

# Community seeks Edo gov's intervention in clan headship tussle

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October 21, 2017    Olalekan Osiade



The South Ibie community in Etsako West Local Government area of Edo State has urged the state governor, Godwin Obaseki, to intervene in a clan headship tussle over the Aidonogie Stool.

This is owing to the controversy that had continued to trail the presentation of Staff of Office to Alhaji Aliyu Kelvin Danesi as the head of the kingdom. The community, through Oghiator branch of Okhokho ruling house alleged that contrary to court judgments, the past administrations in the state appointed Danesi as Aidonogie of the kingdom and thereby, urged the present administration to withdraw the staff of office.

The ruling house, through its legal counsel, Barrister Sumaina Ikpea, made the appeal in a seven page letter to Obaseki, the Commissioner for Local Government Affairs and Chieftaincy Affairs, Mr. Jimoh Ijegbai, and the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Prof. Yinka Omorogbe.

The letter dated September 20, 2017, titled; “Breach of Court Judgments”, stated that the clan headship tussle over Aidonogie of the Kingdom started since 1997. According to the copy of the petition, the tussle between Oghiator Branch of Okhokho Ruling House of Iyakpi, South Ibie and Danesi Branch of the same Okhokho Ruling House of Iyakpi, South-Ibie, had triggered off several court cases, causing commotion, including loss of lives.

The petition stated that in spite of several court injunctions stopping him from parading himself as the Aidonogie of South Ibie and using the acronym HRH, Aliyu has consistently been carrying on as if he is above the law. The petitioner stressed that all attempts in the past to get government's attention to resolve the matter in accordance with court judgment had failed.

“The governor may not be aware of the true fact of the case which necessitated the petition and present all court verdicts in favour of the Oghiator ruling house. It is in the light of the above that we have found it pertinent to unveil the unequivocal facts which seem to be swept under the carpet although they are in the public domain,” the letter stated.

According to the legal counsel, on June 29, 1999 the Benin High Court Presided by Justice Sadoh delivered judgment had declared that Danesi of Danesi Branch was not qualified to be installed as Aidonogie which he appealed against at the Court of Appeal.

“Also, on April 7, 2003, the Court of Appeal, Benin City declared that “the selection, presentation, appointment and /or production of Alhaji Kelvin Danesi as the clan head or Aidonogie of Iyakpi , South Ibie by DanesiBranch of Okhokho Ruling House was hereby declared null, void, unconstitutional and of no legal effect,” the counsel stated.

Stating that Danesi appealed against the judgment, the letter added that on November 11, 2004, the Supreme Court struck out his appeal in Suit number SC274/2003 and in 2006, adding that the Edo State House of Assembly purported to make amendment to the 1979 Chieftaincy Declaration of Clan Headship of South Ibie. While the letter stated that this development was not the correct procedure, it added that Oghiator Ruling House being law abiding sued Danesi, the state government and her agencies to the Benin High Court presided over by Justice Tinuade Akomolafe-Wilson who restrained Danesi and the state government from presenting Staff of Office to Danesi or amending 1979 Declaration until the case is over. The counsel claimed that despite the verdict of Justice Akomolafe-Wilson, Danesi was appointed as Aidonogie in flagrant disobedience of his ruling.

The counsel said in May 2009, Justice Ighodalo also restrained Aliyu Danesi from parading himself as the Aidonogie of South Ibie, adding that none of the court injunctions or judgments has been vacated till date.

While stating that some past administrations in the state had openly displayed support for the other party, the petitioner stated: “We believe the present administration will not allow its name to be marred by illegal, nonsensitive and irresponsible acts.

“We, therefore, passionately plead with the state governor to verify the facts and direct all government agencies to obey the court judgments and injunctions. Royalty is adored all over the world because of its immaculate nature.”

When contacted over the matter, Danesi said the petitioner did not know anything about the tussle, saying no court has stopped him from parading himself as the clan head of the kingdom.

“There is no court injunction restraining me from being the Aidonogie of South Ibie. If there is one, I would have been guilty of contempt of court. Nobody took me to court. I have been king of the kingdom for over 20 years now and I have been representing the clan in the meeting of traditional rulers in the state. No truth in the letter written to the governor”, Danesi said.