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The Kings & Chiefs  
Of Old Calabar  
(1785 - 1925)

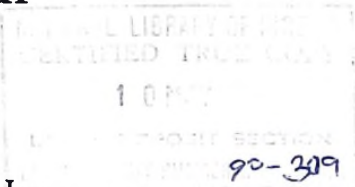
EKEI ESSIEN OKU



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(1785 ~ 1925)



# The Kings & Chiefs Of Old Calabar (1785 ~ 1925)



**EKEI ESSIEN OKU**

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FOR MY FAMILY

06/30/30 1911



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During my career as a Librarian, I had endless enquiries on Efik history, migrations, customs and on Calabar in general from students, scholars and researchers. This book is the first attempt at supplying some of the answers to these questions and it gives the biographical sketches of some prominent Efik Kings and Chiefs.

In its preparation, I have had to draw upon textural information as well as interviews and oral tradition.

Before anything else I have to thank my husband Essien Oku and children, Ekanem, Inyang and Essien Oku, who had encouraged me and took special care to pick up and keep for me every scrap of paper in the hope that I might perhaps have jotted down a historical fact and had inadvertently dropped the paper. My respectful gratitude goes to the Obong of Calabar, H.R.H., Edidem Otu Ekpenyong Effa IX and the Etuboms' Traditional Council for permitting to me the use of a sketch of the Efik traditional crown "NTINYA" on the cover of this book.

I also thank the following people who had kindly granted me interviews:

Etubom Joseph Ewa Henshaw (grandson of Joseph Henshaw), Etubom Oko Bassey Duke (son of Prince Bassey Duke Ephraim IX), Late Etubom Efa John Eyamba who gave me the photograph of Henshaw III to copy Etubom Efiom Bassey Offiong Effiwatt (a descendant of Ofiong Effiwatt, Owner of the Cumberbeach Bell of 1799), Etubom Ofiong Efang Ita of Henshaw Town. Dr. James Ene Richard Henshaw (son of Etubom the Hon Richard Henshaw), Chief Ukorebi Ukorebi Asuquo (a descendant of King Ebrero of Ikoneto mentioned by Barbot in 1698) who supplied valuable documents and other information, Mr Effiong Ukpung Aye, eminent Efik historian and currently Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of African Studies in the University of Calabar, Dr. Anne Okoho Esuabana Eyo, Chief (Mrs) Hannah B. Otudor (grand-daughter of Coco-Otu Bassey), Dr. Eyo Eyo Archibong and Etubom Ekpenyong Ekpo Eyo Archibong (grand sons of King Archibong IV who was brother of Archibong II), Chief Eyo Otu Eyo Princess Ekanem Orok Duke Ephraim IX for permission to copy a photograph of her grandfather, (King Duke Ephraim Eyamba IX) Etubom Oku Etim Nyong (Late Etubom of Marakom, Creek Town).

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## FOREWORD

Neither society nor town nor country exists without its makers. More often these makers have been the "men of the moment." In this brilliant stock-taking exercise on Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar, Chief Mrs. Ekei Oku has succeeded greatly in bringing together those men whose efforts and integrity played such a large part in identifying themselves with Old Calabar and shaping its destiny.

The serious study of the history of Old Calabar as a Nigerian town of political and cultural significance has just begun to be expressive in its various manifestations, because the age needs it in order to unfold its contributions, towards the political and social history of Nigeria as a whole.

Old Calabar was made by men and the study of its history would create an uneasy vacuum were these men left out especially in those heydays of African kingship, when the king was the country, when Jaja was Opobo, when Oba Overami was the embodiment of all that was Benin, and the Dukes, Eyambas and Eyos were to Old Calabar what Dr. Jekyll was to Mr Hyde.

Of the many towns on the coast of Nigeria today, Calabar has one of the longest historical records of external contact, partly because of its early accessibility to foreign ships that plied the West African Coast, partly because of the part it played in overseas commerce for some four centuries before the British colonial impact, and partly because of the energetic activities of its rulers and chiefs throughout those centuries.

In the creation of the Oil Rivers and the Niger Coast Protectorates, it was Old Calabar that pivoted their central hinge, and these men and their moments were significant.

This book, *the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar,*" could never have been produced at a more appropriate time. We need it not only as supplement to our study of Old Calabar, but also as biographical requisites in the whole story. It is a book for the general reader, the research scholar, the student and for the people of Calabar to see themselves as reflected in its mirror.

E. U. Aye

University of Calabar  
1988

## **CALABAR: A EULOGY**

### **CALABAR**

Daughter of the Cross and Calabar Rivers

Grand-daughter of the Atlantic

My Motherland

Home of the Efik

The Qua

The Efut

The Okoyong

Home of all Nigerians

Hostess to the world

Always accommodating

Never repulsive

By Nature endowed with beauty

Half land

Half water

Most ancient

Most modern

Most backward

Most progressive

Most rigid

Most tender

Proud

But not arrogant

Now in the forefront

Now in the rear

Most slandered

Most extolled

Most coveted

Most beloved

Well predestined

Always religious

"**ABASI DOII** her sigh of hope

Cleanest

Filthiest

Affectionately nicknamed

**CANAAN CALABAR!**

## INTRODUCTION

"CALABAR" remains a name of magic and romance for a great number of people inside and outside Africa as it always conjures in their minds a memory or an experience. Inscribed in a niche in the dungeons of that famous historical edifice, "MADAME TUSSEAUD" in London, are the following words:

"Old Calabar: Dog biscuits and poultry," obviously reminiscent of the bleak experiences of the supercargoes at sea from Liverpool to Old Calabar and thence to America. Further away in the royal county of Buckinghamshire in a town of that name, this writer once saw an old archway leading into a garage, with the simple inscription "Old Calabar" perhaps scribbled by a rascally teenager but still conveying a message. Across the Atlantic in the beautiful island of Jamaica, a "Calabar High School" was built by the West Indian Pioneers of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission who had worked in Calabar. To crown it all, a friend once said that the name "Calabar" was so fascinating that it ought to be given to a girl and indeed some people here in Nigeria have been known to add it to their personal names!

It is in this way that the magic, beauty, mystery and romance in the very name "Calabar" affect people whether Nigerians or not.

The nostalgia is well-emphasized in the following extract from the 'Nigeria Magazine': TIMBUCTU, SAMARKAND and CALABAR! There has grown up about these names an edge-of-the-world feel which has arisen, partly from the eternal need for romanticism and partly from the absence of precise information. Calabar the town does not entirely live up to the dream but that would be impossible anyhow. Nevertheless, its associations are certainly as colourful as any romance and it is unlikely that there are many dramatic sequences of fiction which during the town's steamy history, have not occurred in some guise at one time or another ...<sup>1</sup>

LOCATION: Calabar refers to the territory which stands on latitude 4°57' North of the Equator and longitude '8°20' East. To the north and north-east of it are Ogoja and Oban regions respectively while to the immediate and distant west are the Ibibio and Ibo areas respectively. To the near east stretch the regions west of the Cameroons and to the south is the estuary of the Cross River which flows into the Bight of Bonny formerly called Bight of Biafra.

The main town is some fifty nautical miles from the estuary and is built on a series of hills, high bluffs, rises and gentle, undulating lands. On clear days the peaks of the Cameroon mountains can easily be seen from some areas

of the town. The first appeal of Calabar is to the eye for it stands on a cliff overlooking the majestic Calabar River. Majestic not because it is swifter or wider than a dozen other rivers in West Africa, but because the cliffs and high ground overlooking it, provide a three dimensional element usually lacking in river and forest scenery....<sup>3</sup>

This noble river which joins the Cross River at its mouth is snugly cradled in its picturesque setting and usually possesses a calm, metallic and unruffled surface which in a way depicts the characteristics of its seasoned people the Efiks, Quas, Efuts and Okoyongs. It has a deceptive appearance of fragility, but one cannot easily forget the turbulent years which go back for over five centuries. Years when the river was active first with slave trade and later with legitimate trade in palm products and missionary activities. Calabar has, during these long years both suffered and enjoyed unbroken contact with Europe; the longest unbroken contact of any part on the Nigerian Coast.

The development of Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America shortly after the early contacts with Calabar started Europeans in the age old slave trade and Calabar was one of the earlier and greater slave ports, the Efiks acting as middlemen and capturing or buying slaves from the hinterland.

When Britain and Denmark made their revolutionary decision to outlaw slave trade, the Calabar people at first objected, seeing an end to their profitable dealings with the white traders. A deliberate effort was however made to replace slaving with legitimate commerce, but along side this grew a number of profitable but less scrupulous enterprises. Calabar was the centre of it all – the slaves, the firearms, the gun-powder and the cheap gin. The town grew up very much the hard way...<sup>4</sup>

## THE FOUNDING OF CALABAR

The modern history of the Efiks is closely interwoven with the history of Calabar but a meaningful account of Efik or any other ethno-history would have been clearer if the time-setting had not been difficult due to the fact that the period under consideration is a pre-literate one. The earliest recorded date in the Cross River area is said to be the 15th century when Sequeira discovered the Coast in 1472.<sup>5</sup> But indirect records support a much earlier date for the founding of Old Calabar.

Talbot recorded that Kalabari or New Calabar was settled by the people of AWOME in c1400.<sup>6</sup> If this is so, it implies that the process of doing so must have started long before 1400 A.D. Because of this date, it has been assumed by some writers that New Calabar is older than Old Calabar. Here

is what Talbot says:-

Through some error this name was applied to the Cross River estuary which was finally called "Old Calabar to distinguish it from the Kalabari River which was then named New Calabar River...<sup>6</sup>

No one has as yet given the reason why it was in the first place called "New" if it is true that it was discovered first.

It seems quite odd that a place which was reported to have come into contact with Europeans earlier should continue to be called "New" while the one supposed to have been a later discovery should have been called "Old". We believe that New Calabar cannot be older than Old Calabar. It is common-sense to conclude that where two places bearing identical names exist the earlier known one should be called "Old" and the later one "New". It is in the same way that the Pilgrim Fathers who left England to found new settlements in America named one of their settlements "New England." To come nearer home Duke Town or Akwa Akpa or Atakpa was also called "New Town" to differentiate it from "Old Town" or Obutong which was founded earlier and when the latter settlement was shifted to make room for the Calabar Cement Factory, the new settlement came to be known as "NEW OBUTONG" or OBUFA OBUTONG. It is to be noted that the name "New-Obutong" was not imposed for the new settlement wished to retain memories of its connections and antecedents. As a matter of fact Efik tradition has it that some Efiks from Duke Town founded a small settlement in the vicinity of Kalabari. Aye says that Barbot's Duke Aphrom's ancestor is believed to have been the one by whose initiative an Efik settlement was planted in the eastern delta of the Niger to be later known as New Calabar. The colony failed to thrive because of constant quarrels between the colonists and their neighbours.<sup>7</sup> He quotes the following from an account which Mary Kingsley, a great traveller, gave in 1899 in connection with New Calabar:-

New Calabar was first founded some two hundred and fifty years ago, when, tradition says, one of the Ephraim Duke family left Old Calabar and settled at the spot from whence they retired in 1880".<sup>8</sup>

The period of Efik settlement in the area would then be around 1650 and seems to tally with Aye's assertion above that it was founded by Barbot's Duke Aphrom's ancestor. Aye concluded that although Mary Kingsley recorded that the Ephraim Duke family withdrew back to Calabar, there was evidence that not all of them did so for a good number remained perma-

nently in their new home and were subsequently absorbed through intermarriage with their hosts. "Eyamba town" still stands South of Bonny and Duke's compound exists today in New Calabar<sup>9</sup> while some of the people there still answer Black Duke or just 'Duke'. There seems to be no doubt therefore that Old Calabar predates New Calabar. Ajato Amos asserts that Efiks were always empire builders by sending out contingents which settled and conquered an area and made it part of Efik Empire. This may have been what happened with New Calabar but it is likely that the settlement arose from commercial contact and not from war.

Another indirect record which assists in the dating of Old Calabar is a reference made in Goldie's "Efik-English — English-Efik" dictionary to the "ITU-ITA".<sup>10</sup> This name was given by Efiks to the cloth which was brought to Old Calabar by the first three-masted ships that ever went up the Calabar River. This shows that Efiks had already settled down in Old Calabar before the arrival of European ships. Furthermore, of all the western people who came to Calabar in those early days, the Efiks had an assimilated name for only the Portuguese whom they called "BOTOKI."<sup>11</sup> The logical conclusion is that the first Europeans the Efiks had contact with were the Portuguese who must have made a deep impression on them. The first and earliest contact also suggests Efik presence in Calabar long before 1400 A.D. the year when according to Talbot, New Calabar was settled. Later contacts were of course made with the Dutch, French and the British. Indeed the issue of dating the founding of Calabar is receiving serious attention. Afigbo has suggested 13th century.<sup>12</sup> Justice Webber in the 1917 Beachland cases recognised different waves of settlers, some very early indeed. So here was and is, Old Calabar City, the city that has known much, seen much, done much, gone through much and survived it all.

#### THIS BOOK:

Claims and counter claims abound as to ownership or first occupancy of the area now known as Calabar. In each of these, the Efiks have been derogatively described, especially in these political days, as being either 'tenants' or 'late comers.' Although each of her two neighbours, the Quas and Efuts, claim to be the first settlers, to the exclusion of the other, the fact still remains that neither of them can assign the order of their arrival and that of the Efiks. Since they came from different directions, their settlements were at different locations, dictated by their respective occupation, the Quas settling inland in order to hunt and farm and the Efiks and Efuts settling along the coastal areas and creeks respectively as they were fisher folks.

Efik tradition holds that they (the Efiks) met the Efuts first, a fact which

is confirmed in the South Eastern State Government Master Plan for Calabar in the following words:

'The Efut land occupies the South of Calabar. The Efuts were well known to the Efiks before the Akins (Quas) and they were linked with the Cameroonians..<sup>13</sup>

This early meeting completely revolutionised the Efuts for they soon lost all their languages and adopted the Efik language and Efik names and were in many cases integrated with Efik families. Today, the three communities are still entrenched along the routes of their migrations except in areas which had changed hands through acquisition.

It was in fact through the Efiks that Big Qua and Akim Qua Towns got to know about each other's presence on the outskirts of Old Calabar. Kannan K. Nair also records this fact in his book "Politics and Society in South-eastern Nigeria" arising from an interview granted him on the 18th of November, 1965, by His Highness Ntoe Ika Ika Oqua II of Big Qua Town. (See p.3 and p.31 note 5).

Other records exist in both Lagos and London to show that it was the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar (Efik Kings) who signed the treaty of 1884 with Her Britannic Majesty and that by this action the Old Calabar country was brought under the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Earlier in 1878, a treaty had also been signed by the same Kings and Her Britannic Majesty. They signed none of these treaties as anyone's tenants but as owners of the land, for tenants had neither before then nor after, been known to sign such Treaties. This fact was emphasized by the Appeal Judges A. R. Pennington and J. M. H. Dunlop in the West African Court of Appeal, Lagos, while delivering judgment in the case over the ownership of the Calabar Beachland in 1918. The Efiks won the Appeal and the Quas paid costs amounting to 150 guineas.

Be that as it may, the fame and fortunes of Calabar have been the direct result of the activities and interactions between early European traders, supercargoes, missionaries and British administrators on the one hand and Efik kings, chiefs and people on the other. The kings and chiefs in particular were none other than those always alluded to in all historical and missionary chronicles as "THE KINGS AND CHIEFS OF OLD CALABAR". They became the commercial barons of the entire Cross River basin. They controlled the wealth of the region and this meant political and economic control of both the coast and the hinterland. They opened trading stations in most of these areas and through this medium the different ethnic units came to share the fortune and benefit of western technology and education.

Ajato Amos writing about the Efiks said:-

The period of sojourn among the Ibibios left everlasting imprint upon the Efiks. Only the quarrel and subsequent eviction saved them (the Efiks) from imminent absorption. During that sojourn the Efiks acquired their modern ethnic name EFIK (an Ibibio word meaning "the oppressors") and incorporated many Ibibio words into their language to the fantastic extent of assimilation. Aboriginal Efik language has almost fallen into oblivion but fortunately a lot of it remains preserved in Efik personal names ...<sup>14</sup>

While we do not agree with all the views expressed above by Amos, it should be pointed out that he was trying to illustrate the influence of the Ibibios on the Efiks and as for the latter's influence on all other including the whole of Calabar and the Cross River Basin, he says:

It is worth remembering that the Efiks also influenced their hosts (the Ibos and the Ibibios) by virtue of their more advanced and relatively sophisticated culture but the greater part of that influence came in the 18th, 19th and the first 45 years of the 20th century. It can be validly asserted therefore that Efik influence permeated and to a great extent dominated the entire spectrum of social, economic and cultural life not only in the whole of the present South Eastern State of Nigeria but far into the East Central State, parts of Rivers State (There is an early Efik colony—Kalabari in the Rivers State), Western Cameroons and the offshore islands of modern Equatorial Guinea.

It is important to note that the period of Efik colonization ushered European civilization into South Eastern State and neighbouring lands. Earlier, that influence was inspired by Efik love of adventure: it became nurtured by new-found prosperity in trade and contact with European traders and missionaries and later acquired a civilising force in its city's (Calabar's) role as "Obio Unwana" the city of light or enlightenment.

Much was achieved in the days when the Efik man took initiatives and in that way, the glorious days of which the Efiks proudly recount, constituted a real golden age...

Occupying a favoured part of the coast and river mouth, the great Efik city of Calabar – "Obio Efik" – became a Nigerian Rome from where western civilisation – in commerce, religion and education and politics overflowed into and pervaded all that land between the Niger River and the Cameroon mountains but particularly the Cross River Basin.<sup>16</sup>

In writing these sketches of the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar we have had to rely generally on the following sources:—

Works by well known authors on Old Calabar; information (sometimes hazy) which has been gleaned from the reminiscences of the descendants of the biographees in addition to the lyrics, songs and epigrams which entrenched them in tradition. We have also had to visit cemeteries and churches for information contained in the brief inscriptions on grave stones and memorial tablets. On one such occasion the writer was mistaken for a lunatic!

The book has been divided into two parts. Part one deals with the Kings while part two deals with the chiefs and princes, some of whom might, if they had lived long enough, have occupied their rightful places on the Efik throne.

As there is no true record of their dates of birth, we have generally indicated only the period of their reign in the case of the kings and for the chiefs, except for about three of them, we have given only the year of their death.

E. E. O  
Calabar  
1988

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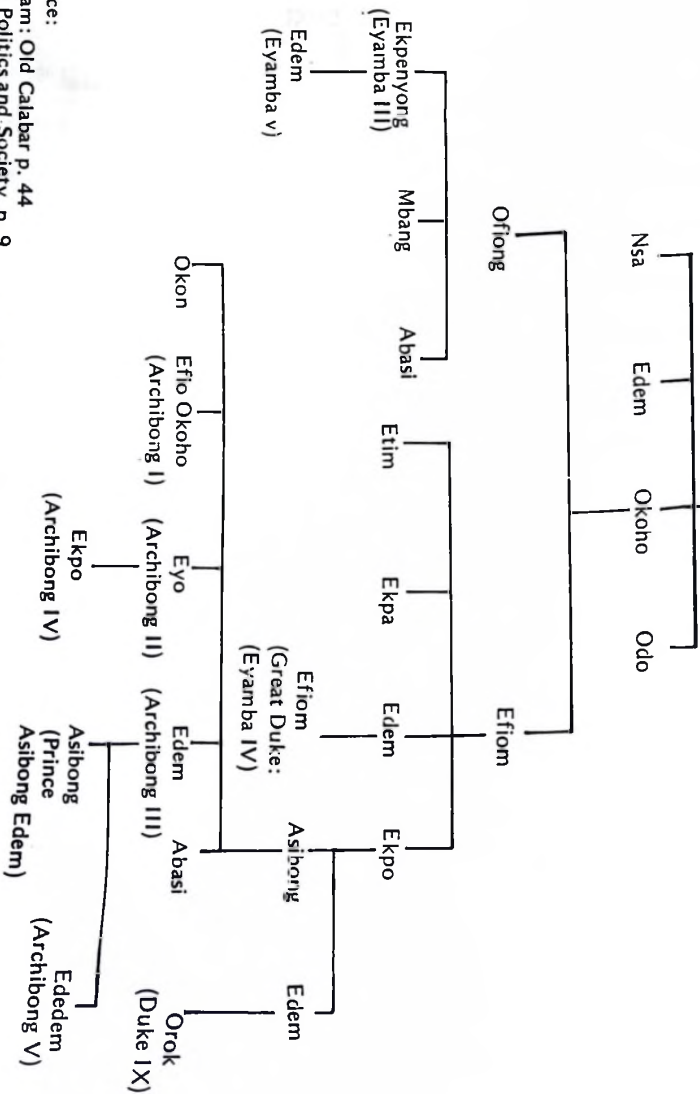
**PART I**

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GENEALOGY OF SOME OKOHO KINGS UP TO 1950

EFIOM EKPO



Source:

Latham: Old Calabar p. 44

Nair: Politics and Society, p. 9

Chief Ukorrebi Ukorrebi Asuguo: 2nd March, 1987

Etubom Ekpo E. Eyo Archibong IV: 9th March, 1987.

## CHAPTER I

### **KING EYAMBA III (1805 – 1814) (EGBO YOUNG OFIONG OKOHO)**

King Eyamba III was none other than Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho also referred to as Egbo Young or Egbo Young Ofiong in numerous historical documents. He was the son of Ofiong Okoho the co-founder of Akwa Akpa or New Town (later Duke Town), with his twin brother Efiom Okoho. It was he who also established the Eyamba ward comprising three sub-families namely Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho, Mbang Ofiong Okoho and Abasi Ofiong Okoho.<sup>1</sup>

Himself a famous man, he was also the father of two famous children: King Eyamba V (Edem Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho) and Ekpenyong Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho, better known as Mr. Young in commercial and missionary circles.

Through Egbo Young's marriage to EDIM EKPENYONG EKPE OKU, a Creek Town Princess, the **lyamba-ship** title borne by Edim's father Ekpenyong Ekpe Oku as **lyamba II** eventually passed to him on the death of his father-in-law. Thus he became Eyamba III and in this manner the **lyamba-ship** left Creek Town and the word 'Eyamba' came to be used not only as a title but also as a personal name in the Eyamba Ward of Duke Town for the first time.

Nearly all subsequent **lyambas** have come from this Ward, with the exception of Great Duke Ephraim IV, Edem Archibong (Eyamba VIII) and Duke Ephraim IX (Eyamba IX) all from Duke and Archibong Wards.<sup>2</sup>

Egbo Young obviously came into office as **lyamba Ekpe** in the days of Antera Duke in the late 1700's for he is frequently mentioned in the famous diary. On the 16th of February 1787 Duke recorded that Egbo Young and Willy Honesty 'dressed Grandy Ekpe in the Palaver House'<sup>3</sup> and on the 31st of August, 1787, he listed the names of all those who had benefited from the assessments paid by Ekpe initiates. Egbo Young had the highest share of 25 rods and one goat while three others, King Ambo, Willy Honesty (Eyo Nsa) and Prince Duke Ephraim had the next highest

share of 20 rods and one goat each.<sup>4</sup>

As Latham says, the numerous references to him in Antera Duke's diary are a pointer to his importance in Efik affairs during the period covered by the diary.<sup>5</sup> His house "Liverpool Hall" <sup>6</sup> was the venue for various activities ranging from sharing of kegs of gun powder, having trade discussions, to carrying out traditional and social functions. So important was he in the community that even a brief period of indisposition made Duke and the others anxious for on the 29th of August, 1785, Duke made the following entry: 'We have a bad Sunday because Egbo Young Ofiong is not well..<sup>7</sup>

Some historians have recorded that Egbo Young became King after the death of Duke Ephraim II in 1786. This gives the impression that he came immediately after Duke Ephraim but it could not have been so because Antera Duke on the 28th of January, 1788, made the following entry:-

.... At 2 o'clock afternoon King Aqua came to see Egbo Young Offiong. So we played (Ekpe) all afternoon. At 7 o'clock at night he went home and soon after we carried Grand Ekpe into the Palaver House...<sup>8</sup>

The last entry in the diary on the 31st of January, 1788, did not also indicate any change of status for Egbo Young for he and Duke still went about their normal business.<sup>9</sup> This shows that he was still only the Iyamba Ekpe and that there was as yet another King. It appears that there were in fact several brief reigns between 1786 when Duke Ephraim II died and 1805 when Eyamba III was believed to have ascended the throne.

The first of these was that of Sam Esin Ambo (Oku Esien Ekpe Oku) who was selected "King of All Calabar" in 1787.<sup>10</sup> This reign must have lasted for something like two years for in 1789, John Adams recorded thus:-

The Town which the ships anchor in the Old Calabar River is called "Duke's Town" and is about fifty miles from the sea. The Town where the King resides which is called "King's Town" is a few miles to the North East of the former ....<sup>11</sup>

It might be wondered why the King lived in King's Town, away from Duke's Town. The fact is that until 1974, Efik Kings over the centuries lived in their own houses which automatically assumed the status of Palaces when they became Kings. By the same token it would not be strange for the town where the reigning King in 1789 resided, to be called King's Town. It is safe to assume that it reverted to its original name upon the death of the King because there is no King's Town today in any part of Calabar. The record-

ing by Adams shows that King Ambo whose home was Creek Town must have died by 1789 and that some other king was ruling Old Calabar from "King's Town" located 'a few miles to the North East of Duke's Town.' This conclusion is based on two facts:-

- (a) Creek Town is North West of Duke Town and not North East.
- (b) Creek Town was too well known to have been called "King's Town" in error.

King's Town could also not have been Old Town because Old Town is very near to Duke Town and was also too well known to European traders and sailors to have been mistaken for King's Town. It could therefore have been either Ikoneto or Adiabo or even Ikoroffiong. There was therefore, yet another king living in one of these towns, who might have reigned for only a few months. This then means that King Ambo and the King residing at King's Town shared perhaps three years between them from 1787 – 1790 for in 1790 John Adams further recorded that:-

"Effium, called by the English traders 'Duke Ephraim' was chief of Akwa Akpa which came to be called Duke's Town after him." <sup>13</sup>

His full names were EPHRAIM WATT EPHRAIM DUKE or Effiwatt Efiom Edem. He later also ruled as king of all Calabar and was still in power in 1799 and chose the title Captain! This fact was disclosed on oath by Prince Bassey Duke Ephraim IX in 1917 during the Beachland court case and re-echoed at the time of the Udo Enquiry into the Obongship of Calabar in 1970. This time the famous CUMBERBEACH BELL presented by Captain Cumberbeach to King Effiwatt was produced to show that other lineages like the Effiwatts of NKOKANIE or NTIERO or EDEM EFIOM also ruled Calabar as paramount rulers even before any of the Okohos began with Eyamba III<sup>13</sup>. Effiwatt's name and year of presentation are inscribed on the bell as follows:-

#### **'EFFIWATT CAPTAIN 1799'**

There appears also to have been the usual struggle for the throne because this was a period of famous men like the warrior and wealthy trader, Eyo Willy Honesty, Willy Tom Robin, Prince Duke Ephraim and Egbo Young himself. There might therefore have been at least one other person after Captain Effiwatt before Egbo Young eventually ascended the throne as Eyamba III.

Quite apart from ancient kings like Edidem Eyo Ema who led his people

into Creek Town and held the dual offices of Ndem Priest and King, Egbo Young was the first person after the dispersal from Creek Town, to hold the dual offices of Obong and Iyamba. From Latham we have the following description of him as John Nicholls saw him in 1809:-

... between sixty and seventy, five feet ten inches high, very corpulent and rather a commanding deportment, he appears a little disfigured by large bony excrescences upon his knees and elbows; he has a small nose and a large mouth and altogether has a pleasant countenance...<sup>14</sup>

As a king, Egbo Young was obliged to entertain all strangers and if required, gave them his protection. But in the Hallet Records of African Association we gather that Nicholls had a very cold reception from him. This was obviously because of the slave trade. The king wanted to know whether Nicholls had been sent by Wilberforce whose anti-slavery activities were well known, or whether he had come to build forts. The reply to both questions was in the negative but he tried to explain that he had come to find out about dye woods and other things which would be beneficial for all Calabar. The king however, bluntly replied that if he had come from Wilberforce, he would have had him killed.<sup>15</sup> How far this threat would have been successfully carried out in view of bombardments and massacres previously suffered by Old Town, it is difficult to say. But the incident shows that the king certainly preferred slave trade to any other and that he also objected to the erection of forts because he suspected that the whiteman would use this as an excuse to take over the country. He did not therefore waver from the old custom which forbade the traders to build on shore and insisted that they lived in their hulks. We however know for a fact that the traders much later devised a subtle means of occupying land when they told the king that although they did not mind living in their hulks, they were nevertheless having much difficulty in splitting firewood on the deck of their ships. They therefore asked to be allowed a space on shore where they could split wood. Permission was granted and under cover of this, they began with the collaboration of the smaller Efik traders, to bring their wares to retail to the people. This gave birth to the beach shops which came to be known as USIAK IFIA (Wood Splitting).

As for anti-slavery activities, Donald C. Simmons in his 'sketch on the Efik people...' records that although England attempted to blockade the West African Coast in 1807 (during Eyamba's reign) and after, the trade continued in Calabar until 1841 when British representatives signed anti-slavery treaties with Duke Town and Creek Town.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps very few people knew that Egbo Young and Antera Duke were either maternal brothers or first cousins. Duke himself reveals this in his

diary on three occasions, the first being on the 21st of June, 1785 when he entered, "I sent my brother Egbo Young to Boostam to trade for slaves. "<sup>17</sup> On the second occasion on the 5th of October, 1785 he recorded:-

I saw my brother Egbo Young, Bob and Apandam who came down all in one canoe...<sup>18</sup>

Then on the third occasion he recorded on the 23rd of January, 1786:-

After 8 o'clock my brother Egbo Young and Apandam came home from Boostam with the slave Toother...<sup>19</sup>

From the first reference to Egbo Young, it seems he was Duke's junior brother otherwise Duke would not have said 'I sent my brother Egbo Young...' which infers the prerogative of an elder relation.

The 19th century was a period of transition from slave trade to legitimate trade in Palm products. Judging from the fact that it was towards the end of the first half of that century that Efik kings and chiefs signed the Treaty of Abolition of this obnoxious traffic, it can be assumed that Egbo Young, inspite of the stiff competition posed by Eyo Willy Honesty, continued to have a flourishing trade like his predecessors.

We are also told that the piecemeal colonization of Akpabuyo continued in his time although it was not until the reign of Great Duke IV that the full scale colonization of the area took place. He died in 1814.



THE CUMBERBEACH BELL OF KING EFFIWATT 1799

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8. *Ibid.* p. 64
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13. Etubom Esien Efiom, late Head of Ntiero House, produced the bell during the Udo enquiry into the Obongship of Calabar when the children of Okoho Efiom protested against the selection of Henshaw Town's Etubom David James Henshaw as Obong of Calabar, in 1970. The bell had been a present to King Effiwatt. The Ntieros wanted to prove that Efik Kingship was not the prerogative of the Dukes or Okohos.
14. A. J. H. Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600 — 1891...* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973), p.46
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## CHAPTER 2

### GREAT DUKE EPHRAIM IV: 1814 – 1834

Severally nicknamed "AKWA DUKE EPHRAIM," "AKWA EFIOM EDEM" and "EFIOM EDEM AKAMBA", all meaning Great Duke Ephraim, the subject of our study is the first Efik monarch of Old Calabar about whom there has been great documentation before the formal history of Old Calabar Kings was documented by established missionary scholars from 1846.

#### EARLY YEARS:

It seems clear that his life covers a great part of the 18th and 19th centuries spanning several eras of Old Calabar history for which much has yet not been known.

So much has been written about the Duke Ephraims that it is essential to distinguish between them as follows:-

1. Duke Aphrom<sup>1</sup> — Mentioned by Barbot in 1698.
2. King Duke Ephraim<sup>2</sup> — Whose death in 1786 was recorded by Antera Duke in his famous Diary (1785 – 1788)
3. Duke Ekpraim<sup>3</sup> — Called "Effium," whom Talbot recorded as being in 1790, the Chief of Akwa Akpa later known as Duke's Town.
4. Duke Ephraim — Friend of Sir John Tobin whom the Lander Brothers described in 1830, also the subject of our study.
5. Duke Ephraim<sup>4</sup> — Who succeeded Archibong I in 1852.

From the above, Great Duke Ephraim was the fourth with that name who ruled in Old Calabar. He belonged to the seventh generation of Efiom Ekpos of Modern Calabar which was founded after the exodus from Ikpaene around 1400 A.D. by Edidem Eyo Ema, who was a contemporary of Efiom Ekpo.

Oku Atai and Esien Ndem.<sup>6</sup>

He came from the Okoho Lineage and his Efik names were EFIOM EDEM EFIOM OKOHO EFIOM EKPO and not EFIOM EDEM EKPO EFIOM as is sometimes erroneously given by some writers.

Research into oral tradition however reveals that it was Barbot's "Duke Aphrom" who went by the name EFIOM EDEM EFIOM EKPO from the Edem Efiom Ekpo lineage. He was therefore the first Duke Ephraim or the first Akwa Efiom Edem.<sup>6</sup>

Great Duke appears to be the "Young Duke" whose new house Antera Duke visited on the night of the 4th of September, 1786.<sup>7</sup> This shows that at an early age he was already a rich, influential, up and coming young man. He might also have been the Duke Ephraim who a year later, in 1787, was listed in Duke's Diary among twenty others as having received various shares of the Ekpe assessment paid by Jimmy Henshaw.<sup>8</sup> This would not be surprising for being rich, he could afford to buy a good Ekpe grade as revealed by the fact that he received twenty rods, one of the largest shares. Chief Ukorebi Ukorebi Asuquo, however argues that the Duke Ephraim in Antera Duke's list was really the late King Duke Ephraim II. Said he,

"It is always the case in Efik custom after a King's burial and funeral obsequies, to get his family to obtain his Ekpe money and "EKPIN EKPE" (Ekpe Palm frond) in the "EFAMBA EKPE" (Ekpe conclave)"<sup>9</sup>

It should however be mentioned that although young, Great Duke was in the same era as Eyo Nsa (Willy Honesty) and Egbo Young (later Eyamba III), the two men who in 1805 were almost outstripped by him in the commercial field.<sup>10</sup>

As with most of the early kings, the absence of records makes it difficult to ascertain the year of Great Duke's birth for although he was a contemporary of the two men mentioned above, he must have been quite young in the days when Eyo Nsa who must have been nearly forty, decapitated the Pirate of Mbiakong perhaps in 1766 and also participated in the decimation of Old Town in 1767,<sup>11</sup> He could therefore have been between twelve and seventeen years during the period of Eyo's military prowess. So, in 1785, the year when Antera Duke commenced his diary, Great Duke must have been between thirty and thirty-five and still young enough among his ageing contemporaries to have been referred to by Antera Duke as "Young-Duke." He would then have been between seventy-eight and eighty-three when he died in 1834, much older than all accounts of him would admit.

His mother was Nkese Etim, a grand-daughter of Nkoro Nsa Nsa Efiom Ekpo of Henshaw Town.<sup>12</sup> Even before his birth Old Calabar was surroun-

ded by hostile neighbours who were gradually trying to strangle her economically. These were:

- (a) Ambo Bakanda of the Cameroons to the East.<sup>13</sup>
- (b) Ibibios of Mbiakong to the West.<sup>14</sup>
- (c) Itu, Eniong, Umon Eburutu to the North.<sup>15</sup>
- (d) Tom Shotts (Obodoms) to the South.<sup>16</sup>

Life was therefore very tough and dangerous. It appears that only well armed slavers or Western Pirates could trade in Old Calabar. One such pirate was BLACK ROBERTS who in 1721 shelled Old Town when he was refused permission to trade on the Calabar River.<sup>17</sup> He could have been the same Roberts who in the 1760's earned the sobriquet "Bully Roberts" because of his brutality to his sailors and the local population.<sup>17a</sup>

As earlier said, Great Duke lived through several reigns and might have attended one of the home schools established in Antera Duke's time<sup>18</sup> because history finds him in 1805 not only literate but also educated as an international figure. On the other hand he might have studied in Ships' Cabins or in Liverpool in his young days of commercial apprenticeship.

However, it is now well known that Old Calabar had schools perhaps before the 17th century. There is today, an ancient writing school slate in the form of a folio which dates back to the 17th century and belonged to EBRERO NONAW (Ukorebi Neneng of Ikoneto) who was the King EBRERO IN BARBOT'S List of 1698.<sup>19</sup>

#### **His Commercial Tactics:**

Great Duke came on the throne after the death of King Eyamba III in 1814, and became one of the most influential and most illustrious Efik Kings. He ascended the throne at the time of the transition from slave trade to palm oil trade and exploited the new trade to the full. In order to attain full monopoly of trade with Europeans he consolidated his position in the following manner:-

- (a) He bought up all the Ekpe grades including the highest one which was (and still is) the IYAMBA.
- (b) He ruled that all Duke Town Houses which had hitherto traded direct with Europeans should henceforth do so through him. Magnus Adam Duke confirmed this in a correspondence to King Ebrero Nonaw X as follows:

.... Great Duke Ephraim was a "Superba et Dominio Tyrannus" in Calabar History. A bloody dictator and authoritarian ruler. He seems to have desired to make all Old Calabar Princes and Gentlemen his household slaves and succeeded to reduce the number of the houses or "Captaindoms" in Old Calabar from nearly 30 to 15 .. and many of these houses he integrated into his new Duke House....

Great Duke tried to decree that no one should use the title "King" "but," wrote Magnus Duke "when this failed, the despot abandoned the title of 'king' for 'Duke' as more distinctive and original" <sup>19a</sup>

- (c) He granted loans to the people and encouraged them to engage in palm oil trade and of course market their produce through him.
- (d) He made sure that any attempt to thwart his directives met with very severe punishment, clearly using Ekpe laws of which he was in 1814 the supreme interpreter as IYAMBA EKPE EFIK IBOKU. <sup>20</sup>
- (e) As each of the seven Ekpe Efik Lodges of the seven Old Calabar Clans had its own Iyamba, he even tried to introduce the office of "Grand King Egbe" or "IYAMBA MME IYAMBA EKPE EFIK IBOKU (Iyamba of Iyambas of Ekpe Efik Iboku). <sup>21</sup>

In this way he had full control of trade in Calabar and entrenched himself with the European traders and in so doing incurred the disfavour of the neighbouring settlements notably Henshaw Town.

This opposition of Henshaw Town to Great Duke's autocracy needs a little explanation. Atakpa (i.e. Duke Town) was founded around 1650 by Ofiong Okoho and Efiom Okoho, the twin children of Okoho Efiom, together with their uncle Edem Efiom Ekpo and his son Efiom Edem Efiom Ekpo (later Barbot's Duke Aphrom in 1698) <sup>22</sup> in the reign of Edidem Nsa Efiom Ekpo who was based at Creek Town. Nsa Efiom's children: Efiom Nsa, Ewa Nsa, Efana Nsa, Ekeng Nsa and Ekpo Nsa, also founded their own settlements at the present Old Consulate Hill, in Calabar led by Efiom Nsa around this time. By 1660 Efiom Nsa had returned to Creek Town and Ewa Nsa had moved down the river to found Okopedi Ewa Nsa where Cobham Town is now located. This place is still sometimes referred to as "Nsidung Oyoho Iba" (Second Henshaw Settlement the first being the one located at what later became the Consulate Hill).

Around 1740, when trade increased in Atakpa and Creek Town and other Efik clans had begun to accept the Atakpa settlements as a historical reality, it was decided that one Ekpe Lodge be established there. Nsa Efiom's descendants declared that by virtue of their being the children of the first son of Efiom Ekpo, the honour of erecting the principal pillar "OBUBOK-ISO EFE" at the Lodge should fall to them but the descendants of Okoho and Edem Efiom insisted that their forebears being the founders of Atakpa, it was their right and prerogative to erect the said pillar. The issue appeared to have been decided in favour of Okoho's descendants, whereupon the Henshaws moved away to their present location where they became neighbours of the ENWANGS the first Efiks to settle in Calabar.

There were constant squabbles between the Henshaws and the Dukes and when Great Duke came on the throne, his autocratic attitude naturally did not improve matters.<sup>24</sup>

Although Great Duke was friendly with Europeans, he nevertheless refused them permission to settle on the coast or penetrate the hinterland. This was because he had already established flourishing markets in various areas of the Cross River Basin such as Ikpa, Eniong, Agwagune, Ikot Ana, Umon and Ikoma along the Cross River itself. Here he erected sheds at strategic points, collected oil from all the neighbouring districts and stored it in the sheds until the arrival of canoes to convey it to Calabar from where it was shipped to England.

In the Rio del Rev (King's River) which had been a traditional Efik trading post since the days of Barbot in the 1600's<sup>25</sup> Great Duke forbade any trading between Europeans and the people there, ostensibly to prevent piratical attacks on the Europeans.<sup>26</sup> We believe however that this action was motivated by his determination to monopolize the trade here as he had done at Duke Town.

At the estuary of the Cross River itself in Tom Shott Islands, piratical attacks had been going on for centuries. Antera Duke recorded one such attack on the 27th of September, 1785<sup>27</sup>. In 1790, John Adams recorded thus:-

...Duke Ephraim made the ships and persons of white men sacred in the country but would not allow them to settle on shore. When the people of Tom Shott (Effiat Islands) plundered a vessel and killed the Europeans, he destroyed their town and made them tributary to him...<sup>28</sup>

The above entry has often been mistaken to refer to Great Duke Ephraim of our study by many writers of this century. The fact is that by 1790 Great Duke who would then be between thirty five and forty would, because of his age, certainly not have qualified to be, "King of Akwa Akpa" or be able to forbid Europeans to settle in his town for in Old Calabar monarchy, age is an important factor and the most senior descendant of the founding ancestors ascended the patriarchal throne in his turn. It would therefore have been another Duke Ephraim who was ruling at this time. It would however appear that the subjugation of Tom Shott took place twice, for Latham, quoting from Nicholls, said the culmination of Tom Shott piratical attacks was in 1821<sup>29</sup> when the mate and some hands of the "George Canning" were killed. Duke Ephraim, assisted by some English seamen, launched a counter attack and finally subjugated the Islands. Thereafter no trade was allowed between Tom Shott and Europeans and in addition, they (the Islands) were made to pay annual tributes to the Duke. This practice continued even after his death for Hope Waddell confirmed it.<sup>30</sup> In 1884 Tom Shott as well as the EFUTS and IDOMBIS indicated their subject status to the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar and their consequent inability to sign any treaties with Great Britain.<sup>31</sup>

It may not be out of place here to give some details of the Tom Shott, campaigns which are well known to many Efik families. History has it that in 1821, King Tom Shott, traditionally called "OKPODOM-ETAK-UKIM" by the Efiks, declared open piratical war on Old Calabar and the supercargoes. He and his men hid in the maze of strategic creeks in the area and from there launched attacks on lonely ships and trading canoes. In this way he virtually prevented Efiks from carrying on with their popular shrimp trade in Effiat. The Cross River Estuary became very dangerous.

Great Duke was enraged when he learnt of this constant harassment of his people especially when it came to be known that they were killed and sometimes eaten during rituals performed before Tom Shott's War deity known as "NKANDA." These rituals always took place under a huge silk cotton tree ("ETAK UKIM") where human bones and skulls were strewn. An Efik Prince popularly called Eyo Asibong Minika (after his mother MINIKA) whose real name was Eyo Asibong Ekpo Efiom Okoho was assigned to launch the campaign on Tom Shott. This was because Eyo Asibong, whose mother MINIKA UDAH came from Uдах in Tom Shott, was the Efik sea-dog and war-lord and knew every part of the area. Employing all the military tactics known to him Eyo Asibong lured and killed the Pirate King and among the spoils of war taken back to Calabar with him, were all the

paraphernalia of the Nkanda. It was at this time that the "NKANDA EKPE GRADE" was entrenched in Ekpe Efik Iboku and later used on royal, ceremonial and military occasions in Old Calabar. This grade of Ekpe is sometimes called "NKANDA EYO ASIBONG" after the prince who in later years became King Archibong II.<sup>33</sup>

It may be of interest to add that the Cross River estuary is still the scene of occasional piracy and smuggling behind the back of the Nigerian Navy.

#### **DUKE EPHRAIM AND SIR JOHN TOBIN**

With the subjugation of Tom Shott, Duke Ephraim had completed task of consolidating Efik monopoly of trade by excluding all tribes from direct contact with Europeans. The stage was set for him to come into his fame. As has earlier been said, he ascended the throne during the period of transition from slave trade to palm oil trade. The abolition of slavery had caused consternation both in Liverpool and Calabar.<sup>34</sup> We have seen earlier that King Eyamba III (Egbo Young), was very hostile to Nicholls when he visited him in 1805. He had demanded to know whether the latter had come from Wilberforce.<sup>34</sup> Latham states that merchants who had grown wealthy on slave trade were faced with ruin and the trading chiefs were left with deserted anchorages and barracoons crowded with slaves.

'Yet this confusion and uncertainty served to cement a friendship and trading alliance between an up and coming Liverpool merchant and a rising African Chief. This alliance carried them both to positions of eminence in their respective communities. The two men were Sir John Tobin and Great Duke Ephraim of Old Calabar.....'<sup>35</sup>

Latham continued that it was the hinterland that supplied the answer to the dilemma of the two gentlemen. "Here grew the thickest groves of oil palms in West Africa with their clusters of red, buttery flavoured fruits"<sup>36</sup> which were crushed to produce oil and kernel. For years the people of Calabar, even in the days of Antera Duke in the 1700s had sold, in addition to slaves, some quantity of palm produce which occasionally found its way to Liverpool. This was later found to be in great demand in England for the purpose of industry. It was the Duke who encouraged the people in the hinterland to increase their production while John Tobin organized the shipment and sale and both men were therefore chiefly responsible for the full development of this new trade which was to spread along the West African coast

from Lagos to the Congo.

John Tobin's acumen and energy in developing the oil trade guaranteed his prosperity. He became more prominent and developed political ambition which ended in his being elected Mayor in 1819 and made a Knight in 1820.

In Old Calabar the prosperity of Duke Town and Creek Town was in the ascendancy for the two towns developed rapidly in size, wealth and importance in comparison with other Efik towns. Both Great Duke and Eyo I were greatly feared and respected by the supercargoes because of their vast influence over their tradesmen. For this reason they were careful to retain their patronage and goodwill giving Eyo two coppers more for the oil he sold and to Duke, described as a very practical trader and one of the most powerful chiefs in West Africa,<sup>37</sup> they gave a third more than they did on oil bought from others and provided him with a better assortment of goods. His house was described as an ornate, two storeyed wooden one and when on Christmas Day in 1830, the Lander Brothers visited him, they gave the following description of the hall in which they were received :

"The room, which was about thirty feet in length was crammed full of all kinds of European furniture covered with cobwebs ... Elegant tables and chairs, sofas of a magnificent description, splendid looking glasses, and prints of the principal characters of England as well as views of sea and land engagements set in handsome quilt frames, beautifully cut glass decanters and glass chandeliers, and a quantity of other things too numerous to mention, were all mixed together in the utmost confusion. A handsome organ attracted our notice and a large solid brass armchair which an inscription on it announced was the present of Sir John Tobin of Liverpool."<sup>38</sup>

It is now known that Duke Ephraim's house stood opposite Edem Street, where Prince Asibong Edem later built his house. It may however be noted from the description of the contents of Duke Ephraim's house that he must have been sufficiently sophisticated to appreciate organ music and that either he himself or his contemporaries could play the instrument.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of his affluence in both men and material, Great Duke's ambition for sovereignty in all things seemed insatiable. But there was really no serious threat to this ambition except for the rivalry of his elderly friend Eyo Nsa. To dispose of this 'nuisance' Duke was reported to have used his position as Iyamba Ekpe Efik to bring up a false charge against Eyo. That was his hour of triumph for Eyo was found guilty and fined to such a degree that he was totally ruined. Yet Duke was not without humanity for when Eyo died in



GREAT DUKE'S CHAIR 1826

1820, he took under his protection, some members of his late friend's family

Having thus played out his rival and secured virtual monopoly of both the foreign and local trade, the introduction of another element set the seal on his success. This was in the nature of the payment of comeys, the receipt of which was hitherto the traditional prerogative of all the trading chiefs as shown in Barbot's list in 1698.<sup>40</sup> But Captain Cummings of the "Kent" presumably on the orders of Sir John Tobin refused to pay anyone but Great Duke.

There was a hue and cry from all the other Clanal Kings but Cummings was adamant and eventually won. Thereafter, all the ships paid comeys exclusively to Great Duke who was then reigning supreme. Cummings became his great favourite and visited him whenever he was in Calabar. His friendship with Sir John Tobin waxed stronger and in 1826, the latter sent him a solid brass chair weighing 148lbs with the following inscription:-

"THIS CHAIR

Presented by Sir John Tobin

To His Friend

Duke Ephraim, King of Old Calabar

Liverpool, September 10, 1826"<sup>41</sup>

This chair is still in the custody of Great Duke's family. The implication of the gift is obvious for during the 1820's and early 1830's, Sir John Tobin's ships, such as the "Caledonia" and "Kent" continued to carry the majority of the oil trade from Calabar amounting to 2000 tons and more each year. In this way the careers of Sir John and Great Duke, based on a mutual friendship and trading alliance, revealed the important changes that were taking place in the African trade both at Liverpool and in Calabar during this period. Without them, both cities would have been the poorer.

Great Duke was said to be a remarkably keen trader who "would haggle in the making of a bargain in a manner that shows how perfectly he understands the doctrine of self interest."<sup>42</sup>

With his finger in every commercial pie, he entered into an agreement with Captain Owen to supply him three hundred pounds weight of beef per day for use by officers at Clarence in Fernando Po, for a period of one year.<sup>43</sup> Consul Beecroft himself noted that he had bought oxen and sheep from the Duke for over £890.<sup>44</sup>

Although slave trade was on the wane yet the Duke still indulged in it when the opportunity afforded itself. Latham describing the trade as practi-

sed by him in 1828 writes as follows:

'He induces the Captains to deposit a quantity of goods in his hands, which he sorts into such portions as would form an ordinary load for a man to carry on his head. He then sends his agents into the country with the goods to purchase slaves, promising the Captains their cargoes amounting to any given number within stated time.'<sup>46</sup>

Interesting accounts abound as to his methods of keeping business records, yet he also employed a traditional one. Reported to have had two hundred wives, many of them acted as his "MEMORIES" thus helping him to arrange, take care of and remember agreements and promissory notes relevant to his trade.<sup>46</sup> Other memory aids recorded as having been adopted during this period were as follows:

"Agreements of all kinds and promissory notes and orders upon the officers of the ship are also given under your hands and on scraps of paper which they fold carefully up and tie in the corners of their handkerchiefs. A native trader doing business with ten or fifteen ships at the same time, whose transactions extend to every article of commerce they have, has an incredible number of these written documents or "books' but I never know a wrong book presented ..."<sup>47</sup>

The Duke's reputation for being meticulous and never failing to fulfil his side of thousands of business deals he had entered into, was the keynote of his success both with Sir John Tobin and other foreign slavers who still came to Calabar when the British Navy was not looking. He was consequently held in high esteem by the supercargoes and was a good friend of Consul Beecroft.<sup>48</sup> The Landers described him as being 'always civil and attentive to the English ...'<sup>49</sup> See also Appendix I.

Among his own people, he was also both respected and feared and tradition has it that he was ruthless and did not hesitate to seize and own or try to own anyone who was indebted to him. Efiom Edem grew up the hard way and did not suffer fools. It is said that his calm exterior commanded obedience from his people. His face must have had a youthful appearance for in 1805 when he was between 50 and 55 years. Latham, quoting Hallet describes him as being:-

'a very elegant formed young man, six feet high with a very expressive countenance and his skin is rather blacker than the Calabar people in general ...'<sup>50</sup>

Dike, quoting from Nicholls' assessment of the Duke in 1832 when he was

between seventy seven and eighty had this to say:-

'a man of great knowledge and humanity'

whom Nicholls thought would abolish the slave trade in his territory were he to enter into agreement with the British. <sup>61</sup>

Latham further furnishes us with a closer description of Great Duke at the height of his power when he says he

... cut an impressive figure. A mild and quiet man of about fifty-five, he would normally appear in a waist cloth with a grey hat bound with gold lace and a gold band. But on high days he would dress in scarlet trimmed with gold. He had a large household with about sixty wives and slave girls with their children. Each morning he bathed in a large brass pan (Akpan-Kpan-Uyere-Mong) inscribed with his name, which is also still to be seen in Calabar. Each of his wives would bring a jug to fill it and his favourite wife stayed behind to scrub his back ... <sup>62</sup>

If Great Duke's grand physiognomy attracted the attention of the European supercargoes, it was equally not lost upon his people.

Many ballads ('UTO') and eulogies ('ASE') have been composed in recognition of his external attributes. One goes thus:-

Ubit Enang Eye Ikpok Idem  
Nkonq Mfiom Adiaha Nsa Efiom  
Ete Nkoro Anwan-Ima aman imo

Efiom Edem Eyen Erem  
Odo ndiye iban  
Ada Ubong Isong Efik  
Eyen Eyen Obong Idua. <sup>63</sup>

The beauty of Efik poetry is lost when it is translated into another language. In the first line the author, just as Hallet had done <sup>64</sup> takes note of the black and glossy skin of the Duke and metaphorically likens it to that of a well kept cow!:-

"Black Cow with glossy skin  
Tall and stately Son of Nsa Efiom's first daughter  
For NKORO, the favourite wife is his mother

Efiom Edem Son of Erem <sup>65</sup>  
Husband of beautiful wives  
Ruler of Efikland  
Grand son of Idua King."

AN ASE TEAM (YOUNG PRAISE SINGERS)



That Great Duke had as many as sixty wives<sup>56</sup> or as Hugh Crow said, about two hundred, should not be taken to mean that he led a licentious life. It has already been shown that he was a keen business man and one effective manner in which he established diplomatic and commercial ties within and outside Calabar was through marriage. He married from all Old Calabar Clans as well as from Quas, Efuts, Idombis, Tom Shott, Eniong, Umon, etc. and these alliances stood him in very good stead in areas where he had to establish trading posts.

The Duke had a royal court in which all the seven Old Calabar Clans were represented and his traditional scribe was his cousin, Prince Edet Nsa Efiom Nsa Efiom who, although of Duke's generation was a younger and more active man. Like Duke, he must also have been schooled in one of the 'Home Schools' of Antera Duke's days, for he was educated, rich and widely travelled.

Always anxious for the progress of his domain, the Duke requested Liverpool merchants to assist him to build a sugar processing plant which he was ready to finance but the West Indian trade was of greater interest to them.<sup>57</sup> He also applied to the merchants to establish schools for the training of his people and although a traditionalist, yet he was the first king to extend an invitation to the missionaries. He did this in 1828 but it was not until after his death that the request was renewed by Kings Eyamba V and Eyo II in 1843<sup>58</sup>

## **DUKE EPHRAIM AND THE COLONIZATION OF AKPABUYO**

Calabar and its environs were at different times colonized by waves of various tribal groups. It is believed that some of the first wave consisted of the Orons, Efiats, Ibenos, Ambos and Obodoms who came from the Cameroons. These later moved to the Oceanic Coastal areas where they still live. The second wave consisted of the Yakurr, Umons, Agbos, etc., who were said to have come to Calabar from IBOM IN OBAN (See Talbot – peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol. 1 page 182 for this Ibom). These people however moved north to their present location in the Cross River valley.

The third wave consisted of the Iduas, Udaas, Abanas and Tabongs who moved to the Cross River Bar areas where they are till this day.

The fourth group came from IBOM in Aro-Chukwu to Uruan and then Calabar where they met the Iduas and other small groups.<sup>59</sup>

It is difficult to date the arrival of the Quas with any degree of certainty because even they themselves do not know for they have at least three versions of the event. The first date was given on the occasion of the unveiling of their "Eve Ukwa" at Big Qua Town in the 1970's when they stated that they had been in Calabar for 300 years which could mean that they had arrived in the 17th Century. The second date was pushed back two centuries in 1972 during the official enquiry into the Kasuk Qua Town Ntoe-ship dispute. On page 11 of the report they had told the Sole Commissioner Mr. D. A. Atuaka on oath that they left Mba Akang in the 15th Century. The antiquity of the event was further "jacked up" on the occasion of the crowning of the Ntoe of Big Qua Town in 1983. They gave the pre-historic date of 500 B.C in an article in the 'Nigerian Call' of Friday 29th - 30th April, 1983 under the caption 'Quas of Calabar and the crowning of an Ntoe' <sup>59a</sup> This means that as at 1983 they had been in Calabar for 2,483 years. This appears unlikely and we would rather agree with either of the first two dates, preferably the first unless it can be proved that the Mba Akang Civil War which sent them from their original home took place in 500 B. C. or before.

The wave of settlers from Ibom in Aro-Chukwu would be none other than the Efik settlers mentioned by Professor A. E. Afigbo as having probably been in occupation in the early 13th century <sup>60</sup> It consisted of the following Efik clans:-

1. ENWANG IBOKU: They settled at first in the region of Old Town, where there is till this day a stream called IDIM ENWANG. This is confirmed by Chief Obo Effanga of Old Town and Chief Etim Mfon of Enwang.

They later moved to the vicinity of Annesley Bridge or what is now called "EFAK TETE" and stretched up to where Henshaw Town is now located. They continued to live in this area until the Efiks at Uruan and Ikpaene reached Creek Town c 1400 A.D. and later arrived at Atakpa around 1650 A D. It was only a very severe quarrel between them and Henshaw Town that caused them to leave Calabar for the Oron region. Their Ndem diety ANANTIGHA ENWANG is still invoked in Calabar by the Efiks and Efuts during their libation ceremonies. The Enwangs were later to be key witness for the Efiks in a land case between the Efiks and the Quas when the latter were claiming ownership of the entire Calabar foreshore in the 1917 Beachland Case. They later lost the case to the Efiks. The Anantigha District now occupied by Efuts is an incontrovertible and lasting testimony to Enwang's earlier domicile in Calabar.

2. ABAYEN IBOKU (IKONETOS):- These settled from the area extending from the Elder Dempster premises to Fort Stuart, the scene of the NPA Cat-Walk disaster <sup>61</sup> then called 'AFIA-OBOM' after the deity of the

Ikonetos. They later left Calabar and went up-river to settle with their kith and kin.

3. ENIONG ABATIM:- These people were a fisher folk. While the bulk of them, and Ito and Ukwa, left Iboim and settled in the Cross River area where they still are, some of them came down to Calabar where they settled in the region of Akpabuyo. As has already been said, the Iduas remained in the area and so when the Abatims arrived, there was a peaceful fusion of the two communities which later multiplied into various sub-groups like the Idua-Abatim, Bukong-Abatim, Abatim-Akani Obio.

In Professor Okon Edet Uya's book "A history of Oron people" Idua tradition is mentioned as having it that in the 1680's four Idua men, Aya Iyo, Oboyo Ntekim, Osukpong Ntekim and Atu Iyoka, left their home in Eket and settled in Calabar area to carry on with their fishing trade. Aya Iyo settled along the Great Kwa River and Oboyo settled in the area later called after him as AKPA OBOYO (Oboyo's River). Oboyo also established three other settlements: Esighi, Ikot Etongo and Idua Inwang while Atu Iyoka founded Esuk Atu now claimed by the Efuts.

Oral tradition on the discovery of the fertility of Akpabuyo is interesting. Aya Iyo had carelessly thrown away some yam peels which surprisingly grew into a fine crop of tubers. As part of his social obligations, he took some to Great Duke (This would be Barbot's Duke Aphrom). The King rewarded him handsomely and gave him an escort to take him home. He was however killed on the way hence the saying "MFON OWOT AYA IYO" (Generosity killed Aya Iyo).<sup>62</sup> This incident was said to have caused the bulk of the community to move down to the Oron area where they settled in a place they called IDUA till this day. There are still remnants of them in Akpabuyo.

It may be mentioned here that the Ibenos, though now mainly in the Qua Iboe and Andony Rivers could also be found in small pockets almost wherever the Efiks were to be found: Obutong, Creek Town, Ikoneto and Ikot-Offiong where they are still called 'Efik Ibeno.

By 1650 therefore, when Ata Akpa or Akwa Akpa was said to have been founded from Creek Town, the Kwas had also arrived from Mamfe through Oban-Nsan-Odukpani; the Efuts had arrived through Great Kwa and Akpafefe Rivers while the Eniongs were still in Akpabuyo.<sup>63</sup>

When Capt Barbot visited Old Calabar in 1698, he saw the following Old Calabar Clanal Kings<sup>64</sup> whom Chief Ukorebi Ukorebi Asuquo and others have identified thus:

1. Old King Robin — Asibong Eso Asibong Akabom Oso Ukpong

Atai of Itakmkpa, Old Town.

2. Old King Oyo — Eyo Nsa Eyo Ema Atai Ema Atai; a descendant of Edidem Eyo Ema Atai who led Efiks into Creek Town and consecrated the land for them.
3. King Ebrero — Ukorebi Neneng (Ndemdem) Esien Ndem Inyang Ekpe Atai of Obomitiat Abayen (Ikoneto).
4. Duke Aphrom — Efiom Edem Efiom Ekpo Efiom Ekpo Efiom of Akwa Akpa.
5. King John — Ekpenyong Effa Otu Mesembe Ukpong Ukpong Atai Iboku of Adiabo or Guinea Company.
6. King Robin Agbisherea — Ani Eniang Nkot Odo Eseku Nkot Odo Efiom of Mbiabo (Ikoneto).
7. King William Agbisherea — Oku Ukpong Eton Ani Eton Ukpong Atai of Mbiabo Ikot Offiong.

A word or two about William King Agbisherea and Robin King Agbisherea. <sup>65</sup> Latham is of the opinion that both men were Ibibio Chiefs simply because the word "AGBISHEREA," a name which applies to Ibibio, forms part of their names. This is not so because it was the custom to call some of the trading Chiefs after their trading posts. Antera Duke's diary is replete with this manner of referring to some of the traders hence we come across such odd names as "Ephraim Aqua Bakassey" <sup>66</sup> who was reported drowned while doing business probably in Bakassey waters; "Robert Enyong" <sup>67</sup> whom Duke sent to Eniong to trade and "Egbosherry Sam Ambo" <sup>68</sup> who caught seven men during a slave raid probably in Ibibioland on the 14th of October, 1786. Kings Robin and William were infact Efik Chiefs who by virtue of the proximity of their towns Ikoneto and Ikot Offiong to Ibibioland, had trading posts established there and subsequently had "Agbisherea." appended to their names for easy identification because short as the Barbot list is, there are three King Robins in it. <sup>69</sup>

Barbot listed these people as having supplied him with provisions. They

were an example of those who in the days of Hope Waddell came to be known as "Republican Kings" and whom Snelgrave in 1713 referred to as "Petty Princes" while he referred to one King Akqua as the "Chief King or Lord of the country..."<sup>70</sup>

The true identity of King Akqua appears to be obscure but it is easy enough for some people to assume that he was a king of the Kwas by the simple fact of his name. Snelgrave however records that in 1704 one "JABRU" (Probably Eta Agbo) was King of the Kwas.<sup>71</sup> This means that Snelgrave knew of the Kwa King and could identify him as such in his record. So when nine years later in 1713 he also recorded that Akqua, Chief King went on board the ship, he would definitely have indicated that he was another King of the Kwas granting that Jabru had died.

Another school of thought argues that King Akqua was King Akwa Ambo of Bakanda in Western Cameroons who was the chief adversary of the Efiks of Akwa Akpa and that he and his men were making incursions into the Akpabuyo area. This would not be surprising because we know that there had been early commercial interaction between Calabar and the Cameroons. Antera Duke recorded several trips to Aqua Bakassey Creek, Aqua Bakassey Corral and Coqua Town, all in the Cameroons.<sup>72</sup> Dike also later mentioned several King Aquas of Cameroons one of whom was in 1852 deposed by Consul Beecroft<sup>73</sup> it would therefore not be surprising to see a King from the Cameroons struggling to have a firm foothold in the booming trade in Calabar.

Yet another opinion on King Akqua's identity is that he was Great Duke Ephraim I, Barbot's Duke Aphrom whom the Efiks themselves called Akwa Efiom Edem ('Akwa' in Efik meaning 'Great' just as we have Akwa Akpa — Great River and original name of Duke Town; Akwa Esuk — Great Beach or according to Antera Duke 'Aqua Landing'). The epithet 'Akwa' or Great was used to describe Duke Ephraim I because he must have been accepted by all as 'Chief King or Lord of the the Country'; a primus inter pares over the 'Petty Princes' in spite of Talbot's assumption that in 1698 neither Ephraim nor Eyo appeared to have obtained Pre-eminence in his town.<sup>74</sup> He would by 1713 have acquired this status because of his industry and the increasing importance of the Duke Town trade.

We therefore believe that Barbot's Duke Aphrom (1698) was Snelgrave's King Akqua (1713) called Akwa Efiom Edem by the Efiks, and Great Duke Ephraim by others. Akwa or Aqua is a personal name still answered in the Duke Ephraim family.

We also believe that the interaction with the Cameroons might not always have been peaceful and that the occupation of Akpa-

buyo might have started during the reign of Great Duke Ephraim I in late 17th and early 18th centuries. This must have continued in a piece-meal manner until over a hundred years later when Great Duke Ephraim IV ascended the throne in 1814. It was largely through him that effective settlement of the area was achieved. It took him the best part of his reign which ended in 1834.

A beach head was established at ESUK MBA under the command of his trusted man MBA EFIOM. He then summoned the cream of Efik aristocracy who were themselves also warriors, to join him. These were ASIBONG MINIKA (later Archibong II); EDEM EDAK and "ASANAYA EYEN EKA EDEM EDAK" otherwise known as OYO ITA." The Duke also adopted a diplomacy which resulted in a firm alliance with NAKANDA AKWA, NAKANDA NKUA and NAKANDA EYEN all of whom were descendants of King Akwa of Ambo Bakanda. Forced by strife in their native Cameroons they had escaped to Akpabuyo and had sought protection from King Duke Ephraim. This was a common practice in Calabar. The Nyanibos of Bonny were also later to seek similar refuge in the court of King Archibong III. Today they are an integral part of Archibong House just as the Nakandas are an integral part of Duke House.<sup>75</sup>

After all these campaigns all Efik families in Calabar were invited to establish settlements.

Nair records that the call made by Duke Ephraim IV began a movement imbued with something resembling the American Frontier spirit of the early 19th century. Each house sent forth its men by canoes and on foot, in large and small companies, to stake claims to any extent of land. "Land thus claimed was to be the right of the founding houses." It became recognised as, for example, Duke land, Eyo land, Obutong land, Cobham land,<sup>76</sup> etc. There was practically no house in Calabar which did not make a "pilgrimage" to Akpabuyo. Today there are over two hundred villages in the area but the largest number is said to belong to Duke House.

Several reasons had been ascribed to the rush for the colonization of the place.

Nair gives three, the first being the promise of large areas of palm trees which could be tapped at a time when slave trade in Calabar was on the decline. His second reason was that the land was meant for the cultivation of foodstuff in view of the legend of Aya Iyo and the yam peeling. His third reason was that the plantation might have been meant for the settlement of surplus slaves following the abolition of slave trade.<sup>77</sup> But Latham argues that it could hardly have been for the last reason because these slaves were already reported to be in existence on the plantations before the

abolition of the trade.

He however says that Akpabuyo produces very little oil. 'Indeed the oil palm is not cultivated ...' He supports this with a statement made by Hope Waddell in 1855 in respect of the people of Akpabuyo. This was that "the oil trade being in the hands of their masters... and their part of the country not growing the palm nut tree in abundance, sufficient for oil making in quantity, they are excluded from all share in that trade now..."<sup>78</sup>

For settling in Akpabuyo therefore, Latham argues that since the place was said to be virgin land with no oil palm which is normally secondary vegetation found only in conjunction with agriculture, the place may only have been 'peopled to grow food for Calabar...' which he said was dependent upon the Cross River Markets for supplies. To support this he argues that the middle of the 19th century saw Calabar taking produce from Akpabuyo and that when there was a war between the slaves in 1852 (when Archibong I died) food prices rose sharply. He however argues further that farming might not have been the main reason for the settlement because 'recent studies indicate that the area is not very fertile... He felt rather, that slaves were moved to settle there for political motives. Great Duke was a powerful man and had continued to fortify himself by settling his slaves there, for, the more potential warriors a ward possessed, the greater its power. Akpabuyo therefore provided him the opportunity of building up a large reservoir of retainers from whom he could always draw as circumstances dictated.'<sup>79</sup> If this argument is accepted as being the sole reason it would be ironical that Duke, who hated rivals (as we shall see from what he did to his friend Eyo Nsa), should be the very one to invite all Efik Houses to settle on as much land as they could, which action would be a sure way of weakening his own defences.

Our opinion is that to all Efiks, Akpabuyo was a New Found Land where everyone went for a different purpose. Although agriculture might not be considered by some writers to have been a major reason for settling in the area, we must not lose sight of the fact that when the Blood Men fought against each other in 1852, the flow of foodstuff into Calabar was seriously affected and this had given rise to inflation. This of course was evident of the fact that Akpabuyo was (and still is) a vital source of food supply. So important is it that it is nick-named "ESIT IDIBI EFIK" (The Belly or store-house of the Efiks). Indeed the plantation should have been christened "AKPA EFIOM EDEM" (Efiom Edem's Legacy). 'Akpa' in this case meaning legacy by virtue of the outstanding role played by the man who was truly great and had contributed so much to the history of Calabar in general and Akpabuyo in particular.

There will be more about the Blood Men in another section. Although their League was not established in Great Duke's day, there was nevertheless a general movement among the agricultural slaves for better treatment. It is said that it was the Duke-Ward trading slaves who were most successful in improving their social and political status. They played a prominent role in the vast centralized trading organization established by the Duke and when he died without any grown up children, it was some of them who controlled his business empire.

The colonization of Akpabuyo could be said to be an attempt by the Efik to expand to the Cameroons for Ajato Amos commented that they formed empires covering Eastern Nigeria, Western Cameroons and the Equatorial Guinea but were prevented from further expansion by the new colonial administration. When Rev A. Ross of the Church of Scotland Mission visited the Cameroons in 1877 he had this to say:-

"We visited in all thirteen towns; three in Nshavet and ten in Kamerons. Seven of them speak the Efik tongue ... From trustworthy sources I ascertained that there are sixteen towns in Kamerons that speak Efik with an aggregate population of about 22,000..."<sup>80</sup>

Duke Ephraim died on the 14th of October, 1834, when all attempts by his royal 'Mbia Ibok' to save him failed. It is said that about fifty people were forced to take the esere and that over forty died. Mr. Young (Ekpeyong Ekpeyong Ofiong Okoho) gave a more detailed account of the killings in his diary as follows:-

**Old Calabar, October 14, 1834**

- Ephraim Duke died in five o'clock this morning, and we put him for ground next morning.

**16th October, 1834**

- This morning all country and Calabar come and we go for Mr. Young, and stop little, not long, after that we go for Duke Palaver House, with all country, and our people about Duke Ephraim sick and we go in for his yard so all our people chop nut. The name of them: Erim Coffee Duke chop, dead. His son chop, no dead. Orrock Coffee and two his son, dead. Coffee Cooper, dead, Egbo Eshen, dead. Egbo Young Egbo, dead. Bashey Archibong Egbo Duk, dead. Erim Egbo Duk Ekpraim Otto, dead. Otto Ecarnum, dead. One Otto slave, dead for street, Egbo Eshen mother, dead to-night.

**Ditto 17**

- Duk wife chop nut this morning, all dead...'

Hope Waddell commenting on this entry said that the names of the wives were given 'and so the entries go on, day by day, like a registry of executions — a calm, regular record of cold-blooded murders daily committed.'<sup>81</sup> It was during his funeral obsequies that the Royal Dance 'ISIM EKPE EFIK was performed for the first time. All the Old Calabar Princes participated in this dance led by Edem Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho who was to succeed him as Eyamba V. <sup>82</sup>

Affectionately called "Grand Duke" or "Duke of West Africa" by his European admirers, it is said that in his time he had succeeded in centralizing political and economic power at Duke Town. It is also said that later Kings and European traders in Calabar looked back upon his reign with nostalgia and regarded it as a golden age of Calabar's history. After his death, the political history of Calabar was marked by conflicts in and disintegration of the old political structure. Latham describing him as an "exceptionally able man," concluded in the following words:-

'his supremely dominant position was the logical culmination of the processes set in motion by the slave trade but it was a position never to recur in Efik history... <sup>83</sup>

The position was however, nearly re-enacted by Prince Asibong Edem when he led a campaign against Eniong and the Ndem Eno War was fought in 1890. The reason had been to open direct trade route with Umon. Assisted by protectorate officials, and after five years fierce fighting, peace was restored and Asibong Edem carried his campaigns to Ikom.

ISIM EKPE EFIK IBOKU (THE ROYAL DANCE)



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## CHAPTER 3

### EYAMBA V: 1834 – 1847 (EDEM EKPENYONG OFIONG OKOHO)

**BIRTH:** Popularly known to his Liverpool friends as Johnny Young, and to his people as Edem Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho, King Eyamba V was the son of King Eyamba III or Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho. His mother was EDIM EKPENYONG EKPE OKU of Ambo or Mbarakom in Creek Town.

Tradition has it that Esien Ekpe Oku, founder of "Mkpe," had invited all the Ekpe Efik title holders to intimate them about his desire to have all his children born and unborn automatically made members of the Ekpe confraternity. The elders agreed to this provided Esien Ekpe could fill a brook with money which in those days was in the form of copper rods. He actually did this because he was a very rich man.<sup>1</sup> This brook is known till this day in Mbarakom as EDIK UKWAK<sup>2</sup> (Iron Creek). Upon fulfilling this difficult condition he was invited to come for initiation but he asked that his senior brother Ekpenyong Ekpe should go through the ceremony on his behalf by reason of his seniority and this was approved.

The initiation was about to commence when it was discovered that unknown to Ekpenyong Ekpe, his daughter, Edim, described by Hart as "a plucky lass," had followed her father into the Ekpe Bush in order to observe the rituals. As a female, this was anathema to the rules of the conclave and certain death was the punishment for such an action. It was therefore decided that Edim should die before the initiation could proceed. Her father pleaded earnestly for forgiveness and this was later acceded to with the proviso that Ekpenyong Ekpe should forfeit the initiation fees paid for him by his brother Esien Ekpe. The Mbong Ekpe however, later took compassion on him and decided that the initiation should proceed on behalf of the children as agreed but only in respect of five lower Ekpe grades while the higher ones must be attained after due compliance with all Ekpe regulations.<sup>3</sup>

It is said that by virtue of her birth and in order to prevent the divulgence

of the secrets of Ekpe Bush, Edim was also initiated into the "Mboko Sanctum"<sup>4</sup>

She was later given in marriage to Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho of Atakpa.

Eyamba V was therefore grand-nephew to Esien Ekpe Oku (Iyamba I) and consequently a second cousin to Eyo II through Eyo's mother Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku. One therefore wonders why there was so much bitter rivalry between them. Although Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho was the founder of Eyamba House, it is pertinent to mention that when Edim Ekpenyong Ekpe Oku was given to him in marriage, her father accompanied her to live in Duke Town and continued to use his title of IYAMBA II until his death. It could therefore be said that it had been partly through him that his son-in-law got his title of IYAMBA III which name he also adopted as a family name<sup>5</sup>

Some might argue that marriage alone could not have been the reason why the title passed to Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho and that there must have been other considerations. While we may agree with this, yet it must not be overlooked that the same situation arose in the case of Eyo Nsa who married Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku. The title of "OBONG EBONKO" also passed to him upon the death of his father-in-law, Esien Ekpe Oku, who had himself also been Obong Ebonko until his death. The young ladies Edim and Inyang were no ordinary citizens but the daughters of eminent and influential people in the traditional society. Their marriages must therefore have contributed to the elevated offices which their husbands later assumed.

**KINGSHIP:** Much has been written about King Eyamba's purported usurpation of the Efik throne. There is a weakness common with some writers, to lift out some controversial issues from other works and put them out so often that they are eventually accepted as facts. As Professor A. E. Afigbo has argued in a different context:

The written word has a mesmerising effect and the more frequently the statement is recorded the more authoritative it becomes. This is all the more true with written words which come from the pens of the people who already are or are on the verge of being regarded as great authorities..<sup>6</sup>

The story of Eyamba's usurpation appears to have its origin from Hope Waddell's "Twenty nine years..." where Waddell states that Eyamba was 'a usurper... and by bribery and flattery gained the support of other chiefs and carried the election'<sup>7</sup> This has continued to be repeated by many writers including Talbot.<sup>8</sup> As Hope Waddell was not in Calabar when Eyamba ascended the throne in 1834, he could only have recorded the infor-

mation given him by Eyamba's detractors: the supercargoes with some of whom he was unpopular because of trade disagreements, and those of his opponents who lost the struggle for kingship to him.

As was usual in the 19th Century history of Duke Town and Creek Town especially in the former, the death of one king sparked off controversies over his successor. The other Efik settlements had no such problems. Nair said that the death of Duke Ephraim without an heir resulted in the usual struggle for supremacy.<sup>9</sup> He is wrong in this assertion for in Calabar, the King need never worry over an heir because his successor is not automatically his son but a descendant of the founding fathers (or mothers) of Efik Iboku. Eyamba was called usurper because the chroniclers did not understand the Efik agnatic system whereby the oldest male member of each branch of the founding ancestors normally takes precedence in the matter of kingship or headship of a House. They thought Great Duke was the quintessence of Efik kingship.

His death however greatly weakened his House and the only substantial support it received in its bid for paramountcy over the Eyambas was that of Archibong Family. In the tussle that ensued men like Adam Duke (Edet Nsa) were in the forefront of those who strove to put Eyamba on the throne. It will be remembered that Adam Duke was Great Duke's scribe. He had in the later days of the Duke's life fallen out with him and one of the reasons was said to be that the Duke had merged the House of Edet Nsa with his own, instead of allowing it to stand on its own.<sup>10</sup> It may be added here that this House has now won its struggle for autonomy and its representative, Etubom Otu Otu Edem, was recently presented to Edidem Bassey Eyo Ephraim Adam III, Obong of Calabar. He is now a member of the Obong's Council.

With the support he had from his friends, Edem Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho was selected the new King of Duke Town and took the title "Eyamba V."

Nair records that in order to consolidate his position, 'Eyamba commended his reign by a massacre of a great number of the Duke Family to eliminate any potential threat to the longevity of his rule...' This must have been why he was dubbed a "usurper." We however agree with Nair that:

'The energetic repression of rival elements is not an uncommon political technique employed with varying degrees of success by those in power.'<sup>11</sup>

If this was usurpation then many aspirants to the throne or other high offices were guilty of the crime. We have seen that in the first decade of the

19th Century, during the reign of Eyamba III, there was a tussle for power and Great Duke trumped up a charge which ruined Eyo Nsa. This principle of the end justifying the means appeared to be the order of those days and certainly the practice of elimination of rivals by death did not end with the death of King Eyamba V.

He could not therefore have been a usurper for he was fully qualified to be king. In the first place, he was the son of Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho who had been an Obong of Calabar (Eyamba III). Upon the death of Great Duke, he was the most senior Etinyin and an Iyamba, a title he did not have by concession but by inheritance from his father and grand-father, Ekpenyong Ekpe Oku who had been Iyamba II. By virtue of this elevated office, it was his prerogative to supervise the first display of the ISIM EKPE EFIK IBOKU known as "The Royal Dance," a highly sophisticated and ritualistic Ekpe display during the funeral obsequies of Great Duke.<sup>12</sup>

He was in fact the natural successor but the supercargoes for purely self-fish reasons had introduced the new element of wealth into Efik Kingship in order to protect their trade. It will be remembered that Duke was very autocratic in his rule but after his death, the "Small Republics," as Hope Waddell later called the settlements, would, according to Adam Duke, 'have none of Big Duke's palavers'<sup>13</sup> and set about consolidating their autonomy with none readily surrendering its rights or powers to another. Thus did Eyo II, when he came into power in 1835, strictly adhere to this principle and in so doing incurred the enmity of Eyamba.

CHARACTER: King Eyamba was described as a "boaster" and because he styled himself "King of all Blackman," it was later said to be 'the empty words of a braggart.'<sup>14</sup> But it must not be forgotten that in the reign of his predecessor (Great Duke), Old Calabar had established a glorious period under a king who was then described as one of the most powerful kings in West Africa. Old Calabar in the early years following the Duke's death was still surrounded by the aura of greatness. It was therefore no boasting when Eyamba described himself as "King of All Blackman." The letters of Adam Duke however reveal that this title given by Eyamba to himself was no flight of fancy. He was a traditionalist and felt that Eyo II was unnecessarily pro-white in his policy. He therefore called Eyo "Whiteman's king" while he was "King of All Blackman."<sup>15</sup> This was yet another reason why he was antagonistic towards Eyo.

Nair describes Eyamba as a well built man with a good-humoured face. A man who could be very pleasant and agreeable when he meant to be so.<sup>16</sup> His detractors accused him of making a vain show of his wealth by lavishing

presents among his friends and living a life of luxury which adversely affected his fortunes <sup>17</sup>

In his lighter moments we have seen him presiding over a dinner for the missionaries or mixing happily with his people. Hope Waddell described one such moment when he visited him in his palace:-

Through a succession of gates and courts and crowds of people, I made my way to an inner yard whence proceeded a roar of merriment. There he was dancing a sort of minuet while his brother looked admiringly on. He paused, and assumed an air of great dignity on seeing a white visitor. He stood before a band of musicians, who, with drums alone to accompany their voices, sang to his honour. With measured steps and waving hands he approached them, while he danced they increased their efforts and bowed low before him. He took one of the drums and beat it himself to show them how to do it and his performance was greeted with a burst of applause from the company... <sup>18</sup>.

Spontaneous gestures such as this sometimes bring the Efik love of poetic eulogy into play. Thus was the following eulogy inspired in praise of Eyaṃòà V:-

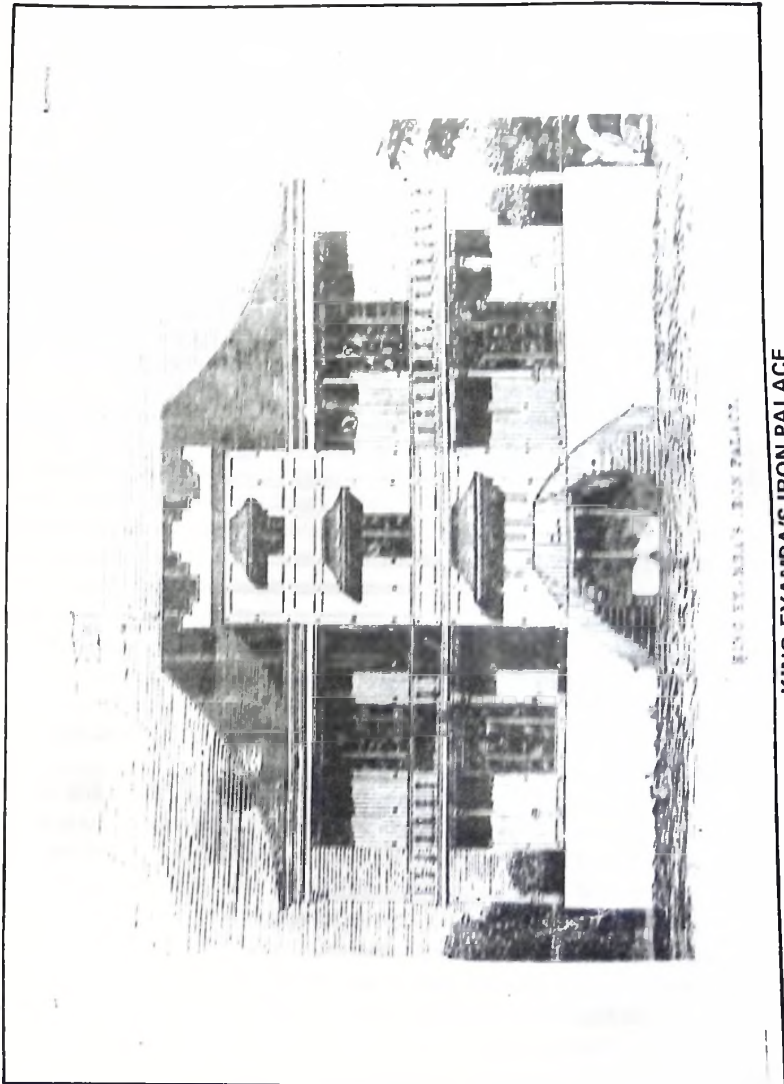
Edem Oduṣu <sup>19</sup> Ofiong  
Ufan Emek Ufan Ima  
Ufan Obo Ufan Unek  
Ufan Ebre Mbre Okwo  
Ete Akpan Obong OḂusu ke ndi

Edem Oduṣu Ofiong  
Ufan Eyen Anwatim Oyo-Eyen  
Edem Oduṣu Ofiong

Esin Ofut Mbre Ekong  
Eyeyen Ekanyin Eyeneka Odo  
Idem Efik kesihede k'efak  
Ekpep Unek Efik Etim Efik Ido  
Akpa Isim Efik Eburutu Efiom Ekpo <sup>20</sup>

### Translation

Edem Oduṣu Ofiong  
Friend selects friend for love  
Friend joins friend in a dance  
Friend plays and sings  
For I am King Oduṣu's Eldest Son



KING EYAMBA'S IRON PALACE.

**KING EYAMBA'S IRON PALACE**

Edem Odusu Ofiong  
Friend of Anwatim Oyo's Son

Edem Odusu Ofiong  
Artistic player with the sword  
Grandson of our Mother, Sister of Odo  
Efik Masquerades parade the streets  
He who learns the Efik Dance knows the Efik Custom  
The first Isim Efik Eburutu in the Land of Efiom Ekpo <sup>21</sup>

On state occasions Eyamba was described as being dressed in black hat and feathers, with waist cloth according to country fashion, and loads of beads and brass rings.. He would then sit comfortably in his state chair of solid brass under a canopy.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that Efik Kings kept open torsos on state occasions.

King Eyamba's famous Iron Palace has found a place in tropical architectural text books. It was imported from Liverpool and Nair describes it as having five rooms. The hall measured 40 feet by 30 feet and was well carpeted, papered and painted and extremely well furnished with sofas, tables, mirrors, a canopied bed of state, and two cushioned gilded chairs of state.<sup>23</sup> It was in this palace that he received Hope Waddell and his colleagues upon their arrival in Calabar. Nigeria was however deprived of what would have been a unique addition to her national monuments because it was claimed that Eyamba had appeared in King Archibong II's dream to complain that he had no home in spirit land and would like his palace sent to him! Thus the building was transformed into 'spirit house' by being deliberately set on fire. What remains of it as a relic is a pillar which is now in safe-keeping in the shrine of Ekpè Efik Iboku in Eyamba Street.

Aye recorded that King Eyamba was good in his civic duties and that no decision was passed on cases without thorough scrutiny by him. He was said to be a man not to be rushed and that during his reign Duke Town was sufficiently disciplined.<sup>24</sup> It would however appear that it was not as sufficiently disciplined as in the reign of Great Duke Ephraim who gave it a strong political leadership. Nair observes that the unity forged between Duke Town and Creek Town which had been a spectacular achievement of the Duke, began to disintegrate in Eyamba's time. He attributes this to a flaw in his character.<sup>25</sup> Contrary opinion is however held that the flaw was in the Duke's character because of his autocratic and dictatorial methods, and as

already said, no one from 1834, wanted any more monarchs as powerful as him and all encouraged the growth of the republics.

POWER: As a necessary adjunct to political authority and power, Efik Kings used to purchase the Iyamba Ekpe title since this would increase their power as rulers. Although he was born with it, King Eyamba was said to have spent a lot in money and men to secure the Iyambaship in perpetuity for his family<sup>26</sup> just as his great uncle Esien Ekpe Oku (Iyamba I) had purchased the five lower Ekpe grades for his children and those yet unborn. Hart records that of all the fourteen known Iyambas of Ekpe Efik Iboku, only four persons who had filled the office of King in the modern sense of the word had the title of Iyamba. With the exception of Esien and Ekpenyong Ekpe Oku of Ambo Ward in Creek Town, subsequent Iyambas came from Duke Town, most especially from the Eyamba family.<sup>27</sup> As the Obong Iyamba, he was the President and Commander -In-Chief of the entire society which position should have greatly facilitated his work as ruler. Nair records that:-

Eyamba realised that in Duke Town, legitimate authority consisted of two types, traditional and charismatic authorities. If the latter can be defined as resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person.. Eyamba had little of it. Traditional authority on the other hand rests on established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them. Such authority was largely a matter of personal loyalty owed to the person of the chief.. Eyamba believed in confirming his position and did so by hypocritically stimulating the loyalty of others on purely opportunistic grounds.<sup>28</sup>

Nair is being quite unfair to Eyamba in his assertion that he was 'hypocritically stimulating the loyalty of others on purely opportunistic grounds..' Kings, be they Efik or not, must certainly have had their own methods of winning the loyalty of their friends and subjects. Great Duke used a very strong arm and destroyed disloyal subjects and if Eyamba used what we believe to be a diplomatic method, what makes it hypocritical?

Also it is unfair to blame the downward trend in Duke Town's com-

mercial fortunes entirely on Eyamba. It is on record that he had set out to employ what we may term 'military diplomacy' to ensure that the way was clear for his people to trade with the Cross River Region. This was in 1846 when news was received that the people of Umon, under their king, Abiakari I, had treacherously attacked and plundered the Agwagunes who were allies of the Efiks.<sup>29</sup> About one hundred and seventy people were said to have been killed by the Umons and Eyamba felt obliged to avenge the atrocity.<sup>30</sup> Umon was favourably located and was the commercial emporium for both the river-side tribes and the Agwagune people. Having once failed to avenge the Agwagunes because of an earlier assault by Umon, not much hope was held out for the success of the second expedition and Hope Waddell and Eyo tried in vain to dissuade him from going. He felt that if he succeeded in quelling the Umons he would rid the Cross River trade routes of further impediments to the commercial ventures of his people and also strengthen his friendship with the Agwagunes. And so he set out with his men.

His great canoe was gaily decked out with several ensigns streaming in the winds, British ensigns with his name thereon in large letters. The little house amidships was brilliantly painted red and yellow. Astride the roof thereof sat two men beating drums with might and main. Before it stood Eyamba, shaded by his grand umbrella, dressed as usual except in having a gold laced cocked hat under his arm, and a splendid sword, a present from the Dutch Government, at his side. In the bows a large gun pointed forward and before it stood a man with a bundle of reeds which he kept shaking at arm's length to warn every obstacle and danger out of the way. On each side sat fifteen men with paddles and between them down the centre stood a row of men armed with cutlasses and guns. The King's body-guard were immediately around him. A train of inferior canoes, ornamented and arranged in the same style belonging to the lesser gentry were in his wake . . .

It may be mentioned here that the so called 'lesser gentry' were representatives of Efik Houses each of which, like King Eyamba's House, being descended from the founding ancestors also had a right to produce a King. Efiks went to war in formations of these HOUSES" with the supreme commander or "A karandot" going first, followed by "King War" or "Obong E kong" and "Captains" or "Etuboms" etc.<sup>32</sup> Thus the contingent made a grand

show and proceeded to Umon. As already stated, the town was strategically placed on two hills overlooking the narrow part of the Cross River through which they had to pass. It was therefore possible for the Umons to lay effective ambush on whoever attempted to go through the passage for any unauthorized business. Seeing the futility of the exercise, discretion overcame valour and the king returned with his party to Calabar.<sup>33</sup>

#### EYAMBA AND THE MISSIONARIES

The abolition of the slave trade before the days of Eyamba III continued to bedevil the commercial fortunes of both the supercargoes and the trading chiefs. Efforts were made by the Calabar kings to leave slave trade for other commercial ventures and the following letter from King Eyamba V to Commander Raymond in December, 1842 reveals the king's hopes and aspirations for his people:-

"Now we settle treaty for not sell slave, I must tell you something, I want your Queen to do for we. Now we can't sell slaves again we must have too much man for country, and want something for make work and trade, and if we could get seed for cotton and coffee we could make trade. Plenty sugar cane live here and if some man must come for teach book proper, and make all men saby God like white man, and then we go on for same fashion. We thank you too much for what thing you come do for keep thing right. Long time we no look Man-of-War as Blount promise and one Frenchman come make plenty palaver for slave when we can't get them.

You been do very proper for we, and now we want to keep proper mouth. I hope some Man-of-War come sometime with proper captain all same you look out and help we keep word when French Man-of-War come. What I want for dollar side is a fine coat and sword all same I tell you and the rest in copper rods. I hope Queen Victoria and young prince will live long time and we get good friend. Also I want bomb and shell.

"I am, your best friend  
King Eyamba V  
King of all blackman."<sup>34</sup>

The request for bomb and shell showed him to be a militarist but the appeal for experts to help establish and develop coffee and sugar industries fell on deaf ears for the triangular trade was still being carried on surreptitiously while the palm oil trade was on the ascendancy. Establishing the industries would also seriously affect the imports from Liverpool as not so much sugar

or coffee would be required from there.

If Eyamba did not impress the supercargoes on account of being a poor trader or the missionaries for breaking his word to them, his role in the christianisation of Calabar can certainly not be forgotten.

When Hope Waddell made known the desire of the emancipated christians of the West Indies to assist with the propagation of the gospel to the land of their progenitors, the Scottish Mission considered the matter seriously and in Liverpool they found friends who were sympathetic to the cause. The Captains trading into Old Calabar, gave glowing accounts of the people's willingness for education and civilization and formal proposal was made to King Eyamba V and his chiefs.

Before the middle of 1843 negotiations for the settlement of the missionaries in Calabar were almost completed and after a meeting at the King's palace it was agreed that:-

To sell the tract of land required was out of the question. The land... will be guaranteed to its occupiers for ever; a law will be passed for its protection.... The spot of ground intended to be presented... is between the two towns of Old Calabar and Henshaw Town which lie about a mile apart...<sup>35</sup>

This letter was further strengthened with an undertaking by the king as follows:-

"We, the undersigned, king and chiefs of Old Calabar, having consulted together, agree to those things before written, and request you to come amongst us.

"King Eyamba V  
Henshaw Duke  
Mr Young  
Duke Ephraim

Egbo Jack  
Adam Duke  
Bashey Offary  
Antera Duke"<sup>36</sup>

The missionaries finally steamed into the Calabar River on the "Ethiopia" which, at the desire of Consul Beecroft they had abandoned their ship "Warree" to take. They first met King Eyo II who was doing business with the "River Gentlemenn." The next day they called on Eyamba who said:

"I look long time for you. Glad you come now for live here. Look about and choose what place you like for make house. The whole country belongs to me for six days journey all

round...<sup>37</sup>

Eyamba could not have been as unscrupulous as he was depicted by some writers for we are told that when he was faced with the 'dilemma' of choosing between Mr Sturgeon of the Baptist Mission and Reverend Waddell he did not hesitate to choose Waddell although, he said, for his own part he did not know any difference between them and supposed they were all the same.<sup>38</sup> But he was honour bound to retain Waddell whom he had invited.

The process of settling down was not an easy one for the missionaries. The King was displeased that a school was planned for Creek Town and wished only Duke Town to have it. Again he saw no reason why two mission houses were maintained in Calabar (i.e. one in Duke Town and the other in Creek Town). One was enough he said, for he never heard before that a man could live in two towns under two kings. Not satisfied with Waddell's explanation that he would continue to live at Duke Town, he had appealed to Beecroft who cut the matter short by saying:-

'You call it strange thing, and what of that. We see new things every day. And nothing can be more new and strange than to see white lady live in any of your towns and teach your children. Never fear, no harm will come..'<sup>39</sup>

Eyamba however, assured the Missionaries of his protection and promised to forgive any slaves for whom they might beg and that none would be flogged for running away if they were brought home personally by them and none would be killed except for serious crimes 'as in England'.<sup>40</sup> This allusion to England shows that he was somewhat knowledgeable in international affairs.

## EYAMBA AND THE SUPERCARGOES

Eyamba was not at all popular with the supercargoes and the missionaries even though it was at his invitation that the latter had come out to Calabar. His supposed unreliability was partly due to his breaking trade agreements with the supercargoes. But those were the days when commercial defaults were common among the trading chiefs and the Palm Oil Ruffians who certainly did not earn their name through their good behaviour. The same accusations were later to be levelled against King Eyo II by the very people who had earlier extolled him and for whom he had done so much.

Hope Waddell rather gleefully describes an incident which was aimed at disgracing Eyamba. With the connivance of all the "River Gentlemen" who had armed themselves and were prepared for war, the captain of the ship "May" detained him when he was invited for breakfast on board the ship. The reason was that he was owing the ship thirty five puncheons or about twenty five tons of palm oil and the period of payment had long expired.

There was consternation in town among his people but they could not effectively pitch a battle against the supercargoes who, as reported, were well armed. No one had forgotten the history of the Old Town Massacres. The matter was however resolved by peaceful negotiations initiated by Egbo Jack.<sup>41</sup> Referring to the diary of Efion Euet Nsa, Chief Ukorebi Ukorebi Asuquo remarked that Eyamba V must have died of a broken heart for he was in short a 'redeemed' man who would have been kidnapped by the supercargoes.<sup>42</sup> He would certainly have been sold into slavery as the two Old Town Chiefs had been sold by the Captain of "The Duke of York" after the massacre of Old Town in 1767.<sup>43a</sup>

## **EYAMBA AND EYO II**

Eyamba and Eyo were both proteges of Great Duke Ephraim. They were also second cousins, their mothers being Edim Ekpenyong Ekpe Oku and Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku respectively. Instead of this binding them closer, they were usually poles apart and always at daggers drawn.

When Eyo was crowned King of Creek Town, Eyamba resented this action and refused to recognize him. He forbade the captains to give him the royal salute when he visited their ships and imposed a fine on whoever did so.

Eyo on the other hand demanded his full rights and honours and would not trade with those who withheld them and as his trade had become the most important in the country, he carried his points.<sup>43</sup> This is a good example of the Republicanist phenomenon of the period.

A rash remark about Eyo by Eyamba nearly resulted in a show of power but this was averted through Eyamba's diplomacy.<sup>44</sup>

## **EYAMBA'S DEATH.**

Hope Waddell recorded that as usual when he was leaving for his vacation, he had delivered the keys of their houses to Eyo and Eyamba to keep until his return. He said Eyamba had an anxious and distressed look which he

said was unusual with him. Said Waddell. "We shook hands and never met again..'<sup>46</sup>

He was said to have been sinking almost ever since Waddell left the country but made an effort shortly before their return, to pay a farewell visit to a ship about to sail for England in order to close his accounts. It was said to be his last effort for after counting the guns fired in his honour as he went ashore, was satisfied that he had received his full number he 'slumped into his carriage to rise no more' and since his death took place before he reached home, it could not be concealed.<sup>46</sup>

The pandemonium that followed was great and slaves and free born alike fled in all directions. He had many wives of the best families in the country and also many slave concubines. Of the former, it was said that thirty died the first day. Whomsoever the "King Called" considered themselves 'honoured'. They would quickly adorn themselves, drink a mug of rum and follow the king's messenger to their doom.

Efiks had several ways of burying their dead kings and one of these, an ancient custom was the watery grave. This was designed to prevent the desecration of the kings' bodies by enemies. The bodies would be fitted out in canoes packed with pieces of iron and conveyed to an undisclosed creek or Edik Ukwak for burial, just as in the past the kings had also been crowned in the creeks until the EFE ASABO ceremony (Egbo Cobham's Cabin) was introduced.<sup>47</sup> When Eyamba died however, it was recorded that:-

... a great pit was dug, wide and deep inside a house and at one side of it, a chamber was excavated, in which were placed two sofas, On these, the body was laid dressed in its ornaments, and a crown on its head. Then his umbrella, sword, snuff box bearers, and other personal attendants were suddenly killed, and thrown in with the insignia of their offices; and living virgins also, it was said, according to old custom. Great quantities of food and trade goods, and coppers were added; after which the pit was filled, and the ground trampled and beaten hard, that no trace of the grave might remain. Lest they should be violated whether through revenge or cupidity such precautions are always used to conceal the graves of the nobles...<sup>48</sup>

No amount of intervention and pleading from the missionaries prevented the work of death that went on and there was a reign of terror everywhere. For several weeks the school at Duke Town remained shut.<sup>49</sup>

King Eyamba's greatest contribution to the history of Old Calabar was his eagerness to have the Church of Scotiand established for the purpose of educating and civilizing his people. In spite of all that has been said or written about him, one thing stands clear. He is not regarded as a usurper by his people and is therefore in his rightful place in the heirarchy of Efik kings.

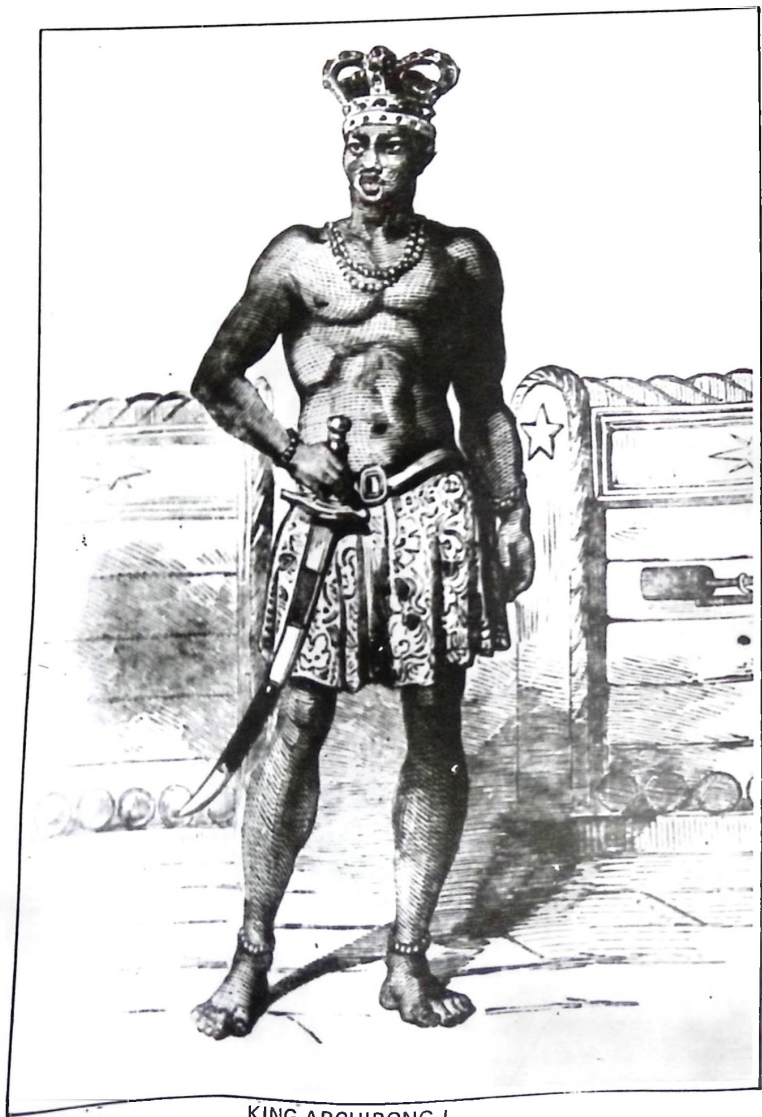
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15. Interview with Chief Ukorebi Ukorebi Asuquo, August 12th, 1983.
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17. Kannan K. Nair, *Politics and Society in South-Eastern Nigeria*, (London, Cass, 1972) p.77
18. Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell, *Twenty-nine years in the West Indies and Central Africa*, (London, Cass, 1970) p.260
19. "ODUSU" is Efik nickname for a person answering "EKPENYONG." Hence Edem Odusu Ofiong refers to Edem Ekpenyong Ofiong or Eyamba V.
20. AKPA ISIM EFIK EBURUTU EFIOM EKPO refers to the Royal Dance led by Eyamba V on the occasion of Duke Ephraim's funeral obsequies. It was first danced on that occasion. Efik version of the "ASE" or eulogy was supplied by Chief Ukorebi Ukorebi Asuquo.
21. LAND of Efiom Ekpo means Duke Town
22. Efiog Ukpog Aye, *Old Calabar through the Centuries*, (Calabar, Hope Waddell

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  30. Ibid
  31. Ibid, p.287
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  34. Ibid, p.665
  35. Ibid, pp.208- 209
  36. Ibid
  37. Ibid p.244
  38. Ibid, p.246
  39. Ibid, p.253
  40. Ibid
  41. Ibid, p.274
  42. Information supplied by Chief Ukorebi Ukorebi Asuquo from the diaries of Efiom Edet Nsa (Unpublished)
  - 42a. Averill MacKenzie - Grieve, The last years of the English Slave trade. Liverpool 1750 - 1807 (London, Frank Cass, 1968) pp. 60 - 61 The two chiefs had been sold into slavery in the West Indies along with slaves after the Olú Town Massacre . They later escaped to Virginia and three years later, in 1770, persuaded the Captain of a British trading ship to take them to Bristol from where they were eventually taken back to Calabar in one of Mr Thomas Jones's ships
  43. Rev Hope Masterton Waddell, Twenty nine years in the West Indies and Central Africa, (London, Cass, 1970) p. 312
  44. Ibid
  45. Ibid, p.295
  46. Ibid, p.336
  47. Oral Tradition
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Africa (London, Cass, 1970) , pp. 336 – 337

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KING ARCHIBONG I

## CHAPTER 4

### KING ARCHIBONG I 1849 – 1852 (EFIO OKOHO ASIBONG EKPO EFIOM OKOHO)

King Archibong I was the founder of the Archibong **dynasty**. After the death of King Eyamba V, Duke Town passed through a two-year interregnum while disputes of succession raged on.<sup>1</sup>

#### SELECTION FOR KINGSHIP:

There were several claimants to the throne. These included Ekpenyong Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho (King Eyamba V's brother who was popularly called 'Mr Young' by missionaries and supercargoes). He was however said to be a poor business man who had shared in the financial ruin that had befallen King Eyamba and would therefore not have made a good king. The second candidate was Duke Ephraim (Etim Efiom Edem Efiom), a son of Great Duke who was also thought to be unsuitable because he was too fond of the bottle. It was even speculated that King Eyo II who was very wealthy and was held in high regard by the British would be acknowledged as the supreme ruler or Efidem of Old Calabar in order to bring to an end the incessant squabbles among the various Efik towns.<sup>2</sup> Latham said that this speculation was rejected because the missionaries and supercargoes felt that wealth alone was the only criterion Eyo had.<sup>3</sup> We disagree with this view because even though he (Eyo II) was the son of Eyo Nsa and for that reason, might not have qualified to be an Efidem, he was also the son of Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku, who was a descendant of Oku Atai Atai Ema Atai Iboku one of the founding ancestors of Efik Iboku. Efik criteria for kingship are strictly based on genealogy and primogenitorship or seniority in birth. . Therefore if Eyo did not qualify through his father, he was fully qualified through his mother. An Efik proverb says:-

Eyen Owo Imanke Ofin

Ofin Ikpang Aman Eyen Owo

(A person of royal blood cannot beget a slave;

but a slave can beget a person of royal blood).

An ancient precedent had already been set when Odo Ema Atai (an Efik princess) married Ibanga Nkanta of Uruan<sup>4</sup> and beget Ekpo who later married Ekei Atai to beget Efiom Ekpo: the head of a great dynasty of Efik Kings. So the missionaries and supercargoes were wrong. The real reason for their objection was because, as Aye puts it, they 'preferred to retain the status quo with two weak heads instead of a strong central one.'<sup>5</sup> They therefore actively meddled with Efik kingship by imposing their own criteria for qualification. These were: success in trade and connection with royalty. This way, their commercial pursuits would be safeguarded. They therefore backed Archibong Duke (Efi Okoho Asibong Ekpo Efiom Okoho) on account of his superior wealth, extensive trade and connection with what they termed, "the original royal family." Reverend Anderson gives the following account of how he was selected:

'After a good deal of deliberation it was considered that for his superior wealth, extensive trade and connection with the original royal family (Duke Ephraim's line) Archibong Duke is the proper successor to Eyamba and rightful king of Duke Town .... All the shipmasters voted Archibong as king. Mr Edgerley and I, the only missionaries present, did not vote at all. From Mr Young's age, ability and influence, it was agreed that he be recognised as Premier ... The meeting was held in our school room and Lieutenant Selwyn having got all the information he wanted, at his request, I sent for Archibong and Mr Young. Both came attended by large retinues. None were allowed to enter the school room but the two chiefs ... After a little talk Mr Young gave up all claims to the Kingship and accepted the premier-ship...<sup>6</sup>

It must be stressed here that no single family in Calabar has the sole right of producing a king. The Efik tribe was originally composed of twelve clans hence the saying:-

Ami Eyen Ndem Efik, Esien Duopeba<sup>7</sup> (I the offspring of the Efik tutelary god (Ndem) of the twelve clans).

The clans were later reduced to seven in the course of migrations. This was known as "ESIEN EFIK ITIABA." At the head of each clan is the founding ancestor from whose blood line the rulers are drawn in rotation. Great Duke Ephraim belonged to the Okohos who are in turn an off-shoot

of Efiom Ekpo. In spite of the wide ramification of the Okohos, they, together with their parent body (Efiom Ekpo), form one branch of the same great stock, ATAI IBOKU through either their fathers or mothers or both. Any of their descendants qualify for kingship if they satisfy other conditions. It was therefore through misconception that Reverend Anderson used the expression "original royal family" in the same manner as Hope Waddell dubbed Eyamba V as "Usurper." As already said, neither the supercargoes nor the missionaries really cared about the traditional criteria of Efik Kingship as long as it did not interfere with their spheres of influence. Hart comments that foreign interference in this institution cut across the norms of the people and so it was that after the selection, Mr Young, like his brother Eyamba V, declared himself "King of All Black-man," 'suppose Archibong be king for the white.'<sup>8</sup>

This meddling became a regular feature in the second half of the 19th century and eventually culminated in the Native Court Proclamation of 1902 when the title "Edidem" was banned and a dichotomy was firmly established at Creek Town and Duke Town. This was the State of affairs until 1927 when King Eyo IX of Creek Town acted as Obong of Calabar because King Duke Ephraim X fell foul of the British. It may be mentioned that it was the Efiks themselves who later decided to resuscitate the Edidem-ship at a confabulation of the ESOP IBOKU in 1940, which was reaffirmed in 1970 by the CREEK TOWN ACCORD.<sup>9</sup> It was after the Esop Iboku agreement that Ededem Archibong was proclaimed Archibong V in 1948.

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS:**

It is difficult to assess King Archibong's performance because of the brevity of his reign. He is described as "young, inexperienced and rash but tried to be friendly with Mr Young."<sup>10</sup> As a ruler he tried to take up the important duty of settling disputes for his citizens but had not the patience to study the cases in depth and therefore always applied the Mosaic Law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth as he deemed fit. One example will illustrate this policy of his. Reverend Anderson narrates that two men had been fighting with sticks in the Mission ground and one was badly wounded. After the wounded man had stated his case Archibong would hear no more but settled the matter thus:-

'He broke your head, and why did you not break his head? **Be off!**'<sup>11</sup>

They went off and Archibong said to the missionary

'That be proper Calabar fashion. When one man hurt tother, tother

must hurt him back worse and if a third man put his mouth shoot him  
... 12

We are here reminded of the Efik application of the Mosaic Law in another incident recorded by Antera Duke Ephraim in his diary. On that occasion one of Egbo Young's wives had broken her mate's tooth in a fight. When the matter was brought before the elders, the offending mate's tooth was also broken<sup>13</sup> in reprisal. Hope Waddell recorded various 'Hebrew customs retained in Old Calabar.'<sup>14</sup>

Consul Hutchinson appeared to have had a poor impression of King Archibong. Said he:

The King was one of the most extraordinary specimens of sable humanity I ever met. He could neither read nor write the English language but spoke it in a very imperfect gabble... He was nearly always in that condition in which he might be expected to agree with the sentiment of Sancho Penza "Blessings on the man who invented sleep."<sup>15</sup>

But Hope Waddell said of him:- Kingship sat very easily on him<sup>16</sup> and an artist impression of him in 1850 does not depict him as a person with somnolent propensities. But although not much appeared to have been achieved by him personally, yet it was during his reign that a remarkable slave movement came into being.

#### BIRTH OF THE BLOOD MEN

Extensive plantations lay in the hinterland of Efik territory both in Calabar and Creek Town. These plantations were worked by slave labour and the coastal community depended on them for their food supply. From the 1850's, the plantations, notably Akpabuyo, became the strongholds of fugitives and runaway slaves who were trying to escape the atrocities of the Ekpe confraternity. They began to band themselves together by a covenant of blood for mutual protection and were thence known by the name "Blood Men" (NKA IYIP). Their objective was to resist the oppressions of the Duke Town gentry, and to preserve themselves from being killed on all occasions according to old customs. They knew of the law abolishing human sacrifices and also that this was still secretly violated. They therefore resolved to stand by each other in self-defence. It was reported that King Archibong I and other free men in Duke Town joined the Blood Men for their own ends. This proves that their combination was not so much that of slaves against masters as that of self preservation and that their avowed objective was not regarded by the rulers as contrary to the order and peace of the country.<sup>17</sup> This said Hope Waddell, 'was the origin of the Blood Society which attained much strength as to rival and defy the Egbo association ...' (<sup>18</sup>



IDEM IKWO (EKPE RUNNERS)

The first clash between the two orders i.e. Ekpe and the Blood Men was provoked by the arrest by Ekpe Law, of some Blood Men who had come into town in 1851. The slaves retaliated by ravaging the plantations and also threatening to destroy the town if their imprisoned colleagues were not released. The insurgents were joined by many free men of Duke Town including those whom the small clique of Ekpe dictators oppressed. Although the rebellion united many diverse interests it was predominantly a slave revolt and it was of such magnitude that the supercargoes were afraid for themselves and their properties. They summoned Consul Beecroft and the warships from Fernando Po. Dike comments that Beecroft knew Old Calabar and its institutions more intimately than those of Bonny and had no prejudice against Calabar rulers such as he entertained for King Pepple of Bonny who was himself also having problems of slave revolts. He, Beecroft, was of the view that whatever the grievances of the insurgents, they must seek redress along constitutional lines. He did not therefore seek to abolish Ekpe authority as he had done in the case of King Pepple but as the treaty which was concluded through his mediation between masters and insurgents showed, he sought to reform existing authority rather than destroy it. Said he:—

‘So rapid has been the advance of civilization in Old Calabar that at present, though retaining many of the old forms they (Egbos) have lost their old influence and no act of oppression can be committed through its agency without notice being taken thereof. The influence of the Christian Missionary has superseded that of Egbo.’<sup>19</sup>

#### THE TREATY:

Quoting from Foreign Office despatch No. F. 84/858 of 21st February, 1851 from Consul Beecroft to Lord Palmerston, Dike outlines the articles of the treaty as follows:—

It is hereby enacted and agreed to:

- 1st That the Ancient Egbo Law of the country be strictly respected and adhered to within the jurisdiction of Duke Town.
- 2nd That no armed bodies of men come into town on any pretence whatsoever.
- 3rd That no slave who has a master living shall chop blood with other slaves without special permission of the said master.
- 4th That in the event of any slave belonging to any person in the town running away to the plantations, he or she shall be given up when demanded.
- 5th That all combinations among slaves for interfering with the correc-

tion of any domestic servant by his or her master be henceforth declared illegal.

- 6th That the Law abolishing human sacrifices be hereby confirmed and that the said Law be not so interpreted as to interfere with the action of the Criminal Law (native) of the country.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, should any article of the treaty or the law for abolition of human sacrifices be infringed, the injured party should apply for redress to the Consul through any British resident on the spot.<sup>21</sup>

On receipt of the treaty, Lord Palmerston viewed articles 2, 4 and 5 with disfavour and denounced it as 'an attempt on Beecroft's part to suppress a genuine movement among the lower orders for self emancipation...'<sup>22</sup>

This, according to Nair, showed that Beecroft favoured the preservation of the political and social status quo of Old Calabar Society.<sup>23</sup>

But defending his action, Beecroft stated that he treated the Blood Men 'not as slaves nor the higher powers as slave masters but the whole as a community, a part complaining truly of a barbarous and inhuman custom held by the more powerful division.... I took advantage to do away with a law that had been a disgrace to a partially civilized place..<sup>24</sup>

Criticising Beecroft's action, Dike said he failed to appreciate the fact that the slaves could no longer be bullied into submission and that apart from his abolition of human sacrifices in which the slaves were in any case directly affected he had surrendered to the masters on all points in dispute.

'But the principle behind Beecroft's action must be grasped. In the Delta, Britain was not ready to take over the responsibilities of government. Yet the valuable trade carried on by her subjects in these parts needed peace and it would have been bad politics to remove the sole protection that trade enjoyed by destroying Egbo power... To govern at all, the Consul must make the existing government the instrument of his policy. Failure to recognize this principle in the treatment of the People Monarchy led to serious loss of British property at Bonny.'<sup>25</sup>

The fact that the slaves continued to strengthen their numbers was proof that they did not believe in the good faith of their masters and that all that was achieved was merely a truce. They therefore used their combinations whenever their hard-won liberties were threatened, or as occasion dictated. One such occasion was when Archibong I fell ill.

Hope Waddell records that his men who had joined the Blood Men in large numbers came into town 'to save his life. They resolved that if he should die, his Abia Ibok (doctor) and all suspected parties should also die.

But as nothing happened, they retired to the plantation.<sup>26</sup> When however, the king eventually died on the 4th of February, 1852 and succession disputes commenced, the Blood Men were summoned into town by Archibong's mother, OBUMA. Latham recorded that she offered the men 100,000 copper rods if they would force the leaders of Eyamba Ward to submit to the *Eseré Ordeal*. This would be a way of avenging the massacre of important Duke House leaders on the occasion of Great Duke's death in 1834. And so the new treaty was set aside and numerous people were killed. Mr Young was required to submit himself to the ordeal but promising to do so in the public square the following day, provided Obuma joined him, he escaped with his brother Ntiero to Creek Town. Obuma of course would not go through the test and threatened to blow up the town with a keg of gunpowder if anyone attempted to force her.<sup>27</sup>

Blood men were also called upon by Duke Ward when Mr Young insisted on being conferred with the title of Iyamba VI and prepared to have himself proclaimed. Having no money with which to counter the men, he gave up the attempt.<sup>28</sup>

It is said that Archibong II also used the Blood Men to fortify his position especially as he did not possess the Iyamba title unlike some of the earlier kings.<sup>29</sup>

The last appearance of these men in Duke Town was in 1872, when King Archibong II died and in 1861 at Creek Town when Eyo III died.<sup>30</sup>

Although King Archibong I's reign was a brief one yet it was a significant period in that it saw the promulgation of the treaty against inhumanity to slaves.

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## CHAPTER 5

### KING ARCHIBONG II: 1859 – 1872

King Archibong II belonged to the same generation as Archibong I, Archibong III and Duke Ephraim IX (O'ong Orok).

His full name was Eyo Asibong Ekpo Efiom Okocho but he was also called John Archibong or Eyo Asibong Minika after his mother MINIKA, who was from UDAH in the estuary of the Cross River.

Tradition has it that he was born around 1790. As a young man he was engaged in the commercial ventures of his day and these included fishing in the creeks and coastal areas in Efiat (James Town), Tom Shott, Idombi and Usaha Edet. His special skill in this occupation contributed to make him a very wealthy man.<sup>1</sup>

King Archibong grew up to be a famous Efik sea lord and an expert swordsman, two attributes which combined to make him a fine warrior. Tradition has it that when Tom Shott pirates persisted in harassing supercargoes, to the detriment of trade in Calabar during the reign of Great Duke Ephraim IV, it was Eyo Asibong, who because of his valour and intimate knowledge of Tom Shott, was sent to head the Efik contingent of the punitive expedition that combined with some white sailors to attack the pirates headed by their King, Tom Shott otherwise known as "OKPODOM ETAK UKIM." The expedition which took place in 1821 was highly successful for Tom Shott was killed and his men were routed. Among the spoils of war captured by Eyo Asibong, were the paraphernalia of the NKANDA cult. He was therefore the person who introduced the Nkanda which came to be entrenched as a grade in Ekpe Efik Iboku.<sup>2</sup> This grade is sometimes referred to as NKANDA EYO ASIBONG after its founder and is used on royal, ceremonial and military occasions in Calabar. In commemoration of Archibong's feat, the following eulogy was composed in his honour:-

Eyo Asibong Minika  
Eyo Asibong Akan Da  
Akan Okpodom Etak Ukim  
Akan Enye Obo Ide  
Oye: Bari: Nkanda!.<sup>3</sup>

(Eyo Asibong Minika  
Eyo Asibong has vanquished his equal  
Vanquished Okpodom Etak Ukim  
Wrested bravery from him  
Oye! Bari! Nkanda!)

As the founder or initiator of the Nkanda Ekpe in Calabar, he, like Esien Ekpe Oku, became the first Nkanda Ekpe Efik title holder and he also introduced the steps of the royal dance "Nyoro Isim Ekpe Efik Iboku" which was first performed on the occasion of the death of Great Duke Ephraim IV by Efik Princes who included Prince Johnny Young, later King Eyamba V.

We have thus seen Eyo Asibong not only as a man of blood and battle but also as a man of culture and traditional grandeur.

He remained in Calabar until after the death of King Eyamba V in 1847 when he moved to his mother's town Udah, due to constant squabbles. He nevertheless continued with his business which must sometimes have brought him to Calabar, for Latham records that he and his brother Adam, were the debtors, because of whom, Young Eyo was arrested and detained in a ship's cabin in 1855.<sup>4</sup>

#### KINGSHIP:

After the death of Ephraim Duke who bore the title King Duke Ephraim, Eyo Asibong was recalled from Udah and was by popular selection proclaimed King in March 1859.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of Talbot's entry that 'on the death of King Duke Ephraim there was a conflict as to the succession between John Archibong... and Antera Young,<sup>6</sup> the truth is that there was no conflict as can be seen from the fact that Archibong was recalled by his people. Latham, quoting from Marwick, records that the amicable nature of the succession was marked by the fact that Archibong was crowned by his supposed rival, Antera Young who was also the Iyamba Ekpe.<sup>7</sup> Reverend Anderson confirms the absence of a dispute in the following entry in his diary:-

'His elevation to the throne appears to be the result of a bona fide popular election. No foreign influence whatever was used with the people in his favour. He does not hold his office by virtue of an appointment thereto by any foreign magistrate. This, I think is as it ought to be. A great many of us, whites as well as blacks, are decidedly of opinion that no foreign influence should be tolerated in the election by the Calabarese, of their Chief Magistrate.<sup>8</sup>

It is not clear why Anderson should call an Efik King a "Chief Magistrate" but it is clear that there was no dispute.

Talbot however records that it was not until February, 1860, that Archibong was recognised by the Consul.<sup>9</sup> The reason for this was said to be that he:

- (a) Owed 500 puncheons of palm oil
- (b) Endeavoured to revive the "Trust System"
- (c) Tried to prevent young men from trading
- (d) Offered to supply slaves to the French Man-Of-War steamer "Renaudin"
- (e) Refused to supply a pilot for the ship "Macgregor"
- (f) Invoked MBIAM against the ship "so that no one dared to break the oath under personal dread of a horrible death," or to trade with her
- (g) Refused to allow a roof to be built over her deck as was the custom.<sup>10</sup>

It is said that Archibong was provoked to take this action on the ship in retaliation for the action of Michael Hearn who had detained his brother, Adam Archibong, because of an unsettled debt. This resulted in the cessation of trade in the river for over two months.<sup>11</sup>

Consul Hutchinson who was always on the side of the supercargoes, whatever their misconduct, therefore refused to recognise Archibong unless he gave an undertaking not to continue to disrupt trade in the river.

Sensitive to the effect of non-recognition, especially where the payment of comey was concerned, the King, on the day of his coronation, 9th August, 1859, wrote to Lord Russell, the new Foreign Secretary, to express his desire for friendly relations with the British Government, and also sought recognition from that government.<sup>12</sup>

Nair records that his letter was supported by the signatures of supercargoes, Agents of European trading houses and leading Efik gentlemen from Duke. Archibong and Henshaw Houses. This is yet another eloquent testi-

mony to the popularity of his election. When therefore the reason for Archibong's behaviour in respect of the ship "Macgregor" became clear to the new Foreign Secretary, what was represented by Hutchinson as misconduct was repudiated by him (Lord Russell) as an action provoked by the arbitrary and illegal conduct of Michael Hearn. Hutchinson was accordingly ordered to recognize Archibong and he did so in February 1860.<sup>13</sup>

#### ARCHIBONG AND HIS PEOPLE

King Archibong II was said to be afraid of no one and that only two people, his elder sister and his brother Adam Archibong, had great influence over him. He was also said to possess a fiery temper and the defiance of his authority always served as additional fuel to his choleric disposition. The following incidents will illustrate this fact.

He hated noise and on one occasion when he heard commotion in his harem he ordered one of his men to kill those who were responsible for the noise. The women on seeing the man, ran for their dear lives except Archibong's favourite wife who apparently took the whole thing for a joke and stayed on. But she was beheaded and her head was presented to the King who was inconsolable because his rashness had caused the senseless bloodshed. He was said to have done a macabre thing by using the beheaded wife's hair to make a head-dress which he wore on his 'bad' days.<sup>14</sup>

On another occasion the King had ordered a bell and when it arrived at Cobham Town Prince had claimed it. Appearing to be biding his time, the King said nothing until a year later when the Prince unexpectedly rang the bell. Whereupon the King summoned the Chiefs and told them that two cocks did not crow on the same roof and that he had been insulted by the Prince. With this, he placed his "NTINYA" (Efik Crown) on the table saying he would no longer perform the functions of a King because another person had attempted to usurp his office. He however yielded to the apologies and entreaties of the chiefs. But the matter did not end there because the King later sent "OKU AKAMA" (Military Ekpe) to destroy the Prince's house after they had retrieved the bell which today "is still to be found in the Eyo Archibong Compound."<sup>15</sup>

#### ADIABO MASSACRE — 1867

A shooting incident in a little village in Adiabo provided an opportunity for Archibong to extend his sphere of influence in 1867. A young man had been accidentally shot and his mother had demanded the life of the unfortunate man who had killed him.<sup>16</sup>

Archibong, before whom she had brought her demand, refused to comply and the woman, determined to have blood for blood, hired someone to shoot the offender but not finding him, he shot his brother. This satisfied the woman but when Archibong heard that his verdict had been disregarded, he ordered that the woman be brought before him. The villagers, afraid to give up a woman of her rank, failed to obey the king's order. Whereupon he ordered that the village be burnt down. There was pillage and destruction and all who fell into the hands of Archibong's men were slaughtered, except those who were taken to Duke Town as prisoners to be killed at leisure.

When Rev Anderson remonstrated with Archibong, he furiously threatened to make war on any village that harboured the refugees from the destroyed village and would only yield on condition that all the prisoners were transported to Fernando Po. This appeared to have been complied with by the supercargoes to whom Rev Anderson had appealed.<sup>17</sup>

#### CONSOLIDATION:

Having secured his recognition and the goodwill of the supercargoes as well as friendship of the Missionaries to whom he gave his word that Sunday markets within the township would be banned, he proceeded to reinforce his position among his people by cultivating close relations with the powerful band of Bloodmen in the plantations, just as his brother Archibong I had done.<sup>18</sup>

This move was considered a clever and diplomatic one especially as the Eyambas had not granted him the supreme title of Iyamba Ekpe. The order of the Bloodmen had become a powerful political and social force in Calabar and had also come to be the dread of both indigenes and supercargoes. It therefore made good sense for Archibong to cultivate their friendship and use them to fortify his position.<sup>19</sup> One of the more notable political events of Archibong's reign was his deprivation of one of King Eyamba V's sons of his Ekpe privileges, an action which the Eyamba Ward was incapable of preventing possibly because they were not financially strong enough to do so while Archibong, though not an Iyamba, could influence the young man's fall.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE OKOYONG WAR

Another aspect of King Archibong's steps to strengthen his position was his move to bring Okoyong under his control. Lying behind the Creek Town and Ikoneto plantations, the settlement had successfully defied the authority and commercial ambitions of the Efiks. It happened that there was a boundary dispute between Ikoneto and Okoyong and the slightest provocation from either side was always enough to start a fight. When therefore a

quarrel broke out between the two peoples, at an Ikoneto market, there was a fight in which three Okoyongs were killed. With no attempt at obtaining redress, the Okoyongs invaded the farm districts of Creek Town and Ikoneto and plundered and burnt their houses killing people as they went.

Seeing this as an opportunity to realise his ambition, King Archibong ordered Duke Town to join Creek Town, Ikoneto, Uwet and Odot in the battle which ensued. Several versions of the war have been given but in Efik law, any group of people who, during a fight, decides to wear the "MFANG" round their necks is taken as having surrendered. And so it was, that in the words of Reverend Hugh Goldie:

'Akoyong surrendered at discretion to Duke Town in the usual way, a messenger with mfang a fruit of a species of Amomum hanging from his neck, indicating that they were reduced to live on such wild fruit . . . Duke Town troops withdrew and left Creek Town and the others to bear the brunt of the war. <sup>21</sup>

The war however continued at the Creek Town sector and before full victory was won, it was Creek Town, Ikoneto's neighbour, which was anxious for the latter's victory and therefore cut its way up to Okoyong's position and obtained its total surrender. The success of Calabar in bringing Okoyong under its control is said to belong more to Creek Town than it did to Duke Town because of the former's tenacity and determination to carry the war to its logical conclusion by destroying the Okoyong territory completely. <sup>22</sup>

History has it that it was the second time that the Okoyongs had fought against Efiks. The cause of the first war was similar to that of the second one except that it was an Efik who had been killed. At an enquiry which was instituted by the then South Eastern State Government in 1973, it was revealed that a large portion of what is now Okoyong was originally occupied by the ADADIAS. When the Okoyongs migrated from Ododop in the Cameroons, to the north of Calabar in the 17th century, they met the Adadias and the struggle for existence between the two tribes erupted into a bloody war in which a Creek Town man was inadvertently killed. Creek Town immediately declared war on Okoyong and compelled a majority of the latter's people to leave their settlement called Ekong Atan Oku towards a place called Akamkpa. <sup>23</sup> Meanwhile the chase against the Adadias by Okoyong continued until they were driven right across the Cross River to Ibibioland where they are till today <sup>24</sup>

The significance of the second Efik-Okoyong War which lasted for a month, was that King Archibong II used it to extend his authority to in-

clude Okoyong. He had so securely consolidated his position in Duke Town that he reigned for thirteen years, much longer than some of his immediate predecessors.

#### ARCHIBONG AND THE SUPERCARGOES

The greater part of the 1850s was a period of buoyant economy in which the volume of trade remained high in spite of fluctuations. The prices realized were favourable and there was generally sufficient oil to accommodate all traders.

There was also security for trade to develop and although there were occasional incidents when supercargoes seized Efik middlemen for not honouring trade agreements, Efik authority was accepted because the anti-slave trade treaties for instance, confirmed this by referring disputes between Efik and European traders to Efik Kings.

The 1860s and 1870s on the other hand, was a period when the political situation underwent a dramatic transformation. The days of Great Duke Ephraim and Eyo II, with their almost limitless power, were over and the rulers who succeeded them in Duke Town and Creek Town were according to Nair,

'of lesser political genius and, as earlier writers have shown, there was a consolidation in the position of the supercargoes and the Consul...'<sup>26</sup>

Efik kings could no longer circumvent the rash lawlessness of the supercargoes who deliberately used the trust system to weaken the Efik Political machinery.<sup>26</sup> Nor could they use their position to obtain concessions from the supercargoes, but accepted instead, the commercial codes of the latter due to the fact that the oil trade of the 1860s and 1870s did not expand with corresponding rapidity with the increase in trade competition as a result of which there was economic stress in Calabar.<sup>27</sup>

While therefore the supercargoes had formed the Court of Equity in 1856 to protect themselves, the British Government drafted an Order-in-Council for the protection of British subjects within their jurisdiction.

An agreement had earlier been signed in January 1860 between Consul Hutchinson and King Eyo Honesty III, to this effect<sup>28</sup>. In May of the same year, a similar agreement was signed between Hutchinson and Archibong II. By 1862, it was clear that the Court of Equity had failed in its task of establishing equitable trading conditions because it was a one sided affair which favoured mostly the supercargoes. There were therefore constant wranglings among the Efiks, the supercargoes and the Sierra Leonians whereupon the supercargoes called a meeting on board the "HMS GRIFFON" to revive

the agreement of the Court of Equity. King Archibong refused to attend, making illness his excuse for not doing so. But the medical officer of the "GRIFFON" who went to see him reported him well. Archibong maintained his ground and according to Consul Burton who had taken over from Hutchinson, he gave 'an insolent and taunting refusal to offer his signature ...'.<sup>29</sup> He was forced to sign on the 7th of May, 1862.<sup>30</sup>

It must however be said that he had tried, not unsuccessfully, to counter the pressure of European traders by holding out against their machinations. In April 1862, when they attempted to reduce the price of oil in Calabar on the grounds that English oil market was falling, Archibong, along with Eyo IV of Creek Town disagreed and using traditional methods possibly Ekpe or Mbiam, suspended trade in the river and permitted no oil to be sold to any ship at the reduced price offered. When the supercargoes frowned upon this, Archibong coldly stated that he was King and could make any law he thought fit.<sup>31</sup>

Latham records that in 1861 young men and boys had begun to trade in small quantities of oil but were thwarted by an Ekpe Law in 1862 which prohibited trading in containers other than puncheons and the traditional casks. Consul Burton had therefore negotiated in his agreement of 1862, that trade be open to all without restriction.<sup>32</sup>

Although Archibong had signed the agreement, he had no intention of keeping to its terms. When therefore on the 8th of May, 1862, a day after the signing of the agreement, Consul Burton, accompanied by supercargoes went up the river to inspect the trading posts there, his contingent was repulsed at Itu by Archibong's men numbering about sixty. With their guns pointed at them, they were ordered to return to Duke Town.<sup>33</sup>

The King was later made to apologize for humiliating Burton but he was ready for a fight. Duke Town was evacuated of civilians and replaced with armed slaves under orders to burn the town in order to cancel all debts, should the Consul open fire. The Efiks removed the doors and windows of their houses to safety. But the matter was eventually amicably settled.<sup>34</sup> Archibong was later granted concessions to secure and implement the stipulation that he reserved the right to nominate workers to construct cask houses and sanction the building of houses of European agents on shore. Although European traders complained that they could never obtain redress for their grievances from Archibong, yet they were the ones who gained for their increased consolidation greatly affected the political and economic position of the Efiks.<sup>35</sup>

The re-established Court of Equity brought back its problems. Fines were levied on Efik traders anyhow and on one occasion in 1867 for instance, King Archibong was fined ten puncheons of oil for sacrificing two of seven

women, the sole survivors of a village which had been attacked and whose inhabitants had been killed on the King's orders ....' <sup>36</sup> Although the massacre was a brutal action, it is nevertheless not clear in what adverse way this had affected the supercargoes, except that in their typical manner they used the incident to foster their interests.

Archibong himself had much difficulty in containing the excesses of his men who were said to commit armed robbery or engaged in assault on the cask houses of the supercargoes. It was said that in July 1868, about 500 Calabar armed men and slaves burgled the cask house of Captain Thomas and stole about a hundred puncheons of palm oil <sup>37</sup> A few months later another burglary was committed on the same cask house by yet another of King Archibong's men. This necessitated additional legislations for the conduct of trade and on the grounds that King Archibong was responsible for the safety of all British property within his jurisdiction, he was fined ten puncheons of oil at a meeting of the Court of Equity held on board the "HMS SPEEDWELL" on the 23rd of February, 1869. <sup>38</sup>

Other measures taken by the Court were that the Kings of Duke Town and Creek Town were to prohibit their subjects visiting the cask houses of Europeans and also, no British subjects were to be detained on shore or ill-treated under any pretext as this would be interpreted to mean that the Efik authority doing so was an enemy of Britain. <sup>39</sup>

It was absurd for the supercargoes to blame King Archibong for the lawlessness of the river for apart from the fact that they themselves were guilty of triggering off many of the disputes, the Kings were not given a chance to settle the disputes by invoking Efik law. King Archibong was for instance once requested to hand over one David King who was charged with theft and assault in Captain Thomas's cask house. When he refused to hand over the youth as he wanted to handle the case himself, they complained about their inability to get satisfaction from him. <sup>40</sup>

## COMMERCIAL HOUSES

The reign of King Archibong II saw the emergence of Efik capitalist groups which included such men as Black Davies who owned a number of men on the plantations and Yellow Duke who was described in consular reports as one of the most dangerous men in the river because he was a favourite of King Archibong and served in his cabinet. <sup>41</sup> A trading concern was also set up by the Henshaw family and was called Henshaw Brothers' Company. It owed its origin to the decline in credit from European firms. <sup>42</sup>

Another aspect of change in the trade pattern of the period was the establishment of fixed European firms ashore in place of the hulk system. It

will be recalled that in the days of Egbo Young or Eyamba III this was never allowed. And so it was that the West Africa Company was established in 1864 followed by the Miller Brothers in 1868 and the United Africa Company in 1879. Nair records that in 1866 there were seventeen firms trading in the rivers of the Bight of Biafra. At Old Town, Captain James Walker bought a parcel of land from King Willie II of Old Town and established the Hope factory. <sup>43</sup>

### ARCHIBONG AND THE MISSIONARIES

Although Archibong, upon his accession to the throne, secured the friendship of the missionaries by publicly declaring his disbelief in *lúiong* and other Efik ritual beliefs, and upheld the words of the missionaries as the only true one, it soon became obvious that he was doing so only to secure their support <sup>44</sup> Rev. Anderson records that without any hesitation Archibong had agreed to his suggestion on the day of his coronation that Sabbath market should be banned within the limits of the township. But in spite of his declaration against fetishism, missionary records for the 1860's show that the decline in the oil trade revived the worship of "Ndem." On the 27th August, 1862 Rev. Anderson recorded that "Calabar Sunday" (AKWA EDERI) was observed and that sacrifices were made to "Ndem." Said he:-

No gentlemen save one at Church today. All the rest been offering a great sacrifice, this being Calabar Sunday. <sup>45</sup>

He had earlier on the 20th April in the same year recorded that he 'spoke seriously to King Archibong after public service was over, about the wickedness and foolishness of trusting to anything save God himself as a protection from fire, famine, sickness or any other evil. He pleaded that the worship of, or rather by "Ndem Efik" had been taught by God to the fathers of the Calabar people just as he had taught the fathers of the white people to worship in Bible fashion' <sup>46</sup>

Accordingly, in June 1862 King Archibong and the Duke Town gentlemen sacrificed an albino girl to Ndem Efik at Parrot Island <sup>47</sup>

Nair comments that much of the missionary preaching in Calabar was what he called "sterile intellectualism" which he said was unrelated to the world in which the Efiks lived. What they received and assimilated depended on their background and patterns of thought as well as the personality of the preacher <sup>48</sup> but even the latter did not sometimes matter for we shall see that Hope Waddell clashed on numerous occasions with King Eyo and other leading citizens of the two leading Efik towns. But Efik traditional religion and christianity were always at conflict because they continued to

live side by side in the minds of most of the people.<sup>49</sup>

Efiks themselves were so determined to keep Europeans off their inland markets that under no pretext would they permit them to journey there. When therefore, Rev Thompson made an evangelistic trip to Umon without the King's permission in 1860, the latter's anger descended upon him. Archibong threatened to break up the Mission stations at Ikoneto and Ikot Offiong but for the intervention of King Eyo III.<sup>50</sup> Based on the Efik adage that "Mbri Iduhe Ke Esuk Urua" (No joke should be allowed in the trading beach) King Archibong called a meeting of all the gentry and they sat to discuss the ejection of the missionaries lest their activities should interfere with Efik trade.

The following is an eye witness account of what transpired at the meeting as narrated by a European trader who observed the gathering from his ship:-

'The day was one so common at certain seasons of the year, bright and clear and enjoyable in the morning, then gradually falling away into subdued stillness -- as if nature had sent a rebuke -- and the oppression of all the senses; but nothing of this had we noticed in the excitement of watching through our glasses, the visible unrest of the angry assembly. As related to us afterwards, King Archibong had made his charge at great length and was full of determined hostility to the mission. King Eyo replied gently but with much firmness in defence, telling the chiefs around him that they might as well stop the rain in its descent as to stay the extension of God's message even if the missionaries were sent away<sup>51</sup>

Mr Thomson (the accused) was about to speak when --

"The lightning came out of the east and shone even unto the west."

The gathering tornado which we had not noticed had burst, the river was foam, the tall mangrove trees bent like willows, and in an incredibly brief space, the assembly was broken up, and never for that object did it meet again...<sup>52</sup>

## HIS DEATH

King Archibong died on the 26th of August, 1872. He had so entrenched the position of the Archibong lineage in Efik kingship that after his death, his brother Edem (or Adam) was selected King. No 'incidents' were recorded from his Bloodmen because there were no atrocities, although when he fell ill in 1871, they had come to town to seek out and kill his enemies, who were believed to have made him sick by witchcraft.<sup>54</sup>

There was never a dull moment in the reign of King Archibong II which stood out for too many murders of offenders.<sup>55</sup>

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## CHAPTER 6

### KING ARCHIBONG III: 1872 – 1879

Known as Adam, King Archibong III was the brother of King Archibong II. The remarkable thing about his selection as king was that he was struck with blindness in 1870 but this affliction did not have any adverse effect on his selection in 1872<sup>1</sup>

Latham records that Adam Archibong was the first King since Eyamba V to be made both King and Iyamba (he was Iyamba VIII), and the second member of Duke Ward ever to hold the office. This, he said, was possible with the consent of Prince James Eyamba who was leader of the Eyamba Ward and also an old mission scholar. The Prince was both friend and adviser to Archibong<sup>2</sup>

#### CORONATION:

Although Archibong had performed his kingly duties since the time of his accession in 1872, it was not until six years later, in September 1878, that he was crowned. It is not known why it took so long before he was crowned but Latham records that Consul Hopkins crowned him.<sup>3</sup> A precedence in this action had earlier been created when Lieutenant Commander Selwyn crowned King Archibong I in 1849<sup>4</sup> as was later to be repeated in the case of King Duke IX. This could only have been tolerated for the purpose of gaining foreign recognition which was so important to trade, and the coronation of Archibong III was unique in that it was the first time a Duke Town coronation was carried out in "Westminster Style" in the Duke Town Presbyterian Church. It was particularly regarded as an occasion for thanksgiving because it took place after the signing of the treaty of fifteen articles between Queen Victoria and King Archibong on the 6th of September 1878<sup>5</sup>. The King had been persuaded by the missionaries to submit to this as a demonstration of his willingness to honour the terms of the treaty. The fifteen articles crystallized in the "Christian Oath" which the King swore to uphold before everyone and which from that time became

an essential ceremony at the coronation of all Efik kings.

Queen Victoria on that occasion, presented through Consul Hopkins (himself a deeply religious man) the royal regalia of robe, a sceptre, an orb, a crown, a gilded throne and a copy of the Holy Bible. These paraphernalia were not the mere trappings of colonialism for they were presented when the King was still respected as a sovereign and independent monarch in his domain. It was therefore to signify that the King had been accepted into the Comity of Christian Kings of the world and that he had become partner with the Monarch of England in defence of the Christian Faith.<sup>8</sup>

The Oath obliged the King to:

- (a) Abolish Twin Murders and ostracism of the mother of twins
- (b) Abolish Human Sacrifices and substitutionary capital punishment
- (c) Protect Widows from the tortures of "Mbukpisi"
- (d) Protect the Sabbath Day from desecration
- (e) Abolish the administration of Esere Beans
- (f) Abolish all forms of slavery and rule his people according to the laws of God and promote their education in the christian way.<sup>7</sup>

For over a century Efiks have retained this as an important aspect of their coronation although the contents of the oath have been varied to go with prevailing conditions.<sup>8</sup>

### **ARCHIBONG'S REIGN**

Unlike his brother Archibong II who reigned for thirteen years, Archibong III had only a brief though significant reign. Incapacitated by his blindness, he scarcely left his house even on state matters. He therefore had a representative in the person of Prince James Eyamba who stood in for him<sup>9</sup> The supercargoes found this quite irksome and beneath their dignity to hold negotiations with a mere representative. They also complained about having to discuss business at the King's palace rather than on board the Consul's ship or even their own. But the Consul sympathised with Archibong, saying 'it does appear somewhat unreasonable to compel a blind man who has not left his own premises for the last four years to venture on the water'<sup>10</sup> This was in 1874.<sup>11</sup>

### **BRITISH AFRICANS**

King Archibong was faced with the immediate problem of containing the excesses of Sierra Leonians and "Accra Men" who styled themselves "British Africans" and held "free papers" issued by the Consul. Armed with these papers they began a movement to rid themselves of the King's

control.<sup>12</sup> They petitioned the Consul that they had been maltreated by the King and Prince Eyamba and that one of them, James Croker, had been flogged and kept in chains by Eyamba for twenty four days.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from the trouble caused by these people, they had no impact on the cultural and political life of Calabar although Latham records that a few of them, including one Fergusson, ran schools where the trading chiefs preferred to send their children to learn English and Arithmetic which was more useful for business than the Efik language and Bible studies taught by the missionaries.<sup>14</sup>

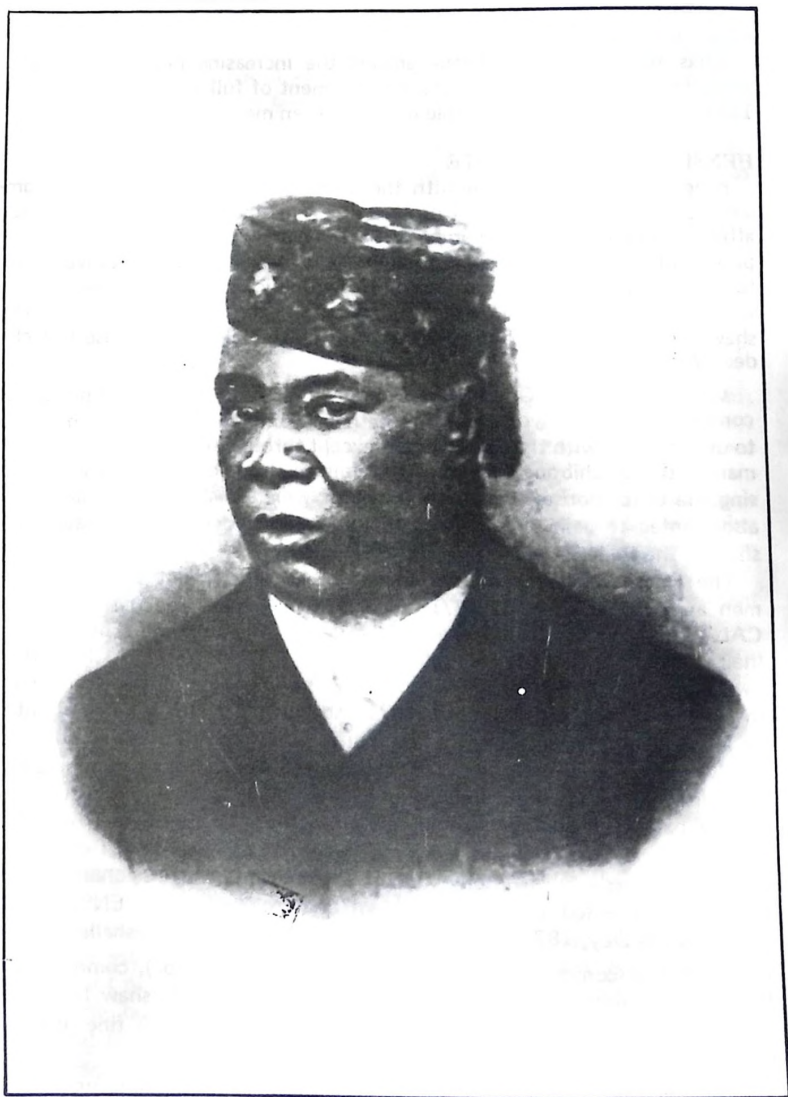
Notwithstanding this, the continued defiance of authority by these people resulted in a build up of resentment against them and there were moves to eject them from Calabar. By 1876 many of them had left Calabar because Efiks threatened to massacre them.<sup>15</sup>

King Archibong refused to take a lenient view of the activities of the so called British Africans and informed the court of Equity that he would:

"In no wise have any African born British subjects in my country who will not abide by the law of my country with the exception of the Hulk and Cask house dwellers. I therefore implore the court to inform the said British subjects dwelling in Old Calabar Towns under my control that those who will not abide by my country law must leave my country entirely or abide in one of the Hulks in my river if they choose."<sup>16</sup>

The Court refused to act and the liberated Africans remained and although the Foreign Office agreed with Hopkins that they were the most troublesome and dangerous people on the coast, they still refused to withdraw protection from them.

Apart from these people, the king had clashes with the missionaries as well over freed slaves for whom they had obtained freedom papers and who had constituted themselves into an independent community having no allegiance to anyone, neither the king nor the missionaries nor the British Government. They, as well as the Sierra Leoneans established a settlement on a hill close to the Mission premises.<sup>17</sup> The king, fearful of losing his authority over his subjects decreed that those who were not redeemed with money should leave the country entirely or sign a document recognizing him as their king. The missionaries were deeply involved in this as was the consular authority and both were as determined to enforce the provision of free papers as the King was to resist them.<sup>18</sup> The situation was aggravated when the Henshaws, because of their resentment over the Eyamba/Dukean alliance and other grievances, chose to offer refuge in 1875 to those who held freedom papers in Duke Town — a direct defiance of the



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King's authority.<sup>19</sup>

Efiks fought a losing battle against the increasing number of British protected Africans and with the establishment of full British protection in 1891, the number of such people increased even more.<sup>20</sup>

#### **HENSHO/DUKEAN DISPUTE**

King Archibong's alliance with the Eyamba Ward meant that the Eyambas were at last re-emerging from the doldrums into which they had fallen after the death of King Eyamba V in 1847 and by 1874, because of his poor state of health, Prince Eyamba who was his representative began to use the King's name to promote his own policies.<sup>21</sup> In so doing, he caused friction to develop between Archibong and the other waris. The Henshaws in particular were deeply resentful of this alliance because it excluded everyone else.

We have seen that Great Duke Ephraim IV (Efiom Edem) did not brook competition from anyone and that he had forbidden all Duke Town Houses to deal directly with the supercargoes except through him. It was in the same manner that Archibong III wanted to retain the trade of the river by suppressing the other houses, most prominent of which were the Henshaws who also wanted to gain direct access to the supercargoes and thus have a fair share in the trade.<sup>22</sup>

The Henshaws had produced a new breed of efficient and progressive men and had as early as 1871, formed a movement called the YOUNG CALABAR MOVEMENT. They drew up a programme for building up their town because they desired like other Calabar towns, to have their own King and make their own laws.<sup>23</sup> This was communicated to Hopkins in a letter dated 16th February, 1871 and when Archibong heard about it he immediately declared that he 'no will for that' and that there could not be 'two king for country'.<sup>24</sup> Such a situation would not be commercially or politically in the best interest of Duke Town, as it would reduce the comey paid to it and correspondingly strengthen the Henshaw Town position.

Against all advice, including that of their friends the missionaries, Henshaw Town selected JAMES HENSHAW and crowned him HENSHAW III on Christmas Day, 1872. Archibong and Prince Eyamba marshalled all the forces at their command both at the traditional level (Ekpe), commercially (the trading agents) as well as the Consular intervention. Henshaw Town was persuaded to hand over the Crown which was destroyed. A fine of £700 was also levied against the town.<sup>25</sup>

In March 1875, they won a contract to build a roof on the hulk "REALM"

belonging to the Company of Messrs Taylor Laughland. For this work, Henshaw Town purchased about 4000 mats and when King Archibong got to know, he wrote to inform Gilbertson who had negotiated the contract on behalf of his company, to say that he Archibong had cancelled the contract. He passed it over to one of his men, Egbo Young Hogan.<sup>26</sup> This resulted in considerable loss to the Henshaws especially as the roofing of hulks was a very profitable business.

In the same year, the King stopped trade in the river by blowing Ekpe. It was however re-opened a few months later but before the end of three months the King this time interdicted the Henshaws from trading by imposing a monopoly over trade in SALT which he knew the Henshaws had purchased with the trust they had been given by European traders. Ekpe Law was applied and Henshaw Town was once more left with a large consignment of salt which it could not sell.<sup>27</sup>

Although Archibong denied any knowledge of Ekpe being used in this manner it is difficult to see how this could be so, especially, as he was Iyamba VIII and no Ekpe law could have been enacted without his consent or knowledge.

In retaliation against the loss suffered by Henshaw Town, Prince Orok Edem who was then visiting a friend in Edibe-Edibe, a district belonging to the former, was kidnapped and detained in chains for three weeks from the 10th of August, 1875.<sup>28</sup>

The explosive situation was contained when Eyo VII of Creek Town sent down an Ekpe drum to stop all firing and also secure the Prince's release. Duke Town then demanded that Chief Henshaw be delivered to them and this was refused. Fighting broke out on the 7th of September 1875 and there were casualties on both sides.<sup>29</sup>

At the mediation of Consul Hopkins an agreement was drawn up between Duke Town and Henshaw Town on the 28th of September, 1875 in which the Henshaws were to rebuild their town after swearing allegiance to King Archibong and being guaranteed equal rights with other freemen of Duke Town.<sup>30</sup>

But the Henshaws were not satisfied because Duke Town held itself aloof and refused to meet them on matters decreed by Ekpe. They also gave several instances of provocation by Duke Town and in February 1876 Chief James Henshaw along with six others, petitioned the British Government about this and asked for an inquiry to be set up.<sup>31</sup> They even threatened to move out of Calabar to find a new settlement in Rio Del Rey or the Qua Iboe region but fearing that this might interfere with Jaja's markets or traditional Efik markets, and so cause more trouble, Consul Hopkins persuaded them to come to terms with Duke Town.<sup>32</sup> Whereupon on the 6th of September 1878, yet another agreement was signed in which the Henshaws

were once more required to recognise Archibong as King and obey him in matters not contrary to christian conscience. In return, Chief Henshaw was to have a seat in Archibong's Council and Duke Town was not to interfere with Henshaw Town and all trade restrictions were removed.<sup>33</sup> A set of rules for the governing of Henshaw Town was also drawn up.<sup>34</sup>

#### AGREEMENT WITH THE QUAS

Also on the 6th of September 1878 another agreement of five articles was purported to have been signed between Queen Victoria and King Ekon Odo of the Quas.<sup>35</sup> We say "purported" because there was no such agreement between the two parties but rather between King Archibong III and King Ekon Odo with Consul Hopkins signing on behalf of the Queen as Witness along with missionaries. Another peculiar aspect of the agreement was that King Ekon Odo's sovereignty was restricted because it stipulated that in no case shall the Qua people kill anybody without first consulting the King and Chiefs of Old Calabar and getting an order from King Archibong or his successors in writing witnessed by two respectable Europeans to carry the sentence into effect . . .<sup>36</sup>

Stranger still was the fact that the name of King Ekon Odo did not even appear in the list of Qua signatories. The Qua agreement was intended to extend the Calabar trade to their territory and also enable them like the other settlements, to participate in trade and other lawful activities without any hindrance.

#### CREEK TOWN

After the death of Eyo III in 1861, Creek Town was by 1864 being boycotted by Europeans because she was owing oil to twenty ships<sup>37</sup> Within a short period of ten years between 1861 and 1871, Eyo IV, V and VI had died and the economic decay of Creek Town continued. Whereas each of the surviving sons of Eyo I had taken his turn to rule the town without any dissension, the death of the last one, Eyo VI sparked off a succession dispute because it was necessary to establish a new line.<sup>38</sup> Before a new King was selected comparative peace and stability prevailed because Eyo Okon, a trusted slave and confidante of Eyo III, was the real power in Creek Town as he was the only one who could control and direct the slaves.

It must be mentioned here that Eyo Okon was a strong willed leader of great influence who emerged among the Blood Men. So powerful was his position among the thousands of slaves of the plantations of the Eyo Household that the Eyo kings found it necessary to acknowledge his position by retaining him as an adviser. He was therefore the power behind the thrones of several Eyo Kings.<sup>39</sup> When therefore he died in June 1873, serious dis-

turbances broke out.<sup>40</sup> But on the 25th of February, Nsa Okoho was made King and assumed the title "King Eyo Honesty VII."

This did not however improve things in Creek Town for dissension over his selection contributed to her continued decline both socially and politically and the king himself went into exile at Cobham Town.

#### THE DEATH OF KING ARCHIBONG

King Archibong died on the night of May 5th, 1879, eight months after his historic coronation.<sup>41</sup>

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34. See Appendix V: Rules for the governing of Henshaw Town, 6th September, 1878
35. See Appendix VI: Agreement between Her Britannic Majesty and King Ekon Odo of Qua, 6th September, 1878
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**KING DUKE EPHRAIM EYAMBA IX AND SOME OF HIS DAUGHTERS**

## CHAPTER 7

### KING DUKE EPHRAIM EYAMBA IX· 1880 – 1896

The death of King Archibong III in 1879 sparked off a fierce controversy over his successor. He was the last of Great Duke Ephraim's contemporaries and after his death, the ancient principle of succession by seniority was no more adhered to.

Since the accession of King Duke Ephraim V in 1852 there had been no serious disputes because there had been no serious contenders. But the position was different when Archibong died because there was a new generation of extremely forceful men all of whom wanted to be kings.<sup>1</sup>

Three Houses were therefore poised for a fierce contest. These were:- Eyamba which fielded Prince James Eyamba, son of King Eyamba V, Prince Duke (Orok Edem Ekpo) son of King Duke Ephraim and one of the central characters in the Hienشو/Dukean controversy; Prince Asibon Edem, son of King Archibong III, the late monarch. That Prince Asibon Edem joined in the contest was indicative of the fact that there was dissension in Duke House which was the parent House of the Archibongs.

It was clear from this line-up that since the traditional method of elimination by the administration of Esere had been banned by the Agreement of September 6, 1878, only war or peaceful negotiations could solve the deadlock and when Acting Consul Easton arrived in Calabar, he found a situation which he described as one of 'anarchy and disorder'<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to bring an end to the chaos the Acting Consul crowned Prince Duke in March, 1880.<sup>3</sup> The new King took the title Duke Ephraim Eyamba IX implying that he was not only king but also the Eyamba Ekpe Efik Iboku, a position which by heredity belonged to the Eyamba ward.

This action only aggravated the situation and realising that the Acting Consul had blundered, the British Foreign Office used the appointment of Consul Hewett as a face-saver to order a fresh election and so another spate of manoeuvrings and campaigns was begun.<sup>4</sup>



**PRINCE JAMES EYAMBA V**

### MISSIONARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DISPUTE

Although Nair remarks that the missionaries avoided all appearances of partisanship,<sup>5</sup> Latham has shown that they were not indifferent to what was happening in the country and that in fact, two leading persons, Reverend Anderson and Reverend Ross, played an important role in the dispute.<sup>6</sup> They took opposing sides, with Reverend Anderson supporting Prince Duke, a traditionalist, while Reverend Ross, an impatient young man of God who wanted to stamp out all traditions, supporting Prince Eyamba who was an Elder of the Church and Superintendent of the Sunday School. Ross felt that as a king, Prince Eyamba would advance the cause of Christianity and humanitarian reforms. But Anderson, who had lived in Calabar since 1848 and understood Calabar politics better than Ross who only arrived in 1875 realized that the election of a King from an impoverished Eyamba Ward would be a mistake. And so he preferred Prince Duke who although a traditionalist was nevertheless a wealthy person from a wealthy and powerful Ward,<sup>7</sup> a factor of extreme importance in trade with the supercargoes who already supported him.

Reverend Ross denounced Anderson for what he termed his support of cruel and unconverted chiefs and his general toleration of barbarous custom.<sup>7</sup>

Prince Eyamba, probably on the advice of Ross, wrote three times to the Foreign Office stating his case.<sup>8</sup> An astute politician in his own right, we have seen how as Chief Adviser to King Archibong III, he had used his diplomatic ability to foster the interests of Duke and Eyamba Wards.<sup>8</sup> But now, he directed all his energy against Duke and in his letters to the Foreign Office stressed the fact that he (Eyamba) was a Christian while Duke was a superstitious and licentious person. He even threatened to leave Calabar to settle elsewhere where he would seek British protection and live according to Christian principles, if Prince Duke was re-elected king.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, our third candidate, Prince Asibon Edem had pursued a policy of violence whereby he arrested and killed the supporters of the other two contestants at will.

Strangely enough, Prince Duke was re-elected in spite of the previous objections of the other chiefs. Consul Hewett thereafter crowned him on the 8th of August, 1882.<sup>11</sup>

Prior to this event, the antagonism between Rev Anderson and Reverend Ross came to a head when the Scottish Mission sent out Rev. David Williamson of Queensberry and Rev David Marshall of East Calder to investigate the cause of their quarrel. The result was that Rev. Anderson was reproached while Ross was ordered home. He refused to go home and resigned from the Church on Christmas Day, 1881.<sup>12</sup>

Prince Eyamba and his Ward, together with Chief Henshaw and his Ward

withdrew from the mission with Ross who later set up the nucleus of his own mission in Prince Eyamba's compound <sup>13</sup>

#### HIS REIGN

The King's reign was described as a 'melancholy period in Calabar history' <sup>14</sup> and several complaints were lodged against his administration. In August, 1883, the Henshaws petitioned Consul Hewett that they were distrusted by the King because of their failure to attend his coronation. The reason might not be far to seek in view of the quarrel of 1875. They, nevertheless mustered strong again under Richard Henshaw.

Duke Town, continued to be in a state of turmoil and in 1884, civil war broke out between Duke Ward and the Archibongs.

Commenting on the King's reign in a letter dated 12th January, 1890 to King Basil Ebrero Nonaw X of Ndem Curcock Town (Ikoneto), Prince Magnus Adam Duke wrote as follows:-

'... I am against the attempts by King Duke to revive Duke Ephraim's "dominio tyrannus" style in trying to subdue many Old Calabar Houses under his "captaindom" through the manipulations of the Missions, Supercargoes, the Consular Powers and H. B. M's Home Office who have untraditionally proclaimed him and King Adam Archibong III before him "Rex Maximus Callabaris" without the consensus of you "Rex Municipii" (Rex Republica) as was agreed in 1834 after that "Duke The Tyrant" died...' <sup>15</sup>

Magnus Duke further accused the king of trying to seize power and office as "Imperator Summus Callabaris" <sup>16</sup> from Prince Asibon Edem having already succeeded in wresting power from "Captain" <sup>17</sup> John Eyamba VI, the title of "Spiritus Maximus Callabaris." <sup>18</sup> As if this was not enough, King Duke was also accused of trying to revive and take unto himself the office of "Oratorus Maximus Callabaris" <sup>19</sup> in the manner of ancient King Calabar despots of Old Calabar Empire. What Calabar needs now is a constitutional monarchy.... <sup>20</sup>

#### TREATY OF 1884

Meanwhile, Prince James Eyamba, having failed in his bid to be king, changed his policy to seeking British annexation. During 1883 many letters were sent by his supporters to the Foreign Office complaining about the King's barbarities and Prince Asibon Edem's violent acts. They demanded annexation with the British as the only way out <sup>21</sup>

Consul Hewett considered this a reasonable request although his reason

was for the purpose of forestalling the French who had already re-established their presence in Porto Novo in 1883. He had wanted the establishment of a protectorate from Benin to the Cameroons. The issue, said Latham, was clear, for if Britain vacillated over annexation of Calabar as pressed by a faction of the Efiks, then they would offer themselves to the French.<sup>22</sup>

By 22nd December, 1883, it had been decided to strengthen the Consular administration in Calabar and make treaties of protection with the coastal chiefs.

But, there was further vacillation arising from what Latham termed 'an unbelievable piece of bungling', when the Chancellor of the Exchequer refused to bear the cost of administering the new territory.<sup>23</sup> It was only when the shattering news of a German expedition to the Cameroons in 1884 and French movements on the Niger were received that the British Government was spurred into action.<sup>24</sup> Consul Hewett was directed to sign a treaty with the Cameroons only to find on getting there, that the German flag was already flying in the territory. He then proceeded to Calabar where he signed the treaty of protection with Kings' Duke Ephraim Eyamba IX and Eyo Honesty VII and their chiefs. The people of Efut, Idombi and Tom Shott who were called upon to sign similar treaties declined to do so on the grounds that they were subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar, and could not sign treaties with any foreign power. They however signed declarations binding them to anything signed by Efik Kings and Chiefs.<sup>25</sup>

On the 5th of June, 1885, the Protectorate Government over the Oil Rivers came into existence. Its extent stretched from the Lagos coastline and the right bank of the Rio del Rey and the banks of the River Niger from Lokoja to the sea, with Calabar as the Headquarters.<sup>26</sup> Thus Calabar had assumed a new status and King Duke IX had become the last reigning monarch of Old Calabar before the inception of Colonial rule.

Sir Claude MacDonald was appointed Commissioner and Consul-General of the Oil Rivers on 1st April, 1891, and arrived to take up his post on 1st August, 1891, the day that Customs Duties were also introduced for the purpose of enabling the new administration to take off.<sup>27</sup>

Sir Claude MacDonald's orders were defined by the Foreign Office as follows:-

'Your object should be by developing legitimate trade by promoting civilization, by inducing the natives to relinquish 'inhuman and barbarous customs, and by gradually abolishing slavery, to pave the way for placing the territories over which Her Majesty's protection is and may be extended directly under British rule. It is not advisable that you should interfere in tribal government, the Chiefs should continue to rule their own subjects and to administer justice to them, but you

should keep a constant watch so as to prevent injustice and check abuses, making the Chiefs understand that their powers will be forfeited by misgovernment. If you should in special cases find it essential for the benefit of the natives, you will be authorized to insist on the delegation to you of a Chief's judicial and administrative powers, which you will then exercise in their interest. You should be careful however, not to arouse discontent by attempting too abrupt reform. <sup>28</sup>

With the establishment of the new administration the political traditions of the Efik underwent a series of modifications and a new category of "Native Political Agents" was established as part of the new power structure. <sup>29</sup> The traditional chiefs came under these agents especially in non-traditional aspects of public life. <sup>30</sup>

Anene records that while the other city states did not question the new change, "Old King Duke IX of Old Calabar" in a letter dated 17th April, 1889, to MacDonal, wanted to know why there should be any change in the form of government. They were quite content, argued Duke, to remain as they were and to govern themselves as they had always done subject to British protection. <sup>31</sup>

And Nair comments:-

'Nor could the British Government disregard the traditional political machinery of Calabar in the early years of British administration. For at least five years the Efik government was the only effective government in Calabar....' <sup>32</sup>

As stipulated in the Foreign Office directive to MacDonal, he was not to interfere in the government of the people by their rulers except in cases of injustice, abuse or any other form of misjudgment. And so it was that in a case of Regina (Queen Victoria) versus King Duke IX the King was in the Consular Court on the 13th of February, 1893, charged with "disturbing the peace of Old Calabar" during the month of January, 1893.

The trouble had started between him and Prince Asibon Edem III. For three days there was disturbance in the town and both parties had threatened to bring their plantation men into town to fight.

King Duke was found guilty and was bound over in the sum of £500 to keep the peace and be of good behaviour towards Prince Asibon Edem III, all the persons in Old Calabar and surrounding country for a period of one year — money to be lodged in Court.' <sup>33</sup>

Prior to this incident, the unsatisfactory situation created by the new administration resulted in a protest letter dated March 9th 1891, to Acting Consul George Annesley from the people of Calabar. It went as follows:-

Sir,

We the Kings,<sup>o</sup> Chiefs and natives of Old Calabar have observed with sorrow and apprehension the severities which in the exercise of your official functions you have exercised and continued to enforce towards us and after grave and anxious deliberations among ourselves, we have respectfully resolved to make a representation to you on the subject.

The punishment inflicted delinquents and your mode of enforcing same are considered to be excessively severe, while at the same time, insufficient pains appear to be taken to ascertain the true state of matters between litigants, with the result that frequently those purpose cause approved by a majority of Calabar people finds condemnation at your hands .... The conduct of the soldiers and policemen in your employment form matter for grave reprehensions. Their insolence right and left ... and insulting conduct to our women at the public markets and elsewhere in town have roused the people to a pitch of anger which in all probability will culminate in an out-break against these soldiers and policemen .....<sup>34</sup>

#### TRADE:

In the commercial fields, there were price **fluctuations** in the oil market and these affected political events in Lagos and Calabar for although the unrest in Calabar after 1879 originated from the struggle for office it might also have been aggravated by the fall in prices which were described as "extremely good between 1883 and 1884 when Britain established the Protectorate but after this period, 'plunged to their all time low.'<sup>35</sup>

The situation had a serious repercussion in Calabar for in 1888, Acting Consul Johnston stopped the trade of twenty-three Efik traders who were indebted to the Agents. Although King Duke was not involved more than half of the leading Efik traders which included his main opponents', Prince **Eyamba**, Prince **Asibon Edem** and Chief **Henshaw III** were affected.<sup>36</sup>

It can therefore be said that price fall contributed to the continued unrest which made the British resolve to consolidate their authority by taking control of Calabar after nearly a century of trying to avoid becoming directly involved in Efik affairs.<sup>37</sup>

Notwithstanding the signing of the treaty, discontent continued 'because the Consul's authority undermined the King's authority.'<sup>38</sup> King Duke died in 1896.

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15. Prince Magnus Adam Duke, Letter to King Basil Ebrero Nonaw X of Ndam Curcuck Town (Ikoneto) 12th January, 1890
16. Latin terms. Prince Magnus Adam Duke studied Law in England hence the free use of Latin terms.  
    Dominio Tyrannus – Tyrannical Rule  
    Rex Maximus Callabaris – Principal King or Edidem of Calabar under whom the Republican Kings ruled.  
  
    Rex Municipii or Rex Republica – Republican King  
  
    Imperator Supremus Callabaris – Supreme Commander of Calabar (a military title)
17. CAPTAIN – English for ETUBOM
18. Spiritus Maximus Callabaris – Iyamba Ekpe
19. Oratorus Maximus Callabaris – Spokesman for Calabar
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PRINCE ASIBON EDEM III (SITTING AT BACK)

## CHAPTER 8

### PRINCE ASIBON EDEM III: DIED 1900

Prince Asibon Edem Ekpo Efiom Okoho was the eldest son of King Archibong III. Upon the death of his father in 1879, he joined Prince James Eyamba V and Prince Orok Edem in a three-cornered struggle for the Efik throne.

Being a person with 'singularly warlike temperament,' he preferred to use violent and bloody means to achieve his ambition rather than employ diplomatic means to get the support of the supercargoes as his opponents had done.<sup>1</sup>

He arrested some of the supporters of these candidates and committed a series of violent acts to show he was beyond all authority. Early in 1881, he captured some Cobham Town men even though the Cobham people were not vying for the throne. In the same year, he also seized some Henshaw Town citizens,<sup>2</sup> presumably because they appeared to support Prince Eyamba in his political quest. This action nearly precipitated a war for which he Asibon was fully prepared as he had earlier in the same year imported the first Gatling gun to be seen in Old Calabar together with 5,000 cartridges<sup>3</sup>

As things turned out, Prince Orok Edem was in a second exercise, re-elected and this acted as fuel to the fire of Asibon Edem's temperament for his atrocities and lawlessness continued. In spite of the Treaty which was signed between Her Britannic Majesty and the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar in September, 1884, war broke out on the 1st of January, 1885, between Duke Ward and its Archibong tributary.<sup>4</sup> It was widely feared that the war which began on the plantations would spread into the town and in order to avoid this, Prince Eyamba wrote to James Eunro, Chairman of the Court of Equity, to send some members of the Court to accompany him to make peace between the warring factions. As it was Asibon Edem's men who

had fired the first shot, he was fined two puncheons of palm oil and both parties were bound over to keep the peace as failure to do so would fetch them a fine of fifty puncheons.<sup>5</sup> Matters did not improve and in spite of Consul Hewett's intervention in March, 1886, and Vice-Consul Johnston's attempts in November of the same year, the situation in Calabar rapidly deteriorated and another war broke out between the Dukas and the Archibongs, this time apparently because Ekpo Archibong's house had been built on disputed land.<sup>6</sup> After this war, and because Asibon was not satisfied with the settlement, he resolved to leave Calabar with his men to settle in Rio del Rey (King's River). Here they established a new settlement which was first called "OBUFA OBIO" (or New Town) and later it was named Archibong Town which name it bears to this day. This way the Archibongs had truly established their independence from their parent body.<sup>7</sup>

The pace having been set by the Archibongs, other families or factions followed suit to break away from the same Duke House and so it was that ETIM EFIOM also staged a "family coup" in the early 20th century. The difference in their method of attaining independence was that instead of resorting to internecine wars, the matter was resolved in the Law Court. British administration had found its feet in Calabar and Justice Webber on the 11th of April, 1913 declared:-

Etim Efiom Family is now regarded as independent and separate.<sup>8</sup> Thus did several other families continue to break away because they felt that they too being descended from the founding ancestors, had a right to the throne and to wealth and power.

#### NDEM ENO WAR

Asibon Edem was both a terror and an asset to the community. We have already seen what he could do when thwarted in his personal pursuits. In the same manner he stood no nonsense where the overall well-being of the community was threatened. Like his contemporaries he was, among other things, a trader. When therefore the Eniong people under their king, NDEM ENO were engaging in piracy and blocking the trade route through their territory to Umon and the northern parts of the Cross River, a decision was taken to go to war with them even though they were the kith and kin of the Efiks. Asibon Edem was one of the men who went to that war which was called "EKONG NDEM ENO" (or Ndem Eno's War). This was in 1890. Asibon and his men were supported by the Protectorate officials. Now he had a magnificent canoe which he called "AFRIKE" after our great continent. It was reputed to be about 70 feet long and 10 feet wide and was very fast. It was in this canoe that he launched the attack on Enion.<sup>10</sup> From thence he penetrated Umon and broke through to Ikom. This was easily

made possible because the Prince had a machine gun at his disposal and with it he subdued village after village and established control over a wide area from Okuni to Ikom. <sup>11</sup> The machine gun was nick-named Udep Edim Asibon Edem” (Asibon Edem’s rainfall or downpour) because of the number of bullets that emanated from it. The Prince was well known in these parts and till this day there is an Asibon Edem Compound in Ikom which shows that he must have established a trading post there.

Asibon Edem was well endowed with nature’s graces for he was reputed to be very handsome. Eulogies abound in his praise as a brave and fearless man and some of them are to be found in the popular Efik historical drama “Asibon Edem” by an equally famous, non-Efik playwright, Ernest A. Edyang who had perfect command of the Efik language and used it most lavishly to express himself. The following extracts from the play illustrate the character of the subject of this sketch:-

Tibara! Oto idionoke edik oduk edik,  
Ebok uto etie ekyat okpoho  
Uto eyen Mma Nkese, urua fo  
Obosin eyen Eburutu.

Okon Edem Ete, aman abak  
Ido fo edi isa ye ide  
Enying fo ekere, ‘Anwana Ekon Ikpon”  
Oodoro Enang mmakara obio nyin

Uto Uto Eyen Mma Iyata!  
Okop ete iba eyen Orok Esu Eyo  
Afo Afo aba eyen Ekpo Efiom Okoho  
Iton uwem Oson fi — o! <sup>12</sup>

#### ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Tibara. <sup>13</sup> Fearless tide that flows into an unknown creek!  
Ball of fire that sits on the Brass Ekpe Drum  
Fair son of Mma Nkese,  
This is your day!  
Great son of Eburutuland

Okon Edem Ete, dreaded even by your mother!  
Daring and full of temerity  
“Lone Warrior”  
Excellent horseman of our town.

Fair son of Mma Iyata!  
To hear of you is to hear of two  
Son of Orok Esu Eyo  
Only you exist  
Son of Ekpo Efiom Okoho  
May you live long." 14

Such was Prince Asibon Edem's influence in Calabar that he was eventually selected King. But the saying "Man proposes and God disposes" is well illustrated in the life of the Prince for after all elaborate preparations had been made for his coronation, he peacefully passed away on the eve of the great event in 1900.

His was a lightning existence that was packed full with incidents for we only saw him very briefly. Had he lived, it is not known into what crises he would have led his people or in what remarkable way he, with his indomitable will, would have altered the course of Efik history.

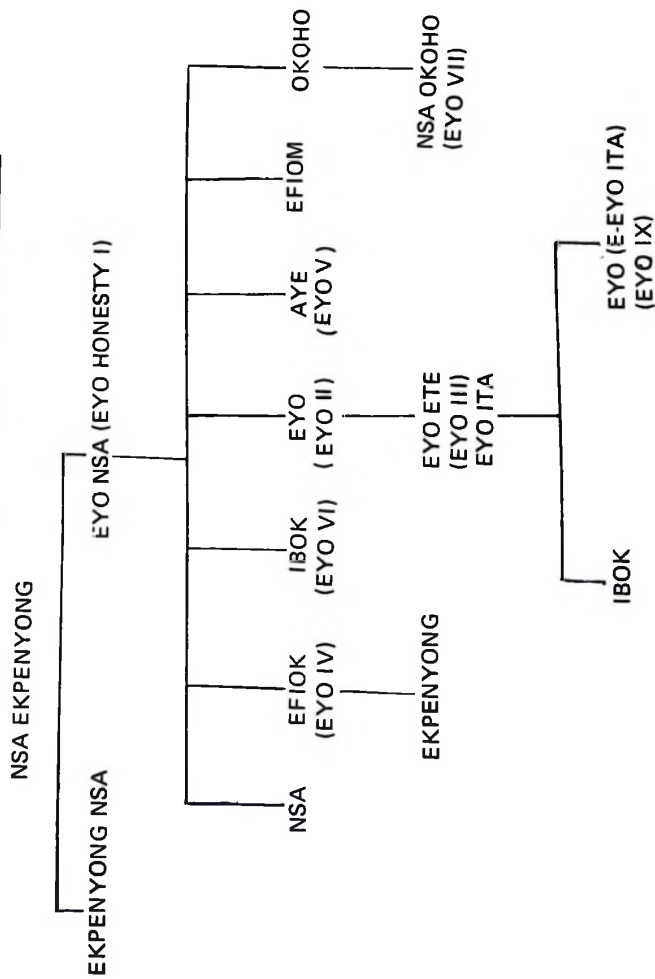
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9. Monday Efiang Noah, *Efik Expansionism and influence in the Cross River Basin. 1884 – 1935*, p.25 (Mimeographed)
10. Ekpo Nta Amaku, *Edikot Nwed Mbuk*, (London, Nelson, 1967) pp.52 – 55
11. Monday Efiang Noah, *Efik Expansionism and influence on the Cross River Basin, 1884 – 1935*, p.25 (Mimeographed)
12. E. A. Edyang, *Asibon Edem*, (Calabar, Wusen Press Ltd, 1986)
13. "Tibara" refers to slave hunters probably of Moorish extraction. They were regarded as white men by their captives because they wore clothes, had straight hair and rode horses. The name was also applied to supercargoes and missionaries. Efiks obviously had contact with Tibaras through slave dealing, and the author's use of the name to refer to Asibon Edem was probably to illustrate his imperious character and fair complexion.
14. The poet lays much emphasis on the Prince's character when he uses such subtle terms as "Fearless tide that flows into an unknown creek." "Lone Warrior" and "Ball of Fire," to show how forceful he was.

**THE KINGS: CREEK TOWN**

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GENEALOGY OF EYO KINGS UP TO 1931



HART: Report of Enquiry into the dispute over the Obongship of Calabar.  
1964, page 125



KING EYO HONESTY II

## CHAPTER 9

### KING EYO HONESTY II: 1835 – 1858

The middle of the 19th century was a period of conflict in most of the coastal areas of West Africa when the British began to lay their firm hands of authority on the coastal states. It was a conflict between the old African way of life and the new European way that invaded the coast.

Naturally, a period like this threw up many colourful characters both white and black, the latter of which were fighting a losing battle to retain the old order. Thus people like Jaja of Opobo, Oba Overami of Benin and Nana of Itsekiri had to come into open conflict with the British and were exiled as a result. Some of the other men were however quick to see the way the wind was blowing and were prepared to lead their people into the new order.

One such person was King Eyo Honesty II of Creek Town,<sup>1</sup> known as Eyo Eyo Nsa or 'Eyo Eyo Eyen Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku' (Eyo Eyo, son of Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku).

#### BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE

The romance of Eyo's birth is still narrated by his people. His father was the famous Eyo Nsa or Eyo Willy Honesty whose heroic feats in the Cross River Basin, contributed in no small measure to the golden days of Efik maritime history. It was one such feat, the decapitation of a pirate, Akpa Akpakpan Uko (Uko Mbiakong) at Ikpa Creek in Uruan, that earned him the fair hand of the Ambo Princess, Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku, whose father Etinyin Esien Ekpe promised to give her in marriage to whoever succeeded in bringing home the pirate's head. Eyo was the off-spring of that union and as with many of the early Efik Kings, the date of his birth, can only be fixed by conjecture.

Hutchinson in 1846 – 47 assessed him as 'a man past forty years of age'.<sup>2</sup> If we accept this he could only have been around fifty two when he died in 1858.

Again an epitaph to his memory inscribed on the tower of the Creek Town Presbyterian Church gives the date of his birth as 1788. This is a

straight-forward date which gives him seventy years when he died.

But we feel that this was yet another conjecture as it is our belief that he was older than seventy and that to come as near as possible to his correct age, we must go back to when his father decapitated the Pirate of Mbiakong. This event preceded the Obutong Massacre of 1767 because Eyo Nsa's friend, Prince Mbo Otu of Obutong who was to have accompanied him on the perilous mission to Mbiakong had changed his mind and stayed back. His action was only a postponement of the evil day, for he was killed during the Massacre in 1767, a macabre event in which Eyo Nsa himself actively participated.<sup>3</sup> So Inyang Esien must have married him before 1767 and Eyo Eyo Nsa must have been born close on 1767 or shortly after, for if we accept 1788, we have also accepted the likelihood of Inyang remaining childless for twenty-one years from or before 1767 to 1788. Efiks have no such tradition in their history in respect of Inyang and since girls were married at an early age in those days, it would normally follow that she had her baby soon after her marriage.

Eyo would then have been much older than the forty years ascribed to him by Hutchinson in 1846 — 47. When his father died in 1820, which time we are told that Great Duke Ephraim IV took him under his protection, <sup>4</sup> he must in fact have been at least fifty years of age (if we accept 1767 or a little later), a fully matured man who was well able to fend for himself. We now know that it was not because of his youthfulness that Great Duke took him under his wing but rather because he (Duke) had, upon accession in 1814, subjected most Calabar Houses to his tyrannical rule. This fact was revealed in a letter dated 12th January, 1890, from Prince Magnus Adam Duke to King Basil Ebrero Nonaw of Curcuck Town (Ikoneto) in which he writes:

'He seems to have desired to make all Old Calabar Princes and Gentlemen his household slaves and succeeded to reduce the number of Houses or "Captaindoms" in Old Calabar from nearly 30 to 15. Willy Honesty kept his House but he disliked Great Duke all the same...'<sup>5</sup>

When therefore Willy died in 1820, his House was still left intact under his brother Ekpenyong Nsa but it was to be expected that the Duke should quickly bring Eyo Eyo Honesty under his iron control for he could not have failed to detect his sharp mind and mettle which must already have registered him as a possible rival: a situation Great Duke could never tolerate.

In his youth, Eyo had worked as a cabin boy under English captains and had travelled with them when the triangular trade was flourishing between Calabar, the West Indies and England and had learnt to speak and write the English language.<sup>6</sup>

## KINGSHIP

If Great Duke was the first Efik King about whom much had been written in the commercial field, Eyo II turned out to be the most documented in commercial, missionary and other chronicles. With the end of the Duke's tyrannical rule in 1834 all the Houses, as already mentioned regained their independence.

Eyo Nsa House continued to be headed by Ekpenyong Nsa who was described as 'a rash, proud and headstrong man who dissipated the family fortunes under him. The old metropolis was deserted and the palaces, built of perishable materials, were soon overgrown, with bush, and "tigers" were said to roam the streets in broad daylight.'<sup>7</sup>

We gather from Magnus Adam Duke's letter that Eyo became what he termed the "CONDITOR" (founder) of his own Ward "Eyo II House" in 1834. Talbot also confirms this when he records:-

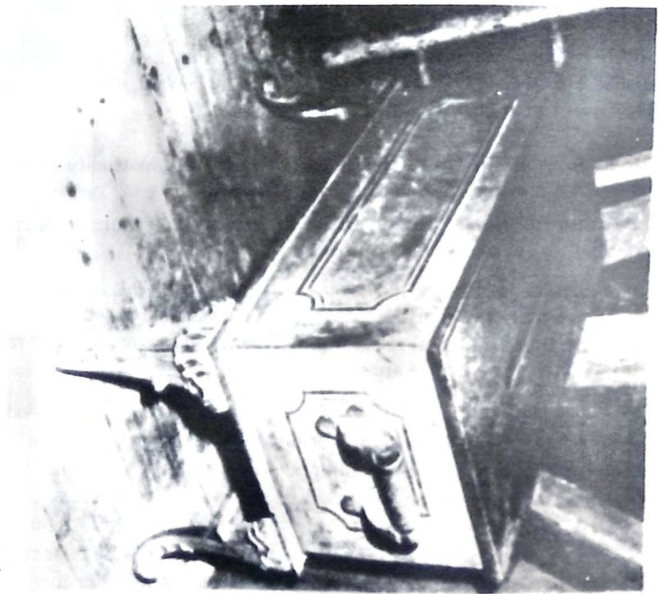
1834 Duke Ephraim died ... Eyo II seized the opportunity of making his town again independent of Duke Town.<sup>7</sup>

The first thing he did was to reconcile all the warring factions in his father's house.

"In a dramatic manner, he went out into the street, lifted a handful of sand which he scattered to the four winds and called upon his six brothers and all other relations to forgive all injury and join him to rebuild the seat of their ancestors."<sup>8</sup>

Another tradition has it that the process of pacification did not end there because his father's bloody reign over his ward was believed to have brought about a curse of barrenness from the gods. Fewer and fewer babies had been born. In order to re-fertilize the town, Eyo, when he came into power, purged it in the following manner:- He killed cows and left them at every corner of the town for vultures to feed upon. As would be expected, thousands of these birds bore down on the carcasses and from then on there was a rich "harvest of babies." Efiks have a saying: "Abasi Ama Owo utere Oduo ono" (Vultures fall before those whom the gods love). — A sign of plenty!

Eyo aimed at establishing his independence which as we have seen started with the founding of his own "Eyo II HOUSE" in 1834. At first, he had no desire to assume leadership of Creek Town which had been totally eclipsed by Duke Town. But such were his achievements that although his senior brother, Tom Eyo had become the Patriarch of his father's ward, it was considered that by virtue of his experience and contact, he would be able



KING EYO II'S SAFE

to transact business with the traders better than anyone else and therefore a more suitable person for kingship.

Thus it was that he was crowned King of Creek Town in either 1835 or 1837.<sup>9</sup> The latter date was obtained from Magnus Adam Duke's letter in which under the list of Houses revived or established after 1834 when the "Old Calabar Republican Proclamation" was enacted, the following entry was made for Eyo II:-

EYO II HOUSE

CONDITOR (Latin for Founder) — Eyo Eyo Nsar, 1834

RECTOR (Latin for Caretaker) — King Eyo II' Rex Republicae, 1837<sup>10</sup>

He was therefore crowned king either in 1835 or 1837 and Hope Waddell gave the following account of the occasion :-

"He proclaimed a festival, invited the country to be his guests and for two weeks entertained all who came, by daily feasts and shows. At last he took his seat, crowned in the market place, surrounded by his family, friends and armed bands, addressed the assembly and was proclaimed rightful King...."<sup>11</sup>

It was reported that King Eyamba V who had succeeded Great Duke Ephraim IV in 1834 was displeased with the idea of there being another King who would be a possible rival to him, and had sent emissaries to register his displeasure and objections to Eyo. Waddell records Eyo's answer thus:-

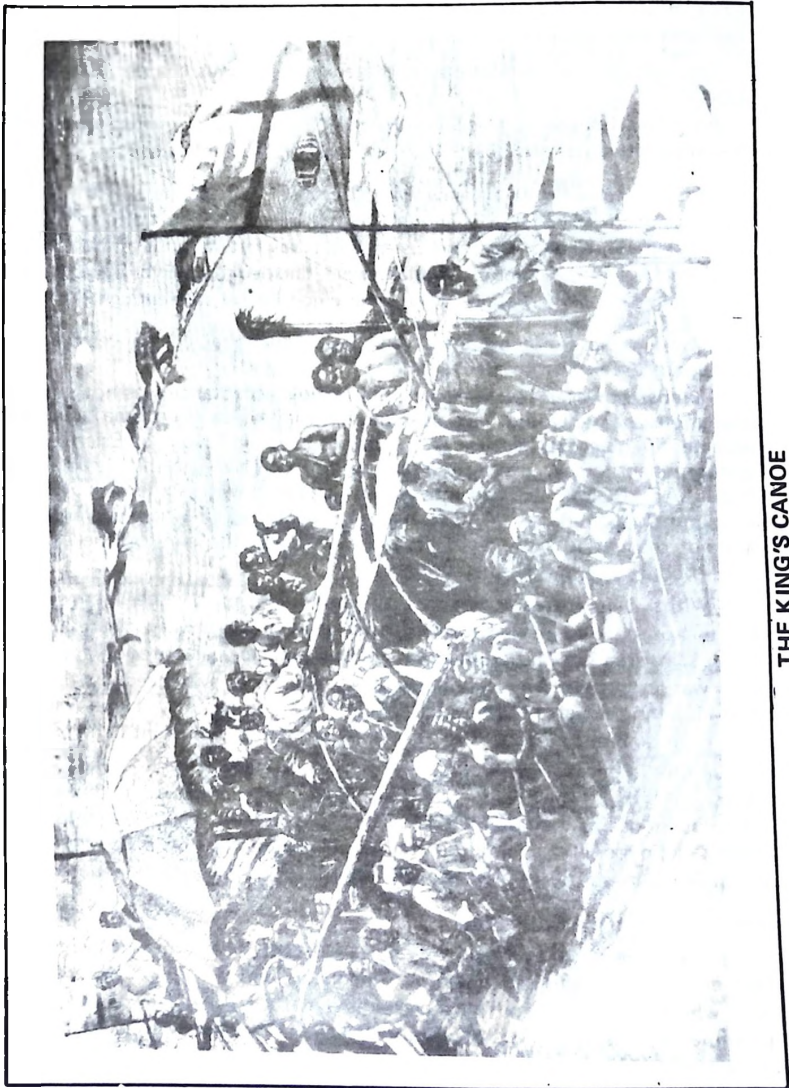
'...from his residence to the town-house he had the streets laid with hundreds of boxes of brass and copper rods, "current money of the merchants" worth each about £5 sterling. On these, he walked, without putting foot to ground and told the messengers what his march had proved, that he had money enough to be king, and needed no leave from Eyamba...'<sup>12</sup>

The impression is thus given that wealth was an essential criterion in Efik kingship succession and that Eyo became king only because of his immense wealth. It has already been mentioned that the 19th century was the century of supercargo interferences in Efik kingship. In a bid to safeguard their commercial interests they insisted that a king or any other trading Chief must be sufficiently rich to give a strong backing to the Trust System which operated in the coastal states. While this policy was accepted by the



*Duke Town, Old Calabar, with the King's canoe in the foreground, an engraving from the Illustrated London News*

**THE KING'S CANOE**



THE KING'S CANOE

Efiks, it was not an irrevocable prerequisite for in these modern times, it has never been applied and there have therefore been rich or poor Kings.

The most important element, as stated in a previous chapter, is GENEALOGY.

An Efik King must trace his ancestry paternally or maternally to the founding fathers of the Efik tribe. Aye, quoting the Ambos writes:

'Eyo Honesty II became King because he was the son of Inyang Esien ... Prince Oku Esien who should have been King after his father Esien Ekpe, had died and Esien Ekpe was left without an heir. So on his death, the Ambos of Mbarakom decided that Eyo Eyo Nsa, the grandson of their late monarch, was a good substitute enough.'<sup>13</sup>

It was in these circumstances, said Aye, "that the acceptance of Eyo II as ruler of Creek Town was unanimous."<sup>14</sup>

It must however be stated here that Eyo's acceptance was not quite as unanimous as Aye would have us believe. Otung of the Eyo Ema house had vehemently objected because they had not been in favour of Esien Ekpe's gesture when he gave Inyang in marriage to Eyo Nsa. The then head of the House, AKABOM ENE, had moved out in protest with some of his people to found Cobham Town. And so history repeated itself when Eyo Eyo Nsa was not recognised because of his father and this also enraged the Ambos who loved Eyo because of his mother.

While it is not clear whether Prince Oku Esien had been considered for the office of King of Creek Town, it is however very clear that the Ambos insisted on the application of the genealogical criterion for when Eyo was crowned, they supported him fully as is evidenced by the fact that an Ambo Chief, ITEM ARED (called "Cameroons" by Hope Waddell) who represented the Ambo Ward in town, was King Eyo's right hand man.<sup>15</sup>

Another aspect of Efik Kingship is that *an Efik King does not crown himself*. It has often been said that Eyo crowned himself in the market place but it seems very unlikely because the Ekpe confraternity would never have sanctioned it and also the traditional ceremonies of Efik coronation are always carried out in secret at the "Efe Asabo" (the shrine of the Cobra).

#### APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER

Eyo was described by Hope Waddell and Consul Hutchinson as being five feet eight inches tall and having a fine head and an open countenance, grey whiskers, a stout and muscular frame with eyes and lips of the usual prominence observable in the Ethiopian face..<sup>16</sup> Ayandele describes him as an attractive personality who was admired and loved by missionaries' and

traders,<sup>17</sup>

He was of dark complexion and was reputed to be a handsome man with strong features and the "fine head" that had attracted Hope Waddell's attention and is still possessed by many of his kith and kin of the present day who like him, are descendants of Esien Ekpe Oku, the man who bequeathed a lasting heritage to his people when he purchased Ekpe from MUTA-KA.

Eyo's general attire is described by Hutchinson as consisting of 'a cloth, generally silk, tied round his loins, a silk handkerchief thrown over his shoulders, a black hat with a gold band, and a binding of the same material about the edge. His ornaments are circlets of blue glass or coral beads round his neck, wrists and ankles, with a massive gold ring on the index finger ....'<sup>18</sup> And whenever he went in state to Duke Town, as he always did on business occasions, he was invariably accompanied by-

'a train of large canoes from one of which a gun is fired to announce his approach as the royal party turns the angle opposite Old Town. The king is always seated in a six-oared gig belonging to the ship to which he is proceeding, whilst the canoes contain his eldest son, Young Eyo, and his three brothers, with an innumerable host of slave attendants. He has a gigantic parti-coloured parasol held over his head on these occasions as he has whenever walking about on his own or seated in one of his courtyards, overlooking his trade books. The musical band accompanying the King consists of an Egbo drum .... an instrument formed of iron as of the saucers of two shovels (NKONG) and struck with a piece of the same metal ... a cow's horn ... and clattering boxes made of bamboo matting with a fringe to them (NSAK).

Yet with this primitive attempt at music, the banners flying from the canoes, the simultaneous hoisting of flags on all the ships in the river and the return of a salute from the vessel to which he is proceeding, when the King's party becomes visible, give the whole scene a very animated appearance ....<sup>19</sup>

When Hope Waddell and his team arrived on the river in Captain Beecroft's launch and met Eyo for the first time, he gave a similar description with the details that:

"he was in his six oared gig covered by an immense and handsome umbrella of various colours ... an ensign with his name thereon in large capitals, streamed behind. He was followed by two large war canoes each paddled by twenty-eight men with a row of armed men standing

down the centre, a swivel gun in the bows, a roofed house amid-ships and immense ensign behind like the one in the boat... Two boys attended him one carrying his gold snuff box in a handsome native bag hung round his neck, the other a pair of pistols and a sword slung over his shoulder...<sup>20</sup>

Eyo neither drank nor smoked but his only luxury was to partake freely of the snuff which was always carried in a silver snuff box by a slave.<sup>21</sup>

His admirers have rightly attributed him with outstanding qualities. He is described as a man of great composure, self-discipline, uncommon sagacity, and a benefactor. He was also a pattern of punctuality and integrity. When accused of any offence, he was always calm in self defence, bore no grudge but possessed a very strong character. On occasions when he was thwarted, he was also said to be rigid, cold, hard and dry.<sup>22</sup> But all these facets of his character manifested themselves in their proper setting as we shall see in the various episodes in this brief sketch.

## DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

### His House:

The Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar usually had houses in town as well as on their plantations and divided their time between trading and farming operations.

King Eyo had a two-storey English house at the crown of a gentle slope leading directly from the river. It was so situated that it had a commanding view of the market square, the river and his Calabar house. It had an external wooden staircase and its interior was furnished with all kinds of good furniture: tables, sideboards, sofas, clocks, barrel organ, china-ware chandeliers and mirrors of all shapes and sizes. Some of these articles including stained glass windows and doors, cannons and chandeliers are still to be found although they are now the worse for wear. This elegant house overlooked his Calabar residential quarters, comprising about nine court-yards surrounded by low thatched buildings each opening into the other.<sup>23</sup> In front of the house, under the projecting roof along the side of the street, was a long sofa-like seat. Efiks call it MBOT. It was made of beaten clay, well shaped and painted. Inside the public courtyard there were similar seats all around the walls and these were also tastefully painted in gay and bold patterns by his wives.<sup>24</sup>

While the King's English house was for his important guests and official reception, his Calabar house was reserved for all his wives, domestic servants and trade goods and traditional affairs.

#### HIS WIVES:

Unlike the present day, the wives of an Efik king were not to be seen in public. They lived in the strictest seclusion in their quarters. The principal wife was called ATAI-ABASI<sup>26</sup> and she had control over the others. Not much was therefore known about them except on occasions when their behaviour or other factors made it impossible to conceal them.

On one such occasion, one of his wives had gone on a visit to her father. While there, she had committed adultery and when Eyo got to know about it, without disclosing his intention, he succeeded in devising a means to bring the offending gentleman and his go-between to Creek Town, had them tied together and drowned in the river.<sup>28</sup>

As for his unfaithful wife, he did not mete out capital punishment to her according to the law of the land because she was the mother of one of his favourite sons.<sup>27</sup> He banished her instead to one of his farms for life, an action which was fully supported by the son because of the embarrassment caused by her behaviour.<sup>28</sup>

On another occasion, another of Eyo's wives IMA (meaning 'love') had broken the harem law and gone into the street where she quarrelled with an impudent girl who had provoked her. Her face was seen and her voice was heard where she should never have been seen or heard, in a way that dishonoured her lord and master. Having himself been witness to her misdemeanour as he was doing business at the beach, Eyo ordered that the yard gate be closed against her.<sup>29</sup> No one dared help her on pain of death. She ran to the King's brothers for assistance but was repulsed by them. She hid in a wretched hut which was open to wind and rain and for nearly two weeks had no food or water except what was smuggled to her at night by a slave. Mrs Waddell and Miss Miller who were the only ones privileged to go into the harem, found that their intervention yielded no good result. Eyo would have none of Ima in his harem. After much entreaty by Hope Waddell, Eyo agreed to forgive the offender. It must have cost him great mental struggle because he felt that both his domestic rule and authority in the country were being seriously undermined. Notwithstanding this, Ima was banished forever from the harem, but was however given a better house where she was free to come and go as she pleased. Eventually, she resorted to church work and was received into the church.<sup>30</sup>

#### HIS CHILDREN

Not much is known about King Eyo's children during his reign except that

he had several of them among whom were: ANSA (the eldest daughter) INYANG, AKO, EKPENYONG, IBOK, AMAYO, EYO ETE (young Eyo). King Eyo was a good father and some of his children became the missionaries' favourites not by reason of their being the King's children but because of their winning ways. Prominent among these were Eyo Ete who later became King Eyo III as we shall see in the next chapter, Amayo, the little girl who enchanted Reverend and Mrs Waddell to the extent that after obtaining the King's permission they looked after her as their own,<sup>31</sup> and Ako (Agoo as Waddell called her) the twelve year old little lady who liked to have her own way. She was named after Esien Ekpe Oku's mother. The King never encouraged insubordination either among his children or others and Waddell narrates the following incident about Ako:-

"There was above a score of fine girls, clever and well behaved ... all promised in marriage and in a year or two certain to be taken from school ... Each brought her attendant about her own age. Agoo, the King's third daughter about twelve years of age, learned well, had an easy quiet dignity of manner and at the writing desk, sat erect and lady-like being fond of writing. She was a little humour-some however... and self willed too and displayed it in the following way ... coming late to school one morning, she passed her reading class which was up, and brought her copy book for line and pen, though the writing lesson was done. Putting it down I gave her a spelling-book and told her to take her place. She put it down and with an air walked out of the school. When called back, she merely turned her head and looked at me without answering and proceeded towards the town."<sup>32</sup>

The incident was reported to the King who immediately sent Ako back with the words "... don't do that thing again, no more for ever"<sup>33</sup> She obviously grew up to be a great lady who owned vast plantations at Creek Town, one of which, IKOT AKO EYO, flourishes till this day.<sup>34</sup>

Eyo's daughter, INYANG (after his mother Inyang Esien Ekpe) was described as 'an imperious woman' who upon his death complained bitterly that he had been dishonoured because no slaves accompanied him to "OBIO EKPO" (Spirit land). 'Never before had so great a man as he, been buried alone.'<sup>35</sup> She was versed in the old traditions and herself became victim to it when she died after 'chopping nut' to exonerate herself from Eyo III's death.<sup>36</sup>

## HIS SLAVES

As is well known, slavery at one time formed a prominent feature in African society and was regarded as quite a normal condition. Those who were

caught or bought might thereby be degraded in position but they did not belong to a degraded race as was the policy in America. An Efik proverb says:

'Ofin ekedi eyen ke ebiet enye otode'  
(A slave was a free-born where he came from)

In other words, those who were slaves might have been masters and vice-versa. Hope Waddell writes:

'The term "Master" or "Mistress" did not, as far as master-slave relationship was concerned, exist in the EFIK language. The sweet and precious names "Father" and "Mother" alone were used to express the relationship. We are here referring to the domestic slaves and not the ones that were shipped to the West Indies and America ... The children of both masters and slaves grew up together as playmates and equally regarded the head of the house as their father .... The heir, as long as he is a child, differs in nothing from a servant though he be Lord of all...'<sup>37</sup>

He further records that "the natives of Calabar could not, if without crime, be sold out of it and their condition improved from generation to generation."

Men have been said to sell themselves and their wives and families into slavery in payment of debts and some had voluntarily enslaved themselves to wealthy men just for protection.<sup>38</sup>

King Eyo Honesty II had thousands of men and four hundred canoes with a Captain and crew for each one. Besides his extensive trade which amounted to several thousand puncheons annually, through his industry he used these men to reclaim waste lands, founded towns and planted farms in strategic areas which gave him command of the rivers and trade channels. He would go with great force to a new district, (one of such places was Ilong Inyang,) and begin work himself, felling the trees, building houses and planting. Then he would leave his people there to take care of themselves, multiply, plant, gather, traffic and gain and bring him his share of the products of the land yearly.<sup>39</sup> These men and women lived comfortably and when required to work in town, they would go in relays.<sup>40</sup>

King Eyo was a good father to his slaves. It was the custom for wealthy masters to purchase Ekpe privileges for those of their slaves who deserved it and Eyo did not hesitate to do this for any of his confidential headmen.<sup>41</sup> Waddell remarked that he had sound judgment on most subjects but up-

held slavery:

'Yet why should we be amazed that Calabar people favoured it on whom the light of divine truth had only begun to dawn when educated and professed christian men, citizens of free countries, could wink at the horrid system for the sake of gain and became consenters with robbers and partakers with murderers?'<sup>42</sup>

One thing Eyo could however not tolerate, was for a slave to run away. To the horror of the missionaries, he declared death for any run-away slave who in addition, fled with stolen property. On one occasion one of his slaves was stolen and sold. A free man had been the thief but the supreme penalty was paid by the substitution of a slave!<sup>43</sup>

On another occasion his brother's slave who had stolen, was on Eyo's orders tied hand and foot and thrown into the river.<sup>44</sup>

In times like this, Eyo would listen to no entreaties from anyone and was then described as being 'destitute of the good feeling he sometimes displayed. He was calm but rigid, cold, hard and dry.'<sup>45</sup>

Eyo abhorred dishonesty. A young girl working as a saleswoman for him, with the aid of a boy had falsified her trade book. The whole community was scandalized and some wondered what good a mission school could do 'if every finger that handled a pen could become a forger, cheat and falsifier of trade book.'<sup>46</sup>

The girl, being afraid of the consequences of her action, disappeared for a week. When she eventually showed up, King Eyo had her lips vigorously scrubbed with sandpaper leaf (UKWOK), 'to teach her not to falsify her trade book again or tell lies to her master.'<sup>47</sup>

Incidents abound to illustrate what some might term, King Eyo's ruthlessness but others show his natural reaction to the violation of the traditions of the people, for it must not be forgotten that he was one of the custodians of these traditions.

One such incident was when he consented to the infliction of capital punishment on a young girl 'for peeping through a fence at an Ekpe procession.'<sup>48</sup> Waddell's attempts to intervene were fruitless. The young girl was beheaded and the only "concession" Eyo permitted was to allow her body to be buried, for it would otherwise have been thrown to the vultures. We are here reminded of a similar but graver occasion when the "plucky lass" Edim Ekpenyong Ekpe Oku exhibited the same curiosity by hiding in the Ekpe bush to observe the rites which were to be conferred on her father.

We are told that the old man wept bitterly because Edim was sure to be killed. But being of the aristocracy, she was later spared although her father did not escape the punishment of a heavy fine.

King Eyo did not tolerate insolence and for speaking slightly of his brother, Father Tom, he ordered that a young man's lips be scrubbed with sandpaper leaves until they bled, and a runaway woman when brought back, was ordered to run up and down the main street all day. Her master (the King) sat with his table and books at one side while the street was lined with onlookers to watch her do her penance. It was the intervention of Waddell that saved her.<sup>49</sup>

The King's reaction to these people's crimes would seem to illustrate Waddell's assessment of his character as being 'rigid, cold, hard and dry'. But we disagree because he was in numerous ways a good and benign 'father' to them, encouraging and rewarding them when they obeyed his instructions and punishing them when they committed crimes, in a way that would deter others from repeating the same misdemeanour.

#### KING EYO'S POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

It was at Duke Town that Eyo, in the formative days of his youth, was schooled in the ways of trade and politics and it was from his mentor, the Great Duke Ephraim IV, that he learnt how closely related politics was to commerce, for 'he who stood foremost in traffic and wealth was powerful and could out-rival all other claimants to political power ...'<sup>50</sup>

Eyo adhered firmly to the maxim 'keep to your trade and your trade will keep to you' which Great Duke taught him.<sup>51</sup> He had several ways of practising this maxim, one of which was that he never took alcoholic drinks.

'If I begin to drink wine what will become of my trade and yours too?  
It is not fit for a man who has to settle palavers in the town to spoil  
his head with rum...'<sup>52</sup>

In his industry he was conspicuous, for his books were always beside him and in them he meticulously noted the transactions of the day in the various markets. When there was out-door work to be done in the town he would sit under a large umbrella on the side of the street with his day book before him attending to his accounts while overseeing the work.

Described as 'a man before his time,' he distinguished himself in several ways and demonstrated his leadership qualities in the manner he tackled the dispute between Agwagune and Umon. It will be remembered that King Eyamba V had failed to settle this dispute when he fitted out an abortive punitive expedition against Umon.

After Eyo II had terminated the funeral obsequies of his uncle, Tom Honesty, and those of King Eyamba in 1848 by shaving his head, feasting his people and giving them "change of raiment" as was the custom, he fitted out his Peace Mission to Umon.<sup>53</sup>

"About sixty canoes followed Eyo and his Chiefs to Bosun. Most of them had each a large gun, mounted on a strong frame in the bows, and a little deck house in the middle for its owner gaily painted with an ensign in the stern. Eyo led the way himself in a six oared gig rowed not by slaves but by young gentlemen of the best families in the land. Some of his canoes which followed were very large, sixty or seventy feet long and five or six broad, paddled by thirty men and carrying also bands of armed men. They had large guns both bow and stern and were ballasted with cannon balls."<sup>54</sup>

On being questioned by Waddell as to whether he did not think that the Umon people would think he was going to fight them, he replied that the Ekpe canoe suitably dressed with palm fronds would precede the entourage. This was equivalent to bearing the olive branch. He also carried a lot of trade goods for distribution to the towns on the way and returned after ten days. An agreement had been reached with Umon that the old quarrel would be forgotten and that Eyo would give an annual gift to certain chiefs in Umon in lieu of all demands and in return, the chiefs would keep the peace of the river. To consolidate the agreement, Eyo came home with a young wife and two gentlemen's sons whom he sent to school.<sup>55</sup>

Eyo was strong enough to maintain his political and economic independence. His handling of European agents was said to be different and better than that of Eyamba, Archibong I and Duke Ephraim all of whom reigned in his time.<sup>56</sup> He kept the friendship of supercargoes and was ready to yield to them to a point but no further. Creek Town prospered with the oil trade and missionary accounts spoke of the bustling trade carried on in the town and of the greatly increased importance of Eyo II in the river.<sup>57</sup>

On the 17th of April, 1852, at a conference held on board the "Africa" and in the presence of Consul Beecroft, Captain Cuthbertson signed a treaty by which because of the volume of trade at Creek Town, Eyo received two

third of the comey paid by the supercargoes to Efik Kings while Duke Ephraim got one third.<sup>58</sup>

Although Calabar was said to be a number of small republics and no one dared assert or exercise his authority over these settlements unless called in as arbitrator in difficult situations, yet Eyo was 'indirectly the most powerful man in the country and his influence was felt everywhere...'<sup>59</sup>

When Archibong I died and there was anarchy at Duke Town, the missionaries appealed to him to come over to Duke Town to mediate. Says Waddell:-

'The sight which presented itself was an uncommon and impressive one. At one side of the market place sat King Eyo under his grand umbrella, guarded by a moderately numerous but very select band of armed men. He had brought only his usual retinue of three canoes following his boat but they were filled with picked people. Beside him Duke Ephraim, Henry Cobham and other Chiefs took their seats with their followers. The "Bush people" several thousands in number, surrounded the rest of the market place.... all armed with guns and cutlasses. The situation was critical. A rash word or act might have made open war in the town before night. To restore order, it needed a self-command and tact equal to the boldness with which Eyo had presented himself with a small guard in the face of that armed multitude. He accomplished that object however and before night, those wild hordes had retired to the plantations all parties having sworn "MEIAM" that no more persons should die in any way for the King.'

By this incident, Eyo had been exalted to a great height of fame for vision and power.<sup>60</sup>

Again when Ikot Offiong was placed under Ekpe ban it was to King Eyo that they appealed. There had been a quarrel between them and Ikoneto. An Ikot Offiong man had sent an Ekpe official to collect a debt from another man in Ikoneto. When the debt was not forthcoming, the man's children were seized in the name of Ekpe by the tying of the sacred yellow band on their arms as hostages. He exceeded the licence of his order by carrying off goats belonging to other people. The Ikoneto people appealed to Duke Town which took up their cause and together they proceeded to plunder Ikot Offiong which resisted the combined force and prevented them from landing. Duke Town returned home to prepare seriously for war and it was to King Eyo that Ikot Offiong appealed.<sup>61</sup> The King prevented the war by calling a Grand Ekpe meeting to settle the misunderstanding. Ikot Offiong was eventually condemned for having resisted Ekpe, its fault

being regarded as high treason: a crime punishable only by death. The sentence was however reduced to a fine and the substitution of one man for decapitation instead of the whole town!!<sup>62</sup>

Thus Eyo had gained the confidence of virtually the whole of Calabar. Hope Waddell records that he had nursed an ambition to be "King of All Calabar" and admitted writing to the Duke Town King and Chiefs to that effect. When told that the King, Chiefs and some of the supercargoes were angry about this he had replied.:

'... Why so? I take no more than God has given me. He make me King, when he make me pass them all in riches and power. When young, I was nobody for I was poor; and it was long before I set up as a gentleman. I put my mind to my trade and worked at first a little and then more. What profit I made I put down. When ships come I trade with their money and when they go away, I trade with my own; and so I come up to be King of Creek Town, and now pass everyman in all Calabar. I don't make myself King for country. God make me...'<sup>63</sup>

It is well-known that supercargoes resented a united Calabar under one King as this would be bad for their trade.<sup>64</sup> It however transpired that although Eyo never became the King of all Calabar, the mantle fell on his grandson, James Eyo Ita, popularly called ETE MAKARA (white father) who was Obong of Creek Town from 1912 – 1927 and acting Obong of Calabar from 1927 – 1931.<sup>65</sup>

After King Eyo had dramatically pacified the Blood Men who had come to town in their thousands to cause disturbances when King Archibony I died in 1852, he was himself overtaken by a personal disaster which brought out yet another facet of this highly philosophical man, who, although not a christian, demonstrated christian fortitude and submission to God's will. Eyo's house and trade goods worth more than £10,000 perished in a fire. This was a huge amount in those days and even now and when Hope Waddell paid him a condolence visit he displayed Job's courage in the following words:

"The Lord has given me and now the Lord has taken away. I am satisfied. I am glad that no houses have been burnt except my own and no lives have been lost in the town. If this had happened when I was away from town, people would have said that if I had been here, I could have prevented it. But I was with my brothers and my people and we could not prevent it for it came from God..."<sup>66</sup>

## TRADE WITH SUPERCARGOES

*The Trust System:* Before we go into the stormy relationship between the

supercargoes and the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar in the latter period of King Eyo's reign, we shall briefly examine the TRUST or CREDIT SYSTEM which was the principal mode of commercial transactions in those days.

Trust was a system of trade by barter in which goods were given on trust to middlemen by the British merchants for periods ranging from six months to a year or longer.<sup>67</sup> During this period, the recipients were expected to trade these goods in the hinterland for palm oil, ivory, timber etc. which they paid over to the merchants. This system was also employed during the slave trade and in its early stages and before abuses and corruption crept in, it worked well and depended solely on mutual confidence for its operation and success.<sup>68</sup>

Each city state had its own mode of fixing prices on barter goods. In Brass, New Calabar and Bonny for instance the medium of exchange was the "BAR" and every manufactured article was valued at so many bars, a bar being worth about 5/-. In Old Calabar, the COPPER BAR was used, its value fluctuating between 4½d and 1/-.<sup>69</sup> The type of goods in demand also varied from river to river, the most popular being beads of all types, hardware like razors, scissors, knives, and hats in Bonny while Old Calabar demanded among other things, alcohol, guns, mirrors and salt.<sup>70</sup>

One of the effects of the growing contacts of the City States with the outside world was the rapid change in the type of consumer goods demanded for the valuable oil, ivory and timber. Formerly, the supercargoes had managed to fool Africans that articles of clothing such as old soldiers' jackets, cocked hats and dressing gowns were a fair exchange for their raw materials. A trader was once quoted as saying that one of their skippers got rid of a quantity of inferior silks by assuring the native merchants that the Queen of England and all great people never wore anything else....<sup>71</sup> Thus was the ignorance of these people exploited but when the scale fell off their eyes, African discontent was widespread. King Eyo II, while agreeing to receive slave trade subsidy in 1842 in goods warned Commander Raymond that he wanted '.. proper India Romolle ... (and) no fool thing ...' That there were lots of "fool things" was also confirmed by John Tobin of Messrs. Tobin & Horsfall, the biggest importers of palm oil in the United Kingdom. He admitted before a parliamentary committee that '... formerly it was the custom for whitemen to fancy that anything was good for a blackman and they attempted to impose upon them... (now) they are well able to distinguish between genuine articles and fictitious as well as any person in this country ....'<sup>72</sup> It may however be said for Tobin that

the solid brass chair which he presented to Great Duke Ephraim IV in 1826 is still as good as when it was presented nearly 161 years ago.

Dike rightly laments how regrettable it is that little of permanent value came to West Africa from the 400 years of trade with Europe. 'In return for superior labour force (slaves), palm oil, ivory, timber, gold and other commodities:

... they received the worst type of trade gin and meretricious articles. When the Old Calabar Chiefs demanded capital equipment for sugar manufacture and cotton culture, we have it on Owen's authority that the West India interest successfully resisted these "legitimate aspirations."<sup>73</sup>

#### THE INTERLOPERS:

The Trust System introduced an element of monopoly in the transactions. Once the pioneer oil merchants had given goods on trust to the principal oil brokers in their respective trading ports, and by the peculiar operation of the system, managed to keep the middlemen perpetually in their debt, every new white trader was regarded as an "interloper." This meant that the Africans were no more free to trade with the new comers and this was unacceptable to the latter, who in turn tempted the Africans with what was termed Double Trust, a system which offered more attractive terms and encouraged the Africans to evade the debt owing to their old customers. This resulted in constant controversy.<sup>74</sup>

#### THE MAIL PACKETS:

In 1852, another element was introduced which aggravated the already highly charged situation. The British Government had come into an agreement with the African Steamship Company — the fore-runner of the Elder Dempster Lines — at the instance of MacGregor Laird, to undertake the carriage of mails to West Africa.<sup>75</sup> Three of these ships called Mail Packets were the first to run a regular service from Europe to West Africa and this had an immediate effect on West African trade for the smaller traders, both Africans and Europeans were now able to avail themselves of the cheap freights provided by the steamers and set up their own concerns to rival the older traders.<sup>76</sup>

#### THE SIERRA LEONIANS

We are told that by 1856 there were upwards of 200 of such firms and to fight the threat of their monopoly, the Liverpool merchants sought to Charter from Laird, all the vessels on their homeward journey to paralyse the firms. This was turned down by Laird because he felt that it was a good

policy to encourage the Africans.<sup>77</sup> His submission before the Anti-Slavery Convention in 1843 demonstrated his belief that it was through Africans themselves rather than through Europeans, that Africa would be regenerated. He therefore assisted with the emigration of Africans from Sierra Leone to the Niger Delta. Some of these settled in Abeokuta with the help of the Church Missionary Society. While Bonny was hostile to the plan, Eyo II enthusiastically welcomed it, saying:-

'Let them come I will be glad to see them and give them land. I will look on them as white men because they have learnt white men fashion. Let them come and teach my people. Nobody will trouble them'<sup>78</sup>

Thus was the avid desire of 19th century Efiks for europeanization once more demonstrated and with the assistance of the Presbyterian Church, the first emigrants were settled and their number increased with the arrival of every mail boat.<sup>79</sup>

This naturally further kindled the hostility of the Liverpool monopolists. The middlemen (Efik and other traders) combined with the 'interlopers' to break the strangle-hold of the Credit System and in Old Calabar where the new men were most numerous, a violent struggle broke out. The Sierra Leonians were accused of encouraging the chiefs to ship their oil direct to England and the supercargoes singled them out for attack. When Consul Lynslager arrived in 1855 to investigate their complaints, he found that the middlemen, King Eyo not excepted, in alliance with the Sierra Leonians, were shipping oil direct to England before they had paid the Trusts owing to the supercargoes.<sup>80</sup> It was further complained that by this practice King Eyo and his subjects were detaining British ships. Latham records that by October 1855, ten ships were in the river, only four of which had been there less than 10 months, the rest having been there 10, 12, 14, 17, 18 and 20 months respectively.<sup>81</sup>

King Eyo was reported to be supplying oil to Peter Nicholls, a Sierra Leonian who had settled at Creek Town. The detention of Eyo's son and Black Davis, a prominent Duke Town trader as hostages had no effect. So in November, 1855, sixteen puncheons of oil belonging to Nicholls were confiscated by Captain Cuthbertson who considered himself to have prior claims to the oil since he had been the first to give Credit to Eyo.<sup>82</sup> This dispute set the scene for the turmoil which developed between the supercargoes and the mail packet shippers. The former insisted that Efiks should liquidate their trust debts before selling to the new comers but the Efiks,

supported by the Newcomers insisted that although trust must eventually be honoured, there was no time limit for this and that in the meantime they could sell to whomsoever they pleased. Latham remarks that by the practice, Efiks were using the supercargoes' trust to purchase oil which they sold to the Sierra Leonians while they were only paying off their trust debts in drips.<sup>88</sup>

Declaring the natives of Creek Town to be insolent, Lynslager determined to dispel their false sense of security engendered by the fact of their being tucked away in the narrow creek.<sup>84</sup> He accordingly brought his Warship "HMS MINX" into Creek Town, a silent reminder of what could happen. This was on the 10th of October, 1855. It was the first time that a man-of-war had ever been there.<sup>85</sup>

At the meeting which followed, Lynslager accused Eyo of 'defrauding the supercargoes and English merchants who according to him had for so long been his friends, in sending oil to England and transacting business with perfect strangers.'<sup>86</sup> Eyo in his defence replied that he was trying to meet the demands of both the Sierra Leonians and supercargoes because the former like the latter had also paid him come. He maintained that non-payment of the debt was not due to the presence of the Sierra Leonians but rather to the very dry season for oil ... 'The white man, he said, 'bothered him too much and that he had no peace from them day or night.'<sup>87</sup>

All this did not satisfy Lynslager and Dike records other incidents of oil belonging to Sierra Leonians being seized. The supercargoes further incited King Duke Ephraim V against them under the pretext that they would eventually expel the chiefs and take possession of the country. Duke Ephraim immediately passed a proclamation forbidding his subjects to have dealings with either the Missionaries or Sierra Leonians. It was the intervention of King Eyo that saved the situation.<sup>88</sup>

#### LAME HENSHAW:

Apart from these constant attacks on the Sierra Leonians the Efiks themselves were quite often visited and attacked in their homes by the supercargoes in a bid to recover their debts. Such was the situation that in 1856, King Duke Ephraim wrote to the new Consul, Hutchinson:-

'... I beg you to do something to stop whitemen from going into the house of Calabar men and knocking them. You white men have fashion to bind men to keep the peace so I beg you to do this and not let palaver come up again.'<sup>89</sup>

The incident that led to the above letter arose from the attack on Lame Henshaw by Cuthbertson. The latter was said to have attacked Henshaw with a stick and his fist in his own house on four different occasions for no reason except that Henshaw had publicly expressed disapproval over Cuthbertson taking one of his kinswomen in Henshaw Town as mistress.<sup>90</sup> What deeply offended the Efiks was that Lame Henshaw was not in Captain Cuthbertson's debt. So the young men got together and attacked him 'inflicting several smart blows on his person ....'<sup>91</sup>

This angered the supercargoes who in spite of the efforts of the Chiefs to mediate, reported the matter to the Consul. Although there was no doubt about Cuthbertson's guilt, the Consul fined him only four puncheons of palm oil while he fined Henshaw twenty puncheons plus a forfeiture of his Ekpe title. It is not clear how he would have effected the latter punishment but justifying his action in his report to the Foreign Office he wrote:-

'... I would not have made this latter so seemingly severe had it not been deposed before me that the young Africans who had attacked Cuthbertson had threatened to murder white men if they continued going to demand payment of debts in their homes...'<sup>92</sup>

As situations such as this if allowed to persist were bound to draw Britain into the fray of river politics, Lord Clarendon who saw that the African small traders must be given a fair chance to compete with others, requested Hutchinson who did not share this opinion to inform the supercargoes that:

.... If in order to recover debts due to natives to them they choose to have recourse to unjust, violent and high-handed measures such as detaining one man on board ship as hostage for another, or seizing palm oil, the property of one man in payment of a debt due by another, the British Consul at Fernando Po must leave supercargoes to themselves and abandon as useless, all attempts to arbitrate between them and the native chiefs.<sup>93</sup>

#### THE OLINDA INCIDENT:

Another typical example of supercargo harassment of the Calabar traders was in 1857, five years after the inauguration of the mail packets. This was caused by what was then known as the "OLINDA INCIDENT," the biggest effort made by the African community to break the Liverpool monopoly. Whereas King Eyo had previously shipped his oil in the mail packets, on this occasion, in a bid to salvage his declining trade, he chartered a whole ship, "The Olinda."<sup>94</sup> Consul Hutchinson alleged that the trust owed by

Eyo was 400 tons of oil or £18,000 and he would consequently not permit him to ship his oil. He said, "I could not allow him trifling in this way with British capital" <sup>96</sup> and although he denied it, yet the Agent of the *Olinda* confirmed that Hutchinson had summoned Eyo on the "H.M.S Firefly" and by threats and intimidation, compelled him to sign an undertaking not to ship oil on the "*Olinda*" until his debts were settled. <sup>96</sup> The Agent further disclosed that Hutchinson could hardly be said to be impartial since it was alleged that Hearn and Cuthbertson, the merchants on whose behalf he had interfered, were his former employers. <sup>97</sup>

This was later found to be a fact and he was also said to have received bribes and to have had vested interest in the trade. Hope Waddell revealed in a book published in Hutchinson's lifetime that he had been a surgeon in the Calabar River and had not inspired all who knew him, with a conviction of his super-eminent abilities for such a sphere of duty (i.e. as Consul). <sup>98</sup> 'We were prepared to receive him as an old acquaintance without expecting too much from him...' <sup>99</sup> It appears, according to Waddell, that it was not easy to find many from whom to select a Consul for Calabar hence Hutchinson was selected. <sup>100</sup>

The *Olinda* incident clearly showed the disparity between the views of the Consul and the Foreign Office. On reading the despatch connected with the incident, Lord Clarendon wrote:

Upon what ground does the Consul interfere at all? The merchants knew the risks they run by the Credit System and would it not be better to let the supercargoes settle their own matter with the natives, at all events until we enable the Consul to interfere with legal authority... <sup>101</sup>

To this, the Under Secretary Stanley replied.—

'I apprehend his argument would be "*pro bono publico*" for he certainly is invested with no power to this extent, in other words, a very imperfectly qualified individual connected apparently with the trade, exercising an authority exceeding any we know of in the Queen's dominions...' <sup>102</sup>

These two correspondences confirm that Hutchinson had no power to act the way he did and should have had nothing to do with the whole incident except for the fact that he was "connected apparently with the trade..." However, since Eyo admitted owing trust, and the Consul had denied using threats and pressure to get him to sign that he owed the trust, Hutchinson's

action was approved. <sup>103</sup>

Dike remarked that this was not surprising because the Board of Trade which dealt with the matter did not know Hutchinson's character, 'nor was its knowledge of Delta trade profound.' <sup>104</sup> One lasting result of the incident was that it led the British Government to invest the Consul in West Africa with Magisterial Powers. <sup>105</sup>

Prior to this, another means of settling the perpetual coastal brawls was the establishment of the Courts of Equity the first of which took place in 1856. Whereas in earlier years the Efik King as well as his colleagues in the other Coastal States, was the one who integrated and co-ordinated relations between his people and the supercargoes as well as kept the peace of the river, the economic stress experienced by Calabar in the second half of the 19th century altered the pattern of the relationship. <sup>106</sup> The external policy of the state was no longer the preserve of the King but that of a tribunal consisting of both Kings and supercargoes. This tribunal or Court of Equity signified a change from the personal relationship of the king with the supercargoes to an institutionalized one, making it possible for Europeans to call upon the King as head to mobilize the community to collect their debts. <sup>107</sup>

After the Olinda incident, greater vigilance was exercised over Consul Hutchinson's performance by the British Government. <sup>108</sup> Dike and Nair say that in 1860, he was accused of receiving bribes from a Liverpool Super-cargo named Hearn, and of aiding that gentleman in his disorderly and questionable behaviour in the Calabar River. After a Commission of Enquiry he was found guilty and dismissed from office. <sup>109</sup> Latham however records that he successfully defended himself against the bribery charge but was transferred from Fernando Po 'merely for showing a lack of judgment and discretion, and far from being dismissed, he was later Consul at Callao ...' <sup>110</sup>

In view of the accusation of 'lack of judgment and discretion' we are inclined to agree with Hope Waddell, that it appeared it was not easy to find many from whom to select a Consul, this time, to Callao.

## THE FRENCH

Nair records that the French had traded in Calabar over a long period. In 1830, John Beecroft complained that British merchants in the Calabar River were hopelessly out-numbered by nine French slave trading vessels and the French took advantage of their numerical strength to do as they liked because the oil rivers were not British territory and anyone could trade there or in the high seas. <sup>111</sup> The activities of the English cruisers were limited to their nationals and subjects of European countries that had signed the

anti-slavery treaties. The British traders therefore faced French competition which was sometimes bloody.<sup>112</sup> In the 1840s French activities were also intensified not only in Calabar but also along the shores of the Delta. In 1843 a French Man-O-War "La Vigie," threatened to blow up Calabar unless it supplied slaves to the French Schooner "Luiz d' Albuquerque." After protracted negotiations they were persuaded to take palm oil instead.<sup>113</sup> The renewed French trading on the coast resulted in the expansion of their trade from 11 million francs in 1840 to 23 million francs in 1846.

After this period their activities in Calabar underwent a change. Their dealings with the Calabar rulers had a political undertone and this trend began towards the end of August 1847 when two French boats the "Foque" and "Australie" visited Calabar. The purpose was to 'conclude a treaty pledging the Calabar people to abandon the practice of human sacrifice at funerals...'<sup>114</sup>

Nair records that the negotiation which ensued between the French and Eyo II revealed not only the strong faith that he had in his English allies, but also his shrewdness and skill in handling the embarrassing situation brought about by the French. The people of Calabar said Eyo, were "Englishmen" and had signed treaties with English to abolish human sacrifice.<sup>115</sup> This had already been done in Creek Town and he was doing everything to do so in the whole country. Not satisfied, the French offered bullocks for the sacrifice but Eyo rejected this saying that if it had been mere bullocks rather than human beings he would have bought the animals himself. Thereupon, the French threatened to stop trading with Calabar if they did not end the practice of human sacrifice. Eyo more or less told them to please themselves. In the dialogue that followed he however accepted an invitation by the French Commodore to visit his ship but refused to hoist a French flag on his canoe saying:-

'... No, suppose I go in my own boat I carry English colours, I be Englishman ... If you will send for your own boat for me, I can go in it and your boat can carry your colours but my boat always carry English colours when any ship ask me to go to it I go in that ship's boat, they send for me. So English and Dutchman do.'<sup>116</sup>

The flag incident demonstrated the deep distrust in which Eyo held the French and corresponding trust which he had in the English. Nair comments that this trust that the English could not do any bad thing to Calabar was a phenomenon also shared by his people.

The missionaries, fearing that if the French had a foothold in Calabar

they would displace them with their own missionaries, encouraged Eyo to keep up the resistance of the French overture. But when in 1847 he applied direct to England for protection, Lord Palmerston of the Foreign Office informed him that Calabar had already signed a slave treaty with that country and that this already made it impossible for the French to take Calabar under her protection.<sup>117</sup>

Captain Hope of the English vessel "H.M.S. Bittern" which was then in the river doubted whether Eyo understood the implication of the hoisting of the English flag on Calabar soil. He said:-

'I do not think that they meant to make over the country to us but merely to put themselves under our protection.'<sup>118</sup>

In 1848, the "H.M.S. Favourite" under Commander Murray went to Calabar with Lord Palmerston's reply which assured Eyo of the Queen's concern for the welfare of Calabar but regretted that his request could not be met. It was rather hoped that an end would be put to human sacrifice. The Foreign Office however decided that Governor Beecroft who was stationed at Fernando Po would accompany a British warship to Calabar to make a show of force to the French.<sup>119</sup> Meanwhile a meeting of all the chiefs was held on board the "Favourite" and King Eyo's pledge to stop human sacrifice in Creek Town was read. Duke Town hesitated to make a pledge but eventually promised to take steps to do so.

Nair comments that Eyo's request for a British Consul provided the opportunity rather than the primary reason for the appointment of such an official. This was because Lord Palmerston was all the time interested in the protection and development of British trade on the West Coast of Africa.<sup>120</sup> In May 1849, John Beecroft was consequently appointed Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra with headquarters in Fernando Po.<sup>121</sup>

Thus was Calabar saved by King Eyo Honesty II from French domination for, had he signed the treaty of protection as demanded by them, it would have strained Anglo-French relations and perhaps resulted in a coastal war between the two foreign powers. Also, Calabar might today have been a French territory.

King Eyo, along with his predecessors, Great Duke Ephraim and Eyamba V, were personal friends of Beecroft and the people of Calabar welcomed his appointment as they interpreted it to be a fulfilment of their request for a British representative to be stationed there. This they felt would act as a deterrent to French interferences. But the time was to come when the customary courtesies hitherto accorded the Kings and Chiefs by Beecroft were reversed and Consul Beecroft the Diplomat summoned them to his gunboat for discussions rather than visit them in their homes as he did in the past.<sup>122</sup>

To conclude this section we shall look briefly at what Latham calls Eyo's "sharp practices"<sup>123</sup>

First he says that in 1854 Eyo refused to pay for his newly imported house.

Secondly, in 1855, he used the credit he received to buy oil to ship direct to Liverpool.

Thirdly, in 1857, he ordered the burning of Bassey Henshaw Duke's factory because he "deprived him of business."

It is here stated that Eyo refused to pay for his imported house because he had been informed that its cost had been inflated. Hope Waddell was maligned by a supercargo as having been instrumental to Eyo's refusal and generally for undermining supercargo interests. It was however later learnt that 'an Old Calabar trader in Liverpool ... had written to Eyo about his palace while it was being constructed there.'<sup>124</sup> He therefore refused to be cheated and would not pay for the house, we suppose, until the price was revised.

On the use of his credit to export oil to Liverpool, Eyo never denied owing the trust. Rev. Goldie's letter to Irvin confirms that he had his own vessel, 'a brig lying at Creek Town to ship his oil on his own account while still continuing his traffic with all the ships (for he gave all a share of his business)<sup>125</sup>

Because of his deep involvement with all the trading ships, Eyo confessed that he had no peace by night or day from the harassment of the supercargoes. Short of being seized for non-settlement of his debt as was the custom in those days, he must have considered that taking advantage of the double trust of the "interlopers" and also shipping his oil direct to Liverpool would yield greater profit and enable him to settle his commitments and still make some gains. This was an era when supercargoes and middlemen would do anything to promote their enterprises and it should be remembered that even Consul Hutchinson, himself a representative of Her Britannic Majesty's Government, had vested interest in one of the companies, "Hearn and Cuthbertson" who were once his employers.

A supercargo once confessed to Hope Waddell that he-

'thought it hypocrisy for any man engaged in the palm oil trade to profess religion. He could not carry it on and keep God's commandments'<sup>126</sup>

As for the burning of Bassey Henshaw Duke's factory, an Efik proverb "Mbubru iduhe ke Esuk Urua" (There is no joke at the trading beach or in other words, all is fair in love and war) was applied on this occasion by Eyo because he did not tolerate Duke's competition. We deplore this



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action but must also point out that "sharp practices" appeared to be the order of those days among supercargoes and the traders in the City States.

Eyo had the admiration of the supercargoes up to the early 1850s when he was paid the highest comey and his trade was going well. But the same people failed to appreciate his predicament and set out to disgrace him.

### THE MISSIONARIES

The primary truth of all religion requires no proof as Hope Waddell discovered in the early days of his mission in darkest Calabar when King Eyo declared that:

'everyman knows that God lives and that he made all things..' <sup>127</sup>

The very gruesome fact of the immolation of men upon the death of a dignitary was evidence of Efik belief in the continuation of life after death. Man must needs have his belongings with him in the spirit (or 'ghost') world and it was therefore without the slightest hesitation that King Eyamba V's famous Iron Palace was burnt down in order to provide him with shelter in the other world. Nor was it considered strange to believe that everything had its counterpart in spirit land. Thus, as Hope Waddell was made to understand, 'the ghost (or spirit) of a man eats the ghost of a yam boiled in the ghost of a pot over the ghost of a fire...' <sup>128</sup> Indeed, to this day, some foodstuffs are still named after spirits, e.g. Ata Mkpong (real cocoyam), Mkpong Ekpo (Spirit Cocoyam), Ubong (leaves of the fluted pumpkin), Ubong Ekpo (the spirit counterpart) Even the beautiful butterfly is called OFONG EKPO (spirit clothing) to distinguish it from real clothing, "ATA OFONG."

Hope Waddell further discovered that:

The remnants of a tradition involving the idea of a Trinity were found among them (Efiks). There was one God — ABASI IBOM (or ETINYIN ABASI) — and a son of God (possibly EKPENYONG ABASI) mentioned in their INKES (NKE) or fables and a third or middle God (ABASI ATIATA) of whom they had heard little and knew nothing about. But only a few admitted the existence of such traditions.' <sup>129</sup>

Certain ritualistic customs traced to the Hebrews were also found to be practised by the Efiks. <sup>130</sup> These were circumcision, sprinkling of blood on doors, washing for defilement contracted from contact with a dead person or grave. Sitting dirty on the floor or in ashes as a sign of mourning. Asked how they came by these customs Hope Waddell was told that nobody knew.

"Thus did their fathers and so do they without asking why ...." <sup>131</sup> And so

we have seen, just as Eyo said, the people of Calabar already knew that God lived. But they still felt the need to know more about that God and so they asked for:

'Man to teach book and make we understand God same white man do.'<sup>132</sup>

Prior to what we may term "the Macedonian Call" of Kings Eyamba V and Eyo II, several attempts had been made to bring christianity to Calabar Tradition has it that Otu Mbo Otu and Afiong Mbo Otu, children of the Obutong Chief, Mbo Otu who had died in the massacre in 1767, had been educated in England and had on their return requested the Kings of their day to invite Missionaries right from 1790. Great Duke in his own day also desired that schools might be built in addition to his desire for the building of a sugar processing plant which he was ready to finance. But the West Indian trade had a very strong pull on the supercargoes, and the matter rested there until the fresh call in the form of letters from Kings Eyamba V and his chiefs and King Eyo II, through English merchants to missionaries of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland to bring the gospel and education to Calabar. When they made this request, little did they know that its impact would eventually sweep across the whole of the Cross River Basin and beyond, with Calabar as the fountain of learning where all came to imbibe as much as they could.<sup>133</sup>

Ayandele writes that unlike the Egbas, the persistent request of the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar for missionaries was not motivated by political extremities. They had no hostile neighbours to threaten them. Their desire was therefore based on their well-founded conviction that the supercargoes who made the suggestion to them would never make any harmful proposal to them because as Eyo put it, every good thing we have come from the white people because they know more than we...<sup>134</sup>

This, says Ayandele, was the Efik experience in their relations with Europeans for centuries. Economically, they had thriven on the trans-atlantic slave trade and when the whitemen required no more human cargo and changed to palm oil, the Efiks found this change even easier and more profitable. 'On the human plane the supercargoes in Old Calabar treated the Efik Chiefs on terms of equality if not deference and even so masterful a man as John Beecroft dared not treat them with disdain until he was appointed Consul in 1849. He was courteous, visited them in their homes and won their confidence by tact and persuasion. It is therefore easy to understand Efik belief

in the impeccability of the whiteman and their spontaneously favourable disposition to the idea of missionaries coming to work among them. . . .<sup>135</sup> Says Eyo — ' They all get learning when young but our children grow up like the goats... A school in our town to teach our children to saby book like white people will be very good thing...' <sup>136</sup>

As Ayandele puts it, King Eyo stood as the individual around whom the political and social implications of missionary enterprise among the people of Calabar revolved in the most important years 1846 — 1858.<sup>137</sup> This was the period of Rev Hope Masterton Waddell's sojourn in Calabar and of the twelve years, Eyo acted for nine years as his interpreter at services held in his compound. Rev Goldie in a letter to Mr James Irvin narrates that he used to interpret the sermons 'paragraph by paragraph ... even when condemnatory of his own opinions and practices, giving however in conclusion, his own views on the subject.'<sup>138</sup>

Eyo took a rational attitude towards christian evangelism and the changes it introduced, and accepted only what he thought was not hasty.<sup>139</sup> His self command, ingenious ready replies and freedom, were uncommon and Hope Waddell was deeply impressed.<sup>140</sup> But Eyo was always fencing with him and quick to defend some of the ways of his people. And when Waddell lamented that the word of God was not yielding much fruit in Calabar after three years of it, Eyo disagreed with him, saying he thought it was definitely growing and gave examples of improvements that had been effected, adding that England which had known it for more than a thousand years did not yet altogether believe and obey it and he hoped that 'God would be patient with Calabar.'<sup>141</sup> In his opinion, 'white men who had God's book and learnt it from their youth would be worse off in the day of judgment than black men who lived and died ignorant of it like beasts...' <sup>142</sup>

Patience was therefore needed, for according to King Eyamba V, 'them old fashion can't knock off in one day — must take time.'<sup>143</sup> Eyo however gave the missionaries every assistance within reason and although Ayandele says he backed them with a zeal he was to regret after a few years,<sup>144</sup>

we seem to agree with Nair that:—

'he was intellectually convinced of the truth of many of the missionary teachings and did describe some Efik customs as "fool things."<sup>145</sup>

Some of those "fool things" were those which had already begun to lose their importance because of changing conditions.<sup>146</sup>

#### REFORMS:

Although Eyo was a traditionalist in terms of religion, he allowed no



#### **USAN ABASI (GOD'S BASIN)**

It was used in the worship of God by ancient Efiks. Picture shows the relics of Chief Esien Etim Offiong's Usan Abasi, an iron container measuring 8 feet wide, 8 feet long and about 2 feet deep. The sacred OBOTI tree stands in the centre of the basin. Also seen in the picture is Madam OBUMA Esien Etim Offiong last surviving daughter of Chief Esien Etim Offiong.

By Courtesy of Esien Etim Offiong family

object of idolatory or superstition to be seen in his place.<sup>147</sup> This could perhaps be attributed to what Ayandele describes as "European ethical values which he imbibed probably during his trips to the West Indies and Liverpool."<sup>148</sup>

It was therefore not surprising that with his active support and influence EKPENYONG and NABIKIM were discarded at Creek Town in 1849.<sup>149</sup> EKPENYONG was the household idol in the form of a painted skull mounted on a stick and stuck all over with feathers. It was supposed to protect people from evil while the NABIKIM was supposed to have protective influence over their crops. Ironically, another "heathen" ceremony, far from being discarded was used for the purpose of discarding Ekpenyong and Nabikim.<sup>150</sup> This was the "NDOK," a biennial purgation ritual intended for cleansing and purification of the town to rid it of evil spirits. It was one ceremony the people would never give up and it did not matter whether it fell on the Sabbath or not the show must go on and so it was that Ekpenyong and Nabikim and skulls and prayer basins of old water, were thrown into the river on NDOK DAY.<sup>151</sup> Prior to this, in 1848, Eyo forbade Ekpe Runners to run on Sundays. He also forbade work or play on this day. In 1850 Sunday market was prohibited and in order that there might be no doubt of this, the King hoisted an ensign over his house every Sunday morning as a reminder of the ban in force.

It was also agreed that CALABAR SUNDAY, whenever it fell on "God's day," should give way to the latter because Calabar Sunday was always observed as a holiday when there was no work except that the markets were filled to capacity.<sup>152</sup>

In 1851 when Waddell made efforts to plead for the protection of twins and their mothers, the Duke Town gentry vehemently protested against such a move and went as far as to promise to invoke Ekpe to blow out of town anyone who dared to contravene the law. King Eyo boldly spoke out:-

'I thank you Mr Waddell for that word and agree to it. I will give those women and children a place to live and then we will see who will blow me out of town.'<sup>153</sup>

Being the founder of OKPOHO Ekpe (or Brass Ekpe) and holder of the title of OBONG EBONKO, the next in rank to the IYAMBA, no one would dare to blow him out and thenceforth Eyo began to give protection to twins and their mothers and was the first King to do so.

Again he played a major role in the enactment of the law prohibiting human sacrifice and immolation of slaves upon the death of a dignitary.

Ayandele comments that no contemporary Nigerian Chief ever destroyed so important a religious and social basis of indigenous society as Eyo did and that by patronizing missionary enterprise and carrying out the most revolutionary legislation in Nigeria in the 19th century, Eyo made the missionaries' revolutionary programme possible in a short time. He opened the floodgate to further reforms soon demanded by the missionaries with the physical backing of the consular authority.<sup>154</sup> By signing the treaty with Beecroft for the abolition of Immolation on the 12th of February, 1850, Eyo who had wished ardently to resist foreign political influence, unwittingly did much to lay the foundation of British rule in the Niger Delta.<sup>155</sup>

### DISADVANTAGES

After this, he became the first victim of his reformation zeal for no sooner was the treaty passed than the missionaries and supercargoes seized the initiative from him and formed "The Society for the Abolition of Inhuman and Superstitious Customs and for Promoting Civilization in Old Calabar."<sup>156</sup> Beecroft was a member and the society became a watch dog of the Ekpe law and its implementation. It dedicated itself to the demolition of one custom after another especially the Esero Poison Ordeal, Substitutionary punishment and twin-murder. Slaves began to disobey their masters and children to defy their parents. The missionaries themselves began to spy on King Eyo and report events to the supercargoes. The Consul began to impose fines on Efiks for "insulting missionaries."<sup>157</sup>

### DISENCHANTMENT

Needless to say that the scales began to fall off Eyo's eyes. He became disenchanted with the missionaries and protested at their interference in matters of internal self government. He must have felt betrayed by the people whom he had done so much to assist and in 1851, he imposed restrictions on their movement into the interior and forbade traders to accompany them anywhere for fear of disrupting the trade. It was his determination to control the nature and pace of change that involved him in a series of clashes with the missionaries. After 1851, missionary records were replete with "horrific stories" of "cruelties" and "brutalities" and of the "disordered fleshly lusts" of Eyo. When he refused to be converted or give up polygamy, he began to be caricatured as "a licentious despot whose way of life was simply abominable."<sup>158</sup>

In July 1855, when he took yet another wife, Waddell swore to break away from him. It was a turning point in the history of the Calabar Mission for he had hitherto relied very heavily on Eyo for almost everything. Accordingly on September 2nd, 1855, he had his last public Sabbath meeting

posed culprits inspite of repeated demands. King Duke Ephraim then blew Ekpe on the Mission House. His action was supported by Eyo and the others. The decree stated that:

- (a) No person was to go to any of the mission premises with provisions of any kind for sale or as a gift.
- (b) All gentlemen having children or slaves living on the premises were to withdraw them at once.
- (c) No Calabar person was to visit the Missionaries.
- (d) No child must be sent or allowed to go to school
- (e) No gentleman must allow meetings in his yard on Sabbath for the hearing of God's word and none belonging to the town was to go to church on Sabbath or to meetings of any kind with the mission people...'<sup>163</sup>

The markets were closed and church meetings also failed. No one came to Church. The boycott was very effective to the extent that when Rev. Anderson approached people to persuade them to come to the Mission, they ran away from him as though he had the plague.

It was the intervention of the Consul that caused the ban to be reversed. The controversy was significant from the point of view of Efik political and social history for it shows the resistance of the Calabar people to the political and social consequences of missionary activity.

The right of asylum claimed by the Mission House was described as dangerous' by the Secretary to the Presbyterian Mission Committee:

The principle involved in this seems to me a dangerous one, liable to be greatly misunderstood and abused. It is the principle which in the palmy days of popery made the clergy demand exemption from the operation of civil power ... Missionaries cannot interfere with the civil administration of a country any further than teaching what is right. Their office is instruction.'<sup>164</sup>

It is erroneously believed in some quarters that King Eyo was a "Christian King." This is far from the truth for in his own words he was 'an old tree now and could not bend like a young one.'<sup>165</sup> Although he had gained much knowledge in christian teachings and had the inborn qualities of a good christian for he was honest, peaceful, humane and sympathetic , he still

remained unconverted for, according to Waddell 'he did not believe in and obey the Son of God for Salvation. . . / 166 This notwithstanding, he Eyo exhorted his people to attend church regularly even after Waddell stopped holding public services in his compound. 167 There were however, several fundamental reasons which prevented him from being converted. As already seen, he had refused to give up polygamy. Another reason was that to seek baptism would be to place himself on the same level with converted slaves. This was a disturbing concept to the chiefs of hierarchical societies like the Ekpe for it would strike directly at a key support of political power. It would also have undermined the awe and reverence which always surrounded the person of the King for in a society where slave holding was an important aspect of status, and political power a function of number of followers, the egalitarian assumptions of christianity were a disruptive force. 168

Finally, he had to be careful not to antagonize himself with the other traditionalists by offending them. He did not want to be embarrassed in the way his father was embarrassed, 169 for while his father's accusers had "trumped up charges against him," his conversion would have left no doubt of his 'guilt.' He was therefore determined to put a check on reckless missionary zeal by guarding against reckless social reforms which might endanger his political fortunes. 170

## THE OBUTONG INCIDENT

More than any other Efik settlement, Old Town (or Obutong) had suffered one devastating blow after another at the hands of the supercargoes. In 1767, a quarrel between Old Town and Duke Town (which was then known as New Town) was hampering trade in the Calabar river for no canoe would travel up or down with trade goods. This in turn affected the trade of the supercargoes and after consulting with each other, the captains of six ships then anchored in the river, decided that Old Town should be shown that they would brook no further delays caused by them.

Under the pretext of effecting a reconciliation between the warring kinsmen, the six captains proposed that the Old Town King and Chiefs should come on board their ships for talks. The King, his son, three of his brothers and twenty seven attendants went alongside the "EDGAR" commanded by Captain Lace who, after an exchange of courtesies, invited the King on board while he sent the main party to the "Duke of York." Other followers were waiting in their canoes in the river.

'Then a single gun was fired and before its echo had died away, the white officers and crew, heavily armed, had surrounded them. Taken utterly, by surprise the negroes tried to escape, a few jumped overboard ... the three brothers were shackled and flung below ... On the deck of the "Edgar" the king fought desperately, killing two seamen, jumped into a small canoe and began paddling for the shore... Bodies of his people floating, leaving long red swirls in the muddy water; guns roaring behind him, the men of New Town bloody and exultant on the shore. A high whistling; an impact sent him down and down; his canoe shot to pieces by a ship's six pounder. Unhurt and gasping, he struck out of the wreckage for the jungle shore above the town, round him splashed pursuing musket shots...' <sup>171</sup>

Thus did the brave King of Old Town escape death but three hundred of his men lay dead in the river. The massacre was 'a deliberate, cold blooded treachery, based on despicable abuse of faith.' <sup>172</sup>

Of the King's brothers, one was killed but two were carried away by the Captain of the "Duke of York" and sold in the West Indies along with slaves. It is recorded that the two men escaped to Virginia and three years later, persuaded the Captain of a trader to take them to Bristol in England. 'After enquiry as to how they were brought from Africa, they were liberated and put in one of Jones's ships for Old Calabar ...' <sup>173</sup>

Eighty-eight years later, in 1855, a similar fate visited Old Town once more when Acting Consul Lynslager ordered its bombardment this time, ostensibly because of the people's persistence in carrying out their traditions: the immolation of slaves upon the death of their King. But it was felt in some quarters that the supercargoes had their own ulterior motives which were not unconnected with trade. Old Town had declined from its former position as a commercial metropolis and was therefore of little value to shipping interest, so being poor and defenceless, the supercargoes had no scruples about destroying it. <sup>174</sup>

Just as they consolidated their positions where the local rulers were weak, so too did the missionaries follow suit. <sup>175</sup> Their initial targets were Old Town and Duke Town and the totally indefensible manner in which some missionaries, especially Reverend Samuel Edgerley, intervened in local situations repugnant to their moral code, exposed a 'certain streak of cruelty, in the foreign religious order ...' <sup>176</sup>

It is said that in December 1849, Reverend Edgerley, on the flimsy excuse of Ekpe flogging his bell ringer, tampered with the sacred Ekpe drum, an

action which was taboo even to the highest and most influential ruler of the land. This greatly angered the Chiefs but Waddell apologized, although he maintained that Ekpe men should not have molested the boy. This offended King Eyo even more and he made it clear to Waddell that Ekpe never meddled with either Europeans or Kroomen as they were not citizens of Calabar, but the boy was a citizen and therefore subject to Ekpe laws.

Edgerley himself also apologized in a letter to Waddell acknowledging his guilt and expressing sorrow for displaying bad temper before King Eyo.<sup>177</sup> One cannot help but conclude that Edgerley's behaviour showed that although he was a missionary who should have practised humility, yet he was first and foremost a white man and therefore considered himself too good to apologise direct to an African King through whose goodwill and co-operation the Mission was thriving.<sup>178</sup>

True to type, Edgerley repeated the misdemeanour when five years later, in 1854, still at Old Town, he entered the "ANANSA" shrine where he broke an egg, an important offering at the shrine. He even tried to justify his action by saying he had seen four freshly cleaned skulls on a small table in the shrine. This infuriated the people who with sticks and cutlasses, followed him from the beach and forced their way into his house brandishing their weapons and threatening his life and property. Edgerley wrote to Waddell immediately and the latter appealed once more to Eyo that the complaint against Edgerley was subjudice because the Old Town people had committed a more flagrant offence by attacking him.

Desiring to maintain good relations between Edgerley and Old Town Waddell called a meeting to discuss the issue. The supercargoes regarded this as a "trial," the first time a white man had to face a native authority (Eyo). Although Edgerley was the worse off for the "trial" yet it did not prevent the missionaries from blaming the Efiks nor the supercargoes from threatening to use the man-of-war if anything happened to a white man in Calabar.<sup>179</sup>

When in February, 1854, King Willy Tom Robin of Old Town died and fifty slaves were immolated, the supercargoes saw this as a gross violation of the Ekpe Law of 1850. They invited King Eyo and others for discussion and wanted the use of force to quell the town. But King Eyo was against this and desired instead that the town be fined twenty slaves and also that the interdiction forbidding the completion of the funeral obsequies be lifted. But the supercargoes insisted that two of the principal chiefs be arrested and deported and the town destroyed.

Although the missionaries preferred a milder punishment involving only the culprits numbering about seven, to which King Eyo had also agreed, the

supercargoes were bent on destroying the town. In January 1855 they sent for Lynslager in Fernando Po and when he arrived he took a final decision to comply with their wishes. And so it was that on the 19th of January, 1855, Old Town was bombarded and levelled to the ground. According to Lieutenant Young in a despatch he sent to Commander Young this was done "in the most able manner" from the Warship " ANTELOPE" .<sup>100</sup>

The incident was taken up in the British Parliament and the missionaries sent a protest memorandum to the British Government denying the allegation of the supercargoes that they were implicated in the tragedy. They argued that the attack by the supercargoes was illegal because:-

- a) There was no treaty between Old Town and the British Government for the abolition of immolation.
- b) The attack was carried out in spite of strong protests on their part.
- c) It tended to weaken the beneficial influence of the whiteman on the African mind.
- d) It was wrong for the Consul to prohibit the rebuilding of the town.<sup>101</sup>

In Calabar, Lynslager tried to secure the signature of Duke and Creek Towns in a document stating that the destruction was beneficial to the country but Eyo and the others refused to sign as this would have exonerated Lynslager from blame and justified the extension of his term of office. But this was not to be.<sup>102</sup>

In 1856, at a meeting attended by the missionaries, supercargoes and the Kings and Chiefs of Duke and Creek Towns, Old Town signed a treaty with the British to abolish human sacrifice, Esere poison ordeal and killing of twins and also to give protection to missionaries. The town then received permission to rebuild on the old site. It does seem that Old Town was not destined to remain at the old site for today it has moved out to give way to the Calabar Cement factory. Resettlement has however taken place over a vast area that has now been named OBUFA OBUTONG (new Obutong or New Old Town).

It must be emphasized that at the time of Waddell's domicile in Calabar, the country was made up of what he himself called "small republics." That Duke Town and Creek Town had signed the Expe treaty with the British did not make it binding on Old Town. This fact was either ignored or escaped the attention of the supercargoes.



**REV. ESIEN ESIEN UKPABIO (FIRST EFIK PRIEST)**

## CONCLUSION

Towards the close of 1858, the King suffered occasionally from severe pains in his chest. Taking this as a warning, he charged his eldest son Young Eyo and his Chiefs that in the event of his death no person should be killed for him.<sup>183</sup>

As was his custom, he went to one of his plantations in Uwet and here he had another violent attack and sent for Doctor Hewan, one of the Missionaries. On recovering, and it being a Sabbath he had called his people together for public worship and asked ESIEN ESIEN UKPABIO, the first Efik convert who later became a priest, to officiate. He addressed the King and people in the solemn words, 'watch for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Lord cometh.'<sup>184</sup>

After that Eyo returned to town and on the final day, the 3rd of December, 1858, he had all his brothers with him to supper, himself hardly eating anything. When they had all left and he rose to retire, he collapsed and died, aged in our calculations, between 88 and 91 years. Consternation and panic followed as people ran in all directions, some to the plantations and some to the Mission House to take refuge from the carnage that was sure to follow.<sup>185</sup> The Blood Men filled the town in case any slaves were to be killed. But they need not have worried for Young Eyo, now Eyo Ili carried out his father's wishes to the letter. Thus, as confirmed by Rev. Goldie, King Eyo II became the first man of his rank who descended to the grave without a profuse effusion of human blood. Numerous epitaphs have been written and continue to be written about this remarkable man but we shall only mention four which sum him up. His friend, Waddell, right from the early days of their association immediately discerned in him the qualities which made him describe him as 'a really fine man.' And that is what he truly was, in spite of their numerous clashes. Rev Goldie considered him:<sup>186</sup>

'far in advance of his countrymen having thrown off much of the superstition by which they were enslaved and was earnestly desirous of promoting their enlightenment. I've thought he might have gone faster in putting down evil customs but he said if he should outrage the minds of the people by a too hasty or thorough opposition to them, they might contrive to get rid of him. He largely encouraged our work in the Mission, in school and in Church'<sup>187</sup>

Consul Hutchinson who had violently disagreed with and disgraced him du -

ring the Olinda Incident said this of him in a book he published in 1858, the year of Eyo's death: -

'All the kingdoms of Western Africa would very soon present a difference from their present condition were they governed by such men as King Eyo ... He is anxious for the civilization of his country... Those who agree with me in thinking christianity and civilization to be cause and effect in Africa as they are all over the world will rejoice to hear that he has given every countenance and assistance to the body of Presbyterian Missionaries settled at Old Calabar...' <sup>188</sup>

Finally, one of his kinsmen, Hogan Bassey, once said of him "Three things make Creek Town what it is EKPE, THE MISSIONARIES and KING EYO HONESTY II." <sup>189</sup> Although Hogan Bassey was regarded as a "sweet mouthed" man and this statement might have been construed as flattery by some, yet each of these institutions, in its own way had an effect on Creek Town.

We have seen that King Eyo did not tolerate any act of indiscipline in his subjects and his handling of their crimes left his stamp on them. Again some of his reforms were carried out under missionary stimulus such as when he decreed that there should be neither work nor play on Sabbath Day. Today, nearly a hundred and thirty years after his death, "Sabbath stillness" still reigns at Creek Town on Sabbath Day. Tucked away in the Creek the people of this town have always been in a peculiar state of insularity that has inevitably affected their character, giving them an appearance of reticence and aloofness which some have mistakenly regarded as arrogance.

Hope Waddell was impatient with Eyo because the latter stuck to his old ways and refused to be baptized. The fact that until his death he continued to attend church services even after these were moved from his compound, did not seem to impress upon Waddell that he was gradually breaking the ground. What he most wanted was the total conversion of the King which would have made big news in missionary saga. But having failed to achieve this goal Waddell became (as he once accused Eyo) rigid and intolerant, to Eyo's predicament. But custom dies hard and it was for this reason that, that uncanonized saint, Mary Slessor of Calabar, was obliged to do what would have scandalized Hope Waddell for, as Vice President of the Itu Native Court, she resorted to the administration of MBIAM oath <sup>190</sup> rather than the Holy Bible because the people believed in the efficacy of Mbiam. It was therefore impossible for Eyo to abandon the old ways for, as he told Rev

Goldie who appeared to understand him, it would have been fool-hardy to plunge into drastic reform that would eventually have spelt his downfall.

Eyo was a man of prudence and industry a man of vision, peace, wealth and power, who was always very anxious to prevent disputes or to bring a settlement of the strife which so frequently arose between neighbouring settlements. He submitted much to injuries from them for the sake of peace.

In recent years, some have labelled him an "imperialist stooge." We say he was a wise man. While the early history of our country is replete with each potentate fighting Britain desperately to retain the status quo, it was through the wisdom of people like Eyo Honesty II that what we now know as Nigeria owes its existence and not to those who right from the outset fought bloody battles to keep Britain out. To call Eyo a stooge is to admit that Nigeria should not have existed as she did. His role therefore in some of the events that led to the making of the country cannot be ignored.

Eyo Eyo Nsa was a man of singular character and integrity and as Goldie rightly maintained "far in advance of his countrymen, in fact not only his countrymen but also far in advance of his contemporaries on the West Coast of Africa as hinted by Hutchinson. It was rare on the entire Guinea Coast to find a ruler who had been free from the shackles of superstition that so gripped Africa in the 19th century. Even today, many are still wedded to this belief in magic and charm and in internal powers under the guise of indigenous culture. Harmful juju making still dominates the minds of many, even in the ranks of the "learned" and we are all aware of the harmful effects of these heathen rites on the well-being of our people.

Eyo was a man of enlightened views on life and an adroit politician. We remember him during the French incident. An ordinary man would have succumbed to the impact of the prevailing circumstances of his time and Calabar would today have been part of another country.

He was the guardian and protector of his country's traditions. He wanted reforms and therefore accommodated himself to the new reforms of the Christian Missionaries which he himself had been a part to their invitation. He had to wrestle with the prevailing foreign commercial impact, the nauseating behaviour of the supercargoes that came in its wake and which the age thrust upon him and his people. Furthermore, he had to protect his own status as a monarch of no mean order. To hold such a balance in the turbulent world of the 19th century was a herculean task under whose impact, ordinary men would have been crushed. Yet this man stood this test of his time, partly because he was an astute diplomat who was able to grapple with the flexible European diplomacy of the 19th century, partly because he was economically independent and partly because he was a man of

strong character.

What personal qualities can therefore label a man a stooge? Firstly, perhaps a weak and fragile character with a mind as fickle as the wind that can readily yield itself to external influences. But Eyo, whose character was described as "rigid," was decidedly the opposite case. Secondly, perhaps a pernicious sense of inferiority complex, but Eyo's biographers openly deny him this. Rev. Waddell describes him as "the most powerful man in the country" whose influence was felt everywhere." Certainly such a character can never admit of any sense of inferiority. Thirdly, poverty which inures a man for his economic survival. But King Eyo was "the wealthiest man in the country" and so, economically independent and in fact a high percentage of foreign merchants and supercargoes depended on trade alliance with him for their very economic livelihood. Fourthly, a life totally devoid of personal pride. But an honest man is a proud man because Eyo's integrity and honesty the last of which his very name conveyed, stood him in good stead before the eyes of all his contemporaries and enhanced his reputation, prestige and pride. And whoever reads these pages closely into the life and work of King Eyo Honesty II, will certainly hesitate to dub him a stooge. The very western education which this monarch encouraged and supported in his kingdom is what we now crave for: the *elixir vitae* of the 20th century that imaginary liquid which medieval scientists once hoped would change base metals into gold, or prolong life indefinitely.

Affectionately called "Etinyin E-eyo" (our father Eyo Eyo), numerous eulogies of him exist but the following will suffice to demonstrate that he was powerful, influential and considerate:-

Anwana Odu Eyen Obioko  
Ndon Inyeneke Edet Obom okpo unam!  
Onion Ubok Osiono Nkpo Aba  
Nkana Inyan Esin Ubok Ubom  
Okuk Eto Ebe Mbiomo  
Owo Ndien Asua Imo Mbiomo Ama.<sup>191</sup>

#### ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Brave son of Creek Town  
Maggots have no teeth but crush a bone!  
Long hand that reaches the deepest cave  
That spans the sea to get at a ship,  
Money tree that eludes the rejected  
Despised by man  
But loved by twins!



REV. WILLIAM ESIEN ESIEN UKPABIO (Son of Rev. Esien Esien Ukpabio)

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12. Ibid
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"Mr Cameroons" was a nickname given by missionaries and supercargoes to Item Ared. His real name, supplied by Etubom Otu Ekpenyong Efa now Obong of Calabar, was Etim Esien Ekpe Oku and this made him an uncle of King Eyo II. As stated by Waddell, he was the Chief of Ambo Ward during the King's reign and also became his right hand man. He must have got his nickname through commercial connections with the Cameroons as was the custom even before his time. Antera Duke lavishly used nicknames like this to describe people, and Barbot's list contains the names of two Mbiabo Kings, William King Agbisherea and Robin, King Agbisherea, and "Agbisherea" here does not mean that they were Ibibios but that they traded in Ibibioland.
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**KING EYO HONESTY III**

## CHAPTER 10

### KING EYO HONESTY III: 1858 – 1861

Affectionately nicknamed "Eyo Ita" or "Eyo Ete" by his father's subjects and "Young Eyo" by the Missionaries, King Eyo Honesty III was the eldest son of his illustrious father, Eyo II. The exact date of his birth is not known but he must have been in his late teens when the missionaries arrived in Calabar in 1846<sup>1</sup> for Waddell records that he came of age in 1848<sup>2</sup>. On that occasion among other things, his father invested him with the broad cloth of manhood called "ISIN ITA" in Efik and made up with four yards of silk or cotton. He was so excited and proud of his new status in the community that writing to Waddell who was then on leave he said: "My father make me man this day and I beg God to make me man pass what my father can do..."<sup>3</sup>

He would therefore have been around thirty when he became King in 1858. He was not only his father's favourite but also that of the whole community for he was affable with the people, respectful to his father and all the chiefs attentive to his business "and in all things so clever and well behaved."<sup>4</sup> Waddell records that when Eyo II knew that he was dying, he proclaimed Young Eyo his successor.<sup>5</sup> It is however important to state that being his father's son did not entitle him to be his successor as King. Hart also records that Esien Ukpabio informed Waddell in a letter that Eyo was made King by the Consul in 1858. Here again it is pointed out that there was no dispute over succession to the Creek Town throne and that the Consul could only have been performing the British Government's version of a ceremony which by unanimous consent of the people had already been performed according to Efik tradition.<sup>6</sup>

On assuming office therefore he had to go to the plantations and markets

to allay the fears of his people who were afraid of being killed for the old king as was the custom. He succeeded in winning them all to his side and under oath, they promised to serve him.

#### TRADE:

Young Eyo was nowhere near his father as a trader but he was his constant companion and was adequately educated in the trade system of the day. He learned to speak and write English as was common among members of the ruling class. He was a familiar person to the supercargoes with whom his father had business and sometimes helped him to transact same.<sup>7</sup> The memoranda of business transactions which his father wrote on slates were always neatly entered by him into account books

and all in English and convinced us that the teachers both for Duke Town and this place Creek Town must be really competent men. Neither Chisolm nor Miller (two members of the Mission staff) were equal to this young man in writing and arithmetic and no teacher here will maintain his standing among the people unless superior to even the best informed of the natives.<sup>8</sup>

In 1855, during one of his visits to settle his father's account with the supercargoes, he was kidnapped and locked up in the cabin; a hostage for debts owed by some Duke Town people he did not even know. We have already seen that this was the practice of the irresponsible supercargoes. They must have hoped that his father who loved him dearly would settle the unknown debt to redeem his son.

Young Eyo however threw himself out of the Cabin window and swam towards his canoe and was escaping when the ship's boats went after him. He swam to the bank and escaped into the bush where he found refuge among his people. As they were however returning peacefully to Creek Town in his father's great canoe, the ship's crew pursued them, shots were exchanged and the crew did not give up the chase until the Captain was wounded.<sup>9</sup>

Not much is known about his trade but Nair records that the balance of economic power in Calabar towns in the greater part of the 19th century was largely in favour of Duke Town by reason of its location. Creek Town which, under King Eyo II had built up its trade to the extent that it was receiving two third of the Comey, began to crumble after the King's death

in 1858. In addition to this, a fire accident had completely razed the old King's splendid houses and property and the Young King was honour bound to make good all his father's liabilities with the supercargoes.<sup>10</sup>

In 1860 Eyo III signed an agreement with Consul Hutchinson on the ship "SPITFIRE" declaring that the interest of all British subjects coming to or residing in his territory were to be placed under the regulation and control of the Consul at Fernando Po. The Consul was also to give effect to all rules and regulations that were or might be enacted by Her Majesty-in-Council or by any authorized British officer as regards the conduct of their trade and prevention of violation of laws. A similar agreement was also signed with Archibong II, in the same year.<sup>11</sup> Talbot records that 'King Eyo Honesty III of Creek Town, Old Calabar arrived in Fernando Po on the steam Yacht "King Eyo Honesty of Liverpool" accompanied by a number of his chiefs and people. This took place on the 31st of December 1860 and 'it was the first time that any Efik King ever was over the bar of Old Calabar River ....'<sup>12</sup> It is not known in what connection the Young King had paid the visit but it is likely that he might have gone there for pleasure since nothing else of importance was recorded and the 31st of December was New Year's Eve, a day already recognized in Calabar even in the days of Antera Duke, as a period of goodwill and merriment.

### THE MISSIONARIES

When Eyo III ascended the Creek Town throne, there were high hopes that he would inherit his father's fine qualities for leadership. But this was not to be, for he was deficient in the performance of his duties as a ruler, and was a pleasure loving person who had been born into an environment intensely saturated with idolatrous superstitions.<sup>13</sup> Where his father was a teetotaller, he was addicted to alcohol and where his father was strict and rigid, he was soft-hearted and pliable. In one thing however, he stood out, for he was totally committed to the cause of christianity and showed great promise of himself being an outstanding christian. As he was a prolific letter writer it was easy to discern his childlike faith in God from his correspondences.

Writing about him to a friend in Scotland, Mrs Waddell said: It is evident that he is under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He seems afraid however to come out and join the people of God. We often have

interesting conversation with him about divine things for he is very conversable...' <sup>14</sup>

Ever anxious for the progress of the gospel, he wrote the following letter to Waddell who had gone on leave:

My dear beloved friend

I hope you no think that I forget you. Always I do remember you in all my doing... And I am very much want you back because I think I have no other friend like you, for you and I, it seem as father and son.. If the Almighty God spare, I like you to bring three or four missionaries for the Gospel of Christ, because Mr Newhall is leave here to go home for doctor says that his wife she can't live long here in Calabar ... and I don't know if doctor is our heavenly father that he know who can live long or not... I know that you cannot forget to bring the house of God as you been tell me. <sup>15</sup> And try if you can get a small ship for our mission. <sup>16</sup>

For himself who was always eager to know more about God, he in this letter asked for a big Bible, a dictionary, a book of meditation titled "Peep of Day" and any other kind of useful book that can give me understanding in the words from the Bible" <sup>17</sup> He also specially requested that all the books he asked for should be in large print to enable him read faster and ended the letter with the petition:

'Give my compliments to your brother and sister and Dr. Fergusson and his wife and to all God's people in England and Scotland. And I beg them very much to pray for poor dark Calabar...' <sup>18</sup>

To friends in Scotland who had sent him gifts he wrote:-

My dear friends,

I have received all your kind presents by my dear Minister and six letters from many friends in England and Scotland. It shows how kind our heavenly Father is to me for so far country as Scotland and England is, to give me so many kind friends as you all. I thank you all for the presents ... and I thank God our Father and his dear Beloved Son, who so loved the world, as he been give his life for our sins, to deliver us from all our evil ways. And I thank God for His great care that He take of my dear beloved Minister, in his great mercies of providence, such blessings from his gracious hand to guide him home, and bring him back, and his dear wife and child, and two young friends, and ship and captain and men, and lead them through the great sea, and bring them to us to teach us more of His true word of everlasting life which is in Jesus Christ our dear Saviour. Oh my dear friends, I

beg God everyday and night to bring many of us into that life eternal and happiness... And I beg Christ our Redeemer, as the two blind men who sat by the wayside and cried saying "Have mercy on us, Thou Son of David," so I beg our Saviour to open our blind hearts that we may receive sight to see all his great love for His love is so great, so full and so free, to all who need and seek Him....

I am yours,

Young Eyo Honesty<sup>19</sup>

One may wonder whether the writer of this letter was not a christian. Waddell replied in the negative and likened him to the young man whom Jesus loved but who would not give up his old way of life for the way of Salvation.<sup>20</sup> Eyo was beset with many spiritual and other problems. His father for instance lectured him severely about the dangers of reading and praying too much to the detriment of his trade, while the missionaries virtually took possession of his mind and filled it with a highly sensitive conscience which made it difficult for him to differentiate between committing sin and carrying out his own traditional functions, without incurring their displeasure. Such was the situation that he wanted to leave Calabar to settle elsewhere for 'he could not serve Christ there'<sup>21</sup>. The missionaries however prevailed upon him to stay back for 'the Lord had appointed him his lot and work there...'<sup>22</sup>

Mission work progressed at Creek Town and other stations and Eyo in the opinion of the missionaries had greatly improved. But being on the threshold of a new religion whose concepts and ethics were completely alien to him, his soft conscience forced him to own a sense of inadequacy, guilt, and self-condemnation which made him say to Waddell:-

'The devil is very strong in Calabar and very strong in me too and I find myself same as I had two hearts. One wants me to hear God's word and do good. The other wants me not to do so.'<sup>23</sup>

He had however ripened up for conversion and it took the baptism of Esien Esien Ukpabio around the middle of October, 1853, to make him take the final step.<sup>24</sup> On the 30th of October, two weeks later, Eyo was also baptized.

Rev Anderson reported that his decision which had met with stiff opposition, 'required the spirit of a Martyr which he seemed to possess.'<sup>25</sup> Even when his father tried to coerce him to postpone his decision until Waddell

arrived from leave, by which time, he promised, he would also submit himself for baptism, Eyo Eyo Eyo (Eyo Ita) refused, saying that 'all God's Ministers are the same' and that he would proceed with the baptism and not wait for Waddell.<sup>26</sup>

After this historic event, the death of a person of distinction and the King's chief blacksmith provided an occasion for "Sin" for Young Eyo. Among the traditional rites, a display of the colourful Ekpe Ebonko which he was particularly fond of was planned. He indicated his wish to participate because he saw no harm in doing so. But no sooner had the missionaries got wind of this than they immediately set to work on his mind. They spoke of 'self denial and cross-bearing by separation from the pleasures and enticements of the world.' They also spoke of the injurious influence his participation would have on his uncovered kinsmen.<sup>27</sup> It was enough to give him the guilty feeling that he had offended God by the mere thought and so he gave up his desires. It is obvious that the 19th century missionaries would have been deeply scandalized by present day christians who openly parade their membership of traditional societies and still practise the christian religion.. But, for Young Eyo and his fellow converts, it was taboo.

'Lapses' were observed by the missionaries and by 1855, Waddell recorded that some church members including Eyo, had 'fallen into shameful sins.' In spite of confession and seeming repentance, the sins were repeated and so the missionaries were obliged to ex-communicate them from the christian society.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the depth to which Eyo had descended in the estimation of the missionaries, he still persisted in promoting the work of God Waddell records that when Duke Ephraim V objected to missionaries going to Ikoneto, it was Young Eyo representing his father, who went with them to speak in their favour, to the disgust of the old king who grumbled that King Eyo II should not have allowed his son who would one day be king, to 'follow whiteman's fashion.' Again when King Archibong II, reacting to the visit of two missionaries to Umon without permission, threatened to break up the stations at Ikoneto and Ikot Offiong, it was he who firmly resisted the threat arguing that his father had in his lifetime agreed for the gospel to spread to those areas.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

King Eyo III's reign lasted for only three years and they must have been terrible years for him as a ruler. He confessed thus in a letter to Waddell who had left finally in 1858:-

'I am now every day troubled by the people's palavers, one after another but I pray every day to the Lord to keep me and help me in this great trying. And I beg you, and all God's people, to pray for me that the Lord may keep me in his own way and give me wisdom and strength to do his will even as Solomon prayed (1 King iii: 6 - 9) and may it please him to grant. I can't say much this time, But I beg you to pray for us your children of Efik...' <sup>30</sup>

This state of affairs continued and in July 1859, his last letter to Waddell again bemoaned his plight:

I thank you for all your good and friendly words in your two last letters but I am sorry to say dear Minister that the trouble I am in is too much for me, more than I can write but you know how bad our country is. Now every people do as they like and all palavers my father used to settle come to settle on me; and as I can't do everything as he used to do, this give me great trouble ... I am in great fear for my own bad heart (wickedness) and fear too for my soul in the trouble I got from one thing to another. It is very bad thing to be King or head in a country like this ... Dear Minister, do pray the Lord for my soul... <sup>31</sup>

For two years he had departed from the teachings of the missionaries. Where his father was a total abstainer from drink, he indulged fully in it and as a result ceased to be a communicant. <sup>32</sup> Yet it must be stated that he never ceased to attend church services, and in his final illness, a natural result of his indulgences, he felt that it was the finger of God which was upon him and was resigned to his fate as seen in the following extract from his letter to Mr Robb three months before his death:-

'I thank you for all your good letters which I look upon as messages from the Lord as it is he who puts it into your heart and mind to write them and it is the duty of a Minister to do so to such a sinner as I. Dear Minister, what can I say? Can a servant say, No, to his master when called to come? And the Lord calls us sinners all for our own good. When I know this and think about it my mind troubles me; but the shame and fear of my wretched heart brings me down and the trouble which I get from one thing to another in the country matter is great. I only write these few things to show my mind to you. But what can I say when the Lord calls me to return, and when I know that he is willing to help and is able to save... I thank you very much for your prayer and your love to my soul and still beg you to pray that the Lord may



**KING EYO HONESTY IV (EFIOK EYONSA)**

take my wretched heart out of the love of sin and bring me, poor sinner, to be his again....' <sup>33</sup>

When he died in May, 1861, two tragedies were enacted at Creek Town. His uncle Ekpo Eyo who had made himself particularly obnoxious to slaves and was reputed to be an Ekpe executioner, was accused by the Blood Men of being responsible for their young master's death. They attacked and killed him and his concubine. Next day, on the instigation of Eyo's full sister Ansa, the Blood Men also forced his half sister Inyang to go through the Esero poison ordeal from which she too died. It was the last appearance of the Blood Men in Creek Town. <sup>34</sup>

At the time of his death, Eyo was heavily indebted to nearly all the European traders, his warehouses being full of Manchester and Birmingham goods. All his property was to be seized and appropriated, but four of his slaves who were coxswains in his trading canoes, summoned all his other slaves and explained the grim situation to them saying the proposed action would be a disgrace to the memory of their father unless his debts were paid. They therefore took over his vast property and sold it in the interior markets. Within a year they had paid off the last farthing of the amount which was said to be between £10,000 and £20,000. <sup>35</sup> This touching action by his slaves was an eloquent testimony to the sterling and humane qualities of the young King. Had he been a wicked father to them, they would never have reacted in such a manner.

Here then was a man who, it would appear, was cut out to be a man of God rather than a man of the people. A man who, in spite of his infirmities, had splendid qualities and as a christian convert was steadfast in his faith. But he died: a victim of the society in which he lived.

King Eyo III is thus remembered for having established christianity as an official religion for subsequent Efik Kings.

He was succeeded by his uncle Tom Eyo Honesty (Efiok Eyo) who had in 1835 conceded the kingship to his father Eyo II to rule because of his experience and contact. Tom Honesty took the title Eyo Honesty IV and Aye records that nothing of historical importance was left to his credit but that he was a quiet and harmless person. Being a senior brother to Eyo II, he must have been quite old when he became King for he died in 1865. <sup>36</sup>

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KING EYO HONESTY VII

## CHAPTER 11

### KING EYO HONESTY VII: 1874 – 1892

Nsa Okoho, also known by supercargoes and missionaries as Henshaw Tom Foster, was a grandson of Eyo Nsa and also of the Atai Lineage through his mother who was a Cobham.

#### EARLY YEARS

He was a young man at the time when the missionaries arrived in Calabar. It was the custom in those days for the chiefs to place their sons in the care of ships' Captains so that they might be tutored in the English language and in commercial techniques. The names of the captains were usually adopted by the boys hence the additional names of "Tom Foster" to Nsa Okoho's names.<sup>1</sup>

The arrival of the missionaries gave him an opportunity for further learning and Rev. Hope Waddell and the rest were very well disposed towards him because of his mild and pleasing manners and more than ordinary good conduct and eagerness to learn the word of God.<sup>2</sup>

He was in fact a young man after Rev. Waddell's heart for he was said to be quite emancipated from superstitions, a thing which the reverend gentleman found extremely difficult to convince his favourite, King Eyo III, to break away from. Four months after Waddell's departure in 1858, Rev. Hugh Goldie received Nsa Okoho into the Church.<sup>3</sup> It was said that his baptism had been delayed because he was hoping and praying that his wife would join him on this memorable occasion but she was so deeply imbued with the custom and traditions of the country that she refused to do so and eventually left him to go his own way.<sup>4</sup>

Described as 'a big and soncy man of about forty years', Eyo was said to possess a pleasant countenance of an unaffected dignity, quiet, sagacious, capable of shrewd remarks and relishing a joke.<sup>5</sup> He was one of the pillars of society in the old metropolis and could be relied upon to champion the cause of the less privileged people as was the case when he joined Eyo Okon

(leader of Bloodmen) and Tom Eyo, to append his signature to a document to give safe conduct to a woman refugee from Adiabo village which had been devastated by King Archibong II's men. Also during the war with Okoyong in 1868, it had fallen to his lot to protect Creek Town and he had done so creditably.<sup>6</sup>

#### ELECTION TO KINGSHIP

The death of King Eyo II in 1858, followed in quick succession by that of his son Eyo III in 1861, and three of his brothers Eyo IV (1865) Eyo V (1867) and Eyo VI (1871),<sup>7</sup> left the town in chaos, the only period of peace being the time that Eyo Okon was controlling things and his men would obey none but him.

This notwithstanding, upon the death of Eyo VI on the 5th of June, 1871, six Creek Town gentlemen wrote to the Consul, David Hopkins informing him that:

'The government of this town and its dependencies lies at present in our hands. In all matter of intercourse between us and Europeans and others not subject of Calabar, we have appointed Henshaw Tom Foster to be our representative...'<sup>8</sup>

The signatories to this letter were:

Henshaw Tom Foster  
Egbo Young Oshom  
Eyo Egbo Honesty  
Eyo Egbo Young Eyo  
Eyo Hogan  
Egbo Young Tom Eyo

They had in this manner given him full mandate and their trust to manage their affairs. After an interregnum of nearly three years and the death of Eyo Okon in 1873, the following descendants and principal men of the Eyo Family conferred together to make Henshaw Tom Foster king :-

Prince Eyo Honesty IV  
Eyo Tom Eyo  
James Willy Honesty  
Prince Eyo Honesty II  
Tom Eyo Honesty II  
John Chisolm  
Henry Eyo Honesty III<sup>9</sup>

After they had sounded the opinion of the whole town the following joint memorandum dated 25th of February, 1874, was released:

'We the Chiefs and Principal men of Creek Town and its dependencies in our own name and in the name of whom we represent approve of Henshaw Tom Foster, Esquire, becoming King over us and do now elect him as such on the basis agreed to on January 28th, of this year.'<sup>10</sup>

This was signed by the following:

Prince Eyo Honesty II  
Eyo Tom Eyo Honesty  
Tom Eyo Honesty  
Henry Eyo Honesty III  
Prince Eyo Honesty IV  
James Willy Honesty, Esquire,  
Young Robinson  
John Boco Cobham  
Eshen Ambo. <sup>11</sup>

The significance of this document was that John Boco Cobham and Eshen Ambo were heads of the Otung and Mbarakom Wards respectively and their signatures confirmed the unanimous acceptance of Nsa Okoho as king.

In a bid to ensure that he was fully accepted by the whole town he laid two conditions before the Chiefs. The first was that the king should govern while the people should submit to be governed according to the will of God as made known in the Bible and that there should be no religious intolerance. The second condition was that he should reign over the whole town and not just a section of it. <sup>12</sup>

These conditions were written down in English and Efik, discussed and accepted by the whole town consisting of Adak Uko (Eyo Town) Mbarakom (Ambo Town) and Otung (Jack Town).

Nsa Okoho was subsequently crowned in the Church by Consul Hartley and took the title "Eyo Honesty VII".

After the ceremony Reverend Edgerley wrote:

"After a year of anarchy we now have a christian king"<sup>13</sup>

But Eyo knew he had undertaken a difficult task and it soon transpired that the pledge undertaken by the people to unite under him was broken by the Ambos who declared that they had signed the document at the King's coronation merely as witnesses. <sup>14</sup> It has already been said that Eyo VII was a grandson of Eyo Nsa and through his mother he was also related to the Cobhams. His rejection by the Ambos was a retaliatory measure against the Cobhams who were as a matter of fact their own kith and kin in the Ema Atai line. Their grievance against the Cobhams goes back to when Esien Ekpe Oku had honoured the hero Eyo Nsa by giving him Princess Inyang Esien Ekpe in marriage around the middle of the 18th century. The Cobhams had been violently opposed to this gesture as being too extreme a reward for



**A CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD AT CREEK TOWN**

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A CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD AT CREEK TOWN

Eyo Nsa's bravery. Many of them had consequently moved to Duke Town where Cobham Town was established under the leadership of Akabom Ene and when Eyo Eyo Nsa (Eyo II) was selected king, they had refused to acknowledge him and more of them had again moved out. So the Ambos were only reciprocating the action of the Cobhams against Eyo II by not acknowledging Eyo VII as their king.<sup>15</sup>

The Blood Men in the powerful Eyo II House also ignored the King and administered their own affairs without any reference to him. His measures for the benefit of the community were opposed and in the midst of this highly charged atmosphere the king decided to leave the town.<sup>16</sup>

He took up temporary residence on board a ship anchored off Duke Town but later moved to Cobham Town from where he contemplated forming a new settlement.<sup>17</sup>

Both Church and other delegations met him to persuade him to return to Creek Town and after much discussion the king eventually agreed to do so.<sup>18</sup>

He then commenced his reign as the first truly Christian King.

In commemoration of his elevation and recognition of his efforts for the benefits of the people, some ladies in Edinburgh presented him with a Bible.<sup>19</sup>

#### EYO AND THE MISSIONARIES

Reverend Goldie records that King Eyo used the Bible as his law book with which he fought against the old customs of the society. He continued the work which his predecessors had commenced, keeping the sabbath holy and sending out proclamation that children should go to school.<sup>20</sup>

Everything that concerned the Church was of paramount interest to the King and when it was brought to his attention that the first Church, built in Eyo II's time was getting too small and that a new one was required, the King wrote to the Foreign Mission Committee in Scotland on July 23, 1878:-

'We need a new Church very much. When Mr Edgerley was at home, we been write to him to help us for the new church. Then the Rev H. Goldie and Rev S. M. Edgerley inform us concerning the new Church, also show us the plan of it which we are very glad to have, some of us sign for, so much rods they will give, and cut posts ready to put up the Church... Mr Edgerley told us that you kindly promise to give £400 as a loan to the congregation to be repaid in yearly instalments. So we think the erection may be begun during the dry season between November and March...' <sup>21</sup>

The Church which was prepared in Scotland arrived in due course with a spire and a chiming public clock of which Efiks in a song boast, Obioko

mme enyene nti nkpo, enyene nkanika amia idem ikpon' (Creek Town the possessor of good things, the possessor of a clock or bell that rings itself).

The Church, dedicated to Eyo II, was officially opened on the 5th of July, 1879. The king made a great day of it and invited people from far and wide and it was reckoned that the congregation numbered about 1000<sup>22</sup> It was also on the same day that Asuquo Ekanem was ordained Pastor for Ikoneto.<sup>23</sup>

The king kept up correspondence with Hope Waddell in one of which, dated 26th July, 1879 (after the opening of the new Church) he writes:-

'I am glad in having the opportunity to write you a few words ... I thank God for His everlasting goodness that we can still hear the voice of each other yet in this life. We of Creek Town are still having much interest in you as the one that had been first to open the way for the rest to walk thereby, with the same precious Gospel trumpet which is still sounding. I can now but say, that I am now feel very happy that Calabar is not now entirely what it was in the days of our fathers before your coming and during the same time of your being among us. A great change has taken place ever since, through the power of the Gospel and even now the evil customs are still gradually dying away, and my desire and hope is, that the whole work of Satan may be destroyed in Old Calabar. For it was true in part of Eyo III's sayings, in recalling to mind what you said once to me by a letter, that it is a hard thing for a Christian man to be a king in Old Calabar, but in the other way is not quite so true, for a real Christian should know first that he could not be able to do a single thing of his own power without the help of God...<sup>24</sup>

King Eyo was a modest and retiring man who never sought to go beyond what belonged to his office. But the congregation sought him out and elected him an Elder of the Church, a Session Clerk and Superintendent of Sabbath School.

#### HIS REIGN

It was difficult to distinguish the difference between his duties as king and as a Churchman or Christian for he endeavoured to be fair and just to everyone. As already said, his Bible was his law book and in any serious case which involved life, when brought before him as judge, he would try to administer his rule in accordance with Divine Law as he had pledged at his coronation.<sup>25</sup>

His fame had spread to Ibibioland and he was invited by the people of a place called Ofuot Emum ye Ita who wanted him to open a market for

them and also asked to be protected by him.<sup>26</sup> He complied with their request and also seized the opportunity to spread the gospel for he considered it his duty to promote the kingdom of God as well as the temporal good of all around him.<sup>27</sup>

Eyo was a peaceful man and as with other things, he carried on his trade quietly. It was he who led the team of Creek Town gentlemen to sign the preliminary Treaty of Protection with Great Britain on the 23rd of July, 1884.<sup>28</sup>

This did not however prevent an outrage from being committed against him by some Germans from the Cameroons.<sup>29</sup> The incident went like this:

A German who had traded in Calabar for many years led his countrymen in a gun boat to a factory at Creek Town where they sent for the King. Thinking that they wanted him on trade business, he went down to the factory only to be seized as hostage. Their reason was that two Creek Town men had in retaliation, seized seven Idombi men because in a faction fight between the Idombis and another tribe called Momoke, the latter had carried off six people belonging to the Creek Town men. The Germans in whose territory the two villages were located, had come to seek redress and as the wanted men were not in town, the Germans took the King away and anchored off Duke Town. He took the incident very calmly and was released on the following day, when the two men were produced.<sup>30</sup>

One may well ask why even at this stage when the fervour of the Treaty of Protection was still lingering, the British government did not express even the mildest protest over the barbaric German action.

### THE KING'S DEATH

In his later years, King Eyo had frequent ailments which eventually ended in paralysis. He died on the 26th of March, 1892. To the end of his life, he was said to have maintained his character as a sincere christian ever ready to participate in any scheme that would promote the welfare of the community.<sup>31</sup>

Said Goldie:

'He was raised up in the midst of the densest heathenism showing what the gospel by the grace of God can do, in lifting him above the pagan customs of his country and enabling him to maintain a life becoming his Christian profession.'<sup>32</sup>

It is remarkable that in all the Efik settlements, the kings of Creek Town

stood out not only as supporters of Christianity but were themselves very deeply religious.

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## CHAPTER 12

### ANTERA DUKE EPHRAIM

In the introduction to the famous book, 'Efik Traders of Old Calabar which is the diary of Antera Duke, Daryll Forde tells us that in their interaction with European supercargoes, Efiks soon appreciated the importance of acquiring a commercial language in which to carry out their transaction since the Europeans had neither the training nor interest to learn their language. This problem existed all along the coastal states in the Oil Rivers and in order to overcome it, there developed through their long association with English traders and seamen, a jargon which was mainly English in vocabulary but whose construction was modelled on the local language which in this case was Efik. The Europeans adopted it in their dealings with the people and it was in turn 'carried from place to place on the West Coast where it merged with other jargons similarly developed to become in the 18th Century, a fairly standardized pidgin English'.<sup>1</sup>

The value of written records, especially of transactions, was also recognized by Efik traders and some of them were effectively instructed in writing by Englishmen from the ships Forde tells us that several published narratives of the early 19th century refer to the keeping of accounts and journals by the leading Efik at this time.<sup>2</sup> The diary of Antera Duke, written in the 18th century is a living testimony to the fact that Efiks kept written records long before the 19th century. It is also on record that the sons of some of the leading traders in the 18th century had visited England and schools had long before the arrival of Missionaries on the shores of Calabar, been established by Efiks in their towns 'for the purpose of instructing in this art, the youth belonging to families of consequence.'<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, one of such schools was, according to oral tradition, started by Henshaw Town in a disused Ekpe shed. The Ships' Captains had helped to get teachers for them.<sup>4</sup>

This makes nonsense of the missionary chronicles which mentioned that

Efik nobles refused to send their children to school and preferred instead to send their slaves! If they were later unwilling to send their children to schools run by the missionaries, it was because the latter had failed to continue the tradition of the supercargoes who had taught them how to read and write English and how to keep proper accounts of their trade returns. They were instead only keen on spreading the gospel through the medium of the Efik language which the Efiks felt did not contribute to the promotion of their business.

Antera Duke Ephraim (Ntiero Edem Efiom), nephew of King Duke Ephraim II, was obviously one of those children who received their English lessons either from the schools, the supercargoes or in England. Armed with this skill, he set out to give us a fascinating and vivid account of his daily activities. From these we now have a unique and valuable source of information on the social and cultural life of the Efiks and their relation with European traders over two hundred years ago. It is remarkable that inspite of Efik sophistication, their fundamental customs and culture are still strictly adhered to.

When he set out to write his log book, little did Antera Duke realise that fragments of it which survived a World War II fire in a Scottish library, would occupy a jealously guarded position on the reference shelves of other libraries of the world, or that even what was later published would now be out of print and still in great demand. It is only fitting that some attempt be made to give a character sketch of the man who had the foresight to maintain a log book of his business transactions and social activities. With no other sources to refer to, we have had to rely on the entries in his diary as we feel that through these we can glean some data with which to write about him.

Antera Duke lived in the 18th century and was described by Daryll Forde as 'an Efik slave-trading chief.'

The most important thing we have learnt about this man is that he was a very serious minded person for whom time and the weather were very essential in the performance of his business which was slave trading. This was why he generally opened his entries with references to the weather and time. He had thus left us with a valuable record of the Calabar climate two hundred years ago which when compared to the present day was no different.

We have also seen in this record that between 1785 and 1788, the period covered by his diary, a total of 7,511 slaves were exported to the West Indies.<sup>5</sup> How many of these were his quota, it is not possible to say but certain it is, that he made good profits from his undertaking for he sometimes ploughed back some of his money into building houses with the help of the

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Antera Duke lived in the 18th century and was described by Daryll Forde as 'an Efik slave-trading chief.'

The most important thing we have learnt about this man is that he was a very serious minded person for whom time and the weather were very essential in the performance of his business which was slave trading. This was why he generally opened his entries with references to the weather and time. He had thus left us with a valuable record of the Calabar climate two hundred years ago which when compared to the present day was no different.

We have also seen in this record that between 1785 and 1788, the period covered by his diary, a total of 7,511 slaves were exported to the West Indies.<sup>5</sup> How many of these were his quota, it is not possible to say but certain it is, that he made good profits from his undertaking for he sometimes ploughed back some of his money into building houses with the help of the

English supercargoes, who, although they were not allowed to live on land, freely associated with the Efiks. Would that those houses had been built with more permanent materials, a good part of what was then Old Calabar would still be extant and might have been taken over by the National Commission for Museums and Antiquities!

Antera Duke, the Efik gentleman of the 18th century, would be a man after the heart of the Efikman of today for he never joked with the customary rites of the Ekpe Confraternity just as the modern Efikman (if he were an Ekpe member), would jealously guard them. He was a senior member of Ekpe as is seen in the first entry in his diary on the 18th of January 1785 which opens with a detailed account of Ekpe activities.<sup>6</sup> He painstakingly recorded the names of Ekpe initiates and the amount paid by each of them, and on another occasion, two years later, on the 31st August, 1787, when Jimmy Henshaw was made 'King Ekpe' (Obong Ekpe), he carefully listed the names of all the beneficiaries of the Ekpe assessment paid by Henshaw.<sup>7</sup> That entry also revealed the names of some of his contemporaries like Eyo Willy Honesty (Eyo I) and Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho (Eyamba III).

Apart from participation in Ekpe rituals, Antera Duke was a stickler for other aspects of Efik traditions for he made constant references in his diaries to 'God Basin' (sacred dish) or Usan Idang, Usan Abasi (God's dish), 'Making Doctor' (Sacrifice), 'Chopping Doctor' (Swearing by Mbiam or Eseré) or 'Drinking Doctor'<sup>8</sup> (Also swearing). As a highly respected member of the community, he also sat in judgement on wrongdoers for he recorded that one of Egbo Young's wives had in a fight broken the teeth of her mate. The Mosaic Law was immediately applied when the elders ruled that the offending wife's teeth be also broken as a reprisal, as this was the only thing that would appease her rival.

We see Antera Duke as a fully matured man with a high sense of responsibility; reliable and one of the most influential leaders of his day, who was respected not only by his people but also by the supercargoes.

When his uncle King Duke Ephraim II died on the 4th of July, 1786,<sup>9</sup> it fell to him to make all the arrangements for his funeral obsequies and we infer from this that he was the Etubom of his House. Upon the public announcement of the King's death, four months later, he calmly recorded that 'at 5 o'clock in the morning — we began to cut slaves' heads off, fifty heads in that one day...'<sup>10</sup> Some might consider him ruthless, cold-blooded and inhuman but it should be remembered that this was 'country fashion', not of his own making and that because of the Efik's firm belief in the continuity of life after death, it was only natural that some of man's possessions should by custom, go with him. Apart from directing his uncle's

funeral rites we also see him participating in the selection of another 'King of All Calabar,'<sup>11</sup> this time King Sam Esien Ambo<sup>12</sup> (Oku Esien Ekpe Oku Atai).

Antera appeared to be a powerful man for when King Duke Ephraim sent to ask him to send men to help catch a cow, he sent the men away and pursued and caught the cow single-handed, a feat comparable to the killing or catching of a leopard! This earned him the reward of a 'big fish' from the King.<sup>13</sup>

On another occasion when it was reported to him that a Bakassy gentleman who, when King Duke Ephraim was alive, was afraid to come to Calabar had re-appeared after his death, it was Antera Duke who caught the man and carried him personally into a slave ship. Said he, 'I carried him on board myself...'<sup>14</sup>

He had a high sense of responsibility and showed concern for the well-being of others. When news got to him that Coffee Duke who had earlier refused to 'Chop doctor' to clear himself of responsibility for King Duke Ephraim's death, had threatened to set fire to his houses, he, Antera, caused Ekpe to be blown on the 8th of January, 1788, to forbid everyone to sleep in their houses in order to avoid being burnt to death.<sup>15</sup> Also in the same month, on the night of the 17th on observing a fire in Potter Antera's house, he gave the alarm and himself climbed on the roof and helped to 'catch fire' (or put it out).

He never brooked any nonsense or impediment to his commercial pursuits for when it was reported to him that Andony people were catching women and harassing market canoes, he quickly assembled some of his men, fitted out a punitive expedition and went down to Seven Fathoms Point in the region of Parrot Island where they chased and captured the offenders on the 1st of June 1785.<sup>16</sup> The following month on the 23rd July, 1785, we see him and others accompanying King Duke Ephraim to Captain Fairweather's ship to collect comeys.<sup>17</sup> In the course of his business he travelled long distances to Umon, Eniong, Itu, Cameroons and many other traditional Efik trading posts, including Ekoi (Coqua) and Ofunatam.

We see Antera Duke as a good husband who held one of his wives, Awa Ofiong, in high regard. He constantly referred to her as 'my dear' and we are persuaded to presume that she was his 'AKWA ANWAN IMA' his favourite and trusted senior wife. It was Awa, who on the 2nd of June brought home his dead slave from Ododop.<sup>18</sup> She also made all preparations for the burial of his brother 'EBO' on the 20th of February, 1787.<sup>19</sup> When 'EBA' the wife of his man Yellow Hogan Abasi who had escaped her husband's bullets on the 19th of September, 1787, for an undisclosed offence, was again to take an oath, it was Awa Ofiong who supervised the administration

of the oath which eventually killed poor Eba. This was not to say that Antera Duke was blind to Awa's shortcomings for he recorded on the 23rd of October, 1785, that he was angry with her for neglecting to have the water pots filled.<sup>20</sup> When his mother joined him to reprimand Awa and she had answered her back he became 'damn more angry!' Mother-in-law trouble is ageless!

We have also seen him angry on other occasions such as when Egbo Young said something uncomplimentary about his father during an Ekpe discussion<sup>21</sup> and when Sam Ambo and George Cobham blew Ekpe on Captain Fairweather. On the Fairweather matter he recorded that they 'saw Eyo and Ebetim come down with Esin Ambo and they went to Sam and George Cobham to make them settle with Captain Fairweather. This was on the 26th of October, 1786.'<sup>22</sup>

On the lighter side we see him as a man who enjoyed his drink when occasion demanded it. He would invite the ships' captains to his house for dinner, or dine on board any of the ships. Although christianity had not yet been introduced into Calabar, it is significant that due perhaps to the influence of the ships' captains, Antera Duke recorded no activities on Christmas Day in 1785,<sup>23</sup> 1786<sup>24</sup> and 1787<sup>25</sup> except that he and his friends including the captains had what he termed "New Year's" dinner and in the case of Christmas 1785 they also "drink all day until night." We see him also at coming of age ceremonies where young ladies went through the cloth tying rituals.<sup>26</sup> He himself was a man who liked to wear fine clothes for he recorded on the 26th of May 1786 that he and two others 'dressed as white men and went to meet captain Combesboch's boat.'<sup>27</sup> During the funeral obsequies of King Duke Ephraim II, he recorded on the 11th of November 1786<sup>28</sup>, that there was a Grand Ekpe display and that they were 'dressed in long cloth and Ekpe cloth (Ukara) and hat and jacket and many fine things...'<sup>1</sup> Still during the obsequies on the 8th of December, 1786, he recorded that they 'fired 28 great guns, one for each ship on the river... We had shaved our heads first and we wore fine hats and fine clothes and handkerchiefs...'<sup>29</sup> On the following day the 9th of December, 1786, he wore new cloths to watch an 'Egbo-sherry play' which was apparently put on in honour of the departed king as a token of friendship.<sup>30</sup>

His love of finery did not stop with his person for he recorded on the 4th of December, 1787, that he had copper leg manacles (EWOK) put on his young wife's legs by the blacksmith to whom he paid 'one rod, 5 Boostam yams and one jar of mimbo'<sup>31</sup> (palm wine). This was obviously in preparation for her coming of age ceremony on the 1st of January, 1788, when he made her 'wear cloth for the first time and be a woman...'<sup>32</sup>

His constant allusion to dressing gives the lie to later assertions that Efiks did not wear clothes until late 19th century. We have seen that even children went through the cloth-tying ceremony when they came of age long before the arrival of missionaries or the establishment of British administration in Calabar. This shows that nudity was a social practice with a cultural significance. Children went naked before puberty. The girls of this grade were called NKA IFERI' (band of naked girls) and the boys were called MKPARAWA. At puberty both go through the cloth tying ceremony called UKUNE OFONG. And yet we know that girls were not entirely without adornment for although Hope Waddell demurred at the sight of a bevy of naked young girls who usually passed by his house to the spring, he admitted that while their 'clothing was shamefully scanty, ornaments were abundant...' <sup>33</sup>

It is however ironical that when in those days they dressed in their simple traditional manner, they were called 'naked savages' and when as happened in the 1870's they dressed in full European costumes with gowns, shoes and hats, reformers like Mrs Edgerley (wife of Rev. Edgerley of Old Town fame) declared that '... This is an evil which will mend itself in time...' <sup>34</sup>

Antera Duke was a friend of the Supercargoes Archibald Forest and Thomas Taylor for it was perhaps one of them who in a different hand wrote down Duke's name at the end of the entry for the 20th of September, 1787, followed by the Latin words "Ejus Liber" (his book) obviously referring to the diary, with their own names written underneath. <sup>35</sup>

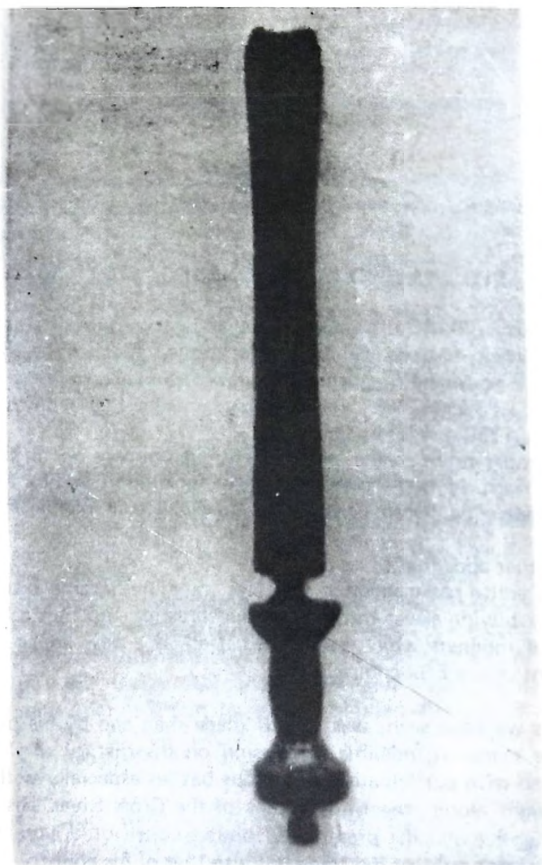
We have seen from his diary that he was a meticulous and astute business man who led an extremely active and full life. Through it we have also seen him as a humane and conscientious person with a high sense of duty; a man who liked his food, his person, his business, his culture and his people.

His character can best be summarised in the following observation recorded by Nicholls in 1805:

I then called upon another Chief and trader, Antera Duke, whose appearance and countenance did not at all please me, having a bold and daring countenance, with some appearance of malignity lurking about it: he possesses apparently great activity of mind. <sup>36</sup>

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**CALABAR SWORD.**

This belonged to the first King Eyo.

EYO NSA'S SWORD

## CHAPTER 13

### EYO NSA (EYO WILLY HONESTY) <sup>c</sup>1730 – 1820

Aye in his book "Old Calabar Through The Centuries" states that Eyo Nsa was believed to have been born prior to the middle of the 18th century. This must be so for he fought on the side of Duke Town in the internecine war with Old Town in 1767.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore possible that he might have been born around 1730 or even earlier.

All evidences point to the fact that although he was not of royal birth, yet by marriage, he had created a dynasty for himself and by sheer ability and intelligence he became the most powerful man of his day at Creek Town.

Latham further adds that :-

By his active participation in the slave trade, he became extremely rich, and by buying slaves for business and prestige, built up a large household of retainers which established itself as a new lineage group and segment of the Efik community.<sup>2</sup>

Eyo Nsa, as we have seen, was a self made man and by his position and influence he made an indelible impression on the history of Creek Town. He is credited with participation in various battles especially with reference to those fought along the trade routes of the Cross River. His own trade was very extensive and the presence of pirates constituted a great hazard to the prosperity not only of his trade but also that of his country men. Hence when the Pirates of Mbiakong, headed by Akpan Akpakpan Uko (or Uko Mbiakong) kept up the harassment at the mouth of the Ikpa Creek, a prize was placed on the head of Uko Mbiakong. Several pledges were made by the leaders of Creek Town and the rest of Calabar to reward whoever brought back the head of the pirate. One of those was made by Esien Ekpe Oku, founder of Ekpe Efik Iboku and head of the Ambo Ward of Mbarakom, who

promised that whoever succeeded in the perilous assignment would marry his daughter INYANG ESIEN EKPE OKU. Aye describes Eyo as a 'mighty man of valour and the Achilles of the Efiks'<sup>3</sup> and as Ifemesia put it -

Eyo Nsa displayed the military prowess which established him in Efik-land....<sup>4</sup>

He succeeded in killing and beheading the pirate and brought the coveted trophy home amidst great jubilation. Esien Ekpe Oku, regardless of Eyo Nsa's genealogical disabilities, redeemed his pledge and Inyang Esien was given in marriage to him. Princesses from other ruling houses were also said to have joined Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku when their fathers gave them in marriage to Eyo. Some of them were Anwatim Ukpon Neneng of Ikoneto. Ako Anwadet Eniang Nkot of Mbiabo Ikoneto, Okoho Ibitam Eyo of Ibitam House and Nyomo Anwan Nyomo Asido Efa of Adiabo. Inyang Esien Ekpe Oku bore Eyo Eyo Nsa II) and Okoho Ibitam Eyo bore Okoho, who in turn bore Nsa Okoho who later became the 'Christian King' Eyo VII<sup>6</sup> By this action, Eyo Nsa automatically acquired freedom of the land. Whether Eyo and Inyang had other children or not, it is not clear but they did have their very famous son, Eyo Eyo Nsa or Eyo II.

Upon the death of Esien Ekpe Oku, who was both IYAMBA EKPE I and OBONG EBONKO, the latter title passed to Eyo Nsa through Inyang Esien and has remained in the Eyo Nsa Ward till this day.<sup>6</sup> This event must have taken place after the battle of 1767 when Old Town was bombarded<sup>7</sup> and before 1785, for Antera Duke, whose famous diary commenced from 1785 makes numerous references to him. The first one was on the 25th of January 1785 when Duke recorded that they did several things on that day which included attendance at the coming of age ceremony of Eyo's daughter.

This reads as follows.

About 4 a.m. I went to Eyo Willy Honesty's house and we walked up to see Willy Honesty in his yard. So he killed a big goat for us. Soon after we walked up to see our town and took one great gun to put in a canoe for one of Egbo Young's men to bring home to Aqua Landing. So we went to Henshaw Town and came back and at 3 o'clock (after) noon we and everybody went to dash Eyo Willy Honesty's daughter. . . 1496 rods besides cloth, gunpowder and iron. So we played all day until night. .<sup>8</sup>

After this first entry, other references made by Duke to Eyo Honesty were either in connection with trade or Ekpe activities. For instance, Duke Ephraim II had died on the 4th of July 1786. On the 24th of March 1787 Duke makes the following entry when it became necessary to look for a successor:

... At 12 o'clock Willy Honesty called all the gentlemen to meet in Egbo Cobham's Cabin to decide who we will make King of Old Calabar...<sup>9</sup>

"All the gentlemen' of course referred to Ekpe title holders and being Obong Ebonko the part played by him in all Ekpe obsequies was only second in importance to that of the Iyamba Ekpe, which post was then held by Egbo Young.

Latham quoting from Nicholls gave the following description of Eyo Nsa as he looked in 1805:-

... In person the King of Ebongo is about six feet high, with an extreme good natured negro countenance, has a very commanding deportment and is a very great warrior...<sup>10</sup>

We have already seen that he was indeed a very powerful person both physically and materially. We also gather from Duke's diary that his other contemporaries were Egbo Young Eyamba and Prince Duke Ephraim.

Latham records that Eyo and Egbo Young 'had dominated Efik politics since the death of Duke Ephraim in 1786....'<sup>11</sup> 'and his office as Obong Ebonko earned him one of the highest shares in money and other articles received as Ekpe assessment.' On the 31st of August 1787 apart from the largest share of 25 rods and a goat which went to Egbo Young as Iyamba Ekpe, the next largest of 20 rods and a goat each, went to him and King Ambo.<sup>12</sup>

Eyo also had one of the largest shares of the comeys paid by the supercargoes. They respected and feared his influence over his trademen and for this reason always gave him two additional coppers for the oil he sold.<sup>13</sup> As has already been said, Eyo was a very hard working, very earnest and prosperous trader. The scrupulous manner in which he transacted his business earned him the respect of the supercargoes who added the word "HONESTY" to his name and as we know, the name Honesty has stuck to the family.<sup>14</sup>

Eyo's activities brought much prosperity to Creek Town. Nair recalls contemporary accounts as stating that Creek Town prospered because it 'had the best and most indefatigable traders.'<sup>15</sup> This naturally incurred

the envy of Duke Town and other neighbouring towns. Eyo was at the zenith of his power and fame. But the death of King Eyamba III in 1814 brought about a turning point in his life. The vacant office of "King of All Calabar" had to be filled and both Eyo Nsa and Great Duke Ephraim who by now had also attained considerable power and wealth, were interested in being successors. Great Duke was bent on being the next ruler and brought up a charge of usurpation of royalty against Eyo Nsa. Waddell recorded that they conspired to break him down as follows:-

Secretly and suddenly they assembled at his capital (Creek Town) and summoned him to the "Palaver House" to answer an Egbo charge. The Egbo institution being the highest court in the country, the source of supreme authority, he could not refuse. The charge was a trumpery one but it sufficed. He was condemned to pay an enormous fine which nearly ruined him. They ate him up, or (as they expressed it), "chopped him to nothing..."<sup>16</sup>

When he died in 1820, over two hundred persons including wives, virgins and slaves were sacrificed at his funeral and wealth was squandered to exemplify the Efik concept of pomp and grandeur attendant upon a person of his status.<sup>16</sup>

He was succeeded as ward head by his brother Ekpenyong Nsa described as a 'rash, proud, headstrong man who scattered the families.'<sup>17</sup> Great Duke Ephraim although Eyo's rival, who apart from being a King, was also Iyamba Ekpe and was suspected to have been at the head of the conspiracy against him, nevertheless gave protection to some of Eyo's dependants including Eyo Eyo Nsa.<sup>18</sup> The Old metropolis began to run to ruin as one by one people were moving out to take refuge at Duke Town or in their plantations. It was said that the court yards of the stately homes were overgrown with bush and leopards were seen to prowl through the grass-grown streets even in the day time.

Contrary to popular opinion, Eyo Nsa was not the King of Creek Town but Head or Etinyin of the Eyo Nsa ward.<sup>19</sup> Noah quoted Henry Nicholls as having made the following observation in 1805 after having spent some time with Eyo: <sup>20</sup>

... called upon the King, who infact is nobody being a nominal title, the traders possessing all the power. The king is a very old man, at least eighty years of age, but does not appear in the least infirm but

very thin and his skin is much wrinkled...<sup>21</sup>

Noah says it was apparent that even before the death of the old, wrinkled King, Eyo Honesty was the actual ruler of Creek Town in everything but name, awaiting the death of the King. The identity of the old and wrinkled king is not known nor is it apparent that Eyo Nsa succeeded him.

But as stated earlier, he was not the King and Aye citing Grant said that 'Eyo was a great warrior but was never crowned...'<sup>22</sup>

It appears to be little known that Eyo Nsa played some role in the writing of the Efik language. In a memorandum published by APELLAC (Association for the Promotion of Efik Language, Literature and Culture), we are told that while the "NSIBIDI," a sacred and secret writing was known and used by only the members of the Ekpe hierarchy, the first attempt made by an individual to write the Efik language was made in 1812 when Eyo Honesty I, an Efik Chief, tried to adapt the English alphabet to his vernacular Efik.

He came out with the following:<sup>23</sup>

Eyo's Vocabulary	Modern Efik	English
ERBOIR	Ebua	Dog
WANG	Nwan	Woman
ERTO	Eto	Tree
HEKONG	Ikang	Fire or Gun
HENUNG	Inung	Salt

Although not learned yet Eyo Nsa was intelligent enough to build up a vocabulary which was not much different from the one established by scholars much later.

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## CHAPTER 14

### EKPENYONG EKPENYONG OFIONG OKOHO (DIED 1855)

He was popularly called "MR. YOUNG" in missionary chronicles and other documents.<sup>1</sup>

A brother of King Eyamba V (Edem Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho), he was "Esukwa Efik" (Speaker) during the reign of Great Duke Ephraim from 1814 – 1834 and continued in this capacity in the reign of King Eyamba V from 1834 – 1847.<sup>2</sup> When Eyamba died he was one of the contenders for the throne but lost to Archibong Duke (Efiom Okoho Asibong Ekpo Efiom Okoho) who became Archibong I.<sup>3</sup>

Being a highly influential man he could not very well be set aside and so he became Archibong's Prime Minister and "AKARANDOT-OBIO" (Prime Minister), from 1849 – 1852.<sup>4</sup> This did not however satisfy him for he was usually at daggers drawn with the king and held conflicting views over social and political issues when it suited him. He was moreover adamant that Archibong should never be conferred with the *Iyambaship* title. He felt that he (Young) had stronger claims to it as he had inherited it from his father Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho (Eyamba III). He declared that Archibong I was a "Whiteman's King," having been crowned by Lieutenant Selwyn of the Royal Navy, and that as such he (Young) was like his brother Eyamba V, "King of all Blackman."<sup>5</sup>

The people of Duke House were equally determined that Mr. Young should not be the *Iyamba* because of the strong opposition of the Eyamba House to the selection of Archibong I as King. When they saw that Mr Young was still pressing for the office and was in fact preparing for his installation, they brought a large number of their plantation retainers into town to oppose him physically. With no money to enable him push his claims he eventually lost the fight but of significance also, was the fact that neither the king nor anyone else was allowed to hold the office. When therefore the king died in 1852 and the question of succession once more

reared its head, Mr Young immediately commenced to sign himself "EYAMBA VI."<sup>6</sup> This action greatly angered Archibong's mother OBUMA who, Latham tells us, summoned the Blood Men and offered them 100,000 copper rods if they could force the Eyamba ward leaders to submit themselves to the Esere ordeal in order to clear themselves of involvement in Archibong's death.<sup>7</sup> In this way, Duke House hoped to be revenged on the decimation of their kinsmen in 1834 when it became necessary for them to clear themselves in connection with the death of Great Duke Ephraim IV. A great number of Duke family was reported to have died by the Esere ordeal on that occasion.<sup>8</sup>

During the witch-hunting that took place on the occasion of King Archibong's death, Mr. Young was challenged to take the bean to exonerate himself and he promised to do so on the following day if Obuma would join him. Meanwhile, he took the fastest boat to Creek Town followed by his brother Ntiero Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho. The worthy lady herself, who was a woman of iron will, threatened to blow up the town if anyone attempted to make her take the bean.<sup>9</sup>

Kingship eluded Mr Young once again for his prestige had been seriously damaged by his flight to Creek Town and this provided the much needed excuse to exclude him from the contest. Duke Ephraim a brother of Great Duke was elected Duke Ephraim V but the post of Iyamba still remained unfilled.<sup>10</sup>

We are told that Mr Young was not a favourite of the supercargoes who according to them, was 'a poor trader.' Reverend Goldie however, thought very favourably of him and described him as a 'sharp and clever gentleman,'<sup>11</sup> while Rev. Hope Waddell considered him 'clear minded and intelligent.' He had spent some time in England in the early 19th century to learn the English Language. He later returned to teach in the schools that were being run then. Hope Waddell records that he taught the young men and did not charge them in cash but in kind at the rate of a slave per gentleman!<sup>12</sup> Who says he was a poor trader?

Mr. Young was indeed very intelligent and Waddell said that he 'spoke English better than any man in the country except King Eyo. For this reason he was engaged on a short term basis to help with the completion of the Efik vocabulary which the Missionaries were compiling for the lithographic press which, he declared with admiration to be a 'stone that makes book in one minute.' He also helped the Missionaries to interpret their sermons and deliberations at church meetings.<sup>13</sup> He had in fact been one of the signatories to the letter inviting the missionaries in 1843.

Mr. Young was a diarist and his records are quite extensive and cover several reigns including those of Willy Tom Robin of Obutong, Ekpenyong

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He was popularly called "MR. YOUNG" in missionary chronicles and other documents.<sup>1</sup>

A brother of King Eyamba V (Edem Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho), he was "Esukwa Efik" (Speaker) during the reign of Great Duke Ephraim from 1814 – 1834 and continued in this capacity in the reign of King Eyamba V from 1834 – 1847.<sup>2</sup> When Eyamba died he was one of the contenders for the throne but lost to Archibong Duke (Efiom Okoho Asibong Ekpo Efiom Okoho) who became Archibong I.<sup>3</sup>

Being a highly influential man he could not very well be set aside and so he became Archibong's Prime Minister and "AKARANDOT-OBIO" (Prime Minister), from 1849 – 1852.<sup>4</sup> This did not however satisfy him for he was usually at daggers drawn with the king and held conflicting views over social and political issues when it suited him. He was moreover adamant that Archibong should never be conferred with the lyambaship title. He felt that he (Young) had stronger claims to it as he had inherited it from his father Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho (Eyamba III). He declared that Archibong I was a "Whiteman's King," having been crowned by Lieutenant Selwyn of the Royal Navy, and that as such he (Young) was like his brother Eyamba V, "King of all Blackman."<sup>5</sup>

The people of Duke House were equally determined that Mr. Young should not be the lyamba because of the strong opposition of the Eyamba House to the selection of Archibong I as King. When they saw that Mr Young was still pressing for the office and was in fact preparing for his installation, they brought a large number of their plantation retainers into town to oppose him physically. With no money to enable him push his claims he eventually lost the fight but of significance also, was the fact that neither the king nor anyone else was allowed to hold the office. When therefore the king died in 1852 and the question of succession once more

Ofiong Okoho (Eyamba III who was also his father), Great Duke Ephraim IV (Iyamba IV), Eyamba V, and ofcourse his great rival, King Archibong I. The handing over of these documents to the National Archives of Nigeria would ensure not only their being preserved in a manner befitting old documents but also that researchers would have an unbiased and authentic source of information in certain aspects of Efik history which are at present being deliberately distorted for diabolical political reasons by some writers.

Mr Young died on the 11th of February, 1855,<sup>14</sup> and it was only after that event that the Iyambaship stalemate was resolved and his brother Ntiero Ekpenyong Ofiong Okoho was installed Eyamba VI in 1856.<sup>15</sup>

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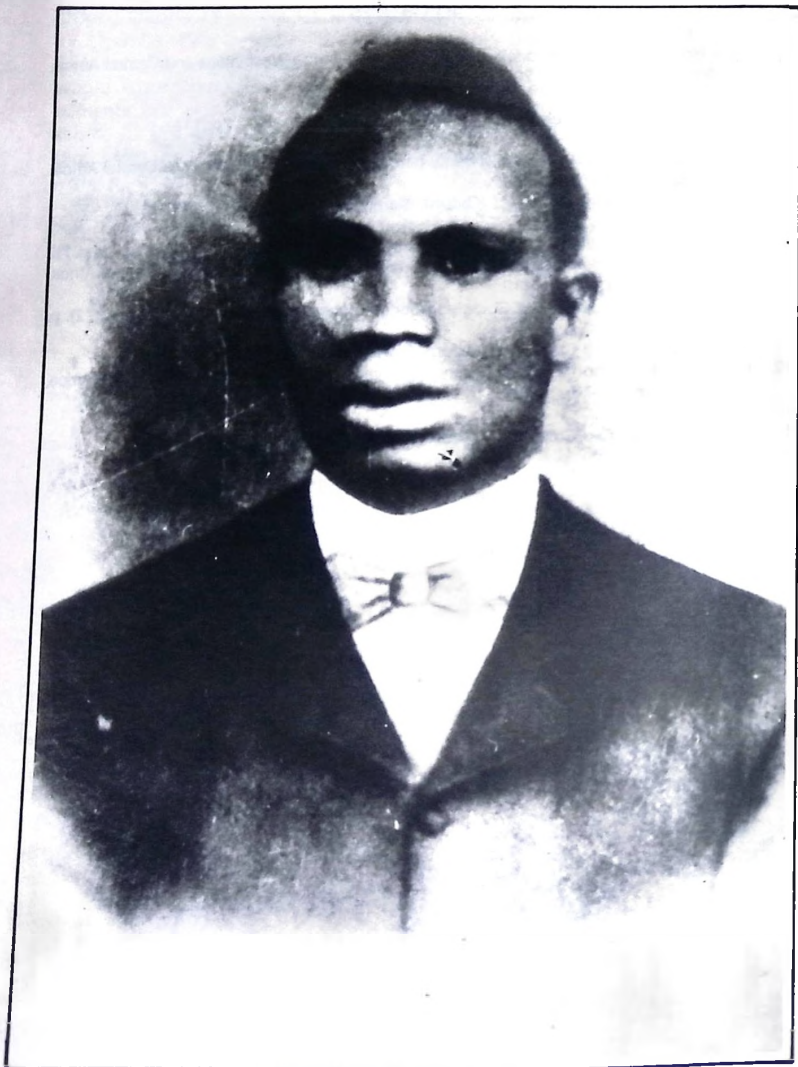
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**JOSEPH HENSHAW**

## CHAPTER 15

### JOSEPH HENSHAW — d. 1884

Joseph Henshaw's other names were Efanga Ekeng Iwatt. His mother was Nyomo Etonko who hailed from Uruan Ekpe in the Cameroons. He was the father of Daniel Henshaw (Nyong Efanga) who became a famous political agent in Eket at the turn of the 19th Century. His other sons were Ewa Efanga, who became Native Court Clerk in 1894 and Efanga Efanga became Chief Sanitary Inspector in his time.<sup>1</sup> This shows that like his cousin, Richard Henshaw, he gave his sons good education. Not much is known about Joseph's early years but he must have been an extremely enterprising and diligent young man who was in later years to become the deputy head of Henshaw Town, the head being James Henshaw III who was his cousin.

In fact he was one of the principal figures in the Hensho/Dukean war of 1875 for in November of the same year, he was despatched by his people to Fernando Po to meet Acting Consul H.C. Tait with a petition against Duke Town for persistent acts of provocation<sup>2</sup> evidently an aftermath of the factional war which had taken place between them two months earlier.

The end of this war had left Henshaw Town in a shambles for its economy was ruined because of pillage and plunder. There were very few goods with which to revive the economy and it was at this critical point that Henshaw Town began to look further afield to the Qua Iboe region to start afresh.<sup>3</sup>

The architect of this vision and enterprise was Joseph Henshaw, described by Nair as a man who was destined to play an important part in the economic development of the Henshaws.<sup>4</sup>

During his trip to Fernando Po to deliver his people's petition, Joseph Henshaw had been shown round the cocoa plantations there. He bought some cocoa seeds which he took to Calabar in the hope of commencing a lucrative business in the commodity.<sup>5</sup>

In 1879, he crossed to Oron where he bought up some land on the left bank of the Cross River from Chief Ating Edem Umo of Iquta and settled

down. Here he commenced the cultivation of cocoa, the first cash crop to be grown in the Cross River area.<sup>6</sup> He also dealt in the sale of palm oil and palm kernel. The cocoa trade was at this time a very profitable one and traders and farmers from Calabar plantations in Akpabuyo and Odukpani bought cocoa seeds from him which they also planted and sold. Thus was cocoa introduced to Calabar and its environs by the enterprise and commercial acumen of Joseph Henshaw.<sup>7</sup>

#### TRADE IN QUA IBOE

In 1880 soon after he had established a port in Idua in Oron, he opened up trade in Ibeno and Eket and parts of Ibibioland which were thickly populated. He worked in collaboration with George Watts, a combination which was said to be a convenient one for the two men.<sup>8</sup>

Watts was a tough and independent trader who had however been unable to keep up with the stiff competition of the other trading firms in Calabar especially as his firm Irvine and Woodward had extended its credit too generously, thereby draining its resources. Again the Hensho/Dukean War had also affected him because the bulk of his trade had been with Henshaw Town. Even the loan which had been made available to him by John Holt in 1877 to resuscitate his business was not of much help and he therefore decided to form the alliance with Joseph Henshaw to exploit new fields of trade.<sup>9</sup> They had an agreement whereby if any other firms wished to trade in the Qua Iboe area operation, 2/3 of whatever was paid by the firms for trading facilities would go to Joseph Henshaw because it was he who had discovered the place.<sup>10</sup>

A factory was accordingly established by the two men and a European agent was put in charge. John Holt sent out quantities of trade goods in addition to what Watts himself was able to buy up the river. On the 7th of February, 1881, Watts obtained trading rights from the Chiefs in the area, who also gave him land to build more factories.<sup>11</sup>

Back home in Calabar, Duke Town did not oppose this move by the Henshaws possibly because the latter's area of activity did not conflict with their own. But stiff opposition came from King Jaja of Opobo who was claiming sovereignty over the whole of the Qua Iboe area. Earlier in 1873 he had forced Miller Brothers to withdraw from there and on the 11th of April, 1881, with some fifty canoes armed with cannons and rifles, he bombarded seven villages and burnt five of them.<sup>12</sup> His men searched in vain for Joseph Henshaw and resorted instead to looting and plundering the factory. Over a hundred prisoners were taken, most of

them women and children. <sup>13</sup>

On June 8, 1881, Jaja formally proclaimed himself King of the Qua Iboe. When Consul Hewett warned him that his territory did not extend that far he replied:-

My first and last words are that the country (Qua Iboe) belongs to me and I do not want white traders there. <sup>14</sup>

In February, 1882, John Holt, who, we may remember, had supplied some trade goods to Watts, appealed to the British Foreign Office to protect Watts and annex the entire coast from Lagos to the Cameroons to Britain in the interest of commerce. But this was not to be until 1884. <sup>15</sup>

While King Jaja was holding sway in the Qua Iboe area the people of Oron were placing conditions before Joseph Henshaw and Watts. They demanded tributes to be paid to them before the two men could evacuate their produce through their land. <sup>16</sup> They resisted and there was a war. One remarkable thing that happened was that in 1882, Duke Town, which in 1875 fought a war against Henshaw Town, this time combined with Henshaw Town to launch an attack on Oron, at Uya Oron. The latter were defeated and passage through the area was no more threatened. <sup>17</sup>

#### CHURCH WORK

Joseph Henshaw was said to be a "link man" between Henshaw Town, the Missionaries and traders until he left Calabar for Oron.

The United Presbyterian Church Missionary Record shows that when Rev Alexander Ross went exploring through Efut in the Cameroons in December, 1878, Joseph Henshaw who had accompanied him gave him hospitality as recorded by Ross himself when they got to a place called Uruan Ekpe..

"J. Henshaw, a native of the town, is a Calabar Chief, and when at home, a regular attender at our church." He acted as interpreter for me into the Efut language. ... On Monday morning , I felt greatly refreshed after sweet sleep, a good bath and pleasant food – the gift of Joseph Henshaw..." <sup>18</sup>

We have therefore seen Joseph Henshaw not only as an enterprising trader but also as a dedicated man who was always ready to contribute to the spread of the gospel by being personally involved in the exercise.

He died in Calabar in 1884 not in Oron as recorded by Nair.<sup>19</sup> Although Nair lists him as one of the Political Agents, this is not likely since he died in 1884, the year, that the Treaty of Protection was signed between the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar and Britain. Political Agents were appointed after the establishment of British administration in Calabar in 1891.<sup>20</sup>

The young Calabar spirit which he symbolized had met with several reverses in the 1880s.

In February 1885, upon the request of George Watts, the British Government reiterated its stand that the sovereignty over the Qua Iboe territory belonged to the British and not to King Jaja and that if he molested any European there he would be punished with a heavy fine.<sup>21</sup>

Joseph Henshaw's fortunes were not totally depleted for he left considerable landed property in Oron. The cocoa trade thrived until the first World War broke out.<sup>22</sup>

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## CHAPTER 16

### COCO-OTU BASSEY: DIED 1899

#### PREAMBLE

Occupying geographically advantageous positions on the Calabar River and estuary of the Cross River, Efiks of Old Calabar used their ingenuity to promote their commercial activities, by establishing trading posts wherever it was possible to do so and using them as springboards into the Ibibio and Upper Cross River hinterland as well as that of their own kith and kin: the Eniongs. Thus in the latter region, they controlled the markets at Atan Onoyom and Obio Usiere; in the Upper Cross River Area they controlled Uwet and in Ibibio land they founded markets in Ifiayong, Issiet Adadia, Ikpa, Nwaniba Beach. King Eyo Honesty VII established the Ikpa market while Eyo Ma, a relative of Obong Eyo Ita also of Creek Town, established Ntrukpum in Esuk Odu in Uruan. <sup>1</sup>

In the same manner, Otu Abasi Ofiong Okoho Eyamba had acquired considerable landed property at Mbiabo and the Itu areas.

Here we shall digress briefly to have a look at Itu, one of the most important centres of Efik enterprise.

In memorandum No. P.C.52/1929 of the 12th of February, 1929, to the Resident, Calabar, Jeffreys who was then District Officer in Itu had this to say:-

'The origin of the present town of Itu is not that declared before Mr. Justice Webber in 1911 by the present Itu inhabitants, who for their own purposes claim to be a branch of the Itams. They are repudiated by the Itams, and, what is more significant, do not share Itam Clan taboos, e.g. the eating of monkeys.'

All the surrounding Ibibios have no hesitancy in stating that these

Itus came from the Itu town up the river. The name also is not an Ibibio one whereas the Itams are Ibibios...<sup>2</sup>

G. H. Findlay, Resident for Calabar Province in his covering report on Itam Clan confirmed that:

'Itam Clan will have nothing to do with the Township of Itu although some Itams who live in Itu are members of the present Itu Native Court which has jurisdiction on the Itu land on the area of the Township....'<sup>3</sup>

Finally, an intelligence report on Itu for the period 1933 – 1934 by the Acting District Officer, R. K. Floyer added:

'It is not certain when the Itus came ... but they differ from the Ibibios who surround them in organisation .... There are Itu settlements at Itu Mbuzo in Bende district and the Akunakuna on the Cross River where the same family names are to be found but they are too far away to be included in any proposals for re-organisation.'<sup>4</sup>

As disclosed by Jeffreys in his memorandum, Itu is not an Ibibio word or name. The fact is that the Itus are Efiks but in a land case presided over by Mr Justice Webber in 1911, they had claimed to be of Ibibio origin because they wanted a share of Itam land.<sup>5</sup> They had, like other Efiks dispersed from Ibom but went their own way and settled where they now are. This was disclosed by the Clan Head for Itu, Etinyin Edet Okon Ekpo V on the occasion of the visit of the Obong of Calabar, Edidem Bassey Eyo Ephraim Adam III to Itu in July, 1984<sup>6</sup> Itu has always been represented in the Court of the Obong of Calabar.

The town and its offshoot, Obot Etim, occupy a strategic position which in former days became an important entrepot for both slavery and palmoil trade. Its kinship with the Efik was an added impetus to the spate of trading which was carried on by the latter who, coming from Creek Town and Duke Town, established smaller settlements along the river. There is consequently a considerable concentration of Efiks in Itu.

#### EARLY LIFE OF COCO OTU BASSEY

Thus, as already mentioned, did Otu Bassey establish his own settlement.

The story of Coco-Otu Bassey originates from a town in Inokon where he was born and named Okereke. Four years after the death of his father,

Okereke Ebru, he was like Jaja of Opobo, kidnapped by traders and taken to Amasu, another Inokon town where he was sold to an Eniong man called Ekpo Nta. The latter had been indebted to Otu Bassey and as he had no money with which to settle the debt, he substituted the fair-skinned Okereke who was a likeable lad and immediately took Otu Bassey's fancy. Whereupon the latter called him after himself saying he was his "Koko" or namesake.<sup>7</sup>

Fearing that Koko Otu Bassey might be retrieved by his people, he sent him to Duke Town to be taken care of by his old retainer "Bassey Africa," who, Nair recorded, handed him over to a white trader called, Wood, who was based in Fernando Po. We do not however believe that Bassey Africa had the power to sell or give over the lad without the approval of Otu Bassey. This belief is confirmed by Chief (Mrs) Hannah B. Otudor who on interview stated that Otu Bassey had given the boy into the custody of his friend Captain Wood.<sup>8</sup>

Be that as it may, young Coco Otu Bassey worked in ships and travelled as far as Sierra Leone and in those years acquired much learning and experience.<sup>9</sup>

The last person under whom he worked was one Robert Murray, Captain of the ship "ALMANTA" and it was through him that Coco Otu Bassey obtained his freedom paper from Consul Livingstone.<sup>10</sup> An attempt by Chief Esien Etim Ofiong in later years to submerge Coco-Otu Bassey's family under that of Otu Bassey as belonging to the latter, resulted in a long drawn court case instituted by the late Chief John Coco-Bassey Head of the Coco-Otu Bassey family, against Chief Esien Etim Ofiong. The case was won by Chief John Coco-Bassey who thereafter expunged the name OTU from the Coco-Otu Bassey family name which is now known as Coco-Bassey Family.<sup>11</sup>

#### LATER LIFE

On returning from Sierra Leone, Coco Otu Bassey, because of his experience was set up to take charge of the John Holt Trading Company in Calabar.<sup>12</sup> We are informed that the first thing he did when the opportunity afforded itself, was to build a storey house for his adopted father, Otu Bassey, in appreciation of what he had done for him. It was after doing this that he built his own house, an eloquent testimony to his fine character and humility.

### HIS WEALTH:

Coco Otu Bassey owned vast plantations at Itu where he cultivated cocoa, coffee and palm trees, which produce were sold to factories. He also founded Etehe Ntem which was to become his commercial headquarters. Part of it was later leased by Chief John Coco-Bassey to government for the manufacture of bricks which were conveyed to Calabar for the construction of the maximum security prison and some other government buildings as well as some staff quarters in the Hope Waddell Training Institution. The British officials who could not pronounce the name "ETEHE NTEM" called it "BRICKFIELD."<sup>13</sup>

Coco Otu Bassey had control northwards from Itu and on both banks of the Cross River where he sometimes consolidated his position by marrying into many of the communities.<sup>14</sup> One of such marriages was to the Iya of Akpabere who made vast lands available to him.<sup>15</sup> The papers of Chief Esien Etim Ofiong mention that some people sold themselves to him for protection as was the custom even before his time.<sup>16</sup>

He owned numerous canoes and employed men to man them and his other enterprises. Chief Onoyom Iya Nya Ita of Atan Onoyom, writing his autobiography in 1922, recorded the loss of one of Chief Coco-Bassey's canoes in 1889 in the Cross River opposite Atan.<sup>17</sup> Two of his steamboats "Ofiong" and "Otu Bassey" were used for the transportation of bricks from Etehe Ntem to Calabar.<sup>18</sup>

### HIS ARMY

In the days preceding the advent of colonial administration, when Calabar had been broken into a series of small republics, the head of each republic maintained his own army and many powerful noblemen and other wealthy men also organized and maintained their forces when called upon in times of emergency. Thus Coco Otu Bassey had his own army and gunboats, the most famous of which, the "JACKDAW" was presented by Chief John Coco-Bassey to the new British Administration, in addition to various military hardwares like guns, cannons and hand cast bells.<sup>19</sup> When in 1895 Efik settlements in Itu were attacked by Ibibios from Ididep and Use, they the Ibibios were routed by a combined force of government trained men and Coco-Bassey's army under the command of Vice Consul A. Galway.<sup>20</sup>

### POLITICAL AGENT

Because of his wide experience, reliability and influence, Coco Otu Bassey was in 1890 appointed President of the Itu Customary Court, a post he held until his death.

About two years after the establishment of the new Protectorate administration, Sir Claude Macdonald had initiated the policy of using African Political Agents to assist in the extension and consolidation of the territory. Their duties included acting as interpreters, ensuring peaceful conduct of trade, collection of political intelligence, having oversight of special government projects like road making and on occasions, leading campaigns against the interior peoples.

This policy was vigorously pursued by Consul-General Ralph Moor when he took over from Macdonald and in the Cross River area, Coco Otu Bassey was one of the first men to be selected, and did excellent work. He was not exactly an official of the Protectorate Government for he offered free services and permitted his residence to be used as a base for early colonial enterprise in Itu. In return, the British created opportunities for him to do good business as a trader. He used his good sense to disarm the people's hostility to government, breaking up blockades and obstacles to free flow of trade, but at the same time exploiting the prestige which his familiarity with the whitemen gave him in the eyes of the Upper Cross River inhabitants and in Ibibio and Ibo lands.<sup>21</sup> He extended the frontiers of colonial administration and greatly increased trading facilities.<sup>22</sup>

In 1896, Ralph Moor paid him the following glowing tributes:

'Without him the same amount of success could not have been attained and I consider that without his active co-operation and goodwill, the difficulty of carrying on the work of opening up the Cross River... effectively would be increased to an enormous extent.'<sup>23</sup>

Upon his death in 1899, believed by some to be the result of dissipated energy, Moor once more eulogized:-

'I cannot speak too highly of the assistance rendered by this Chief to the Government. He employed all the means at his disposal, monetary and otherwise, and also used all his influence in furthering the establishment and control of the administration ... his death at a comparatively early age is due to the untiring energy which he displayed in the assistance of Government ... The expenditure he made in administration was by no means limited to the amounts which he received. ..'<sup>24</sup>

Among his own people he was also held in high regard even if not for the same reasons as Moor. One of the eulogies on him by Efik ladies goes thus:-

Eyire mkpat etim Ndok Ibombom  
Iban Efik Mama Mbume Nkpo

Ebup Ete, "Eyen Enye-mi Oto Edem Anie?"  
Ete Oto Ke Ufok Esien Abasi  
Esien Abasi Ofiong Okoho Eyamba <sup>28</sup>

(With grace he ascends the hill  
His legs clad with leggings of bells  
Curious Efik Ladies ask  
"whose son is this"?  
He is from Esien Abasi House  
Esien Abasi, Son of Ofiong Okoho Eyamba)

This shows him to have been a very handsome man, a physical endowment which has been inherited by his successors and naturally much admired.

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CHIEF MAGNUS ADAM DUKE

## CHAPTER 17

### MAGNUS ADAM DUKE: 1842 – 1899

Born Efiong Efiom Edet Nsa, in 1842, Magnus Adam Duke was a grandson of "Big" Adam Duke (King War) who was one of the signatories to the letter inviting the Missionaries to Calabar.<sup>1</sup>

Magnus in his own words wrote 'my parents have no relations in Duke Town for they are free men from Henshaw Town...'<sup>2</sup> We shall see the reason for this statement later in this chapter.

His father Efiom Edet Nsa was also known as Dr. Ephraim Adam Duke and although it is not clear whether the handle to his name meant he was a learned man or not, it is obvious that he was sufficiently enlightened to appreciate the benefits of English education by sending young Magnus to England where in Magnus's own words he 'studied in London from 1867 to 1877 ...'<sup>3</sup> It is no wonder then that during his long sojourn in that city, he had imbibed English airs and graces which he maintained until the end of his life.

Although his was a comparatively short life, Magnus Duke was one of the most colourful personalities in Efik history. Narrating the tradition that he had audience with Queen Victoria at which he discussed the situation in Calabar, Nair comments somewhat sceptically that 'Magnus might have enhanced his importance by relating stories of this nature to credulous villagers'.<sup>4</sup>

To begin with, Calabar even in those days, was not a village. If its population, according to Lander who visited Duke Town in 1830 was 6,000 (already a teeming town),<sup>5</sup> one would expect that during the lifetime of Magnus Duke 1842 – 1899, this figure would have increased by several thousands.

Again we fail to see why Duke should have exaggerated his importance

will or not, was a sign of making one a slave.<sup>11</sup> This was why he had earlier stressed that his parents were free men from Henshaw Town. It is not known how Annesley resolved the controversy but King Basil Ebrero Nonaw X of Ebrero Nonaw House in Ndem Curcock Town (Ikoneto) had in an attempt to enter into the "raging palaver" (Duke's words) between the two men, requested Duke to "furnish him with details of the growth of Adam Duke House and with facts of other Calabar Houses to enable him decide on how best to tackle the matter."<sup>12</sup>

This request resulted in an invaluable data which according to Magnus Duke he had assembled:-

'using facts in family libraries particularly those from my grandfather (King Adam Duke), your father, King Ebrero III, Ebrero Nonaw VII and my own father Dr. Ephraim Adam Duke...'<sup>13</sup>

It traced the growth of modern Efik Houses from the 17th century, revealing most interestingly, the Houses ruled by the Republican Kings who were mentioned in John Barbot's commercial list of 1698 and also the fact that the founder of the Adam Duke House was "King Ephraim Henshaw Ephraim" (Efiom Nsa Efiom). This House, said Duke, was originally known as "Henshaw House" in 1690 after Efiom Nsa's return from Liverpool with letters on international trade from Captains Barbot and Snelgrave...'<sup>14</sup>

About himself, Duke stated that he became Etubom or "Captain" of Adam Duke House in 1890, after his father had died in 1889 and King Duke had ruled for ten years. This was why he strongly objected to King Duke's manoeuvres.<sup>15</sup>

In further response to King Basil's (Bassey) request, Magnus, who it must not be forgotten, had studied Law and was therefore anxious that there should be equity, justice, good government and peace, set out the following recommendations for re-organisation of the Houses:-

1. That all Old Calabar Houses that existed in 1834 be allowed to continue to exist as "Captaindoms." This must include Adam Duke House.
2. That Tom Ephraim (Etim Efiom) House founded by Tom Ephraim (Captain) in 1790 and placed under "interrex" or regency of Captain Duke Egbo Ephraim's (Edem Ekpo Efiom) House in 1834 as the 3rd Duke House of the present King Duke IX should stand on its own

again.

3. Captain Egboyoung Henshaw (Ekpenyong Nsa) became Captain of Eyo I House in 1834. Records show that this house became distinct in 1875 when Eyo VII went into exile and Creek Town had no "Rex Republicae" (Republican King). This House is now clearly on "Aequalitas Callabariis" (on equal basis) as the ancient "Ekpenyong Nsa" House.
4. All 29 Houses which existed from 1780 – 1814 but were forced out by Great Duke from 1814 – 1834 or have not yet revived during the republican era (1834 – present) should be allowed into the various clans to survive.
5. As a descendant of the "Oratorus Callabaris" you should call a meeting of the senior descendants of all the "Nobilis" (-Nobles), all seven "Rex Republicae" (Republican Kings) and all existing "Praefecti" (Heads of smaller units) to review the 1834 Old Calabar Republican Proclamation with a view to reviving the office of "Rex Maximus Callabaris" (EDIDEM) in King Duke IX but as a "Principalus Legitimus Rex" (i.e by law or common consent, allowed to be pre-eminent over the others not by sheer forcing of his will on them).

Magnus Duke urged King Basil to act quickly 'for it has occurred to me that the time is short for me and King Duke IX. A calamity may befall Old Calabar if nothing is done whilst we are still here.' But on a happier note he adds: 'Old Calabar must march on in spite of Magnus Adam Duke and Duke Adam Egbo'. "

As history shows, the British established their administration in 1891 but prior to this, they were fully conversant with the constant wranglings for supremacy in Old Calabar. To them, this state of affairs only had nuisance value since, having taken over the country, only the British monarch was supreme. Consequently, the 1902 Native Court Proclamation, was enacted. The "Rex Maximus Callabaris" or "Edidemship" of 1834, was not allowed to be resuscitated. In its place a dichotomy was established whereby there were two kings, one for Creek Town and one for Duke Town. This might perhaps have satisfied Magnus Adam Duke, if he had lived.

## TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES

In spite of his sophistication and learning, Magnus Adam Duke was a true traditionalist for he was a full member and title-holder of the Ekpe Efik Iboku confraternity. He was said to have foiled attempts by two honorary alien Ekpe initiates, Whyte and Addie, who attempted to probe into the esoteric aspects of the cult.

Fragments of rules drawn up to regulate the operation of the society in his time, dated 17th December, 1896 for the year 1897 exist as follows:

'The Head Chief of any of the four Egbos viz. Nyamkpe, Okuakama, Okpoho and Nkanda is appointed by the King, or the Chief of country or his representative by authority given him under his hand and seal. They cannot be removed from their functions without his special consent.

2. The Iyamba or Egbo King of the Town will be elected by the members and Egbo Chiefs at a meeting at which they are required to be present.<sup>19</sup>

Then the document gives us the following names of order or Ntot Idaha Ekpe Esien Efik Itiaba as follows:-

- |                        |                  |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. King Duke IX        | — Iyamba Ekpe    |
| 2. Ekpenyong Efiok     | — Obong Ebonko   |
| 3. Ofiong Efiom Nda    | — " Nyamkpe      |
| 4. Asibong Eyo         | — " Oku Akama    |
| 5. Ekpo Eyo            | — " Okpoho       |
| 6. Ekpenyong Ekpe VI   | — " Nkanda       |
| 7. Abasi Eke           | — " Nkanda       |
| 8. Abasi Ekpe Abasi    | — " Mbakara      |
| 9. Edet Asido          | — " Okpoho       |
| 10. Otu Abasi          | — " Iyamba       |
| 11. Abasi Ibitam       | — " Mboko Mboko  |
| 12. Eyo Efiom Eyo      | Isun Nkanda      |
| 13. Edet Esien Antigha | — Isun Oku Akama |
| 14. Eyo Eyo Ita        | — Murua Okpoho   |
| 15. Abasi Okon Abasi   | — Isun .....?    |
| 16. Esien Andiyo       | — (Not stated)   |
| 17. Asibong Edem       | — Isung Okpoho   |

- |                          |                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 18. Abasi Eyo Ndem       | — Isung Nyamkpe                 |
| 19. Magnus Adam Duke     | — Murua Nyamkpe                 |
| 20. Asuquo Ekpenyong Oku | — Ekundu Okpoho                 |
| 21. Adam Ephraim Adam    | — Murua Nkanda                  |
| 22. Ekpo Ekpo Abasi      | — Murua Oku Akama <sup>20</sup> |

NOTE: We have deliberately listed these names to indicate that the confraternity was in those days, a strong closely knit organisation embracing the seven clans of Efik Iboku as indicated by the names given against the titles.

#### POLITICAL AGENT:

On the inception of colonial rule, Magnus Duke became one of the first political agents, which post combined both judicial and administrative powers which he wielded over his area of authority. He had a charismatic and attractive personality which made it easy for him to obtain people's cooperation in his field of administration. Thus was he able to draw men like Esien Etim Ofiong and Prince Bassey Duke Ephraim IX who accompanied him on his tours in the Cross River Districts. His exemplary performance also inspired them to such an extent that even after his death these men willingly continued to advance colonial interest although they had not yet been formally appointed political agents.<sup>21</sup> As a political agent he was said to be diligent and very honest.

As court clerk he was vested with immense powers being the direct representative of the central government. He could therefore pass judgments on court cases and in many cases these were upheld by the British.

The judicial records kept by him are still extant and these are 'a scholarly exposition of Efik Native Law and Customs which are still fundamental and dependable.'<sup>22</sup>

In April, 1897, at the Native High Court of Calabar he (Adam) heard the case of one Okon Ekpo Iso who was seeking to recover land which had been given to another Ekpo Iso by the Plaintiff's family. Duke dismissed the claim on the grounds that 'A gift is a gift and cannot be taken back at will' — when the plaintiff appealed to the District Officer, A. A. Woodhouse, Duke attached the following comments to the appellant's letter:-

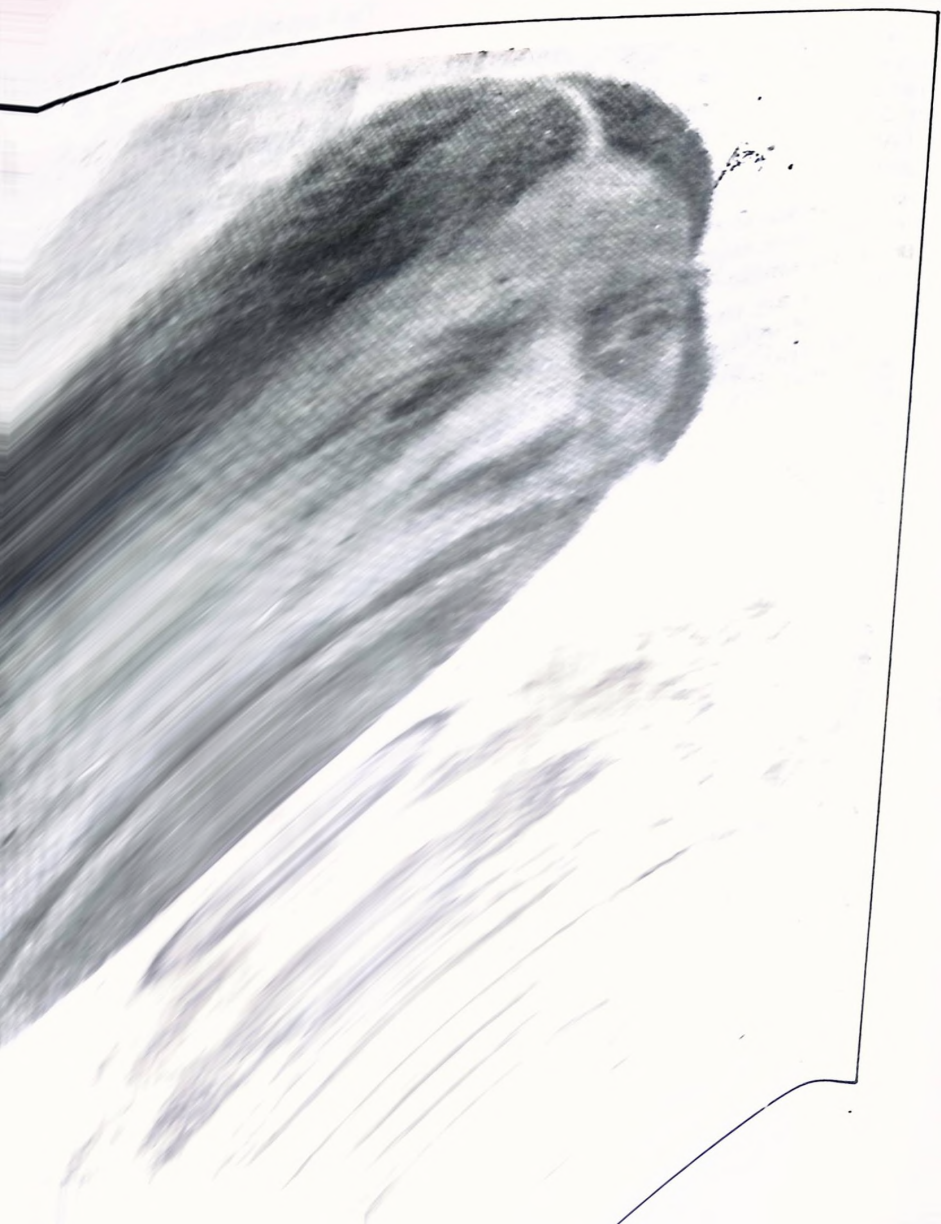
'I do not from the writer's point of view consider that he has any just ground for appeal.'

Woodhouse confirmed the court's ruling without further investigation.<sup>23</sup>

When in another case in the same court, one Atim Udo Messeme brought a suit against her husband for ill-treatment, Duke dismissed it saying that he had acted in accordance with the Efik native law and custom and urged the D. O. to confirm his judgment. This was done.<sup>24</sup>

Although some political agents were suspected of having used their official positions to seek their own ends, Magnus Adam Duke proved to be an exception to this rule<sup>25</sup> for as already said, he was a very honest and conscientious man who contributed much to the laying of the foundation of British administration in the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.

He died an insolvent man in 1899, leaving three daughters, Nkoyo, Ekpe-nyong and Afiong. The first, Nkoyo, was, like the father, also educated in England and also, like her father, had the English airs and graces. 'She had the reputation of speaking several European languages and was a foundation staff of Edgerley Memorial School.'<sup>26</sup>



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CHIEF ESIEN ETIM OFFIONG III.

## CHAPTER 18

### CHIEF ESIEN ETIM OFFIONG III 1859 – 1911

#### EARLY LIFE

Esiens Etim Offiong was the son of Chief Etim Offiong Esiens Abasi Offiong Okoho. His mother was Edim Edem Ekpenyong Offiong Okoho Eyamba, a daughter of King Eyamba V. Both his parents were thus of the Eyamba family in Duke Town, while his maternal grandmother hailed from the royal family of Obong Asikpo Ito of Ibonda, an Efut town in Western Calabar. He also had an extended family link with the Qua Clan in Calabar.<sup>1</sup>

He was born around 1859 and in his young days, a European friend of his father, obtained the latter's consent and sent him to study abroad. He therefore studied in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana) and advanced to a stage which qualified him for further studies at the famous Fourah Bay College at Freetown, Sierra Leone. On completing his course there, he was sent further still to Berlin and although it is not known what subjects he studied there, it is obvious that he was by this time a very enlightened young man. In 1887, he visited several European countries including Great Britain and nearer home, he travelled widely in some West African countries in pursuit of his business. He thus became a very popular man with wide business connections and enviable achievements.<sup>2</sup>

#### POLITICAL AGENT:

After the inception of colonial rule, he was on the 27th of April, 1898, appointed political agent for Calabar and the outlying areas by Acting District Commissioner A. G. Griffiths. He received dual mandate to act as Clerk of the Native High Court in Calabar and a supervising Clerk in all minor courts in the district because of the talents he displayed in the course of his activities as assistant to Magnus Adam Duke.<sup>3</sup>

For his labour, Chief Esien Etim Offiong received an annual income of £40 with an annual increment of £5 as a clerk of the Native Court while as a Clerk of the Minor Courts, his salary commenced at £100 with annual increment of £5. This remuneration was smaller than what was paid to the European administrators of the same rank but the Chief did not depend on this for his livelihood. Like his contemporaries, he was a very wealthy man who owned vast estates and a large fleet of trading canoes which plied the Calabar waters. He therefore obtained special concessions from the new British administration to enable him see to his trade one week every month with additional few days to dispose of his goods whenever his canoes brought these to the factories in Calabar.

This arrangement did not in any way adversely affect the performance of his official duties which also included the surveillance of the Upper Cross River areas. He was a man of transparent honesty, integrity and undoubted capability. When he was appointed to head an enquiry that was set up by Major Gallway to investigate an allegation in respect of an obstruction of trade in Itu by one of the traders, he executed the assignment with a spirit of impartiality which earned him high commendation.<sup>5</sup>

He had at one time worked under Coco Otu Basse and was a renowned warrior who participated in many of the skirmishes mounted by the latter in the Cross River areas. In 1896, he led an infantry group in a war between the Ekuris and the Efiks, which war was won by the Efiks.<sup>6</sup>

#### THE FOUNDING OF ESIEN TOWN, CALABAR

Chief Esien Etim Offiong had at first lived with his two brothers in the Eyamba Ward at Duke Town. He did not get on well with them and when a bitter quarrel once broke out, he packed all his belonging including his household, fitted out his canoes and put out on the Calabar River on his way to his grandmother at Ibonda. But the Obutongs of Old Town who were also his relations on getting wind of his intention waited for him at the great bend of the river. Here they intercepted him and pleaded with him not to go to Ibonda. As an alternative, they gave him all that parcel of land which is today known as ENEN ESIEN ETIM or Esien Town. He settled down here and was later made the Head Chief of Obutong.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE FOUNDING OF CATHOLICISM IN CALABAR

The Christian evangelization of Old Calabar cannot be complete without

mentioning the pioneers of the Roman Catholic Church for just as Kings Eyamba V (Chief Esien Etim Offiong's grandfather) and Eyo Honesty II had invited the Presbyterians to Calabar, so too did Esien Etim Offiong himself invite the Roman Catholics.<sup>8</sup>

Although he was not a professed christian, he was nevertheless privileged to observe the phenomenal progress of the evangelical work of the Roman Catholic Mission in Sierra Leone and the other countries he had visited. On his return home, he invited priests of the Roman Catholic denomination who were then resident in Fernando Po to establish their Church in Calabar. In response, the Catholic Mission sent a French Priest, Rev Father Lejeune from Onitsha to Calabar in 1903 and so Catholicism, through Esien Etim Offiong was born 57 years after the coming of the Presbyterians.<sup>9</sup>

Today, a Roman Catholic Church occupies a prominent place in Esien Town. It is called ST. CHARLES LWANGA CHURCH, after one of the Ugandan Martyrs. Also today, most of the children and extended family of Esien Etim Offiong (and we understand that he had over a hundred wives and a hundred and seven children), are Roman Catholics. To crown it all, three of his grandchildren have joined the Holy Orders of the Roman Catholic Church. These are Rev. Fr. Adim Michael Offiong who became the first Efik Roman Catholic Priest, Rev. Sr. Immaculata Offiong and Rev. Sr. Elizabeth Offiong. Thus the Esien Etim Offiong family has so far contributed in Calabar, the highest number of children to the Catholic religious order.

Chief Esien Etim Offiong was a prominent member of many friendly Masonic societies such as the Foresters, Noble Order of Odd Fellows and the World Fellowship of Free Masonry 197 I.C. He was the first African to win the Golden Sword of the Free Masonry.<sup>10</sup>

#### FRIENDSHIP WITH OBA OVONRAMWEN OF BENIN

Little known but albeit of great historical interest, is the fact that in the latter part of his life and until his death, Chief Esien Etim Offiong played host to the great exiled King of Benin, Oba Ovonoramwen (or Overami as he was sometimes called). The Esien Etim family history has it that after the king had been exiled to Calabar, Chief Esien Etim Offiong specially appealed to the British government for permission to play host to him. Upon his request being granted, no doubt on the grounds of the implicit confidence the British had in him, the king lived in Esien Town until his host died in 1911. While there he had married one of Esien Etim's daughters

who was said to have born him a child but had re-married and left Calabar with her child after his death. With the death of Chief Esien Etim Offiong, Oba Ovonramwen moved to Calabar town where he died in 1914. <sup>11</sup>

Chief Esien Etim Offiong had tremendous influence in Calabar and contributed immensely to the consolidation of the colonial administration. Although he utilised his position to enlighten his people on the benefits of education, it was sometimes felt that he was too strict and adhered too rigidly to foreign standards when settling disputes and that in so doing he applied too much red tape. <sup>12</sup>

But rather than be a disadvantage this characteristic only confirms the fact that he was highly principled and all who knew him agreed that he was a patriot who played a great part in the maintenance of peace, order and stability in Calabar. He died on the 14th of February, 1911 and will always be remembered in the historical annals of Calabar. <sup>13</sup>

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PRINCE BASSEY DUKE EPHRAIM IX.

## CHAPTER 19

### PRINCE BASSEY DUKE EPHRAIM EYAMBA IX, 1878 – 1921

Abasi Orok Edem Ekpo Efiom was born on the 10th of January, 1878, two years before his father, Orok Edem Ekpo Efiom (Öböñ Orok) was crowned King Duke Ephraim Eyamba IX of Duke Town.

As was the custom among the wealthy Efik gentry, he was sent to England in 1887, when he was only nine years old, to continue his education. He studied first at Seaforth High School and afterwards at Waterloo College near Liverpool under the Rev. Dr Bain. He returned to Calabar in 1892, on attaining the age of fourteen. Because of his early exposure to English education and influence, the young prince must certainly have possessed qualities which were not lost upon the British administrators for he entered the service of the Niger Coast Protectorate which had just been formed under the Consul Generalship of Sir Claude MacDonald, but resigned in 1894 in order to start business as a trader.<sup>1</sup>

Although it is not stated what type of service he had rendered to Sir Claude MacDonald until he attained the age of sixteen, it would appear that he might have been drawn to his elder countryman, Prince Magnus Adam Duke, the colourful Political Agent who must have inspired the young man with his exemplary performances. Anne Eyo, quoting from a manuscript obtained from Etubom Efiom Bassey Duke (one of Prince Bassey Duke's sons) confirms this and adds that the young prince and another young man, Esien Etim Offiong had also worked under Magnus Duke.<sup>2</sup>

In 1903 when he was twenty five, Prince Bassey Duke was appointed a Warrant Chief and member of the Native Consular Court. As a government official he handled his assignments in an able manner and was regarded as a shield of progress by his people because he had the advantage of a good education. He was very active, dynamic and hardworking and his influence was felt, not only in Calabar but also far into the Cross River region where

his work took him to places like Obubra, Ikom and Oban. His main duty in these districts was to keep the peace and in this regard, he was instrumental to the consolidation of British rule in the Oban district, a situation which was possible by virtue of the existence of various Duke villages in the area including one called Yellow Duke.<sup>3</sup>

When the Germans posed a threat in these areas and Calabar from the Cameroons, it was Bassey Duke who arranged meetings with the principal villages and ensured their loyalty to the British by giving them letters of protection as was then the practice.<sup>4</sup>

His activities enabled the colonial officials to acquire an intimate knowledge of the natural resources of the forest region.

In 1914, he was appointed Native High Court President and maintained law and order and saw to it that the people of Calabar made themselves available for the performance of civic duties which included community work. Defaulters were always severely punished by him.<sup>5</sup>

#### LAND TENURE IN CALABAR

Because of his experience and attributes, Prince Bassey Duke was in 1913 sent on a delegation to London along with Prince James Eyo Ita (later King Eyo Honesty IX of Creek Town) to present the case of Calabar in land tenure matters, before the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Harcourt.<sup>6</sup> We reproduce below what the Prince termed "a bird's eye view" of land tenure in Calabar and the surrounding districts:-

In the first place, I must explain that all our lands have owners and are either (a) Town or Country Property (b) House or Family Property (c) Personal or Private Property.

Town or Country land belongs to the country and may be termed public property. This is controlled by the Obong or Etuboin of the Town who holds it in trust for the country, be it in the town or what is termed Forest. He collects the rent for these lands and distributes it among the several Houses.

If an individual, who of course, must belong to the country, clears a forest land and takes effective occupation he remains in undisputed occupation of that particular piece of land. In addition to these lands which we have from our forefathers, we acquire other lands from neighbouring tribes by purchase and these lands are dealt with and held as explained past.

### FAMILY OR HOUSE LAND

These are controlled by the head of the House. Land can, with consent of the proper Native Authority, be disposed of either for a specified period or outright. It can only be sold by or with the consent of the Head of the House and the Principal members thereof, in the same way as town land can only be sold by the consent of the *Obōñ*, *Etu-boms* and Chiefs of the particular town.

### PERSONAL OR PRIVATE LAND

That is, landed property acquired by those who by Native Customary Law can acquire property in their own right never required the consent or approval of the *Obōñ* or *Etu-bom* of the town or that of any other individual as a condition for sale. The owner of such property can dispose of it without obtaining the consent of any individual though, it is not unusual that he sometimes informs certain intimate friends of his of the transaction.

Now, great stress has been laid recently on the possibility of wholesale and almost indiscriminate parting with or disposal of our property and, as a remedy, it has been suggested that the Government should step in as guardians. The intention may no doubt be good but we are unable to appreciate it and we emphatically feel that we do not require this proposed guardianship.

Anyone who says that the aboriginal Native of these parts does not know the value of his ancestral or other lands show great ignorance of us and our peculiarities. No one guards his right to property of any kind more jealously than we do. Some of our land has been retained at the cost of the lives of very valuable men. We know that the value of land increases as countries view up for commercial enterprise, hence we cannot help, but with concern, if not with misgiving and anxiety (accept?) this proffered guardianship which we feel and know we do not need or require. It has been hinted that it is not the custom of the native to sell land outright. This is a fallacy and only side view of our so called advisers or proposed guardians who would be the first to bargain for same had we offered to do so.

It had been suggested that the Government should control our lands through the District Commissioner or as it is *nicely put*, through the Native Council.

Now what would be the first thing we would hear if we consent to this guardianship? The Government would survey and make plan of all

our lands evidently to get a schedule of names of those who lay claims to lands, then demarcate and allot them, and for these services, we will or may be required to pay some money, the name of form of the payment has not yet transpired. I warn my countrymen against this protective measure in the matter of the control of our land and ancestral property.

We have been accustomed to buy and sell property at our own initiative, and at most, under the control of Native Chiefs and others who by our custom are required to be consulted in such matters. We do not wish this right interfered with. We must protect our rights as our fathers protected and passed them unto us their children. If our fathers in the lack of education knew how to defend our lands and the values of the land we inherited from them, how much more having come into contact with the light of education may we not understand to control our land which is regarded by every native as their vital treasury. We must protect and ever protect against Government control of our land that the sanction of government be regarded as unnecessary or unessential to enable us to part with what is, indisputably our own right to be disposed of.

I apologize for any shortcoming in this endeavour to draw birds eye view as to native custom regards to Land Tenure particularly in Calabar and Districts.

Many thanks is due to Prince James Eyo III (now Obọñ Eyo Honesty IX) for the noble manner and patience rendered to me in assisting to put into form the bird's eye view of Native Law and Custom as to Land Tenure.

*Ever Your Obedient Servant*

*Bassey O. E. Duke Ephraim*

*Late Delegate on Land Tenure to England*

*President of Native Court and Native Authority, Calabar.<sup>7</sup>*

As a result of the success of their mission the following letter of appreciation was sent to the Prince.:

Calabar  
30th August, 1913

To Our Trusty and Well Beloved  
Prince Bassey Duke Ephraim

We, Eyo Honesty VIII, Obong of Creek Town, and Adam Ephraim Duke, Obong of Calabar for ourselves and on behalf of our Etuboms, Chiefs and Natives of Calabar, Eket, Uyo Districts and certain Towns in the Cross River Districts desire to accord you a hearty welcome on your return from England on a mission relating to West African Land Tenure.

We are deeply sensible of the risks which more or less attend a visit to England and are therefore thankful to Almighty God for granting you a safe return to your native land.

We desire to place on record our satisfaction for the hearty co-operation which you gave to your Brother delegate Prince Eyo Ita (now Oboñ Eyo Honesty IX of Creek Town).

We appreciate it at its true value and pray that your life may be spared for more usefulness in the service of your country.

Sgd. Eyo Honesty VIII, Obong of Creek Town  
Adam Ephraim Duke, Obong of Calabar  
(For the Etuboms and Chiefs)<sup>8</sup>

Nor was that the last time that Prince Bassey Duke went on an official delegation for his people for in March 1920, he and Esien Etim Offiong were among those selected to represent Nigeria at the West African Conference at Accra. Allister MacMillan in his "Red Book of West Africa" recorded that this conference:-

The first of the kind in West Africa, was attended by representatives of the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria, specially chosen for their ability and prominence in public affairs, and was held for the discussion of various political disabilities of the people of the British West African Colonies as well as for the formulation of the necessary constitutional reforms and a general scheme for the inauguration of a university of British West Africa....<sup>9</sup>

The unanimous decision of this historic conference resulted in the sending of yet another delegation, this time to London for further discussions on the West African question.

Always an asset in matters of grave significance to his people, the prince



LEFT: PRINCE BASSEY DUKE EPHRAIM  
RIGHT: PRINCE JAMES EYO ITA (LATER KING EYO HONESTY IX)



PRINCE BASSEY-DUKE EPHRAIM, 5TH FROM LEFT  
AFTER A LEOPARD HUNTING EXPEDITION

took part in the punitive expedition organised by his father in connection with the massacre of Efiks at Itu by Ibibios.<sup>10</sup> Again he was one of the defendants in the Supreme Court case on the 20th of August, 1917, between the Efiks and the Quas when the latter were claiming the Calabar foreshore as their own. While narrating how the Efiks came to settle in Calabar he said under oath:-

'I know the history of Calabar from my father King Duke IX... He succeeded King Archibong III ... There is no native history written... My father told me about Calabar after I came from England. He told me as follows:-

"The Efiks were originally Ibo descendants. They came from Mbiak Creek in Ibibio Country. There was a quarrel and they moved on. Efik comes from Efik Eburutu. From Isong Inyang they came to Creek Town. There were different classes (clans) Iboku, Obutong, Adiabo, Anwan (Enwang) and Abayen. We were all fishermen but we did little farming. Adiabo left first and came to what is now called Old Town... A quarrel arose in Creek Town between Iboku and Obutong and the latter cleared away and went to Esuk Utan. Shortly afterwards Iboku came and built where Duke Town is now. Our fishermen reported good land here and Ansa Efiom, Edem Efiom and Okoho Efiom and their families came and settled in what is now Duke Town..."

As already mentioned elsewhere in this book, the Quas lost the case.

#### PERSONAL LIFE :

The Prince was a very popular person in the community for he was magnanimous and sympathetic. In appearance he presented a truly regal aspect with his stout and commanding height, combined with a charismatic aura that magnetised his admirers.

He was an international figure who was highly respected, an attribute which we are told, contributed to his being accepted into the 197 L. C. Masonry, a very exclusive body.<sup>12</sup> He was a sportsman with a bias for hunting which must have contributed to the success of the exploration of the dense forest district of Oban. Allister Macmillan records in his "Red Book" that he was the first free son of the soil to go direct from Calabar by the Cross River to Okuni.<sup>13</sup> But we believe that this could not have been so, for Prince Asibong Edem who died in 1900 and had fought in the Ndem Eno War in 1890 when Young Duke was only 12 years old, had blazed his

way right down to Okuni and Ikom with his famous gatling gun or as it was called by the Efiks, "Udep Edim Asibong Edem" (Asibong Edem's rainfall.)

In spite of his education and sophisticated airs, the Prince, like Magnus Duke, was also a traditionalist to the core. He belonged to the school which insisted on strict traditional punishment for those who had contravened tradition and was known to have personally carried out one such punishment in a case of adultery.<sup>14</sup>

Efik marriage law, we are here again reminded, is very strict on adulterers. In ancient times, the 'Nsibidi' executed the offenders. In Eyo II's time, an example was made of the man who offended the king in this manner for he was tied hand and foot to the man who aided and abetted him and thrown into the creek, while the offending wife was banished from his court forever.

### HIS DEATH

The Prince died on the 9th of June, 1921, leaving twenty eight children, most of whom were quite young indeed and himself not yet forty-three and full of so much promise.

As a befitting memorial to this remarkable man, his family, headed by his sister, Princess Uduak, erected an imposing marble monument popularly called "Bassey Duke Effigy" or "Itiat Udi Abasi Orok" at the Watt Market round-about. The following words are inscribed at the base of the monument:-

To the glory of God and to the beloved and honoured memory of His Royal Highness Prince Bassey Duke Ephraim Eyamba IX, second son of King Duke of Old Calabar and of the late Princess Andem Oko Abasi. He was born at Calabar on the 10th January, 1878. Elder Brother of Prince Adam Duke IX who fell asleep in Jesus in December, 1915. His father died in 1896 and his mother in 1908.

The deceased Prince Bassey went in 1887 to England and finished his education and returned to Calabar in 1892 and entered government service under the Consul Generalship of Sir Claude MacDonald and resigned in 1894. And in 1903 he was appointed a Warrant Chief and member of Native Consular Court 1912, he was elected by the Calabar Community as Native Representative and in 1914 elected President of Native Court, the post originally held by Europeans under the regime of Sir Frederick Lugard, the Governor of Nigeria.

The Prince died at the regrettable age of 42, a year after his son's death, age 19 (Effiong Bassey Duke). By virtue of the Prince's position as President of Native Customary Court his opinions on Native Customary Laws were much respected by the Supreme Court Judges and he was a full member of Free Masons Lodge Society. He endeared himself to every stranger and died in the service of his country, respected and mourned in the several communities.

May He Rest In Peace.

Thus ended the life of a true Patriot who had a brilliant career, with the promise of greater achievements in the formative years of the Protectorate of Nigeria. A much loved person who was also loved by the gods, he died young and as Efiks would philosophize:-

He went to market early,  
Sold out his wares early,  
And returned home early!

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HON. RICHARD HENSHAW

## CHAPTER 20

### ETUBOM, THE HONOURABLE RICHARD HENSHAW 1865 – 1925

Etubom Richard Henshaw, also known as Edet Ekeng Ita, was one of the illustrious sons of an illustrious father, Obong Ekeng Ita, the key figure in the Henshaw/Dukean War of 1875. His mother was Iyia Afo Ene<sup>1</sup> and apart from himself, his father had other illustrious sons among whom were Johnstone Henshaw, Thomas Henshaw, Ekpenyong Ekeng, Bassey Ekeng, Elijah Henshaw and David James Henshaw who subsequently became David James Henshaw V, Obong of Calabar, 1970 – 1973

Richard was one of the fortunate sons of Efikland sent to England where he attended St. Mary's College, Ealing, in West London, between 1889 and 1892, after completing his primary education in a *German Mission School in Calabar*.<sup>2</sup>

On his return from England, he, like many of his contemporaries, became a successful trader, owning many trading canoes and retaining a large band of men who manned these canoes as far afield as Efiat and Enwang in the Oron district where colonial documents revealed him as having had much influence.<sup>3</sup>

#### EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

It would have been surprising if a person of Etubom Henshaw's calibre had on his return from England, failed to encourage his people to avail themselves of the educational facilities provided in those days. Far from this, he was a true pioneer of educational activities in Calabar in general and Henshaw Town in particular where he got his relations together to establish the Henshaw Town Church and school early in this century.<sup>4</sup>

He was also said to have personally organised and supervised evening classes within his compound and another outstanding testimony to his ardent interest in the spread of education and development of schools in Calabar

is also borne out by the fact that he undertook the training of his brothers <sup>5</sup>

It was therefore, not surprising that one who was so keen on the educational advancement of other people should give the best education possible to his own children. Thus did we have the first Efik Medical Doctor in Lawrence Ekeng Richard Henshaw and later Dr James Ene Richard Henshaw, both of whom received their professional training in the British Isles and became like their father, outstanding citizens of Nigeria.

It was also through Etubom Henshaw's instrumentality that the land on which the Roman Catholic Convent stands, was given out in 1903 for a rent of 1d (one penny) a year. <sup>6</sup>

His educational activities were not confined to Calabar township but spread to the hinterland of Akpabuyo where he was specifically involved in the programme of that area. <sup>7</sup>

He assisted a team of civil servants from the Education Department to select teachers for various schools in Old Calabar and those selected for the new schools from 1920 onwards included Chief Kevin Okon who was sent to Okoyong, Daniel Duke worked with Chief Maurice Archibong in Ikom, Ogoja, Afikpo and Arochukwu while Chief J. A. Nya was posted to Okobo in Oron district. <sup>8</sup>

#### MILITARY SERVICE

Richard Henshaw was a political agent or vice-consul as this post was sometimes called. His peculiar assignment made him a man of many parts and brought to the fore, some of his finest qualities. He was seconded for military service as Sub-Lieutenant in Niger Coast Protectorate Force, then known as the Oil Rivers Irregulars under Captain Prince of the West Riding Regiment. He later became attached to the Cross River Expeditionary Force as an officer under Sir Ralph Moor, K.C.M.G. and from 1901 – 1905, he served under Major H.C. Moorhouse, C.M.G. D. S. O. as transport officer in the Aro Field Force Expedition where he showed exemplary skill, bravery and high standard of discipline which earned him high commendations in the military despatches of Sir Ralph Moor, the then High Commissioner. <sup>10</sup>

As a member of the British Colonial administration, Etubom Richard Henshaw had to undergo military training for military service which included rigorous drills and combat readiness. All volunteers were required to produce certificates of fitness every year while still in the army and citing one of his sons, Anne Eyo in her thesis on "Efik Political Agents" recorded that Richard Henshaw was known to have undergone at least *twenty company and battalion drills*, having already undergone such drills as a recruit. <sup>11</sup>

This must have been regarded as an outstanding feat.

Between 1907 and 1913, Richard Henshaw was attached as private secretary and interpreter to Sir Ralph Moor for a total period of twelve months in the High Commission's Office. Then he was sent along with Dr. Hanley on the Oban Mountain Exploration Expedition.

He was a skilled marksman and cunning fighter and when war was declared on Germany in 1914, he was at once attached to the W.A.F.F. (West Africa Frontier Force) and his role as Political Agent at this time was mainly occupied with military skirmishes, the most outstanding of which was "Ekong Usaha Edet" (Usaha Edet Battle), when he led the force that defended Calabar and environs which had been infiltrated by Germans.<sup>12</sup>

In one grim battle he was completely surrounded by his enemies but to their utter amazement, he led his men to break through their lines. Later, at the end of hostilities, he was detailed to lead displaced persons to establish settlements in areas north of the Calabar district. The Nigeria "Who's Who" noted that he did yeoman's service for the King and his country during the campaigns.<sup>14</sup>

Efik tradition acknowledges him as a powerful man. One of his sons, Dr James Henshaw narrated an incident which was connected with his being initiated into an Ekpe title in his mother's town Dobe in the Cameroons. One of the stringent conditions that he had to fulfil before taking the title was to remain alone in the Ekpe bush for seven days to prove that he was brave enough to be so honoured. Having successfully done so, he made a grand entry into Dobe Town and back home in Calabar, he earned the title "ITIABA AYANA EKPE IBAT"<sup>15</sup> – the embodiment of seven men who was capable of cluding the Leopard! Till this day he is remembered not only by his name but also by the nickname ITIABA an Efik word for SEVEN which signifies strength and will-power. Thus when they say "Erenowo Itiaba" they mean a man not only physically powerful but also mentally so.

#### ROAD CONSTRUCTION ORON – EKET ROAD

Major Winn Sampson, District Commissioner in Calabar, was anxious to open an overland route between Oron and Eket and there was no better person for him to take on the mission than Richard Henshaw, whom he used, to win the support of the local chiefs and other powerful people along the proposed route.<sup>16</sup> The project was by no means an easy one as there was a lot of hostility and suspicion on the part of the villages that the commissioner intended to fight them. By gentle persuasion and tact, Richard

Henshaw urged Sampson to consent to the taking of an oath to convince the villagers that no harm was intended. For this ceremony the villagers:

“brought out juju stones about 15” square, thin and flat, and asked Major Winn Sampson to take oath upon these. He was quite ready to swear that government would not trouble the people so long as they did no harm...”<sup>17</sup>

They also insisted that Richard Henshaw take the oath saying:

‘You and Daniel are cousins, therefore if either of you injure us by breaking the oath, the juju must kill both ....’<sup>18</sup>

Not satisfied with this ritual, another one was insisted upon when the party reached Eket and the District Commissioner for Eket, Mr. Douglas was this time included among those to take oath.

“A bowl of mimbo was brought with a glass for each and one over. Into the latter every man had to let fall a few drops of blood from a cut made in the back of the hand by the wrist. When all had contributed, a little mimbo was poured in and the glass was carefully shaken so as to mix the contents. These were shared out into the glasses of the five principal people. More mimbo was added and the mixture drunk off...”<sup>19</sup>

The Oron – Eket road was full of adventure for European Commissioners and the Political Agents as they did not always come across friendly groups. On one occasion, Richard Henshaw saved the lives of three English Officers at the risk of his own. One of the men was Horace Bedwell and for this, he received in recognition, the African General Medal from His Majesty the King, two claps and the thanks of His Majesty’s Government.<sup>20</sup>

#### “MBAT EDET EKENG”

If the Oron – Eket Road was important to the British administrators, the area that came to be known as Mbat Edet Ekeng was of greater importance to the Efiks. After establishing central markets in the Akpabuyo district including the now flourishing Ikang market, Richard Henshaw achieved a lasting fame by laying out a road of great strategic and commercial importance between Calabar and her vast, eastern hinterland, Akpabuyo. This road was named after him and is known till today as “MBAT EDET EKENG’ (Edet Ekeng’s Swamp). It is now destined to be a national highway now that

the ATIMBO BRIDGE connecting it to Akpabuyo has been completed. The laying out of Mbat Edet Ekeng was a feat which was in those days thought to be impossible but Richard succeeded,<sup>21</sup> and in so doing further strengthened his reputation as a man of great determination.

#### LATER LIFE

Upon the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, Richard Henshaw was nominated to represent the Eastern District of the Southern Provinces in Lord Lugard's Amalgamation Council for four years. He became a member of the Legislative Council in 1918 where he struggled for better prices for palm and other agricultural products.

For several years from 1916, he was chairman of the Agricultural Society of Calabar and member of the Licensing Committee.

He became Etubom of Henshaw Town in 1920, a befitting laurel for the achievements of this colourful man.<sup>22</sup>

He died on the 25th of May, 1925, and proudly takes his place as one of the makers of Nigeria for he was a soldier, administrator, explorer legislator, a man of the highest integrity and discipline, the memory of whose life and achievements will continue in the annals of this great country — Nigeria.<sup>23</sup>

His funeral was attended by His Majesty's representative, a true testimony to the innumerable contributions made by him to the establishment of the colonial government.<sup>24</sup>

Etubom Richard Henshaw was the last of the Political Agents of Old Calabar.<sup>25</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Much was indeed achieved when the Efikman took the initiative. Esien Ekpe Oku established "Mkpe," an integral part of Efik tradition. Eyo Nsa the Mighty Man of Valour, cleared the Cross River waterway of pirates and made it safe for his people to trade unmolested. Great Duke Ephraim IV caused Akpabuyo to be effectively settled. Eyamba V and Eyo II invited Christians to Calabar and actively encouraged the spread of the gospel, with the corresponding spread of education and enlightenment. Duke Ephraim IX and Eyo Honesty VII signed the Treaty which brought Calabar under the British Protectorate that later became Nigeria. Richard Henshaw and his cousin Daniel Henshaw opened the Atimbo and Oron-Eket Roads respectively and today, Atimbo is a trunk road leading to the internationally strategic border town of Ikang. In spite of these contributions, some have dubbed them "colonial stooges." Be that as it may there is no denying that through them, much good has come to many.

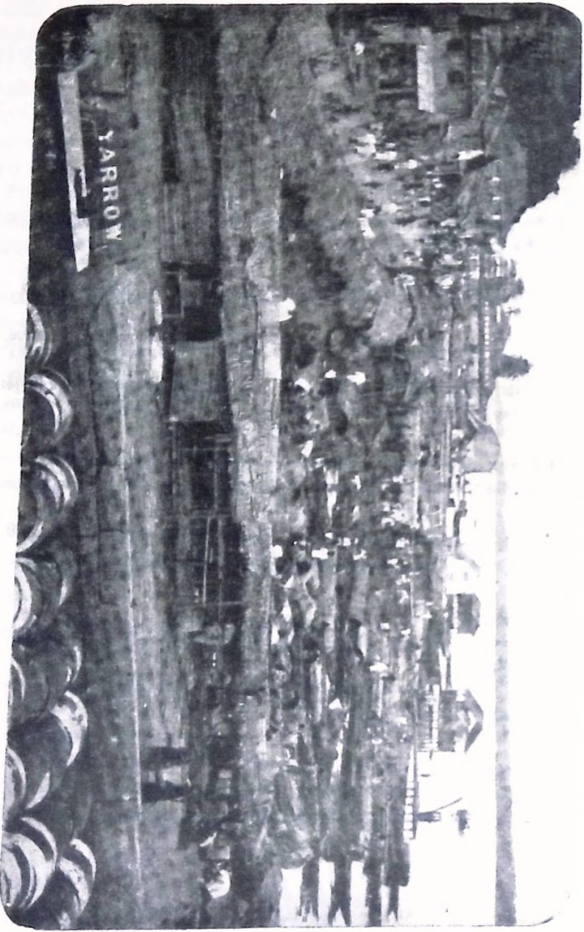
By virtue of their early contact with the agents of western civilization, it was easy to use Efiks as some of the first teachers, civil servants and political agents for the establishment and expansion of missionary activities, education and the young British administration in Calabar itself, Ibo and Ibibio lands, the Cross River regions and the Cameroons. The Efik way of life, their names and even their culinary arts became models which their neighbours adopted.

Today, however, the Efikman has sadly lost his pioneering spirit. He looks back with nostalgia to bask in the sunshine of a past glory that was initiated by his ancestors.

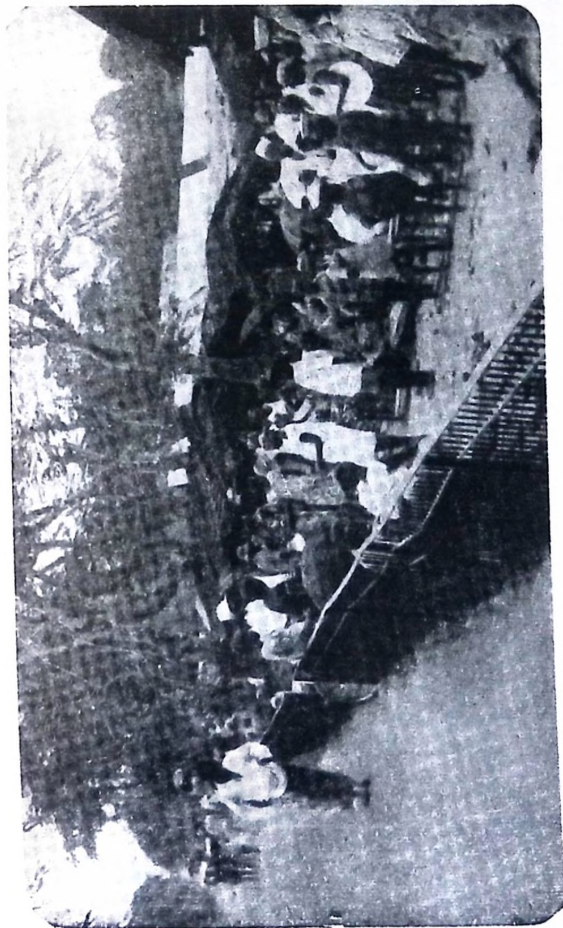
This is a hopeless attitude for while it is in itself a good thing to look back on the achievements of our fathers, they should not be seen as the end but a means to further achievements an inspiration which should spur us to greater things. Thus shall we avert the misfortunes that have attended us as a people ever since the third decade of the 20th century and by waking up from our dreams we should, as advised by Professor Eyo Ita in his Foreword to Aye's "Old Calabar through the Centuries," 'make a more meaningful and serious thrust into the future' if we are not to be left behind to continue dwelling in the past.

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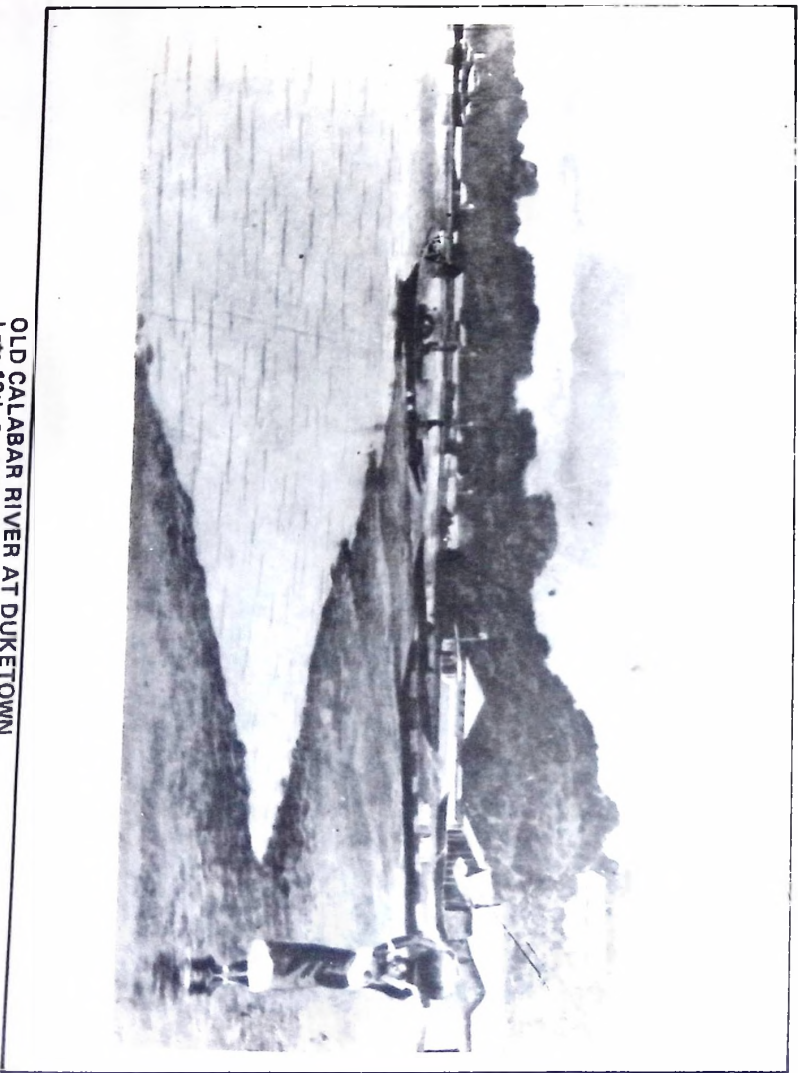
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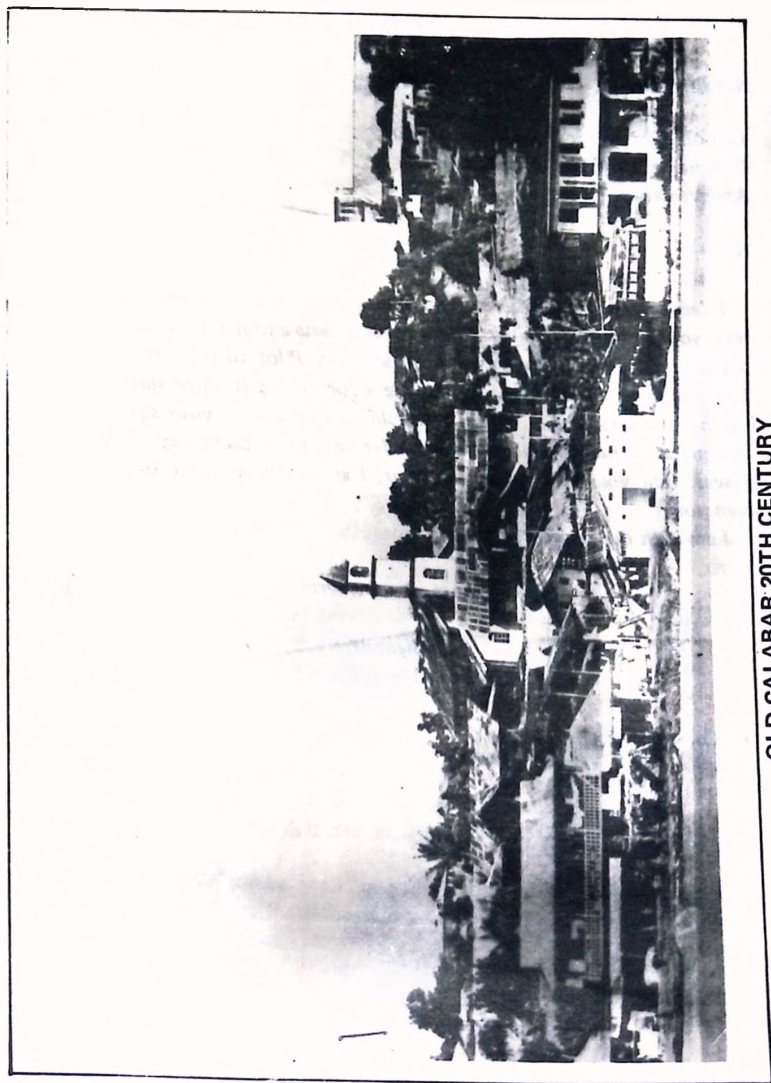
BEACH MARKET - 1902)



WATT MARKET 1902



OLD CALABAR RIVER AT DUKETOWN  
Late 19th Century



OLD CALABAR 20TH CENTURY

**APPENDIX I**

*Ref FO 84/14*

*To Commodore Sir George Collier Bart,  
Commander in Chief of H.M. Ships  
And Vessels in these Seas.*

*Sir,*

*I feel it my duty to write you, and should have been very glad to have seen you up at Old Calabar. Should feel pleasure in rendering you any assistance that lay in my power. I have sent my Pilot to pilot the Portuguese Brig you took last night. (Unfortunately for me I put three slaves on board and has not got paid for them). Should you or any of your squadron visit this place, I shall feel pleasure in rendering you or them any service in my power. Had you been inside the river, I should have come down to have seen you.*

*I am with the greatest respect.*

*Yours mt. obt. servt.*

*(Signed)*

*Duke Ephraim Eyamba*

*Old Calabar 9th April, 1821*

APPENDIX II

(Public Record Office (London) F 084/1508)

*Agreement made between David Hopkins, Esquire, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, in the name of Her Majesty's Government and King Archibong III and his Chiefs in the presence of resident Missionaries of Duke Town and Creek Town and the European Merchants and Traders whose names are hereunto subscribed.*

*Twin Murders – Human Sacrifices – and the giving of Esere or Poison Bean –*

*As Agreements, Treaties and conventions were entered into on the 12th of July, 1850, 15th January 1855, 21st January, 1856, 18th January, 1861 and 26th April, 1872, by the then reigning powers of Old Calabar and Her Majesty's Government, and as Treaties may not be broken without the consent of the contracting parties it is not necessary to enter into fresh agreements. But it is now distinctly promised by the King and the Chiefs that the following rules will be observed in future and that the King will cause at once to be made known throughout all the land where he claims sovereignty, either by the beating of Egbo Drum or other effective method, the following articles:-*

TWIN CHILDREN AND TWIN MOTHERS

ARTICLE I

*Whoever wilfully takes the life of a twin child or twin children shall be adjudged liable to the penalty of death. Anyone wilfully concealing any fact that may come to their knowledge of the murder of twins shall be considered accessory after the fact and shall be liable to such punishment as the Consul shall direct.*

*Twin Mothers in future shall have full liberty to visit the town and buy and sell in the markets, the same as any other woman of the town, and they shall not be molested in any way.*

## HUMAN SACRIFICES

### ARTICLE II

*Anyone wilfully causing the death of another by violent flogging or by any other means except in the case of a culprit being sentenced to death by law shall be considered guilty of murder, and shall suffer the penalty of death by hanging provided the King and Chiefs with the consent of the Consul finds no extenuating circumstances, which would warrant mercy being extended .*

### ESERE BEANS

### ARTICLE III

*Any person administering the Eseré Bean whether the person taking it dies or not shall be considered guilty of murder and shall suffer death.*

### ARTICLE IV

*Anyone taking the Eseré Bean wilfully either for the purpose of committing suicide, or for the purpose of attempting to prove their innocence of any crime of which they may have been accused, shall be considered guilty of attempted murder and shall be fined as heavily as their circumstances will permit, and shall be banished from the country.*

## IQUA EGBO, OR THE STRIPPING OF HELPLESS WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC STREETS

### ARTICLE V

*This abominable, disgraceful and barbarous custom of allowing the young men of the town to take an Egbo out and seize, strip and indecently assault any woman wearing a dress or cloth in the street, and their exhibiting such dress or cloth hung up on a pole or in the tree in front of the Egbo Palaver House, being so disgusting and revolting — Is now and forever abolished.*

WIDOWS

ARTICLE VI

*The custom of compelling widows to remain in their houses, in filth and wretchedness after the death of their husband until his "Devil Making" is over, they having been sometimes kept for seven years in this state of misery is abolished. The widows are to remain mourning for one month after the death of their husbands and after that no further restraint will be put on them.*

TRADE AND COMMERCE

Acqua Town

ARTICLE VII

*The people of Acqua Town have free liberty to buy, sell, visit and trade with any or all European Houses in the River or on the beach, in all article of produce such as palm oil, palm kernels, ebony or any other article that may be saleable and also to sell yams, goats, fowls, eggs, corn, cassava, fruits, or any other article fit for food or use of the Europeans. And it shall not be lawful for any Calabar person to prevent them doing so direct with the Europeans nor shall it be lawful for any person to endeavour to induce them, that is to say, the people of Acqua by threats, bribes, or otherwise, to pass their produce through a Broker's hands, should the party most interested in selling the produce not wish to do so.*

ARTICLE VIII

*The people of Acqua are to have a certain part of the River Frontage near Old Town Beach for their own use, where they can at all times embark, disembark, and land all their properties, be they of whatsoever description they may.*

FREE TRADE

ARTICLE IX

*All restrictions at the present existing are now taken off and all the natives of Duke Town, Creek Town, Henshaw Town, Cobham Town, Old Town, Acqua Town and all other towns which may be considered to belong to Old Calabar proper, whatever be their rank or standing, are permitted to*

*trade freely in all European and other goods for the legitimate produce of the country at all the markets and all are permitted to buy in large or small quantities as suits them, whether puncheons, Hogsheads, Barrels or any lesser measure. Further, it is understood that Brass Rods may be sold to the traders in any number the Trader chooses to receive them.*

#### ARTICLE X

*It shall be lawful for the Kings and Chiefs of the above-mentioned towns and places, to form among themselves a Court of Commerce where they can arrange the prices that are to be paid in the markets, and it shall also be lawful for them to arrange a fixed sum which shall be paid for any breach of their commercial code of rules — But it is distinctly understood and promised to the Consul and the Chairman and Members of the Court of Equity that the fines shall not be excessive so as to press unduly on the poor trader and that it shall be the same for all ranks. A list of what these fines are will be kept by the Chairman of the Court of Equity and a copy deposited in the Consul's hands.*

#### ARTICLE XI

*It shall not be lawful for the Kings and Chiefs of Calabar proper to close any of the markets without first informing the chairman of the Court of Equity and the members and showing them such good and sufficient reasons for so doing, as will justify them in recommending the Consul to give his permission.*

#### ARTICLE XII

*It shall not be lawful for the Kings and Chiefs of Calabar proper to make war amongst themselves, or any of the neighbouring tribes, or on any people, without having first informed the Consul and giving him sufficient and satisfactory reasons for their intention of so doing. And producing to him receipts showing they have paid all their debts.*

#### ARTICLE XIII

*Any canoes at any European's beach or alongside his hulk or ship whether loaded or not loaded, is for the time being under the protection of the European residing at the Beach or on the Hulk or ship and cannot be seized by any person whatsoever either by Egbo Law or otherwise.*

ARTICLE XIV

*Any European who wishes to build Dwelling Houses on the beach, provided he confines himself to the beach and the base of the slopes, and does not encroach on the brow of the hill is entitled to do so.*

ARTICLE XV

*The Comey on Palm Kernels and Ebony should be 5 Coppers a ton and on oil, as before arranged, namely 10 coppers — Comey shall be paid for produce shipped either by steamer or sailing vessels.*

*And in witness that we have had all the foregoing duly translated to us and that we thoroughly understand the full purport and meaning of each clause and cheerfully abide by the same, we hereunto set our hands this 6th day of September, 1878.*

*The Signatories on the Efik side were:*

*King Archibong III*

*Prince Duke*

*Prince Eyamba V*

*Offiong Effiwatt*

*Yellow Duke*

*George Duke*

*Eyo Ita*

*Henshaw Duke*

*Henshaw Toby*

*Hogan Ironbar*

*Adam Ironbar*

APPENDIX III

THE CHRISTIAN OATH

*I, . . . by the Grace of God, Grand Patriarch of Efik Eburutu, Obong of Calabar, do hereby solemnly swear by the Almighty God and in the presence of His chosen Servants:*

- i That I shall remain loyal to the lawful Government of this country .*
- ii That I shall uphold the Constitution of the Etuboms' Traditional Council .*
- iii That I shall counsel my peoples in the fear of God and protect all strangers within my domain .*
- iv That I shall do all that lies within my power to maintain law and order.*
- v. That I shall uphold and defend the Traditions of my Sacred Office doing only those things that are just and reasonable and abstaining from all such things as will be repugnant to natural justice and good conscience.*
- vi That I shall endeavour at all times to promote the welfare of my peoples and to defend the cause of Christianity throughout my domain.*

*So help me God!*

APPENDIX IV

AGREEMENT BETWEEN HENSHAW TOWN AND DUKE TOWN  
6TH SEPTEMBER, 1878

*We the Chief and people of Henshaw Town, Old Calabar having besought the friendly interference of Her Majesty's Government in the affairs which have disturbed for some time the friendly relations that formerly existed between ourselves and Duke Town, are now willing to abide by the advice of David Hopkins, Esquire, Her Majesty's Consul, and we the King and Chiefs of Duke Town having also faith in the discretion and just decision of the aforesaid Consul, also bind ourselves to abide by the rules he now makes. And to prove there shall be no deceit in this we have each and severally put our names to this Agreement in the presence of all the Resident Missionaries and Europeans who have hereunto subscribed their names.*

ARTICLE I

*There is but one King of Old Calabar, that is King Archibong III.*

ARTICLE II

*Henshaw shall be hereafter known by the name, style and title of Chief Henshaw of Henshaw Town and its people.*

ARTICLE III

*Chief Henshaw shall rule his town in accordance with the rules arranged between himself and Her Majesty's Consul, which are attached to this document.*

ARTICLE IV

*King Archibong and his chiefs bind themselves not to interfere in any way with Chief Henshaw or his people, either in Henshaw Town, the Market or the Plantations or farms.*

ARTICLE V

*Chief Henshaw binds himself to obey all the lawful orders of King Archibong, provided always that none of them call upon him to do or suffer to be done any act of pagan rites which could not be expected of a Christian.*

ARTICLE VI

King Archibong for himself, his heirs and successors, binds himself to remain in lasting friendship with Chief Henshaw and his heirs or successors and neither by word or deed lead to anything that would tend to sever this happy friendship.

ARTICLE VII

King Archibong further feeling the ties of relationship that exist between the families of himself and Chief Henshaw agrees to give Chief Henshaw a place at all times at his Councils whether they be on trade or other matters connected with the general welfare of the country.

ARTICLE VIII

All matters connected with markets and trade and commerce generally being provided for in Article 9 – 15 inclusive of the agreement made this day and duly signed, they are not repeated here.

And in witness that we had all the foregoing duly translated to us and that we thoroughly, understand the full purport and meaning of each clause and cheerfully agree to abide by the same, hereunto set our hands this 6th day of September, 1878

Duke Town		Henshaw Town	
	His	Chief Henshaw	
Archibong	X III		
	Mark	Joseph Henshaw	
Prince Duke		James Brother	
Prince Eyamba V		John Jemmy Henshaw	
Offiong Effiwatt	His	Henshaw James	
	Mark		
		Egbo Jemmy	
Yellow Duke	His		His
George Duke	X	Benjamin	X Jimmy
	Mark		Mark
Henshaw Duke			
	His		
Henshaw Toby	X		
	Mark		
Hogan Ironbar	"	Joseph Eyamba	"
Eyo E. Ndem	"	Prince Archibong III	"
Prince Archibong II	"	Egbo-King Archibong III	"

APPENDIX V

*Rules and Regulations for the Management of Henshaw Town, submitted to David Hopkins Esquire, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul and approved of by him this sixth day of September, 1878*

RULE NO. 1

*The Sabbath day shall be kept as a Christian Sabbath ought to be kept. No work of any description whatsoever shall be done — Nor shall there be any unseemly noises made such as firing of guns or cannons.*

*For the non-observance of this Article for the first offence, a fine of 12 Brass Rods will be exacted.*

*For the second offence, 1 Box or 120 Brass Rods and for a repetition of the offence such heavier fine as the Chiefs may think fit to levy.*

RULE NO 2

*All heathenish customs are abolished. There shall be no worshipping of images or sacrifices made to supposed Gods, nor Devil — Making, or making offering to the spirits of deceased persons.*

*For a violation of this Rule a fine will be inflicted of not less than 120 or more than 360 Brass Rods.*

RULE NO. 3

*Murder in whatsoever form shall be dealt with in precisely the same manner as provided for by Article No. II of the General Treaty or Agreement of this date.*

RULE 4

*Any person procuring abortion or assisting to procure abortion will be fined according to the judgment of the Chiefs, but in no case less than 3 Boxes of Brass Rods.*

RULE 5

*No person — professing Christianity can be called upon to take Pagan Oath MBIAM — whatever oath is binding on their conscience must be considered sufficient.*

**RULE NO. 6**

*No person is to charge another with any offence and offer to pay such and such a sum if he does not prove his case or expect a like amount from the person charged, if he does, as this gives unscrupulous persons the opportunity to injure innocent people. No people of Duke Town are to charge any of Henshaw Town and no Henshaw Town to charge any of Duke Town.*

APPENDIX VI  
AGREEMENT WITH QUA

*The following articles of Agreement were concluded between David Hopkins Esquire, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul on the part of Her Majesty Queen Victoria of Great Britain and Ireland Empress of India and Ekon Odo King of Qua and to prove that this is a true agreement which cannot be broken in any one part and that there is no deceit in it, the Consul and the King have both signed their names to it in the presence of all the Resident Missionaries and Europeans of Old Calabar and they have also signed this paper to prove its truth.*

ARTICLE I

*There shall be no killing of people accused of witchcraft — no one shall give another the Esere Bean - Twin children shall not be killed — The Mothers of twin children shall not be driven away to plantations but they shall have free liberty to come and go as they please.*

*Any one guilty of taking the life of another human being whether man, woman, or child, freeborn or slave shall suffer death — and this is the only crime for which such punishment shall be inflicted. But in no case shall the Qua people kill anybody without first consulting the King and Chiefs of Old Calabar and getting an order from King Archibong III or his successors in writing, witnessed by two respectable Europeans to carry the sentence into effect.*

ARTICLE II

*All people of Qua are hereby permitted to wear decent cloths or clothes — women are especially to be protected and encouraged to wear dresses.*

ARTICLE III

*That the King and people of Qua are to assist and help the Missionaries to establish schools to which they pledge themselves to send their children for instruction. That they will respect the whiteman's Sabbath and do no work on that day. That the King solemnly has promised the Consul in the presence of all the whitemen to particularly enjoin his people to obey the rule.*

ARTICLE IV

*And in consideration of the faithful observance of the three foregoing rules, the Consul has granted to them the return of their ancient rights.*

*The Qua Town people have full liberty to trade direct with the Europeans whether in their ships or on their beaches, wherever they are so established and they can trade in all articles whether it be palm oil, palm kernels, ebony, ivory or any other saleable produce they can obtain and in all provisions such as yams, corn, goats, bullocks, fowls, eggs and all things of this description.*

ARTICLE V

*It is further agreed that they the people of Qua shall have a beach where they can keep their canoes, and go off and do all their business in the River, or to the Markets or to any place where they wish to go. But it is agreed and understood that this beach or landing place shall not be placed anywhere between the European cask houses but near to Old Town*

*And in witness that, we have had all the foregoing duly translated to us, and that we thoroughly understand the full purport and meaning of each clause, and cheerfully agree to abide by the same, we hereunto set our hands this 6th day of September, 1878.*

*Duke Town  
Archibong III his mark  
Prince Duke  
Prince Eyamba*

*Acqua Town  
Ekon Esu (his mark)  
Akpo Asibong    "  
Akpo Eta         "  
Iso Ekpo         "  
Ekon Edim        "*

*And in the presence of*

*David Hopkins (Her Majesty's Consul)  
H. Harris  
Alexander Ross  
William Anderson  
J. B. Walker  
Robert Beedie  
T. H. White*

APPENDIX VII

INCLOSURE 16 in No. 13

TREATY WITH KINGS AND CHIEFS OF OLD CALABAR  
SEPTEMBER 10, 1884

*Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, & Co., and the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar, being desirous of maintaining and strengthening the relations of peace and friendship which have for so long existed between them;*

*Her Britannic Majesty has named and appointed E. H. Hewett, Esq., her Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra, to conclude a Treaty for this purpose.*

*The said E. H. Hewett, Esq., and the said King and Chiefs of Old Calabar have agreed upon and concluded the following Articles:-*

ARTICLE I

*Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, & Co., in compliance with the request of the Kings, Chiefs, and people of Old Calabar, hereby undertakes to extend to them, and to the territory under their authority and jurisdiction, her gracious favour and protection.*

ARTICLE II

*The Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar agree and promise to refrain from entering into any correspondence, agreement, or treaty with any foreign nation or power, except with the knowledge and sanction of Her Britannic Majesty's Government.*

ARTICLE III

*It is agreed that full and exclusive jurisdiction, Civil and criminal, over British subjects and their property in the territory of Old Calabar is reserved to Her Britannic Majesty, to be exercised by such Consular or other officers as Her Majesty shall appoint for that purpose.*

*The same jurisdiction is likewise reserved to Her Majesty in the said territory of Old Calabar over foreign subjects enjoying British protection, who shall be deemed to be included in the expression "British subject" throughout this Treaty.*

ARTICLE IV

*All disputes between the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar, or between them and British or foreign traders, or between the aforesaid Kings and Chiefs and neighbouring tribes, which cannot be settled amicably*

*between the two parties, shall be submitted to the British Consular or other officers appointed by Her Britannic Majesty to exercise jurisdiction in Old Calabar territories for arbitration and decision, or for arrangement. The said Kings and Chiefs shall have the right to appeal to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for foreign affairs against the decision of the Consular or other officers.*

**ARTICLE V**

*The Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar hereby engage to assist the British Consular or other officers in the execution of such duties as may be assigned to them; and, further, to act upon their advice in matters relating to the administration of justice, the development of the resources of the country, the interests of commerce, or in any other matter in relation to peace, order, and good government, and the general progress of civilization, subject to appeal, as in Article IV, against acting upon the advice of the Consular or other officers.*

**ARTICLE VI**

*The subject and citizens of all countries may freely carry on trade in every part of the territories of the Kings and Chiefs parties hereto and may have houses and factories therein. (This Article is not agreed to by the Kings and Chiefs)*

**ARTICLE VII**

*All Ministers of the Christian religion shall be permitted to reside and exercise their calling within the territories of the aforesaid Kings and Chiefs, who hereby guarantee to them full protection.*

*All forms of religious worship and religious ordinances may be exercised within the territories of the aforesaid Kings and Chiefs, and no hindrance shall be offered thereto.*

**ARTICLE VIII**

*If any vessels should be wrecked within the Old Calabar territories, the Kings and Chiefs will give them all the assistance in their power, will secure them from plunder, and also recover and deliver to the owners or agents all the property which can be saved.*

*If there are no such owners or agents on the spot, then the said property shall be delivered to the British Consular or other officer.*

*The Kings and Chiefs further engage to do all in their power to protect*

*the persons and property of the officers, crew, and others on board such wrecked vessels.*

*All claims for salvage dues in such cases shall, if disputed, be referred to the British Consular or other officer for arbitration and decision. The Kings and Chiefs will not be responsible for the Tom Shott people with respect to wrecking vessels, but they promise to do their utmost to induce those people to act in conformity with this request.*

#### ARTICLE IX

*This Treaty shall come into operation, so far as may be practicable, from the date of its signature, except as regards Article VI, to which the Kings and Chiefs do not agree.*

*Done in triplicate on board Her Britannic Majesty's ship "Flirt" anchored in Old Calabar River, this 10th day of September, 1884.*

*(Signed)*

*Edward Hyde Hewett  
King Eyo Honesty VII  
J. B. Cobham  
Prince Eyo IV, his x mark  
Tom Eyo II  
Prince Eyo II  
Prince Eyo III  
Esen John Ambo  
Abasi Ibatam, His x mark  
Ekpe Ene, ditto  
Ekpa Anlieka Ambo, his x mark  
Essien Ekpenyong Oku, his x mark  
Ekpenyong Essien, his x mark*

*(Signed)*

*King Duke IX  
Offiong Effiong Imah, his x mark  
P. Ejro Eyamba  
Prince Archibong II, his x mark  
Prince Archibong III  
Prince Egbo Archibong, his x mark  
James Ephraim Adam, his x mark  
Hogan Archibong, his x mark  
John Anderson, his x mark  
Hogan Iron Bar, his x mark*

*Eyo Eyo Andern, his x mark  
Adam Iron Bar*

*The above signatures and mark signatures, from King Eyo Honesty VII to Ekpenyong Essien, from King Duke IX to Adam Iron Bar, both inclusive were affixed to the Treaty in our presence this day, the 10th September, 1884.*

*Signed )*

*H. Kruger, Chairman of Court of Equity  
E. B. Comyn Platt.*

**DECLARATION BY TOM SHOTT**

*We, the undersigned King and Chiefs of Tom Shott, declare that we, our people and country, are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar, that we cannot, therefore, make any treaty with a foreign power for ourselves, but that any treaty the said Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar have made, or may hereafter make, is, and will be, binding on us.*

*Done in triplicate this 11th day of September, 1884, on board the steamship "Trader," Old Calabar River.*

(Signed)

**OBOU EKOU, his X mark**

**ABASY NA, his X mark**

*Witnesses to these marks of King and Chiefs:*

(Signed)

**R. W. CRAIGIE,**  
*Commander, Her Majesty's Ship "Flirt"*

**ASUQUO EKPENYONG,**  
*Messenger of King Duke*

**DECLARATION BY EFUT**

*We, the undersigned King and Chiefs of Efut, declare that we, our people and country, are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar; that we cannot, therefore, make any Treaty with a foreign Power for ourselves, but that any Treaty the said Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar have made, or may hereafter make, is, and will be, binding on us.*

(Signed)

<b>King Ekpo Ano,</b>	<b>his x mark</b>
<b>Ebuma Mesika,</b>	<b>"</b>
<b>Etua Retunda,</b>	<b>"</b>
<b>Ra Fe Mahari,</b>	<b>"</b>
<b>Ra-Ke-Nde Waxako,</b>	<b>"</b>
<b>Mesika Wa-Ete,</b>	<b>"</b>
<b>Rasako Mu-Ete,</b>	<b>"</b>
<b>Yellow Duke</b>	

*The above declaration was duly explained to the signatories thereto, and then signed in our presence, this 8th day of September, 1884.*

*(Signed)*

*JOHN HAMILTON EBRINGTON ALLEN,  
Acting Lieutenant, Her Majesty's Ship "Flirt."*

*JAMES MUNRO.*

*DECLARATION BY IDOMBI*

*We, the undersigned King and Chiefs of Idombi, declare that we, our people and country, are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar; that we cannot, therefore, make any treaty with a foreign power for ourselves, but that any Treaty the said Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar have made, or may hereafter make, is, and will be, binding on us.*

*(Signed)*

<i>King Ito Inango,</i>	<i>his x mark</i>
<i>Inua Ebende,</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Mara Mba,</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Aduma Akari,</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Morondi Wikori,</i>	<i>"</i>
<i>Ekpo Kuma,</i>	<i>"</i>

*The above declaration was duly explained to the signatories thereto, and then signed in our presence, this 9th day of September 1884.*

*(Signed)*

*JOHN HAMILTON EBRINGTON ALLEN  
Acting Lieutenant, Her Majesty's ship "Flirt."*

*JAMES MUNRO.*

APPENDIX VIII

*Inclosure 14 in No. 13*

*Preliminary Treaty with Kings and Chiefs of Creek Town, Old Calabar River,  
July 23, 1884*

*HER Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, & Co., and the Kings and Chiefs of Creek Town, Old Calabar River, being desirous of maintaining and strengthening the relations of peace and friendship which have so long existed between them;*

*William John Moore, Esq., Lieutenant and Commander of Her Britannic Majesty's ship "Goshawk," for and on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, & Co. and the Kings and Chiefs of Creek Town, Old Calabar River, have agreed upon and concluded the following Articles:-*

ARTICLE I

*Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, and Ireland, & Co. in compliance with the request of the Kings, Chiefs, and people of Creek Town, Old Calabar River, hereby undertakes to extend to them, the territory under their authority and jurisdiction her gracious favour and protection.*

ARTICLE II

*The Kings and Chiefs of Creek Town, Old Calabar River, agree and promise to refrain from entering into any correspondence, Agreement, or Treaty with any foreign nation or Power, except with the knowledge and sanction of Her Britannic Majesty's Government.*

ARTICLE III

*This preliminary Treaty shall come into operation from the date of its signature.*

*Done in triplicate this 23rd day of July, 1884.*

*(Signed)*

*W. J. Moore, Lieutenant and Commander of Her  
Britannic Majesty's ship "Goshawk."*

*King Eyo Honesty VII*

*Prince Eyo IV*

*Prince Eyo II*

*Tom Eyo II*

*Prince Eyo III*

*Urim Egbo Yong*

*Nkute,*

*his x mark*

*Espen John Ambo*

*Ekpe Ene Ambo,*

*his X mark*

*Ekpe Antika*

*"*

*Okon Ekpenyong*

*Hogan Antika Ambo*

*Ibitam Ibitam*

*Cobham Offiong,*

*his X mark*

*Abassy Egbo,*

*"*

**Witnesses:**

*(Signed)*

*A. J. Brows, Assistant Paymaster in charge;*

*Her Majesty's Ship "Goshawk."*

*Albert Gillies*

*George Watts.*

*Jas Munro*

*James S. Cockburn*

*H. Kruger*

*James Lyons.*

*A. Burn, Chairman of Court of Equity*

*E. B. Comyn Platt.*

APPENDIX IX

Creek Town,  
December 1, 1842

*"To Commander Raymond  
Man-of-War Ship 'Spy'*

*"I am very glad you come and settle treaty proper and thank you for doing everything right for me yesterday. Long time I look for some Man-of-War, and when Frenchman come I think he want war, and sent one canoe to let you know, but too much wind live for his catch Fernando Po, and no one come help me keep treaty as Mr Blount promises and when I no give slaves French Man-of-War come make plenty palaver, but I no will. One thing I want for your Queen, I have too much man now, I can't sell slaves and don't know what for do for them. But if I can get some cotton and coffee to grow, and man for teach me, and make sugar cane for we country come up proper, and sell for trade side I very glad. Mr Blyth tell me England glad for send man to teach book and make we understand God all same white man do. If Queen do so, I glad too much and we must try do good for England always. What I want for dollar side is proper India Romalle and "Copper rods, I no want fool thing, I want thing for trade side, and must try do good for Queen Victoria and all English woman. I hope Queen and young King can live long time proper and I am, Sir, Your friend.*

(Signed)  
KING EYO HONESTY

EPILOGUE

“OLD CALABAR”

1. Should Old Calabar be forgot  
And never brought to mind  
Oh no! Oh no! Oh no! my dears  
For the sake of happy years

CHORUS

- Oh Calabar, our fathers' home  
wherever we may roam  
The garden of our people's birth  
Their harbour and their berth
2. Let's sing your great and glorious name  
And stories of your fame  
Nigeria's town of great renown  
Her loving sparkling crown
  3. Most ancient land, let's sing your song  
In every place and tongue  
So green your hills, so blue your skies  
So wide your links and ties.
  4. Your future stars more brightly shine  
Your dreams more sweet and fine  
For God shall make your fortune rise  
Oh bounteous Paradise.

— By Courtesy of Chief (Dr) James Ene Richard Henshaw

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Obtaining a Government Scholarship, she trained as Librarian in the United Kingdom and qualified as an Associate of the British Library Association (A.L.A.) in 1953, thus becoming the first female Librarian in both her country, Nigeria and the whole of then British West Africa.

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Apart from her hobbies which are singing, reading and writing, she is also fully involved with community work and work in the traditional society. For this, she was in 1983 awarded the traditional honorary Efik Chieftaincy title of ADAIDAHA-KE-EFIK-EBURUTU by the late Obong of Calabar, Edidem Bassey Eyo Ephraim Adam III.

The "Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar" is her first book.