across the study centers, alongside observation of narrative settings where correction and contestation occur. This approach allows the article to describe not only what Izzi people say about the past, but how the community produces credibility through recognized authority, performance contexts, and social regulation.

Scope and Delimitations

This article examines specific forms of Izzi oral tradition as historical memory practices: genealogy, origin narratives, land histories, proverbs, ritual speech, dispute narratives, and songs. These genres were selected because they recur in public and semi-public contexts, and because they carry explicit claims about identity, belonging, authority, and moral order (Table 2). The focus is not on collecting a large catalogue of tales; it is on understanding how clan memory becomes history through oral practice, and how truth claims are authorized, corrected, and contested. There are also clear exclusions. First, the article does not attempt a comprehensive ethnography of Izzi society. Such a project would require wider coverage of political economy, religion, social change, and everyday life beyond the oral tradition focus. Second, the article does not claim to produce definitive clan history. Clan narratives may carry deep authority, yet they may also be plural, contested, and context dependent.

Table 2: Conceptual Map of Memory, Clan, and History in Izzi Oral Tradition.

Analytical Level	Core Function	Description
Memory	Source of historical knowledge	Individually remembered and collectively shaped experiences that draw on genealogy, place, ritual, and shared pasts
Oral Performance	Mode of transmission	Public and semi-public narration through storytelling, ritual speech, proverbs, songs, and dispute narratives
Clan Authority	Regulating structure	Recognition of who may speak, when, and with what legitimacy, including processes of correction and restraint
Historical Claims Identity Practice	Outcomes of narration Social effect	Authorized accounts of origin, land, kinship, and moral order that function as history Formation of belonging, legitimacy, responsibility, and moral orientation within the community

Third, the article does not adjudicate contested political claims about land or precedence. Where contested narratives appear, they are treated as data for analyzing how communities manage disagreement, not as material for taking sides. This boundary is not only methodological but ethical, because publishing sensitive claims can intensify intra communal tension.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

Statement of the Problem

The central problem addressed by this article is the tension between oral tradition as lived historical truth in community contexts and the academic demand for verification grounded in written archival norms. In many scholarly settings, the word verification implies documentary corroboration, stable chronology, and consistent narrators. Oral traditions often do not present themselves in that form. They may be episodic rather than chronological, performative rather than documentary, and plural rather than singular. Yet this does not mean they are formless or careless. Oral tradition can be socially disciplined through recognized custodians, conventional genres, and audience-based correction, even when multiple versions exist (Finnegan, 2012; Vansina, 1985). Oral history scholarship similarly argues that contradiction should not automatically be treated as error. Contradiction can reveal contested identity, unequal power, or the coexistence of different Interpretive needs within a community (Portelli, 1991). In Izzi contexts, oral tradition is experienced as truth not simply because it is old, but because it is embedded in social relationships and clan authority structures that organize belonging. This produces a scholarly dilemma. If one dismisses oral accounts because they are not written, one risks reproducing archival bias and missing how history actually operates in the community. If one accepts oral accounts uncritically, one risks romanticizing tradition, misrepresenting internal debates, or publishing material that should remain bounded by community ethics.

A second dimension of the problem is the risk of erosion. Generational change, formal education, migration, religious shifts, and digital media have

reshaped how young people encounter the past and how elders transmit it. Memory studies warn that when the social frameworks that sustain remembrance weaken, communities may lose both content and the practices that make content meaningful (Halbwachs, 1992; Connerton, 1989). Digital media can preserve fragments, but fragments without context can also distort. The speed of circulation can detach narratives from their custodians and from the settings where correction normally occurs. A third dimension is the scholarly gap. There is limited Izzi focused, insider led, methodologically explicit analytic auto ethnography that connects clan memory, oral performance, and historical reasoning in Abakaliki. Studies of Nigerian and Igbo related oral tradition often address broader categories or neighboring identities, leaving Izzi oral dynamics comparatively under analyzed in journal-ready methodological detail. This article responds to that gap by offering a method-driven account of how authority, performance, and contestation produce historical credibility in everyday clan life, while also making researcher positionality visible and ethically accountable (Anderson, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011).

Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions:

- How does clan-based memory function as history in everyday Izzi social life in Ebonyi State?
- How are historical claims authorized, regulated, and contested within and across Izzi clans through socially recognized practices?
- How does the researcher's insider positionality shape access to memory, interpretation of historical narratives, and ethical responsibility?
- How do contemporary social changes influence the production, transmission, and interpretation of clan-based historical knowledge?

Objectives of the Study

In response to these questions, the study pursues four interrelated objectives:

- To examine how memory becomes history through clan structured practices in Izzi communities.

- ii. To analyze how clan authority establishes and regulates historical credibility through recognized custodianship and communal evaluation.
- iii. To explore the relationship between personal memory and collective memory using analytic auto ethnography, positioning the researcher as both participant and analytic site.
- iv. To develop an ethically grounded approach to studying clan-based history that balances scholarly analysis with community accountability.

Significance of the Study

Academic Significance

This study contributes to African historiography by advancing the argument that oral tradition functions not merely as a store of cultural information but as a structured system of historical reasoning. By examining how Izzi clan-based authority regulates narration through recognized custodians, public performance, and communal correction, the study clarifies how historical credibility is produced and sustained in oral societies (Finnegan, 2012; Vansina, 1985). This approach challenges archival bias in historical scholarship and affirms oral tradition as a legitimate mode of historical knowledge with its own internal logic. The study also contributes to memory studies by providing an empirically grounded account of collective memory in practice. Drawing on theories that understand memory as socially organized and institutionally mediated, the Izzi case demonstrates how remembered history is shaped by clan structures, performance contexts, and shared frameworks of authority (Halbwachs, 1992; Connerton, 1989). Rather than treating memory as individual recall, the study shows how memory operates as a communal practice that binds identity, morality, and historical consciousness.

Within oral history scholarship, the article reinforces the view that meaning, context, and social function are central to evaluating oral narratives. By treating contestation and contradiction as analytically significant rather than as indicators of unreliability, the study aligns with perspectives that see oral narratives as sites where communities negotiate identity, legitimacy, and moral order (Portelli, 1991). In doing so, it extends oral history debates by demonstrating how authority and correction operate within clan-based systems to regulate historical claims over time. The study contributes to auto ethnography by illustrating how analytic auto ethnography can function as a disciplined research strategy rather than a purely personal or evocative mode of writing. By situating the researcher as both participant and analytic site, while maintaining explicit engagement with theory and method, the study demonstrates how insider research can achieve scholarly rigor when reflexivity

and triangulation are systematically applied (Anderson, 2006).

Cultural and Community Significance

At the community level, the study supports responsible approaches to preservation. Preservation is understood here not as fixing oral tradition into a single authorized version, but as documenting living practices without undermining their adaptive character. Oral traditions remain vital because they respond to changing social contexts, and this study respects that dynamism by focusing on processes of transmission and regulation rather than on producing definitive narratives. By making visible how truth claims are socially managed, the study offers a framework for community reflection on what aspects of oral tradition may be at risk under contemporary pressures such as migration, formal education, and digital circulation. The study also contributes to intergenerational transmission by articulating the continuing relevance of oral tradition beyond nostalgia. For younger Izzi generations who may encounter fragments of tradition detached from their original settings, the analysis provides a language for understanding how oral narratives function as moral formation and communal governance. At the same time, the study models ethical restraint by recognizing that not all knowledge should be made public. The deliberate withholding of sensitive or contested materials is treated as an ethical responsibility rather than a methodological weakness, reinforcing accountability to the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this literature review is to situate this study within scholarship on oral tradition, memory, clan authority, and auto ethnography, while making clear why an Izzi focused, insider led article is still needed. Across African historiography, the question is no longer whether oral tradition can carry history, but how scholars should read oral narratives as historically meaningful without forcing them into the expectations of written archives. Nigerian and African scholars have been especially influential in defending oral sources as legitimate historical evidence and as indigenous knowledge systems, particularly where colonial documentation is incomplete, biased, or strategically silent (Dike, 1956; Falola, 2022). At the same time, scholarship on memory and narrative has shown that contradiction and variation are not necessarily failures of truth, but indicators of social meaning, political negotiation, and moral formation (Halbwachs, 1992; Portelli, 1991). These debates matter directly for Izzi oral tradition in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, where clan memory is not merely recalled but performed, corrected, authorized, and sometimes contested in socially regulated settings. This review advances one guiding conviction.

Izzi oral tradition should be approached as a living historical system governed by clan authority and communal ethics. That framing allows the study to engage international debates on oral history and memory while remaining accountable to the local realities of who may speak, who may correct, what may be disclosed, and what must remain protected.

Oral Tradition as Historical Method

Oral tradition became a central concern in African historiography because colonial scholarship often treated Africa as a space without credible history, or as a space whose past could be known only through European documentation. Nigerian historians decisively challenged that assumption. Dike's historical method modelled how oral accounts, when critically assessed and situated, could support rigorous reconstruction of economic and political history (Dike, 1956). Later historiographical reflections collected by Falola (1993), together with Tamuno's work, reinforced the view that oral sources are not supplementary decorations to archives but vital evidence for African agency and continuity (Falola, 1993; Tamuno, 2009). Their combined influence created a standard expectation within Nigerian historiography: oral evidence must be evaluated, contextualized, and compared rather than dismissed. Within the broader field of oral tradition studies, Vansina's methodological contribution remains foundational because it explains how to treat oral tradition as a source with its own transmission logic, social location, and internal checks (Vansina, 1985). Finnegan similarly shows that oral genres are structured forms shaped by performance contexts, audience expectations, and culturally recognized styles of narration (Finnegan, 2012). Okpewho extends this by clarifying that oral literature is not merely a record of the past but a sophisticated system of verbal art in which authority and meaning are enacted through performance (Okpewho, 1992). These contributions help interpret Izzi oral tradition as an organized archive of genres such as genealogy, origin narratives, land memory, ritual speech, proverbs, and songs.

The reliability debate is often framed in terms of whether oral tradition provides stable facts. Yet oral historians have argued that stability is not the only marker of value. Portelli's work is particularly important because it demonstrates that oral testimony carries meaning, interpretation, and social truth even when it diverges from documentary timelines or contains inconsistencies (Portelli, 1991). This is relevant for clan-based societies where multiple versions of an origin narrative may coexist. Such variation can reflect shifts in alliances, the moral work of belonging, or the need to manage disputes without destroying social cohesion. For Izzi contexts, the most useful reliability question is not simply what happened, but how a narrative becomes authorized, how

correction occurs, who is permitted to challenge whom, and what kinds of disagreement are socially acceptable in different forums. The methodological implication for this study is that oral tradition should be read through a combination of performance analysis and source criticism. The historian asks about the speaker's authority, the setting of performance, the genre rules, and the social consequences of narration. The account becomes more credible when the researcher traces internal consistency across narrators, attends to how elders regulate narrative boundaries, and compares versions across contexts rather than seeking a single final version.

Memory Studies and Collective Identity

Memory studies provide a conceptual language for what many oral societies practice in daily life. Halbwachs argues that memory is shaped within social frameworks, meaning that even personal recollection is formed by group categories, collective expectations, and communal narratives (Halbwachs, 1992). In clan-based societies, this helps explain why individual memories often return to shared stories of origin, migration, kinship, land, and moral lessons. Connerton develops this further by showing that societies remember through embodied practices and ritual performances, not only through spoken narratives (Connerton, 1989). Assmann's distinction between communicative memory and cultural memory helps clarify how everyday storytelling differs from more formalized memory guarded by custodians or expressed through ritual speech and repeated public narration (Assmann, 2011).

For Izzi oral tradition, these frameworks encourage a view of memory as social practice. Memory is produced in settings such as funerals, family meetings, dispute forums, and naming rights. The setting affects what is said and how it is said. A genealogy recited in a public forum is not merely information. It is an act that claims legitimacy, shapes belonging, and may settle or intensify disputes. The key insight is that history is made through regulated remembrance. People learn what counts as credible not only by listening but also by witnessing corrections. Correction is not only factual. It is ethical and political, because it involves who has the right to speak and what is appropriate to reveal. The difference between collective and individual memory matters, especially for auto ethnography.

Auto ethnography risks turning personal experience into general truth. Memory studies caution the researcher to treat personal recollection as socially shaped and morally located rather than purely private. This is why analytic auto ethnography requires disciplined movement between personal memory and collective narration, making visible how the self is formed within communal frameworks while still resisting the temptation to claim that one household's story represents the whole clan.

Clan, Kinship, and Authority in African Contexts

Scholarship on African kinship highlights that clans are not only descent groups. They function as institutions of belonging and as frameworks of authority that regulate truth, legitimacy, and historical arbitration. In many communities, clan memory shapes who may claim land rights, lineage affiliation, ritual roles, and social protection. Alagoa's work on Niger Delta traditions shows how oral history is preserved and regulated through custodians, institutions, and community expectations, and how historical narration can carry legal and moral weight (Alagoa, 1972). Afigbo's Igbo centered historiography is also crucial because it models culturally sensitive historical reasoning. He demonstrates that the historian must understand local political forms, moral logic, and social institutions to interpret oral narratives responsibly (Afigbo, 1981).

A major lesson from Nigerian historiography is that local histories matter. When scholarship remains at the level of broad ethnic categories, it can flatten the distinct ways communities organize authority, memory, and dispute settlement. This is relevant to Ebonyi and Abakaliki, where local group histories and inter group relations shape how narratives circulate and how identity is asserted. Recent scholarship on conflict and peace building in Abakaliki that uses oral historical methods indicates the continuing relevance of traditional institutions and community regulation of narratives, even when the research is not focused specifically on oral tradition as a historical archive (Ani, 2024). Gendered knowledge transmission is another key issue. Feminist scholarship in Igbo studies demonstrates that women often carry memory through forms that earlier scholarship overlooked. Amadiume's analysis of gender and authority in Igbo society challenges assumptions that power and knowledge travel only through male lineage channels (Amadiume, 1987). Achebe similarly demonstrates how women's experiences and authority can reshape historical understanding when scholars take women's narratives seriously as sources of political and social history (Achebe, 2011). For this study, the implications are methodological and ethical. If the researcher relies only on formal lineage custodians, the archive becomes gender narrowed. A more responsible approach listens to domestic memory, market linked knowledge, women's ritual speech where applicable, and women's interpretations of kinship, land, and morality. Gender is therefore not an optional theme added at the end. It shapes what is remembered, how it is narrated, and who is recognized as a legitimate historian.

Auto ethnography and Insider Research

Auto ethnography offers a particularly fitting approach for clan-based oral tradition because the researcher's identity is already embedded in the moral economy of the

community. Yet that embeddedness creates risk. Analytic auto ethnography provides one pathway for balancing insider access with scholarly accountability. Anderson defines analytic auto ethnography as an approach that retains the researcher's visible presence while committing to systematic analysis and engagement with theory rather than purely literary self-expression (Anderson, 2006). Ellis, Adams, and Bochner provide a widely used framing of auto ethnography that emphasizes narrative depth while also acknowledging the ethical challenges of writing about intimate communities (Ellis et al., 2011). The distinction between analytic and evocative approaches is important for international journal standards. Evocative writing can communicate emotional truth, but it can also blur the line between artistry and argument. Analytic auto ethnography must therefore show procedures. It clarifies what counts as data, how triangulation occurs, how reflexive memos shape interpretation, and how the researcher manages bias and obligation. For oral traditional research, analytic auto ethnography becomes more credible when paired with oral history practices such as cross-checking accounts across narrators, comparing genres, and tracing how correction and contestation operate in real settings.

Ethical challenges intensify in clan contexts. Publishing origin narratives and land memories can re-open disputes, expose sacred knowledge, or create reputational harm. The literature on insider research repeatedly warns that closeness can produce selective access and emotional investment. For the Izzi case, ethical practice requires careful anonymization where possible, cautious paraphrases rather than quotation in sensitive matters, and a clear boundary between documenting tradition and adjudicating political claims. The study's contribution is therefore not only descriptive. It models how an insider researcher can write with fidelity to community life while meeting academic expectations of transparency and critique.

Nigerian and Igbo Oral History Scholarship

Nigerian and Igbo scholarship provides a strong foundation for this article, while also revealing the gap it addresses. Dike's work, the historiographical essays collected by Falola (1993), and Tamuno's scholarship together defend oral sources as central to Nigerian historical method and to decolonizing knowledge (Dike, 1956; Falola, 1993; Tamuno, 2009). Falola builds on this by framing oral traditions as indigenous knowledge systems that preserve intellectual history and moral reasoning, not only political events (Falola, 2022). Within Igbo scholarship, Afigbo's work remains exemplary for understanding how local institutions shape historical narration and social identity (Afigbo, 1981). Okpewho provides a continental perspective on oral genres that strengthens interpretive attention to performance and

Table 3: Literature matrix of key studies: Comparison with Selected Recent Studies (2023-2026).

Study	Method	Key contribution	Difference from current study
Manyane (2024)	Conceptual/historiographical analysis	Revisits the oral tradition/history debate in Africa	Does not focus on Izzi, clan authority, or insider method
Kim et al. (2024)	Community oral history stewardship study	Shows the importance of shared authority and custodial practice	Not clan-based and not focused on indigenous historiography in Nigeria
Lange & Teer-Tomaselli (2024)	Visual community auto ethnography	Demonstrates auto ethnography as heritage method in South Africa	Uses a different heritage setting and not oral historiography in Izzi
Magoqwana & Maseko (2023)	Interpretive/social-historical analysis	Foregrounds maternally transmitted knowledge and women's intellectual legacies	Not focused on clan authority or oral-history validation
Current study	Analytic auto ethnography + oral history	Explains clan authority as an epistemic structure of history in Izzi	Combines insider method, oral performance, and ethical restraint

Table 3: Contd.

Author and year	Context and material	Method and focus	Key contribution	Main limitations for this study	Relevance to Izzi article
Dike, 1956	Niger Delta history, Nigeria	Historical synthesis using oral and documentary sources	Defends African agency and legitimacy of indigenous sources	Not focused on micro level clan arbitration	Establishes Nigerian historiographical precedent
Falola, 1993	African historiography debates	Historiographical essays and method reflection	Positions oral tradition within African historical reasoning	Broad scale, not community specific	Supports framing oral tradition as scholarly history
Tamuno, 2009	Nigerian historiography	Method and national historical writing	Strengthens Nigerian tradition of rigorous historical method	Limited guidance on clan ethics of disclosure	Supports oral source legitimacy in Nigerian scholarship
Afigbo, 1981	Igbo history and culture	Cultural historical interpretation	Models context sensitive interpretation of Igbo institutions	Not Izzi centered	Anchors Igbo contextual approach to authority and memory
Alagoa, 1972	Niger Delta oral tradition	Oral tradition as historical reconstruction	Shows custodianship and institutional regulation of oral history	Different region	Offers comparative lens for clan governed archives
Okpewho, 1992	Africa wide oral literature	Genre, performance, interpretation	Clarifies oral genres as structured, literary, and socially regulated	Broad, not clan specific	Supports performance analysis of Izzi genres
Amadiume, 1987	Igbo gender and authority	Ethnographic and historical analysis	Reveals gendered authority and overlooked knowledge channels	Not Ebonyi specific	Guides gender inclusive sampling and interpretation
Achebe, 2011	Igbo women and political history	Oral history and biography	Demonstrates women's narratives as historical evidence	Not Izzi specific	Strengthens inclusion of women's memory as history
Ani, 2024	Abakaliki, Ebonyi	Oral history and qualitative methods	Shows relevance of traditional institutions in local conflict histories	Not focused on oral tradition genres	Supports Abakaliki context and need for deeper oral archive study
Mbam, 2024	Izzi, Ebonyi	Historical study of social practice change	Shows Izzi scholarship is emerging in local journals	Not focused on clan memory as history	Indicates a developing research base that this paper extends

verbal artistry (Okpewho, 1992). Amadiume and Achebe show why gender must be integrated into historical method if the archive is to represent community life more fully (Amadiume, 1987; Achebe, 2011). Alagoa demonstrates how oral tradition can be read historically through the lens of custodianship, institutional regulation, and social function (Alagoa, 1972). Izzi-specific scholarly coverage remains limited in international visibility. Some recent studies mention the Izzi in relation to conflict, peacebuilding, oath taking, or social change, showing that the community is present in scholarship but often not centered as a site of oral historical analysis (Ani, 2024; Mbam, 2024). This is where the need for further paper becomes clear. The literature supports oral tradition as

history, but few studies provide a transparent method, insiders account of how Izzi clan memory authorizes truth through performance, correction, and ethical restraint. An Izzi focused article can therefore refine broader debates by offering a grounded case of how clan authority functions as an epistemic structure, how gender shapes the oral archive, and how modern pressures such as schooling, Christianity, migration, and digital circulation reshape both transmission and meaning. The scholarship provides tools and precedents, but the Izzi archive still needs a dedicated, carefully governed, analytically written account that meets international standards while remaining faithful to community realities. This is the space this study occupies.

Recent scholarship also helps position this study within wider 2023-2026 debates. Manyane (2024) revisits the oral tradition/history debate in Africa and argues that oral traditions remain indispensable to historical reasoning. Kim, Roeschley, and Byun (2024) show that community oral history requires explicit stewardship structures, shared authority, and clear custodial practices. Lange and Teer-Tomaselli (2024) demonstrate how community auto ethnography can operate as heritage method in South Africa, while Magoqwana and Maseko (2023) foreground maternally transmitted knowledge as historically consequential rather than merely domestic or anecdotal. Together, these studies strengthen the present article's argument that oral archives are governed, relational, and methodologically explicit rather than informal recollection (Table 3).

Synthesis and Identified Gap

Across scholarship on African oral tradition and oral history, a broad consensus has emerged that oral narratives can function as historical knowledge when they are approached with disciplined interpretation, attention to context, and careful source criticism (Finnegan, 2012; Vansina, 1985). Scholars generally agree that oral accounts are not free-floating recollections. They are socially regulated genres shaped by performance settings, audience expectations, and recognized custodians of memory (Okpewho, 1992). Nigerian historiography has been especially important in establishing that oral evidence is central to historical reconstruction where written archives are partial, colonial, or strategically silent (Dike, 1956; Falola, 2022). This consensus strengthens the case for reading Izzi clan narratives in Abakaliki as historically serious forms of knowledge rather than as folklore.

A second area of convergence is the recognition that memory is not simply individual recall but a social practice. Collective memory frameworks emphasize how communities organize remembrance through shared categories, ritual repetition, and institutional authority (Assmann, 2011; Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992). This makes clan context particularly significant, because the clan often functions as a practical institution of truth making. It authorizes speakers, corrects narratives, and assigns moral consequences to particular ways of remembering. In other words, clan memory is a social mechanism for producing historical claims, not only a store of stories. Alongside these agreements, key debates remain. The first debate concerns reliability. Some frameworks evaluate reliability primarily through stability, agreement among narrators, and alignment with external evidence. Other approaches argue that variation and contradiction are historically meaningful because they reveal social negotiation, moral imagination, and contested identity (Portelli, 1991). For clan narratives, this debate is especially sharp. A single origin account is

often less important than the social processes that permit multiple versions to coexist without collapsing communal life.

A second debate concerns performance and power. Scholars differ on whether oral tradition should be treated mainly as evidence for past events or as a present-oriented practice that legitimates authority in the here and now. This debate matters in Abakaliki because genealogies, land narratives, and ritual speech often carry immediate social consequences. The narrative is not only about what happened. It is also about who belongs, who speaks for the clan, and which relationships must be preserved. A third debate concerns the ethics of disclosure. International scholarship increasingly recognizes that publishing community history can generate harm, particularly when narratives involve land claims, ritual restrictions, or intra-community disagreements. Insider research intensifies this challenge because the researcher is morally entangled in the same networks of belonging and obligation that the research seeks to analyze (Anderson, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). The question becomes how to produce knowledge without violating sacred boundaries or inflaming conflict. These debates expose the specific gaps that this article addresses. First, Izzi focused scholarship on oral tradition as a structured historical system remains limited in international visibility. The Izzi are often referenced within broader regional categories or within studies where oral tradition is not the analytic center. Second, there is a methodological gap. Few studies combine analytic auto ethnography with oral history validation in a way that is transparent about how narratives are authorized, corrected, and contested within clan life. Third, gendered pathways of knowledge transmission are still underrepresented, even though Igbo scholarship has shown those women's narratives, ritual roles, and domestic memory practices are essential for a fuller archive (Achebe, 2011; Amadiume, 1987). Fourth, the literature needs more ethically explicit models for writing clan histories where sensitive claims must be selectively withheld. This article addresses these gaps in four ways. It offers an Izzi centered analysis of oral tradition as historical method, treating clan memory as an epistemic structure that produces truth through performance, correction, and moral accountability. It uses analytic auto ethnography not as memoir but as a disciplined method that links personal memory to collective narration through triangulation across narrators and contexts (Anderson, 2006; Vansina, 1985). It foregrounds the governance of speech by elders, lineage custodians, and women knowledge holders, thereby resisting a narrow lineage only archive (Achebe, 2011; Amadiume, 1987). It makes ethical boundaries explicit by distinguishing what can be quoted, what must be paraphrased, and what must remain undisclosed in order to protect community cohesion. In this respect, the article's stance is consistent with an ethic of care that treats vulnerability and

interdependence as moral realities, including in research practice (Igwe, 2025).

Case Studies

The case studies that follow are written as analytically framed vignettes. They are grounded in fieldnotes, memory work, and narrated accounts from community conversations, but they are presented with careful anonymization and selective paraphrase. Names, some locations, and certain ritual details are intentionally withheld. The aim is not to adjudicate contested claims but to show how clan memory becomes history through authorized speech, correction, and context.

Case 1: Genealogy and historical authority

In a family gathering held after a burial, an elder began a lineage recitation to situate the deceased within the clan's remembered chain of descent. The recitation was not offered as private recollection. It was delivered with the tone of public responsibility. Younger listeners signaled recognition through brief affirmations, while another elder listened in silence, only intervening at one point to correct the sequence of a segment. The correction was not confrontational. It was framed as safeguarding the integrity of the lineage and protecting the dignity of those named. The moment revealed a principle: genealogy carries authority because it is socially regulated. The narrative becomes history through public performance and through the recognized right of certain elders to correct. Even when the correction concerned a seemingly minor detail, the social weight was clear. Kinship is not merely recorded. It is enacted as belonging.

Case 2: Land memory and boundary narratives

In a dispute context, a boundary narrative was narrated as a remembered walk. The speaker mapped a route from an old tree to a stream bend, then to a ridge, using remembered markers and ancestral names. What stood out was that the narrative operated as moral history. It appealed to a shared memory of settlement, labor, and covenant like agreements. Another speaker responded with a different route narrative, not denying the first speaker's story, but claiming that the true boundary should be read through a different ancestral episode. Elders attempted to keep the exchange within acceptable limits, redirecting the speakers from accusation toward clarification. Here, land memory functioned as a historical claim with immediate social consequences. The debate also illustrated why contradiction is not simply error. Competing boundary accounts can coexist because the community has procedures for managing disagreement without destroying kinship bonds. This supports the view that contradictions are analytically valuable for understanding social dynamics, not merely problems to

be eliminated (Portelli, 1991).

Case 3: Ritual speech and moral memory

During a naming rite, a short ritual address was delivered in a form that blended proverb, blessing, and moral instruction. The speech invoked ancestors, affirmed communal values, and located the child within a moral history of endurance, restraint, and solidarity. The address did not provide chronological history, yet it carried historical consciousness. It narrates the kind of person the community must become if it is to remain itself. Moral memory was transmitted through compressed language and shared symbols. Women present contributed through call responses and short aphorisms that framed the rite's meaning, revealing gendered participation in memory making. In this vignette, oral tradition functioned as an archive of ethical formation, demonstrating that the past is carried not only as events but as virtues and warnings.

Case 4: A contested origin narrative

In an informal evening conversation, two versions of an original narrative emerged. One version emphasized migration and settlement. Another emphasized a prior presence and a moment of covenant with neighboring groups. Rather than collapsing into open conflict, the exchange moved toward a shared recognition that certain details could not be settled in that setting. A respected elder concluded by naming the limits of ordinary speech: some knowledge belongs to designated custodians, some belongs to ritual settings, and some belongs to careful silence. The effect was not the suppression of history but the governance of disclosure. This vignette shows how historical truth is structured by authority and by ethical boundaries. It also highlights the challenge for publication. The researcher must represent contestation without amplifying conflict and must honor restrictions on what can be made public.

METHODOLOGY

Methodological Significance

Methodologically, the study demonstrates that analytic auto ethnography can be both rigorous and ethically grounded when paired with triangulation, transparent reflexivity, and clear boundaries of disclosure (Anderson, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). In contexts where insider knowledge is essential for interpretation, analytic auto ethnography allows the researcher's memory and participation to be treated as data without collapsing analysis into personal narrative. The study further shows how oral history approaches can complement auto ethnography by locating personal memory within

collective processes of authorization, correction, and contestation (Portelli, 1991). Overall, the methodological contribution lies in offering a model for studying clan-based oral tradition that is academically credible and ethically attentive. Credibility is achieved by taking seriously the internal logic of oral tradition and subjecting historical claims to cross-checking across narrators and contexts. Ethical attentiveness is maintained by resisting extractive research practices and treating scholarly publication as a responsibility shared between academic audiences and the community whose history is being examined.

Design

This study uses an analytic autoethnographic design integrated with oral history methods. The central methodological claim is that Izzi oral tradition is best studied as a socially regulated historical system, not simply as a set of narratives. Analytic auto ethnography is therefore used to make the researcher's embeddedness

visible and accountable, while oral history methods provide procedures for corroboration, contestation analysis, and credibility assessment across narrators and contexts (Anderson, 2006; Portelli, 1991; Vansina, 1985). The integration is deliberate: auto ethnography contributes access, interpretive depth, and attention to lived experience, while oral history contributes validation practices that guard against over reliance on personal memory or singular versions of events (Vansina, 1985).

Fieldwork Profile and Data Corpus

Fieldwork was conducted in Ebonyi State across study centres in Abakaliki LGA, Ebonyi LGA, and Izzi LGA. The study engaged 80 participants, comprising 50 male and 30 female participants aged 50 to 90 years. Fieldwork lasted 30 days and was conducted three days per week. Analytical sufficiency was judged iteratively through repeated themes, correction patterns, and recurring narrative structures across participant categories and performance settings (Table 4).

Table 4: Fieldwork and Date Summary

Component	Details
Participants	80 participants: 50 male and 30 female; all were aged 50 to 90 years and were engaged as elders, lineage custodians, women knowledge holders, and other senior community participants.
Fieldwork duration	30 days of fieldwork, conducted three days per week.
Study locations	Study centres in Abakaliki LGA, Ebonyi LGA, and Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State.
Analytical saturation	Saturation was assessed iteratively as major themes, correction patterns, and narrative structures recurred across participant categories and observation settings.
Data corpus	Life-history memory work, interviews/conversations, observation fieldnotes, genealogical materials, and family/clan records where available.
Saturation/audit trail	An audit trail was maintained through reflexive memos, fieldnotes, sampling records, and iterative coding notes.

Research Design and Logic

Analytic rather than evocative auto ethnography is adopted because the primary aim is explanation of social processes. Evocative approaches often foreground literary texture and personal resonance, whereas analytic auto ethnography is explicitly oriented toward systematic analysis, theory linkage, and methodological transparency (Anderson, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). In this study, the self is not the final product but an entry point into clan memory practices. My memories and experiences are treated as data that must be interpreted within the wider social field of Izzi oral performance and clan authority. Oral history methods are integrated because oral traditions are neither random nor purely individual. They circulate within communities that regulate who speaks, what may be said, and how correction happens. Oral history scholarship emphasizes that oral accounts cannot be evaluated only by checking factual consistency. Their meaning and social function are also

part of what makes them historically valuable (Portelli, 1991). At the same time, African historiography offers clear guidance on how oral tradition can be handled as historical method through cross checking, internal consistency analysis, attention to genre, and careful reconstruction of transmission conditions (Vansina, 1985). In practical terms, the design applies three linked logics. First, it treats oral tradition as performance situated in particular settings, where audience and purpose shape what is emphasized (Finnegan, 2012). Second, it treats clan authority as an epistemic structure, meaning that credibility depends on recognized custodianship and communal regulation, not only on individual recall. Third, it treats plural versions and contradictions as analytically productive because they reveal what is at stake in memory and historical claims, and how communities manage disagreement over belonging, precedence, and land (Portelli, 1991).

Figure 2 summarizes the methodological logic of the study by illustrating how different streams of evidence are

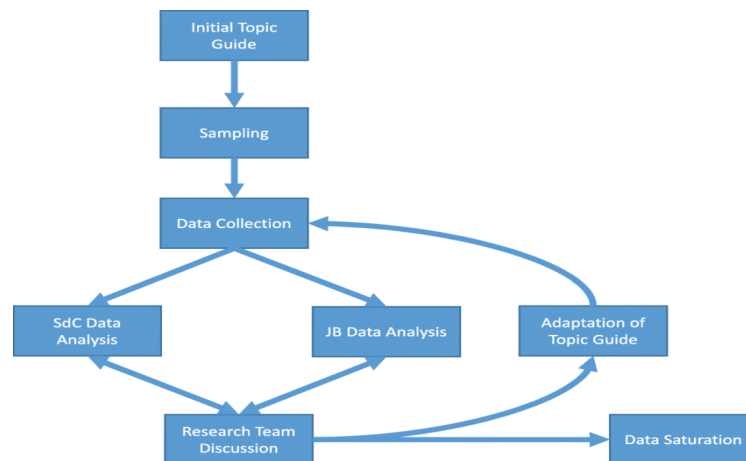


Figure 2: Conceptual Process Diagram

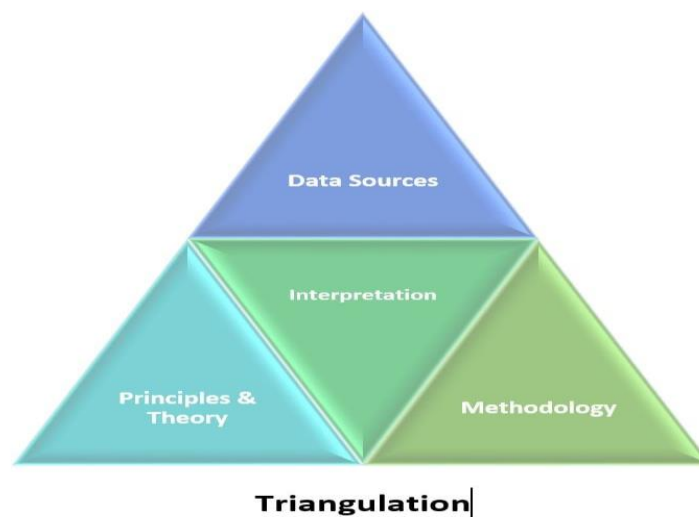


Figure 3: Integrated Analytical Framework

integrated to produce historically grounded and ethically responsible analysis. The study operates through a dual evidentiary pathway. On one pathway, the researcher's autobiographical memory and life history episodes are examined through analytic autoethnographic reflection, treating personal experience as data situated within wider social processes. On the second pathway, community-based evidence drawn from conversations, interviews, and observations of oral performance is examined using oral history validation practices. These two pathways are not treated as parallel but separate sources of insight. Rather, they converge through systematic triangulation, thematic analysis, and narrative analysis. Triangulation allows personal memory to be tested against communal narration and performance contexts, while narrative analysis attends to how authority, correction, and contestation shape historical claims. Thematic interpretation identifies recurring social functions, including the regulation of belonging, land claims, moral formation, and responses to contemporary change. The

integration process produces two primary analytical outcomes. First, it generates empirically grounded themes that explain how Izzi oral tradition functions as a historical system governed by clan authority and communal evaluation. Second, it produces an explicit ethical framework that guides decisions about quotation, anonymization, and nondisclosure, ensuring that scholarly interpretation remains accountable to community norms and social risk (Table 5). Figure 2 thus clarifies that the study's methodology is not simply additive but integrative, moving from lived experience and communal narration toward analytically robust and ethically disciplined conclusions.

Methodological integration pathway

Researcher memory and life history episodes inform analytic autoethnographic reflection. Community conversations, interviews, and observations of oral performance inform oral history validation. These streams

Table 5: Methodological Integration Process: Integration of Autoethnographic and Oral History Evidence

Evidence Stream	Primary Data	Analytic Treatment	Contribution to Findings
Researcher memory	Life history episodes, recalled narratives, learning moments	Analytic autoethnographic reflection and reflexive memoing	Insider access, interpretive depth, identification of key memory processes
Community narration	Conversations, interviews, oral performances	Oral history validation and cross checking	Communal authority, correction mechanisms, narrative plurality
Convergent analysis	Combined data sets	Triangulation, thematic analysis, narrative analysis	Themes of authority, performance, contestation, and social change
Ethical synthesis	Sensitive narratives and contexts	Ethical decision rules for disclosure and anonymization	Protection of community integrity and prevention of harm

converge through triangulation, narrative analysis, and thematic interpretation, producing empirically grounded themes and an ethical framework for disclosure and anonymization (Figures 2 and 3). The process is iterative, with analytic insights feeding back into reflexive assessment and ethical judgment.

Positionality and Reflexivity

This study is undertaken by a researcher who was born and raised in Izzi and is therefore socially located within the community whose oral tradition is being studied. Positionality is not presented as a guarantee of authenticity. It is treated as a source of access and interpretive competence that also introduces obligations and risks. Reflexive practice is used to clarify how insider status shapes what can be heard, what may be disclosed, and how interpretations may be influenced by loyalty, reverence for elders, or concern about intra clan tensions (Anderson, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011). Clan membership entails social obligations, including respect for custodians and recognition that some narratives are not public property. This creates power dynamics in at least three areas. The first is age based authority. Elders are often regarded as custodians of genealogy and precedent, and their evaluations can validate or constrain other accounts. The second is gendered access. Knowledge about certain domestic, ritual, or relational histories may circulate more strongly among women, while lineage and land claims may be more publicly managed by male custodians in some contexts. The third is sacred restriction. Some ritual speech and names may be governed by rules of disclosure, timing, and audience. These dynamics are treated as part of the data rather than as obstacles to be removed. They help explain how credibility is socially produced and why some versions become dominant while others remain private.

Reflexivity was maintained through a structured journal that recorded memory prompts, emotional responses, emerging assumptions, and moments of discomfort. Such documentation is important because auto ethnographic work can easily blur the line between interpretation and justification. Regular peer debriefing with academically trained colleagues helped test emerging claims and identify over interpretation. Member reflection was used selectively and carefully, recognizing that asking participants to approve interpretations can itself create pressure, especially where clan hierarchy is present. This

approach aligns with qualitative guidance that reflexivity is both an ethical practice and a credibility practice, particularly when the researcher is deeply embedded (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Sources

The study draws on four interconnected sources of evidence, each chosen because it illuminates a different aspect of how memory becomes history through oral tradition (Table 6). First, autobiographical memory and life history episodes. These include childhood recollections of storytelling, remembered scenes of correction and dispute, and experiences of learning genealogies, land narratives, and moral proverbs. Memory work was conducted as deliberate recall rather than casual reminiscence. It included writing episodes, identifying narrative gaps, and noting which details were stable and which changed when they were retold over time. Memory is treated here as socially framed rather than private, consistent with scholarship that emphasizes collective frameworks of remembering (Halbwachs, 1992). Second, conversations and interviews. Semi structured engagements were undertaken with elders, lineage custodians, women knowledge holders, and other senior participants aged 50 to 90 years. The purpose was not to collect one final version of tradition but to understand processes of authorization, correction, and contestation. Interviews focused on genres such as origin narratives, genealogies, land histories, and dispute narratives, as well as on how narrators learned them and how they decide whether a version is acceptable. Third, observation of oral performances. Oral tradition was observed in communal settings where it is naturally produced, including funerals, meetings, naming rights, and dispute-related contexts. These settings are crucial because performance conditions show how audience, purpose, and authority shape narration. Observation also captures moments of correction, interruption, or restraint that may not appear in interview talk about tradition (Finnegan, 2012). Fourth, clan and family materials. These include written notes where available, genealogical listings, land boundary accounts, naming systems, and privately held family records. Such materials are used cautiously. They are not treated as superior to oral testimony, but as part of the ecology of memory in a changing society where oral and written modes increasingly interact.

Table 6: Data Corpus and Sources.

Data source	Primary purpose	Typical setting	Analytic use
Memory and life history episodes	Identify insider learning pathways and moments of correction	Research journal and structured recall sessions	Establish experiential access points, generate analytic questions, track reflexive shifts
Semi structured interviews and conversations	Document narrators' criteria for truth, authority, and correction	Homes, meetings, informal gatherings	Compare versions across clans and roles, map authorization processes
Observation of oral performance	Capture how oral tradition operates in real time	Funerals, naming rights, communal meetings, dispute contexts	Analyze performance, audience regulation, interruption, correction, and restraint
Clan and family materials	Trace how oral and written memory interact	Private family holdings and clan records where available	Cross check names, boundary markers, and narrative stability over time

Sampling Strategy

Sampling was guided by purposive and maximum variation principles, with the aim of illuminating how historical memory is produced and regulated across different social locations rather than achieving statistical representation (Patton, 2015). Selection focused on participants and settings where memory carries recognized authority and where historical claims are evaluated in practice. The study engaged 80 participants drawn from study centres in Abakaliki LGA, Ebonyi LGA, and Izzi LGA in Ebonyi State, comprising 50 male and 30 female participants aged 50 to 90 years. Variation was sought across clans and sub-clans, gendered knowledge roles, and seniority positions within Izzi society. Elders and lineage custodians were engaged primarily for genealogical accounts, origin narratives, and land-related histories, as these domains are widely regarded as requiring senior authority. Women knowledge holders were included to access forms of memory often embedded in domestic narration, ritual speech, songs, naming practices, and moral interpretation. Sampling also included settings rather than individuals alone. Particular attention was paid to funerals, dispute-related gatherings, and clan meetings, because these are sites where narratives are publicly affirmed, corrected, or restrained. Observing these contexts made it possible to examine how historical credibility is produced in action, not only how it is described in interviews.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection prioritized ethical clarity, relational trust, and cultural sensitivity. Fieldwork was conducted over 30 days, scheduled three days per week, across the three study centres in Abakaliki LGA, Ebonyi LGA, and Izzi LGA in Ebonyi State. Consent procedures were adapted to participant capacity and context. Where literacy was limited, oral consent was obtained following clear explanation of the research purpose, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. In settings where recording could be socially inappropriate or potentially harmful, detailed field notes were used instead of audio recording. Where recording was permitted, audio data were supplemented with immediate reflective memos capturing setting,

audience presence, interruptions, and nonverbal responses. Translation and transcription were treated as interpretive tasks rather than mechanical processes. Key Izzi and Igbo terms were retained with explanatory glosses where direct translation would flatten meaning or obscure cultural logic. This approach recognizes that translation decisions shape analysis and that transparency in these decisions strengthens validity (Temple & Young, 2004).

Data Analysis Procedures

Analysis proceeded through overlapping phases that reflected the study's concern with how memory becomes history. First, thematic analysis was used to identify recurring social functions of memory, including belonging, legitimacy, boundary making, moral instruction, and dispute management. Coding was iterative and reflexive, moving between data segments and emerging categories with attention to how memory operates within clan structures rather than to topic frequency alone (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Second, narrative analysis focused on how historical claims are constructed and authorized. Attention was given to plot structure, invocation of named ancestors, use of place markers, ritual references, and the narrator's positioning as custodian, witness, or learner. This approach is well suited to examining how authority and credibility are established through storytelling practices (Riessman, 2008). Third, contradictions were analyzed as data rather than treated as error. Divergent versions were examined in relation to social location, generational position, performance context, and the stakes involved. This approach follows oral history scholarship that treats plurality and contestation as central to understanding how communities negotiate memory and identity (Portelli, 1991).

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Trustworthiness was pursued through credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across participants, settings, and narrative genres, and through selective member reflection on non-sensitive interpretations.

Table 7: Ethical Decision Rules for Quotation and Anonymity

Decision issue	Risk indicator	Action rule
Participant identifiability	Role is unique or easily traceable	Use broad descriptors and remove clan specific markers
Dispute sensitivity	Narrative linked to ongoing land or precedence contest	Paraphrase or omit; avoid naming places or lineages
Sacred restriction	Ritual speech or names governed by disclosure norms	Omit or generalize; do not reproduce restricted content
Harm potential	Content may inflame intra clan tension or stigma	Prioritize analytic summary over quotation
Consent clarity	Consent uncertain in public performance settings	Use fieldnote based description without direct attribution

Negative cases were actively sought to prevent premature thematic closure. Dependability was addressed through an audit trail documenting sampling choices, consent processes, analytic decisions, and revisions to codes and themes. Confirmability was supported through reflexive memos that distinguished description from interpretation and recorded how positionality and emotional proximity shaped analytic judgment. These practices align with established qualitative standards for rigorous insider research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical responsibility was central throughout the study because clan histories and land narratives can have real social consequences. Confidentiality and anonymization were applied consistently, and sensitive segments were paraphrased or omitted where direct quotation could expose individuals or inflame disputes. Sacred knowledge and restricted narratives were treated with protective restraint (Table 7). Material that violated community norms or carried risk of harm was excluded even when analytically valuable. The risk of intra clan tension was assessed continuously, particularly where publication might amplify contested claims by giving them academic visibility. For this reason, the study prioritizes analysis of processes of authorization, correction, and restraint rather than reproduction of the most sensitive content. Community accountability functions as a guiding ethic. The research seeks to contribute to scholarly knowledge while respecting communal integrity and avoiding extraction or destabilization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative transmission pathways and sites of correction

Figure 2 conceptualizes transmission as a flow of narrative through overlapping settings. Elders and lineage custodians transmit core genealogies and origin accounts in formal contexts such as funerals, dispute forums, and council meetings. Households transmit everyday memory through storytelling, proverbs, and naming explanations. Women knowledge holders transmit moral and domestic memory through rites, market networks, and family instruction. Younger narrators may carry narratives into schools, churches,

and digital spaces where language shifts and compression occur. Sites of correction include council meetings, elder gatherings, funeral announcements, and moments of public recitation where recognized authorities intervene to clarify sequence, restrain exaggeration, or redirect disputed speech toward communal peace.

The results are presented thematically to reflect how oral tradition operates as a historical system in Izzi clan life. Evidence is drawn from repeated motifs in narrations, observation of performance contexts, and the patterned ways correction and contestation occur. Illustrative excerpts are paraphrased to protect confidentiality.

Authority and authentication

Historical credibility is produced through authorized speech. Not everyone may narrate every genre in every setting. Genealogies and origin accounts gain force when recited by recognized elders, lineage custodians, or those socially assigned to speak. Authentication occurs through public performance, communal recognition, and the right of designated persons to correct. This confirms that history is not only content but governance. The process is consistent with scholarship that emphasizes social regulation and transmission as central to oral tradition as history (Vansina, 1985).

Performance and context shape meaning

The same narrative changes emphasis depending on setting. A funeral recitation highlights dignity and continuity. A dispute narrative highlights legitimacy and boundary. A naming rite highlights moral formation. Performance context therefore shapes what is foregrounded and what is restrained. This supports genre and performance approaches that treat oral tradition as structured practice rather than casual storytelling (Finnegan, 2012; Okpewho, 1992).

Memory tension between self and community

Personal memory frequently aligns with collective narration, yet moments of tension arise when an individual's lived experience conflicts with communal versions. In such moments, the community often resolves tension through gentle redirection rather than open denial, preserving both the person and the collective story. Analytic auto ethnography helps illuminate this tension by showing how the self is formed within

collective frameworks while still experiencing unique pain, pride, or loss (Anderson, 2006). In the author's broader work, attention to vulnerability and the ethics of care provides language for acknowledging dependence and relational responsibility as moral realities, which is relevant for writing community histories with humility (Igwe, 2025).

Modern pressures and narrative reshaping

Schooling, migration, Christianity, and digital circulation reshape transmission. Younger narrators often compress stories, reduce ritual language, or shift into English or regional Igbo registers. Church settings sometimes reinterpret clan memory through moral categories that emphasize reconciliation and restraint. Digital circulation can detach narratives from their original settings, weakening community mechanisms of correction. These pressures contribute to both erosion and adaptation. The effect is not simply loss but change in the channels of authority and the speed of narrative travel.

Continuity and ethical restraint

Continuity is sustained through the community's ethics of restraint. Not everything is said everywhere. Limits on disclosure protect sacred knowledge, reduce conflict, and preserve trust in custodians. This restraint is not anti-historical. It is a form of governance that keeps history socially inhabitable. It also sets the terms for publication, requiring the researcher to prioritize communal wellbeing over completeness. That ethic resonates with theological approaches that treat embodied life and moral responsibility as inseparable, including in scholarly practice (Igwe, 2025).

Themes and illustrative excerpts

Given the ethical restrictions governing sensitive clan histories and the absence of quotable transcripts in the materials available for quotation checking, the article reports carefully paraphrased excerpts rather than verbatim quotations. This approach protects confidentiality while preserving the analytic focus on recurring themes, correction practices, and narrative settings (Table 8).

The findings suggest that Izzi oral tradition functions less like a storehouse of stories and more like a living system of historical reasoning. In Abakaliki and the wider Izzi clans, history is carried through genres such as genealogy, land memory, ritual speech, proverb, festival narration, and dispute narratives, but these genres do not circulate freely. They move through recognized pathways of authority, correction, and restraint. What counts as truthful is not decided only by what a narrator says, but by who is permitted to speak, where the speech occurs, what genre rules apply, and how elders and custodians

regulate the boundaries of disclosure. This pattern helps explain why oral tradition remains authoritative even when versions vary. The authority is not simply in the content. The authority is in the communal governance of memory. Genealogy emerged as a primary mechanism of historical authority. Genealogical recitation is not merely descriptive. It is performative. It situates people within the moral and social order of the clan, particularly in contexts such as funerals, conflict resolution, and major family gatherings. In these moments, the clan does not only remember. It actively maintains continuity by naming the living and the dead within an accepted chain of belonging. Correction is part of that maintenance. When a senior voice adjusts sequence or clarifies a lineage link, the aim is not to shame but to protect communal integrity. This is why genealogy can carry legal and moral weight, especially when it intersects with land identity and kinship obligations. Land memory and boundary narratives highlighted another dimension of history as lived practice. Boundary narratives do not only mark geography. They mark moral claims and social responsibility. The same land story can be told as settlement memory, as labor memory, or as covenant memory, depending on the setting and the audience. Where conflict exists, competing boundary narratives are rarely only about land. They are also about dignity, recognition, and the authority of particular descent lines. Studies of Abakaliki conflicts that use oral history methods illustrate how traditional institutions still mediate disputes and regulate narratives in contemporary Ebonyi settings (Ani, 2024). The Izzi case adds that oral tradition is not merely used during disputes, but is itself a structured tool for adjudicating belonging, because narratives are shaped by who is authorized to speak and who is authorized to correct. Ritual speech and moral memory show that Izzi history is transmitted not only as a record of events but also as a formation of character. Blessings, proverbs, and ceremonial addresses compress communal values into repeatable forms that travel across generations. This is where oral tradition functions as a pedagogy of identity. Rather than narrating a chronology, ritual speech narrates what kind of people the clan must be. The past becomes a moral horizon that guides how the present should be lived. A detailed example of Izzi religious and cultural practice appears in work on Ojiji and Otutara, where communal observance is described as a structured annual remembrance with moral and social obligations, and with elder mediated regulation of participation (Ogbonna & Michael, 2023). Even when one approaches this material from outside religious studies, the key point holds. Ritual performance is a regulated site where memory is authorized and made socially binding. The contested origin narrative vignette clarifies why contradiction should be treated as data rather than as failure. Oral historians have long argued that divergence in testimony can reveal the social meanings and power relations surrounding memory (Portelli, 1991).

Table 8: Thematic Summary and Empirical Basis.

Theme	Illustrative empirical basis	Report in text	Count / coded instances
Authority and authentication	Lineage recitation; elder correction; custodial speech	Results/Discussion sections	Recurrence documented qualitatively across interviews and observation notes; frequency is reported descriptively rather than numerically.
Performance and context	Funeral, naming rite, dispute, and meeting settings	Results/Discussion sections	Recurrence documented qualitatively across interviews and observation notes; frequency is reported descriptively rather than numerically.
Memory tension	Tension between personal recollection and communal correction	Results section	Recurrence documented qualitatively across interviews and observation notes; frequency is reported descriptively rather than numerically.
Modern pressures	Schooling, migration, Christianity, digital circulation	Results/Discussion sections	Recurrence documented qualitatively across interviews and observation notes; frequency is reported descriptively rather than numerically.
Ethical restraint	Restricted speech, paraphrase, and non-disclosure rules	Results/Methodology sections	Recurrence documented qualitatively across interviews and observation notes; frequency is reported descriptively rather than numerically.
Theme	Definition	Illustrative excerpt paraphrase	Context note
Authority and authentication	Credibility produced through authorized speech and correction rights	An elder states that the lineage must be spoken correctly because it protects the living and honours the dead	Funeral recitation with elder correction
Performance and context	Meaning shaped by setting, audience, and genre rules	The same story is narrated with emphasis on peace when addressed to youth but emphasis on boundary when in dispute forum	Youth meeting and boundary discussion
Memory tension	Negotiation between individual experience and communal account	A speaker acknowledges personal suffering but accepts the communal phrasing that restores unity	Family meeting after conflict
Modern pressures	Transmission altered by education, religion, migration, and digital media	Younger narrators shorten the story and translate key phrases, prompting elders to warn about losing meaning	Household storytelling and phone recording
Continuity and restraint	Ethical limits govern what can be disclosed and where	A custodian redirects discussion, stating that some knowledge belongs to the elders and must not become public talk	Informal evening conversation

In Izzi contexts, multiple origin versions often signal what is at stake, such as inter clan relationships, migration claims, or the moral need to preserve unity while acknowledging differences. An elder's intervention that limits disclosure does not mean history is suppressed. It means the community is governing speech to prevent harm. This governance becomes part of the historical system itself, shaping what can be said publicly and what must be reserved for custodial contexts.

Engagement with existing scholarship

The findings align with scholarship that treats oral tradition as a historically serious method when approached through transmission, genre rules, and social location (Finnegan, 2012; Vansina, 1985). They also

reinforce the memory studies insight that remembrance is socially organized rather than purely individual recall (Halbwachs, 1992; Connerton, 1989). What this article adds is a more explicit account of clan authority as an epistemic structure. In the Izzi case, the clan does not merely preserve memory. It regulates true claims through correction, audience calibration, and ethical restraint. The study also speaks to Nigerian historiographical debates about evidence and archival bias. Nigerian historians have argued that oral sources are indispensable for reconstructing African pasts where written archives are incomplete or colonial in orientation (Dike, 1956; Falola, 2022). The Izzi case illustrates that the credibility of oral tradition is not a simple opposition to the written archive. It is a different kind of archive, one governed by living institutions and moral consequences. This helps an

international audience avoid the common mistake of evaluating oral tradition only by written criteria. Recent studies reinforce this point. Manyane (2024) revisits the continuing methodological value of African oral traditions, while Kim et al. (2024) emphasize stewardship, shared authority, and the governance of community voice. Lange and Teer-Tomaselli (2024) further show that community auto ethnography can be deployed as heritage practice, which supports the present article's insistence that insider scholarship can be rigorous when it remains transparent about authority, curation, and ethics.

The findings also require sustained engagement with gender in oral transmission. Igbo scholarship has demonstrated that women's authority and memory work can be overlooked when researchers rely only on formal lineage recitation (Amadiume, 1987; Achebe, 2011). In Izzu settings, the gendered patterning of narrative is not uniform across genres. Some domains of moral memory, household history, and ritual participation may be carried strongly by women, even when public lineage recitation is dominated by male elders. This means that a responsible historical account must listen for women's narrative forms, not only for their presence as respondents in male coded forums. The implication is methodological as well as ethical. A gender narrowed archive produces a distorted history. Finally, the study's account of modern pressures connects with contemporary Ebonyi scholarship that documents changes and continuity in local practices. For example, work on changing and continuous healthcare practices in Izzu shows how traditions adapt across time rather than simply disappear (Mbam, 2024). Although that research is not about oral tradition as history, it supports a key interpretive claim of this article: continuity often appears through adaptation, selective retention, and changes in transmission pathways. In oral tradition, modern schooling, migration, Christian expansion, and digital circulation accelerate this reshaping. Digital circulation is especially significant because it can detach stories from the settings where correction and restraint normally occur.

Methodological contributions

Methodologically, this article contributes by integrating analytic auto ethnography with oral history validation in a way that is tailored to clan governed memory. Analytic auto ethnography requires that the researcher's insider experience is not treated as self sufficient evidence, but as one stream of data that must be interpreted through theory and triangulated across narrators and contexts (Anderson, 2006). This is especially important in clan contexts where the researcher's memory is already shaped by collective frameworks, obligations, and loyalty. The article shows that insider access can be a methodological strength when combined with transparent reflexivity, clear boundaries of disclosure, and systematic comparison of narrative versions across settings.

The study also proposes a practical interpretive stance for contradiction. Instead of forcing a single harmonized version, the analysis asks what contradictions reveal about authority, social negotiation, and the moral economy of belonging. This stance is consistent with oral history arguments about meaning and interpretive truth, and it is particularly appropriate for origin narratives and boundary accounts where the stakes are communal, not only historical.

A further contribution is the articulation of ethical decision rules as part of method. In clan history, ethics is not a separate section added at the end. Ethics shapes the archive itself. Choices about quotation, paraphrase, anonymization, and omission must be justified as part of scholarly rigor because they affect what evidence can be shown publicly. This ethical discipline resonates with an ethic of care orientation that treats vulnerability, dependence, and communal responsibility as real constraints on knowledge production, not as sentimental concerns (Igwe, 2025b). It also connects to the author's broader scholarly pattern of attending to social disruption and communal responsibility in contexts of displacement and moral strain (Igwe, 2025a). While those works focus on ecotheological ethics and inclusion rather than oral tradition, they reinforce the same moral sensibility required here: scholarship must minimize harm while still pursuing truth.

Study limitations

Four limitations should be acknowledged clearly. First, insider status is both access and risk. It can produce selective visibility, especially where elders or custodians filter what may be told to protect the clan. Second, representativeness is constrained. No single article can capture all Izzu sub clan variations or all generational voices, particularly where migration and urbanization shape exposure differently. Third, ethical restraint limits evidentiary display. Some claims cannot be quoted verbatim, and some narratives must remain partially undisclosed. This is a limitation in the conventional academic sense, but it is also a finding about how Izzu history is governed. Fourth, translation and language shift introduce interpretive risk. Some concepts in Izzu and related dialect forms carry meanings that resist direct translation into English without flattening moral nuance. A further reporting limitation in the present draft is that it does not yet state participant totals, fieldwork duration, coded theme counts, or verbatim quotations. These items should be inserted from the author's field records before final resubmission.

Recommendations

Community based preservation strategies

A first recommendation is the development of clan

governed storytelling forums that intentionally gather elders, women knowledge holders, and youth in settings designed for respectful intergenerational transmission. The aim is not to create performance for outsiders, but to strengthen internal continuity. Such forums should include a structured space for correction, because correction is part of how credibility is produced in Izzi oral tradition. A second recommendation is the creation of clan-controlled archives that prioritize consent and governance over public visibility. This could include audio recordings where permitted, accompanied by contextual notes about when and where a narrative may be played, who may access it, and what must remain restricted. The most important point is governance. A digital file without communal governance can spread narratives outside their corrective settings, increasing the risk of misinterpretation and conflict. A third recommendation is a consent-based return process. Communities often share knowledge with researchers but receive little in return. A practical return could include a community booklet of anonymized moral proverbs and festival explanations, or a controlled access recording collection housed with a trusted local institution, accompanied by clear rules about what may be circulated.

Scholarly and institutional protocols

Universities, journals, and ethics boards should adopt protocols designed for insider research in contested community histories. Standard consent forms are often inadequate in settings where knowledge is communal, layered, and sometimes restricted. Protocols should recognize that oral consent may be appropriate and that some knowledge is owned by custodianship rather than by individuals. Scholars working on Izzi and related Abakaliki histories should adopt triangulation as a norm, not merely as a methodological decoration. Triangulation here means comparing narratives across speakers, genres, and settings, and documenting how correction occurs. This also means that evidence should be situated. A proverb in a naming rite and a boundary narrative in a dispute forum cannot be treated as equivalent data simply because both are spoken words. Institutions should also encourage collaborative authorship or formal acknowledgement pathways where appropriate. Some community contributors may not wish to be named, but where naming is desired and safe, recognition supports ethical scholarship and improves interpretive accuracy.

Educational and heritage applications

Local educational initiatives should be developed with careful vetting. Oral tradition can enrich curriculum materials, but it must be used cautiously to avoid politicizing contested origin or land claims. Education materials should focus first on genres and values, such

as proverbs, moral memory, and festival cycles, while treating contested narratives through a framework of plurality and respect. Heritage applications should support living performance rather than freezing tradition. Museums or cultural centers in Ebonyi can host seasonal exhibitions that explain narrative genres and moral logic, but they should work under clan governance rather than extracting stories as public property. The Ojiji festival, for instance, can be interpreted as a site where food cycle, communal unity, and ancestral remembrance converge, but the community should determine what can be displayed publicly (Ogbonna & Michael, 2023).

Implications

Theoretical implications

Theoretically, the study supports an understanding of oral tradition as a historical reasoning system governed by authority, performance, and ethical constraint. It clarifies that clan authority is not merely social power. It is an epistemic structure that governs truth claims. This shifts how international scholarships should interpret reliability. Reliability is not only a matter of stable content. It is also a matter of regulated transmission, authorized correction, and context appropriate disclosure. The findings also strengthen the claim that memory is best understood as social practice. In Izzi contexts, memory is made in gatherings, rites, disputes, and household narration. This practice orientation supports memory studies frameworks while adding a distinct emphasis on the governance of speech as part of the memory process.

Practical implications

Practically, the study offers guidance for researchers who work in clan-based settings. First, research design must include community governance as part of method. Second, the archive must be understood as layered. Not all narratives are equally public, and not all knowledge is equally quotable. Third, contradiction should be recorded carefully rather than prematurely harmonized, because contradiction often reveals how communities negotiate identity and authority. The study also highlights the risks created by ungoverned digital circulation. If narratives travel without corrective settings, they can be weaponized in disputes or misunderstood by outsiders. This makes community control of preservation tools not optional but necessary.

Societal implications

At a societal level, the work suggests that strengthening cultural continuity can occur without inflaming conflict if preservation is governed ethically and communally. Oral tradition can reinforce belonging and moral formation, but it can also intensify land disputes if published

irresponsibly. The study therefore argues for a model of public scholarship that is accountable, selective, and peace oriented. This intersects with local research showing that institutions such as churches also perceive themselves as actors in peacebuilding within Izzi area contexts (Edwin, 2023). Even when one does not adopt Edwin's theological framing, the societal implication remains relevant: peace-oriented governance of speech matters in communities where narratives can affect real disputes.

Direction for Further Research

Comparative studies are a first priority. A subsequent article could compare narrative governance across Izzi sub-clans or between Izzi, Ikwo, and Ezza communities in the Abakaliki area, focusing on how correction, custodianship, and gendered transmission differ by location and historical experience. Such work would refine theory by showing which features are widely shared and which are locally distinct. A second direction is methodological exploration. A dedicated methods paper could develop an explicit framework for ethical boundaries in clan auto ethnography, including decision rules for quotation, paraphrase, omission, anonymization, and community review. This would be useful beyond Ebonyi because many African communities face similar dilemmas when oral archives enter academic and digital publics. A third direction is digital and bilingual dissemination strategies. The most constructive approach is controlled-access dissemination, where communities decide what is public and what remains internal. Bilingual output can also broaden intergenerational accessibility. A bilingual publication strategy could include English analysis accompanied by glossed Izzi or Igbo expressions, with careful attention to concepts that resist translation. In addition, a digital humanities project could develop a metadata-rich archive that records narrative genre, setting, custodial status, and permitted uses, ensuring that context travels with content. Future writing could expand the link between oral tradition and contemporary ethical life. The moral economy of clan memory shapes how communities interpret displacement, conflict, and social vulnerability. Building on the author's existing work on climate migration ethics and ethics of care, a future paper could explore how Izzi moral memory informs communal responses to migration, land pressure, and social inclusion without forcing oral tradition into purely political categories.

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