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## Akwa Ibom/Efik Diplomacy in the Lower Cross River Region Since the Pre-colonial Period

by

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### Abstract

*Long before the advent of colonialism, various Nigerian groups have been interacting on various spheres. Some of these groups had shared common historical origins, culture, political arrangements and above all, heads interacted economically with little or no conflict. In the course of the relations, inter-marriages and borrowings of ideas of common interest took place, leading sometimes to fusion of languages and political systems. The people of Akwa Ibom, consisting of the Ibibio and her related groups on the one hand have had sustained relations with the Efik people of present-day Cross River State. The advent of the Europeans to the area blossomed in direct colonialism. Colonial rule brought the people into the same political orbit with Calabar, the foremost Efik territory as the headquarters until 1987. The introduction of Christianity, especially the exploits of the Presbyterians, provided more the instruments of integration of the people, such as the translation of the Bible, hymn books and related literature, schools, hospitals etc. Using a historical narrative methodology, the paper notes that the Efik, because of its vantage geographical location, were the first to interact with the Europeans and absorbed the Western culture. This made the Efik language to become the lingua franca in the Old Calabar area and also resulted in cultural imperialism to the disadvantage of Akwa Ibom people. However, the Efik dominance was broken in the 1960s. The paper examined the diplomatic variables that engendered the robust relations and advocates the strengthening of the long socio-cultural ties between the people.*

### 1. Introduction

Akwa Ibom State is located within the Southeastern axis of Nigeria, wedged between Cross River, Abia and Rivers States on the sandy deltaic coastal plain of the Guinea coast. On the Southern margins of the state is the Atlantic Ocean which stretches from Ikot Abasi to Oron (Ekpoh, 1994). Akwa Ibom State is inhabited by the Ibibio and her related groups such as Annang, Oron, Eket, Ibeno and Eastern Obolo (Andoni). Though the Ibibio origin of the above mentioned groups has recently been questioned by



some scholars, all the groups mentioned trace their origin from the Cameroon area (Akpan, 2018).

On the other hand, the Efik occupy the lower basins of the Enyong Creek, Cross and Calabar Rivers, extending beyond the Great Kwa River to Akpayafe on the Cameroon border. To the immediate west and North West of this contiguous riverine landscape lie their Ibibio and Igbo neighbours respectively. The city of Calabar is a tripartite capital of the Efik, Qua and Efut, three ethnic groups whom history has since drawn into the same municipal orbit (Aye, 2005). Apart from Calabar, the Efik also inhabit Akpabuyo and Odukpani Local Government Areas with other social-linguistic groups (Onor, 1994).

The historical visibility of the Efik is tied to Calabar, variously described as the “Cannan City of Nigeria” “a Nigerian Rome”, “the New York City of Ibibio land” or “a Cross River Metropolis.” Calabar derives its historical fame from her cosmopolitan character, being the cross-roads for trade, culture, civilization and administration since the middle of the 17th century. Located on the Calabar River near the basin of the Lower Cross River, the history of Calabar has been bound up with the sea, the Cross River and its tributaries, the Calabar River, the Kwa River, the Akpayafe or Ikang River and the Enyong Creek (Uya, 2005).

Since the arrival of the Efik in their present abode, have “turned their attention to the river or sea and become wedded to it because the sea then proved to be their important source of livelihood...the sea enriched their literature; it brought them trade and learning and linked them to the world outside their own. Using the river as the main artery of penetration and access, Efik influence came to permeate and, to a certain extent, dominate, the entire spectrum of social, economic and cultural life of the entire Cross River region of Nigeria (Uya, 2005).

Noah confirms that Efik traders of Old Calabar owed their reputation and influence more to the accident of geographical location than anything else, but they were quick to use their ingenuity in manipulating the geographical advantage for economic gains. From the strategic location at the entrance to the Atlantic Ocean, the Efik became one of the earliest peoples along the Nigerian coast who came in contact with the Europeans. This early Efik contact with the Europeans had implications beyond economic considerations (Noah, 1978).

## 2. Efik Origin, Migration and Settlement

To-date, Efik origin is beset with endless controversies. These controversies can be grouped into three schools of thought. The first maintains that the Efik are of Igbo extraction. Afigbo, the chief proponent of this view, suggests that the Efik ancestors were an Igbo clan living around Ututu in Igbo “country” and on the boundary between the Igbo and Ibibio. However, this view had been discredited. Afigbo has been vehemently criticised by scholars, all of whom contend that his proposition is not based on historical evidence. They argue, for instance, that there is nothing in Efik tradition, culture or language that shows any form of relationship with the Igbo. Thus, Afigbo’s

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claim is dismissed either as a figment of his imagination or an attempt to create a theoretical basis for Igbo political domination over the peoples of the Cross River region (Onor, 1994).

The second school asserts that the Efik are Ibibio by origin. Udo (1983), noted that the name of Efik founding father, Ibom Eno and those of their succeeding rulers – Otong Iboku, Atai Iboku, Ekpe Atai Iboku, Atai Ema Atai, Efiom Ibanga Nkanta etc. – are all Ibibio names. All Efik surnames before the European contacts are Ibibio. It is believed that the Efik, being one of the families of sub-group of the Ibibio, lived alongside with other Ibibio groups at Ibom in Arochukwu region before they were dislodged during the war with the Aro.

The third school of thought places the origin of the Efik in Palestine. This school is largely associated with Aye and Akak, who sought to show cultural and linguistic relationships between the Efik and peoples of the Middle East as proof of the veracity of their position. This school, like others, has been criticised. Its critics point out that it is not founded on any concrete and informed historical fact. They argue, for instance, that the acclaimed similarities between the Efik and peoples of the Orient are insufficient and therefore, not necessarily symptomatic of a historical relationship between them. Furthermore, mere similarities in cultural patterns do not automatically portray common origins of peoples (Onor, 1994).

The name Efik is from the Ibibio verb, *fik* (to oppress, to press down with a weight). Thus, the name “Efik” means “oppressor” or “those who oppress others”. The name probably came into use during the golden period of Efik history (1500-1900). Udo (1983) categorically states that the Efik are descendants of the Uruan stock. He stresses that the name “Efik” came about when some people from Uruan, who were living at this new place of abode at the time of the early European explorers and merchants came, and on their arrival, gave the name “Kalabros” (Calabar), to the place just as they gave the name “Benny/Benne” to what afterwards became the Bight of Benin.

### 3. Contacts Between Akwa Ibom People and the Efik at Ibom

Aye (2005), opined that the Efik ancestors entered what is now Nigeria by crossing the Benue River near the present day Yola and followed its wide valley between the river and the eastern ranges of the Adamawa highlands, stretching along the east into the flat undulating country of the Igbo. On getting to Arochukwu area, they settled at Ibom. After sometime, some of the Efik people dispersed to Itu Mbonuso, Ututu, Ukwa, Ito and Eki all within Ibom vicinity.

Abasiattai's (1987) account has it that from the Central Benue valley, the Cross River people including the Ibibio and Efik Ibibio, used the Cross River, landed at Ibom in present-day Arochukwu region of Abia State. They developed proto-Bantu culture during the period they settled in the Central Benue valley. The development encompassed language, social institutions, religion – including the concept of God among other ways. It is not known for how long the Ibibio and Efik stayed at Ibom, but what has been established by Noah (1980), is that the Ibibio were dispelled from Ibom

by the Aro, who not being a fighting group hired the Akpa mercenaries to accomplish the task. The Efik, like the rest of Ibibio people, migrated from Ibom. They subsequently lived at Uruan for many generations with their kith and kin. It was from Uruan that a certain group of Uruan whom the people referred to as “Efik” (oppressors) moved out in search of better fisheries and settlement. They sailed along the Cross River and settled at Ikpa Ene (Udo, 1983).

At Ikpa Ene which is an island, they sighted another land which they pointed at and called it “Obio Oko” which the Europeans later named “Creek Town” because it is located at the bank of Calabar River creek. They went and settled at the present site of Calcemco, which was afterwards called by the Europeans Old Town (Obutong), Ata-Akpa (Duke Town) and Ansa (Henshaw Town) were later settlements North of Old Town and Duke Town. The Efik found the Qua, (an Ejagham group) who had settled there before their arrival as well as the Efut, who came in from the Cameroon (Udo, 1983).

### 4. Socio-cultural Contacts Between Akwa Ibom and Efik

The Efik have had long contacts with some groups in Oron area of Akwa Ibom State. For instance, the Idua people in Oron/Eket have a tradition of migration which links them with the Efik migrations from Ibom through Uruan before they reached Calabar from where they crossed the river to their present location in Oron. Indeed, there has been extensive mingling between the Idua and the Efik over the years. This common environmental interaction over the years have led to some common customs among the two groups (Uya, 1984).

Uya (1984) added that it is likely that before the Efik migrated from Uruan, the Idua were already established along the coast of the Cross River. The earliest prominent settlers were, Ayo Iyo, Oboyoy Ntekim, Osukpong Ntekim and Atu Iyo Iyoka. According to tradition, Ayo Iyo, an Idua man, was a fisherman, who established a settlement along the Qua River in Calabar in the 1860s. Around his settlement, Ayo Iyo had thrown some yam peels, which surprisingly grew into huge tubers which he harvested and sent to the King of Calabar, Chief Effiom Edem popularly known as Duke Ephraim of Duke Town as part of his social obligation.

The king was surprised about the sizes of the yams and asked where they were produced. Ayo Iyo explained that they were harvested from the fishing settlement where he resided. Effiom Edem sent some people to assess the prospects of habitable land in the area. Their findings were encouraging, for they saw a stretch of uninhabited land. Effiom Edem mobilised his relations and friends to invade Akpabuyo (sea of Oboyoy). Eventually, Ayo Iyo was killed on the orders of Effiom Edem to avert the spread of Idua people in the newly discovered land. The incident is remembered in the popular saying – *mfon okowot Ayo Iyo* (it was kindness that led to the death Ayo Iyo). It is believed that other villages established by Oboyoy around the vicinity included: Esighi, Ikot Etongo, Idua Inwang, and Esuk Atu on the Cross River. The early interactions between the Idua and the Efik have been maintained over the years and strengthened by the establishment

of Efik settlements in the Idua area of Oron in the early 20th century. In Idua Asang commonly known as Oron, the Efik constituted the majority of the stranger population (Uya, 1984).

Ebughu Otong, one of the groups in Oron, has a strand of tradition of origin and migration that links its ancestry with the Efik. In addition, the Enwang group in Oron is regarded as one of the original Ebrutu clans that dispersed from Ibom to Uruan. The Enwang had settled in Calabar before the arrival of the Efik from Uruan. This claim of prior settlement of the Enwang in Calabar before the arrival of the Efik was the basis of a court judgement by Justice A.F. Weber. He wrote: "it is probable that as far as Calabar land is concerned, the Efik, when they came from Creek Town met the Qua and the Enwang". Further evidence of early Enwang presence in the area is that the most powerful deity among the Enwang, *Ndem Anantigha*, is still located at present day Efut beach. According to a source, in the past, an Enwang chief had to be present during the installation or burial of an Obong of Efik land (Uya, 1984; Oku, 1989).

Following some conflicts between the Enwang and Nsidung, the Enwang crossed the river to Oron and landed at present Esuk Oron. Feeling still threatened by possible Efik pursuers from Calabar, the Enwang left Esuk Oron towards the estuary of the Cross River where they settled at Mkpang Utong. There is little doubt that the Enwang are more related in origin to the Efik than their other Oron neighbours. It was not until 1926, for example that the Enwang people, for administrative convenience soft pedaled on their relationship with the Efik and accepted brotherly association with the Oron neighbours (Uya, 1984).

Effiat group in Oron is also considered as one of the offspring of the Efik stock. Similarly, James Town (Obio Okon Ekpo) was founded as an Efik colony by James Ekpo Bassey from Calabar town in the late 19th century. On arrival in Ibaka, Okon Ekpo started a lucrative trade in the area. He obtained land from the Ibaka people and established a flourishing market for palm oil trade. Related traditions and linkages to the Efik exist among the Okobo. Indeed, one of such traditions links the Okobo migrations from Ibom and subsequent dispersal from Uruan. In the process of the deep interactions with the Efik, the Efik established a trading post at Esuk Inwang Ekeya in Okobo which expanded to become a major settlement. Another settlement, Atabong, was founded by one Antai Ema, an Efik fugitive from Adiabo, who specialised in shell fishing (Uya, 1984).

Apart from the ancestral/early affinity between the Oron groups and Efik, the Obolo (Andoni) and her related group Ibeno are believed to have inhabited the Calabar area when they arrived from the Cameroon. This was long before the Efik migrated from Uruan. Oku (1989), noted that the Ibeno, though now mainly in the Qua Iboe and Andoni Rivers, "could also be found in small pockets almost wherever the Efik were to be found: Obutong, Creek Town, Ikoneto and Ikot Offiong where they are still called Efik Ibeno".

## 5. Factor of Geography

As noted earlier, the Efik traders of Old Calabar owed their reputation and influence to an accident of geographical location since Calabar, the core of Efik habitation is located in the estuary of the Cross River which empties itself into the Bight of Biafra. The Cross River is the third largest River in Nigeria and it receives numerous streams to its right and left banks so that Efik traders were not seriously handicapped in conveying goods either to or from the interior. Except where the local population proved hostile, Efik traders could use river transport to inland places at a time when road transport was scanty and far-between. Since the settlements were located at the estuary of the Cross River which commanded the entrance into the Atlantic Ocean, the Cross River had a tremendous impact on the economic and social life of the Efik and largely dictated the direction of Efik expansionism and influence (Noah, 1978).

Noah (1978) added that the importance of the Cross River to the Efik whether in the economic, cultural, religious or political fields cannot be over-emphasised. The Efik exploited the opportunities afforded by their location to achieve extensive economic power. Economic power carried considerable political and cultural significance. Indeed, in weighing the importance of the various West African rivers against the needs of the colonial administrators, in the estimation of the colonial administrators, the Cross River was the highway by which light and civilisation would penetrate the remotest recesses of the *terra incognita* inhabited by the Igbo, Ibibio and Ogoja peoples.

Based on their strategic location at the entrance of the Atlantic Ocean, the Efik became one of the earliest peoples along the Nigerian coast who came in contact with the Europeans. This early contact with the Europeans had implications beyond economic considerations. Through this contact, not only were the Efik able to learn European manners and customs but also seized the opportunity and sent their sons abroad to acquire Western education which was a prove of immense infrastructural advantage to the commerce of the region. The immediate effect of this action was that before the missionaries established schools in Old Calabar, sons of prominent Efik traders had received some education overseas (Noah, 1978).

## 6. Economic Diplomacy

Evidence shows that before the advent of the Europeans, the Efik and Akwa Ibom fishermen met at various fishing settlements along the river banks, its tributaries and numerous creeks to eke out a living. Overtime, such fishing settlements developed into villages. For example Effiat, Inua Abasi, Utan Bramah, Obio Iyata, Mbendoro, Inne Okang and many of such villages, which make up the Bakassi area, were initially fishing settlements (Uya, 2005).

Udo (1983) explained that, the history of Old Calabar and its development into major trade emporium from the 16th Century are inextricably linked to the internal trade on the Lower Cross River and later international trade with the Europeans. When in the first decade of the 16th Century, the European businessmen arrived on the coast of what is today Calabar, the Efik were the first people they saw. They opened trade transactions



with them, and not with the Qua or Efut who lived in the interior. Since the Efik were already traders, it did not take them long to learn the techniques of European business. They learned from the European businessmen how to monopolise trade and they became brokers in the overseas trade. Consequently, they banned the Europeans from entering the interior and buying, first, slaves and, after the slave trade ended, palm produce.

From the initial trade in commodities, such as ivory, ebony, bar wood, wax, red pepper for which Efik exchanged imported cloth, tobacco, rum, gin, firearms, swords, knives, hardware, iron bars and other domestic wears of the early years, trade in slaves and later palm oil and kernel would come to dominate the economy, politics and society of Old Calabar from the 17th through the 19th centuries. It was their position as the middlemen in the trade of the Bight of Biafra, in general, and the Cross River Region, in particular, that catapulted the kings and chiefs of Old Calabar into dominance in these years (Uya, 2005).

Efik trading stations and towns in Akwa Ibom areas included Jamestown, Ibeno, Enwang and Idua Oron, Ikot Offiong and Itu. Uruan Efik relations became closer when both made written commercial agreements as from the third decade of the 19th century. On the 18th of October 1836, King Eyo of Creek Town and his chiefs signed an agreement with Uruan people to open a trading station at Ikpa Uruan. Uruan chiefs who signed the agreement included Akpan Akpabio of Ikpa, Umoren Umo Ekpot of Mbiaya, Udo Eno of Eman Uruan, Udo Ntete of Ita and Esifa Umo of Ibiaku Uruan. Efik representatives who signed the agreement included King Eyo of Creek Town, Efiok Okoho and Ephraim Adam (Udo, 1983; Essien, 1983).

Uruan people permitted King Eyo (Etenyin Eyo) to settle some of his domestic slaves in Uruan River side for the purpose of trade. Uruan coastal towns like Anakpa, Ifiayong, Nwaniba, Ikot Inyang Esuk, Eman Ukpa, Ishiet Ekim, Ishiet Inua Akpa and Nrukpum completed mutual trading agreement with the Efik. Efik traders included Efiok Efang from Nsidung and Ekpo Umo Nkan from Ikoneto, opened beach markets at Anakpa and other coastal towns in Uruan.

Slaves were taken from the inland and coastal areas of Akwa Ibom to Ikpa beach market for sale. Slaves were bought in the slave markets of Anakpa in Uruan, Urua Akpan Andem in Aka Offot and Urua Ekpo Nwa in Edeobom, Nsit. At the market, large canoes were obtained for their transportation to the Efik slave brokers at Calabar port who bought and sold them at high profit to the European slave traders. Duke Town kings like Eyamba II (1805-1814), Duke Ephraim Eyamba IV (1814-1834) and their chiefs sent their trading men to Ikpa beach market to buy slaves, palm oil and kernel. Some Efik traders obtained permission from the people of Ikpa community and built shades for storing the goods bought until their canoes could arrive from Calabar, or they could hire big canoes from some Akwa Ibom coastal chiefs to convey the commodities to Calabar port for sale (Essien, 1997).

The Ikpa beach market was very crucial during the period. Apart from the route which connected Ibibio land to Arochuku in Igbo land, there were other major overland trade routes which linked the Ikpa beach market to other trading centres. One route

connected Ikpa through Ndon Ebom, Okobo, Oron to Eket. Some slaves and palm produce obtained from the hinterland of pre-colonial Akwa Ibom area were taken by canoe to Opobo at the Imo River mouth, where King Jaja's trading men bought them for their master (Essien, 1997).

The change over from slave to palm oil trade in Calabar directly affected the pattern of trade in the coastal and hinterland towns of Akwa Ibom area in the 19th Century in that the palm produce trade quickly became popular among the people and their trading partners. Some Akwa Ibom slave traders rushed into the emerging palm produce trade. For example, Chief Urua Anakpa from Duke Town, Calabar and Chief Ekpo Udo Ikoh from Ibeno obtained permission from Mbiakong people and established trading ports at a creek area called *Akai Iduak* and settled there to trade from the 1870s. The *Akai Iduak* beach market was called Nwaha-mba, because it was on a way between the Ikpa beach and Calabar Both Urua Anakpa and Ekpo Udo Ikoh bought palm oil and palm kernel and sold them to some European traders including Messrs Tobin and Horsfall who were palm oil importers in England but they sent their trading agents to Calabar (Essien, 1997).

Also Chief Efa Etim Effiong and Chief Edem Archibong, palm produce traders from Duke Town, Calabar, obtained permission from Etuong family in Idu Uruan, to settle at Etuong beach and trade. The Etuong beach was later identified as Ifiayong beach market. These traders were trading agents to Peter Nicholls, a Sierra Leonean palm produce and dye wood trader in Creek Town, Calabar. Both *Akai Iduak* and Etuong creeks were in the same axis and they developed, as earlier said, into beach markets. The Nwaha-mba beach market later came to be called Nwaniba beach market, where palm produce and manufactured goods were obtained. In the Ifiayong beach market, crayfish, edibles and palm produce were sold in large quantities (Essien, 1997).

According to Essien (1997), the presence of pirates in the creeks that led to Ikpa, Nwaniba and Ifiayong beach markets caused great hazards to the prosperity of trade in the area toward the end of the 19th Century. Pirates often frequently harassed trading canoes in the areas causing loss of goods and lives. It was suspected that one of the pirates' leader was Mr. Akpan Akpakpan Uko who was nicknamed Uko Mbiakong. The traders made several attempts to curb the scourge of piracy by making pledges to reward any person or persons who could capture the pirates' leader or offer useful information that could lead to his arrest.

In response to the call, an Efik strongman named Eyo Nsa, led a band of strongmen and attacked some pirates around Ikpa creek. The group caught Uko Mbiakong, the supposed pirates' leader and beheaded him. As promised, Chief Essien Ekpe Oku of Efik land gave his daughter, Inyang Essien Ekpe Oku, in marriage to Eyo Nsa, the Efik strongman. It is opined that at the end of the 19th Century more than 1000 trading canoes were operating in the beach market area – a reduction from earlier boom in the trade (Oku, 1989).

Another factor that led to the decline of trading activities in the beach markets was the molestation of Ikpa women by some Efik traders in about 1889. When Ikpa

market women brought their palm oil and kernel to Ikpa beach market, they asked for some increase in price of their oil and some Efik buyers who seemed to have accepted the increase in the price later refused to pay same after collecting the palm oil to their shades. The women refused to take the after-thought price that the Efik traders gave them. A disagreement ensued and the women insisted on collecting back their palm oil but the Efik traders refused. They later exchanged words, abused them, and threatened to 'deal' with the women physically (Essien, 1997).

The action of the Efik traders on the women was an anathema to the social custom and traditions of the people in the Ikpa community. As anger rose high, Ikpa chiefs ordered that their beach market be closed, and it was accordingly closed to businesses. Following the closure, trading businesses were halted for some weeks between March and May 1889. Later however, the Efik traders sued for peace and settlement of the dispute. When the matter was settled, the Efik traders were heavily fined. The fines included: a live cow, seven faces of yam tubers (35 tubers of yam), seven white cocks, seven pots of palm wine, seven bottles of *ufofop* (native gin) and seven goats for sacrifices to the gods (Essien, 1997).

The port of Itu was the principal port of business. The agents of Efik middlemen settled in large numbers in Itu at this time for the purpose of engaging in "legitimate" trade. But they had traded earlier in the hinterland since the days of the slave trade. By 1931, Efik population in Itu, numbered about 2,418, clustered around a single settlement at Itu Hill. Perhaps, it is relevant to examine briefly the business and political life of one Etim Offiong Coco-Bassey, a prominent Efik businessman and traders in the late 19th century. He lived and traded at Itu and became very rich. He had cocoa plantations at Obot Etim, Afia Isong, Brickfield (Etehentem), and Mbiabo. His father, Chief Otu Bassey, also had cocoa plantation at Mbiabo. He later became a Political Agent (Warrant Chief) and President of the Itu Cross River Native Court, a post he held until death on the 30th of November 1898. He was of the Eyamba family of Calabar as they were the majority of Efik resident at Itu (Ukpong, 1986).

At the close of the 19th century, a new market was opened at Idua, Oron by an Efik immigrant, Nyong Efanga. His market remained largely ignored as people continued to patronise the old ones. Efanga was compelled to hand out gifts of salt as inducement to traders. However, when the locality was made a colonial seat of administration for the Oron area, Efanga's market gained in stature. Another Efik, Joseph Henshaw introduced cocoa into Oron from Fernando Po in 1879. He bought a piece of land at Oron on the left bank of the Cross River estuary, from Chief Ating Edem Umo of Iquita. He then began a plantation there, growing cocoa among other crops (Uya, 1984).

The Efik continued to steadily flow into Oron area up to the colonial period. Many of these immigrants settled in Tom Shott Island, Ibaka, Idua, Uya Oron and Okobo. Not only did their presence expand the existing fraternal ties with the Efik, they also brought with them well developed knowledge of the demands of international and domestic trade. As noted earlier, a notable Efik trader James Egbo Bassey from Duke

Town established a trading post and settled at Ibaka and founded James Town. From there, his sphere of influence extended to Udesi, Uda, Enwang and Afaha Eduok in Oron. In another development, in the second half of the 18th century, one Eton Otu Meseme, nicknamed, Antai Ema constantly lost his children to crocodiles in Adiabo Creeks, feeling witch-hunted, sailed out in a canoe to Okobo, probably he was related maternally with the Okobo people. He established a new Adiabo settlement called Atabong. The settlement had since blossomed into a large population resulting in the dispersal of some of the inhabitants to Eket area to form another community known as Atabong (Uya, 1984; Ekarika, 2014).

Many Efik traders also settled in Okobo, especially around Esuk Inwang Okobo. Through trade and inter-marriages, they exerted their cultural influence in Okobo. As the 20th century progressed, there appeared to be a tacit partitioning of Oron among some Efik traders. Thus, Bassey Orok held sway in Ebughu area, while Edem Orok dominated trade in Eyo Abasi and Uduung Uko. A number of others are remembered for the bulking centres they named after themselves, such as Esuk Ene Okon, Esuk Iman and Esuk Inyang Uyi in Uya Oron.

In the area of agriculture, the people of Akwa Ibom, particularly the Ibibio and Annang also made significant contributions to this sub-sector. According to Okokon, by the second half of the 20th Century, all slaves in Old Calabar were freed. The Efik were put in dire need of extra hands to work for them. The labour situation was further worsened with the abolition of the House Rule Ordinance of 1915 justified partly on the ground that the Houses were based on domestic slavery. This development threw Efik society into economic doldrums. The loss of "house labour" was the greatest blow on the Efik chiefs whose deteriorating economic position was worsened by the repeal of the forced labour in 1918. Most of the freed slaves declared themselves independent of their masters and refused to sell their labour to the masters. This was the beginning of the "contract labour" or what can be described as "house-boy" system. Some Efik gentlemen penetrated Akwa Ibom area to recruit *mbio utom* (labourers) and *ndito ufok* (house boys) for their domestic needs (Charles, 2008).

The negotiation might last several days and would be finally sealed by an oath administered on the Efik gentleman who came to recruit labour. The oath was aimed at guaranteeing personal safety of the Ibibio labourer in the strange Efik environment. The oath instilled confidence in the labourer. He was sure that his contract fee would be paid at the expiration of the contract and that he would return safely back to Ibibio land. The contract itself involved a verbal agreement specifying the number of years each labourer would work, the type of work or task to be performed and the financial benefits and other privileges attached. Oath taking was gradually replaced by written agreements because of increased literacy level among the Ibibio. Each party kept a copy of the agreement and both copies were formally destroyed at the expiration of the contract period (Charles, 2008).

Esen substantiated this assertion by submitting that:

*It was Akwa Ibom migrants that farmed the virgin land around Calabar and beyond. In the process, they spread*



through all that land around Creek Town, Akpabuyo, Ikoneto, Okoyong and all the way to Ikang on the border with the Republic of Cameroon. The encounter with the Efik was not on the basis of an equal economic relationship. The Efik were the landlords and the Ibibio immigrants, the tenants in a system of land tenure and utilisation that for its repressiveness is reminiscent of feudal Europe. Some of the Ibibio word "Etubom" is a contraction of "Eteubom", meaning literally the "head or captain of canoe-men; in time, by generalisation, it has come to mean simply (head or chief). Those canoes went out all year round to gather fish, shrimps and other sea-foods from the numerous creeks and the open estuary of the Cross River. Some served in minor capacities on the beaches where the lucrative trade with the white super cargoes in palm oil and kernel was enriching the Efik chiefs and their better placed subjects. But by far the majority served the Efik landlords, clearing primeval forests and cultivating assorted food crops and gradually turning what had been one vast jungle into what came to be known as "inwang Efik", that is farms of the Efik (Esen, 1982).

Not all Akwa Ibom migrants could achieve their economic objectives. Those who were a total economic failure were described as Udo Ibanga. Udo Ibanga is a legendary Akwa Ibom migrant who lavished his earnings on Efik women and returned to Ibibio land years later with a torn mat and rags as property. Udo Ibanga became an object lesson for all Ibibio migrants who failed to achieve their ambition in foreign land (Charles, 2008).

## 7. Language Factor

Language is a very important aspect of any group of people. Based on linguistic and ethnographic studies of the Efik and Ibibio, Nair, cited in Bassey, noted that:

*There is some linguistic proof that Efik is a dialect of the Ibibio language, and that it separated from the other only within the last centuries. Simmons notes that a comparison of 195 Ibibio and Efik words on the Swadesh basic vocabulary list revealed 189 cognates (95 percent) and that this high percentage indicates recent separation of the two languages (Bassey, 2005).*

Efik language is classified under Benue-Cross River Semi-Bantu cluster of the Central Branch of Niger-Congo family of African languages by Greenberg. Among the minority groups on the South-South of Nigeria, the Efik is the best known language group. The reason is that they were the first group to come in contact with the Europeans and traded with them since the early 1500, acting as middle men between the Ibibio groups and the European traders. Missionary school activities began among the Efik which led to the translation of the Holy Bible into Efik as well as the writing of an Efik

dictionary. Efik was also the major language of teaching and socialisation of children in the primary schools (Charles, 2008).

Christianity and commerce constituted the two main factors that facilitated the transformation of Efik as the *lingua franca* within the Cross River region. Udo notes that:

*The members of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland who began their evangelical education... established schools and churches among the Efik; second, they translated the Efik dialect into writing; third, they produced Efik vernacular readers for use in Efik schools; they also translated the English Bible and the English hymn book into Efik and published a dictionary in Efik. Furthermore, they also wrote the history of the sub-group and of the Efut and Qua among whom the Efik lived. For about 60 years (1846-1906) the Scottish missionaries worked among the Efik and failed to open their stations in Akwa Ibom area...the Church only established a school in 1858 at Ikot Offiong, an Efik trading station in Ibibio land. Two years later, Archibong II of Duke Town banned missionaries from going up the Cross River beyond Ikot Offiong (Udo, 1983).*

The flowering of Efik language occurred to the detriment of the Ibibio language. Attempts to write and develop the Ibibio language happened at the time the Efik was about to be written (between 1846 and 1862), when Rev. Goldie Dictionary of the Efik Language was published. As noted by Jeffreys (1935), the first attempt to write Ibibio was defeated by two votes.

Essien corroborates the episode thus:

*At the language conference held in Calabar, the motion to impose the Efik dialect on the Ibibio race was carried by two votes and then, only because two members refrained from voting. The defeat of Ibibio or victory for Efik has made all the difference, for the Efik dialect was to be imposed on the Ibibio race by early missionaries to this part of the world whose efforts were directed towards the development of Efik....The missionaries naturally directed their studies to the Efik language with the result that the Efik have benefitted enormously and their language has inevitably assumed a position that is not justified either upon population or linguistic basis (Essien, 1990).*

According to Essien, in spite of the initial set-back for Ibibio, Jeffreys, a onetime District Officer in Nigeria, produced the orthography for the Ibibio language and made a passionate plea to the missionaries and other authorities that Ibibio be used officially side by side with Efik for mutual benefits. But this orthography was rejected and an attempt to make Ibibio an official language failed, as evidenced in this excerpts (Essien, 1990).

## 8. Religion/Shared Cultural Values

As a riverine people, Efik world view is shaped by their ecology. The existence of *ndem* (mermaid) explains the vitality of water bodies surrounding them. The Almighty God is the Supreme Being and the creator. They see the world as a free gift by God. The abundance as given by *Akwa Abasi Ibom* (Almighty God) must be without bounds so that inhabitants could enjoy the best out of it (Like the Ibibio, they call God, Abasi). Central to the religion of the Efik is the existence of *Abasi Ibom*, the creator and all powerful God. He is ageless and all knowing. Below the Supreme Beings are the deities, the lesser gods which could be manipulated by man through rituals. The belief is that it is through the deities that *Abasi Ibom* could be approached in matters affecting man and society. There is a strong belief in *mbukpo* (ancestors), spirits, *ukpong* (soul double) and *ifot* (witchcraft). The ancestral cult offers one of the approaches for mediation and solution to problems of existence. Ancestors are not only thought of as forefathers, but also as spirit beings that have power and influence over the living (Charles, 2008).

There are many gods (i.e. deities) among the Ibibio and Efik and they are similarly worshipped by both. The greatest of all these is *Abasi Ibom* (the Supreme God who resides in the sky and controls everything in the universe). He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent). The Efik call their God *Abasi Ibom* (Supreme God). Similar word usages include: *inyang ibom* (ocean) and *Ibom Eno* (ancient palace of Efik rulers) (Charles, 2008).

It has been averred that objects of royal importance which the Efik still use in the coronation of their Obong, stemmed from Uruan chieftaincy institution.<sup>61</sup> When the Efik left Uruan for Ikpaene, they were said to have carried the idea of Uruan chieftaincy and some royal paraphernalia such as *ntinya* (native crown), *akata* (throne or stool), *ikpaya* (woven royal raffia) and *ayang* (broom). Initially, Uruan used to take part in the coronation of Efik kings. In recent years, however, some changes have been introduced in the coronation processes of the Efik monarch, but the basic practices remain the same (Anwana, 2005).

According to Essien (1993), *Atakpor* (Uruan deity) also exists in Efik land. This assertion is backed by a tradition which says: *ke ndem Efik Iboku, Atakpor Ndem Uruan ke etuk*, meaning that where there is Efik deity, there is also Atakpor Uruan to share with it. He adds that when the Efik were part of the Uruan society, their traditional rulership emanated from *Efe Atakpor* (Atakpor shrine) until in their new environment in Creek Town before the concept of *Efe Asabo* developed among the Efik to serve similar purpose. In other words, in *Efe Asabo*, there is Atakpor Uruan. Secret societies such as *ekpe*, *obon*, *akata* played vital roles in unifying the pre-colonial relations between Akwa Ibom and Efik in particular and the Cross River region in general. The functions of these secret societies were religious, legal, commercial and social. They made and enforced laws as well as acted as the main executives of village administration. It was also their responsibility to execute condemned criminals, impose fines and collect debts.

## 9. Inter-Marriages

Inter-marriages also facilitated the integration of Oron into Efik commercial orbit. As earlier indicated, there were important Efik related communities such as Enwang, Okobo and Idue, permanently settled in Oron. The marriage of people in the Oron area into some Efik royal families created a lot of goodwill towards Oron. Especially after Henshaw Town/Duke Town War of 1874-1875, Oron emerged a source of wives for many Efik, particularly Henshaw Town royalties; thus, many Efik have Oron grand or great-grand mothers (Uya, 2005).

Efik Ibibio relations also featured in marriages particularly between the Efik and a section of the Ibibio known as Uruan. Some Uruan women were married to the Efik while many men from Uruan also married Efik women. For instance, the mother of Etim Offiong was from Esuk Odu and the Obong of Mbiabo Edere (Ikot Offiong) was also from Esuk Odu. Ansa Iso Nkrok from Esuk Odu was the mother of Okon Ekpo Abasi Ekpo Eyo Eno from Creek Town. Her son later became the Obong of Efik land. Nsa Ibok Eyo Nsa from Ikot Anwa Nto family in Esuk Odu was married to an Efik man named Eyo Nsa or Eyo Willy Honesty. She gave birth to Eyo Eyo Eyan Inyang Essien Ekpe Oku of Creek Town (Obio Oko). Her son was Eyo Eyo Nsa who became King Eyo Honesty II (1835-1858). It is important to note that the husband of Nsa Ibok Eyo was the one who had an encounter with one Akpan Akpakpan Uko, otherwise called "Uko Mbiakong" at Ikpa River in Uruan. Another point to note is that the son of King Eyo Honesty I became King Eyo Eyo Honesty III (1858-1861) and was nick-named Etinyin Eyita (Obong Oyoho Ita) (Essien, 1993).

Many other *mbong* (rulers) from Efik land married women from Uruan. As noted above, Uruan women gave them children who later became Efik kings. As also noted, Uruan people married Efik women and they became culturally related. The great grand maternal father, Efembe Umoren, a brother to Ekpo Umoren of Efik had family connections with Uruan villages of Ishiet Ekim, Ishiet Inua Akpa, and others. Some Efik families in Old Calabar had connections with Uruan villages such as Esuk Odu, Ndon Ebom, Ekpena Ukim, Adadia, Ibiaku Uruan, Mbiaya and so on. There were also Efik families in Nsidung and in Creek Town that had connections with Ekim Enen and Ekpena Ibia villages in Uruan (Essien, 1993).

It was also common for some Efik residents in other parts of Akwa Ibom to get married to Ibibio women. Udo Udoma, the eminent jurist, writes that after her mother, Madam Adiaha Edem, became a Christian, baptised and was confirmed a full member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Nigeria, in Egwanga (Ikot Abasi). She made genuine efforts to convert her husband (Udoma's father). When her efforts proved abortive, she felt that it was incompatible for her to continue to live with the husband who was the leader of *ekpo nyoho* and *atat* societies. Consequently, she filed an action in the customary court seeking the dissolution of the marriage. Having been granted divorce, the woman got married to a famous and wealthy Efik man who was a Civil Engineering contractor and a leader of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Egwanga (Ikot Abasi), known as Mr. Fenton Mbiet. The marriage was blessed with a son (Udoma, 1987).



#### 10. Political Factor/Other Aspects of Relations

The deep and long period of intercourse between the Efik and the Europeans resulted in the emergence of a completely new class of Efik elite skilled in the art of middlemanship. Such men included Chief Magnus Adam Duke, Chief Coco Otu Bassey, Essien Etim Offiong III, Henry Black Davies, Prince Bassey Duke and Chief Richard Henshaw. These "men of civilisation" charted the course and dictated the tempo of business dealings between European slavers and supercargoes at the coast and the raw material producers of the hinterland. They served as a conduit through which phoney products from Europe were exchanged for valuable and highly demanding raw materials and commodities from the interior. They also partially dictated the terms of trade, the mode of commodity exchanges and the general pattern of trade relations and its attendant security network especially during the 18th and 19th centuries (Noah, 1978; Ndem, 1990).

For instance, Daniel Henshaw (Nyong Efanga Ekeng Iwat), who was a political agent for Oron and Eket areas, was alleged to have seized the landed property of the people of Idua. The people had to petition him. Daniel Henshaw and his cousin, Joseph Henshaw, played influential role in the establishment of colonial rule in Oron, Eket and Ubium (Uya, 1984; Akpan, 2017).

Efik political dominance over the Ibibio manifested in 1906, when the Uruan Court was constituted at Ikpa, the Efik formed half of the members as the list below shows.

#### 11. Court Members in Uruan Native Court - 1906

Uruan	Efik
Udo Efe Udo Mbang	Offiong Ekpenyong Eyo II
Ibanga Nkanta	Bassey Effiom Duke
Udo Ikpe	Eyo Ubom
Udo Okon Mbang	Ekpenyong Eyo Essien
Akpan Okon Etuk Udo	Oku Uta Egbo Jack
Eyo Ukpong	Asuquo Ukpabio
Akpa Aka	James Eyo II (Clerk of the Court)

**Source:** Noah, M.E. (1978). "Efik Expansion and Influence in the Cross River Basin, 1884-1935". *The Calabar Historical Journal*. Volume 2, No. 1, June, pp. 8-9

In the provision of educational manpower, the Efik were also on top of Akwa Ibom. There was a practice, once a village or community had decided to open a new school in their area; they had to send a team of searchers to Calabar to recruit Efik teachers because they were the ones with the highest qualification. Thus in 1918, John Boco became the first English language teacher at Ibiaku Uruan and in 1927, Rev. Ekpo Jack left Duke Town and opened a branch of the National Church of Christ at Uruan. The schools at Ididep and Ikot Edung were opened by Effiong Offiong and Ekeng Ita respectively. There was E.H. Hogan, another Efik educationist, who opened the

Government School at Ikot Ekpen and he was later lured to Asutan Ekpe to work up a new school that was opened in the area (Noah, 1978).

Amamkpa (1979) and Udoka (1996) have given further insights into the nature of relations between the Efik and the Ibibio that are worth narrating. Amamkpa's account shows positive outcome, while Udoka's generates negativity. According to Amamkpa (1979), a Chief in Afaha Etok Ibesikpo named Ete Udo Mbom Udo, had a friend in Creek Town known as Chief Itam Okpo Enekpon, who occasionally came to the village to source for labourers. In one of his visits, he was moved with pity to note how the pioneering youths of the village had to suffer daily trekking to school at Aka-Offot. He suggested the idea of facilitating a better school for the village. The youths were advised to send a letter to the Creek Town Women Association requesting them to start a church in Afaha Etok. The youth obliged and later sent a delegation to Creek Town for the arrangement. Finally, on the 10th of January 1912, the Women Association of the Presbyterian Church of Creek, Town sent the first batch of teachers and preachers to open a church and school at Afaha Etok. The first set of preachers included: Mr. Essien Oku Abasi Etim and Rev. Ekpe Nko as the officiating pastor. The teachers included Messrs Asiya Eyo Ndiyo, Etim Eno Okokon Itam among others. This event marked the beginning of educational, economic and social revolution in Afaha Etok in particular and Ibesikpo in general.

Udoka (1996) stated that although the influence of the Primitive Methodist Mission was super-imposing in the mainland part of Southeastern Nigeria in the later part of the 19th and early part of 20th centuries, it was the Wesleyan Methodist Society with its connection with Lagos that founded a Mission in Ikot Abasi in 1910. This was possible through the efforts of some Sierra Leonean and Gold Coastian (Ghanaian) settlers. He attributes the reason the Wesleyan Methodist Mission did not establish a post-primary institution in Ikot Abasi before the 1950s to organised intrigues perpetrated by some Efik indigenes in Ikot Abasi, who were employed by the Wesleyan Methodist Mission in Ete village, Ikot Abasi.

The mission had preliminary arrangements for the establishment of Methodist College, Ete, to train teachers and ministers in about 1927. However, one Mr. Anah, an Efik catechist attached to Methodist Church, Ete, had observed that since the Wesleyan Methodist Mission operated in Ikot Abasi and Calabar, once a school of that nature was established in Ikot Abasi, no other college would be established in Calabar, at least in the foreseeable future. This implied that the Efik of Wesleyan Methodist background would be asked to travel to Ete for training. Mr. Anah therefore insinuated that the Ete chiefs should reject the sitting of the college on their land. He conjectured that if the college was moved from Ikot Abasi, it would be located in Calabar. Mr. Anah informed the chiefs that having banned *ekpo nyoho*, the European missionaries would confiscate their oil palm trees. Since Mr. Anah, by virtue of his position, was highly revered by Ete people, he was able to achieve his desired result. The chiefs became unanimously vehement that the college should not be sited on their land. But the Christians fought

back and requested the mission to proceed with its plans to commence classes at the acquired location. Consequently, a stalemate ensued (Udoka, 1996).

While the stalemate persisted, Mr. Okon Edem, another Efik and former Headmaster of Government School, Ikot Ekan, arrived and settled in Ete. Mr. Edem, an alumnus of Hope Waddell Training Institution Calabar, as Headmaster, had murdered an indigene of Ikot Ekan. But instead of being prosecuted, he was dismissed from government service and his educational qualification withdrawn from him. After the incident, instead of returning to Calabar, he decided to settle in Ete. Mr. Edem joined his fellow Efik, Mr. Anah to work against the establishment of a Methodist College in Ete. Having been fully briefed by Mr. Anah, Mr. Edem addressed a petition to the District officer at Ikot Abasi painting a picture of impending fracas should a college be sited in Ete. The man intimidated the District Officer. that Ete people were poised to fomenting riot if a college was built there at Ete or any other place in the present Ikot Abasi Local Government. On the receipt of this petition, the D.O. wrote and warned the authorities of the Wesleyan Mission to abandon the idea. However, in the early 1960s, a post-primary school – Methodist Secondary School was established at Ete founded probably as a consolation for the loss in 1927 (Udoka, 1996).

## 12. Warfare

The first recorded war between the Efik and Uruan took place while the Efik were still part of the Uruan in Ibibio land society. According to Aye, the outbreak of the war was linked to one Abasi-anwan, an Efik housewife, who borrowed an axe from her Uruan counterpart to split firewood. The axe broke accidentally on its first application. When the owner of the axe refused to accept her explanation, Abasi-anwan is said to have dumped the axe and its broken handle into the latrine pit and prepared for any consequences. The crisis generated by it was such that neither the Uruan nor the Efik could control. While the elders from both sides were trying to settle the matter, some scuffles took place at the place of the meeting and led to the dispersal of the assembly, which was hoped would reconvene, but it never met again because the matter boiled into an open war. There were losses on both sides. The Efik called it *Ekong Abasi-anwan* (Abasi-anwan's War) (Aye, 2000).

In 1874-75, there was war between Joseph Henshaw, an Efik businessman in Oron. This followed the establishment of a lucrative business by Henshaw in partnership with a British merchant, George Watts in Idua/Qua Iboe. Oron people reacted to this encroachment by demanding tributes on goods passing through their territory. This dispute is said to have been resolved militarily when a formidable Efik force organised by James Henshaw subdued the Idua people who were responsible for the blockade (Uya, 1984).

In 1895, there was a war between the Efik and the Ibiono Ibom people of Ididep and Use. Nair reported that the Ibibio resented the Efik middlemen's position and wanted to market their produce by themselves in Calabar. But Chief Udo Udo, the village head of Use in Ibiono Ibom, said that the Efik traders made away with oil in the canoe without

paying for it. The owner of the oil, an Ididep woman, challenged him and a fight ensued. The Efik traders returned to Calabar but came back with their kinsmen ready for war. This single incident appeared to have been the immediate cause of the war. The Use and Ididep people of Ibiono Ibom attacked the Efik at Itu during the war. There was a fairly large-scale war. The Efik, armed with machine guns (Atombe), penetrated the interior parts of Use, but were finally driven back (Ukpong, 1986).

It is believed that about 40 to 50 settlers at Itu were killed during the war, including the Efik, Enyong and Umon. However, the resident Efik at Itu were not driven out as a result of the war. After the war, they continued to do their business unmolested. Some of them were engaged in fishing. By the end of the century, there were about 1,500 Efik people living in Itu. They still spoke the Efik language and maintained Efik tradition and culture, though surrounded on many sides by their Ibibio neighbours (Ukpong, 1986).

## 13. Relations in the Colonial/Post-Colonial Periods

Calabar had become the headquarters of the consular administration in 1882, the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1885 and Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893. It remained the headquarters up to 1906, when the seat of government was moved to Lagos, following the merger of the Niger Coast Protectorate with the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos into the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The implication was that Efik also had political influence over Akwa Ibom. The emergence of Calabar Province resulted in the Ibibio area being known as the Six Ibibio Districts of the Calabar Province or mainland Province (Akpan, 2018).

However, further developments in Eastern Nigeria, particularly, the discovery of coal at Enugu in 1912, resulted in the removal of the political capital from Calabar to Enugu. Further political developments, brought the people of Akwa Ibom and their Efik kinsmen, under the yoke of the Igbo majority in the Eastern Region during the era of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) dominated the politics of the defunct eastern Nigeria. The struggle for the creation of Calabar Ogoja and Rivers State (COR), which was initiated by the Ibibio Union, also received the strong support of the Efik. On the 27th of May, 1967, a distinct state known as South-Eastern State (which was renamed Cross River State in 1976) was created to accommodate the Efik and the people of present-day Akwa Ibom State. This political arrangement subsisted until the 23rd of September 1987, when Akwa Ibom State became a distinct state in Nigeria (Akpan, 2018).

The relations since 1987 have been very challenging. There was a fierce struggle over some oil wells in the Bakassi Peninsular. The worst of the conflicts was the "indigene/settler" conflict between Oku Iboku (Akwa Ibom State) and Ikot Offiong Efik – Cross River State) episode (involving the ransacking of Ikot Offiong, an Efik settlement in Oku Iboku (Ibibio land) in year 2000.



## 14 Conclusion and Recommendation

This work has attempted an appraisal of Akwa Ibom-Efik relations since the pre-colonial period. The Efik are believed to have migrated from Ibom in Arochukwu area to Uruan in Ibibio land, where they lived for many centuries. From Uruan they dispersed to their present locale in the estuary of the Atlantic Ocean. The favourable geographical location brought them into contact with the Europeans from where they derived substantive Western influence. It is also noted that the relations with the Efik was greatly facilitated by the Cross River and the numerous creeks within the region.

The people of Akwa Ibom and the Efik have greatly inter-married. As the study has shown, some of the kings of Calabar were the children of Uruan women. Also, the Efik married many Oron women. The religion of Akwa Ibom and Efik is very similar; they both venerated *Abasi Ibom* (God of Heaven). Even though Efik language became the *lingua franca* in the Cross River region, the circumstances has been explained. Indeed, it is a dialect of the Ibibio language.

In the economic realm, the Efik, who were the middle men in the trade with the Europeans established many trading outlets in Akwa Ibom area and dominated the trade of the area for a long time. In the process of trade, alliances, negotiations and other aspects of diplomacy were undertaken. Occasionally, war broke out, but such occurrences, lacked the propensity to totally bring the contact to an end. In all, wars were seen as an aspect of intergroup relations.

Colonial rule and its impacts such as urbanization added more impetus to the relations. The role of the missionaries also enhanced the relations. In the post-colonial Nigeria, the Akwa Ibom people began to up-turn the yoke of "internal imperialism" imposed on them by the Efik kinsmen and came on top of the game. That was the situation until 1987, when Akwa Ibom was carved out of the old Cross River State. The relations between Akwa Ibom and the Efik still continues to the present time and need to be further strengthened since they share a common bond for their benefit since they are minorities within the Nigerian federation.

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