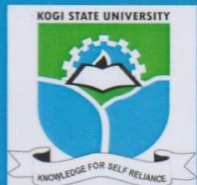


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Origin, Migration and Settlement of Iman Ibom People: A Critical Perspective

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Abstract

The reconstruction of the origin of a people is an aspect of cultural history that has generated a lot of controversy over the years. This is because most groups of people firmly hold on to the "authonomous" concept of historical evolution. In other words, such groups erroneously believe that groups that exist at present have always been at where they settle. In a situation where such theorists are confronted with historical evidence to shift their grounds, the issue of the family that constitutes the first settlers in the area becomes contentious. This scenario is aggravated in an era where politics has been mixed with scholarship; hence, historical reconstruction is undertaken from the political point of view. However, available historical evidence shows that all groups of people migrated from somewhere to their present abode. It is also obvious that the existing clans and even ethnic groups are amalgams of disparate groups of people brought together by diverse historical undercurrents. This study examines the origin, migration and settlement of Iman Ibom, one of the clans in Ibibio land. The work notes that although

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Iman Ibom people primarily inhabit the present day Etinan and Onna Local Government Areas, some of their kinsmen have over time dispersed to other places like, Mkpato Enin, Ikot Abasi and Nsit Ibom Local Government Areas in Ibibio land; Ukanafun and Oruk Anam Local Government Areas in Annang land; while migrants from other areas such as Nsit, Ubium, Eket, Ikono Ibom, Ikpa Ibom, Uruan, Annang land, and so on, have been absorbed into Iman Ibom communities over time. The paper suggests that the existing common historical ties should be explored to overcome the challenge of disunity that has confronted the state for a long time and inhibit its developmental aspirations. The study adopts a historical analytical method.

Keywords: Origin, migration, settlement, Ibom, Iman

Introduction

Iman Ibom is one of the clans in Ibibio land of the present-day Akwa Ibom State. Iman Ibom people live mainly in Etinan and Onna Local Government Areas. It is believed that their ancestral home in Akwa Ibom State is Ekom Iman village, located in Iman North, Etinan Local Government Area, where they dispersed from, to cover the areas they now settle. The clan is made up of four groups, namely: Afaha; Nnung Oku Itina; Nnung Oku Ubo and Nnung Asuna.

There are varied theories of origin of the people. The most popular one is that a certain man named "Iman Ibom", whose siblings were: Ikono Ibom, Nsit Ibom, and Ibiono Ibom who migrated from Ibom, Arochukwu, in the present day Abia State to Ikot Oku Ikono in Uyo Local Government Area, from where he and his followers dispersed to settle at Ekom Iman.

However, this study takes a different perspective and also adopts a unique historical research methodology based on the

analysis of the primary totems and deities venerated by each of the groups¹ to arrive at the conclusion that although the people have lived together peacefully over the centuries and would continue to interact, they are related groups who migrated either together or separately, but later forge a common entity. This argument is buttressed by the existence of the groups like Afaha and Nnung Oku, in other parts of Ibibio land, and indeed Akwa Ibom State. However, what is not disputed is the fact that the earliest set of migrants dispersed from Ekom Iman, in Etinan Local Government Area.

Theoretical Framework

The sensitive issues of origin and migration have drawn arguments from various scholars to the extent that, a notable historian once stated that "no subject has received more sustained attention and provoked greater scholarly controversies in the chequered and tortuous history of Africa and Black pluriverse than origins, migrations and inter-group relations".²

The complex situation has given rise to several schools of thought. Although space would limit us from elaborate discourse of the subject matter, a few perspectives, each, seeking to provide a framework through which the origin of people could be meaningfully examined, will be outlined. These schools include the Diffusionist, Anti-Diffusionist, Procreationist and Evolutionist schools of thought.³

The Diffusionist school ascribes to groups or peoples, places of origin, usually outside their present abode. The Anti-Diffusionist school, as the name implies, arose as a reaction to the views expressed by the Diffusionists. It posits that groups owe their origin to places around their abode. The Procreationist school of thought upholds biological procreation as the basis of groups' existence. Put differently, this school postulates that any given nation is a product of the reproductory energies of a "man and woman" from whom all its component units ultimately derive. Finally, the Evolutionist school of thought maintains that

socio-cultural affinities emerging from shared historical experiences overtime, constitutes the bedrock for understanding the origins of people. Scholars in the school assert that it is through the interaction and intermingling of different peoples in the past, through migrations, military conquests, trade, among others, that the foundations of nations are laid. To buttress the view expressed by scholars in this school, the works of Professors Erim O. Erim on Idoma and E.J. Alagoa on the Ijaw are worthy of note.⁴

Erim in his stimulating work on the Idoma, has shown that the concept of "pure race" popularised by the first generation of British anthropologists is a farce. Using Idoma as a concrete example, he demonstrated that modern ethnicity is a product of multi-ethnic community blended and harmonised into common nationality by forces of history through time, while Alagoa, writing on the Ijaw people, shows clearly, the early differences that existed among several Ijaw groups in their theories of origin and socio-cultural patterns. However, he submits that, over time, those differences were melted within the fertile historical crucible, provided by the Delta, into the indissoluble nationality.⁵

An examination of the aforementioned schools of thought reveals that the study of the evolution of Iman Ibom people fits into the framework of the Evolutionist school of thought. Historical research shows that Iman Ibom, were in the earliest times, part of the Ibibio race inhabiting the Central Benue Region from where they migrated to Usak Edet region of the Cameroon and afterwards, they moved to Ibom in Arochukwu from where they eventually migrated via the Enyong Creek to Ikot Oku Ikono, the major point of dispersal of Akwa Ibom people, and then to Ekom Iman in the present day Etinan Local Government Area.⁶ However, over time, these socio-cultural units coalesced by forces of history, such as inter-marriages, trade; and adoption and, subsequently developed a number of shared cultural characteristics which today distinguished them as members of a common clan.⁷

Origin, Migration and Settlement of Iman Ibom People

Iman Ibom people are part of Ibibio stock; therefore, it is appropriate that the reconstruction of the history of their origin, migration and settlement, should be contextualised within the framework of the origin, migration and settlement of Ibibio people. It should be noted that diverse theories have been propounded in this respect; however, the account of Monday Abasiattai, a Professor of History is adopted in this study.

According to him:

The later day occupation of present day Akwa Ibom State, although a gradual process was considerably expedited by the Igbo-Ibibio War, at Ibom in Arochukwu. The subsequent migration of the new waves of Ibibio people from Ibom, following the war caused further pressure on Ibibio people already concentrated at Ikot Oku Ikono thus, causing them to disperse in many directions. As the people spread out from Ikot Oku Ikono, they formed clans that exist today.⁸

The fact that the Ibibio people settled and dispersed from Ikot Oku Ikono district is demonstrated by the proximity of the location of almost all the major deities in Ibibio land around the area. The deities are: *Itina Iman, Anyang Nsit, Ukana Offot, Awa Itam, Etefia Ikono, Anantia Ibiono, Udu Oku, Udu Ediene, Afia Ndem Etoi* and so on.⁹

As noted earlier, the popular tradition of the origin, migration and settlement of Iman Ibom has it that the progenitor of Iman Ibom, was known as Iman, who migrated from Ibom, in Arochukwu region. It is believed that after settling around Ikot Oku Ikono, he and his group dispersed to Ekom Iman and stayed under a big tree, known as *Ekom* from where the name of the ancestral home of the people is derived. This tradition states that Iman Ibom had three sons, namely: Afaha, Oku Itina, Asuna and a daughter known as Ubo. This source believes that these sons and daughter of Iman Ibom constitutes the ancestors of Iman Ibom clan.¹⁰ However, having considered the common ancestry episode

of Iman Ibom people, it is also necessary to critically examine the groups that constitute Iman Ibom clan at present separately before substantial opinion is formed about their identity.

Afaha Group

The Afaha is the largest group of people in Akwa Ibom State. Afaha people inhabit almost all the Local Government Areas in the state. According to Mkpong and Nyong, the Afaha people descended from a common ancestry and migrated from Usak Edet in the Republic of Cameroon, and later moved in-land and created settlements for themselves throughout the areas that became Calabar, Ogoja, and Owerri Provinces of colonial Nigeria. Today, Afaha people occupy not less than 710 villages in Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Abia and Imo States of Nigeria.¹¹

In Monday Noah's opinion, Afaha is the core of the Ibibio and Annang people. He buttressed this claim with the fact that "Afaha kinship permeates all sections of Akwa Ibom State".¹² Edet Udo, also observed that there were about 275 Afaha villages in all the colonial districts in Ibibio and Annangland. According to him, in the 1952/1953 population census, Afaha people numbered about 205,908. They were distributed as follows, Abak 76, Ikot Ekpene 10, Eket 48, Etinan 79, Itu 21 and Uyo 18.¹³

After the arrival of Afaha people at Ekom Iman, it is believed that they merged with other groups because they were probably related before their dispersal to Ekom Iman. Their coming together brought about the phenomenon of *imaan* which means pact or alliance.¹⁴ Because of the religious beliefs attached to *imaan*, it was deeper in meaning and operation than any modern political alliances or pacts. Its usage covered political, economic, social and religious functions.¹⁵ It is likely that it was on this 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*).¹⁶

The rest of Afaha people may have fanned out also at Ikot Oku Ikono to Ibiono, Nsit, Ikono, Itam, Oku, Offot, Ediene, Etoi clans, Annang area and Ngwa land in the present day Abia State, as well as other places.¹⁷ Indeed, the fact that there are Afaha villages scattered all over Akwa Ibom State including Oron, Eket, Ibeno and Andoni should not be regarded as a coincidence of name but a phenomenon engendered by the dispersal pattern of the Afaha people over time.¹⁸

The primary totem of Afaha Iman Ibom people is elephant (*enin*), while rabbit (*oyot*) is the secondary totem. Their primary deity is *Akwa Afaha*, located in Afaha Iman, Etinan Local Government Area, while their secondary deity is *Itina Iman*, located at Ekom Iman.¹⁹ The secondary totem could be considered as having been adopted to ratify the artificial grafting of the people into a common socio-political unit. The presence of the dual totem and deity suggests that the people constitute a distinct group in Iman Ibom Clan.²⁰ H.F.P. Wetherell in his Intelligence Report on Iman Clan, has confirmed that each of the groups has a separate deity in addition to *Itina*. For instance, Nnung Oku Ubo have *Ubo* deity which is located at Ekpene Obom, and those belonging to Nnung Oku Itina have *Ndem Oku Iman*.²¹

It is important to state that the Afaha group in Iman Ibom clan still links their historical roots to the rest of Afaha people in Akwa Ibom State and belong to the Pan-Afaha organisation, known as *Mboho Akwa Afaha*. As a matter of rule, it is not the Clan Head of Iman and Paramount of Ruler of Etinan Local Government Area that coronates the Group Head of Afaha in Etinan Local Government Area, known as *Akwa Afaha*.²² From Ekom Iman, Afaha people dispersed and established Afaha Efiat where they lived before other Afaha settlements were established. The villages are: Mbioto No. 1, Afaha Iman, Afaha Akpan Ekpo (Which was formerly part of Afaha Iman), Ikot Ananga, Ikot Esua, (believed to have been established by some Afaha migrants from Western Nsit),²³ Ikot Udo Abia and Ikot Ikpukho, (Ikot Ikpukho was formerly, part of Ikot Udo

Abia). Other Afaha migrants moved across the Qua Iboe River to establish settlements in Southern Iman, Etinan Local Government Area. The villages are: Afaha Urua Essien, Ikot Akpan Obio Ekot, Nkana, Ikot Ibok, Ikot Obio Eka (Ikot Obio Eka was formerly a family in Ikot Ibok), Ikot Nte, Ikot Ese, Mbioto No. II, Efiat Mbioto and Ikot Nsung. Afaha villages in Awa clan of present Onna Local Government Area are: Awa Ndon, Awa Iman, Awa Atai, Awa Nkop, Afaha Ubium, Afaha Atai, Ikot Akpan Nkpe, Ikot Idem Udo and Ikot Nkang.²⁴

It should be noted that some of these villages have received migrants from other places who are now part of the respective villages. For instance, Mbioto No. 1 has some migrants from Annang land, Oboetim and Ikot Nya in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area. Afaha Akpan Ekpo has migrants from Ukam in Mkpat Enin.²⁵ Nkana Iman has migrants from Annang land, Awa Iman in Onna Local Government Area also has migrants from Eket, Ikpa Ibom, Ubium, Nsit, Arochukwu and Andoni, while Ikot Idem Udo has migrants from Nsit area.²⁶

Nnung Oku Itina

Nnung Oku is the largest group in Iman Ibom clan in Etinan Local Government Area. The *Oku Ibom* descendants exist in all the Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State with the name *Oku*, *Nnung Oku*, *Mbio-Oku*, *Ikot Oku* or *Ibiaku*. They were the priests in time past, who ministered to the deities on behalf of the people.²⁷ According to a source, when the Ibibio came to the present homeland, and began to scatter into different directions, it became necessary for the groups to have *Oku* (priests) in their respective areas. Consequently, the *Oku* group also began to disperse into various directions and live among their kinsmen. Even though the people from Nnung Oku have dispersed extensively, they regard themselves as "a unit". They have a Pan-Oku organisation which draws membership from all *Oku* villages in Akwa Ibom State.²⁸

The term *Oku* means "priest". A priest is a representative of

the people to God. According to the biblical account, at Mount Sinai in the wilderness, during the transition of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, the tribe of Levi was set apart for the conducting of religious functions, and the priesthood became hereditary and was perpetually linked with the family of Aaron. (Exodus 28: 1, Exodus 40: 12-15, Numbers 3:5). Based on these explanations, it is safer to assume that *Oku Itina* was not the "son" of a man named Iman Ibom. Rather the group that constitutes Nnung Oku Itina in the present day Iman Ibom are part and parcel of the *Oku* stock which are found all over Akwa Ibom State.

The fact that the *Oku* group exists all over Akwa Ibom State, primarily to perform offering and sacrifices for the clan's deities is further substantiated by Wetherell in his Intelligence Report on Iman thus:

The keeper of the clan *Ndem - Itina* at Ekom is called *Oku Itina*. Before the *Oku Itina* becomes fully qualified for his post, he had to undergo a rigorous training which includes entering *Inam* seven times....No Iman except the *Oku Itina* is allowed to enter the hut in which the *ndem* is kept, but men of Mbak Nsit village who Ekom claim *imaan* (i.e. blood relationship) may enter the hut and collect the mud. When sacrifices are being made to *Itina*, Udo Umo Obom carries out the ceremonies in connection with them but Mbak people have to be present to carry the sacrifices into the hut itself.²⁹

Be that as it may, Nnung Oku Itina in Iman Ibom, have over the years dispersed from Ekom Iman to establish many villages in Etinan and Onna Local Government Areas. The spread was accelerated by the fact that some of the families in some villages seceded and become distinct village(s) while migrants from other groups dispersed to join Iman people.

The villages are: Ikot Obio Inyang, Ikot Osong (established migrants from Nnung Ema in Ikot Obio Inyang),³⁰ Ikot Nseyen (named after Nseyen Ekwo, believed to have been adopted from Annang land by Ekwo of Mbioto No. 1),³¹ Ikot Akata (established

by migrants from Nnung Akata in Ebo)³², Ikot Ekang (established by migrants from Ikot Odiong in Western Nsit,³³ Ikot Akpabio, Etinan, Ikot Ebo and Ikot Ebiyak (Ikot Ebo seceded from Etinan village in 1916, while Ikot Ebiyak seceded from Ikot Ebo in 1946.³⁴ In Southern Iman, Nnung Oku villages are: Ekpene Ukpa (believed to have sprung from Ekpene Ukpa village in Eket urban. Moreover, there is a family in the village known as Ekpuk Eket, in addition to Ekpuk Ubium which imply that these families came from Eket and Ubium respectively).³⁵ Ikot Obong Ikot Inyang and Ata Ikot Inyang (originally existed as a single village). The village was founded by one Inyang Obio Mfon, an indigene of Ikot Obio Inyang in Iman North of Etinan Local Government.³⁶

Other villages in the group are: Ikot Eba (which has substantial population from Nnung Isemin in Etinan village).³⁷ Ndon Utim (which has migrants from Oboetim in Western Nsit),³⁸ Oto Akan (formerly a family in Ndon Utim), Anyam Efa, Akpasak Efa, Ata Efa, Ikot Ebikot, Ikot Akpa Ese (all these villages were originally part of Efa).³⁹ Others are: Ikot Esen Oku, Awa Ntong, Ikot Ekot, Ikot Etor, Ikot Itina and Ikot Eteko.

In Awa clan, Onna Local Government Area, Nnung Oku villages are as follows: Ikot Mbong, Atiamkpat, Ikot Obio Eket, Ikot Akpan Nko and Ikot Udo Esang. The people of Atiamkpat have ancestral affinity with Atiamkpat people in Ubium clan.⁴⁰ Ikot Obio Eket was established by migrants from Eket,⁴¹ Ikot Akpan Nko was founded by migrants from Ikot Nko, in Asutan clan, Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area,⁴² while Ikot Udo Esang, the village of the former Governor of the old Cross River State, Chief (Dr.) Clement Isong, was established by some members of Nnung Esang Usung Umondia Eka Inyang, from Ikot Inyang in Iman South, Etinan Local Government Area.⁴³

According to tradition, the dispute that resulted in the dispersal started at Nkana Iman, in the compound of one Umo Inwang Aba Ekpa, the head of *idiong cult*. The *Idiong* function involved some feasting, during the ceremony, one Etukudo Adiaha Nwa from Ikot Inyang put his hand in the plate to remove

obu ekem (prawn), while the traditional permission had not been given for the sharing of the food. Isong Udo Adiaha Esa rebuked him and commanded him to remove his dirty hand from the plate. Akpan Etukudo Adiaha Nwa, also an *Idiong* initiate, who was present at the occasion, was offended because of the insult that was meted to his father and vowed to retaliate. Despite the intervention by those present, he returned to a grove known as *ukit ekpo* in Ikot Inyang and hid himself. When Isong Udo Adiaha Esa returned, Akpan Etukudo Adiaha Nwa murdered him and fled. Eventually, Isong Udo Adiaha Esa's family retaliated and it resulted in *mwot iman* (murdering of many kinsmen). Some members of Nnung Esang Usung Umondia Eka Inyang fled to live with their kinsmen of Nnung Oku Itina in Awa clan in the present day, Onna Local Government Area. In the process, they established their own village known today as Ikot Udo Esang, after their family in Ikot Inyang, "Nnung Udo Esang Usung Umondia Eka Inyang".⁴⁴

This episode is preserved with the saying: *obu ekem idiong ama asuan Nnung Esang Usung Umondia Eka Inyang*, (meaning that *idiong* prawn led to the dispersal of Nnung Esang Usung Umondia Eka Inyang).⁴⁸ Research has also shown that migrants from Ikot Mbong, in present Onna Local Government Area, dispersed to establish a village in Annag land known as Ikot Mbong.⁴⁵

Nnung Asuna

Nnung Asuna are the descendants of Asuna Nkwa Ikit Okpot Idang their legendary father, Nkwa Ikit Okpot Idang. According to tradition, after the dispersal of Asuna people from Ekom Iman, they inhabited a location known as *Akwe* (the parcel of land in Ikot Ekan which is a government farm). While they habited that location, they established their deity known as *Iso Abasi* under an *Ukana* tree. The first version of the tradition states that Asuna had four sons, namely: Isong, Ekan, Anya, and Nkang.⁴⁶

However, there is a strand of the origin episode which states that Nkang, the founder of Ikot Nkang was not one of the sons of

Asuna. The argument that substantiates this point is that whereas the three sons of Asuna, namely: Isong, Ekan and Anya dispersed from *Iso Akwe*, Nkang lived at *Ndon Ikot Inyang Ekang*, around Mbioto No. 1. This source opined that Nkang married a woman from Ikot Akpanya and it was because of this reason that the relations of the woman did prevailed on him not live far from them and eventually allocated him a portion of land to live.⁴⁷

The other Asuna villages in Iman North, Etinan Local Government Area, are: Ishiet Erong (which has links with other Ishier villages).⁴⁸ Ikot Udo Oto, Ikot Abasi No. 1. (Ikot Abasi No. 1 has migrants from Oboetim Nsit, in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area, Ikono clan and remnants of Aro slave traders).⁴⁹ The other villages of Asuna extraction in Southern Iman, Etinan Local Government Area, are: Ikot Umiang Ede, Ikot Ukpong (Ikot Ukpong was established by migrant hunters from Ikot Ukpong in Nsit clan),⁵⁰ Ikot Akpan Ntembom and Iwo Eto.

In Awa clan, Onna Local Government Area, Nnung Asuna villages are: Ikot Obong Ishiet, Edem Idim Ishiet, Abak Ishiet (the people of Abak Ishiet have ancestral links with the rest of Abak villages in Akwa Ibom State).⁵¹ The other villages are: Edem Idim Ishiet, Ikot Akpan Ishiet, Ntan Ide Ekpe and Ikot Ese. Ikot Ese in Onna Local Government Area, has ancestral affinity with Ikot Ese in Uruan and Mkpato Enin Local Government Areas.⁵² From Iman, migrants from Ikot Ese dispersed to establish Ikot Ese village in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area, those from Ikot Umiang founded Ikot Umiang Obio Nkan in Mkpato Enin and in Okon clan, Ikot Abasi while those from Ikot Ukpong established Ikot Ukpong in Ikot Abasi and many parts of Annang land. In time past, the Asuna villages used to attend Pan-Uruan meetings.

Dominus Essien, an Uruan Professor of History, in many of his works on Uruan people, noted that there are many Uruan groups that have mingled with other Ibibio groups to form many communities. He added that originally, Uruan had 12 traditional clans, but during their migration to the mainland (Akwa Ibom State) from their cradleland, some of the Uruan people moved

into Opobo (Ikot Abasi), Eket, Oron, Ikono, Itu and so on.⁵³

Nnung Oku Ubo

Nnung Oku Ubo constitutes the smallest group in Iman Ibom clan in Etinan Local Government Area, but the largest single clan in Onna Local Government Area. As noted, opinion varies concerning the status of Nnung Oku Ubo in Iman Ibom. While some sources are of the view that Ubo was the wife of Iman Ibom, others believe that Ubo was a daughter of Iman Ibom. Others hold the view that Ubo was the fourth son of Iman Ibom. Still, there are others who believe that they are an offshoot of Nnung Oku which is now known as Nnung Oku Itina. In other words, this school of thought believes that there is a single Oku group in Iman Ibom.⁵⁴

Nnung Oku Ubo are believed to have been the priests of *Ubo* deity. The deity was the god of flood and thunder, and was a deity that was also revered by the people. This is because, at that time, it was believed that it was the duty of the *Ubo* deity to help the people from destruction by thunder, and stop floods from destroying their crops.⁵⁵ From Ekom Iman, the Oku Ubo family dispersed and in the process, established a village in Iman North, known as Ekpen Obom, from there emerged the seven villages associated with the clan in Iman North and South of Etinan Local Government Area. The villages are: Ikot Inyang Osom, Ndon Eyo No. 1, Edem Ekpat and Ikot Udo Adia (Iman North). Ndon Eyo II and Oniong Iman (Southern Iman).⁵⁶

It should be noted that what is now known at present as Edem Ekpat village was a farmland belonging to Ekpen Obom people. There an *ekpat*, (a big trunk of a fallen tree), across the path leading to the farmland in the area. When the people of Ekpen Obom wanted to get to the farm, they would have to cross the trunk to the other side to the farm. Whenever the farmers were asked where they went, they answered, *nnyin ika edem ekpat* meaning, we went to the other side of the fallen tree. It later became a slogan for the non-farmers *mbon edem ekpat*.⁵⁷ From Ekpen Obom, migrants dispersed to establish Ekpen Obo

village in Esit Eket Local Government Area.⁵⁸

Iman People in Oniong, Onna Local Government Area

The clan is made up of 16 villages, namely: Akpabom, Ikot Abasi, Ikot Akpatek, Ikot Annang, Ikot Ebekpo, Ikot Edor, Ikot Ebiere, Ikot Ebidang, Ikot Eko Ibon, Ikot Ndudut (first village that was established), Ikot Ntuen, Ikot Udo, Ikwe, Mkpaeto, Okom and Ukpanah. The people of Oniong migrated from Oniong village in Southern Iman, Etinan Local Government Area. The name "Oniong" signifies the place of origin of their forebears.⁵⁹ The leader of the migration to the present locale of the clan was one Ndut, who moved with his people away from Oniong Atai through Efa Iman to Awa-Iman where they stayed for some time. After settling at Awa, they moved to establish Ikot Ndudut, while some migrants later dispersed to Ikot Akpatek.⁶⁰

Oniong people venerate the *Ubo* deity which is the primary deity of Nnung Oku Uboin Iman clan of Einan Local Government Area.⁶¹ Like all the other groups in Iman Ibom, Oniong has assimilated other groups of people. For instance, Ikot Annang was established by migrants from Anangland,⁶² while Ikot Abasi has migrants from Ikpa Ibom Clan in Mkpate Enin and Eket. In addition, there are some remnants of Ubium people in the area. In addition, migrants from this stock now constitute Nnung Emem in Asong village in Mkpate Enin Local Government Area.⁶³

Iman Ibom People in Nnung Ndem, Onna Local Government Area

Nnung Ndem is the smallest clan in Onna Local Government Area. It consists of five villages namely: Ikot Nkan, Ikot Ndua Iman, Ndon Eyo, Mkpok and Okat. Although the five Nnung Ndem villages are inhabited by people from other stock other than Iman Ibom people, sufficient evidence exists to show that the villages had been established before these migrants came in to settle.⁶⁴ The migrants came from Ibeye group in Eket.⁶⁵ Ibeye people originally migrated from Ibedu Clan in Nsit Atai Local

Government Area and belonged to a Pan-Ibeye Association.⁶⁶ Another group of people that constitute Nnung Ndem came from Edor Eket⁶⁷ and others from Ukat in Ubium.⁶⁸ In his evidence at the E.A. Udoh's Panel of Enquiry into Nnung Ndem Clan Headship Dispute in 1972, Edidem Thompson Udo Uyo-Ata Akpabio (later Oku Ibom 1 of Ibibioland) confirmed the fact that before the arrival of Ndem, whose name Nnung Ndem villages are associated with, all the five villages of Nnung Ndem had already come into existence. He however, added that "it was only when the descendants of Ndem spread all over the five villages that it came to be known as Nnung Ndem".⁶⁹

It should be added that, the village known as Ndon Eyo was established by migrants from Ndon Eyo in Southern Iman, Etinan Local Government Area, while Ikot Ndua Iman developed from a swamp that Iman Ibom people used to tap palm wine from. Ikot Nkan was established by a set of Iman migrants that established Oniong Iman villages.⁷⁰

Iman Ibom People in Okon Eket Clan, Eket Local Government Area

Okon Clan at present is made up of 17 villages divided into three distinct lineages, namely: Nnung Obiota, Nnung Uko, Nnung Osufok. Nnung Osufok who are of Iman Ibom origin has the following villages: Ikot Ikpe, Ikot Akpan Ikpo, Ikot Akpaeneng, Ikot Obio Anana.⁷¹ It is believed that the Iman Ibom people in Okon dispersed from Awa clan in Onna Local Government Area. According to an informant, the migrants were led by one Osufok. Iman Ibom people and Nnung Osufok in Okon clan still share common fishing ground, common markets and related custom and tradition and there are many families in Okon which could still trace their relations in Iman Ibom clan. Moreover, the people of Iman Ibom, in Awa Clan, used to call Iman people in Okon "Nnung Osufok Nnung Oku", a name that clearly suggests an earlier migration of this group from Iman.⁷²

The villagehead of Ikot Ikpe in Okon clan in Eket Local

Government Area, is also the village head of Nnung Oku Ekanem in Awa clan, Onna Local Government Area. He however, rules Nnung Oku Ekanem by proxy (through his accredited representative since he resides in Ikot Ikpe in Okon clan in Eket Local Government Area).⁷³ Nnung Osufok in Okon clan, venerate a deity known as *Isa*. *Isa* deity exist in Ikot Udo Abia and Afaha Urua Essien in in Etinan Local Government Area.⁷⁴

Iman Ibom Villages in Mkpato Enin and Ikot Abasi Local Government Areas

Mkpato Enin and Ikot Abasi Local Government Areas, also have migrants from Iman Ibom. According to Essienobom, some migrants from Ikot Ekot and Ikot Nsung in Southern Iman, Etinan Local Government Area, led by one Akan Ndang and Akpa Etuk respectively, dispersed to settle in Ikot Afang in Ikpa Ikono clan, Mkpato Enin.⁷⁴ In addition, some migrants from Nnung Amanam in Ikot Ibok, Southern Iman, Etinan, now live in Ikot Ekpaw, Mkpato Enin.⁷⁵ Also, migrants from the family of Akaha Osukpong in Mbioto II, Southern Iman, Etinan, dispersed to places like Esa Ekpo, Ibotio Ndon and Nya Odiong, in Mkpato Enin.⁷⁶ In addition, there is a family in Nya Odiong in Ibiaku group of Mkpato Enin, that dispersed from Ekpene Ukpa in Southern Iman, Etinan.⁷⁷

Research has also shown that some migrants from Ikot Udo Abia, Etinan, led by one Akpan Udo Abia dispersed to establish a village known as Ikot Udo Abia, in the present Eastern Obolo Local Government Area, in addition to Utapa Ete Udo Abia, which the European explorers wrongly pronounced the village as "Utapate."

Nnung Udo Abia mixed-up with other groups and became part of Nnung Obionteng in Ikpa Ibom Clan, while others associated with Ukpum group. Later, some migrant fishermen of Andoni (Obodom) extraction came into the area and approached Nnung Udo Abia for permission to squat and fish. In appreciation to the kind gesture, the Andoni people named the settlement Ikot Ete, wrongly pronounced Okoroette in their dialect (but meaning

the land of Ete Eyep Udo Abia) and used to pay royalty to the landlords.⁷⁸ With the advent of colonial rules, the Andoni community in Ibibio land evolved to the extent that there was an influx of migrants to the area. Eventually, there was a conflict that resulted in the dispersal of Nnung Udo Abia to Ibotio, Ndon, Ikot Enin, Ikot Oyoro and Ikot Obio Ekpong in Mkpato Enin Local Government Area. Some of them spread to Ete and Okon Clans in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area, while others dispersed to Edor in Esit Eket. Interestingly, the members of the family still maintain their ancestral name of "Udobia".⁷⁹

According to Abasiattai, Ikot Abasi (the headquarters of Ikot Abasi Local Government Area), has links with Ikot Abasi No. 1, in Etinan Local Government Area.⁸⁰ An informant in Ikot Abasi No. 1, Etinan, corroborate this position. According to him, the traders from Ikot Abasi No. 1, who were middle men to the coastal merchants used to rest at a particular spot in the area and later named the location "Ikot Abasi" after their village. The name eventually evolved and became popular.⁸¹

Iman Ibom Communities in Anangland

According to the Intelligence Report on Annang group in Opobo Division, by W.D. Spence, there is at least one Iman village in the area. He notes that:

A small town with only 133 taxable males has its own *Okuku* and they join Ekong in their own town. Their *juju* is *Itina*, which is the Iman *juju*, and they have another distinct Iman custom, they must not eat *eyot* (a kind of ground pig). All the Annang around eat this animal. I consider that they came from the Iman side. The *Okukuship* always stays in the Echor (sic.) family as this was the family who came and founded the town; bringing the *juju* *Itina* with them... this suggests Iman (Ibibio) origin. (sic.)⁸²

The same report notes that there were then two villages with a population of about 1,250 people in Annang Native Court

Area, and was regarded as independent unit and admitted that the founders of the villages came from Nnung Oku Ubo. As the work has shown, the Nnung Oku people in the entire Akwa Ibom State are of the same origin. Therefore, the Nnung Oku Ubo group in Iman Ibom and the group in Annang area, cited, are of the same extraction.

Ikot Udo Abia village in Ukanafun was established by migrants from Ikot Udo Abia in, Etinan. The migrants went there as farmers and traders in palm produce with the Umani (Opobo) traders. With time, they increased in number to the extent that they established a distinct village named after their ancestor in Iman Ibom. Nnung Udo Abia were later joined by other groups of people such as Nto Ekon, Nto Eda, Nto Ibanga and Nto Abia Ikot. Nnung Udo Abia have with time expanded to establish Ikot Inyang Abia, while some of them now live in Ikot Unah and Okoyo, in Ukanafun Local Government Area. Ikot Udo Abia people do not use machet to fight like the typical Annang people do. Rather, they use "traditionally treated" sticks.⁸³

Nnung Ita Ikot Obio Enin Udoabia in Oruk Anam, was also established by migrants from Ikot the Udo Abia. According to tradition, when the migrants got there, they established a settlement but discovered that there was preponderance of elephants (*enin*) in the area. The Nnung Udo Abia used to kill the elephants and offer as sacrifice and also share same to their neighbours. From this act, the name, *Nnung Ita* (those that eat) was coined in addition to *Obio Enin* (an area with elephants), which Nnung Udo Abia are found. Later, other migrants came to join them such as those from Ikot Idem in Ibesit clan and Ikot Obio Ino.⁸⁴

Adoption as a Process of Integration in Iman Ibom Society

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 an 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.⁸⁵

Such a person had to provide one hen, one manilla, *eyei* (palm frond), 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 from then 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.⁸⁶

Conclusion

This study examined the origin, migration and settlement of Iman Ibom people primarily domiciling in Etinan and Onna Local Government Areas. Obviously, Iman Ibom people share a common historical background with the rest of the Ibibio people. After their dispersal from Ibom, their ancestors settled at Ekom Iman, and engaged in intense process of integration. Out of the process emerged the four groups that now exist in the clan, namely: Afaha, Nnung Oku Ubo, Nnung Oku Itina and Nnung

Asuna. Although there is a tradition which posits that the four groups emerged from the procreational capacity of one Iman Ibom, the analytical perspective adopted in this study expresses a contrary view.

The study is in line with the assertion that there is no biologically homogenous breeding population anywhere in the world.⁸⁷ As observed by Ashley Montagu:

With regards 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 hybridisation....The biological fact of race and the myth of race should be distinguished. For all purposes, race is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth.⁸⁸

From available evidence, there is none of the groups in Iman Ibom, as it is obtainable in other parts of the Africa that exist exclusively as a "pure race". Certainly, the villages are a mixture of people from other stock. In other words, after the original settlers had come in, they were in most cases joined by other groups. The evolution of Iman Ibom society has not been exempted from this principle. The study is not an attempt to pitch one group against the other, but as Obaro Ikime has noted:

The historian must be faithful to his evidence. Evidence will not always point to unities. Sometimes the evidence will point to disunities and divergencies...let those divergencies be faithfully recorded because the historian's duty is that of demonstrating how and why things have happened the way they happened. By so doing, the historian plays his role of deepening understanding about men and society with a view of influencing for good the attitudes and actions of his readers.⁸⁹

As rightly noted by Esen, it will be in the interest of Akwa Ibom State for groups to "find and link up with their counterparts

in other clans, such as Nnung Oku Etefia in Ikono Ibom clan, Nnung Oku Akpasima in Ibesikpo clan, Nnnug Oku Anantia in Ibiono Ibom clan, to name only a few. Afaha villages will link up with their counterparts in an expanding network of Afaha villages in Nsit, Itam, Offot, Eket, Oron, Ukanafun and other clans in Akwa Ibom State. This will engender solidarity, peace and more powerful basis of inter-community understanding and cooperation in the state than ever before".⁹⁰ This study supports this advocacy.

Endnotes

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