

**ORAL TRADITION AND ETHNICITY IN THE
CREATION OF NEW STATES IN NIGERIA:
THE CASE OF AKWA IBOM**

F.E.K. Amoah

INTRODUCTION

One of the major values of contemporary African nationalism is equal rights of the individuals and minorities in a country. The feeling of helplessness in the established socio-political set up often motivates such minorities to try and achieve their goals through their own efforts. In the 1950s the advent of internal self-government in Nigeria brought with it the struggle of minority ethnic groups seeking a measure of autonomy. The idea was resisted by the dominant ethnic groups for as long as possible on the pretext of preserving the unity of Nigeria. This was to a large extent the remote cause of the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 to 1970. Some analysts have ironically labelled it as the 'Nigerian War of Unity' in the sense that it represented the tacit acceptance that true unity could come to Nigeria only when most of its constituent ethnic units genuinely felt that they had a voice in its administration and a stake in its continued existence.

Furthermore development planning in the form of sectoral planning on a national basis is not understood by the majority of Nigerians. As Mabogunje (1972, p. 5) rightly pointed out "until the spatial profiles of the sectoral allocations are clearly indicated through closely formulated Regional or Local Government Plans, no development programmes can be expected to win the enthusiastic support of Nigerians."

It was naturally the desire of the Ibibio, the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria to follow the example of the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo, among others, in asking for their own separate state or states in order to develop their own language, culture and economy. Within the former Cross River State the Ibibio agitated during the early 1980s for the development of their own dialect which was allegedly being neglected in favour of the dialect of the Efik minority which was being taught in the Schools and was adopted generally in public circles. It is interesting that a common over-arching language was not enough to bind together the Ibibio and Efik. There were also, of course, accusations of political domination and nepotism in educational, business, employment and other opportunities against the urban-based Efik living mainly in the Calabar Metropolitan area. Socially, the Efik, allegedly had always regarded the Ibibio (who live mainly in small rural communities) as stupid and uncivilized 'bushmen'. Besides the share of the proceeds of oil (petroleum) from the wells of Eket Local Government Area by the Federal Government system of weighting was a major bone of contention and a source of conflict among the ethnic sub-groups.

In short the Ibibio majority refused to be dominated by an 'arrogant minority' ethnic group, the Efik who controlled power in the former Cross River State. Several theories of the 'Ibo origin' of the Efik and the 'external connections' of the Efik minorities of the Calabar District came to dominate the politics of the former Cross River State in the 1980s. One eminent educationist, Aye (n.d), of this area put the matter more succinctly, and this

may well apply to other parts of Nigeria and presumably elsewhere in Africa:

In the Cross River State today everything is married to ethnic politics: whether in employment, promotions in service, award of contracts or scholarships, admissions into places of learning, distribution of projects and amenities and what not.

It is not intended to add more fuel to a political situation that had generated more heat than light in the past, and caused the break up of the former state. Rather this represents the documented outsider's viewpoint of the ethnic relations in this part of Nigeria by a writer after living and working among the people for almost a decade.

The basis of the divisiveness among the Ibibio and Efik appears to have been oral traditions which tended to distort the facts of history. Some of the communities in an effort to establish their separate identities in the area through the agency of some unscrupulous chroniclers dared to rewrite the political-cultural history of the land, claiming origin from all kinds of bizarre and unauthenticated locations including Ghana (presumably ancient Ghana) Ethiopia, Egypt, Zululand and so on. Weren't these propositions too romantic and far too tenuous to have been taken seriously? To what extent did local traditions and ethnicity play a role in the creation of Akwa Ibom State which was officially proclaimed in September, 1987?

The Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Every country in the world seems to possess some lores or legends which are transmitted to the younger generation about the origins of their forebears, the foundations of their towns and cities, and the sagas of their people. Such story-telling often supplies mythical explanations for the past and hopes for the future. Even well-meaning historians of the ancient city of Rome usually begin their accounts with the fable of Remus and Romulus and then brush it aside before proceeding to the documented and authentic data of the place on a more serious note. In the Cross River State the fables of Obio Offiong (1957) *A first step to Ibibio History* represent this category of information, and Amaku's (1949) *Edikot Nwed Mbuk (A Book of Stories)* Volume II, falls perhaps into the category of traditions.

Conceptually, it is important to distinguish between the roles of fables and traditions in understanding the African past. Fables, like family stories, speak of what was, or is believed to have been accomplished by the ancestors and the peoples with whom they were in contact. The characters involved may not be as mystical as those in myths that are presented mainly for entertainment of the reader. By contrast, traditions have the closest resemblance to history because they recall events and phenomena that occurred in the not-too-distant past in a familiar environment or social setting and therefore assert beliefs, customs and so on.

Yet there are many scholars who challenge the credibility of oral traditions because of their tendency to twist the facts to further particular interests. Malinowski (1922) shared this view. Murdock (1968) also flatly rejected oral traditions in his cultural history of African peoples, but made the Polynesians of the Far East an exception because of the care with which their traditions are supposed to be transmitted. Indeed, the Polynesians are reputed to have a well-organised body of traditions although they are essentially a non-literate farming society. Again after carefully examining some traditions of southern Ghana, Wilks (1957) concluded that traditions reflect diplomacy, not history. By

implication history or historical research in general may illuminate tradition but it can hardly be the other way round.

An unfortunate instance of how not to record traditions is provided by Meyerowitz (1952) in the **Akan traditions of origin** where the author made notes only of the things which interested her and even these were sometimes used out of context. Appropriate use of Ibibio, Ibo and Efik traditions must perforce involve a comparison of various versions of the issues and these must, if possible, be cross-checked with the traditions of neighboring peoples. An effort is therefore made here to correlate such traditions with documentary and other evidence.

Ethnographic characteristics provide other useful sources of information about the origin and migrations of people including their settlements. Thus any study of the Ibibio, Ibo or Efik which ignores the accounts of the early European, and possibly Arabic writers on the area cannot be complete because most of these writers were eye witnesses of events and happenings of the recent if not the remote past. Although some of their observations may have been faulty or erroneous from the African point of view, these may be regarded as being fairly representative of what obtained in the land at the time of their writing, or what they borrowed from written cross-references.

Linguistic studies have also been useful guides to the understanding of ethnic relations; but these have serious drawbacks. The study of comparative linguistics has not advanced to a stage where there is a general agreement on its interpretation. Indeed, the lack of an accepted genetic classification of African languages has been a handicap to African historico-linguistic research. The classification of African languages by Greenberg, (1966), for instance, is accepted without demur on the continent of Europe, but it is generally rejected by British linguists.

More importantly language is not always a sure clue to ethnic origin and association. The Onitsha people of Eastern Nigeria have a strong tradition of origin which relates to the Edo of Benin west of the Niger River but they speak a dialect of Ibo in the east. Similarly the Efut of the Calabar area who appear to have lost their original language and independent cultural traits, actually speak their own language as well as Efik when necessary. So do the Efutu west of the Accra Capital District of Ghana who speak a Guan language (Efutu) in addition to their acquired but preferred language of Fante spoken by the people with whom they currently have much interaction.

Significantly, the tacit acceptance of the close relationship between history and geography provides an opportunity to exploit their apparent complementarity in the search for patterns of migration and settlement morphologies. Ntukidem (1976) in a typical social science fashion, attempted to construct models that idealized the origin of clans and migrations of the Ibibio as a first step towards elucidating the processes and directions of their mobility in the past. Such models are, of course, easier to propose than to support by factual evidence so that the findings have remained somewhat inconclusive.

One important methodological message of this paper is that in conceptualizing such an historical situation (i.e. theorizing first and looking for evidence to support it by deduction in the tradition of the sciences), one tends to ignore, often deliberately and consciously, much of the supplementary evidence which would ultimately contradict one's own theory. On the other hand, generalizing by induction (on the basis of available evidence from unwritten and other traditional sources alone) can be misleading. There is thus a dialectical relationship between deduction and induction in historical research and both processes must be recognised as complementary.

In summary the methodology adopted in this study is holistic or multi-disciplinary. Such a methodology for the reconstruction of the centres of origin and patterns of migration of peoples is however more than a mere collection of methods. Rather it provides a synthesis of the individual methods in an effort to determine the relationship between different classes of information, or data which involve weighting a set of evidence against others in the same class, or different ones which appear to support one another, while others may contradict themselves (McCall, 1969).

Background to the Land and Peoples of the Lower Cross River Area

Among the earliest known descriptions of the land and peoples of south-eastern Nigeria, of which the Rivers State, Cross River State, and Akwa Ibom State now constitute a part is that provided by Dapper (1686) a Dutch trader and traveller in Africa during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. His 'description' was followed about four decades or so later by that of Barbot (1732) Agent General of the French Africa Company who wrote about the Guinea Coast in the early eighteenth century. Much of the information from these writers was obtained from second hand sources provided by local Africans because the Europeans confined their activities to the coastal settlements and rarely visited the inland places.

The distribution of ethnic groups and languages spoken by the peoples of the Lower Cross River basin was recorded much later with reasonable accuracy by Waddell (1863) and Goldie, (1874) the two Christian missionaries who lived among the Efik people of the Calabar area for several years during the second half of the nineteenth century. During the early part of the present century also the British Colonial Administrative Officer and Government Anthropologist, Talbot (1926) among others, (Forde and Jones, 1950) vividly described various aspects of the peoples of Southern Nigeria.

The Ibibio have been the dominant ethnic group of the 'Mainland' area of the former Cross River State. Today their highly dense population is based mainly in Akwa Ibom State. According to the **Nigerian Handbook** (1980) the Ibibio people constituted the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria after the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Ibo (Igbo) in that order. The Ibibio sub-groups include the Annang, Efik, Oron, Eket and some minority communities living in fishing settlements along the estuary of the Cross River, what the early Portuguese explorers called Rio Del Rey.

The present-day ethnic distinction leading to the recognition of the Annang, Efik and Oron as separate ethnic entities (as opposed to Ibibio proper) seems to be quite recent. Neither in the works of Talbot (1926) nor in the last Colonial Population Census of Nigeria (1953) were these recognised as ethnic groups distinct from the Ibibio.

It was in the first National Population Census of Modern Nigeria (1963) carried out three years after the attainment of full political independence that segments of the Ibibio were first accorded distinct ethnic status as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Selected Major Ethnic Groups in Nigeria, 1963

Name	Population
Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri	18,546,202
Yoruba	11,320,509
Ibo	9,246,388
*Ibibio	2,005,489
Tiv	1,393,649
Edo	954,970
*Annang	675,004
Ekoi	344,514
*Efik	166,297

Source: National Population Census of Nigeria,
*Of Greater Ibibio (Ibibio Union).

It is not unreasonable to suppose that political agitation in the period prior to full independence had given rise to political, and perhaps cultural individuality and a sense of belonging at the national as well as local levels. Indeed, an editorial comment in the Cultural Magazine of the Ibibio Students Association (1959) University College of Ibadan, remarked that "time was when Ibibio people were one; and when ignorance was rife they distinguished themselves as people with progressive ideas". Furthermore, during the presidential address on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Ibibio Students Association of the University College in that same year Ekpenyong (1959) its president, was constrained to make the following observation:

The definition and extent of Ibibioland is a matter of our serious concern. When the present Ibibio State Union at home was formed in 1928 it was called 'Ibibio Mainland Union', but eventually its limits were reconsidered and the name was changed to Ibibio State Union so that it might accommodate all the member clans of Ibibio land - whether on the mainland or on the seaboard. But it is very unfortunate that the cohesion has not been maintained to our satisfaction. Today the people talk of Efik, Annang, Oron and Ibibio as if they could force on all the component parts the status of a tribe. Such an attempted division is neither historical nor actual and is only a canker that is tending to undo our national strength.

But who are the Ibibio? Earlier, Jeffreys (1927) had played down the thesis that the Ibibio had migrated from far-off-lands in Africa to their present homelands. He concluded:

There are no legends or traditions of origin among the Ibibio. They have been long enough in the Forest belt to have forgotten the stories of their origin. (Jeffreys, 1927, p. 28)

Although this idea is gradually gaining support, as we shall see later, stories of

ancient migrations to Ibibioland are by no means dead among the people themselves. This in fact has been the basis of much divisiveness and political unrest in the area.

Ibibio Traditions of Origin and Ethnic Relations

Information about Ibibio origins is highly speculative and varied. Available traditional sources suggest that the earliest stock of the Ibibio included the Afaha clan whose ancestral home is believed to be Usak Edet in South-western Cameroon and that there are strong cultural similarities between the Ibibio and the Bakoko of Southern Cameroon (Noah, 1980a). It is suggested that the highland regions of this part of Africa may have been a major centre of human evolution on the continent (Dike, 1956).

The Ibom Centre of Migration Hypothesis

It is further suggested that the Ibibio people migrated from these eastern parts of their present homeland in two major directions. One group may have reached what is now the Ibibio Mainland by an overland route and settled at Ibom in Arochukwu formerly an Ibibio territory but now Ibo. Noah (1980b), on the authority of an earlier reference by Jeffreys (1927) states that the Ibibio lived in Arochukwu (South-eastern border of Iboland) probably between A.D. 1300 and 1400 and for a long time maintained a famous shrine called Long Juju of Arochukwu at that place. But this latter suggestion is discounted by Aye (n.d) on the grounds that the Ibibio have no such tradition nor practice of such a cult. Many scholars however continue to press the viewpoint of a centre of Ibibio dispersion from the village of Ibom in Arochukwu to other parts of the present Ibibioland, (Akwa Ibom State). It is thought that the people of present-day Abak, Uyo and Ikot Ekpene who are described as Eastern Ibibio or Ibibio proper might have migrated from that cradle, although as we shall see later, the structural layout of their clans today hardly supports this viewpoint.

There are other Ibibio who, according to another version of the migration story, seem to have reached the Mainland by sea from the east, presumably Cameroon. Among these would be the Oron, Eket, and Andoni people who upon arrival at the seaboard may have advanced northward until they came up against the eastern Ibibio expanding southward. Indeed the Rev. Groves (1930) of the Methodist Mission suggested that the Annang or Western Ibibio migrated northward from a place near Opobo by the creeks of the Cross River estuary. He based his contention on the observation that the general tendency in the province had been one of northward pressure. But such a trend would have been too recent to be considered as part of a general movement among the early Ibibio settlers.

Original Ibibio Homeland and Environs

Geographically, the presumed migration of the Ibibio from the south-western highlands of Cameroon to the Lower Cross River Basin may have occurred through two natural gaps - the Benue and Mamfe Troughs. The Niger-Benue area today is a region of great cultural diversity and complexity; but the geological history of the south-eastern lowlands shows that only the Oban Massifs and Adamawa Highlands stood above the sea that invaded this part of Africa during the Eocene period. This suggests that the Lower Cross River Basin might have remained under the sea for 'a long time' (Dessau and Whiteman, 1972).

Even in comparatively recent times the physical environment has presented many obstacles to free movement of people. At the time of the early migrations of the Ibibio there must have been a high forest which at its primeval stage would have been a very difficult environment. There was also a trough through which the Enyong creek now flows. This lowland with marshes and seasonal floods could not have offered a hospitable environment to the early settlers. Besides even though the people must have adjusted themselves to the riverine environment, the Cross River and its numerous tributaries would almost certainly have been formidable barriers rather than points of contact and interaction between the Ibibio and the original people who may have earlier occupied the land. As all these constraints lie to the south and south-west of the little village of Ibom where tradition has it that the Ibibio first lived, it is difficult to reconstruct the path through which the Ibibio 'fled', as it were, from war with the local people to their present homeland in the south. All that can be said is that they managed to avoid these obstacles.

The Alternative Ikono Centre of Dispersion Hypothesis

A more plausible and acceptable hypothesis of the Ibibio migration is that proposed by Jones (1963) who suggests that the cradle of the Ibibio people lies somewhere between Abak and Uyo government stations of Akwa Ibom State. In the words of Jones.

A study of the present distribution of the Ibibio tribes suggests an early scatter of the Ibibio over an area extending from Arochukwu in the north, Ika on the west and Oron in the south. This was followed by a massive dispersal north and south from a centre somewhere between the present Abak and Uyo government stations and a differentiation into Annang (Western) and Ibibio (Eastern). (Jones, 1963, p. 31).

Unfortunately Jones did not proceed any further to highlight this point beyond these few verbal statements. Ntukidem (1977) took up the issue some years later to examine the validity of Jones' assertion with the aid of structural hypotheses which rested on the assumptions of **constrained vis-a-vis unconstrained** expansion of the Ibibio clans and settlements from a common centre.

Granting that the bond of common ancestry, language, customs and culture may preserve ephemeral unity of primary communities in the face of expansion, in the first instance of constrained expansion in a conflict situation one should expect a restricted movement in one and the same direction. The resultant spread would resemble a fan or beam from a torchlight as in the case of the Ibom Origin hypothesis. In the second instance of unconstrained expansion one may expect a circular growth of clans and settlements resembling a diffusion pattern in ripples made by a stone dropped into a pond or the spokes of a wheel as in the case of Ikono centre hypothesis.

Distortions, of course may modify these ideal patterns especially where physical obstacles restrict or obstruct the free movement of people, for example, where the population of different segments of the community is confronted with unfriendly neighbours and frequent wars.

Thus if the two hypothesized centres of dispersion at Ibom in Arochukwu and Ikono between Abak and Uyo government stations have any meaning at all, the impact of the movement of people would have been vividly recorded in the structure of the boundaries and orientation of the different segments of the clans to the source region of the migration.

On the basis of this assumption the Ibom centre hypothesis has to be rejected on the ground that the wedge or fan-shape layout of clans expected is not represented in the landscape today. On the other hand the Ikono centre theory, the findings of which actually show at least sixteen major clans believed to have derived their origin from a common centre, must be accepted as a basis for further investigation.

The Evidence from Territorial Occupation by Ibibio Clans

Of the many Ibibio clans, Ikono presents a curious shape and significantly there are portions of this sub-clan among the western, eastern, northern and southern Ibibio. It runs in a north-west direction through the greatest length of Ibibioland. Its sub-clans are found in Abak, Itu, Uyo, Etinan and Opobo local government areas. Directly north of the assumed centre is Ibiono clan whose shape conforms to what should be expected under the presumed centrifugal growth (sectors) from a common centre. The clan is wedge-like in shape with its sharpest edge lying near the assumed origin. From here it stretches for nearly 70 kilometres towards the Enyong Creek.

Outside Ibiono clan towards the north and north-east are Itam and Uruan clans which also spread out in a fan or wedge-shape. Between these are smaller splinter clans of Etoi, Oku and Efut. In the south-eastern section two clans, Nsit and Iman stretch nearly the same distances from the centre. Ibesikpo clan's southward projection is however arrested by two small intervening clans of Iwawa and Ndikpo. The south western section is made up of Abak Ukanafun and Ndot among the most extensive clans and their arrest in the west is suggestive of the high population and struggle for land. In the northwest, the layout consists of severally broken up clans such as Abak, Ukanafun Afaha, Abako and Obong, Annang which depict an outward growth from the presumed centre.

This visual evidence in support of the Ikono centre hypothesis gives credence to the suggestion that the Ibibio had lived in their present homeland for a "very long time" and casts doubts about the presupposition that the people began their migration from Ibom further north of this point. Indeed, the observed pattern of clan distribution in Ibibioland especially the long stretches of Ikono, Abak, Ibiono, Itam, Nsit, Iman and others from a common centre could hardly have been achieved in only three hundred years as proposed by Talbot (1926).

The Ibibio and their Neighbours

The nearest neighbours of the Ibibio are the Ibo (Igbo) to the northwest, Ijaw to the southwest and Efik to the southeast, with the Qua, Efut and Ekoi further away in the northeast. Among these perhaps the Efik are their greatest adversaries. The Ibibio come into conflict with Efik as they do business and interact with the latter in Metropolitan Calabar, the seat of government and administration in the Cross River State.

The problem of Efik origin and descent is intimately linked with that of the Ibibio pioneers. Weddell (1863), Goldie (1874), Talbot (1926) and more recently Forde and Jones (1950) all concluded that the Efik are an Ibibio stock. The main evidence in support of this view was that the Efik spoke a dialect of Ibibio. A cursory examination of the lexical comparison of Ibibio dialects by the present writer seems to confirm this conclusion.

Table 2

Lexical Comparison of Words in Ibibio Dialects

English	Ibibio	Efik	Oron	Eket
God	Abasi	Abasi	Abasi	Abasi
man	eden	eren	Onwieni	Aniniewe
woman	anwowan	nwan	Utangayo	Mbaba
me	ami	ami	omi	amei
you	afo	afo	ofu	afe
one	kied	kiet	ki	kiang
two	iba	iba	iba	iba
three	ita	ita	ita	ita
four	inang	inang	inang	inang

Source: Author's Field Study, (June, 1986).

A study of other aspects of the dialect would have been appropriate and even more illuminating. As we have noted earlier, however, language is not always a conclusive evidence of descent since it can be easily adopted by neighbouring peoples. For example the place of the Oron and Eket sub-groups in particular is not clear with respect to the language criterion as the comparisons above indicate, for these latter sub-groups of the Ibibio speak dialects that are somewhat distinct. Could distance from the parent stock have been a factor in the differences?

The most comprehensive and fairly recent account of Efik origin and descent is probably that contained in a Report by the Commission set up by the Government of the erstwhile Eastern Nigeria to investigate the Obongship (traditional kingship of Calabar) dispute. In the Report submitted by the sole Commissioner, Hart (1964) at least five different accounts were provided by different interest groups.

It would be superfluous in a single paper such as this to narrate all the various accounts. In reconciling them, however, three points clearly emerge. Firstly, all but one mention Ibom in Arochukwu and Uruan in Eastern Ibibio as major centres of dispersion of the Efik. The people seem to have run into trouble first in Arochukwu.

The Aros wanted the Efik immigrants to worship their Long juju called Ibritam Chuku but the Efik refused and said they were worshippers of Abasi Ibom (i.e. Ibom god). The Aros asked them to get away from their town if they were not prepared to worship Ibritam and so a religious dispute arose (Hart, 1964, p. 59)

Secondly, the last major ethnic group among whom the Efik lived in fairly recent times were the Ibibio (possibly at Uruan) from whom they may have acquired the name Efik meaning "oppressors" or "Those that oppress others" (Noah, 1980a, p. 6, 10). Thirdly the majority of the Efik once lived in Creek Town (Okurotunko) by the creeks of the great bend of the Calabar river estuary, from where they finally settled in the city states of Old Calabar namely, Old Town (Obutung), Duke Town (Atakpa) and Henshaw Town (Nsidung).

It would seem that what has gained currency in the traditions of origin of the Efik is part of their recent history in which a section of Greater Ibibio clans crossed what may have been a great barrier, the Cross River, to the left bank where they came into contact with the Qua, Efut, Ekoi and other ethnic groups which were culturally different from their own. Up till this day the Efik still pay homage to the Qua people (Noah, 1980a).

It is significant that there is a deviant contribution to stories of Efik origin and descent by Afigbo (1965) who following a suggestion by Amaku (1949) concluded that the Efik are an Ibo stock, not Ibibio at all. Amaku's contention was that the Efik clans are the result of an intermarriage between an Ibo man, Okorafo, and an Ibibio woman, Atong Ama, both of whom lived in Eket in Ibibio land. The Ibibio traditionally named their children after their mothers, not their fathers, perhaps due to the polygamous nature of the society.

Presumably, the claims of Ibo ancestry of the Efik originated from the belief that their Ibibio neighbours once occupied an area inhabited by Arochukwu Ibo. Alternatively the claim may have been inspired by the fact that the Ibo were, and still are, a commercially and politically important group in the southeastern part of Nigeria, and such a claim could be regarded as a plea on the part of the Efik for acceptance by a group that controls the wealth of the region. Of course the claim that the Efik originated in Egypt or Palestine (Aye, 1967) is too romantic and far too tenuous to be taken seriously. This may equally have been an attempt to link the people, particularly the yellow-skinned Efik, with some caucasoid peoples of North Africa, Palestine and neighbouring regions.

Retrospect

This study has not resolved all the naughty issues of the origin and descent of the Ibibio, Efik and related ethnic groups in South-eastern Nigeria. It has however thrown more light on what would otherwise have been obscure about their traditions of origin which were the basis of their divisiveness. From the evidence adduced, it cannot be said with absolute certainty that Ibom in Arochukwu, now dominated by the Ibo was the starting point of a major migration of the Ibibio or, for that matter, the Efik. But the Ikono centre hypothesis of migration seems to have a stronger appeal as evidenced by the present day structural layout of Ibibio clans. Not surprisingly, the New Akwa Ibom State was named after the presumed cradle of Ibibio descent, Ibom. However Uyo the present-day cultural, economic and political nerve centre of the Ibibio clans near Ikono, was also chosen as the State Capital.

The decision seems to give credence to the view that history or historical research may illuminate tradition, but it can hardly be the other way round. In Nigeria today there is a strong correlation between the boundaries of the several new States and ethnic nations of the pre-colonial era, the best examples being the Hausa-Fulani States of Kano, Bornu, Sokoto and Kebbi the Yoruba states of Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo, the Ibo States of Imo, Anambra and Abia. In the same vein Akwa Ibom State is coterminous with Ibibio ethnic group although the same cannot be said of the multi-ethnic state of the present-day Cross River.

CONCLUSION

There are now thirty states within the Federal Republic of Nigeria and it is still too premature to suggest that the present divisions into states are final. Certainly there are still

a few pockets of continued agitation from various ethnic groups, a situation which has been resisted by the present military regime. Irrespective of the final outcome of the agitations, one thing has become very clear. The creation of states on the basis of ethnicity has become a critical element in the surge towards new focal points for regional and local development in the country away from the old capital of Lagos and the new one at Abuja.

The numerous state capitals because of their newly acquired political importance give new orientation to transportation, communication, economic and population flows in the country, and thus reduce the blighted effects of urban primacy or the concentration of a disproportionate amount of national development in a single national city which is the political capital, the chief port as well as the industrial centre. In terms of Nigeria's total development, the increasing spatial integration represented by the evolution of numerous growth points or centres comprising the state capitals, and their interaction during the next few decades must command attention. The extent to which the existing states in Nigeria will remain viable depends to a large extent on the development of internal cohesion within them. Past experiences indicate that internal cohesion in many states hinges on two primary conditions:

- 1) The extent to which legislation and practices in any particular state reflect the cultural aspirations of all parts.
- 2) The extent to which available resources in each state are distributed equally among the various parts. (Adejuyigbe, 1983).

Indeed some of the present states in Nigeria comprise more than one ethnic group so that the multi-cultural states ~~will~~ have to pay attention to the needs of the different ethnic groups which make up their population. In particular the largest and dominant ethnic group will have to guard against the temptation of passing legislations which reflect only their own practices and aspirations or adopting state symbols and other features that are important to their own section of the state. These are essential safeguards against disaffection within the state.

Moreover, the multi-cultural state should avoid the concentration of a disproportionate amount of development in areas of one ethnic group. In this regard special attention must be paid to the minorities in the state because all over the country, and indeed all over the world, people wish to preserve their territorial integrity, social cohesion and cultural values which are often traced to their ancestry.

REFERENCES

- Adejuyigbe, O. 1983 "Social Factors in the Development of the Political Map of Nigeria" in Oguntinyinbo J S et al (eds.) **A Geography of Nigerian Development**, 2nd Edition, Hienemann, Nigeria Ltd., 291 - 228.
- Afigbo, A.E. 1965 "Efik Origin and Migration Reconsidered" **Nigeria Magazine** No. 87, December, 267 - 280.
- Amaku, E.N. 1949 **Edikot Nwed Mbuk**, Vol. 11, Nelson.
- Aye, Efiog, U. 1967 **Old Calabar through the Centuries**, Calabar, Hope Waddell Press.
- n.d. **The Origin and Migration of the Efiks**, Calabar Osko and Sons.
- Barbot, John 1732 **A Description of the Coast of North and South Guinea**. London, Churchill.
- Dapper, D.O. 1686 **Description de l'Afrique**, Amsterdam.
- Dessau, T.F.J. & 1972 "Biostratigraphy of the Whiteman, A.J. Odukpiani Cretaceous Type Section, Nigeria" **African Geology**, Ibadan U.P., 207 - 8
- Dike, Kenneth 1956 **Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830 - 1885**, London, Oxford University Press.
- Editor's Note 1959 Editorial Comment in Cultural Magazine of Ibibio Students Association, University College, Vol. 1, No. 1, Ibadan
- Ekpenyong, Iyoho 1959 In a Presidential Address, Ibibio Students Association, University College, Ibadan on the occasion of its 10th Anniversary.
- Forde, D. and 1950 **The Ibo and Ibibio-speaking Peoples of South Eastern Nigeria**, London, International African Institute.
- Jones, G.I.
- Goldie, Hugh 1974 **Principles of Efik Grammar with a specimen of the Language**, Old Calabar, Mission Press.
- Greenberg, J.H. 1966 **The Languages of Africa** 2nd Edition, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------|--|
| Groves, A.T. | 1930 | In A Report on the Okun and Afaha Clans of Ikot Ekpen Division, Calabar Province, by Hawkesworth E.G. (1931)5 - 6. |
| Hart, A.K. | 1964 | Report of the Enquiry into the Dispute over the Obongship of Calabar, Enugu Government Printer, Enugu. |
| Jeffreys, M.D.W. | 1927 | Adiasim Group Intelligence Report by C.P. Thompson, Assistant District Officer. |
| Jones, G.I.
rB | 1963 | The Trading States of the Oil Rivers, Oxford University Press |
| McCall, D.F. | 1969 | Africa in Time Perspective: A Discussion of Historical Reconstruction of Unwritten Sources, New York, Oxford University Press. |
| Malinowski, B. | 1922 | Argonauts of the Western Pacific. New York, Dutton Co. |
| Mabogunje, A.L. | 1972 | "Regional Planning and Development Process, Perspectives in the 1970-74 Plan" in Babour K.M. (ed.) Planning for Nigeria, Ibadan. |
| Meyerowitz, E. | 1952 | Akan Traditions of Origin, London. |
| Murdock, G.P. | 1968 | Africa: Its Peoples and their Culture History, London. |
| Noah, Monday E. | 1980a | Old Calabar: The City States and the Europeans 1800 - 1885. Scholars Press, Nigeria. |
| Noah, Monday E. | 1980b | Ibibio Pioneers in Modern History. Scholars Press, Nigeria. |
| Ntukidem, A.E. | 1976 | "Geography and Historical Methodology with reference to the Study of the Origin and Migration of non-literate people" Calabar History Journal Vol. 1, No. 1, June, 1 - 28. |
| Ntukidem, A.E. | 1977 | Geography and Historical Methodology II. An Evaluation of the Structural hypothesis of Ibibio Origin and Migration". A seminar paper for Discussion, History Department, University of Calabar, March. (Unpublished). |
| Obio-Offiong, U. | 1957 | A first step to the Study of Ibibio History, Ana. |
| Talbot, P.A. | 1926 | The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. 1, History, London. |

- Waddell, Hope N. 1863 **Twenty Years in the West Indies and Central Africa.**
London, Nelson.
- Wilks, Ivor 1957 **“The Rise of Akwamu Empire” Trans. Hist. Soc. Ghana,**
Vol. III, No. 2.
- 1980 **Nigeria Handbook**
- 1953, 1963 **Nigerian National Population Census.**