

**AKSU JOURNAL**  
**OF HISTORY & GLOBAL**  
**STUDIES**

**Volume 1, Numbers 1&2, 2014**

**ISSN: 199 006X**

**Department of History  
& International Studies,  
Akwa Ibom State University,  
Nigeria.**

*AJHGS*, Vol.1 Nos.1&2, 2014

*AKSU Journal of History and Global Studies(AJHGS),*  
Volume 1, Nos.1&2

Published by

Department of History & International Studies,

Faculty of Arts,

Akwa Ibom State University,

Obio Akpa Campus, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

(in collaboration with *Ibom Journal of History and International*  
*Studies, University of Uyo*).

ISSN: 199 006X

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any  
means, electronic, median Seal, photocopy, recording or otherwise,  
without the prior permission of the Publisher.

© December 2014.

Printed by Robertminder International Limited.

**HISTORICAL LINKAGES AND CONTACTS  
AMONG THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH-EASTERN  
NIGERIA: SOME LESSON ON INTER-GROUP  
RELATIONS**

**BY**

**ASUQUO O. ANWANA Ph.D**

Department of History of International Studies  
Akwa Ibom State University  
Obio Akpa Campus

**Abstract**

*The Efik, Ejagham, Ibibio, Oron, Cross River Igbo that inhabit South-eastern Nigeria were no strangers to each other in the pre-colonial era. Rather there had been different levels of contacts, linkages and interactions between these ethnic nationalities in their historical experiences before the advent of colonial rule. This paper examines the nature, and historical forces, which facilitated inter-group relations among them.*

**Introduction**

Some scholars in their works on the people of South-eastern Nigeria before the advent of the European created the general impression that no relationship ever existed between them. In their views, the pattern of relations between one group and another was characterized by isolation, separateness and autonomy. Later studies on these people are diametrically opposed to the earlier views as they emphasized the distinctiveness of the entire groups which were hitherto lumped together under a convenient ethnic umbrella of a majority group around them. Thus, especially the 1980s marked a phase in the people's history with the emergence of "nationality"

study or studies of group "socio-political identities". Much of these studies questioned the doubtful historicity of the previous schools of thought and corrected some wrong impressions about each group.

The potential pitfall in both categories of writing is that they tended to over-emphasize the socio-cultural differences, some at best tenuous and glossed over the intricate network of historical forces which cemented relation between the communities in South-eastern Nigeria.

A.E. Afigbo<sup>1</sup>, O.E. Uya<sup>2</sup>, and E.O. Erimt in their separate works on the people of South-eastern Nigeria demonstrated that these people were more historically and culturally related than they have been portrayed.

South-eastern Nigeria is a vast geographical region encompassing many communities from the dim past. However, giving the limited scope of our work and perhaps for a more meaningful analysis, we shall focus on the following groups, the Efik and Ejagham in the present Cross River State; the Ibibio and Oron located at the littoral part of Akwa Ibom State; and the Cross River Igbo found in modern day Abia State. The purpose of this paper is to examine the natural and historical forces which facilitated and enhanced links, contacts and relations between and among these people spanning through decades and centuries before the advent of colonial rule. These are:

### **Factor of Geography**

The first factor which promoted links and contacts between the people of South-eastern Nigeria was naturally, the geographical factor. Cross River and its tributaries - Calabar, Akpayefe, Great Kwa, Ndian, Mbo and UyaOron Rivers among others-provided intricate network which serves as the basis for the establishment of historical linkages. Cross River rises from the Cameroon Mountains and meanders through the frontiers of many of these groups, and empties into the Atlantic Ocean. It passes through the gentle undulating Savannah plain to its confluence with Eniong Creek and

continues through forested coastal plain, which extends to west to the Niger Deltas<sup>4</sup>.

Viewed with European spectacles, Cross River and its tributaries were seen as formidable obstacles, which hindered inter-group relations within much of this area. They were dismayed by the fact that the main Cross River itself was not navigable beyond certain points and that for only a fraction of the year, by modern river crafts of any reasonable size. Its tributaries also were painted with drab colours. Charles Partridges, for instance, averred that "the upper reaches of the tributaries on the right bank of the Cross River are formidable obstacles during the rainy season owing to their swift currents and boulder-strewn channels too wide and violent to be bridged by above methods<sup>5</sup>".

For them, these obstacles were largely responsible for the ethnic, social and political fragmentation, which characterizes the people of the region. This was a misconception and misrepresentation of the actual value of the Cross River mostly as it concerns the people of the area. Much as it could be conceded that during the rainy season, some of the tributaries are virtually unusable, it has been pointed out that the rainy season was a period when indigenous people did very little travelling<sup>6</sup>. The main travelling and trading, this source further maintain, was during the rainy season when many of the section of the tributaries were easily navigable by means of native canoes or in any case could be forded at different point in the pre-colonial period. The main river was navigable by these craft all the year, round. Prior to the construction of road in these areas, the drainage system of the Cross River and its tributaries was so coordinated that communication or contact in the region posed no serious problem. Hence, for ages, the main river as well as tributaries served as a major link for the Efik with Oron and Ibibio. Similarly, it was through this river that the Cross River Igbo came into contact with Efik, Ibibio and Ejagham among other peoples of the Cross River basin.

Evidence shows that before advent of European, the Efik,

Ibibio and Oron fisher men met at the various fishing settlements along the river bank, its tributaries and numerous creeks to eke out a living. Overtime, such fishing settlements developed into villages. For example, Effiat, InuaAbasi, Ute brannah, ObioIyata, Mbendoro, InneOkong and of such villages which at present make up Bakassi Local Government Area were initially fishing settlements<sup>7</sup>. Emphasizing on the importance of Cross River to the Efik and Akunakuna people J. C Anene wrote:

The Efik of the estuary and the Akunakunagroup on the upper reaches of the (Cross) River exploited the opportunities afforded by their location to achieve extensive economic power. Economic power carried considerable political and cultural significance<sup>8</sup>.

As the importance of this River system was to the Efik and Akunakuna, so it was to the Cross River [gbo, Ibibio, Ejagham and Orono. As O.E Uya pointed out "historically then, Cross River has remained a major high way for the intermingling of the people of the region, with consequent reciprocal influences on their respective culture"<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, through the Cross River system, the people of South- eastern Nigeria had contact and gained an appreciable knowledge of each other.

### Migration Routes

Another factor which facilitated and enhanced historical links and relations between these communities were population movement and migratory route contacts. Although, there are considerable disagreements on the directions through which each of the groups arrived at their present abode, it is incontrovertible that they came into contact with one another during this phase of their histories.

Evidence shows that during the migrations, communities criss-crossed common routes and this accounts for the

mingling between them. For example, Efik tradition shows that they had migratory routes contact with the Cross River Igbo and are said to have settled in various places like Ututu, Umuahia, ItuMbonuzu and Ibom in Arochukwu. At this stage, the Efik interacted with the Cross River Igbo at different levels. It has been said that their nicknames Eburutu and Iboku are products of that contact<sup>10</sup>, In line with this, an account maintained that:

When the Efiks (sic) reached Eastern Nigeria, they first settled at Ututu in Ibo Country. The people of Ututu called the immigrants Eburutu, a corruption of the words "Hebrew" and "Ututu", the former word being a reference to the Efik oriented origin. Eburutu is the name which the Efiks (sic) are still known till this day<sup>11</sup>.

A version of this account rather holds that Eburutu, was an eponymous legendary hero from whom all the Efik people to whom the name Eburutu applies descended. An author remarked that in some instance toponyms are given the images of eponyms by oral traditions and that in the absence of any specific evidence, the rule should be "not to treat as eponym, a name that carries with it sufficient doubt of its eponymous identity"<sup>12</sup>.

It is most probable that the Efik acquired the name as a result of their temporary sojourn at Ututu in Cross River Igbo. It has been averred that, the indigenes of Ututu presumably in derision of the Efik claim of Hebrew origin called the intruders "Hebrew-Ututu", the appellation which later became corrupted to Eburutu<sup>13</sup>. However, even though there are apparent contradictions in the meaning of the name Eburutu, what is certain is that Efik acquired this nickname from migratory route contact with the Cross River Igbo.

Similarly, the name "Iboku" which is still in usage by the Efik was a by- product of their historical contact with the Cross River Igbo. It has been reported that the appellation "Iboku" is a corruption

of Igbo word, "Ibo-Okwu" meaning (troublesome or talkative Igbo) by the Ibibio<sup>14</sup>. E. U. Aye wrote that "it was during their (Efik) stay among the Igbo that called their host "unege" a corruption of the Igbo word "nnegi" (your mother), often used by their hosts children to abuse their Efik playmates when they quarreled<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, the Igbo called the Efik people "ndenmong" (from the Efik word "nmong" meaning water people) or "mbammiri" (islanders). It is probable that these nicknames, derisive in character, are reference to Efik contacts with the Cross River Igbo. This does not, however, suggest common origin but by products of migratory route contacts, interactions and experiences.

Also, Efik and Ibibio traditions reveal that the Efik pedigrees migrated through Uruan in Ibibio land. It has been said it was at this phase of their history that the people were called "Efik" by the Ibibio meaning "oppressors" and "those who cheat others". Udo expounded that the name came into use during the period of the slave trade and introduction of western education to the Efik because of their geographical position had contacts with the Europeans but barred the Ibibio from such contacts. Therefore, the Ibibio who felt oppressed gave them the name "Efik" from the Ibibio verb "Ufik" (to oppress)<sup>16</sup>. This suggests that the people were not originally known as Efik among the Ibibio whom they had interacted with but experiences acquired in the course of their contacts gave birth to the name, "Efik". On this note, M. E. Noah reported that:

One important clue to an understanding of Efik origin and migration is to bear in mind that the name Efik by which the present people are known, is fairly recent compared to the peopling of the estuary of the Cross River. It was the circumstances of the migration of the present inhabitants that actually gave rise to the name<sup>17</sup>.

Similarly, the Efik gave the name "Abakpa" to the Qua while the latter referred to them as "Anyong" a corruption of the Efik word "Omonyong" meaning welcome.

However, evidence shows that the by-products of the migratory route contacts were beyond name-calling. For example, it has been averred that the objects of royal importance, which the Efik still use in the coronation of their Obong, have some Ibibio connection. A source maintained that when the Efik left Uruan for Ikpaene, they were said to have borrowed from Uruan royal paraphernalia like *Ntinya*(native crown); *Akata*(throne or stool); *Ikpaya*(woven royal raffia); and *Ayang*(broom).

Also, the emergence of EkpoIbangaNkanda whom some insisted was Efik man whose mother hailed from Uruan and had a son, EffiomEkpo, who has become very famous in Efik history is traceable to their migratory route contact with the Ibibio<sup>18</sup>. In addition, it was migratory route contact, which promoted the establishment of a common native court council for both the Uruan and Efik people. It has been posited that before the removal of the court from IssietAdadia in 1906 to Ikpe, the Efik had equal members with the Uruan as shown in table 1.

**Table 1**  
**COURT MEMBERS, 1906**

URUAN	EFIK
AkpaAka	OffiongEkpenyongEyo II
UdoEfeUdoMban	BasseEffiom Duke
IbangaNkanda	EyoEyoUbon
UdoIkpe	EkpenyongEyoEssien
UdoOkonMbang	OtuUtaEgbo Jack
AkpanOkonEtokudo	AsuquoAkpabion
EyoUkong	James Eyo II (Clerk of the Court)

Source: M. E. Noah, "Efik Expansion and Influence in the Cross River Basin", pp.27-28.

The president of the court was R. B. Brooks, the Assistant District Commissioner. In the like manner, accounts of Cross River Igbo migration show that they had contacts with the Ibibio and Ejagham. In Arochukwu, for example, as many scholars have reported prior to Arochukwu migration into present abode, the Ibibio in the course of their northern expansion had occupied that area. Overtime, conflict arose between the Arochukwu and their Ibibio neighbours which resulted in the oft-quoted war. With additional military strength from the Akpa, the Arochukwu succeeded in pushing the Ibibio to their present location<sup>19</sup>. H. F. Matthews said that the Akpa referred to the Ekoi.(Ejagham). This suggests that in the course of their migration the Arochukwu mingled together with the Ibibio and Ejagham people. Afigbo admitted this much when he wrote that "the Aro are the final results of generations of blending together of three ethnological entities-Igbo, Ibibio and the so-called Akpa,<sup>20</sup>. H. F. Matthews in 1927 reported that "the traditions of all the various ingredients of this composite community (Arochukwu) from the time of their settlement here agree so well among themselves that they are worthy of much credence<sup>21</sup>.

The relationship between the Arochukwu and their Ibibio neighbor was not initially characterized by belligerent, inter-cine and rancorous warfare. Evidence shows that before the arrival of the Ejagham, the Arochukwu had settled down with the Ibibio in an atmosphere of cordiality for mutual benefits. A. E. F. Murray's view, for example, on the nature of their relationship was illuminating when he wrote:

The Aros (sic) lived with the Ibibios (sic) before the advent of the Iboms (sic) ... The inference to be drawn from this is that the original Aros (sic) (EzeAgu and his descendants) who were undoubtedly a mercenary people, settled down amongst the Ibibios (sic) for purpose of trading in the same manner as the Hausa do at the present day.

In all possibility, they formed settlements and tried to make friends with the Ibibio inhabitants. When this failed, they resorted to another device and called in the Iboms (sic) for purpose of exterminating them and driving them southward across the Enyong Creek.<sup>22</sup>

Also, an analysis of composition of the village, which constitute Arochukwu, as indicated below reveals the enduring legacy of the Arochukwu contacts with the Ibibio and the Ejagham. Arochukwu clan is made up of nineteen villages. Each of these villages was largely autonomous. In 1920s the nineteen villages were amalgamated into five families or group each of which believed that it descended from a single founding father or a closely related group of founders. The groups were as shown in the table II

**Table 11**  
**The Nineteen Villages of Arochukwu Classified into Five Groups**

Ada (Igbo) group	Ameseri (Igbo) group	Mixed Ibibio and group	Unspecified or Amaja group	Akpagroup
Utughugu	Uguafor	Obinkita	Isimkpa	Uguakma
Oror	Ugho	Amanagwu	Atani	Agbagwu
Manku	Amaoba		Amangwu	Amangwu
Amuvi				Amukwa Amasu
Asaga				Ibom

Source: H. F. Matthews "Intelligence Report" Aro Division, 20/1/15 N. A. E. p. 24.

The above classification shows that the Igbo consist of 8 villages; the Ibibio group 2 villages and the Ejagham group 6

villages, with the Amaja or unspecified group having 3 villages. The current groupings by A. E. Afigbo reflects 3 groups as shown below:

**Table 111**  
**The Nineteen Villages of Archukwu Classified Into Three Groups**

	OkeNnachi (Igbo family)	EzeAgwu (Ibibio family)	Ibom-Isi (Ejagham family)
1	Utughugu	Amanagwu	Uguakum
	Oror	Obinkita	Agbagwu
	Amanku		Ujari
4	Muvi		Amukwa
5	Asaga		Amasu
6	Uguafor		Ibom
7	Ugbo		
8	Amaoba		
9	Isimkpa		
10	Atani		
11	Amangwu		

Source: A. E. Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture* (Oxford: University Press, 1981), p. 190.

The current classification unlike the former one indicates the alignment of the hitherto unspecified group, Amaja, with the two Igbo group of Ameseri and Ada into OkeNnachi (Igbo family) with 11 villages; the EzeAgwu-(Ibibio family)-still retain 2 villages and the Ibom - Isi, Ejagham group also remaining unchanged with 6 villages.

Perhaps this new arrangement became necessary to foster strong unity among the entire core, Igbo group. On the remnant Ibibio in Archukwu a source wrote: The Ibibio, though broken and

driven out, were not exterminated, and the shattered remnant of their forces was allowed to collect and settle in what is today one of the largest towns in Aro confederacy, Obinkita, so named derisively by the victor, "the place of the dog"<sup>23</sup>. This source concluded that the strength of Arochukwu arose from the very diversity of their origins. All their groups contributed some factor to the Aro power and manner of their blending was the measure of Arochukwu greatness.

Among the Oron groups like Idua, Okobo, Enwang, EfiatMbo and Ebughu, their various traditions of early migration indicate that they had contacts with the Efik. In Idua, for example, traditions of migration to their present settlement place them within the context of Efik migration from Arochukwu to Uruan. According to this tradition, four groups of Eburutu namely Abayen, Usuk-Akpa, Enwang and Iboku reached Uruan from Ibom. Some insist that Idua was one of the groups identified as Usuk-Akpa who along with the Enwang and Abayen left Uruan before Iboku.

Idua peoples maintained that before the Efik arrived at their present location, "the Idua were already established along the coast of the Cross River". Among the early Idua settlers were the followers of Ayo Iyo, Oboyo, Ntekim, OsukpongNtekim and Atulyoka, OboyoNtekim was said to have established Akpa-Oboyo. This suggests that the original inhabitants of Akpabuyo before the Efik established their plantations there in the eighteenth century were Idua (Oron). Corruptly spelt Akabuyo. Other villages established by Oboyo included EsighikotEtongo, and IduaInwang while Atulyoka founded EsukAtu on the bank of Calabar River<sup>25</sup>.

### Trade and commence

Trade and commence also fostered interactions and relations between the communities in South-Eastern Nigeria. With the settling down of migrants and the developments of permanent settlements, trading patterns emerged to satisfy the economic needs of the people, and became consolidated. Gray, Birmingham and Melillsoux in a review of African pre-colonial trading pattern saw it in broad terms as

one expanding unit with each local trading point as the centre of the economic universe around it<sup>26</sup>.

On his part, Vansina, in relation to trade in Central Africa made a distinction between local trade and external trade. Vansina described local trade as one conducted from village to village with a given population, and the goods exchanged in this type of trade were generally specialized products from local industry<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, he viewed long distance trade as being a direct trade over long distance. Hopkins postulated that it was an attempt by the African entrepreneurs to overcome the limitation associated with local commerce which led to their participation in long distance trade<sup>28</sup>. For the people of South eastern-Nigeria, longdistance trade was an extension of their local trade networks with border communities acting in relay as centers of disposal.

The Cross River system which we earlier discussed also played a fundamental role as route on which trade was conducted between one group and another. Some of such clearly defined routes were the Cross River itself, Calabar, Akpayefe, Qua, Uya-Oron, and Mbo Rivers, and the numerous creeks including Eniong creek. It has been reported that a route also ran from Arochukwu in Cross River Igbo territory to Itu on the Cross River where it joined the main river route in Calabar. Afigbo maintains that this was the major route that linked Old Calabar to the so-called "salve land". That is, the region between Ogoja and the Benue which fed South- Eastern Nigeria with slaves up to about 1940S<sup>29</sup>.

The Efik traders, for example, were linked with Oron and Ibibio land through the main river with Calabar, Mbo, Uya-Oron and Okobo Rivers serving as major outlets. Similarly, the Ejagham through which the Cross River flowed became integrated with the network of routes which brought these people together in an impressive trading contacts between one another.

Evidence shows that the Ejagham had trade contacts with Ibibio conducted mostly through middlemen at Itu and Umon Islands<sup>30</sup>.

Also, through Umon, Oron people shared in trade with the Ejagham. A source maintained that most of the yams and cocoyam commonly referred to by Oron people as "ebreAtam" and "IkpongAtam" could be traced to the Ejagham people. Umon traders ferried into Oron with these produce and berthed at Uya-Oron, Iquita and Idua Rivers banks in exchange for fish and crayfish. It was fish and crayfish which also promoted the initial trade between Oron and the Efik. Another item of trade was salt. This was derived from Tom Shott Island situated at the mouth of the Mbo River<sup>31</sup>. In the course of interactions Efik elements fused together with the Oron inhabitant of this Island and became collectively known as Effiat. Besides TomShott Island, salt springs were located among theEjagham around the sacred lake Ijagham from which the people are said to derive their name, as well as in other places near Oban, Talbot reported that these salts springs were "possibly a determining factors in the final choice of settlement among the tribes"<sup>32</sup>. In his assessment of salt as an item of trade, which linked the Cross River Igbo with others in this region, Afigbo wrote "salt was very important in trade and external relations ofthe Cross River peoples. From here, much of the Eastern, North-Eastern and much of the Northern and Central Igbo obtained their salt"<sup>33</sup>.

Efik trading posts at Oron as well as other areas were manned initially, by their agents, probably slaves. George Watts, a District Commissioner wrote of the markets established along the river and creeks where "the boys go out to the village markets of the neighbourhood to collect produce in small quantities andbring down to the water side"<sup>34</sup>. In the nineteenth century, the tempo of trade changed, Efik merchants moved in droves and dominated trade within the Cross River basin with the European in the overseas slave trade: which much has been written about in this region.

In Oron area, for example, notable Efik traders founded settlement for trade. Notable Efik merchants included OkonEkpoBasey (James EgboBassey) who founded a trading settlement in 1879 known as ObioOkonEkpo metamorphosed into

James Town. From this base, OkonEkpo extended his commercial network to Udesi, Uda, Enwang and AfapaEduok. Joseph Henshaw was another prominent Efik trader who opened a trading base in IduaOrono in partnership with George Watts, he established a lucrative palm produce trade in Orono. Others include BasseyOrok who controlled trade in the Ebughu area, EdemOrok who had EyoAbasi and Udunguko as his trading sphere. Establishment of trading beaches also became fashionable among the Efik traders. Some of the beaches founded and named after themselves were EsukEneOkon, EsukIman and EsukInyang Uyi<sup>35</sup>.

In an assessment of Efik trade with Oron, an author averred that it was "solely in capitalistic terms". He suggested that Efik traders came to Oron with the sole aims of "realizing healthy profits" hence, they monopolized trade to ensure their gain. Nevertheless, it was through trade with Efik merchants that Oron was linked to the international economy with its attendant enduring effects on Oron landscape. Also, the establishment of Efik trading settlement in Oron fostered harmony and remained an admirable bond of unity between both communities as demonstrated by the Efik saying that *Oronye Efikedimkpokiet* (Oron and Efik are one).

Evidence also shows that Oron has trading contacts and relations with the Ibibio. The border communities of Ubiurn, Nsit and Ikot Ubo served as markets. It has been reported that unlike the trade in Eflk, Oron people trade with Ibibio did not hold much attraction based on a number of inhibiting factors. For examples, the goods obtained in Ibibio market were identical to what was produced in Oron environment. An intelligence report on Nsit, for instance, disclosed that they were almost entirely agriculturists as their Nsie and Okoboneighbours in Oron<sup>36</sup>.

Another limiting factor was Ibibio instrument of social control, EkpoNyoho while Oron adopted Ekpe. Being non-initiates of Ekpo, Oron traders suffered trade restrictions during Ekpo season and became very insecure. These dissimilarities in the means of social control hampered closer trade and links. Thus, Oron traders directed their activities mostly toward the riverside area including

Efik and Usahadit.

The means of transportation during the pre-colonial period favour water transport. Head portage adopted in trade with Ibibio land slowed down economic activities. With water transportation, places connected by arteries of the Cross River system could easily be reached with tons of goods. As the Mbo, Uya-Oron and Okobo Rivers empty from hinterland into the Cross River, it thus facilitated trade more with the banks of these rivers and creeks. However, these do not suggest that Oron trade relations with the Ibibio had no significant impact on both communities. Oron had strong trading link with the Uruan and Nsit people. Also the movement of traders between the two areas gave them an appreciable knowledge of each other's rich cultural heritage. For example, though trade contacts, Oron borrowed Ekpo, an Ibibio instrument of government. However, in Oron it served mainly entertainment functions

### Marriages

Marriages served as another factor, which promoted and sustained contacts and relations between each group and another. At the pre-colonial period, this closely followed migratory routes and trade contacts. Evidence shows that traders and other people who rendered services over long distance took wives along their regular routes. In most instances, they allowed the women to stay among their own people to provide not only the usual conjugal benefits but also other services, which aided their travel and professions. Among such services were hostel and warehouse facilities, etc. It has been reported that Arochukwu traders and Afikpo blacksmiths of Cross River Igbo, for example, took Efik and Ibibio wives in the course of their commercial sojourn in these neighbourhoods. Aye asserted that Cross River Igbo people have strong maternal ties with the Efik<sup>37</sup>. Also evidence shows that the mothers of some prominent Efik men were from Arochukwu.

Similarly, the frequent movements of Efik traders into the Oron geopolitical enclave led to inter-marriages between these two

communities. An author observed that Efik men preferred Oron women as wives based on two major reasons. First, among the traders, it was "a demonstration of wealth". Secondly, "Oron women were reputed to be very fertile"<sup>38</sup>. The second reason became a dominating factor for the Efik choice of Oron wives after the Henshaw Town/Duke Town war of 1874- 1875. As a measure to replenish their human loses in the war and even surpass their Duke Town adversaries, most Henshaw Town men rushed to marry Oron women. In addition, such marriages provide safety for Efik traders who quickly settled at OronoAsOron in-laws these traders had their business enterprises protected and where disputes arose these marriages were often used as the basis for peaceful resolutions.

### Traditional Secret Societies

Among these communities, another factor which promoted historical linkages and relations was the prevalence of traditional societies. For example, the Efik had Ekpe, Idiong, Ekong, and EkpriAkata; the Ejagham had Akata and mgbe (Ekpe); the Ibibio had Ekpo, Idiong, Ekong, and Ekpe; Oron had Ekpe, Idiong, and Ekong, and the Cross River Igbo had Ekpe, Akang, Okonko and Obon. These societies performed similar socio-economic cum political functions in the communities. However, there were observed variation in usage. As regard the diffusion of versions of these societies among the Cross River Igbo, for example, an author wrote:

We find among the eastern Ibo, the Ngwa, the Ututu and the Cross River Igbo secret societies whom names, rituals and functions denote something of their origin playing very prominent role in political and social matters. These societies include the Akang, Ekpe, Okonko and Obong (obon). Secrete societies bearing these or similar functions are found among the Efik-one<sup>39</sup>.

Ekpe, more than any of these, societies had wider spread and formed closer links and inter-group relations among these

communities. As reported by Uya, the unifying influence of Ekpe within the Cross River region is no longer debatable.

### Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, it could be concluded that the communities that inhabit South-eastern Nigeria were not strangers to each other, rather there had been different levels of contacts, linkages and interactions spanning through several centuries of their historical experiences. Thus, factor of geography, migratory routes, trade and commerce, marriages, traditional societies constitute the roots of inter-group relations in South-eastern Nigeria.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>A. E. Afigbo, "External contacts and Relations: An overview", in *A history of Cross River Region* (ed.), Monday B. Abasiattai (Enugu: Harris publishers Ltd, 1990), pp. 122-145.
- <sup>2</sup>O. E. Uya has demonstrated in many of his works the historical forces which fused the peoples together. See for example, "History, cultures and Unity in the Cross River Region" in M. B. Abasiattai (ed.), *The Rope of the Arts in Nation Building* (Calabar: Map Publisher, 1980), pp. 27-48; "Historical Trends in the Cultural Development of Nigeria, with Particular Reference to the Cross River State" in S. O. Unoh, (ed.), *Cultural Development and Nation Building* (Uyo: University of Cross River State, 1986), pp. 22-37.
- <sup>3</sup>E. O. Erim, "The Early History of the peoples of the upper Cross River Region", in S. O. [aja, (ed.), *History and Culture of the upper Cross River* (Enugu: Harris Publisher Ltd. 1990), pp. 38-42; "The Roots of our National Unity in the *Calabar History Journal* vol. 1, June 2000, pp. 1-16.
- <sup>4</sup>A. J. Latham, *old Calabar 1600-1891* (London: Clarendon Press 1973), p. 1
- <sup>5</sup>Cited by Afigbo, "External contacts and Relations", p.142.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid, pp. 125-126.
- <sup>7</sup>Asuquo OkonAnwana, "Ekpe Imperium in South-Eastern Nigeria, 1600-1900", Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, University of Calabar, Calabar, August 2002. p.46.

- <sup>8</sup>J. L. Anene, *The International Boundaries of Nigeria*, (London: Longman Group, 1970), p.61.
- <sup>9</sup>Uya, "Historical Trends in the Cultural Development of Nigeria", pp.29
- <sup>10</sup>A. K. Hart, "Report of the Enquiring into the Dispute over the obongship of Calabar" (1964), pp. 24-34; E. U Aye, *Efik Origin and migration Revisited* (Enugu: Harris Publishers, 1990), p.8.
- <sup>11</sup>Hart, "Report", p.29.
- <sup>12</sup>Cited by K. B. Maison, "A Socio-Political Identity of Oron People 1600-1900", Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, University of Calabar, Calabar, 1984. p.96
- <sup>13</sup>Aye, *Efik Origin and Migration Revisited*, p.9.
- <sup>14</sup>E. A. Udoh, *who are the Ibibi*(Onitsha: Africana-Feb. 1983), p.18.
- <sup>15</sup>Aye, *Efik origin and Migration Revisited* p.8.
- <sup>16</sup>Udoh, *who are the Ibibi* pp. 5-6
- <sup>17</sup>M. E. Noah, *Old Calabar: The city State and the Europeans 1800-1885* (Uyo: Scholars Press 1980), p.4.
- <sup>18</sup>Hart, "Report" p.35.
- <sup>19</sup>K. O. Dike and F. Ekejiuba, *The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria 1650-1980* (Ibadan: University press 1990), pp. 45-49.
- <sup>20</sup>A. E. Afigbo, *Rope of Sand: studies in Igbo History and Culture*. (Ibadan: University Press, 1981), p.206; H. F. Matthews "Intelligence Report on Aro" 20/1/15 N.A. E.
- <sup>21</sup>Matthew, "Intelligence Report", p.9. <sup>22</sup>Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand* p.194.
- <sup>23</sup>T. M Shankland, "Intelligence Report on Eastern Aro", AD 635, N. A. E, p.9.
- <sup>24</sup>O. E. Uya. *A history of Or on People of the Lower Cross River Basin*, (Oron: manson, 1984), pp.14-25.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid, p.15, 80.
- <sup>26</sup>Cited by K. B. Maison "A Socio-Political Identity of the Oron People", p.193.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid, p.193.
- <sup>28</sup>A. G. Hopkins, *Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973), p.56.
- <sup>29</sup>Afigbo, "External Contacts and Relations", p.136, 133.
- <sup>30</sup>M. B. Abasiattai (ed.), *Akwa Ibom and Cross River State: The Land the People and their culture*, (Calabar: Wusen Press, 1987), p.58.
- <sup>31</sup>E. U. Aye, *Old Calabar Through the Centuries* (Calabar: Hope Waddel

- Press, 1976); p.16; Uya, *A history of Oron People*, p.8.
- <sup>32</sup>P. A. Talbot, *In the shadow of the Bush* (connectat: Negaro University Press, 1992), p.318.
- <sup>33</sup>Afigbo "External Contacts and Relations", p.137.
- <sup>34</sup>Cited by K. B. Maison. "A Socio-Political Identity of the Oron People", p.195.
- <sup>35</sup>Uya, *A history of Or on People*, pp.80-81.
- <sup>36</sup>H. E. P Wethevell, "Intelligence Report on Eastern Nsit Clan", (1932), Uyo District 1/3/3 N. A. E.
- <sup>37</sup>Aye, *Ellk Origins and Migration Revisited*, p.9.
- <sup>38</sup>Maison, "A Socio-Political Identity of Oron People", p.198.
- <sup>39</sup>Afigbo, *Rope of Sand*, pp.20-21.
- <sup>40</sup>Uya, *A history of Oron People*. P.34.