ISSEKE: HOMELAND OF OLAUDAH EQUIANO

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Introduction
There has been continuous controversy and disputation in the international academic circle over the nativity of a prodigious African of Igbo stock called Olaudah Equiano, Gustavus Vassa, the African. Equiano was enslaved in the 18th century. He later secured his freedom (1766), achieved wealth and great international fame. Lovejoy (2005), states that he was perhaps the first black person to command a large audience in Britain.

Olaudah referred to himself as “The African” whose native home was Essaka in Eboe. Some European sources and scholars consider that Equiano merely invented his African, (Eboe) origin and that he came from the West Indies. Scholars of Igbo history generally agree that Olaudah was an Igbo man, but his precise home is not clear.

It was Prof. C.O Acholonu who took up the challenge of establishing the root of Equiano. After two years of anthropological investigation and study in Isseke, Acholonu concluded that Olaudah Equiano was Olude Ekwealuo born in Isseke in Igboland. Acholonu’s research seemed to settle the centuries-long search for Equiano’s nativity. So we started to hear of the proposed Olaudah Equiano Local Government and recently a proposed Olaudah Equiano International Conference Centre, Isseke. Recently another scholar, Vincent Caretta revisited the controversy and projected the view that Olaudah indeed was born in South Carolina.

The pertinent question and, the knot to untie therefore is which view on the nativity of Olaudah is now valid. Isseke, the claimed home of Olaudah, had played a major role in the research and conclusions of Acholonu; the study was conducted directly in Isseke. Some prominent elders and citizens were interviewed. So, Isseke spoke to the world through Prof. Acholonu’s work. It now appears necessary that the voice of the town should be heard directly by the international community Isseke people may of course ask; what is the need for the search for the nativity of a man lost hundreds of years ago? The answer to this question is important but should come later.