



MEMORANDUM

Of the

ETUBOM TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

On the

CAPPING OF
His Majesty
EDIDEM BASSEY EKPO BASSEY II
AS
OBONG OF CALABAR.....

Issued in CALABAR,

On

Friday 18th April, 2008.

Arrangement of Sections

- A. Introduction;**
- B. Selection and Capping**
- C. The Legal/Constitutional Question**
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A. Introduction

HRH Etubom Bassey Ekpo Bassey IV on Sunday, 6th April, 2008 was proclaimed Obong of Calabar. and henceforth is to be addressed as **His Majesty Edidem Bassey Ekpo Bassey II.**

His selection and proclamation, following his irreversible capping at **Efe Asabo**, our ancient Kingship Shrine would appear to have engendered a dispute. This memorandum is an endeavour to address the issues in dispute and state the position of the Etubom Traditional Council, as briefly as possible.

B. Selection and Capping

When an Obong of Calabar dies, it is customary for him to be replaced on the Throne almost immediately. Experience however is that replacement is often delayed on account of disputes.

Be that as it may, it is not just any person that is made Obong in his place. The prospect must, among other requirements, be Etubom, be of agnatic descent from one of the Founding Fathers, be a senior Etubom, and hold an Ekpe title.

1. Selection is done in conclave of Etuboms which is convened by a Senior Etubom at whatever venue that is acceptable to the persons invited. In the **Report of the Enquiry into the Dispute over the Obongship of Calabar**, paragraph 247, A.K. Hart reports (of the selection of Archibong V in 1948 which was adjudged valid):

“Etubom Edem E. E. Adam stated in evidence, that he as the most senior Etubom that is, if the late Obong was discounted, called a meeting of all the Etuboms and certain prominent persons with royal blood, and at this meeting which was held in his house, the late Obong was elected...”

2. Secondly, the process of selection is completed only when the person so selected is capped at Efe Asabo with the traditional **Ntinya**. It is a settled fact of our kingship process that this capping is irreversible and cannot be repeated in the lifetime of the person capped (See Hart's Report Paragraph 163)

Edidem Bassey Ekpo Bassey II satisfies these requirements and is a fit and proper person to sit on the Efik Throne. Also a Conclave of 20 Etuboms, called by him, presided over by **H.R.H. Etubom Ayi Ekpenyong Edem** of the **Ekpenyong Offiong Eyamba House**, on 2nd April 2008, formally selected him as Obong of Calabar-elect; which process was completed on 6th April at Efe Asabo with the traditional capping with Ntinya.

Bassey II who was one of the three oldest Etuboms in Efik land, has accordingly been proclaimed as Obong of Calabar, selected by 20 Etuboms.

C. The Legal / Constitutional Question

The Etuboms Traditional Council has been informed of a rival selection, that of a first-term Etubom called Ekpo Okon Abasi-Otu of Adiabo. There are a few technical difficulties with this selection:

1. Whereas there is informal emphasis on seniority and Bassey II was an Etubom since 1992, and was inducted into the Court of the Obong of Calabar in 1993, Abasi-Otu is **barely three years old in the place**. Selecting him would tend to show that there are no standards;

2. The people who selected him talk about a constitution which was produced by Henshaw VI, Abasi-Otu is unknown to that Constitution as neither himself nor his House is listed there; Bassey II and his King James Ekpo Bassey House are not just listed, he is a signatory to that constitution (which is however, substantially inoperable).

3. Whereas the area of traditional authority of the Obong of Calabar covers the entire Efik world, there are crippling legal constraints to Okon-Abasi ascending the Throne. Some of these constraints were thrown at the Nigerian legal team at the Hague successfully by the Cameroonians in the matter of dispute over Bakassi, yet the contradictory Nigerian laws have not been repealed. The Obong of Calabar was positioned by the Nigerian lawyers as a King with far-flung, international areas of authority, but Cameroon pleaded our own laws to show that *sui juris*, that area does not go beyond Calabar South.

The Obong is supposed to be a rotatory Chairman of Calabar South Local Government Traditional Rulers Council, how can someone

from Odukpani **lawfully** occupy that position? We stand for the amendment of that law, but that is what it is!

4. And of course the most crippling constraint is that he (Abasi-Otu) was not just selected by a fewer number of Etuboms than selected Bassey II (11 to 20), his selection process was not consummated with capping at Efe Asabo, and now, **cannot be**.

Much has been made of the fact that the minority of Etuboms who selected Abasi-Otu are in the Palace, while the majority are not.

The explanation is that there was a Palace crisis in 2004 over the matter of fake clans and villages. A number of Etuboms maintain long lists of villages that do not exist, on account of which they themselves are considered Clan Heads. They were exposed by those who thought that there was so much destitution in our neighbourhoods as to engender escalating cases of violent crimes; that such monies as are monthly paid to those fraudsters should rather be spent as grants to turn things around in the neighbourhoods (One of the Etuboms owns 22 fake villages and is personally paid for 18!).

When, on account of this complaint, the Cross River State Government instituted an enquiry in February 2004, all hell broke loose; and the late Obong who was a patron of the scheme, set one of the Etuboms (who himself has four fake villages) on the main complainant, and there was a scuffle!

All the Etuboms who were either not part of this scam or were suspected of harbouring sympathies for those who wanted to stop the malpractice have since been shut out of the Palace. These include the Houses that selected their Etuboms after the crisis. The Obong did not want to risk having them reopen the matter.

Unfortunately, this small group of Etuboms have found support with some august persons in government and in the National Assembly, who see nothing wrong with their scheme of monthly defrauding the public, and have provided security cover for them to continue excluding the majority, even with the demise of Henshaw VI., from the Palace.

The total effect of this exclusion is that seven out of the 12 Efik Principalities are not represented at all. These are Eniong, Ito, Idere, Ukwa, Eki, Ikot Offiong and Ikoneto; and many of the Houses in the other 5 are also not there with them.

There are altogether 18 Houses in the Palace; whereas by the time five of the principalities with us have formalized the Etubomship of their Houses, our number shall rise to 32, up from the 20 that chose and crowned Bassey II. That is to say, there are 32 Houses in our Etuboms Traditional Council, but only 20 have formalised their Etubomship.

There are 32 Houses in our Etuboms Traditional Council, 18 in theirs. 20 Etuboms chose Bassey II, only 13 "selected" Etubom Abasi-Otu. Nonetheless, our doors are open to them at all times; they may return to the fold, provided they stop signing for and collecting stipends for villages and clans that do not exist, to enable us advise government on the better use of the money to salvage our neighbourhoods.

Our platform is that of unity, we plan to bring the entire Efik Nation (in its vast expanse) together; and to expand this ambience of unity to cover all adjoining groups. No Principality or family shall be left out.

Hart was drawing from the 1902 Proclamation when he wrote "A second implication of Articles 3 and 4 is that the right to the Obongship of every free Efik family was recognized and the Etuboms of each of these various units became eligible for appointment as Obong."

Every Efik family is free and we urge all those that have selected their Etuboms to come forward let us reposition the kingship to serve the cause of communal progress and peace. This is no time for exclusion, this is the time for inclusion (which is why we are angry that the few self-opinionated and police – protected persons in the Palace could declare the bulk of Ikoneto Principality non-Efik and order out of the Palace, exceedingly august Efik personages who have been there as Etuboms long before them!

Indeed, one of the Etuboms ordered out was a First Republic Parliamentarian; another, an accomplished University teacher and the author of most royal scripts since the 1970's. There is hardly any person who has flown the flag of the Efik Nation over the years more than those two Etuboms. Such brigandage that would shut them out of the Palace in favour of persons, some of whom still serve as junior staff in the public service, cannot be allowed to stand. And we call on the Nigeria Police to stop giving protection to such illegality, such fraud.

D. Our Stand

1. His Majesty, Edidem Bassey Ekpo Bassey IV has been duly selected by a majority of Efik Royal Houses that have formalized their Etubomships; he has also been capped with “Ntinya” at Efe Asabo, which act completes the process of selection, and cannot be reversed, has never been reversed. Indeed, there is no known scheme of propitiation for reversing it. What is left is formal installation at Church Coronation.
2. The Government of the Cross River State is therefore most respectfully requested to do the routine thing of according him recognition. Disputation is a regular feature of our succession; so is factionalisation. The history of our succession crises is replete with instances where different factions select different candidates as Obong. The clincher is capping with Ntinya at Efe Asabo. There have been cases where Government is uncomfortable with the person crowned, but that has never led to a reversal.

An April 28th 1972 resolution of Etuboms Council addressed a purported annulment of the crowning of Edidem David Henshaw at Efe Asabo by the

Military Government of Brigadier U. J. Esuene thus:

“8. That the Etuboms Council deplores the radio announcement monitored from the NBC Calabar, and the press announcements which probably draw inspiration from the same source, that **the Government has nullified the enthronement of David James Henshaw V.**”

“9. That the Etuboms Council would wish to have it placed on record that enthronement is a different thing from government recognition, the one a tenet of tradition and the other a gesture of mutual cooperation and respect from the ruling government.”

In 1971, the Esuene Government was confronted with the capping of Henshaw V at Efe Asabo, and he instituted the Udoh Enquiry, at the end of which Henshaw V received recognition by Government.

Of the three persons selected by three factions following the demise of Archibong V in 1961, only Edidem Edem E. E. Adam had been capped at Efe Asabo; and when the Government of Eastern Nigeria set up a commission of enquiry (the famous Hart Commission) it was Adam that was recommended for recognition, and Adam that was recognised.

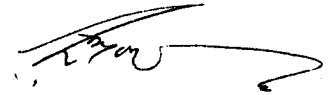
Also, the Government of Governor Donald Duke appeared uncomfortable with the enthronement of Edidem Nta Elijah Henshaw VI at Efe Asabo and in 2001 set up the Eyamba – Idem Commission of Enquiry to handle the matter. Government seemed unhappy with the figure of 10 Etuboms who selected Henshaw VI and kept pointing to the opposing faction. Government was told that 10 was a very high figure in our history of factional selections; that his predecessor Boco V was selected by only six Etuboms, and Archibong V by 5 Etuboms and one Acting Etubom, etc.

Government Enquiry did not annul Henshaw's capping at Efe Asabo and he was given Government recognition. No enquiry, no amount of disputation, nothing has ever reversed capping at Efe Asabo. This fact is very well known to the member of

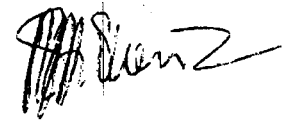
Government detailed to look into traditional rulership affairs, which is why he deployed awesome state forces to not only Efe Asabo, but also, the entire precincts of Cobham Town, ostensibly to keep the place for the candidate of his predilection. Unfortunately for him, the forces of our ancestors and mme Ndem are exceedingly potent in the Shrine. When the time came for Bassey II to be crowned there, those forces of state merely looked on as the Efik Tradition continued its majestic march.

We, the Royal Houses of the Efik Nation, organised in the Etuboms Traditional Council, hereby invite those that are not yet with us to join up. And those who have set up shop fighting us to close up. We have commenced work to reconcile our various warring communities; restrain "the wrath of sinful man" everywhere; rebuild the physical and psychological damages which have laid some of our communities bare – from Obomitiat to Okoyong, Isong Inyang, Ikot Offiong, Ikot Ana in Umon, Ebijakara, etc. We shall immediately commence work to reconcile and rebuild; and to pacify the youth of our communities. We aim to help the people prosper and to generally restore peace.

The Etuboms Traditional Council calls on the Government of the Cross River State to accord **His Majesty, Edidem Bassey Ekpo Bassey II** his due recognition, to assist our work. We pledge our abiding loyalty and cooperation. All we ask is for government to assign to us, community related problems to solve, and concentrate on bigger things. **We are all geared for the task ahead, there shall be no turning back!! For every beleaguered people comes a time of Restoration. This is Restoration time for the Efik and all their neighbours!**



HRH Etubom Ayi E. Edem
Chairman



H.H. High Chief Dr. Alex Ekeng
Secretary