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SOME ASPECTS OF DIPLOMACY AND INTEGRATION IN IBIBIO TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

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Abstract

This paper discusses the use of diplomacy in the attainment of integration in the Ibibio traditional society. The diplomatic methods and practices examined are the processes of adoption and pact. It is discovered that in the traditional Ibibio society, deliberate efforts were made to integrate outsiders into a community for political, social and economic and strategic purposes. Because of the acceptability of the diplomatic methods by the parties involved, peace, stability and progress prevailed in the society. Currently, the issue of national integration is confronting Nigeria; this is because of the belief that Nigeria is an artificial creation of the British, welded together for the attainment of economic and political purposes. The paper shows that no society is a biological homogenous breeding population and that some elements of artificiality exist in every society. Based on the successful experience of integration recorded in Ibibio traditional society through diplomacy, it appears that the problem of national integration in Nigeria arises from the fact that the nation's plurality has not been properly managed. The paper concludes that some lessons should be drawn from the pre-colonial Ibibio experience which could help the country to overcome the challenge of national integration. It adopts a historical analytical method.

Introduction

Diplomacy may be conceptualized as the “how of inter-group relations”. It is an art of conducting relations with other states or communities so as to further the interest of the states concerned. The essence of diplomatic craft in pre-colonial times was to promote peace, conclude treaties, maintain or break alliances, establish boundaries, develop and protect trade and pay tribute. Several diplomatic methods were employed by rulers and other actors to maintain ties. These included exchange of gifts, sending of regular messages, use of accredited agents and diplomats, threats, negotiation and so on.¹

In the Ibibio traditional society, one of the aspects that diplomacy was used, was in the incorporation of outsiders into existing communities and villages through accretion or adoption. Moreover, villages and clans diplomatically struck enduring alliances or pact with others. Through the use of requisite diplomatic methods and strategies, backed up with customary law of the people which are discussed in this study, integration was achieved. Indeed, there are a few Ibibio communities, or villages that can claim homogeneity in the sense of having originated or sprung from a certain ancestor or founder and having no outsiders incorporated in it.²

Just like international law and conventions guide and are binding on actors in the international system, in the pre-colonial African experience, customary laws which were accepted by all actors were formulated to guide diplomatic relations. Customary law consisted of customs accepted by the members of a community as binding on them. In addition, the people subscribed to custom and usages - general rules and practices that had become generally adopted through unvarying habit and common use.³

This paper is divided into seven sections. Section one is the introduction, section two discusses the meaning and dimensions of national integration, section three examines the Ibibio pre-colonial socio-political structure, section four discusses the formation of villages in the Ibibio traditional society, section five looks at the

diplomacy of adoption, section six examines the enactment of pact in the Ibibio traditional society, while section seven is the conclusion.

Meaning and Dimensions of National Integration

The concept of integration has been variously defined by different scholars. Myron Weiner views it as the process of having together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit.⁴ Ernest Hass and Leon Linberg conceptualize integration as an incubator-style process, whereby existing political systems continuously forgo the desire and ability to conduct key foreign and domestic policies independently of each other, seeking instead to make joint decisions or to delegate the decision-making process to new central organ.⁵ Jacob and Toscano give a definition based on the idea of the existence of a certain amount of cohesiveness within the group under study. They submit that this degree of cohesion can be effectively elicited by examining the extent of public oriented co-operative, corporate activities undertaken by members of a grouping, constantly bearing in mind the relative importance of these activities to the survival of the entities involved.⁶

John Coleman and Carl Rosenberg see integration as the progressive lessening of ethnic, culture and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community, while Henry Binder opines that the achievement of integration involves the evolution of a cultural ideological consensus of a very high degree of comprehensiveness.⁷

Weiner adds that the levels of integration include territorial, value, elite, mass and national integration. According to him, national integration refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates – subordinate parochial loyalties. This integration involves amalgamation of disparate social, economic, religious, ethnic, and geographic elements of disparate nation – state, a homogenous entity. It implies both the capacity of government to control the territory under its jurisdiction as well as to stimulate a set of popular attitudes

described as loyalty, obligation, allegiance, patriotism and willingness by the people to place national interest above local or parochial concern towards the nation generally.⁸

These definitions suggest that for national integration to occur in a nation, a significant number of citizens must develop identification with a nation that supersedes identification with ethnic, cultural, or religious groups, acquire political awareness, share common norms and values and develop attitude favourable to display integrative behaviour among people of different groups. Ali Mazuri identifies five interrelated aspects of national integration: the fusion of norms and cultures including the sharing of values, mode of expression, life styles and a common language, the promotion of economic interdependence, the narrowing of the gap between the elite and the masses, the urban and rural areas, rich and poor i.e. social integration, the resolution of emergent conflicts, the sharing of mutual experiences so that people can discover that they have undergone some important experiences together.⁹

The Ibibio People of Nigeria

The Ibibio at present are situated in South-South geopolitical region of Nigeria. The composition of this group has been differently discussed and the debate as to who are and who are not Ibibio continues among several writers that further discussion here is deemed not necessary. For details see Udo⁸, Ekong⁹, Ford and Jones¹⁰, Aye¹¹, Uya,¹² Abasiattai¹³ just to mention a few.

In the pre-colonial era, the Ibibio who originated from the Cameroon highland lived in villages and clans and were politically segmented.¹⁴ In other words, they did not exist under the jurisdiction of a centrally administered political organization as was the case with some ethnic groups like the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba. There was no hierarchical political framework at the head of which one single being like the Oba of Benin, the Fulani Emirs and so on; every village and clan, like in the Igbo land exercised political authority accordingly.¹⁵

In order to govern the village, the head of the village needed a council and the village council remained the highest legislative body for that village. This council had powers of life and death over all members of the village. The practice, by which political offices in the village were shared among the various lineage heads, precluded the concentration of political power in the hands of any one individual. The heads of all the secret societies in the village were chosen among the heads of the lineages. All heads of the lineages, were members of the village council which often met once a week unless in the case of emergency. Members of the village council had the chance of making laws to govern the village. Laws were made for the protection of life and property of the individual, the conservation of soils, the protection of crops and the regulation of harvests. Laws were made for the village sanitation, for the sanitation of roads and squares and for the chastity of women as well as for orderly behaviour whether at home or market or even the playground.¹⁶

At the clan level, there was also a clan council known as *esop ikpaisong*. In most cases, this was the highest administrative structure in the land. Village heads reported to the clan heads, notwithstanding that, the village heads still enjoyed supreme right; however, many clans existed in Ibibioland. The enforcement of village laws was the responsibility of organizations like *ekpo nyoho* and age groups. Other secret societies in Ibibioland included *ekong* and *ebre*. *Ekpe* operated mainly in the riverine parts of Ibibioland. In addition, the Ibibio adopted the use of *mbiam*, a concoction supposed to have magical powers and capable of detecting culprits and punishing them.¹⁷ The nature of the Ibibio political system brought significant impact on the pattern of diplomatic relations in Ibibioland. The system afforded individuals and villages and clans depending on the reasons for communication, the right to conduct business with neighbouring villages of other ethnic groups.

To create a deeper understanding on the working of diplomacy and integration in the traditional society, it is necessary to discuss how villages were established in the area.

Formation of Villages in Ibibio Traditional Society

According to Ekong, every village in Ibibioland has its history. Usually, a village has a founding father – the first settler who himself may have broken from a family group elsewhere. He may have set out to found the new settlement in company of his sons, a brother or a number of brothers and their sons. On arriving the virgin bush area, each brother or grown up son may have settled at different spots in the territory. As families expand, these spots would eventually expand to become *efak* (wards) within the village. Each ward bears a name either for the first settling family or any prominent natural feature in the area but they all regard themselves as forming one single village. The village might be named after the founding father – usually with either of the following prefixes: *Ikot* (bush), *Ekpene* or *Ndon* (thick bush) or *Akai* (forest). Alternatively, a village which was founded by a man and his family or a number of brothers might be named with the prefix *Nnung* or *Ikot*, which means, the family or followers of so and so.¹⁸

A village may also be named after an ancestral village from where the founding migrants originated. This happens mainly in cases of internal schism or where a need arises for expansion to new farmlands. Such villages generally maintain close links with the ancestral village. A village may also be named after some prominent feature such as a big tree, e.g. *Ekpene Ukim* (Ukim - silk cotton tree); lake e.g. *Edem Ibiok*; (Ibiok - lake); a hill, e.g. *Obot Idim* (Obot – hill); or a soil, e.g. *Ikoneto* (red earth), *Edik Mbat* (swamp) and so on. In addition, a new village may be named after the *ndem* of the place or that of the mother village from where the founder migrated from.¹⁹

The break-up, which is otherwise known as fission, continues till today and will ever continue in the future as population increases. Study of the history of the foundation of each village, would show that in the not-too distant past, there were much less *Ekpuk*

(patrilineages) than there are now. In the olden days, each patrilineage sometimes incorporated outsiders into it, a process which is generally known as accretion. There are few Ibibio communities, or village that can claim homogeneity in the sense of having originated or sprung from a certain ancestor or founder and having no outsider incorporated in it.²⁰

This point confirms the assertion of Montagu that:

With regard to race mixture, the evidence points unequivocally to the fact that this has been going on from the earliest times. Indeed, one of the chief processes of race formation and race extinction or absorption, is by means of hybridization between races or ethnic groups. The biological fact of race and myth of race should be distinguished. For all practical purposes, race is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth.²¹

The Diplomacy of Adoption

It should be noted that in the pre-colonial Iman Ibom society as well as other Ibibio communities, the practice of “adoption” was an acceptable norm. Through this process, a person that was not originally from a particular community could be made to become one. The word “adoption” could be interpreted to mean, (a) *ediduk owo* (b) a child who has no parents or known family relations. In (a) above, a person who pledged for adoption was usually a person who was accused of very serious crime or offences and he had no money to pay the penalty or to save himself from being killed or sold into slavery. Also, it could be a person from insignificant family who wanted to attach himself to a founding or royal family in order to be respected; share in the riches of such a family, or to receive protection by such a family, for fear of being molested by the community and from being kidnapped and sold into slavery.²²

Such a person had to provide one hen, one manilla, *eyei* and cut hair from his head to the new "father". This was arranged before the community head. The immediate community would summon the villagers to the village square where after sufficient enquiry; the person is handed over to the new "father". He would drop his surname and adopt the new "father's" surname. Any property he had would be converted to the new family. He would thenceforth enjoy certain privileges of that family with other indigenous members of the family excluding some, which included chieftaincy succession and chieftaincy rights. In the case of (b), above, the person concerned would be accorded the same rights and privileges as other members of the family except chieftaincy succession and chieftaincy rights.²³

At this point, it is necessary to consider Ntukidem's opinion on the formation of settlements such as villages and clans. He notes that; as population of the villages increased at different rates, more land was needed to support people. Competition for land produced social stresses and tensions which often resulted in conflicts and violence among clans, and between kinsmen and near relations. Such situations occasionally gave birth to offences and crimes which were considered too grim to be condoned. Offenders in such circumstances would run away from their birth places to escape punishment rather than stay on to face the consequences of their actions. Under such conditions, a fugitive offender, fleeing from justice in his original home land, might establish a "hermit settlement". Sometimes, he might have the option of settling down among his maternal relations, who, according to Ibibio tradition, were forbidden to harm their grand-children, or give them up to any danger. Over time, such circumstances led to a clean break in patrilineal links, and if the fugitive became fruitful, he might become the nucleus of a new clan.²⁴

According to an ancient tradition, separation became total if the fugitive sacrificed a tortoise and performed some other rights that amounted to a denouncement of his former birth place and his kinsmen. Such denouncement on the other hand implied a total

acceptance to the people and the culture of the people amongst whom he settled. When fully integrated into his new village, his offspring could form the nucleus of an *ekpuk*, which under favourable circumstances might grow into a village, clan or sub-ethnic group.

Few instances cited here illustrate the circumstances under which physical separation of settlements from their parent stocks were possible. Before a new settlement was recognized as such, several segments of related families had to be bound together by social and spatial contiguity. The group had to establish for itself an *iso ekpo*, *nduono* or *nwommo* (shrine) *iso ndem*, *afe Abasi* or *anwa isong* (that is, public square). Finally, an *obong idung* or *ete idung* who remains the titular Head of the Group and link between the past and the present was chosen. Without these institutions, a new settlement still tied itself to the parent settlement from which its founders broke away, although it might be separated from it by distance.²⁵

The formation of Itam communities in Item, Abia State, Ikot Akpan Ndua in Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Area and Obong Ntak in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State followed existing diplomatic protocol. The people of Ikot Akpan Ndua, in Asutan clan of Ibesikpo/Asutan Local Government Area, are of Mbiatok Itam origin in Itam clan. The origin of Mbiatok people in Asutan is traceable to economic adventurism where a group of people from Mbiatok village in Itam who were skilled in wine tapping and blacksmithing settled at Asutan and engaged themselves in these arts. As the area they settled was particularly located in swampy tropical rain forest, with abundant raphia palm, the people took to palm wine tapping there. With time, the population swelled with more people from Mbiatok and the neighbouring Ekit Itam. With increase in the number of people, there was need for formal settlement.²⁶

Though the area they inhabited was virgin land, their leader, Akpan Ndua, consulted the council of elders of Asutan with gins and formally requested for a place for settlement. The chiefs inquired

from them whether they were exiled from their original homeland, they answered in the negative and narrated the objectives and occupational duties that attracted them to Asutan. To be convinced, the council of elders demanded from them to go back to Mbiatok Itam and bring back signs that they were not outcast. The Itam people there went back to Mbiatok Itam and came back with *ndom*, *nsei*, *nweweb* and *aduang*. With these items and drinks, the Asutan chiefs gave them the area that they settled. When they performed their first festival, as also performed by the people of Itam clan on *Awaitam* day, they saw uncountable monkeys – Itam clan’s totem.²⁷

In similar circumstances, the people of Obong clan in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State originated from Obong Itam. Some families from Obong Itam village went there to settle in the pre-colonial period for economic and social reasons; particularly to offer traditional medical services. From a humble beginning as a settlement of few families, the inhabitants expanded their original settlement to the extent that today it is a clan with twenty-eight villages and two of Obong villages exist in Abia State.²⁸

The Diplomacy of *Imaanship* (Pact or Alliance)

Imaan (pact or alliance) can be classified into two. One type of *imaan* is the one formed between two or more groups of people for a common purpose. The people who entered into the pact might be of the same or different ethnic groups or cultural backgrounds. Another type of *imaan* is kinship relationship recognized by two or more groups of people who had in the past lived together, but later parted ways through migrations and later live in separate locations. In this class, the groups of people are usually culturally of the same stock as they can trace their descent to common actual or putative ancestors. For the purpose of clarity, the first category of *imaan* should be regarded as an artificial or man-made *imaan*, while the second category conveys the notion of natural *imaan*. A distinction can be drawn between artificial and natural *imaan*. It is artificial or man-made *imaan*, because two or more groups of people who might have been of the same or different cultures gave their consent and formed

the pact among themselves for an agreed common purpose(s). The artificial *imaan* was usually sealed with human blood or blood of animals or by marriages. On the other hand, the natural *imaan* basically involved people of the same cultural stock. In other words, natural *imaan* involved people with strictly blood relationship who had once lived together but later disintegrated.²⁹

H.F.P. Wetherell in his Intelligence Report on Iman notes that:

Iman (sic) (pact or alliance) means strictly blood relationship, but Ibibio clans talk of being “Iman” (pact person or ally) with one another or one village will be “Iman” with another where no blood relationship exists. It would appear that when the clan (now calling itself Iman) began to disintegrate, the several villages called one another “Iman” to show their relationship and thus the name of the clan (Iman) came into existence.³⁰

The outcomes of the pact were the establishment of *Itina*, as their primary deity at Ekom Iman, and choice of *oyot* (bush rabbit) as the common or secondary totem. The fact that the emergence of Iman clan (one of the largest clans in Ibibio land, at present made up of Etinan and Onna Local Government Areas) was achieved through the process of deliberate diplomatic craft is demonstrated by the existence of multiple totems and deities shared by the groups in the clan. The clan consists of four groups, namely: Afaha, Nnung Oku Itina, Nnung Oku Ubo and Asuna. In the case of Afaha group, the *Akwa Afaha* located at Afaha Iman is their primary deity while the *Itina Iman* located at Ekom Iman is their secondary deity. Also, the *Enin*, (elephant) is the primary totem of Afaha Iman Ibom people while *oyot* (bush rabbit) is their secondary totem. Each of the groups mentioned have their distinct primary totem and deity. The

secondary totem (Oyot) and deity (Itina Ima) could be considered as having been adopted to ratify the artificial grafting of the people into a common socio-political unit.³¹

It is likely that it was on the basis of the *imaan* relationship that "Iman Clan" derived its name. Possibly after the pact, the people jointly established the deity at Ekom Iman called *Itina Iman*, and appointed one of the groups as the priest to *Itina*, hence, the term *Nnung Oku Itina* (the priest of Itina). Afaha ancestors may have sanctioned this arrangement since, as warriors they were compelled by their dynamic nature to be adventurous. An informant noted that Afaha relationship in Iman was an artificial arrangement. The source added that the other groups that Afaha struck the alliance with were their kinsmen whom they had interacted with for a long period and may have possibly migrated together with them. The remaining Afaha groups may have fanned out also at Ikot Oku Ikono to Ibiono, Nsit, Ikono, Itam, *Oku*, Offot, Ediene, Etoi clans, Annang and Ngwaland in present day Abia State as well as other places.³² This stance has also been strongly substantiated by many sources. The fact that there are Afaha villages spread all over Akwa Ibom State including Oron, Eket, Ibeno and Andoni should not be viewed as a coincidence of name but had been engendered by the dispersal pattern of the Afaha people at Usak Edet and Ibom and later Ikot Oku Ikono in Uyo Local Government Area.³³

Totemism is a methodological device that has been used by historians interested in African history to reconstruct the history of many societies. In the classic anthropological sense, totems link people into groups under an emblem of a common totemic species (plant or animal), and set them apart from groups claiming common substance or origin under other species. Erim, quoting Durkheim maintained that totemism determines the social order of a group and therefore is a theory of origins and theory of relationship of groups of people to nature.³⁴ This implies that clans or kindred groups that revere the elephant (as the Afaha people do), regardless of their modern geographical spread in the society, were supposed to be

related ethnically in the past. Put differently, totemism suggests that man has series of totems which consistently reminds him of his relationship to an ever expanding group of people. Totems are emblems for the clan as flags are for nations. This background is very necessary in our study of Afaha people found in many villages across the "ethnic groups" in Akwa Ibom State. They revere the elephant as their primary totem and also have other totemic symbols of the respective communities they now inhabit.³⁵

It could be said that among the Ibibio state system, there were people who could be classified as *imaan*, meaning blood relations. Even though they did not live close together, they were often regarded as blood relatives to certain families who have more than one place of settlement. Edet Akpan Udo explains further that, *imaan* is a name from the Ibibio verb, "man", which in its deeper sense means "to bear (children)" or "to procreate". It also means "pact" or "alliance". Because of religious belief attached to it, it was deeper in meaning and operation than any of the modern political alliances or pacts. Its usage included political, economic, social and religious functions.³⁶

Imaan pact was formed for various reasons. Some villagers that had migrated and stayed away from the parent stock or clan, and had settled near hostile neighbours, were back to form pacts with the parent stock to remind them that they belonged to one stock. For example, the Oku group in Ibesikpo formed a pact with the Oku clan in Uyo. In another instance, a pact was formed because of the friendly attitude of one village towards another group in time of need. Such examples can be cited in the case of Afaha group in Ibesikpo clan and Afaha Ikot in Uruan clan. Afaha oral tradition states that during their movement from their original home, they stayed in Afaha Ikot in modern Southern Uruan. On moving again to their present home, they went back to form *imaan* with the Afaha Ikot.³⁷

The ceremony of *imaan* varied from village to village. After the parties had accepted going into *imaan*, they appointed a day and a

place for the ceremonies that went with such a pact. The parties concerned brought *mbiam* and some drinks. All the palm wine and *mbiam* brought were put together in a pot. Each member present cut his hand and put his blood into the mixture. The oldest man in the parent village of the group to be joined in *imaan* poured libation after which the mixture was shared out to all present to show that they had accepted the union. From that time on they had one totem, to indicate that that they were indissolubly one. *Imaan* was also entered into after concluding a treaty that ended a war or wars between villages. The same procedure was followed.³⁸

In Uruan clan, blood was used, as already described. But in other clans, such as Etoi, each of the two parties brought a he-goat, a hen and a fish. Each side also brought water while the two villages combined and bought a mortar. At the boundary of the two villages (if they were adjacent) a hole was dug in the ground, and twelve leaves called *nweweb* were lined on each side of the boundary. The people from both sides donated their blood, which was poured into the water. The leaders from both sides then made some pronouncements which would have binding effect on them. After that, the blood was mixed with water and drunk by everyone present and the mortar was buried with everything inside. Finally the goats were killed, exchanged and taken home for eating accompanied by either an *ekpo* or *ekpe* play.³⁹

Politically, when two or more villages of different clans joined in *imaan*, they promised not to fight each other or to be a party to any other group planning to attack any of them. They promised to defend one another in case of enemy attack and not to be involved in killing or harming one another in any way. In the economic sense, they were free to pluck fruits or to take food of any kind in one another's village. In time of serious economic need, a member of *imaan* could obtain help from his *imaan* villages. For instance, one could be given farm plot or oil palm plantation for a period of time by his *imaan* villages. Socially, an *imaan* member was free to move about and enjoy privileges that other villagers could sometimes not enjoy. For

example, if an *imaan* person committed adultery or fornication, he was set free without paying any fine. *Imaan* played a unique role in the judicial system of the Ibibio. In case of any quarrel in a village of another clan, *imaan* members from the *imaan* village handled the case and settled the dispute.

However, Udo has observed that though *imaan* played a unique role in the Ibibio political, economic and social systems, and especially, the judicial system, there were some pitfalls. Excessive freedom was given to *imaan* people, which resulted in making them outlaws of a kind. For example, a criminal found solace in running to *imaan* village, knowing that nothing would happen to him there. A lazy *imaan* person could depend on his *imaan* villages for his livelihood without giving corresponding help to them. On the whole, *imaan* helped in the promotion of unity and peace in Ibibioland. To avoid war, Ikot Ese in Uruan arranged *imaan* pact with Oboyo Ikot Ita, in Nsit Ibom; Etoi arranged *imaan* with Uruan, Nsukara, Ediene and Idoro. There were numerous *imaan* pacts in pre-colonial Ibibioland which cannot be mentioned here.⁴⁰

A typical example of alliance in Ibibioland was the one made between a section of Uruan clan in Uruan Local Government Area, and between Itam in Itu Local Government Area and Offot Ukwa clan in Uyo Local Government Area, of Akwa Ibom State which fostered good relations between Itam and these clans. In the case of Offot Ukwa clan, the symbol of the relationship was *Ukana Offot-Awaitam*, which represented the marriage of the deity of Offot with Itam. The treaty and alliance system between Itam and Offot involved oath-taking, consumption of blood, killing of slaves and the use of sacred symbol to depict humans of the opposite sexes. The symbol is still in existence in Obio Offot. The covenant between the two deities bonded Itam people with those of Offot Ukwa and vice-versa and promoted common understanding between the two clans. The bond is still in existence till today.⁴¹

The Itam-Offot alliance represents a perpetual treaty of peace and friendship. In pre-colonial and colonial periods, Itam people

fought many fierce wars with Uruan, Oku and Ibiono Ibom clans, but Itam and Offot did not fight and shed each others' blood, and have not done so even till the present time. Offot sided with Itam to fight Oku and dislodged them from some parts of Oku settlement. Following the occupation of the land by Itam, a section of Oku people were forced to move further to establish a new homeland in the area known now as Oku Iboku in Itu Local Government Area. During the episode, Oku clan had to hide their *Udu Oku* deity, in Idoro village from the rampaging confederacy of Itam and Offot who wanted to capture the deity from Oku since they believed that the Oku people derived their strength from the deity⁴²

It is necessary to anchor the perspective on the scholarly opinion of some major Nigerian historians. According to Obaro Ikime, "our primordial groups deliberately seek to establish some identity as between groups that found themselves in regular or close interaction. The search for identity is often revealed in myths and traditions of origin of our various people". He used a few examples to drive home his point such as, the Oduduwa of the Yoruba and the meaning of the Bayajidda legend. He reasoned that, these traditions or legends were evolved for the purpose of deliberately creating some kinds of relationship between groups with certain linguistic ties, but each of which was a separate socio-political unit. He also mentioned the Igbo. According to him, "which ever traditions of origin one considers, whether of uncoordinated migrations from some area outside the present day Igboland, or whether of a primary migration of the Nri-Awka-Orlu axis and subsequent migration from there to other parts, one is struck by the neatness of the traditions as they relate to individual Igbo clans or village groups. Each such socio-political unit has a founder who had many sons, each of whom founded the various sub-units within the clan or village group."⁴³

Ikime noted that:

Afigbo has questioned this neatness in the traditions and has suggested instead a picture in which autonomous, little kin groups established

themselves in different areas within a given neighbourhood. As the population of these kin groups expanded, the space between groups was gradually filled in, contact was established, some initial problem of co-existence was generated, and a solution was found in amalgamation and coalitions of hitherto separate groups". Afigbo points out, and I do wish to stress the point, that such amalgamations and unions were acts of deliberate statesmanship". He concludes that it was groups that succeeded in working out such arrangements that came to look upon themselves as brothers. "o consolidate this functional co-operation, they probably in time invented a common ancestor and hierarchical order of seniority for groups".⁴⁴

The conclusion is that, "what is true of the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo is true for every other Nigeria people. When the ancestors found themselves thrown together by historical circumstances, found a way out of their differences by deliberately forging new alliances and amalgamations. The process was not always necessarily peaceful. The undeniable fact is that statesmanship triumphed and a meaningful and acceptable relationship was established".⁴⁵

Also, Alex Thompson has noted that:

...pre-colonial Africa did not have permanent, precisely delineated boundaries...if parts of a community wished to escape a certain political authority; they simply occupied land further away from the centre. It was easier to escape political opponents rather than fight them. As a result, there has been a long tradition of population flow in Africa, with groups of

aspects of diplomacy that ensured integration in Ibibio traditional society is detrimental to nation building efforts.

Endnotes

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