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Diplomacy and Community Development in the Era of the Ibibio State Union, 1928- 1966

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Abstract

The Ibibio Union later renamed (the Ibibio State Union) was a progressive, cultural and welfare association which was formed in 1928 by the Ibibio people in the Old Calabar Province (now Akwa Ibom State). Their aim was initially the protection of themselves as a group against insult, abuse and oppression. Subsequently, the Union evolved to become a virile instrument of community development and social integration of the various groups in the land and modernization generally. For instance, the Union, in 1938, initiated the first major communal scholarship scheme in Nigeria, which resulted in the training of some of the nation's finest builders overseas; it established the Ibibio State College at Ikot Ekpene in 1946, an institution regarded as the first secondary school in Nigeria to be built and financed solely by a "tribal" Union. The Union also served other important functions like arbitration in disputes between clans and villages including land disputes, contributed to reforms of local government system, and also made significant input to Nigeria's nationalist struggles against British imperialism. The Union was however proscribed alongside other ethnic oriented Unions by the Major-General Aguyi-Ironsi-led military administration in January, 1966. The paper assesses the contributions of the Union to community development and the diplomatic methods adopted to achieve the spectacular results. Its relevance is anchored on the lessons that could be learnt and applied in nation building; especially as the nation yearns for "participatory" national developmental initiatives. It adopts a historical narrative methodology.

Introduction

The Ibibio people live in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria and are considered as the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria (Offiong, 1991). They appear to have been one of the earliest inhabitants of south-eastern Nigeria. According to Talbot (1926), "the Ibibio were the original

owners of much of that tract of land lying east of the Niger, south of the Benue, while their language is probably the most ancient of all the "Semi-Bantu languages". He then suggested 7,000 B.C. as the possible date for the development of human population in the area. Indeed, so ancient has been the Ibibio presence where they still live that G.I. Jones and Daryll Ford, in their *Ibo and Ibibio Speaking Peoples of South Eastern Nigeria*, recorded that the Ibibio "have no tradition of migration from elsewhere nor having displaced any previous inhabitants".

The Ibibio people were the first set of Nigerians to establish a formidable Union with which they used for social mobilization in the country. The Ibibio Union catered for the entire ethnic group, unlike groups like Owerri Improvement Union in Port Harcourt (1916), the Egba Society (1918) and the Onitsha Improvement Union, Lagos Branch (1920), all of which only involved segments of either Igbo or the Yoruba people (Noah, 1988). Throughout its existence, the Union was used effectively in a constructive way to mobilise the people of the area for progressive programmes and actions in Nigeria. As a result of the spectacular achievements of the Ibibio people in this direction, the Union opened the floodgate to the establishment of similar Unions across Nigeria (Umana, 2004).

Some of the remarkable achievements of the Union included its intervention in the 1929 Women's War, an action that averted the escalation of the war beyond the proportion it reached, the award of overseas university scholarships to six Ibibio male scholars from the six colonial Ibibio districts in 1938, the award of scholarship to six Ibibio female students to study abroad in the 1940s and the establishment of a secondary school in the area in 1946. The Union was also first of such bodies to be appointed a Licence Buying Agent by the colonial authorities and also the first ethnic organization to operate an account with English Bank. It floated a business arm known as the Ibibio Trading Corporation, and tremendously assisted the colonial government to eliminate the Man Leopard menace in the 1940s. It even aspired to establish its own commercial bank, hospital and farms to improve the condition of the Ibibio people.

The Concept of Community Development

According to Sanders, the term "community development" can be regarded as a method or process of tackling the problem of community organisation in order to bring about economic development. He further identifies four major approaches to community development which also account for variations in definitions. He adds that:

some social scientists think of community development as a process and focus upon the sequences through which communities (or their segments) go as they move from a pre-industrial to an industrial type or a similar kind of overall change; others who are of action rather than research oriented, think of community development as a method to be used in moving toward their objectives... They focus upon accomplishments rather than upon sequences. With a third grouping, community development means a programme that has been carefully thought through in terms of content as well as procedures. A fourth view is that community development is a movement. It is more than a mere programme... but is rather a special kind of programme that holds unusual promise and worthy of unabashed commitment by those who want to see revolutions take place in underdeveloped countries or who want to see poverty and illness alleviated among the great masses of underprivileged humanity (Sanders, 1958: 4).

Sander's concept of community development can be regarded as an ideal and its emphasis lies on the interdisciplinary nature of the problem. Thus, in concluding his thesis, he stressed that:

...it seems much wiser and even imperative that the problems of community development be viewed in terms of the sociologist's theories of social change, social control, social organisation, political sociology, communication and occupational sociology – to mention only some of the areas that seem definitely appropriate.

However, earlier conception of the term "community development" had a different emphasis. At least with respect to tropical Africa, the idea of community development was first conceived by the Colonial Office in Britain as a special "development model" for the rural areas of its dependent territories. Its aim was to compensate for the short-comings of the conventional school system in the former British dependent territories, and to serve as a vehicle for progressive evolution of the people to self-government in the context of social and economic change. Thus, the colonial administration's original conception of community development was in terms of mass education (Ekong, 2003).

Nevertheless, it became clear as time went on that the concept of "mass education", while it served a particular phase, could not be the sole orientation of community development. In 1945, the Ashridge Conference on Social Development, therefore, redefined community

development as a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and on the initiative of the community. In 1948, the Cambridge Summer Conference on African Administration sponsored by the Colonial Office, further defined community development as

a movement to promote better living for the whole community, with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement (Udoka, 1997; Ekong, 2003).

As the term "community development" gained international recognition, the United Nations, in 1956, adopted the following definitions:

Community development is the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. This complex of process is, therefore, made up of two essential elements: the participation by the people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living with as much reliance as possible on their initiative; and provisions of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help and make these more effective. It is expressed in programmes designed to achieve a wide variety of specific improvements (Rothman, 1970: 31).

From these and other definitions of the term, Ekong (2003) opines that community development emphasizes the following: (a) community self-help, (b) attention to community's felt needs, (c) the development of community as an integrated whole and (d) technical assistance.

The Formation of the Ibibio Union (Later the Ibibio State Union)

The Ibibio Union was an amalgam of two separate organizations of the Ibibio people, namely: the Ibibio Mainlanders Association based in Calabar and the Ibibio Welfare Union was based in the mainland part of Ibibioland. The Ibibio Welfare Union was made up of mostly teachers in government schools and others – clerks, road overseers, teachers in government schools and others. On the other hand, the

Ibibio Mainlanders Association was formed in Calabar mainly as a result of some misunderstanding that arose between the Ibibio and Efik following the publication by one Mr. E.N. Amaku, a headmaster with the United Scotland Mission in Calabar, of some materials which the Ibibio considered defamatory (Noah, 1988).

The Amaku's saga occurred, following the decision of the colonial administration to introduce the teaching of literature in the vernacular in schools in Calabar Province. As a result of this development, teachers were encouraged to send materials for consideration. Mr. Amaku, in an attempt to write what he called, "the history of the Efik people", made a submission of an anthropological/historical slant in which the Ibibio people were negatively portrayed. The content of the booklet was, on submission to the authorities of the Mission, leaked to some prominent Ibibio persons who resided then in Calabar, who eventually instituted a legal action against Mr. Amaku. However, upon the intervention of the Mission and some colonial government officials, the matter was settled out of court, after Mr. Amaku had tendered a written apology to the Ibibio people and offered an undertaking that the seditious materials would be expurgated from his submission. The consequence of the episode was the formation of the Ibibio Mainlanders Association in Calabar (Udoma, 1987; Noah, 1988).

According to Noah (1988), the formation of the Ibibio Union (later Ibibio State Union) on 28 April 1928, represented the coming together of the Ibibio Mainlanders Association and the Ibibio Welfare and it took place at the Qua Iboe Church, Uyo. The foundation leaders of the Union were: Chief Sampson Udo Etuk, (General President), Chief Robert Umoinyang, (Vice-President), Mr. Usen Udo Usen, (General-Secretary), and Chief Thomas Udok, (Treasurer), among others.

Organisationally, the Union had a central secretariat at Uyo with a president and two deputies, a secretary and two assistants as well as other officers including the legal adviser, a field secretary, a financial secretary and an auditor. Duties and functions were specified for each of the offices. The basic unit for organising the Union was the district and each district Union had its officers including the president and secretary who were required to keep in touch with the central secretariat at Uyo and through whom the decisions from the centre were communicated to the respective districts. In addition to the district unions, there was the Branch Union. The branch was established to cater for all Ibibio indigenes resident abroad or outside Ibibio territory. Apart from these agencies, the Union had a number of meetings which consisted of the Annual Conference and the National

Assembly. The Annual Conference was a deliberative body mandated to meet once a year, usually in the first week of August. This was a representative body but prominent traditional rulers were also members. The National Assembly was both a deliberative and legislative body which served as the supreme legislative authority of the Union (Udoma, 1987; Noah, 1988).

The Ibibio Union recorded monumental achievements which the passage of time cannot obliterate. In fact, based on available evidence, the Union was able to fuse the people of Akwa Ibom State under a common umbrella and made it possible for all to accept Ibibio origin without rancor and also recorded many uncommon achievements which this paper discusses.

The Role of the Ibibio Union During the 1929 Women's War

The 1929 Women's War occurred just one year after the formation of the Ibibio Union. It was a culmination of the oppressive and exploitative activities of the British colonizers in Nigeria, particularly the rumour that the colonialists intended to tax the women from the Eastern part of the country. However, despite its relative "young age", the Ibibio Union still played active role in managing the crisis. The Ibibio Union dispatched a touring team to some parts of Ibibioland to dissuade the women from participating in the demonstration. The Union's emissaries led by Mr. Udo Essien Obot had to collaborate with Rev. W.T. Grooves of the Methodist Mission at Ikot Ekpene to pacify the large crowd of women numbering about 4,000 at Ikot Osurua. The Union officials acted as the go-between the women and the District Officer at Ikot Ekpene, Mr. R.N. Marshall. They negotiated with the women leaders and obtained for them typed-written assurances that women would not be taxed. Another 2,000 women who were approaching Ikot Ekpene from Uyo were also persuaded to disperse by the representatives of the Union. The Union issued a manifest, calling for peace, which was translated into the local dialect. These were widely distributed, whenever women groups were addressed (Akpan and Ekpo, 1988).

The Ibibio Union team arrived in Abak and Ikot Abasi (Opobo) rather too late to be able to apply the same diplomatic instruments to curb the escalation of the crisis which led to the death of many women at Utu Etim Ekpo and at Egwanga beach. As a result of the activities of the Ibibio Union team, the worst possible tragedies which could have befallen many parts of Ibibioland were averted. The proactive disposition of the Union received the commendation of colonial government officials, including the Resident, Calabar Province and

the Governor-General, Sir Donald Cameron, who noted that, "we were saved from disaster by the indomitable spirit of the Ibibio people...hope for the future was found in their unflinching industry and tenacity of purpose..." (Akpan, 2012).

The Ibibio Union's Meeting with the Colonial Officials at Ikot Ekpene in 1937

At the request of his Honour, the Chief Commissioner, W. E. Hunt, a meeting of the Ibibio Union was held in Ikot Ekpene Council Chambers on the 15th of February, 1937. Also present at the meeting were: G.G. Shute, Senior Resident, Calabar, J.W. Hartley, the District Officer for Ikot Ekpene, N.A.P. Mackenzie, the Assistant District Officer for Ikot Ekpene, and the Private Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, G.A.L. Guise. The meeting drew representation from all the Six Ibibio Districts. The agenda included the history of the Ibibio Union, the request for the removal of the Provincial headquarters from Calabar to Ibibioland, Unified Native Administration, the request for Ibibio representation in the Legislative Council among other issues relating to the well being of the Ibibio people (Akpan, 2012).

Chief Sampson Udo Etuk, the President of the Ibibio Union who was the spokesman of the Union used the diplomatic mix of negotiation, persuasion, lobbying and so on, in his interaction with the colonial officials. He briefed the colonial officials on the history of the Ibibio Union and noted that the composition of the Ibibio Union included the people from the Six Ibibio Districts of Calabar Province. He added that Annang is a sub-group of Ibibio and that they were known as such no matter their change of dialect which is due to their nearness to the Igbo. According to him the Union was enjoying the support of the chiefs and elites from the Six Ibibio Districts. At the occasion, the Union requested for the transfer of the Provincial headquarters from Calabar to Uyo, which was considered as a more central location and the appointment of a Deputy Resident at Uyo, and as from the mid-1940s, the creation of an Ibibio Province with the capital at Uyo. In his response, His Honour, W.E. Hunt observed that all classes of men were represented in the Ibibio Union; he added that the Ibibio Union will ever remain "the voice of Ibibio". He noted that if all classes of the people continued to work together, the aim of Ibibio federation would be established and their ambition reached (Noah, 1988).

Educational Programmes

A key objective of the Ibibio Union was the advancement of education considered as a prerequisite for any aspect of individual or

communal development. To advance education and enlightenment, the Union vigorously promoted the establishment of schools and the award of scholarships. For instance, it was mainly at the prompting of the Ibibio Union that the colonial government established the Teachers' Training College at Uyo in 1931, though the Ibibio Union had actually desired a Grammar or Technical School. The institution has today metamorphosed into the University of Uyo (Akpan, 2012).

In 1938, the Ibibio Union made the phenomenal award of scholarships at one time to six selected Ibibio students for the pursuit of professional education overseas. Each of the Six District Unions, namely: Abak, Eket, Ikot Ekpene, Opobo (Ikot Abasi), Itu and Uyo, presented a candidate. The money was raised mostly from palm produce revenue, and communal levies from the then Six Ibibio Districts. The Districts which the candidates represented and their courses of study were as follows:

Bassey Udo Attah	Agriculture, Uyo
Obot E. Antia-Obong	Medicine, Itu
Ibanga Udo Akpabio	Education, Ikot Ekpene
Egbert Udo Udoma	Law, Opobo
Lawson James Nsima	Education, Eket
Asuquo Udo Idiong	Medicine, Abak.

The Ibibio Union had by that remarkable achievement opened a new concept — a phenomenon — within the context of the philosophy of self- help and self development in the annals of Nigerian development. The path-breaking achievement inspired editorial comments in many Nigerian newspapers, notably, *The West African Pilot* and *The Daily Service*. With the exception of one of these beneficiaries (Asuquo Udo Idiong) who died in Canada, all the students successfully completed their studies under the sponsorship of the Union. That arrangement produced Hon. Sir Udoma, regarded as the first Nigerian, and probably the first African to have obtained a PhD in Law, a one-time Chief Justice and Acting-Governor General of Uganda, a retired Supreme Court Justice and the first indigenous Chairman of a Constituent Assembly in Nigeria, whose son, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma, served as a two term Senator and Senate Chief Whip, representing Eket Senatorial District in Akwa Ibom State (1999 to 2007) and the current Minister of Budget and National Planning. Chief Bassey Udo Attah, (the second Nigerian to hold a University degree in Agriculture and the first to obtain a Master's degree in Agriculture), his son Arch. (Obong) Victor Attah was a two term

Governor of Akwa Ibom State (1999 to 2007) and Chief Ibanga Udo Akpabio (a prominent Minister in the Eastern Region, Deputy Premier and Acting Premier in the First Republic. His nephew, Barrister Godswill Akpabio served as the Governor of Akwa Ibom State between 2007-2015 (Akpan, 2013).

In 1946, the Ibibio Union established a secondary school at Ikot Ekpene and appointed Mr. Ibanga Udo Akpabio and Mr. James Lawson Nsima, two of the Ibibio Union's scholars who studied education in the United States of America as the principal and vice-principal, respectively of the new College. This was a remarkable achievement because as at that time, there were about three post-secondary institutions in the area, all operated by the Christian missions. The school tremendously facilitated the educational training of many Ibibio sons and daughters and others from the neighbouring communities.

Although women education was not valued for a long time in most African societies it was not neglected by the Union. Following the precedent already established by Union when the first batch of six male scholars were selected and sent abroad to obtain university education in 1938, some female beneficiaries of the Ibibio Union's scholarship were chosen from the Six Ibibio Districts in 1949 to study Nursing in England. The candidates were as follows;

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Miss Ibium Bassey | Uyo District |
| 2. Miss M. Nsarak | Itu District |
| 3. Miss J. Ibok | Eket District |
| 4. Miss Victoria U. Inyang | Ikot Ekpene District. |

(Two candidates were later selected by the Opobo (Ikot Abasi) and Abak Districts and sent abroad). It was in the same year that Effiong Udo Ekpo of Abak was selected and sponsored by the Ibibio Union to study Medicine in England as a replacement of the late Asuquo Udo Idiong, an Ibibio Union's scholar who died in Canada in 1943 after completing his medical training.

The Ibibio Magazine

The Union also published a monthly journal known as *The Ibibio Magazine*. Its purpose was to inform and educate and entertain the Ibibio and the general public. Its maiden edition came in May 1941. The medium also served as a powerful tool of effective mobilisation for community development. According to Umana (2004) a study of *The Ibibio Magazine* was undoubtedly a study in excellence, intelligence and wisdom and an excursion to its editorial showed that the

magazine was in a class of its own. Its language was lucid; its style, poetic; its content, superlative and its outlay, splendid.

The Man-Leopard Menace (1943-47)

In about 1943, there was a strong rumour that in various parts of Abak, Opobo (now Ikot Abasi) and Uyo Districts, there were some groups of persons who, under the guise of being wild bush leopards, were engaged in the killing of human beings. The victims of such killings, as alleged, were usually persons against whom some members of the groups entertained animosity. The groups had resorted to such killings because they were unable to obtain redress appropriate to their grievances and circumstances from courts of justice in cases in which their victims were usually involved (Udoma, 1987).

This situation attracted Mr. F.R. Kay, the British expatriate Administrative Officer, in-charge of Abak District at the time to conduct a secret administrative enquiry into the circumstances of the death of one of the deceased person. He eventually came to the conclusion that the deceased person was the victim of some foul play; that he was violently murdered by someone who was a member of a man-leopard society; and that there was in fact in existence and operation in Abak District, what he termed the "man-leopard society" (a secret cult). According to Udoma (1987), a similar report was submitted to government by the Senior District Officer, Mr. J.G.C. Allen, as to the prevalence of man-leopard menace in Opobo District. The report by Mr. Allen was based on the result of the prosecution and conviction of one Akpan Mbodi of murder after he was arrested on suspicion of being a member of man-leopard society.

The bizarre incidents and killings assumed enormous proportion and representations were made to the colonial government which itself regarded the situation as frightening. Thereafter, a state of emergency was declared in the affected areas which embraced Abak, Opobo, and parts of Uyo Districts. A curfew was also imposed on the affected areas and 300 police men were posted there. The then Governor of Nigeria, Sir Arthur Richards and the Chief Commissioner, Eastern Provinces, Sir F. Bernard Carr, visited the affected areas and addressed the leaders of the Ibibio people on the gravity of the situation. They appealed for the cooperation of the Ibibio Union to enable the government to accomplish what they considered an arduous task of eliminating the scourge. Consequently, the leadership of the Ibibio Union had to intervene and eliminate the scourge (Udoma, 1987).

On the 20th of March, 1947, the Resident, Calabar Province, Mr. C.J. Mayne, conveyed to the Ibibio Union the approval by the colonial government for them to visit the "man leopard areas" for the purpose of exterminating the menace by the process of application of customary method. Consequently, a team of 42 prominent Ibibio Union members including chiefs were selected to accomplish the task. The tour began in the month of May 1947 and ended in the month of July of the same year. The selected team of the Union adopted traditional diplomatic methods, strategies and processes to eradicate the scourge without the aid of the Nigeria Police Force and earned the commendation of the colonial government officials.

Udoma (1987) notes that the tour was clearly a manifestation of patriotic zeal entailing personal sacrifice of the highest order, involving as it did, self denial of personal comfort. There could have been no better demonstration in practical terms of their love for their brethren and of the philosophy of self-help and self-reliance, which constituted the bed rock of the policy of the Ibibio Union whose motto was "Love, Unity, Cooperation, Self-Sacrifice and Independence". The tour was of great importance and made an unforgettable impact on the lives of the people inhabiting not only the leopard infested area but also the whole of Ibibioland.

Political and Administrative Contributions of the Ibibio Union

The Ibibio State Union's contributions to the political and administrative sphere included the participation of the members in local government administration, general participation in the nationalistic movement through the sponsorship of some selected members to attend several conferences held in Nigeria and London, to formulate the successive Nigerian constitutions in 1951, 1954, 1958 and 1960. The Union also participated in party politics beginning from the 1940s (Abasiattai, 1991).

At the local level, the Ibibio Union contributed to the strengthening of successive local government systems in Calabar Province. In the 1940s, the leadership of the Union intensified the pressure on the colonial government to create "a unified and uniform Native Administration Service" for the Ibibio with a central office at Uyo, in place of existing clan-based Native Administration, to ensure unity and even development of Ibibio land. The unified Native Administration was envisaged to have a "Central Treasury for the whole of Ibibio. At the commencement, it was to be controlled by the Resident and later by a Supreme Ibibio Council". The Council was expected to plan centrally for the entire Ibibioland and allocate the

Native Administration funds centrally and therefore effectively and rationally for the achievement of the desired balanced development between the various Ibibio Districts (Abasiattai, 1991).

Additionally, the Ibibio Union pressed the colonial government to create an Ibibio Province comprising the entire Mainland (present day Akwa Ibom State) with the capital at Uyo, an Ibibio (Native) Appeal Court to hear and determine cases from Native Courts in accordance with native law and custom and an Ibibio Chiefs' Conference to codify Ibibio native law and custom and take other measures to nurture Ibibio traditions and institutions "not repugnant to Christianity and British justice". In the month of August 1948, an Ibibio State Union Resolution urged the creation of the Ibibio Province in order to promote even development in the Mainland (besides Calabar area). In that month, Mr. Ibanga Udo Akpabio, the principal of Ibibio State College, Ikot Ekpene and the General Secretary of the Ibibio State Union, wrote to inform the Calabar Improvement League (which had expressed concern about prospects of removing the headquarters of Calabar Province from Calabar) that:

...while the Ibibio State Union does not necessarily stress on the removal of the Provincial Headquarters from Calabar, it vehemently demand the creation of an Ibibio Province in the heart of the Ibibio country (Abasiattai, 1991: 491).

In March, 1951, the outgoing Senior Resident, C.J. Mayne, strongly recommend the creation of an Ibibio Province and a Calabar Province to the Eastern Nigerian government and noted that:

Strong feelings exist amongst the Ibibio, expressed in numerous resolutions of official and un-official bodies, that the Mainland area of the present Calabar Province should be administered as a separate Ibibio Province from Uyo. I ask that His Honour give these proposals his earnest consideration, since I consider that re-organisation on these lines is inevitable and should be implemented at an early date before the demands of expediency become too pressing. All factors point to the acceptance by the people and I am convinced that this is a matter in which we should take the initiative (Abasiattai, 1991: 491).

Later in 1951, both the Chief Commissioner for Eastern Nigeria and Governor Macpherson endorsed the proposal for an Ibibio Province although indicating that the matter should await a review of the Nigerian constitution. Ironically, however, when the Calabar

Province was split by the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) controlled Eastern Nigerian government in 1959, it was not an Ibibio Province and Calabar Province as the Ibibio State Union had pressed for, but into Uyo and Annang Provinces.

Through the intense diplomatic initiatives of the Union, Central Council and Appeal Court were successfully established in the Enwanga section of Opobo (Ikot Abasi Division), and in Uyo and Ibesikpo-Asutan Ekpe District Federated Councils, but not a Central or Unified Ibibio Council or Appeal Court. The idea of an Ibibio Chiefs' Conference anticipated the later-day, House of Chiefs in Eastern and Western Nigeria. Moreover, in appreciation of the Ibibio State Union's desire to reform the Native Administration system, the Colonial government appointed the Carr's Commission in January 1942 to inquire "into the condition of service of the Native Administration employee with a view to improving them" (Abasiattai, 1991).

Indeed, the Union was very formidable to the extent that it "gained the ears" of the colonial officials, and one of the officials described the Union as "light", while several of the Union's leaders described particularly, the Chief Commissioner for the Southern Provinces, G.G. Shute, as "friend of the Ibibio State Union" whom posterity would not forget (Akpan, 2012).

The Ibibio Trading Corporation and Ibibio Farmers Association

The Ibibio Trading Corporation was an all embracing co-operative movement to which every Ibibio village would subscribe a share of £3. It was formed with the aim to export and market the products of the area directly abroad. On its part, the Co-operative Producers Association was responsible for the erection of warehouses, supplying the barrels for the oil and the bags for the kernel. It was the responsibility of the Association to arrange for the shipment of these products to the United States and market them. Upon marketing the products, one half of the price obtained abroad was to be paid immediately to persons who consigned their goods to the Association while part of the money realized from the sales was to be used for defraying shipping cost and marketing expenses. Whatever balance was left thereafter was to be distributed every three months, in form of dividends to the people who consigned their goods. It was believed that shipping the produce directly to the United States of America as well as the importation of foreign goods directly would enable the Ibibio farmers to side-track the British middlemen in Nigeria and thereby gain a footing in the world market where they could obtain

the best price available for their produce (Noah, 1988).

Over the years, the organisation passed through some transformation, first in 1931, into the Southern Nigeria Produce Corporation and more importantly in 1939, into the Ibibio Farmers Association (IFA). By 1950, the Ibibio Farmers Association was the single largest Ibibio owned modern firm (Limited Liability Company) and a Licensed Buying Agent of the Nigerian Palm Produce Marketing Board.

The Proposed Ibibio State Hospital

True to its philosophy of self-help and self reliance, the Ibibio State Union planned to establish a medical institution in "Ibibioland" to cater for the health needs of the people. The idea had informed the Union's decision to sponsor two scholars to study medicine in Canada and the United Kingdom in 1938 and later, six females to study nursing abroad. Moreover, at that time, there were only two Government Hospitals in the whole of the Mainland Districts of the Calabar Province (now Akwa Ibom State), located at Ikot Ekpene and Ikot Abasi (then Opobo) (Akpan, 2012).

Because of the fact that there was no hospital in the whole of Abak District, the leadership of the Ibibio State Union agreed that the proposed Ibibio State Hospital should be established at Ikot Okoro in Abak District to cater for the health needs of the people and also serve as a memorial to Asuquo Udo Idiong, one of the Ibibio Union scholars who died in Canada. Accordingly, on 5 September 1949, the Ibibio State Hospital Project Committee, headed by Dr. Obot Antia-Obong declared that the Cottage Hospital would cost the sum of £10,000.00. The amount was supposed to be raised from levy to be imposed, at the rate of £120.00 per clan, upon approximately the 81 clans of Ibibioland. However, in the end, lack of funds, indifference by the colonial government and intrigues perpetrated by the NCNC-led government of Eastern Region aborted the scheme. Thus, when the hospital was finally built in 1954 by the Eastern Regional Government, it was named "Annang Joint Hospital", Ikot Okoro and not "Ibibio National Hospital" as demanded by the Ibibio State Union. Moreover, the hospital was managed by the Qua Iboe Mission and not the Ibibio State Union (Abasiattai, 1991; Brown, 2009).

The Proposed Ibibio National Bank

The Ibibio Union also proposed to establish a financial institution known as the Ibibio National Bank. The idea was designed to help eradicate poverty and break a new path for the economic

emancipation of the Ibibio people. By 1952 when the idea was conceived, the Banking Ordinance of Nigeria required a capital of £25,000 for the accomplishment of such project. It was the belief of the Ibibio State Union that the amount would be generated from contributions by the six Ibibio Districts. The bank was to be a limited liability company in which individual Ibibio sons and daughters would be shareholders, or under the co-operative venture, which would involve the formation of co-operative societies as shareholders; or a combination of both since that the people were peasant farmers. Because of lack of funds, the bank was not established (Akpabio, 2012).

Conclusion

The Ibibio State Union was a formidable cultural organisation which existed to protect the cultural values of the Ibibio people and to promote their welfare as well. By 1928, it had become clear to the Ibibio people that in order to fit into the new scheme of things created by the colonial situation, they would have to adopt aspects of the values of the colonizing power and work for changes within limits imposed by the colonial authorities. Military confrontation with the British had proved largely futile and the court system even with its many flaws, had given permanence to the new order. This order emphasised, among other things, development along values and colonial prescription involving the embracement of Western type of education not only as a means of securing employment in the new economic structure but more importantly as a means for gaining familiarity with Western style constitutional provisions and legislative procedure (Noah, 1988).

Throughout the period of its existence, the leadership of the Union devoted its attention and resources to promoting the principles of self-realisation and self-reliance of the people through the united group. The award of scholarship to Ibibio indigenes in the 1930s and 1940s, the establishment of the Ibibio State College and the advocacy for the establishment of an educational institution which has metamorphosed into the University of Uyo, were visionary educational initiatives of the Union. In addition, the Union helped to curb the escalation of the 1929 Women's war, made political and administrative inputs to enhance the running of the colonial infrastructure, formed the Ibibio Trading Corporation and Ibibio Farmers Association, and made plans for the establishment of Ibibio national bank and hospital.

The Union adopted diverse diplomatic methods like negotiation, dialogue, bargaining, persuasion, reward, exchange of visits, threats

and compromise to achieve its aim and objectives. Without these robust diplomatic methods the Union would not have succeeded because it was established at a time that the colonial government did not allow any form of association by the indigenous people. The Union took many risks and through diplomatic methods endeared itself to the British colonial authorities.

It should be noted that some of the proposed projects like the bank and the hospital did not materialise, however, others were successfully carried out for the betterment of the people. As Nigeria struggles with the challenge of development, it is necessary to appraise the diplomatic/developmental template of the Ibibio State Union with an appeal for communities across Nigeria to arise and supplement government developmental agenda. In 1966, the Federal Military Government, led by Major-General Aguyi Ironsi proscribed all ethnic based unions including the Ibibio Union and subsequently brought an eventful era in the annals of community development in Nigeria to an end.

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