

THE EFIK POLITICAL SYSTEM : THE EFFERVESCENCE

OF TRADITIONAL OFFICES

a thesis

submitted

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Dedicated to my Grandfather

YVES EDET BASSEY

(Abasi Mbo Orok)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has previously been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of learning.

Olayinka Margaret Savage

ABSTRACT

"...In any social system the political institutions, the economic institutions, the kinship organization and the ritual life are intimately related and interdependent."

(Fortes, 1940:xii)

This in a sense sums up traditional Efik society. The Efik house system is the basis of all political offices. The offices of village caretaker in the plantations, village heads or heads of co-opted communities, hereditary and honorary chiefs, etuboms or house heads, Ekpe (secret society) chiefs, Ndem (tutelar deity), chief priest (priestess) and ultimately, the Obong, paramount ruler, are all vested in the house system. These highly coveted offices, together with other economic resources, have proved essential in the survival and persistence of the Efik house system. Apart from these political and economic considerations are the equally important bonds of sentiment and descent. Thus Efik houses afford a means of social and genealogical identification. Operating within the society is an element of gerontocracy combined with a monarchical principle: seniority and descent are the two principles governing succession to political offices.

The bilateral kinship system encourages and permits multiple house affiliation. Thus, an individual can decide on which side to consolidate house activities and capitalize on potential and available economic and political resources. This element of choice portrays itself in the dynamics of membership between and within houses.

The survival and persistence of the house system is also due to its ability to adapt to situational changes. Efik society is relatively fluid and mobile. Increasingly, the old rules of seniority and descent are being manipulated to allow for new democratic rules of achievement. Economic and social considerations, the distribution of power, and education, continue to influence the basis of succession to political offices. The incursion of a new system of evaluation has resulted in even greater mobility and access to offices which normally would be out of reach. This situation is reflected in the attempts by peripheral house members (of servile origins) to attain offices which were the sacrosanct preserve of blood descendants. The extent of such assertion is evident in the increasing incidence of disputes on all levels of political offices. The ability to rely on and activate multiple house affiliations has facilitated the power struggle. There is thus a gradual attempt to redefine the boundary of the political elite.

The power struggle is most evident in the hereditary offices: family heads, house heads and Ekpe titles, in which there is considerable laxity and a great scope for the manipulation and interpretation of descent and seniority principles. In the Obongship, although there is still less scope for succession by non-descendants, the possibility exists. However, not all disputes are of the peripheral members and descendants type. Some are between blood descendants and essentially consist of a struggle between new rules and old principles. Less of a power struggle is manifest in the offices associated with Ndem which is mostly relegated to the religious and supernatural domain. Its once powerful office of Oku Ndem, chief priest,

was economically crippled in the nineteenth century. Since then it has operated in a modified pattern. Correspondingly, no competition exists for its office. The result of this power struggle is the effervescence of political offices.

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THE PROBLEM

Existing literary materials on the subject of Calabar may be roughly categorized into five groups. Firstly, there are accounts given by travellers such as Barbot (1732) and Hutchinson (1858) which give mainly geographical and some political information. Traders such as Crow (1830) and Williams (1897) were mainly concerned with commercial activities and only reported on social life as it affected their trade; but from them information on the leading traders and key political figures and their activities may be derived. As their encounters with the natives were of brief duration the accounts of travellers and traders often bordered on the journalistic and half understood items of culture were compared out of context. They were preoccupied with the unusual and extraordinary.

The third and most important group are the missionary sources. Although they were principally concerned with the religious conversion and salvation of the people, missionaries such as Waddell (1863), Goldie (1890) and Marwick (1897) also provided valuable ethnographic accounts of local life as they comprehended it. Waddell especially was concerned with firstly understanding the way of life of the people, in order to appreciate the best methods of religious conversion applicable to them, and also to enable him to evaluate their spiritual progress. Most important of all the missionary sources provided first-hand information on various facets of life. Unlike previous writers they were familiar with the people and culture, as their calling necessitated living among them, and therefore they were less likely to make out of context observations than the travellers and traders.

More contemporary writers range from colonial administrators such as Jones (1956), Talbot (1912,1926), anthropologists such as Forde (1956) and historians like Nair (1972) and Latham (1973). Recent years have seen a development of indigenous writers perhaps spurred on by the Hart Tribunal Report on the dispute to the Obongship (Hart, 1964) and increasingly ethnic hostilities. Aye (1967) focussed mainly on the glorious past of the Efik and bemoaned the contemporary waning position of Calabar and the Efik in Nigerias socio-political development. He also dedicated a section to Efik literature and attempts by neighbouring groups to subjugate them. Akak (1983) for the most part deals directly and indirectly with the controversial issue of Efik origins, especially in the context of their controversial Ibibio origin. One of his volumes was almost entirely dedicated to this issue, and vehemently asserted that Efik were not of Ibibio origin. The remainder of his work documented Efik language, culture and superiority almost in direct refutal of Noah (1983) who, on the other hand perhaps biased by his own ancestry, claimed the Efik were Ibibio. Both Akak and Noah, like the other indigenous writers, because of the sensitive nature of their subject, sometimes lapse into sentiments.

Of the volume of literary materials on Efik and Calabar, Nair (1972) and Latham (1973) are among the most recent and comprehensive, and thus call for further analysis. Neither was however, directed to contemporary society but to two closely related eras. Nair's primary concern was with the impact and significance of the change from trading in slaves to palm oil on the Efik economy and social life. Consequently, he was neither concerned, nor did he focus on, the present Efik society

but on the period between 1841 and 1906. His perspective was basically historical. Latham's (1973) own time span on the other hand ended near Nair's starting point as he focussed on the era from 1600 to 1891. Conversely for Latham therefore the slave era was the most important in Efik history because it resulted in the metamorphosis of Efik from fishermen to traders. Trade, in turn, led to a need for organized and enforced law and order which the Ekpe secret fraternity provided. Although both Nair and Latham were concerned with Efik politics it was mainly from the economic aspect and the influence of the supercargoes and the British Consul. Even the missionary influence on the society, especially with regard to the welfare and treatment of slaves, was under-estimated, particularly by Nair who put everything down to economic influences and activities.

Neither Latham nor Nair were much concerned with the full mechanism of the internal political structure and hierarchy. Consequently, no serious attempt was made to investigate and analyse the institution of Obongship, the religious cult of Ndem and the Ekpe secret society as the tripartite forces in the Ekpe political structure. Of the three political institutions more by far has been written on the subject of the Ekpe and the Obongship. Ndem is more often limited to a few sentences or at most, paragraphs (Jones, 1957:116). Because Ndem no longer has a chief priest, Oku Ndem, operating in the same political capacity as he did until the nineteenth century, it is assumed that the institution is no longer of political or social importance (Latham, 1973:35,44). No attempt has been made to examine the contemporary forms of the Ndem belief systems, practices

and adaptations. It has even been suggested that the disappearance of the absolute powers of the Oku Ndem is indicative of the last stage of the social and religious evolution of the cult (Akak, 1982:301). Nonetheless, Ndem continues to be a significant religious-political institution which permeates Efik traditional life and has even found a niche in literary works (Aye, 1967:196).

In an attempt to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the present Efik political system, the institution of Obongship paramount head and civil ruler, the office of etubom, house head, traditional and honorary chiefs, adaidaha, Ekpe secret society and Ndem, tutelary deity, will be closely examined. The relationship between them (if any) will also be analyzed to reveal how all these segments are interwoven in the complex interplay of political and non-political roles in the Efik power structure. Also, the increasing ways in which non-traditional criteria of eligibility are entering into and influencing succession to political offices, the importance and attraction of these offices to contestants, the ensuing disputes and inevitable efflorescence of the offices will all be examined. In order to achieve an insight into the Efik as a people, their relationship with other groups in the State will be examined, especially the Efut, Qua and Ibibio. These three groups have been isolated, firstly because the Efik have had a long historical association with them and secondly, because they are culturally similar groups and are still thrown together today, either as allies or as rivals, according to the social context.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

A period of approximately 14 months between March 1982 and June 1983 were spent carrying out fieldwork in Calabar. During the first months I lived with an Efik family whom I had known from childhood, in a modern flat where I was given a room. Subsequently, I was allocated a room in a bungalow rented by the National Museum for one of its staff. Prior to this period, however, I had undertaken a number of visits to Calabar while working for the National Museum. As my mother is Efik, I already knew the language although the first visits helped to refresh my vocabulary and understanding. Prior to the period of fieldwork I had not previously spent any appreciable time in Calabar. Although most of my mother's natal family had not lived in Calabar since the 1940s they were still known and remembered among the older people who especially remembered my grandfather. From Calabar I visited, for brief periods, some other important Efik settlements. These include Creek Town, Efut Abua (also in Creek Town), Adiabo, Ikot Offiong and Akpabuyo. I also travelled briefly to Ibibioland, Igboland, Akamkpa, Ogoja and Ikom in the northern part of the State.

An examination of some relevant literary materials was undertaken before going into the field; these included works of travellers, traders, historians, indigenous writers, and most important of all, missionary sources, to gather sufficient background information. Some of these sources, especially the missionary works, were also used to compare with the present institutions and cultural forms of ceremonies. Attention was also given to oral history, although efforts were made to cross-

check this with documentary evidence where possible. Participant observation was the main method of gathering information and this was done by living among the people with a view to achieving full understanding, not only of their way of life but also as far as possible, modes of thought. The period of fieldwork was particularly significant as it coincided with the selection of the Obong-elect, the subsequent dispute, and finally his coronation.

Furthermore, innumerable visits were paid to traditional office holders such as etuboms, heads of houses, chiefs, Ndem (tutelar deity) adherents who were also often Ekpe (secret society) title holders. Also, some important personalities who, by virtue of their positions, e.g. head of women's organizations such as Iban Esa Obong (women's guild in charge of the Obong's palace), association, experience and/or education, not only gave important information but also useful leads, were visited and interviewed. Where possible family manuscripts and diaries were also used as sources of information. Archival materials, especially intelligence reports on the Efik, Calabar Provincial Office Papers (CALPROF) which are basically records of colonial correspondence in relation to agreements, proclamations and Native Court papers, disputes etc. Government White Papers on disputes about the Obongship and etubomships were also examined, as were memoranda and correspondence between the Etubom's Council and the Cross River State Government on some fundamental issues. Knowledge of some historical background was imperative for the correct analysis of memoranda and manuscripts published by Efik houses and ruling bodies. Some were contradictory or biased to suit the different political climates

that stimulated publication in order to gain support and sympathy. The publications therefore had to be examined critically and compared with publications of other houses, where available, of the same and/or other dispute-free periods.

The procedure for arbitrating of disputes as conducted by the Obong's Arbitration Panel provided important insights on details of social and political rules and how they actually operated. Efforts were made to attend traditional displays, as some masquerades and plays portray certain aspects of the relationship and interplay between social, religious and political institutions which ordinarily are not readily recalled or admitted and about which individuals were reluctant to enter discussions.

There was a general reluctance to give information readily, even among some etuboms, although I had been formally introduced to them during a meeting of the Obong's Council, in which the present Obong, then etubom, had kindly provided them with drinks to 'unplug their ears'. Some professionals demanded the customary presents of spirits and money before consultation. Others dropped broad hints. However, there were a few who were willing to help and who gave of their time ungrudgingly.

Unavailability and destruction of documentary materials was a common occurrence. Many Efik families have manuals and diaries, some similar to Antera Duke's diary, others written later in fluent English and occasionally Efik. In several cases these were said to have been lost or destroyed during the 1967 Civil War. Some were ruined by weather elements in the disintegration of thatched houses. Others had simply not been seen as valuable enough to save and had been left to the mercy of

insects and rodents. Documentary materials provided a mine of information on the past and present relations. They also helped in no small way to clarify present day issues. Where the materials existed there was a general air of secrecy and reluctance which prevented access to them. Nonetheless, some were still casually thrown around households. Perhaps this reluctance was due to the contents of such diaries and possible disclosure of slave transactions, proving slave ancestry, human sacrifice and other practices which have since become unlawful and regarded as uncivilized. Fears were also expressed that information, especially those pertaining to the Efik cultural history, being revealed to the wrong people such as the Ibibio, which would further betray them. This denial to access resulted in an inability to elicit, copy or preserve these historical manuals from destruction and defacement to which the majority are eventually subjected. Furthermore, it also hindered the full projection and unravelling of Efik tradition which, in view of the current trend of modernization and westernization, may become lost.

Absolute absence of statistical information, especially on population for example, ethnic composition of Calabar Municipality, European population, and the composition of villages, created some difficulties. Due to religious affiliations I sometimes met blunt refusal to discuss issues pertaining to Ndem and other supernatural beliefs. This is similar to Jones' findings on attitudes to secret societies, whereby some societies had a division between Christian and non-Christian sections for disconcerted individuals (Jones, 1957:22). There was also secrecy concerning Ekpe society which is strictly

for initiated men; women being for the most part profane subjects. Consequently, questions concerning the relationship between Ndem and Ekpe met with either offended silence or knowing smiles, suggesting that I was trying to be smart and draw them out. Some people conceded and said they would have discussed certain issues with me if I had been initiated into Ekpe. Unfortunately, it was not until near the end of my fieldwork, in May 1983, that I was initiated. Although the actual initiation rites were performed by the Muri (head) of Efut Abua in Creek Town, this was only made possible by my mother's brother who bore all the costs.

The Arbitration Committee met in the Obong's Palace, nonetheless it was open, more or less, to the public who attended as witnesses or to give friends or relatives moral support. However, there was a reluctance to give permission for me to attend hearing sessions. It was only through perseverance and solemn promise not to take notes that permission was finally granted that I could sit in and observe the procedure of meting out justice.

LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

An introduction to Calabar and its environs precedes the first chapter which commences with an analysis of the Efik and their inter-relationships with neighbouring groups to prepare the background for subsequent chapters. A brief account of the administrative divisions and economy of the people are also undertaken.

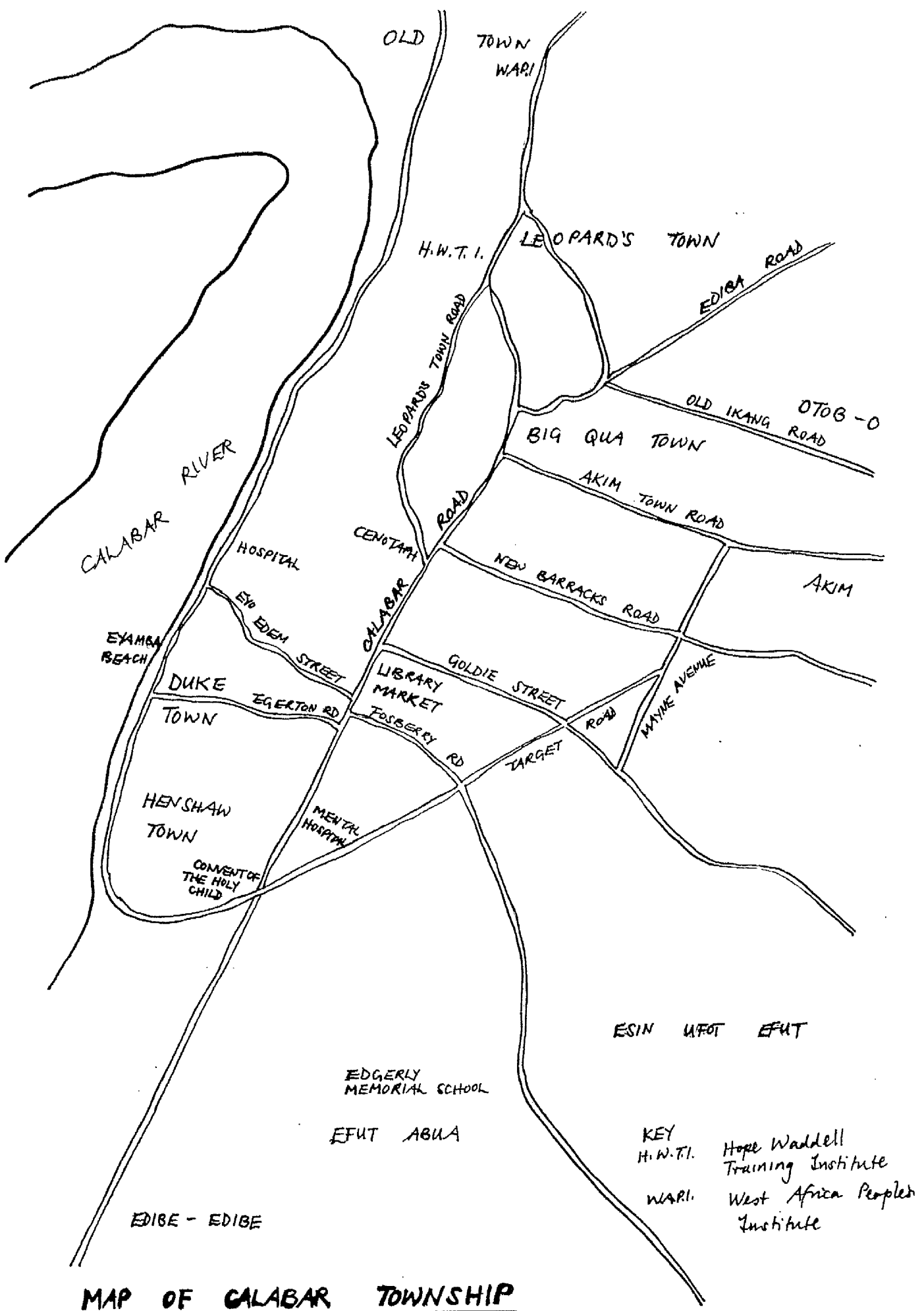
Chapter Two focuses on the Efik kinship, descent, house and plantation systems. Here, an attempt is made to examine and analyse the dynamics and persistence of the house system, membership and affiliation. Marriage and inheritance patterns, especially as it affects the relative position of women in society, are also investigated.

Traditional political offices, namely: honorary and traditional chiefs, etuboms, house heads and finally the Obongship, are all examined in Chapters Three and Four. Attention is also given to the norms and rules governing succession. The different rules of succession, especially the selection, election, and rotationary, are also looked at. The relationship between the Obong, etuboms and chiefs are also pin-pointed.

To understand the importance of these offices I have also focused on the struggles and competition generated by the quest for political offices and the ensuing disputes. In the arbitration of disputes special emphasis is placed on the rules used as the basis of judgement and their actual operation. The emblems associated with the offices of Obong and etuboms are pin-pointed as well as the functions of the two formal Councils associated with them.

The Ekpe secret society is examined in the fifth chapter, with reference to its origin among the Efik and their neighbours, as well as its geographical spread. The function of Ekpe, both traditional and current, the various grades (titles) with their associated functions and masquerades are also examined. The different kinds of initiation involving the sexes and title holders are also discussed. The symbols of Ekpe proliferation and establishment of lodges, and lastly, Ekpe funeral rites, efamba, are all examined.

The final chapter focuses on religion, especially with regard to Ndem, the tutelary deity of the Efik. An attempt is made to analyse the belief in the existence of a distinct Ndem world and its association with the physical world. Also the different deities, modes of reincarnation, spirit possession with its accompanying food restrictions, are also examined. The extent of Efik belief in the far-reaching influence of Ndem is portrayed in the influence of Ndem in apparently profane activities. By focusing on the features of certain masquerades the elusive relationship between Ekpe and Ndem is illuminated. And lastly, the relationship between Ndem and Christianity as perceived by the people.



MAP OF CALABAR TOWNSHIP

CALABAR : An introduction

Calabar is the administrative capital of the Cross River State in south-eastern Nigeria. It has a population of approximately 170,000 people and covers an area of 333.918 sq km. The town is situated on the Calabar River near its confluence with the Cross River. It is one of the few natural harbours on the West African coast which makes it an important seaport. Inland, ~~Cross River~~^{State} shares a common boundary with Rivers State, Imo State to the west, and Benue State to the north. Its eastern border is co-terminus with the international boundary between Nigeria and the Cameroons. It is bounded in the south by the sea. The name 'Calabar' is of Portuguese origin being derived from the word Calabaros, calm bar (Waddell, 1863:309). Its natural harbour encouraged coastal trade with European merchants especially between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries when Calabar was one of the most important trading ports in the then Bight of Biafra. Calabar was an important slave port until 1842, when the treaty for the abolition of the slave trade was signed the rules of which were enforced by the British Consul and missionaries. Subsequently, Calabar changed to an oil palm port still attracting vessels from Liverpool, Bristol and other European ports.¹

In 1891 when the Niger Coast Protectorate was established, Calabar became its headquarters. In 1900 it came under the jurisdiction of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. However, Calabar retained its position as administrative headquarters until 1906, when Lagos (Colony) was amalgamated with Southern Nigeria and became the new capital. As capital of the Southern Protectorate,

Calabar was also the headquarters of the police, the judiciary and administrative systems. The first Dispenser's School in Nigeria was established there in 1916, attached to the main hospital. Although the centre was eventually moved to Lagos in 1924, Calabar still remained the medical centre for Southern Nigeria until 1927 (Aye, 1967:140).

From the seventeenth century until the late nineteenth century the Efik were middle men for the trade in slaves and palm oil. As the main markets were in the hinterland they were very much against inland penetration by missionaries and traders, who they saw as threats to their coveted positions. Thus in the 1884 treaty, drawn up between the British Consul Hewett and Duke Town and Creek Town, the rulers (especially those of Duke Town) rejected article nine which stipulated that "..... the subjects and citizens of all countries may freely carry on trade in every part of the territories.... and may have houses and factories therein..."²

The Efik managed to maintain a monopoly of trade and successfully prevented the opening up of the hinterland until 1891, when Calabar became part of the Niger Coast Protectorate and Native Political Agents were established. The political agents were the go-betweens for the indigenes and the colonial authorities, and also the buffers. Their powers, both authorized and unauthorized, gradually undermined the powers of the traditional chiefs and etuboms, heads of houses. Some of the political agents were wealthy traders and educated (e.g. Magnus Duke, Henry Black Davis, Daniel Henshaw and Coco Bassey), and they were used as clerks, translators, investigators, revenue collectors etc. Political agents also had some degree of judicial authority

as some were put in charge of Native Courts.³ Although Efik, they were also a salaried group within Colonial administration and, as such, became a new status group whose power was derived from a basis other than the traditional (Nair, 1972:204,8).

Commercial interaction between Efik traders and supercargoes generated a need for a common system of communication. With time this resulted in the development of pidgin, an adaptation of the English language.⁴ Heavy trade flow stimulated more fluent command of English, and Efik traders soon began to write specific trade requests to Liverpool and Bristol. The main trend on literacy was in learning how to read and write, with especial emphasis on bookkeeping and transaction records.⁵ One such important record is Antera Duke's diary (Duke, 1956:27). Consequently, most of those who acquired literacy skills were traders who were often also of the traditional nobility. Wealthy traders like the Great Duke Ephraim (Duke Town) and Eyo Honesty II (Creek Town) with their warehouses and innumerable slaves depended as much on their literacy skills as on their business acumen to maintain their economic position. As education was so clearly linked with trade, traders complained against proselytizing and argued that they sent their children to mission schools not to 'saby God' but to 'saby trade book' (Waddell, 1863:289). On the same rationale learning was a male preserve, as a trader said of women: "They no want go for ship make trade."⁷ (Waddell, 1863:346). Traders often put their children aboard ships for long periods to learn English and bookkeeping. The wealthy sent theirs to England. Before the arrival of the missionaries, therefore, Efik traders and nobility had already acquired various degrees of literacy skills.

Just as they had monopolized European trade in the Cross River Basin, the Efik also had an unrivalled advantage through education. Early missionary teachings were conducted in English, partly because of the desire of the people to learn the language and partly because the missionaries knew no Efik. With time lessons were conducted both in English and Efik. By 1873 the Bible had been translated into Efik and a dictionary had been compiled. Although the pupils in the mission schools were mostly from the royal family or children of wealthy traders, they had slaves attached to them as chaperons and these were also taught (Waddell, 1863:594). A similar situation also existed in Akropong Basel mission schools (Middleton, 1983:4).

In subsequent years the mission trained pupils were sent as pupil teachers and religious instructors to the hinterland missions. Efik language therefore spread to the hinterland as the medium of education. The Efik therefore were pioneer mission teachers and later on became political agents for the colonial administrators. As such they were often sent to establish and/or man government and mission owned institutions. At the end of the nineteenth century there were probably more literate Efik in the Eastern Province than of any other group.⁸ In 1895 the Hope Waddell Training Institute was established in Calabar. Not only was it the first educational institute in the Cross River Basin but it was one of the earliest in the country. It was established at a time when Calabar was still of prime importance as the capital of the Niger Delta Protectorate. Furthermore, its examination successes made it a much sought after school. It therefore attracted a diverse student population from all over the country. Hope Waddell, as it is popularly called, provided formal education for the country's first politicians.

The first president, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, as well as the present Obong of Calabar, were both trained there. In the early 1920s Efik constituted over 50% of the products of the institution (Noah, 1978). For a long time they had the advantage of producing more educated people than any other group in the Cross River Basin.

Thus, although the Efik are a minority group both within the Cross River State and in the national context (1% of national population), the language is among one of the most widely known, even if it is usually wrongly identified as Calabar. Efik kings, secret societies and ordinary people were well aware of the importance of education and literary achievements. They were reluctant to go into the hinterland as teachers in order to preserve their positions in the educational league. However, in recognition and appreciation of missionary efforts in the attainment of their positions as forerunners in education, missionaries like Anderson, MacGregor and Cruickshank were bestowed with the traditional title of etubom, house head (Taylor, 1984:204). Educational superiority added to the political and commercial importance of the Efik as a culturally refined minority among a mass of undifferentiated people.

Because of the volume of trade they controlled and subsequent wealth and influence of their rulers, the Efik attained suzerainty over neighbouring people e.g. Ebunda, Uwet, Imong, Efut etc. They became by far the most important people in the Cross River Basin. Consequently the name Calabar became synonymous with the Efik even before the slave trade era.⁹ The paramount ruler of the Efik is officially called "The Obong of Calabar". He is the only traditional ruler to have the official appendage

of 'Calabar' as part of his title, much to the chagrin of the Efut and Qua, who claim that as first settlers, they have more right to the name. This point has been the main source of contention among them as will be seen later.

Monopoly of European trade put the Efik in a prime position which early education further enhanced. They sincerely believed that the forefront was the rightful position. They still regard themselves as torch bearers and pace setters who are socially and culturally superior to all others.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS

Cross River State was divided into 20 local government areas in 1982. A local government area is basically an administrative area, each of which either had to have a minimum population of around 123,987¹⁰ or be remote and inaccessible, but which, so the rationale went, would with development reach that minimum population, or in some instances be for simple political convenience.

Each local government area is autonomous and responsible for the provision and maintenance of public services, collection of community tax etc. A local government area comprises a number of clans. To facilitate local administration, paramount rulers, or in some cases clan heads, were appointed in these areas.¹¹

In 1984 the new military regime nullified all newly created local government areas. Consequently the number of administrative areas was reduced to 17. They are now as follows:-

Abak, Ikot Abasi, Akampa, Calabar, Eket, Etinan, Ikom,
Ikono, Ikot Ekpene, Itu, Obudu, Odukpani, Ogoja, Oron,
Ukanafun, Uyo and Obubra.

Of these, apart from the Calabar local government area municipality, the Efik have only one administrative area and that is Odukpani. Even so Odukpani is by no means exclusive to the Efik as it also includes Efut and Qua communities. Pockets of Efik population have been encapsulated within other areas such as Itu and Oron.

The Efik had particularly looked forward to the creation of another Efik local government area in Akpabuyo. They believed this would stimulate development of the area and give them better representation in the state. Thus the nullification of Akpabuyo local government area (among others) was a bitter disappointment.

GEOGRAPHY

Cross River State falls within the equatorial rain forest belt. The coastal areas are covered with brackish waters of the red and white mangrove forest swamps. The external roots of the mangrove trap silt from the rivers and thus help in the formation of land (Waddell, 1863:323). The land beyond the mangrove swamps is over-run by palm trees. The forest is thick, dank and damp, with dense tangled undergrowth.

Rain usually falls throughout the year but especially between April and October. The peak rainy months are June and July, during which there is the usual three days constant down-pour. There is very scanty rainfall between November and February when the atmosphere covered with fine dust carried by the north-east trade winds from across the Sahara Desert. Humidity is very low during this period and the diurnal temperature range is high thus resulting in dry, hot, dusty days and cool, foggy nights. This is the harmattan season. The dry season starts from February through to April during which temperatures range between 72^oF and 90^oF.

The most important river is the Cross which rises in the Cameroon Mountains, and has been the main channel of trade. The river has several tributaries, the most notable being the Calabar River and Great Qua River. About 30 miles from its estuary the Cross River is broken up into a myriad of creeks and small islands which include Enyong Creek, Ikpa Creek, James Island, Parrot Island and Tom Shott Island.

The natural soil is light and sandy. The coastal area around the rivers and creeks are low lying and are under water at high tide. Beyond the coast the land is undulating, ranging between 100-200 ft and increasing inland to the Qua Mountains.

ECONOMY

Traditionally, until they became involved in the Atlantic slave trade, the Efik were fishermen who supplemented their diet by subsistence farming and periodic hunting. Human sacrifices were offered annually by fishing villages to the deity of the sea to ensure a successful harvest (Waddell, 1863:328). A similar relationship exists between riverine people like the Itsekiri, Nembe and Ijaw and the deities which are believed to reside in the waters. Today, farming is the main occupation of the plantation population although there are still some small farms within the Calabar township. The plantation population is approximately 108,000 which also engage in seasonal fishing and hunting as well as farming. The crops produced include plantain, coco-yam, cassava, vegetables such as spinach, inyang afia, pumpkin leaves, ikong ubong and water leaf, mmong ikong. Fruits, palm oil and other palm products are also produced. The people also rear fowls and smoke fish, lobsters and bush meat (i.e. hare, squirrel, grass cutter etc).

These products are transported to wholesale and retail markets in Calabar by traders in lorries. Traders go across the Atimbo River, which divides Calabar from Akpakuyo (plantations), to buy produce either by the river bank or from the periodic markets. Although some farmers take their products into Calabar township to sell directly to the markets, and so cut out the middlemen, most do not. The latter are put off by the cost of transport into Calabar and also because they feel out of their depth in the town with the hustle and bustle of the traffic. Produce is loaded into huge basins and head-loaded to the Atimbo River for traders from Calabar and else-

where to buy. Sometimes motorcycles are used to carry vegetables. There are about six periodic markets in Akpabuyo. These are Udua Mba, Udua Okon Eyom, Udua Okpo Ikut, Udua Ntifuot and Udua Ikang (near the Cameroon border and also the largest). Most markets specialize in certain commodities.

Akpabuyo is only about 30 minutes by road from Calabar across the Atimbo River. The river itself is not very wide and the people are visible from either side of its banks. Crossing from the town to plantation and vice versa is only hindered by the absence of a bridge across the river. There is, however, a government ferry service which transports people, vehicles, animal and farm produce across the river. There are also dug-out canoes and speed boats. The ferry takes 10 minutes to cross but the canoes do the same distance in half the time. Both men and women plant crops, tend and harvest the plants. Sometimes land is leased out to farmers for a cash sum and part of the harvest. Others may just hire labourers to plant, weed and harvest the crops. The majority of such labourers are Ibibio, sometimes Igbo and occasional from Ogoja and the northern part of the state. Although yam is also grown in the plantations, the northern part of the state and Ibibioland are more well known for their yams than is Efik country.

Creek Town and its populations also produce food for sale in Calabar markets, especially fish. Creek Town, as its name suggests, is located on land but surrounded by numerous creeks and inlets. Canoes and some government trawlers go out to fish. Fish is sold along Henshaw Town and Duke Town beaches, especially early in the morning and in the evening. Other Efik settlements, such as Adiabo and Ikot Offiong, also supply similar

foodstuffs. The fishermen use both dugout canoes and powered vessels. Fishing is done within sheltered waters as well as in the main river. Few vessels venture out to the sea which is considered dangerous.

The Efik are noted for their disdain of manual work. Mylius suggests that this is due to their early mode of subsistence as fishermen. For agricultural work Igbo, Ibibio and farm hands from the Cameroons are employed (CALPROF, 53/1/545:49). The Efik attitude to physical work is reminiscent of the nineteenth century stratification of urban society in the Gold Coast. The second category of 'educated' people were petty clerks who although they despised 'the dignity of labour' lacked the incentive or ambition to improve their status by further education (Foster, 1965:98). Most of the literate and semi-literate are engaged in white and blue collar jobs as teachers, nurses, medical doctors and clerical officers. However, they are only fairly represented in the professional and top management cadre in which most posts are occupied by Ibibio. Only a small proportion of them are in commerce, a sector dominated by the Igbo and Ibibio. Some of the Efik of noble ancestry are especially disdainful of agricultural jobs but are often qualified for little else. This category makes perpetual reference to the past wealth, influence and glory of their families.

There are a few industries and factories in Calabar but most of them are located outside the state capital. The majority of these have been established only in the last decade. In Calabar there is a plywood and furniture factory, Seromwood, a cement industry, Calcemco, and a Peugeot car assembly plant. All the breweries and soft drinks are situated in Eket in Ibibio-land.

The Efik also practice some traditional crafts such as carving chewing sticks, making of beaded velvet bags for chewing sticks, ekpat okok and decorated brass pans, akpankpan on which very fine designs are beaten using a sledge hammer and nail or bicycle spoke. Beaded shoes and caps are also made, usually for the well-off, who particularly like to wear them during traditional ceremonies, for which men wear beaded shoes and caps with the Ekpe emblem, either a leopard (ekpe) or peacock feather ntakanda sewn on them. These are symbols of status. There are also traditional tablecloths made up of geometrical patchwork designs, mbufari. These are often used in public ceremonies and traditional occasions, such as marriage feasts and wake keepings, to cover brass basins loaded with food, drinks and presents. The majority of these crafts are skilled. Brass pan decorations are now almost entirely confined to the Iron Bar family of Duke Town.¹² The art seems to be dying out because it is not regarded as prestigious. There appears to be no form of tutelage or training to impart skills to younger generations. Know-how seems to depend largely on individual interests and dexterity; such persons are said to be gifted. It is held to be tedious, unproductive and unbeneficial to attempt to learn a craft if there is no innate ability or gift.¹³ Brass decoration is especially labour intensive and taxes the eyesight. Unfortunately, demand for it is low. Low demand and scarcity of brass ware help to increase production costs which in turn restricts demand and production.

The other crafts are not associated with specific houses. Geometrical tablecloths and brass beatings are modifications of crafts introduced during the missionary era (Aye, 1967:91).

Almost all of these crafts are exclusively relegated to the female domain. It is only in recent times that individuals have set up workshops which employ men to make beaded caps, shoes and bags. As the crafts are no longer lucrative, craft persons are few and far between. Elaborately decorated brass pans have become family heirlooms. Some families make them available for rent to the public on ceremonial occasions. However, access to them still depends on how well acquainted to the family the person(s) desiring the articles are. Similarly, because few individuals have brass combs which are used for hair decorations at marriages, chieftaincy celebrations and traditional dances, they are also hired from individuals and families.

CHAPTER ONE

EFIK, EFUT, QUA AND IBIBIO

THE PEOPLE : EFIK, EFUT QUA AND IBIBIO

The population of Calabar is cosmopolitan. Calabar being the largest city in the State as well as the capital, attracts people who seek white collar employment, nurse political ambitions, and others lured by the bright lights of the city. The increasing urban growth and cosmopolitan population is a constant source of vexation to the indigenous people, particularly the Efik. The Efik in Calabar number about 30,000 and is the largest of the three ethnic groups which lay claim to the city. It is a commonly held opinion that there are by far more Efik outside Calabar than within who, for various reasons, shy from returning home. The Efik, Efut and Qua are far outnumbered by the Ibibio and other groups (Ejagham, Bekwara and Ekoi etc) from the northern part of the Cross River State. Ibibio is a generic term loosely used to designate an ethnic group as well as all those who come from the west and north-west (hinterland) of the Calabar River.

Calabar also has a large non-indigenous population comprising mainly Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. Before the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) the Igbo were by far the largest non-indigenous group in Calabar. They were the commercial force of the city. Today, although they no longer dominate commercial activities, the Igbo still constitute a formidable force as do the Ibibio. The Igbo, Ibibio and Yoruba engage in a wide spectrum of trade from textiles, stationery, pharmaceutical drugs and foodstuff to enamelware. The motor spare parts trade is predominantly run by the Igbo, as well as the sale of textiles and secondhand clothing. Each of the three groups has carved out specific spatial locations in the main market. Foodstuffs (retail) are

generally sold by Efik, Efut, Qua as well as Ibibio. The Hausa traders specialize in the sale of leathercrafts. They have also dominated the wholesale marketing of onions, yams, beans, potatoes etc, which are imported from northern Nigeria. This is partly because they control a good deal of the long distance road transport in Nigeria (together with the Igbo) as well as the fact that the 'Green Revolution' seems to have taken off more successfully in northern Nigeria than elsewhere in the country. The Hausa wholesale trade is conducted solely within the Sabo (stranger quarters) are called Bogobiri. This is the Hausa quarter serving both trade and residential needs. The Hausa are also the main suppliers of beef. Calabar has one large main market, Udua Watt, situated along the central business district, Calabar Road. The market, however, has spilled over into adjacent side streets. There are also other markets which supply specific commodities, e.g. beef market and those which serve the suburbs.

Apart from these non-indigenous groups there are also pockets of Lebanese, Indians, Pakistanis and European communities in Calabar. They, for the most part, run their own private business or are employed on contract basis by the government or private organisations in construction work or the medical and teaching fields. The Lebanese are by far the largest of these, some of whom have married local women and consider themselves part of the community. The majority of them are in entertainment, catering, textile and supermarket enterprises.

Despite the cosmopolitan nature of Calabar, by far the most important groups in the city are the Efik, Efut, Qua and Ibibio. They are the main groups in terms of cultural dominance, socio-political interest and lastly, population. Efik, Efut

and Qua are the indigenous people of Calabar and all three lay equal claim to the 'rightful' ownership of the city which has been a source of conflict among them, often dormant but always festering. This underlies most of the social relations among them, especially in the formal organizations and manifests itself in several ways as will be seen later.

Calabar is a curious mix of old and new, modern and traditional forms. One evidence is exhibited by the structure of the houses. Thatched houses stand beside modern storey buildings. The occupants take comfort in their paradoxical claim that only the wealthy can afford to live in thatched houses, because of the cost of refurbishing the thatched roof. The weaving of palm leaves for thatched roofs is a laborious and skilful job. Like most traditional crafts it does not carry any prestige. The demand for thatched roofs is diminishing and therefore costs are high as production has become highly specialized. Some of these thatched houses have modern amenities such as electricity, water, toilet. Others do not. Similarly, some householders attempt to modernize such structures by plastering them with cement, while others carry out piecemeal structural renovations to concrete houses. The existing thatched houses are old, as Calabar Municipality would not give approval for the erection of such structures today.

The Efik are the most populous of the three indigenous groups. In 1933 they numbered 35,000, Qua being 3,600 and Efut just 2,000 (CALPROF, 53/1/545:13). The Efik, according to oral tradition, were expelled from Ibibioland and settled in their present location about the seventeenth century. They acquired land from the Qua. Goldie goes further to include Okoyong,

a neighbouring group, and Ibibio among those from whom the Efik also got land to settle (Goldie, 1890:12). Of all the Efik settlements, Old Town, or Obutong, has by far the closest relation with the Qua. This is probably due to the fact that they have lived virtually in the middle of Qua settlements (Waddell, 1863:423-426). During the 1855 destruction of Old Town, its people sought refuge in Qua villages. The Qua later, in the rebuilding of Old Town, provided labour (Waddell, 1863:576). They sometimes even had to bear the consequences of their friendship with Old Town. Goldie gives an account of the destruction of a Qua village because they had given refuge to some Old Town people. There has been very close historical links between Old Town and Qua. Consequently, most of the inter-marriage between the Efik and the Qua has, in actual fact, been between the Efik of Old Town and the Qua.

As stated earlier, the Efik jealously guarded their positions as entrepreneurs and completely monopolized trade with the Europeans. It was therefore imperative for the British Consul to state explicitly, even as late as 1878, in the first treaty undertaken with the Qua, that the Qua were free to trade directly with the Europeans. However, although the Qua were an autonomous group, they were not wholly free of Efik dominance. The 1878 treaty was witnessed by Efik chiefs and rulers. Under Article 1 of the treaty the Qua could not impose capital punishment without first consulting the Efik rulers and securing the approval of the paramount ruler, Obong. Similarly, in 1884 the 'kings and chiefs' of Efut entered into a treaty with the British which affirmed their status as subjects of the Efik.¹⁵

Thus, through trade, politics and later, education, the Efik completely overshadowed the Efut and Qua as indeed all other groups in the Cross River Basin. When the Calabar Native Authority was established in 1933..it was mainly controlled by the Efik, who were numerically and financially stronger than the other two groups together. The Efut and Qua joined forces with the Efik under this administration (Findlay, CAL-PROF, 140/33). The Efik language is still very widely spoken in Calabar and in the hinterland. However, there is much reluctance for non-Efik and especially the Ibibio, who clearly understand the language, to speak it. This is regarded as tantamount to cultural submission. The Efik continue to make reference to their past glories of the pre-colonial and colonial times when they were by far the dominant and most prosperous and educated group in the area. Their proud ancestry is reflected in their behaviour towards all other groups, especially those nearest to them, despite the fact that they have long ceased to hold this prime position. This notion of cultural and political superiority manifest in Efik behaviour is resented by all other groups who have somewhat accepted, either consciously or otherwise, that the Efik were and are still somehow superior to them and consequently feel threatened by that, albeit reluctant, admission.

Efik cultural superiority is exhibited in several forms of social life. Firstly, in their finesse and decorum in conducting themselves in whatever they do e.g. pattern of dress, manner of speech, marital relationship, dancing, eating etc. These habits, the Efik say, are not learnt but are inbred which is why other groups (especially the Ibibio), try as they may,

cannot readily inculcate such patterns of behaviour. By comparison other people oscillate from being uncivilized to gauche. This is very similar to the Creole cult of eliteness as compared to the provincials (Cohen A, 1981).'

EFUT:

The Efut migrated from the Cameroons and established settlements at both Creek Town and Duke Town, Calabar. There is no date as to their estimated period of arrival in the area, other than their claim as the original owners of Calabar. There has been very little documentation on the Efut. Because of their sheltered position away from the coast they had little contact with the supercargoes, as the trading seamen were called, and therefore played no significant part in the commercial activities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They soon became eclipsed by the Efik to whose jurisdiction they were quickly subjected. Assimilation was facilitated because of their small population as well as the fact that they lacked distinct settlements. As early as 1847 Waddell mentioned a colony from the Cameroons in Creek Town, who had no defined boundary with the Efik (Waddell, 1863:340). Their settlements, being small and ill-defined, were incorporated within larger Efik settlements where they became extensions of Efik wards (Jones, 1957:35). There is a later reference to Ebunda (probably Ibonda) a village seven or eight miles from Creek Town. As at 1850 they had their own language and customs even though at that time there were signs of acculturation. Waddell said their customs were mixed with those of Calabar (Waddell, 1863:444). Although they were a separate settlement they were bound by the laws which operated in the premier Efik settlements of Creek Town and Duke Town.

Proximity in turn encouraged large scale intermarriage between the Efik and Efut which undermined any effort to maintain a cultural identity. Their ruling families, especially, intermarried with those of Efik wards. With intermarriage followed

a change in the ownership of land. The Efut freely gave and/or leased land to their Efik kinsmen who now claim ownership through usage. Land may be inherited bilaterally. In Calabar, the Efut have the reputation of being indiscreet land sellers. They are often accused of selling the same plot of land to more than one buyer, thereby generating confusion and enmity.

The Okoho group, descendants of one of the Efik apical ancestors, acknowledge the Efut paternity of their ancestors. However, they refute allegations that their paternity makes them more Efut than Efik. The degree of assimilation is reflected in the 'Efikness' of most 'Efut' names. Only within Efut royal families are traditional names like Mbo and Mbondo (names of important ancestors) preserved. All in all it is difficult to find an Efut with no Efik connections and, to a lesser extent, the reverse. The Efik uphold that so absolute is the degree of assimilation that Efut and Efik are one and the same, the only point of controversy being land.¹⁶ Land ownership being very important, especially with its present commercialisation, is almost always the main cause of disputes between the Efik and Efut. It is because of this that the Efut and the Mbarakom ward of Creek Town are historically rivals.¹⁷ The consequences of over-reaching kinship ties in Efut-Efik relations will become more apparent in the analysis of Efik-Efut-Qua relationships with special reference to the 1940s crisis.

By the twentieth century the Efut had become so integrated with Efik society that even their language had become obsolete and was forgotten. The Efut can neither boast of a distinct organization nor of customs. The Efik language and customs have been wholly adopted. Why then is there still a body of

people claiming to be Efut? Most of those who stress their Efut ancestry are those related to the royal family. As such they are in a key position to inherit land, family chieftaincy, or Ekpe titles. There is no mode of behaviour that is particularly Efut and distinguishable from Efik.

Traditionally the Efut had no single chief recognized as head of all Efut settlements. This assertion tallies with that of Jones as well as the 1933 intelligence report (Jones, 1957:35 and CALPROOF 234/18). In 1933 there were five Efut settlements or clans, namely: Abua, Nabonda (Ibonda), Ekondo, Ifakama (Ifako) and Mkpara Otop Mkpara. Some of these settlements are in Creek Town while others are in the Calabar Municipality (Duke Town). At the present time, the number of settlements has increased to seven, perhaps in a deliberate attempt to match the Efik claim to seven clans. The additional Efut clans are Ukem and Idundu. Each clan has its own head, Muri, as well as its own Ekpe lodge and is to that extent autonomous. The existence of a paramount ruler of all Efut clans, called Muri-Munene, is a recent phenomenon as will be explained shortly.

QUA

The Qua, on the other hand, have managed to retain a large degree of their autonomy. Like the Efut they share the claim to being the original inhabitants of Calabar. Unlike the Efut, who live amidst a large Efik population, the Qua have distinct villages which are predominantly Qua in population. The Qua are of Ejagham or Ekoi stock. They migrated from Mba Akang in the Mamfe district of the Cameroons to Calabar.¹⁸ They claim to be amongst the first settlers in Calabar, followed by the Efut and lastly, the Efik.

In 1933 there were six Qua settlements, namely: Big Qua, Akim Qua, Ikot Ansa, Etagpini Ikot Omin and Odukpani. Each settlement was independent with its own head, Ntoe Nfam, who together with the heads of the compounds (Asi-oyo) comprising the settlement, controlled the village. At the present time there are ten Qua settlements; the additional four being Kasuk Qua, Idundu Qua, Akim Akim and Ikpai.¹⁹ The first treaty between the Qua and the British in 1878 acknowledged the Qua as the "original owners of the soil on which Duke Town now stands." In the early part of the nineteenth century land was yet to become a commercial commodity and there was little controversy over ownership or original owners (Goldie, 1890:13). Old Town, in testimony during a land case between the Qua and Efik in 1948, confirmed that the Efut and Qua were the original land owners of Calabar and their ancestors had received land from the Qua for settlement.²⁰ As has been stated earlier, the Qua and Old Town Efik have long been united through ties of amity and marriage. In the 1950s some of the members of Archiborg V's cabinet were of Qua extraction. Even now there are several Efik who have strong and active Qua ties, to the extent that sometimes their allegiance to Efik society is questioned by their colleagues. Yet they are still members of the Obong and Etuboms' Councils.

EFIK - EFUT - QUA

It would appear that Efik-Efut-Qua relations had been more or less congenial until the 1940s. Prior to this period Efut and Qua were members of the Combined Native Authority, together with the Efik, which was formed in 1934 (Southern Provinces CALPROF 140/33). Although all three groups were

represented, the Efik were by far the most dominant. During the period of inception of the Native administration Duke Town and Creek Town had no Obong. The last Obong in Duke Town, Adam Ephraim Duke, had been deposed in 1926. The presidency of the administration was held in rotation between the three groups on a yearly basis. According to the administration, the Ntoi (Qua), Muri (Efut) and Etuboms were all placed on the same footing

However, on the 1st June 1940 an Efik organization, Esop Iboku, held a meeting and passed the following resolutions: that an Obong should be elected and be known as 'Obong of Calabar' and he was to be the life president of the Native Authority. He was to be supported financially from the Native Authority funds and, lastly, that the deposed Obong be 'reinstated' as 'Obong of Calabar'. This was the beginning of a long series of discords between Qua and Efut jointly against the Efik (CALPROF, 5/1/633:11). The two other groups protested against the installation of an Obong of 'Calabar'. The bone of contention being the inclusion of the word 'Calabar' as part of the title of the Efik paramount ruler. This is because both the Qua and the Efut alleged that 'Calabar' was not synonymous *with* the Efik, as the latter claimed, because they (Qua and Efut) also lived in the area designated as Calabar. Calabar was a town not an ethnic group. Therefore, the Efik could not claim 'Calabar' exclusively because in fact the Qua and Efut were the real owners. Also the Qua and the Efut questioned the propriety of the Obong of Calabar as the life president of the Native Authority, for fear of political dominance and reduction to the status of vassals by the Efik. The Qua, especially, regarded this as an attempt by the Efik to impose political

authority over them because the then Ntoe of Big Qua was the current president of the council. Subsequently, the Qua and the Efut proposed that if the Efik refused to withdraw or amend the title of 'Obong of Calabar' then they would demand the creation of paramount rulers also under the titles Ntoe of Calabar and Muri of Cal^aibar respectively, and which were to be given official government recognition (CALPROF, 5/1/683). This proposal was, however, rejected by the Eastern Province government on the grounds that neither Efut nor Qua had ever had a paramount ruler as each village was autonomous. This dispute dragged on until 1941 when the Efik, being the numerically and financially strongest of the three groups, threatened to withdraw from the Native Administration and form a separate one.

In the meantime the proposed candidate for re-election, the deposed Obong, Adam Ephraim Duke, had died (1940). However, the Efik claimed the right to the title of 'Obong of Calabar' on the following grounds: that Calabar was synonymous with the Efik, that their kings were addressed as the 'Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar' and their Obong was officially recognized and addressed as 'Obong of Calabar' in the 1902 Native Council Rule. After a 14-year interregnum they felt there was an urgent need to elect an Obong, as he was the symbol of unity, cooperation and the embodiment of the Efik society. They believed that his existence bound the people and prevented moral disintegration and promoted social justice. Their lists of counter-claims were documented and sent to the resident and district officers.

This conflict segmented the Calabar Native Authority into three:- the Efik as represented by the *new* organization, Esop Iboku, the Qua and the Efut. Eventually the District Resident arrived at a decision. The Efik were to have an 'Obong of Calabar' but he would not be the life president of the Native Authority, but would hold office in rotation with the Qua and Efut; the Qua and the Efut would not be subjected to Efik rule and the Efik gave a formal undertaking to that effect (CALPROF, 11:238). However, although the dispute was resolved officially in July 1941, it was not resolved in the minds of all the disputants. It had merely been relegated to the background, ready to be rekindled at the appropriate time.

Since then, the Efik-Efut-Qua relationship has been strained. The late 1940s saw a succession of land cases between the Qua and the Efik, the Efut and the Efik. In 1949 the former president of Esop Iboku, the revolutionary organization, etubom Ededem Archibong became Obong. As Archibong V he attempted to restore the cordial relationship that had existed among the Efik, Efut and Qua by making some of them members of his cabinet. This was an unprecedented move in Efik political history and a move for which he was heavily criticised by more conservative members (Hart, 1964; para 214) of ^{the} Efik Royal Fraternity; a new organization whose importance and support in the 1950s eclipsed that of the older Esop Iboku organization. Membership of the Esop Iboku had comprised etuboms, house heads and chiefs, so also was that of the Efik Royal Fraternity. The new society, therefore, spelt the end of the former. However, membership in the new society was strictly limited to royalty; the founders would have none of the democracy of Archibong V. The Obong wielded considerable control over members of his cabinet and

was swift to call them to order whenever he felt the need. Some of his actions caused deep resentment among the etuboms. Eventually there was a split among them into two factions. On the one hand were members of the new Efik Royal Fraternity, who claimed to be the true representatives of Efik culture and tradition and these etuboms and chiefs who remained loyal to Archibong V, as members of his cabinet. In the 1960s the internal conflict escalated to embrace national politics. The Efik Royal Fraternity aligned with the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C.) political party while the Obong and his cabinet were more sympathetic to the Action Group party (A.G.). The government of Eastern Nigeria, under whose administration Calabar was then, was that of the N.C.N.C. party, while the A.G. was synonymous with Western Nigeria. National politics merely exacerbated the already growing rift between the Obong and his etuboms. The discontented etuboms (who were also members of the Efik Royal Fraternity) sought to withdraw recognition from the Obong as the paramount ruler of Efiks, and thus render his administration ineffective. This they did by the publication of a notice of withdrawal of recognition document which was signed by eight etuboms and the etubom of the Eyamba house in his capacity as the head of the Ekpe secret society, Obong Eyamba Ekpe. The capacity in which this etubom signed the document was of paramount importance, firstly, in securing the removal of the Obong and secondly in that it reflected the political relationship between the secular head Obong, on the one hand, and head of the traditional judicial organ of the government, Obong Eyamba Ekpe on the other. The full implications of this signature will be analysed in Chapter

Five. Some houses in retaliation to the attempts by their etuboms to depose the Obong (without prior approval from them) immediately reacted by deposing them. Thus some houses chose to remain loyal to the Obong, despite the fact that their etuboms had crossed sides. Of all the nine etuboms who signed the withdrawal of recognition notice, five were deposed (Hart, 1964 : para 326). The result was chaotic, some etuboms refused to be deposed while their houses went ahead and installed new heads. When Archibong V died in 1961, the situation degenerated to such an extent that it was impossible to select the next Obong, or resolve the deposition claim of houses against some etuboms. Eventually, an official enquiry had to be conducted in 1963 to recommend a new ruler. Some houses managed to resolve their conflict with their etuboms. However, in Eyamba house, although it had to be settled officially in 1974 by the government, a stalemate still exists. Not all house members have accepted government intervention.²¹ So crucial was this dispute in Efik political history in its precedence, magnitude, display of the operation of rules and offices, that it needs to be analyzed in Chapter Four.

It is noteworthy that throughout the 1940s dispute over the title of the Efik Obong, not all the Efut and Qua clans were involved. Three Efut clans: Ibonda, Ifako and Mkpara Otop abstained from the dispute. Indeed during this period the Muri (head) of Efut Abua affirmed that the Efut had for long been under the jurisdiction of the Obong and Calabar without any objections. Their only grievance was that they had been overlooked and had not been consulted on the succession to the Obongship in Creek Town on the death of Eyo Honesty IX, as

had hitherto been the practice (CALPROF, II:75). In the Qua case, the Odukpani and Akim Akim clans had been involved in a domestic quarrell with the rest of the Qua clan Council in 1933, and both therefore dissociated themselves from the dispute. The stand of the Muri of Efut^{Abua} revealed the degree of affiliation between the Efik and the Efut which had developed over a period of time. As the Efut had already been long assimilated by the Efik, it was more difficult for them, unlike the Qua, to create a permanent rift in their relations with the Efik. Most Efut can trace themselves genealogically as Efik although the reverse is not the case. In good times both the Efik and Efut agree that there is no difference between them. People only remember and attempt to impute a difference when there is bad blood or disagreement over land, or when Efut elements feel they have been overlooked, 'insulted' or not duly informed on some traditional matter. The stressing of Efut identity²² is dependent largely, therefore, on the social climate, time and place. It is a matter of cultural integrity to stand ones ground and refuse to accept Efik suzerainty, domination and authority, especially when one has been insulted. Efutness also comes into play when there are possibilities of economic resources, such as land and traditional titles, being 'given'.

Most of the Efut settlements, especially the Ibonda and Abua, have predominantly Efik populations. They speak Efik, eat the same food, wear the same clothes and even have the same marriage customs. In fact it is difficult to point at one cultural item that is distinctively, wholly and purely, Efut. Efut and Efik relationships are therefore generally cordial and imputed differences are forgotten. It is only when the

Efut are at loggerheads with their Efik relations that sentiments of subordination or superordination and numerical inferiority emerge and create temporary hostility and rift.

A more permanent damage, however, was done to the Efik-Qua relationship. It was much easier for the Qua to manipulate their distinctiveness to effect a wider gulf with the Efik than the Efut who had no cultural distinctive trait to marshal and use as a weapon. Firstly, the Qua have a distinct language which is completely unintelligible to both the Efik and Efut. Therefore although the Qua speak Efik only those Efik (and even fewer Efut) with very close kinship ties e.g. filiation, can speak Qua. The Efik and Qua languages belong to different groupings.²³ Also their separate villages provide a ready social and spatial barrier between them and other groups. Their distinct settlements lessened the incidence of Efik-Qua marriages, in comparison with the Efik-Efut marriages, except in the case of Old Town. The dispute over the title of the Obong of Calabar was regarded by the Qua as a sign of Efik ingratitude (as original land owners) and also forewarned them of what their future relationship with the Efik might well be. In Calabar today, of the three indigenous groups, the Qua have most strongly resisted the sale of their land. Efut-Qua relationship is much more cordial than are those of the Qua-Efik. Both share the notion that the Efik are domineering upstarts attempting to subjugate them.²⁴

The Efik on the other hand felt threatened by the Qua claim to primary occupation of all land in Calabar Municipality. The situation was compounded in 1979 when a government edict published a compilation of Efik clans and villages. A number

of important settlements within Calabar Municipality were omitted e.g. Old Town. Furthermore, about 350 Efik villages were listed under Efut and Qua clans. This caused a great uproar, especially among the Efik.²⁵ The inauguration of the Calabar Municipality Traditional Rulers' Council in 1979 did nothing to remedy the already poor Efik-Efut-Qua relationship. According to the edict which created the council, formal recognition of paramount status was conferred to the Efut and Qua, who had never had paramount rulers. This, for the Efik, was not only a return to the 1940s dispute on the title of the Obong when the Qua and Efut in retaliation to the Efik title of 'Obong of Calabar' demanded government recognition for a paramount ruler of their own, but also a reversal of policy. The 1979 Edict, therefore, made both Qua and Efut victorious over the Efik having finally and effortlessly achieved the crucial issue of the 1940s dispute. The Traditional Rulers Council also had further implications for Efik-Efut-Qua relations. Former village/settlement heads, as represented by the Ntoe (Qua) and Muri (Efut), were suddenly no longer on the same level as the Efik etuboms (house heads) having now been elevated to paramount rulers as Ndidem (Qua) and Murimunene (Efut) on the same level as the Obong himself. This unprecedented equality of status was a lowering of the traditional status of the Obong of Calabar to that of a clan head and the destruction of the history of the title as far as the Efik were concerned. Also, they saw this as a repressive action of the government in a deliberate attempt to implement a policy of 'divide and rule' among the indigenous groups of Calabar.²⁶

Despite the antagonism in Efik-Efut-Qua relationships created by sentiments of cultural and social superiority and

domination and occasionally fanned upon by government action, there are still several common elements that serve to unite them. Firstly, all three consider themselves above all other groups as the indigenes of Calabar. Efik is also a common language among them. The Efik-Efut-Qua marriage and chieftaincy institutions are similar, although those of the Qua still retain some distinguishing features. One of the most uniting factors is the Ekpe society. This is a secret fraternity which will be discussed later. All three groups possess it and members can freely attend each others meetings without formal invitation, except those exclusive to the inner circle. High ranking members who constitute the inner circle are found in each group, as indeed in every Ekpe lodge. However, its presence in the three groups has also managed to create another source of friction as well as unity. Among the Qua the society is called Mgbe while both Efik and Efut call it Ekpe. The bone of contention lies in the original owner of the cult. Both the Qua and Efut lay claim to this, as indeed do the Efik. However, it is generally held that the society is not indigenous to the Efik but was introduced to them and they, as they had done in trade, education, and land, came to dominate the society and assume supremacy in its affairs (Hart, 1964: para 186 ; Ruel, 1969:33) Ekpe, nonetheless, is a symbol of autonomy among the three groups. Each group has its own lodges. The Efut claim that nsibidi, the secret language used in Ekpe, is of Efut origin, but then so do the Qua. Furthermore, the Qua claim that one of the titles of the Obong, Edidem, is a corruption of a Qua word, Odidem, meaning a royal, supreme ruler.

The ethnic rivalry in Efik-Efut-Qua relationships arises mainly from land disputes, political paramountcy and origin of Ekpe, this notwithstanding the three groups have intermarried and also conferred honorary chieftaincy as well as Ekpe titles on one another. Also, they have given land to their 'children' and kinsmen from other groups. Outwardly, therefore, they are very much the same and present a united front, especially when confronted with a common problem of being minority groups in the Nigerian context.

IBIBIO:

The Ibibio are the largest ethnic group in the Cross River State. According to the 1969 population census they numbered about 3.5 million. They occupy the hinterland area west of the Calabar River. Their language is also known as Ibibio. The Ibibio are farmers producing mainly yams, ^Scasava, and palm oil. They are also famous for their crafts, especially for their skill in mask making and the production of articles from raffia (a product of the raffia palm) such as stockings used by masquerades, mats, bags, baskets etc. Recently, their attention has turned towards the production of wicker work made from cane. Grouped under the term Ibibio are a number of ethnic groups namely: Anang and Eket, who claim they are not Ibibio, but they all speak different dialects of the same language.

The Ibibio have always had a very close association with the Efik. The closest period of contact was when the Efik lived in Ibibioland during their period of migration from Igboland. Subsequent years saw them as trade partners (Waddell, 1863:454-7). The Ibibio played significant roles in the hey-days of Efik trade alternatively supplying slaves and then oil. The

Efik capitalized on their position as middlemen to limit Ibibio trade contacts with the Europeans, although the most important oil market was at Ikpa in Ibibioland. Eyo II of Creek Town had a number of his headmen living in permanent quarters in Ibibioland to safeguard their commercial interests there (Waddell, 1863:590). However, there were other sources of slaves apart from Ibibioland. The Efik sold slaves caught from Igboland, the catchment of the Benue River as well as from the Cameroons (Vansina, 1964, Afigbo, 1977). Some were retained as domestics and plantation slaves. However, the bulk of the Duke Town slaves had been released from slavers breaching the new anti-slave trade law (Waddell, 1863:426). The Ibibio were keen to see the end of Efik monopoly on trade and to establish direct dealings with European traders (Nair, 1972:243-4). Ibibio-Efik tension erupted into a raid in 1895 on Itu, a borderline market settlement in which 50 people were killed.

The Efik-Ibibio relationships, although predating the Efik-Efut-Qua relationship, is most ridden with ethnic hostility. This could be attributed to the historical trend of Efik-Ibibio association which is best understood through an examination of Efik migratory patterns.

EFIK ORIGIN AND MIGRATION

The origin and migratory pattern of the Efik is still very much a controversial subject, partly because a great deal of it is shrouded in myth rather than reality. Also, the different versions lend themselves to different political interpretation. One version stresses the Orient as their starting point of migration. In so doing tenuous links are drawn between the

Efiks, Hebrews, Egyptians and Ethiopians. This trend has much of its foundations, to my mind, in the writings of the early missionaries on Calabar especially (Waddell, 1863) and Goldie (1890). Understandably, they had been quick to draw comparisons, where they existed, between the Efik (heathen) and the Israelites (God's chosen people) and the rest of the middle-east. Efik mythologists, it would appear, latched on to this theme heavily and came up with some far-fetched relationships. The extent of missionary influence on the Efik is hardly appreciated. Most of the professionals and educated men and women were trained in schools founded by missionaries. Missionary sources are frequently used by disputants to support their divergent claims (Duke Town Families Memorandum, 1971). As pointed out by Harris, in a criticism of Nair and Latham, in some cases, information put across as oral tradition are in fact drawn from missionary sources (Harris, 1976:289). Thus, Calabar was even sometimes called Canaan City in allusion to its special relation as the chosen one (Hart, 1964:para 109). In the 1960s there were songs depicting Calabar as the Canaan City. This title is still used as a name for guest houses in Calabar and even became a synonym for the city, just as Port Harcourt used to be called 'Garden City'. An earlier name Eburutu associated with the Efik, was interpreted as a corruption of the word, Hebrew. Efik-Eburutu was therefore translated as the Efik from Hebrew (Hart, 1964: para 76) Aye, one of the protagonists of the Efik-Orient parallels draws largely from Waddell and Goldie in his comparisons.

EFIK-ORIENT COMPARISONS

	<u>Waddell</u>	<u>Goldie</u>	<u>Aye</u>
1. Circumcision and sprinkling of blood rite	p.291	p.21	p.28,29
2. On wealth and kingship	p.339		p.27
3. Brass anklets	p.249,673-678		p.25

Waddell's comparison of Efik social life with the Orient covered a wide range of cultural traits, from the structure of houses (p.17), the practice of seclusion of women (p.2), washing of hands during feasts (p.88) to even the Efik language. He embarked on an elaborate discussion on the similarities between Efik language and the Nilo-Hamitic group. Efik was "... a simple and primitive tongue of Shemitic character." He also made numerous comparisons between several Efik, Hebrew, Arabic and Ethiopic words. Another Efik similarity with the Hebrews is apparent in their claim to seven clans (Waddell, 1863:673).

From the Orient the Efik migrated south of the Sahara Desert and a group dispersed to the region of the present day, Ghana. Hence the occurrence of common names between them e.g. Ama, Anansa, Otu (Aye, 1967:23). The main body, however, continued eastwards to Igboland where they lived for a period notably in Ibom, Umuahia and Arochuckwu. According to oral tradition, they left Igboland for Ibibioland due to a quarrel. Their most important settlement in Ibibioland was Uruan. Yet another version disclaims entirely the oriental origin but substitutes it with Central Africa as the point of origin (Hart, 1964:para 95). From there the Efik moved north to Egypt before returning south

and passing through Igbo and Ibibio lands to reach the environs of their present location.

As a result of having lived in Igbo and Ibibio lands, the Efik share some similarities with both people. Efik cuisine is similar to the Igbo (Aye, 1967:212). The Efik and Igbo were trading associates in the days of the Long Juju Oracle of Arochukwu which was really a cover for the supply of slaves. Both groups probably exchanged women in marriage, as they still do. Igbo women were assimilated into Efik households as slaves and some were kidnapped from wealthy families and married into Efik royal families. In Calabar, several families have Igbo connections, especially at the level of grand and great grandparents, but there is a general reluctance to admit or discuss this openly. The Efik lived in Ibibioland for about 150 years. They admit intermarrying with the Ibibio. When the Efik were expelled from Uruan they left not only with their Ibibio wives but also with their traditional crown ntinya, throne, akata, royal broom, ayang, and raffia robe, ikpaya (Hart, 1964:81,89,99) These objects constitute the 'royal' paraphernalia of the Obong of Calabar with which he is traditionally installed, yet historical evidence (as well as Efik own admission in their oral tradition) indicates that these objects originally belonged to the Ibibio.

On the other hand, the Ibibio have an Ntinya society to which all influential chiefs in the village should belong. Mylius suggests this may be the basis of Efik Ntinya usage, although there is no concomitant Ntinya society among them (CALPROF, 53/1/545). This may well be an example of a cultural item used outside its original context and given far greater significance by other people adopting the custom.²⁷

The Efik-Ibibio relationship is further complicated by the fact that Ekpo Ibanga Mkanta, an Ibibio is accepted by the Efik as one of their ancestors from whom the Okoho group (Duke Town and Henshaw Town) are descended (Hart, 1964:35) and also (Udo, 1971; Appendix Chart). After they left Ibibioland, the Efik-Ibibio relations became ambiguous. The Ibibio hinterland supplied the Efik middlemen with valuable trade commodities, as has been stated earlier. One of the wives of Eyo II (Creek Town) was from Ibibioland. Although the union may well have been undertaken for economic and political reasons, she was the mother of Eyo's only two sons, one of whom later ruled as Eyo III. Waddell also narrated the incident whereby an Ibibio gentleman had sold his slaves and eventually himself to Eyo II to secure Ekpe privileges (Waddell, 1863:341,617). Yet in another instance, two Ibibio chiefs had gone up to Eyo II subtly, demanding war (Waddell, 1863:340). It would appear, therefore, that during this period the Efik-Ibibio relationship was one of mistrust and caution.

Although no overt attempt was made to subject the Ibibio, as had been done to the other groups in the Cross River Basin, there was still an element of suzerainty in Efik-Ibibio relations. Firstly, the Efik had been more prosperous traders with a vast accumulation of European articles. Wealth was also exhibited in the erection of prefabricated storey buildings called Liverpool houses. A large proportion of their plantation and domestic slaves were of Ibibio origin and the Efik were the first people in the Cross River Basin to become educated. Ibibioland on the other hand remained closed to Europeans until the 1890s. In the pre-colonial period, the Efik-Ibibio relationship was at best of the patron-client kind and degenerated

to master-slave relationship when the other became presumptuous. Trusted headmen who distinguished themselves in trade were considered 'gentlemen' and their masters bought them Ekpe titles in appreciation of their loyalty. Some of these headmen were far more wealthy and influential than many of the nobility (Waddell, 1863:318). Iron Bar, for example, was one of the wealthy men in Duke Town and no-one dared refer to his servile origin.

It was colonization that opened up the Ibibio hinterland to European traders and missionary influence. Mission trained Efik teachers were sent to the hinterland to man mission schools (Taylor, 1984). According to popular Efik opinion education and modernization improved the condition of the people and on this they blame the Ibibio attempts to challenge their cultural superiority. The Ibibio, on the other hand, strongly resent Efik claims to superiority and are asserting themselves in political and economic spheres, especially in the control of State affairs. The Efik sum up the twist in their fortunes vis-à-vis the Ibibio and attempts by the latter to exert the upper hand by the idiomatic expression: "The hands used to hold the leg, now the legs are trying to hold the hands." Aye made an allusion to the same idiom which he regarded as potentially inflammable (Aye, 1967:179).

Despite the Efik claim to superiority and contempt for the Ibibio there have been, and continues to be, intermarriages between them. Although these are few and far between now and are highly disapproved of, especially among the Efik royal families who regard it as a debasement of all that is Efik; there is less outcry when mixed unions take place with poorer and less influential people. The Efik believe there

is a deliberate 'policy' attempt by the Ibibio to weaken Efik allegiance and unity through intermarriage.

The name 'Efik' is said to have been given by the Ibibio. Simmons suggests it is of Ibibio derivation and means 'oppressor' (Simmons, 1956:1). For him, Efik is a dialect of the Ibibio language. In a comparison of 195 words in both groups there were 189 cognates. A similar view is taken by Jeffreys who, obviously because of Efik origin, came to the conclusion that they were not a clan but a mixture. The Efik on the other hand stress that they are an ethnic group (Jeffrey, 1935:24,35). Even Aye, who is Efik, admits readily that only dialectical differences exist between the two languages (Aye, 1967:24). Some Efik words have clearly been borrowed from the Ibibio, especially the terms denoting sex and seniority of birth e.g. akpan, first son; adiaha, first daughter (Aye, 1967:25). Unlike the Ibibio, these words are never used as proper names by the Efik and for which they commonly ridicule the Ibibio.

Until an intensive comparative research has been undertaken between the Efik and the Ibibio it is difficult to state categorically that the Efik are of Ibibio origin. Nonetheless, it is obvious that the Efik are culturally closer to the Ibibio than other groups in the State. The original languages of neither the Efut nor the Qua is Efik. Privately, the Efik admit there are several areas of common ground between them, the most striking of which is the language. Some highly placed Efik are beginning to hold the view that derogatory statements about the Ibibio are irrelevant and merely serve to aggravate the political situation. They concede that the only difference between the Efik and Ibibio languages is that the former is more refined. As stated by Jeffreys, and admitted by the people as well,

the Efik have been influenced by neighbouring cultures particularly the Igbo and Ibibio (Coronation Programme, 1982: 17). They have assimilated people of different groups through slavery. On Dalby's language map Efik is grouped with Ibibio and Annang as part of the same or ^asub-set, all being generally intelligible. On the other hand, Qua and possibly Efut, belong to a different complex, being part of the Ekoid group (Dalby, 1977:31,34). Some 'Efik' traditional emblems, as had been shown, are of Ibibio derivation. Goldie pointed out that seclusion and coming of age ceremonies were of Ibibio origin (Goldie, 1890:22). There is far more Ibibio influence and relationship in the Efik than they would care to admit. Efik ancestry for one, and which is accepted by them, points to Ibibio ancestry for one of the most dominant sections of the Efik, the Okoho group. The Efik-Ibibio differences appear to have been exaggerated by political rivalries.

The Efik claim to superiority is based on their historical position on the Cross River Basin as the most important people; their wealth, political domination of smaller groups, cultural heritage (which they claim the Ibibio lack), early acquisition of education and literary skills while the Ibibio were still illiterate. And, above all, is the fact that the Ibibio had been as Efik slaves, used for human sacrifice, substitutes for Efik royalty for capital punishment and, in recent times, farm hands and labourers. Until recently, the majority of domestic helps, both in Calabar and in the country in general, were Ibibio.

Although the Ibibio were slaves, contrary to popular Efik belief, a great number of their slaves were not of Ibibio origin, but were from the Benue region, Igboland, and even the Cameroons.

Despite the fact that the Efik relations with the Benne region are rarely referred to nowadays there seems to have been much interaction between the two, especially during the slave era. Firstly, there was a slave route from the middle and upper Benue to Old Calabar and their common copper rod currency would have facilitated trade between them. More significant however, is the present use among the Tiv of the ukara-like material, a dyed/woven indigo cloth worn by Ekpe members. The former Benue State Governor, Aper Aku, often wore this traditional costume at public functions. Perhaps through trade links, the Ekpe fraternity was also adopted by the Tiv to safeguard commercial interests, just as it was by several groups in the Cross River Basin. There is little documentary evidence to draw from and the Efik-Benne links seemed to have long disintegrated as it is never mentioned even in oral history.

However, the lot of the Ibibio is a far cry from what existed during the slave era, or even during the turn of the century when slavery was still very much practised. A majority of those in key political government positions in Calabar are Ibibio. They wield a great deal of power and influence consequently, and their network is further enhanced by the common web of nepotism. In this way there has been a turning of tables on the former Efik-Ibibio position. Moreover, they have also succeeded in purchasing land and property in Calabar Municipality, especially from the Efik and Efut. Several of them have lived all their lives in Calabar and speak Efik fluently. However, the indigenous people of Calabar accuse the Ibibio not only of dominating them in the public and private sectors, but also of trying to take their land from them. The Efik also

maintain that the Ibibio government is deliberately attempting to sow the seeds of discord among the indigenous people of Calabar, in return for Efik scorn and contempt. The Ibibio, however, are a very industrious, enterprising and aggressive people. Unlike the Efik they have no comparative cultural or historical past to boast of and are making a concerted effort to rise from their former position in society (Noah, 1982) They very much resent Efik claims and demonstrations of superiority over them.

To the Efik the word 'Ibibio' does not only designate an ethnic group or language, it also connotes all the negative attributes associated with the lowly position they (Ibibio) occupied during the days of the slave trade and slavery. The word today, therefore, especially when used by an Efik, has come to acquire a derogatory meaning. It creates an anomaly in that it has become offensive for an Efik to call a person 'Ibibio' even if he is one; and, as a corollary, the Efik regard it as a great insult for them to be mistakenly called 'Ibibio'. However, this happens frequently, especially outside the State where people are not aware of either the cultural differences or ethnic hostility that exists between them. This is because to most Nigerians, because of the prime position the Efik had in the history of the area, they have become synonymous with Calabar. Marwick made a similar reference to the growing use of Calabar to mean the Efik (Marwick, 1897:573). Consequently, anyone who comes from the Cross River Basin area, especially if he speaks a language similar to Efik, must be from Calabar and therefore is Calabar (Efik). The word 'Calabar' therefore has acquired different meanings and is often used

in three different contexts. Firstly, as the capital of Cross River State, secondly, as a language, and finally, but incorrectly, as an ethnic group. This misuse of the word has gained currency because it is more acceptable to most Ibibio to be called a 'Calabarian' but it is in reality an incorrect label and nebulous as it neither designates ethnic identity nor status in society. Also it has no derogatory undertone. Comfort is taken in anonymity. It is therefore a much safer label than 'Ibibio'. Thus, the name of a locality has been extended to embrace several different ethnic groups as well as the popular indigenous language of the place. A similar situation also exists between the Hima and Ankole on the one hand and the Tutsi and Rwanda on the other. Anyone who claims to be 'Calabar' therefore is almost certainly Ibibio, as no Efik would hide under that cloak of ambiguity.

However, outside the Cross River State, which is the main arena of competition and confrontation, the Efik-Ibibio relationship is somewhat cordial and less antagonistic. The further away they are from the State the more tempered are ethnic hostilities, which then become latent. In a 'foreign' state and faced with a common predicament, they may even regard one another superficially as 'brothers', especially where neither is in a position of threat or challenge to the other.

The Efik-Ibibio relationship is, therefore, in a perpetual state of effervescence, very much ridden with ethnic jealousy and rivalry, erupting occasionally according to the political or social atmosphere. For example, during the last State registration and voting exercise there was considerable tension and ethnic rivalries erupted into verbal attacks and sporadic

physical violence. In 1965 the body of an Adiabo chief was exhumed on suspicion that some Ibibio had been buried with him. The charges were unproven and the arrested chiefs released (Aye, 1967:171). However, this was regarded as a sacrilege especially as the Efik chiefs and nobility are usually buried within their houses in unmarked graves for anonymity and protection from evil intentions. The creation of the Obong Ikpaisong chieftaincy title in Calabar by the Ibibio was regarded as an attempt to assert ownership status in Calabar (Aye, 1967:171).

There was a great effort made to rekindle Ibibio awareness in the Cross River State in the 1980s. This found expression in an ethnic organization, Esop Imaisong Ibibio, "a society for the love of Ibibioland." The aims of the organization were to bring national recognition to the Ibibio as the fourth largest ethnic group in the country, destroy the notion that they were a minority and give them their rightful position in society. This 'cultural' organization soon became a political machinery for marshalling votes in the 1983 elections. All professionals and other successful people were morally obliged to join the movement and participate in its affairs. The sudden growth of this organization stimulated others into counteraction. The Nka Ekpenyong Nuk (members of Ekpenyong Nuk), although a much smaller society, membership of which is strictly confined to Efik, Efut and Qua, rose to the challenge. Its aims were to promote unity and growth of Calabar and its communities, generate literacy, social interest, understanding and cooperation between its members and society. Its members include potential leaders of Efik, Efut and Qua societies. Like the Ibibio organization, the Nka Ekpenyong Nuk also claimed to

be non-political. However, they undertook making pre-dawn and dusk announcements for the indigenes of Calabar to register en masse for the national elections and safeguard their interests in the state. The Nka Ekpenyong Nuk is regarded as one of the most important Efik cultural organizations in Calabar. Its members led the procession when Esien Ekpe Oku V was going to take up residence in the newly built palace. When an internal rift divided the organization into two factions, the Obong and etuboms²⁸ were sufficiently concerned to seek a reconciliation of the opposing sections.

This summary of Efik, Efut, Qua and Ibibio relationships is crucial for a full understanding of subsequent chapters especially in relation to disputes, both domestic and political, quests and competitions for political offices, the mode of screening and selection of candidates and the resultant changes in these positions.

The forms and uses of Efik mythology and oral traditions especially about their origin and migratory patterns like the itan, stories of the Ijesha are steeped in practical politics. They obviously do not provide any long-term framework for the past (Peel, 1984).

NOTES

1. See account of trading expeditions by merchants notable among whom were Hugh Crow (1890), Snelgrave (1734) and Williams (1897).
2. Conscientious attempts were made to prevent Europeans from residing ashore. They were confined to their vessels. Crops planted by them were destroyed for fear that ownership may also be extended to the soil (land). (Waddell, 1863:455,569,612).
3. See a similar account of an educated group whose political ambitions sometimes undermined chiefly authority (Foster, 1965:78). It would appear that this was a common development in most of British West Africa.
4. For a definitive account of the development and use of Pidgin English see Todd, 1974 and also Shepherd, 1981, for development of literary skills in Calabar.
5. The minimal curricular requirements in the nineteenth century Gold Coast was largely confined to reading, writing and arithmetic (Foster, 1965:82).
6. Waddell attributed the wealth of Eyo II largely to his ability to keep records of transactions, goods etc (Waddell 1863:382,439,579 and 616).
7. Opposition to female education in terms of potential threat of economic independence and disruption of the status quo in society was by no means confined to the nineteenth century Efik nobility. Indeed, the Akan say it is the business of women to sell eggs and not gunpowder (Daku, 1971:177. See also *Baxter*, 1982:466). Arnold comments on the position of women in trade and sums it up succinctly 'vendors in the market place are women. But trade like war, is the affair of men.' (Arnold, 1957:183).
8. For brief accounts of the Efik lead in education see Aye, 1967:151; Taylor, 1984:192-204; Jones, 1956:33).
9. This erroneous practice started with travellers and continued throughout the missionary era. Waddell (1863) and Goldie (1890) often called the Efik 'Calabar people'. Only Marwick (1897), appeared to have realised its incorrect usage.
10. This number was arrived at by projecting the 1963 population census and density figures. All post-1963 population figures here are derived from this source.
11. See South Eastern State of Nigeria Edict No.17 of 1973, 1st April 1971, and No.14 of 1978.

12. Interview with one of the descendants of Iron Bar who is believed to have introduced brass beating among the Efiks. Brass ware used to be imported from Germany. In recent times importation of materials has ceased and people have to rely on supplies from Bida in Nupe country in middle belt of Nigeria, Eme Bassey Effiom, 13/1/81.
13. Discussions with Miss B. Duke, a beadworker in the Crafts Complex of the National Museum at Lagos. Skilfulness in such arts tends to be regarded as a gift from Ndem which will be discussed later.
14. There was a small workshop at Egerton Road in Calabar where men were largely employed.
15. Preference Public Records Office F084/1508 of the 1878 treaty between the Qua and her Majesty's Government. The 1884 Declaration of the Kings and Chiefs of the Efut was culled from the etuboms Council to the Cross River State Commissioner for Local Government.
16. Discussions with etuboms Ene O Ene, Ekpenyong-Effa and Bassey Duke.
17. Interview with Chief I Itam and discussions with the Muri of Efut Abua.
18. This is amply stated in The Qua Rejoinder : Text of a Rejoinder on Chieftaincy Titles in Calabar (p.37).
19. See also page 6 of the above-mentioned Qua Rejoinder.
20. Old Town submitted a letter in support of the Prospect Beach Island case in the Supreme Court, Calabar, Suit No.C/47/1948. Copies of this letter were also sent to Qua, the Efut and the District Officer of Calabar to whom Old Town paid the Qua rent. See also page 44 of the Text of a Rejoinder on Chieftaincy Titles in Calabar.
21. There are still two factions in Eyamba house. One for government recognized etubom, Effiom Ekpenyong John Eyamba who is also the formally accepted etubom for Council meetings. The other faction supports Offiong Obo Obo Offiong as etubom. See also Official Document No.6 of 1981 for Government recommendation on the dispute.
22. During the funeral rites of an important Efik man, who also had Efut connections, the Muri of Efut Abua and other Efuts had been invited. There was a complaint because they had only been informed of the arrangements at the last moment. They felt they had been slighted. Apologies were made by their kinsmen who showed them to a table and provided drinks for their entertainment. See also page 19 of the 'Status of the Obong of Calabar vis-a-vis The Cross River State Chief's Council.

23. According to Dalby's language groupings Efut (op?) and Qua belong to the Ekoid compound language group which is a different grouping from Efik (Dalby, 1977:34).
24. See Qua Text of a Rejoinder on Chieftaincy Titles in Calabar.
25. This is clearly stated in the 'Mutilation of Efik Clans and Omission of Efik Settlements' letter of 21st June 1979 signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Etuboms Council to the State Government.
26. See Index 4 of the Status of the Obong of Calabar, vis-a-vis Cross River State Chiefs' Council.
27. See also Jones (1957:16) in which he stated that the ntinya title was synonymous with the chieftaincy or headship of a community.
28. As the words 'Obong', paramount ruler, and etubom crop up regularly throughout the body of this thesis they are used without an attempt to translate them into chiefs to which they do not correspond, having infinitely more significance. Also, as it is sometimes necessary to anglicise them for clarity in the text it may be appropriate to proceed without underlining them as would normally be the case. A list of all Efik words is enclosed in a glossary at the Appendix page 345.

THE EFIK HOUSE AND KINSHIP SYSTEM

The Efik house system is inextricably bound up with its kinship system. Without understanding the kinship system, the implications and significance of the house system cannot be fully grasped. Nor can the importance of the kinship system be understood without reference to the house system. One reinforces the other. This is reflected in the entrenchment of kinship dogma in all spheres of Efik social life. The house system developed as an adaptive solution to the ever-changing environment which the Efik encountered from their sojourn through Igbo and Ibibio lands. Their kinship and house systems allowed them to intermarry with other people while still maintaining (to some extent) a core group. The core group basically comprise those who are blood descendents of the founding fathers. This is the basis of their royalty and which is further enhanced by the actual incidence of obongship in their house.

The Efik acknowledge two apical ancestors: Atai Iboku who was of Efik origin, and Ibanga Nkanta who is believed to have been of Ibibio origin. From these ancestors they further claim to be divided into seven clans, Esien Efik Itiaba. Given the different origins of their ancestors it would be more appropriate to group the seven clans under two moities. However, the Efik do not readily acknowledge the diverse origins of their ancestors except in disputes concerning high offices. In the 1964 Hart Inquiry there was an attempt by one of the disputants and his supporters to dislodge the claim to Obongship of one of his opponents on the grounds that, as a descendent of Ibanga Nkanta, he was not 'proper' Efik (Hart, 1964:184).

Nonetheless, descendants of both ancestors are generally regarded as being of the same blood and therefore equivalent. This is one area in which Efik-Ibibio differences are raised. This discrimination or accusation as it is commonly used, crops up also in domestic quarrels between half siblings, in disputes over etubomship (house head) or sections within houses. Also, Ibibio stigmatization is alluded to when people think an individual is becoming too presumptuous and is forgetting his origins. Some individuals readily admit that their ancestors took women of slave origin as concubines and wives, others do not. Generally the former make such revelations under the assurance that the taint is insignificant because of their royalty which is sufficient to erase it. The latter on the other hand may not have royal blood to announce such connections.

Although the Efik have several putative ancestors there are also individual names which are remembered. Atai Ibok and Ibanga Nkanta are two of these. Some of the others are evoked during Ekpe salutations, namely: Esien Ekpe, Eyo Ema, Asibong Ekondo, Mukata and Nkok Ofuta (Hart, 1964:63). The descendants of the two common ancestors are the founders of the present day Efik settlements.

Of the settlements founded by descendants of their common ancestors, four are located within Calabar township. These are Obutong or Old Town, Cobham Town, Henshaw Town or Nsidung, and Duke Town. Mbarakom and Adauko are the main sub-sections (wards) in Creek Town. Creek Town is the premier settlement and cradle of Efik history and culture. When they left Ibibio-land, Ikot Etunko or Creek Town was the environs of their first permanent settlement. It is situated on the sheltered waters

EFIK ANCESTORS AND CORRESPONDING SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Ancestor	Descendant/Founding Father		Clan/Settlement	Houses	
1. Atai Iboku	1.	Ukpong	Atai	Adiabo	5
	2.	Adim	Atai	Obotung/Old Town	3
	3.	Ema	Atai	Otung and Cobham Town	3
	4.	Oku	Atai	Mbarakom and Adauko* - Creek Town	5
	5.	Mbiabo		Mbiabo	4
				Total number of houses:	20
2. Ibanga Nkanta	1.	Nsa	Effiom	Henshaw Town or Nsidung	5
	2.	Okoho	Effiom	Duke Town	5
				Total number of houses:	10
				Overall total	30

* The origin of Adauko (Eyo word) is uncertain. Some would associate it with (Igbo) slave origin, others with the Okoho group of Duke Town. The latter explanation is tenuous considering that the Okoho group all reside in Calabar and not Creek Town. However, as Hart rightly pointed out, most of such explanations are political. (Hart, 1964:para 281-290).

of the Calabar River among creeks from which its name is derived and is only about four miles from Calabar as the crow flies. By road it is a distance of 80 kilometres and is about an hours drive. Travel on the river is by far the fastest means of transport. Calab^aer to Creek Town is only fifteen minutes by speed-boat. It is also referred to as Obio-oko, the country beyond, but this name is usually used by non-indigenes. Creek Town is visible from Calabar and especially from the elevation on which the Hope Waddell Training Institute is built. Also in Creek Town are some Efut settlements the most notable of which is Efut Abua. As stated earlier there is no clear-cut boundary between Efut settlements and Efik. There is a historical land dispute between the Efut and Mbarakom (Efik) in Creek Town. Mbiabo is about 30 miles by road from Calabar. At one time Obutong was in the centre of town but in 1964 its location was changed to make room for a cement factory. It is now situated off the Odukpani Road about five miles from its former site. Adiabo is about 20 minutes by car.

Despite the fact that its establishment dates back to the seventeenth century, and was one of the most important settlements in Old Calabar vying with Duke Town for supremacy, today Creek Town is little more than a village. Duke Town has far outstripped it in growth and development. This is probably due to its location away from the centre and seat of government. It has neither electricity nor pipe-borne water. It has only one secondary school and most of its young people are compelled to migrate to Calabar for further education and employment. Some of the inhabitants are engaged in subsistence farming, and petty trade. They also rely on more well-off relatives

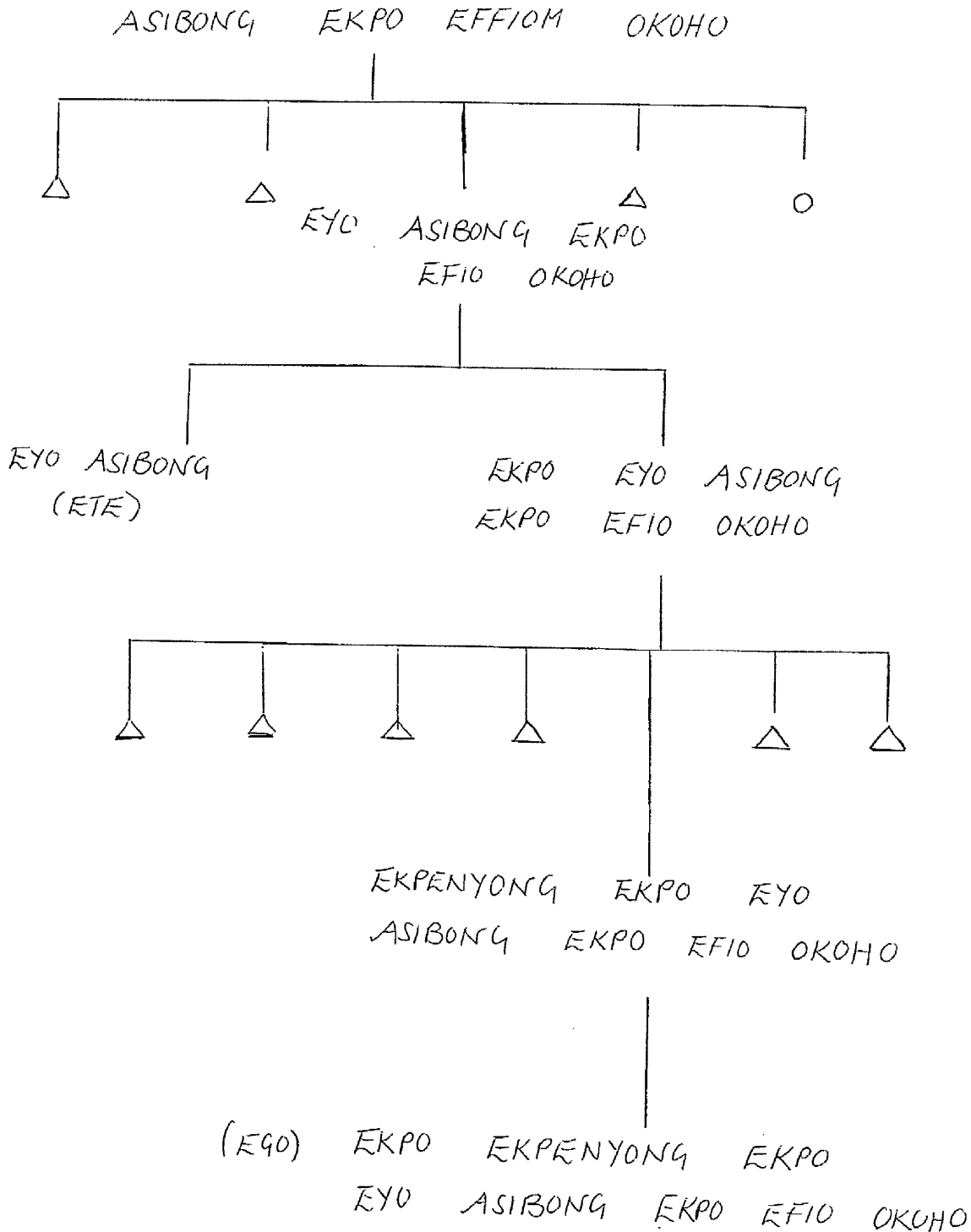
to send regular or occasional sums of money to eke out a living. Some affluent Creek Town indigenes in Calabar, with a view to retiring there, have put up modern buildings with generating plants for use during their brief visits. Others on the other hand are very reluctant to retire there on any permanent basis for fear of witchcraft and envious kinsmen. This observation tallies with those of Offiong (1983:81) and Ikodike (1983:7) who observed that urban dwellers especially were afraid to go home for fear of being harmed or killed by witches. Aye also made similar observations on Efik interpretations of witchcraft and how this fear resulted in a brain drain and a reluctance of indigenes to return to Calabar (Aye, 1967:157,162). However, some make brief, unannounced visits especially during festive seasons or for ceremonies, as well as sending financial assistance. Others only return for burials. So endemic was witchcraft and witchcraft accusations in Calabar and other Efik settlements that the administration of the esere bean ordeal as a test to establish guilt or innocence was the norm until its application was curtailed in 1887 through missionary intervention. However, in 1946, and later in the 1960s, there were reports of a secret administration indicating that the esere bean ordeal had not been completely stamped out (McFarlan, 1946:177).¹ Although it is no longer practised other forms of oaths swearing, mbiam to prove guilt or innocence, are being used.²

Esere is the bean of the Physostigma venenosum plant which is deadly. It causes convulsions and hallucinations. It was frequently used as a political weapon to eliminate rivals and weaker houses. Whole settlements were destroyed through its indiscriminate administration (Goldie, 1890:37).

Despite the fact that some of the Efik settlements are called 'towns', especially those within the Calabar Municipality, they are little more than suburbs. The use of the word 'town' in Calabar, seems to date back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when communities were regarded as distinct and autonomous with separate social boundaries and political heads. Distances also were exaggerated because of the mode of transportation. Although the situation no longer exists the nomenclature has persisted. These 'towns' are almost coterminous being so very close to one another, e.g. Henshaw Town, Cobham Town and Duke Town. There are no physical boundaries or demarcation between them. Some, like Cobham Town, comprise only a number of streets, while Duke Town forms a large part of the commercial zone of Calabar. Calabar, therefore actually comprises these towns namely: Duke Town, Henshaw Town, Cobham Town and Old Town. In addition the city has grown to include Qua and Efut settlements. The word 'town' is a translation from the Efik word obio which means country, town. Its usage connotes a physical and foreign entity where different laws and cultures operate. In this way it is similar to the use of 'town' in Freetown. According to the Native Authority Ordinance, town was used interchangeably with village and clan to mean a collection of different houses.³ Until the early part of the century these 'towns' were solely inhabited by indigenes and other people who had chosen to associate closely with them and had been subsequently incorporated as house members. Spatial location corresponded neatly with a political unit. Also certain names were identified with specific families or towns thereby making it easy to ascertain not only residence but also house

membership and descent. The Efik attach a great deal of importance to genealogies contrary to Jones, and are able to trace descent through several ways (Jones, 1956:133). Jones's remark on the importance of genealogy seems to be not only inaccurate but inconsistent, for he later conceded that a man's position in society did in fact depend on his ability to trace his genealogy (Jones, 1957:23). In the Efik name system, the father's first name becomes the son's second name (see diagram). Thus the full name of a person refers not only to his father but to his grandfather as well. In this way it is quite easy to trace ones descent and examine claims to royalty and political offices. Although the recurrence of names may lead to confusion some names are compressed e.g. if ego is called Edem after his father, he may be the second generation to bear that name. In which case rather than be called Edem Edem or Edem II it is compressed to Ededem. Oral tradition also helps to preserve genealogical reckoning. Thus as pointed out by Latham, any omission would be easily detected.⁴ (Latham, 1973:11). Therefore despite the fact that the Efik have incorporated a lot of stranger elements among them it is possible for them to distinguish the core from the periphery. However, when and if they choose to distinguish between 'proper' Efik and others is another matter. As a result of this practice of identifying people it is commonplace (and acceptable) for them to mark a person and ask who he is. Identification not only enables the Efik to compartmentalize the individual in terms of his forebears, house, and more recent ancestors, it also helps to define the boundaries of proper behaviour as governed by rules and status. Most important of all it serves to identify non-Efik who may be

EFIK NOMENCLATURE AND GENEALOGY



EYO ASIBONG was called ETE because he was his father's namesake. Most individuals do not use their full names ordinarily. Only about three or four names are used.

trying to pass themselves off as Efik. This is crucial to the Efik especially when it concerns marriage or other close associations particularly in what is regarded as an epoch of Ibibio domination.

The Ibibio, unlike the Efik, give names which reflect the circumstances of birth e.g. war as in Iniekong. Although there is a recent tendency for traditional Efik names like Archibong to be borne by them, their naming pattern lacks the consistency and depth of the Efik nomenclature.

HOUSE STRUCTURE AND DESCENT

Each settlement or town, which often also corresponded to a clan in composition, is divided into a number of subdivisions. The Efik tend to use the terms family or house interchangeably in reference to the various sub-divisions within the settlement/clan. For clarification and convenience I have adopted a system of terminology similar to that used by Jones (Jones, 1956: 122). Thus, sub-divisions within a settlement will be called 'wards' in a territorial context. For example, in Creek Town, Mbarakom (Ambo) and Adauko (Eyo families) will be referred to as wards just as Waddell did. However, the term maximal lineage will also be applied to the same division in a kinship context. A maximal lineage comprised a number of houses ufok. In all, there are 30 houses. Each maximal lineage has a (clan) head, etubom-obio. The (clan) head is the most senior of all the etuboms.⁵ The etubom is the head of a house which in turn is made up of a cluster of families or sub-houses. Both the etubom obio and etubom, and for that matter all the other group heads, must be capable of tracing descent to one

of the ancestors. This is the most important basis for eligibility. The internal divisions of a house depend on the number of surviving male descendants, the overall population of the constituent families, financial strength and a strong, forceful representative. The house is divided into sub-houses which comprise minor lineages. Each sub-house has a head or ibuot ufok. At this level members often claim direct descent to one great-grandfather. These, together with the village or community head (which will be fully examined later) constitute the five-tier political structure of the Efik as they see it with the Obong as paramount ruler at the apex of the structure. There are three main readily identifiable levels of segmentation. They correspond to the maximal lineage (clan), major lineage (house) and minor lineage (sub-house). Beyond this level there is a proliferation into sub-divisions and even smaller units. Not all houses have kept pace with internal segmentation, growth and expansion. Some families or sub-houses have degenerated because there was no surviving male descendant or significant people to carry the mantle of leadership. Other families have simply become extinct.⁷

The etubom is selected from one of the internal units (sub-divisions) of the house. These sub-divisions are often established by siblings, some of whom may have been Obong or remained princes and, occasionally, by princesses. Wealth, number and descent together form the prerequisites for the formation of a new segment. When the members of a unit within the house feel they are affluent and populous enough to protect its interest, the head of the sub-house, ibuot ufok, approaches the etubom of the house from which the split is sought for

his approval. With the approval of the etubom the sub-unit approaches the Obong for confirmation and acceptance. If the Obong approves, the proposed etubom would be presented to the Obong in council on an agreed date for recognition by all other house heads. Similarly, the establishment of a sub-unit is effected only through the approval of the etubom. As this is an internal affair, the creation of a sub-unit within a house does not necessitate presentation to the Obong (Memorandum submitted by Duke Town Families, 1971). Occasionally the most senior male declines etubomship of a house in favour of a younger person because of ill-health or other commitments. For example, between 1956 and 1958 the etubomship of the Eyo Nsa house of Creek Town remained vacant because the oldest male agnate could not assume office because of personal affairs outside Calabar (Hart, 1964:140). Also, the house may deliberately pass over an older candidate for a younger one on grounds of unpopularity.

The word 'house' appears to be a direct translation of the Efik word ufok. Its use in the Efik lineage/descent system is ambiguous because ufok could simultaneously refer to both the house structure and its inhabitants, that is, the families that reside within it. Ufok therefore could comprise a number of households all belonging to the same unit. Consequently, the words 'house' and 'family' are used interchangeably to refer to a major lineage as well as to its internal divisions. This usage was more appropriate in the nineteenth century than at the present time. Before the expansion and subsequent segmentation of Duke Town in the nineteenth century, it comprised effectively one house, namely Duke house. Archibong house which was created in 1885 was regarded as a sub-unit of Duke house

and so also was Eyamba house. Duke house was therefore synonymous with Duke Town which was also the settlement of the Effiom Okoho clan. House in this context, therefore was co-terminous with the clan (maximal lineage), and settlement, although its usage in this sense is no longer strictly appropriate as not all settlements comprise a clan. For example, Creek Town (settlement) is occupied by Mbarakom (Ambo), the Eyo group of houses (or Eyo ward), Otung and Efut. In this instance therefore the settlement is not co-terminus with the clan. Nonetheless the word 'ufok', house and family are still freely used interchangeably. The difference in meaning depends on the context in which it is used. Thus it was incorrect to infer, as Jones did, that ufok connoted house without implying a kinship bond between its members (Jones, 1956:122). Although a household or compound may have a number of unrelated persons of servile origin, by far the *most* important was the group of agnates and cognates (relatives) who formed the core group. This observation tallies with those of Latham (1973:12) and Simmons (Simmons, 1956:13). Nair, on the same lines, associated ufok with kinship ties and ones ability to establish descent (Nair, 1972:7), just like Aye (1967:213).

Creek Town in 1885 comprised three 'families' according to Waddell. Eyo II also used the word 'family' in reference to the Efik wards in Creek Town. Waddell in fact used the words 'town' and 'family' interchangeably. No reference was made to the term 'house'. The use of the word 'house' appears to have been of a later day introduction. The Native Court Rule of 1902 formally introduced the word 'house' to the different settlements thus giving it official recognition. According

to the Native Authority Ordinance, 'family' was defined as people of one common ancestor, e.g. the Duke family, while 'house' comprised people of two or more families (CALPROF 53/1/545 Mylius). The arbitrary use of the word seemed to have gained currency from then on.

There has been a great increase in the number of houses since the turn of the century. Jones (1956:159) observed that the Etim Effiom 'family' was inconspicuous in Calabar politics, presumably in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The reason simply was that during that period Etim Effiom had no existence as an autonomous unit. It did not achieve the independence of a house until about 1913 (Hart, 1964:151). Before this time it was only one of several sub-houses of the Duke house. By 1935, the segmentation of Duke House/Town was complete. Out of the original house had emerged four new houses. Today Duke Town comprises Duke House, Eyamba House, Archibong House, Ntiero House and Etim Effiom House. Duke Town (with its component five houses), Henshaw Town, Old Town and Cobham Town had eight house heads. Thus, apart from Duke^{and Creek Town} all the other settlements corresponded to a house (CALPROF, 53/1/545, Mylius, Appendix E). However, by 1971 Henshaw Town which hitherto had one etubom, now had five (Memorandum, Duke Town Families, 1971). There have been similar developments in the other houses. Until 1914 the Efik had two paramount rulers, Obongs, one at Creek Town (Western Calabar) and the other at Duke Town (Calabar Central). Under the political administration of Duke Town were other autonomous houses e.g. Henshaw Town, Cobham Town and Old Town. Similarly, Ikoneto, Adiabo, Ikot Offiong and Obom Itiat, all came under Creek Town.

EFIK TERRITORIAL AND KINSHIP ORGANIZATION

TERRITORY

CLAN
divided into
wards

KINSHIP

MAXIMAL LINEAGE
divided into
HOUSES

POLITICAL OFFICES

CLAN HEAD or
ETUBOM OBIO

MAJOR LINEAGE
HOUSE^{OR}

HOUSE HEAD or
ETUBOM

MINOR LINEAGE
SUB HOUSE^{OR}

FAMILY HEAD or
IBUOT UFOK

Thus, the house was a territorial as well as a political entity, consisting of lineages formed along potential lines of fission treated by matrilateral ties. The territorial element of the house however has become obsolete. Formerly a compound consisted of a number of extended families including unmarried children, daughters and sisters in between marriages, widowed or divorced, with or without their children. Today the number of families inhabiting a compound is largely determined by the availability of rooms or land for new families, because land for extension is no longer available. Land has now, unlike in the nineteenth century (Goldie, 1890:13) acquired an economic value, as is reflected in the increasing number of land disputes especially among kinsmen. Post-marital residence is usually neolocal (especially among educated couples) and only occasionally virilocal. Educated couples therefore tend to live in rented apartments outside the family house. Middleton arrived at a similar conclusion about the choice of residence in Akropong. Wealth, level of education, nature of family affiliation and religious affiliation influenced the co-residence pattern (Middleton, 1979:251). Among the non-literate, post-marital residence tends to be virilocal. Economic status as well as educational qualifications seem to be the main determinants of post-marital residence among the Efik. Couples rent apartments from landlords who may be Efik or non-Efik. The emphasis is primarily on the suitability of the structure rather than ownership. Although territorial distinctions no longer characterize the house system due to urbanization, rural-urban migration, and expansion there are still pockets in Calabar which have remained very traditional and conservative in residential compo-

INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF ARCHIBONG HOUSE

1. EYO ARCHIBONG SUB-HOUSE
founded by Archibong II.

2. EDEM ARCHIBONG SUB-HOUSE
founded by Archibong III.

3. OKON ARCHIBONG SUB-HOUSE
founded by a son of Archibong III who died young
and so never became Obong. The etubom of Archibong
House, Okon Etim Archibong, is from this sub-
house.

4. ABASI ARCHIBONG SUB-HOUSE
founded by the daughter of Archibong III. She
was given in marriage to Eyo Nsa Esien Ekpe Oku
of Mbarakom, Creek Town. It is regarded by
Archibong House as a quasi sub-house because
its origin is from an ancestress.

sition. These areas are found especially around Garden Street, Archibong Street, Egerton Road, Johnstone Road and Queen Duke Street. These areas belong to Duke House, Archibong House and Henshaw Town. Even the buildings have the traditional Efik structure with rooms opening to an inner courtyard. In these areas residence runs with the bonds of agnatic kinship.

INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF EYO ARCHIBONG SUB-HOUSE

1.	EKPENYONG	EKPO
2.	OFFIONG	EKPO
3.	EYO	EKPO
4.	ENO	EKPO
5.	EYO	EKPO
6.	ABASI	EKPO
7.	EFFIONG	EKPO
8.	EDET	EKPO

Ekpo means ghost but when it is used as a personal name its meaning changes. A person is called Ekpo if he or she was born after a death in the family. These eight lineages comprise the sub-house of Eyo Archibong and represent the children and grandchildren of Archibong II, Archibong III and Archibong IV. Three Archibong brothers became Obong consecutively. Archibong IV was the son of Archibong II, while Archibong III was the father of Archibong V (1949-1961). Thus the relationship between the lineages within the Eyo Archibong sub-house is that of siblings or cousins. This is why all eight have 'Ekpo' as part of their names and this has been adhered to for the sake of brevity. No.1 was the grandchild of Archibong IV and

his mother was from Efut Uwanse. Nos.2 and 3 were full siblings and their mother was also Efut Uwanse. Ene Ekpo's mother was the second daughter of Archibong III. The mothers of Nos.6 and 8 were from Oron, Okobo. However, the latter was the first son of Archibong IV. The mother of No.7 was the first daughter of King Duke IX (1880-1896) and No.5 was a descendant of Archibong IV.

INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF ETIM EFFIOM HOUSE

1.	EDEM	EFFIOM
2.	UMO	EFFIOM
3.	EDEM	EKPENYONG
4.	EKPO	EFFIOM
5.	EYO	EFFIOM
6.	EKEI	EFFIOM
7.	ENEYO	
8.	OYO ITA	

The first six are siblings and are the children of Effiom Ededem (Tete). The present Obong, Basseyy Eyo Ephraim Adam III (1982-) is from Eyo Effiom sub-house. His father, Eyo Effiom, was the founder of the sub-unit. Edem Effiom Ededem (1899-1906) who was Obong, was the first son of Tete. Eneyo was a sibling of Tete while Oyo Ita is said to be related to the other families of Etim Effiom House through matrilineal ties.⁸ Unlike Archibong or Duke House, the Etim Effiom House has no significant minor lineage within the sub-house because most of them have very few male blood descendants, or lack sufficiently prominent and forceful personalities to bring them to the forefront.

Eneyo for instance has no blood descendant. Edem Ekpenyong was the last son of Effiom Ededem, and ruled as Obong (1961-1967). At present the sub-house has no significant head. Similarly, Umo Effiom has no significant head although there are two male children left. Although the founder of Ekei Effiom had been etubom it has no significant head like most of the others. Despite the fact that Eneyo only enjoys sibling status in the house, the majority of the villages in Akpabuyo belong to this sub-house, while Oyo Ita has only one.

Etim Effiom House was the last one to break away from Duke House to assert its autonomy. This is reflected in the lack of genealogical depth between the founders of its sub-houses and its present day members.

EFIK HOUSES, THE PLANTATION SYSTEM AND CO-OPTED COMMUNITIES

The composition of the Efik houses can be broken down into three categories. First there is the royal core. This consists of all those who can establish descent through lineal and/or bilateral ties to one of the founding ancestors or ancestresses. These, however, make up the minority of house members. By far the majority of house members are those of servile origin. The majority of the composition of Duke House for instance comprise non-descendants and the euphemism 'member' is used for them. Most of these 'members' reside in the plantations.

The Efik plantation system was a direct result of the slave trade and power manipulations between rival houses. With increased trading in slaves, the servile population soon outnumbered that of free men. According to oral tradition and

EFIK HOUSES AND PLANTATION DISTRIBUTION

<u>SETTLEMENT</u>	<u>HOUSES</u>	<u>NO. OF PLANTATION</u>
DUKE TOWN	DUKE	66
	ETIM EFFIOM	41
	ARCHIBONG	20
	EYAMBA	19
	NTIERO	8
HENSHAW TOWN	EFFANGA OFFIONG	26
	EWA EKENG	7
	EKENG IWATT	1
	EWA NSA	1
	ANDEM ANKOI	1
OLD TOWN	ITAK NKPA	} 12
	IKANG	
ADIABO	AKANI OBIO	3
	OKURIKANG	5
	USUHORE	5
	IKOT EKPO	6
	IKOT INOK	6
MBIABO	IKONETO	15
	IKOT OFFIONG	27
	ATABONG	18

COBHAM TOWN	LOWER	COBHAM	5
	UPPER	COBHAM	10

CREEK TOWN (ADAUKO)	EYO	NSA	16
	EYO	EYO II	34
	EKPENYONG	EYO	7

(MBARAKOM)	ABASI	OKU	11
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also documentation, Great Duke Ephraim spear-headed the settlement of slaves in the countryside. The largest and most important of these settlements is in Akpabuyo. Akpabuyo comprises about 220 villages. Slaves settled at the plantations, Iwang as Akpabuyo and other similar settlements were called, served to boost the physical strength of the wards in the towns. As retainers they constituted a ready-made army to be called upon at any time. They were used particularly as farm hands producing crops for subsistence as well as for the needs of the towns. Although Latham, contrary to Nair, claimed commercial oil was not produced in Akpabuyo, Waddell, whom both used as a primary source, suggested this was not the case (Latham, 1973:92; Nair, 1972:54). Slaves supplied their masters as well as markets with palm oil and other foodstuffs, and evidently produced so much oil that they were restrained by plantation law not to trade in palm oil to avoid undercutting their masters (Waddell, 1863:319). Aye in a similar strain stressed not only the self-sufficiency of the plantations but also the production of food for the towns and overseas markets (Aye, 1967:15). Slaves were also used to establish the political jurisdiction of Efik rulers by the establishment of new settlements (Waddell, 1863:320).

In the 1850s the abolition of the slave trade resulted in an upsurge in the plantation population as slavers were captured and the slaves freed. Consequently a large population of the Duke Town slaves did not really consider themselves as such as they had not been bought but freed from slavers (Waddell, 1863:426). Although there was a tendency for slaves to be categorized into a rural-poor and urban-well-off dichotomy

by writers, this was an over-simplification of the real situation. Plantation slaves were left largely to their own devices although some were required to serve their masters in town periodically. Some of them became wealthy enough to buy their own slaves, the first step towards relative freedom and wealth. It was precisely because of their independence and influence that the basis of the 'Bloodmen Organization', Mbuniyip formed in 1850, was not in the towns but in the plantations. When a similar organization was formed in Creek Town in 1858 it was again spear-headed by the plantation slaves (Waddell, 1863: 643). The Bloodmen Organization was formed by slaves who bonded themselves by blood oath to unite and prevent the freemen from perpetrating inhuman acts against them e.g. human sacrifices which had been abolished in 1850 by Ekpe law, although this law was still secretly breached (Goldie, 1890:141). This organization was not a revolutionary one as Latham claimed but was for ensuring the safety of slaves. The Bloodmen, because of their numbers were a powerful force and exerted sufficient influence so as to influence Archibong I and other leading chiefs such as Adam Duke, join their bond (Waddell, 1863:476). Clearly the slaves became political allies who were used to safeguard their interests especially against the evil machinations of their enemies.

The plantations were also used as a refuge by the nobility from the intrigues and strife of the towns. Willy Tom Robins of ^{Old Town} retreated to his farms for one year to avoid the wrath of Ndem, tutelar deity (due to missionary interference with Efik customs) and implementation of the abolition of human sacrifice (Waddell, 1863:511). Similarly offenders were banished to farms as punish-

ment. The plantations were extensions of the houses in the towns and were just as involved in house politics as the urban population. Quite often the nobility established a small family nucleus there to cater for their needs during their periodic visits. The reference in Duke's diary to his 'mimbo-wife' i.e. plantation wife, is probably to one of such nuclei (Duke, 1956:16/4/87). Thus not all the plantation population were of slave origin.

At present the inhabitants of the plantations are even more removed from the influence of Calabar paradoxically because of forces of modernization. The difference between Calabar and Akpabuyo is due largely to the absence of a bridge across the Atimbo River, although successive governments since 1960 have used the prospect of constructing a bridge as a political tool. The civilian government in 1981 made an issue over constructing a bridge immediately after the Nigerian-Cameroonian border skirmish. In 1983 there was still promise of construction and engineers had been sent to conduct preliminary investigations. Yet no bridge is visible nor has any work commenced on the site. This is similar to the observation of Aye, about the ^{political} construction of the Atimbo bridge. Despite the absence of a bridge to facilitate movement between the plantations and Calabar, there is no all-weather road. Neither is there pipe-borne water, electricity or adequate health or educational facilities. Most of the existing meagre services were stimulated through self-help movements or were donated by organizations such as Nka Ekpenyong Nuk, ^{and} the Duke House Union. Consequently the final creation of a separate Efik local government for that area was most welcome as the Efik were certain that subse-

quent development and opening up of the area would be only a matter of time. Unfortunately the new military regime nullified the creation of all new local governments and the situation has regressed back to square one.

Although the majority of the present inhabitants of the plantations are of servile origin some house heads reside there permanently and only come to Calabar for Council meetings and personal affairs. However, there is a growing number of stranger elements, notably the Ibibio and Igbo some of whom are seasonal labourers while others are more permanent residents. This coincides with Aye's observation in the 1960s that increasing numbers of Ibibio had migrated to Akpabuyo because of better means of subsistence (Aye, 1967:16). Despite the increase in recent times, the Ibibio have always constituted part of the population of the plantations as slaves and hired farmhands. They lived (and still do) closely among the Efik as neighbours, attend each others ceremonies and also intermarry with them.

The inhabitants have complete control over mundane day-to-day affairs. Yet they still have allegiance to the etuboms of the various houses ~~of~~ ^{wh} which they still regard themselves part ~~of~~. The heads of the different villages are chosen by the inhabitants themselves subject to the ratification of the house head, etubom. Most etuboms feel the villages should have the right to choose their head as they would have to live with their choice.⁹ These are the village caretakers. Because there is usually no 'proper Efik' living at the plantations, the village caretakers ^{are} often of servile origin. Normally none of the royal family would accept rural living when there are better opportunities and higher standards of living and facilities to be

enjoyed in the city without loss of his share of the house products from the plantations. Only in very few cases do the Efik royalty live there. Usually this is because they are uneducated and feel they could not fully utilize city amenities because of their 'handicap'. It is most likely that they also grew up in the plantations and feel their presence there is of paramount importance to safeguard their economic welfare especially when large valuable estates have been left under their supervision by the house or sub-house. A few of the villages belonging to the Archibong House are supervised by blood descendants.¹⁰ The unlikelihood of a freeborn residing in the plantation as head of a settlement was also pointed out during the Eyamba House dispute which will be discussed in a later chapter. The headship of these villages therefore is not hereditary. An incumbent succeeds office only on the basis of personal merit. The village ^{caretaker} handles the affairs of the community on behalf of the etubom to whom all matters concerning land must be taken for decision, as well as disputes which cannot be satisfactorily resolved at the village level.¹¹

There is a concerted effort by some etuboms not to alienate plantation folk from house affairs. Etuboms who reside in Calabar make it a duty to hold regular meetings in the villages to discuss matters with plantation heads and house members. Others hold alternate meetings at the plantations and invite members to Calabar according to the venue of the meeting.¹² For some etuboms there is much revenue to be derived from oil production, land rents and food crops to stimulate regular visits. On the other hand there are a few who hardly pay visits to the plantations nor do they expect or receive anything from the

villages. Often, age, educational and financial status may prevent town-based etuboms from paying regular visits to their plantations or from depending on revenue or food produce so derived. On the other hand, some of the etuboms who live in the plantations are hard-pressed to visit the town or attend council meetings regularly. Whatever the actual relationship between etuboms and the plantations the latter are regarded by the Efik as personal estates of the various houses and their elected heads as caretakers under the etuboms. More important, the plantation people regard themselves as part of houses most of which are centred in Calabar in the case of Akabuyo. Indeed, Jones (1957:35) reported that they were integrated in Efik house structure and regarded themselves as members. They participate in house activities especially during the proclamation of an etubom and (in some houses) in the selection also. They present plays on ceremonial occasions.

Therefore, to an extent, the town-plantation relationship is much of the centre-periphery type. There is much communication between them and town people who own land and other resources. Like Jones observed, the more obscure house members live in the plantations while their wealthier relatives reside in the town. However, the plantation is still 'home' in the context of 'hometown' to these urban dwellers. It is the seat of culture and tradition and its web of networks link up those who live in the towns as well as those in other parts of the country. Town people go home to the plantations to visit poorer relatives, for traditional or 'native treatment' as it is referred to, for burial ceremonies etc. On their return they leave with fresh 'home' grown or produced foodstuffs. There is a

great deal of sentimental and emotional bond between town and plantation people. Although plantations were established to complement 'urban' settlements a great deal more is denoted in their relations and position vis-a-vis the township. The change is reflected in the Efik expression, 'If you do not come from the plantations, you are not Efik' (Aye, 1967:12). Originally the onus of membership was on the houses to which plantations were attached. Now from the above idiom it would appear that much more importance is now attached to the equal ability to identify with a plantation settlement as well. There are several similarities between the Efik notion of 'hometown' and ownership of plantations by houses and in Akropong (Middleton, 1979:246) *especially with those of Duke Town and Henshaw Town.*

Town-plantation relationship is at one and the same time complementary and divided. The town people look to the plantation for certain commodities and services and vice versa. Plantation people are regarded as country folk, simple when compared to the sophisticated modernized townspeople. Yet because of their very rural nature they are also regarded as the seat of the real culture and tradition of the people, untainted by western civilization, modernization and Christianity. This buttresses Aye's claim that the salvation of indigenous Efik poetry came from the rural parts (Aye, 1967:190), shielded from external influences. Thus some traditional performances like Uqua 'sword play', Ekpe, are often brought from the plantation for display in Calabar. On the other hand plantation people are archaic, still deeply rooted in traditional beliefs and practices such as witchcraft and other supernatural forces. As they are dependent on the soil and rivers for livelihood,

they tend to believe more in the powers of Ndem (tutelar deity) and other spirits than their town counterparts.

The plantations were not apportioned in any order among the Efik houses. Rather their acquisition was based solely on foresight and resulted in a "first come" allocation basis among the heads of settlements. Most of the communities outside Calabar, such as Creek Town, Adiabo, Ikoneto, Ikot Offiong (i.e Western Calabar) had sufficient land in their immediate environs to enable them to establish their plantations nearby. Those in Central Calabar which comprises Duke Town, Henshaw Town, Old Town and Cobham Town have their plantations located across the Atimbo River in Akpabuyo. Occasionally, a settlement in Western Calabar e.g. Creek Town, may have a plantation in Central Calabar (Akpabuyo) and vice versa. This only happens through matrilateral ties. Esien Ekpe Oku V was head of two villages, Ikot Eka Edem and Atimbo in Akpabuyo. Although his father had come from Mbarakom, Creek Town, he exerted control through his grandmother, Abasi Oku, who has become a sub-house in Archibong House. A few of the villages are headed by women.

Duke House has by far the largest number of plantations among the Efik houses. Out of the 220 plantations in Akpabuyo, the five component houses of Duke Town own 157, Henshaw Town with its houses has 36 and Old Town 12. In Western Calabar on the other hand, the Eyo ward with its 57 plantations is the largest owner.

The third category of Efik house members comprises integrated communities. These were stranger elements who because of strife in their own lands chose to settle in Calabar. As formal interactions between settlements were carried on

through the various houses, the only way for these strangers to participate in Efik society with adequate protection and representation was by identifying with the different houses. Although there was no deliberate attempt to assimilate them into Efik society, members of the integrated communities have intermarried with their hosts. These are: Ekpo Offiong, Edet Nsa, Ikot Ishie, Ene Obong, Ekanem Esin, Ekpri Obio Abakpa and Ifiang-Nsung. The Efik exerted no direct authority on these communities who chose their heads independently. Headship was based not on hereditary but on consensus opinion. This was the only category of leadership designated village head in the Efik indigenous political system until the introduction by the State Government of village heads at the plantation level in 1979.

However, in 1974, the State Government promulgated a law by which the Obong ceased to be officially recognized as paramount ruler but as clan head. This edict was however, subsequently replaced by another which re-recognized the Obong as paramount ruler. In 1979 the State Government gave official recognition to the heads of Efik houses as 'village heads'. Worse still, the plantation caretakers were accorded the same status. By so doing the Government equalised two vastly different offices. This caused a great outcry from the Efik and several petitions were written on this distortion of their political structure. At present the Government still continues to award etuboms official certificates of recognition as 'village heads' just as the plantation caretakers.¹⁴

KINSHIP SYSTEM

As all members of a house, and by extension, a clan (settlement) are kinsmen, being blood descendants of a founder, they adopt a kinship idiom in addressing one another. Members of the same house are ndito-ete, 'children of the same father', ndito meaning children. Even though they may not be able to trace their exact relationship to one another readily, they regard each other as cousins and address each other as such. Although cousins are not as close as one's immediate kinsmen, they attend each others ceremonies and often form an open and ever-increasing social network. The scope of cousinhood is therefore very broad. It includes almost every individual who can be relied on to assist one and attend one's important ceremonies. Cousinhood therefore carries with it a form of reciprocal and moral obligation not unlike that of the Grand Cousinhood among the Creole (Cohen, 1979:67). The Efik have no indigenous term that can be translated into cousin and therefore the English term is readily used.

Efik kinship terminology is essentially descriptive in nature. The word 'father', ete, is also used as a respectful form of address to elders, kinsmen and non-kinsmen alike. Similarly, mma or eka is mother, but the terms may also be used as a sign of respect and endearment to females, both kinsmen and non-kinsmen, irrespective of age. In certain contexts, eka or mma are used with disdainful undertones for younger persons. Children of the same father, irrespective of sex are ndito or eyen ete. Similarly, children of the same mother are ndito or eyen eka. Again there is no differentiation between sexes. These form the basis of kinship terminology and words for

mother's sister or brother are derived from a combination of terms:

mother's siblings (brother/sister)	-	<u>eyen eka eka</u>
father's siblings (brother/sister)	-	<u>eyen eka ete</u>
mother's father	-	<u>eka ete</u>
father's father	-	<u>etete</u>
father's mother	-	<u>ete eka (eteka)</u>
mother's mother	-	<u>eka eka</u>

Thus great grandfather is father's father's father - etete ete mi.

The Efik have no common word unlike the Yoruba, applicable to both sexes to denote seniority or junior position among siblings. Rather they have specific terms which combines birth position and sex:

first daughter	-	<u>adiaha</u>
second daughter	-	<u>udowan</u>
first son	-	<u>akpan</u>
second son	-	<u>udo</u>

There are no corresponding terms for other children. Instead, expanded terms are used for the children of people within the above category, for example

first daughter of first son	-	<u>adiaha akpan</u>
first son of first daughter	-	<u>akpan adiaha</u>
first son of second son	-	<u>akpan udo</u>
first daughter of second son	-	<u>adiada udo</u>
second son of second son	-	<u>udoudo</u>

The term for husband is ebe and nwan for wife. Affines are known by the general term, ukot. Individuals may be specified by the additional use of general kinship terms, e.g. husband's mother is eka ebe.

A house is therefore a descent category. The lineages within it are organized into corporate property owning groups based primarily on patrilineal descent but with a strong cognatic ideology. Children of the same mother, eyeneka, are distinguished from those of the same father, eyen ete. Siblings have strong kinship ties based on a common womb (stomach), idibi tiade, umbilical cord/navel, ekob tiade, and food pot. All those who can trace descent through an ancestor and/or ancestress are members of a house. However, there is a strong emphasis on patrilineal descent and this is generally preferred to matrilineal ties especially when it pertains to succession to high offices. Nonetheless, there is a strong cognatic idiom as bilateral relations are also of significance and value. Bilateral ties may be used as secondary options when agnatic or patrilineal ties are not so strong or are strained and competition for economic resources are too keen. Primarily, therefore, an individual's first choice would be with his patrikin. This is so even though post-marital residence is increasingly neolocal than virilocal. If however, due to the death of her spouse, separation, or divorce, a woman returns to her natal family with her children, the children through residence and subsequent affiliation can and do activate their secondary choice.

Successful manipulation of secondary choice as regards effective claim to land and other resources invested in the house is determined by the stability or instability of ones

parents' marriage. Ego's chances of making a successful claim are enhanced if he lives among his matrilineal kinsmen, actively participates in house and lineage ceremonies, assists members when he can, pays his levies regularly and associates with members. He must also attend house lineage meetings regularly. It helps if he is an eloquent speaker. Another important element is the presence of an influential or 'strong' kinsman to act as his patron or guardian, to protect and propel him through the right channels. Final acceptance then depends on all the afore-mentioned factors and the personal disposition of the individual as it affects inter-personal relationships within the house and/or lineage and lastly, his popularity with members especially the heads of the sub-houses within the house. Amity is important as resources are corporately owned and therefore consensus opinion carries considerable weight in decision making. Because the Efik descent system takes cognisance of bilateral relations no one can be rejected as a house member. Membership is determined primarily by consanguineal tie. However, an unpopular person may be shunned and valuable resources denied him. Even if genealogically and by seniority, a political office falls on his shoulders, popular opinion may work against him and prevent his acceptance as the legitimate candidate. Once membership has been successfully established, ego can have access to land or even hold traditional offices. The following examples help to bring out the importance of manipulation, and the use of bilateral ties as well as the strength of group consensus.

INSTANCE ONE¹⁵

Asuquo Ekpenyong Okon assumed the etubomship of Archibong House (Central Calabar) through his mother who was from the royal family of the house. His father was from Mbarakom (Creek Town) and also from the royal core. However, he grew up in Calabar with his mother who was very wealthy. Nonetheless, because of his father he was also recognized as etubom of Mbarakom as well. He was so associated and equally claimed by both houses that when he died there was a wrangle over his body and who had the right to bury him and where. It is said that while the arguments were going on women from the Archibong House stole his body in a canoe from Creek Town to Duke Town where he was buried stealthily.

INSTANCE TWO

Chief F is a member of the Etim Effiom House on his father's side while being related to the Archibong House matrilaterally. However, he is not on good terms with the key members on his father's side because of his involvement in the 1960s political tumult between the then Obong and his cabinet. He is also unpopular for the handling of the affairs of a deceased Obong. It is said by some people that he had personal ambitions to the Obongship. Because of his unpopularity he has 'changed' alliance with the houses. Through matrilateral ties he has become head of a sub-house in the Archibong House, and has thus been able to acquire landed property and revenue derived from the lease of land and sale of crops.

INSTANCE THREE

Etubom Ene Oku Ene is head of the Eyo Nsa House, Creek Town. His father was however, from Ikoneto. His matrilateral kinsmen offered him the etubomship because they could not find a more eligible candidate among their set of agnatic kin. He turned down the offer the first time in the 1960s because he was not interested in such a political and public office. However his kinsmen persisted and he finally yielded to pressure in 1972 and accepted the etubomship. As etubom of the Eyo Nsa House he still retains and exercises his right among his patri-lineal kinsmen in Ikoneto.

INSTANCE FOUR

Esien Ekpe Oku V (1973-1980) was the son of etubom Asuquo Ekpenyong Oku (Instance One). His mother is said to have been a non-Efik from the adjoining Rivers' State. Prior to his being Obong he had been etubom of the Esien Ekpe Oku House (Mbarakom) in Creek Town. Through matrilateral ties he was head of Abasi Archibong sub-house in the Archibong House. He was the ^{great} grandson of Abasi Archibong, and subsequently 'owned' her plantations in Akpabuyo. Since his death the headship of the sub-house has passed to his brother.

Matrilateral kinsmen are supposed to be kinder and more sympathetic than patrilateral kinsmen. They treat their relatives with more generosity, after all one is their sister's or daughter's child. Matrilateral ties are therefore of great significance. In times of trouble matrikin are a protective group to render help. A person who lives with his matrikin becomes

accepted as a member of the lineage and house as long as he acts like one and does not make himself unnecessarily unpopular. Succeeding generations of his descendants become unquestionable members, although they may choose to return to the house of their patrikin. The situation therefore is not unlike that of New Guinea where cumulative filiation gives a picture of a patrilineal descent group with a strong agnatic core. With the operation of cognatic descent ideology and manipulation of secondary choice offered through matrilineal ties most patrilineages are actually made up of a small core group surrounded by members from other houses who have gained acceptance. Inter-marriage between clans and houses helps further to blur already masked distinctions e.g. Archibong IV gave his daughter Minika Ekpo Eyo Archibong to Edem Ephraim Adam I in marriage. The latter in turn gave his own daughter to Archibong IV. Also Adam Duke gave his daughter to Archibong IV in marriage. Unions within the core group was a deliberate attempt to keep children within the royal family and help strengthen it. In more recent times, Effiong Ekeng Ita, first son of Obong Ekeng Ita, gave his second daughter to his younger half brother, Elijah Henshaw.¹⁷

MARRIAGE AND INHERITANCE

Among members of the royal family in-group marriages, ndo-ufok were greatly favoured and encouraged. Preferential marriage thus took place within lineages as well as between houses. Firstly, it served to consolidate and preserve royal stock, ^{the Efik believe} it also helped to increase the royal population. In-group marriages also helped to ensure that daughters were never

too far away from their natal families in case they were maltreated. Also it was believed one could safely eliminate the risk of hereditary illness such as insanity, leprosy or social evils such as twin births. It is said that fear of twin birth was such that some women remained celibate and refused to have children. In the past twins and their mothers were killed and then in later years were treated as outcasts. Despite education and Christianity, the incidence of twin births is still regarded as a misfortune to both mother and children which makes them unclean and unsuitable to perform certain sacrifices (in Ekpe society) or be present for rituals. On the contrary, twin births among the Yoruba is ^{now} an exaltation, twins being considered as spiritual and powerful beings.

Unions between close cognates were the most common type. Despite the fact that marriages in the past were often polygamous especially among the wealthy, this was not accompanied by a high birth rate. The Efik still lament their numerical inferiority and that they are being swallowed by other groups. Most of the Efik Obongs had very few children. Eyo II with his 60 wives had only two sons and less than 12 children altogether. The indigenous population growth rate was so poor in the nineteenth century that children were bought from slave markets to be reared in Efik houses (Waddell, 1863:382,487). Therefore, contrary to Simmons' claim that marriage and sexual relations were forbidden between members of the same family and cousins, marriages were actually encouraged and practiced. Indeed this was one of the issues on which Waddell severely castigated them and to which he attributed their low birth rate (Simmons, 1956:14).

Apart from in-group marriages there were also marriages between settlements, after all, they were essentially 'one blood', iyip tiade, related by descent and reinforced by marriage. Often one settlement stood in a relationship of sibling to another since they were mostly founded by children of the same father. Marriage therefore served to renew ties of kinship between houses.

Today in-marriages, especially between relatives of the second order e.g. first cousins, between affines are no longer as common as before. Firstly, Christianity raises moral questions about the practice, secondly, it is now regarded as being biologically unhealthy. More importantly very few marriages are as rigidly arranged so as to leave the partners without a choice. Although young people are still 'introduced' to one another, with the hope of match-making, the element of choice rests largely on the individual. Potential spouses are met in educational institutions, places of work, recreation etc. Awareness of the low population and fear of 'losing' their children to foreigners have induced parents in some cases to return to Calabar where chances of their children marrying Efik would be increased. However, as most of the core members of the houses are known to one another because of their small number, through intermarriage and other social institutions, their children often end up marrying each other.

Marriage does not sever the ties between a woman and her patrilineage. She is still very much a member and can exercise rights in her natal group on marriage, for example, claim a share in family revenue or have access to land. She can inherit land, houses, and even assume headship of a lineage. Marriage

is the culmination of the female developmental cycle beginning with child circumcision, seclusion and the coming of age ceremony

Efik customary marriage is sealed by a series of presentations from the groom to the bride and her family. The most binding presentation is the marriage box ekebe ndo which is the bridewealth. This was formerly standardized at twelve pounds. Unlike its name suggests originally this did not involve the actual giving of a box. Today, however, ekebe ndo operates in the literal sense and in addition to the money it is accompanied by a trunk filled with clothes, shoes, cosmetics etc. for the bride. The bulk of the bridewealth money goes to the bride and the remainder, along with some of the drinks are distributed among the kinsmen. An elaborately filled trunk is regarded as a sign of affluence and sometimes up to one thousand pounds cash may be included by the groom in his gifts to the bride. It is noteworthy that in the past in-group marriages did not require such elaborate presentations of gifts and money. The union was simply sealed with an exchange of spirits.¹⁸ The bridewealth gives the husband legitimate rights over the offspring of the union. It also entitles him to full mourning in the event of death. The low amount of bridewealth compared with neighbouring groups, e.g. the Igbo, where the customary bridewealth well exceeds one thousand pounds cash depending on the brides educational qualifications, reflects the assertion by the Efik that in marriage they do not sell out their daughters. The bride in fact receives more expensive gifts from her natal family. This is a deliberate display of their ability to maintain her as well as an oblique warning

to the man and his family against maltreatment and readiness to take her back with (or without) her children.

Marriage is a union which extends the social network through procreation. Special importance is given to the first son, akpan, and daughter, adiaha. The position of birth determines seniority and status among the Efik. Traditionally an individual may not be conferred a traditional or honorary chieftaincy before an elder sibling except with their consent and permission. This rule is however quite often ignored due to unequal financial strength. Membership of some societies e.g. Ekpe Obon, is determined solely by birth position. Also, certain hair styles may only be worn by the first daughter.

Husband and wife are expected to live cordially like siblings. This was probably reflective of the era when marriages often took place between close kin. Marriages likewise are expected to break up amicably and once the initial animosity has evaporated, partners not only address each other as kin but also treat each other as such. The bridewealth is seldom returned except when there are no children involved. Marriage commonly comprises two different ceremonies, firstly, the traditional ceremony and then the church (Christian) wedding. The former begins with the coming of age ceremony, akwawan, followed by the marriage ceremony, ndo, and culminates in the going away ceremony whereby the bride formally leaves her natal family for her new home. The church ceremony is usually a white wedding followed by a reception. The elaborateness of all the ceremonies depends on the affluence of the families involved. The couple may, in between these two ceremonies, go to the Registry to legalize the union.

The death of a spouse, separation, or divorce, leaves the woman free to contract fresh associations. Consequently, women, especially those from affluent families, often return to their natal families on the break-up of their marriages. Occasionally, especially if she is educated and has a good job, a woman may set up home alone with her children taking in one or two relatives to help with domestic tasks. Ability to return to their natal families readily with their children increases the possibility of individual association with matrilineal kinsmen. The knowledge that a woman does not lose rights in her natal family on marriage, and that she can return on break-up of her marriage and rely on the support of her family, undermines the stability of marriage. Thus marriages break up with as much ease as they are contracted. The general attitude to marriage and its dissolution is best portrayed in the Efik phrase referring to divorce, ediangande ndo, which literally means to 'unravel' or 'undo' marriage. Therefore although a marriage is expected to be binding the partners may break the bond should they become incompatible. Some women remain in their natal families while being married and their spouses live elsewhere. Some cases may be worth examining.

INSTANCE ONE

Mayen returned to her natal family in May 1982 apparently for a weekend visit. By August, her father had commissioned an extension to the family house for a two-bedroom apartment to accommodate her and her 18-months-old daughter. It was later discovered that she had had a fight with her mother-in-law whose ear she had bitten during the fight. Her sisters-in-law

subsequently turned her out of the house. In September, one of her affines had a birthday party for which she cooked elaborately, indicating that some sort of reconciliation had been reached. By January she was expecting a second baby while still living with her father. Up to July there was still no talk of her returning to her husband.

The erection of a permanent structure to accommodate her indicated a long stay in her natal family and the probability of continuing her marriage from there.

INSTANCE TWO

Coco is a graduate, married with two children and living with her mother. She got married in Jos in 1977 to an Efik whose family was very well known to her mother. She spent the first year alternating between her mother's house and her husband's. By the second year she vowed the marriage was over. As she was still in university, her mother took care of the child while she was away. In 1980 some sort of reconciliation had been made, although they were still living apart and the child was with her mother. By the following year she declared that the marriage was definitely over. However, by February 1982, she had delivered a second son. Shortly afterwards she returned from Jos and moved in with her mother with her second child and has remained there ever since. Although there are social visits between both families and Coco's mother helps whenever her mother-in-law has a ceremony, there is no talk of a permanent reconciliation. Coco enjoys the freedom she has living with her mother and her two sons, and does not contemplate going back to her husband. Meanwhile they are still legally married to each other.

INSTANCE THREE

Atim is a 65 year old woman with five children. She used to live in a large city away from Calabar. When she was expecting her first child in the 1950s she returned home to Calabar for her mother to take care of her during her confinement. While she was away there, the father of her child became involved with another woman whom he later married. Atim remained with her natal family after the birth of her child. She later contracted a union with X and subsequently had two children. During this period she was still living with her natal family. In 1965 she moved back to Lagos briefly and got married, then had two more children. However, by 1974 she had returned to Calabar where she had a house built in the compound of her natal family. She has remained there with her unmarried children ever since and regards it as her home.

Matrifocal households therefore tend to dominate the image of many families. The position of women in Efik society further helps to undermine marital stability. Although women are not considered equal to men they can and do inherit property just as men. Women are not excluded from large scale economic activities. A few are wealthy enough to have representatives who trade on their behalf. Both men and women have equal rights where inheritance is concerned. Also, through cognatic descent, women do become heads of families although they can never assume the office of etuboms which would make them potential candidates for Obongship. Where a woman is the oldest member of a family/house she acts in the capacity of advisor to the house head especially those from royal blood. Women, especially those

of royal blood are also initiated into Ekpe society, an exclusive male preserve. Although this does not confer them with any power as the initiation is more symbolic than practical, it is indicative of their birth and enhances their status in society. Initiated females wear the peacock feather ntakanda in their hair as a sign on ceremonial occasions. Women also attend the Obong's Council Meetings in their capacity as honorary chiefs. As members of the Obong's Council they are eligible to vote and participate in the decision-making. As women constitute a stable force in society matrilineal ties are important and are an alternative to patrilineal ties.

Elderly women well past menopause are considered asexual and are regarded as male, this is especially true of those who participate in the ekpa dance. Ekpa is a secret and mysterious dance performed solely by old women before the Obong's coronation ceremony to cleanse society of evil, diseases and ensure peace and fertility. It is said to be performed in the nude at night away from prying eyes.

As a result of unstable marital ties, although most marriages are monogamous through the influence of Christianity, individuals are often involved in serial marriages. On average, a man has between two to three wives in his lifetime. The first union may be contracted when he is between 20-28 years of age. By the time he is 40 years old the first union would have broken up and he enters into a fresh union. When he contracts his last marriage his children from that union would be the same age as his grandchildren. Women in the last marriage tend to be much younger than their spouses as they are supposed to 'look after the men'. On the other hand, a woman would only normally contract about two unions within her lifetime.

INSTANCE ONE

X is now a middle-aged woman with grandchildren. She married her first husband when she was 22 years old and had a child. The marriage subsequently broke down. The next five years she spent improving her educational qualifications at the end of which she remarried. The marriage was dissolved three years later without children. After four years she began thinking of another union. However, at the last minute arrangements fell through. She has since remained unmarried although there have been a series of suitors.

INSTANCE TWO

V had her two children by the time she was 18 years old. Although she never married their father he gave the required presentation to her family to acknowledge their birth which conferred him with legitimate rights over them. She contracted her second union six years later and had another child. By this time she had built herself a house on a piece of land acquired from her mother, and there she lived with her three children. She subsequently had three more children from two associations throughout which she continued living in her house. The fathers of her other children visit her occasionally with or without money or gifts. Although she is uneducated she has farm lands as well as a partially built house which she hopes to rent out.

INSTANCE THREE

Y holds a high traditional office although his eligibility is under dispute as most political offices are. He married his first wife young, but by the time he was 40 the union had been dissolved. His second union lasted less than four years. All his children from his first marriage are grown-up with children of their own. By his second union he had one son. Five years ago he had a third spouse who lived with him for one year. He is now 70 years old and lives with a woman in her early 30s. They have two children who are of the same age as his grandchildren, some of whom live with him with their parents.

INSTANCE FOUR

X is a well educated middle-aged man. Because he is from a wealthy royal family he was educated in England where he subsequently married. He has five children from his first marriage all of whom are grown-up. He separated from his wife on the basis of incompatible customs. Since then he has had several associations. Five years ago an old man gave him his daughter to bear children for him. There was no talk of marriage and indeed there is an educational and social gulf between them. She does not reside with him but has borne him two sons. He does not regard her as a wife or mistress. In fact in our discussions he neither acknowledged or mentioned her or his sons. Young women are attracted to older men for several reasons, firstly, financial security, secondly their birth status, potential and actual political offices. Birth status is of particular importance because ultimately their children in turn through

descent would be eligible for high political offices. Older men on the other hand seek young women to look after them and their needs. Because of the age, or social and educational disparity, the relationship is often one of father and daughter or maid and master.

DYNAMICS OF THE HOUSE SYSTEM

The house system has survived because of its ability to adapt to economic and social changes in Efik society. Its development can be traced from the patriarchal system whereby the eldest male was head of the patrilineage, being the embodiment of the ancestor and as such his intermediary with his descendants. Significantly, he was called Eteyin, 'father of all'. The head of the patrilineage had judicial authority and presided with a council of lineage heads over disputes. This system seemed to have been in operation till the seventeenth century when the Efik began active trade in slaves. Until then the patriarchal system was suitable for the predominantly fishing and farming society. With the slave trade and later the palm oil trade, there was a consolidation and metamorphosis of the patriarchal system to the canoe system. Leadership was no longer solely dependent on seniority but also on the ability to represent the lineage successfully with outsiders, especially European traders. The head of the patrilineage was therefore expected to have considerable business expertise in addition to being a successful trader. He was invariably also head of a large trading network conducted through canoe transport. It is from this canoe trade group that the term etubom, which now designates house head, evolved. The term is coined from two words, ete,

'master/father' and ubom, canoe. Literally, therefore, an etubom was the head of a canoe trade network. Occasionally the patriarch was not also the secular head of the lineage. Thus although Eyoll was Obong of Creek Town his elder brother remained the head of the lineage. The latter had deferred the office of Obongship to his younger brother because he was a more successful trader and better suited to represent the house with foreigners (Waddell, 1863:311).

Successful traders began to challenge the conservative authority of the patriarch. Inequalities in trade led to political rivalries and economic independence, segmentation of lineages and creation of new units. The formation of new segments from patrilineages correspond with the years of the trade boom. The Archibong sub-section of Duke Town/House (as the original ward was then called), broke away in 1885. In 1874, Henshaw Town tried unsuccessfully to assert political autonomy and establish its own Obong. By the turn of the twentieth century the segmentation of Duke House was complete. Etim Effiom House was the last branch of the original Duke House to assert independence. Jones wrongly concluded that the house did not play an important part in Calabar politics because it was never mentioned during the era of economic and political expansion. In fact the house had not acquired its formal status then. The autonomy of the Etim Effiom House was not established until the 1913 court ruling in Calabar (Jones, 1956:159), also Hart (1964:151).

The end of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of British administration of the oil rivers and the establishment of the Protectorate. The opening up of 'the hinterland' closely followed. The use of steamers, building of warehouse on the

beaches brought a gradual end to the canoe trade and the Efik monopoly. Independent lineages were consolidated once more into a new political framework - the house system. The House system was officially recognized in 1902 by the Native High Court Rule. Although the house system was a metamorphosis of the original patriarchal system, its development was somewhat sharpened by its socio-political milieu: unlike that proposed by Jeffreys. For him the house system was a direct product of and response to the European slave trade (Jeffreys, 1935: 46). The developmental trend of the old patriarchal system defeats this claim. Furthermore, the house system should have disintegrated with the end of the slave trade. Rather, the house system has become so consolidated in Efik society that it has become the basis and test of 'proper' Efik identity. This observation supports that of Aye who stressed that inability to trace ones origin to a house and its ancestry was tantamount to not being Efik (Aye, 1967:213). The patriarchal system developed into the canoe system which later was consolidated into the house system. Descent and kinship which were the underlying rules in association and interaction within the patriarchal system, continued to form the basis of the house system as Jones also later realised.¹⁹ This is borne out in the incidence of disputes over political offices and often forms the basis of eligibility and ineligibility of disputants. The Efik are also quick to point this out in conversation. Some swear, exclaim regularly by the names of their ancestors. The administration of the wards under the canoe system was almost a duplication of the patriarchal system on a larger scale. The wards and settlements had a council of heads (chiefs) which met as

dictated by circumstances, contrary to Jones' opinion that no such body existed (Jones, 1956:123). In fact, Waddell mentioned the existence and operation of such bodies both in Creek Town and Duke Town. Eyo II delayed his formal meeting with the missionaries until his head men could be present. Similarly, Eyamba V had to confer with his council before embarking on the Omon War. The heads of towns had to meet with their ward heads before laws could be promulgated (Waddell, 1863: 283,314). This system still operates within the house system, whereby the etubom and heads of sub-houses deliberate on important matters before adopting a formal course of action.

PERSISTENCE AND SURVIVAL OF THE HOUSE SYSTEM

Etuboms as heads of houses have had much of their political powers curtailed, first by the native political agents introduced in the late nineteenth century and later by the administrative and judicial machinery of the State. The house, as represented by the etubom, has now been relegated to solely traditional matters. Nonetheless, the house system has persisted and managed to survive the radical changes in society. This persistence of the house system is due to its ability to adapt to changes and adopt new functions as required by society. As a corporate land-owning body members of the house have a vested interest in its survival. The house comprises a small core of people who trace descent through bilateral ties to an ancestor or ancestress. By far the majority in the house consist of 'members' and affiliated groups. Membership of a house predisposes an individual to a number of valuable resources.

Apart from corporately owned lands there is also property belonging to families which may be allocated to an individual and occasionally sold. The revenue as such realised is shared among members. Property is corporately owned by (descendants) the house when the immediate children of the original owner are no longer alive. Pending that period, property is singly held by the last surviving child of the owner. Thus some properties belong to the house, others to a sub-house or lineage. Land may be given, leased or sold in rare cases. House land is usually 'given' only to members. This change of ownership is not a strictly commercial one. The exchange is sealed by gifts of spirits, some amount of cash and a goat. Prayers are said over the drinks which are also used for libation to invoke the spirits of ancestors, especially the ^{original} owner of the land, to acknowledge and bless the new owner. The blood of the goat is sprinkled on the land to appease the spirits and deities. The drinks are shared to seal the pact. Corporately owned lands are leased out as farms and the rents paid in cash and crops are divided among house members. Some land owners especially those who live in the town or are engaged in other commercial activities, lease out their land, especially if they are joint owners. Food products from farm lands are also available to members. Fishing and farming are especially important in the plantations. Fish is caught by a variety of techniques from the simple hook and line, bamboo traps used with the aid of the tide, baskets and floating fish nets. Fish is smoked by the women on charcoal fires. The urban population depend on the plantation for their food. Smoked fish which is considered a treat, is generally expensive and as such its consumption

is limited to the well-off. The hinterland is noted especially for its smoked fish and palm oil as well as for other products. A small amount of petty trading is done in the plantations. Trading and salaried employment are found almost exclusively in the urban areas.

The number of active members of a house at any one time is influenced by its available resources, especially when there happens to be a vacant political office, possibility of the conferment of chieftaincy titles and other ceremonies. The population of Archibong House is about 1,001. However, only about 100 attend house meetings in Calabar while the attendance figure at the plantation is around 200.²⁰ The house provides reliable members with a ready circle of people whose assistance they can count on in occasions of jubilation and sorrow. Association therefore gives some degree of social, moral and financial security to members. All members are obliged to pay dues regularly but not all comply. House dues are tailored to suit the abilities of members. The money so derived is used to provide refreshments during house meetings, contribute to the financial costs of introducing an etubom to the Obong's Council and token contributions to members on bereavements or for marriage ceremonies. Some houses also use part of the house revenue accrued from the lease of land etc. to initiate self-help projects in the plantations e.g. Town Hall, Primary School, Maternity Centre, which are later taken over by the local government after appeals for assistance have been made. In 1981 an annual revenue of £5,000 was realised from the sale of firewood, palm oil etc. in the Archibong House. In Calabar Municipality, revenue is realized in the form of land rent from the government. A



Some recipients of honorary Chieftaincy awards conferred on members of Duke Town houses. The women wearing heavily embroidered dresses in traditional Efik style, onyonyo, also have brass combs in their specially plaited hair, etinge. The peacock feather in their hair denotes Ekpe initiation and royalty.

stretch of land covering several miles from the Calcemco Cement Factory to the Marina (beach) belongs to Duke Town Council. The five component houses comprising the Council presided over by the most senior etubom who is the clan head or etubom-obio share the revenue after the payment of administrative and legal fees. Only a percentage (undisclosed) of the revenue is kept by the etubom of each house. The remainder is divided into five for each of the houses. In the case of Archibong House it is further divided into four for the different sub-heads who redivide the sum among their constituent lineages. Apart from the percentage used for community projects in Akpakuyo a percentage is also given to the village caretaker who supervises important activities such as communal labour, checks deviant behaviour, gives approval for house burial and generally maintains law and order.²¹

Chieftaincy awards both hereditary and honorary are vested exclusively in houses, although the Obong in council also confers honorary chieftaincies. Access to chieftaincy awards therefore requires membership and active involvement in house activities. Hereditary or traditional awards are determined by descent and genealogical links while the honorary type is conferred in appreciation of contributions, financial and otherwise, to the house and society. The former being hereditary, are not as open to manipulations as the latter, and are therefore accorded more dignity. Honorary chieftaincy conferment is often influenced by social pressures and economic status. Consequently it is often bestowed on affluent and prominent individuals, e.g. politicians, civil servants, as well as private figures. Conferment of chieftaincy ^{honours} by the Obong in council usually

takes place as part of the anniversary celebration of his coronation. Thus in 1978, during the fifth anniversary celebration of the coronation of Esien Ekpe Oku V, 19 people were conferred honorary chieftaincy awards. Three of these were non-Efik, and seven were women.²² In 1984, similar awards were made by the reigning Obong, Bassey Eyo Ephraim Adam III, to mark his second coronation anniversary. Thus they are sometimes referred to derogatively, as naira²³ chiefs, in other words, the conferment of the title was financially influenced and therefore the chieftaincy award was literally purchased. Holders of chieftaincy awards do not attract any financial remuneration from the State. Nonetheless, it is highly desirable as it connotes social status and is held in high esteem both by the public and the recipients, who attach the title 'chief' to their names and by which they desire to be called. This mode of address is regarded as being far more dignified and prestigious than the ordinary mister or mistress. The title 'chief' denotes wealth and popularity as well as a large clientele of retainers. It is therefore considered an affront by some to have ones title overlooked and be addressed as mister instead of 'chief'.

Most of the high Ekpe titles are vested in specific families while others are in a similar fashion associated with certain families. The highest Ekpe title, Obong Eyamba (President) belongs specifically to the Ekpenyong Offiong family of Eyamba House. The next title of Vice-President, Obong Ebunko,²⁴ is vested in the Eyo Nsa House. Although some of the other titles are not so absolutely confined to specific houses, long and successive possession of a title by a house often confers on it the privilege of first refusal (Hart, 1964:56). Thus titles, while not belonging to some houses become associated with them.

The office of etubom is vested only in houses. It is a prestigious and dignified traditional office held in respect by the Efik. Firstly, etubomship is a public indication that the incumbent is a member of the royal family. Most important of all an etubom is a potential candidate for the Obongship. The appointment of an etubom is given official government recognition. Formerly they were paid regular stipends by the State as traditional rulers, but this practice ceased in 1980. Etuboms are elected by the Etuboms' Council to act as a representative/ adviser in the Calabar Municipality Traditional Rulers Council of which the Obong is the current president. However, the selection of an etubom is purely a domestic house affair. It is after the approval and consensus of house members that the candidate is presented to the Obong in Council for recognition. The selection of the house head only becomes an extra house affair in the event of a dispute. The incursion of the State in granting official certificates of recognition to etuboms is a recent phenomenon. The dignity and importance associated with the office holders as custodians of Efik tradition and customs becomes more apparent when it is considered that most of the etuboms are men in their middle ages and older, including pensioners, retired from either government service or private enterprise e.g. farming etc. As such etubomship is morale boosting for incumbents especially the not very educated ones. The activities generated by the office provides them with alternative sources of interest. Despite their educational status the Efik like most Nigerians, still identify very strongly with the home base especially those from royal families. Ability to hold traditional office in addition to ones educational or

professional status is regarded generally as the hallmark of success and achievement. In other words, the individual has been successful both in the traditional and modern spheres of life and recognition that one has not jeopardised or mitigated his association in the other. Consequently, the offices of etubomship and Obongship are very much sought after by both the well-educated and professionals, as well as by the semi-educated.

HOUSE, DESCENT AND AFFILIATION

Just as the rules governing descent are flexible and affiliation is open, so also is house membership. An individual through cognatic ties has rights both in his father's and mother's house(s). Ultimate affiliation, as has already been examined, depends on a number of factors which curtail individual movements and prevent indeterminate flitting between houses. Although individuals can and do associate with both houses of their parents, their rights and interests are often stronger in one house than the other. House membership may change not only from one generation to another, but an individual may also change active membership between houses and thus shift his allegiance. This may be done for a number of reasons: the individual may have antagonized key members of one house, e.g. sub-heads, and thus feel his access to valuable resources have been blocked, or he may decide the resources are not of sufficient value. He may therefore try his chances in another house where there are not only desirable resources but where his relations with other house members and his reception would be more congenial.

INSTANCE ONE

The father of D.C. was from Cobham Town but was said not to have been a blood descendant. His mother, however, is from the Eyamba House and believed to be of royal blood. Through matrilineal affiliation he is a member of the Ekpenyong Offiong family of Eyamba House. He plays an active part in the activities of the house. Incidentally, as a result of a dispute over the etubomship, there are now two factions in the house with their etuboms. D.S. is the House Secretary of one of the two factions. In 1972, he was the signatory for the etubom of Eyamba House on the memorandum to the State Government on the issue of the coronation of David Henshaw as the Obong of Calabar. D.C. has created a niche in Eyamba House for himself and the extent of his acceptance is reflected in his office of House Secretary.

INSTANCE TWO

Atim Edet belongs to both Duke House and Etim Effiom House through her father. His paternal grandfather was from Efut while her paternal grandmother was from Queen Duke sub-house of Duke House. She is further related to Duke House through her own mother. She is an active member of Queen Duke sub-house, she hosts and attends 'family' meetings and participates in house activities. Through her connection as a member of Duke House, she bought a piece of land for her children. However, she also attends Efut meetings. Depending on the context therefore, she is an Efik from Duke House and Etim Effiom House, at others an Efut and sometimes a mixture of all three. The Muri of Efut Abua to whom she is related, visits her house whenever he is in Calabar, and Efut meetings are sometimes

held there as well. Some of her relatives like her have the same multiple membership and affiliations, some in the Etim Effiom House and in the Efut community, both of which they exercise. She was initiated into Ekpe through her Efut relations.

INSTANCE THREE

Bassey's father was Efut but his mother is Efik from Obutong (Old Town). He holds a very high Ekpe title in Efut and is considered by other members as being very knowledgeable in Ekpe activities despite his relatively young age (mid 40s). On his mother's side he is also related to the Duke House where he has a house. He participates keenly in the activities of Duke House especially Queen Duke sub-house, as well as Efut and Obutong. However, because of the high Ekpe title he holds, the Efut pull on him is stronger than the rest. Neither of the two Efik houses to which he belongs could confer him with a title as high as that which he already holds.

INSTANCE FOUR

Chief Francis Archibong is from Efanga Offiong House of Henshaw Town. His grandmother was from Big Qua Town and her father from Obutong. Consequently, he was initiated as a child into Ekpe at Big Qua. Through his matrilateral ties he was later initiated into the Ekpe lodge of Obutong where he was conferred with a title, Mboko Mboko, by the head Obong Eyamba of that lodge. He therefore attends Ekpe meetings at Big Qua Town as well as those at Obutong. Incidentally, Henshaw Town has no Ekpe lodge and very few of its people are title holders.

INSTANCE FIVE

Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa is head of Adiabo Akam Obio. His father was a chief of Adiabo. He holds the Ekpe title of Ebunko which passed on to him from his father's brother. Through matrilineal ties he is related to the Efut. He is a lawyer by profession and acts as an adviser to the Obong as well as to the Efut. Through cognatic ties he is also related to the Qua from whom he acquired a piece of land on which he has built a house. He associates with Efik, Efut and Qua on different platforms and identifies with all three. However, his highest offices, Etubom and Ebunko, are held as an Efik. There was a dispute on his claim to the office of Etubomship and one of the charges thrown at him apart from his age, was that he was Efut.

It is therefore apparent that people can and do actually maintain and activate affiliations and membership simultaneously in different houses as well as in closely associated ethnic groups. They also assert themselves as members for it is only by so doing that they can be regarded as such. Dual membership is not resented as long as individuals involve themselves actively in house matters and prove their worth. In fact it is unusual for a person not to have an alternative channel of affiliation for there has been a great deal of intermarriage not only between houses but also between Efik, Efut and Qua. The more active members a house can boast of, the stronger it becomes, not only numerically but also financially. Also, as core members of a house comprise a group of closely intermarried people, most individuals have at least dual affiliations. House affiliations exist in all kinds of permutations and

single house membership is consequently an exception rather than the rule.

Since house membership, whether activated or not, is determined by birth and subject to personal affiliation, an individual cannot cease to be a member. House membership is hereditary. However, an individual may choose not to activate his membership in a house, subsequently, he cannot expect or rely on the financial, social or moral support of the house in times of need. Although active membership may be rekindled at any one time, this does not necessarily guarantee access to resources. There are always other more qualified people who by virtue of active participation, have proved their worth as members and therefore have more legitimate claims to resources. Despite these limiting factors the value of a 'patron' who may be a kinsman and a core member, or just an active member of high esteem, must not be overlooked. Patrons steer their protege through the right channels and in the right directions especially with regard to access to scarce resources. However, patrons can only successfully operate where members are accommodating and the individual has not been antagonistic.

Thus the development of the house system is an on-going process from the simple patriarchal system to its present complex form. Since its official inception in 1902, it has undergone changes, some radical, as in the creation of new houses and etuboms, others not so apparent. Henshaw Town for example increased its number of houses from one to five in 1971. Other houses at that time, notably those within Duke Town, criticised this rapid increase which they ascribed to the fact that the then reigning Obong (whose selection was disputed) was from

Henshaw Town. Cobham Town also increased its house by one. Some members of Obutong tried unsuccessfully to introduce a new house. A considerable number of the changes involved in the dynamics of the house system is reflected in the various kinds of disputes that have stemmed from competition for scarce resources and political offices vested within the unit.

According to Efik tradition, the oldest member of the house is eligible for the office of etubom. This is a direct application of the primogeniture principle which was the rule in the old patriarchal system and somewhat during the canoe system. It has now been modified by other considerations, namely physical and mental health, competence and consensus opinion. Thus the oldest candidate on grounds of ill-health, senility, incompetence and unpopularity may be overlooked in favour of a younger and more popular person. Also, an approved candidate may decline the office. This is usually done under the excuse of inability to withstand pressures generating from the office and the rigours of age. There are no laws to determine succession of office but there are rules which act as guidelines and therefore subject to interpretations, manipulations and subsequent contestations as will be seen later.

NOTES

1. Also interview with Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa 23/2/83.
2. In the course of administering justice the Obong's Arbitration Panel occasionally resort to the traditional method of oath swearing to prove innocence in witchcraft accusations. However, there is great reluctance to resort to this method because of the influence of Christianity and modernisation.
3. See Sections 5 and 8(p) of the Native Authority Ordinance in CALPROF (Mylius E.N.) 53/1/545.
4. This observation also agrees with those of Nair (1972:7) and Hart (1964:125).
5. See the Efik memorandum 'Status of the Obong of Calabar vis-a-vis Cross River State Chiefs Council (p.3).
6. Interview with Etubom Bassey Duke 24/8/82. A similar statement was also made by the Secretary of Etim Effiom House, Chief Bassey Ekpenyong, during an interview, 29/6/82.
7. This piece of information is contrary to that given in Hart (1964) during the inquiry on the dispute of the Obongship in which a member of Oyo Ita sub-house was quoted to have affirmed that Oyo Ita had no stasis in Etim Effiom house, implying servile origin. Hart's statement is probably more accurate than the 'matrilateral' link suggested by the house secretary who is from Oyo Ita sub-house. This suspicion is further confirmed by the fact that the house secretary conceded that Oyo Ita was ineligible to take part in the house selection of an etubom. Interview, 29/6/82 (Hart, 1964:50).
8. See Waddell (1863:426). This was also confirmed at an interview with the Etubom of Duke House, 24/8/82. This situation exists in most of the other Efik houses also. The Efik in this context differentiates between blood descendants, ndito ufok, 'children of the house' and mbon ufok, 'members of the house'.
9. Interviews with Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22/2/83, Etubom Ene Oku Ene, 29/9/82, Chief Francis Archibong, 4/8/82 and also Etubom Bassey Duke, 24/8/82.
10. Interview with the house secretary, Chief Ekpo E Archibong, 7/6/82.

11. Interviews with Chief Francis Archibong, 4/8/82, Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 23/2/83. Etubom Basse Duke also confirmed that an Etubom, as custodian of all house land, had to represent the house in court in all land cases, 24/8/82. Technically, therefore, if his authority is rejected by a resident in the plantation, he by so doing strips himself of all legitimacy of his right to live in any of the etubom's plantation.
12. Interviews with Chief Ekpo Archibong, 7/6/82, Chief Francis Archibong, 4/8/82 and Etubom Ekpenyong Effa, 22/3/83.
13. Interview with Chief Ekpo Archibong, which was also supported by the 1982 compilation by the Obong Council, Villages in Akpakuyo Local Government Area (p.7).
14. See the mimeographed document 'Status of the Obong of Calabar vis-a-vis the Cross River State Council of Chiefs (p.53).
15. In most cases, the information used in illustrating specific instances are derived by the persons referred to. Occasionally, because of antagonism during my period of field work between individuals it has not been possible to make direct allusions. In such cases initials or fictitious names are used. Information for Instances One and Four were derived from an interview with Chief Ekpo Archibong, 15/6/83.
16. Interview with Chief Ekpo Archibong, 15/6/83.
17. Interview with Chief Ekpo Archibong, 15/6/83.
18. In 1956 Jones states that no attempts were made to remember genealogies or preserve distinctions between descendants of agnates and outsiders. (Jones, 1956:133). However, he later conceded the paramount importance of descent (Jones, 1957, para 35) and again (Jones, 1963:19). Inter-
- 19-20. Interview with Chief Ekpe Archibong, 7/6/82.
21. Programme of Fifth Anniversary Celebration of the Coronation of the Obong of Calabar, 1978. Esien Ekpe Oku V conferred the largest number of chieftaincies among all Efik Obongs.
22. Naira is the Nigerian currency, and at the official exchange rate £1 equals ~~₦~~1.20.
23. Like most Efik names (as Eyamba has come to be used), the titles Eyamba and Ebunko have no meaning in themselves outside the context of Ekpe. Thus Ebunko refers to the second highest Ekpe title and is also extended to its masquerade or physical representative, idem.

CHAPTER THREE

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL OFFICES : I - OBONGSHIP

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL OFFICES : OBONGSHIP

The Efik political hierarchy comprises village heads, hereditary chiefs and etuboms, with the Obong at the apex. The Obong is the paramount ruler of the Efik. He is seen as the symbol of unity and embodiment of the Efik tradition, the promoter of social justice, upholder of the sense of dignity and sanctity in society. His official title is 'Obong of Calabar'. He is the only paramount ruler in the Cross River State with the word 'Calabar' incorporated as part of his title. The Obong may be addressed by his etuboms and others by three titles, Eteyin, Edidem, and Amasi. There seems to be no clearcut distinction in the application of the first two titles. Both, together with Obong, are used synonymously to connote leadership and sovereignty. Eteyin means father of all and was especially applicable in the early patriarchal system to the head of the lineage. Edidem on the other hand connotes a supreme ruler with absolute power (Goldie, 1874:61). The Efik claim it is a title that combines the civil authority of the Obong with the religious power of the chief priest of Ndem (tutelar deity), Oku Ndem. The word Edidem has been translated literally as "it is Ndem". However Jeffreys, like Qua, claimed that Edidem is a corruption of odidem, a title denoting a royal and supreme ruler with absolute powers used to address their divine king.¹ Goldie also stated that although the title was superior to that of Obong, the Efik had no ruler to which it could be applied. However, the Efik appear to have used this title earlier in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially when the office of the high priest of Ndem, as well as that of secular head, Obong, converged on the same individual.

At present Edidem is used as a title for the Obong. Obong is also used in general parlance to denote deference to an older person and may be translated as 'sir'. In some respects it may also imply ownership and rights. Obong is also used as a prefix for high titles in Ekpe society. In 1902, the use of the titles Edidem and Eteyin were abolished by the colonial administration in favour of the more limited and secular title of Obong. However, in 1971 the Obong's Council formally reintroduced the use of the title 'Edidem' as it was more exalted than 'Obong'.² The three titles, Eteyin, Edidem and Obong had probably been applicable to distinct offices in Efik political history. Although two of them (supreme ruler and patriarch) have since ceased to be applicable to the present political offices they have nonetheless become identified with the existing office of Obongship, as they all denote leadership. A less frequently used title is Amasi. This is also used to denote deference as well as benevolence. It is believed to be a corruption of the Igbo word mazi³ which is used as a prefix or title for respected men. 'Amasi' is also used as a term of endearment by wives to their husbands.

PRECOLONIAL AND COLONIAL INFLUENCE ON OBONGSHIP

European trade saw the adoption of a variety of appellations to denote leadership. The identification of settlement heads was particularly important to supercargoes as it indicated with whom trade negotiations had to be conducted. Thus, there was an introduction of various titles ranging from 'King', or 'Duke' through to 'Captain'. Consequently, the office of Obongship was strongly influenced by the supercargoes, the British Consul and missionaries, because of its implications for the political atmosphere, which in turn affected trade. When Eyamba V (1836-1847) died, there was a move by some of the Efik to put an end to the diarchy system by recognizing Eyo II (Creek Town) as ruler for both towns. The supercargoes rejected this proposal for fear of its implications on trade (Goldie, 1890:136). Archibong I (1849-1852) and Eyo V (1864-1867) were two of those who assumed office through the influence of the supercargoes and British Consul (Goldie, 1890:137,222). Even the destruction of Obutong (Old Town) in 1855 was due largely to the incursion of the supercargoes within local politics. Obongship in the pre-colonial era was determined by royalty but more importantly, by virtue of wealth and business acumen. Thus, Archibong I became king because of "... his superior wealth and extensive trade and connection with the original royal family..." (Marwick, 1877:). It was therefore possible for the Duke Town Family and the Eyo Family of Creek Town⁴ to monopolize the obongship for more than a century.

The Old Calabar Native Council Rules of 1902 had great implications for the Obongship. The other Efik settlements, having been excluded from the even distribution of comey (trade

duties paid to the Obong by the supercargoes) and the Obongship, agitated against the Duke Town and Creek Town monopoly. They succeeded eventually in having a law passed by the colonial administration which acknowledged their rights to the Obongship. When Henshaw Town tried to assert its independence in 1874 by proclaiming its own Obong, Archibong III (1872-1879) had the settlement destroyed and publicly burnt the crown and sceptre of the would-be monarch, Ekeng Ita. This resulted in the Hensho-Dukean war of 1874-1876. The sacking of Henshaw Town by Duke Town was to have far-reaching implications about a century later as will be seen.

According to the 1902 rules, the Obongship could no longer be monopolized by the Eyo ward of Creek Town and Duke Town families (Archibong, Eyamba and Duke). Other settlements such as Henshaw Town, Obutong, Cobham Town etc. now had a stake in the office.⁵ However, the rule had no immediate impact on existing political arrangements as the other settlements continued to be excluded from Obongship. There was little change, for in Creek Town, the Eyos continued to supply the Obong just like Duke ward did in Duke Town. Heads of other settlements were designated etubom-obio or head chiefs.⁶ Each Obong had his Council which comprised heads of wards and other leading men. This state of affairs remained in force until 1970.

Until 1970 Creek Town and Duke Town had two separate political councils and there was much rivalry between the two communities. Creek Town etuboms and chiefs constituted the Creek Town Area Efik Chief's Council and were responsible for all traditional matters, especially those pertaining to political offices. Creek Town also had a Council of etuboms like

Duke Town. The 1950s saw the development of the Efik Royal Fraternity in Duke Town (see Chapter I). The Obong and etuboms were ex-officio members and patrons like some of their Creek Town counterparts. (Hart, 1964:219). Despite the fact that Creek Town and Duke Town were regarded as two distinct political units, in fact there were several areas of unity and cooperation between them. Indeed this was only to be expected as there has been much intermarriage between them, and Creek Town looks to Duke Town for higher education, employment, city life etc. Also, Creek Town etuboms were members of Archibong V's cabinet. A number of people hold chieftaincy titles in both communities. After the death of Eyo IX (1922-1926), Creek Town was never to have an Obong in the old sense. In 1926 the then reigning Obong of Duke Town was deposed and was never reinstated until his death in 1940. There was an interregnum in both communities which lasted ten years in the case of Duke Town. In 1950, Archibong V assumed office as the 'Obong of Calabar'. He was the first ruler to hold this title rather than Obong of Duke Town. Although the organization, Esop Iboku (which later became the Efik Royal Fraternity) had already fought for and won the right to have the Efik paramount ruler designated 'Obong of Calabar' in 1940, there was no incumbent to the office until 1950. Creek Town was riddled by disputes and when a candidate for the Obongship (Creek Town) was finally presented in 1961 it was discovered at the last minute that he was not Efik but Ekoi and as such ineligible for the office (Hart, 1964:241). Thus, the Eyo ward was the only one that produced candidates for the Obongship of Creek Town in documented history. Creek Town and Duke Town are also united

Ekpe. Both communities continue to share one Ekpe lodge with the head, Obong Eyamba Ekpe from Duke Town while his deputy, Obong Ebunko, is from Creek Town.

There had been several attempts to unite the diarchy under a ruler since the nineteenth century apart from the move during the reign of Eyo II (1835-1858). The desire for unification was re-echoed by Jones almost a century later in 1957 (Jones, 1957:34). Although the question of the right of Creek Town in the office of 'Obong of Calabar' had been raised by the Efut and Qua during the 1940s dispute over the official title of the Obong, it never actually became a source of contention for the Creek Town etuboms. This was mainly because they had no ruler after 1926. Secondly, and of greater significance, during the raging years of Esop Iboku in the 1940s the key offices of the organization were shared between Duke Town and Creek Town. Thus, its president was etubom Ededem Archibong (who later became Archibong V) while the vice-president was from the Eyo ward of Creek Town. Thus, Creek Town was part of the body clamouring for the right of the Efik to the title of 'Obong of Calabar'. Clearly they did not consider themselves excluded from ^{the} use of the title.⁷

Although the 1902 rule had made provision for two Obongs, one for 'Old Calabar' and another for 'Creek Town'. This was, however, superceded by the 1959 classification of Chiefs Law which recognized just one paramount ruler for the Efik to be designated 'Obong of Calabar'. The move towards political unification had finally received official impetus.⁸ According to this law the Obong was categorised as a first-class chief. However, matters came to a head after the death of Archibong V.

As a result of the incursion of partisan politics into traditional (palace) politics there was a complex dispute of many dimensions over the successor to the office. The etuboms' cabinet; the traditional law-making body, was split in two. One faction in alliance with the Efik Royal Fraternity formed an opposition to the former Obong's Cabinet. Each faction put forward a candidate for the Obongship. There was a similar split among the Creek Town etuboms; at first they supported the two opposing factions. Thus, there were two contestants for the office. Amidst the turmoil two new contestants emerged: these were from Creek Town. The emergence of two Creek Town candidates gave the dispute a different twist. The etuboms' council (Duke Town) regarded this as an unlawful encroachment by the Creek Town etuboms on 'their' Obongship. Their reason was that Calabar was synonymous with Duke Town and thus did not include Creek Town. Rather than being confronted only by the 'rebel' candidate of the other faction of the disintegrated body of etuboms, the etuboms' council⁹ now had to contend with two others who had taken advantage of the disarray. The Creek Town etuboms on the other hand regarded themselves as the only true Efik being the descendants of Ema Atai, while Duke Town descended from Ibanga Nkanta an Ibibio man (Hart, 1964:15,381). Eventually, the etuboms' council withdrew their candidate leaving only three contestants.

SELECTION OF OBONG

Although in precolonial times the Obongship had involved the participation of both the Efik and Europeans in the selection process, age or seniority at present determines for the most part succession. Apart for a few discrepancy among the Eyos, seniority governed the succession pattern among the Archibong brothers and their descendants. Where this rule was breached it was by tacit agreement rather than an attempt by one to supplant the other. Because succession was based on seniority, it was more or less automatic and the choice of Obong-elect obvious to all. Automatic succession, however, could only be practised when the candidate was the popular and unanimous choice of the king-makers. However, when there was a disagreement, the king-making body, comprising heads of wards and principal men, and later, etuboms, put the candidature to secret ballot, the result of which was expected to be final. The voting or election procedure therefore is a modern incursion into the traditional selection pattern of the Obong-elect in the absence of an obvious successor or consensus. Quite often the results of one are merely reinforced by the other. Because there is little difference in the overall outcome, the Efik tend to use the words, selection and election, interchangeably to describe the procedure by which a successor to the Obongship is acquired. Thus, during the 1961-1963 Obongship dispute one of the determinants of the successful candidate, Etubom Edem E.E. Adam was the fact that he was the oldest of the three contestants (Hart, 1964:431). This was also the case in the 1982 Obongship dispute.

In December 1970, all Efik etuboms signed the Unification Agreement at the Ndem shrine, Efe Asabo, in Creek Town.¹ This was the formal seal for the same resolution had already been undertaken in the Efe Asabo at Cobham Town in Calabar.¹⁰ This agreement was aimed at putting an end to the question of the right of Creek Town etuboms in the office of the Obong of Calabar, and thus resolve a potential source of bitterness and enmity between Duke Town and Creek Town as erupted in the 1961-1963 incident. In all, 20 etuboms signed the agreement by which the Obongship was to rotate between Creek Town and its associated communities i.e. Western Calabar on the one hand and Central Calabar, comprising Duke Town and its associated communities on the other. It was also hoped that this would help streamline the issue of succession to the Obongship and as such eliminate disputes. It was also agreed that as the then Obong had been selected from Henshaw Town (Nsa Effiom) in Calabar Central, the next Obong would automatically be from Western Calabar. Although this agreement has been successful as far as the area within which the Obong must be selected, it has not by any means put an end to the rise of disputes and competition for the office. The 1970 agreement itself was the result of the dispute over the Obongship after the death of Adam Ephraim Adam II (1961-1967). Because of the controversy an official inquiry was commissioned in 1971 to resolve the dispute. As a result of which David Henshaw V. (1971-1973) became Obong. He was the first ruler to break the monopoly of the Duke Town houses in history. It is said, perhaps maliciously, that his brief reign was an indication of his unacceptance by the deities, Ndem, for having breached the age-long

ROTATIONAL PROCEDURE FOR OBONGSHIP

A. WESTERN CALABAR

UKPONG	ATAI	(ADIABO including ATABONG)
OKU	ATAI	(MBARAKOM, CREEK TOWN)
EMA	ATAI	(OTUNG, CREEK TOWN)
EYO	NSA	(ADAUKO, CREEK TOWN)
MBIABO		(IKONETO, IKOT OFFIONG, OBOM ITIAT)

B. CALABAR CENTRAL

ANSA	EFIOM	(HENSHAW TOWN)
EDEM	EFIOM	(DUKE TOWN)
OKOHO	EFIOM	(DUKE TOWN)
UKPONG	ATAI	(OLD TOWN)
ADIM	ATAI	(OLD TOWN)
EMA	ATAI	(CORHAM TOWN)

custom. His successor came from Western Calabar, whose turn it was, with far less trouble. Theoretically, when the office becomes vacant, the etuboms are supposed to notify the section whose turn it is (i.e. Western Calabar or Calabar Central) to nominate a person for selection. There is a set of rules which govern the selection of the Obong-elect. However, because of the number of protracted and embittered disputes that have ensued on the demise of an Obong a number of rules were formally drawn up by the etuboms. These rules form part of the Etuboms' Constitution.¹¹ According to the constitution the candidate for Obong-elect must fulfil certain conditions, namely: he must be the most senior agnate of a founding ancestor of a house i.e. etubom; he must not be of unsound mind, infirm, or of disreputable character. He must also be capable of giving purposeful leadership. Where the most senior agnate is incompetent the office should go to the next maximal lineage¹² within the clan. He must be a duly recognized etubom, as well as a holder of an Ekpe title in any of the established Efik Ekpe lodges or be in a position to have a title conferred on him before installation.¹³

Given the explicit nature of the rules the choice of the Obong-elect should be conclusive, but this is hardly so, as will be examined later. The period before the demise of an Obong during which he becomes inaccessible to the public, is one of immense activity among the etuboms. They are engaged in a series of informal and formal consultations. Calabar is rife with speculations (as are Efik communities located outside the state) on the probable choice of the Obong-elect. As these speculations are being made, so are arrangements for the funeral obsequies of the deceased Obong.

FUNERAL OBSEQUIES

The actual demise of an Obong is kept secret from the public. In the past this was done so as not to alarm the slave population and prevent the securing of a sufficient number of companions to follow the deceased ruler to the ghost world. Several procedures are involved before a public announcement of the bereavement. Firstly, the Obong is said to be sick and indisposed. As the illness worsens a metaphorical fire is said to be lit to keep him warm. This is called ubarikang udongon, 'building up of the sick fire'.¹⁴ This second stage lasts for a week during which sorcerers and medicine men, abiaidiong, are invited from far and near to diagnose the illness with a view to a cure. Usually the cure requires unattainable items like a three-legged goat to restore health to the ailing Obong. The next week, following the inability of the medicine men to effect a cure, his death is then announced. The time span between the actual demise of an Obong and the public announcement is determined by: the finalization of the expenses for the funeral obsequies, the efficacy of selecting a successor, absence or presence of a dispute, its subsequent settlement and lastly arrangements for the traditional installation and coronation ceremonies of his successor.

The public announcement of the death of an Obong is heralded by the beating of a drum from the roof at midnight, obodo eyong ekom. In the morning the late Obong's eldest daughter, dressed in a mourning gown and carrying a staff, is accompanied by the senior daughter of each house. The procession goes by a chosen route reciting poems, uto, singing and bemoaning the passing away of the Obong. They stop at houses of important

people e.g. etuboms, past Obongs, extolling them. This is called eyet awan, public cry. Antera Duke's reference to 'crying in the town for Duke' was obviously a reference to this (Duke, 1956, 4/11/86). There appears to be no special chants for the occasion. The funeral dirges depend on the versatility of the mourners. Like the Akan, Efik dirges comprise praise singing, bemoaning the loss of society and journey of the deceased to a better place (Nketia, 1955:19-51). Certain people are believed to be specially gifted at such recitals and their services may be sought for the occasion. Each bereaved family or house composes its own text or improvises on others. Usually dirges are not documented. It is considered a bad omen for the staff to fall during the procession.¹⁵ The 'public cry' is followed by a week of traditional plays, a separate performance featuring each day. These plays comprise rare Ekpe masquerades and other unusual performances which appear only on special occasions. The following Sunday, a memorial service is held in Duke Town Church for the deceased Obong. This is followed by another week of Ekpe plays which also mark the end of the ceremonies.

Despite the public hue and cry accompanied by the variety of activities during the funeral obsequies of the Obong, in actual fact he had long been buried. The burial of an Obong, like that of an etubom, is performed secretly. It is said that he is buried by Ekpe members immediately after his death. A room in a house often provides the burial site which remains secret except to a selected few. The deposed Obong Ephraim Adam I, was buried in his house (CALPROOF 11, No.EF/134/25:170), under the watchful eyes of the then district officer to ensure there were no human sacrifices involved. The Efik believe that

when a noble man dies he achieves an elevated position and becomes closer to the ancestors and deities. Thus, his body must not be defiled. As such he cannot be buried in a public cemetery. Also, secret burials are said to have been practised in the past for fear that enemies may exhume part of the body for evil purposes.¹⁶ This confirms an earlier account by Simmons (1956:22). Formerly, the demise of an Obong or other notable was marked by human sacrifices. Favourite wives and slaves were expected to assist him and to reflect and enhance his importance in the other world (Waddell, 1863:336). Although this practice has long been abolished, suspicions still lurk, especially among the non-Efik as among Akan, that it is still secretly performed (Aye, 1967:171). Thus, the death of an Obong or etubom is often accompanied by quiet warnings by those in the know to avoid late nights.

Before the funeral obsequies of an Obong are embarked on, the choice of Obong-elect has usually been decided on. The Obong-elect plays an important role in the funeral obsequies of the deceased Obong. He carries the royal mace, esang Obong. The bearer of the mace during the plays and festivity marking the end of the funeral obsequies therefore is regarded as the successor. Thus, the proclamation of the Obong-elect follows immediately after the funeral obsequies. Under normal circumstances, the rites must be performed before a successor can assume office. For this to be done there must be a sufficient time span between the actual death and the performance of the funeral obsequies. The obsequies signify the formal acknowledgement and proclamation of a vacant throne. The period in between allows for the marshalling of funds from the various

houses for the funeral obsequies and subsequent traditional installation and coronation ceremonies. At the time consultations among the etuboms to select a successor are taking place, so also are meetings of Ekpe chiefs and sacrifices to Ndem and ancestors. As soon as the Obong-elect has been successfully selected (i.e. without a dispute), the coronation planning committee goes into action, making arrangements to ensure a grand and successful ceremony. During the interregnum the Obong's Council goes into recess and the etuboms, as traditional rulers, act as co-regents with the most senior etubom presiding as Chairman.¹⁷

However, the principle that the funeral obsequies should precede the proclamation of the Obong-elect is not always adhered to. In the days of the supercargoes, when lack of political leadership was detrimental to trade, Obongs often assumed office almost immediately after the death of a predecessor (Goldie, 1890:221). Despite this fact contestants for the Obongship often attempt to use this as a weapon against their opponents and thus render their claim to the office premature and untenable (Udoh, 1971:35,38; also, 1971:Memorandum of Duke Town Families: 9). No funeral obsequies were performed immediately for Edem E. Adam II when he died in 1967, even though the next Obong did not assume office until 1971. His funeral obsequies were conducted only in 1982 and that was because the then Obong-elect happened to have come from the Etim Effiom house as Adam II. Then it became obligatory to perform the rites in order that the spirit of the deceased Obong may be placated and find permanent rest. It was said that failure to perform the rites might lead to the untimely

death of the successor or an unpeaceful reign. However, as it was then about 14 years since the death of Adam II, the other etuboms declined to share the cost of the funeral obsequies as is normally done. Thus, Etim Effiom house and its etubom had to bear the brunt of the funeral expenses. The excuse usually given for not having performed his funeral rites earlier was that the Obong had died during the Nigerian Civil War, therefore it was not possible to hold such a large scale public ceremony at that time.¹⁸

DISPUTES AND OBONGSHIP

Given the open nature of the rules governing the election of the Obong-elect it is only to be expected that more than one candidate would present themselves as contestants for the office. The rotational procedure was introduced to forestall such a situation but in fact has done little to prevent the recurrence of disputes. The existing situation is similar to that of the Anuak and Bemba. There are nine distinct political units according to the rotation charter constituting Western and Central Calabar. There is no formal order among them on the basis of which the Obong is to be selected. The situation is further complicated by the adoption of a new system in addition to the traditional mode of selection: the casting of secret ballots. This is an indication that some etuboms are no longer content with the older procedure of automatic succession in political offices. The results of the ballots or votes are supposed to be final. A more radical practice is still the selection of a younger man in favour of the most senior. Thus, the primogeniture rule no longer reigns supreme as was obvious

in the election procedure for the etubom of the Obutong and Ntiero houses in which younger men were elected to office by the casting of votes (Hart, 1964:260). Since the 1970s three important conditions have been introduced as part of the requirements for the candidate for the office of Obong-elect. The considerations were:- physical and mental fitness of the candidate, soundness of character and official government recognition as etubom. The first condition was included to prevent an incumbent who could not give any purposeful leadership from assuming office. Archibong III was said to have been blind and decrepit, yet he was Obong (Goldie, 1890:241). The second and third reflect the incursion of the State in the Efik political system. No public office may be occupied by a person with a criminal record, according to government regulations. Also, the State now gives formal recognition to etuboms. They are presented with a certificate of recognition of office in which they are designated 'village heads'. Stipulating that potential candidates for the Obongship must be recognized etuboms serves to narrow down the number of contestants as not all etuboms have official State recognition.

Disputes appear to be endemic to the Obongship for several reasons. Firstly, as the rules are general they are subject to manipulations and different interpretations. According to one of the rules, the Obong-elect must be a titled Ekpe holder. Yet, there is a provision where this is not the case. A non-title holder could be found a 'small' title if need be (Hart, 1964:400; Udoh, 1971:39). Indeed there seem to be provisions and alternative interpretations for most of the rules, while others are vague enough to cover a wide range of circumstances. This supports Goody's claim that the openness of succession encourages power struggles. (Goody, 1965:23).

Thus, the interpretations of the rules are open and have far-reaching consequences. The incidence of disputes is further increased by the incursion of power groups into traditional matters as well as the personal ambitions of others and the lust for power. A close examination of the Obongship from 1950 to the present period will throw light on the incidence and causes of disputes as well as their central issues.

INSTANCE ONE : 1961-1963 Dispute

Archibong V was an authoritative Obong, he wielded considerable power and often succeeded in demoralising his etuboms. Often he acted as he saw fit, the views of his cabinet, notwithstanding. The Efik Royal Fraternity was a powerful organization in the 1950s and undertook sole responsibility for all matters pertaining to the Obongship. Both the Obong and etuboms were members. By 1961 things had come to a head and the Obong had fallen foul of the Fraternity and some of the etuboms. The latter drew up a list of charges and abuse of office against the Obong and withdrew their recognition from him. As far as they were concerned the Obong was well on his way to being deposed. In the other camp were the etuboms who remained faithful to the Obong and denounced the proclamation calling for his deposition. Furthermore, some houses in support of the Obong against their etuboms, deposed them for their association with the withdrawal of the recognition public notice and appointed new etuboms in their places.

Prior to the notice of withdrawal of recognition, the Obong, his cabinet, and members of the Fraternity had been divided by national politics. Archibong V was accused of

actually giving his native crown, ntinya, to his son to wear on the opening of a hotel and radio-telephone service in Calabar. Also, he was said to have converted his cabinet to an anti-government body. The fourth charge was for vacating the throne without formal leave to attend a public function. He was also accused of initiating the leader of the government opposition party into Ekpe, against the expressed wishes of the head of Ekpe, Obong Eyamba. Worse still, he not only conferred on him a chieftaincy but actually capped him with the emblem of the office of etubomship, the bidak. In the 1950s, Archibong V had fined the etubom of the Ambo house for the presumptuous wearing of the bidak before his formal introduction to the Obong (Etuboms Paper, 1972:19). The Obong and some of his etuboms were sympathetic to the Action Group (A.G.) while the Fraternity and the other etuboms were in support of the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C.). In all, five etuboms were deposed by their houses for having turned against the Obong (without their tacit approval). These were: the etuboms of Duke house, Eyamba house, Etim Effiom house (being three of the five component houses of Duke Town), Eyo Nsa house and Eyo II house of Creek Town (Hart, 1964, para 326-7). Thus, an internal Efik stalemate over the exercise of power by the Obong over the etuboms had been in effect until the incursion of national politics gave it an unexpected dimension.

Unfortunately the Obong died in July 1961 in the midst of raging hostilities between the two camps. Each faction considered itself to be the legitimate Etuboms Council on the death of the Obong. They both had a president who was the oldest etubom in addition to a secretary. Also, they had their candi-

dates for the Obongship. The situation among the Creek Town etuboms was almost identical. Thus, when the contest for Obongship opened there were four disputants. Although the Obong's cabinet (pro-Archibong V) had a candidate, they never formally presented him for the Obongship. The opposing faction, the Etuboms' Council, however, presented their contestant, the 'deposed' etubom of the Etim Effiom house. Goody also recognized the volatileness of the period of interregnum as one for radical changes. (Goody, 1965:10) In the midst of this controversy, Creek Town complicated the situation by the emergence of two contestants. It was the first time Creek Town had made a claim on the office of Obong of Calabar. This caused a great uproar among the Duke Town etuboms who regarded this unprecedented move as an unlawful incursion into their affairs. Eventually the pro-Obong Council dropped out of the dispute which narrowed the contestants down to one from Duke Town and two from Creek Town.

The government commissioned an inquiry in 1963 to examine the claims of the contestants and recommend the rightful incumbent for the Obongship. All three contestants were blood descendants, physically and mentally fit, and without any criminal record. They were all also considered by their various factions of being capable of purposeful leadership. Only two of them were titled Ekpe holders, the third had no title. However, all three claimed to have been duly proclaimed Obong by their various groups. One of them was disqualified on the grounds that not all the etuboms in his maximal lineage had sanctioned his proclamation as Obong. This narrowed the contest to two candidates, one each from Duke Town and Creek Town.

The Duke Town etubom was finally recommended as the Obong-elect because in addition to fulfilling the above-mentioned conditions he was also the oldest etubom in Duke Town as well as Creek Town (Hart, 1964:428).

In this incident, the multiple claims on the Obongship were due primarily to sectionalism within the late Obong's Council. Furthermore, it was the first time in history that Creek Town etuboms publicly declared their vested interest in the office of Obong of Calabar. Although etubom Edem Adam became Obong as recommended by the Hart enquiry, it is said that his reign was unpopular among the people as he had been the head of the rival anti-Archibong V group as well as pro-N.C.N.C. Thus, he was not installed Obong at Efe Asabo, Ndem shrine, the traditional venue. Consequently, when he died no funeral obsequies were performed for him until 14 years later when it became imperative to do so, as will be seen in Chapter Four. In contrast to this is the case of etubom Adam Duke Ephraim, who crowned himself Obong with the ntinya in 1909. In 1926 he was disposed by the British administration. However, when he died in 1941, the Efik rallied round and performed his funeral obsequies. Thus, although he had been deposed to the office of etubom, to the Efik he had still been the Obong of Calabar.¹⁹ It is interesting to note that two of the three other claimants to the Obongship did succeed in becoming Obong in the period immediately after the reign of Edem Adam II. Generally the Efik regard the events which led to the 1963 Hart Inquiry and their consequences as part of the 'dark ages'. As such there is much reluctance to refer to them. At best only an oblique reference is made. Consequently most of the information concerning this era has been derived from documentary sources.

INSTANCE TWO : 1967-1971 Dispute²⁰

The 1967-1971 dispute was of a different nature to the previous one. It involved a different set of principles. The main point of contention was that the century old monopoly of Duke Town over the Obongship was being challenged. The monopoly of Obongship was being translated as the exclusive right of the Duke Town houses and exclusion of all others especially Henshaw Town, who was the contestant at that time for the office of Obong of Calabar. The Etuboms' Council had elected David Henshaw, etubom of Henshaw Town and the oldest among the etuboms, as Obong-elect. Duke Town, however, rejected his candidature on the grounds that no one from Henshaw Town had ever been Obong of Calabar. Indeed their first and only move towards assertion of independence and installation of an autonomous Obong had met with abysmal failure. In 1874, Ekeng Ita tried to set himself up as Obong of Henshaw Town but Archibong II of Duke Town had his crown destroyed and also had Henshaw Town burnt.

The dispute essentially was between some Duke Town etuboms primarily of Archibong house and Duke House on the one hand and the etuboms' Council on the other. The Duke Town contestants did not actually present an alternative candidate. They were merely contesting the eligibility of Henshaw Town to the Obongship. An official inquiry was eventually inaugurated in 1971. It is interesting to note that the candidate for Obong-elect in 1971 had been the pro-Obong's Council candidate in 1961, although the Council did not officially present him as a contestant during that dispute.

The 1902 rule had included Henshaw Town as one of the other six 'families' eligible for the Obongship. This was the basis of the defence presented by the etuboms' Council. Also, the majority of the etuboms had voted in support of the etubom of Henshaw Town. These two factors were crucial in the defeat of Duke Town in this case. Furthermore, midway in the hearing of the dispute, the etubom of Duke House who was one of the two key litigants, defected and took the side of the etuboms' Council leaving Archibong House alone to contest the Obongship. This proved to be the turning point in the dispute even though Archibong House ^{had} attempted to exploit to the maximum the fact that it had the sympathy of the Obong Eyamba Ekpe (Head of Ekpe) as one of its key witnesses.

The etubom of Duke House appeared to have been swayed by the decisions of his sister and aunt, who were the most senior members of the house, towards decamping (Udoh, 1971: 14,18). It was also strongly rumoured that the then State Commissioner for Home Affairs and Social Welfare (a member of Duke House and a titled Ekpe holder) was instrumental in the defection of Duke House.

The other points raised by the contestants against the etuboms' Council was that the candidate for Obong-elect was not a title holder in Ekpe Efik Iboku. As the Eyamba Ekpe was a key witness for the Archibong House he was not likely to confer him with a title at that point. However, during the dispute Old Town conferred the etubom of Henshaw Town with an Ekpe title. It was also pointed out that the funeral obsequies for the late Obong had not been performed and therefore no vacancy existed in the office of Obongship. However, the

defendants stated that this was not a pre-requisite for the Obongship and cited several cases in which the funeral obsequies of an Obong had not been performed before his successor assumed office. As has been stated earlier, there are several ways of circumventing the rules governing the selection of the Obong elect. The etuboms' Council used the mode of succession of previous Obongs as precedent. Thus, the Archibong House lost its case and etubom David Henshaw was crowned Obong in 1972.

The 1967 Obongship dispute was significant in four aspects. Firstly, it was the first time in the history of Calabar that the stool of Obong of Calabar passed out of Duke Town and its five component houses. It was also the first time that Henshaw Town had held that office. Secondly, it re-opened the old wound of the position of the other houses and particularly Creek Town in the Obongship. The latter issue was eventually resolved by the 1970 Creek Town agreement in which Creek Town and Duke Town agreed to end the dichotomization of the office of Obongship. The Obongship henceforth became rotational between Creek Town and Duke Town. David Henshaw V, therefore was the first Obong of the unification although the pace had already been set by Archibong V. Thus, on the demise of David Henshaw V, his successor automatically had to come from Creek Town. Lastly, land was acquired from Henshaw Town to build an official palace for the Obong. Before this period a house had been rented in Calabar by the etuboms' Council for the use of the Obong. Although the palace was not completed during his reign a palace fund committee was set up to aid in financing it. The money for the building of the palace was raised through public appeal to the Efik community both in and out of Calabar. An Efik

organization in Lagos, for example, bought chairs for the palace. Individuals as well as professionals such as architects, masons etc also gave their services free or at reduced costs towards the construction. Donations were received mainly from Efik, although a few non-Efik but aligned communities, also made contributions. The palace is estimated to have cost about ₦250,000 which is approximately £240,000. Significantly, the palace is built on elevated ground overlooking the Calabar River, the abode of Ndem, and specifically, sunko monjo, an Ndem deity associated with Henshaw Town.

The palace was opened in 1980 and for the first time in Efik history there was an official residence for the Obong. The need to build a palace had not arisen in the reign of Obongs such as Eyamba V, or Eyo II, because they had been wealthy enough to commission the construction of large Liverpool houses. A Liverpool house comprised a prefabricated building totally imported from Liverpool (hence its name) to Calabar where it was then assembled piece-meal. More often than not storey buildings were ordered by Obongs and other leading influential men. The building was essentially made of wood which facilitated long-distance transport. However, with colonialization came the end of trade monopolization by the Efik, and the Obong ceased to control the bulk of the volume of trade in the Cross River basin. The Obongship was no longer a guarantee for wealth, and this was reflected in the quality and size of their living quarters. The Obong, as a paramount ruler, is a national figure to whom other natural leaders and public figures pay courtesy calls. The etuboms decided that their personal quarters were inadequate for such formal receptions. Moreover, they did not

reflect well on the status of the Obong. Thus the etuboms' Council rented a house in Calabar for residential and official purposes for the Obong. The last Obong, Esien Ekpe Oku V (1975-1980) was the first to live in the palace. The main wing housed the Obong and his family. There is a large central reception area for receiving guests. Connected to this is an office for the secretary of the Obong. Next to his office is a large rectangular hall where Council meetings are held. The sittings of the Obong's Arbitration Panel are also held in the hall. The annexe to the palace is yet to be completed. There is also a veranda which opens to a raised driveway for the Obong, this overlooks the palatial grounds which are large enough to accommodate crowds and traditional plays during festivities or ceremonies.

INSTANCE THREE : 1980-1982 dispute²¹

As the last Obong, Esien Ekpe Oku V had been from Creek Town, it was now the turn of Central Calabar to present a candidate for Obong-elect. Rumours were rife that the Efik throne was vacant yet no public announcement to that effect was made. However, the following months saw intense activities within the palace grounds. The etuboms' traditional council were meeting almost daily to decide who would be the next Obong.

During the preliminary stages of selection, the etuboms were involved in narrowing down the number of potential candidates. The most senior etubom (etubom obio) of Obutong, was said to be seriously ill and was therefore out of the contest. So also was the most senior of all the etuboms who was the vice-president of the etuboms' traditional council, and brother

to the late Obong David Henshaw. Shortly afterwards it was rumoured that he had died. As Henshaw Town had only recently (1971) produced the candidate for Obongship it was effectively out of the power struggle also. Thus, the competition was narrowed down to Duke Town and Cobham Town. However, Cobham Town, as the traditional kingmakers, were not expected to contest for Obongship. The kingmaker, it was argued, could not crown himself. Thus the office fell within the spheres of the five etuboms of Duke Town: Duke House, Eyamba House, Archibong House, Etim Effiom House and Ntiero House.

The elimination and selection process did not however run smoothly. Firstly, contrary to all expectations Cobham Town demanded the right to present a candidate for the Obongship and in fact put forward two candidates, the etuboms of Upper and Lower Cobham. Among the Duke Town Houses, the etubom of Etim Effiom, being the oldest, was put forward as the candidate for Obong elect. Of the three contestants, the etubom of Upper Cobham Town was by far the youngest. Nevertheless, he had the support of five other etuboms to buttress his claim. He is said, by other etuboms, to be a 'cousin' to the etubom of Etim Effiom House.

During the preliminary stages of selection, while the etuboms were still debating among themselves as to who the most qualified candidate was, a 17-year-old secondary school girl was brought to the Council. She was introduced by some elderly women, some of whom were members of Iban esa obong, a women's organization in charge of the upkeep of the palace. She said she had been sent a message by Ndem Efik, the tutelary deity to proclaim its choice for the Obongship and to effect

a reconciliation among the warring parties. This Ndem medium made her first appearance in the Council it was said, around the time of the demise of the last Obong. At that time her genuineness was widely believed, especially with regard to the late Obong. However, her later 'messages' were discounted and were regarded by the Council as an attempt by some unscrupulous persons to influence the selection process, especially as she had chosen a far younger person than any of the three contestants who was also younger than anyone who had ever before reigned as Obong. When eventually the etubom of Etim Effiom House was selected as Obong-elect, (not only by seniority (automatic succession) but also by majority vote), the Council was divided.

During this period, the Etuboms Traditional Rulers Council were meeting almost daily to resolve the Obongship power struggle. Informal meetings and consultations were also held privately to marshal support for the contestants, to decide who was the most qualified candidate as well as to find the best way of dissuading some of the contestants from prolonging the power struggle. During the course of the dispute the etubom of Lower Cobham Town, a medical practitioner, eventually withdrew from the contest and gave in to the etubom of Etim Effiom House. However, etubom Boco and his supporters remained steadfast on their claim to the Obongship. It was said that one of the reasons the Ndem girl was sent was to effect a reconciliation among the factions. As etubom Boco was one of the least qualified by age, yet the most adamant candidate, it was rumoured that he was being supported by a Lagos-based power group to contest for the Obongship.

The majority of the etuboms were in support of the etubom of Etim Effiom House as Obong-elect. Eventually the etuboms' Council expelled the third contestant together with five other etuboms who had supported him. The expelled etuboms were from Otung, Adiabo, Ekeng Iwatt House, Upper Cobham and Eyoll House. They were expelled for revolting against the authority of the Council. They were primarily charged with the public announcement of the death of the Obong and presentation of their candidate as Obong-elect in October 1981, before the performance of the funeral obsequies of the late Obong, apart from the fact that the Council had agreed on a different candidate. The leader of the expelled party then took the matter to court and filed a legal suit against the etuboms' Council and their candidate. Consequently, the traditional installation, ntinya ceremony was hurriedly performed in February 1982 under police supervision. The matter was still in the High Court when the State Government accorded official recognition to the etubom of Etim Effiom House as Obong of Calabar in March 1982. The Government recognition was based on the assertion that he was the popular choice of the Efik. He was accordingly presented a staff of office and a certificate of recognition. During this period one of the expelled etuboms apologised formally to the council and re-affirmed his oath of allegiance to the Obong and was subsequently pardoned. Normally the coronation ceremony should immediately follow the ntinya ceremony. However, this was postponed because of the court case.

When the coronation of the Obong took place in November 1982, the matter had still not been settled. Eventually, when the case finally came up for judgement in 1983, the parties



The Obong in Council reading a welcome address to the Oba of Benin who was one of the dignitaries who attended the 1982 Coronation ceremony. The Obong is wearing a traditional crown comprising a bidak-like cap encircled with leopard skin. At his feet is a full leopard skin rug.

were advised to settle their differences out of court as the two ceremonies conferring authority on the Obong-elect had already been performed. The outcome of the Obongship dispute was particularly interesting for several reasons. Firstly, the Obong-elect was not normally resident in Calabar. He was (is) a well travelled man operating a number of privately owned business enterprises. Before his selection and election as Obong-elect he commuted regularly by air between Lagos and Calabar and attended council meetings as he saw fit. Most of his business was in Lagos where most of his immediate family resided. In fact as far as he was concerned the Obongship would restrain his activities and curtail his work. He was therefore not interested. It has been said by those close to him that he had reluctantly accepted the position of Obong-elect. The ensuing power struggle served to stimulate his interest and subsequent determination in the Obongship.

Despite his status as the paramount ruler of the Efik, the Obong retained the etubomship of Etim Effiom House like Archibong V (Hart, 1964:258 and Edem E. Adam II (Duke Town Families Memorandum, 1971:10). This caused some discontent among certain members of his house who felt that as Obong he should relinquish the lower office to some other person. Although the State Government over-ruled the issue of relinquishing his former office, the Obong has had to delegate some of his authority as etubom to other house members.

The Efik monarchical system like that of the Bemba, despite the rotational procedure is still beset by much power struggle. The openness of the rules contribute in no small way to the incidence of dispute. Similarly, previous modes of succession are used by contestants as precedents when and where it supports their claim to office. (Werbner, 1979).



The Obong Esien Ekpe Oku V (1973-1980) after the ntinya ceremony, in the Palace hall. He is dressed in the ikpa ya raffia costume. In his right hand is the royal broom, ayan, the head of which is covered with leopard skin. On his head sits the ntinya.

TRADITIONAL INSTALLATION : NTINYA CEREMONY

The ntinya is the traditional crown of the Efik. It confers the status of Obong on the Obong-elect when placed on his head during the installation ceremony. The ntinya comprises a white woven cap encircled by a ring of leopard (ekpe) skin part of which hangs down over the ears. The white cap itself is crocheted in synthetic yarn. Embedded in the cap are the front claws of the leopard, mbara ekpe. The ntinya is said to have all the emblems of Efik society. Thus it is of such paramount significance that it is supposed to be worn just once in public and that is during the installation ceremony. There are other traditional crowns similarly styled which the Obong may wear in place of the ntinya.²²

For the traditional installation ceremony the Obong-elect wore the ikpaya, a woven raffia attire comprising a skirt-like wrapper and tunic. It is said to be woven by a member of one of the houses. There appeared to be no specialized craftsman solely charged with weaving the garments, unlike in the Benin society, for example. The Obong-elect set out from the Palace in a Mercedes Benz before dawn, robed in the ikpaya, to travel to the Efe Asabo, the Ndem shrine, holding a broom, ayan, in his right hand. The head of the broom is covered with leopard skin, ikpa Ekpe. The broom is an emblem of unity as well as the medium through which all evil is removed. The ikpaya is also reminiscent of the olden days Efik attire which was fashioned out of tree bark. As late as 1965, Lieber similarly reported that the old people in Ikoneto still favoured this ancient mode of clothing and fashioned a form of short skirt from the bark and leaves. This bark cloth was worn by

males and females (Lieber, 1971:31). In addition, the installation garb is associated with the Goddess of Water (Ndem) and therefore signifies purity. This connection is immediately obvious when it is considered that the ntinya ceremony is basically the domain of Ndem. During the ceremony the power of Ndem is infused on him while wearing the royal vestments. The vestments are therefore sacred and as such are only to be worn during the ceremony. They constitute the manifestation of the symbolic power of the ancestors and deities which are also believed to be infused in the Obong through association with the vestments.

The Ndem shrine, Efe Asabo, where the traditional installation or ntinya ceremony is performed, is situated in Cobham Town. The people of Cobham Town are the custodians of Ndem Efik. The chief priest of the deity, Oku Ndem, was higher in the political hierarchy than the Obong. He had to give his approval of the Obong-elect before he could be duly recognized Obong. The Oku Ndem crowned the Obong and was thus the king maker. He enjoyed an elevated position in society. However, due to some factors which will be examined later the office became extinct. Yet the powers of the Oku Ndem as well as his role in kingmaking, has been preserved within Cobham Town. Thus, it is in the Ndem shrine that the actual installation rites are performed. The Obong-elect is taken inside for secret rites before his installation. All etuboms as potential Obongs are empowered to enter the Efe Asabo as well as the Ndem priests and priestesses. All etuboms who officiate at the installation ceremony do so as ministers of the deity, Ndem. Efe Asabo thus represents the final and most important rite of passage for Obongship.

Efe Asabo literally means house of boa constrictors. It is believed that the Obong-elect must go through this ordeal before he can be truly acclaimed Obong. The selection of the Obong is not only performed by the college of etuboms but also by the spirit of the ancestors, mbukpo and Ndem. Therefore these spiritual forces must be constantly in consultation with the physical forces throughout the selection process. It is said that as such these forces must acknowledge and approve of the Obong-elect without whose support he can never reign.

The crowning of the ntinya was done by the etubom of Lower Cobham Town. The last traditional insult is administered to the Obong-elect before his installation, also by Cobham Town. It is said that this last rite which consists of a knock on the head, edi kong eti was omitted for the current Obong. After this symbolic knock the Obong is never to be insulted again, having been elevated spiritually by the ceremonies to a status nearer the ancestors. The etubom of Lower Cobham Town acts in a similar capacity to the extinct office of Oku Ndem, the high priest of Ndem. Members of certain houses also have similar distinguished roles to play during the ntinya ceremony. Most of these reflect the special relationship between the house and the Obongship or some historical precedent significant to the Obongship. For example, water is poured on the head of the Obong-elect by an Ndem priestess from the Ntiero House. Water is regarded both as a purifying and a calming substance. It is also the abode of Ndem. The water serves to ensure a peaceful reign for the Obong. The pouring of water is also used symbolically to detach him from his previous life and status and usher him into a new stage. This rite is in this respect not unlike



Efe Asabo, the venue of the ntinya ceremony, in front of which some etuboms are seated. They are dressed in white, the traditional costume for Ndem ceremonies and wearing the white bidak, cap of office for etuboms. On the left is the national flag while the Ekpe masquerade, idem Ikwo, is on the right. The steps of the Ndem shrine are covered with palm fronds, ekpin, another feature associated with Ndem. Covering the entrance to the shrine is a piece of Ekpe cloth, ukara.



An Ndem priestess from the Ntiero House, performing the uduok mong (purification rite) on the Obong-elect at Efe Asabo.

that performed on new slaves whereby water is thrown on the eaves of a roof and the slave is made to stand underneath so that the water runs over his head, marking his divorce from his old life and incorporation to a new household, uduok mong. (Waddell, 1863:539). The Obong-elect is also anointed with oil by a Mbarakom (Creek Town) priestess, to signify kingly status.

Ndem embodies all that is pure and peaceful. This is symbolic of the white cloth Ndem adherents wear. Since the ntinya ceremony is principally the domain of Ndem, all those who attend it, Ndem adherents and non-adherents alike, all wear white. Men wear white shirts or tunics over white wrappers and women wear white dresses. All Efik freeborn are entitled to wear white. However, just as non-descendants have now succeeded in becoming traditional chiefs they also wear white during the ntinya ceremony. It is the plaited raffia necklaces which distinguishes Ndem adherents from non-adherents. While etuboms and members of the royal family wear red square raffia necklaces with tassels at each end, Ndem adherents wear white ones.

As has already been mentioned, the ntinya ceremony is basically an Ndem affair as such close communication must be maintained with Ndem in the period immediately before, during and after the ceremony. In keeping with this trend therefore, just before the installation ceremony, two etuboms went out in a canoe on the Calabar River to hold consultations and offer sacrifice to Anansa, one of the principal Ndem deities. They poured libation invoking all Efik deities to be present, and to bless and accept the ceremony conferring kingly status on the Obong-elect.

Some masquerades also appeared during the installation ceremony. They were mostly unusual ones which were seldom seen by the public as they appeared only on rare, important occasions. The most notable of these was ayan isim (the long tail). Like its name suggests this masquerade consists of a man with an elongated white tail about eight yards long. It is associated with Ekpe, yet the white signifies Ndem influence. The last time the masquerade was seen was in 1956 during the visit of the Queen of England to Calabar. During the installation ceremony the masquerade directs a bow and arrow at the Obong. This is said to signify the fact that power and authority is vested in the Obong as well as his acknowledgement by Ekpe. After the Obong has been installed with the ntinya, all etuboms come forward to pay him homage and affirm their allegiance and support to him.

After the ntinya ceremony the Obong, accompanied by some etuboms, proceed to Efe Ekpe, the Ekpe lodge where he undergoes the Ekpe rite. The Ekpe rite is relatively short compared to the Ndem one. It consists basically of the Obong being called by Ekpe (leopard) in a special voice to which he must reply in a prescribed manner. This is called uyo mboko. To be able to reply correctly in the prescribed Ekpe salutation it is imperative that the Obong must be an Ekpe title holder. Presumably at that level certain extra secret Ekpe rites may be divulged to him confidentially without any fear or risk of exposure to unworthy people. This is why being an Ekpe title holder is one of the conditions to be fulfilled by contestants for the Obongship. The head of Ekpe, Obong Eyamba, officiates at this ceremony.

Three forces, namely Ndem (tutelar deity), Ekpe (leopard, secret society), and Mbukpo (ancestral spirits) are coalesced in the office of the Obong. Ndem crowns the Obong indirectly through the officiating etubom of Lower Cobham Town. Ekpe confers him with authority, thus he must be a title holder. The spirits of ancestors and past Obongs must also sanction the installation of the Obong. In the traditional installation ceremony therefore, all these three forces are called upon to unite, bless, and confer the Obong with power and authority to rule over Efik society. Thus, the Obong is the embodiment of Ndem, Ekpe and the ancestral spirits. These combined forces constitute the bedrock of Efik society, ikpaisong. Consequently, the Efik assert that the Obongship is bestowed on high and not by man.

THE CORONATION OR AYANYA CEREMONY

Although the coronation ceremony is the modern counterpart of the ntinya installation it is in fact only secondary and complementary to it. The coronation ceremony comprises a Christian church service held in the Duke Town Church during which the Obong is vested with the modern and western symbols of office, namely, the crown, mace and orb. This is the very last public ceremony the Obong undergoes as part of the rituals of Obongship. The coronation ceremony thus marks the end of all the rites associated with the Obongship. Although the coronation is complementary to the installation ceremony in several ways it is the opposite to it. Firstly, while the ntinya ceremony revolves round traditional beliefs and takes place well before dawn, the coronation ceremony is held in

church in broad daylight. While the ntinya ceremony is characterised by much mysticism and secrecy, and as such is very solemn, the coronation service is essentially marked by great pomp and pageantry, and an elaborate display of clothes, wealth and social status. Yet to the Efik the ntinya and coronation ceremonies do not contradict one another but are complementary. Several 'Christian' traditional rulers have to face this duality and they do so smoothly. As Middleton observed in Akropong the present king, although trained in the Presbyterian Mission School, was required to adopt traditional practices as part of his royal duties. Similarly, the Queen Mother, although a practising Christian, was at the centre of palace ritual (Middleton, 1983:7).

The coronation ceremony is very much like stepping into a time machine back to the Victorian ages. Members of the royal house strive to outdo one another in their display of family heirlooms. Crowns and coronets of various style and quality are worn by the princes and princesses. Others wear velvet breeches reminiscent of European court costumes complete with plumes and all. Brass helmets and European ceremonial garbs may also be seen. For the women in particular, this is an occasion to display their best. The royal ladies wear purple gowns to display royalty, some are trimmed with fur. Others adorn themselves with broad brimmed feathered hats and boas most of which have been specially brought from England for the occasion.

Duke Town Church is small and cannot accommodate everyone. The seating arrangements were therefore finely planned and cards were pinned on seats to indicate the category of people

to occupy the various seats. Seats were reserved for etuboms, members of the royal family, members of the Obong's Council, palace associations such as Iban Esa Obong (Women's Association), senators and their wives, members of the press, specially invited guests and traditional rulers. The paramount ruler of Ile-Ife, the Oni and the Oba of Benin, were among the traditional rulers invited for the last coronation ceremony in 1982. The State Governor, his wife and deputy, and the chief judge, were also present.

The service was inter-denominational and representatives from Anglican, Wesleyan, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, all officiated at certain points. The Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, a comparatively recent revivalist church was also represented, as well as the Catholic and Apostolic Churches, among others. The crown or ayanya was delivered by the etubom of the Ekpo Abasi House (Lower Cobham) who crowned the Obong during the ntinya ceremony, to one of the clergy who performed the actual crowning of the Obong. The secretary of the etubom's Council handed the scroll containing the Obong's oath of office to another minister. The Obong then signed it in the presence of the minister of the Duke Town Church, a legal practitioner, chairman and secretary of the etuboms' Council, chairman and secretary of the coronation planning committee and a representative of the State Government.

After the ceremony the Obong was escorted back to the palace while the congregation dispersed, some to the palace and others to their homes. A banquet held at the Metropolitan Hotel marked the end of the coronation ceremony. This was by no means the first of its kind as a similar one took place in 1978 during the fifth coronation anniversary of Esien Ekpe Oku V.



The Obong of Calabar Edidem Bassey E.E. Adam III, en route to Duke Town Church for the coronation ceremony, accompanied by a procession of members from the royal families. Flanking both sides of the car are two guardsmen. Note the brass helmets and swords which typify the Victorian mode of dressing among the Efik.



Edidem B. Eyo Adam III, just after his coronation by the Church ministers. His crown is trimmed with fur and his royal robe is heavily gold embroidered velvet. Beside him is his wife who is also wearing a crown.

Despite all the pomp and grⁿadeur associated with the coronation ceremony it is a comparatively recent phenomenon in Efik history. It dates back to the reign of Eyamba V (1842-1847), who in the height of his wealth and power declared himself the 'King of all Blackmen', just as Queen Victoria was that of all whitemen. He therefore sought association with Queen Victoria who subsequently sent him presents comprising a crown, bible, and sceptre.⁷

The actual coronation ceremony, however, did not take place until 1879 when the missionaries of the Church of Scotland Mission succeeded in persuading Archibong II to be publicly crowned in Duke Town Church. He was also made to undertake the 'Christian Oath' which comprised a reaffirmation of loyalty to the British government, abstinence from all acts repugnant to natural justice, allow free trade (which the Efik refused to honour), protect all strangers and above all, promote christianity. To commemorate the occasion David Hopkins, the Consul at that time, on behalf of Queen Victoria, presented Archibong II with a royal robe, crown, sceptre, orb, a gilded throne and the Bible. Since then the coronation has become an integral part of the ceremonies of office for the Obong-elect. The present oath of the Obong still embodies sections of the Christian oath which Archibong II swore to in 1879.

From the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, which was the period of trade boom, the office of Obong remained a highly coveted position. The Obong, as the political head, controlled much of the volume of trade in the Cross River basin. He received the highest percentage of comey or port dues paid by the traders. As a result of his political power he received



A cross-section of the royal congregation during the coronation service. Note the preponderance of coronets and their varieties. In the background is the former President of the Senate. Duke Town Church holds about 500 people.

extensive credit facilities from traders who also extended his period of payment. A number of smaller settlements were dependencies under his authority. Consequently, he received assorted presents from the supercargoes and was always invited for breakfast, a kind of feast given by the supercargoes to Efik traders to seal the taking out of credit or when returning payment in the form of oil on board (Goldie, 1890:87). His departure from ships was always accompanied by gun salutes. When the slave trade was abolished, the Obong and principal men were paid £200,000 in lieu of their economic loss.

At present, and indeed since the twentieth century no economic or commercial power is vested in the office of Obong and much of the political power of the Obong has all but disappeared. Wealth is now determined solely by individual ability and personal financial standing. The present incumbent for example was an engineer before his assumption of office. He therefore has his own personal resources to utilize aside from the State remuneration. However, since his succession to office he has had to give up much of his private work which is now delegated to others.

In the 1973 Traditional Rulers Edict a special establishment grant of about £2,400 was made to the Obong in addition to approximately £1,600 public office allowance. By 1978 the total sum allocated to the Obong was £5,280 ~~N~~aira (about £4200), which the Efik insist is only a fraction of the expenses of the Obong. (Edict No.14 of 1978).

Just before his installation, the Obong had commissioned the building of a large structure the size of which drew public speculations on his occupation of the palace. And indeed, well after his coronation, he had still not moved his residence to the palace.

The Obong, as paramount ruler of the Efik, is a political figure. The present incumbent, as a result of past associations, is acquainted with a number of political personalities. Although traditional rulers are not expected to engage in partisan politics, they still constitute valuable keys to mass votes, and as such are still courted by politicians. The office of the Obong of Calabar is respected by even older traditional political rulers such as the Oba of Benin and the Oni of Ife. The Obong is also the Chancellor of the University of Bauchi.

His position in national politics was perhaps best reflected during the 1983 election. Leaders and members of various political parties paid courtesy calls to the Obong in Council, obviously in a bid to attract sympathy and thereby votes. When the national President was scheduled to visit the Cross River State in 1983, it was rumoured that some elements were set on disrupting the occasion. The Obong and etuboms' Council had to release a press statement dissociating themselves from the potential explosive situation. The Obong and etuboms' Traditional Council have attempted to maintain a neutral stand in national politics. This is probably due to the lesson of the destructive effect of the incursion of partisan politics in the Obong's Cabinet in the 1950s which led to the purported deposition of the Obong and embittered hostilities among etuboms.

The vote of the Efik in the 1983 national election was considered by political observers and acknowledged by politicians to be the decisive factor in determining which party

would govern the country. Thus the Obong of Calabar was visited by several politicians including the national President, in an attempt to influence public opinion and win votes for their various parties.

TRADITIONAL DISPLAYS

The coronation ceremony is the culmination of a week of traditional activities. Each day is dedicated to a particular performance. The week of activities is opened by ekombe. This is a secret rite performed by old women at night. This dance is performed to pave the way for the coronation by cleansing society of evil and diseases. The women are said to knead the earth figuratively, nuak isong, to make it soft and pliable for the Obong to tread on and thus ensure a peaceful and fruitful reign. This rite is shrouded with much mysticism, just like the actual rites performed in the Ndem shrine during the traditional installation of the Obong. Although the coronation ceremony is a Christian one as opposed to the traditional ntinya installation, sacrifices still have to be performed to ensure its success.

The next day is dedicated to poetry and praise singing, ase. This is also a feminine affair. Young girls dressed in very brief traditional attire, accompanied by middle-aged women, go about important Efik streets but mainly those around the palace, Garden Street and Eyamba Street, extolling the new Obong and past Obongs. The recitations are interspaced by the beating of gongs and shrill noises. By afternoon the groups from the various houses congregate at the palace grounds for a final display. Throughout the week the palace grounds are

filled with spectators. Chairs are arranged on each side of the balcony to accommodate spectators who visit the palace daily, especially in the evenings, to watch the performances.

Traditional displays in the form of masquerades feature for the next three days. Abasi Njom was one of the performing masquerades. It is peculiar to the Oban district of Akampka local government area. Its performance was arranged by the Commissioner of the Local Government Service Commission who belonged to the royal family. His father had been the head of Ekpe in Akampka while he held the title of ntufam. Abasi njom is a seasonal play concerned with locating and erradicating evil, diseases, improving fertility and ensuring abundant harvest. It is regarded as the God that sees itself, and a representative of the cult of the living. Akampka has had long association through commerce, marriage and culture with the Efik. Language constitutes the principal difference between the two communities.

Most of the other plays such as okpokpo obon, osongo diboya, etambembe, Ekpe ikong ukom, ibom etc are akin to Ekpe or Ndem and occasionally to both. Their significance will therefore be examined later within the context of Ekpe and Ndem. Generally most of the masquerades were concerned basically with sniffing out evil, erradicating diseases and restoring peace and tranquility.

NOTES

1. 'Text of a Rejoinder on Chieftaincy Titles in Calabar'. Qua Rejoinder, p.9.
2. Etuboms Paper on the Obongship of Calabar. June 1972, p.28.
3. Discussion with Abasi Okura, 15/9/82, also 1982 Coronation Programme, p.17.
4. In the colonial era the leading wards were given the kinship term of 'family'. At present the word 'family' is still used interchangeably with 'house' though an attempt is being made by the etuboms and chiefs to restrict its use and meaning to major lineages i.e. sub-houses.
5. Prior to 1902 each settlement had its own ruler or Obong. However, Creek Town and Duke Town grew in size, wealth and power and eclipsed all other settlements to become the two most important Efik settlements. The Efik limited the use of the title Obong (having abolished Edidem and Eteyin) to the two rulers of Creek Town and Duke Town. Under these main settlements were smaller communities who were now to have a right to the Obongship.
6. Although etubom-obio was equated as head chief in the 1902 Rule, this is not the proper Efik translation. The Efik translate etubom-obio as clan head, obio meaning a town, which is more correct when one considers that this was a new title for the community head which hitherto had been Obong (obio). As explained in Chapter Two, before the widespread expansion and segmentation of lineages the clan did correspond to a ward/settlement.
7. See CALPROF II, p.79).
8. Laws of Eastern Nigeria, Chapter 21, Section 4 and First Schedule. There was a similar enactment in 1963 which was a revision of the 1959 law.
9. In order to differentiate between the two rival factions of etuboms, the author has termed the faction that remained loyal to Obong Archibong V 'etuboms' Council' and the opposing faction 'body of etuboms'.
10. Etuboms' Paper on the Obongship of Calabar, 1972, p.24. The undertaking of the same proclamation at Duke Town and then in Creek Town also appears to be customary in the Efik traditional pattern of law enactment. A similar pattern took place in 1850 when Ekpe promulgated the law against human sacrifice. Creek Town Ekpe proclaimed the law in Duke Town and vice versa (Waddell, 1863:422). This was done because the two communities are rivals and exchanging enforcement agents was one way of checking the other and preventing deception and eliminating

potential grounds for pleas of ignorance or denials about the existence of the law in future. Exchanging of law enforcement agents in a strange way also helped to cement the two communities. Similarly, the 1970 Unification Agreement was undertaken at both Creek Town and Cobham Town (Central Calabar) by the same etuboms at their Ndem shrines where the installation of the Obong-elect takes place to avoid any possible plea of ignorance or non-commitment, and thus prevent a statement or nullification of the important resolution.

11. This is a mimeographed document originally drawn up in 1972 with guidelines for all matters pertaining to the offices of Efik traditional rulers, especially the Obong and etuboms.
12. Maximal lineage is used to mean houses in this context.
13. As the Etuboms Constitution was a direct result of the 1961-1964 and 1967-1970 Obongship disputes, most of its salient points reflect issues raised during the inquiries. One of the factors which had rendered Etubom David Henshaw ineligible for the Obongship, according to the contestants, was his lack of an Ekpe title.
14. Traditionally, especially in the past when a person becomes seriously ill, a coal fire is lit to keep him warm. Ubarikang Udongon is an allusion to this practice as no coal fire is actually built. Interview with the late Etubom Emmanuel Henshaw, 10/9/80, and also confirmed during an interview with etubom Adim Esoi Archibong, the financial secretary of Efim Effiom House, Chief Eyo Edet Eyo and Chief Umoh Adam Ephraim, 30/4/82.
15. It is said that during the 'public cry' for Ededem Archibong V in 1961, the staf fell and this incident was followed by the death of his daughter who had been carrying the staff. Interview with Madam H. Otudor, 4/5/82. Unless stated otherwise, the information on the funeral obsequies are largely derived from interviews conducted with the late etubom Emmanuel Henshaw, etubom Adim Esoi Archibong and to a lesser extent by Chief E. Edet Eyo. 30/4/82
- 16-17. Interview with Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22/2/83. It was for this reason that the women of Okoyong severed the heads of their men from their bodies during the Creek Town - Okoyong War of 1868 (Goldie, 1890:228).
18. Interviews with Chief Eyo Edet Eyo, 30/4/82 and Etubom Ekpenyong Effa, 23/2/83. However, it appears Efik society was disgruntled about the manner in which his will, personal estate and affairs were handled after his death. (see Udo, 1971:40).
19. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22/2/82.
Chief Eyo Edet Eyo, 30/4/82
Etubom Ene Oku Ene, 29/8/82.

20. Chief E. Archibong, 7th June 1982.
 Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22nd February 1982.
 Etubom Dr. Bassey, 28th September 1982.
21. The author was in Calabar during the crucial period of this dispute and was able to observe certain incidents first-hand. This was supplemented by discussions with following people between March–November, 1982.

Mr. J.M. Bassey
 Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa
 Chief F. Archibong
 Chief O.O. Asuquo
 Chief E. Archibong
 Madam H. Otudor,
 Miss Patricia Eyo (Ndem medium)

22. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 19th March 1982, and unless otherwise stated, information on the Ntinya ceremony and associated features was derived from the following people:

Etubom Ene O. Ene, 29th August 1982
 Etubom Dr. Bassey, 28th August 1982
 Chief E. Archibong, 15th June 1983
 Chief I. Itam, 2nd May 1982

CHAPTER FOUR

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL OFFICES : II - ETUBOMSHIP

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL OFFICES : ETUBOMSHIP

The office of etubom as it exists is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Before the turn of the century, the word 'etubom' was one of the many randomly used terms (like Duke or Captain) to signify headship of a community. The Native High Court Proclamation of 1902 which lent official status to the office of etubom-obio or head chief of families and/or settlements such as the Duke families, Cobham family, Henshaw family, Old Town and Eyo family etc. also restricted the use of the title to them. The office of etubom-obio has now been equated to clan head while etubom is used for the head of a major lineage. Outside the political arena the word is freely used to denote deference and respect. In 1902, from the list on the High Court rule, it appears that there were only seven etuboms (obio) in Duke Town and six in Creek Town. By 1933 when the British Resident, Findlay, introduced the Calabar Native Administrative Council, 16 etuboms were recorded. This number seemed to have increased to 22 by 1972.¹

By comparison, the present number of etuboms/houses has increased by 12. Creek Town, Henshaw Town and Cobham Town have one additional house each. On the other hand, Adiabo has increased by three more houses and Mbiabo by four. Obutong also has two additional houses. Only the composition of Duke Town has remained unchanged.

The process by which the office of etubom is filled is entirely a house affair. Once the candidate has been agreed on and proclaimed etubom to the house members, then the Obong in Council is informed. On an agreed day, the house, amidst gay festivity, presents their etubom to the Obong in Council.

It is the Obong who caps him with the bidak, the traditional emblem of office for etuboms. Although only etuboms are empowered to wear the bidak, quite often this rule is broken. Men wear it on ceremonial occasions as part of their outfit. Conservative etuboms may request that they remove their caps. It is because of this growing trend, but nonetheless improper usage of the bidak, that Hart incorrectly called it 'the ordinary gentleman's cap'. This breach of custom is mainly found among young men. Formerly it was viewed as a grave offence. Thus Archibong V had an etubom fined for wearing his bidak prior to his presentation to the Obong. On a similar vein, Archibong V himself was severely criticised by some members of his cabinet for capping the then leader of the government opposition party with the bidak. (Hart, 1964, para 357,236(8)). However, neither the Obong nor the other etuboms have a say in the selection or election process of an etubom except in cases of dispute. When a dispute arises on the etubomship the house may then present its case before the Etuboms' Council for arbitration.

PRESENT STRUCTURE OF THE ETUBOMS' TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

<u>CLAN/SETTLEMENT</u>	<u>HOUSE</u>
1. Okoho Effiom (Duke Town)	1. Duke House 2. Eyamba House 3. Archibong House 4. Etim Effiom House 5. Ntiero House
2. Nsa Effiom (Henshaw Town)	1. Ekeng Iwatt House 2. Efana Offiong House 3. Effiom House 4. Andem Ankoï House 5. Ewa Ekeng House
3. Oku Atai (Creek Town) i) Mbarakom ii) Adauko	1. Ekpe Oku House 2. Abasi Oku House 3. Eyo Nsa House 4. Ekpenyong Nsa 5. Eyo II
4. Adim Atai (Obutong)	1. Ikang House 2. Itak Nkpa House 3. Ikot Otu House
5. Adiabo	1. Ikot Otu Ibuot House 2. Okut Ikang House 3. Ikot Nkpa House 4. Akani Obio House 5. Ushore House
6. Ema Atai (Otung & Cobham Town)	1. Otung House 2. Lower Cobham House 3. Upper Cobham House
7. Mbiabo	1. Ikot Ani House 2. Ikot Nkpo House 3. Ikot Offiong House 4. Obom Itiat House

Each of the etuboms is accompanied to Council meetings by two advisers.

THE PROCESSES OF SELECTION, ELECTION AND ROTATION

As all etuboms are potential candidates for the Obonship, they must be blood descendants of the founding fathers according to Efik tradition. Candidates for etubomship must also be able to establish without doubt genealogical descent through patrilineal, or bilateral ties. The etubom is usually the oldest or among the most senior men of the house. Finally, he must be the popular choice of the house barring ill health or infirmity. In other words, if a candidate fulfills all the other conditions - descent and seniority, but is unpopular and the majority of the house members oppose his succession as house head, he cannot be made etubom. This is directly contrary to Jones' claim that no importance is attached to seniority of birth or line of descent (Jones, 1957:122). As has already been stated, it is considered improper in Efik society for a younger person to assume political office or take a chieftaincy title before his senior save by tacit agreement and explicit permission of the older person. This observation supports a number of instances cited by witnesses during the Hart Inquiry (Hart, 1964:para 258,300,408).

An etubom, apart from being the physical embodiment of the founding father of the house, is also supposed to act on behalf of his house. To do this successfully he needs the support of its members. He is expected to look after their welfare and protect their interests. As the father of the house, Eteyin, he is also the judicial head. He is expected to settle disputes arising within the house. However, he may not take any arbitrary action on behalf of the house without the express agreement and consent of the heads of the component families within the



Presentation of Bassey Eyo E. Adam, etubom of Etim Effiom House in full ceremonial attire (now the present Obong) to Esien^{Ekpo} Oku V.

house. Thus, the Henshaw House Council was able to pressurize their etubom to resign from the Calabar Urban District Council in 1959. Similarly, the Eyamba House demanded that their etubom should denounce the notice withdrawing recognition from Archibong V in 1961 (Hart, 1964:para 327,346).

The actual process of electing/selecting an etubom varies from house to house. The varieties in the pattern are not limited to either Creek Town or Duke Town. Various houses exhibit and adopt different modes which cannot therefore be said to be typical to Western or Central Calabar. Three processes are generally in operation, namely selection, election and rotation. In some houses (e.g. Adiabo Akani Obio), the etubomship is rotated among the ruling families i.e. sub-houses. Nonetheless, in this case as in all others it is the genealogical senior that succeeds to office. Occasionally the genealogical senior is not the biological senior and this has led to disputes. Similarly, the candidate presented by a sub-house for etubomship according to the rotational procedure may not be the eldest, as was the case in Adiabo Akani Obio.²

However, the traditional way of determining the successor to the etubomship is by selection. The selection process is basically an informal one based on unanimous agreement and consensus of the constituent families. Most important of all, it is based solely on the principles of seniority and descent. Thus the selection process is one of automatic succession, whereby the most senior blood descendant succeeds office. Consequently, in this method of appointment it is possible to know beforehand on whom the cap of etubom will fall. Despite this accepted method, on the vacancy of the office a series

of informal meetings and private canvassing begin. From these meetings, a popular candidate emerges whose succession is sanctioned by the majority of the family heads. Through this informal procedure therefore a successor is acknowledged. The house then under the heads of the families calls a formal meeting whereby the official seal is put on consensus opinion. In order for the proclamation of the candidate as etubom to be valid, the heads of all the families or their appointed representatives must be present. Failure to inform all heads and their subsequent absence invalidates the proclamation of a potential etubom.

The composition of the house meeting in which an individual is selected and proclaimed etubom, varies from house to house. In some houses there is no discrimination among various stages in which non-descendants may or may not participate in the selection, election or rotation process. During the succession to office of the etubom of the Etim Effiom House in 1940 both descendants and non-descendants alike participated in the election process and voted. The successful candidate won by a majority of votes (Hart, 1964:para 324). Similarly, in the Eyamba House, non-descendants appeared to have played key roles in the selection of the etubom for several decades. In 1949, the selection of the etubom of the Eyamba House was nullified because one of the sub-heads protested formally to the Obong that he had not been present at the meeting of selection. This was done even though the complaint had been made by a non-descendant.⁴ On the other extreme, Henshaw Town, which is the most conservative of the Efik houses, places descent above all other considerations such as wealth and social status.

Their selections and proclamations are done solely by blood descendants.³

The third method, election, is a modern interjection into tradition. This procedure is generally resorted to when no consensus can be reached. In such an instance a ballot is called for and heads of sub-houses and members (descendants and/or non-descendants) vote. The candidate with the greatest number of votes succeeds to office. Old Town opted for this new method in the 1960s in the selection of its etubom, thus making a complete break from tradition (Hart, 1964:260). Although the election process may seem an alternative to the traditional pattern of selection or automatic succession in certain cases there is very little difference, if any, between the two. In the selection process is embedded two fundamental Efik principles, seniority and descent. Thus, in most cases where there have been disagreements about the selected successor ~~for~~ the etubomship and the matter is put to the vote, the outcome is often the same as the selection process. During the 1961 Obongship dispute one of the initial four factions put the incumbent to the office of Obong-elect to a vote. The results of the vote were identical to seniority grading (Hart, 1964:274). In practice there is little differentiation between selection and election processes because in both instances decision-making for the most part is still strongly influenced by the old principle of seniority. This is reflected in the way the Efik use the words. Selection and election are used interchangeably by the Efik to refer to the same procedure. After the houses have informally selected their heads (automatic succession), some go further and undergo an election procedure

in which the same individual is again elected at a general house meeting. Some houses defend the participation of non-descendants in the succession to etubomship on the rationale that they participate only after descendants have made the 'real' decision and effected their choice. Thus, their participation is in effect inconsequential. However, as has been stated this is not always the case.

Etuboms constitute the policy makers in traditional Efik society. They are (and are perceived by society) as responsible for upholding the cultural heritage as well as being the traditional custodians of all that is Efik. Etuboms constitute a corporate entity which is formally known as the Etuboms Traditional Council. Different appellations have been attached to the formal body of etuboms. This is because although there have been recent attempts to adopt a standard nomenclature, the various names by which the body has been called at different periods in Efik history persist. The changes in nomenclature or rather the diversities do not have any significant correlation with political innovations. Sometimes the body of etuboms are called (in English) Etuboms' Council, College of Etuboms and Obong's Cabinet. At present they are formally known as the 'Etuboms' Traditional Council'. For brevity, this conclave will hereafter be referred to as the Etuboms' Council. Etubomship constitutes an elevated position within the traditional chieftaincy system.

Each etubom as a member of the Obong's Cabinet, is entitled to two advisers who are usually family (traditional) chiefs. These chiefs act in an advisory capacity to the etubom. They attend both the Obong's Council Meeting and the Etuboms'

Traditional Rulers Council meetings with the etubom or on his behalf when he cannot attend. Usually these chiefs are made advisers by their houses because they are literate and knowledgeable and are as such expected to guide their etuboms in decision-making in house and council meetings. However, the fact that they act as advisers does not necessarily indicate automatic succession or enhance their chances of succession to etubomship on the death of the house head. Nonetheless, this position gives them an advantage over others in that it makes them conversant and confident about the workings of the Etuboms' Traditional Council and other associated bodies. The present etubom of Ikang House (Obutong) first represented his house as acting etubom during the 1961 political rumpus in the Obong's Cabinet. He was subsequently made substantive etubom.⁶

Each house has its own council and hold regular monthly meetings to discuss general affairs of the house, e.g. distribution of revenue, hearing of disputes etc. It is the duty of the etubom to ensure that his house is run smoothly. The property and the number of members who have a stake in it is directly determined by genealogy. Initially, the children of a founder are the immediate heirs of his property. They all have an equal share in his estate. When the last of his children die, then the property may be converted to family (i.e. sub-house) property. The property only becomes house property when any direct descendant of the owner ceases to exist. This bears out the judgement of the Calabar Native Court Suit of 1961 between the etubom of the Etim Effiom House and a house member over a claim on landed property. (Hart, 1964: para 254-5).

THE ETUBOMS' TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

The Etuboms' Traditional Council acts as a buffer between the Obong and the society. They make public announcements on his behalf and also take responsibility for official statements. They also deliberate on issues fundamental to the bedrock of Efik society, e.g. all matters pertaining to the funeral obsequies, selection, installation and coronation of an Obong. Consequently, only etuboms and their advisers may attend the Etuboms' Council Meetings. However, there is a contention about whether advisers should participate in the selection of the Obong-elect or if this should be the exclusive prerogative of etuboms. The etuboms as policy makers collectively present their decisions to the Obong for ratification. However, the Obong is not expected to go against the collective decisions of the etuboms. According to their constitution, the Etuboms' Traditional Council is empowered to perform the following duties:

to regulate and control the selection, proclamation and installation of the Obong.

To have custody of and regulate the use of royal symbols and paraphernalia of the Obong.

To assist in the maintenance of order in society and to regulate the code of conduct of the Obong and etuboms.

To settle disputes.

To ensure good relationships between the Efik and the Government.

To foster unity and cooperation among the Efik and other affiliated clans.

The Etuboms' Traditional Council has a chairman who is usually the most senior etubom. It also has a secretary and a treasurer. The Obong acts as the ceremonial president during council meetings. The chairman convenes meetings, presides over them and represents the Obong on some public occasions. However, the current chairman of the Etuboms' Council is not biologically the oldest etubom but he is the most senior by virtue of years in office. He became etubom in 1957 during the reign of Archibong V. He has therefore served in the councils of four Obongs. Apart from this he has also served in various judicial capacities within the native courts. Hence he is also chairman of the Obong's arbitration panel.

As the etuboms act in an advisory capacity to the Obong, he is expected to consult them before he embarks on any course of action. The relation and the scope of power play between the etuboms and the Obong will be examined later. Etuboms have the collective right to expel members who transgress. They are also empowered to appoint various committees to help with the upkeep of the palace as occasion demands. This right to expel members is vested only in the body constituting the Etuboms' Council and not in individuals. This right was exercised in 1981 when six etuboms were expelled over the Obongship tussle. Although the Etuboms' Traditional Council expelled them from the Council, they did not however strip them of their office. Deposition of etuboms as we shall see, like succession, is strictly a house affair. It is up to their various houses to decide on the course of action to take. The various houses could pressurize them into apologising, just as the etuboms of Eyo II House did later in 1982, or depose

them and choose others to represent them. However, their seats have been declared vacant in Council. Other etuboms shun contact with them for fear that any association with them may cast doubts on their own allegiance to the Obong.⁸

Members of the Etuboms' Council are levied monthly dues of about £5 while their advisers (traditional chiefs) are levied £4. The money so collected forms part of the revenue of the Council. The Council has no revenue yielding venture and in times of important ceremonies such as a coronation relies on contributions from the various houses and philanthropic citizens. However, as members of the Etuboms' Traditional Council, individuals have a ready group of colleagues on whom they can rely to attend each others ceremonies. The Council also formally delegates etuboms to represent it at funeral services and other ceremonies of members. Sometimes a token purse is presented to the bereaved family on behalf of the Council. This is similar to the mutual help scheme of masonic lodges whereby members through an almoner are obliged to give financial and moral support to their 'brothers' in time of need. Similarly, masons frequently attend each others social ceremonies (Cohen, 1979:108,119). Although some etuboms are also freemasons, it is doubtful if the token contribution of the etuboms is an indication of the influence and incursion of the 'lodge' on the etuboms.

Indeed there are real kinship ties between the majority of the etuboms especially those within a clan, as well as between etuboms and their advisers. Thus, within the Etuboms' Traditional Council, existing kinship ties are further strengthened by a bond of mutual cooperation and friendship.



Some members of the Obong's Council during the reception for the Oba of Benin in 1982. The etuboms have the white bida k on, while chiefs have embroidered and beaded velvet hats. In the background are the Obong and the Oba of Benin

This is not to say that rivalries or jealousies do not exist among members. As has been indicated in Chapter Three, one of the disputants for the office of Obong-elect was related to him. Similarly, in the 1980 etubomship dispute of Adiabo Akani Obio House (one of the component houses of Adiabo), the etubom of Adiabo Okurikang, who was then the most senior etubom in Adiabo (acting clan head) was not in support of the succession to office by the present incumbent because of his comparatively junior age. Yet they were cousins.⁸

THE OBONG'S COUNCIL

There is also a second political enclave known as the Obong's Council. This Council comprised the Obong as chairman, etuboms, their advisers and honorary chiefs, as well as heads of co-opted or integrated communities. Membership of this Council is far more embracing than the Etuboms' Council. At present the etuboms (30), together with their advisers, number about 90. When honorary chiefs are taken into account, membership of the Obong's Council well exceeds 100. Meetings are held weekly while the Etuboms' Council does not generally conduct meetings so frequently. The frequency of the Etuboms' Council meetings is generally dictated by events. During the period following the death of, and installation of the Obong, meetings are held almost daily and then become less frequent as matters are sorted out. Similarly, disputes on etubomship and family headships generate more meetings. Accordingly, this is reflected in the attendance of meetings by etuboms, a few of whom live outside the Calabar Municipality and are quite elderly. At ordinary periods when there is nothing sensational such as

a dispute or quarrel, or a matter of crucial importance like the selection of an Obong or a coronation anniversary, then attendance of etuboms is at its lowest. An attempt is being made to stimulate full attendance all year round.

The difference between the Obong's Council and the etuboms' Council is that only the latter is empowered to deal with the selection of the Obong-elect, funeral obsequies, traditional installation ceremonies, disputes on etubomships and other crucial matters pertaining to Obongship and etubomship. The Obong's Cabinet on the other hand concerns itself with more general problems like customary laws, upkeep of the palace, preservation and fostering of the Efik cultural heritage and unity. Consequently, while honorary chiefs (some of whom are non-Efik) and heads of co-opted communities are part of the Obong's Council the composition of the etuboms' Council is more exclusive, although by no means solely made up of blood descendants. Through the Obong's Council, non-Efiks and non-descendants can and do participate in matters touching the bedrock of Efik society. The dual membership of etuboms in the Obong's Council, as well as the more exclusive etuboms' Council, is obviously a measure to monitor the influence of non-Efiks and non-descendants on crucial matters, and if necessary negate their interference.

The formation of a separate body for etuboms and their advisers as in the etuboms' Council is a recent phenomenon. This practice started in 1971 during the reign of David Henshaw V.¹⁰ It would appear that this was a calculated attempt to curtail the overall influence of 'stranger' elements in Efik affairs while continuing with the democratic legacy of

Archibong V in the open composition of the Obong's Council. The creation of the etuboms' Council also reflects the conservatism of the then Obong as characteristic of Henshaw Town and perhaps shows the general mood of that period as well.

There have been criticisms over the years by some of the etuboms and family chiefs that the composition of the Obong's Council is too loose by far. During the reign of Archibong V, the Qua and Efut were members of his cabinet. Thus, in the 1970s when the Efik were asserting the supremacy of the Obong of Calabar over all other traditional rulers in Calabar, the Qua were quick to point out that people of servile origins had been advisers to Archibong V as members of his cabinet. Indeed, the Obong's Cabinet in the period between 1950 and 1961, comprised five categories. These were: etuboms with their advisers, representatives from communities which did not constitute houses, non-Efik communities such as the Efut and Qua, co-opted members, and extraordinary (honorary) members who were considered experts in their fields.⁹

The inclusion of non-Efik and non-descendants in the Obong's Cabinet originated from the era of Archibong V, whose reign, though autocratic, was also somewhat democratic. Their participation within the Obong's Cabinet (as his council was designated), was of great significance because decisions were arrived at by majority vote. Thus, from the first category alone the etuboms were outnumbered by their advisers. In taking the other categories of members into consideration the etuboms were completely overshadowed when it came to the vote. Consequently, non-Efik and non-descendants had over-riding powers through majority vote over Efik royalty and house heads.

The criticism by more conservative royalists over the participation of non-Efik and non-descendants in the Obong's Cabinet culminated in the public resolution of etuboms in 1960, that the Efik Royal Fraternity was the sole and rightful king-making body. This body was also responsible for all matters pertaining to Obongship, etubomship and chieftaincy. Furthermore, it resolved to adopt an advisory role to the Obong on all traditional matters. So widespread was the anti-stranger/non-royal feelings in the Obong's Cabinet that all Efik etuboms signed the 1960 resolution of the Efik Royal Fraternity, with the exception of the Ntiero House (Hart, 1964:219,228). Although the Efik Royal Fraternity has now ceased to function, once more criticisms about the composition of the Obong's and Etuboms Councils have surfaced. It is said by traditionalists that the sanctity of the councils are being debased by the infiltration of 'members' and non-Efik. These criticisms are very significant in the context of two Efik idioms which state that 'a man who represents or advises the Obong is as good as the Obong himself' (mbet obong edi obong; isung obong edi obong).

Thus, the Obong following a similar trend of thought, in 1983 formed a body which was called the Obong's private cabinet. This was done for the following reasons: personal conviction that some members of the councils did not have the genuine interest of Efik society at heart but only their personal egoistic interests and therefore sometimes gave deliberately misleading advice. Also, important matters discussed at meetings were alleged to have been leaked to rival interest groups. Some members were said to have conflicting interests through genealogical ties with neighbouring groups (Efut and Qua).

Some, it was rumoured, were actually in the pay of rival groups to leak secret information. The formation of the private cabinet was therefore an attempt to bring together a body of intelligent, competent and trusted advisers from different fields to give opinions on various subjects. The private cabinet comprises about 15 people, some of whom belong to the Obong's immediate family. The remainder include some etuboms, honorary and family chiefs, some of whom are regarded as specialists in their fields, as well as some government functionaries. Membership of this cabinet is not open to all etuboms but restricted to only those personally selected by the Obong. The creation of this body, the first of its kind in Efik history, met with opposition from some members of the Obong's and etuboms' Councils. It was regarded by some as a move towards despotic rule and setting aside of decisions taken by the etuboms' Council. However, there is nothing in the etuboms' constitution to prevent the Obong from having an independent and private cabinet. Those in favour of the new cabinet said it was not an attempt by the Obong to supplant the etuboms' Council but merely an alternative source of advisers.

Compared to other societies like the Benin and Yoruba, there is a glaring lack of specialized roles and functions among the etuboms and accordingly there are no hereditary offices. The only specialized roles are those visible during the traditional installation ceremony. All ^{other} roles tend to be achieved rather than ascribed. Perhaps the formation of this private cabinet is an early move towards specialization of roles in Efik political offices.

DEPOSITION

Just as members of a house select or elect an etubom, they also have the collective power to depose him. The family heads within the house as well as other members, play active roles in the running of the house. They advise their etubom in his actions. They are empowered to notify and caution the etubom if they have reason to believe he is acting contrary to the wishes of the house. The house therefore maintains a strong hold on the etubom and can bring pressure to bear on him as they see fit. When house members (elders) caution an etubom he is expected to apologise to the house and retract the offending deed, or pay a fine. Flagrant disobedience of the wishes of the house and disregard of warnings may result in the deposition of the etubom. However, as the etubom represents a patriarchal figure and as such constitutes one of the pillars of Efik society, depositions are few and far between. An etubom may be deposed for negligence of office, maladministration and incapability to run his house affairs successfully. Ill-health or senility are not regarded as grounds for deposition but if these occur a deputy or a regent may be appointed to help in the running of the house until the demise of the etubom.¹¹

However, the etubom of Henshaw Town was deposed in 1901 and that of Cobham Town in 1906. There was a strong move to depose Henshaw Town's etubom again in 1943 on grounds of maladministration and abuse of office. An etubom may also be removed if he has been convicted of an offence. Such is the power of a house over its etubom the Henshaw Town Council pressurized its etubom into resigning from the Calabar Urban



Etubom of Ekpo Abasi House (Lower Cobham) who performed the ntinya installation rite, in full ceremonial attire, holding his staff of office. On his head is the bidak. The beaded cap is ekpaku nkwa. The star-shaped pendant on his neck connotes royalty. On his feet are the beaded shoes, a characteristic of the traditional elite.

District Council in 1959. Similarly, the etubom of the Duke House was fined for his conduct with the Obong over the visit of a prominent political figure. During the break-up of the Obong's Cabinet in 1961, when some etuboms attempted to depose the Obong, five houses in swift retaliation, deposed their etuboms for refusal to withdraw their signatures from the document stripping the Obong of his authority. (Hart, 1964, para 268,337).

ETUBOMSHIP AND DISPUTES

Disputes do arise quite often over the procedure and candidature for filling the office of etubom just as they do for the Obongship. The disputes may be categorized into two types. Firstly, there is the dispute emanating from multiple candidature. In this case there is more than one eligible candidate for the office, but the genealogically most senior rather than the biological candidate succeeds office where succession is governed by automatic (seniority) right. In the second instance a person of servile origin may lay claim to office because he is influential and wealthy, and has a sufficiently large number of supporters (both descendants and non-descendants) to give him the confidence that his ancestral past is no longer of significance. This second type is called dispute between a 'member' and descendant.

There have been increasing attempts by 'members' to assert themselves not only in house meetings but also in their aspiration to traditional political offices, etubomship included. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, slavery has long since been abolished and discriminations based on such social distinctions are regarded by most people as unprogressive

and unchristian. Secondly, there is a thin line between those of servile origin and the true descendants. As has already been mentioned, the incidence of pure Efik blood is almost non-existent. So extensive was the mingling between slave and free-born that no clearcut dichotomy existed in many houses (McFarlan, 1946:18). However, this blur on social difference was partially remedied by the general rule that the offspring of a slave, ^{and} a free-born was free. Thus, royal blood redeemed one of servility. Consequently, the incidence of servile origin amid royal ancestry does not taint or disqualify an individual to succession to political office. The Efik view on the effect of servile origin on royalty is aptly summed up in the idiom, Efin, aman eyen, edi eyen aman efin, edi mbuka: "a slave may beget a child (i.e. free-born) but it is an abomination for a free-born to beget a slave."¹² This also supports the assertion by Hart that the incidence of servility in ones family did not make one servile. Thus, even though this charge had been levied against him etubom Edem E. Adam went on to become Obong. (Hart, 1964:319). At present there is no restriction of marriage between royalty and those of servile origin. Also, several sub-houses or families are comprised entirely of non-descendants.¹³

The position of 'members' within houses in house affairs is ambiguous. Several houses have conferred them with honorary chieftaincy. In some cases they have been made heads of sub-houses, contrary to Jones' assertion that people of servile origin could never aspire to become chiefs, heads of wards or their sections (Jones, 1957:34). There ^{are} two conventional ways in which a non-descendant could become head of a sub-house

or even an etubom. A 'member' may be asked by blood descendants of a sub-house or house to act as a regent in the absence of a suitable descendant with leadership qualities, or if they are minors. Such office is not hereditary but merely temporary pending the maturity of the descendants.

However, in recent times there have been a number of cases where individuals have attempted to convert such temporary offices into hereditary ones. It has been suggested that one of the two disputing etuboms of the Eyamba House is not a blood descendant and by that virtue ineligible for etubomship. Part of his claim to office is the fact that his father had been selected etubom of the house before him. This was, however, in the capacity of regent and as such the office was not hereditary. The aspirations of 'members' to etubomship has been gradual. In the 1950s they formed part of the Obong's Cabinet and in that capacity participated in decision making. They were conferred honorary titles and with time the barriers to family (hereditary titles) were also lowered to include them. The Efik political hierarchy comprises in ascending order, traditional or hereditary chiefs, etuboms and ultimately the Obong. Therefore, aspiration to etubomship by 'members' is just going one step further up the political echelon. The scope for the fulfilment of this ambition is facilitated by the laxity in several houses on the extent of participation of non-descendants in political matters. In some cases, they participate in the selection or election of etuboms. In one instance the acknowledgement of an etubom by the Obong was nullified because a non-descendant who was head of a sub-house, complained that he had not been present at the meeting for the selection to

the Obong. Consequently, the house had to conduct a second selection. Also, during the coronation of Archibong V a non-descendant was allowed to carry the royal paraphernalia, to the chagrin of Efik conservatives (Hart, 1964: para 225).

As they are more-or-less involved in the process of making an etubom some 'members' have simply sought to establish their authority and exercise powers in other channels. Attempts have been made to achieve autonomous status for a branch of a house with the hope of eventually assuming headship of the new house, which would then place them on the same level as other etuboms and by extension, eligible for Obongship. Marriage still provides a channel for social mobility and this is facilitated by the preference for house or in-group marriages. As a result of this laissez-faire attitude, it was possible for the etubom of Ikoneto Obom-Ifiat to be elected Obong-elect of Creek Town in 1961. This election was later nullified because it came to light that he was not Efik but Ekoi. Yet he had been made etubom and if his origin had not been timely revealed he might have succeeded in becoming the Obong of Calabar. It is significant that this discovery did not result in his removal from office. The extent to which the Efik permit the activities of non-descendants in political matters will be understood better if one examines one or two cases of disputes relating to etubomship and headship of sub-houses.

INSTANCE ONE¹⁴

This involved a dispute over the etubomship of the Eyamba House. There were two contestants, both claiming to be the rightful etubom. The complexity and uniqueness of this dispute was due to the fact that it actually originated in 1961, during the mass deposition of etuboms by houses which remained loyal to Archibong V (see Chapter Three). Although the existence of a dispute in the Eyamba House was formally lodged in 1971 with the State Commissioner of Social Welfare and Internal Affairs, an enquiry was not commissioned until 1974. The inquiry did not actually commence until 1975. The time-lapse was due to several reasons: the existence of a dispute had been lodged by one of the descendants who ^{also} supported the etubom who was a descendant. The contestants on the other hand did not agree that there was a dispute. This attitude was reflective of the view that if there was no dispute then there was nothing to resolve, and presumably they (the contestants) could carry on without external interference. Secondly, administrative red-tape and bureaucracy resulted in long delays in communication between the government and the parties involved to determine if indeed there was a conflict in the house.

Despite the fact that the inquiry made its recommendations in 1975, having officially resolved the dispute over the etubomship, the conflict has by no means been resolved in the minds of a number of people. The official inquiry was simply regarded as government (external) interference. Thus, there are still two factions in the Eyamba House, each with its recognised etubom, one of which is the officially recognised house head acceptable to the Obong, etuboms and State Government. This

dispute has lasted throughout the reign of three Obongs. Also, during this period there have been four etuboms in the house (since 1961). In fact most of the major disputants are now dead. Eyamba House is the only one in which the long-term result of the turmoil into which the Obong's Cabinet was thrown in 1961 is still very much apparent. The other houses which purportedly deposed their etuboms had long since settled their differences. Those 'deposed' etuboms were reinstated, for example, the etubom of Duke House.

Eyamba House comprises three sub-houses or families: Ekpenyong Offiong, Mbang Offiong and Abasi Offiong, all being children of Offiong Okoho, one of the founders of Duke Town. When the dispute was in its infancy, the first contestant was Efa John Eyamba. He became etubom of Eyamba House in 1949 at the beginning of the reign of Archibong V. During the turbulent years of the 1960s, especially in the power tussle between Archibong V and his Cabinet, etubom E.J. Eyamba spearheaded the move which culminated in the public notice withdrawing official recognition from Archibong V as the Obong of Calabar. Apart from being the etubom of the Eyamba House, E.J. Eyamba was also the Obong Eyamba Ekpe. It was in this dual capacity that he signed the February 1961 withdrawal of recognition notice. The implications of the power of Ekpe in the Obongship will be examined later.

The house was annoyed over the part played by its etubom in the apparent attempt to depose the Obong. The Eyamba House had not authorized its etubom to act on their behalf in that manner. Consequently, the house (i.e. heads of the three component families) summoned him to a meeting in which he was

asked to withdraw the public notice in which he, together with eight other etuboms, had withdrawn recognition from the Obong. Etubom Efa John Eyamba was adamant and refused to retrace his steps. At a meeting chaired by John Coco-Bassey from the Abasi Offiong family, the house resolved to depose their etubom in March 1961. By May 1961, Asuquo Eyo Effiom had been appointed etubom of the Eyamba House.

Throughout this period the second disputant, 'etubom' Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, the head of the Mbang Offiong family took sides with E.J. Eyamba. The 'deposed' etubom sued the house in Calabar High Court in the person of J. Coco-Bassey and four others for wrongful deposition and deprivation from collecting rents, subsidies and other benefits due to the Eyamba House etubom. In May 1961, in support of etubom E.J. Eyamba, the then Chief Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, as head of the Mbang Offiong family signed a public notice asserting that the new etubom Asuquo Eyo Effiom was in fact from Cobham Town and not really from the Eyamba House. In 1968 he also signed a public notice disclaiming Asuquo Eyo Effiom as the etubom of the Eyamba House, and declaring Efa John Eyamba as the rightful house head. This was subsequently followed by a legal action in which the heads of two families, Abasi Offiong and Mbang Offiong, with a representative from the third family, filed a suit in the Calabar High Court against Asuquo E. Effiom as etubom. However, the case was struck out for want of jurisdiction. Asuquo E. Effiom, although etubom of the Eyamba House was only remotely connected to the Eyamba House through his mother. Nonetheless, he was presented to Obong Adam II in Council as the etubom of Eyamba House and was acknowledged as such.

Incidentally, when E.J. Eyamba was selected etubom in 1949 and presented to the Obong for recognition, Chief Offiong O.O. Offiong had protested against the mode of selection. The Obong consequently nullified the selection, which was then redone, with the three family heads present to validate it.

After the death of etubom A.E. Effiom, Chief Offiong O.O. Offiong tried to persuade the heads of the other two families to forget their differences and effect a reconciliation with the rest of the house. They refused, but Chief Offiong O.O. Offiong made peace with the other faction against whom he had been hitherto opposed. In May 1971 he was made etubom by the faction which he had just joined. At his election, a woman represented the Ekpenyong Offiong family and also poured the libation. Incidentally, she was the mother of the secretary of the second faction of Eyamba House. The heads of the two other families had refused to attend the election as they were still in support of the etubomship of Efa John Eyamba. However, Offiong O.O. Offiong was presented to the Obong, Esien Ekpe Oku V in Council as etubom, and was acknowledged. He did this with the full knowledge that only a representative (and a woman at that) of the Ekpenyong Offiong family had sanctioned his election within Eyamba House. In the light of his formal complaint in 1949, his election to etubomship was therefore invalid. The other faction of the Eyamba House took up the matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Social Welfare, stating that there was a dispute in the house. The Eyamba House had irrevocably been segmented into two.

Meanwhile, the other faction, comprising the heads of the two other families still supported Efa John Eyamba and

claimed that he was the legitimate head of the Eyamba House. The reasons they propounded for their stand were the following: firstly, the purported deposition of etubom E.J. Eyamba had been carried out at a meeting chaired by a non-descendant. The heads of the three families had not sanctioned the deposition. Secondly, the election of A.E. Effiom as etubom had also been done without the consent of the three family heads, just like that of Offiong O.O. Offiong. As E.J. Eyamba had not been deposed by the three family heads, according to Efik tradition he was still head of the Eyamba House. Moreover, the election of Offiong O.O. Offiong as etubom was not valid according to E.J. Eyamba, because he was not a descendant. His position as head of the Mbang Offiong family was a historical accident. The great-grandson of Mbang Offiong, Offiong Obo, had died childless. However, his slave had a son, Obo Obo Offiong, who grew up to become regent of the family.

Later, on the death of the father of E.J. Eyamba who had been etubom, the house collectively decided that Obo Obo Offiong should act as etubom for the house in place of any suitable male heir. He died in 1926. It was solely on this basis that his son, Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, later sought to claim title to the etubomship of the Eyamba House. As Offiong Obo, the blood descendant and great-grandson of Mbang Offiong had died childless, it followed that the male line of that family had ceased. The head of the Abasi Offiong family who had formally informed the State Government of the incidence of a dispute in the house, died in 1975, during the official inquiry. Thus, Efa John Eyamba, as the oldest descendant of the Ekpenyong Effiong family, together with the fact that his 'deposition'

had not borne the approval of the other family heads was returned as the substantive head of the Eyamba House in 1975. By this time, however, he was old and blind. The dispute had dragged on for 14 years.

As far as the other faction was concerned the dispute had by no means been resolved. In their opinion, E.J. Eyamba had won because he had the support of the Government. A purely domestic matter had resulted in the intrusion and interference of outsiders. The official recommendation had therefore no meaning for them even though according to it, their candidate was no longer the official etubom of the Eyamba House. However, as far as they were concerned he was their etubom. He had been presented and accepted as such and had even signed public documents in that capacity. Thus, there were still two factions each with its own etubom, only one of which was officially recognised as such and represented the house in Council meetings. Shortly after the enquiry, etubom Efa John Eyamba died and the dispute continued between the two factions. After his death in 1976, a vacancy was legally created for an etubom of the Eyamba House. Again, Offiong Obo Obo Offiong was elected etubom in 1979. However, his election was challenged by Effiom Ekpenyong Eyamba, the brother of the deceased etubom, who had just returned to Calabar. Once more, the etubomship was officially declared disputed. This time it was referred to the Calabar Municipality Traditional Rulers Council for investigation and arbitration. The Council had only been inaugurated in 1979 so the arbitration of the etubomship dispute was unprecedented. Moreover, the investigation had been conducted under the auspices of the Ntoe of Qua who was then Chairman of the

Council. The Council recommended the appointment of Effiom Ekpenyong J. Eyamba as etubom. The other faction felt he had got this judgement by lobbying the Ntoe and other etuboms. Effiom Ekpenyong J. Eyamba therefore became etubom of the Eyamba House.

The long fight regarding the etubomship of the Eyamba House is understandable when it is considered that the etubom is supposed to hold the powerful office of Obong Eyamba Ekpe. During the years of dispute an attempt was made to 'transfer' the office of Obong Eyamba Ekpe to Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, but this was not effective because the Ekpe laws operate differently from etubomship (Duke Town Memorandum, 1971:27). The office of Obong Eyamba Ekpe is hereditary and vested exclusively in the etubom of the Eyamba House and always in the Ekpenyong Offiong family. During the attempt to 'transfer' this office, E.J. Eyamba still had the staff of office, monyon, in his possession. Moreover, Offiong O.O. Offiong had no Ekpe title. It was suggested that this was an attempt by Henshaw Town which was then (1971) seeking to put forward a candidate, David Henshaw, for the Obongship to elect their own man as head of Ekpe. Also, as etubom, the incumbent is entitled to receive all rents, subsidies and payments accruing from family and house property. Until the 1970s the incumbent also received a government subsidy. Thus part of the terms involved in the 1961 law suit filed by Efa John Eyamba against the house was compensation for the loss of income from house property and the government subsidy.

During the 1961 crisis with Archibong V, etubom David Henshaw and etubom Efa John Eyamba had been in opposing camps

with the former loyal to the Obong and the latter against. Obviously the situation in 1971 afforded an opportunity for David Henshaw to repay E.J. Eyamba for his opposing roles. Indeed, during the 1971 Obongship Inquiry, E.J. Eyamba was a key witness for Duke Town families against the candidacy of David Henshaw for Obong-elect, while his opponent, Offiong O.O. Offiong, supported him. It is interesting to note that both disputants were described as etuboms during the 1971 Enquiry (Udoh, 1971:9). Henshaw Town at that time had the support of the Government. It was said that this was why the etubom of the Duke House had changed course in the middle of the ¹⁹⁷¹ enquiry to support David Henshaw as Obong. It was to the self same Commissioner for Home Affairs and Social Welfare, who was strongly rumoured to have influenced etubom Bassey Duke to support Henshaw Town's candidacy for Obongship that the first report of the Eyamba House etubomship dispute was made. The Commissioner who had retired as the first Nigerian Inspector-General of Police, was a prominent member of the Duke House as well as an Ekpe title holder. Despite the assertion by Udoh that the Commissioner's influence or guilt in the deflection of etubom Bassey Duke was not established, the public had a contrary opinion (Udoh, 1971:48,53). It was also believed that the reason the report on the Eyamba House dispute failed to receive prompt official action was because the Commissioner was already biased against the E.J. Eyamba faction in support of the other faction who was an ally of David Henshaw. It is significant that throughout the reign of David Henshaw (1971-1972), Offiong O.O. Offiong was recognized as the etubom of the Eyamba House and no investigation was initiated. In short,

the dispute was treated as non-existent. This belief was further consolidated by the fact that no preliminary investigation was initiated by the Commissioner before a public enquiry was commissioned. A similar vein of thought on the influence and subsequent action of the Government on the Eyamba House dispute was shared by some Duke Town Houses (Duke Town Families Memorandum, 1971:23). Clearly both factions of the Eyamba House dispute believed that the other side had Government support albeit at different times, which influenced the procedure and ultimate outcome of the dispute.

A number of factors crucial to Efik tradition are raised by this dispute. Firstly, the dispute draws attention to the composition of the legitimate body empowered to conduct the selection/election of an etubom. In the case of etubom E.J. Eyamba, he had been selected firstly by only male descendants. Later, through the intervention of the Obong, a non-descendant, as family head, also participated in the selection. The etubomship of E.J. Eyamba was based on selection as opposed to election, seniority and descent being the defining principles. Subsequent etuboms that emerged during the years of dispute were elected rather than selected. In other words, their appointments were made by a number of persons and were not by any means based on descent or seniority. The first elected etubom of the dispute period, A.E. Effiom, was not even from the Eyamba House, it was said, but from Cobham Town. Similarly, Offiong O.O. Offiong was strongly believed not to be a descendant. Yet both were acknowledged as etuboms by the Obong in Council. In fact Offiong O.O. Offiong had the full support of the etuboms' Council in 1971 against Efa J. Eyamba. Clearly this was a perpetration of the 1960s internal dispute among etuboms.

Again, the composition of the electorate in the later two cases were markedly different from the first instance. In the later cases non-descendants featured prominently and in fact seemed to have completely controlled house activities. A woman not only represented the Ekpenyong Offiong family but also poured the libation to seal the election of Offiong O.O. Offiong.

It is obvious therefore from the above trend of events that the laws governing succession to Efik political offices are somewhat nebulous and malleable. This long drawn out dispute especially manifests the ways in which laws may be ignored, bent, or evoked to suit situations and individuals. Also, the importance of a strong supporting force in determining the likelihood of seeing a cause through is apparent. Thus, it was possible for Offiong O.O. Offiong, a non-descendant, to become etubom. He was acknowledged by the very Obong and etuboms who later on agreed on his dismissal from office and the subsequent reinstatement of etubom Efa John Eyamba.

The election of a non-descendant as etubom and his subsequent acknowledgement by the Obong in Council while there were suitable, eligible descendants raises a number of issues. It was suggested that the house secretary, Mr. Theodore Cobham and his mother, who is said to be a daughter of Eyamba VI, were principally responsible for the election of Offiong O.O. Offiong. Mr. T. Cobham's father was from Cobham Town. As such it was suggested that he had a vested interest in the etubomship of the house and that the election of their candidate as etubom was done to pave the way for his own future. However, as has already been shown, etuboms are potential candidates

for the Obongship. If by some quirk of fate the presentation of Obong-elect fell on the Eyamba House, etubom Offiong O.O. Offiong could have been the Obong. Therefore a non-blood descendant could rule over the Efik as Obong of Calabar.

As divergent as this may be from Efik custom and tradition, it is not in the least far fetched in reality. The instance of etubom Eniang Essien of Obom Itiat Ikoneto demonstrates this. He was selected Obong-elect of Creek Town in 1961 only to be rejected later because it was discovered he was a non-Efik. Yet, if he had gone through as the Obong-elect, he would have been one of the contestants of the stool of the Obong of Calabar in 1961. It would therefore appear that even in important offices like that of etubom, the Efik can be persuaded to overlook certain rules, especially those pertaining to birth and descent. The chances of social mobility therefore appear to be increasing. Given the right situation and inducement, a considerable number of people appear to be quite willing to overlook crucial principles.

INSTANCE TWO¹⁵

In 1982 the etubom of the Andem Ankoi House (Henshaw Town) died. Finally, when the house came to select a new etubom during a general family meeting, (i.e. including descendants and members) two people with the right qualifications were skipped (i.e. seniority and descent) and there was an attempt to elect an 'unqualified' candidate instead. In all therefore there were three contestants. The third contestant, and the least qualified, ^{by age,} was a medical doctor normally resident in Lagos. However, he was chosen because certain house members considered

him to be pushful, educated, and wealthy. He was also said to have been financially generous and supportive to the house on all occasions.

The first contestant was a blood descendant and, in fact, he was said to be the uncle of the third contestant. He had also acted in the capacity of adviser to the late etubom. The second one was the oldest but of the same generation as the last contestant, thus making the first contestant the most senior by descent. The second and third contestants were said to be "cousins". The blood descendants rejected the last contestants as etubom. Some suggested that the first contestant should act as deputy whenever he was ^(No.3) away in Lagos. Contestant No.1 was said to have agreed to this arrangement but he ^{later} denied it. However, the conservative faction of the house refused. If No.1 was good enough to deputize for No.3 in his absence, then he could also be the substantive etubom. Thus a dispute ensued. Henshaw Town Council intervened and advised the disputants on the rules governing the selection of the etubom and told them to go back and settle their problem. Eventually, the matter went to the etuboms' Council who also advised them similarly. The first contestants was regarded as the most eligible for the etubomship.

The occurrence of this case in Henshaw Town in particular, is an indication of the trend and changes in social mobility especially regarding succession to political offices. Henshaw Town is the most conservative of the Efik clans. However, even it appears to be succumbing to social changes to the extent that an important office as etubom was decided by a general

house meeting. The influence of wealth is also apparent in inducing flexibility to otherwise rigid customs.

INSTANCE THREE¹⁶

There was an attempt by a faction within Obutong to establish an independent house, Ikot Otu House. The reason behind this move is that a house requires an etubom. Therefore the protagonists of the new house would be responsible for the selection or election of the etubom. This faction in choosing their candidate, who was a senior advocate of the bar, broke a fundamental rule in Efik society - no man may assume political office before his father. The father of the proposed etubom was still alive. Secondly, the candidate was not a blood descendant and as such could not trace descent to any branch in the Efik genealogical charter by which political independence of the purported family branch may be asserted. Consequently, this case was dismissed by the etuboms' Traditional Rulers Council to whom an application for presentation had been sent.

This is another clear instance in which an attempt was made to use economic and social positions to mask the importance of age and descent in order to attain political office.

INSTANCE FOUR¹⁷

This case involved a dispute over the etubomship of Adiabo Akani Obio which erupted in 1978. There were two contestants, Ekpenyong Hogan Effa and Otu Ekpenyong Hogan Ekpenyong-Effa. Adiabo Akani Obio House comprises three families: Effa Effa (Otu Meseme), Ekpenyong Effa (Otu Meseme) and Asido Otu Ika. Contestant No.1 was from the Asido Otu family. The last

etubom whose death created the vacancy in the house which was ^{now} being disputed, had been his elder brother. He was much older than the second contestant who was still in his 40s.

On the death of the etubom a general meeting was summoned by a member to select a new etubom. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Adiabo Development Union. The second contestant declared that the Union had *no* authority to convene a meeting over a traditional matter such as the selection of an etubom. He therefore ignored the summons and did not attend the meeting. In the meeting of July 1978, both men and women participated in the selection process. According to the first contestant there were only two chiefs in Adiabo Akani Obio, himself and Chief Otu Nyong Otu of the Ekpenyong-Effa family. Both had become chiefs in 1975 but the former was the elder of the two. During the general meeting they had both nominated one another for etubom. Eventually the matter was put to the vote and the first contestant won by a vote of 30 to 22, age obviously being the determinant factor and thus he became the etubom. He was later presented to the Obong for recognition in November 1978.

The second contestant subsequently filed a protest to the etuboms' Council and later the Odukpani Traditional Rulers Council. He stated that the etubomship of Adiabo Akani Obio was rotatory between the three constituent families and therefore the first contestant could not fill the post as his brother had last held the office. This was later confirmed by witnesses from the first contestant's family and the then acting clan head, Chief Asako Otu. Under examination the acting clan head revealed that, although the etubomship was rotatory, the crux

of the matter was that the rightful candidate (the second contestant) was far too young by age to succeed to office. He went on to assert that etubomship was based on seniority.

However, the second contestant had assumed the Ekpe title, Obong Ebunko (vice-president) in 1949 on the death of his uncle. His father had originally held the title which reverted to his brother, the second contestant's uncle, at his death. The second contestant, who was a legal practitioner, not only had his age against him but also the fact that he had not been resident in the village. In fact he had been absent for several years from Calabar. He had only returned from Jos in 1975 where he had been practising, perhaps the vacant office serving as an inducement. As a returnee he had no house in Adiabo although he had relatives there. Consequently, he had very little support to rely on.

The dispute was finally settled by the Odukpani Traditional Rulers Council. It was confirmed that it was the turn of the Ekpenyong-Effa family to produce an etubom and Otu Ekpenyong Hogan Ekpenyong-Effa was the rightful candidate. He was, however, advised to build a house in Adiabo in order to establish a feeling of belonging between him and his people. He was subsequently presented to the Obong in December 1980. Since his assumption of office not only has he built a house in Adiabo but also pays regular weekly visits there to familiarise himself with the people, conduct house meetings, arbitrate disputes and generally endear himself to his people.

INSTANCE FIVE¹⁸

The dispute was over the headship of the Esien Etim Offiong family (sub-house) of the Eyamba House. The issue at stake in this case was the sex of one of the contestants. There were two contestants for the office. The male candidate felt that the woman, although a blood descendant, by virtue of her sex was ineligible for the headship of the family. Thus, contestant No.2 took over office and prevented the woman from having access to family rents and revenue. She reported the matter to the Obong and the arbitration committee investigated the complaint. It was stated informally that, although female, the first contestant, as the oldest descendant, had full rights to the headship of the family, whereas the second contestant had no claim to royalty, and as such, none to the office. Judgement had not been passed before the end of my fieldwork but nobody was in any doubt as to the outcome of the case.

The incursion of national politics in the internal stalemate between the Obong and etuboms and the subsequent Obongship and etubomship disputes is in several ways similar to the effect of government policy and the incursion of partisan politics in the Yendi Tragedy among the Dagomba (Northern Ghana). (Staniland, 1975). Also, like the Eyamba House dispute, the official solution of the dispute left some of the parties involved highly dissatisfied. To them, the Government had meddled in traditional affairs and caused great havoc.

THE OBONG AND ETUBOMS

It may appear that much of the potential powers of the Obong are circumscribed by the etuboms. Although in one of seven oaths sworn by the Obong before he is crowned during the coronation ceremony he affirms "to uphold the constitution of the etuboms traditional council", each etubom is required to take an oath of loyalty to the Obong as well. Indeed as soon as he is crowned with the traditional ntinya, each etubom goes forward and pays him homage. The ntinya ceremony elevates the Obong from his erstwhile rank of etubom to a new revered one akin to that of the ancestors. While a wise Obong listens to his Council as the overall father of society his ^{OWN} wishes should be obeyed. The Obong as the paramount ruler should therefore have the final say.

However, there are a number of inclusions within Efik traditional political offices which serve to check the excesses of the etuboms vis-a-vis the Obong and vice versa. Firstly, is the inclusion of ordinary, or honorary chiefs within the Obong's Council. This chieftaincy status is conferred by the Obong on deserving individuals (albeit on the advice of his etuboms). It is significant that these honorary chiefs, the majority of whom are usually wealthy and influential in society, are members not of the etuboms' Council but of the Obong's Council. Similarly, within the Etuboms' Traditional Council is a category of people who act as advisers. For the most part these are house chiefs whose chieftainship do not depend on either the Obong or etuboms but are hereditary. They are therefore not beholden to either the Obong or etuboms. During

the Obong's and etuboms crisis of the 1960s some etuboms tried to withdraw some of the house chiefs from the Obong's Cabinet in demonstration of their own withdrawal from his Cabinet. However, Archibong V told them that house chiefs owed allegiance as members of his Cabinet first to him before their etuboms. Thus, although some etuboms were deposed the same treatment did not befall the advisers. (Hart, 1964: para 350).

Although not much scope is allowed for the incursion of Ndem within political offices, in times of crisis Ndem priests/ priestesses often act as mediators between factions. They constitute a force external to the rivalry that may surface in the potential power struggle between the Obong and his etuboms. On a more physical platform, Ekpe serves as an even more direct ^{and} powerful medium to curtail excesses of power of either the Obong or the etuboms. This check on the power of the Obong is especially ~~potent~~ since the civil and judicial arms of the government are no longer vested in the same individual. It was therefore the Eyamba Ekpe who signed the withdrawal of recognition notice from the Obong in 1961. At best an Obong holds a title in Ekpe. Quite often some medium rank is bestowed on them just before their installation to conform with the conditions for the Obong-elect. Consequently, even if the Obong manages to have full control of his etuboms, quite often he cannot exert a similar check on the Mbong Ekpe (Ekpe chiefs). They are empowered as Worshipful Masters to deal with his excesses. Thus Eyo I of Creek Town was destroyed by a trumped up Ekpe charge which cost him all his wealth. His son, Eyo II, in his actions in Duke Town politics was always cautious of the extent of his interference

lest he be ruined by Ekpe charges like his father, or poisoned. (Goldie, 1890:122). The Obong if he is not an Ekpe chief has no jurisdiction in certain Ekpe matters. He cannot even attend high ranking meetings save by invitation.

As has already been demonstrated, the Obong exerts quite an influence within houses to the extent that some pressurize their etuboms to act in accordance with the wishes of the Obong or face disciplinary actions from the house. The loyalty of houses to the Obong rather than the etuboms resulted in the deposition of five etuboms by their houses in 1961. In reality therefore the extent of power the Obong wields depends on his personality and how strong-willed he is. He can, as paramount ruler, play on the oath of allegiance of the etuboms. All statements issued by the Obong are supposed to be ratified by the etuboms' Council before being publicised. However, the Obong has direct access to his secretary and could bypass them easily, or refuse to amend his text. Personal resources seem to influence the extent of the Obong's dependence on his Council of etuboms. A wealthy, educated and cosmopolitan Obong like the present incumbent has little cause to be wholly dependent on his court and therefore is less open to manipulations by the etuboms. His introduction of a private cabinet has been regarded as an attempt to break free of the grasp of the etuboms.

NOTES

1. 1972 Draft Constitution for the Obong's Council.
2. Interview with the head of the Adiabo Akani Obio House, Etubom Ekpenyong Effa, 26th April 1982.
3. Interview with Chief F. Archibong, 3rd August 1982.
4. Eyamba House Dispute Report, 1975, para 50.
5. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22nd February 1983.
6. Interview with Etubom Adim Esoi Ekpenyong, October 1980.
7. Discussions with Chief Bassey Ekpenyong, 11th June 1982, secretary Etim Effiom House, Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 26th April 1982, and also Chief O.O. Asuquo, the Obong's secretary.
8. Adiabo Akani Obio Dispute 1980, and also Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22nd February 1982.
- 9-10. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 28th April 1982.
11. Chief F. Archibong, 3rd August 1982, Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 26th April, 1982, Mr. E.U. Aye, *26th April 1982*.
12. Interview with Chief E. Archibong, 7th June 1982.
13. Etubom Bassey Duke, 24th August 1982.
Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22nd February 1983.
Chief Bassey-Ekpenyong, 11th June 1982.
14. Information on this dispute except where otherwise stated was compiled from interviews conducted with the surviving principal contestants, namely etubom Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, Mr. Theodore Cobham and others. Views expressed by others such as the etubom Bassey Duke, are also included. These interviews were also cross-checked with evidence of witnesses in the Udo 1971 Report, and Government Reports on the Eyamba House Dispute especially Official Document No.6 of 1981, and Duke Town Families Memorandum 1971. From these documents and other interviews it was possible to compile the arguments of the late E.J. Eyamba.
15. Interviews with Chief O.O. Asuquo, 30th March 1983 had also seen supporters of the contestants during a visit to the Obong's Palace. Also interview with Chief Francis Archibong, 3rd August 1982.
16. Discussions with Chief O.O. Asuquo, 30th March 1983 and Dr. E. Akak, 28th March 1983.

17. Interview with Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 28th April 1982, Chief E. Archibong, 7th June 1982, and official report on the dispute.
18. Although this matter came up for arbitration by the Obong's Arbitration Committee it could not be heard as only the female contestant appeared. However, she voiced some financial hardship she was experiencing because of the encroachment of her opponent on family rents and other monies. 4th May 1983. Also, discussions with Chief O.O. Asuquo, 30th March 1983.

CHAPTER FIVE

EKPE FRATERNITY

EKPE FRATERNITY

Secret societies constitute an integral part of most traditional African political systems. The diversity and scope of these secret societies are essentially wide, membership extending from youths to adults. The Poros society for example stretches through almost half of West Africa, being particularly active in Liberia and Sierra Leone where it has become somewhat incorporated into national politics (Azevedo, 1973; Cohen, 1979). The initiation of young boys into the Poros society starts off with an important ceremony, circumcision. Thus, initiation is strongly linked with manhood and nationhood. The Ogboni society of Yoruba differs in the sense that membership is exclusively limited to a category of adult men, mainly those related to the royal families.

Women's secret societies operating on the same political level with those of men are few and far between. One such exception is the Bundu of Sierra Leone. Secret societies were particularly disapproved of by colonial authorities, especially those that were concerned with the execution of judicial functions. These societies were associated with secret rituals. In the pre-colonial era, human sacrifices either to appease supernatural forces or as part of burial rites formed a significant part of the activities of these societies. Slaves and people of obscure status were used as sacrificial lambs (Waddell, 1863:421,427). Although human sacrifices have long since been abolished, accusations of secret breaching of the law still surface from time to time (Cohen, 1979:100; Aye, 1967:171). In 1979, while it was being rumoured that the then Oba of Benin

had died, the 'Observer' national newspaper carried reports on the incidence of mutilated bodies with missing vital organs. Although this was immediately associated with the performance of secret rituals and the demise of the Oba, no official palace statement was made to confirm the vacancy of the throne.

Secret societies play a significant role in traditional political systems. In the first place, most are interlinked with the religious system which, as a fundamental part of the belief systems, enabled the societies to use and exert powerful physical and supernatural sanctions, especially to induce compliance. This religious aspect elevated these societies from the mundane and secular spheres and put a spiritual seal of authority on decisions and judgements emanating from them. The secret rituals created mysticism and helped preserve authority, while the cloak of secrecy provided safety to members from the public, personal wrath and vengeance. Thus, secret societies are associated, directly or indirectly, with the powers of ancestors, rites of death and recreation.

The extent to which secret societies have survived changes imposed on them firstly, by colonial administration and later by the functions of the State, and the curtailment and even removal of their traditional powers depends, primarily on their functions and the extent to which they have been adapted to outside influence. Although the Ekpe, like the Poros, played important political roles in pre-colonial as well as colonial eras, its significance was mainly in the economic (trade), and social spheres (law and order). Thus, while the Poros has extended its sphere of influence into modern politics, the Ekpe still operated largely in the traditional sphere (Cohen,

1979:100). Nonetheless, several similarities exist among the Ekpe, Poru and Ogboni societies. All three represent traditional political elites and therefore feature largely in kingship and chieftaincy systems. Initiation transforms individuals into members, but only higher rituals qualify them for admission into ranks and higher secrets. Traditional secret societies share similarities with modern masonic lodges. Indeed, members of one are sometimes active in the other. Because of the high fees and dues required by members of masonic lodges only the wealthy can afford to join. As such 'lodges' as they are called, are regarded as the exclusive domain of the rich and influential. Members have a 'moral obligation' towards one another to give assistance in both spiritual and especially secular spheres of life. Outsiders thus feel that a motivating reason for membership of masonic lodges is promotion in places of work or recruitment into specially desirable posts. Members are therefore seen as perpetuating their own aims and maintaining their distinctiveness in the secular, economic and political domains as well as the spiritual. Consequently, Waddell described Ekpe or Egbo as it was called by the Europeans, as a tool of the native nobility (Waddell, 1863:258), with pretence to supernatural authority in order to control society and keep its members in check.

THE EKPE FRATERNITY - ORIGIN

Ekpe, which means leopard, is the most important secret fraternity among the Efik. In pre-colonial and colonial times it was the all-powerful and far-reaching political machinery. Through Ekpe, the Efik were able to extend their tentacles to neighbouring settlements which became satellites of the main towns. The origin of Ekpe, despite its pre-eminence in Efik tradition, is masked by the very nature of its activities.

However, it appears that Efik activities in Ekpe had their beginnings in an earlier secret society, Nyana Yaku or Mkpe, which was indigenous to them. This earlier society had long since fallen into obscurity and little is remembered of it except that it was a milder form of Ekpe (Hart, 1964:30,63). Presumably, as the Efik changed from fishermen and farmers to traders, the former society became an ineffective means of social control consequently they adopted the Ekpe society which was better suited and more adaptable to their new needs. This was probably true as Ekpe was initially described by the missionaries as a sylvan deity (Goldie, 1890:30). Societal exigency shaped the development of Ekpe to deal with all kinds of complex situations, most of which stemmed directly from economic activities. This is similar to Ruel's deduction of the Efik-Ekpe relationship (Ruel, 1969:254). Although there is no direct indication of the period during which the Efik acquired Ekpe secrets, Antera Duke's diary provides a significant lead. It makes reference to a practice as being unheard of "...since weer grandy grandy father..." i.e. since our great grandfather's time (Duke, . . . 1956:16/4/1797). According

to this entry, Ekpe was already in existence among the Efik in the late seventeenth century.

The issue of Ekpe origin, is further compounded by the claim by both Efut and Qua, that Ekpe originally belonged to them. Each claim that they let Efik in on their secret and just as in all other spheres, namely, trade, education and land, the Efik turned the tables on them, usurped their position and claimed supremacy. As well as these claims, the Efik also claim original ownership of Ekpe. As there are different claims and counterclaims on the real owners of Ekpe, so also there are numerous accounts as to its origin. However, it is generally believed that Ekpe was not originally a traditional Efik institution, although it has come to assume that position today. Ekpe is widely held by the Efik themselves to have originated from Efut (Hart, 1964:para 184,5). According to one account, initially the Ekpe fraternity included both men and women in its activities. Later men edged women out and dominated Ekpe activities to the complete exclusion of female participation at any serious level.¹ Another version stated that when Efik arrived at their present site they heard of this mystical being from their Efut neighbours. The Efik desired to be shown what was called Ekpe. However, after the Efut let them into the secret they were summarily killed and the Efik assumed ownership of Ekpe.²

A similar account stated that Usak Edet and Efut used to live in the water like fish, there they discovered the secrets of Ekpe. Their old women brought the secrets out of the water and the Efik developed them.³ Thus, Ekpe is intricately related to water which in Efik cosmology is the domain

of Ndem (tutelar deity). Therefore, Ekpe is 'played' in the water just as it is on land. The Efik use the word 'bre' or 'mbre' which means "play" or "to play" in describing Ekpe activities, especially with regard to masquerades. Despite its frequent usage in Ekpe incantations and association with its origin, the meaning of the word Usak Edet still remains uncertain. It is alternatively used to refer to a person as well as an unknown place. Usak-Edet in common parlance is used to refer to an ethnic group located in the Cameroons, near the Nigerian border. The word refers directly to the teeth filing practice of the people. This is probably the same as Goldie's 'Nsahevet' towns in the Cameroons, some of which spoke Efik (Goldie, 1890: 298). Latham states that Usak-Edet is now called Bakasi (Latham, 1973:36). What is still maintained however, is that Usak Edet is crucial to the origin of Ekpe.

The pro-Efik account on the other hand, claimed that the secrets of Ekpe were first revealed to Eyo Ema of Mbarakom clan (Creek Town) who then relinquished his position as 'owner' to his brother Esien Ekpe. However, the Efut themselves affirm they gave Ekpe to the Efik. Significantly, the principal salutations are said to be of Efut origin (Hart, 1964:para 185). Equally, the Qua also stake a claim to being the original owners of Ekpe, which they call Mgbe. Both Qua and Efut migrated from the Cameroons to their present settlements. To that extent therefore it could well be that their joint claims to ownership of Ekpe is an indication of a close cultural bond between them. Despite this controversy, Ekpe acts as another source of unity among the Efik, Efut and Qua. Only an extensive and intensive research among Efut and Ekci settlements in the Cameroons can shed light on this triangular tie.

THE EKPE BELT

The Ekpe institution is by no means exclusive to the Efik, Efut and Qua, but is found in several societies both within and outside the Cross River State. Within the Cross River State the northern boundary of Ekpe extends to Akamkpa, Obubra, Ekoi and other Ejagham speaking people, into the Benue region. To the east it extends into the Bamenda region of the Cameroons. Some Igbo-speaking people to the west also have Ekpe fraternity, especially the Arochukwu. Given the geographical spread of the institution and the diverse societies within which Ekpe exists, it is difficult to give a definite summarization of its place of origin. It is significant that the geographical spread of the Ekpe fraternity also coincided with societies which the Efik passed through and lived among during their migration to their present site. The Efik also had strong trade links with these societies, especially in slaves. Given the widely accepted Efut origin of Ekpe and the fact that the Efut migrated from the Cameroons, it could well be that the origin of Ekpe lies within the Bamenda region. The Efut (and perhaps also Qua) took the secrets on their migration into the Cross River State, and from there it spread to the Efiks who then passed it to other societies through trade links. This also supports Ruel's suggestion that the Ekoi (a group which includes the Qua and to which the Efut are related - see Dalby, 1977: 34) introduced Ekpe to the Efik during their migration from the Cameroons to the Cross River Basin. The Efik in turn introduced the society to other groups in the area and from there it spread back into Western Cameroon (Ruel, 1969:250).

Despite the fact that the Efik lived among the Ibibio longer than they did among the Igbo, and that the Efik and Ibibio share a number of cultural similarities (perhaps even more than the Efut and Qua), Ekpe society does not exist among the Ibibio. Although during the peak of the Efik trade boom, individual Ibibio had sought and were initiated into Ekpe, it never became widespread there (Waddell, 1863:617).

Varsina pointed out the little known but extensive trade links between the Benue region and the Efik. There was a slave route between the Benue and the Cross River Basin. Trade was facilitated by the fact that both regions shared a common currency. This also supported the observation by the missionaries that the slaves first mistook them for slave raiders who were distinguished by their straight hair, clothes and riding horses (Waddell, 1863:321; Varsina et al, 1964:190). The nearest place where horses are to be found is in the region north of the Cross River Basin. The Tiv not only have Ekpe but also use the Ekpe cloth ukara as a national costume. The former Governor of Benue State, Aper Aku, frequently wore ukara cloth on public occasions. Accounts from the diary of Antera Duke, reveal that the Efik had already established trade links with the Cameroons by the eighteenth century (Duke, 1956: 38,43).⁴ In their later years some Efik migrated to the Cameroons to avoid repressive measures (Latham, 1973:89), or to set up trading or educational institutions (e.g. late Etubom Emmanuel Henshaw). There are still pockets of Efik settlements in the Cameroons. Indeed until 1958, Western Cameroon was administered as part of Nigeria as a trusteeship territory.

TRADITIONAL FUNCTIONS OF EKPE

In pre-colonial times Ekpe was the means of government. While Ndem represented the religious arm of government, the Obong the civil, the Ekpe was supreme as the judiciary and executive machinery. Laws were enacted, proclaimed and enforced with the authority of Ekpe. Ekpe as a supernatural being, was represented in public by one of its lesser figures, idem iquo. This is a masquerade: covered from head to toe in a raffia costume. Attached to his costume is a bell which he may ring to announce his presence. Also associated with this masquerade and indeed with Ekpe in general, are the leaves of the Newbouldia laevis tree, ikong oboti, as the Ekpe leaves are called.⁵ Idem Iquo also wields a long whip. There are other Ekpe masquerades but these generally represent higher ranks in the fraternity. As such they do not make regular public appearances like the Idem Iquo, but only come out on important occasions. In pre-colonial times the importance of a law was reflected by the type of masquerade used during public proclamations.

Thus it was with the backing of Ekpe that the missionaries succeeded in stopping people from the continual use of mission grounds as a receptacle for the unburied dead. Similarly it was with the authority of Ekpe that Sunday was declared a day of rest on which markets would close (Waddell, 1963:438). The abolition of human sacrifices, killing of twins and their mothers, administration of the esere bean ordeal, were all done with the force of Ekpe (Goldie, 1890:140; Taylor, 1984:195).

Ekpe was also used to recover debts (Waddell, 1863:503; Duke, 1956:45/86). Because the creditor was a high ranking member an important masquerade Nyamkpe was used for Antera

Duke. This function of Ekpe was especially important to the supercargoes and essential for trade which was wholly built on credit. European traders gave their Efik counterparts as much goods as they believed they could sell or exchange in the hinterland for slaves and palm oil. Membership of Ekpe therefore gave the supercargoes additional assurance of the credit worthiness of the Efik trader as well as placing him in a position for recovering his goods or money on default. Consequently, several settlements, as well as the European traders sought to become Ekpe members. Uwet, Enyong, Umon and Okoyong were all members of Ekpe. Waddell gave an elaborate account of the initiation of some foreigners (and by proxy their society) into Ekpe marked by a rare ceremony (Waddell, 1863:264). Jones also has a well documented list of Ekpe functions (Jones, 1956:135).

Individuals, as well as settlements, could be boycotted and banned from interacting with others by Ekpe for violating laws. Ikot Offiong was banned by Ekpe for undue violence in recovering a debt (Waddell, 1863:503), and later trying to resist Ekpe. This was considered high treason which cost Ikot Offiong a life. The mission came under Ekpe ban for housing twins (Waddell, 1863:591), and for shielding people from the esere bean ordeal (Goldie, 1890:188). People were forbidden to enter the mission, parents were asked to collect their wards and slaves. No one was to attend school or church until the ban was lifted. Similarly, when an individual or settlement was banned, no one entered or left the settlement, or spoke to, sold food to or bought from the marked individual or community under pain of death. The ban was most detrimental to trade and therefore greatly feared. Banned individuals and settlements

could be redeemed by payment of an Ekpe fine and usually involved loss of life. This 'blowing of Ekpe' as the Ekpe ban was described, is similar to the use of Poro loyalties and implementation of sanctions against trading in palm kernels in 1898 in Sierra Leone. By so doing this secret society held the country to ransom and the situation finally culminated in the famous Hut Tax War which resulted in the massacre of several people, mainly non-Poro-Creole elements (Cohen, 1979:99).

On a more positive scale Ekpe safeguarded or sealed property by placing its mark (yellow sign) on it or hoisting a yellow flag over it to prevent it from being used or stolen. On a day-to-day basis, Ekpe was used to maintain law and order, prevent disorderly crowds, and disperse street fighting (Waddell, 1863:507). Disputes between officers or high ranking members were also settled by Ekpe. Thus, Eyoll sent Ekpe to Duke Town on the death of Archibong III when it seemed armed blood men had over-run the settlement (Goldie, 1890:159).

Just as Ekpe was used to enforce law and order it was also used to connote hostility and warfare (Waddell, 1863:372). Most of the influential Ekpe chiefs or adaidaha were also heads of families, wards in the secular sphere. To this extent, Ekpe was manipulated to cater for and protect sectional interest. Eyo I was ruined by a trumped up Ekpe fine, because of jealousy of his wealth. His son, Eyoll, despite his power and wealth was ever aware of the possibility of using Ekpe to destroy him for alleged malpractice or interference in other settlements activities (Goldie, 1890:122). It would appear that while major settlements like Creek Town, Duke Town and Old Town could interfere in the affairs of satellite communities like Efut, Adiabo

etc and even evoke Ekpe bans on them, they could not do the same with one another without incurring Ekpe fines. Creek Town could not intervene in the affairs of Duke Town or Old Town without their consent (Waddell, 1863:423,498).

There was some degree of discrimination in the meeting out of Ekpe fines and punishments. Well connected offenders whose friends and relatives were prepared to help them came off lightly in instances where the ordinary poor man would have been executed. Similar high ranking Ekpe officers could mediate in the 'blowing of Ekpe' on their associates (Duke, 1956:85; 10/5/85). Indeed, Eyo II confirmed that as long as friends could assist the offender in purchasing other Ekpe grades or in payment of a fine, he could come off lightly (Waddell, 1863:503,592,608). Despite its supremacy the execution of the powers of Ekpe was manipulated by its high ranking officers. To this extent therefore it was indeed a machinery for the affluent and nobility.

EKPE GRADES

As a supernatural being, Ekpe lives in the forest, ikot Ekpe. It is publicly represented by different grades of masquerades, idems. The costume is usually donned in ikot ekpe. The individual on wearing the raffia/jute costume of an idem ceases to be an ordinary man. He undergoes a transformation, the spirit of Ekpe converges on him and he becomes its representative. Ekpe is said to have a deep rumbling voice which may be heard from the Ekpe forest. In the past its voice sent fear down the spine of the uninitiated and women. Occasionally Ekpe itself 'appeared' in public although it remained concealed as

a supernatural force in a tent-like enclosure carried on the shoulders of its officers (Goldie, 1890:32), or apparently moving of its own accord as in the masquerade okokp~~o~~ obon.

Ekpe, like a bureaucratic set-up, is divided into a number of grades, along with the hierarchy is some division of labour. The exact details of the differentiation of duties according to rank or grades is not well known because of the secretive nature of the organization. The most important Ekpe grades in descending order are:-

1. Obong Eyamba
2. Obong Ebunko
3. Obong Nyamkpe
4. Obong Okuakama
5. Obong Okpoho
6. Obong Nkanda
7. Obong Nboko
8. Obong Mbakara.

The head of Ekpe is the Obong Eyamba. In pre-colonial days he was also known as 'Emperor' (Hart, 1964:167). He is still sometimes referred to as the 'Most Worshipful Master', a direct application of a masonic lodge title (Cohen, 1979:120). Indeed, in several ways, the Ekpe fraternity bears resemblance to the masonic lodge. It is no surprise that many of the etuboms are also members of masonic lodges. Its meetings are shrouded in secrecy and great mysticism and only high ranking officials, mbong Ekpe (plural of Obong) may attend. The higher the rank, the greater authority and power it wields. Members are obliged to undertake an oath of secrecy concerning the fraternity's activities.

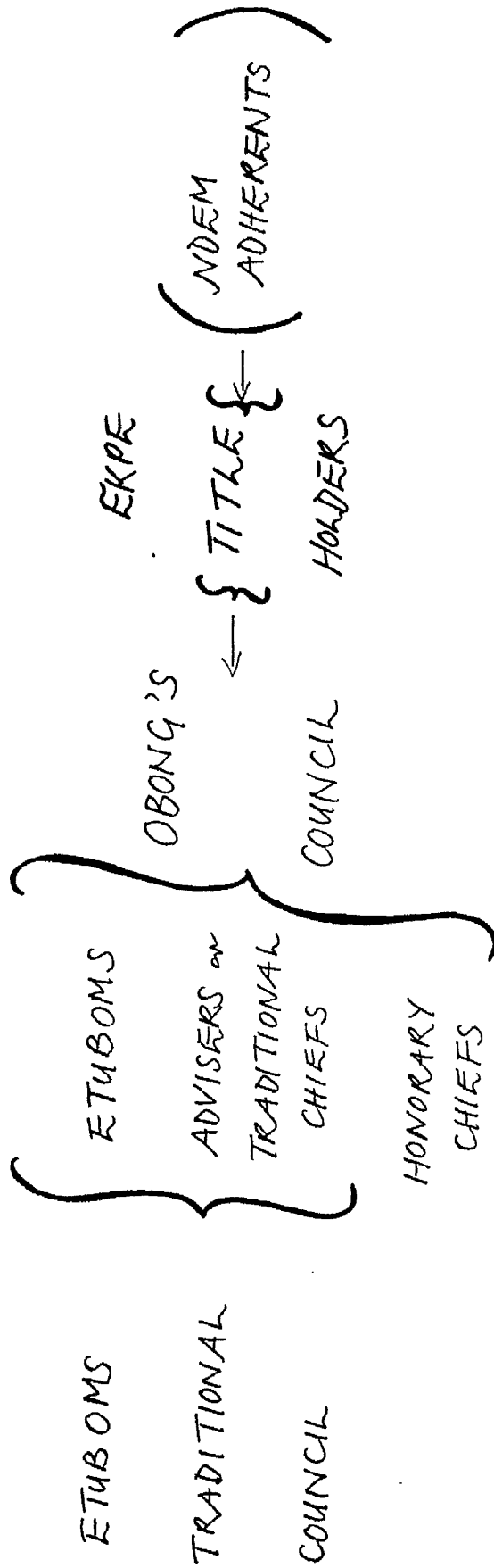
Within the main eight grades are sub-divisions. These sub-divisions in themselves also constitute grades under the head or Obong of that grade. Father Tom, the elder brother of Eyo II, was said to be chief of the branch of Ebunko within the fraternity (Waddell, 1863:357). He was therefore Obong Ebunko. The sub-divisions are:-

Isung Ebunko
 Ise Mongo
 Isung Nyamkpe
 Isung Okuakama
 Isung Okpoho
 Isung Nkanda Ekpe
 Murua Nyamkpe Ekpe
 Murua Okuakama Ekpe
 Murua Okpoho Ekpe
 Murua Nkanda
 Isu Ekpe

'Isung' Ekpe designates a sort of deputy. Thus, there is Obong Nyamkpe Ekpe, who is head of Nyamkpe grade while Isung Nyamkpe is his deputy and Murua Nyamkpe his sub-deputy. Thus a grade may be internally divided into three ranks. One exception to this rule is the title Isu Ekpe which is not a sub-division of a grade but is a grade itself. During inner circle meetings only title holders may attend. I am not certain if in the absence of the head of a grade one of the deputy ranks within the grade may deputize and act on his behalf. No initiate would deign to reveal such details of the secret working of the fraternity to a woman.

There appears to be no correlation between a maximal lineage or clan and the incidence of grade holding in Ekpe. In 1964, the holders of the offices of Obong Nkanda, Isung Nkanda and

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Idem Ebunko

Muruua Nkanda came from three different clans. Occasionally, the holders of lower ranks within a grade, e.g. Isung and Muruua may come from the same clan but there is no rule that stipulates such. When the same title exists in more than one family, then the most senior contender gets the title. The younger person then holds the office of assistant or deputy rank as in Obong Ebunko (head) and Isung Ebunko (deputy).⁶

Traditionally, the eight highest Ekpe titles with the prefix 'Obong' may only be held by Efik. Similarly, Ekpe titles are supposed to be strongly related to birthright and descent. Ideally, before an individual aspires to or can be given a title he must come from a family/house whose ancestors had held the grade or one of similar rank. It is difficult to attain a grade if it did not previously exist in one's family.⁷ The Obong Eyamba as head of Ekpe is the custodian of all grades. Theoretically therefore, on the death of a title holder the title automatically reverts back to the Eyamba until it is once more given out. Certain grades are vested in specific houses. These are, Obong Eyamba, which has been held by the head of the Eyamba House since the late eighteenth century. The title had originally been held by Esien Ekpe Oku of Creek Town (Mbarakom) who was Eyamba I. His elder brother succeeded as Eyamba II who gave his daughter in marriage to Ekpenyong Offiong of the ^{then} Eyamba family (Duke Town). Eyamba II had no son to succeed him so on his death the title passed on from Mbarakom to his son-in-law in Eyamba family. With the exception of three holders who were also from Duke Town, the title Obong Eyamba has become the 'property' of the Eyamba House. Similarly, Obong Ebunko, vice-president, and Obong Okpoho are vested in

Eyo I and Eyo II houses respectively. It is to this extent that titles are said to belong to specific houses.

In practice however, an individual could approach Ekpe chiefs, adaidaha and put across his desire to acquire a particular title. The Ekpe chiefs then confer among themselves. If they approve of the person's application a date is fixed for his initiation into the grade. Initiation into Ekpe is an elaborate and expensive affair which generally only the well to do can afford. This will be discussed later. However, as in other spheres of life changes have crept into the mode of acquiring titles in Ekpe. Some of the more conservative Efiks have complained that titles are being bought indiscriminately. Instead of descent and former acquisition of titles, money and social influence have become prime considerations in the attainment and conferment of titles. Consequently, individuals who traditionally should not be title holders now hold titles.⁸

Every Efik family should have ekete Ekpe a metaphoric Ekpe basket. As the family acquires a title a palm frond is plucked into the basket. Each palm frond therefore signifies an Ekpe title. If ones ancestors held one or more titles, by birthright any member of that family has a right to any one of those titles. Still based on this rationale is the assertion (made especially by members of the royal family), that as they are descended from royalty it is not necessary to be formally initiated into Ekpe or hold a title, in order to be recognised as Ekpe members. This they claim is because they were born into Ekpe (i.e. that they are of the royal family and their ancestors were title holders) and as such they have Ekpe in

their blood. Initiation into the society or actual conferment of titles was therefore merely a formality. This view point was among others held by Mr. Theodore Cobham, whose ancestors included Eyamba V and Eyamba VI. As acquisition of a title may cost up to £2000, he did not consider it money truly well spent. This statement is similar to that made by one of the contestants to the Obongship in 1963, etubom Ekpenyong Oku (Hart, 1964:para 181).⁹

In Ekpe society, a distinction is drawn between title holders or Ekpe chiefs (mbong Ekpe) and mere initiates. All Efik, free-born and 'members' alike, can be initiated into Ekpe. However, only royalty may become Ekpe chiefs. Also, only title holders may attend 'closed' or inner circle meetings. Ekpe titles, like chieftaincy titles, may be conferred in an honorary capacity on deserving individuals, especially in appreciation of some brave or distinguishing deed. However, on the death of the holder the title cannot be inherited by a member of his family but must be returned to the family who had bestowed the title on him.¹⁰

Although Ekpe is no longer the primary organ of judicial administration among the Efik it is still a very important society. This is reflected in the fact that Ekpe titles and even ordinary initiation into the society, are still highly desired and sought after, despite the prohibitive costs. It is very prestigious to be a member of Ekpe. The hallmark of royalty and political elite is being a title holder. Despite Hart's assessment of it, the Ekpe fraternity has not been relegated to merely an honorable institution (Hart, 1964:para 154). This assessment is so obviously incorrect, especially

when it is considered that one of the most important issues of the Hart Inquiry was the exercise by the Obong Eyamba Ekpe of the traditional powers vested in him as overall head of Ekpe, not only to call the then Obong to order, but eventually stripping him of his authority as paramount ruler of the Efik. Although it was later conceded in the course of the enquiry that the Obong had not been deposed as neither the Obong Eyamba nor the etuboms who signed the document of withdrawal of authority attempted to select a successor (Hart, 1964:para 326,351-4). However, there is no doubt of the intentions of the Obong Eyamba Ekpe and the etuboms to marshall their collective powers of selection (of the Obong) and render his authority ineffectual.

Furthermore, Ekpe chiefs are responsible for the burial rites of the Obong. They still constitute an important arm of government. However, their roles have become somewhat masked by the fact that title holders often hold multiple roles as etuboms and chiefs in the Obong's and etuboms councils. Ekpe still fines offenders. Particularly in land disputes, disputants often seek the recourse of Ekpe. Thus one still finds Ekpe leaves, ikong oboti, stuck in the middle of a plot of land or building site. These are planted to halt any further development to the land. Ikong oboti, therefore, signifies the presence of a dispute on the land and that the powers of Ekpe have been solicited to resolve the controversy. Because of its association with the supernatural being Ekpe, ikong oboti cannot be summarily stuck in the ground by anyone to halt development. Indeed, no one would stoop to such a sacrilegious act. Certain rites have to be performed before the leaves are stuck, invoking the powers and wrath of Ekpe on any wilful trespasser. This

is usually done at night. Similarly, before they can be removed secret rites have to be undergone again to remove the oath, mbiam on the land and thus prevent any harm befalling any of the disputants.

Initiates as well as non-initiates can seek the power of Ekpe to settle a dispute. However, as in most Ekpe activities this is an expensive undertaking as the litigant must buy drinks to present to the Ekpe chiefs as well as those (among other items) to be used for libation, before the oath is sworn. A non-initiate has to go through an initiate to lodge a formal complaint with Ekpe chiefs. This is an even more expensive venture as this intercessor also has to be recompensed for his trouble. This procedure is similar to that described by Waddell in 1852 (Waddell, 1863:504).

Ekpe may also be invoked to recover stolen items. During an initiation ceremony in Efe Ekpe Efut Abua¹¹ certain personal objects were declared missing. An oath was sworn and Ekpe invoked for the discovery of the culprit. This is believed to have an infallible power to compel the offender to confess and return the objects. However, as an oath, mbiam had been sworn, the objects could not just be summarily returned. The oath has to be unsworn and taken off the objects. Certain rites have to be performed before this is done. The revocation of an oath is an expensive affair but must be carried out in addition to the offender being fined before the matter can be settled. The use of mbiam and ikong oboti among the Efik is very similar to its use among the Mende in the female secret society Sande (Jedrej, 1976:249).

INITIATION INTO EKPE

Traditionally, an individual may only be initiated into Ekpe with the permission of the Obong Eyamba and other Ekpe chiefs. However, this rule is quite often put aside. Thus Ekpe chiefs sometimes single-handedly initiate persons without prior consultations with their peers. This is done under the claim that ^{the people} so initiated are installed under their own Ekpe i.e. their own grade as well as under their capacity as Ekpe chiefs. A similar defense was given by the then Obong Nyamkpe in the 1963 Hart Inquiry when challenged that he had no right to initiate a person without the foreknowledge and approval of other title holders (Hart, 1964, para 165).

When a title belongs to a family it is comparatively inexpensive for one of the family to acquire it unlike when it belongs to another family. In the latter case the aspirer is said to 'buy' outright the Ekpe chiefs in order to acquire the title especially if he is not a 'proper' Efik. In addition to paying the prescribed fees for the grade the individual must have privately solicited the Ekpe chiefs to gain approval. Acquisition of a title in this way thus becomes a particularly expensive affair which only the wealthy can undertake. Ekpe membership (both ordinary and titled holders) cuts across society and is not by any means the preserve of the educated, literate civil servants or other bureaucratic or professional group. Indeed in Creek Town, for example, where the first Ekpe lodge was established, the majority of its members are just literate. The 'country' people are reputed to be more well versed in Ekpe secrets and rituals than their 'town' counterparts. Not being civil servants they have more time to 'play' Ekpe. The

composition of Ekpe membership is thus representative of society like the Poro, and is not confined to bureaucrats or professionals like the masonic lodges. Indeed it has been suggested that readiness and skilfulness of the country people to 'play' Ekpe is not only due to their more flexible time schedule but also to the fact that initiation ceremonies yield financial rewards to Ekpe chiefs and an opportunity for drinking and revelling for others. Apart from this it provides a social forum for meeting friends, colleagues and non-resident kinsmen, especially those who have travelled solely for the initiation ceremony.¹²

Despite their relatively unwealthy status 'country' people or poor 'town' people, like all initiates, must pay fees before initiation, to the Ekpe chiefs. It is significant that although most 'country' people are not as wealthy as their 'town' counterparts, they still manage to hold high ranks. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, being 'country' people, contenders for grades are more likely to do so on the basis that they 'belong' to their families. As such, lobbying will be on a small scale compared to 'outsiders' who have to use their wealth and influence to 'buy' titles. Secondly, it would appear that the fees structure is not rigid but flexible enough to permit initiation of 'Ekpe children' who are not wealthy enough to display or spend on as large a scale as the educated employed. The educated who are also white-collar workers, are seen to be rich and therefore must spend more.

DIVISION OF LABOUR

There exists within Ekpe a division of labour along with the power hierarchy. Unfortunately, not much is known of the precise pattern of differentiation because this is regarded as one of the secret areas of the society. However, it is apparent that Okpoho or 'Brass Egbo' as it was called by Europeans, was responsible for effecting the ban or boycott on individuals and settlements. Okpoho means brass which is yellow. Thus the yellow flag is a symbol of the grade and a sign that its powers have been enforced (Waddell, 1863:507).

Another grade is responsible for the public appearances and comportment of Ekpe masquerades. Its permission must be sought before masquerades go out. It is its duty to ensure that masquerades do not unnecessarily molest bystanders, especially women, or defile the sanctity of Ekpe by unseemly behaviour such as drinking in public etc. As a method of checking the excesses of Ekpe masquerades their traditional public performances during Christmas or Easter seasons were banned. When the ban is a decision of Ekpe members, the mbong Ekpe (chiefs) deliberate before this is effected. Occasionally the State declares a general ban on masquerades during the same period. Also, rather than allow the masquerades to play on streets, their performances have become more streamlined to important people and specific locations. These tend to coincide with wealthy, influential people, 'Ekpe families' and important Efik landmarks such as the Obong's Palace and the Bassey Duke Effigy (a deceased Obong).



Idem Iquo, the most popular of the Ekpe masquerades, in a 'majestic pose', holding the staff, esang, in one hand and the leaves, ikong oboti, in the other.

In recent times Ekpe masquerades have been involved in political activities. During the 1983 registration exercise, idem iquo masquerades were alleged to have been used to ensure that only Efik registered at certain polling booths.¹³ Also, random meetings between Ekpe representatives (masquerades) and Ibiblio Ekpo masquerades on the streets during public performances, are always filled with tension which sometimes erupt into aggression. The Efik consider their Ekpe to be far more regal and superior to the Ekpo. The Ekpo masquerade is characterised by its fearsome black mask. It is a violent figure wielding a cutlass and as such is sometimes controlled by one of its followers holding a rope attached to its waist.

EKPE MASQUERADES

Just as there are a number of grades within the Ekpe fraternity so also are there different representatives or idems. The different masquerades or idems represent various grades and are therefore said to be their embodiment. Idemiquo is the most widely known and most commonly seen of all Ekpe masquerades. More important masquerades are associated with the higher grades and accordingly make fewer public appearances. They appear only on important occasions, to honour distinguished personalities. Thus the week culminating in the Coronation of the Obong was marked by performances of various kinds by a number of unusual Ekpe masquerades.

Of all Ekpe masquerades representing various grades, the highest in the power hierarchy is Idem Ebunko. As its name suggests, this masquerade belongs to the Ebunko grade. It is a very colourful masquerade, with a bright yellow costume.



Ekpe Tkong ukom, the pristine form of Ekpe 'carried' by pre-puberal boys accompanied by a small group of children. In the background is the raised platform of the palace.

It has a small trunk, the flank of which is decorated with several opaque glasses. Like all Ekpe masquerades, attached to its costume is a bell.

Nsibidi is another rare masquerade. Unlike the popular Idem Iquo or Ebunko, this is a fierce masquerade. Consequently it belongs to the category of destructive representatives, Idem Afai. Characteristically, the Nsibidi masquerade wields a cutlass. In pre-colonial days it was used for execution for grievous offences. The mark of Nsibidi is the removal of the lower jaws of its victims. In the nineteenth century, Waddell remarked that Nsibidi was an old form of Ekpe which was seldom activated (Waddell, 1863:472). Even in those days the activities of Nsibidi were shrouded in secrecy. Today, it is still more so, and the masquerade is greatly feared. In 1982 it was rumoured that Nsibidi had operated its awesome execution. Flippant talk about Ekpe sometimes sparks off the caution that 'nsibidi will remove your jaws' - nsibidi oyio sio fi mbang. Despite its awesome nature, the Nsibidi masquerade is not 'played' by the first born son but is the exclusive reserve of the second son, Udoh. Consequently, Nsibidi is called idem udoh.¹⁴

A far milder type of Ekpe is Ekpe ikong ukom. As its name connotes this masquerade is covered with dried plantain/banana leaves (ikong ukom). It is said to be a pristine form of Ekpe. Since this masquerade represents the early stages in the crystallization of Ekpe it is befittingly performed by young boys. Unlike the 'adult' masquerades, Ekpe ikong ukom like children tends to be very persistent in demanding attention and is over-demonstrative. Its followers are also young boys in the pre-puberty stage.

SYMBOLS OF EKPE

The skin of the leopard, ikpa Ekpe, is the primary symbol of Ekpe. In pre-colonial days the use of the leopard skin was confined to Oku Ndem, the high priest of Ndem and to royalty. The skin also is an emblem of Obongship. The ntinya (traditional crown) of the Obong is comprised partly of leopard skin and the front claws of the leopard, mbara Ekpe. The royal footstool of the Obong, ntung on which he rests his feet during the ntinya installation ceremony, is covered by leopard skin. So also is the head of the broom, ayan, he holds during the ceremony. The leopard skin not only represents Ekpe but also kingly status.

The leaves of the *Newbouldia laevis* tree, ikong oboti, is another symbol of Ekpe. This is usually found in Ekpe lodges and is also carried by Ekpe masquerades. Wherever ikong oboti is found it connotes the jurisdiction or presence of Ekpe as in disputed lands or buildings. Itiad Ekpe is one of the most fundamental structures of any lodge. The Ekpe stone is balsaltic in composition. Although the size of the stone is unimpressive, not being large, it is said to possess formidable powers. Without the necessary rituals performed the stone is immovable. The stone appears to be a universal symbol and Ruel described it as a 'visual charter' for the association even among the Banyang of Cameroon (Ruel, 1969:222).

Nsibidi, as well as being a masquerade, is also the secret sign language of Ekpe. The Nsibidi sign language comprised geometrical signs, pictorial diagrams of objects such as trees, chickens etc. This sign writing is found on the ukara cloth, a woven and sometimes dyed indigo cloth produced by Arochukwu

Igbo exclusively for Ekpe members. The ukara cloth is bought from Arochuku by traders who sell them in Calabar markets. The ukara is also worn by the TiV of Benue State. Ukara is the characteristic garb of Ekpe initiates and being expensive it is only worn by title holders.

Nsibidi is also a sort of mime and choreography used by Ekpe members in dancing to communicate silently with members. It enables members to talk among themselves without divulging the secrecy of the conversation to others.¹⁵ As such it may be used both within and outside Ekpe functions. Members acquire more knowledge on nsibidi sign language either through discussions with other better informed members or by attending meetings frequently in different lodges and generally by association.¹⁶

Nsibidi sign language is not a recent phenomenon in Ekpe, Antera Duke makes mention of Ekpe cloth, which is undoubtedly ukara in his diary. Thus, as early as the eighteenth century the ukara and nsibidi were already important Ekpe emblems (Duke, 1956, 11/11/86).

The manatee or sea cow is sacred to Ekpe. As such its capture was regarded as an important occasion for celebration (Duke, 1956, 28/4/1787). Its skin is used for the elongated, flexible and lithe whip carried by Ekpe masquerades and wielded by Ekpe chiefs during performances. The whip, Isimupan, is usually only handled by title holders. During public displays a non-title holder may indicate his desire to 'dance' with the whip through a series of mime steps intelligible only to Ekpe members. The Ekpe chiefs may concede and throw the whip down for the member to use. Some Ekpe whips have spikes, being made from the skin of the pike fish, edeng.¹⁷



Some Ekpe chiefs miming with idem Ebunko and other Ekpe masquerades just before the coronation of Adam III. Only Ekpe chiefs may hold staffs. Some of them are wearing the indigo blue ukara cloth with its nsibidi inscriptions.

Ntakanda, peacock feather, is a more ceremonial symbol of Ekpe. Unlike all the other symbols, ntakanda can be used by women. The peacock feather is usually worn in the hair or headgear of Ekpe initiates as an external sign of membership. Brass peacocks are used as decorations in homes by initiates and also by non-initiates. The emblem may also be sewn as applique on beaded velvet shoes and caps worn by Ekpe members to attend Ekpe meetings and other ceremonial occasions. Eyamba V had a peacock which was allowed to wander freely about his 'palace', possibly to reflect and enhance his office not only as the King of Duke Town, but also as the head of Ekpe, Obong Eyamba Ekpe (Waddell, 1863:245). Very few people rear peacocks in Calabar, though the bird is natural to the area and its feathers are sold in the market. Despite the ready availability of the feathers to initiates as well as non-initiates, as it is sold in the markets and is therefore easily purchased by anyone, it is respected by non-initiates as an Ekpe symbol, to which only members are entitled and as rule they do not purchase them.

EKPE LODGES

The establishment of an Ekpe lodge is synonymous with independence and autonomy of settlements. It is further justified by a saying "Two cocks cannot live under the same roof." Initially, there was only one lodge (efe) at Creek Town. As factions broke up to establish independent settlements, so the number of lodges increased. Thus, when Duke Town was established, it set up its own autonomous lodge. The building of the Duke Town Ekpe lodge caused a rift between Henshaw Town

and Duke Town. Nsa Okoho, founder of Henshaw Town, as the eldest demanded the right to set up the front pillar and central beam. This request was rejected by Offiong and Effiom Okoho, who wanted no partnership claim on their Ekpe lodge. Thus, Nsa Okoho in annoyance, left Duke Town for another site - Henshaw Town (Udo, 1971, para 60). However, the lodges of Creek Town and Duke Town are effectively combined under one head, Obong Eyamba. The two settlements share grades between themselves. While the Obong Eyamba (head of Ekpe) is from Duke Town, the next two important offices, Obong Ebunko and Obong Nyamkpe are vested in Creek Town houses. The lodges are jointly known as Efe Ekpe Efik Iboku Utan (Duke Town) and ye Efik Ebokn Esit Edik (Creek Town).

James Town was founded in 1879 by James Ekpo Bassey, as a result of political conflict in Ekpe and over kingship with Duke Town. Eventually he was advised by the Consul to leave town to prevent the outbreak of hostilities between him and the Duke family especially. This he did, and the people of Ibaka Mbo (Oron) gave him land on which he established James Town. In 1893 he was crowned king by the supercargoes. He subsequently built his own Efe Ekpe. In 1879, he built a Methodist Church for the missionaries. His grandson, the etubom of Lower Cobham Town, crowned the Obong during the traditional coronation ceremony. Despite the fact that his grandfather had set up a separate settlement their relationship with Cobham Town their original body, is still maintained. James Town remains as a sort of private property to Lower Cobham Town which is one of the houses of Cobham Town. Cobham Town

was actually founded by a faction of Otung who had left their their main group in Creek Town as a result of some internal strife.¹⁸

At the present time there are seven Efik Ekpe lodges. These include the combined lodges of Duke Town and Creek Town - Efe Ekpe Oboku Ura~~n~~ ye Efe Ekpe Esit Edik, Otung lodge, Mbarak~~em~~ lodge. Cobham Town lodge, Obutong lodge, combined lodges of Adiabo Iboku Esit Edik, Mbiabo lodge and Ikoneto lodge. It has been rumoured that Henshaw Town is also aspiring for its own separate lodge on the rationale that its founder was the oldest son among the Okoho group. Each of these lodges has its hierarchy of offices which is basically identical. All the above lodges collectively belong to Ekpe Efik Eburutu with the Obong Eyamba of Duke Town taking precedence over all others as first among equals.

Membership in the lodges tends to be fluid. An Ekpe chief from one lodge is equally recognised in other lodges and may attend meetings in any of the lodges, except for 'closed door' inner circle meetings. With the proliferation of lodges it has become possible for most etuboms to hold high ranks in Ekpe. Thus, the creation of lodges may be seen as an attempt by settlements to keep politically abreast of one another. It serves to counteract any assertion or feeling of supremacy or superiority over others which Ekpe chieftaincy creates. It is therefore possible for the etubom of Adiabo Akani-Obio to hold the office of Obong Ebunko in the Adiabo lodge while the etubom of Eyo Nsa house also holds the same title in Duke Town and Creek Town Combined lodges. Similarly, the etubom of Ikang (Obutong) is the Obong Eyamba of Obutong lodge while the etubom of the Eyamba House is also the Obong Eyamba of

of the combined lodges of Duke Town and Creek Town. It would have been impossible for the etuboms of different houses to keep on a par with their counterparts if Ekpe chieftainships were vested only in the combined lodges of Duke Town and Creek Town.¹⁹

Some members hold ^{multiple} Ekpe titles in different lodges. This is quite possible as all Ekpe lodges are fraternized. Thus, David Henshaw V, held titles in Adiabo Combined lodges, Obutong lodge and Cobham Town lodge. Some even hold offices in Efut and Qua lodges. Chief Francis Archibong, secretary of the Etubom's Council, was first initiated into Ekpe at Big Qua Town. His maternal grandmother was from Qua and her father from Obutong. Later he was given a title in Obutong lodge. He is also a member of the combined lodges of Duke Town and Creek Town.²⁰

Title holders can and do climb up the hierarchical ladder in Ekpe. Etubom Doctor Bassey of Lower Cobham Town was made a title holder in 1935. He became Obong Mbakara in 1965 and later ascended to the office of Obong Nyamkpe in 1969. Similarly although Etubom Ene of Eyo Nsa house was initiated into Ekpe in 1941, he did not ascend to the office of Obong Ebunko until 1972. However, while some members have mobile Ekpe careers others do not because they almost immediately assume a high office after initiation. The high title therefore marks the end of their mobility, especially if no other title 'belongs' to them ^{or is available} and they cannot afford the costs of lobbying for a higher grade. In Duke Town and Henshaw Town particularly, few etuboms are title holders. In fact, none of the Henshaw Town etuboms are mbong Ekpe i.e. title holders. This has been attributed to the monopolization of titles by young usurpers. Con-

sequently, when Etubom David Henshaw was proclaimed Obong elect in 1971, he did not hold a title in Duke Town. It was only during the ensuing Obongship dispute of 1971 that he was bestowed the title of Obong Mbakara by Obutong lodge (Udoh, 1971, para 39). One of the grounds which some of the Duke Town houses used to challenge his selection was based on the fact that he was not a title holder. Although it is against the general rule which upholds the precedence of seniority and descent in succession to offices for younger persons to hold offices before their elders as has already been shown, this rule is not strictly adhered to within Ekpe. This is because in recent times other considerations such as wealth, social and political status and influence, have also become quite important, sometimes of sufficient importance to overlook the seniority and descent rules.

Each title holder has a certain number of shares allocated to him. These indicate the number of persons he can initiate into Ekpe. When he has exhausted his shares he can no longer initiate people into the fraternity except through lobbying others for the use of their shares for which he must pay dearly. The Obong Eyamba as head of Ekpe may decide that shares may be re-allocated afresh to members as he sees fit. Not until this is done can members once more have shares to dispose of as they wish. It is with these shares that an officer may initiate his children and others who pay him for it.²¹

Despite the proliferation of lodges, Ekpe still presents a unified front at crucial times, e.g. during the death, selection or funeral obsequies of an Obong. These occasions are presided over by the adaidahas, Ekpe chiefs. Therefore Ekpe

serves as another medium for the unification of the different clans and settlements. It also serves as a forum through which corporate decisions affecting Efik society may be made. Occasionally also the lodges of Qua, Efut and Efik bury their sectional interests and hold joint consultations. As a secret society, Ekpe has the ability to exercise authority and ensure compliance.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EKPE LODGE

Before a settlement or clan can build its own Ekpe lodge it must receive approval and support from the already established lodges. It is the combined Efik lodges who through their recognition or non-recognition sanction the approval of a new lodge. A new branch can only be launched with the approval and assistance of already established lodges. According to the Udoh Report there are certain conditions which must be fulfilled before a community can establish its own autonomous lodge (Udoh, 1971, para 59). This also supports Waddell's account of a manner through which Ekpe was to be established in a foreign community (Waddell, 1863:265 and Reul, 1968: 229-30). Efe is just a shed. What legitimises or validates a lodge to an Ekpe shrine is the presence of the Ekpe stone, itiad Ekpe. Each lodge must have one. Its significance, being fundamental to the establishment of lodges, is a well guarded secret. Waddell described the Ekpe stone of Creek Town as pentagonal pieces of basalt which had originally been brought from the Cameroons (Waddell, 1863:250). Animal sacrifices are offered to the stone and blood poured over it.

Outside most lodges is an effigy. This is sometimes made in the form of a man. It is usually blackened by sacrificial blood. Often the effigy is the only obvious symbol to mark an Ekpe lodge. In 1846, the Creek Town Ekpe lodge effigy was carved out of wood. It was in the form of man on a pedestal, on the front of which was a serpent and on the back was carved an alligator (Waddell, 1863:250). The intertwining of the man, serpent and alligator depicts a connection between Ndem (deity) (which is sometimes signified by a serpent and alligator as water creatures), and Ekpe. Water, as in streams, rivers and seas, is the traditional domain of Ndem which will be fully discussed in the following chapter.

Most lodges comprise only a skeletal structure and some have no doors. There is no fear of theft because of the ever present and far reaching oath, mbiam, against such action as well as the supernatural sanction (and fine) such an act would incur. Most of all, fear of the unknown prevents people from trespassing. Women may be allowed into the lodge when Ekpe is not in residence. Usually drinks (spirits) are left on the table uncovered for the ancestors and spirits to partake of and care is taken to ensure a regular supply. The population and size of settlements are the other two factors which determine the establishment of lodges. As such a lodge may be established for political or administrative purposes.

INITIATION CEREMONY

There are three types of Ekpe ceremonies. The first is the ordinary initiation of men which does not involve 'real' Ekpe secrets. The second is that of women, which is strictly ceremonial, and as such, initiates are not allowed to share in Ekpe secrets of any level. The third, which is the most important and expensive of all the ceremonies, concerns initiation into grades. In the majority of cases the exorbitant expenses encountered in the initiation into high offices is due to the fact that the initiates are not really qualified to hold these titles. This is in the sense that their families have no 'right' to these titles as they do not 'belong' to them. As has been shown frequent usage and hold on titles tends to confer certain rights and privileges on families over those titles. Unqualified individuals therefore must use other means to manipulate and ease their way to the desired titles. The economic status of the individual is one very important consideration in the conferment of Ekpe titles on otherwise unqualified people. Initiates have certain prescribed items or fees which must be given to each title member of the particular lodge in which they seek an office. The type of 'gifts' given is determined by the rank and status of the title holders, to whom they are to be given.

Prior to the initiation day, the prospective initiate intimates to a title holder to whom he is close, of his desire to hold a title. This title holder then acts as his sponsor. He helps to lobby and solicit other title holders over the entrance of the prospective candidate. The sponsor confers with other Ekpe chiefs, sounds them out and brings pressure to bear on them if necessary. If they give their consent to

the initiation of the aspirant into a grade the sponsor informs him and a date is fixed. To validate the initiation ceremony, the Obong Eyamba or the deputy Obong Ebunko or the next in the hierarchy, Obong Nyamkpe should be present. As has been discussed this is not always adhered to. The sponsor also advises his 'ward' on the Ekpe chiefs, who should be visited and what gifts should be presented.

In order to promote and publicise his initiation and ensure wide recognition and acknowledgement in the future as a title holder, the initiate invites title holders from other lodges to his initiation ceremony. This general invitation is also issued for 'fraternity' and social reasons. Generally, once other members hear of a pending initiation ceremony, especially one into a titled grade, they regard it as an occasion for feasting and entertainment and therefore flock to attend. The initiate therefore must cater especially for all title holders from his lodge and make provision for those from other lodges as well as ordinary 'floor' members. Dishes of special specification and drinks (spirits and soft drinks) must be served to all present at the expense of the initiate. Palm wine and illicit gin are also served.

There are a number of prescribed dishes for Ekpe ceremonies. Some of the Ekpe dishes include ukang, which consists of plantain cooked with dried, smoked meat; iwuk abia Ekpe, which is a dish made from yam and is like ordinary yam pottage, except that the yam pieces, to befit Ekpe status, are cut into very large pieces. A whole yam for example, may be cut into only six pieces. The sizes must be formidable to suit the daunting aura of Ekpe. The pieces are said to be large enough to frighten

the eater and its mere size should fill up the stomach. A goat must also be slaughtered, part of which is to be used for a soup, afia efere, to which no oil is added. This soup is regarded as a special delicacy and is accompanied by pounded yam, using abia. The entries in Antera Duke's diary on Ekpe food refers to similar dishes (Duke, 1956:14/8/85, 12/11/86). A great deal of importance is attached to the correct cooking of Ekpe dishes.²²

Ekpe chiefs, as title holders, believe they are empowered to initiate people, especially those within their families or close friends, into Ekpe. As has been discussed, the possession of shares by titled members enables them to do so. The initial ceremony which makes a person an Ekpe initiate is almost a perfunctory act compared to that which elevates members to chieftaincy status (Goldie, 1890:86). There is little or no revelation of real secrets at this primary level. Initiation into Ekpe is therefore open to all Efiks both freeborn and non-freeborn alike. In certain cases, foreigners have also been initiated but this is usually in an honorary capacity. In pre-colonial days trusted slaves were frequently initiated into Ekpe. Eyo II bought Ekpe rights for several of his headmen. Membership of Ekpe gave them an exalted position almost akin to nobility. Thus, Ironbar was among the 'gentlemen' of Duke Town. (Waddell, 1863:317). Non-Efiks are also initiated into Ekpe for political reasons and public demonstration of association. Thus, the first Premier, Sir Tafawa Balewa, President Dr. Namdi Asikiwe of Nigeria, and the then leader of the opposition group, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, were all initiated into Ekpe at different times in the country's political history. In 1983, the Obong, amidst growing criticism from some etuboms (Ekpe chiefs) similarly initiated the President.

When an individual is to be initiated he is usually taken to the Ekpe lodge where he undergoes certain secret rites. Camwood, iduo white native chalk, ndom, and a yellow substance, are rubbed into the person's skin at certain points in a prescribed manner by an Ekpe chief while chanting some incantations, some of which the initiate is asked to repeat. At the end of this he is declared an Ekpe member and is given a peacock feather to wear as a symbol.²³ This initiation ceremony, being purely a primary one conferring only membership status, is also done outside lodges.

INITIATION CEREMONY AT EFUT ABUA LODGE²⁴

The potential initiate X was a civil servant from Lagos. Although he was Efik (with strong Efut connections as well) he had spent all his adult life outside Calabar. His father was half Efik and half Efut but his mother was Efik. X's senior brother, Y, already held the office of Obong Ebunko in the lodge, a title which he had held since 1976. Both X and his brother belonged to the royal family both in Efut and Efik societies. Their grandfather had been the Muri (head ruler) of Efut. The present Muri of Efut Abua was a close kinsman. Similarly, the Obong of Calabar is a cousin of their late father. They were therefore highly connected in both Efik and Efut societies. They manipulated their Efik and Efut ties differently according to the situation and operational context. Since his initiation as Obong Ebunko, Y had become more involved in 'home' affairs and as such visited Calabar more frequently than his brother. Y retired as the legal adviser of an international oil company.

Although X had not been previously initiated into Ekpe, as a member of the royal family he belonged to the category of a 'child of Ekpe', eyen Ekpe. By birth he automatically had Ekpe in his veins and the initiation ceremony was but a formality. For the ceremony which took place at Efut Abua lodge in Creek Town, the following items were bought from Calabar:- a goat, two chickens, several pieces of stock fish, yams and bottles of spirits. Provision was made in Creek Town for the supply of palm wine and illicit gin, a very popular local drink. X, his brother, and a colleague of his who, incidentally, was also a title holder in Ikoneto lodge, had travelled from Calabar for this ceremony. At the appointed period, X was asked to change from his French suit into the traditional Efik costume. This consisted of a wrapper of six yards, Ofong isin, and a white long-tailed shirt. The wrapper was tied at the waist and knotted at the side. In the pre-colonial era only 'gentlemen' and Ekpe chiefs were allowed to wear long shirts and long wrappers (Waddell, 1863:438).

The Muri and other Ekpe chiefs then took him to the lodge where the initiation ceremony took place. Local Ekpe members were also present in the lodge. At different times the voices burst out in incantations or replies to salutations and songs. After about an hour and a half, X emerged from the lodge into the Muri's house to divulge himself of the rest of his Western and foreign objects - wrist watch, silver bracelet, wedding ring and spectacles. He then returned to the lodge barefooted for the rest of the rites. Shortly afterwards, he came out shirtless. By this time the ceremony had been completed. On his trunk were vertical and circular markings in camwood, native chalk and

a yellow substance. He also had some markings on his forehead and limbs. He was not without the hallmark of his newly acquired status, the peacock feather, ntakanda, in his hair. He was now wholly and truly an Ekpe initiate. The conferment of an Ekpe title was now just a step away. The Ekpe markings described above were similar to those made by Eyamba V on an Ekpe initiate which Waddell described as his 'patent of nobility' (Waddell, 1863:246), and are symbolic of scratches made by the leopard.

However, this was by no means the end of the ceremonies. The Muri who had come out with a few people to perform my initiation ceremony in his house returned afterwards to the lodge from where further incantations and salutations could be heard. By this time it had grown dark being about 7.30 p.m. A messenger came out of the lodge and went round the neighbourhood shouting a warning that Ekpe was about to come out and the uninitiated and women were to confine themselves indoors or come out at personal peril. Soon all the ineligible persons disappeared indoors. After a period of 45 minutes, voices could be heard outside in the dark night. Shortly afterwards the Muri, X, his brother, Ekpe chiefs and others came out of the lodge and returned to the Muri's home. This marked the end of the initiation ceremonies and the beginning of socialisation.

The Muri's wife with the help of some of her family, began the preparation of Ekpe food, namely iwuk usung abia, yam potage, and afia efere ebode - goat soup. Meanwhile, drinks were freely served to all present. Eventually the dishes were served. There were intermittent outbursts of salutations by the Ekpe chiefs throughout the evening. The ceremony was an opportunity for members, especially the young men, to revel, drink and

make sport generally. The initiation ceremony in all had cost quite a large sum of money, the exact amount was undisclosed being part of the secret. A proportion of the cost was in cash and was distributed among the Ekpe chiefs and others as their share of the initiation fee as is customary according also to documentary evidence (Duke, 1956:23/3/85;14/8/85). The drinking continued throughout the night until the following day. There was very little sleep.

The next day started again with drinking. The initiate and his party were invited by two of the Ekpe chiefs to their homes. There were discussions on traditional matters, e.g. the origin of Efut, land disputes with a neighbouring Efik clan, Mbarakom, land demarcation and boundaries, renovations to the Ekpe lodge, etc. As it was Sunday, people were passing by on their way to Church and as the house was by the roadside, discussions were occasionally interrupted to introduce X to some unknown relatives and trace their relationship. Ironically, two churches had been built on the same row on which the Ekpe lodge was located, one was Revivalist and the other Methodist. The location of these churches, just a stones throw from the lodge, was considered improper by some of the Ekpe chiefs who clearly thought Christianity and Ekpe ceremonies were incompatible. There was a brief talk of the possibility of changing the location of the lodge. Some arguments ensued on an issue of deference to the Muri but these soon evaporated. More drinks were bought and some small sums of money given out. Eventually, the initiate and his party, amidst strong exhortations to visit home more often so he could know his relatives and not alienate himself from his roots, left Creek Town for Calabar. The initiate

still had his Ekpe markings which he was admonished not to wash off.

BROTHERHOOD

Initiation into any of the Efik lodges confers universal membership and ability to attend plays, ceremonies and open meetings of other lodges both within and outside Efik society, e.g. Efut, Qua and Igbo. However, ordinary initiation does not confer the right to attend 'closed' lodge meetings of title holders. On the other hand, title holders from other lodges may be invited to attend 'closed' inner circle meetings of another lodge. If an unknown initiate from one lodge attends a meeting in a foreign lodge, he may be required to identify himself and give proof of grade. This may be assessed through one's knowledge of Ekpe incantations or salutations, e.g. the manner in which one 'holds Ekpe' - di kama Ekpe. When it comes to his turn, or at a certain point in the process of salutations he then chants out his title. Ruel similarly described this performance as the ability and competence to 'command Ekpe' (Ruel, 1969:225).

Initiates cannot lie about their titles or lay false claim to titles because most of the Ekpe chiefs of the various Efik lodges are known to one another. Sometimes an initiate may be asked to cite who initiated him and some of the title holders present during the ceremony to cross-check claims. At present as proof, some initiates attempt to capture the occasion through photographs. There are certain rules of etiquette which further serves to demarcate Ekpe chiefs from floor members. Only title holders may sit at the high table, okpokoro Ekpe. It is a griev-

ious offence for floor members to attempt to sit with Ekpe chiefs. Similarly, ordinary initiates cannot casually help themselves to drinks from the table but must wait to be offered. Nor can certain apparels such as shoes, glasses or jewellery be worn²⁵ beyond certain areas of lodges. This again supports Ruel's account of Ekpe society among the Banyang of Cameroon (Ruel, 1969:224,226).

The scope of participation in Ekpe activities is therefore largely defined by grades. This restriction of certain activities to title holders bears out the incident reported by Waddell, where some initiates were sentenced to death for witnessing secret rites beyond their levels. In pre-colonial days, such offenders could only be saved if friends or relatives could 'buy up all Egbo for him' i.e. have him initiated into all the required grades. It is considered a profanity for an^{ordinary} initiate to observe the inner secrets of Ekpe, it is a sacrilege for a non-initiate whose status and therefore offence is almost tantamount to that of a female. The gravity of intruding on Ekpe secrets was also reflected in another case where the son of an Ekpe chief from the Cameroons (Bakasi) was executed for having lied about his initiation into Ekpe. Although his father was a high title holder he could not redeem his son (Waddell, 1863:606).

INITIATION OF WOMEN

In the pre-colonial era Ekpe was absolutely a male preserve. Even then, there were categories of male eligible for admission into Ekpe secrets. Only initiated men were worthy of observing and participating in the secrets. There was further differentiation among initiates:- ordinary (floor) initiates, who could participate only up to a certain level, beyond which participation was an offence unless one was a title holder. Women were profane as far as Ekpe was concerned. They were not even fit to pronounce its name. Women and the uninitiated fled with dread at the mention of Ekpe. To view its secrets or be caught by its masquerade idem iquo meant death (Waddell, 1863:592). A number of items are believed to taint an Ekpe member. Before he can offer sacrifices or participate in certain activities, he must cleanse himself. Being a twin debars members from performing certain Ekpe rituals. This is in accordance with the Efik conception of twins as evil beings. Similarly, a menstruating female or intercourse with a woman before a ritual contaminates the individual who must undergo purification before participation.

In pre-colonial days there were only two occasions on which women could be found around Ekpe activities. The more important of these was during funeral obsequies of Ekpe chiefs and important figures. Ekpe masquerades in paying their last respects to the deceased often flogged the widow(s), children and other close relatives. The family was also made to give money to Ekpe. Payment of money mitigated the beatings but did not prevent them.²⁵ Also, during the coming of age ceremony of girls just before marriage, the importance of the occasion

as well as the status of the girls family was often indicated by the performance of Ekpe plays. Ekpe chiefs sometimes allowed their daughters to stand on the skin of the leopard during the coming of age ceremony as a symbol of royalty (Duke, 1956, 24/10/85). Women also had the sole responsibility of preparing Ekpe food.

Today, much of the female dread of Ekpe has evaporated. This is mainly due to the fact that much of the judicial and executive powers of Ekpe have been curtailed, also women are now actually initiated into Ekpe. In addition women generally, both initiated and non-initiated alike, can now openly observe public performances although traditional decorum still demands they do not make themselves conspicuous. It is still not 'proper' for a woman to openly photograph any of the idem (masquerade) Ekpe. During the 1983 coronation activities a female spectator was very conspicuously photographing a masquerade, one of the Ekpe chiefs was so incensed that he threatened her with the Ekpe whip, Isimupam. His actions brought a sudden hush to the crowd in speculation of further developments.

Despite the initiation of women into Ekpe, female membership is only peripheral. Women as a rule do not participate in Ekpe activities. They are not supposed to know Ekpe salutations or incantations much less to say them. The majority of the women initiated into Ekpe are so honoured because of their family status. They are either of the royal family or belong to the 'Ekpe children' category. Others may be initiated because of their association as friends or relatives of title holders. Women are not initiated into grades. Ekpe grades are the exclusive preserve of men and denotes political mobility, whereas

female membership is static. As membership of women is merely ceremonial and of no prime importance in relation to that of men, it is almost always performed as a complementary part of the male initiation. The same substances are used for female and male initiation ceremonies. However, the markings drawn on the woman is different from that of men. This is due to the necessity of decorum in relation to a woman's body, apart from the secret rites. Thus, while men have marks drawn on their forehead, trunk and limbs, women only have marks on the forehead, arms and legs. Like those of male initiates, these are drawn while the Ekpe chief chants incantations. At the end of the marking, Ekpe salutations are made. Finally, the woman is pronounced an Ekpe initiate and the peacock feather, ntakanda is duly placed in her hair as a symbol of her new status.

Being an Ekpe initiate is particularly prestigious for women who are traditionally excluded from its activities. Firstly, membership indicates their birth and social status. It elevates them into a much sought after position as members of the powerful and prestigious Ekpe society. Secondly, as initiation ceremonies are expensive, membership also indirectly connotes affluence. Furthermore, it confers a degree of privilege over non-initiates. They are unlikely to be randomly flogged by Ekpe masquerades on sight of the peacock feather. Also, some male members would concede talking to them and allow them to listen to peripheral Ekpe discussions because they have been initiated. However, the initiation of women does not confer them with any real right or privilege to learn Ekpe secrets or observe secret Ekpe activities. They may not, for

example, enter an Ekpe lodge when Ekpe is present. Similarly, they are forbidden to make Ekpe salutations and it is an abomination for them to respond to the call of Ekpe.²⁷

EKPE FUNERAL RITES²⁸

When an Ekpe chief or an important person, for example, etubom or chief dies, other Ekpe chiefs must be informed. As Ekpe chiefs also function in other capacities in societies, for instance, as family chiefs, etuboms etc. this is easily done. There are secret rites which must be performed to send off the deceased. Depending on the office of the deceased and the extent of his religious affiliation Ekpe may completely take over the burial rites. This is very much like the activities of the masonic lodges on the death of its members (Cohen, 1979: 109). If the deceased had minimal Church membership then the funeral would be wholly an Ekpe affair. This being the case the family of the deceased would be given time to view the deceased for the last time before Ekpe members take over the body. The Ekpe chiefs ask to be given a private audience with the deceased. Alone, away from the prying and profane eyes of the uninitiated and women, they drink and perform secret rites. The Ekpe staff, esan Ekpe and leaves, ikong oboti on the table indicate the presence of Ekpe and serves as a warning to non-members. The sons of the deceased may be permitted to be present during part of the Ekpe rites.

The death of the deceased is publicly announced by the beating of a drum on the roof top, obodo eyong ekom. This is beaten early in the morning and last thing at night. The drum is beaten until the day of the burial. Meanwhile, Ekpe

masquerades, idem, will perform for at least seven days, culminating in the burial ceremony. Also during this period, a procession led by the eldest daughter of the deceased will go around important streets, bemoaning the loss of their father, singing praises and extolling him in poems, interspaced by the beating of the gong and at certain periods, the group breaks out in sonorous ululations. This is called eyet awan, meaning public cry, which is also performed until the burial. The leader of the procession carries a staff, esang, which denotes royalty. Eyet Awan is performed only for freeborn royalty. The family of the deceased also must kill a cow as part of the obligations demanded of the royal family. Also, within this period a tent-like structure is erected. This is of special significance as the degree of elaborateness is associated directly with the affluence of the family. The mkpoto traditionally is decorated with family brass heirlooms such as hugh basins and trays, bells etc. pieces of velvet, brass soap stands, souvenirs of the colonial era. Over the mkpoto the Union Jack flag is flown at full mast. While some families follow the traditional pattern of display others attempt to be more individualistic. One such mkpoto was decorated almost exclusively with onyonyo, the long traditional Efik women's gown. There were about a dozen of these sewn in different styles hung on the walls of the canopy. These had belonged to the deceased. On the floor were several pairs of velvet and satin hand-made shoes decorated with beads. Traditionally, only Efik freeborn may have mkpoto erected on their behalf. However, this is no longer strictly adhered to.



The Mkpoto, tent-like structure erected in honour of a deceased who traditionally must be of the royal family. On the covered chair is a brass crown.



Funeral procession: part of the funeral obsequies for the deceased. Note the crown and staff which are symbols of royalty.

During the period of the funeral obsequies people are warned privately not to go out at night. Before the drum is erected on the roof top, libation and other rituals have to be performed. Accordingly similar rites are performed before it is brought down. Ekpe burial is regarded as directly contrary to the Church and Christian principles by the ecclesiastics. It is considered pagan, ritualistic, and bordering on heathenism by Church ministers. Consequently, the Church refuses to perform the final blessing for an Ekpe chief or individuals who are to be given Ekpe burials. Nonetheless, some Ekpe chiefs regard themselves as Christians as well. As Christians, the last blessing is of utmost importance in their journey to the other world. Some do not see a necessary conflict in their membership of both groups. They have managed to arrive at a compromise between the two belief systems. This is not unlike Middleton's Akuropon community where Christians make surreptitious visits to shrines to be cleansed from pollution., and whose religious lives comprise a curious mixture of traditional practices, orthodox and spiritualistic churches (Middleton, 1983: 7). One system of belief is simply more appropriate on certain occasions than others and therefore is the one to be followed at that particular period.

Thus, if the deceased is to receive full Ekpe burial, Ekpe takes over completely and performs the burial rites. Sympathisers and members of the family observe from a respectable distance. On laying the coffin to rest, Ekpe's voice is heard and the masquerades, idem, ring the bells attached to their costume. The type of idem depends on the social status of the deceased. If he was a high ranking Ekpe official, higher

idem such as Ebunko may appear to do him honour. Important figures usually have rare and unusual masquerades to pay their last respects. However, if the burial is predominantly a Christian one, the participation of Ekpe is relegated to second place. The church people led by the minister, choirs, family of the deceased, representatives of the house, affiliated associations and their sympathisers form a long procession from the Church to the cemetery. Ekpe only follows at a distance. When the Church or Christian rite is over and the minister and choirs have left, then Ekpe performs. The masquerades and Ekpe chiefs congregate at the grave-side while other people stand back.

On the appointed day an Ekpe ceremony, efamba is performed. This is usually done seven days after the burial. Women and non-initiates are not supposed to go out at night during this period. In pre-colonial times this would probably be the period lives would be taken. Ekpe members proceed to make public cry eyet awan for seven days. The last day marks the end of the ceremonies. Ekpe chiefs are given a cow or goat by the head of the family in appreciation of their performances during the funeral obsequies. They are also given drinks, mostly spirits and some money. At the end of this period widow(s), children and close relatives are beaten by idem ikwo.

Generally, information on the Ekpe fraternity, its functions and activities, because of the secrecy which pervades it, has been sketchy and fragmentary. Members, especially title holders are initiated under stringent oaths, and are sworn to secrecy. The oath puts them under pressure not to reveal secret rituals or details of the fraternity to non-initiates and women. This pressure brings out a series of reactions. At the one extreme members decline absolutely to discuss Ekpe with a woman. Others become antagonised while some are uncertain of the safety limits within which they may enter into discussions, or do so very reluctantly. The supernatural and physical sanctions prove to be very powerful barriers. Consequently, information is sometimes confused and garbled and informants are unwilling to expatiate or clarify issues.

NOTES

1. Madam Arit Oken, Ndem priestess, Ikot Iske, 27th April 1982.
2. Esien Edet Ofonyete, 28th April 1982, Oken Ita Itam, 28th April 1982.
3. Etubom Offiong Obo Obo Offiong (disputant in the Eyamba House case), 12th February 1982.
4. Not only did the Efik have extensive trade links with the Cameroons, they also participated in activities in each others Ekpe lodges. See Antera Duke's diary, especially 8/2/86:p.43; 1/5/86:p.45. They swore oath for mutual benefits.
5. Significantly, the leaves of the Newbouldia laevis tree are also used in the Sande female secret society among the Mende of Sierra Leone. Its purifying attributes make it especially potent for secret rituals. (Jedrey, Africa, 1976 volume 46, No.3. There are a number of similarities between the uses and functions of Efik mbiam (medicine, oath, etc) and Mende hale. See also Offiong O. (Africa, volume 53, No.3, 1983) for other uses of mbiam.
6. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, Obong Ebunko, Adiabo Akani Obio, 22nd February 1983. Mr. Bassey O. Offiong, Obong Nyamkpe Efut Abua, 9th February 1983. The list of Ekpe titles was based on these interviews but was also cross-checked with Hart's compilation (Hart, 1964:para 157).
7. Mr. Theodore Cobham, secretary Eyamba House Council, grandson of Eyamba VI, 8th February 1982.
8. Mr. B.O. Offiong, 9th February 1983. See also Hart for a similar complaint that masquerades from high Ekpe grades such as Ebunko, Nyamkpe are sent to honour public figures on arrival in Calabar when idems of lesser importance from lower ranks would have sufficed. (Hart, 1964:para 174).
9. This assertion by Mr. T. Cobham was also confirmed by Mr. B.O. Offiong. See also Hart, 1964:para 181, for a similar statement.
10. Mr. B.O. Offiong, 9th February 1983.
11. Although I was not present in the Ekpe lodge during the initiation ceremony as Ekpe was in session, I was, however, at the house of the Muri of Efut Abna where I was later initiated into Ekpe. The house was about two minutes walk from the Ekpe lodge.
12. Chief Ekpo E. Eyo Archibong, Obong Nkanda Ekpe, Duke Town, grandson of Archibong IV, Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, Mr. B.O. Offiong, 22nd February 1983.

13. National Newspaper of the Cross River State 'Chronicle' 1983.
14. Chief B.O. Offiong, 10th February 1983.
15. Chief Francis E. Archibong, secretary Etuboms' Council, 4th August 1982.
- 16-17. Chief B.O. Offiong, 9th February 1983.
18. Etubom Dr. Bassey, Obong Nyamkpe Ekpe, Cobham Town, 28th September 1982.
- 19-21. Etubom Ene Oka Ene, of Eyo Nsa House, 29th September 1983, Chief F. Archibong, 4th August 1982, and Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 23rd October 1983.
- 22-24. Special thanks to the Muri of Efut Abua, the Obong Ebunko Ekpe (Efut Abua) and other title holders, 4th June 1983.
25. Chief Francis Archibong, 3rd August 1982.
26. The beating of widows and children of the deceased by Ekpe masquerade is an old rite which serves as a sort of purgation and indication of the loss of an Ekpe chief/important figure. See Antera Duke's diary for accounts of similar incidents, 12/11/86; 13/11/86. (Duke, 1956).
27. Chief Ita Itam, Creek Town, 2nd May 1982.
28. Chief B.O. Offiong 18/2/83.
Mr. E.C. Ofonyete 28/4/82.
Mr. Okon I. Itam 28/4/82.

CHAPTER SIX

N D E M

NDEM

The Efik believe in the presence of an almighty deity, Abasi Ibom, God, who normally abides in the sky. Thus, they swear by God in Heaven, Abasi ke eyon gesticulating to the sky. While God is omnipotent and omniscient, the Efik have a powerful spirit who belongs especially to them and is their tutelary deity, Ndem Efik. Although the influence of Ndem is far reaching and its spirit may be anywhere and everywhere, it resides closer to the people than Abasi, its common abode being in the water - streams, creeks, rivers etc. Although Ndem, unlike Ekpe, is indigenous to the Efik and which Waddell described as the juju they brought with them when they came out of Ibibio land (Waddell, 1863:314) very little has been written about it. This is perhaps due to the fact that most of the people are Christians belonging either to one of the orthodox sects or to revivalistic groups, while a few combine the above with traditional practices. Middleton gives an account of a similar combination and mixture of religious practices and belief systems in Akropong (Middleton, 1983: 7).

The prevalence of the belief in Ndem is mainly the result of the relationship between the Efik, the environment and subsequent occupation. The Efik are basically riverine people, the largest concentration of them living among creeks and streams. Before they became actively involved in the slave trade they were originally fishermen. Hunting was a seasonal occupation and farming basically subsistent to provide for domestic needs or at best to barter locally. They depended on the streams and rivers for transportation into the hinterland. When European trade began, economic activities were conducted largely on

vessels anchored on the rivers and streams. Slaves were transported in canoes on to waiting vessels and in return trade goods were taken to the hinterland. Ndem is the overseer of all but especially the rivers and seas, owner of life within them and commander of the vessels that travelled on them. Accordingly, Effiat (also known as Tom Shott Island) fishermen used to sacrifice fair complexioned girls or albinos periodically, to the deity of the sea to ensure abundant harvest (Goldie, 1890:43).

Because the surrounding rivers and streams have such a stronghold on their lives, the deity of the waters is a powerful one to be feared and appeased with regular offerings. Indeed most riverine people along the Niger Delta exhibit strong sentiments to the waters which are expressed in their religious beliefs. The Kalabari, for instance, have strong beliefs in Owu the 'water people', a set of gods believed to control the waters. They control the water level, waves, movement and depths of fishes. Like the Efik, specific owus (gods) are associated with particular tracts of creeks and those who fish in their territory must pay homage to ^{them} for rich harvests (Horton, 1960: 17).

Ndem had a high priest, Oku Ndem. He was a sort of divine king. In the traditional Efik tripartite form of government, Oku Ndem was the religious arm. So important was the office that it was the Ndem high priest who was empowered to instal the Obong. The Obong was merely the civil head of the community, competent to deal with the Europeans. Thus, in nineteenth century Creek Town, among the Eyo family, while Eyo Eyo was the Obong (Eyo II), his elder brother, Tom Honesty, was the

patriarch and actual head of the family. According to Waddell, the Ndem high priest was the greatest man in the country. He was called King Calabar (Waddell, 1846:640).

The Ndem high priest, as king-maker, was entitled to the skin of all leopards killed. Vagrants and slaves who fled to the shrine for sanctuary immediately became the property of Ndem and could not be harmed (Goldie, 1890:43). However, after 1800 such was the dramatic conversion of Efik from fishing villages into slave trading communities that the importance of the Ndem high priest degenerated into obscurity. Formerly, he used to receive tributes from the people but by 1890 the holder of the office was a poor man from Cobham Town who hardly had enough to eat. The sanctions imposed on the office also discouraged interest from prospective candidates. The high priest could not engage in trade, the new lifeline of the community, nor could he eat in the presence of anyone. With the death of the last incumbent in 1890 the office of Oku Ndem ceased to exist (Waddell, 1846:315).

Ndem worship and all its affiliated activities are associated particularly with the Eyo Ema clan which includes Otung and Cobham Town. They are the custodians of Ndem, especially the Ene Ndem family (Upper Cobham Town). Accordingly, the priest and priestess who officiate during the traditional installation ceremony and perform the anointment and pouring of water rites on the Obong elect, are from Ene Ndem¹ (Upper Cobham Town). Similarly, ^{it was} the etubom of Ekpo Abasi house (Lower Cobham Town) ^{who} installed the Obong with the ntinya, the traditional crown, during the ceremony.

The offices of Oku Ndem and Obong were originally fused together, both being vested in one person, Eyo Ema in Creek Town when the Efik first settled there. Eyo Ema was given the title Edidem to conote his status as supreme ruler.

NDEM DEITIES

According to Efik cosmology, Abasi (God) is the most powerful spirit on earth and next to him is Ndem. The most powerful of the Efik deities is Ndem Efik. There are lesser spirits or idem to which Ndem Efik delegate different duties. Outstanding physical features in the rivers and seas, e.g. sandbanks, whirlpools and sandbars, are regarded as the abode of specific Ndems. The Kalabari also share similar beliefs (Horton, 1960:18). Similarly, each of the Efik clans or settlements has its own special Ndem deity who protects it from evil or illness, and who must be consulted before important functions such as the installation of an Obong. Sacrifices must be offered regularly to maintain good relationship between the deity and its subjects.

The Ndem of Adiabo Akani Obio is Ukong-Esuk. Before the coronation ceremony of 1982, the etubom of Adiabo Akaŋi-Okio went before Ukong-Esuk to inform it of the pending ceremony and the participation of the house.² Similarly, Henshaw Town is associated with Sunko Monko. A sacred tree of the raffia palm, Iya represents its shrine. Significantly, the Obong's palace is built in Henshaw Town on elevated land which overlooks the abode of Sunko Monko on the Calabar river.³ Anansa Ikot

Obutong, the deity of Obutong is believed to reside at the head of a spring or river near the town's former site by the Hope Waddell Training Institute. This bears out Waddell's claim (Waddell, 1863:328).

There are multitudes of spirits under Ndem. There are as many as there are angels, and some of them are listed below:-

1. Ansa Ikot Obutong
2. Akpa Uyoh
3. Ikong Usinibo Nne
4. Ebebe
5. Esiere Ebom
6. Ekpenyong
7. Afia Wan
8. Eka Asari
9. Udom Inyang
10. Ekarabitiad
11. Amia Nkanika
12. Oworoba
13. Inyang Edini
14. Ekanem Unan
15. Akpan Ekpe Uyong
16. Ewa Okon
17. Otokpa Udia Inyang
18. Ifiaya
19. Ofiong Abia
20. Uman Enang
21. Ekpoi Itiaba
22. Akpando
23. Nkonginua Akpa Efik
24. Atabru Inyang
25. Obo Iwomen
26. Afia Wan Esuk Ekondo
27. Atakpo

The different Ndems have special objects associated with them which must accompany offerings made to them. Offerings

or sacrifices are usually made in a basket ekete. For Anansa Ikot Obutong a pipe must be included in the sacrifice, for Afia wan (fair lady) there must be a piece of white cloth. Apart from these special items, usually when a deity is to be appeased it specifies through a medium, oku, or a medicine man abiaibok the objects which must accompany the sacrifice to ensure acceptance.

THE NDEM WORLD

According to Efik belief just as a physical world exists on earth populated by men, women and children living in families with elaborate divisions of labour and social differences so also exists a similar world under water. This is the Ndem world. The Kalabari also believe in the existence of a world under water and have rich myths recounting incidents in the town of the water people (Horton, 1960:18). Like in the physical world, life under water is a busy one with people going about their duties, linked by ties of friendship as well as rivalries. The different deities also have spouses. Atakpo (no.27 above) is said to be the husband of Atabru Inyang (No.24 above).⁵ Occasionally there are marital ties between the water and physical worlds also.⁶ Thus, unknown to an individual he or she may have a spouse in the other world. This association may go unsuspected for a while until the person attempts to take on a spouse. When the individual has been involved in several unsuccessful attempts at marriage a member of the family may go to 'see' what the problem is about. The help of an Ndem adherent or medicine man or spiritualist may be solicited. If the individual is discovered to have already been married

in the spirit world enquiries, are made as to how this spiritual union could be severed in order that a physical union may be formed. The spirit spouse may release its partner on the offering of the specified sacrifice.

However, care must be taken to ensure that the right Ndem is appeased otherwise the food would just be consumed by the wrong Ndem who will do nothing for the cause of the offering. When Ndem is appeased successfully both the person who offers the sacrifice as well as she for whom the sacrifice is offered, are blessed.⁷

POSSESSION

Certain individuals are more disposed than others to be possessed by Ndem. Some families, especially those from Otung, Cobham Town (traditional custodian of Ndem), are identified as Ndem families. In such families it is expected that from time to time Ndem may manifest itself in one of its members. Ndem possesses the female more often than the male although there are both male and female deities. Women by their physical nature are more attractive to Ndem. Firstly, they are the fairer sex and are physically softer and more fleshy than their male counterparts. Women are also supposed to be calm, gentle, the pacifier within the house, all these are attributes associated with Ndem. Some specially feminine features are even more conducive than others to the presence of Ndem. These include exceptionally beautiful women, particularly if they also happen to be light in complexion (as symbolized by Afia wan (No.7 above) i.e. fair lady) or pleasantly plump. Abundant hair is also an Ndem trait. Udom Inyang is believed to be a mermaid



Female Ndem adherents at Efe Asabo, Ndem Shrine, Cobham Town during the traditional installation ceremony.



Male Ndem adherents.

bedecked with combs in her hair and mirrors to admire herself. This deity is similar to the mami-water (mother of water) a goddess popular among riverine societies Ndem embodies all that is pure and peaceful.

There are two main ways in which Ndem affiliates with a person and chooses her to be its medium. Ndem may mark an individual right from birth as its own. Clearly not everyone falls into this category, only selected persons who are acceptable and loved by Ndem are chosen or possessed. Also, ^{as} a supernatural being Ndem cannot be seen by the naked eye or heard by ordinary ears. Only those mediums to whom it makes itself known may observe and communicate with it. Those who were chosen before they were born to be Ndem adherents are said to have come out of the plate of Ndem - usan ndem.⁸ People in this category are believed to have had prior existence in the water world before being sent to earth. On the other hand, there are people who later become possessed by Ndem.

Ndem possession, manifests itself in various forms and sometimes the influence remains undetected for a period. Ndem may make its presence felt by visiting illness or strange behaviour on its chosen ones. Sometimes the individual sees visions, or goes into spontaneous dancing and singing. So strange might be the resultant actions of the possessed that ignorance might cause others to label them as being insane. In some cases such as these, eggs are broken to calm the afflicted person.⁹ The possessed person may be aware or unaware of the influence of Ndem within her. In the latter case the aid of a medium, medicine man, or even a medical doctor may be sought to diagnose the illness with a view to effecting a cure. When the diagnosis

and cure of the doctor fails or when she is unable to explain the illness, then the individual or member(s) of her family may turn to traditional practices for a cure. Sometimes the services of the diviner or medicine man are sought immediately without prior consultations with a medical practitioner. The sequence in the seeking of health care depends on the educational background and religious affiliation of the afflicted and her parents or guardian. A well-educated Christian is likely to consult a medical doctor first before seeking traditional help, if at all. On the other hand the uneducated or semi-literate is more likely to consult traditional practitioners immediately or go to a spiritual church to 'see' what the matter is.

During periods of possession or visitation by Ndem, the deity may give the individual different powers as it sees fit to heal, divine, diagnose illness etc. The person has no power of her own except what has been given her by Ndem who may withdraw them and cease communication with the individual whenever it sees fit. Powers bestowed on a person by Ndem may be withdrawn if abused. The Ndem adherent may or may not charge members of the public for consultation depending on instructions from Ndem. Failure to follow instructions and wrongful charge of fees may result not only in the withdrawal of powers but also punishment for disobedience. When Ndem mediums are instructed not to charge fees they tell prospective clients to give whatever they think suitable.

It is the diviner or medicine man, or an Ndem medium, who after consultation confirms that Ndem has 'taken hold' of the individual. More divination and consultations are required to discover exactly what Ndem desires of the individual.

Sometimes, a sacrifice may be all that is required to appease Ndem, if the possession or influence is due to some slight, or offence on the part of the afflicted person. If this is the case, on offering the sacrifice to appease Ndem the person may be released. Ndem chooses a point or place where it wishes to be appeased, ndi wa. The items for sacrifice vary from one deity to another. Also the components of the sacrifice differ according to the nature of the possession as well as the cause.¹⁰ On the other hand, Ndem might want the person to act as its medium, this type of visitation entails a more protracted relationship between the individual and the deity. Some Ndem require the use of a medium as a go-between and a messenger for specific individuals.

Occasionally, it may be apparent to the possessed that she is acting under the influence of Ndem and she states so. She is then asked to prove that she is indeed under Ndem's influence and that she is not a fake. Because the Efik believe very much in traditional practices, divination is therefore very lucrative. Also, people can be very gullible and it is much easier to blame others for their own personal misfortunes than to accept responsibility for their actions. The prevalent belief in witchcraft also generates and encourages consultations with diviners and medicine men. Witchcraft causes not only individual ruin but also communal disintegration. Belief in the malice of relatives and friends have succeeded in keeping large numbers of Efik away from their home town. This is in line with the observation of Aye (Aye, 1967:162).

To authenticate the claim of an individual, she is asked for proof of Ndem's influence by competent adherents. This

may be done in a number of ways. She may be asked to mention which deity has possessed her and the spot from which it came.¹¹ Others may be asked to decipher nsibidi (usually Ekpe sign writing, a form of which is apparently legible to Ndem adherents). Also, the individual may be asked to recall her Ndem life in the spirit world.¹² Another test comprises the handling of a young palm frond, ekpin, ability to break it indicates a definite sign of Ndem influence.¹³

Possessed individuals may or may not have food restrictions imposed on them. Consumption of foods like cocoyam, fish, mushrooms, oil, pepper vegetables (ikong ubong) or crocodile may be prohibited. Some Ndems are even more severe and impose absolute abstinence from food except for the sucking of native chalk, ndom. Despite this rigid food restriction, the individual does not become hungry.¹⁴ The severity of the restrictions not only varies from one deity to another but also on the status of the individual possessed. Mild food restrictions are imposed on children and young people compared to adults.¹⁵ Possession by Ndem need not necessarily result in seemingly eccentric or violent behaviour by the possessed.

As Ndem belongs to the water world most of its emblems are associated with sea creatures. Thus the python, alligator or ibah and crocodile, fiom are associated with Ndem. So also are vultures, utere, and birds. According to one song, only those loved by the gods are visited by vultures. Vultures are therefore regarded as a good sign, signifying peace unlike the owl or bat. Those so favoured with a visit on their roof tops are said to reciprocate the love by boiling yam and throw-pieces of cooked yam and oil to the vultures.¹⁶ This notion

is similar to the belief among Kalabari and Nembe of the ability of the water people to materialize as pythons, which is also their principal symbol for the water people owu/oru (Horton, 1960:50). Similarly, some people allow snakes to wander freely among their chickens and devour as many eggs as they wish because they are regarded as representatives (idem) of Ndem. Significantly, the shrine where the traditional installation rites are performed is called Efe Asabo, house of boa constrictors. It used to be known as Efe Ndem, Ndem shrine, until the 1950s during the reign of Archibong V, when it became referred to more and more as Efe Asabo.¹⁷ Today, the two names are used interchangeably. As has been seen (Chapter V) efe just means a shed, it is what it houses and what is conducted within it that gives it significance.

The building known as Efe Asabo has been used at various times for different purposes. It has been used alternatively as a police station, a polling station, church, school, as well as a public meeting place. The same building is presently the Ekpe shrine, efe Ekpe of Cobham Town.¹⁸ When Ekpe is present or during an Ndem ceremony, the nature and significance of the building becomes transformed and transcends the secular to the sacred. At such times only those concerned with the ceremonies may enter the shed.

Also, the throne, akata, of Archibong IV depicts in relief various sea and land creatures which are associated with and believed to represent, Ndem. This throne is made out of wood, and is carved from one solid block. Encircling the seat is a snake (asabo) whose tail is held by a mermaid (udom inyang). Other emblems depicted on the throne are ikut, tortoise, and fiom, crocodile.



Akata, traditional throne. It belonged to Archibong IV. Note the various Ndem emblems: mermaid (udom-inyang) holding the snake, asabo, by its tail. The preponderance of Ndem emblems around the akata indicates the relationship between Ndem and Obongship.



NDEM - RELIGION

Participation in Ndem as in most religious activities is very much an individual and highly personalized experience. In Ndem, there is no organized body or fraternity which prospective members may approach for membership, or through which membership may be regulated. Thus, unlike in the Ekpe fraternity there are no Ndem initiates. Consequently, no meeting is held nor are joint regular activities performed in honour of deities like in Ekpe. In most cases, experiences are not shared but remain not only individual but often secret as well. The absence of a high priest, Oku-Ndem, as existed in the pre-missionary era to help knit adherents together, has further made Ndem activities sporadic. Christianity, conversion and education have turned many people away from traditional practices. Christians and the educated shun Ndem religious activities as being fetish, a machinery for eking out a means of living by unscrupulous illiterates. Others concede to the power of the supernatural but believe in letting the unknown well alone.

As has been stated previously, Ndem may reveal itself to a person or influence her actions without necessarily possessing her. This may be done through persistent dream patterns, series of strange incidents, recurrent illnesses or misfortunes. Dreams which are predominantly about water (as in streams, creeks or rivers), sea creatures, or where white cloth features a great deal, indicate Ndem influence. When Ndem reveals itself in its various forms to an individual who refuses to acknowledge its influence or do its bidding because of religious convictions, the deity may visit physical misfortune on the person as punishment. Thus, in Calabar, some people are believed to have lost

their sight or become slightly mad because of their stubbornness or failure to acknowledge Ndem and placate it with sacrifices as they should have done.²⁰

It is due to the above raised issues that Ndem has been mostly overlooked in Efik history and literature and relegated to the background. Consequently very little is known about it. This is remarkable when it is considered that the Efik regard Ndem as a bedrock of their society. Also, it is still an Ndem priest who acts as king maker, and other adherents who perform rites crucial to the installation of the Obong of Calabar. During the installation ceremony conservative Christians for once swallow their religious superiority and concede the importance and paramount significance of Ndem ceremonies for the Obongship in which they all firmly believe. Also, whereas the missionary accounts from which much information of pre-colonial Efik society is based, were sympathetic to fraternities such as the Ekpe which was regarded as an autocratic organization (Waddell, 1846:313), Ndem was more in direct opposition to their mission among the people. Thus, the people kept a great deal of the Ndem activities secret from them (Waddell, 1846:314).

When Ndem wants a public performance put up in its honour it approaches chosen adherents through dreams and other means and reveals the type of dance it wants performed. The type of costumes desired, such as headgear, masks etc may also be projected. The preparation of the masks and dances for Ndem stipulate certain conditions. The individual must be in a state of purity. Sometimes this requires abstinence from sexual relations and strict discrimination in choice of people prepar-

ing their food. As the frequency of performances is dictated by Ndem, they are for the most part irregular. Also, communication and interaction among those brought together to assist in the performance of the play is often short-lived rather than continuous. The end of the performance also brings about the end of a specific and intense association among a few adherents.²¹

NDEM : SACRED AND PROFANE

Apart from its dominant influence in the religious domain, Ndem as a powerful and far-reaching deity also enters into other spheres of activities. The seclusion of girls, traditionally a prerequisite to womanhood and subsequently marriage, is one of such seemingly secular activities.²² As has been stated, plump or pleasantly fat women are sometimes identified as being followers of Ndem. During seclusion, nkukhuo, because the initiate is under confinement for a long period (sometimes lasting up to three years, depending on the wealth of her parents), and restrained from carrying out strenuous duties while being encouraged to consume large quantities of food, the debutante emerges soft and fat. One condition traditionally associated with seclusion and the fattening room (as it is popularly called) is ikim nwan nkukhuo, the 'urine of the secluded woman' which has also been linked to diabetes. Prolonged consumption of superfluous food resulting in enormous weight gain and combined with little expenditure of energy, is believed to cause the illness.²³ The secluded girl is somewhat under the influence of Ndem. On her wrist is tied a piece of palm frond, ekpin eyo as a sign of reverence to Ndem and to signify acknowledgement of its power and hence prevent its wrath. The

palm bracelet also helps to fortify the secluded girl from evil forces. A similar observation was made by Lieber in Jamestown, an outlying Efik village (Lieber, 1971:65). While in seclusion, the girl is massaged daily with native chalk, ndom, camwood, iduo, among other substances. As the secluded girl is under Ndem's influence, sacrifices must be offered to appease the deity before she embarks on any canoe trip, otherwise Ndem will cause the canoe to capsize and retrieve 'its property.'²⁴

Creative activities such as dancing, singing, playing of musical instruments, the performing arts generally as well as the plaiting of hair, etinge, are all subject to the influence of Ndem. The ntimi dance is especially connected with Ndem. Ntimi is a type of gourd, and the dance is believed to be the dance of the mermaid (udom inyong). Maidens are especially selected on the basis of their fair complexion and beauty, and are taught the music and steps of the dance. The young girls are often in the care of older women who supervise their performance. Their costume consists of white cloth over a crinoline-like hoop, mkpin. They wear bead bodices, ekpaku nkwa, over brief blouses and beaded armbands, and leglets decorated with beads and small bells, nkporikpo. The girls wear their hair in different styles depicting Ndem which are held by white headbands tied at the back. The gourds which they carry are decorated with white chalk, ndom. Designs are also traced on their foreheads with the chalk. Some of the dancers wear strips of palm fronds on their neck or wrist. They dance in a single row or circle making meandering movements like the flow of a river. Some of the dancers carry certain leaves between their lips, or parrot feathers, ntan inim, a sign of secrecy.²⁵

This dance is performed on special occasions such as the coronation of an Obong or on a smaller scale to celebrate the coming of age ceremony after seclusion. The aim of the ntimi dance is to show respect for the spirits of the land and ask their protection and success for the celebration. Similar dances include abang (clay pot) and akpan.²⁶ Ndem spurs on the imagination, helps the inspiration for the creation of hair styles and the different ways to cut and plait the hair. It also guides the fingers of the hairdresser. Part of the payment she asks of her clients is a bottle of spirits. Before she embarks on plaiting the hair she pours out a libation and calls on her ancestors. At the end of the prayers she pours some of the drink into a glass and drinks it and then pours another for her client. The sharing of the drink links both the hairdresser and her client beyond the commercial transaction to a spiritual one. Both of them are under the influence and guidance of Ndem. While she plaits no one can casually walk in to see her client. All who wish to have access to her must first drop money on a piece of cloth spread on the floor.²⁷

NDEM AND EKPE - MASQUERADES

More interesting and significant still is the influence of Ndem in Ekpe. While it is accepted by those knowledgeable enough on Ekpe, (Ekpe chiefs, adaidaha) and Ndem (priests and priestesses), that there is indeed a strong link between the two, the exact relationship is never revealed and remains very much a secret. One reason for this is that the 'real' rites of Ekpe and Ndem as in, for example, the Ndem shrine, Efe Asabo, are secrets which only those of certain ranks possess. Presum-

ably these secrets are also at the centre of the link between the two systems. There are different versions of the relationship between Ekpe and Ndem, just like the variations on the origin of Ekpe. One version states that women first discovered Ekpe from Ndem and so the two are intertwined. The extent of the relationship is complex and is summed up enigmatically: "Ekpe belongs to the water, Ekpe is Ndem and Ndem, Ekpe." ²⁸ A similar statement was also made by etubom Offiong Obo Obo Offiong who also included Obongship to create a tripartite relationship: "Ekpe is from Ndem just like the Obongship." ²⁹ Nothing more is conceded beyond these equivocal statements on the relationship between Ekpe and Ndem except that the two go together. ³⁰

However, a better understanding of the relationship between Ndem and Ekpe may be achieved by examining other factors and areas of association. Firstly, the offices of Oku Ndem, high priest of Ndem and Obong Eyamba, head of Ekpe, were originally jointly vested in the same person, Eyo Ema, whose descendants founded Otung and Cobham Town. Because of the convergence of these two powerful offices in him he was called Edidem, a title connoting a divine and omnipotent king. Although the term is also used for some Obongs it is not always used in the same strict sense but more to denote importance and to stress significance in a particular context as was seen in the Hart enquiry (Hart, 1964:75). On the other hand, it is agreed by the Efik that Eyo Ema was indeed both Obong Eyamba and Oku Ndem, thus Edidem.

Significantly, in Cobham Town, the Ndem shrine and Ekpe lodge are fused under the same roof. Perhaps this is also the explanation of the exclusive rights to leopard skins of the

high priest, Oku Ndem. With time, Eyo Ema relegated the headship of Ekpe to the Ambo 'family', Oku Atai of Creek Town. Despite the spatial separation of the Cobham Town group from Otung (the main group) they still share ties as well as sentiments of unity. For instance, in Cobham Town Ekpe lodge, while the head Obong Eyamba is from Cobham Town, the deputy, Obong Ebunko is from Otung in Creek Town.³² Cobham Town as one of the custodians of Ndem constitute Efik king maker. The etubom of Lower Cobham in his capacity as Ndem custodian, crowned the Obong elect with the ntinya, the traditional crown. The ntinya embodies all the emblems of the Efik belief system, especially Ndem and Ekpe.³³

As Ekpe is played on land so is it played under the water.³⁴ This allusion is best depicted by the masquerade ayan isim, the long tail. This masquerade consists of a man holding a bow and arrow with the dramatic feature being the yards of elongated white tail-like protrusion from his waist from which its name is derived. This was the most prominent masquerade during the traditional installation ceremony during which it had its bow and arrow pointed at the Obong elect thereby directing all authority to him.³⁵ It represents Ekpe while at the same time designating the deity (Ndem) in the water. Obviously this was one of the masquerades which featured in Waddell's rare Egbo ceremony and which he called the 'bows and arrows with tails'. He noted especially the 'immense caudal appendages, trimmed with silk and ribbons.' (Waddell, 1863:265). It acted as a complement to the installation rites signifying the externalization of authority under the water. Despite its strong Ndem association depicted in the predominance of white cloth

in its costume, ayan isim is regarded as an Ekpe masquerade which appears only at burials, installation ceremonies and other occasions at the discretion of the Ekpe chiefs. Generally it is seen about once in a decade or two. Prior to its appearance at the installation ceremony in 1980 it was last seen some 25 years ago when it came out in honour of Queen Elizabeth II in Calabar.³⁶ Yet authority of the water world is female, Ndem.

Similarly, although ebunko, oku akama are high grades, which with nsibidi (secret sign writing) are especially associated with Ekpe they are also connected with Ndem (see Chapter 5 for Ekpe grades). An Ndem deity, Ekpenyong Obio Ndem is said to be the custodian of nsibidi. Also, the whip wielded by Ekpe masquerades isimupam is not made of a branch as one would have expected, Ekpe being a forest spirit but from the skin of the stingray fish, upam or pike fish, edeng. Similarly, the sea cow or manatee, isantim is held sacred to Ekpe. In Antera Duke's diary, the capture of the sea cow was an occasion for great celebration and the 'playing' of Ekpe as performances are called (Duke, 1956:28/4/87). Furthermore, nsibidi apart from being the Ekpe secret sign language found particularly on the Ekpe cloth, ukara, is also drawn in white chalk, ndom on the forehead, flank and limbs of Ekpe masquerades and others. It is similarly used by Ndem adherents, dancers and women on the coming of age ceremony. The white chalk features prominently among the objects offered to Ndem as sacrifice and also in the toiletry of the girl in seclusion.

Two other masqueradesⁱⁿ particular, clearly exhibit the close connection between Ndem and Ekpe. These are Ekpoi Nkanda



Ekpoi Nkanda play

and Okpokpo Obon. Ekpoi Nkanda is performed by seven men. It is a rather war-like and aggressive play, the name of which is derived from the hula loop-like ring - ekpoi, carried by one of the performers. This loop is completely wrapped round with ukara (Ekpe cloth). Yet the performers are dressed in a white skirt-like attire with a white piece of cloth tied on their foreheads and fashioned to a bow behind to form a white ring round their red berets. White, as has been mentioned, is a symbol of Ndem. The first dancer holds two horns for sniffing out and detecting the enemy. He is followed by another wielding the loop, ekpoi in which a dancer mimes about. The ekpoi is for trapping and holding the enemy on his being discovered. A fourth dancer holds an elongated prong, nfa, also wrapped in Ekpe cloth and decorated with woollen tufts of red which signify danger. The head of the captive is supposed to rest in the hollow of the prong. Should the enemy escape from the prong instrument, another dancer carrying a machete (also covered in ukara) should prevent further elusion. The gun of the sixth dancer ensures final capture, at which the head of the enemy is severed by the cutlass and put into a small basket wrapped in white carried by the seventh dancer.³⁸ The predominantly white costume of the dancers depicts the Ndem influence, white being the emblem of peace and unity. However, this contrasts with the red emblems which signify war and blood. The ukara, covering the extermination instruments, clearly portray the domain of Ekpe yet the receptacle^{to} bear the severed head is wrapped not in ukara but white (Ndem). As it may appear at first sight, the one does not contradict the other but enhances and complements it. The Ekpe-death related instruments,

loop, prong, machete and gun, assist in the eradication of evil from society thus bringing peace and calm as signified by the white of the basket and general costume of the dancers. In this performance, therefore, is the inseparability in certain spheres of Ekpe and Ndem.

Obon is another masquerade akin to Ekpe and which Simmons described as a 'brother' of Ekpe (Simmons, 1956:18). Okpokpo Obon comprises a house or tent-like structure which glides without any visible aid. On the top of this structure, sitting astride, are two pre-puberal boys dressed in white skirt-like shorts with white caps. Their flanks and arms are marked with white chalk, ndom in nsibidi. The boy in front holds a live white chicken which he shakes from time to time while the one at the rear carries a bunch of leaves, ikong oboti, in both hands, which he flexes. The tent is gaily decorated with palm fronds,³⁹ and also red, yellow and white pieces of cloth. Attached to the front of the tent is a bunch of Ekpe leaves, ikong oboti, and red and black feathers. This structure is accompanied by the Ekpe Obon masquerade holding a stick, unlike the idem Iquo, the Ekpe masquerade which holds a staff, a sign of superiority. The Ekpe Obon does not carry the customary Ekpe leaves, ikong oboti, but instead carries those called nwariwa. Still, the Okpokpo Obon is a masquerade which appears only on special occasions. Apart from Ekpe Obon which accompanies it, it is surrounded by Ekpe chiefs who dance around it. Ekpe is said to be concealed within the tent-like structure just like the ark which Waddell described 'covered with fine cloths and carried on the shoulders of chief men' (Waddell, 1863:265). The pre-puberal boys in white costumes connote purity (Ndem).



Okpokpo Obon



Okponkron

A white chicken is a common sacrificial item while the leaves carried by the boy at the rear signify Ekpe influence.⁴⁰

Okponkron is another masquerade associated with Ndem. It comprises an elongated circular structure the base of which extends to a broad, ^{crinoline-like} covered loop which is in fact made of a cane-like structure. It is covered by cloth and gathered pieces of pink and blue materials are attached round each alternate tier, of which there are nine in all. The masquerade is accompanied by four men, one of whom at intervals sprinkles a brackish substance with a broom on the masquerade causing it to go into contortions. Sometimes the elongated structure contracts to almost ground level and then suddenly springs out over ten feet long. The contortions, twisting and turning movements, are similar to that of the snake (asabo) as well as the meandering of a river. In fact one of the praise songs of the masquerade extolls it as the representative of the river, idem inyang.⁴¹ The snake because of its flexible abode on land and water is especially important as an Ndem representative.

Lastly, despite the fact that Ekpe is a forest spirit, very often when Ekpe chiefs go to bring it from the forest to the village, town or shrine, they do so by means of a canoe. Thus this forest spirit is conveyed by water transport to land.

(Duke, 1956 : 4/8/85).

Generally, all goods transported by water traditionally must be covered by branches of the palm tree out of respect to Ndem and to avert its displeasure, otherwise Ndem may cause the vessel to capsize and 'sieve' the goods. Despite its supremacy in politics as well as its supernatural origin, when Ekpe is being transported on water, it is concealed by Ekpe cloth in the mid-section of the canoe



Ekpe being transported by water from Creek Town to Calabar. The deity in the mid-section is shielded from profane eyes by a piece of Ekpe cloth, ukara. Accompanying the canoe is a representative, idem iquo. Note the use of palm fronds around the canoe, especially in the mid-section in deference to Ndem, owner of the waters.

and then shrouded by palm fronds which, as previously mentioned, is associated with Ndem. In fact, the lower section of the tent-like structure of the okpokpo obon is covered predominantly by palm fronds, ndak eyo.⁴²

It has been possible, by examining some Ekpe masquerades, to achieve a better understanding of the secret and elusive relationship between two of the most important Efik supernatural beings, Ndem and Ekpe. The masquerades examined here are by no means the only ones which depict this inter-relationship. They were some of those which featured during the celebration week culminating in the coronation of Edidem Bassey Eyo Ephraim Adam III in November 1982.

NDEM - SOURCE OF ORIGIN

According to Efik cosmology, some people have lived before their present existence on earth. Individuals belong to and emanate from diverse origins. Some come from the forest or animal world, e.g. ekpe (leopard), and others from the water (ndem). There are accounts of people who were attacked in the forest by apparent humans but when on examining the marks, found animal and not human marks. Other narrations tell of unfortunate adventures with alligators or crocodiles and subsequent confrontation and warnings on land by persons who could not possibly have known of their accidents on the river. The explanation for occurrences like these is that some individuals, because of their source of origin, possess the power of changing into animal forms at will.⁴³ This belief was the basis of accusations on two occasions levied by Ikoneto on Ikoroffiong which almost precipitated warfare (Goldie, 1890:39). Among the Ibibio, Goldie

recounted a society whose members were supposed to be capable of turning into leopards, mfuroekpe. They were responsible for the death and mutilation of bodies. Leopards, tigers, crocodiles and alligators abound in the forest and rivers. Often leopards and tigers roamed round houses looking for preys (Waddell, 1863:310). An area within Calabar township still bears the name Leopards Town (Diamond). (See Map on page xxi).

Individuals who originate from a common source are said to come from the same plate, usan tiad. These individuals therefore exhibit similar temperaments and qualities which are said to characterize them. People have diverse qualities according to their plates of origin, usan owo worode, usan being plate. The allusion to plate in terms of a person's source of origin is a typical Ndem idiom. Usan owo worode refers to the origin of the particular deity in question and need not necessarily mean a plate. It could be a room or a stick.⁴⁴ There are as many different Ndems as there are different plates and diverse characters. Each person ^{has} her own plate through which Ndem may send messages at different times for it to be appeased. As has been mentioned previously, not every person comes from Ndem, only those from Ndem who are likely to be communicated by the deity and are regarded as latent or manifest Ndem adherent.

Members of the same family need not necessarily come from the same source (plate). Occasionally, however, they may do so, especially among Ndem families. Families in which members emanate from the same plate exhibit similar traits. For example, they may be very artistic, with ability to dance and sing exceptionally well or excel in poetic recitation and composition. Although others may know just as many poems they do not have

the gift of elocution to recite them. When a family or some of its members acknowledge originating from the same plate and attribute special artistic traits to the Ndem influence, they tend to impart their knowledge and skill to their children at a very young age and the family becomes identified as being so gifted.⁴⁵ Yet there is a recognized limit to which a person may be schooled in the performing acts. If she has not been especially gifted she will not excel and rise above the crowd. Rather she will just remain a good performer. It is the influence of Ndem that elevates one from the ordinary to the exceptional category.

The plate ideology is not confined to Ndem religion but used to be a basic expression of religious worship. Association of water and plate/basin in Ndem worship bears a similarity with another, albeit outdated, religious practice. This mode of worship comprised the regular putting of water in a basin set at the foot of the silk cotton tree, ukim. The tree was believed to have supernatural powers and to be the abode of a spirit.⁴⁶ The head of the household offered prayers and sacrifices on behalf of members. The basin was never emptied but a little water was added on each prayer day. This was called usan Abasi, God's plate/basin (Waddell, 1863:381). Although this custom was gradually abolished through missionary zeal by 1849, it was a very popular practice in the eighteenth century, as indicated by the references in Antera Duke's diary (Duke, 1956 : 9/5/85; 17/3/86). The rationale behind the never emptied basin of God is similar to the ancient Roman custom whereby an ember was always kept burning in the fireplace, its continuous burning signifying the life force of the house-

hold. Extinguishing of the embers signified the death or extinction of that family unit (Fustel de Coulange, 1935:). Among the Efik, prayers and sacrifices were also offered to ensure safety on travels, celebrate social gatherings and occasions. Food and drinks were offered and shared among the supplicants and celebrants. This mode of religious practice brought them into close communication with God, and was called iso Abasi, the face (presence) of God.

At other times prayers were offered to ancestors through a similar process. This was a form of ancestral supplication. The house head offered sacrifices on a mound on behalf of the group to their ancestors to assist them in their lives on earth. This was called iso Ekpo, the face of spirits, and was clearly the same as Antera Duke's reference to 'making doctor at his father's basin' (Duke, 1956:8/6/85). Although these religious practices have generally ceased to be practised, prayers are ^{still} offered especially with libation and occasional sacrifices made to ancestors according to the occasion. The Efik are ever conscious of the presence of their ancestors and are mindful of their powers and potential influence on their lives. Ancestral spirits therefore must be kept happy and honoured through prayers and occasionally sacrifices. As has been seen, plates are an important feature of religious worship. Firstly, they serve as receptacles for food offered as sacrifices. They reflect and enhance the status of the deceased. Also, their surfaces are reflective, thus the sky and water can be easily seen during offerings to God or Ndem. Mirrors, particularly, are used as objects of sacrifice to Ndem especially Udominyang (mermaid). The mermaid not only wears combs in her hair but uses mirrors

to admire herself and comb her locks. Plates, because of their reflective surfaces, constitute a very important item of Ndem worship. Thus chinaware, enamel ware and pewters and brass ware (especially basins and tureens) are commonly used. They constitute an integral part of the sacrificial requisition of certain spirits just like combs and mirrors.

There are several (religious) practices emanating from and/or reflecting belief in reincarnation and life after death. Ndem is one of these and human sacrifices another. Human sacrifices were endemic until the nineteenth century when they were formally abolished. However, there is still a suspicion that the laws are occasionally breached and the old custom is still being secretly practised. (Aye, 1967:170). It is believed that the incident of twin birth is caused by evil machinations of others who, out of hatred, jealousy, or sheer malice 'throw' an additional foetus into the womb. In the past there were competent medicine men who not only could diagnose twin pregnancy but also 'extract' and eliminate the extra foetus before delivery thus saving the mother from the calamity and taint of being a twin mother.⁴⁷ During a burial ceremony a cow was slaughtered in honour of the deceased as he had been from one of the royal families, and two calves were found in its stomach. This caused a mild consternation and this unlucky news was quickly hushed up.⁴⁸ Expectant mothers and women in seclusion are at their most vulnerable at these times. They therefore shield themselves from unnecessary public gaze. Both the mother of twins and her children are considered unclean. Ndem cannot be discussed with them nor can they go before it to offer sacrifices without performing certain purification rites. Also, children born

breech, or a man who marries two sisters, are taboo to Ndem.⁴⁹ Some of these taboos extend also to Ekpe. Persons of twin birth are unsuitable to offer sacrifices in Ekpe.⁵⁰

NDEM AND WITCHCRAFT

Abasi, God, is acknowledged as the most powerful and omnipotent spirit, next to him is Ndem but another formidable power is witchcraft, ifot.⁵¹ Efik belief systems recognize good and evil as different sides of the same coin. Thus, Abasi, as the most powerful being is supplicated for good as well as evil, and so also is Ndem. Just as there are good Ndem spirits there are also evil ones. Those involved in witchcraft supplicate the bad Ndem spirits for aid and success in carrying out their evil machinations. Ndem therefore is evoked for good as well as for evil. Atabru Inyang, a deity, is one of such wicked spirits often used to curse people. This Ndem is represented by a masquerade (idem) which also bears its name. It is a fierce, violent masquerade (idem afai) and may be found in the company of Ekpe and Mkpokporo. The violence of the latter is depicted not only by the axe but also by the skull which forms part of its costume. In the past it was used to execute offenders of a certain degree. Atabru Inyang is so much dreaded that even when it is casually pronounced on someone it is viewed as a grave curse and the individual is immediately asked to revoke the curse, o sio uyo, for fear of reprisal.⁵²

An individual may be taken before the Ndem shrine to seek protection from the evil machinations of others. Ndem is then evoked on the persons attempting to harm him. Such evocation is done in the context of the omnipotence and far-reaching

influence of Ndem. "If anyone tries to harm you, let Ndem harm the person, if he travels in the forest (land) may Ndem cause the wind to fell a tree and kill him. If he travels by sea, let the waters take him."⁵³ The use of Ndem to fortify or curse or avenge a person is also portrayed in Efik literature (Aye, 1967:201).

Without the aid of these evil spirits, witchcraft cannot succeed in harming people. Because of its dual role, Ndem is therefore used as a camouflage for evil deeds and some witches hide under the guise of Ndem influence.⁵⁴ Similarly, the results of witchcraft may be incorrectly or deliberately diagnosed in order to mislead, as the result of Ndem affliction. Evil spirits may visit individuals and inflict them with physical illnesses such as skin diseases, blindness, insanity etc. The Efik believe that the correct origin of this type of affliction cannot be diagnosed or successfully treated by conventional medicine. When such unsuspecting victims visit hospitals after vain efforts to diagnose and treat their ailments, they are sometimes advised to go 'home' and seek 'native' treatment. Then they turn immediately to traditional methods. It is the diviner or medicine man who then informs the individual of the cause of his affliction and the way to a successful cure.

The belief in the existence and power of good and evil Ndem is also reflected in the existence of two types of witchcraft, black, obubud, and white, afia. While the former as indicated by its colour is employed for harmful or evil purposes the latter is used for good. Through the latter a person could ensure wealth, intelligence, good occupations, etc. for his family. Thus, a family whose members are all highly qualified, wealthy, and with equally intelligent children, is often

rumoured to have used witchcraft to achieve their good fortune. Ifot, witchcraft, is also the name of an internal organ found in the leopard. It is the possession of this organ which gives the individual super-ordinary powers.

Witchcraft is not hereditary but is 'given' to others by those already possessing it in food or drink. Thus, people, especially children, are usually warned by their parents not to accept food or drink without prior approval from certain suspected relatives and friends. Certain foods and soups are believed to be favourite in passing on witchcraft.⁵⁵ This supports a similar observation that oily foods such as coconut, rice, plantain or yam pottage are conducive for transmission. (Aye, 1967:79). People who possess witchcraft are compelled to confess their secrets and crimes if caught out on return from their nocturnal activities by the first light of dawn. Also, witches cannot die unless they confess their crimes.⁵⁶ The death bed is therefore sometimes enveloped in suspense and excitement. Curious people inquire if there were confessions. Witches are said to possess both male and female ^{sexual} organs and it is not an uncommon feature to see a 'caught' witch being followed by a large crowd on the streets eager to hear the confessions.

The Ndem religion and its associated features are in several ways like the nhialic, clan divinities and personal or free-divinities of the Dinka. They also share common emblems in the crocodile and snake. In the incidence of possession, like the Efik, the Dinka demand to know the source of possession and the services of a medicine man are sought to diagnose the cause. Blindness and barrenness are believed to be the result of supernatural sanctions on offenders. (Lienhardt, 1961:30,61,121).

NDEM AND CHRISTIANITY

Sacrifices are not offered on Sunday, it being God's day as well as a day of rest and worship. However, each day of the Efik eight-day week is sacred to some deity. Akwa Ederi, big Sunday, belongs to Eka Ndem, the mother of Ndem, while Akwa Offiong, big moon, is sacred to an Ndem spirit, Ekpenyong Obio Ndem.⁵⁷ This is similar to Ekpe in which Akwa Offiong was also sacred to Grand Ekpe or Nyamkpe. This is in keeping with Aye's statement that each day was dedicated to some special deity and sacrifices were offered accordingly (Aye, 1967:102).

Both the educated and uneducated believe in the presence and power of Ndem. They believe that every nation and people have their protector, and Ndem Efik is the tutelary deity of the Efik. While some acknowledge the existence of Ndem they believe it is best to leave the unknown alone. Others participate actively and a few relegate Ndem and associated activities to being fetish and wasteful. On occasions when it is said that sacrifices have to be offered to Ndem Efik, either for the society as a whole or for certain matters pertaining to the Obongship, the Efik contribute towards the cost of the sacrifice. There is no force exerted or compulsion to contribute but the majority feel a moral obligation to do so. Contributions are not only received from the Efik communities located in other parts of the country, but also from abroad. Similarly, during the coronation of Edidem Eyo Ephraim Adam III the Efik community in England contributed money and commissioned a number of parasols commemorating the occasion. A delegation was sent to present the gifts to the Obong in Council.

Ndem prevents pestilence and misfortune from afflicting the Efik. Yet there have been occasions where for one reason or another attempts were made to circumvent certain items of sacrifice, for example, trying to pass off a spotted cow as white for a Ndem sacrifice. Ndem not only rejected the sacrifice but also made its wrath felt on society and had to be pacified afresh. Ndem protects its people. It is said that during the 1966 Civil War when troops opened fire on Calabar, a deity, Nkonho Ubakpa caused the waters of the Calabar River to rise for several days so that shots fired could not reach their targets and cause any damage.⁵⁸

While some Christians see association with Ndem as being opposed to their religion, others do not see any such contradiction and actively practice both. One Church elder is a well-known Ndem adherent who goes to Church on Sundays and does not see how his activities in one sphere opposes the other. Both Ndem (good) and God are holy spirits, the difference being that while God is universal, Ndem belongs especially and exclusively to Efik. Thus, the elder, while being deeply steeped in Ndem practices, making costumes and performing Ndem dances, also attends services in Church. He is merely serving God in different ways, one traditional (Efik) and the other foreign (Christianity).

Ndem has been likened to angels. There are as numerous spirits as there are angels. Similarly, as there are good and bad angels, for example, Lucifer, so also are there good and bad Ndem.⁵⁹ Christianity is the religion of Europeans just Ndem is that of the Efik. Thus, the one does not contradict the other but complements it. As such, an individual in the

process of finding a cure to an ailment may consult a gamut of practitioners from modern science (medicine), to spiritual churches, Ndem diviners etc. until he finds the most appropriate one. In his search, each of the various religious houses does not contradict but buttresses and supports the other until finally a cure is found. A similar pattern of attitude and behaviour is demonstrated among the Akropong people. Thus, Middleton categorised such behavioural patterns not as an indication of insincerity but as a reflection of moral and cosmological complexity and of a need for ritual protection (Middleton, 1983:12).

The Efik in several ways, tend to equate traditional religion to Christianity. This tendency has been further encouraged by the flexible usage of religious or cultural notions in both areas. For example, there is a traditional rite known as the throwing of water, Uduok mong. This consists of water being poured on the roof top and allowed to run off the eaves over a person made to stand beneath them. This rite severs him from all previous relationships and former ties and incorporates him into a new bond. Baptism, therefore, was regarded as being the same as this old Efik rite and as such is designated by the same name. The Uduok mong rite was especially performed for new slaves. A similar rite was undergone by the Obong elect during the installation (ntinya) ceremony as a rite of passage from his former status as etubom to a new one, Obong. The missionaries compounded the issue by the use and adoption of Efik names and ideology particularly when it represented a similar Christian notion. Thus Efik conception of a supreme being, Abasi, was readily translated to God. This

result of missionary attempts to present God and Christianity in terms of a similar traditional notion is by no means confined to the Efik but seems to be an inherent paradox of early evangelisation. This analogous nature of Christianity was also apparent in Akropong. (Middleton, 1983:11).

As has been stated earlier there are basically three main attitudes to Ndem. Those who are firm adherents, those who acknowledge Ndem but dissociate from it, and those who dismiss it as being a fetish. The outlook of people on traditional religion and practices seems to be influenced by education and social status, just like marriage (monogamy as opposed to polygamy). Just as the slightly educated and non-literate are more likely to seek the aid of diviners and medicine men to cure ailments, most Ndem adherents tend not to be well educated. A polygamist is not likely to be a practising Christian, but a traditionalist, to whom association with Ndem and associated activities would be quite acceptable. Apart from these extreme groups, the educated and the uneducated, there is a marginal category who normally, because of their educational backgrounds, are Christians and as such actively shun 'fetish practices' but who, because of family status (e.g. royalty), have to align themselves with traditional practices particularly during an installation (ntinya) ceremony. The extent of syncretism between traditional beliefs and practices and Christianity is perhaps most apparent in the traditional installation (ntinya) and coronation ceremonies of the Obong. Usually both ceremonies are performed a week apart. While the former is basically an Ndem ceremony taking place at night, the former is a Christian service performed in Church. Yet the king maker

in the ntinya ceremony not only participates in the coronation but hands over the crown of the Obong to the Bishop or Moderator for the actual coronation. So during the coronation service the roles and spheres of influence of the traditional practices and Christianity are complementary. The Efik call crayfish, ata abasi, the real God. Yet crayfish as a sea creature is readily an Ndem emblem.

Although very little attention has been focused wholly on Efik religion, especially in relation to Ndem, other than the occasional allusion, much may be gathered from indirect references. Both European and indigenous sources in their attitude tend to relegate Ndem to the fetish, pagan and therefore unprogressive. Even Aye, one of the few lucid Efik writers, dedicated only a paragraph to Ndem Efik apart from one or two brief references (Aye, 1967:28). Yet the pervasiveness and depth of assimilation of the Ndem belief and practices is apparent in the Efik life-style and much of this may be gleaned from Efik literary works and stories.

Elizabeth E. Archibong's poem on the River of the Efik, Akpa Obio Efik, for example, depicted the notion of the powerful force which provided not only bounty and wealth but also controlled the traffic on its waters. She employed the imagery of the giant lobster to portray sea life in the underworld as well as dominance. According to the imagery the ruling male and female lobsters (obu) were like a couple united before God. This simile connotes Efik belief (which has already been discussed) of marital links under water, it also reveals the association in Efik conception of the relationship between Ndem practices and Christianity. The power of the sea creatures is also

displayed by their performance not only below but also in their decision on the safe passage of people above. Only those permitted by Ndem may travel safely (Aye, 1967:196).

Another literary work, a play called Mutanda Seeks Namondo, Mutanda Oyom Namondo, similarly depicted Efik belief in the existence of good and evil spirits as portrayed by the evil spring goddess, Atim Okpoebot. More interestingly, it also reveals the fear that Ndem sometimes 'took' people from the physical world by engineering accidents such as drowning.⁶⁰ Information on such 'captives' may only be obtained by offering sacrifices to appease Ndem who out of pity for the families of the 'bereaved' may release them.

Yet another poem attempted to explain why the lives of educated and illustrious Efik were short-lived. It will be recalled (see Chapter 3) that the 1930s was a dark period in Calabar. Four of the first Efik lawyers suddenly died one after the other. This led to migration of people out of Calabar and neighbouring Efik settlements, for fear that the menace of witchcraft had enveloped the society. However Mbukpa revealed that premature deaths were the result of a curse by a chief who was so old that he had to be killed. He called three powerful Ndem, Anansa (deity of Old Town), Ukong Esuk (Adiabo) and Atakpo Uruan to avenge his death by causing premature death of prominent people in the peak of their careers. (Aye, 1967: 201). More specific references to the power of Ndem as fertility spirits are reflected by Ewa Efiom who extolled Anansa, (Ukong) Esuk, Sunko Monko as the custodians of the soil, ensuring rich harvests (Aye, 1967:204).

Another deep seated belief is that all human beings, before conception, must pledge what kind of lives they would lead on earth, akanga (vow). Furthermore, it is believed that such vows are usually made before Ndem. Individuals are bound to their vows. A play, Asibong Edem, revealed how ego on tasting the sweetness of power and authority, contrary to his pledge aspired to be crowned Obong. He could not succeed in placating Ndem to revoke his vow and thus he died mysteriously on the eve of his installation. Asibong Edem is said to be a true story concerning the son of Archibong III and brother to Archibong V. ⁶¹

NOTES

1. Interview with Dr. E.E. Bassey, etubom of Ekpo Abasi House (Cobham Town), 28th September 1982.
2. Interview with etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22nd February 1983.
3. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22nd February 1983.
4. Interview with Chief Ita Itam, 2nd May 1982.
5. Chief I. Itam, 2nd May 1982.
6. Interview with Madam Hannah Otudor, 4th May 1982.
7. Chief I. Itam, 2nd May 1982.
8. Interview with Patricia Ekpanyong Eyo, a 16-year-old secondary school girl who became possessed by Ndem. She had become confined to the house since then. Ndem Efik sent her to Obong Esien Ekpe Oku V just before his departure. She was later sent again to arbitrate in the dispute that followed the subsequent selection of the Obong-elect, 7th May 1982.
9. Interview with etubom Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, 12th February 1983.
10. Chief I. Itam, 2nd May 1982.
11. Interview with Madam Arit Okon, 27th April 1982, also supported by Patricia Ekpenyong Eyo, 7th May 1982 and Chief I. Itam, 2nd May 1982.
12. Chief I. Itam, 2nd May 1982 also confirmed by etubom Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, 12th February 1983.
13. Etubom Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, 12th February 1983. The palm frond is especially associated with Ndem and features prominently in various ways. Very young palm frond, ekpin eyo is very soft, oily and slippery and therefore difficult to break. Palm fronds are also used to cover goods transported by river transport as a sign of reverence to Ndem. The basket in which sacrifices are offered is also made of palm fronds.
14. Madam Arit Okon, 27th April 1982.
15. Patricia Ekpenyong Eyo, 7th May 1982.
16. Abasi Okure Effiong Edet Bassey, 9th October 1982.
17. Etubom Ekpenyong Effa, 26th April 1982.
18. Interview with Chief Francis E. Archibong, 23rd July 1982.

19. Interview with Chief E.E. Archibong (IV)
20. Interview with Mrs. Emelda Mkpeti, March 1982.
21. Etubom Offiong Obo Obo Offiong, 12th February 1983.
22. Chief B.O. Offiong, 15th February 1983, confirming the statement of Chief Itam of 2nd May 1982.
23. Interview with Mrs. E. Agboluaye, a retired state registered nurse, 6th May 1982.
24. Etubom Offiong O.O. Offiong, 12th February 1983. The wind of Anansa (deity), ofum Anansa is often held responsible for the capsizing of boats and canoes on rivers. This is said to happen when the deity is displeased. Hurried consultations are made after a number of accidents to enquire what is amiss and appease the deity, Abasi O. Effiong Bassey, 18th September 1983. A similar statement on another deity, udominyang, was made by Jones. (Jones, 1956:70).
- 25-26. Abasi O. Effiong Edet Bassey, 2nd October 1982.
27. Interviews with Madam Sarah Inyang Edet Etim, 4th May 1982, and also Dr.(Mrs) Ekanem Ohia, 28th December 1983.
28. Madam ~~Aw~~ Okon, 27th April 1982.
29. Etubom Offiong O.O. Offiong, 12th February 1983.
30. Chief B.O. Offiong, 9th February 1983.
- 31-32. Interview with Dr. B.E. Bassey, etubom of Ekpe Abasi House (Lower Cobham), 28th September 1982.
33. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 26th March 1982.
34. Chief I. Itam, 2nd May 1982.
35. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 26th March 1982. The white worn by the masquerade is symbolic of Ndem which coupled with the elongated tail whic portrays a sea creature definitely connotes Ndem.
36. Open interview at the Obong's Palace, 22nd March 1982, Chief O.O. Asuquo, Etubom E. Bassey Duke, among others. This was also supported by a later interview with Chief Itam, 2nd May 1982.
37. Chief Itam, 2nd May 1982.
38. Chief B.O. Offiong, November 1982. Today the performance is purely a symbolic one.
39. Abasi O. Offiong Edet Bassey, 2nd October 1983.

40. Chief B.O. Offiong, November 1982.
- 41-43. Abasi O. Effiong Edet Bassey, 19th September 1982.
44. Patricia Ekpenyong Eyo, 7th May 1982.
45. Interview with Abasi O. Effiong Edet Bassey, 19th September 1982.
46. Interview with Affiong E. Eneyo, March 1981.
47. Madam H.B. Otudor, 4th May 1982.
48. For obvious reasons the exact reference cannot be made to the family of the deceased because of the ill-fortune still associated with twins.
49. Chief Itam, 2nd May 1982.
50. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 19th March 1982
51. Chief Itam, 2nd May 1982.
- 52-53. Abasi O. Effiong Edet Bassey, 19th September 1982.
54. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 23rd February 1983.
55. Abasi O. Effiong Edet Bassey, 19th September 1982, and also Mrs. I. Otudor, 4th May 1982.
56. Interview with Mrs. I. Otudor, 4th May 1982.
- 57-58. Etubom Offiong O.O. Offiong, 12th February 1983.
59. Chief I. Itam, 2nd May 1982.
60. This belief is perhaps more clearly portrayed by a folksong which bemoans the disappearance of an educated youth Effian. It was believed that Ndem had 'taken' him. A sacrifice was made to appease Ndem for his release. Women wailing went down to the river to beg Musak Abasi, the mother of the gods, to release the youth, especially as his European employers had written enquiring about him. Abasi O. Effiong Edit Bassey, 16th September 1982.
61. Discussion with Chief Ekpo Archibong W, 15th June 1983.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION

Obongship, Ekpe and Ndem collectively comprise the Efik tripartite political system. The Obong, as secular head, is the most important public figure especially in foreign affairs. He is the protector of the rights and welfare of his people. In pre-colonial days, together with other leading chiefs, he was responsible for the negotiation and signing of treaties between the Efik and representatives of foreign governments. The Obong was far from being despotic, various kinds of checks and balances were operating to curb political excesses and rash behaviour. One of the most potent measures was the administration of the esere bean poison ordeal. This bean was often administered indiscriminately on suspicion of witchcraft, homicide, as well as for malicious reasons. Esere is a poisonous hallucinative bean which often caused death. Proof of innocence laid in throwing up the poison bean. Death was a sure indication of guilt. Houses engaged in rivalries used this method to eliminate political rivals and weaken the numerical strength of members. Its administration is illegal but in the 1960s there were cases of unlawful use.¹

Ekpe, Ndem, and the college etuboms constitute other political and religious bodies, sometimes complementing the Obongship and at other times checking or infringing on its secular powers. These other religious-political bodies had inter-related roles. The extent of the authority of the Obong depends greatly on his economic strength as it did in pre-colonial days. This fact was succinctly summed up by Eyo II "... the man that has most money will always be king." (Waddell, 1863:339). In pre-colonial days economic superiority over other 'gentlemen'

assured him of the political backing of the supercargoes and British Consul. It also afforded him control over a retinue of dependants, both slaves and freeborn. Eventually, economic strength, together with nobility, became the decisive factors for Obongship. In modern times economic strength has weakened the dependency relationship between some Obongs and their Council. It has removed a potentially potent political weakness from the body of etuboms and chiefs who, together with the Obong, administer societal affairs.

Thus, Obongship does not by any means confer unmitigated power on the incumbent. The actual power of the Obong is circumscribed both from within (etuboms and chiefs) and from outside (supernatural forces, Ekpe (forest spirit), Ndem (tutelard deity), Mbukpo (ancestral spirits). As Obong he is first among equals (etuboms) from which rank he had been elevated to paramount ruler. As stated by Goldie, the Efik have no ruler to whom the title King or Edidem supreme ruler may be appropriately used (Goldie, 1894:61). These titles were formally abolished in 1902 and replaced by the more moderate title of Obong. The regeneration of the title Edidem in 1971 under the reign of David Henshaw V, was part of the attempt by the Efik to reassert themselves as the only 'proper' paramount ruler in the Cross River State vis-a-vis other traditional rulers. Indeed, so supreme and omnipotent is the title that it has found its way into religious worship as a term of address for God Almighty. In addition to Obong the paramount ruler is alternatively addressed as Eteym (father of all) or Amasi, lord, both being endearing but respectful.

However, as secular head of the society, the Obong is also the symbol of unity. The Efik believe the Obong unites society into a cohesive entity, fostering both moral and social consciousness. Prolonged inter-regnum as occurred between 1926 and 1949, is detrimental to the well-being of society resulting in social and moral decay, loss of a sense of direction and final disintegration of society.² As paramount ruler invested by Ndem with earthly authority, Ekpe also gives him deference as demonstrated in various rituals, especially during the ntinya, traditional installation ceremony. Just as Ndem, together with the ancestral spirits, Mbukpo and Ekpe invest him with power to rule, they can similarly remove all authority and support from him.

Ekpe fraternity provided a forum whereby wealthy leading men, freeborn and non-freeborn alike, were united by common interests. Although membership of Ekpe was often said to be limited to nobility in actual fact it cut across social, educational and occupational strata. Today this is even more noticeable than ever and, although it has been described as a sort of Freemasonry, is unlike masonic lodges in this respect (Marwick, 1897:534). For its members, Ekpe served to protect commercial interests while enforcing religious, judicial and social control over society. Despite its foreign origin the Ekpe fraternity was so developed by the Efik that it became identified with them and through them spread to other neighbouring groups such as Arochukwu, Enyong, Umon etc (Ruel, 1969:250).

Ekpe therefore served as a higher recourse for offenses and from which not even the Obong, as paramount ruler, was exempted. The secular authority of the Obong is not taken into

cognisance in the Ekpe power structure. In fact the Obong immediately after the ntinya installation ceremony is taken to the Ekpe lodge for acknowledgement and last traditional rituals. The head of Ekpe, Obong Eyamba, indeed wielded more power than the secular Obong. Consequently, there was much struggle in Efik history by individuals in the quest to hold both offices simultaneously. Very few Obongs were Eyamba at the same time. The last candidate to hold dual office was Duke Ephraim Eyamba IX (1880-1896). (Hart, 1964:para 158). Since then the offices of Obong and Eyamba Ekpe have been vested in separate individuals. There are several reasons for this, notable among them is the fact that Obongship is no longer the preserve of the Duke Town houses or specifically, Duke House, Archibong House, Eyamba House and Eyo houses of Creek Town. Since 1970 the Obongship has rotated between the houses of Calabar Central (Duke Town, Old Town, Henshaw Town and Cobham Town), and Western Calabar (Creek Town, Adiabo, Mbiabo and Ikot Offiong), to stop the monopolistic tendencies of the dominant houses and prevent political stalemate. Also, so volatile is the quest for political offices that it is potentially dangerous, more so now than ever, to vest two powerful offices in the same individual. Besides, the separation of the two offices means a distribution of political power. Whereas the office of Eyamba Ekpe is vested in the etubom of Eyamba House, the Obongship has become more democratic. Thus, chances of both offices converging on the same individual are negligible.

Indeed some Obong-elect did not even hold titles in Ekpe. This issue was raised as a disqualifying point for etubom Ekpenyong Oku in the 1963 Obongship dispute and later for David

Henshaw V in 1971. (Hart, 1964:para 397; Udo, 1971:35). Thus, an Obong may be called to order and reprimanded in Ekpe for abuse of power or office. It was in his capacity as head of Ekpe that the Obong Eyamba signed the notice in the 1950s which led to the ostracism of etubom Henshaw Thomas Eyo who attempted to set himself up as the Obong of Creek Town in defiance of the attempt to end the political dichotomy between the two main Efik settlements. (Etuboms' Paper, 1972:19). Similarly, it was the Obong Eyamba Ekpe who signed the withdrawal of recognition notice from the Obong in 1961 (with the support of eight other etuboms). The office of Obong Eyamba Ekpe is one of the few offices among the Efik that is vested in a specific family. Therefore it is outside the range of offices which are open to manipulation. Yet this did not prevent the attempt by some of the etuboms during the uncertain years of the Eyamba House dispute, to try and shift the office from the 'deposed' etubom to the other contestants. (Duke Town Families Memoranda, 1971:27). However, as was also pointed out by the Duke Town families, the incumbent of Obong Eyamba Ekpe, was not open to selection to other political offices, being a hereditary office.

Ekpe provides a forum for uniting rival segments of society and cuts across clan, house and family loyalties. Ekpe governs itself.

Although Ekpe was not a secular village council its key members were the same leading men in society. Thus decisions generating from the secular council meeting were formalized, sealed, and given the backing of Ekpe to become laws. This was how several of the social reforms initiated by missionaries were passed into laws. Against Nair's general opinion of the

overwhelming influence of missionaries in generating socio-economic changes among Efik (Nair, 1972:55-69) is Taylor's more pragmatic summary. Taylor realised that Obongs as secular heads did not wield real power but that it was secret societies like Ekpe who were therefore the backbone of successful law enforcement. (Taylor, 1984:195), e.g. abolition of human sacrifice. Most of the title holders in Ekpe are also etuboms and chiefs of the Obong's Council. However, Ekpe laws are far from being secular as they had supernatural sanctions of the forest spirit, Ndem.

This dual membership may seem to pose problems of dominance between the different political structures. However, the issue is not as simplistic as it may appear. Although the ritual yet political Ekpe hierarchy is formally independent of the secular and political enclave comprising the Obong, etuboms and chiefs, it is far from being independent in practice. As operates in the Poro society, the powerful men in the one (religious) are often the same in the other (secular) context. (Cohen, 1972:98). Thus the profane complements the sacred. Both structures are ultimately geared towards the well-being of society and dual membership serves to remove any potential factional or antagonistic tendencies. There is a great deal of interflow and flexibility between Ekpe chiefs and other political offices. Thus, contrary to Ruel's assessment, Ekpe laws were far more than being just secular. (Ruel, 1968:253). Ekpe was (is) a superordinate authority and it was this fact that made the Eyambaship a much sought after office.

Despite the coveted position of Ekpe chiefs as political elites, unlike the masonic lodges who are often accused of

'cooking appointments' in meetings, they do not appear to exert such influence in public administration. (Cohen, 1972:100). Most of the Ekpe chiefs are elderly retired men, few of whom were sufficiently well educated to hold influential posts. In any event there does not appear to be any moral obligation within the fraternity towards members. Such obligations operate within families and houses, and to a lesser degree in the etuboms' Council. Most of the title holders are middle-aged before acquisition of their titles and as such are already entrenched in their posts or ways of life. This is particularly so because of the operation of the seniority rule. Professionals and relatively young men are a recent phenomena in traditional offices and are still few and far between. Thus, on the whole, neither etuboms nor Ekpe chiefs constitute a clique for the informal 'cooking' of appointments for their members.

Although much of its commercial, social and judicial functions have been superseded by modern institutions, Ekpe is still very much a fraternity of political elites. It still has great potential for the articulation of political activities as was manifest during the 1983 registration exercise in Calabar. Ekpe masquerades were used to safeguard polling booths and ensure that only Efik registered in these booths. Also in 1982, despite grave opposition from the Efik Ekpe lodges, Efut Abua lodge initiated the then State Governor, Clemont Isong, into Ekpe and conferred on him an honorary title, to the chagrin of the rest of the Efik and Efut society. They felt they had been sold out by the actions of the Muri Munene (paramount ruler) of Efut. Feelings ran so high that the Efik dissociated

themselves from the initiation while some Efut Ekpe chiefs published a disclaimer in the Cross River State newspaper, 'The Chronicle', to the same effect. The potential of Ekpe in national politics has long since been realised. Ekpe is identified with Efik society. Thus, politicians at crucial points in their careers sought and were initiated into Ekpe as a sign of public identification with Efik in order to secure votes.

Despite the political hegemony of Ekpe over Obongship and its power to check its authority, this is seldom done except in extreme cases. The Efik believe that it is the supernatural forces - Ndem, Ekpe and ancestral spirits - that confer Obongship, not man. Thus the Obong as the representative and embodiment of these joint forces has been elevated from the mere rank of men or etuboms to that of paramount ruler. As such he is a much respected figure. In Efik history only in 1960 did the Obong Eyamba Ekpe together with eight etuboms attempt to depose the Obong Archibong V by withdrawing their recognition from him as Obong. Despite this attempt to strip Archibong V of the Obongship, Efik tradition maintains that no candidate can occupy the office of Obong as long as there is an existing incumbent (CALPROF I, CP.2787/6, also Hart, 1964:para 360). Among his list of wrong doings was the fact that he had been initiating 'strangers' into Ekpe without the consent of the Eyamba and other Ekpe chiefs. The significance of these 'strangers' was not that they were non-Efik but that they belonged to rival political parties.

A more powerful force than Ekpe, especially in relation to the Obongship, is Ndem, the tutelary deity. Its high priest,

oku Ndem wielded considerable power both in religious and secular activities. He was called King as well as chief priest and as reflected in his title had such judicial authority that he settled crimes for which there were no precedents. (Hutchinson, 1858:146). All Efik settlements paid tribute to him also. (CALPROF, 53/1/545:32). Although after 1850 there ceased to be a chief priest of the same status, Ndem continues to wield considerable influence in Efik society. As pointed out by Nair there appears to be a relationship between social upheaval and revival in Ndem activities (Nair, 1972:55). The Efik believe that Ndem Efik protected them from destruction during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) and this period was matched by a strong religious fervour.

Unlike Ekpe which was acquired after they had settled in Creek Town, the Efik brought Ndem with them to their last settlement. Its shrine was located in a forest grove near Creek Town. (CALPROF, 53/1/545:32). The Ndem chief priest is still the king-maker. Without his approval and cooperation, no Obong-elect can become fully recognised as Obong, nor can anyone else perform the traditional installation (ntinya) ceremony. When Adam Ephraim Duke crowned himself with the ntinya, the etuboms confiscated and burnt the traditional crown. He was not only heavily fined by the etuboms, but was eventually deposed by the colonial administrator in 1926. (Hart, 1964:para 358; CALPROF, 53/1/545:45).

As king-maker and mediums of the deities, Ndem priests and priestesses continue to exert influence in politics on traditional rulers particularly with reference to the activities of the Obong, etuboms and the well-being of society. The sphere

of influence dominated by Ndem in Efik politics is significant when it is recalled that it is also related to Ekpe. Also, the latter (Ekpe) is said to emanate from the former (Ndem). As much of Ndem activities pertains to divination it is a potential weapon for political manipulations as was alleged during the 1982 selection procedure for the Obong-elect.

Efik believe that unless Ndem acknowledges and accepts the Obong-elect he can never reign as Obong. It is said that in cases of strong disapproval the candidate will not emerge alive from the Ndem shrine, Efe Asabo. Thus, the period following the demise of an Obong and selection of another is characterised by much divination, consultation, and offering of sacrifices. Ndem mediums, under the latent threat of supernatural sanctions, exert a great deal of influence on political rulers. Although Ndem is very much a cult of the living as well as the dead it is incorrect to relegate it to an earth cult as suggested by Nair. (Nair, 1972:56). Ndem still is more than the religious arm of government; it is one of the forces which held Efik society together. It was before the oku Ndem and '... his idol the covenants of tribes and families were sealed by oath.' (Waddell, 1863:315). Thus Ndem, together with Ekpe and the Obongship, constituted the integrative forces of a society comprising independent units.

Ndem, Ekpe and Obongship, as the integrative forces, also constitute the most important machinery for political activities in Efik society. These three most important forces are simultaneously political offices and as such provide venues through which individuals seek participation, recognition and prominence in local affairs. Individuals vie keenly for the offices

associated with these institutions. This is possible because in Efik society social status is by no means fixed. Rather, mobility is fluid and competition for these and associated offices is by no means the exclusive prerogative of the royal families. Others who are sufficiently endowed morally and financially challenge tradition and compete with those who, by virtue of birth, as descendants are more advantageously placed.

There are thus ongoing attempts to redefine the boundary of political elites as well as the rules which govern the category of persons eligible for these offices. Conservative elements in Efik society recognize this gradual encroachment on the prerogative of blood descendants. They have called for screening of individuals allowed in the more traditional enclave of the etuboms' Council. Also, the Efik drew up a constitution to put a halt to ad hoc procedures and rules governing political offices and to streamline succession. However, the constitution was still being debated up to 1983 by the etuboms and chiefs in council meetings.³

Chieftaincy titles constitute the springboard of political ambitions. Most etuboms ascend to office from being house chiefs. A few succeed to etubomship from being Ekpe title holders. Ability to hold one office does not necessarily indicate or confer the individual with the prerogative to assume other offices. However, it helps a person's political ambitions if he already holds an office whether honorary or hereditary.

Social mobility is facilitated by the operation of general rules or guidelines rather than rigid laws or principles in succession. The rules governing succession to hereditary chief-

taincy, etubomship, and to some extent, Obongship, and Ekpe titles are based on: blood descendant, seniority and more recently, popularity. Because the rules are general they are open to various interpretations based on perception and manipulation, and of course political ambitions. In addition, there are traditionally accepted circumstances for which alternate rules may operate. Thus, despite the emphasis on blood descendants for succession to political offices in the absence of an eligible candidate, a non-descendant may assume office. It was in this way that Obo Obo Offiong became head of the Eyamba House till 1926. Also, in recent times there have been moves by some houses to substitute the seniority rule for another - rotation. Popularity has become another important factor in the succession of political offices.⁴

The rule of blood descent, because of the possibility of its manipulation, far from being rigid creates loopholes. As pointed out by McFarlan, the ancestry of Efik royal families is largely mixed because of the free introduction of slaves into households. (McFarlan, 1946:18). However, a number of rules were created to give some form of social distinction and make allowances for the various grades of slaves and free-born. (Waddell, 1863:317-318). To complicate issues there is a general acceptance that a drop of noble blood elevates an individual from servile status (Hart, 1964:para 319). An Efik idiom states that a slave may give birth to a freeborn but it is an abomination for royalty to conceive a slave.⁵ Education and modernization have done much to increase social mobility. Social distinction has been further blurred by the acceptance of house marriages even between royalty and non-descendants.

The dynamics of the house system provides a vehicle for political ascendancy. This is assisted by the ability of individuals to inherit and succeed to offices through matrilineal ties as well as patrilineal ones. This alternative rule, in turn, paves the way for, and encourages dual house membership and multiple affiliations. Dual house membership and multiple affiliations, in turn, provide a broad scope of choices from which the individuals may activate his membership. Active house participation is fostered and rekindled by the valuable resources vested within the houses. The survival and persistence of the house system has been influenced largely by the availability of resources to certain members who form the core, as well as some influential peripheral members who form the bulk of the population of most Efik houses. Peripheral members are of two kinds, non-blood descendants and those who originally did not belong to the house but who have chosen to activate secondary ties of affiliation.

The resources vested in houses which influence membership, affiliation and participation are land, food crops, chieftaincy titles (some of which admit holders to influential and highly coveted enclaves like the Obong's and etuboms' Council). Also linked directly to house membership are Ekpe titles. Titles are normally available only to Efik and it is therefore a foregone conclusion that aspirants must come from one of the several houses. Also, certain Ekpe titles are vested in specific families and their conferments are therefore controlled by the leading men of those houses. Membership of the councils (Obong and/or etuboms') and the Ekpe inner circle, elevates an individual to the body of traditional elites. Furthermore, as traditional

rulers (etuboms) individuals are afforded government recognition which often guaranteed some form of remuneration. Local recognition in turn generates wider national recognition. Thus, the government may select individuals from this body of local rulers for public appointments such as a vice-chancellor of institutions, a chairman of the Traditional Rulers Councils, etc. For the political ambitions local recognition provides a base for national politics.

Because house resources, whether land (or the rents and products accruing from them) and offices are highly desirable, there is much competition for them. These resources are vested in the house heads (etuboms) and heads of sub-units within houses. The scope of competition is broad because of the dynamics of membership within and between houses. There are struggles between core members who may be influential or weak or inactive and peripheral members who, by activating and manipulating ties of kinship and friendship, may gain access to these valuable resources. However, because it is only as members that individuals may gain access to these resources they have to prove themselves. This may be done by asserting themselves in active participation in house affairs, regular attendance of meeting, payment of dues and financial support. The assistance of a patron, and moral support of leading members of the core group is invaluable in ensuring ultimate acceptance as a house member. With time, peripheral members are accepted as 'full' or 'proper' members and may be given land or conferred chieftaincy titles, etc. Attempts to secure resources often results in disputes.

Competition for the allocation of these scarce resources are reflected in disputes, e.g. Eyamba House dispute, Henshaw Town dispute and the Obutong dispute. House disputes also portray ongoing changes, especially in relation to the definitions and manipulations of concepts and rules; in the selection, deposition of house heads (etuboms) and heads of sub-houses. In the ongoing attempt to redefine rules and widen the membership of the political enclave, some individuals succeed while the unfortunate do not. Thus it was possible for Eniang Esien to be accepted as etubom of Ikoneto. He was even made Obong-elect of Creek Town until 1962 when the appointment was nullified because it came to light that he was not Efik but Ekoi.

Matters have become complicated by the recent trend for individuals to use financial might and social influence to buy their way through to chieftaincy and Ekpe titles. Although traditional family titles are normally restricted to blood descendants, houses create honorary awards to confer on individuals for recognition of their commitments and contribution to the society. Some ambitious individuals strive to attain higher traditional offices like heads of sub-houses or houses from these honorary titles. Perhaps a greater potential for the attainment of traditional offices by peripheral members exists more in the Ekpe fraternity than elsewhere. This is because very few Ekpe titles are vested in families and the Obong Eyamba as head of Ekpe and custodian of all vacant titles, may be approached for titles by prospective holders. Initiation into Ekpe and subsequent mobility has always depended to a large extent on the ability to pay the required entrance and entertainment fees. This financial ability is more important

by far in Ekpe as a prerequisite for attaining titles than in ordinary chieftaincy. Yet neither the path to etubomship or Ekpe chieftaincy is smooth, for conservative blood descendants will always object to the entrance of peripheral members.

Chieftaincy and Ekpe titles, etubomship and Obongship, are offices much sought after by the professionals, semi-literates and illiterates alike. The significance attached to these offices are two-fold. Firstly, traditional offices apart from being prestigious, provide a ready means of identifying and being identified with the local community and politics. This is especially important to retired professionals and civil servants who have just relinquished their strongholds in public and private practice for a more sedate life. For some of these men, ^{they} have become strangers to their home towns because of their jobs. Chieftaincy titles therefore provide a means of reintroduction to local communities, subsequent amassing of support and ability to influence local politics and create a niche for themselves in society. This is similar to the observation made by Jones in 1956 on the position of titles and secret societies. (Jones, 1957:23). As long as individuals see the need to return 'home' and politicians rely on the use of the home base for political support and popularity, traditional offices will remain attractive and highly sought after.

NOTES

1. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 22nd February 1983.
2. See CALPROF C.P.2787/6 of 23rd May 1940.
3. Dr. E. Akak, 5th October 1982.
Chief Amika, 2nd March 1983.
4. Etubom Ekpenyong-Effa, 19th March 1982.
5. Chief E. Archibong, 7th June 1982.

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GLOSSARY OF EFIK TERMS

The following Efik terms have all been translated. I have followed the Anglicised mode of spelling as a number of Efik names have been Anglicised. This is also the pattern popularly used except in the formal teaching of Efik literature which is not at all common.

abang	earthenware pot, also traditional performance
Abasi	God
abiaibok	medicine man
adaidaha	exalted persons, chiefs
adiaha	first daughter
afia	white
akang	vow
akata	traditional throne
akpan	first son
akpankpan	embossed brass trays
akwawan	coming of age ceremony
amasi	lord
asabo	boa constrictor
ase	praise chants
asi-oyo	Qua word, head of compound/family
ata abasi	prawns
ayan isim	masquerade related to <u>Ekpe</u> and <u>Ndem</u>
ayang	broom
bidak	cap of office for etuboms
bre	to perform, play
ebe	husband
ediangande ndo	divorce, separation
edeng	pike fish

edidem	supreme ruler, God
edikong eti	knock on the head, last ritual insult undergone by Obong before traditional installation ceremony
efamba	<u>Ekpe</u> burial ceremony
efe	shrine
efin	slave
ekebe ndo	bridewealth
ekete <u>Ekpe</u>	metaphoric <u>Ekpe</u> basket
ekob tiade	one navel/umbilical cord
ekpa	female secret society
ekpaku nkwa	beaded bodice-like garment worn during traditional ceremonies
ekpat okok	chewing stick bag
ekpe	leopard, secret society
ekpe obon) ekpe ikong ukom)	all masquerades associated with <u>Ekpe</u>
ekpin	young palm frond
ekpoi nkanda	play associated with <u>Ndem</u> and <u>Ekpe</u>
esang	staff (of office)
esop	society, court
eteyin	father of all
etinge	traditional hair style
etubom	head of house
etubom-obio	clan head
eyen eka	children of the same mother
eyen ete	children of the same father
eyet awan	public cry

fiom	crocodile
ibah	alligator
iban esa obong	women's organization in charge of the Palace
ibuot ufok	head of family/sub-house
idem	physical representative, masquerade
idem afai	violent masquerade
idibi tiade	one womb, stomach
iduo	camwood
ifot	witchcraft
ikim wan nkuho	diabetes
ikong oboti	leaves of the Newbouldia laevis, <u>Ekpe</u> leaves
ikong ubong	vegetable, pumpkin leaves
ikong ukom	banana, plantain leaves
ikpaya	raffia cloth worn by Obong during installation ceremony
ikut	tortoise
inyang afia	spinach
isimupan	<u>Ekpe</u> whip made from the skin of the stingray fish
iso	face
isung	deputy
iwang	farm, plantation
iwuk abia	yam pottage
iyip tiade	one blood
mbet	advisers
mbiam	oath
mbon ufok	house/family members
mbufari	geometrical patchwork table, cover cloth

mbuka	ridiculous, abomination
mbukpo	spirits, ancestors
mgbe	Qua for <u>Ekpe</u>
mkpin	crinoline-like cane frame used in traditional performances
mkpoto	tent-like structure erected in honour of the dead
mma	mother
mong	water
monyò	<u>Ekpe</u> staff of office
muri	head of Efut community
murimunene	paramount ruler of Efut
muruwa	sub-deputy
<u>Ndem</u>	tutelar deity
ndak eyo	palm fronds
ndam	raffia
ndito	children
ndom	native chalk
ndi wa	to appease (<u>Ndem</u>)
nfa	prong
nka	members of, age group
nkorikpo	small bells
nsibidi	secret sign language, writing of <u>Ekpe</u> , also masquerade
nta inim	parrot feather
natakanda	peacock feather
ntimi	traditional dance associated with <u>Ndem</u>
ntoe	head of Qua communities
ntung	royal footstool

nwariwa	leaves associated with <u>Ekpe</u> obon
nwan	wife, woman
nyana yaku	pristine secret society, milder form of <u>Ekpe</u>
obodo eyong ekom	drum on the roof top
Obong (plo mbong)	paramount ruler, sir, head
obu	lobster
obubud	black
odidem	Qua word, supreme ruler
ofong isin	men's wrapper
okpokpo obon	masquerade associated with <u>Ekpe</u> and <u>Ndem</u>
okponkro	masquerade associated with <u>Ndem</u>
oku	<u>Ndem</u> medium
onyonyo	traditional long dress
<u>Owu</u>	Kalabari water deity
ubarikang ndono	making fire for the sick
udo	second son
<u>uduok</u> mong	pouring of water rite
udwa	market
ufok	house
ukang	plantain and dried smoked meat - <u>Ekpe</u> dish
ukara	<u>Ekpe</u> cloth
ukim	silk cotton
ukot	affine
uqua	traditional sword play
usan	plate
usung abia	pounded yam
utere	vulture
uto	poetry

LIST OF EFFIK OBONGS (1816 - 1931)

<u>DUKE</u>	<u>TOWN</u>	<u>DATES</u>	<u>CREEK</u>	<u>TOWN</u>
Great Duke Egharaim				
Efom Edem		1816 - 1834	Eyo Hweyng	I
			Eyo	Nwa
Eyamba V				
Edem Ekpennyang	O. Okoho	1836 - 1847	Eyo II	
			Eyo	Nwa
Archibong I				
Eyo - Okoho	Asibong Minka	1849 - 1852		
Duke Egharaim II			Eyo III	
Edem Odo		1852 - 1858	Eyo	Ita
Archibong II				
Eyo Asibong		1859 - 1872	Eyo IV	
			Efok	Eyo
Archibong III				
Edem Asibong		1872 - 1879	Eyo V	
			Aye	Eyo

Duke Ephantaim (Eyanba X)
Orak Edem

1880 - 1896

Eyo VI
Ukok Eyo

Eyanba X
Epeyonyong Epepe

1896 - 1899

Eyo VII
Ansa Okoko

Adam Ephantaim Adam I
Edem Efrom Ededem Tete

1899 - 1906

Archibong IV
Eyo Eyo Asibong Minika

1906 - 1908

Eyo VIII
Epeyonyong Eforok

Adam Ephantaim Duke
Edem Epefong

1908 deposed 1926
d. 1940

Eyo IX
James Eyo the
Makara

The dates are those of Duke Tom Obongs drawn up against Greek Tom Obongs of the same or similar periods. The first names are their official titles, and the second, their proper Ede names. Based on Goldie (1890) and Duke Tom Families Memorandum (1972).

 LIST OF OBONG OF CALABAR

Archibong V
 Ededem J Asibong 1950 - 1961

Edem E. E. Adam II
 Edem Ekepenyong Efo Ededem TeHe 1961 - 1967

David Henkhan V
 (Kamification Obong 1971 - 1973

Essim Ekepe Okun V 1973 - 1980

Bassay Eyo Ephraim Adam III 1982

- 1842 Treaty for the Abolition of Slave Trade
- 1846 Arrival of missionaries of the Church of Scotland Mission in Duke Town and Creek Town
- 1850 Ekpe Law against Human Sacrifice.
Restriction of the Administration of the Ewere Poison Ordeal
- 1850-1 Formation of the Bloodmen Organization in Duke Town. Creek Town (1861)
- 1855 Destruction of Old Town
- 1856 Rebuilding of Old Town
- 1875 Ekeng Ita crowned himself Obong of Henshaw Town
- 1875-8 Henshaw - Duke Town War
- 1884 Annexation of Old Calabar
- 1890 Death of the Last Oku Ndem

Based on Waddell (1863), Goldie (1890), Hart (1964), Udoh (1971) and informants.

- 1902 The Native Court Proclamation whereby provisions were made for: an Obong of Old Calabar and Obong of Creek Town and rights of all Efik settlements in the Obongship
- 1940 Official recognition of the Obong of Calabar
- 1940 Efik under Esop Iboke organization agreed on the selection of one paramount ruler.
- 1950 Formation of the Efik Royal Fraternity (E.R.F.)
- 1960 Resolution by E.R.F. as the King-Making body
- 1961 Withdrawal of recognition notice published by 8 etuboms against Archibong
Mass deposition of etuboms by their houses
- 1961-1963 Obongship dispute, Hart Inquiry

- 1967- 1971 Obangship Dispute,
Udoh Inquiry
- 1970 Unification Agreement
between Duke Town and
Creek Town under one
Obang.
Rotational Procedure
- 1971 First Obang of Calabar
under the unification
agreement, David Henshaw V.
Reintroduction of the
official title 'Edidem'.
Expansion of Henshaw Town
houses to five from one
- 1975 Eyamba House Etubomship
Dispute, James Inquiry
- 1978 Adiabio Akani Obio
Etubomship Dispute
- 1979 Obang's Arbitration Panel, formed
- 1980 Opening of the first Official
Palace of the Obang of Calabar
- 1981 - 1982 Obangship Dispute
1982 Expulsion of five etuboms by
the Etuboms Traditional Council
Formation of the Obang's Private
Cabinet

PROGRAMME

OF

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION

OF THE

Coronation



OF

HIS HIGHNESS ESIEN EKPE OKU V

(OBONG OF CALABAR)

DECEMBER, 20TH—26TH, 1978.

LEAD HOLY SHEPHERD!

Today, December 23, 1978, His Highness Esien Ekpe Oku V, turns the fifth milestone in his arduous journey as the Patriach of the entire Efik tribal group - the Obong of Calabar.

"The head that wears the crown, lies uneasy". The burden of office is not a particularly enviable one - replete with trials, temptations and even moments of near-eruption. Nevertheless, His Highness's five years in office has already registered a fascinating record of achievements yet unsurpassed in the long history of Efik kingship.

From the solid foundation of an insuperable institution with its ~~complement~~ of Clan Heads, loyal Group Heads (Etuboms), unfailing support of representatives of families, a phalanx of Honorary Advisers drawn from the professions and cultural groups - the institution of Obongship today has an aura of dignity and veneration that truly reflects the grand past of which we are heirs, a contemporary situation of which we are proud, and future of which we are supremely hopeful.

His Highness has earned our sincere congratulations for his amirable role as "Leader and Father" of the tribe

Today, as on the four previous occasions of the Anniversary of his Coronation, the Etuboms' Council, on behalf of the generality of the Efik people everywhere, dutifully salute his Highness and wish him God-speed in his onward journey.

Lead, holy shepherd, lead us,
Thy feeble ly flock, we pray;
Thou king of little pilgrims,
Safe lead us all the way

P R O G R A M M E O F E V E N T S

5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CORONATION

OF

HIS HIGHNESS ESIEN EKPE OKU V

OBONG OF CALABAR

DECEMBER 20TH - 26TH, 1978

- December 20th, 1978 - ASE
- December 21st, 1978
 - (6 a.m.) - EFE ASABO
 - (2.30 p.m) - NATIVE PLAY (*Palace Site*)
- December 22nd, 1978 - DRIVE ROUND THE CALABAR/AKAMKPA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS (HIS HIGHNESS, CLAN-HEADS, ETUBOMS, CHIEFS AND HON. ADVISERS.)
- December 23rd, 1978
 - (2 p.m) - CONFERMENT OF CHIEFTAINCY HONOURS. (*Palace Site*)
- December 24th, 1978
 - (10 a.m.) - ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING SERVICE (DUKE TOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH EYAMBA STREET).
- December 26th, 1978
 - (11.30 a.m) - ETUBOMS' COUNCIL MEETING
 - (7.30 p.m) - COCKTAIL, (By Invitation)

SECRETARY, ETUBOMS' COUNCIL

LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN!

Let us now praise famous men.

The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through his great power from the beginning.

Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring p *Prophecy* :

Leaders of the people by their counsel, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise and eloquent in their instructions:

Such as found out musical tunes, and recited verses in writing:

Rich men furnished with ability, living peaceably in their habitations:

All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times.

There be of them, that have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported.

~~And~~ some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished, as though they had never been; and are become as though they had never been born; and their children after them.

But these were merciful men, whose righteousness hath not been forgotten.

With their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance, and their children are within the covenant.

Their ~~seed~~ standeth fast, and their children for their sakes.

Their seed shall remain for ever, and their glory shall not be blotted out.

ECCLESIASTICUS, Chapter 44, Verses 1-14.

C O N F E R M E N T

His Highness the Obong of Calabar (Edidem Esien Ekpe Oku V) has graciously accepted the recommendation of the Etuboms' Council to confer the venerable rank of Honorary Chieftaincy on the following persons who by their performances in their respective spheres of activities have made outstanding contributions to the economic and social life of the community.

AMBO: (Dr.) Effiong Esien Okon
(Engr.) Bassey Effiong Bassey
Cllr. Okpo Ene
Mrs. Inyang Edem

EYAMBA FAMILY: Joseph Bassey Asuquo

WELFARE: Mrs. M. Antia
Mr. Andrew Asuquo Eyo Ekpenyong
Mrs. Elizabeth Inwang

LAGOS: Eniang Effiong Offiong

PROFESSIONS: Effiom Otu Ekong
(Dr.) James Ene Henshaw

ARTS AND CULTURE: Ekpenyong Inan Ekpenyong
Miss Affiong Ekong

TRADE - COMMERCE: Patrick Solomon
Emmanuel Etim James

HAUSA COMMUNITY: Seriki Lawal

DUKE HOUSE: Edem O. Edem
Mrs. A.E. Ene

ETIM EFFIOM: Mrs. Alice E. Adam



His Highness Edidem Essien Ekpe Oku V
receives envoys from the Royal Court of Benin.



SOUTH-EASTERN STATE OF NIGERIA

**Conclusions of the Government on the
Report and Recommendations of
the Inquiry into the Obongship
of Calabar Dispute**

PRICE: ONE SHILLING

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER · CALABAR

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT ON THE REPORT
AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INQUIRY INTO
THE OBONGSHIP OF CALABAR DISPUTE**

The Honourable Commissioner for Home Affairs and Social Welfare, upon apprehending a dispute over the selection of Etubom David James Henshaw as the Obong of Calabar, appointed Mr E. A. Udoh, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Social Welfare as Sole Commissioner under powers conferred on him by Section 4 (i) of *Cap. 112* of the Laws of Eastern Nigeria 1963 (E.R. Law No. 9 of 1960) to enquire into the dispute. The Sole Commissioner was given the following terms of reference:

- (a) to examine the grounds of the protest against the selection of Etubom David James Henshaw as the Obong of Calabar; and
- (b) to advise the Government as to whether a vacancy exists and whether he can, in accordance with Efik tradition rightly fill it.

2. The Inquiry which started on 13th August, 1971 closed on 22nd September, 1971. The report and recommendations which were submitted on 26th October, 1971 cover eleven chapters in four parts as follows:

- | | | | |
|----------------|----|----|----------------------------------|
| (a) Part One | .. | .. | Preliminaries |
| (b) Part Two | .. | .. | Historical Background |
| (c) Part Three | .. | .. | Summary of Protests and Rebuttal |
| (d) Part Four | .. | .. | Findings and Recommendations |

3. Part One of the report contains three chapters namely: the Introduction, the Opening of the Inquiry and the Apostasy of Etubom Effiom Bassey Duke. Part Two contains three chapters dealing with the Founding of Duke Town and Henshaw Town, the Hensho-Dukean war of 1874-1876 and the Kingship Institution in Calabar. Part Three also

covers three chapters and summarizes protests by Archibong and Duke Town Houses, Rebuttal by the second group of disputants and the Evaluation of protests and Rebuttal. Part Four contains the Findings of the Sole Commissioner and his recommendations.

4. In compliance with Section (a) of his terms of reference the Sole Commissioner in chapter nine of his Report, evaluates the protests against the selection of Etubom David James Henshaw, one of which as recorded in paragraph 105 (vii) of the Report, is that "Henshaw Town people are subjects of Duke Town, having been conquered in the war of 1874-1876 and being customary tenants of Duke Town. As conquered people, they cannot aspire to sit on the throne of their conquerors". In his finding on this ground of protest, the Sole Commissioner states, in effect, in paragraph 126 of his Report that the terms of settlement following the war of 1874-1876 merely conferred a hulk-made kingship on Duke Town Rulers inspired by the Europeans and cannot therefore, operate to exclude a Henshaw Town candidate from the stool of Obong of Calabar.

5. The settlement as recorded by the Rev. William Anderson following the war between Duke Town and Henshaw Town, waged to consolidate the kingship of Old Calabar, and in which Duke Town was victorious, read as follows:

"I drop only a line or two from the hulk of our friend, Mr Gilbertson, to say that we have just left a meeting at which matters have been arranged between Duke Town and Henshaw Town, under the auspices of H.B.M.'s Consul. The chief provision is that Henshaw Town people may rebuild their town, but they are to live henceforth as subjects of the King of Duke Town. They are to have the same rights and privileges as the free men of Duke Town, but are not to form a separate and independent kingdom. This is perhaps the best arrangement that could have been made, and we are all obliged to Consul Hertley for his prompt and effective interposition."

6. It is clear from the text that the two Europeans involved, namely, the Rev. Anderson and Consul Hertley played the roles of a recorder and a

go-between respectively; that the terms were not imposed on any of the parties and that they constitute a genuine settlement reached by the two warring parties (i.e., Duke Town and Henshaw Town). This point is strengthened by the declaration of King Archibong III when he said, "We no will two kings for we be one family". This settlement must therefore, be accepted as constituting the agreed basis for the selection of Obong of Calabar, and bearing in mind that there has not been a deviation from 1874-1971—nearly one hundred years—it must also be accepted as the traditional basis until it is set aside by the mutual agreement of the Efik people.

7. (a) The Government is satisfied that the people of Calabar had no illusions whatsoever as to the interpretation of the terms of settlement recorded above hence, from 1874-1971 they have been selecting their Obongs from Duke Town Houses. (b) If the Efik people desire a change it is for them to come to an agreement and tell the Government so publicly and in the proper manner; they should also lay down the new basis of selection.

8. As regards Section (b) of his terms of reference the Sole Commissioner finds that a vacancy physically exists in the Stool of Obong of Calabar to be filled, and he advises that Etubom David James Henshaw can rightly fill it. The Government agrees with the Sole Commissioner that a vacancy exists in the Stool of Obong of Calabar but rejects the advice that Etubom David James Henshaw can rightly fill it in so far as the terms of settlement recorded above have not been set aside. i.e. 7(b)

9. The Government's disagreement with this recommendation of the Sole Commissioner does not however detract from the excellence of his work. The Report bears ample evidence of the care with which he has handled his assignment and the detailed sifting of the evidence before him. It is to his credit that the Government has drawn its conclusion on this crucial issue wholly from the contents of his report.

Calabar,
20th April, 1972.

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SOUTH-EASTERN STATE OF NIGERIA

**Government Statement on the
Obongship of Calabar**

PRICE: ONE SHILLING

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CALABAR

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON THE OBONGSHIP OF CALABAR

Sometime last year, 1971, news reached the Government of South-Eastern State that the Efik people had selected their traditional leader—the Obong of Calabar—following the widely known (though not formally announced according to the Efik traditional custom) demise of the former incumbent, Etubom Edem E. E. Adam. The news of the appointment of the new Obong of Calabar in the person of Etubom David James Henshaw sparked off protests from certain quarters.

2. The Efik people of Calabar are well and widely known to be among those in Nigeria with the most solidly established and deeply respected institutions of traditional Chieftaincy of Etuboms and the Obong. These institutions were recognized and accepted by the European traders and, later, by the British colonial administrators, as far back as the nineteenth century.

3. The Government of the South-Eastern State fully respects and upholds the sacred traditions of chieftaincy anywhere in the State. It expects the Chiefs and other traditional leaders to play their due roles in the vital tasks of diversified development of the State. But it also knows that without the universal support and confidence of his subjects no Chief or any other traditional leader can play his expected roles with effective and productive results. It was for that reason that the Government of the South-Eastern State, on being satisfied that a dispute existed over the selection of Etubom David James Henshaw as the Obong of Calabar, decided to exercise its power under the law by instituting a public enquiry—

- (a) to examine the grounds of protest against the selection of Etubom David James Henshaw as the Obong of Calabar; and
- (b) to advise the Government as to whether a vacancy existed and whether Etubom David James Henshaw could, in accordance with Efik tradition, rightly fill it.

4. The Sole Commissioner of the Enquiry Mr E. A. Udoh advised that a vacancy existed and that Etubom David James Henshaw who had been selected by the overwhelming majority of the Etuboms could rightly fill that vacancy in accordance with Efik tradition. During consideration of his report however, Government's attention was drawn to a Settlement in the late 19th century concerning the issue of accession to the Stool of Obong of Calabar. Whatever may have been the legal significance of the Settlement, the Government nevertheless decided not to ignore its political and historical importance and thereupon withheld recognition of Etubom David James Henshaw as the Obong of Calabar in order to give the Efik people a chance to come to a mutual agreement among themselves on how to overcome the provision of the Settlement which vests the right to provide an Obong in a single Efik House.

5. More than three months have passed since the publication of Government's decision. Every evidence since then points to the fact that the great majority of Efik people, represented by their Etuboms, accept and want Etubom David James Henshaw as the Obong of Calabar. This position was re-affirmed in a resolution of the Etubom's Council dated the 16th of June, 1972 and communicated to Government.

6. Being now satisfied that Etubom David James Henshaw is the generally accepted candidate of Efik people for the vacant Stool of Obong of Calabar, appreciating the undesirability of allowing this important question to continue hanging in the air, and believing it to be in the interests of peace, happiness and progress of the generality of the Efik people that an Obong of Calabar be formally recognized by the Government of South-Eastern State, His Excellency, the Military Governor of South-Eastern State, Brigadier U. J. Esuene, on behalf of the Military Government of South-Eastern State, has decided to grant and hereby grants, formal recognition to Etubom David James Henshaw as the rightful Obong of Calabar.

(Sgd.) M. O. ANI

Secretary to the Military Government

Cabinet Office,
Calabar
11th August, 1972.

APPENDIX

SMG/S/55/Vol. III/489

11th August, 1972

Etubom David James Henshaw,
Henshaw Town,
Calabar.

The period since the publication of the Government White Paper on the Udoh Commission of Enquiry into the Obongship of Calabar has enabled me to appraise very fully your acceptability to the Etuboms and the Efik People as the Obong of Calabar. It is therefore, my pleasure to inform you that I have this day decided to recognize you as the Obong of Calabar, and a formal announcement to that effect is being made.

2. I wish you a successful tenure of office and look forward to your full co-operation.

(Sgd.) Brigadier U. J. Esuene
Military Governor
South-Eastern State

J. Savage (3)

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ISSN 0331 — 0338



CROSS RIVER STATE OF NIGERIA

**Conclusions of the Government of the Cross River State
on the Report and Recommendations of the Inquiry into
Eyamba House Etubomship Dispute**

OFFICIAL DOCUMENT No. 6 of 1981

PRICE: 25k

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CALABAR

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CROSS RIVER STATE ON
THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INQUIRY INTO
EYAMBA HOUSE ETUBOMSHIP DISPUTE**

INTRODUCTION

1. The Eyamba House Etubomship Dispute arose in March, 1961, as a result of the irregular deposition of the late Efa John Eyamba as the Etubom of Eyamba House by a faction of that House and the subsequent appointment of one Offiong Obo Obo Offiong as the new Etubom for Eyamba House. Therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Section 6 (1) – (2) of the Traditional Rulers Edict No. 17 of 1973, the then Commissioner for Home Affairs and Social Welfare, Chief K. J. N. Okpokam, by an instrument dated 30th April, 1974, appointed Major E. S. James, Administrative Officer, Staff Grade, to inquire into the Eyamba House Etubomship Dispute with the following terms of reference:

- (i) “to investigate and spell out, in accordance with Efik Tradition and as adopted by Eyamba Family, the method of selection and deposition of Etubom;
- (ii) to investigate and report whether, according to Efik Tradition, one Efa John Eyamba was deposed as the Etubom of Eyamba Family; if so, the circumstances leading to his deposition;
- (iii) to examine the claim that Eyamba Family had selected one Offiong Obo Obo Offiong as the Etubom of Eyamba Family, and to determine whether the selection was done in accordance with Section 8 of the Traditional Rulers Edict No. 17 of 1973; and
- (iv) to recommend to Government the person entitled to be recognised as the Etubom of Eyamba Family in Calabar Division”.

The Sole Commssioner submitted his Report in March, 1976.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. In compliance with Sections (i) – (iii), of the terms of reference, the Sole Commissioner found and was satisfied as follows:

- (i) that the traditional method of selection of the Etubom of Eyamba House is in two stages. The first stage is discussion between the Heads of the three constituent families, namely, Ekpenyong Offiong, Abasi Offiong and Mbang Offiong, the elders and senior blood descendants to the exclusion of women and persons of slave descent. The second stage is the presentation by the selectors, of their chosen Etubom to the whole House for acceptance. The traditional method of deposition of an Etubom is that all the three Families of the House must concur in an action to depose an Etubom. This means that those entitled to participate in the selection of an Etubom are also entitled, when there are good and sufficient reasons, to initiate his deposition;
- (ii) that Etubom Efa John Eyamba was not properly deposed from the office of Etubom of Eyamba House;
- (iii) that there was no vacancy in the office of Etubom of the Eyamba House at the time of the purported selection of Chief Offiong Obo Offiong and that the purported selection was not in accordance with the traditional method of selection of an Etubom.

COMMENTS

Government accepts the views of the Sole Commissioner on these matters.

3. With regard to Section IV of his terms of reference, the Sole Commissioner's recommendation that Efa John Eyamba was the person entitled to be recognised as the Etubom of Eyamba House has been overtaken by events in that the said Efa John Eyamba died in 1976. The death of Etubom Efa John Eyamba naturally created a vacancy in the Eyamba House Etubomship. The subsequent selection of Offiong Obo Offiong in February, 1979, as the Etubom of Eyamba House was challenged by Efiom Ekpenyong John Eyamba. The stool was therefore declared disputed and referred to the Calabar Municipality Traditional Council for investigation and advice in accordance with Section 7 of the Traditional Rulers Edict, 1978. The Calabar Municipality Traditional Council investigated the dispute and advised that Efiom Ekpenyong John Eyamba is the person best qualified to be recognised as the Etubom of Eyamba House.

COMMENTS

Government accepts this recommendation and therefore accords the said Efiom Ekpenyong John Eyamba recognition as the Etubom of Eyamba House with effect from 1st February, 1981.

4. Government appreciates the mature comportment shown by the Sole Commissioner in his conduct of the inquiry, especially in the face of unwarranted provocation by persons who testified before him. In addition, the Government wishes to express its gratitude to the Sole Commissioner for his good Report which is a clear evidence of the creditable way in which he handled the assignment.

Office of the Governor,
Calabar.

17th March, 1981