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Iman Under Colonial Rule (1914-1960)

Uwem Jonah Akpan, PhD

Department of History & International Studies, University of Uyo

*Corresponding Author: Uwem Jonah Akpan, PhD | ORCID: [0000-0000-0000-0000]

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Abstract

The colonial administration in Iman area, like in other parts of Ibibio society of Akwa Ibom in Nigeria, led to the overthrow of the indigenous authority including the governmental machinery of law making and enforcement. This happened because the British colonial authorities abrogated many governmental institutions considered as being repugnant to the foundations of English law. One of the ways the colonial agents achieved its purpose was to rule indirectly through indigenous personnel. The policy was such that they appointed people of their choice and gave them certificate of recognition called "warrant". The warrant entitled the holder to sit in the court from time to time to judge cases. It also empowered the warrant chief to assume, within his locality enormous powers. At the initial stage, the native courts were accorded executive, legislative and judicial powers. To achieve the desired goal, the colonial authorities grouped Iman in Uyo and Eket districts. These districts were very wide and, to some extent, impinged on the existing lineage bond, alienated the people and generated conflicts among the alien groups that were grouped together. Also, new methods of taxation, policing, provision of social services such as education and health, infrastructure, etc., were introduced by the colonial authorities. Despite the oppressive nature of colonial rule, it led to the introduction of social infrastructure in the areas of education, health, etc. The paper benefits a great deal from archival records such as colonial intelligence reports, assessment reports and hand-over notes as sources of data. The author adopts historical analytical method in the writing.

Keywords: Colonial Administration, Indirect Rule, Warrant Chiefs, Native Courts, Iman Society.

Introduction

Prior to the establishment of colonial rule in Iman area of Ibibio land, of present-day Akwa Ibom State of Southern Nigeria, the people had evolved socio-political and economic institutions which enabled them to stablilise their society over time. Each village was autonomous and independent and no village legislated for the other. The village was the only political entity which actively affected practically the daily lives of the citizens. Each village was lineage based and the lineage consisted of a number of families. Both the lineage head and heads of families were members of the village council responsible for making all village legislations. The village council made laws to govern all aspects of village life.[1]

The Iman indigenous society was one in which the old and the aged were veritable instruments for the maintenance of law and order. For instance, the village head was a man chosen on the basis of age and experience who could as well claim descent from the family believed to have founded the village. He was regarded as the first among equals. He was a man whose age had acquainted him with the proper customs. Along with the various age grades and secret societies such as *ekpo nyoho, ekpe*, *ekong*, *atat, ekpri akata*, *idiong*, etc., the aged exercised tremendous influence in the society.[2]

Important judicial instruments existed in the Iman traditional society such as *mbiam* (oath-taking substance), *idiong* (divination)*, afia* (ordeal), *nnuk enin*, (elephant tusk), *eyeyen* (grand children of daughters), *ukot* (in-law), *imaan* (ally), *ebre*/*iban isong* (women's government). Plants were also adopted as symbols to convey "the don't" (warning signals) in the society. The plants included the young shoot of the palm tree (elais guineensis), known in Ibibio as *eyei* or *ekpin eyop*, used in conveying prohibitive instructions. Also *okono* (dracaena fragan) served as beacon stones in the demarcation of boundary. *Mbritem* – (ginger lily) and *mkpatatat* (selaginella) when lined on a plot of land served as a warning that such plot of land was not ready to be farmed that season.[3]

According to Noah, village laws were not made arbitrarily and steps were taken to ensure that the wishes of the people were ascertained. This often took place in a meeting of the lineage assembly held on a fixed day of the week. It was during such assemblies that proposed village legislations were placed for discussion and every member of the lineage had the opportunity of expressing his opinion on such impending legislation. Laws in the traditional society were rigidly enforced, the laws served as instruments that prevented deliberate misbehaviour by the members of the respective communities.[4]

The advent of colonial rule resulted in the overthrow of the indigenous system and the introduction of alien system. For instance, colonial courts were introduced: the court helped in the establishment of British rule by the enforcement of ordinances and proclamations. Also, the existence of a court in an area had a restraining effect on local inhabitants. There was no conceivable matter that could not be made into a court case. They include the refusal to pay tax, indebtedness to individual, possession of firearms, theft, etc.[5]

Despite the fact that colonial rule which forcefully replaced the "old order" had some weaknesses, it however, led to the transformation of Iman area via the establishment of educational and medical institutions, social infrastructure such as roads, bridges, communication among others.

Iman: The Land and People

Iman is one of the major clans in Ibibio land of Akwa Ibom State. Iman settle mainly in Etinan and Onna Local Government Areas and constitute a substantial population of Okon clan in Eket Local Government Area. Iman consist of four groups namely: Afaha, Nnung Oku Itina, Nnung Oku Ubo and Nnung Asuna. Iman ancestors are believed to have settled in Ekom Iman in the Northern axis of present-day Etinan Local Government Area after their forebears had migrated from Usak Edet in the present-day Isangele Division of Cameroon before their dispersal to the respective abodes they now occupy.[6]

A colonial source in 1932, gives some insights into the geographical and demographic particulars of Iman area thus:

> Iman villages in the Uyo District number 36, 2300 of which are on the East side of the Qua Iboe River and the remaining 13 on the West. The clan is surrounded on all sides by other Ibibio clans. On the West the land occupied by the clan forms the boundary with the Opobo Division, and on the South it forms part of the boundary with the Eket Division. On the East it is bordered by Nsit and on the North by Ikono clan territory. Both clans form part of the Uyo District. On the North-West for about one mile the Iman territory borders that of the Annang. The area occupied by the Iman in Uyo District is about 46 square miles, the 36 villages contain an estimated population of 17, 509, consisting of 5, 089 men, 5, 379 women and 7, 042 children. The average density is therefore 380 per square mile. In the Eket Division, attending the Awa Native Court, are 35 Iman villages. These villages are separated from those in the Uyo District by a purely arbitrary boundary.[7]

The colonial source adds that:

> The centre of the country inhabited by Iman clan lies roughly 17 miles South-West of Uyo and in the extreme South-West of the District. The Qua Iboe runs through Iman country on either side of which is a narrow belt of swamp in which *tumbo* trees are grown. Out of the river valley, the land is flat and heavily farmed. The villages consist of scattered houses each house being surrounded by its own farm and its own fruit trees, in the centre of the village is to be found a square which is used for dances, ceremonies and occasionally for village meetings. Ibibio is spoken by the elder members of the population...[8]

The Colonial Interlude

The process of the British penetration of Iman area was a gradual one and pre-dated 1914 which is the originating period of this discourse. From the coastal foothold of Eket, the British advanced inland initially to explore and trade. In 1871 and 1881, A.A. Robertson and George Watts, British merchants, respectively, explored the Qua Iboe estuary and commenced trade on the river. In the 1880s, Consuls E.E. Hewett and Harry H. Johnston similarly explored the River's estuary and the adjoining coasts. In 1895, A.A. Whitehouse, the newly appointed Pro-consul for Qua Iboe (Eket) District, deepened the exploration of the hinterland via the Qua Iboe River.[9]

At the amalgamation of Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914, the already existing Provinces were broken into smaller ones. Due to World War 1 (1914-1918), the reforms introduced by Lord Lugard were not fully implemented. Moreover, the administrative structure did not change until Lugard's departure in 1919. In 1919, Sir Hugh Clifford assumed leadership as the Governor of Nigeria and ordered the Secretary for Native Affairs, S.M. Grier to undertake a tour of the Eastern Provinces and issued a report to the Government. The crux of Grier's report was critical to the warrant chieftaincy. He advised the Government to make genuine efforts to discover the natural rulers and put them in positions of authority. In 1923, another study was done on the Eastern Provinces by G.O.F. Tomilson.[10]

These reports influenced the re-structuring of Native Court administration ordered by Sir Hugh Clifford and Colonel Moorhouse, the Lieutenant Governor of the Eastern Provinces. It became obvious that many of the chiefs were not traditional heads of the units they administered, while the native courts areas did not coincide with ethnic groups and boundaries. In 1926, Sir Graeme Thompson succeeded Sir Hugh Clifford. In 1928, he introduced direct taxation and this involved undertaking an assessment to determine the amount to be paid by each person.[11]

The Women's War of 1929, marked a watershed in Nigeria's nationalistic struggles subsequently, de-robed the colonial structure of its paraphernalia. The scenario partly obliged the British colonial authorities to reform the indirect rule system. There was a complete overhaul of the Native Court system in the entire Eastern Provinces between 1930 and 1938. This resulted in the deliberate involvement of traditional rulers in all relevant units of local government and the separation of the executive from the judiciary, the establishment of native court in each Native Authority as well as the employment of indigenes of a particular native court area to serve as staff such as clerk, messenger, treasurer, etc.[12]

Initially, the British Consular influence in Iman area initially stem from Eket. It is believed that the pioneer Qua Iboe missionary in Iman and its environs, Rev. John Kirk, who arrived in 1898, worked closely with the British Consul at Eket and was authorised to undertake some judicial functions of the Consul. It appears that the scenario subsisted until the establishment of Uyo District by Robert Bernard Brooks in 1904-1905.[13] Following this development, some villages in Iman, because of their proximity were administered under Uyo District while some continued to be part of the Eket District.[14]

Talbot, a colonial Officer states that Eket District in the 1920s was a very large area encompassing Oron, Ikot Ubo, Effiat, Ubium, Nsit (including Ndiya and Okon) and Ibeno. He describes the Iman in Eket District (Iman in Awa clan, Oniong and Nnung Ndem) as "Ibibio Awa" numbering about 39,000 people.[15] Another colonial Officer, Jeffreys, confirms the above assertion.[16] Also, Wetherell states that in 1932 there were 33 Iman villages in Eket District occupying an approximate area of 34 square miles, containing an estimated 10,340 people. This description was limited to Iman in Awa Clan and did not include the Iman in Oniong and Nnung Ndem clans in present-day Onna Local Government Area. Wetherell also notes the peculiar geographical feature of the clan by stating that "the most northerly Iman village is within five miles of Uyo headquarters, while the most southerly village is within four miles of the Eket headquarters".[17]

According to Wetherell, the 33 Iman villages in Eket District were as follows:

(1) Efa (2) Mbioto (3) Awa (4) Ikot Ante (5) Ikot Mfon (6) Afaha Ikot Akpan Nkpe (7) Ikot Ibok (8) Ikot Akpan (9) Ikot Ekot (10) Atiamkpat (11) Afaha Ubium (12) Afaha Ikot Idem Udo (13) Nnung Oku

(14) Ikot Umiang Ede (15) Ikot Obong (16) Ntan Ide (17) Iwo Eto (18) Edem Idim (19) Ikot Ese (20) Ikot Nsung (21) Afaha Atai (22) Awa Ndon (23) Ikot Obio Eket (24) Ikot Obio Eka (25) Ikot Udo Asang (sic.) (26) Ikot Ese Issiet (27) Ikot Mbong (28) Abak (29) Ikot Ukpong (30) Ikot Akpan Ntembom (31) Ikot Akpan Nko (32) Ikot Nkang (33) Ikot Ete Ekpo.[18]

Wetherell also posits that during the same period, there were 36 Iman villages in Uyo District. Out of these, 23 were located on the East side of the Qua Iboe River and the remaining 13 on the west. He adds that the area occupied by Iman villages in Uyo District was estimated at about 46 square miles.

Iman Villages East of the Qua Iboe River were as follows:

(1) Afaha Efiat (2) Afaha Iman (3) Etinan (4) Ekom (5) Ekpene Obom (6) Ikot Abasi Iman

(7) Ikot Akata (8) Ikot Ananga (9) Ikot Akpabio (10) Ikot Akpanya (11) Ikot Ebo (12) Ikot Ekan

(13) Ikot Nkang (14) Ikot Isong (15) Ikot Ekang (16) Ikot Nseyen (17) Ikot Obio Inyang

(18) Ikot Osong (19) Ikot Udo Abia (20) Ikot Udo Adia (21) Ikot Udo Oto (22) Ishiet (23) Mbioto.[19]

Iman Villages West of the Qua Iboe River were as follows:

(1) Afaha Urua Essien (2) Awa Ntong (3) Ekpene Ukpa (4) Ikot Akpan (5) Ikot Eba

(6) Ikot Esen Oku (7) Ikot Inyang (8) Ikot Itina (9) Ikot Obong (10) Nkana (11) Ndon Eyo

(12) Ndon Utim (13.) Oniong.

A Native Court was established at Etinan village since 1902. The Etinan Native Court was a "C" Grade. Iman in Uyo District attended the Etinan Native Court together with five Ikono villages in present-day Uyo Local Government Area. The five Ikono villages were: Ikot Offiong, Minya, Anan, Nnung Asang and Ikot Ebo.[20]

Rev. John Kirk of the Qua Iboe Mission served as the President of the Native Court at Etinan. Rev. Kirk combined the position of a Court President and missionary. This seems to have arisen from the fact that he was accepted by both European political officers and the indigenous people. Some of the indigenous chiefs that sat with Kirk initially included Chief Udo Ema, Chief James Usen and Ekwere Inyang. Each of the the native court members was given chieftaincy regalia - big, wrapper, a staff, a shirt and a cap. To summon an accused to court, a complainant had to pay litigation fee of five shillings, a cock and maize. Cocks collected from litigants were often sold to Rev. Kirk or occasionally to the court members while the maize was used in feeding them before they were sold out. Judgement was delivered after hearing from the parties concerned and their witnesses. It was given in such a way that both the accused and the complainant often accepted the verdict of the court with good feelings.[21]

In the year 1930-1931, 1,216 civil cases - 76 adultery as well as 249 criminal cases were heard. This resulted in the total revenue of £732 from fees and fines. But by 1931-1932, there was a considerable reduction in cases heard. The decrease was attributed to general trade depression. The expenditure, which consisted of sitting fees, scribe and court messenger salaries, totaled £290. It is interesting to note that, of the 1216 civil cases heard in the period of 1930-31, only 46 or 3.8 per cent were appealed by the losing party for review by the District Officer.[22]

Wetherell states that:

> Although minor evils exist, there is not to be found the wholesale corruption that is alleged of native courts elsewhere and the crowded court and the number of cases heard and few appeals, speak for its popularity as an institution. The members, who for the most part were village heads, had a very live (sic) realisation for their duties and the rough justice which they dispense met with the immediate demands of the people.[23]

Out of the 36 Iman villages that attended the Etinan Native Court, 13 had to cross the Qua Iboe River. Beginning from the 1920s, considerable agitation was made by the 13 villages for a court of their own. They rightly pointed out that the river was a barrier between them and the 23 Iman villages on the East.

In 1906, a native court was established at Awa Iman and some Iman elite were appointed as warrant chiefs to judge cases in the court. A President and three members were appointed monthly by the District Officer and continued until 1933 when the schedule of the "Warrant" was amended to include the village council of Iman Clan in Eket District. Until the re-organisation, the Awa Native Court served villages situated on both sides of Awa Creek and was therefore, conveniently central. But with the withdrawal of the Oniong and Nnung Ndem villages to their new court, Awa was no longer in the centre of the area it served, rather it situated in the extreme south of Iman clan territory. Iman people were anxious to remedy this by moving the existing court to Ibiok Iman.[24]

A few adjacent clans in Opobo Division were subject to the jurisdiction of Awa Native Court. The court was regarded as "a government institution or an out-post providing a centre that was more convenient than the headquarters of a district where the Commissioner might deal with local affairs". The Clerk was considered the local agent of the Government. The persons appointed to judicial positions in the Court were those who aided the extension of government influence or made themselves useful by compelling their villages to make roads or in some instances, they were village or family heads. Moreover, they were men of influence. They represented the final extension of government authority into the villages from district headquarters via the native court. Their business, in addition to hearing cases in court, was to make known the orders of government in the villages. It was also part of their duty to look after the Commissioner when he visits any particular village. A frequent and just plea from the village that had no warrant chief was that, there was no one to bring into effect the orders of government.[25]

It should be mentioned that Uyo Division to which some Iman villages belonged, consisted of 10 clan areas of the Ibibio. This area was bounded on the West by the Abak Division, on the North West by Ikot Ekpene Division, on the North by Itu District, on the East by the Cross River, on the South East and South by the Eket Division, and on the South West by the Opobo Division. The clans were: Offot, Oku, Etoi, Ikono, Uruan, Asutan Ekpe, Ibesikpo, Iman, Western Nsit and Eastern Nsit. A colonial report states that "the Iman clan, second to the Western Nsit clan in population and area, still maintains its reputation as being the most advanced of all".[26]

Based on the above records and others, it is obvious some developmental projects were embarked upon by colonial authorities during this period under study. For instance, Wetherell describes Iman in present-day Etinan Local Government Area thus:

> The area is well supplied with motor roads. Running north and south is a road which links up Uyo with the Etinan Native Court and then continues to join the Ndiya-Opobo PWD road. There is a pontoon across the Qua Iboe River at Ekpene Ukpa. Branching off the above road at Ikot Ekan, where a Government School is situated, a road runs through to Abak. Three other short motor roads leave the main Uyo-Etinan road, one going to the factory at Ekpene Obom the second linking the Etinan Native Court with the Nnung Udoe Native Court and third running to the Mission Hospital at Etinan. Bush paths abound and are kept in excellent order by the villages. The area is plentifully supplied with water by the Qua Iboe and *Akpa Ubom* rivers and their many tributaries, with the exception of an area in the extreme north around Ekom and Ikot Ekan.[27]

The colonial source cited above adds that other social amenities which could be attributed to the missionaries and the colonial administration included the opening of motorable tracts linking many settlements around Etinan. As early as 1912, the road linking Etinan and Uyo had been constructed. It also seems that it was during this period that another route was created to link Etinan from Opobo. By 1925, a temporary bridge which "hoped to bear light traffic was being built over the tributary of the Qua Iboe River near Etinan", thus, it opened up the road from Etinan to Issiet in present-day Uruan Local Government Area across the south of the district-a-distance of 18 miles.[28]

The 1936 annual report of Uyo Division states that in that year, telephonic communication to Calabar, Port Harcourt and intermediate stations and to Itu had been in operation throughout the year. Postal facilities was being increased and the transport of mails was been considerably speeded up. The institution of a regular air-mail service to and from Europe became been outstanding development.[29] The Postal Agency at Etinan was efficiently maintained under the charge of Mr. B. Ekpo, who was also the Scribe of Etinan (Iman) Native Court. Inspecting Officers praised the conduct of the agency. After repeated but abortive attempts to influence Government to grant a subsidy to the Agency, the Post Master-General, on a visit to the area in December approved a grant of 10/- a month.[30]

According to a colonial source:

> The Uyo-Eket Divisional boundary which divides the clan into two parts was purely arbitrary, consequently, proposals for re-organisation were submitted for ultimate unification of the clan in one Administrative Division. Petitions were received from the villages in Eket Division and from those in Uyo Division asking to be joined together under one council and under the guidance of one Administrative Officer.[31]

Colonial records further state that:

> A considerable change in boundaries has been made…upon the merger of the Iman and Western Nsit clans in the South West by the division. These two clans were hitherto split up roughly half of each being administered in the Uyo and Eket divisions. Iman was merged as from the1st of April 1936 and Western Nsit clan as from the 1st of June 1936. Mr. Wetherell, Assistant District Officer was

> posted on special duty in the Eket and Uyo Divisions especially to tour the Iman and Western Nsit areas in those divisions and by incessant village travelling and instruction, to prepare and fit the clans for the amalgamation. Thus, fulfilling a long-felt want as the progressive Iman clan required constant guidance and the comparatively backward Western Nsit clan, constant encouragement (sic.). Mr. Wetherell posting made the amalgamation possible earlier, perhaps, than would have been the case without an officer posted to the area.[32]

From the 1st of April 1936, the Iman Clan became a Native Administration. A Council centre consisting of a Council House, Strong Room, Safe, Offices and Quarters for the Treasurer and Messengers had been built. This work proceeded, despite the absence of the Inspector of Works who was on leave. The Council House was completed by the end of the year and employees' quarters and a Rest House still remained to be built. Meanwhile, the Treasurer was selected and had undergone a course of training at Uyo. In January 1937, the separate Iman Native Administration with its own Treasury was put into full working order with headquarters at Ekpene Ukpa. His Honour, the Resident of Calabar Province officially opened the Clan Centre in February, 1937.[33]

Available colonial record reveals

> The clan has been working on the polled estimates of the former Uyo and Eket sections, and in a fairly sound financial position. Taxation started at the beginning of October. Of an estimated tax, £2241. 17/- was collected leaving an outstanding balance of £49. With a yearly revenue of £ 19, 90, the balance in the Treasury at the close of the year (1937) was £1643.17.2 of which £500 is still owed by the Eket Native Administration being part of the Eket Iman surplus funds. [34]

With the amalgamation, the Clan Council carried out its duties efficiently and conscientiously, although somewhat slower. The taxation process was observed as being satisfactory. In December 1936, certain dissatisfaction was felt by the Awa section of the clan with the conduct of clan affairs and the council. They complained that their area was being ignored by the reminder of the clan, that taxation was carried with undue severity but with leniency in other areas of the clan and that their Native Court sitting membership was being unduly interfered with by the Council. Their complaints were investigated in full council and it was observed that "there was some foundation for the complaints, although they were considered as having been much exaggerated". The whole matter was settled amicably and a colonial source claims that "there was is prospect of further friction".[35]

In 1936, there are two Native Administration schools in Uyo Division, one at Oniong (Iman Clan) and one near Ntuk Otong (Asutan Clan, while a third is due to open in 1937 for the Awa-Ikot Akpan Ntembom area (Iman Clan). The two schools in being have reached half way on their six year plan expansion. They each have three classes and a teaching staff of two. The fourth class will be added in January1937.[36] Still in the area of education, a report maintains that contract was awarded for the construction of two teachers' quarters at the Government School, Ikot Ekan, as a result of a request that was forwarded to the Chief Secretary of the Government for funds.[37]

The lapses recorded in the area of the provision of primary medical services to the people of Southern Iman in present-day Etinan Local Government Area attracted a petition addressed to the

Resident, Calabar Province via a letter dated 18th of September 1947, by the Southern Iman Progressive League, Lagos. It was complained that the people of Southern Iman were experiencing great difficulties due to lack of medical treatment. This was attributed to the fact that the Native Administration Dispensary at Ikot Akpan Ntembom was not efficiently managed. It was alleged that the supply of drugs was inadequate to meet the demand of the indigenes. It was disclosed that formerly, it was the practice of the Medical officer in-charge of the area to call at the dispensary for medical treatment to the sick in the morning. At the time that the petition was written, it was noted that he only called there occasionally and at very odd time in the afternoon. The petitioners therefore frowned at such negligence of duty and observed that that was not in the best interest of the people. They then appealed for the intervention of the Resident in this regard.[38]

In a response to the petition of the Southern Iman Progressive League, Lagos, the District Officer, Uyo Division, on behalf of the Resident responded via a memorandum No. N.A. 287/Vol. 2/461, dated 15th of October 1947, and frowned at the attitude of the organisation. He described the allegation as regards the Dispensary as untrue. He went on to explain that the Medical Officer, Opobo has a large area to cover comprising Opobo, Ogoni, Eket and Southern Uyo Divisions and he has to fit his touring in accordingly. The Medical Officer used to travel from Oron to Odot, then toIkot Akpan Ntembom and returned to Opobo via Awa, a distance of about 74 miles.[39]

It should be noted that the Native Authority System being the fourth phase of evolution of local government in Nigeria, was primarily aimed at incorporating the broad-based traditional democracy in the local government. Consequently, the democratic principles, which guided the re-organisation, led to the establishment of village and clan councils. The Clan Council became the Native Authority with executive and legislative powers. Similarly, the Village Council was made up of traditional lineage heads, village heads and elders of the village. The Native Courts remained a separate arm which concerned itself primarily with the dispensation of justice. Each clan had its own court, as more clan courts were established in the areas that had none.[40]

Although the Native Authority System relatively satisfied the people better than the autocratic warrant chief system, there were still some lingering problems with the new system. For instance, corruption, injustice and inefficiency persisted in most clan councils and courts. Moreover, the new system did not involve more of educated elements. In the 1940s, government applied some remedies including the cutting down of membership of the councils. But the outbreak of World War II (1939-1945) compounded the problems. For one thing, World War II like World War 1, caused the depletion of colonial officials who could have trained the new council members in their administrative and political duties.[41]

At the end of World War II, the colonial government adopted a system called “Best Man Policy”. Under this policy, each community was directed to send to the Native Authority Councils and Clan Courts, a man it considered “best” qualified to represent its interest. Such representatives could be traditional chiefs or any kind of persons that the community felt would represent the people well. This was a departure from the past reforms. For the first time, the people were given an opportunity to choose their representatives. The fact that the choice was not restricted to traditional rulers alone was also important, because the emerging educated elements were equally given a chance in local governance.[42]

The County Council System was the last experiment by the colonial administration to find a suitable and acceptable system of local government for Nigerians especially those of the Eastern Region of which Iman people belonged.[43] By the Eastern Region Local Government Ordinance No. 16 of 1950, all rights, interests, obligations and liabilities of the Uyo Federated Native Authority, Iman Native Authority, Uruan Native Authority, Ibesikpo/Asutan Native Authority, Eastern Nsit Native Authority and Western Nsit Native Authority were formally constituted into the Uyo Division. In exercise of the power of Section 3 of Eastern Region Local Government Laws of 1955, the Iman Rural District Council consisted of 40 elected members. According to the Schedule, the villages were grouped for electoral or ward purposes.[44]

The electoral wards were as follows:

(1) Mbioto No. 1, Afaha Effiat, Ikot Osong (2) Ekom (3) Ikot Akpanya, Ikot Ekan

(4) Ikot Nkang, Ikot Isong, Ikot Udo Adia. (5) Ikot Obio Inyang (6) Ikot Nseyen, Nnung Ukana, Nnung Umo, Nnung Obok sections of Mbioto 1. (7) Nnung Uko, Nnung Ekang, Nnung Nkang, Nnung Awa, Nnung Akpan and Nnung Ekwok of Mbioto 1 (8) Afaha Akpan Ekpo Afaha Iman, Ikot Akata, Ikot Udo (9) Ekpene Obom (10) Ndon Eyo, Edem Ekpat (11) Nnung Otu Oyo, Nnung Akpa Ete and Nnung Isemin (Etinan No. 1) (12) Nnung Akpakpan Etuk, Nnung Osura, Nnung Akpan Efiok Unam, Nnung Udo Inyang (Etinan No. 2) (13) Nnung Udo Akpa Uso, Nnung Ofon Essien, Nnung Umo Etuk Udo (Etinan No. 3) (14) Ikot Ekang, Nnung Ibit Itam section of Ikot Abasi No. 1 (15) Nnung Abasi, Adaha Ekom, Nnung Umo Akara Owo (sections of Ikot Abasi) (16) Ikot Akpabio (17) Ikot Ebiyak (18) Ikot Esua, Ikot Ikpuho Ishiet Erong, Ikot Ananga (19) Ikot Ebo (20) Ikot Udo Abia (21) Akpasak Efa, Ikot Nsung (22) Anyam Efa, Ikot Ese (23)Ata Efa, Ikot Akpa Ese (24) Efiat Mbioto, Ikot Akpan Ntembom (25) Ikot Nte (26) Ikot Ibok, Ikot Obio Eka (27) Ikot Ekot, Iwo Etor (28) Ikot Mfon (29) Ikot Ukpong, Ikot Umiang Ede. (30) Mbioto Ekpene Ituen, Ikot Etekpo, Ikot Etor.

The first Iman District Rural Council (present-day Etinan Local Government Area) was headed by J.D. Ime (Chairman) and J.A. Inyang (Secretary). From the available colonial records, the Council experienced some form of mismanagement by the administrators. Consequently, on 6th of June 1953, one J. B. Umana then a staff of G.B. Olivant in Calabar wrote a petition to the Ministry of Local Government in Enugu alleging high level of corruption by the officials of the Council. In response to this allegation, a Panel of Enquiry was set up, empowered under Section Eleven of the Eastern Region Local Government Ordinance. The release to this effect was signed by C.L. Walker, the Acting Resident of Calabar Province. The Panel was headed by A.T. Wickham, the Assistant District Officer. The audit and investigation that was eventually carried out revealed that, at the time of the audit, there was £406 in the safe while £48 was available in the strong room.[45] The panel eventually concluded its assigned duty and submitted its report to the Government. The Government reacted administratively and issued a press release accordingly.

The press release issued to this effect states thus:

> Following the unsatisfactory reports on the workings of the administration of the Iman Rural District Council, Government appointed Mr. A.T. Wickham to enquire into the report on the affairs of the Council. A study of Wickham report has convinced Government that the Council has failed completely in carrying out the provisions of the

> Local Government Ordinance in relation to the levying and collection of rates in the administration of funds of the Council and in the general conduct of the Council affairs. Government has therefore decided that the Council shall be dissolved forthwith and replaced by a Caretaker Committee Council of five members. Furthermore, Government has decided that, a Caretaker Committee shall not exist for more than three months.[46]

In public notice of the Eastern Region Local Government Law, 1955, (No. 26), Instrument Establishing the Iman District Council and revoking the previous Instrument establishing the Iman District Council with effect from 20/10/55, revoked the Law of the Eastern Nigeria No. 25 of 1954.

At the disbandment of the previous Council, a Caretaker Committee was eventually constituted with effect from the 24th of January 1955 with Chief T.S.B. Inyang of Etinan as the Chairman, Chief H. N. Udo of Efa, Mr. D.W. Etuk of Oniong, Mr. T.U. Uko of Asuna and Mr. O.A. Ufot of Qua Iboe Mission, Etinan, served as members of the Committee. The Committee was constituted to serve for three months. The Chairman was to receive a monthly salary of £20 while the members were entitled to £15 per month.[47]

The new Council was constituted via Iman Rural District Council Instrument No. 9/S7/C.8/144 from Ministry of Internal Affairs Enugu signed by the Permanent Secretary, I.N. Ebere. The new council commenced on the 27/1/56. The council consisted of 40 elected members. It is reported that the fresh election was conducted under universal adult suffrage and with ballot boxes were conducted by Mr. Hewitt in January 1957 and the new Council which Chief Inyang as Chairman (a worthy gentleman) who appeared to be doing its best.[48]

It is also a matter of historical importance to mention that a grant of £6, 000 was obtained in March 1953 for the erection of a new bridge across the Qua Iboe River at Ekpene Ukpa, to be constructed by the Public Works Department. This Department was not sufficiently equipped to handle the task, and attempts were made to get an Italian firm to take it on contract. Eventually, the County Council agreed in principle to the provision of more money up to a total of £10,000 if this could be arranged. One Mr. Smith volunteered to arrange this.[49]

Available record also posits about further development of the bridge thus:

> Government has given out a contract to the German firm of Beton Monieban for £12,200 but they are to construct only the bridge itself; the County Council is responsible for the embankments. These approaches, as Mr. Hewit discovered when inspecting the site on the 2nd March in the company of representatives of the firm and the Secretary of the County Council will involve much expensive work. The County Council however has had to lay off its road labourers and is too insolvent to pay for the cost of building these embankments. It would be tragic to stop the work at this eleventh hour. I have suggested to Mr. Hewit that it might be worth asking the Qua Iboe Mission authorities at Etinan (who are of course very interested in this bridge) if they could help organise some voluntary labour for the work. If the people agree to turn out (and build an embankment is par excellence suitable for community development) (sic.), then the use of community development funds (of which we have a tidy sum in hand to be spent before the close of the financial year) would be justified. These could be paid to

> the "chiefs of Etinan", if they agree to turn out their people, and placed on deposit by them in the Iman District Council Treasury for withdrawal as required. Since the County Council is unable to repay to Government the £6,000 Special Grant, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, has asked the Ministry of Development to withhold all reimbursements for Trunk Roads B, and to place any sums due on deposit against the Etinan bridge contract.[50]

By April 1956, two municipalities were in existence in the Eastern Region – Port Harcourt and Enugu, 17 County Councils, 89 District Councils and 782 Local Councils. No major administrative measures were taken to reform the local authorities; rather a few administrative steps were taken to ensure that the Councils performed better within the framework of existing laws and regulations. From 1958, the Local Councils were becoming increasingly difficult to manage, owing partly to the high administrative costs, and became very unpopular among the people. The County Councils were all abolished and the district councils reconstituted. Before their abolition, the County Councils were vested with the control of secondary schools, some roads and dispensaries, while a multitude of functions were left for the cistrict councils – education at the primary level, rates, health services and so on.[51] The above situation subsisted until1960 when Nigeria became independent.

Conclusion

The emergence of colonial rule in Nigeria transformed hitherto autonomous political entities into component parts of a new whole. Prior to the advent of colonial rule, each community decided for what purpose and in what ways it related with others. The colonial state removed that initiative from each group and vested it in a new authority at the centre. In Iman, the existing indigenous socio-political structure upon which governance revolved was dismantled and Iman was divided into two colonial districts of Uyo and Eket. The native courts became the centre of governance and embodied executive, legislative and judicial powers. The native court system made use of persons who were not traditionally entitled to governance in the area.

The alien system brought with it innovations in aspects of governance such as policing, taxation, sanitation, etc. Infrastructure such as roads, bridges etc., were provided by the colonial government while Western type of education received a boost, hence schools were built and scholarships awarded. This created and sustained a new wave of elite who kept alive the colonial enterprise. Also, improved health services came into existence in Iman area.

The colonial administration in Iman, like in other Ibibio communities of South-Eastern Nigeria provided the foundation upon which post-colonial administrative structure revolves in Iman area. Like in other parts of Ibibio land, the indigenous system of governance has been phased out and the traditional rulers now play limited role in public governance.

Notes

[1]Noah, Monday Efiong. *The Ibibio Pioneers in Modern Nigerian History.* Uyo: Modern Business Press Ltd. 1980, pp. 4

[2]Uwem Jonah Akpan. *Akwa Ibom and Her Neighbours: A Study of Regional Diplomacy Since the Pre-colonial Period.* Uyo: Heritage Preservation Foundation, 2017, p. 18

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]Noah, Monday Efiong. *The Ibibio Pioneers in Modern Nigerian History.* Uyo: Modern Business Press Ltd. 1980, pp. 2-3

[5]Monday Efiong Noah . "The Establishment of British Rule Among the Ibibio (The Judiciary", published in *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 149, (1984), p. 25

[6]Uwem Jonah Akpan. *A History of Iman People*. Uyo: Heritage Preservation Foundation, 2018, p.124

[7]H.F.P. Wetherell. *Intelligence Report on Iman Ibom Clan, Uyo Division, Calabar Province, File No. 9230 A Milgov – 12/42.* pp. 2-3

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]Monday Abasiattai. "The Old Calabar Province Under Colonial Rule: Colonial Subjugation and Administration".*A History of the Cross River Region of Nigeria*. Enugu: Harris Publishers Ltd., 1990, p. 163

[10]Adiele E. Afigbo. "The Warrant Chief System in Eastern Nigeria: Direct or Indirect Rule? *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. 111, No. 4,* June, 1967. p. 695

[11]Uwem Jonah Akpan. *Akwa Ibom and Her Neighbours: A Study of Regional Diplomacy Since the Pre-colonial Period*. Uyo: Heritage Preservation Foundation, 2017, p. 124

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]Charles Ekere. *Christianity in Etinan. The First Century, 1898-1998*. Uyo: Modern Business Press, 1998, p. 8

[14]Uwem Jonah Akpan. *A History of Iman People*. Uyo: Heritage Preservation Foundation,2017, p.123

[15]P.A. Talbot. *Life in Southern Nigeria. The Magic Beliefs and Customs of the Ibibio Tribe*. London: Macmillan and Co. Limited. 1923, p. 5

[16]M.D.W. Jeffreys. *EkEDIST 4/2/1. Report on Tribes and Clans in the Eket District*, 1925, p. 57

[17]H.F.P. Wetherell. *Intelligence Report on Iman Uyo Division, Calabar Province, File No. 9230 A, Milgov – 12/1/42*, p. 1

[18]*Ibid*. p.12

[19]*Ibid.*

[20]*Ibid.*

[21]Koko Ete Ina. *The Changing Faces of Ibibio History, 1885-1987*. Uyo: Ndeco Educational Publishers, 2017, pp. 70-71

[22]H.F.P. Wetherell. *Intelligence Report on Iman Uyo Division, Calabar Province, File No. 9230 A, Milgov – 12/1/42*, p. 17

[23]*Ibid.* pp. 17-18

[24]H.F.P. Wetherell. *Intelligence Report on Iman Eket Division, Calabar Province, File No. 9230 A, Milgov – 12/1/42*, p. 1

[25]D.A.F. Shute. *Intelligence Report on Oniong/Nnung Ndem Clans, Eket Division*. pp. 23-24

[26]*NAE, Handing Over Notes, Uyo Division, UyOPROF. 1/38/159*, p. 7

[27]H.F.P. Wetherell. *Intelligence Report on Iman Uyo Division, Calabar Province, File No. 9230 A, Milgov – 12/1/42*, p. 2

[28]*Ibid.* p. 3

[29]*UYODIST 1/8/9. Uyo Division Annual Report,* 1936, p. 58

[30]*Ibid.* p. 32

[31]*NAE, UyoDIST. 1/8/9. Uyo Division Annual Report, 1936*, p. 1

[32]*Ibid.*

[33]*Ibid.* pp. 2-3

[34]*UYODIST 1/8/9. Uyo Division Annual Report,* 1936, p. 18

[35]*Ibid.* pp. 18-19

[36]*Ibid.* p. 50

[37]*Ibid.* p. 56

[38]*CALPROF 3/1/201, CP:2344/1, Iman Clan Intelligence Reports- Uyo Division: Petitions,* 1936, p. 31

[39]*Ibid.* p. 41

[40]Monday Abasiattai. "The Old Calabar Province Under Colonial Subjugation and Administration". p. 165

[41]Joseph Robert Bassey. "The Evolution of Local Government System in Nigeria, from the Pre-Colonial Period to the Present". *Politics and Grassroots Administration in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Prospects*. Akpan-Umana, Otoabasi (Ed.). Uyo: Home-Base Ventures, 2006, pp. 64-65

[42]*Ibid*. p. 65

[43]*Ibid.* p. 66

[44]*CALROF, 17/1/1969, Iman Rural District Council Instrument*. p. 1

[45]*Ibid*. pp. 5-6

[46]*Ibid*. p. 8

[47]*Ibid.*

[48]*UYODIST 1/8/9. Uyo Division Annual Report,* 1936, pp. 2-3

[49]*Ibid.* p. 162

[50]*NAE, Handing Over Notes, Uyo Division, UYOPROF. 1/38/159*, p. 162

[51]Cited Uwem Jonah Akpan. *A History of Iman People*. Uyo: Heritage Preservation Foundation, p.246