

**ORAL TRADITION AND THE PRESERVATION OF FAMILY LINEAGE AMONG
THE ANNANG: THE ADA OBOT FAMILY OF AFAHA ESANG IN ABAK LGA,
AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

In many parts of Nigeria, family history is preserved through oral tradition. Understanding how the Ada Obot Families of Afaha Esang in Abak LGA, Akwa Ibom State, preserve their history can help identify how the Annang people preserve theirs. However, research on the preservation of family history among Annang people is limited. The main objective of this paper was to reconstruct the genealogy of the Ada Obot Family using oral narratives. Data were generated through in-depth analysis of oral accounts from elders and family historians on the subject, analysed through the lens of Collective Memory Theory, propounded by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s and 1930s. The study revealed that the Ada Obot Family story was preserved and transmitted by family elders who noted that the Ada Obot Family originated from Annang and his son Obong's three sons, Atai, Achot and Utut-ejo. Secondly, storytelling, rituals, naming practices and inheritance systems were the major sources of transmitting the history of the Ada Obot Family. Third, that the heritage of the Ada Obot Family was preserved through oral histories, ancestral reverence, shared customs and strong kinship ties that connect present generations to their forebears. Fourth, the challenges facing oral preservation in modern times include the influence of modernisation, religion, and technology.

Keywords: *Family, Rituals, Genealogy, Inheritance*

Introduction

Family history in many Nigerian communities survives mainly through oral tradition rather than written records. Among Annang people of Akwa Ibom State, stories, praise names, migration narratives, rituals and kinship memory serve as primary archives of lineage and identity.¹ Oral tradition also preserves beliefs about the ancient origins and migrations of the people long before written documentation existed. Abak is one of the eight LGAs inhabited by

¹ I.I. Eyakndue and A. B. Udoka, A.B. "A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Namesaking and Inheritance amongst the Anaañg People of Southeastern Nigeria," *Genealogy* 10, no. 1 (2026): 31, Accessed May 2, 2026. <https://www.mdpi.com>

Annang people. Abak LGA has four clans. These are Afaha Obong, Ediene, Midim and Otoro. Families in these communities traditionally pass down ancestry through storytelling, family meetings, naming patterns, and ceremonies and rituals. However, modernization, urban migration, Christianity, Western education and digital culture are gradually weakening this system.²

In many parts of the world, family history is preserved through oral tradition. For instance, in Iceland, medieval family histories were preserved through the famous Icelandic sagas, which were originally transmitted orally before being written down in the 13th century.³ The Njálsson family history, recounted in the 13th-century saga, traces several generations of ancestors. The saga preserves details about family lineage, property inheritance, and social relationships, highlighting how the family's identity and reputation were maintained through oral storytelling before being committed to writing. Similarly, in China, family lineage was preserved through oral storytelling long before their genealogical records were formally written.⁴ Elders would recite ancestral names, migration stories, and notable deeds of family members during ancestral worship ceremonies and festivals such as *Qingming* (Tomb-Sweeping Day). These oral recitations ensured that younger generations remembered their origins, respected family hierarchy, and maintained a sense of identity and belonging, even as branches of the family migrated to other provinces or overseas.⁵

² P. Eze-Uzoamaka, and J. O. Akintunde. "Modernization and Its Effect on Cultural Heritage in South-Western Nigeria." *AFRREV IJAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 6, no. 2, June 2017, p 81. Accessed May 2, 2026. <https://www.afredevijah.com>

³ A. Kristinsson. "Lords and Literature: The Icelandic Sagas as Political and Social Instruments." *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 28, no. 1, June 2003, p17. Accessed May 2, 2026. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/>

⁴ M. Bussotti, "Chinese Genealogies and Tables of Generations: A Few Examples from Huizhou. In book: *Genealogical Manuscripts in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, RMIT University. December 2024 , p.141. Accessed May 3, 2026. https://www.efeo.fr/uploads/2026/01/2024_ra-individuel-des-chercheurs_final.pdf

⁵ H.R. Clark. "Portrait of a Community: Society, Culture and Structures of Kinship in Mulan River Valley (Fujaian) From the Late Tang Through the Song", *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, Volume 38, 2008, pp. 289, p 437. Accessed May 3, 2026. https://ccs.ncl.edu.tw/chinese_studies

In Ghana, traditional historians known as griots preserve family and royal lineages through storytelling, poetry, and music. Griots memorize centuries of genealogies and recount them during ceremonies such as weddings, coronations and funerals. The Sissala family in Northern Ghana has its lineage preserved through the work of local griots, who memorize and recite the genealogies of successive chiefs and prominent family members.⁶ During festivals and funerals, griots perform songs and narratives that recount the family's origins, notable ancestors and historical achievements. These oral performances ensure that younger generations know their ancestry, social roles and the family's place in the broader community, demonstrating the central role of griots in maintaining both family memory and cultural continuity.⁷ In Nigeria, especially among the Yoruba, oral tradition preserves family lineage through *oriki* (praise poetry). The Alaafin family preserves its lineage through *oriki* recited by elders, griots, and family members during naming ceremonies, coronations, festivals, and other family events. These *oriki* recount the family's historical achievements, heroic ancestors, migration stories and notable deeds of past Alaafins (kings).⁸ Through these oral recitations, younger generations learn about their ancestry, social responsibilities, and the historical significance of their lineage, ensuring that the family's identity, prestige, and cultural memory are maintained across generations. In like manner, this paper seeks to preserve through oral tradition the family lineage history of Afaha Esang in Abak LGA, Akwa Ibom State.

⁶ I. Gbene, B.K. Asinyo, and E.K. Howard. "Sissala Clan Totems as a Resource for Design and Production of Tumu Paramountcy Skin Regalia, *Fashion and Textiles Review*, September 2021, 3, p 52. Accessed May 2, 2026. <https://journal.itfpgh.com/ft/article/view/>

⁷ A.K. Awedoba, "An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghana Conflicts: Towards a Sustainable Peace". Sub-Sahara Publishers, Accra. 2010. p342. Accessed May 3, 2026. <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers>

⁸ R.O. Adeyemi. "A Histrio-Linguistic Perspective Of Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi Iii's Oriki Within Yoruba Epistemology", *Ajayi Crowther University Journal of Religious Studies*, 2023, Vol 2, No 1. p231. Accessed May 3, 2026. <https://acujores.acu.edu.ng/index.php/acujores/article/view/>

Many Nigerian families lack written genealogical records. As elders pass away and younger generations migrate or adopt modern lifestyles, valuable family history risks disappearing. This has resulted in a decline in storytelling culture, a weak transmission of genealogical knowledge, the loss of indigenous naming and kinship systems, and a generational gap in family historical awareness. This paper seeks to document how the Ada Obot Family preserves its lineage through oral tradition. The research objectives are as follows:

- a. To reconstruct the genealogy of the Ada Obot family using oral narratives.
- b. To identify traditional methods used in preserving lineage memory among Annang people.
- c. To discuss the heritage of the Ada Obot Family.
- d. To investigate challenges facing oral preservation of family history among Annang people in modern times.

This paper is significant because it documents and preserves the rich oral traditions that sustain family identity, continuity, and cultural memory within the Ada Obot lineage of Afaha Esang in Abak LGA of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. At a time when modernization, migration, and digital lifestyles are weakening intergenerational storytelling, the research provides a written record of narratives that might otherwise disappear. By examining how oral tradition transmits ancestry, values and social responsibilities, the study contributes to scholarship in history, anthropology, African studies and cultural preservation. It also strengthens community awareness by showing how indigenous knowledge systems remain relevant for identity formation and social cohesion.

The findings will benefit multiple groups: members of the Ada Obot family and residents of Afaha Esang will gain a documented heritage resource that can be used for family education, cultural festivals, and conflict resolution rooted in shared ancestry. Scholars and students in universities will benefit from new primary data for research on oral history and lineage preservation. At the same time, policymakers and cultural organizations can use the insights to design heritage preservation programs. Ultimately, the study serves as a model for other Nigerian families and communities seeking to safeguard their histories and strengthen intergenerational bonds through documented oral traditions.

The study will examine the role of oral tradition in preserving the Ada Obot family lineage in Afaha Esang, Abak LGA, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It focuses on the transmission of ancestry, migration narratives, kinship structures, cultural values, and inheritance practices as communicated through storytelling, proverbs, family gatherings, and rituals across generations. The study is confined to oral accounts obtained from selected family elders and knowledgeable community members, and does not attempt a comparative analysis with other families or ethnic groups; rather, it uses the Ada Obot lineage as a case study to illustrate how oral tradition functions as a tool for preserving family history and identity within a specific local context. The study adopted a qualitative, ethnographic, and historical research design. It used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews, family meetings, storytelling sessions, rituals and ceremonies. It also utilised focus group discussion, genealogical mapping and participant observation.

Oral Tradition

Oral tradition refers to the transmission of knowledge, beliefs, customs and historical experiences from one generation to another through spoken words rather than written

documents. In many African societies, oral tradition has historically functioned as the primary archive of history, identity and cultural values.⁹ Oral narratives include folktales, genealogies, praise songs, proverbs, rituals, and migration stories used to teach social norms and preserve collective memory.¹⁰ The use of oral tradition as a historical source became prominent in African historiography after decolonization, when scholars sought to reconstruct African history beyond colonial written records.¹¹ Historians recognized that African societies possessed complex historical systems long before the introduction of writing.¹²

Literature review

Scholars widely acknowledge oral tradition as a major source of African history, particularly for societies where written records were limited or absent. Falola & Heaton (2006) argue that the study of oral tradition has become a specialized academic field, emphasizing its central role in reconstructing pre-colonial African history and understanding social structures and genealogies. Oral traditions provide insights into chronology, migration, kinship, and social organization when properly collected and analysed using interdisciplinary methods.

Similarly, Falola (2022) notes that oral traditions function as “ritual archives” and “oral artifacts” that preserve indigenous knowledge systems in Nigeria. These traditions are transmitted verbally across generations and form the pillars of historical identity, memory and cultural continuity. For the Ada Obot family, this perspective supports the use of oral accounts

⁹ R.M. Manyane. "Centuries-Long African Oral Traditions and History: Revisiting the Debate" " *Journal of African History, Archaeology and Tourism*, 1 Jun 2024, Vol. 2, No. 1. p 65. Accessed May 2, 2026. <https://www.google.com/search>

¹⁰ B. Izu. "The Impact of Oral Traditions on African Indigenous Musical Practices: A Systematic Literature Review", *Journal of Arts and Cultural Studies*, 2023, 3 (2), 1-12. p 76. Assessed May 5, 2026. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Benjamin-Izu->

¹¹ A.M. Abdullahi, A.S. Kunga. and H.H.U. Degri. "Use of Oral Tradition in the Study of African History," *Gombe Journal of Historical Studies*, June 2021. Vol. 1 No. 1, p51. Accessed May 4, 2026. <https://www.scribd.com/document/>

¹² J. Vansina *Oral Tradition as History*, University of Wisconsin Press. 1985, p 87. Accessed May 4, 2026. <https://archive.org/details/oraltraditionash0000vans>

as credible historical evidence for tracing ancestry, migration narratives and lineage continuity within Afaha Esang.

Research shows that designated custodians, such as elders, lineage heads, and community historians, preserve oral tradition. Anene and Njoku (2018) describe communal oral historians as “reservoirs of indigenous historical scholarship” who preserve myths, proverbs, genealogies and moral codes. These narratives serve as a bridge linking the past, present and future of African societies. The authors further emphasize that oral tradition transmits values, beliefs and survival strategies, making it a comprehensive system of education and identity formation. This literature is relevant to the Ada Obot family study because family elders often function as custodians of lineage histories, marriage alliances, and ancestral migration stories. Their testimonies provide the core data for reconstructing family heritage.

Studies in southeastern Nigeria demonstrate how oral tradition reinforces lineage identity and social hierarchy. Ugwuanyia, Ugwub and Okwueze (2020) show that oral narratives help legitimize village and lineage ranking by embedding genealogies within ritual practices and cultural performances. Oral traditions, therefore, serve not only as historical records but also as tools for maintaining social order and ancestral authority. This literature is particularly relevant to family lineage studies because oral narratives often determine seniority, inheritance rights and kinship relationships. In the context of Afaha Esang, similar mechanisms likely exist where family stories validate ancestral origins and the social standing of the Ada Obot lineage.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Collective Memory Theory, developed by Maurice Halbwachs, as the guiding framework for understanding how oral traditions preserve and transmit the historical consciousness of the Ada Obot family across generations. The Collective Memory Theory, propounded by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s and 1930s, explains how groups preserve and transmit shared memories across generations through social interaction, rituals, and storytelling. It is highly relevant because oral traditions in the Ada Obot family function as collective memory systems that keep ancestral history, migration stories and family values alive. The theory helps explain how family members rely on elders, ceremonies and communal gatherings to maintain a shared understanding of lineage and identity. One major limitation of Collective Memory Theory is that shared memories are often selective and subjective. Because memories are shaped by group interests, power relations and social expectations, certain events may be exaggerated, altered, or completely forgotten over time. Also, collective memory can change across generations, leading to distortions and inconsistencies. This limitation was managed by comparing oral accounts from different family members and generations, collecting narratives from people across multiple generations, and conducting interviews individually rather than in group settings.

Research Findings

a. Genealogy of the Ada Obot family using oral narratives

Ada Obot's family story was preserved and transmitted by family members such as the Late Martin Ada Obot, Benard Ada Obot, Linus Iyakndue, Nko Udo Essiet, Lawrencina Umoh, Gerald Ada Obot, Reverend Maurice Etim Matthew, Honourable Justice Nkereuwem Martin Obot and Asuquo Martin Obot. According to their oral account, the Ada Obot family story begins with Annang and his son Obong. The three sons of Obong, Atai, Achot and Utuu-ejo, founded the 23 villages in Afaha Obong Clan of Abak LGA. These are Afaha Esang, Ebebit, Edem Anwa, Eriam, Ikot Akpa Edem, Ikot Akpabio, Ikot Akpakpan, Ikot Akpan Ikpong, Ikot Ibit Ekpe, Ikot Inyang and Ikot Ndue. Others are Ikot Obio Ikpa, Ikot Obong, Ikot Odiong, Ikot Ubom, Ikot Ufen, Ikot Udo Obio Iwok, Ikot Udo Urom, Ikwek, Nna-Enin, Ntukuk, Ukana Mkpa Eyop and Uruk Obong. These villages are loosely classified as *Nto Atai* (children of Atai), *Nto Achot* (children of Achot) and *Nto Utut-ejo* (children of Utut-ejo) according to the children of Obong who established the various villages. *Nto Atai* include Afaha Esang, Erem Anwa, Eriam, Ebebit, Ikot Akpakpan, Ikot Odiong, Ikot Udo Obiowok, Ikot Udourom and Nna Enin. *Nto Achot* include Ikot Obio Ikpa, Ikot Inyang, Ikot Ubom, Ikot Ibit Ekpe, Ukana Mkpa'jop, Ikwek and Ikot Obong. *Nto Utut-ejo* are Ikot Akpabio, Ikot Ukpong, Atam Ntukuk, Ikot Ufen, Ikot Akeng, Ikot Imana and Ikot Nduese. Some of the villages may no longer bear the name they had at inception.¹³

Afaha Esang belongs to *Nto Atai*. Atai migrated from Ikot Obong to Akong Atekong, and his descendants became the people of Afaha Esang. The journey continued with Esang, the son of Atai, who moved again to settle at Akai Esa Essien Ejiara, where he lived, died and was laid to rest. The torch was passed to Asong Etor. Asong Etor, the son of Esang, had 4 sons: Itiat, Nja, Ekpaidot and Eda Ekpoedi. Itiat had one son, Ekpo. Nja had 3 sons, Ikono, Umo and

¹³ M. E. Matthew, (Clergy, 66), Interview by Ifiok Martin Obot, Afaha Esang, 28 April 2026.

Ekpenyong, while Ekpa Idot had 3 sons, Ekanem, Usen Ide, and Mfiokowo. Mfiokowo was buried at Anwa Ekom. Eda Ekpoedi had one son, Akpan Eda.

Mfiokowo had 8 sons. These are Akpan Mfiokowo, Udoidung, Etokudo, Udoden, Udo Enang, Ikorio, Isonguyo and Iyakndue. Akpan Mfiokowo had 8 sons. They are Uruon or Thomson, Udoidung, Ndoong, Ikono, Ekarak, Udokang, Ekong and Ibanga. Udoidung had 3 sons, Akpan, Udotim and Essien. Etokudo had one son, Akpan. Udoden had 2 sons. These are Sunday and Peter. Udoenang had 4 sons. This is the immediate umbrella of the Ada Obot Family. These are Akpan (Anyiekere), Afiokedem, Udoudo and Ada Obot. Ikorio had one son, Akpan. At the same time, Isonguyo had one son, Akpan. Iyakudue had 4 sons. These are Asuquo, Michael (Udousoro), Linus (Udonnwene) and Effiong.

Annang people are traditionally polygamous and believe in having large families. In line with this tradition, Ada Obot had three wives, seven sons and seven daughters. The sons are Martin (Asuquo), Anthony (Nanna), Bernad (Udoudo), Ignatius (Monday), Felix (Udom), Augustine (Ekanem) and Gerald (Ebong). The daughters are Nko, Lawrencina (Mmaret), Unwa, Jenny (Akpoho ukot), Veronica (Akposi), Nse and Philomena (Nwafor). These are Ikwo Akpan Ekpon of Atan Midim, Nwa Ekpo of Midim Ikot Uko and Akon Udo Nnon of Uruk Obong. Ikwo Akpan Ekpon, the first wife, is the mother of four sons and two daughters. The sons are Martin, Anthony, Bernard, and Augustine, while the daughters are Nko and Lawrencina. Nnwa Ekpo, the second wife, had two sons, Ignatius and Gerald, and two daughters, Unwa and Jenny. Akon Udo Nnon, the youngest and favourite wife, had one son, Felix and three daughters, Veronica, Nse and Philomena. One of the values of the Annang people is seniority among family members. In order of seniority, the children of Ada Obot are Martin, Nko, Anthony, Benard, Ignatius, Unwa, Larencia, Jenny, Felix, Augustie, Veronica, Gerald, Nse and

Philomena. The full name of the Ada Obot Family, which spans nine generations, is the Ada Obot-Udoenang-Mfiok Owo-Ekpa Idot-Asong Etor-Esang-Atai-Obong-Annang.

b. Traditional methods used in preserving lineage memory

(1) Oral storytelling

Among the Annang people of Akwa Ibom State, lineage memory has traditionally been preserved through oral storytelling, recitation of genealogies, and the authority of family elders. Elders, especially lineage heads such as Linus Iyakndue (Head of *Nto* Mfiokowo), Anthony Ada Obot (Head of *Nto* Ada Obot), Nko Udo Essiet, the first daughter of Ada Obot, and village historians such as Reverend Maurice Etim Matthew, serve as living archives who recount ancestral origins, migration stories, marriage alliances and the achievements of forebears during family gatherings, funerals, naming ceremonies and festivals. Praise poetry, proverbs, folktales and songs are also used to encode family history in memorable forms that younger generations can easily recall.¹⁴ One major advantage of this method is its accessibility and continuity, as knowledge is passed down naturally within the family without requiring literacy or written records. However, a key disadvantage is the risk of distortion over time, as memories fade, details are forgotten, or stories are unintentionally modified across generations.

(2) Rituals

¹⁴ A. U. Essiet, (Lawyer, 63), Interview, Interview by Ifiok Martin Obot, Afaha Esang, 28 April 2026.

Another important traditional method is the use of rituals, shrines and ancestral symbols to preserve lineage identity. Among the Annang, ancestral worship and memorial rites serve as occasions where family history is retold and reaffirmed. Sacred objects, family compounds, burial grounds and ancestral trees often function as physical reminders of lineage continuity.¹⁵ Each family had a shrine with ancestral symbols where rituals are performed. The ancestral symbols include *akwa* (stake) and *nsoi* (carved images). Though Christianity has eroded this tradition, Benard Ada Obot, the custodian of the Ada Obot Family tradition, always takes time to offer prayers at family occasions, which usually take place at Afe Ada Obot (the family shed) at the grave of Ada Obot. These cultural practices strengthen emotional attachment to ancestry and reinforce kinship bonds, a significant advantage because they embed historical knowledge within spiritual and social life.¹⁶ The disadvantage, however, lies in the gradual decline of ritual practices due to modernization, Christianity, urban migration, and changing lifestyles, which reduces opportunities for these traditions to be practiced and transmitted.

(3) Naming practices

Naming practices among the Annang people of Akwa Ibom State play a vital role in preserving family lineage, identity and cultural memory. Naming ceremonies are conducted in the presence of the child's father with other family members and representatives of the extended family as witnesses. It is presided over by the family head, who is usually the oldest male family member. Children are often named after

¹⁵ I.O. Umoren, (Retired Teacher, 76), Interview by Ifiok Martin Obot, Afaha Esang, 28 April 2026.

¹⁶ A. U. Essiet, interview.

grandparents, respected ancestors, or significant events surrounding their birth, ensuring that the family's history and legacy remain alive across generations. For instance, Martin Ada Obot named his third son after his father and his last son after himself. Obot, the third son of Martin, named his first son Asuquo, the native name of his father, Martin. Similarly, the last son of Martin Ada Obot, Asuquo, named his first son Martin after his father and his second son Anthony after his uncle. Through this system, names serve as signs of love and allegiance, reminders of ancestral achievements, moral values, and family expectations, and as a means of strengthening kinship bonds and continuity within the lineage. Naming ceremonies provide an opportunity for elders to explain the meanings and stories behind names, thereby transmitting family history and cultural knowledge to younger generations. In this spirit, the author named his last daughter Mfoniso, meaning good luck. Mfoniso was born on 6 February 2012, a day before terrorists bombed Headquarters 1 Division Nigerian Army, Kaduna. If the author had died in that incident, it would have been said that the newborn daughter brought bad luck. In this way, Ada Obot's family and, indeed, Annang naming practices function as an important oral mechanism for preserving heritage, reinforcing identity, and maintaining intergenerational connection within the family structure.¹⁷

(4) **Inheritance systems**

Inheritance practices among the Annang people are deeply rooted in kinship, lineage continuity and communal responsibility. Traditionally, inheritance follows a patrilineal pattern in which property such as land, family compounds, and

¹⁷ M. U. Idiong, (Retired Court Clerk, 72), Interview by Ifiok Martin Obot, Afaha Esang, 28 April 2026.

economic resources is passed from fathers to sons, particularly the eldest son who often assumes responsibility as the new family head.¹⁸ This system ensures that family wealth and ancestral property remain within the lineage while preserving the memory and authority of past generations. In addition to material inheritance, heirs also assume social and cultural responsibilities, including caring for younger siblings, maintaining family shrines or burial grounds, and upholding the family's reputation. Although modernization, urban migration, and changing legal systems have begun to influence these practices, inheritance among the Annang still plays a crucial role in sustaining lineage identity, family cohesion, and intergenerational continuity.

c. **The heritage of the Ada Obot Family**

Family heritage among Annang people of Akwa Ibom State is a central pillar of identity, social belonging and cultural continuity. Family heritage is preserved through oral histories, ancestral reverence, shared customs and strong kinship ties that connect present generations to their forebears. Members of the Ada Obot Family maintain close ties across generations. The children of Ada Obot live in one compound, thereby enabling two generations comprising children and grandchildren of Ada Obot to maintain very close ties. Brothers, uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces live together in harmony. This also offers opportunities for guidance and mentorship that help preserve family values. Elders play a key role in recounting family origins, migration stories and notable achievements during gatherings, ceremonies and festivals, ensuring that younger members understand their roots and responsibilities. For instance, the grandchildren of Ada Obot hold their ukaware isua (End-of-Year Celebration) on 31 December every year. This event brings together the children,

¹⁸ A. A. Obot, (Retired Lab Technologist, 86), Interview by Ifiok Martin Obot, Afaha Esang, 28 April 2026.

grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Ada Obot together at the afe (shed) of Ada Obot, which houses the grave of Ada Obot. During this event, drinks and food are shared and consumed together freely. Prayers are offered for the repose of the souls of ancestors, named in order of seniority. The occasion enhances interaction across three generations, thereby encouraging the transmission of family knowledge and values. Awards are presented to family members who have excelled in their fields of endeavour. This includes children who excelled academically during the period. Also, every 26 December, the Family Head, Anthony Ada Obot, hosts the family for a get-together at his country home. Family compound, burial grounds, traditional titles and inherited land further symbolize continuity and strengthen the sense of belonging within the lineage.

One of the greatest values of the Ada Obot Family is education and a high moral standard. Despite the pressures of modernization and urban migration, the Ada Obot family continues to value family heritage as a foundation for unity, moral guidance and collective pride. Ada Obot himself was a shy person and therefore never exerted himself. Consequently, he was overlooked by his father and not encouraged to pursue an education. The humiliation of this experience motivated Ada Obot to insist on educating his first son, Martin, who later became an accountant.¹⁹ On his part, Martin Ada Obot ensured that he educated his immediate younger brother, Anthony, as well as the first sons of his father's other wives, Ignatius and Felix. Ignatius and Felix, on their parts, ensured the education of their mothers' children. This culture entrenched education in the family, and the Ada Obot family is fondly referred to as *mbon nwed* (educated people). Today, many members of the Ada Obot family have excelled in public service and in the private sector. The family boasts personalities such as a professor,

¹⁹ B. A. Obot, (Retired Clergy, 82), interview by Ifiok Martin Obot, Afaha Esang, 28 April 2026.

a judge, a military general, top civil servants, and entrepreneurs. The Ada Obot family is also highly religious, as all members are practicing Christians. Though Ada Obot was a traditional worshipper, he ensured that his children practiced Christianity. The family is divided between the Roman Catholic Church and the Pentecostal Assembly Mission, which was introduced to Afaha Esang by Ada Obot's first wife, Evangelist Ikwo Akpa Ekpon. The family boasts of a Catholic Priest and many Elders of the Pentecostal Assembly Mission.

d. **Challenges facing oral preservation in modern times**

(1) **Influence of modernization**

One major challenge facing oral preservation among the Annang people is the growing influence of modernization, formal education, and rural-urban migration. Many young people leave their ancestral communities in search of education and employment in cities, thereby reducing daily interaction with elders who traditionally serve as custodians of lineage history. As family gatherings and communal living decline, the informal settings where stories, genealogies and ancestral knowledge were transmitted are becoming less frequent. The advantage of modernization is improved access to literacy and technology, but the disadvantage is the gradual erosion of intergenerational communication that sustains oral tradition. With improved literacy, family members can read, write, and document their history. Stories that were once only spoken can now be preserved in written or digital form. However, there is reduced intergenerational interaction. Younger members spend less time with elders due to schooling, work, urban migration, and digital lifestyles. Traditional storytelling sessions are becoming rare. Also, there is a decline in respect for elders as knowledge keepers.

(2) **Influence of religion**

Another significant challenge is the influence of religion and changing cultural values. The spread of Christianity and Western lifestyles has led some families to abandon traditional rituals, festivals, and ancestral practices that once offered opportunities to retell family histories.²⁰ In the past, ceremonies such as funerals, naming rites and seasonal festivals were key moments for recounting lineage narratives. Today, many of these practices have been simplified or replaced with modern religious formats, leaving fewer cultural platforms for oral transmission. While religious transformation has contributed to moral and social reforms, it has also unintentionally weakened the cultural institutions that supported oral preservation. Religious teachings promote discipline, honesty, respect and social responsibility. It also discourages harmful practices such as violence, harmful rituals, or social vices. Nevertheless, it led to a decline in traditional gatherings, moonlight stories and ancestral festivals. Custodians of oral history (elders, family heads, traditional priests) have loose influence. Younger generations view traditional narratives as less important or “outdated.” Younger family members adopt new religious identities that distance them from ancestral practices. Oral transmission becomes irregular or stops entirely.

(3) **Influence of technology**

Technological change and language shift also threaten oral tradition among the Annang. Younger generations increasingly prefer English or Nigerian Pidgin in everyday communication, leading to reduced fluency in the Annang language, the

²⁰ Matthew, interview.

primary medium through which oral histories were traditionally preserved.²¹ Since many proverbs, songs, and historical narratives lose meaning in translation, the language's decline directly affects the survival of oral heritage. Although digital technology offers new opportunities to document oral traditions, the lack of systematic efforts to do so means valuable knowledge risks being lost as elder custodians pass away without transferring their memories. Consequently, the younger generation is not familiar with many traditional and ritual items. For instance, the important features of ritual worship, akwa and nsoi, are not known.²²

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that oral tradition remains a vital instrument for preserving family lineage, identity and cultural continuity among Annang people, with particular reference to the Ada Obot family of Afaha Esang in Abak LGA, Akwa Ibom State. Through storytelling, rituals, naming practices, inheritance systems, and communal gatherings, the Ada Obot lineage has successfully maintained a multi-generational record of ancestry, values, and social responsibilities despite the absence of written genealogies. However, the study also reveals that modernization, Christianity, migration, and technological influences are gradually weakening these traditional mechanisms of memory transmission. Despite these challenges, the persistence of oral accounts and family-based commemorations shows that oral tradition remains a resilient and adaptive cultural archive that continues to shape identity, strengthen kinship bonds, and sustain historical consciousness within the family.

²¹ O. M. Obot, (Retired NSCDC Officer, 62), interview by Ifiok Martin Obot, Afaha Esang, 28 April 2026.

²² A. M. Obot, (Project Manager, 49), interview by Ifiok Martin Obot, Afaha Esang, 28 April 2026.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations:

- a. The Ada Obot family and similar lineages should systematically document their oral histories in written and digital formats to prevent loss of valuable genealogical knowledge as elders pass on.
- b. A family archive or genealogical record centre should be created to store recorded interviews, photographs, lineage charts, and historical narratives for future generations.
- c. Elders and lineage heads should be actively involved in educating younger family members through structured storytelling sessions during family gatherings and annual celebrations.
- d. Efforts should be made to promote the use of the Annang language within the family, especially in storytelling, naming ceremonies, and cultural events, to ensure the survival of oral expressions and meanings.
- e. The family should adopt modern technologies such as audio recording, video documentation, and social media platforms to preserve and share family histories in ways that are accessible to younger and diaspora members.
- f. Researchers should compare oral accounts from different family members and generations, collect narratives from people of multiple generations, and conduct interviews separately instead of in group settings.

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