

## **Discord and Harmony in Calabar: A Study of Intergroup Relations, 1904 –2010**

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### **Abstract**

Before colonialism became firmly implanted in these parts of Nigeria Calabar has been the home-land of the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik. The Akin (Qua) dwelled in the interior while the Efik occupied the coastal plains of the Calabar River. The Efut inhabit the forest and enclaves to the south of Old Calabar. All were settled on a contiguous expanse of territory by which provision they interacted with each other politically, socially, economically and culturally. Their dispersed settlements and separation physically by thick forests, swamps and steep valleys notwithstanding, this proved rather healthy for meaningful relationship than is usually conceded by some scholars. British imposition of colonial rule in the area in the 1890s brought these culturally distinct ethnic nationalities under one Native Administration. This episode irrevocably changed the fortunes of these ethnic components in Calabar. As such, the paper examines the relations, which has existed between these groups from 1904 to the year 2010. It argues that relations were mostly cordial as no inter-ethnic war has been recorded amongst them; but less often boisterous and tense. These relations are analysed against popular views that multiculturalism is a drag on African development using historical and interdisciplinary tools of inquiry. The paper relied on both primary and secondary sources of information for data to pursue its set goals.

**Key Words:** Harmony, Discord, Calabar, Intergroup and Relations.

### **Introduction**

Akin (Qua) – Efut – Efik relations has a great history behind it. Relations cut across cultural, political, economic and even linguistic spheres of human activity. These relations actually date back to the sixteenth century when the settlements in Calabar were said to have been formed (Latham 3). This paper deals with the Akin (Qua) – Efut – Efik relations since 1891 when the British, through Claude Macdonald, established a system of colonial administration in the area. It is therefore appropriate to state quite early that the Akin (Qua) were hinterland dwellers and by that fact largely farmers and hunters (Itakpo 71). The Efut arrived Calabar as fishermen, but were good farmers as well (Akak 58). For the Efik, they came to their present habitation as fishermen, but turned big time traders in the later course of their history (Latham 9).

Calabar, the capital of Cross River state, is located on latitude 04° 58' North and longitude 04° 57' East (Effiong-Fuller 3). On his part, Aye records that the city of Calabar is situated on 04° 57' North and longitude 08 20 East (1). Rosalind I. J. Hackett is in support of the latter position (19). Whatever the geographical location of "Calabar" may be is significant to this paper, but not to the extent of limiting Calabar to the small Efik enclave by the coast of the Calabar River, or to the Efik and their city-states. This paper is concerned with the expanse of territory that constitutes Calabar South and Calabar Municipal Local Government Area in modern-day Calabar. Calabar shed itself of the prefix "Old" following government proclamation of 1904 (Noah 39). This geographical entity is located within the equatorial rainforest belt. The Great Kwa and Calabar Rivers are two of its outstanding physical features which also act as obstacles to the east and westward expansion of the city, respectively.

This geographical entity and its people has been isolated for analysis in consideration of the fact first the close proximity of these ethnic groups – Akin (Qua) to the North-East of Cross River, Efut to the South-East and Efik who occupy the (Eastern) coast (Jones 32). Although divergent in linguistic and cultural patterns, the five

centuries or so of interaction with each other yielded tremendous social, economic, political and cultural impacts on one another (Essien 29). Finally, by the differing processes of growth and development – accretion, fusion/fission, conurbation, among others, these different ethnic peoples have come to inhabit one large city called Calabar. What is the nature, pattern, mode and course of interaction are subjects analyzed in this paper.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Several concepts and theories have been postulated by scholars of intergroup relations in order to comprehend the subject of intergroup relations. Thomas Hobbes, for instance, views relations among groups as that of “natural anarchy”, where “everyman is pitched against everyman”, in war. As such man’s existence on earth becomes precarious. In other words, man’s life in such a situation becomes “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (107). We know, however, that the necessity to live calls for cooperation amongst groups in what Okpe Okpe refers to as “interdependence” and “Mutual Aid” (6-7). A. E. Afigbo demonstrates this interdependence more elegantly when he writes: “no community, no matter how rich and however favoured by nature can produce all its needs to attain what its people consider the good life and self-fulfillment whether at the individual or group level” (124). What Afigbo captures more profoundly in the above postulation is that “no man is an island unto himself” no matter his endowments. This then makes “consensus and conflict”, “discord and harmony”, clearly though not compatible phenomena, not only the two sides of the same coin but integral parts of intergroup relations. T. Tseror’s dictum therefore that “those who survive best are those who have perfected the art of cooperation rather than conflict” is most appropriate and apt in our context (12-14).

The triggers of discord and harmony in Calabar are analysed using two sets of theories – the Frustration – Aggression/Relative Deprivation and Human Needs theories. While the former has the likes of Leonard Berkowitz (1962), Aubrey Yates (1962), C. J. Davies (1962), Remi Anifowose (1982), and John Dollard of an earlier date as

proponents, the latter parades scholars such as Ted Robert Gurr (1970), Abraham Maslow (1970), Rosati et al (1990), John Burton (1990), Edward Azar (1994) and Max Neef (1999) as advocates. Both groups of scholars are however united in their claim first that the frustration of expected needs impedes the actualization of potentials and as such capable of instigating conflict. Second, all are also agreed that in order to resolve or prevent conflict, those things which were initially denied any people must be supplied them using appropriate “satisfiers”, these being the things that the people were denied (Faleti 53).

The Frustration – Aggression theory provides that aggression is not a natural reaction or instinct in man as realists and biological theorists claim, but a product of frustration. Even a rat, it is argued, would fight back if not given an escape route in a war situation. Scholars of this persuasion further explain that the feeling of disappointment arising from direct or indirect deprivation of the legitimate desire of an individual or group may lead such an individual or group to express anger through violence directed at those perceived/actual persons responsible for that denial (Faleti 48).

For the Relative Deprivation theory which is by all intents and purposes similar to the Frustration – Aggression theory, Ted Robert Gurr’s (its proponent) postulation will suffice: “the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seem attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result” (24). C. J. Davies warns, nonetheless, that when the differences between “expected need satisfaction” is in deficit of “actual need satisfaction”, the tendency is to confront those who are frustrating the provision of these needs (6). Because our story of Calabar is that of discord and harmony, the Frustration-Aggression thesis fits adequately our model of explanation and is relied upon for this reason.

The main assumptions of the Human Needs theory for which our analysis of discord and harmony is dependent is that all humans have basic needs which they strive to meet. The obstruction of the

provision of these needs by other groups or individual affect adversely those who desire these needs now or in the future. Obviously then, obstruction/suppression leads to frustration which results in conflict (Rosati et al 90). Some of these needs listed by Abraham Maslow include physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem and self-actualization needs. For John Burton response, stimulation, security, recognition, retributive justice, meaning, need to appear rational and develop rationality, need for sense of control and the need for role defence are not repressible (72). But Faleti's insistence that human needs for survival, protection, affection, understanding, participation, creativity and identity including needs for recognition, security, autonomy and bonding with others are shared by all people, are irrepressible and not easy to give up no matter how hard one may try. Persistence to frustrate or suppress these needs, according to Faleti, may fail or cause more damage on the long run (52). The Human Needs theory is relied upon in this paper as it helps to address the needs issue in Calabar. From the early demands of the Akin (Qua) for a separate native administration to their demand for its own paramount chief, amongst others, the theory endures.

### **Early Years of Native Administration and Tension**

Britain declared a protectorate over the coastal peoples of Calabar, Opobo and Ibeno in 1885. This declaration was intended to protect British trade and strategic interests in the region, but outside any system of effective administration (Abasiattai 170). This was established in 1891 when Claude Macdonald, who doubled as High Commissioner and Consul – General of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, arrived at Old Calabar in company of thirteen (13) other Officers, with £14,000 loan obtained for this purpose. It was Claude Macdonald who ensured that what largely existed on paper as a semblance of administration of the protectorate was transformed and translated into concrete and effective system of governance in Calabar. The Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik were administered first under the Oil Rivers Protectorate (1885-1893); the Niger Coast Protectorate (1893-1899); the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (1900-1906); the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (1906-1913) and the

amalgamated colony of Nigeria as from 1914 (Abasiattai 167). The Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik participated actively in the local administration in Calabar hence their relations with each other within the new protectorate government.

The establishment of British colonial rule at Calabar in 1891 and the subsequent exposure of the city to the influences of Western education, colonial administration, the civil service and other alternatives considered necessary to achieving good life, undermined the traditional occupations of the people. Thus, while the Efik systematically abandoned their traditional occupations of fishing and trading for the public service, the Akin (Qua) and Efut similarly underwent some economic reorientations in consonance with the new change. E. U. Aye reports that although the rate of transition was low among the Akin (Qua) as among the Efut, the Efik suffered little dislocation due largely to their long and early contact and relations with the forces of light and salvation identified as the European explorer, traveler, missionary, administrator, etc (*The Efik* 235).

In terms of administration and adjudication of disputes, the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik were until 1903 separate. The Efik were constituted into the Judicial Council of Old Calabar and District by the colonial authorities in 1902. This Council remained exclusively that of the Efik (Aye "Efik Kingship" 34). Aye notes further that nineteen Efik sons, including Edet Effiong Otu, Essien Ekpe Hogan Basse, Eyo Ephraim Adam, Offiong Ekpeyong Eyo II, Okon Efi Effanga, amongst others formed the Council. This meant that until 1902 the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik ethnic components depended on their indigenous judicial and administrative institutions of Atoe, Etubom and Muri respectively for such purposes. This scenario changed in 1903 when two Akin (Qua) representatives, Edim Ebane and Abasi Tata were admitted into the newly reconstituted Judicial Council of Old Calabar and District. As noted by K. K. Nair, the Akin (Qua) representatives were drawn into the Council to assist in bringing "light" and salvation to Akin (Qua) territories in the interior (294).

Dawn to the Calabar Division Central Council of 1929, this comprised the Akin (Qua) Efut and Efik with Ntoe Ekpo Etta as the only Akin (Qua) representative (Alderton 8). This raised forbidding challenges to the administration when the Akin (Qua) and Efut demanded a representation in the Council which would reflect, not only their numerical strengths but status as landowners as well. The Efik on their part reacted dramatically to these demands by swiftly changing the name of the Council to *Obio Efik* Council implying that the Council belonged to the Efik only or that only Efik representatives were illegible to sit in the Council. As if the change in the nomenclature of the Council was not enough, the Council in July 1932 resolved that “as the Council is called *Obio Efik* Council any Qua Town which chooses to remain as a member ... should submit a written declaration before Monday 18<sup>th</sup> (July) or else leave the Council” (Alderton 9).

Acquiescence to this nomenclature or submitting a written declaration as demanded by the Efik would have subordinated the Akin (Qua) and Efut ethnic components and communities to the Efik as dependencies of the *Obong* of Calabar. This arm-twisting tactics of the Efik angered *Ntoe Ekpo Etta*, an Akin (Qua) representative, who walked-out of the Council. This en passé was resolved by the colonial authorities when a decision was reached to form a separate Council for the Akin (Qua). As reported by Alderton “... the Qua Council with its own president will be on equal footing with the Calabar Branch and Creek Town branch of the *Obio Efik* Council and that these three branch councils together form the authority of the joint Efik-Qua administration” (11). This resolution soothed the frayed nerves of the Akin (Qua) and was instrumental to their return to the Calabar Native Council. It also formed the basis upon which the Native Administration Council of 1933 was inaugurated (Aye *The Efik* 237).

### **Socio-Cultural Relations**

A most common feature in the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik relations is the recurrent incidences of litigation amongst them. In 1902, for instance, there was a legal tussle between the Akin (Qua) and Efik over the title of *Ndidem in Calabar* (*A text of a Rejoinder* 10). Also in

1916, the Akin (Qua) instituted a court action against the Efik for a declaration of title to the ownership of all Calabar including the shore line from Duke to Henshaw Towns (Aye *The Efik* 326). In 1937 one Offiong Egbo Archibong and two other Efik sons dragged Ntoe Eteta Eta and the entire people of Akim Qua Town to court over land matters (*Efik Eburutu Consultative Assembly* 18). Yet in 1948 it was the turn of Akin (Qua) to lodge another case against the Efik claiming that Duke and Henshaw Towns land including *Nsutana*, Prospect Beach Island, were Akin (Qua) territories (Aye *The Efik* 239). Of note too were the cases between Henry Cobham and four others (Efik) against Okon Edem Odo and others (Efut) and Okokon Ita Duke (Efik) and Edet Edem, Muri of Efut (Akak *Efut* 61-2). Although court litigation is the most peaceful, legal and permanent way of resolving disputes, it however generates ill-feelings and dissatisfaction among litigants because court rulings usually lack the reconciliatory and ameliorative capacities of traditional adjudication systems (Afigbo *The Warrant Chiefs* 272). These litigations generated hatred and enmity among the litigants and invariably tension amongst them.

An important instrument in the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik relations was inter-ethnic marriages. Afigbo has identified two sub-types of this relation. The first is that which the married woman is brought home to live with the husband's relatives and the second refers to a situation where the married woman is left to continue to reside with her people while the itinerant husband visits her in her parents' home (139). Certain advantages are derivable from both modes of behavior. The first sub-type encourages "cultural transfer and borrowing" while the second facilitates "travel and profession". Both are however congenial for healthy inter-ethnic relations (Afigbo "an Overview" 139).

In the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik situation, intermarriages between the Efik and Efut have resulted in the "disintegration and integration" of the Efut into the Efik culture and tradition (Akak *Efut*). It has also led to cultural transfer and borrowing amongst the Akin (Qua) and Efik (Onor 89). The *Mgbe*, for example, which is purely Ejagham cultural creation has been adopted and adapted by the entire three



components in the city either for social mobilization, entertainment or for social control. The *Nsibidi* sign writing, which is the medium through which *Mgbe* initiates communicate among themselves is also common among these groups (Erim 115). More importantly, such traditional dishes like *Ekpang Nkukwuo* and *Edikang Ikong*, typically Efik local dishes are now common place cuisines among the Akin (Qua) as among the Efut (Aye *The Efik* 40).

Intergroup marriage among the ethnic components in Calabar was noted to have been responsible for the cordial relations existing among these ethnic units. J. J. Ewa and O. B. Duke, both Efik informants, maintain that the degree of interethnic marriage amongst these ethnic groups is so great that in a situation of war, it was likely that for every five persons killed three would likely have Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik blood streaming in them. This, according to these informants, has always compelled these ethnic groups to exercise a lot of care and restraint over every issue that involves them so as not to rock the boat (Ewa and Duke).

The prevalence of *Mgbe*, a secret society amongst the three ethnic components in Calabar also acted as a unifying factor in the people's socio-economic and political relations (Afigbo "an Overview" 140). Since *Mgbe* was, and still is, potent in Calabar, it provides the people with a common ground for the exchange of ideas and ideals. For instance, during the funeral obsequies of a prominent member of the society, the *Ogbe*, plural of *Mgbe*, of the other groups were usually invited to partake in the burial ceremony of that *Mgbe* member as a mark of paying homage to their departed initiate (Erim 116). Such occasions usually represent high points in the display of *Mgbe* and a period of interaction and cooperation amongst the people. *Mgbe* provided a forum for the resolution of conflicts and for the maintenance of good relations amongst a people, the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik inclusive (Erim 117; Edet "The Akin (Qua)" 6).

With regard to language, a lot appears to have happened among these ethnic groups in Calabar. Particularly among the Akin (Qua) and Efik, it is not uncommon to hear *Mgbe* songs being chanted and

song in Ejagham language among the Efik as in Efik among the Ejagham (Erim 118). During the administration of Mr. Donald Duke, governor, Cross River state, there was a radio advertisement in the Cross River Broadcasting Cooperation urging urban property owners to pay their tax as a way of securing improved urban social amenities. In that advertisement, the word *Tebede*, a typically Ejagham ((Akin (Qua)) word meaning careful, decorum, gentle, etc was adopted and adapted as Efik (Cross River Radio Advertisement 2006). Similarly, *Enyene obio akama obio tebede, odudung ekim asari*, lyrics of a popular Efik song of the 1970s also used the word *tebede*. When translated literally as “gently”, the word *tebede* is again adopted and adapted as Efik. Aside the extent of borrowing that this adaptation may reveal, it equally shows the level of interaction that has gone on among the people over time.

### **Years of Discord and Harmony**

As from 1916 when the Akin (Qua) sued the Efik in court a second time for “a declaration of title to the ownership of all Calabar including the foreshow from Old Town to Henshaw Town”, three contending issues have continued to rear their most ugly heads in the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik relations in the city (Aye *The Efik* 236). These include:

- (i) Who, between the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik, owns the land in Calabar
- (ii) Which ethnic group listed above arrived first at Calabar and:
- (iii) Between the *Ndidem*, *Muri Munene* and *Obong* of Calabar, the three traditional political stools in Calabar, which of them is higher and superior to the other? (*Efik Eburutu Consultative Assembly* 1-4; *Qua Clans Constituted Assembly* 32-44).

These, perhaps, were the issues that troubled the mind of the Akin (Qua) and Efut when in 1941 they requested the then colonial government to split Calabar Municipality into three parts, according to indigenous ethnic constituents, so that each could rule itself using the best principles of custom and tradition. But G. G. Shutte, the then Commissioner for the Eastern provinces of Nigeria, disregarded the plea saying: “there has

never been an *Ntoe* of Calabar or *Muri* of Calabar and as such government was not in a position to accept the titles” (Akak 49). With these demoralizing and obviously provocative position taken by the Hon. Commissioner, Calabar could not be divided, nor the titles of *Ndidem* or *Muri Munene*, recognized by government.

It seemed that for the Efik complete subordination of the Akin (Qua) and Efut to the supreme authority and over-lordship of the *Obong* of Calabar should not be compromised. This is what the Efik Eburutu Consultative Assembly implied when it wrote in her book *Qua: Enough is Enough*: that “There is ... documentary evidence to support the contention that the King of Calabar exercised overall lordship over the Quas and Efuts and therefore in 1888 the Quas and Efuts were subjects to the King Duke Ephraim IX of Calabar” (11). Implying, perhaps, that the Efik were a repentant imperialist nation, they counseled: “the Quas have a right to self determination and the Efik have no more expansionist tendencies and on that the Efik were ready to negotiate” (52). Available evidence indicates that the Efik have never ruled over any territory or people except their own. This unfortunate position of theirs made relations between them and the other groups, as we have seen, boisterous and tense.

The Local Government Law of 1955, E. R. N. No. 26 section 4 (d) mandated the Minister for Local Governments to appoint members into the Urban District Committees in the Eastern Region of Nigeria. With particular reference to the Calabar Urban District Council, the law further stipulated that

- (i) Four title holders from the Efik in Calabar, one of whom shall be the *Obong* of Calabar;
- (ii) Two title holders from the Qua community in Calabar, one of whom shall be the *Ntoe* of Big Qua Town and
- (iii) Two title holders from the Efut community in Calabar, one of whom shall be the *Muri* of the Efut, should be appointed to the CUDC.

This provision shows that even as late as 1956, the administration of Calabar was the joint responsibility of the three indigenous ethnic groups. It also indicates that although the Efik had four slots in the council, its membership was representative. Representation also reflected the numerical strength of each of these ethnic components in the city. This also testifies to the fact that the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik were in a union in which no one was superior to the other.

But, the Cross River state Edict No. 14 of 1978, published in the Nigerian Chronicle of 5<sup>th</sup> January 1979 raised the stakes further when it created and accorded recognition to the offices of the *Ndidem* of the Qua and *Muri Munene* of the Efut. This edict however satisfied the curiosities and expectations of the Akin (Qua) and Efut who had long contemplated the elevation of the status of their *Ntoe* and *Muri* respectively to the same pedestal as that of the *Obong* of Calabar. Apart from creating more First Class Chiefs in Cross River state, the Edict established three Paramount Rulers in the city – the *Ndidem* of the Qua, the *Muri Munene* of the Efut and the *Obong* of Calabar (Akak 49). This situation naturally created room for contest for supremacy among the three natural rulers in the city and, invariably, conflict in a grand scale (Aye *The Efik* 241).

The creation of other two rival traditional political stools in Calabar did not go down well with the Efik who protested same to government. Akak believes that the creation of parallel and rival political stools for the Akin (Qua) and the Efut “destroyed the foundation of Efik chieftaincy institution” (48). If by this comment Akak meant that the creation of these stools diminished the importance of Efik Chieftaincy stool, or that it reduced in scope the administrative outreach of the *Obong* of Calabar, or that it denied the *Obong* the services of the Akin (Qua) and the Efut, the verities remain that Calabar, even as at 1902 when the Efik traditional political stool was made more prominent, Calabar (as opposed to Old Calabar) was a city inhabited by three indigenous ethnic groups. The edict merely corrected and gave recognition to this fact of history.

As if to sound a warning to the Efik that the *Ndidem* and *Muri Munene* titles have come to stay and were of equal ranking to the

Obong of Calabar, the Commissioner for Local Governments in the state, Chief U. U. Okorouen, while inaugurating the Traditional Rulers' Council in Calabar Municipality averred that: "One thing I wish to emphasize at this stage is that all Paramount Rulers in the state are equal before the Government and are held with high esteem by their respective communities" (Quoted in Akak 49). This exercise affected, to a large extent, Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik relation when the heat and vehemence that greeted the Akin (Qua) publication of 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1994 on the title of *Ndidem* and their claim over ownership of land in Calabar is considered (Nigerian Chronicle April 20, 1994; May 4, 1994 May 11, 1994).

The state creation exercise of 1987 in Nigeria split the then Cross River state into Akwa Ibom and Cross River states. This excision necessitated the reorganization of the existing local government councils in Cross River state to bring it to its current structure in the state. The consequence of this was that the former Calabar Municipality was split into two council areas of Calabar South and Calabar Municipality in 1997 (*Qua Clans Constituted Assembly* 3). This division should have placed Calabar Municipality squarely in the control of the *Ndidem* of the Akin (Qua) and left the *Obong* and the *Muri Munene* of Efut to continue the battle for supremacy in Calabar South (Aye *The Efik* 241). But this was hardly the scenario because, according to NewAge Newspaper: "Peace in Calabar, the Cross River state capital may shortly be disrupted, courtesy the on-going struggle by the three major ethnic groups, Quas, Efuts and Efiks for nativity rights over the city." As further reported by the paper: "Before now claims and counter claims interlaced with derogatory language on which of the tribes is superior, had been between Efiks and Quas, but of late, the Efut have joined in the fray taking sides with the Quas" (1).

*Ndabo* Godwin Bassey, an Efut informant, however, attempted an explanation of the reasons behind this bickering. "There was a move to impose one Paramount Chief over others in Calabar. This situation was rather in total contrast to established norms in the city. As such history was invoked by one of these ethnic groups in Calabar to counter the move which, if allowed to unfurl, would injure the peace

and stability in Calabar” (Bassey). It could be inferred from the foregoing that the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik have recently been “locked in titanic struggle for supremacy over one another” (Daily Sun 21/06/2004). As such relations amongst them have become strained to the extent that it threatened the peace and stability which have hitherto prevailed in the city. These ethnic components were at daggers drawn with each other as confirmed by ThisDay Newspaper earlier quoted that: “we the Quas and Efuts of Calabar ... are aware of moves by certain persons to disrupt the peace of the public in Calabar, this shall be resisted with all might” (3).

Peace and stability are two variables vital to the successful administration of a city or country and by inference, its growth and development. For the growth and development of Calabar to be achieved it was therefore vital for these variables to remain validly functional. It was, perhaps, in appreciation of this fact, and in recognition of the threat that the absence of peace may pose to the administration of the state, that warranted the state governor, Mr. Donald Duke to set up the “Issues Bordering on the Ethnic Groups in Calabar” committee in 2002 to resolve all outstanding matters involving the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik before they explode into open violence (Ewa). Again, it was *Ndabo* Godwin Bassey who characterized the committee as comprising Chief (Dr.) Bassey Ewa Ekeng, Permanent Secretary, Chieftaincy and Political Affairs, Governor’s Office, Calabar, Chairman; Mr. I. N. Ingwu, Secretary and representatives, three (3) each from the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik as members. This source further explained that soon after the position papers were presented, the Efik withdrew from the committee on the “baseless grounds of pending matters in court.” The *Ndabo* regretted that though papers were presented, no white paper has yet come out of it, but assures all the same that the superior position paper took precedence over others, with obvious reference to the Akin (Qua) position paper. This, he said, is revealed in the mutual peace and harmony existing among the three Royal Fathers in Calabar in recent times (Bassey).

When Thomas Ika Ika Oqua was selected among the Council of Atoe as the Paramount Ruler of Calabar Municipality and *Ndidem* of the Akin (Qua) in 2002, government for political or logistics reasons delayed in recognizing nor promptly present to him a staff of office (Imona). This attitude of government was interpreted as a desire to superimpose one Paramount Chief, possibly the *Obong* of Calabar, on other traditional rulers in the city (Bassey). Government was, however, eventually prevailed upon, E. Imona further claimed, to accord recognition to the *Ndidem* as well as presented to him staff of office on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2003 (*Programme of Thanksgiving Service* 30). In that colourful occasion which was also well attended, His Royal Highness, *Ndidem* Thomas Ika Ika Oqua III, Paramount Ruler of Calabar Municipality, wondered: "It is rather ironical that some unprogressive elements in the society would dare to attempt to challenge the status and authorities of the Qua who are the undisputed landlords and first inhabitants of this city of Calabar (*Programme of the Thanksgiving Service* 12). The *Ndidem*, nonetheless, thanked the wisdom of the governor, Mr. Donald Duke and his government for standing on the side of truth by presenting him a staff of office.

It could be reasoned from the foregoing that some detractors and unknown persons may have prevailed upon government to withhold recognition for the *Ndidem* as the Paramount Ruler of Calabar Municipality (Etim). It is also probable that government wanted only one Paramount Ruler in Calabar considering government attitude towards traditional rulers and clans' creation in the state at the time (*Clan Verification Edict* 2002). On the other hand, the *Ndidem* and the entire Akin (Qua) nation may have also been blackmailed before the governor by his adversaries who probably are the Efik (*Qua Clans Constituted Assembly* 1). It could also be that the Akin (Qua) desire for their *Ndidem* to be called the "*Ndidem* of Calabar" required caution on the part of government which translated in the delay experienced (Edet). Whatever the true situation may be, it became obvious that the Akin (Qua) blamed this delay on bad politics of the Efik (Imona).

Relations between the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik became boisterous and tense especially during the reign of Professor Nta Elijah Henshaw IV as the *Obong* of Calabar and Thomas Ika Ika Oqua III as the *Ndidem* of the Qua and Paramount Ruler of Calabar Municipality, respectively. As reported by the Punch Newspaper, it would appear that the *Obong* has always stirred the hornets' nest by his constant claims of over-lordship over the entire Calabar to the disregard of the Akin (Qua) and Efut in the city. These claims forced the Akin (Qua) and Efut to bring to public notice the spurious and provocative claims of the *Obong*: "Quas and Efuts have told the Obong of Calabar Professor Nta Elijah Henshaw IV, to stop claiming authority over the entire Calabar Kingdom as the jurisdiction of the Professor (*Obong*) was limited to the Efiks (12).

It would be recalled that in 1941 G. G. Shutte, the Commissioner for Eastern Provinces, had warned that in "ordinary private life the *Obong* shall have such authority over the Efiks as they agree to give him, but I do not agree that he should have any authority over the Quas and Efuts in any way or manner whatsoever" (*Qua Clans Constituted Assembly* 19). In 1949, it was also reasoned by a West African Court of Appeal sitting in Lagos in suit No WACA 2863 of 8<sup>th</sup> April 1949, that "there has not at any time been a fusion of the Efiks, Quas and Efuts into one community, and Calabar as one town embracing the Efiks, Quas and Efuts is a creation of government for administrative purposes" (Quoted in *Qua Clans Constituted Assembly* 9). It is therefore infuriating to the Akin (Qua) and Efut when the *Obong* of Calabar claims authority over them. More often than not, these claims rouse suspicion and generate bad blood among the ethnic groups in Calabar.

Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik relation is very cordial now (2006) an informant reported. For example, His Eminence *Edidem* (Prof) Nta Elijah Henshaw IV, the *Obong* of Calabar, visited the *Ndidem*, Thomas Ika Ika Oqua III, where both sat and consorted together. The *Obong* also visited the *Ndidem* in his living house where they also discussed issues of vital importance (Edet). J. J. Ewa confirmed that the *Obong's* visit to the *Ndidem* was reciprocated by the *Ndidem* when



he said: “the *Ndidem* paid a visit to the *Obong* in his palace.” Ewa further elaborated that if there was any important function being held in the *Obong’s* palace, the *Obong would* usually extend invitations to the *Ndidem* and the *Muri* who will attend in person. Even at public functions, the three royal fathers are always seen together. This is an indication that peace and social harmony has returned amongst them (Edet).

### **Walking the Path to Peace and Harmony**

The route to unity, peace and harmonious relations amongst the three ethnic groups in Calabar was not charted by the Cross River state government alone. Other agencies, nationally and internationally, contributed to achieving harmony (Edet). These agencies include the Inter-Religious and International Federation of World Peace, a None Governmental Organization (NGO) with a consultative status in the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council, Abuja; the National Conference of Traditional Rulers, Abuja and; the three ethnic groups in Calabar. The first two bodies, in collaboration with the listening ears, pervious and malleable mind, of the people collectively brought back peace and harmony in Calabar against threats and counter threats to render Calabar ungovernable by ethnic chauvinists in the city (Edet).

Changes in other spheres of Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik relations also transcended the traditional socio-religious institutions of the people. This was clearly stated by the *Obong* of Calabar, *Edidem* (Prof) Nta Elijah Henshaw as follows:

When I came to the palace, I had to effect some changes in the manner of doing things. First, we agreed that some of the sacrifices that were being perpetuated in the palace must be discarded. It was agreed, collectively, that pouring of libation, in view of its irrelevance to our present situation, must be countenanced and it was stopped. We also organized a “Solemn Assembly”.

This transformational propensity of the *Obong* was further corroborated by J. J. Ewa who spoke as follows:

When Edidem (Prof) Nta Elijah Henshaw assumed office as the *Obong* of Calabar, he convened a meeting of all stake holders in the traditional administration of the Efik apex Council in Calabar. At the meeting the *Obong* requested members to choose between further rendering sacrifices to idols and worshipping the Almighty who is the true God. Appeal was further made by the *Obong* to the effect that their decisions should be communicated to him in the next three months. At the end of the period, Council members unanimously agreed to follow the path of the true God the Almighty. This was how pouring of libation, sacrifices generally, in the *Obong's* palace, was compromised

The *Obong* did not stop at inducing the abolition of sacrifices within his palace but also ensured that gains made in this direction were sustained. He explains:

On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, 2006 another Solemn Assembly, with the theme "Return to Sender", was organized in the palace where we returned to God all the land in Calabar. This is because land belongs to Him. A weekly prayer session was also instituted. This takes place every Thursday of every week in the palace.

The return to sender theme of the Solemn Assembly is explicable and understandable. As noted earlier, the land question has been a constant source of friction amongst the Akin (Qua), Efut and Efik and, invariably, a cause for strained relations amongst them. Land being handed back to God implied that this source of friction no longer existed. The Efik can no longer lay claim to ownership of land

(Henshaw). What this translated into in real life was that an Akin (Qua) or Efut person can come to hitherto held Efik-land and settle or acquire land there for any purpose without discrimination (Duke). However, it the wholesomeness or otherwise of this act which calls for caution because “there are more hypocrisy and mercenary intentions than sincerity in Christian worship these days, particularly among some new generation communions” (Nsan 263). It is the sincerity of intentions that is paramount in this matter.

Similar prayer sessions, Solemn Assembly and other religious activities were organized by the *Ndidem* of the Qua and Paramount Ruler of Calabar Municipality, as confirmed by an informant, “to seek the face of God and His presence in all that we do on earth” (Imona). This source further maintained that the pouring of libation and other unhealthy rituals and practices were stopped in Akin (Qua) land when Thomas Ika Ika Oqua III was an *Esi-Nyo*, family head. The *Ndidem* only extended to other Akin (Qua) Clans (in this most Akin (Qua) informants were unanimous) what he believed was good and just for the Akin (Qua) people. Consequently, a Businessmen’s Fellowship Centre has been created in Big Qua Town where people from all works of life go to worship (Imona). When consulted the Efut reported that similar religious activities were also organized by them as a mark of their change of heart (Bassey).

### Conclusion

Changes in city life brought about partly by the colonial ruler, more so by the indigenous populations, affected relations among the three indigenous ethnic groups in Calabar. Although relations were often smooth and cordial, it was less often boisterous, explosive and tense. On the whole, each ethnic component knew its part and function in the city. It was the kind of relations that existed between the tongue and the teeth in the cavity of the mouth. It was relations of caution, mutual respect and understanding. The sum total was mutual peace and harmony and eventually growth and development of Calabar

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