

An Empirico-Rational Justification of Metaphysical Foundation of *Mmiam* (Oath) in Annang Thought

Inameti Udo, Otto Dennis and Etifiok Udominyang*

ABSTRACT

Abstract— The concept of Mmiam (oath-taking) in African philosophical discourses, particularly in ethics and jurisprudence, is deeply rooted in the belief in a harmonious relationship between visible and invisible beings. This belief shapes African moral standards, promoting social cohesion, justice, and fairness. African thought systems often feature hierarchical relationships among beings, from a supreme deity to lesser gods, ancestors, and humans. These beings, particularly incorporeal ones, are believed to intervene in human affairs, including justice. In Annang culture, for instance, disputes are resolved through Mmiam, an oath-taking ceremony officiated by a native priest who invokes the supreme deity (Awasi Eyong), lesser deities (Awasi Isong), and ancestors (Mme Etete) using rituals such as incantations and libations. However, non-initiates, foreigners, and skeptics often dismiss such practices as superstitious, barbaric, or irrational due to their empirical-rational worldview, which ignores the metaphysical underpinnings of life. This essay employs a critical-analytic approach to demonstrate the empirical-rational aspects of Mmiam. It argues that, despite its seemingly mystical appearance, the practice possesses empirical and rational dimensions that reinforce its metaphysical potency. By appreciating these dimensions, it becomes clear that Mmiam is an integral and effective part of Annang society, helping to resolve disputes and maintain social order.

Keywords: Terrorist Financing; International Law; FATF; Customary International Law.

1 The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria

2*The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria.

3 The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria.

© 2024 the Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0).

INTRODUCTION

Ethics and Jurisprudence present the major aspects of philosophy in which oath-taking makes meaning. This is because the practice serves functions that relate to concerns of both disciplines (Oraegbunam, 2009; Udoh & Umotong, 2013). Like Ethics, oath-taking is concerned with morality of human conduct, and like Jurisprudence, it is concerned with justice, equity, and fairness (Edet, et al., 2024; Owa et al., 2024). Like both disciplines together, it is concerned with social cohesion. These appropriate the reasons for philosophical reflections on the practice, especially in its diverse ramifications of African meanings and functions.

Oath-taking is rife in Africa. Her various peoples, especially those from the southern-Sahara, conceive it as a necessity for their communality (Tsekpoe, 2020). To the peoples, the meaning and function of oath-taking are both spiritual and physical (Nnanna, 2020). This is because their world is characterised by a harmonious interplay of both visible and invisible beings which dictate moral standards and sustain social cohesiveness, justice and fairness (Udo & Udoh, 2023; Otto & Inameti, 2020; Menkiti, 1984; Ruzicki, 2010). It features the sort of spirituality that structuralises a hierarchical relationship among beings, starting from a supreme deity, and transiting through lesser gods, ancestors, elders, youths, infants, to the yet-to-be-born (Otto, 2022; Otto, 2015). From top to bottom, the vertical relationship is such that each being commands respect, obedience, and veneration and, turning the other way round - from bottom up - each seeks guidance, provision, and security, especially from the deities and for vital decisions (Otto, 2022). With the relationship, it is not unexpected, therefore, to find incorporeal beings exercising interest in affairs of corporeal individuals, even extending to justice. And in adjudication, the interest involves assistance for clarifying knotty disputes and settling them by helping to determine offender(s) and the innocent(s), and punishing the offender(s) as well as discharging and acquitting the innocent(s). In Annang world of south-Saharan Africa, the assistance is sought and delivered through a native-priestly-officiation, where the supreme deity (*Awasi Eyong*), lesser deities (*Awasi Isong*), and ancestors (*Mme Etete*) are summoned by a specialised priest to hear a dispute, using concocted potions, codified incantations and libations (Ekarika, 2014).

But non-initiates, foreigners to the culture, and habitual skeptics, usually disregard or completely discard the cultural practice, its potency, and efficacies, as fetish, barbaric, uncivilized, anachronistic, superstitious, spiritually mysterious, chance occurrence, and absolute time wastage (Ekanem, 2002). This is because such people are too empirico-rationally attuned to life to make sense of spiritual potency of the culture. They are inattentive to or completely oblivious of metaphysical foundation of life as well as its connection with and determination of empirical and rational aspects. This essay deploys critical analytic method of philosophising to resolve the problem by exposing the empirical-rational aspects of metaphysical foundation of oath or *Mmiam* of Annang people and using the same to justify the meaning and functions of the practice.

It argues that, although the culture may appear uncivilized, superstitious, and magical, the appearance is only a product of biased unspiritual perception of life by non-initiates. With unbiased interest in investigating it, such people would discover that the cultural practice has empirical and rational dimensions that justify and fortify its metaphysical potency and reliability. Based on the position, therefore, the essay concludes that *Mmiam* remains an irrevocable part of Annang world as it helps the society control or completely rid it of many disputes and crimes.

From this outset, critical analysis as a method of philosophical engagements, involves breaking down of complex concepts to simpler terms for clear rudimentary understanding and simultaneously applying that understanding to debate for overall view of what a concept of focus entails. By 'criticality,' on one hand, is meant engaging in disbelief that a claim, view, or position is absolutely true (Etokudoh, 2017). It is the refusal to accept any view except on verifiable or evidential grounds (Otto, 2021). Criticism raises questions, especially against dogmas (i.e. unverified beliefs or claims) in order to establish truth (Dennis, 2023). By 'analysis,' on the other hand, is meant "rational act of breaking down constituent notions, concepts, and/or terms involved in a statement into the least possible and familiar notions or ideas in order to have better grasp of the statement" (Etokudoh, 2017, p. 47). Analytical approach to discussions reduces or completely removes ambiguities in statements or propositions such that they offer adequately understandable representation of ideas inherent in them (Dennis, 2023). It clarifies concepts to offer meaningful theories, practices, and problem solving (Umotong, 2001).

THE ANNANG AND THEIR THOUGHT SYSTEM

Annang or, more natively, "Anaang" is a term with both ethnic and linguistic meanings. Ethnically, the term describes a people who occupy the North-Western territory of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The people are geographically "located within the Cross-River Basin between latitudes 4^o.25' and 7^o North and longitudes 7^o.15' and 9^o.30' East" (Essien, 2011b, p. 361). They are the second largest ethnic group in Akwa Ibom State, as they occupy eight out of the thirty-one Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the State, including Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Essien Udim, Abak, Etim Ekpo, Oruk Anam, Ika and Ukanafun. Essien (Essien, 2011) further guides that "these communities are brought together by a common cultural bond and they all look up to Afaha Obong (a community within the Annang territory) as their cradle of origin and traditional headquarters, where the Annang supreme deity is situated." This cultural bond makes indigenes of the ethnic origin refer to themselves as "agwo Annang" - with *Agwo* translating as "person" or "someone" in English language and "Agwo Annang" being a term that infuses idea of sameness into the peoples' thought system. Linguistically, Annang people also speak Annang language. This means that the people have their unique language, which is also known as "Annang." According to Ekong (2011, p. 65) "this language originally belongs to the Niger-Congo ethno-linguistic group."

However, slight variations exist in Annang language of Ika, Abak, Ukanafun and Ikot Ekpene people.

Historically, Annang people are said by Etim (1983) to originate from Jewish world. They merely migrated through Egypt and the Sahara desert in search of a permanent homestead. They, together with the Efik people of Cross River State of Nigeria and Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, first settled among the Twi people of Ghana (where the name Anaang means fourth son) before further moving southward to arrive at coastal South-southern Nigeria and South-western Cameroon.

Socio-culturally, the Annang are happy, cheerful, warm, and hospitable people who often take pride in their homes and heritage. They are “sentimentally attached to the tombs of their ancestors, but they reach out vigorously towards modernization through education” (Essien, 2015). As is the case in every society, the family is the cradle of social interaction and education in Annang society. Lending credence to this, Umoh (2009, p. 58) asserts that “in pre-colonial Annang... social interactions and alliance were formed through four institutions, namely: friendship, ally, grandparent/child relationship”. He maintains that these social relations unites the Annang society, helps the people to avoid war and facilitates peace between the people and their neighbours. More so, socio-cultural interactions, education and recreation among Annang people, are provided through Annang cultural folklore (*nke*), riddles, songs, dances, masquerades, and wrestling. Other strong socio-cultural institutions are the Annang secret societies, which performs multifarious functions ranging from social, religious, humanitarian, moral to economic political and judicial. Prominent among the secret societies for men were the Ekpo (masquerade) cult. Udo and Ette (2014, p. 83) explain this more purposely where he asserts that “among these secret societies, Ekpo and Iyong masquerades remain vital agencies of law enforcement in pre-colonial Annang.” And they all exercise a great stabilizing influence on the society.

In terms of religion, the traditional Annang person is the same as any other African. Mbiti (3) explains that “wherever the African is, there is his religion; he carries it to the fields, takes it to a beer party, to a funeral and other ceremonies and, if he is educated, takes it to school or university; and, if he is a politician, he takes it to the political arena”. Africans believe in existence of a supreme deity, lesser deities, and ancestors, and the Annangs are no different. For the Annangs, the supreme deity is the greatest of all spirits (good and evil), and is beneficent in character. It is known variously in the local dialect as *Awasi Ibom* (Great God), *Awasi Enyong* (God of the Heavens), *Awasi ikpa enyong* (God of the sky) *Awasi asana enyong* (God who makes the white sky), and *Abot* (the Creator). The lesser deities are *Awasi Isong*, and ancestors (*Mme Etete*). Udoh (1986, p. 69) avers that the name “*Abasi* or *Awasi* (SIC) was already in existence before the Scottish missionary arrived.” Ancient Annang people formed a theocratic state in which everything was established by supreme authority of god and lower deities who acted directly through agency of the ancestors, chiefs and elders; a system in which the god, the ancestors, and mankind interacted freely within approved bounds, influencing and complementing each other for the good of all. The same belief

system subsists among the people till date and shall remain among generations yet to be born.

THE NOTION OF *MMIAM* IN ANNANG WORLDVIEW

One important question that would lead to the foundation of this current theme is: what is *Mmiam*? It is pertinent to define the concept before discussing its types, functions, and justifying its nature. Accordingly, *Mmiam* is a solemn appeal to a deity to witness one's promise or determination to speak the truth or keep to terms of an agreement (Udo and Ette, 2014). The promises may be verbal, written, or ritualistically symbolic and, in Waapela's view (2005), can be administered on two individuals or communities in order to promote and strengthen bonds of friendship and foster good human relationship.

Mmiam can also be a physical and material substance or potion, which has invisible forces that makes its use active and effective. In other words, there are some underlying elements that serve as reactive force to the potion. It is in this wise that Ekarika (2014) avers that "*mmiam* is a concoction of herbs and certain liquids known only to the traditional medicine adepts and practitioners. It is highly poisonous but its effects are believed to depend on metaphysical and supernatural forces."

Mmiam binds people mystically, restraining them from being hostile and wicked towards each other. It creates what John Mbiti describes as "blood brothers" where parties involved, no matter how distant and *unfilial* they may be, relate as though they are biological relatives and would never act or behave in hostile and wicked manners between themselves (Udoh, 2014).

From jurisprudential perspective, Ekpo (1996) describes *Mmiam* as a method of ascertaining veracity of evidence in traditional dispute-settlement proceedings. It entails invocation of supernatural forces (the ancestors and deities) to assist in crime detection and other disputes (such as land, adultery, and defamation cases) resolution. The ancestors and deities are believed to be angry when unspoken reservations or falsehood are uttered with their names called, mentioned, or invoked. Depending on terms of administration of the *Mmiam*, the anger can result in serious calamities or fatalities to whoever the culprit(s) is. That outcome and familiarity of its possibilities instill fear in disputants (and intending ones) brought before the *Mmiam* and ensures that only true vows and confessions are made under/on oath. It is for this reason that ancestors are regarded as impartial umpires, judges, and adjudicators of disputes.

The practice of *Mmiam* is not new to Annang people. According to an oral interview offered by a custodian of *Mmiam ikpaisong*, Akuku Solomon Udoalah, of Ikot Ansang Village in Ekpenyong Atai 2, Essien Udim L.G.A, "the origin of *Mmiam* in Annang traditional society is as old as mankind. No one can really ascertain the exact period that Annangs began their use of *Mmiam* as the practice has been at the foundation of the society from time immemorial" (Survey 2023). Furthermore, Akuku Johnson Akpan Essien in Nto Usuh Ika village in northern Annang lends credence to the Akuku Udoalah's claim where he avers that "the origin of *Mmiam*-oath in Annangland is traceable to ancestors who established the practice for the purpose of

administering justice in the land” (Ekanem, 2002, p. 80). Also, Offiong (1991, p. 69) posits that “*Mmiam* is a secret and spiritual practice that has been in practice since the very beginning of time across the length and breadth of Annang communities; as both a discursive and practical mechanism that has shaped the understanding of everyday life, experiences and enigmatic moments of Annang people.”

What all these views imply is that *Mmiam* has been a culture of the people for ages, even before colonization. Since it started as and became an inalienable culture of the people, it has been passed from one generation to another as a powerful traditional tool for establishing and sustaining order, allegiances, justice as well as peaceful coexistence of Annang people of past, present, and the future. This is why the cultural practice features robustly in the people’s private and public parlances where the invocations are rendered for spiritual reinforcement and state engineering.

Mmiam is god of justice. Akuku Solomon Udoalah, in his further explanation of origin of the culture, also avers that “Annang society is notorious for her peace and security, and victory in wars because of the peoples’ adherence to *Mmiam* as their god of justice” (Survey 2023). Right from their ancestors to present and future children of the land, peace and unity among the people can be sustained especially through *Mmiam*, which serves as their binding covenant. Everyone in Annangland, therefore, can be said to be under jurisdiction of *Mmiam* as that has also enhanced their oneness and helped to rid the society of evil. Indeed, due to its efficacy in Annang world many societies and cultures today borrow the practice from Annangs. Explaining this, Ekanem (2002, p. 159) avers that “though *Mmiam* abound in all parts of Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, the best organized form of *Mmiam* is in Annang land, and particularly from Ika clan of Northern part of Annang.” This suggests that there are different types of *Mmiam*, perhaps with the most potent – depending on function – found in Ika. Also, it suggests that apart from Annang world, *Mmiam* exists in other places, but with varying degrees of potency per place-of-origin and the best being from Annang world. These possibilities in varying *Mmiam* therefore necessitate interrogation of its types and functions.

TYPES OF MMIAM

There are various types of *Mmiam* in Annang world. And the typology depends largely on function. There are also various functions, and the multiplicity creates difficulty in categorization of the types. However, for scholarship, we systematically categorize them into *Mmiam Enwongo*, *Mmiam Ekpuk*, and *Mmiam Idung*.

Mmiam Enwongo

Enwongo is a native word that translates as ‘promise’ in English language. *Mmiam Enwongo*, therefore, is ‘promissory oath.’ The oath-taker, in this case, makes promises under oath to discharge certain duties, responsibilities, or obligations in a certain negotiated way. He or she is, subsequently, expected to keep the promise. Failure to do so leads to experiencing of certain calamities that are contained in the

promissory negotiation and accepted *ab initio* by the oath-taker. *Mmiam Ewongo* is usually undertaken by two or more individuals who promise or agree not to break a vow, covenant, or agreement, or divulge a secret that binds them. It is equally applied in situations requiring affirmation or denial of what one did in the past.

In Ika, such oath involves pinching of left thumb of each party to the oath and spilling the blood thereof into a container. Each party to the oath then recites the agreement and, after, sips or licks the concocted blood. A drop or smear of the concoction on tongue is sufficient. Each party thereafter decrees that a prescribed calamity (such as an untimely death) befalls him/her if he/she betrays the negotiated promise, agreement, or course. This type of oath is difficult or impossible to break. That is because it involves covenanting with human blood. And experience reveals that many breakers of the type of oath usually go mad. *Mmiam Ewongo* can be useful in the following situations:

- (a) A boy and girl who are in love, but are too young or ill-prepared to get married. They secretly use the *Mmiam* to assure each other that they will wait for each other against all odds.
- (b). Membership of secret society or the occult, where new members are made to pass through rituals that would ensure perpetual membership, and remind of them of irreversibility of the membership.
- (C). Vigilante group membership, where it helps members to stick together in pursuit, deterrence, and defeat of criminals. The oath makes members resist temptation of selling out useful information about members to robbers, which could result in casualties on the side of the security operatives.
- d). Local Hunters, where it helps to control the innate tendency of a greedy hunter to shoot at a fellow hunter willfully while claiming that he mistook the colleague for a game.

Mmiam Ewongo can be private or public. It is private when the oath is between the person and his/her gods, and nobody else. On the other hand, it is public when the oath is between two or more people. In spite of this sense of publicness, the oath may still be private - with another sense of publicness defining it. Accordingly, *Mmiam Ewongo* is privately public when the individuals undertaking it are private personal or business people. It becomes public when it is undertaken by public office holders. Instances of such public oaths include those undertaken during chieftaincy installation, other public political office inaugurations, as well as professional inductions (e.g. Hippocratic and Matriculation oaths). A third sense of the publicness is defined by burdens of consequences of a party's failure to keep to terms of the oath. In this case, the oath is privately public when consequences of failure are strictly limited to the persons involved and is public when consequences of failure spreads to members of community related to the parties involved. There are situations where, for sole reason of sustenance of commitment to its course, the terms and conditions of an oath includes having the calamitous consequences of default by a party spread to his/her immediate or extended family relatives and even community of origin.

Mmiam Ekpuk

Ekpuk is a native word used in describing a conglomeration of various extended families. Each extended family populated by descendants of common ancestry or parentage is known as *Ufok*. This means that various *Ufoks* make up an *Ekpuk*. *Mmiam Ekpuk* is an oath instituted among relatives of common ancestry to protect members from killing or maiming or economically decapitating each other. It becomes necessary when there is a palpable suspicion that some relatives are capable of planning and executing evils against others. Killing of a kith and kin, for instance, is a crime against the earth goddess.

Although the objective of *Mmiam Ekpuk* is the same in all communities, the method of instituting it differs from one *Ekpuk* to another. Each *Ekpuk* adopts a pattern suitable for them. However, the most commonly used method is licking of *inung-ke-idia-allan* (mixture of salt and palm oil), or cola nut and oil, or water in calabash. Each member of the *Ekpuk* is required to dip one of his/her fingers into the mixture, remove and place it on his/her tongue, and say the following: "Never again if ever, shall I conspire, contemplate, and/or execute any evil against any member of the family. Old things have passed away, and today is a new dawn. Should I engage in any of these proscribed acts, may I go to sleep earlier than chickens do." Any family member who refuses to take part in the oath is seen as a dangerous person and is ostracized.

Mmiam Idung

Idung is a native term for the English word "Village" or "Community." *Mmiam Idung*, therefore, is community oath. This is similar to *Mmiam Ekpuk*, but is merely wider in scope of application. It derives its powers from the general belief in Annang land that when all members of a community lick from the same pot or container of a covenant potion, whosoever violates the prescribed acts is doomed. *Mmiam Idung* is undertaken in a community to proscribe acts like incest, prostitution, adultery by married women, murder, stealing, and other forms of societal ills.

THE METAPHYSICALITY OF MMIAM IN ANNANG THOUGHT

In Western thought, Metaphysics is one of the four core aspects of Philosophy, with the other three being Logic, Axiology, and Epistemology. Philosophically, Metaphysics is concerned with meaning and nature of reality. Reality is the ultimate nature of things. And in being concerned about ultimate nature of things, Metaphysics interrogates subjects such as change and permanence, existence and essence, space and time, universals and particulars, cause and effect, freedom and determinism, and Being. There are two basic perspectives to the interrogation. These include Idealism and Materialism. Idealistic metaphysical interrogation of reality emphasises the view that ultimate nature of things is "non-physical or intrinsic or intelligible or mental or ideal" (Dennis, 2023b, pp. 82-83). It describes the philosophical claim that idea or the ideal is

the sole way of access to and constitution of experience, structure of being, and the world (Omoregbe, 2002). By making such claim, idealists submit that reality is *a priori* (i.e. knowledge established before contact with experience) or "...intelligible or that reality is mental or that what is real is of immaterial substance" (Unah, 2001, p. 55). Put simply idealistic realities are value, idea, non-physical, spiritual, or intellectual things. On the other hand, Materialism emphasises that matter (not idea) is the only reality that exists (Omoregbe, 2002). This means that materialists' view of reality opposes primacy of idealists' idea (Omoregbe, 2002). And inherent in the metaphysical view is a simultaneous claim of *a posteriori* (i.e. knowledge acquired after contact with experience) mode of cognition or knowledge based on experience or "reasoning from consequence to ground" (Mautner 33). This also opposes idealists' *a priori* mode of cognition. Put simply materialistic realities are factual, matter, or physical things.

From the foregoing philosophical simplification of Metaphysics, if Annang cultural practice of *Mmiam* is contextualized within it, it would be apparent that it is idealistic. This is because the people's collective way of perceiving and interpreting the reality is basically spiritual or non-physical. It is why the perception emphasises various forms and levels of spiritual interactions among various hierarchies of beings. It is also the reason that causation is at the base of the people's belief system, which presupposes that every event has a cause and that cause is spiritual. It is for this reason that traditional medical practitioners or native healers, for instance, consult the 'spirit world' to investigate and identify the cause of a disease of an ill person (primarily, whether the ailment is a consequence of a violation of an established order by the sick person or a spiritual affliction by a wicked spirit or an ordinary, non-spiritually-influenced one), and source for solutions. For the people, even illnesses are regarded as having both natural and supernatural causes and, thus, must be treated through both physical and spiritual means.

Annang's causation perspective to life is predicated on the people's ontological view of reality as a harmonious interplay of visible and invisible beings. By this, they establish the conviction that every physico-natural event has a spiritual base that influences it. Following the conviction and their reliability on the spiritual and its efficacies, the people also consult the spirits for ascertainment of truth when confronted with intriguing and sensitive judicial matters. It is for this reason that *Mmiam* is administered and a duration of time given for manifestation of its effect(s). The oath-taker, if he/she is guilty of falsehood as accused, is expected to suffer a stipulated affliction (usually, death) during the time. When he or she dies or suffers the affliction, he or she is regarded as proving his or her guilt. Subsequently, his or her family is required to cleanse the land with certain rituals taken as peace offerings to the gods. However, if neither the affliction nor death happens to the accused person, he or she would be publicly declared innocent, discharged, acquitted, and celebrated before the entire community.

THE EMPIRICAL AND RATIONAL JUSTIFICATION OF METAPHYSICALITY OF *MMIAM*

Empiricism and Rationalism are twin schools of Epistemology. As already stated above, Epistemology is one of the core areas of study in Philosophy. Its major concern is investigation of meaning and nature of human knowledge as well as knowledge's relation to truth. With the investigation, one major subject addressed is determination of appropriate method of acquiring indubitable knowledge and determining valid truth. And it is for that reason that the twin schools evolved right from the time of Plato.

Empiricism is the epistemological theory that holds the view that the sole technique to deploy in acquiring valid and indubitable knowledge is the human senses, sensation, sense-experience, or scientific experimentation (Dennis, 2023; Dennis, *The Branches* 79). On the other hand, Rationalism is the epistemological theory that holds the view that the sole technique to deploy in acquiring valid and indubitable knowledge is deep (sometimes, ascetic) human thought, reflection, contemplation, meditation, or ratiocination, using the intellect (Dennis, 2023; Dennis, *The Branches* 77). While it is apparent that each of the schools of thought doubts the capacity of the other to offer valid knowledge, Immanuel Kant clears the doubt by arguing through synthetic *a priori* theory that both of them are complimentary in valid and indubitable knowledge delivery (Dennis, 2023).

From the descriptions so far, it is to be submitted against skepticism of non-initiates that *Mmiam* practice is empirically and rationally justifiable in spite of its metaphysical base. This is because the practice, though fundamentally metaphysical, also involves both empirical and rational dimensions.

Empirically, *Mmiam* is as physical and material a substance as it is metaphysical. This is because it is a potion. It is why Ekarika (2014, p. 269) avers that "*mmiam*-oath is a concoction of herbs and certain liquids known only to the traditional medicine adepts and practitioners..." Furthermore, following the view that Empiricism involves sensation, empirical interrogation of anything entails singular or collaborative utilisation of the five known human sense organs, including the nose, skin, eyes, tongue, and ears for interpreting and establishing conclusion and forming cognition (Dennis, 2023). It is through this that the human body (brain) mentally stimulates, interprets, perceives, or establishes smell, touch, sight, taste, and hearing, respectively, as what they are cognised to be. It is also through it that the senses singularly or collaboratively stimulate and mentally interpret, perceive, or establish life conditions cognised as cold or heat; pain or pleasure; comfort or discomfort; trust or doubt; anxiety or calmness; hunger, thirst or satisfaction, *et cetera*. And *Mmiam* can be so sensed. As a potion, it can be touched, sniffed, seen, and tasted. Ekarika (2014, p. 269) justifies this where he posits that it "...is a concoction of herbs and certain liquids ... that is (SIC) highly poisonous..." Also, *Mmiam* metaphysical efficacy can be physically cognised by a culprit as a condition of health including heat, cold, pain, discomfort, anxiety, and finally, death (sensually knowable by survivors of the culprit).

Mmiam can further be empirically justifiable where Empiricism, which is experientially based in knowledge acquisition is, according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, "(1) the knowledge and skill that you have gained through doing something for a period of time; the process of gaining this, (2) the things that have happened to you that influence the way you think and behave, (3) an event or activity that affects you in some way" (Hornby 513). All these conditions for qualifying a type of cognition as empirical are satisfied by constant practice of *Mmiam* as a people's culture.

Mmiam practice also satisfies criteria of experimentation, which characterises Empiricism. This is because it involves "(1) a scientific test that is done in order to study what happens and to gain new knowledge, (2) a new activity, idea or method that you try out to see what happens or what effect it has" (Hornby 513). Before Annang people could find its potency and efficacy dependable, *Mmiam* "potions" had been experimented by them several times since time immemorial till now. They have hypothesized conditions that would require *Mmiam*, concocted different potions for different purposes, applied the concoctions, observed their effects, and tested their workability, sometimes with antidotes for reversal. All that share traits with and amount to experimentation. Indeed, given claims of its potency or efficacy, *Mmiam* practice is falsifiable. The claims of potency or efficacy can be refuted through tests. Falsifiability or falsification, according to Popper (1963), is one of the traits of Science and Empiricism (Udo, 2023).

Rationally, *Mmiam* practice applies the intellect for imaginative, reflective, contemplative and meditative cognition. Without that, the constituents of the potion cannot be known, its types cannot be delineated, and functions cannot be charted. Doing aoll that successfully requires deployment of human intellect for understanding and interpretation. There are these unadulterated ideas of constituents of the potion, its potency, and efficacy that are innate or inborn or ingrained or inherent in *Mmiam* priests as well as clients. And innateness of cognition is an identifying peculiarity of Rationalism of old or speculative Rationalism (Dennis, 2023 39; Dennis, *The Branches* 77). Rationalists submit that human beings are endowed with native capacity for understanding and interpreting reality (Udoh, 2013a; Udoh ,2013b,Dennis, 2023). Cognition, to rationalists, always already exists in individuals right from birth and prior to life experiences. And that also explains why most priests of *Mmiam* are heirs of the practice from their forbears. They inherit the knowledge spiritually as it gets passed down through the intellect from generation to generation. *Mmiam* practice in Annang world is intellectually trans-generational.

But where did the cognition originally originate or arise from? Rationalists, just as Annang people, assert that it originates from the mind or intellect of the first mankind who perceived life in that dimension, for every human being is born with a mind (Dennis, 2023). Otto Dennis (2023) explains this rationalists' view more broadly where he avers that:

It is the mind that informs an infant (which has not yet learnt any behaviour from observable experience), for instance, that it is hungry (when it is hungry) and needs to feed. The same intellect informs it to stop sucking its mother's breast for the milk it feeds on when it is satisfied. Consequently, all that people display as knowledge right from birth is recollection of the elemental ideas originating from their intellect or mind. And that occurs *a priori* or prior to and independently of practical experience, sense-experience, sense-perception or sensation (p. 77).

From this, it is clear that *Mmiam* cultural practice is rationally justifiable. And Annang people of old were aware of the consequence of superficial contemplation of their universe as they thought and tried as deeply as their theoretical and experiential apparatus could aid them.

CONCLUSION

Annang people have a cultural practice called *Mmiam*, which helps them to create and sustain standards of morality and justice. Although the culture is fundamentally metaphysical, it is also empirically and rationally justifiable. Annang society is religio-cultural. The spiritual and physical are interwoven to the extent that whatever happens in the physical has a spiritual dimension and vice versa. That is why *Mmiam* is both spiritual and physical in its entire constitution and representation.

Not having a form of writing might have hindered the people's publicisation and proliferation of the culture in the way that written civilisations live. This might have also been the reason skeptics disregarded the possibility of *Mmiam* cultural practice having empirical and rational dimensions and, thus, being meaningful to life. Nevertheless, since the people stored their ideas in form of folklores, folk wisdom, mythologies, traditional proverb, religious world views that are passed down trans-generationally, we could still deduce and argue plausibly for existence of the empirical and rational dimensions of the culture as well as its meaningfulness. If the culture appears uncivilized, superstitious, and magical, that appearance is merely a product of the biased unspiritual perception of life by non-initiates and skeptics. With unbiased interest and proper investigation, such people would also discover that the cultural practice has empirical and rational dimensions that fortify its metaphysical potency and reliability and justify its meaning. *Mmiam* remains an irrevocable part of Annang world which controls or completely rid the society of many disputes and crimes.

REFERENCES

- Edet, J. E., Ugbe, R. O., Nabiebu, M., Alobo, E. E., & Ijomah, A. O. (2024). From Sovereign Immunity to Constitutional Immunity in Nigeria: Reappraising the Gains and Pitfalls. *Migration Letters*, 21(S2), 615-625.
- Ekanem, J. B. (2002). *Transforming Customary Laws: The Role of the Catholic Church in Dispute Settlement among the Annang of South-Southern Nigeria*. Being a Ph. D Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of award of the degree in Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven.

- Ekarika, J. (2014). *Uruan-Efik Essien Duopeba in Pre-History and Heritage: Akwa Ibom Evolution and Development of a Nation State in Africa*. ICIDR Publishers, 2014.
- Ekong, I. U. (2011). *Preaching in the Context of Ethnic Violence: A Practical Theological Study within the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria Calabar Synod*. Being a M.A Dissertation submitted in partial requirement of award of the degree in Stellenbosch, University, South Africa.
- Ekpo, J. (1996). *Annang Historical View*. Greenwood Press.
- Essien, E. (2011a). Annang Philosophy." *Summa Philosophica: An Introduction to Philosophy*. Pp 360-390. Edited by Ephraim-Stephen Essien, Lulu Press.
- Essien, E. (2011b). *Annang Philosophy, History and Culture: An Inquiry into Afrology and Afrophilia*. Lulu Press.
- Essien, E. (2015). Annang Metaphysics: A Specimen of African Metaphysics." *Aboriginal: African Philosophy*. pp 106-141. Edited by Iniobong Umotong. Robertminders Int'l.
- Etim, A. (1983). *Cultures, Customs, and Traditions of Akwa Ibom People of Nigeria*. MCOMP.
- Etukudoh, C. N. (2017). The Methods of Philosophy." *Introduction to Philosophy and Logic*. Pp. 45-49. Edited by Victor Daniel B. Inoka, The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University.
- Mautner, Thomas (ed.). *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. Penguin Books, 2000.
- Mbiti, John. *Introduction to African Religion*. 2nd edition, LongGrove: Waveland press, 2015.
- Menkiti, I. A. (1984). Person and Community in African Traditional Thought." *African Philosophy: An Introduction*. Pp. 171-181. Edited by Richard A. Wright, 3rd edition. University Press of America.
- Nnanna, A. (2020). African Traditional Religion Oath Taking and Resource Management in Nigeria." *International Journal of Religion & Human Relations*, 12(1), 201-209.
- Offiong, D. (1991). *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Magic & Social Order Among the Ibibio of Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Omogbe, J. I. (2002) *Metaphysics without Tears: A Systematic and Historical Study*. Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd.
- Otto, D. (2015). African Paradigm for Corporate Social Responsibility." *Journal of Management and Training for Industries* 2(2), 41-55.
- Otto, D. (2020). The Branches of Philosophy." *Rudiments of Philosophy and Logic*. Pp. 67-95. Edited by Iniobong Umotong, Otto Dennis, and Inameti Udo, The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University.
- Otto, D. (2021). Critical Reasoning." *Arguments and Critical Reasoning*. Pp. 1-26. Edited by Iniobong Umotong and Christopher Udofia, The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University, 2021.
- Otto, D. (2022). African Environmental Intuitionism and the Obligation to Posterity." *African Philosophy in an Intercultural Perspective*. Pp.181-190. Edited by A. Grannes et al. Springer-Verlag GmbH.

- Otto, D. (2023). Empiricism." *Theories of Knowledge*. Pp. 36-55. Edited by Iniobong Umotong. The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University.
- Otto, D. (2023). Idealism." *Theories of Knowledge*. Pp. 81-97. Edited by Iniobong Umotong. The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University.
- Otto, D., & Inameti, U. (2020). Suicide: A Betrayal of African Communalist Personhood." *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, XIII(1), 220-240.
- Owa, O. E., Miebaka, N., Odey, S. A., Ugbe, R. O., & Aloba, E. E. (2024). Impact of the 2014 Pension Reform Act on Workers' Commitment, Retention and Attitude to Retirement in Cross River State, Nigeria. *Ianna Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 6(2), 293-301.
- Popper, K. R. (1963). *Conjecture and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. Harper and Row Publishers.
- Ruzicki, T. (2010). A Traditional African Concept of Community Related to Ethical Intuitionism." *Macalester Journal of Philosophy* 5(1), 48-52.
- Survey 2023. A field survey conducted by the researcher in May, 2023, to corroborate claims about origin of Mmiam in Annang world.
- Tsekpoe, C. (2020). African Traditional Oath-Swearing: An Evaluation from a Ghanaian Pentecostal Perspective. *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 1(5), 131-138.
- Udo, I. L. (2023). Some Philosophies and Methods of Science." *Rudiments of History and Philosophy of Science*. Pp. 37-67. Edited by Precious Obioha, Iniobong Umotong, and Otto Dennis, The Department of Philosophy, Akwa Ibom State University.
- Udo, I. L., & Udoh, M. (2023). Moral Education and Corruption in Nigeria: A Reflection on Plato's Counsel on Education. *IILARD Journal of Humanities and Social Policy*, 9(1), 1-12.
- Udo, I. L., & Ette, E. (2014). Punishment as a Technique of Social Control in Annang Traditional Society. *Ifiok Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 1(1), 1-9.
- Udoh, E. (1986). *Who are the Ibibio?* African FEP Publishers.
- Udoh, M. O. S. E. S. (2013). Challenges and Prospects for Developing Scientific And Technological Attitude In Africa. *African Journal of Culture, Philosophy and Society: Aworom Annang*, 3(1), 7-15.
- Udoh, M. O. S. E. S. (2013). The Place of Mythological Metaphysics in Social Control. *Journal of Complementary Reflection: Studies of Asouzu*, 3(1), 45-53.
- Udoh, M. O. S. E. S. (2014). Socialization and Society: The Family System as a Basic Unit.
- Udoh, M., & Umotong, I. (2013). Environment Sustainability and Renewability. *Elements of History and Philosophy of Science*.
- Umoh, D. (2009). *The Annang Personality*. SNAAP Press.
- Umotong, I. (2007). *Exploration for Knowledge*. Robertminder International Ltd.
- Unah, J. I. (2001). *Lectures on Philosophy and Logic*. Fadec and Company Ltd.
- Waaapela, B. (2005). *Ethnocentrism and Conflict Resolution in Africa*. Freepress.