"The Life and Times of King Ja Ja

of Opobo - 1812-1895"

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ABSTRACT

The title of this study is "The Life and Times of King Ja Ja of Opobo, 1812-1895". The central theme, therefore, is the study of a man. King Ja Ja's life history provides not only a fascinating case study of an African ruler's response to British imperial expansion in the nineteenth century, but, above all, a rare instance of indigenous African reaction to the forces of "Western Civilisation".

Ja Ja was a great man. Great men of course, do not arise in a vacuum, and factors such as childhood influences and exceptional opportunities for advancement may be as significant in the making of greatness as individual ability. In Ja Ja's case, the politico-social and economic organisations of Bonny, Britain's ideas about civilising the Niger Delta and a superb intellect and vision conspired to produce Ja Ja, King of Opobo.

The significance of the man-on-the-spot is seen in the fact that it was on the basis of reports from consular officials that Britain began to encroach upon King Ja Ja's empire. Ja Ja's reaction to this encroachment which culminated in his deportation reveals two cultures in conflict. Even in exile, Ja Ja continued to defend his stand against the British. He regarded himself, and was regarded by others as the King of Opobo.

The most significant fact however was the attitude of Opobo people after Ja Ja's deportation. They stood firm against European penetration of the interior, continued to look to Ja Ja as their King and after his death, would not elect a new Head until the traditional funeral ceremonials had been observed for Ja Ja. As far as Opobo men were concerned, if King Ja Ja lost his throne, the lost sovereign rights did not accrue to Britain.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

F.O.	=	Foreign Office
C.O.	=	Colonial Office
P.P.	=	Parliamentary Paper
A.A.	=	African Association
H.M.S.	=	Her Majesty's Ship

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CHAPTER I

BONNY IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY

BACKGROUND TO THE RISE OF JA JA

The Rise of the Kingship

When the nineteenth century opened, British trading interests, usually the raison d'etre of the European presence in West Africa, were the predominant interests in the Oil Rivers. Bonny was the pivot of this trade. Much of the Oil Rivers' trade was dominated by Liverpool firms who had gained pre-eminence in the slave-trade by controlling the Bights of Benin and Biafra, West Africa's largest slave-mart during the century. A remarkable feature of this centuries-old trade with the peoples of the Bights was that it had remained confined to the Coast until the middle of the nineteenth century. The deadly climate of this part of the West African coast and the hostility of the coastal Africans formed serious obstacles in the way of inland penetration. The effectiveness of prohibition of inland penetration is attested by the fact that, after several hundred years of contact with the coast, Europeans had remained incredibly ignorant of the geography of its immediate hinterland until the middle of the nineteenth century.[1] Most Europeans who visited the coast were traders solely interested in making profits. To this end, good relations with the African peoples were vital and their objection to inland penetration was not contested.

The trade of the Oil Rivers was thus conducted by a middleman system whereby coastal Africans brought down to the coast the merchandise of the territory to the Europeans who saw that it was in their interest to 'hug' the coast. Quite apart from the dangers to health, the foreign merchants'

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1. Boahen, A.A. Britain, the Sahara and the Western Sudan, 1788-1861, Oxford 1964, p.1, hereinafter referred to as Britain and the Western Sudan.

ignorance of the hinterland made it economically expedient for them to remain on the coast. The African middleman amply supplied all their demands and there was therefore no incentive to disturb the system. Profitable trade requires a certain amount of order and peace; these could be provided only by the local African authorities, the foreign merchants having brought no government with them.

African opposition to attempts to penetrate the interior was based on an appreciation that their wealth and political stability depended on the trade of the hinterland sources of trade merchandise. Continued control of the hinterland was vital not only for their economic well-being, but, above all, as a symbol of their sovereignty. As sovereign entities, these city-states provided the pax necessary for trade, protected foreign merchants against sharp practices by their nationals, and established suitable organisations to provide the trade goods demanded by Europe. Thus secured against possible risks to life and property, European merchants paid 'comey' to the African rulers in recognition of their politico-economic position. In addition to 'comey', individual merchants also made various presents or Dashes to the ruler and his elders in an effort to win large amounts of trade. The various Dashes were known as 'Shakehands'.

Partly in response to the demands of the Atlantic trade, the city-states had undergone some changes in their constitutional and territorial structures sometime during the eighteenth century. On the constitutional level, the increasing need for organisation demanded by long distance (overland and oversea) trade led the coast communities to accord great authority and administrative power to their hitherto purely visual leaders. Community leadership came also to be confined to a particular lineage. Jones writes thus of the development:

> Under the earlier political systems the office of the head of the community is said to have been one for which the chief of any of its houses (wards) was eligible. Under the nineteenth century system this office was vested in a particular lineage and passed from founder to sons (provided these were able enough) and then to sons' sons. This office originally carried with it little additional authority except in ritual matters, the community head ranking as litte more than the senior of a number of ward heads and performing the function of presiding over village council meetings and similar public gatherings.[2]

In the hands of able and astute leaders, the new powers could and did become institutionalized into what approximated the autocratic monarchies of Europe, with the result that European merchants who visited the coast had no difficulty in accepting the system.

Such was the case in Bonny under Opubu the Great. King Opubu who ruled Bonny until 1830 was able, through his control of his people and the foreign merchants and his astute manipulation of the perquisites of his office, to build up a powerful monarchy. Since the seventeenth century, the traditional trading customs, such as the breaking of trade so ably recorded by John Barbot, had gradually acquired ceremonial status in which the 'King' and his Elders were sumptuously entertained by the European traders. By King Opubu's time the ceremony had become a function of the monarchy alone, to its great increase in prestige vis-à-vis the other trading Houses.[3] To the European traders, the increased prestige and authority of the King was a welcome development, because it facilitated their trading arrangements and provided them with a ready-made insurance against less through bad debts, Some of the trading gifts, such as the various "Dashes", were rooted in the indigenous tradiong system and were indispensable

preliminaries

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2. Jones, G.I. The Trading System of the Oil Rivers, Oxford 1963, pp. 65-6, hereinafter referred to as Trading States.

3. Jones, Trading States, p. 94.

to all business transactions, but as time went on, their numbers increased, and they became means by which competing European merchants sought to secure favourable trade concessions as against other competitors.[4] Under King Opubu the Great not only the 'comey' but also the Dashes and 'shake-hands' became institutionalized as perquisites of the kingly office.

There was a causal relationship between the development of the kingly office and the changes in the territorial structure of the city-state. The Oil Rivers' states were trading communities par excellence. Situated on the undrained swamp of the Great Niger, the soil refused to grow yam or cassava, the staples of these communities. The people had lived by fishing, the product of which they exchanged with the agricultural peoples of the coastal hinterland for other necessities. With the advent of the Slave Trade era the economic inter-dependence continued although the commodities changed. Furthermore the emphasis in the balance of power shifted towards the coast communities as a result of the 'new' leadership that had emerged in that area; organizing and administrative abilities in the 'new' leaders became highly desirable qualities. Since the coast communities could produce little themselves and what they produced, mainly fish, was not demanded by merchants as trade goods, it became highly necessary for them to establish economic dominance over the hinterland sources of the desired merchandise - human beings. It thus became a primary object of the coastal rulers that the territories over which they ruled embraced not only the ancestral land but also some outlying districts upon which the state depended for its economic well-being.

Several methods were adopted to secure control of the desired and desirable districts but in every case the control did not extend beyond

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4. Kingsley, M. Appendix 1 by Count de Cardi footnote 1, p. 446 of West African Studies, London, 1899, hereinafter referred to as de Cardi in Studies.

the right to purchase all the trade goods of the 'subject' peoples. Among these methods for bringing the hinterland into the territorial structure of Bonny were 'dynastic' marriages and payment of parts of 'comey' to their leaders. Ultimately, Bonny secured the alliance of the Aros whose organisational framework for tapping the human resources of the eastern Niger was all-embracing. Bonny became "undoubtedly the first among the 'great powers' of the Niger Delta"[5] mainly through her alliance with the Aros who thereby sold the bulk of their slaves to Bonny. Should economic incentives and dynastic marriages fail, the coastal ruler was not unknown to enlist the help of his superior fire-power to achieve his objective. Since both sides were always mutually inter-dependent, raids were the expeption rather than the rule.

The 'new' leadership that evolved in the coastal states had certain attributes which set it apart from the common people of the land.[6] As in former times, the holder of the office was always a descendant of the original founders of the community. As a descendant of the founders, he was thus in communication with the ancestors and served as the living embodiment of the community at large. He was a ritual head. At the same time as the nineteenth century saw this leadership and its ritual status confined to and made hereditary in one lineage,[7] the qualifications demanded

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5. Dike, K.O. Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta Oxford 1962, pp. 38-9 hereinafter referred to as Trade and Politics.

6. Jones, Trading States, pp. 180-2.

7. Jones, Trading States, pp. 65-6.

from its incumbents were extended to include organisational ability and the possession of sufficient economic resources to command overall obedience. The political authority accorded the ruler by the community for his services together with the economic perquisites of his offices were intended to augment his wealth. It was a cumulative process in which wealth begat still more wealth.

In nineteenth century Bonny, control of superior wealth had also become an attribute of royalty almost as decisive as control of ritual status. The King was recognised by the European merchants as the Head of the State, and as such, superior to any other person mainly because he controlled the greatest amount of wealth. He was thus able to monopolise in his person all legitimate authority to command obedience. To his African subjects, his control of superior wealth and therefore superior power had great significance in a community where living and dead were inseparable, the latter revered because they served as suppliants to the Divine. The ritual king was the living bridge that bore his people's petitions to the suppliants. Ritual sanctions by themselves were ineffective substitutes for the power derived from the control of superior wealth in the struggle for economic and political dominance that characterised the city-state of Bonny in the nineteenth century, but as long as the king remained able to communicate with the ancestors, he symbolised the soul of the nation and as such was indispensable. The king who could perform this function was irreplaceable.

The inherent weaknesses of the new leadership became apparent when it is remembered that control of superior wealth in the Delta presupposed success as a trader and astuteness of character. Under King Opubu the Great, the great wealth and power of the monarchy had added to it much aura and dignity. European merchants who visited Bonny testified to the

immense power, prestige and respect he commanded.[8] But the success of the monarchy under King Opubu only served to mask the underlying weaknesses of the system. In the hands of men not blessed with business acumen, the monarchy would lose its superior wealth and therefore cease to be supreme. Weaknesses of character would lay the ruler open to manipulation by both European and African trading interests eternally jockeying for economic and political advantages. Lacking an independent stabilizing force in its constitutional structure and with descent a vital determinant to succession, Bonny depended on the character and ability of individual incumbents of the kingly office for stability. Such shifty constitutional bases were to prove disastrous for the city-state in the nineteenth century.

While the king was an able man of business and organising ability, effective authority could be exerted over both the metropolis, the ancestral land and the outlying districts which provided the trade merchandise. Most of these economic spheres of influence were peopled by different ethnic groups over whom metropolitan control was mainly economic: as long as they made no attempt to trade directly with the coast they were left free to govern themselves according to their particular mode, the metropolis exerting occasional pressure, mainly economic, to ensure favourable political climate for the pursuit of prosperous trade. Often, as in the case of the Andoni who inhabited the immediate north-east of Bonny, the 'subject' peoples did not themselves provide any merchandise but simply served as another layer of middlemen between the coast and the interior producers. Bonny under King Opupu had managed to extend her economic influence over much of the immediate hinterlands that were so rich in human resources and were to

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8. Adams, J. Remarks on the Country extending from Cape Pabuas 2nd ed. London, 1966, pp. 135-36, hereinafter, Remarks.

prove fabulously rich in oil resources.

Nineteenth century Bonny was really an empire in microcosm consisting of a congerie of peoples - Ibo, Ibo-Ibibio and Ijo, with a sprinkling of Bini.[9] The social and economic structure which this city-state had evolved by the nineteenth century was a reflection of its territorial structure based on its need to dominate others potentially more powerful than itself. As long as Bonny remained able to maintain the stability of this structure, and this depended on the ability of her rulers, not only the foreign merchants who resorted to her port but also the African subjects of the king, could not but submit, though for different reasons, to the authority of the monarchy.

The Politico-Economic Organisation of Bonny - The House System

At the root of the economic organisation of the city-state was the House System. Originally composed of a man, his wives, children and other kin who depended on him, the House served as an organ of local government, The man as Head of his House was 'father' to all its members. He represented them in the councils of the state where laws were made, often simply by reference to custom, and functions distributed. As the representative of his House he was responsible to the community for the good behaviour of its members. His functions were therefore administrative and judicial, and because he was also the oldest member of the Household, also ritualistic. The Head of the Household was all-powerful within his House because of his large responsibilities. The Household expanded through the natural increase of its members and "when it became overlarge, unless there was other factors promoting its unity, it tended to segment as a result of internal conflicts

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9. Adams, Remarks, pp. 124-32.

and rivalries as a means of lessening or resolving such conflicts."[10] Apart from this inherent self-regulating tendency within the Household, the almost absolute power possessed by its Head over all its members and the constant threat posed by the competition of other Households enabled the Households to remain stable.

By the nineteenth century however, possibly as part of the changes in the state-structure, the Household had become the Canoe House which contemporaries defined as "...a number of petty chiefs congregated together for mutual protection owing allegiance generally to the richest and most intelligent one amongst them whom they called their father and Europeans called a Chief."[11] It is perhaps necessary to point out that Count de Cardi's'petty chief' was simply the original Head of the Household now much expanded to include his slaves. Thus the Canoe House "was composed of a greatly enlarged Household group"[12] the leaders of which competed endlessly among themselves with the object of increasing the wealth of their particular Households. The significant change in the system was that the criterion for leadership of a Canoe House was intelligence manifested in success as a trader, as against age and descent as in the old arrangement. The Head of a Canoe House was Head solely because he could command the necessary resources in men and money to exert his authority and power and thus maintain a stable balance between his competing subordinates.

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10. Jones, Trading States p. 166.

11. de Cardi in Studies, p. 522.

12. Jones, Trading States, pp. 167-68

Jones has shown clearly that the position of a Head of a Canoe House was no sinecure:

> But with this increased power went a very considerable increase of responsibility. The chief was the manager of a trading and fighting corporation engaged in fierce economic competition with other similar corporations. This increase in power was necessary if the management was to be effective. The members of his house were interested primarily in this effective management rather than in abstract principles of justice. The more efficient his management, the greater his authority became and the more his house was prepared to tolerate occasional arbitrary applications of it. The more inefficient his management, the more he could expect his authority to be challenged until ultimately he would find himself deposed and replaced by a more efficient head. He was, like every other person in his house, ultimately dependent on the ordinary members of the group mobilized either for or against him by their various leaders (i.e. Household Heads). He exercised control over considerable wealth but he could not use it for his own as opposed to the house's advantage. While he was in office little or no distinction was made between his personal wealth and the house funds; both were expected to be used for the common good of the house which was held to be identical with the chief's own interests. Should he be deposed, a division could be made between his own and the house property but, by the time matters had come to this pass, the debts of the house were usually sufficient to have swallowed up any personal capital he might lay claim to. [13]

The Headship of a Canoe House was a career open to talent. The survival of the House meant its continuous expansion in human and economic terms. The labour force depended on slaves driven from the populous hinterland and there was almost always a continuous flow of them into the city-state not only for sale to Europeans but also for use at home.

In addition to the large political powers allowed to the successful Head of a Canoe House, there were attached to the post certain economic advantages; he was the recipient of a series of commissions from European merchants who did business with the Heads of the Household groups that composed his Canoe House. This and other funds of the Canoe House were used to ensure the continued economic dominance of the group by his own particular Household and also to help other Households within the Canoe

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13. Jones, Trading States, pp. 170-71.

House to become established as new Canoe Houses. Such new Canoe Houses, allied by blood and interest to the original Canoe House, would constitute an accretion of wealth and therefore of political power within the city-state to the latter; the Canoe House was not only an economic but also a political institution. Economic competition of other Canoe Houses encouraged within each successful Canoe House a high degree of economic and political solidarity and the primary loyalty of its members rested with its Head. In economic matters, the king of the city-state, himself engaged in the same economic struggle, was at times seen by members of Houses other than his own as a competitor rather than as a protector. There were frictions and competitions within each Canoe House, but the degree of this was always determined by the success of its Head's leadership. Equally true was this of the city-state as a whole; under an able king, the underlying sectionalism of the system was submerged; the king represented the greater loyalty that cut across all lesser loyalties.

The ambition of every Head of a Household group within a Canoe House was to become established as a new Canoe House. For this he needed the goodwill and material support not only of the Head of his Canoe House but also of the Heads of the other subordinate Households. The support he was likely to receive was determined by the group's measure of his ability as a leader and manager of a trading corporation. There were of course cases of outstanding men of ability who formed their own Canoe House through sheer thrift and managerial capacity.

Count de Cardi wrote of Oko Jumbo:

> He, as I have said above, was a bought slave, yet by his superior intelligence and industry, he amassed, in early life, great wealth, was able to buy numerous slaves, some of whom showed similar aptitude to himself, to whom he showed the same encouragement that his master had shown him, and allowed them to trade on their own account. These men in their turn bought slaves, and allowed them similar privileges.

> This kind of evolution went on with uninterrupted success until Oko Jumbo, after twenty years' trading, found himself at the head of five or six hundred slaves; for, according to country law all the slaves bought by his favoured slaves (now become petty chiefs or head boys) belonged to him as he belonged to Manilla Pepple; but owing to his accumulated riches and numerous followers he was beginning to take rank as a chief and head of a House. 14

The New Slave and his lot in Bonny Society

In the economic and political competition of the slave trade era, Bonny had evolved a peculiar system of social and politico-economic relationships in which a slave, by definition a piece of property, also owned property and therefore held a position in the social and political order of his adopted society. The term 'slave' in Bonny as in the other city-states had a different meaning from its accepted European usage. Under the House System, all members of a House, slaves and free-born, enjoyed "the same political rights and as members of the same corporate group were equally the property of that group."[15] The Canoe House System was the basis of the middleman system of trading. As all the emphasis was on the continued expansion of the House, it meant that not only the well-born, as in former times, could found or lead Houses but also slaves with the necessary qualifications of organising and business ability.

The ordinary members of a Canoe House consisted of slaves and free-born. There was, among these certain gradations of status but this also was based on the ability to acquire and keep wealth. There were some distinctions between the newly bought slave and a second generation slave, the latter being looked upon as of higher status. The newly bought slaves formed the 'scum' of society, the scavengers and the pull-away 'boys' in the oil canoes and gigs of the chiefs. Theirs was usually a very hard lot indeed. Their claim to Bonny society was based on their status as the

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14. de Cardi in Studies, pp. 522-23

15. Jones, Trading States, p. 58.

dependant. As Jones has pointed out, this utter dependence upon a master did not lack a corresponding advantage for the slave who as a result was the more easily able to rise in society.[16] After the undoubtedly difficult early years of a slave's residence in Bonny, during which his loyalty to his master and his House was on trial, the distinction of status between the newly-bought and the Bonny-free became more apparent than real. It was during these early years that, should the tender mercies of a master turn out to be not all too tender, punishments for trifle offences included

> ear-cutting in its various stages, from clipping to total dismemberment, crucifixion round a large cask; extraction of teeth; suspension by the thumbs chilli peppers pounded and stuffed up the nostrils and forced into the eyes and ears; fastening the victim to a post driven into the beach at low water and leaving him there to be drowned with the rising tide, or to be eaten by the sharks or crocodiles piecemeal; heavily ironed and chained to a post in their master's compound without any covering over their heads, kept in this state for weeks, with so little food allowed them that cases have been where the irons have dropped off them...[17]

The fact that each House always sought to encourage the best in their members, as these constituted the wealth of the House, made such cases of cruelty rare. This does not however destroy the fact that a bought slave who managed to establish himself as a Household Head owed his fortune not only to his ability and intelligence but also, above all, to his luck in having fallen into kind hands. Sometimes supercargoes provided the bought slaves with respite from the monotony of their station by employing them as cabin boys during periods of trade depression and when their masters had no use for them. Though the payment for such employment was made to their masters, yet slaves often benefited from it. In such employment, they had

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16. Jones, Trading States, p. 169.

17. de Cardi, in Studies, p. 535.

ample opportunity to learn the "whiteman mouth", the knowledge of which could be turned to advantage.

Bonny society in the nineteenth century can be broadly divided into royalty and commoners both of whom were expected to excel in the single business of making money. Anyone, whether bond or free who showed promise as a trader could hope to become Head of a House, but among the commoners, Headship of a House was the ultimate to which they could aspire within the society. Count de Cardi described the process of graduation from slavery to the headship of a House:

> Thus at first he would get only the Boy's dash...The second stage in his progress would be marked by his being allowed to take the Gentleman's Dash...The third who he would be allowed to receive a portion of the Work Bar on his oil, sometimes only a third, gradually increasing until he would be allowed to claim the whole Work Bar. On arriving at this latter stage he would be expected to provide a war canoe and men and arms for the same, ready at any moment to turn out and fight for the general good of the country or to take part in any quarrel between his master and any other chief in Bonny...[18]

It was a very slow process at the end of which followed yet another ceremonial exhibition of wealth. The initiate into the chiefly circle would then have to go through a religious ceremonial. This involved him in making "some payments to the principal JuJu men of the town, and if he never had been at war and thus missed the opportunity of cutting an enemy's head off, he must purchase a slave for this purpose and cut the poor creature's head off in cold blood in the JuJu House. This function was rigorously insisted upon by the JuJu men and under no circumstances would they allow a man to become a chief who had not cut a man's head off, either in war or in cold blood." After the religious ceremony, the new leader was introduced by the other leaders of his House to the various super-cargoes

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18. de Cardi in Studies, pp. 523-24

to ensure that he received from them all the Work Bar, Ex Bar, Gentleman 's Dash and Boy's Dash. Thus was Bonny organised to meet the demands of the Atlantic Trade as it developed.

European exploration and its effects on Bonny

The reasons for the sudden attention directed by European governments towards the interior of Western Africa from the end of the eighteenth century fall outside the scope of this study. Among these reasons, however, was the strong desire to find raw materials. This commercial motive had far reaching effects on West Africa in general and on the Oil Rivers in particular. The explorations pioneered in England by the African Association under the leadership of Sir Joseph Bank had quickened after the close of the Napoleonic Wars. By that time, too, the Abolition Act has been passed and the Oil Rivers, the main source for slaves, came under increasing pressure from British naval authorities and merchant-officials. Explorers were directed to search for the mouth of the River Niger, and as they did so, they sent back much information about the western Sudan. In 1830, the Lander brothers found for Europe the mouth of this great water-way, and with the formation by McGregor Laird in 1832 of a trading company to ply the water-way, the commercial exploitation of the Niger Basin had begun.

A King Dies and a Slave Arrives

It was an unfortunate coincidence for Bonny that the Landers made their discovery in 1830, for it meant that that city-state now found herself in contact with men with new ideas not particularly to her advantage at a time when her constitutional structure had lost its only stabilising force, the able Opupu the Great. King Opupu died in 1830, leaving no capable and generally acceptable successor. Of the King's surviving sons, only one, for some inexplicable reason, was considered for the kingship. This son,

William Dappa Pepple, was a minor and Opupu's jural son by his predecessor's wife and therefore a natural son of that predecessor, the late King Fubra. Fubra was the founder of the Manilla House, now under the Headship of a successful slave. This House naturally saw in the infant Dappa a protégé whose patronage could bring in the much coveted economic advantages that went with the monarchy. So they espoused his cause, and claimed the regency while he remained an infant. The Anna Pepple House had been founded by King Opupu and was also under the control of another able lieutenant of lowly origin. Traditionally, during a royal minority, the regency was formed by the most powerful Houses in the state but the perquisites of monarchy were allowed to accrue to the House of the last king, in this case, the Anna Pepple House. Such an eventuality the Manilla House tried to prevent by declaring that William Dappa Pepple had attained majority when in fact he was only 18 years of age. The Manilla Pepples found themselves in a regency with which they were not prepared to cooperate and the effect of this lack of cooperation was to expose the underlying instability of the constitutional structure at a time when foreign powers were showing increased interest in the Delta city-states.

It would seem a paradox that about the same year in which King Opupu's death exposed the weakness of the constitutional structure, there arrived in Bonny a young slave boy who in later life was to provide the only possible permanent solution to the political difficulties. This young slave boy, born around 1812 in the Umuduruoha village of Amaigbo in Iboland, was presumably just one of many such young men brought into Bonny in that year to maintain the vitality of the Canoe House System. Originally bought by a member of the Allison House, this slave boy finally found himself in the Anna Pepple House through one of the leaders of that House to whom he had been presented because the Allisons had found him "insubordinate and headstrong". The name 'Ja Ja', according to a European contemporary,

signified "a present in some native language in the hinterland of Bonny".[19] Dike, however, states that the name 'Ja Ja' was a European corruption of a contracted form of an Ibo name 'Jubo Jubogha'.[20] Whatever the origins of this name, the young slave boy who bore it became later only too well known not only throughout West Africa but also among Foreign Office circles, the Merchant Houses of England and Scotland and even in Exeter Hall. In so doing, JaJa provides not only a fascinating case study of an African ruler's response to British imperial expansion in the nineteenth century but above all an illuminating instance of indigenous African reactions when confronted by 'Western Civilization'.

Not very much is known of JaJa prior to his coming to Bonny in 1830. One can only assume that, like the average Ibo boy of his time, no prophesies preceded his birth and no stars descended on him at it. Indeed one may deduce from the fact of his having been taken into slavery at the very tender age of twelve that JaJa's opportunities were less than that of the average boy of his time. Prisoners of war provided the main victims of the slave trade from this area.[21] There were cases of child kidnapping and raids but victims of such vicissitudes tended always to have been first of all victims of meagre family resources which by denying the children necessary care and protection left them exposed. For one or the other of these reasons JaJa found himself in Bonny where he had to adjust to the new and make a fresh start.

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19. de Cardi in Studies, p. 522

20. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 183

21. The large subject of the African side of the Delta Slave Trade has yet to be explored, the views here expressed are no more than deductions and inferences.

Ja Ja's early life as a bought slave can only be reconstructed from what is known of the general opportunities and limitations of men of his class. Life for Ja Ja in Bonny would have begun as a grim struggle from the last rung of the social, political and economic ladder in which the only redeeming feature was that careers were open to all men of talent whether they were home-born or bought. As trading constituted all the careers, men of organising and business abilities were at an advantage. With luck, the success of such men within Bonny society was assured, but their ultimate goal was the Headship of a Canoe House, as they happened not to be of royal birth. They might succeed in controlling the monarchy and thus become king-makers but they could never themselves sit on the throne.[22] As the emphasis was not on birth but on the ability to make money and keep it, promising young men, whether bond or free, were encouraged by their Houses to establish themselves as independent traders. Ja Ja proved to be one such who, within a few decades of his arrival into Bonny society, had moved up the ladder of the social, economic and political structures of Bonny and become a leader of a Household, having by that time gone through the 'graduation' ceremonies so well documented by de Cardi.[23]

For the youth of Bonny, training for business was not institutionalised but formed part of everyday life. While for the 'Winna-boes' or Bonny-frees its formal aspect began by superintending the gauging of their masters' oil, for the bought slaves it opened when their 'mother' sent them to hawk a few commodities, such as fowls and eggs, to European merchants. In either case,

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22. Jones, Trading States, pp. 181-82.

23. de Cardi, in Studies, pp. 523-24.

> This duty required a certain amount of savez, as the natives call intelligence, for he had to so look after his master's interests that the pull-away boys.....did not secrete any....., [24]

Success at this stage was measured by the slave's ability to make a good bargain for his master or mistress and commercial acumen was detected if he was able to improve on the price tentatively set by his superior. As part of the business transaction, he received from the buyer a little Dash, amount of which was often fixed according to the quantity of the goods he sold. If, as was often the case when the master was satisfied with his services, the slave also received a little present from him, the process of amassing wealth thus began. Given his ability and the leadership of his House, the steady, though slow, rise to the leadership of a Household was hence assured. In cases where the bought slave worked for supercargoes as a Boy, he was still subjected to the 'low wages' of his status; his owner received the wages he earned allowing him only what his social status at any time might allow.[25] No evidence suggests that Ja Ja's early days differed from this norm.

The Breakdown of Authority

The 1830's, 40's and 50's were chequered by events of greater immediate concern to the city-state of Bonny than the life of a struggling slave called Ja Ja but they helped to produce King Ja Ja of Opobo. On the domestic scene, a clear cleavage had emerged in the power structure. Both the Manilla and the Anna Pepples, now the most powerful Canoe Houses, each

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24. de Cardi in Studies, p. 472.

25. de Cardi in Studies, p. 523.

controlled a segment of the Royal Family. While the Manillas espoused the cause of Prince Dappa, the Anna Pepples saw in Prince Datu, Opubu's real son, a natural protégé; gradually a hiatus developed in the royal lineage. In the constitutional structure of Bonny, though wealth was power, yet it took more than wealth to command legitimate sovereign power. This contradiction had been unmasked by the death of King Opubu in 1830. In 1830, if Prince Dappa had been an able merchant, with a powerful Canoe House to support his ritual status as a descendant of the Pepples, the cleavage in the power structure might not have occurred. As it was, competing powerful Houses dominated by king-makers held the real power which they could not legitimatise because of their origins. King Opubu's death left authority fragmented, and as the monarch became the pawn of its more able subjects, their competition unsettled trade conditions. British merchants felt their lives and property threatened and called for metropolitan support against 'mushroom kings' who also happened to be disobeying the Abolition Act of 1807.

To the unstable political conditions following 1830 was now added increasing pressure from British naval and merchant officials, trying to secure their interests against foreign and African competitors. The Abolition Act had been passed in 1807 and throughout the first two decades of the century efforts were made to persuade other European powers to respect it, but these had met with little success. The British merchants of the Delta ports found their sphere of interest slipping from their control and because abolition had been imposed on them by the government, they looked upon the latter to support them in their attempts to retain control. The merchants could remain in the Delta ports only by attempting to develop trade in 'legitimate' commodities, and in this process the British navy readily lent a helping hand for they were seen as implementing a programme of 'civilization' through the inculcation of 'legitimate commerce'.

On the African side, the situation was straightforward. From the point of view of the rulers in the city-states, no respectable sovereign could take seriously such a unilateral declaration as the Act of 1807 unless it was in his interest to do so. For these states, centuries of European slave trading had led to the abandonment of other means of livelihood. They had reorganised their very ways of life to participate in this trade and had come to depend entirely upon it. Their wealth from it was the basis of their sovereignty not only internally but also in relation to the hinterland peoples. The Abolition Act took no account of this fact and to that extent reflected a one-sided view of economic needs and was therefore bound to be challenged in Bonny, the centre of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Other European nations still demanded and bought slaves, and as their demand increased in the immediate post-abolition years, the sovereign of Bonny saw that it was in his interest to ignore the Abolition Act. Bonny therefore supplied demands for both 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' merchandise. In these years, British merchants in the Delta were passing through difficult times and the Preventive Squadron was employed to help them in the struggle against slave traders, and all those who resisted their demands. To this end, they were aided by the political rivalry within Bonny.

In 1836 officers of the Preventive Squadron, armed with the 'Equipment Treaty',[26] intervened in Bonny waters to stop Spanish slavers from loading a cargo. Local sensibilities were offended by this slight on Bonny's sovereignty, in view of the fact that no corresponding request from Bonny had been made. The Head Regent, Maduka of the Anna Pepple House, reacted by arresting and imprisoning the chief officer, Lieutenant Tyron. Predictably, the gunboat

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26. By this Treaty, Britain was allowed to arrest any ship found merely carrying slaving equipments.

promptly sailed into Bonny, secured the release of the offending officer and tried to secure better conditions for British traders. The method for the latter purpose was to obtain an undertaking making the Regent responsible for the security of British life and property. The circumstances of the 1836 undertaking deserve closer study. The Anna Pepple House, who to their opponent's chagrin controlled the regency, had continued King Opubu's policy of supplying both slaves and produce to those who demanded them. With control of the regency went also control of the economic perquisites of monarchy such as 'comey' and trade commissions. When the gunboat of the Preventive Squadron arrived, their opponents of the Manilla Pepple House saw an opportunity to dislodge them from the acquisition of those benefits. In 1836, in a 'treaty' extracted from the Anna Pepple Regents and undersigned by 'His Britannic Majesty's Subjects', the navy secured that no English subject should henceforth be detained ashore or maltreated. Further, it provided for the 'breaking' of trade by the king immediately 'comey' had been paid and for the settlement of disputes, hitherto the prerogative of the king, by a "Council of Captains with the King and Chiefs of Bonny".[27]

Superficially, the demands of the naval officer and the merchants who drew up this instrument were modest but their implications for the city-state of Bonny were profound. The king as sovereign had settled all disputes within his kingdom without reference to the British merchants, although he was aware of his responsibility for their safety. Under King Opubu, it was part of the methods of protecting these merchants that they had been declared to be 'juju' so that Africans refrained from attacks and other interferences with their person. Although King Opubu's death removed the overall

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27. Jones, Trading States, p. 112.

supervisory authority, it was the 1836 instrument that made the first breach of monarchical sovereignty. It appears that no one but those who controlled the monarchy in 1836 were aware of this fact which was obscured in the sectional rivalries of the two segments into which the monarchy had become divided. Despite this division, the question would still arise as to under what authority these British subjects took it upon themselves to constitute a 'parliament' for Bonny; it is hard to imagine that they seriously expected their 'treaty' to be observed. The Anna Pepple regent, one of the two African signatories of the 'treaty' and the Head Regent, had done no more than bow to superior force in signing it, and as soon as the gunboat left the port, the regency ignored the instrument. One cannot but agree with Crowder that the significance of the 'treaty' for those who imposed it, was that it served as an opening for future interferences[28] which, it was hoped, would secure the type of pax desired by the British merchants.

African politicians of Bonny lost no time in exploiting the presence of the Preventive Squadron and the blind eye turned on the 1836 instrument by the regency. When the Crown Prince William Pepple and the Manilla House approached the British naval authorities late in 1836, the Prince did so in the hope that alliance with the British would enable him to establish his authority in Bonny; his supporters, in the hope that it would secure his accession to the throne and enable them, as the Prince's patron, to secure the economic benefits of monarchy. The young Prince had not established a Canoe House of his own, and for the necessary backing that came from such a House, he would have to depend on the Manilla House. In the long run, the aspiration of the Manillas proved the more realistic and realisable. For

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28. Crowder, M. Story of Nigeria, London 1962 ed., p. 130, hereinafter, Story.

the British merchants, the animosity and rivalry of the leaders of Bonny held out a promise. The Anna Pepple regents, like King Opubu, had refused to obey the 1807 Act and continued to supply slaves to the detriment of British trading interests. These regents had gone further, and repudiated the 1836 convention. To British merchants whose interests were at stake, the 'unreasonableness' of the Anna Pepples could not but be seen as an obscurantist response to the well-meaning endeavours of Christian and progressive Englishmen to end the enslavement of Africans. The possibility that the attitude of the regents in imprisoning Captain Tyron and in repudiating the 1836 convention represented a reaction against the blatant violation of their sovereign powers expressed in the act and the convention did not occur to the British. The Anna Pepple dominated regency had proved themselves recalcitrant and uncompromising and it was in the interests of British commerce and 'civilisation' to support those who opposed them. The first step in this direction had been taken soon after the 1836 convention when, after a scuffle between the two opposing parties, the so-called 'council of captains' and parliament gentlemen' had intervened, stripped the Anna Pepples of their power and enthroned the crown prince.[29]

When, in March 1837, a gunboat of the Preventive Squadron sailed into Bonny ostensibly to pay respect to the King on his accession, the real motive was to formalise, under a show of force, the action of the British merchants. The new king had no authority and even his allies of the Manilla House were unable to give their support openly because they feared retribution from the powerful Head of the Anna Pepple House.[30] Pepple alone went down to meet the naval officer and explained his weak position

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29. Jones, Trading States, p. 113.

30. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 75.

vis-à-vis the Regent. William Dappa Pepple saw the regent as the obstacle to his assumption of power and the thorough briefing of the naval officer by the resident British merchants confirmed this view.[31] The naval officer, from his gunboat, formally declared the deposition of the Regency and the enthronement of William as King of Bonny, and made another 'treaty' designed to protect British interest.

The "Convention of Amity" between the King of Bonny on the one hand and Commander Craigie and 'His Britannic Majesty's Subjects' on the other "confirmed the King of Bonny as the person to whom the Europeans should refer for settlement of their disputes and for enforcement of other articles of the convention."[32] The process of ratification of this convention by the British government has been dealt with elsewhere.[33] What is useful for the purpose of this study is to investigate the implications for the city-state of Bonny, and the reactions of the authorities to them. Since the Convention interfered with the traditional conventions relating to the 'breaking' of trade and secured that supercargoes be allowed 'to trade within seven days of arrival', it set a limit on the sovereignty of the king and helps to explain why "King William Dappa's relations with his own people were as unfortunate as with the English trading community."[34] It could be argued that this Convention was an attempt to unify the divided authority within Bonny, which the British merchants saw as the cause of

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31. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 75.

32. Jones, Trading States, p. 113.

33. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 79.

34. Jones, Trading States, p. 115.

instability, by vesting sole responsibility for the protection of life and property in a single individual, and thus, restore the status quo ante King Opubu's death. Such a line of argument would of course ignore the important fact that the Convention, by formalising the establishment of the so-called Bonny Parliament, was in fact invading the king's prerogative. The Manilla politicians, engrossed in their petty squabbles, appear not to have appreciated the implications of the Convention except in so far as it impinged on their control of wealth and power. Naturally, the Anna Pepples whose interest accordingly suffered, opposed the Convention as much as they had done the first instrument. It would be rash to suggest that their action was motivated purely by selfish interest, and it would be more reasonable to state that personal interest was no more than an element in their attitude.

The reaction of the British merchants to the Convention was triumphant. They saw it as more than a breakthrough for their enterprise. To them it meant also the control of the political power in Bonny for "we conceive, by the elevation of the rightful heir, Dappa Pepple, to the rule of Bonny country, that the ascendancy of the British Flag is undoubtedly and henceforward established in the River, namely, to the exclusion of others..... by the present treaty, the whole feature of the Trade is greatly and advantageously changed for the British interest."[35] For an understanding of the coast merchants' reaction, it is necessary to take a broad view of events throughout the entire Niger Region in these years. In addition to the slave trading activities of other European nations, the British merchants at the coast also faced increasing pressure from other merchants who were trying to use the Niger water-way. McGregor Laird's early voyages had undoubtedly proved disastrous. In addition to fevers which carried off

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35. FO2/1 No. 1, Encl. 7, HMS Brutus, Bonny River, Masters to Craigie April 11, 1837.

38 of the original 48 members,[36] two had lost their lives from African gunfire. No money had been made and the tales of the few survivors had dampened enthusiasm for Niger expeditions. Despite this, the established merchants on the coast, aware of the continuing interest of humanitarians in this venture, sought to retain their position by controlling the African authorities and using them to fight the inland expeditions. These Africans themselves were arch-enemies of inland penetration and could therefore be relied upon to fight to uphold the system of middleman trading. The pressures of British merchants on the Bonny political structure which began in 1836 was thus aimed, not against the system of trading, but at securing a favourable political climate for their aspirations. In 1837 these merchants thought that they had secured this. Events of the following years showed how utterly wrong they were in their assessment of their achievements.

Jones has shown, following Dike, that the late 1830's and 1840's were years of trade depression "in which the weaker traders, European and African, were being eliminated and the most illustrious of the latter was King William Dappa" who lacked the trading ability of his predecessor. "King William Dappa could only lose money. His House, though it had some able members, remained small and weak, while his relations with European supercargoes were undermined by the fact that he was, to most of them, a defaulting debtor."[37] Changing times had exposed the King's lack of business acumen in relation to the great Opubu, but as he tried to make good this inadequacy by exercising his sovereign powers and manipulating the economic perquisites of the monarchy, he found that he had lost the power to do so. The giving of vast quantities of 'trust' to Africans was one of the devices employed by the supercargoes to retain their monopoly. Even under able rulers, it

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36. Boahen, Britain and the Western Sudan, p. 96.

37. Jones, Trading States, pp. 113-14.

was inherently an anarchic device, involving the 'chopping'[38] of any African merchant as a retribution against attempts to free himself from the device. Under the weak rule of William Dappa, "debts and disputes multiplied, and in settling them each trader had to fend for himself...." The 1837 Convention had "confirmed the king as the person to whom the Europeans should refer for settlement of their disputes...." 'Trusts' were creating too many disputes, and as the king could not stop the Europeans from giving them, he tried to restrict his responsibility for debts arising from 'trusts' to only those which had been given with his knowledge and consent. The king's move was not as 'innocent' as it seemed; the competing merchants realised this and resisted it. If William Dappa could limit the 'trust' given to his over-luxuriant subjects, he could hope to narrow the gap between their wealth and his shrinking fortune. The king also used trusts to reward his supporters. On this occasion, however, British and African merchants united to oppose the king. Admiral Sir George Elliot, then in Bonny waters, disapproved of the king's move and warned him that "the difficulties of exacting the penalty on Masters for placing any part of their cargo in Trust, would be beyond the powers of the King, and if attempted would lead to violence."[39] In simple language, this meant that there was a limit to what the king could do and that that limit was defined by the desires of British and African merchants.

After 1849, the trend set by Admiral Elliot became established policy. With Lord Palmerston at the Foreign Office, the view of active intervention for the protection of British trade become established policy

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38. Chopping was the method adopted by the European traders to recover bad debts whereby the creditor of an African waylaid and seized the oil of any African belonging to the community of his debtor.

39. FO84/340, No. 53, HMS Wolverene at Sea, Elliot to Admiralty, 3 July, 1840.

and John Beecroft was appointed consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra.[40] If Beecroft's consulship "initiated the politics which were to characterise the consular period of Nigerian history"[41], the first testing ground for that politics was Bonny. In October 1850, the new consul made his first official visit to Bonny. He had come to right the wrongs of King Pepple against the 'legitimate' traders.[42] On the 3rd of October, 1850 King Pepple was made to sign yet another instrument which, quite apart from reaffirming the main provisions of the previous ones, made an attempt to secure its observance by providing penalties for any breach of its articles, specifically penalising the King, should he cause any delay in 'breaking' trade. The 'treaty' was novel in other ways; complaints involving British subjects and Africans were to be submitted to the 'King and Chiefs and Masters assembled', but "if any British seaman shall maltreat a Bonny man, he shall be punished by the master of the vessel to which such seamen shall belong." Thus the king was shorn of power to punish offences by British seamen and merchants. Article IV reiterated the earlier provision that trade should commence immediately 'comey' had been paid and went on to state the constituents and the procedure for its payment:

> "....The comey to consist of a fair assortment of the goods usually brought out for trade, viz, guns, cloth, powder, rum, salt, beads, caps, knives, iron bars, bars of tobacco, earthenware,.....or any other goods such ship may have in for trade." [43]

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40. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 54 and p. 68

41. Dike, Trade and Politics, pp. 128—46

42. Crowder, Story, p. 138

43. Jones, Trading States, pp. 222—24

Furthermore, "the comey to be tendered upon the ship's arrival, or as soon as convenient and if not accepted by the King, such ship shall be at liberty to commence trade." The significance of these latter provisions becomes clear when it is remembered that the 'breaking' of trade constituted a king's most powerful instrument against merchant ships which flouted local customs or resisted the king's authority, while the right to choose the assortment of goods for 'comey' provided a means of securing that the most worthless articles from Europe were not deposited in a particular port. A more one-sided 'treaty' could not have been conceived.

In all Bonny-British relations, the problem that had dogged both British naval and consular representatives had been that of how to ensure that Bonny rulers observed the undertakings they were from time to time made to sign. At the root of this problem was the issue of sovereignty. Any attempt to solve it would have raised the question concerning the powers of a British naval or consular representatives over rulers of a non-British territory who refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of such representatives. George McLean's activities in the Gold Coast had been rationalised by the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1842,[44] but there is no evidence that its application was brought to bear on Bonny-British relations. No attempt was made to give officials on the spot guidance on this problem and it remained to beset all British representatives on the Delta. It is possible that the British image of the Delta Africans left no room for such a question,[45] and until events forced the issue, officials simply expected Africans of Bonny to react favourably to their policy; when they did not, it was blamed on some evil influence which could be removed by persistent effort. There was no room

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44. Metcalfe, C. Maclean of the Gold Coast: the life and times of George Maclean, 1801-1847, London 1962, pp. 98-145, discuss his 'illegal' exercise of power that was 'legalised' by the Foreign Jurisdiction Act.

45. Curtin, P. The Image of Africa: British Ideas and action, 1780-1850, Wisconsin, 1964.

to investigate the possibility that the power to command obedience might have a different basis in Bonny from that in Britain. In 1850, however, Consul Beecroft thought that his problems were over when, by simply prescribing penalties for non-observance of his 'treaty', he expected His Majesty of Bonny to toe the line. Events of the next four years proved the falsity of his expectations and the problem of obedience remained unsolved.

The Exile of a King creates a vacuum in legitimate authority

In May 1852, King William Dappa had a stroke. The supercargoes stepped in and appointed members of the Manilla House as regents. The Anna Pepples refused to recognise the regency. Once again their motives could be variously explained. It may have been no more than a continuation of the age-old inter House rivalries; it may have been the result of resentment at the intervention of the British whose action in choosing the regency went against tradition and amounted to imposing rulers of their choice on Bonny. Their motive may have been a mixture of both considerations. But their opponents of the Manilla House and the supercargoes sent for the consul who came in with the gunboat and approved the choice of the merchants. While the gunboat remained in port, obedience, however reluctant, could be given to the regency but no sooner had it left than things resumed their original posture. When the king quickly recovered from his illness and resumed his office, the second regency crisis was over. King Dappa had not long to enjoy the empty honour of kingship for "by now he had succeeded in mobilizing the African as well as the European traders against him. According to the Europeans, he was compelling African traders to accept goods from him on trust at exorbitant rates before he would allow them to trade in the hinterland markets; according to the African traders he was using

the trade goods he received as comey and shake-hands and those from the anti-slavery subsidies to undersell them in these markets."[46]

The king was aware of the dissatisfaction of his subjects and, it would appear, attempted to divert their attention, and in the process, rid himself of some of the over-mighty of his subjects. His plan was to trick them into a war with the traditional enemy, New Calabar, by starting as a pretext, on a trip to his mother's grave to give thanks for recovery from his recent illness. This was the normal practice but Dappa Pepple hoped that his entourage would be ill-prepared for war and thus prove easy victims to the ever-vigilant New Calabar warriors. The king's plan miscarried when, suspecting his intentions, his chiefs refused to go. The chiefs were said to have called for his deposition and replacement by Prince Dappa, a protégé of the Anna Pepples. It is doubtful whether the majority of the leaders of the people called for Dappa's deposition. The truth must lie somewhere between the usual division between the Manillas and the Anna Pepples supporting their own protégés. Consul Beecroft, who appeared with the gun-boat, promptly transported Dappa to Fernando Po and thence to England. The king's exile had begun. How the gap between deposition and exile was closed has been treated elsewhere.[47] What is necessary here is to point out that after the king's deportation the field was clear for the rivalries and competitions of the two major Houses to have full scope.

Before transporting Dappa off to Fernando Po, the consul secured the signing of still another 'treaty' which was intended to secure the pax desired for British trade by adding further provisions to the previous one of 1850. In Article I, the king was forbidden to trade, penalized if he

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46. Jones, Trading States, p. 117.

47. Crowder Story, p. 142; Dike, Trade and Politics, pp. 141-44.

should do so, a reward was offered to anyone giving information against him in this respect and yet a further penalty provided against the king should be try to victimise such informants. This article also provided that two thirds of the 'comey' should form the king's revenue while the other third was to be reserved for the "exigencies of the country". Article II provided that all future meetings of the Council of Chiefs, the European community and the King now known as the 'court' were to be held in the court-house and anyone absenting himself "without due cause or who came armed or with armed followers was to be fined one puncheon of oil in the first case, 50 puncheons in the second." Article III declared that "the King or chiefs of Bonny shall not go to war with any neighbouring country without informing the supercargoes...and should it be thought necessary for them to do so, it is distinctly understood that all debts owing to the ships must be first paid",[48] In Article VII, the 'court' soon to assume the name 'Court of Equity' arrogated to itself the power "to draw out such fresh clauses as may be deemed necessary, and which being approved by Her Majesty's consul, may be considered the laws of the country." Between 1836 and 1854, three treaties had been forced on Bonny rulers which were intended to provide a desired pax for British traders. The utter disregard, in these treaties, of the established practices of the local people, and the fact that in most cases, their African signatories held no positions of authority in society sufficiently explain why they proved to be unworkable.

Indeed, the 'Court of Equity' had in theory arrogated much power to itself. It had also taken care to ensure that no future king of Bonny would be a competitor to the European, and for that matter, the African, merchants by forbidding the monarchy to trade. But that it failed to provide

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48. Jones, Trading States, p. 121.

stability is borne out by the fact that the Court of Equity found it necessary to recommend that the exiled king be recalled.[49] It should be accepted that William Dappa's removal from the kingship and the prohibition of the monarchy from trading was based on ignorance of the fundamental bases of kingly power. When Beecroft recommended that the monarchy be banned from trading so that it might more ably discharge the function of kingship, he could not have known that the wealth from trading formed a vital attribute of monarchy in nineteenth century Bonny. In the event, this provision and the civil war that went on intermittently from 1855-59 contributed greatly to the destruction of what remained of the European merchants' respect for kingly authority.

Neither the European merchants nor the quarrelling African politicians could provide an overall rallying point and claim the respect and authority denied the king. In 1854, Bonny presented a superb example of an African society where the traditional political institution had broken down, though, as has been shown, this was brought about by factors other than 'the impact of Western Innovation.' Yet no one, either in Whitehall or on the coast, suggested taking Bonny under colonial rule.[50] In that year, the Bonny monarchy, divided against itself, mauled by opportunist patrons and persecuted by those who opposed its prostitution, lay prostrate, thinly veiled by its ritual status, its real authority and power in the hands of those who, by tradition, could not don its regal garb. The result was the struggle for power, with no group acutally desirous of declaring itself sovereign. It is an over-simplification to call the "upheavals in Bonny the work of ex-slaves debarred from enjoying political positions

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49. Crowder in Story, p. 160.

50. See Robinson R. and Gallagher J. with Denny, A. Africa and the Victorians: the official mind of Imperialism, London, 1961, p. 18, hereinafter, African and the Victorians, for a different viewpoint.

commensurable with their economic strength."[51] An inherently unstable constitution had broken down; and underlying sectionalism had come to the fore; then came a new force which was able to entrench itself because the local peoples, unwilling to coordinate defensive measures, fell prey to its 'material superiority' which was really largely their own competing and disunited loyalties. Both the ex-slaves and the British merchants and their consul exploited but did not create Bonny's political troubles.

This is not to say that the disintegration of Bonny was a completely indigenous phenomenon; it is simply to say that its origins were indigenous. The final onslaught was rendered by the Christian religion which came to the Delta in the 1860's and will form the subject of the next chapter. In the 1850's, European medical and technological advances manifested in the introduction of steam vessels into the Niger trade and the regular use of quinine had brought an influx of 'new' traders into the Niger Region. The full significance of this innovation has been ably demonstrated by Gertzel,[52] but its effects on the city-state of Bonny lay in the future. In the late 1850's and early 1860's, all the traders and merchants were aware of more difficult economic conditions. Some of them were also conscious of the fact that the frontier of trade was gradually but steadily shifting away from the coast into the interior.

Ja Ja heads the Anna Pepple Canoe House

It was against this background of shifting economic frontier and internal struggles that seemed insoluble that Ja Ja was elected Head of the Anna Pepple House on the death of Alali its existing Head.

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51. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 154.

52. Gertzel, J.C. 'John Holt - a British merchant in West Africa in the Era of Imperialism' D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1959, Chapter One, hereinafter referred to as 'John Holt'.

De Cardi described the election thus;

> By right of seniority, a chief named Uranta (about the freest man in the House) was offered the place but he, for private reasons of his own refused. After Uranta, there was Annie Stuart, Black Foobra and Warrassoo all men of considerable riches and consideration, but they also shirked the responsibility, for Elloly had been a very big trader and owed the European traders, it was said at the time of his death a thousand or fifteen thousand puncheons of oil, an equivalent to between £10 to £15,000 sterling or more and none of the foremost men of the house dare tackle the settlement of the large debt, fearing that the late Chief had not left sufficient behind him to settle up with, without supplementing it with their own savings, which might end in bankruptcy for them and their final downfall from the leadership. [53]

All the long established and more qualified (by birth) leaders of the Anna Pepple House feared to assume the responsibility of Headship and JaJa, the youngest leader in the House "though he had for a considerable number of years been a very good trader and was much respected by the white traders for his honesty was unanimously elected to fill the office."[54] It says much for the character of JaJa that he would not rush in where angels feared to tread for "he however did not immediately accept, though his being unanimously elected amounted almost to his being forced to accept." JaJa's ability and honesty as a trader were not untempered by a careful and calculating disposition. Before formally accepting the Headship of his House, with its implications of shouldering his predecessor's debts and increasing the wealth of the House, he "first visited each white trader and went through the accounts of the House and found that though there was a very large debit against the late Chief, there was also a large credit as a set off, in the way of sub-chiefs' work-bars and the late Elloy's own work-bars."[55] JaJa also seized the opportunity to strike a bargain for the future expansion of his trade by securing that he inherited not only the debts of the late Head but also the goodwill the House had built up under him.

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53. de Cardi in Studies, p. 526

54. de Cardi in Studies, pp. 526-27

55. de Cardi in Studies, p. 527

He was then ready to accept the formal leadership of the Anna Pepples. At a public meeting of the leaders of the House, he announced his willingness to assume the mantle of office and secured a solemn pledge from them for assistance and moral support.

The unanimous acceptance of Ja Ja as Head of the princely House of Anna Pepple was not simply a tribute to a dominating and inspiring personality. For men of the stature of Chief Uranta willingly to allow themselves to be led by a bought-slave of no more than thirty years' residence in Bonny was indicative of the great importance which Bonny society had come to attach to ability as a criterion for leadership. Through the thirty years of his residence in Bonny, Ja Ja had come to understand this society, its politics, its possibilities and its limitations. Ja Ja knew, like all the politically aware, that Bonny's greatness depended on the wealth from the hinterland. He could see that Europeans had begun to penetrate this hinterland; they went with shallow-draught vessels and now they were able, with quinine, to stay alive. From 1857 these 'new' traders had come in ever increasing numbers with the granting of government subsidy to McGregor Laird's company. Between 1857 and 1859, they had consistently increased their share of the Niger trade. The returns in 1857 had been £1,800; in the next year, it was £2,750 and by 1859 it averaged at more than double that figure.[56]

Despite the opposition to this trend by the old traders, their government, in response to this growing success had declared:

> The object which Her Majesty's Government had in view in incurring the expense of the former exploring under Dr. Baikie have been attained...it has been proved that the Niger can, at the proper

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56. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 171.

> season, be navigated freely for six months, and for a distance of 500 miles...and the natives of the countries visited on the expeditions have moreover shown a desire to engage in legitimate trade.[57]

The British government had declared its intention to open trade with the interior of Africa through this route and had instructed its representative to tell the delta peoples that the British government "have the means of punishing them for any outrage they may commit on the vessels engaged in peaceful commerce." As though to prove that this was no sterile bravado, the British government had sent HMS Espoir in 1860 to destroy some delta towns which had attacked Laird's vessels in 1859. It had followed this by sending annual naval escorts with the expeditions. By 1863, the Company of West African Merchants of Manchester had also joined the move into the interior. The future of the Niger Trade lay in the hinterland of the coast. Ja Ja was aware of these movements.

In contrast to the expressed determination of the British government to push the Delta trade inland, Bonny was deteriorating. Its constitution had lost, in King Opubu, its only stabilising force; its monarchy had become a pawn in the hands of competing interests. Through a series of 'treaties' imposed by British merchants and their consul, the monarchy had steadily lost all authority. Ja Ja had lived through all these events. As a leader of a Household in the Anna Pepple Canoe House, he must have taken counsel together on tactics and he could not have been unimpressed by the futility of those measures as a solution to Bonny's problems. Ja Ja might have concluded within these years that Bonny had ceased to satisfy the political and economic needs of its people but no evidence suggests that he did. In 1863, his election as the Head of his House presented against the Manillas an opponent of a challenging ability, and a discerning onlooker like Richard Burton could predicate that a decisive event would follow.

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57. FO2/34, Russell to Brand (Consul at Lagos), June 19, 1860.

> "In December 1863," wrote Consul Burton, "one Ja Ja, son of an unknown bushman, a common negro and a favourite slave of the deceased" was chosen by the boys as their Chief. "He is young, healthy and powerful and not less ambitious, energetic and decided. He is the most influential man and the greatest trader in the River and £50,000, it is said, may annually pass through his hands. He lives much with Europeans and he rides roughshod over young hands coming into Bonny. In a short time he will either be shot or he will beat down all his rivals. At present he leads the party against the King." [58]

Burton's assessment of Ja Ja was uncanny in its prophetic insight.

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58. FO2/45, Burton to Russell, August 8, 1864, Confidential.

CHAPTER II

CONFLICT AND SECESSION - 1863-1870

The Return of the Exiled

In the previous chapter an attempt was made to discuss some of the factors which led to the destruction of the politico-economic viability of Bonny. In this chapter, the final phase of the disintegration and the reactions of the leaders of the people to it will be discussed. As contemporaries noted, "six years of regency formed by the two main Canoe Houses of Bonny had proved beyond doubt that a powerful monarchy was indispensable for political stability upon which depended economic stability."[1] The sectional rivalries that had burst forth in civil wars had not abated; their manifestations were only too apparent in the increasing insubordination of the people to all but House authorities. The king, allied to the Manilla Pepple House, could no longer serve as the focus of the greater loyalty that had wielded Bonny into a nation-state. When the Manilla Pepples and the European-dominated Court of Equity petitioned for the return of King Dappa Pepple, these two groups hoped that they would gain from this event.

The Europeans, now aware that their Court of Equity had failed to replace the monarchy, hoped, by the king's return, to re-establish unified control and with it political stability which they could manipulate for the benefit of their trade. Within the Manilla Pepple House, there was the hope that the king's return would be followed by a restoration to him of the power then exercised by the Anna Pepple House; such a restoration would benefit those who had done their best to restore part of his damaged fortunes and uphold his rights in his absence. Their traditional claim on his favours would then be fully rewarded. In the event, however, neither the European merchants nor the Manilla House realized their desires.

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1. Hutchinson, T.J. (ed.), Ten Years Wandering among the Ethiopians, London 1965, pp. 176-8. hereinafter referred to as Ten Years Wandering.

In 1861 King William Pepple returned to Bonny a very poor man indeed: too poor to fulfil the desires of his friends. Without significant wealth when compared with his subject-chiefs, the king lacked the power to command supreme obedience. The situation was not made easy by the fact that old treaties imposed on His Majesty before his deportation still stood and the king was still held responsible for their observance. Despite the loss of his wealth, and despite the treaties which compromised his sovereignty, King Pepple had retained the support of the conservative elements which formed the vast majority of his subjects. In political matters, Bonny had never opposed its King except when it was felt that he was compromising his position for personal gain. To a man Bonny was aware of the usefulness of the monarchy which all accepted as the prerogative of the Pepples. The Pepple Monarchy was a symbol for something that was irreplaceable; so even when the king had lost the economic attributes of his office, he remained in a curious way sovereign over the people.[2]

The traditional concept of sovereignty was inseparable from the origins of the community. The king, as a descendant of the founders of Bonny, was in communion with the spirits of his departed ancestors who, as they left this life, were held to have acquired increased power and the ability to communicate freely with the Supreme Essence. The role of the ancestors was to protect, through their contact with the spirit world, the land which they had formed into a community and the people reared in it. The king, as their descendant, communicated freely with them, presenting the needs of himself and his people to the Supreme Deity through the ancestors to whom he made sacrifices regularly. It was a kind of hierarchy in which the king at the bottom of the pyramid served as a primary intercessor for his people before the ancestors who had power to influence the course of events.

King William Pepple returned from his exile in 1861 poor not only economically but also spiritually in the eyes of his subjects. When Pepple

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2. Jones, G.I., Trading States, pp. 181-82.

allowed himself to be converted to Christianity he shed his last remaining garb of royalty. As a Christian Pepple could no longer believe in the power of departed ancestors to influence events, nor in his own power to intercede for his people. In the ethics of his new Protestant religion, Christ was the one and only intercessor and any deviation was positively sinful. King Pepple, a Christian, had become alientated from the traditional religion in which he, as a Pepple, held a crucial position. Before he went into exile, he had already lost the material power to command supreme obedience; by becoming a Christian, he also lost the spiritual power to do so.[3] Hence, on his arrival to Bonny with his British entourage, the latter "found that the king was not wanted by his people..."[4]

Count de Cardi displayed remarkable insight when he attributed to the power of "jujuism" the ill-success of "the native of these parts who has attempted to retain any of the teachings of Christianity on his return amongst his pagan brethren."[5] Pepple's new religion explains why he "never regained the monarch's ancient sway over the Bonny people" and why "he felt himself safer away from the vicinity of his more powerful chiefs."[6] King Pepple also needed protection from his scandalised subjects as well as from the European merchants who soon accused him of attempting to sell the rights to trade in the hinterland of Bonny to an Anglo-French firm and of trying to emancipate himself from the obligations imposed on him by the 1854 treaty.

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3. Jones, G.I. Trading States, pp. 180-182
4. de Cardi in Studies, p. 520
5. de Cardi in Studies, p. 531
6. de Cardi in Studies, p. 521

The Struggle for supremacy

The very acceptance of William Dappa Pepple as king had unmasked the contradiction in the constitutional allocation of power within Bonny since Opubu's death. The distribution of power in the State had become inconsistent with its distribution in society, but it was the King's new religion which, by removing the raison d'etre of the monarchy, relieved his subjects of their obligations of loyalty to him and opened up vast opportunities for the ambitious and daring among his competing over-mighty subjects with whom now lay alternative sources of power. But theirs was only physical power, lacking in religious restraint, and since they were not of royal birth, were destined to remain so as long as they formed part of Bonny society. In the struggle between the two main Houses, the main dramatis personae were now Jaja of Anna Pepple and the already well known figure of Oko Jumbo of the Manilla House.

Oko Jumbo, possibly a slave born in Bonny, had long before Jaja built up a powerful Canoe House of his own by means which bore witness to his genius as an organiser and a trader. Though Warribo was the elected Head of the Manilla House[7], Oko was the dominant figure in his House. He could hope to command greater respect and authority than his 'bought' opponent of the Anna Pepple House. Soon however, Oko Jumbo was to realise that in Bonny society. the distinction between the first and second generation of slaves was a very fine one indeed and that his opponent's stigma lacked really serious propaganda value. Both the Manillas and the Anna Pepples were aware that, in the unfolding struggle, the decisive factor would be the size and power of their respective Canoe Houses but they went about securing the necessary support in different ways.

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7. Jones, Trading States, p. 130, suggests that Warribo was deposed from the headship.

Christianity as a factor in Bonny Politics

At Juju Town where Pepple had lived after his return, the King did not remain idle. A man of the world who was not unskilled in diplomacy,[8] Pepple was alive to the new forces that were penetrating the Niger Delta. Having himself become a Christian convert, Pepple may have been genuinely concerned about imparting the new faith to his subjects. But when a few years before his return from exile the king again[9] requested missionaries to come and minister to him and his people, he had, unlike the fervent convert, made conditions. Ikuba, the national temple of Bonny was to be left intact by the missionaries. The missionaries had rejected this conditional offer. It seems probable that when in 1864 Pepple renewed his, now unconditional, invitation to Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who had begun the Niger Mission in 1857, the King was prompted by his need for some support in the face of his utter helplessness. Quite rightly Pepple saw in the missionaries a force that could be used to recover some lost advantages but he was wrong if he hoped to regain the loyalty of Bonny through their assistance. However, in 1864 he and the Manilla leaders invited the missionaries to establish themselves in Bonny. It is doubtful whether the king or his chiefs suspected that Christianity, once invited, would permanently 'contaminate' the monarchy which they sought to defend and retain in their own hands.

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8. Dike, Trade and Politics. See Chapter 10 for an assessment of William Pepple's character.

9. Ajayi J.F. Ade, Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-91, Ibadan, 1965, pp. 103-8. hereinafter referred to as Christian Missions.

   Ayandele, Missionary Impact, pp. 72-74.

   Both show that the King had made earlier request but on terms the missionaries could not accept.

So in 1864, the Christian missionaries arrived in Bonny and like the proverbial new broom, began to sweep clean all nooks and corners of everyday life. Theirs was a programme of social revolution in which the help of political leaders was essential. Those who, for various reasons, invited and welcomed the mission were seen as the Biblical wheat while the 'Conservatives' became the tares to be uprooted by all means for the sake of the Word.

King William Pepple died in 1865 and his successor, George Pepple, began an even more fanatical pro-Christian policy. In the context of the struggle with the Anna Pepple House, George could exploit his Christian professions to curry favour with the missionaries, but in terms of real power, he tasted even less of it than did his father. John Whitford had this to say of him:

> The son and successor to the late King Pepple, George Pepple is not of much account, although educated in England. He has not exactly ascended the throne of his ancestors and does not consider it beneath his dignity to solicit for and superintend the washing of clothes for white men.[10] Oko Jumbo is one of the smartest traders and most influential Chiefs.

Despite George's lack of power, attested also by Count de Cardi,[11] King George adopted for Bonny the missionaries' revolutionary programme. In their scheme of things, the old things were to pass away and all things be made new. For the missionaries this meant quite simply attacking and subverting, as a sacred duty, all aspects of the established way of life. At the root of the established way of life were the traditional religion of ancestor-worship and the practice of marrying several wives.[12] These customs now came under severe fire from the Christian missionaries who saw them as

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10. Whitford, J. Trading Life in West and Central Africa, 2nd. Ed., London, 1967, p. 289.

11. de Cardi in Studies, p. 531.

12. Ajayi, Christian Missions. In pp. 103-8 these points are discussed at some length.

sinful. It was therefore the bounden duty of the faithful to destroy these institutions.

The Reaction of the Political leaders to the Missionary Programme

It has already been suggested that the Manilla House and the king invited the Christian missionaries into Bonny in the hope that through the mission's help the Manillas could overcome their opponents of the Anna Pepple House and re-establish the ancient power of the monarchy in their own hands. With the arrival of the missionaries, the very bases of the traditional authority were attacked. King George's reaction to this turn of events was as pathetic as it is revealing. George professed Christianity and preached Victorian morality to his subjects. Nudity was one of the social 'evils' he abhorred and attacked. The king's programme, like that of the missionaries, aimed at revolutionising society along Christian lines, but unlike the missionaries, Goerge was unwilling to destroy "polygamy and the divine aura of his family."[13] A Christian monarch such as George was incompatible with the near-divinity of the traditional kingship, and its speaks volumes for King George's lack of understanding not only of the operative forces within his society but also of the principle tenets of the Christian faith he was professing that he hoped to combine the two.

The Manilla leader, Oko Jumbo supported the King's programme of reform and joined in an iconoclasm which ultimately alienated the masses of the people. Oko's Christian zeal carried him on a proselytising mission to the Qua Ibo River in 1868. In the same year, he supervised the slaughter of the Iguanas, Bonny's sacred totem, and declared the end of twin murder for

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13. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, pp. 77-78.

his House. The Manilla House began, too, as a sign of their 'progress' to neglect Ikuba. In their conflict with the Anna Pepple House, they were now enlisting the support of alien forces, represented by the Christian missions and their programme of reform, to the complete neglect of traditional elements.

In contrast, Ja Ja and the members of his House refused to invite the missionaries, and when they did arrive, remained steadfast to the old religion, shedding human blood to the gods when the House Head fell ill and attending to Ikuba when others fled the temple.[14] This attitude on the part of the Anna Pepples led by Ja Ja raises a problem of motive; did the Head of the Anna Pepples reject Christianity because his opponents had stolen a march on him in welcoming it? Was this reaction to the new religion no more than an extension of the struggle against the Manilla House whom the missionaries supported? Or was Ja Ja, in remaining steadfast to Ikuba, defending his own interest as a priest of the old religion, as Ayandele also implies.[15] The answers to these questions are of importance in understanding Ja Ja Anna Pepple and his times.

Ja Ja, as a leader of his House against the Manilla House, might have considered the new religion not worth his patronage, because the Manillas and their king had already professed patronage. This, however, fails to explain Ja Ja's refusal, at the outset, to attach his name and that of his House to the petition inviting the Christians in 1864. The Anna Pepple House could have taken up the missionary presence as another sphere of activity in which they and the Manilla House could try their strength. But they did not look upon Christianity as such a field. As to the second question, there is no evidence that Ja Ja was hostile to the Christian missionaries, although he

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14. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, pp. 77-8.

15. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, pp. 77-8.

was always openly suspicious of African Christians whom he regarded as dangerous subversives. Until the missionaries involved themselves actively in the 1869-73 War, the records disclose no other feeling on his part towards them than suspicion.

Ja Ja's steadfastness to the established traditional religion cannot be explained simply by reference to his enmity with the Manilla Pepples. Nor can it be explained in terms of his self-interest alone: if, as Ayandele has rightly stated, Ikuba was the national or tribal temple of Bonny, then Ja Ja Anna Pepple, a parvenue in that society, could not have been a high priest of Ikuba. Priesthood was a status that, unlike the headship of a house, was not opened to talent. If, as also stated by the same author, Ikuba was already being neglected by the majority of the people, then not much benefit by way of the vital popular support could have been expected to accrue from continued patronage of an institution in such a predicament. It is clear that Ja Ja rejected Christianity because he believed that his own theology was superior. Ja Ja's view of the traditional religion discloses, on his part, a rare insight into the fundamental bases of his society. When men of the calibre of James Africanus Beale Horton were writing volumes on the "regenerating" powers of Christianity for Africa,[16] Ja Ja Anna Pepple believed quite firmly that it would bring degeneration for his own Africa and he was determined to prevent this, and since the new religion had become allied to the Manilla House, Ja Ja now had the two forces to contend with. How Ja Ja continued the struggle and what help he enlisted deserves discussion.

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16. Horton, J.A.B. West African Countries and Peoples, London, 1868. Hereinafter referred to as West African Countries.

The Reactions of the Political Leaders to Changing Economic Circumstances:

The men who brought the Bible to Bonny also brought trade goods to the whole of the Niger Basin. It was a case of the alliance of Christianity and Commerce with the Niger Pastorate acting in concert with the Company of African Merchants, in which they held shares. This Company was one of the two early trading concerns to move up the Niger. The other, McGregor Laird's had begun a regular steam-ship service in 1852 and the consequences of this for the Niger trade has been demonstrated by Gertzel.[17] Here it is sufficient to mention that the presence of large numbers of petty firms struggling for a share of the Niger trade adversely affected the economic health of the Canoe Houses despite the continued expansion of trade. The highest incidence of economic casualty fell among the small Houses, many of whom went out of business altogether, while some lost their independent existence by allowing themselves to be absorbed by one or the other of the major Houses in return for payment of their debts.

This was a traditional method of avoiding complete disintegration in times of economic stress. In cases where a single House had paid the debts of such Houses and thereby 'bought' all its members, the latter often remained as a distinct group within their new House and sometimes succeeded in re-establishing themselves as an independent Canoe House when opportunities presented themselves. This method of expansion tended, in the long run, to the disadvantage of the stronger House for such absorbed Houses were potentially 'irridentist', causing disputes within a Canoe House. However, in the heat of the cut-throat competition of the fifties and sixties, both sides tried to survive by this means. It was a well-established method of

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17. Gertzel, J.C. 'John Holt', Chap. 1.

winning allies and gaining power and offered yet another means of carrying on the inter-House struggle in Bonny.

It cannot be over emphasized that wealth measured in terms of the size and power of a Canoe House determined political status in Bonny. Both the two main Houses knew this and exerted themselves economically and commercially to secure the necessary support. Ja Ja had already begun the process of consolidation from within his own Canoe House. Count de Cardi emphasized the urgency and the novel dimensions of his method:

> Ja Ja had not been many months head of the Annie Pepple House before he had begun to show the old Chiefs what kind of metal he was made of; for during the first twelve months he had selected from among the late Elloly's slaves no less than eighteen to twenty young men, who had already amassed a little wealth, and whom he thought capable of being trusted to trade on their own account, bought canoes for them, took them to the European traders, got them to advance each of these young men from five to ten puncheons worth of goods, he himself standing guarantee for them. 18

This was a strictly traditional method of winning confidence and support; its novelty lay in its daring scale. The result was predictable: "this operation had the effect of making Ja Ja immediately popular amongst all classes of the slaves of the late Chief" and of exciting the admiration and envy of the slaves of the other Canoe Houses of Bonny. Ja Ja was equally aware of the value of the good-will of European merchants on whose patronage expansion of business depended. Accordingly,

> "Two years after Ja Ja was placed at the head of the House, the late Elloly's debts were all cleared off, no white trader having been detained beyond the date Ja Ja had promised the late chief's debts should be paid by. In consideration for the prompt manner in which Ja Ja had paid up, he received from each super cargoe whom the late Chief had dealt with a present varying from five to ten per cent on the amount paid." 19

By 1865, Ja Ja had set his House in order with himself as the respected and popular Head. He had also gained the confidence of the European merchants,

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18. de Cardi in Studies, p. 528

19. de Cardi in Studies, p. 528

while his treatment of the young men of his House struck envy and admiration into the hearts of the youth of other Houses. He was above all absorbing into his Canoe House an increasing number of minor Canoe Houses by paying off their debts.

The Manillas attempt to Curb the Anna Pepples:

The increasing solidarity and popularity of the Anna Pepple House was bound to cause concern among members of the Manilla House. The success of their opponents was undermining their own position. There was the fear too that, when Ja Ja had captured enough of the minor Houses, he would make a bid for the supreme power in the State. Such fears, however, under-estimated the intelligence of Ja Ja who knew that only men of royal birth could be accepted as Sovereign in Bonny. But the Manilla House could not fold their hands and do nothing. The result was the invitation to the Christian missionaries.

The presence of the Christian missionaries did not stop Ja Ja extending his influence. By 1867 he had absorbed no less than fifteen minor Canoe Houses. The Manilla House and their allies took alarm and early in that year put pressure on the members of the Anna Pepple House to stop the absorption of minor Houses. The latter agreed to sign a declaration which read:

> We, Anna Pepple, party Chiefs, etc. do hereby and for the future agree to give up the following parties, viz: Tillibor alias Gogo Foobra, Fine Bone, Sonjo, Black Foobra, Tobi, John Africa, Jack Tellifeurs, Warrisco, Semah Sunju, Young Trader and Tariber, to be masters of their own houses and to have no interference with their house and trade businesses and managements; and they, the above named parties also promised not to give or sell themselves or house to Anna Pepple, Manilla Pepple or to any person or persons whatever; but in the event of any disputes arising between any two houses they are to endeavour with the juju men to settle such disputes amicably.[20]

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20. This document, quoted by Jones, Trading States, p. 129, is filed in FO84/1326

Under a powerful monarch, who was respected by all his people, the minor Canoe Houses had served as stabilizers between the powerful ones. Having been relied upon to take unbiased view of disputes, their function in helping to settle disputes had been recognised by the large Houses and their independence respected. In the difficult economic circumstances of the 1860s, with a King who was a puppet of one of the major Houses, considerations of economic survival took precedence over the political stability of the State.

There is no available evidence to suggest that the minor Houses named in the above document were anxious to accept the kind gesture of 'liberation' extended to them in the declaration. In fact, they remained attached to the Anna Pepple House. The document itself does not bear the signature of either Ja Ja or Oko Jumbo, the respective leaders of the two major Houses named in it. It cannot therefore serve as evidence for the statement by Jones that "Ja Ja was not yet ready for war and preferred to be conciliatory."[21] If Ja Ja was planning a war, it can be argued that 1867 was a favourable year for him to have precipitated an encounter. He was powerful and popular within his House, his relation with the European merchants was sound, and among the other Houses of Bonny, his popularity was being expressed by the number of minor Houses who had come under his House.

The Failure of a curb by agreement and the recourse to war:

It was more than "the demon of jealousy" which led the members of the Manilla House to the decision "that Ja Ja must be pulled down" by means of a civil war.[22] There was a real fear that Ja Ja aimed to seize the throne.

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21. Jones, Trading States, p. 129.

22. de Cardi in Studies, p. 529.

Such an eventuality would have destroyed the institution of the monarchy because Ja Ja was not a Pepple. Absurd as the supposition was, it produced mounting tension in which both sides frantically armed themselves. In view of the continuing tendency, despite much evidence to the contrary, to attribute the opening of hostilities in 1869 to the Anna Pepple House,[23] it is important to quote an eye-witness account of the events of the immediate pre-war years:

> ...though the Oko Party was most numerous, each side was equally supplied with big guns and rifles up to a short time before the end of 1868, when two European traders, on their way home, picked up a number of old 32lb. Carronades at Sierra Leone and shipped the same down to Oko Jumbo. This sudden accession of war material of course, put him in a position to provoke Ja Ja, and he cast about for a casus belli but Ja Ja was an astute diplomatist and managed to steer clear of all his opponents' pitfalls.[24]

de Cardi's evidence has been accepted as valid by many modern researchers.[25] Since he was one of the first two Europeans who followed Ja Ja and his men to their new settlement from the very beginning and gained much as a result, his evidence needs to be checked against other sources. The Foreign Office documents and the Ja Ja Papers corroborate de Cardi's account on the outbreak of the war. In a letter to Consul Livingstone dated June 8, 1870, the Bonny chiefs claimed that the war arose because Ja Ja broke a treaty to the effect that every Chief was to be independent.[26]

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23. Jones, Trading States, p. 130; Ayandele, Missionary Impact, p. 73.

24. de Cardi in Studies, p. 529.

25. Jones in Trading States, p. 128; Dike in Trade and Politics, pp. 184-5.

26. FO84/1326, Bonny Chiefs to Consul Livingstone, June 8, 1870.

The treaty was the document already quoted and which neither of the Heads of the two leading Houses had signed. If Ja Ja's continuing absorption of minor Houses was the cause of the civil war, his opponents who disapproved of this trend on his part must have begun war on him to stop his advancement.

There is other evidence against the view that the Anna Pepples were the aggressors in the 1869 war: a fire had occurred in Bonny on the 7th April 1869 in which the Anna Pepples lost most of their wealth and war material. This was one reason why the Manillas thought that they at last had their chance to undo the Anna Pepples. "We were just on the point of pursuing, then to bring Ja Ja and his party so that famine would ensue and all of them be brought to bay...[27] War in 1869, it was felt by the Manillas, would settle for all time 'the Ja Ja threat'. The pretext for the official invitation to war was found in an accusation soon after the fire "that a woman of the Anna Pepple House had drawn water from some pond belonging to the Manilla Pepple House." To the message that "the time had come when nothing but a fight would settle their differences", Ja Ja had "reminded them that he had no wish to fight, was not prepared, and furthermore, that neither he nor they had paid their debts to the Europeans".[28]

The Anna Pepples refused a fight and their enemies must have felt their calculations confirmed. Gleefully they increased their military preparedness and debated the next move. As tension mounted, Ja Ja, on 1st September, wrote to the Court of Equity calling its attention to the tense situation and suggesting that the Manillas were trying to precipitate a war against his House. The Chairman of the Court replied stating that he

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27. FO84/1326, Bonny Chiefs to Consul Livingstone, March 7, 1870.

28. de Cardi in Studies, pp. 529-30.

had written to the Manilla House asking "whether hostilities are intended or apprehended by them"[29] and urging them to reply by the 6th instant. Ayandele, writing on the war, states that the Manillas had informed Ja Ja that being Christians, they would not fight with Ja Ja on a Sunday.[30] This statement, based on one of Livingstone's dispatches, constitutes all the evidence on which Ayandele attributes responsibility for the war to Ja Ja. Ja Ja might have chosen to return on a Sunday a reply to the Manillas' invitation to a fight. He might have chosen a Sunday because he knew that his opponent would not agree to fight on that day on account of their new religious obligations - that would give him more time to meet their standard of military preparedness - or as spite against the new religion which was mounting increasing propaganda against his 'heathenism'. The Anna Pepples and not the Manillas were victims of aggression, for against the background of the former's weakened position, against the recorded declarations of their leader's unwillingness to go to war and against his recorded attempt to avoid a resort to war, the Manilla House had only the excuse that, being Christians, they would not fight until the following day.

It is very easy to conclude that Ja Ja's reluctance to fight resulted from his awareness of his House's weakness. This was undoubtedly a factor he had to consider. But equally important, by a series of treaties imposed during the time of William Pepple, the African authorities of Bonny had been bound not to go to war without first paying all their debts to the supercargoes. After a little war in 1859 between two Households of the Anna Pepple and Manilla Pepple Canoe Houses, the supercargoes and their

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29. Ja Ja Papers 1/8, in Letters from Court of Equity, 1869-1884, G.W. Moore, Acting Chairman Bonny to Anna Pepple, March 9, 1869.

30. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, p. 73.

consul had stepped in again, and after fining the combatants bound the Houses "not to use guns and cannon again in Bonny Town."[31] These engagements considerably influenced Ja Ja's decision to reject the invitation to a fight in the middle of 1869. As will emerge from a study of his later relations with both the British and African authorities, it was part of the character of the man to abide strictly by undertakings once they were entered into.

The Anna Pepples refused to take up the challenge to war but their opponents were determined to force the issue:

> The latter part of the message was too much for an irascible one-eyed old fighting Chief named Jack Wilson Pepple, so off he marched to his own House, and fired the first round shot into the Anna Pepple part of the town and civil war was commenced.[32]

It is clear from this piece of information that no final decision to start a war was taken by the Manilla House, though they had for sometime been inclined to the view that a war was desirable. Jack Wilson Pepple, the Odogu or war leader, must have found the deliberations of the civil authorities of his House a waste of time. So he withdrew from them. By firing the first shot which was returned by the Anna Pepples, he forced the hands of his House and committed both sides to a civil war that broke Bonny. Much as the Anna Pepples would have preferred to avoid resorting to hostilities, they were not in a position to determine the course of events and all they could do was to defend themselves. The Manilla House would have preferred a well-considered plan of action that would probably have fallen short of hostilities, but they too had lost the power to shape the course of events. The military had seized the initiative.

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32. de Cardi in Studies, p. 530.

Religion as a factor in the Civil War:

In the course of the war, differences were exposed and attitudes hardened. Ayandele comments:

> According to the Manilla Pepple faction, it was not merely a war against Ja Ja's political ambitions butwas as well a war on behalf of Christianity against the tribal religion with which the Anna Pepples, Ja Ja's faction, were uncompromisingly identified. [33]

The activities of the Manillas reveal an element of truth in this statement. Early in 1868, Oko Jumbo, carrying his Christianity to the individual Bonny man and woman, had announced the end of twin murder. He followed this up by personally supervising the slaughtering of the sacred Iguanas. During the war which began in September 1869, this iconoclasm and 'defamation' was carried a step further by violation of the sacred sanctuary of Juju Town.

It was the tradition in Bonny that during a war the women and children of the contending parties were left unmolested unless any side had broken the accepted standards respecting warfare. Further, anybody, whether a man or woman, who took shelter in Juju Town was spared his life. During the 1869 war, the Manilla House, carried away by the enthusiasm of a new cult, flew in the face of these traditions; even women and children of the Anna Pepples who had taken shelter in Juju Town did not escape slaughter. The Mission House to which the women, children and wounded of the Manilla House were welcomed while those of the Anna Pepples were denied similar sanctuary had for the Manillas, superceded Juju Town as the sacred Sanctuary.[34]

Excesses have a tendency of producing counter-reactions. In the Bonny war, the excesses of the new Christians produced reactions that helped Ja Ja's cause. Ayandele states [in the section already cited,] that the majority of the people had already begun to neglect Juju Town and Ikuba. If this

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33. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, p. 72

34. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, pp. 73-74

'majority' included other than members of the Manilla House, their neglect of the traditional holy places could not have been because they had become Christians, since no corresponding increase in membership was recorded for the new religion. The only plausible explanation is that, like the Bonny monarchy, Juju Town and Ikuba had become defiled and their resultant impotence rendered them no longer useful to their erstwhile worshippers. Bonny, like its monarchy, had outlived its usefulness, not only for the economic but also, above all, for the spiritual needs of the people who respected the traditional way of life.

The secession from Bonny:

The Anna Pepples had managed to return fire while they evacuated, for protection, all their followers to a small Bonny town called Tombo Town, less than three miles from the centre of the city where the fighting was going on.

> From here, he (Ja Ja) was in a better position to parley with his opponents, and make terms if possible, but he soon saw that no arrangement less than the complete humiliation of himself and people was going to satisfy his enemies, for besides the jealousy of Oko Jumbo, the young King George Pepple...had not forgotten that the Anna Pepple house, represented by the late Elloly, had been the chief opponents of his late father when he had returned to Bonny in 1861 after his exile.[35]

King George, it must be pointed out, was not actuated solely by vindictive impulses. George was a perfect 'Black Victorian' and, like all men of his class, genuinely sought to 'reform' his society along the tenets of that great achievement, 'Victorian Civilization'. King George saw only good in the Christian religion and he wished to have it firmly established in Bonny but the religious traditionalism of the Anna Pepples stood in his way.

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35. de Cardi in Studies, p. 530.

From Tombo Town, to which Ja Ja and his people had retired on the 13th September, he sued for peace. The letter announcing his 'sudden collapse', written on the 14th September and directed neither to the King nor to the Consul but to the Court of Equity, read:

> Gentlemen, I beg to inform Court that I cannot fight any more because I have no house and no carriage and have (NO) guns to fight as all were burnt and now the small countries which (WE) have in hand belong to the Queen.[36]

The Court could not and did not take up the implied offer, if such it was meant, of Ja Ja's strongholds to the Queen. The Manillas, over-joyed by what appeared to be their quick victory, argued over the amount of fine to be imposed on their opponents as a pre-condition for opening peace talks. For ten days, messages passed between the two sides at the end of which it became clear that the economic attachments of the Europeans merchants to the warring Houses made it impossible for them to take a detached view of the conflict as arbitrators and made them unable to agree on the terms of peace. As hostilities were renewed, the Manillas found that their prey had eluded them.[37] Ja Ja and his people had moved from Tombo Town to a place in Andoniland. The Anna Pepples had left Bonny, as it turned out, for ever.

When the Manillas found out what had happened, they accused their opponents of having talked of peace simply in order to gain time to execute ready-made plans. This accusation has been accepted by almost all writers on the war as a statement of fact. Jones states that "as soon as he became head of the Anna Pepple Main House, Ja Ja set about implementing secret plans, on which, as he later admitted, he had been working for some time."[38]

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36. FO84/1308, Encl. 2 in No. 24 Ja Ja to Court of Equity, September 14, 1869. The words in brackets are mine.

37. FO84/1326, Bonny Chiefs to Livingstone, March 7, 1870.

38. Jones, Trading States, p. 128.

Jones goes on to connect this statement with Ja Ja's consideration of secession from Bonny thereby implying that secession was part of the "secret plans" that had been maturing for some time. Undoubtedly, Ja Ja as a man with a keen sense of business must have perceived the opportunities and hazards facing the African middleman as a result of the changing patterns of the Delta trade due to the influx of new traders. He must have contrasted this development and the prospects it held out to the falling profits in Bonny with its chronic instability. But the changing pattern of trade was not new; it was a process which began in 1852 and had become well advanced by the time the Manillas began the war of 1869. Then Ja Ja had refused to fight and tried to avert a war. When he failed and war did break out, he tried to invite a third party to settle their differences after evacuating his followers to a suburb of Bonny. He did not then secede from Bonny.

It is easy, in retrospect, to see Ja Ja's withdrawal from Bonny to Andoniland as a neatly premeditated and smoothly executed act of secession such as Jones implies it was. Other evidence, however, strongly suggests that Ja Ja hit upon the idea of seceding from Bonny and founding a new state while he was in retreat at Tombo Town and not earlier. de Cardi wrote:

> In the meantime, Ja Ja had been studying a masterly plan of retreat from Tombo Town to a river called the Ekomtoro, also called the Rio Conde in ancient maps. [39]

Ja Ja's letter of 14th September to the Court of Equity announcing himself defeated and the above quotation by Count de Cardi are powerful evidence that secession was not contemplated till late in the war "after several weeks of palavering" and "no better terms were offered Ja Ja than had before been offered to him".[40] Ja Ja did not rush into secession which was a novel

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39. de Cardi in Studies, p. 531

40. de Cardi in Studies, p. 532

experiment. It was in the course of the war that attitudes hardened and momentous decisions were made.

In the hectic days of refuge at Tombo Town, Ja Ja made a move which reveals that he was alive to the possibilities offered by his times. The increasing competition among traders had victims not only among the minor Canoe Houses but also among the small European firms. But as some of these went out of business, others came in. The old-coasters stiffened their traditional opposition against the new arrivals, exploiting the system of 'trusts' as a means of protecting their monopoly and competing wastefully among themselves as a result. In the process, even old hands suffered. Among the latter in the late 1860's was 'Charlie' de Cardi. 'Charlie' was threatened with displacement from Brass River where he had operated for some time past. 'Charlie's' friend, Archie McEachen represented a new interest on the Coast. His firm, Miller Brothers of Glasgow had tried to establish at Brass but had been prevented by the opposition of the old-coasters, dominated by Liverpool firms.[41] Ja Ja had a brief interview with 'Charlie' at which the latter agreed to buy oil from him. On his return to Brass, 'Charlie' confided the scheme to Archie McEachen.[42] With the assurance of selling his oil, Ja Ja could go ahead and consider all the implications of founding a new state.

If the changing patterns of the Delta trade helped Ja Ja to secure vital allies among the European firms, African politics on the Oil Rivers were no less helpful to him. The Ikomtoro took its rise from the Oguta Lake in the Ibo hinterland and emptied itself into the ocean in Andoni

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41. Flint, J.E., Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, London, 1959, pp. 27-28.

42. de Cardi in Studies, p. 532

territory. Its basin washed the great palm oil belt which fed the famous markets of Okirika, Obunko and Akwete. Settlement at the Ikomtoro, Ja Ja was aware, would enable him to control all the major routes to the oil markets. It also held out political advantages, not only from the point of view of its strategic and economic importance but above all, from the fact that, because founded by the House of Anna Pepple, Ja Ja as Head of that House would be accepted by the people as its founder and king. Such a settlement would be a symbolic expression by the Anna Pepples of their rejection of Bonny as it had become degenerate and would give legitimacy to their exercise of sovereignty. European firms, especially those outside the ring of the established Liverpool firms might be attracted to such a new State.

The Andonis who controlled the mouth of the Ikomtoro had fought several wars with Bonny over the use of its mouth as a trading port. After the last of these wars a treaty had been signed by the Andonis, in which, as they understood it, they allowed Bonny to handle their trade with the Coast. de Cardi reports that

> The Bonny men not always getting the best of these encounters were very glad to come to terms with them in 1846, a treaty being then signed between the two tribes, wherein the Andoni men were secured equal rights with the Bonny men.... [43]

However, according to the letter of the treaty and as intended by Bonny, the 1846 treated 'ceded' Andoniland to the King and people of Bonny.[44] The misunderstanding arising from the different readings of the treaty produced ill-feeling between Bonny and Andoniland. When Ja Ja and his men went to Andoniland during the War anti-Bonny feeling crystalised around him building up, while Bonny and its allies began to treat the Andonis as enemies.[45] It

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43. de Cardi in Studies, p. 539

44. Jones, Trading States, pp. 115-116

45. FO84/1326 - Ja Ja to Livingstone, September 16, 1870; FO403/18 - No.3. Ja Ja to Granville and Enclosures, March 1883.

was through the alliance of the Andoni that the Anna Pepples were able, early in their new settlement, to take control of the important markets of Imo, Obunko and Akwete.[46]

Assured of the opportunity to establish at the strategic Ikomtoro, and of the economic viability of the proposed settlement, Ja Ja proceeded to ensure the continued allegiance and confidence of the Anna Pepple House and their supporters. It was one thing to allow a bought slave who had proved his mettle to lead a segment of the Royal House; there were precedents for this, but it was quite another to follow such a man along the uncharted path of secession. This was far too novel and risky an undertaking to take men's allegiance for granted. So while still in retreat, and presumably after the agreement with 'Charlie', Ja Ja concluded with the leaders of his Canoe House and their supporters, the famous Minima Agreement. In a preamble to this historic document, the representatives of the Households confirmed the power and authority of Ja Ja over the entire Canoe House and its supporters. They voluntarily engaged "to elude Grand Bonny with a view to settle elsewhere in Andony territory". In Article I, the leaders promised to provide jointly the expenses of the war against the Manillas. In return for losses sustained in the war, it was understood in Article II that the leaders and their successors "shall have the indefinite title to a share of the revenues from 'Comey', Work Bar, Custom Bar and such other imposts and levies after 25% of the whole has been reserved as income for the Big House." By reserving, in Article III, the executive authority for the government of the new settlement in all the leaders and their successors who were acknowledged as entitled for election to the Kingship, the secessionists by-passed the evils of hereditary monarchy which had helped to

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46. See Map of Eastern Delta.

destroy Bonny. Ja Ja was chosen as the first King by the assembled leaders.[47]

The Minima Agreement which formed the Constitution of Ja Ja's new settlement gives an insight into another aspect of Ja Ja's character. It reveals a man who would take nothing for granted. Throughout his years as leader of his House, Ja Ja had worked assiduously to retain the confidence reposed in him when the House chose him to lead it. This confidence had grown as his able administration brought increasing strength to his House. Notwithstanding this fact, before Ja Ja took the momentous new step, he was careful to sound the views of his fellow members of the Anna Pepple House. He was aware of the conservatism of his society, with which he himself was imbued, and for which he and his house had fought. Apart from the provision, born of necessity, that Household leaders would share even 'Comey' with the King and apart from the elective principle introduced into the Kingship, there was no constitutional change from that which obtained in Bonny. In the Minima Agreement one sees Ja Ja's conservatism and his understanding of men.

As was to emerge in the type of structure the secessionists later built, there was nothing revolutionary about this Constitution nor about the spirit that inspired it. The introduction of the elective principle was in effect a restoration. As has been suggested in Chapter One, African societies of the eastern Oil Rivers had elected their leaders on the bases of age and ability in the days before the Atlantic trade. The Minima Agreement was, in this aspect, a return to former practice. But the traditional leaders lacked the vast political powers accorded to the new in Bonny and retained in the Minima Agreement. This Constitution can best be described as a mixture of the old and new and it gives a foretaste of Ja Ja's reaction to the influences of his times.

47. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 189 and Appendix A. Dike does not give the documentary source but states in footnote that the Minima Agreement was, when he wrote, the basis of the Opobo Constitution.

Why, it must be asked, did the House of Anna Pepple agree unanimously to secede from Bonny? There was the undoubted fact of Ja Ja's ability as an organiser of men and as a trader. These qualities could not but inspire confidence, especially at moments of crisis. With Ja Ja at the head of his House, economic success seemed assured, especially as some guarantee of selling produce had been obtained. Though important, this reasoning fails to explai n the decision of the Anna Pepples to leave Bonny for ever. The arrangement with 'Charlie' must have influenced the assembled leaders' decision, but in view of an obvious need for secrecy, the arrangement could not have been disclosed to the rank and file who did the fighting. It does not therefore explain the support of the common people who followed their leaders into secession.

The civil war had developed into something more than a struggle for economic and political dominance. For both sides, it involved also a struggle for a way of life. This factor became of increasing importance as the war progressed and understood values were flouted. When women and children were slaughtered and Sacred Sanctuaries invaded and their refugees murdered by the Manilla Pepple Christians, not only the Anna Pepples who were bearing the banner of the traditional religion but also members of other Canoe Houses who had not accepted the Christian religion felt scandalized. Ikubo was the temple of a religion that formed the cement of society, permeating the lives of individuals within it. By 'defaming' this temple and flouting its values, the Manilla House alienated all the conservative forces within the society. Ja Ja, speaking for himself and his people with much bitterness, could not forgive them for the presumed massacre of his people who had fled into the Sacred Sanctuary and demanded, as a condition for peace settlement, that the

Manillas should give an assurance that these people had not been killed.[48] But the people had been killed and there was no one in Bonny to placate the ancestors; for the monarchy, by becoming Christian, had lost contact with them and no one in Bonny was qualified to assume it. In such a situation the conservative commoners suspected the gods would wreck vengeance on Bonny.

The leadership of the Manilla Canoe House was disqualified for the throne on two counts;[49] their leader was not of royal birth and had also become the patron of an alien religion. The Anna Pepple leader, Ja Ja, though 'uncontaminated' by the alien religion, was also not of royal birth and could not therefore serve as a ritual head in Bonny. But if the Anna Pepples found a new State, they could assume the authority over the non-Christian elements of Bonny abandoned by the Manilla House by which time they would have legitimatized that authority. If Ja Ja was ambitious and sought to found his own State, other factors and other men, including his enemies, provided the opportunity and the resources. Ja Ja's genius did no more than respond to these stimuli.

Opobo Town and its Environs:

The choice of the site of the new settlement could not have been better. A small creek flowed from an elevation on the south east of Andoniland into the Ikomtoro. Behind the elevation, almost surrounded by water lay to the north, the oil market of Akwete, the south eastern-most centre of the Ibo

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48. FO84/1326 - Ja Ja to Livingstone, Opobo, August 20, 1870; also Same to Same, September 19, 1870, and August 19, 1870.

"...I wish to state impossibility of reconciling the Bonny and our people at present as it would be quite impossible for one to keep down the bad feeling existing between my people and the Bonny". If his people had not been filled in cold blood, he would allow free access to the fare. Ja Ja finished by begging Livingstone to fire no more guns at his people.

49. Jones, Trading States, pp. 181-183

palm oil belt. To the north east of this elevation, was the Essene oil market, the collecting centre for the produce of Oboro, Ibibio and Umon hinterlands.[50] Large ocean-going ships could never hope to reach this peninsular because of the narrowness of the creek leading to it. It was on this peninsular that Ja Ja and his followers entrenched themselves. In the difficult and uncertain days of the truce, Ja Ja and his men, by taking quick decisions and exploiting the opportunities available, were able to produce and execute a plan whose precision and efficacy could not but dazzle their opponents and elicit accusations of pre-meditation and deceit. When Ja Ja wrote his letter on the 14th September to the Court of Equity, he was a desperate man clutching at any and every straw, to be rescued from a desperate situation. A month later he was in full control of the situation.

The British Presence as a factor in the War:

At last, Charles Livingstone,[51] then British Consul, received instructions from the Foreign Office early in 1870. It was to the effect that he should not interfere in a conflict that was purely an internal affair of Bonny and which that city-state should settle for herself. So it was, but British merchants did not follow the line taken by their government. They entered on a profitable trade in arms supplies to their respective allies in the war. Consul Livingstone, despairing of the activities of his countrymen declared:

> English traders have furnished the rival Chiefs with guns, shot and powder as required, until war materials are a drug. Bonny Agents have wished Ja Ja smashed and all trade brought back to Bonny.[52]

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50. See Map of the Eastern Delta.

51. Charles Livingstone, David's brother and companion on the Zambesi expedition, 1858-64 after which he was appointed consul in Fernando Po in October 1864 and consul of the Bight of Benin and Biafra in June 1867.

52. FO84/1326 - Livingstone to Granville, 25th August, 1870.

The old coasters tended to support the Manillas, while those with no foot-hold in Bonny wished that Ja Ja be left alone to open a port from which they could benefit. As the division among British merchants widened and influenced the war, King George once again approached Consul Livingstone asking him to use his power to prevent British subjects from trading with his 'rebel' subject.

By early April 1870, the Foreign Office, on the strength of information received on the war from the Coast, by one of the British agents on the Delta, came to the view that "the circumstances justify Her Majesty's Government in acceding to this request and I have therefore arranged with the Admiralty for your conveyance in a gun-boat to Bonny for the purpose of mediating between the rival Chiefs."[53] The Consul was instructed to present enclosed letters from the Foreign Secretary to Ja Ja and the other Chiefs and to invite them to meet him on board the gun-boat where he was to listen to their quarrel and arbitrate. The Foreign Secretary desired the Consul to offer his suggestions for the next line of action should his mission of arbitration fail. He would also like to know how far a blockade of trade, to enforce peace, would affect the interests of traders in the area. In a further communication to the Consul, the Foreign Office clarified their position a little:

> 'Her Majesty's Government desire to remain perfectly neutral in this quarrel, but they cannot permit British lives to be endangered or British property to be destroyed by either of the contending parties.'[54]

In other words, the British Consul was not to intervene except if British interest was endangered, when it would have to be protected against whichever

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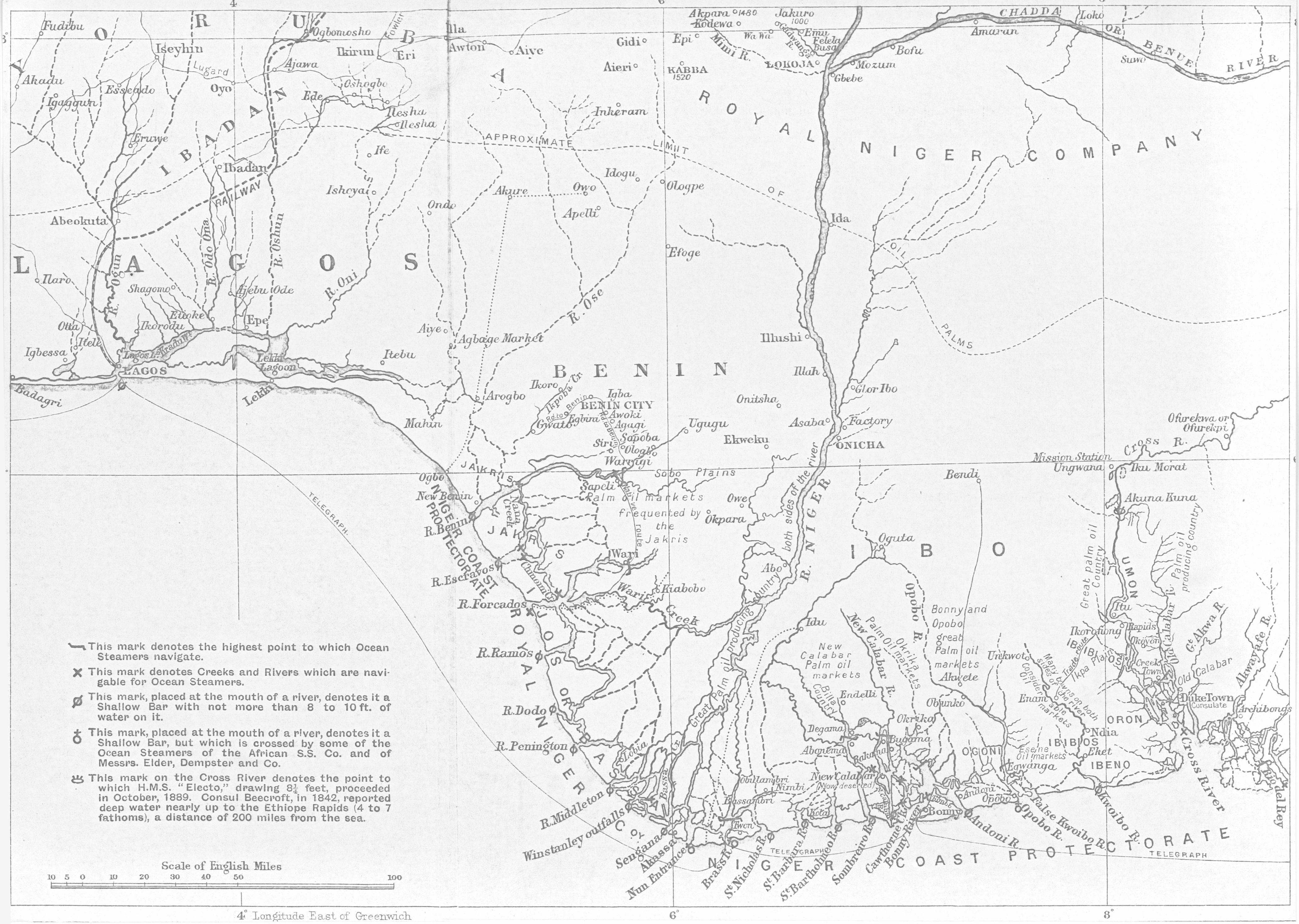
53. FO84/1326 - No. 16., F.O. to Livingstone, April 8, 1870.

54. FO84/1326 - No. 23., F.O. to Livingstone, June 3, 1870.

MAP OF THE NIGER DELTA.



side endangered it.

The Man-on-the-Spot as a factor in the War:

In May, Livingstone visited Ja Ja at Opobo. He took with him the peace proposals from the Manilla House which were intended to secure Ja Ja's return to Bonny. The Manillas agreed that all the independent Houses that had joined Ja Ja might remain connected with the Anna Pepples, thereby conceding the main point that had led to the war. They also agreed not to ask Ja Ja for the 100 puncheons of oil they claimed he had seized in their oil markets. And they were willing to conclude a written agreement binding them in future to submit their quarrels to the Consul.[55]

Consul Livingstone, in delivering these terms, threatened Ja Ja with his government's displeasure should he refuse to settle, but Ja Ja rejected the terms "with scorn and derision. He would never return to Bonny; they had robbed the grave of his Father of its treasures; they had foully murdered his women and children who had taken refuge in the sacred Juju Town; he would lie in the bush, he would die, but never more return to Bonny."[56] Ja Ja said he would allow the Agents to trade in Opobo but that he would never allow the Manilla House to enter the oil markets.

Ja Ja's reply was tantamount to throwing down the gauntlet to the British Government and the Consul was aware of it. He in turn recommended a strong line to his government:

> Peace can never be secured while the markets are shut to the Bonny Chiefs. Bonny must fight till they obtain access to their oil markets or sink to a mere fishing village. Ja Ja's blockade entirely cuts off the trade of seven English firms which can never go to Opobo (and) must therefore sink or swim with the Bonny people. [57]

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55. FO84/1326, Livingstone to Clarendon, H.M.S. Pert, June 4, 1870.

56. FO84/1326, Livingstone to Clarendon, June 6, 1870.

57. FO84/1326, No.30., Livingstone to Clarendon, July 11, 1870.

Earlier in June, the Consul had recommended that:

> Stoppage of Ja Ja's trade will soon bring him to reason but nothing short of this will. A single gun-boat stationed in the fine bay... would be an effective blockade of the Opobo...[58]

That these were unmistakably pro-Bonny sentiments is confirmed by an eye-witness account in the form of John Holt's entry in his diary for 28th March 1870, which reads:

> The Consul and I went to dine with Commodore Dowell of H.M.S. Rattlesnake. Conversation chiefly on the Bonny war. Commodore and Consul take the part of Bonny. I suggested the possibility of sending my schooner over to the Opobo. He thought I should be very careful, as if the Bonny men took it, I could get no redress from our government and that if force were used on board the schooner to repel the Bonny men, it would be an act of piracy...[59]

The reply from the Foreign Office to the proposal to coerce Ja Ja was undecided. The officials had heard from Miller Brothers of the Consul's threat to blockade Ja Ja. It was difficult to give him definitive guidance but "it appears to me," wrote Lord Granville, "as it did to Lord Clarendon, that the continuance of the present state of affairs is as much owing to the rivalry of British Traders as the quarrels of the natives and that if it were not for the interference of Europeans the dispute might easily be settled." Her Majesty's Government was averse from interfering except as mediators but "they cannot view with indifference the sacrifice of general Trade and the Prosperity of the districts to the desire of Ja Ja and his party to retain the monopoly of the Oil Markets, and if the present state of affairs continues they must consider what steps can be taken to put an end to it."[60]

The Consul had already ordered H.M.S. Pert to keep up fire on Ja Ja's position, and some Andoni people had been Killed.[61] He went further and

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58. FO84/1326, Livingstone to Clarendon, June 4, 1870.

59. Diary of John Holt, edited by Cecil Holt, Liverpool, 1948.

60. FO84/1326, No. 26, Granville to Livingstone, August 3, 1870.

61. FO84/1326, Ja Ja to Livingstone, September 16, 1870.

issued a proclamation banning British subjects from entering the Andoni and Opobo while the war lasted.[62] Since March 1870[63] he had come to the view that if traders could be stopped from visiting the Andoni, Ja Ja's supplies would be cut off and he would be compelled to come to terms. Livingstone saw no advantage to trade in opening the Andoni which in his view was an inferior alternative route to the oil markets as compared with Bonny and would mean that the European merchants would have to keep up two establishments for the same amount of oil.

The Consul, as the man on the spot, was aware, unlike the men in London, that protection for British lives and property in a condition of civil war was inseparable from interference. So writing to Commander Jones of H.M.S. Pert he analysed the situation and came to the conclusion that the danger to British life was Ja Ja's blockade of the oil markets which led Bonny to fight. His remedy was that a complete stoppage of trade was necessary. "Ja Ja is so critically situated in this new country that he will certainly yield in a short time when convinced that we are determined he shall."[64] The Consul did submit his terms to Ja Ja and on the 20th of August the latter replied reiterating that he must have satisfaction regarding his people who took refuge at Juju Town before settling along the lines demanded by the Consul and complaining about Livingstone's attitude and the fact that he had been fired at by the Consul's men. As the gun boat kept up its fire, Ja Ja agreed to discuss peace terms.

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62. FO84/1326, Livingstone to de Cardi and McEachen, June 16, 1870. See also: FO84/1326, No.22, F.O. to Livingstone, May 23, 1870, for F.O. approval of this.

63. FO84/1326, Livingstone to Granville, March 16, 1870.

64. FO84/1326, Livingstone to Commander Jones, August 18, 1870.

Acting-Consul Hopkins, Livingstone's temporary successor was equally keen on restoring the markets controlled by Ja Ja to Bonny through the intervention of the British government. In his view, "It is of the most vital importance to these people that Ja Ja's monopoly of the Eboe should be demolished." This could easily be done with a steam launch as Ja Ja's "warriors were generally boys from 12 - 16 years of age a few of whom are armed with Birmingham trade guns costing about 7/6d. each, they would never stand for one moment against English boats - in fact if Ja Ja were told that his forts are to be destroyed he would give in at once."[66] After writing this despatch, the Acting-Consul went to Ja Ja and offered himself as mediator. The King of Opobo asked for £800 war indemnity from Bonny and the return of his people who had fled to Juju Town. Bonny would not or could not agree to this and in the Acting-Consul's view the only way out of the deadlock was to compel Ja Ja to allow access to the markets.[67] On this despatch, an official of the Foreign Office minuted:

> Lord Granville has, I believe, finally determined that we should not be justified in employing force to compel Ja Ja to give way and submit to arbitration....

It is clear from the foregoing that while the officials in London carefully calculated the cost to British interests of any policy they might adopt, the men on the spot, Livingstone no less so than Hopkins, had appraised the situation and urged their government to intervene and bring Ja Ja back to Bonny. They did so not because they supported Bonny by itself, but because it was in the interest of British Commerce as it was then organised that Ja Ja should be made to return to Bonny. Ayandele states that "Livingstone was in a great measure responsible for the successful rebellion of Ja Ja."[68] It is submitted here that Ja Ja succeeded in spite

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66. FO84/1343, No.31., Hopkins to Granville, November 27, 1871.
67. FO84/1343, No. 32., Hopkins to Granville, December 6, 1871.
68. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, p.76.

of Livingstone. It was not a sign of support when the Consul recommended a blockade of Ja Ja, and enforced it despite contrary instructions from the Foreign Office and at the cost of the lives of one Andony man and woman.

Ayandele interprets the Consul's attitude to Ja Ja as friendly. He explains this friendliness by reference to Livingstone's personal inclinations. Indeed, Livingstone's personal feelings against King George and his party influenced his attitude on the question but this animosity did not develop until George had gone to England in April, 1870, and told the Foreign Office that the Consul's "incompetence was responsible for the worsened state of affairs in Bonny." By that time, Ja Ja and his men were already well entrenched in the Ikomtoro and were no less troublesome to the Consul than they were to Bonny. Even after that, the Consul had continued to try to enforce his declared blockade of the Ikomtoro. But as on previous occasions, economic interests proved more binding on the merchants than loyalty to their government's representative. Merchants continued to visit the Ikomtoro and in increasing numbers and many wrote to their government complaining of the danger to their interests in that area and demanding protection.[69] Ja Ja's merchant allies felt that Livingstone was going too far in blockading the King. They wrote to the Consul expressing "deep concern over the hostile measures adopted against Ja Ja."[70] Consul Livingstone's position was indeed unenviable. At the Foreign Office, meetings were held and after analysing the issues the government came out with the view

> "that the war is as much prompted by rival British Agents as by the African Chiefs. If it were not for the interference of Europeans, the dispute might easily be settled."[71]

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69. FO84/1326, No. 23., FO to Livingstone, June 3, 1870, enclosing letters from Miller Bros., A.A. and William Couper.

70. FO84/1326, Encl. 3 in No. 34, Supercargoes to Livingstone, August 19,1870.

71. FO84/1326, No. 25, Clarendon to Livingstone, June 23, 1870.

British Merchants' Interests as a factor in the War:

The personal factor was of negligible importance. Nor should it be considered, as Ayandele has done, to the exclusion of other factors such as the political status of Consular representatives at that time and their dependence on merchant-unanimity to enforce decisions. Until the 1872 Order-in-Council, British Consuls depended on the co-operation of the merchants to enforce their decisions usually by appearing with a gun-boat. As had become clear throughout earlier Consulships, such decisions were binding on Africans only as long as the gun-boat remained in port; but the gun-boat could not stay in the ports indefinitely. Even Beecroft's attempt to circumvent this difficulty of obedience by holding the King responsible for the observance of treaties imposed on him and his people had evaded the basic question of sovereignty. As the case of William Pepple clearly showed, although treaties imposed by British merchants and their Consuls in theory limited the freedom of action of the King and thereby compromised his sovereignty, the lost rights of the sovereign did not by any means accrue to Britain's representatives. To the Africans involved, sovereignty did not rest on force but on descent from the founder of the Community. Over the Manilla-Anna Pepple conflict, British merchants were unable to agree on policy and as a result Consular impotence was exposed. The Foreign Office documents already cited establish beyond doubt that Livingstone had the will and the inclination to coerce Ja Ja and would have liked to present a fait accompli to his government, but the divided voice of British merchant interest made it impossible for him to do so. It is a misunderstanding not only of the issues involved in the 1869-73 War and of the relationship between the Consuls and Africans of the Bights but also of the Official documents, to attribute the success of Ja Ja's secession to Consul Livingstone.

Ja Ja's stubbornness was doing much damage to British trading interests still concentrated in Bonny. This was a fact that the British government

could not ignore. Short of declaring war on Ja Ja for refusing to open his gates there was little the government could do especially in the face of the lack of co-operation of its merchant subjects. Of equal importance was the fact that African potentates who could have influenced events refused to bestir themselves along the lines desired by the old-coasters whose aim was a restoration of the status quo ante bellum.

While the Andonis actively supported Ja Ja, King Amakiri of New Calabar would not play the part assigned to him in an arbitration scheme. He too was Bonny's traditional enemy. After a year of hostility, the damage to British trade was estimated at £100,000. Men like Glover, the Administrator for Lagos, and William H. Wylde, senior official in the African Department of the Foreign Office pressed the government to intervene and stop the loss to British trade. Wylde was sure that

> When the Chiefs know that we are in earnest, it will take very little pressure to compel them to agree to our terms.[72]

But the instruction to the Consul was that he should not "interfere any further except for the protection of British life and property."[73]

If this was meant to be a statement of policy, its ambiguity rendered it of doubtful utility. Protection for British life and property in a situation of civil war in which these persons had taken sides was inseparable from interference either on one side or the other. Livingstone had tried to coerce Ja Ja but the divided voice of British merchants had hounded him out of that line of action. The only opening left, and one not inconsistent with the Foreign Office view embodied in their despatch, was to accept the fact that Opobo had come to stay, that the British government had no authority there and then try to secure the best possible terms for British merchants by negotiating with Ja Ja. This, it seems, was what the Consul now tried to do.

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72. FO84/1326, Minutes on Memo, to H.W., FO, December 29, 1870.

73. FO84/1343, No. 2., Granville to Livingstone, FO, January 25, 1871.

Meanwhile Ja Ja, in December 1870 formalised his secession and officially announced the name of his state as Opobo. Although the war continued for another two years, it was clear to him and his men that they had won their freedom to live away from Bonny and exploit the resources they controlled. 'Opobo' was chosen by Ja Ja himself in memory of King Opubu the Great who had found, while still a prince, the Anna Pepple Canoe House. The reign of Opubu is significant in Bonny's tradition as the golden age of that city-state when its influence first extended into the hinterland, its monarch slew the King of New Calabar and ate his heart and European merchant-ships fired several salutes in honour of His Majesty coming down shore for the 'breaking' of trade. "Opobo" as the name of Ja Ja's state was significant, as de Cardi stated,[74] as showing the great esteem to which bought slaves, like Ja Ja, held their 'fathers' in the eastern Oil Rivers' States. It was significant in another way. The Anna Pepples' control of the trade routes gave them the material power to command obedience in Bonny. By founding a new State they also secured the legitimate right to exercise ritual power over Bonny men. The new State, therefore, was Bonny in new surroundings and by calling it "Opobo" its founders claimed that the golden age of Bonny had returned.

The secession from Bonny of the Anna Pepple Canoe House and their supporters was not an act of rebellion; there had been no legitimate authority, according to traditional criteria, to rebel against. Ja Ja did not need to overthrow an existing order nor to evolve a new political system. Nor was the secession a revolutionary act; since there had been no revolution, there was no need to create a revolutionary organisation. Ja Ja and his followers were no rebels; they were no revolutionaries and to call them such is to exhibit much misunderstanding of the factors that prompted their

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74. de Cardi in Studies, pp. 532-33.

secession and of the nature of the polity which they afterwards created.[75] Ja Ja's departure from Bonny was a reflection of the tensions that had built up within Bonny society; it was a climax of the shifting balance of power, itself a reflection of significant changes within that society. Ja Ja's secession was an indigenous expression of African self-determination.

Opobo was the creation of Ja Ja's undoubted personal ability and vision. It came into being because Ja Ja worked assiduously, because Ja Ja's vision and character willed it into existence. But there was more than Ja Ja's personality and ambition in its creation; the politico-economic and social values of Bonny, the changing pattern of the Oil Rivers' trade, and Britain's ideas about 'regenerating' Africa had helped to produce a situation in which many Bonny men and woman felt that the city-state had outlived its usefulness. When the 'regeneration' programme helped to produce a Christian monarchy in Bonny, that city-state could in truth exclaim that things had fallen apart. Opobo was an attempt to rebuild the fallen structure. It came into being therefore because it answered, in a given historical period and context, the special needs of a society in its relations with the international community. Ja Ja Anna Pepple was the builder who used the materials at hand.

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75. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, p. 76.

CHAPTER III

THE OPOBO POLITY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF 'IMPERIAL' RIVALRY

1870 - 1885

Britain and Bonny make peace with Opobo

Ja Ja Anna Pepple had been able to withdraw from Bonny and to found a new state which he named 'Opobo' in 1870, but the fortunes of the new state still hung in the balance. 1871 opened with the European merchants no nearer agreement on the conflict between Bonny and Opobo, while the policy of the British government, the predominant foreign influence in the area, remained vague and indefinite. British governments had always hesitated, mainly on account of the attendant expense, to involve themselves in conflicts with the local peoples except when convinced that imperial interests merited such involvement. While the calculations went on in London and the merchants on the coast disputed the respective rights of the other side, Ja Ja had legitimatized his de facto control of Bonny's sovereignty by his command of the oil markets and had begun to draw the oil producers of the hinterland to the port of Opobo. To these people, Opobo came to replace Bonny as Opobo men now plied the trade routes and supervised the markets formerly worked as Bonny's. Bonny could only evade starvation "by going into Okrika Country to make a little trade and buy enough food."[1]

Since 1871, it had been recognised that the Bight of Biafra contained the highest concentration of British commercial interests on the whole coast of West Africa. This realization had led to the removal of the consulate from Fernando Poo to Old Calabar in the following year. The interests involved were represented by some twenty Scottish and English firms owning between them about sixty trading establishments. "Their property in the Rivers in English manufactured goods, Hulks, Houses, River Steamers, Schooners, Lighters, is not much short of a million pounds sterling and is often estimated

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1. FO84/1343, No. 13, Hopkins to Granville, July 7, 1871.

at a higher figure. Five Steamers leave Liverpool every month and the trade of the Oil Rivers being their principal support. About £1/2 million sterling is invested in these steamers" which carried between them some 25,000 to 30,000 tons of palm oil, in addition to small quantities of ivory, India rubber, and bar wood.[2] Amidst the undoubted opulence of nineteenth century Britain, the entire Oil Rivers investment might well have been negligible but its significance, in the Victorian scheme of things, far outweighed its material worth, and both the government and the merchants were determined to keep and nurture it.

Bonny, the centre of the British Oil Rivers interest, was threatened with economic disaster by Ja Ja's blockade. The British merchants tied to Bonny through their off-shore establishments and often through 'trusts' prophesied disaster to themselves should Bonny lose the interior markets. In July, 1872 Consul Livingstone reported that "the Bonny-Opobo difficulty may now be considered, as in fact, practically settled. Ja Ja has now all the Ibo and Qua markets; our five great English firms in the Opobo are doing immense trade."[3] Since the other English firms at Bonny could not, on their calculation, survive the abandonment of their establishments at Bonny, might it not, in the circumstances, be realistic to accept the fact of Ja Ja's establishment at Opobo, negotiate with him to secure some concessions to Bonny, thereby limiting the loss to the firms attached to Bonny? After all, King Ja Ja had, soon after his establishment at Opobo, declared his willingness to enter into friendly relations with the British Government.[4]

On January 3, 1873, Commodore J.E. Commerell, under orders from his government, appeared off Opobo waters with five warships to supervise a

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2. FO84/1356, No. 371, Livingstone's Memorandum received at the FO, December 3, 1871.

3. FO84/1356, No. 15, Livingstone to Granville, July 9, 1872.

4. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 190.

settlement of the conflict. Consul Livingstone and some other Delta rulers served as arbitrators, and the Consul and Commodore signed, on behalf of their government, the treaty of peace between the combatants.[5] By its terms, hostilities were to cease and prisoners of war be returned by both sides; trade routes were to be demilitarised from a certain date, and some disputed members of Ja Ja's House were confirmed as belonging to that House. On the crucial issue of the oil markets, Article 111 of the settlement provided that Bonny was to have for its exclusive use, the markets of Arguatay, Obunku, and the four markets in Urala making a total of six markets. The treaty further provided that the Andoni were to go to any of these markets unmolested and that the Ibos who had taken part in the war were not to be punished. The final article of the treaty provided that any infringement of the settlement should be referred to the consul who would impose a fine and a stoppage of trade until the fine was paid.

On the following day, the 4th of January, the Consul and Commodore, on behalf of their government, entered into a Commercial Treaty with King Ja Ja in which they secured for their merchants in Opobo the same amount payable as 'comey' as that by the merchants in Bonny. The first article declared the British government's acknowledgement of Ja Ja as the King of Opobo, entitled to all consideration as such, while the last confirmed and thus legalised by English law, his position as the sole middle-man for the trade of the interior:

> After April 5th, 1873, the King of Opobo shall allow no trading establishment or hulk on or off the town of Opobo or any trading vessel to come higher up the River than the White Man's Bench, opposite Hippopotamus Creek. If any trading ship or steamer proceeds further up the river than the Creek above mentioned after having been duly warned to the contrary the trading ship or steamer may be seized by King Ja Ja, and detained until a fine of 100 puncheons be paid by the owners to King Ja Ja.[6]

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5. PP 1888 LXXIV Vol. 1, No. 1, Treaty between the King and Chiefs of Bonny and the King and Chiefs of Opobo, Opobo River, January 1873.

6. PP 1888 LXXIV Vol. 1, No. 2, Commercial Treaty between Great Britain and the King and Chiefs of Opobo, Opobo River, January 4, 1873.

Factors Determining the nature of the 1873 Peace Treaty

King Ja Ja could not have hoped for a more favourable settlement which in all essentials recognised his strong position. The question that arises is why this recognition had been so complete?

> "Evidently the arbitrators considered that Ja Ja was in no way to blame for the civil war that had taken place in Bonny for in the division of the markets, that had been the common property when Ja Ja and his people had formed an integral part of the Bonny nation, the greater part was given to Ja Ja and his right to remain where he had established himself fully recognised."[7]

Count de Cardi, the "Charlie" of Opobo's very early days, could afford to enthuse, and justify and explain Ja Ja's success by mere reference to morality. de Cardi had a vested interest in the success of Opobo which had enabled him to rebuild his tottering business, and he would therefore, in the manner of those days, explain its success in moral terms. There were also, however, issues of hard economics which were the over-riding concern of those who decided to consort with King George's "rebel" subject.

There was the very important factor of the man-on-the-spot, who always had overwhelming influence on the events in his station. Consul Livingstone has been characterised as individualistic and eccentric by many writers, some of whom have found in him ideas about African societies that conflicted with those of his government.[8] It was indeed a result of the Consul's personality, but only partly so, that his relations with King George, the nominal ruler and Head of the Manilla Pepple House, had become strained.[9] There had been acrimonious correspondence between the two in the course of which the Foreign Office had intervened in the King's favour by ordering its representative to forward all George's letters direct to the office. Livingstone could not but feel slighted by his government's attitude on the

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7. de Cardi in Studies, p. 533

8. Ayandele, Impact of Missions, p. 74; Dike, Trade and Politics, footnote 2, p. 182.

9. Ayandele, Impact of Missions pp. 75-6; Anene, Southern Nigeria, p. 44.

question and thus showed increasing bias against the king and his interest. Yet the Consul's attitude and influence cannot adequately explain Ja Ja's complete victory in the 1873 Treaties. After April 1870, when King George lodged the accusation of incompetence against the Consul at the Foreign Office during the King's visit there, the Consul had tried to coerce Ja Ja into returning to Bonny by threats.[10] When that failed, he had gone further and recommended to the Foreign Office that force was the only means of securing a suitable and permanent settlement which in his view would involve the opening of the trade routes to Bonny by Ja Ja.[11]

The Bights Consulate had been established in 1849 mainly for the purpose of protecting British trading interests. Although the 1842 Foreign Jurisdiction Act may be said to have, by implication, embraced the Bights, the powers and jurisdiction of consular representatives operating there had never been defined in formal terms. There was an inherent anarchy in the system of trading by 'trust' and all the evils attendant on 'chopping'[12] had evoked the endless complaints of Consul Hutchinson on the lawlessness of the British merchants in the Bights and on the inadequacy of consular authority to check their excesses.[13] The 1872 West African Order-in-Council was an attempt to regularize the existing machinery for maintaining law and order but it still left the consul powerless over Africans and foreigners who refused to submit to his jurisdiction; it was not till 1879 that the consul was empowered to act magisterially even for British subjects. It is in the context of this consular impotence that the limited influence of Livingstone on the Bonny-Opobo conflict can be fully understood.

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10. See Chapter II

11. FO84/1326, No. 30, Livingstone to Clarendon, July 11, 1870.

12. 'Chopping' was the practice indulged in by European merchants of way-laying and carrying off without payment of any oil belonging to any African who happened to belong to the same community as the particular European merchant's debtor.

13. Hutchinson, Ten Years' Wandering, pp. 143-207.

King Ja Ja's blockade of Bonny taxed the resources of the British Delta interest; in 1873, it was estimated that "Liverpool trade with Bonny and Opobo had fallen off to the amount of £500,000 during the last two years."[14] But the merchants were unable to agree on a course of action because of their varying interests. It was thus against a background of his own impotence, merchant inability for united action and Ja Ja's obduracy that Livingstone secured the 1873 Treaties which, in all essentials accepted Ja Ja's fait accompli. King Ja Ja's complete victory in the oil markets is evident in the fact that, in the settlement, the rest of the oil markets were simply assumed to be for Opobo's exclusive use.[15] Consul Livingstone's final settlement showed him completely oblivious of his government's declared policy on the Niger Region[16] following the technological and medical advances of the 1850's; yet it should be pointed out that this declared policy had not been followed up with logical consistency and what guidance the consul received was ambivalent.

It was only to be expected that the consul would defend the treaties he had helped to sign; in the process, Livingstone was also defending Ja Ja's interest because the King had gained thereby. Bonny and her merchant-allies could not but be displeased with the settlement which, by accepting Ja Ja's complete victory, accepted as permanent her exclusion from the hinterland markets. Individual firms soon began to make their peace with King Ja Ja, but the official coast-merchant organisation, formed in 1843 as "The African Association", continued punitive measures against Ja Ja in the hope that he might be induced to return to Bonny; the shipping-interest, mainly controlled by the old-coast interest, placed a tariff on cargo to and from

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14. FO84/1377, Minutes on Livingstone's Nos. I and II, February 8, 1873, Quoted in Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 197.

15. PP 1888 LXXIV Vol. 1, No.1, Treaty of Peace, January 3, 1873.

16. FO2/3, Russell to Brand, June 19, 1860.

Opobo. The Bonny rulers refused to carry out the stipulations of the treaty and four months after its signature, Consul Livingstone, in a letter that was both explanatory and condemnatory, was warning them against their continued non-observance of its stipulations. They had violated the demilitarization clause; they had not quite recognized the guaranteed rights of the Andoni to the oil markets reserved for Bonny, and of course they had to realize that "the remaining markets are for Opobo" - a clear attempt to close the loop-hole in the third clause of the treaty.[17]

It is possible that the consul regarded Bonny's non-observance of the treaty he had secured as part of its king's challenge to his authority and therefore exerted himself to enforce his treaty (he visited Bonny specifically for that purpose).[18] The effect of the consul's exertions was to produce a pro-Ja Ja attitude on his part which was a radical departure from his government's established attitude. The Anna Pepples had been dominant in the Regency which imprisoned Captain Tyron in 1836. On that occasion, the navy had intervened and ultimately installed William Dappa Pepple, a protégé of the Manilla House.[19] Again in 1854 when the Court of Equity backed the Manilla House as regents and the Anna Pepples dissented, Consul Beecroft had intervened and, with the gun-boat, secured the reluctant acquiescence of the Anna Pepples. This is not to suggest that British policy was committed to supporting the Manilla House but historical developments had produced on the part of the British a pro-Manilla policy to which Livingstone's attitude now ran counter. This helps to explain why the Foreign Office began to doubt the sanity of their representative;[20] it is highly probable that Livingstone

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17. PP 1888 Vol I LXXIV No.4, Livingstone to Kings and Chiefs of Bonny, Old Calabar, July 16, 1873.

18. Ja Ja Papers, In-letters from British Consular Officials, 1870-95 Livingstone, Old Calabar, 18 April, 1873.

19. See Chapter I p.

20. Ayandele, Impact of Missions p. 76

was stripped of his consular office because of this change of policy.

While he retained his post, he spared no pains to persuade Bonny to observe the treaty and in the process flattered Ja Ja greatly. In a letter to the King in March [illegible] 1873, he wrote: "I am quite sure that King Ja Ja will keep good faith with Her Majesty's Government. They know that King Ja Ja has always spoken the truth and will continue to do so."[21] Clearly the flattery mentioned by Ayandele was mutual.[22] Livingstone's exertions, however, proved futile; Bonny's resentment against the treaty remained and was encouraged by Livingstone's successors.[23] By 1875 Bonny was still declaring that "any people, men, women, or children belonging directly to you or any of your people in Opobo running to us here, we can never return but keep, for Bonny is their proper and rightful country..."[24]

Oliver states that the British government had denounced the 1873 Commercial Treaty with King Ja Ja "on a technicality".[25] No provision had indeed been made for its ratification but suffice it to say here that in a government memorandum of 1882 the treaty had been accepted as valid though only as regards "Opobo" and not the Qua Ibo. When Consul Hewett later made the proposal for the establishment of some form of British rule, his argument was based not on the invalidity of the treaty but rather on the spurious ground that the local ruler, Ja Ja, and others, had not fully kept their obligations by the treaty arrangement.[26] Even as late as 1887, the British

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21. Ja Ja Papers, In letters from Consular Officials, Livingstone, April 18, 1873.
22. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, p. 75.
23. Ja Ja Papers, In letters from Consular Officials, see especially Hartley's and McKellar's letters.
24. Ja Ja Papers, In letters from Other Chiefs, 1873-1887, January 12, 1875, From Grand Bonny.
25. Oliver R., Harry Johnston, p. 108.
26. FO403/18, No. 9, Hewett to Granville, January 14, 1882.

government's lever against Ja Ja was that the Treaty had been superseded by that of 1884 on account of Ja Ja's alleged infraction of that of 1873.

Despite the dominance of free-trade ideology in British economic thinking, and despite the fact of increasing government support for attempts to penetrate the interior through the Niger, the old-coasters, bound by their economic interest to the middleman system, refused to push trade into the interior and continued to oppose those who tried to do so. Official government policy was thus torn between following ideological conviction and whole-heartedly fighting the battle of the 'new' traders on the one hand and protecting the interests of Liverpool and Bristol on the other. In 1873 and for some decades after, the government did not feel itself able to coerce the Liverpool interest, and as the treaty of 1873 served the interests of the merchants well, it was not attacked.

If the old-coasters showed no inclination to break the old system of trading, King Ja Ja, the greatest African beneficiary of that system, posed no threats to British interests. Ja Ja's wealth and power derived from the trade with British merchants and he was aware of the value of friendly relation with them and their government. Since his establishment at Opobo, King Ja Ja had begun to expand the trade of the Eastern Delta; the palm-kernel trade which began in 1872 was a result of Ja Ja's expansiveness, encouraged by his British merchant-allies. As early as 1871, he began the cutting of what became the Ja Ja Creek, connecting the Ikomtoro with the Qua River, for the purpose of facilitating the flow of trade. King Ja Ja in 1873 promised to be a good collaborator and it was hoped that the territories under his influence would be an area of "a local expansive impulse", with "private enterprise seizing its opportunities."[27]

Such hopes were not altogether unfounded. In 1873 King Ja Ja had sent a contingent to aid the British in the Ashanti War; in recognition, he had

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27. Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, p. 38.

been awarded a sword by Her Majesty the Queen of England.[28] This gesture by the king has raised difficulties for those who have attempted to study the man and his times. A modern historian has seen it as evidence of the king's earlier loyalty to the British government which he later cast off;[29] while another doubted the justification of the adjective 'nationalist' as applied to Ja Ja,[30] since he invoked this gesture at his trial and called for release on the basis of it. It is somewhat difficult to judge a person's previous behaviour by what he said of his actions while on trial, though in Ja Ja's case it is a remarkable fact that even on that occasion he made no claims that did not square with his previous actions. The important fact about the Ashanti levy was that neither the British government nor King Ja Ja looked upon it as anything more than assistance given by a friendly government to another in need.

In a memorandum prepared by Captain Nicol, the officer sent to secure the help, both King Ja Ja and the British authorities agreed that

> It is understood that this levy is not to be taken as a precedent, so that neither King Ja Ja nor his successors can be called upon to furnish a contingent of men, also, if called on, should they decline, the British government is not to take umbrage thereat.[31]

In addition to the memorandum, the following conditions were drawn up for the use of King Ja Ja's men:

> 'Fifty three men are sent; they are to be sent back to Opobo at the British government's expense in six months' time; they are to be paid 1/- a day plus food from the date of embarkation to their return to Opobo; only about 3d. or more a day can, if required, be paid to the man, 'the balance to be paid to King Ja Ja or the men'!

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28. Ja Ja Papers, In letters from Consular Officials, Hartley, March 26, 1875; see also James Nicols, Opobo November 4, 1873.

29. Flint J.E., 'Nigeria: The Colonial Experience from 1880-1914', Chapter VII, of L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan, Colonialism in Africa, 1870 to 1960, Vol. I, The History and Politics of Colonialism 1870 to 1914,

30. Tamuno, T. 'Some aspects of the reaction of Nigerian peoples to the imposition of British rule', Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol 3, No. 2, December 1965, pp. 274-75, hereinafter referred to as Some Aspects.

31. Ja Ja Papers 2 from Captain Nicol, November 4, 1873.

It is clear from this evidence that the valid view of the 1873 levy is that "Ja Ja's help to the British therefore can be likened to that rendered by one sovereign to another in war".[33] It is also a diplomatic move by Ja Ja for Bonny had first been asked for aid but did not respond until after Ja Ja had done so.[34] Just as the British authorities were exploiting the differences of the Delta rulers in their hour of need, so the rulers themselves tried to exploit the difficulties of the British to enhance their prestige. It is in this context that Ja Ja's Ashanti levy can be understood and not in terms of loyalty that never did nor could exist between Ja Ja and the British. The type of loyalty that the above cited writers imply presupposes a political relationship. In Ja Ja's scheme of things, and in his relation with the British, no such relationship existed. The two parties were bound together by the Commercial Treaty of 1873. The Ja Ja Papers also bear eloquent testimony to real personal friendship between Ja Ja and some British merchants, and there was a good deal of good-will on Ja Ja's part towards Britain for these reasons but there was no basis for political loyalty between the two. The British had not founded Ja Ja's state; they had no connection with his ancestor with whom they could not therefore communicate. The only link between Ja Ja and the British was economic and, in King Ja Ja's scheme of things, this did not constitute a sufficient basis for loyalty.

Ja Ja Consolidated and Extended his 'Empire'

After 1873, King Ja Ja turned his attention to the internal consolidation and external extension of his power and influence. Internally, King Ja Ja is alleged to have made himself supreme by "putting to death with the aid of ju-ju all the heads of the Houses who had followed him to his new state."[35]

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33. Tamuno "Some aspects" p. 274

34. Ja Ja 1/3 In, from Consular Officials, Nicol, Bonny November 6, 1873.

35. Ayandele Impact of Missions, p.76

JA JA MAKING JU JU.[2]

This statement is based on the evidence of Oko Eppelle, a member of the Anna Pepple House whose original House had pawned its members for its debts and who was attempting to use the Opobo-Bonny conflict to reestablish his House as an independent Canoe-House. The 1873 Peace Treaty had, however, declared him a member of the Anna Pepples and ordered him to return to Opobo. There were unwilling 'supporters' on both sides of the conflict and the evidence of such men regarding the activities within the groups in which they found themselves should be viewed with circumspection.[35]

King Ja Ja may have purged some members of his House but more substantial evidence than Eppelle's is necessary to establish that he did. In the absence of supporting evidence, and from the fact that Opobo, like Bonny, retained the House system as the basis, not only of economic exploitation but also of political power,[36] it would be more fruitful to look for explanations of Ja Ja's supreme power in the political structure of Opobo which, like that of Bonny under King Opubu, gave full scope to men of ability like King Ja Ja to exercise effective royal power. Ja Ja's perception of the importance of religion as a stabilizing force in the state and his ability to exploit this also added to his influence and prestige; the system of religious investiture af Heads of Houses and leaders of Households was strictly observed in Opobo and King Ja Ja, now the religious as well as the political leader of the state, always graced the occasion with a special and suitable attire.[37] Within the first five years of the establishment of Opobo, the port had been enlarged and improved and the Ja Ja Creek completed bringing with them much expansion of trade.

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35. Ja Ja Papers, 1/5 In letters, Personal 1869-87; from Cookey to Ja Ja written from Bonny, February 13, 1871.

36. Jones, Trading States, p. 176.

37. See photograph facing the page

With the consolidation of the state and port of Opobo, King Ja Ja turned his attention to the strengthening of his power outside the immediate confines of that city-state. To the north and east of Opobo lay the vast Ibo and Ibibio hinterlands. Political authority among these peoples was highly fragmented, the largest political grouping being often the village-community. Heads of families held executive, judicial and ritual powers; in the latter case, their power was of domestic scope and relevance as each family Head ministered only to the ancestral Ofo in the case of the Ibos and the Ekpenyong in the case of the Ibibios. In laws and customs, responsibility was communal and the decisions and actions of the past always served as precedents.[38] Each village-community was politically independent of its neighbour and within the village-groups each Ofo and Ekpenyong served the specific needs of individual families. They were not 'state' gods even within the villages where they resided. In economic affairs, specialization was limited to the medical and craft guilds and what was imposed by geographical conditions. Such was the case with the Qua Ibos.[39] These had taken no part in the slave trade mainly because of the relative inferiority of the mouth of the Qua Ibo River as a port. They had remained fishermen and traded their catch for food with the inland food-producers. The relationship was basically symbiotic but Talbot has shown how economic interdependence of this sort tended to develop political implications.[40]

It was among what may best be described as a vast nest of village sovereignties that King Ja Ja built up his empire. His methods were threefold and throw much light on the nature of the empire of Opobo . In some cases

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38. Basden, G. Niger Ibos, London, 1966, Chapt. VIII; Uchendu, V.C., The Igbo of South East Nigeria, Stanford, 1965, pp. 41-44, also pp. 94-100.

39. de Cardi in Studies, pp. 159-60.

40. Talbot, P.A. Southern Nigeria, pp. 287-9.

the king married into the influential families of the communities, for example Ohambele where, as son-in-law, he was accepted as one of the people many of whom acted as his trade agents; in others, Ja Ja made judicious grants of 'trusts' to able and influential men of the community; in yet others, he paid part of his 'comey' to the leaders of the community for the security of their area from outside interference. The third method was employed in cases where the community in question did not produce a commodity required for trade with Europeans but very often all three methods were combined and in all cases the new relationship was stamped by "blood or ju-ju chopping".[41]

By "blood or ju-ju chopping" the parties 'covenanted' to remain allies in perpetuity. The terms 'treaty' cannot adequately explain the relationships thus established for their efficacy was based on religious sanction. Such relationships could not be abrogated to suit changing circumstances without, in the opinion of the people, incurring grave consequences on the community as a whole. Through these 'covenants' King Ja Ja was granted perpetual leases on the surplus marketable produce of the communities and it was through his resident agents that he maintained necessary political control. The relationship between Opobo and the 'subject' communities was primarily economic; no tribute was paid by them to King Ja Ja, who in fact could be said to be paying, through 'trusts' and 'tolls' for the use he made of these communities.

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41. This remains the common method of ascertaining guilt and preventing evil design in many parts of the Eastern Niger. The parties involved, often co-wives, surrender a drop or two of their blood; these are either mixed with some wine and drank by those involved or pieces from a kola nut are dipped into the drops of blood and eaten by them. They are thus made responsible for one another's blood. Among the Ibibiosand Efiks, it is called "Uta mbiam"; Ibos call it "Igba ndu".

If Ja Ja's relationship with the inland communities had gone no further than that of economic inter-dependence, his power and influence over them would have been no more than skin-deep. The traditional system of alliances employed by Ja Ja was not new to the Delta; what was new to this part of the coast was King Ja Ja's conscious use of religion as a cement of political power. It is true that the city-state of Bonny had made allies of the Aros whose Deity had been the main focus of religious authority and also served as the main instrument of the slave trade but not even Opubu the Great made any attempt to win the allegiance of the inland communities through the agency of the Aro Deity. This was what King Ja Ja now attempted.

The Aros had used their Ibinokpabi or Chukwu, known to Europeans as the Long Ju-ju, to attain economic dominance, with some political overtones throughout the Delta and its hinterland, but the end of the slave trade had 'dethroned' the Aros from their powerful position. Furthermore, Aro dominance had been based on the fear of their Deity and their Abam and Abiriba mercenaries. King Ja Ja had tried to build a sounder basis of power and influence by his efforts to give his 'subject' communities a stake in his organization through marriage alliances and 'trusts'. It was a question of using the same instruments but in different ways, with Ja Ja achieving a more effective result by building on the foundations laid by the Aros and Bonny.

Even before Opobo was founded, peoples of the Delta had recognized the Aro Ibinokpabi as a Deity superior to their domestic gods and the Aros, as the guardians of that Deity, had commanded great respect as Umu Chukwu, the Children of God. Often cases from different parts of the region had been referred to Chukwu at Aro. The end of the slave trade had diminished such instances. King Ja Ja, by his relations with the priests of Chukwu,[42]

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42. Dr. Dike has uncovered evidence of Ja Ja's close relation with the priests of Chukwu; see foot note 3 p.196 of his Trade and Politics.

and the use he made of that Deity in his 'covenants' was able to give Chukwu a certain basic symmetrical relation with the total political order of the entire Eastern Niger; this Deity developed, during Ja Ja's time, a recognisable supra-political ethic in the sense that its values came to transcend purely political considerations. The territorial function and relevance of the Aro Deity thus became pronounced and lent a semblance of political unity to an area already held together by cultural and economic ties.

But King Ja Ja never concerned himself with the internal administrative structures of the communities; he always referred to these places as his 'markets' and his real concern in them was the exploitation of their resources. To these 'markets' King Ja Ja, like the kings of Bonny, sent resident market-guards to maintain order and regulate prices and thus ensure stability. The influence of the king of Opobo penetrated deep into the interior and as far west as the Benin River from where, it would appear, he had also taken a wife.[43] Through trade and diplomatic relations Ja Ja's influence extended as far afield as Accra, while on the Delta Opobo was the ally of New Calabar. The king of Brass wrote of having heard of Ja Ja's name and that "we all are family" while the Old Calabar rulers sent out feelers seeking to establish close relations with him.[44] By 1877, King Ja Ja had carved out an empire for himself that more than carried out James Horton's programme for the "Egbo nationality".[45] Evidence suggests that within King Ja Ja's undefinable empire, Africans were responding to "Victorian expansiveness like the citizens of Montreal and Sydney".[46] If, as has been suggested, "the conflicts

43. Ja Ja Papers, 1/5 In letters, Personal, 1869-87 (a) Okoro Ajumolu, Benin River October 8, 1877 (b) Ja Ja Papers 1/1 In letters European Merchants, J. Pinnock Liverpool, August 3, 1877.

44. Ja Ja Papers 1/7 In letters from Other Chiefs, 1873-87 (a) July 23, 1878, Jackie Taweeh, King of Accra; (b) King Ockyai of Brass Town, September 13, 1876 (c) Joseph Henshaw, Henshaw Town, January 26, 1877.

45. Horton, J.A.B., West African Countries pp. 172-3.

46. Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, p. 29, hold a different opinion.

of imperialism constituted all the nineteenth century history of West Africa",[47] to the conflicts of the African-Muslim and European-Christian 'imperialism' must be posited the 'imperialism' of Opobo under King Ja Ja which drew its inspiration wholly from the traditional African religion of Ancestor worship. On more than one occasion a British consul was to testify to King Ja Ja's benign and unifying influence.[48]

King Ja Ja's reaction to 'Western' Culture

An examination of Ja Ja's attitude towards the Christian religion in the previous chapter reveals that he was rejecting at least some aspect of the cultural heritage of Europeans. Among those aspects of European culture he attempted to incorporate was education. In King Ja Ja's traditional society, education was an initiation into the social and spiritual-cultural inheritance of the community. Its main purpose had been to keep alive the religious and political ethos of the community and to continue the family tradition of such things as medicine, wood-carving, and fishing. One obvious disadvantage of the system was that it created no new desires and opportunities necessary to instigate rapid social mobility. Several Delta rulers would appear to have realised this when they sent their children to European schools; they would appear also, like King Ja Ja, to have decided that the traditional religion was one aspect of their own cultural inheritance that ought not to be changed. Accordingly, they had informed the Christian missionary schoolmasters to whom they sent their children for instruction that

> They did not want religious teaching, for that the children have enough at home; they teach them that themselves; that they want them to be taught how to gauge palm-oil and the other mercantile business as soon as possible.[49]

47. Crowder, West Africa, p. 32.

48. FO403/73 No. 115, Memorandum by Hewett regarding Ja Ja's action... August 27, 1887.

49. Ajayi, J.F. Ade Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891, Ibadan, 1965, pp. 132-3; Basden, G. ed. Among the Ibos of Nigeria, London, 1966, pp. 215-6.

What distinguished Ja Ja from the other rulers of his time was, as Ayandele has pointed out, "Ja Ja's discernment from the beginning of the dangers of missionary activity to the sovereignty of the Niger Delta potentates..."[50] Ja Ja was aware that the sovereignty of these polities could remain intact only under the operation of the traditional African religion. This discernment led the king of Opobo to attempt in a positive way to limit the influence of the alien religion over his wards and possible successors in Opobo. King Ja Ja, like other rulers after him, was torn between a desire to have his people learn the 'technological' aspects of European culture and aninstinctive realization of the destructive potentialities of an aspect of that culture, Christianity, which could not really be clinically Separated from the technological aspect.

King Ja Ja thought that he could make the separation and had therefore thrown himself with gusto into securing for his children and wards the 'white man's education'. While still in Bonny, King Ja Ja had a daughter at a Liverpool school wanting to know from "Papa and Mama" whether she might, as her teachers desired, learn music.[51] Later correspondence reveals that Ja Ja had some wards at the Lagos and Sierra Leone grammar schools and with the beginning of the secular system of education in Britain, Sunday, his heir-apparent was sent to Liverpool for schooling.[52] At Opobo, King Ja Ja established a school through the services of Miss Emma Ja Ja,[53] whom he successfully induced to

50. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, p. 80.

51. Ja Ja Papers 1/5 In letters Personal, 1869-87 (a) Liverpool, September 7, 1869, Anna Pepple to "Papa and Mama"; Ja Ja Papers 1/1 vol. ii In letters from European Merchants from Liverpool, October 24, 1879, Edith de Cardi.

52. See Sunday's letters to Ja Ja, Ja Ja Papers 1/5; Ja Ja's to and from the Cardis, 1/6 and 1/5 respectively.

53. Miss Emma Ja Ja, a black American, formerly Miss White by name emigrated to Liberia after the Civil War, traded along the coast till in 1875 she settled at Opobo. She was a devout Methodist and was instrumental in the founding of the Opobo school of which she was school mistress. Though much liked by Ja Ja, she never succeeded in convincing him to allow religious instruction in the school nor would he allow her to read the Bible to him. This information on Miss Emma Ja Ja is drawn largely from Ayandele's Missionary Impact.

keep Christian instruction out of the school curriculum. King Ja Ja had much respect for the educational achievement of the Europeans and fully realising the inadequacy of his own cultural heritage in this regard, sought to remedy it by a judicious incorporation of European values; Ja Ja himself, it appears, even took some lessons in reading and writing.[54]

The King of Opobo was not unaware of the relative weakness of his position in trying to pick and choose among elements of a foreign culture; he seemed to have realised that though Miss Emma Ja Ja could be pressed upon successfully to keep Christian instruction out of the school system, it would not be quite so easy to keep Sunday in Liverpool, for example, free from the undesirable contact with Christianity, even though the educational system had become secularized. Yet Ja Ja tried to reserve for himself the cultural and religious education of his wards, repeatedly requesting and securing their release from school to return to Opobo that they might "know us a little now and our country custom, and so I send him back to you to learn. Let him attend his lessons and go to school always. Don't allow him to grow wild and wayward. Try all your best for him. As I told you before, don't let him read the Bible..."[55]

King Ja Ja wanted his wards "to learn merchants and clerk business and to study up you to count well".[56] The cultural and religious aspects of education was to follow the lines laid down by Ja Ja as is revealed by this extract from the letter written to de Cardi already quoted:

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54. See the signature to his letter of September 30, 1888 from St. Vincent to 'Grandson'.

55. Ja Ja Papers, 1/1 vol ii In letters from European Merchants, 1878-91, "Copy" King Ja Ja to de Cardi, May 12, 1883. de Cardi was acting as a foster parent to one of King Ja Ja's wards.

56. Ja Ja Papers, 1/6 Out Letters, Personal 1876-91, to 'Grandson', June 3, 1889.

> I hope you will still show yourself my true friend. I mean in the matter of my son Sunday. I want him to be sharp and useful, as he was to me before he left. He was actually my steward whenever any of my chiefs came to see me he will ask them if they will have a drink of Loimbo. I hope you will make him learn all these things the more...I shall hope to hear always from you how the boys are getting on. Whatever expenses you undergo for their books please let me know and I shall always settle you for same...

It was customary in Ja Ja's traditional society to send one's loved children to one's friends for a proper upbringing; yet it must have been a deep and strong-rooted friendship between Ja Ja and his merchant-friends that induced in him the necessary confidence and in them the necessary respect and devotion to send his children and wards to Britain for schooling in their care.

Relations between King Ja Ja and his merchant-associates were, not unnaturally, tempered by his fatherly nature, to the extent that they not only relied on him to collect their debts from Opobo men but were close in everyday things - one letter in Ja Ja's papers asks to borrow a piece of rope from the king.[57] King Ja Ja tried very successfully to limit relations between Opobo people and foreigners to the necessary minimum; hence, all questions of debt-collection were handled by him. Foreigners, mainly merchants, (Christian missionaries were not admitted into Opobo until the 1880's) were, according to the 1873 Commercial Treaty with Britain, restricted to a section of the town and were never allowed to pass the night outside their 'reserve' lest, in Ja Ja's view, traditional morality be offended.[58] The King made it obligatory for the foreign merchants to give him advance notice of their day of departure from Opobo so that debtors would prepare their accounts for settlement in good time. In these ways, King Ja Ja was able to minimize occasions for conflict between the local people and the foreign merchants and thus warded off British naval and consular intervention

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57. Ja Ja Papers 1/1 vol. ii from Smart, Opobo, July 4, 1879.

58. Ayandele, Missionary Impact, p. 77.

in the affairs of Opobo.

The 'Personal' letters of King Ja Ja are unique guides to the understanding of his character. Alone among all the other sources of information about the life and times of King Ja Ja, they reveal something of the man's concept of a father's duties which is a rare insight into a traditional African King's attitudes. He was always ready with advice without ever seeming to be imposing his will. Always wanting to know how "Mark" was getting on at school, he would often promise a treat when he saw "that you are getting on well."[59] At moments of youthful indecision, the King would write:

> I want you to stop in England at Mr. Miller's office to learn Merchants and clerk business and to study up to count well and if you should go to Opobo now you will look like a fool and you won't know much about business matter. I have written to Mr. Miller about you and you must be careful with your books or letters; you must not show them to anybody.[60]

Despite the physical separation of the family, filial affection among the children does not seem to have suffered. While from Freetown Abraham wrote to his father inquiring Herbert's address so that he could write to him "as brother",[61] from Sunday in Liverpool, King Ja Ja read that Duke got "a prize for schooling"[62] and also a description of Christmas, good books and toy-soldiers. Nor did distance prevent Duke from seeking father's help in solving an arithmetic problem. He had the good sense to lighten the burden with a short discourse on English Seasons:

> 'Spring is the next season in England," he wrote, "buds are nearly breaking forth and if thereis no more frost we ought to be having flowers soon."[63]

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59. Ja Ja Papers 1/6 Out Letters Personal, Kingston, St. Vincent, W.I., July 9, 1888.
60. Ja Ja Papers 1/6 Out Letters, Personal, To "Grandson", June 21, 1889.
61. Ja Ja Papers 1/5 from Abraham Freetown, November 7, 1879.
62. Ja Ja Papers 1/5 from Sunday, Liverpool, February 29, 1884.
63. Ja Ja Papers 1/5, from Duke, February 2, 1884.

It can be seen from Ja Ja's programme of education for his children and from his relationship with his 'markets' that his programme for the development of his country was to make it a powerful merchant State. This he sought to do through collaboration with British merchant-interests but in a way that did not compromise his views of his country's independence. Although Ja Ja sought to introduce sheep-farming into Opobo through his merchant-allies, his business relations with them were centred around the palm-oil and kernel trade. It was his desire to provide effective security for this trade on the basis of the 1873 Treaty that led him to start, early in the 1870's, direct shipment of his produce to England.

King Ja Ja breaks into the export market

In April, 1875, the Liverpool firm of Herschell had heard from a friend of Ja Ja's that he wished to do direct business with a Liverpool firm "so as to avoid the European agents at your place."[64] This firm agreed to open business, gave their invoice and ended by emphasizing the need for secrecy lest the scheme be frustrated. It would appear that the king, possibly dissatisfied with what Herschell were willing to offer, sounded out other firms, for in April of the next year, it was Samuel Cheetham, another Liverpool merchant, in partnership with John Holt who, announcing the final arrangement wrote:

> You need not fear any hitch in carrying out our plans. Do not mind what anyone says, you are a free country and can carry on trade as you like. Of course, the old merchants will try to keep up the old monopoly but we need not be surprised at that...but they cannot contend with you in a stoppage, and in three months and a half from the time of shipment you can have your return in hand from England - which is only like going to your own long market. [65]

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64. Ja Ja I/I vol i, Herschell, Liverpool, April 9, 1875.

65. Ja Ja I/I vol i, from Samuel Cheetham, Liverpool, April 6, 1876.

Samuel Cheetham had closed with the sanguine hope that "we shall have a large business because it will be to your advantage and mine also", with "saving of all expenses on the coast, hulks, coopers..., agents, clerk, etc. etc."

It requires some understanding of the commodities involved in the European Delta trade to understand why Cheetham anticipated a mutual benefit from the scheme he was planning with Ja Ja. For obvious reasons of security, the European merchants had been discriminating in their choice of arms for trade with the Delta peoples; only minor arms and ammunition had been imported into Delta through them. After King Ja Ja settled at Opobo, he wanted to strengthen the defences of his State by making use of some of the latest weaponry, such as the Maxim and Gatling guns. His oldest ally, Miller Brothers, in MacEachen's long absence from Opobo on sick leave,[66] were unable or unwilling to supply these demands so Ja Ja turned to 'interlopers' like Cheetham. Miller's agents in Liverpool had indeed been receiving direct shipments from Ja Ja of some quantities of palm-oil in return for which he asked for "parts powder and gin plus casks filled with salt",[67] but this had taken the form of strict barter and had involved the traditional articles of the coast trade. Cheetham, it would appear, was prepared to supply King Ja Ja with the new and more efficient weapons, and to do so not on basis of barter but by direct export trade. This assessment is supported by the fact that three out of four direct orders placed by King Ja Ja between August 1876 and September 1877 involved ammunition of some sort.[68]

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66. Ja Ja Papers I/I vol i from MacEachen, Glasgow, December 12, 1876.

67. Ja Ja Papers 1/2 to Miller Bros., May 22, 1875.

68. Ja Ja Papers 1/2 see the orders to Sam Cheetham and de Cardi.

King Ja Ja learnt a few things from his 'trip' into the European market; from the direct fnformation about trade he obtained from Cheetham, he observed a wide disparity between the price of goods in England and on the coast.[69] Furthermore, his order for a Gatling gun, the main reason for his attempt to go into the export trade, had taken longer than he anticipated to arrive, and when it did, no ammunition came with it.[70] These revelations must have weakened the king's faith in the barter export system of trade by which he sent his own produce to England and asked for his needs in return, and rendered attractive Cheetham's arrangements for a real export trade as against simple barter. By this means Cheetham, harassed as an 'interloper' by the old-coasters, would break their monopoly by capturing the Opobo oil from the Liverpool end while King Ja Ja would benefit from a greater awareness of English market conditions and also obtain his ammunition direct.

King Ja Ja was clearly aware of the inevitable opposition from the established interests, including this time his old-time allies, Millers and de Cardi, and he had to weigh the benefits of direct export-trade against their resentment and antagonism. A letter from Lilley and Wheeler, another firm scrambling for the Opobo oil, reveals Ja Ja's fears and dilemma:

> We have heard that you are alarmed that if the Hulks left the River the steamers would cease to call - do not let this trouble you in the least -
> As long as there is palm oil in your River, the steamers will always call.[71]

Worsening Trade conditions and merchants reaction

It was in fact the worsening conditions of oil trade which, by making direct-export less profitable, decided King Ja Ja to withdraw from that field and confine the bulk of his trade to the coast. In Ja Ja's letters to and from his merchant-associates in these years, there are scattered

69. Ja Ja Papers 1/1, vol. i, see prices quoted by Millers, October 1, 1875, and that by Cheetham by Cheetham, December 17, 1875.

70. Ja Ja Papers 1/2, to de Cardi, September 27, 1877.

71. Ja Ja Papers 1/1, from Lilley and Wheeler, Liverpool, November 24, 1876.

references to a deteriorating state of trade; Millers complained of merchants loosing money in Opobo, Ja Ja himself spoke of trade being dull, while Wheeler was distressed by lack of shipment from Ja Ja. In all, the references were of course to the oil and kernel trade. In the peak years of the 1840's the price of palm oil per ton in England had risen as high as £45.[72] There was some price-fluctuations during the 1850's but until 1860 the price did not fall below £43. 12. 0. The discovery of mineral oil in California in 1860 would appear to have introduced greater competition into the oil trade and the palm oil price of the next five years showed a sharp fall, selling at £37. 4. 0. per ton average.[73] As the following table shows, there was no improvement for some years following.

	Price per ton	Total Value In £ From the West Coast to Britain
1866	40.21	£1,422,937
1870	36.48	1,721,632
1875	33.35	1,727,765
1880	29.45	1,890,599
1881	29.09	1,585,373
1882	30.49	1,725,375 [74]

It will be seen from this table that until 1880 the output of palm-oil was rising fairly steadily and the price falling; the falling output which set in after that date gave a slight fillip to prices for about three years when the market conditions again worsened. By 1887, the price per ton was £19. 4. 0. Parliamentary statistics are often of doubtful credence, but the depressed state of the palm-oil trade was part of the general economic depression that descended on the world around 1873. Its magnitude

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72. Dike, Trade and Politics, pp. 97-127.

73. McPhee, The Economic Revolution in British West Africa, p. 33.

74. PP 1881 XCIII, 32-3, 104-5; PP 1890-1 LXXXIX, 50-1, 134-5.

was such as to induce The Times to reserve large portions of its business columns to detailed surveys of 'the state of the produce market'. The first direct mention of palm-oil was made in the issue of January, 25th 1873, when readers were told that "fine coast palm-oil realized £35 to £37" per ton.

On the Delta, the largest source of the palm-oil, the depressed condition of trade was blamed on the Bonny-Opobo war.[75] When peace returned without improvement in trade conditions, the old-coasters revived their old scheme[76] of coercion against threats to their profit-margins; this time, it was directed solely against the African middle-men whose price-fixing was blamed for declining profits. In the 1870's, merchants began attempts to reach agreement on prices and to impose their agreement on King Ja Ja, the most powerful middleman on the coast, both by reason of his political power and by his control of the largest portion of the oil-markets. The differing economic interests of the various agents on the coast and the continuing influx of 'new' traders made it difficult for them to achieve unanimity. They therefore relied mainly on the old system of manipulating the 'trust' system; in this, they were aided by the custom of requiring returning merchants to give advance notice of their intended departure.

In 1883 Stuart and Douglas informed Ja Ja that "English firms are combining to rig prices and keep others out. It is done by initially forcing prices down, then giving enormous quantities of trust, after which prices are gradually raised so as to keep away other traders. Then, on the pretext the agent is going home, all trust is called in. This therefore depresses trade at that time, prices are therefore high, so the firms combine to reduce them and the whole cycle begins again."[77] The scheme was in fact almost

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75. See Consular despatches already cited above.

76. Dike, Trade and Politics, p. 108.

77. Ja Ja 1/1 vol ii, from Sam B. Hall, Hooper, etc. Opobo, January 13, 1878; "Stuart and Douglas, Liverpool, November 30, 1883; from Lilley and Wheeler, August 16, 1878.

ten years old. The response of the established firms to King Ja Ja's attempt to trade direct with England had been no more than the traditional one employed against all threats against their monopoly profits. When this method failed to restore the old profit margins, they stiffened their resistance against the 'new' traders whom they saw as the back-bone of Ja Ja's resistance against their attempts to dictate prices.

As Dike and Gertzel have pointed out, attempts by the old Liverpool firms to cut out competition from the oil trade was not new to the late nineteenth century.[78] The African Association founded in 1843 and dominated by the old coast-interest of Tobin and Co., Hatton and Cookson, Harrison and Co., Stuart and Douglas, all of Liverpool, with the sole Bristol firm of R. and W. King, had been in the vanguard of the opposition to 'new' arrivals. From 1852, they had begun the tactic of absorbing any new firm that succeeded in capturing a sizeable amount of the oil trade. Their motive remained the traditional one of trying to secure unanimity among the European firms so that low prices could be imposed on the middleman; the method too was the old one of ruthless price-cutting.

By 1880, the African Association had within its ranks three of the 'new' coast-interests - Couper Scott, Johnstone and Co.; Laughland and Co.; and the John Holt interest. The first two were Glasgow firms and they arrived at the coast in the 1850s and 1860s respectively. Unable to establish a foothold on the old centers of the coast-trade, they had been welcomed at Opobo where Millers already had a stronghold. They had gradually increased their share of the trade of Bonny through their share of the Opobo trade and had thus rendered themselves worth incorporating by the African Association. Holt, the third newcomer to the ring, was not new to the coast but was

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78. Gertzel, "Commercial Organization", pp. 290-94.

to the city-states. John Holt had a foot in the Gaboon, another through an associate (Cotterrell) in Bonny, a stronghold in Fernando Poo and an eye on the Lower Niger through yet another associate, Thomas Welch.[79] In addition, Holt was in partnership with George Watts who had moved from Fernando Poo to Old Calabar in the mid 1870s.[80] With Millers outside the ring and in partnership with the new Niger Company, itself an enemy of the old-coast interest,[81] the absorption policy had clearly failed to unite the European firms. Furthermore, the Holt interest, possibly as a result of the wide experience that came with wide-spread involvement, did not share the African Association's concern to retain the old system of trade through the middleman. The New Calabar conflict revealed the divergence of views on this vital point.

The New Calabar War and the beginning of Ja Ja's Conflict with the Consuls

New Calabar, under King Amakiri, ranked next to Opobo in political stability. This had come about largely because the king, by prohibiting the giving of 'trusts' by Europeans to Africans had succeeded in keeping relations between the two pleasantly uneventful. 1879 brought an end to this order for in that year Will Braid, the Head of the Barboy House, attempted to secede and as a result, civil war broke out. European merchants at New Calabar appealed to the consul, Hopkins, to restore the status quo. The consul had requested and secured the assistance of King Ja Ja and other local rulers to act as arbitrators. An award was made by the arbitrators and approved by the Acting consul Easton and the Commodore of the British ship of war, Dido, where it was signed.

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79. Holt and Co. Ltd., Merchant Adventure, Northampton, 1959

80. Gertzel, "Commercial Organization", p. 293.

81. Flint, Goldie, pp. 25-32

Will Braid, who was receiving support from some 'new' traders, refused to honour the arbitration though he had signed it. Consul Hewett, who succeeded Hopkins, at first gave tacit support to Braid and refused to press him to abide by the award of the arbitrators; when, urged by the European merchants of New Calabar to do so, he instructed them to go into the inland markets and trade.[82] Hewett was to force Braid to observe the award later but he did so not in opposition to inland penetration but rather as an attack against 'new' traders represented by Moses Ledlum, a Sierra Leonian, who had begun to support Braid. In 1880, the consul refused to coerce Braid and King Ja Ja, as one of the arbitrators felt obliged to write to the Foreign Secretary about the continuing conflict which he blamed on Hewett's 'incompetence'.[83] Ja Ja urged the Foreign Secretary to see that the award was observed by Braid.

Two main questions arise from these developments: why did Hewett refuse to enforce an agreement secured by his predecessor on board a British man of war, and why did King Ja Ja feel compelled to report the matter to the Foreign Secretary? The answer to the first question lies with the British government who, it would appear, were now beginning to evolve a single policy for the entire Niger based on pushing trade into the interior, despite the opposition of the old-coasters. As has been suggested above,[84] the 1873 Commercial Treaty had been at variance with British government's economic policy. It had been accepted because it served the needs of the interested parties at the time. By 1879, the inland firms united under Goldie gave promise of being the best instrument of the British 'civilizing' mission and the arm of the government was ever ready to encourage

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82. FO403/18 Inc 6 in No. 2 Ja Ja to Hewett May 23, 1881.

83. FO403/18 No.3 Ja Ja to Granville, July 28, 1881 and enclosures.

84. p. 84 above.

and help them.[85]

Livingstone's successors showed a decidedly anti-Ja Ja attitude whose manifestations always centered around the 1873 Treaty.[86] (Consul Hopkins' term of office was a sort of Indian summer for King Ja Ja; he secured the assistance of the arbitrators, he also warned Watts against 'invading' the Qua Ibo). There is no evidence that Hewett received any clear guidance on the middleman system but his advice to traders to go inland coupled with the fact that he had been instructed to reverse his predecessor's policy in Old Calabar,[87] suggest at least a tacit understanding that government policy was decidedly against the old system.

The reasons for King Ja Ja's behaviour on the Will Braid affair lies in his moral obligation as one of the arbitrators, his concern to maintain the status quo in the Delta; and his concern to maintain the status quo in his relation with the British government. King Ja Ja had a very strong moral sense which always made him keep strictly to agreements once they were signed. This is why he always sought to secure the best bargain for himself; he was faithful to a fault and Will Braid's failure to honour the arbitration award seemed to him a personal challenge. Moral obligation apart, Ja Ja saw Braid's attempt at secession in relation to the power politics of the Delta which he dominated. Bonny was Opobo's enemy and New Calabar, her ally. Bonny had 'cashed in' on the Braid affair (contd.)

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85. From the 1860's, annual naval escorts followed the Niger trading expeditions and in 1879 the town of Onitsha and other rivers in villages were levelled to the ground for attacking the inland traders. The officer commanding the Pioneer, which carried out the operation was presented with a testimonial by the United Africa Coy. while the Foreign Sec. conveyed his thanks through the Admiralty to Lt. Burr. See The Times, April 21, 1880.

86. Ja Ja Papers 1/3, See Consuls Hartley and McKellar's letters to Ja Ja.

87. FO 403/18, No. 16, Hewett to Granville, February 17, 1882.

and was receiving the oil taken by him which, rightfully, belonged to New Calabar, to the latter's detriment. Such an accession of wealth and therefore of power to Bonny, if unchecked, was likely to upset the existing balance of power in the Delta in Bonny's favour. This, Ja Ja could not view with equanimity.

Furthermore Ja Ja's relations with the European merchants at his port were governed by the 1873 Treaty with the British government. The circumstances of the signing of that treaty were very similar to that of the arbitration award; unpunished breach of the latter seemed to Ja Ja an ill omen. These factors combined to produce from Ja Ja the gallant call in the letter quoted above to Granville to

> prove not only to the New Calabar men, but to all the neighbouring tribes who are eagerly watching the current events, that treaties made with the English must be respected and that, having undertaken to settle the dispute, the British government will not leave it in a worse state than they found it, much less allow it to be said that King Amakiri and his Chiefs have been ruined by placing implicit confidence in Her Britannic Majesty's Representatives, and acting according to their requests.

King Ja Ja clearly saw himself in the position of King Amakiri and the prospect did not appeal to him.

Meanwhile the New Calabar question had merged into the Qua Ibo question, as George Watts, John Holt's partner, found support for his long cherished desire, and went to open trade in the Qua Ibo. King Ja Ja objected on the ground that Watts was breaching the 1873 Treaty. The questions now came before the Foreign Secretary to whom the ubiquitous Holt had written calling for support of his protege against King Ja Ja.[88] The Foreign Office ordered a naval inquiry into the Qua Ibo question; it is from the report produced in November 1881,[89] that one gleans the terms of reference of the investigator. The officer was instructed to investigate

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88. FO403/18 No. 6 Holt to Granville October 28, 1881.

89. FO403/18 Encl. 1 in No. 8, Hammicks to Richards, November 21, 1881.

whether Ja Ja's alleged atrocities in the Qua Ibo region was in any way directed against British interest. He reported that it was not and further defended the rights of King Ja Ja on the basis of the 1873 treaty. The African Association wrote to Granville, echoing Ja Ja's views on the New Calabar question and suggesting that Consul Hewett be not allowed to return to his post because of his 'incompetence'.[90] They went further and protested against any attempt to remove the Qua Ibo region from King Ja Ja's influence.[91]

British Government support Consul Holt attempt at inland penetration

Despite overwhelming opinion in Ja Ja's favour, the Foreign Secretary wrote to the King, blaming him for the unsettled New Calabar question, sent a letter of approval to Hewett for his part in the question, and informed Ja Ja in another letter that

> Her Majesty's Government must decline to commit themselves to any recognition of your claim to this country. (Qua Ibo) and I have at the same time to warn you that they cannot permit the taking of any steps which would lead to the destruction of the lives or property of any British subject who may see fit to establish themselves as traders in that country. [92]

As has been stated above, Watts had answered Hewett's call and late in 1880 went into the Qua Ibo to establish a factory. His agent, John Harford described their reception:

> ...but I found the villagers very excited and not liking at all my advent among them as they had just had news from the up country informing them that if they allowed a white man to remain in their river King Ja Ja who was the very terror not only of this place, but of some 50 or 60 miles all round, had threatened to burn their towns down he laying claim to all this country allowed no one to trade their but himself. The advice I had from these people was that I had better go back and leave them and their river to themselves. But I said, No, I am not going back. I have come to open

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90. FO403/18 No. 24, A.A. of Liverpool to Granville, May 3, 1882.

91. FO403/18 No. 26, A.A. to Granville, May 17, 1882.

92. FO403/18 No. 12 Granville to Ja Ja, January 21, 1882.

> a trading station and to remain with you, and that King Ja Ja or any one else but our British consul would not drive me from that river alive.[93]

Since, despite his show of force, "it was useless taking notice of these frightened people", Harford sailed a little way up river and at a place between the first and another village erected a trading station and returned to Old Calabar to bring trade-goods for his unwilling customers.

The reactions of Ja Ja and the local peoples to the attempted British breach

While Harford was away, King Ja Ja, as had been feared by the Quas, descended on them with his warriors. He had done this before in 1877 on account of frequent attacks by some Quas on his trading stations and on that occasion had dealt liberally with them. At the end of another successful expedition in 1881, the king had secured the signature of the Qua leaders involved to a document declaring him to be their 'sovereign' and protector for ever.[94]

Ja Ja's expedition provided an opportunity for action against him by the Holt interest and Hewett. The Consul's attempt to defend Watts in Qua Ibo was significant for opening the question of the territorial extent of Ja Ja's 'legitimate' authority; this, Hewett termed 'sovereignty'. For Ja Ja and Hewett 'legitimacy' and 'sovereignty' had different bases in fact; in the culture conflict that lay behind the debate on these issues, King Ja Ja was from the beginning forced into using the terms of his opponents without accepting their arguments. Hewett tried, in typical arm-chair fashion, to 'partition' Ja Ja's empire as a basis for denying his right over the Qua River.[95] He had disputed the king's right on the basis of the 1846 Treaty between Bonny and Andoni.

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93. Kingsley, Studies, p. 586.

94. FO403/18, Encl. in No. 25 Declaration of Qua Ibo Leaders, June 8, 1881.

95. FO403/18 Encl. 3 and 4 in No. 3, Hewett to Ja Ja, May 28, 1881, Same to same July 8, 1881.

One by one Ja Ja demolished Hewett's arguments; the Ibenos sent their disputes to Ja Ja and not to the king of Bonny, the only European merchant, McEachen, who had tried to trade at the river had offered to pay 'comey' not to the king of Bonny but to King Ja Ja and had had to withdraw from the river on Ja Ja's insistence that he did so. There was above all the fact that the Andonis (relatives of the Ibenos) who had fought on Ja Ja's side during the war with Bonny, had ever since been treated as his subjects, the 1873 Treaty of peace with Bonny had, by redistributing the oil markets, superseded the treaty of 1846.

> "Now", Ja Ja went on, "I would like to know what can possibly be the use or meaning of this Treaty if any one had 'the right' to establish trading station wherever they like in any of the small rivers adjoining this which are under my jurisdiction, and which lead to the markets with which I have the exclusive right of trade?"

King Ja Ja went on:

> The fact is that the upper waters of the Qua Eboe River run through the district from which the greater portion of the oil exported from this river is obtained, Eseni, my largest oil market, being only a few miles from that river. 95B

The simplicity with which Ja Ja laid his motivation bare only high-lighted the drapery in which his opponents covered their own. Harford claimed to be defending not his rights but those of the Ibenos. Such was the disarming frankness of a man who believed in the justice of his cause and held that if only he explained, others would realize their mistake.

Meanwhile Harford had applied himself to organising a rebellion against Ja Ja in Qua Ibo:

> "...I, with a few of the most courageous Ibunos (Ibenos - southern Quas) or Qua Iboe people made a tour of the principal villages in the Ibuno country to let the inhabitants know of the deadly onslaught that had been committed on the people at the mouth of the river. They all swore to stand by us to a man, and to keep themselves free from Ja Ja's tyrannical rule." 96

95B. FO403/18 No. 3 Ja Ja to Granville, July 28, 1881.

96. Kingsley, Studies pp. 590-91.

Harford's next step was "to get all the guns we could get together and all able-bodied men I told off for gun practice and defence drill. This I carried on day after day, until we had quite a little band of well-trained men". It was no easy task to make rebels out of the Quas for "often two-thirds of them would rush off to the woods under the impression that the Opobos were again making a raid upon them. This went on for weeks, so much so that I was almost losing heart and sometimes thought I should never get confidence in the people."

From the account by Harford himself, the Ibenos did not wish to shake off Ja Ja's "tyrannical rule". The Ibenos had been noted for their turbulence.[97] They had the distinction of being the only group in Ja Ja's empire known with whom he made war. A problem arises as to why they became so spineless in the face of mere rumours of attacks by Ja Ja. The clue lies in the people's view of their relationship with the king and their conviction of guilt as a result of their inactivity against Harford's intrusion into their midst. The Ibenos, the southern Qua Ibos, were descendants of Andonis (known as Obolo by the Ibos whose language they spoke in an adulterated form). King Ja Ja had established his state in Andoniland and the relation of the Ibenos to him had been based on his cooperation with Andonimen. This traditional allegiance had been formalised by the 'covenants' and the Ja Ja Creek which connected the Ikomtoro with the Qua Ibo River symbolised the economic dominance of Opobo over the Qua Ibo region.

Harford's presence in the river Qua was a breach of the covenant with Ja Ja. In the beliefs of the people, such breaches called down universal punishment on the community as a whole and it was the duty of the leaders of the people to avert such an eventuality by propitiation. It was the Ibenos' feeling of guilt that explains their nervousness and led them to sign the

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97. Kingsley, Studies p. 549; Casement Report in FO2/16.

1881 declaration. King Ja Ja made peace with the Ibenos and felt that he had settled the Qua Ibo question when he agreed with the suggestion of the naval authorities to withdraw his warriors from the Qua Ibo River, which in any case had only served as a highway to the oil markets.

The response of the interested parties to Granville's declaration

The response from the interested parties to Geanville's declaration on the Qua Ibo River was instructive: John Holt insisted that nothing short of a protectorate would effectively safeguard the interest of his protégé, the consul had made a similar proposal in a letter to Granville in which he suggested either a 'protectorate',a crown colony or a chartered company rule, but the African Association strongly objected to any attempt to destroy the middleman system.[98] At this point the Foreign Office called for a memorandum and Clement Hill prepared one in May 1882.[99] In so far as the memorandum did not remove the negative character of the government's policy, it provided but cold comfort for the advocates of some form of British rule. It did however produce an official statement against the middleman system as represented by Ja Ja.

It is important to emphasize at this point the fact that those who called for the establishment of British 'rule' over an area embracing Ja Ja's territory - Holt and Hewett - had given as their reasons the necessity to liberate trade which was being confined to the coast and stifled by the obstructions and 'savage' attacks of King Ja Ja. Ja Ja then, was the main obstacle which the establishment of British rule was expected to remove.

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98. See foot-note no. 91; also FO403/18 No.9, Hewett to Granville, January 14, 1882

99. FO403/18 No.27, Memo by Mr. Hill, May 23, 1882.

Despite Nugent's information that "it would not be an expensive government either, and in a very few years the income would easily be made to cover the expenditure and more",[100] and despite Hewett's efforts to produce some local 'demand' for British protection,[101] the Colonial Office, the department responsible for new acquisitions, refused to be tempted. All that the Foreign Office had done had been to threaten Ja Ja with punishment should he molest British merchants or the people among whom they chose to establish themselves in the Qua River.

Back on the coast, Hewett busied himself with finding instances of Ja Ja's 'illtreatment of the natives' as indications of his molestation of them. Meanwhile, Harford had carried his battle for the Ibenos into the oil markets of Eket, Ukot and Okon. Hewett visited these places, found Ja Ja's men 'insolent' and trespassing on a piece of land claimed to have been bought from its owner by Watts and his agent. Anyone slightly conversant with the system of land-holding in these communities can readily detect the falsity of the land purchase claims.[102] However, Hewett, on these bases, wrote to the Foreign Office:

> Ja Ja will not be content with ousting Mr. Watts from the Qua Eboe country; he will not be satisfied even with the subjection of the people to his rule; he wants more. What he is aiming at is to close the River against all trade...But I will briefly bring to your Lordship's notice fresh evidence of Ja Ja's fixed determination not to be thwarted in extending his dominion so as to include the tribes on the River Qua Eboe and this inspite of the decision of Her Majesty's Government and inspite of the wishes of the people themselves.[103]

Hewett had succeeded in securing that the British Government came out

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100. FO403/18, No. 23x, Memorandum by Nugent, April 29, 1882.

101. FO403/18, Encl. in No. 9, King Bell to Consul undated.

102. T. Elias, Nigerian Land and Custom, London, 1950, pp. 6-7, also Chap.V

103. FO403/18, No. 41, Hewett to Granville, February 5, 1883.

openly against the 1873 Commercial Treaty;[104] a year later, he was labouring to bring that government into conflict with King Ja Ja.

At this point, it would be well to examine what were the consul's motives in his relentless attacks on the king of Opobo. It has been suggested above that the consul's attitude towards the middleman system as represented by Ja Ja was a reflection of his government's attitude. Another issue had widened the gap between him and King Ja Ja and that was the king's allegation of incompetence against him. The opinions of the African Association and the naval officers had corroborated Ja Ja and to Hewett, naturally eager to make a position for himself in the consular service, Ja Ja had become a threat. Ja Ja erred too when his influence pervaded the entire consular district and his independent line threatened to confine consular authority to the coastal fringes. Hewett's attempts to challenge the king's authority on the coast had only produced 'indignities' which filled the consul "with resentment". Clearly, Hewett faced a crisis on the Oil Rivers and it was an internal crisis posed by Ja Ja.

If by 'imperialism' is meant the willingness to annex foreign territory per se, then only a cynic would call the British government in these years and in this region 'imperialist'. With remarkable slow-footedness, that government had, prodded by its representatives, veered towards destroying the middleman system. It was now being urged to enter into a 'scramble' for territory with King Ja Ja. Efforts to do so by reference to the 'Ja Ja threat' had failed. At this point, it was other interests not directly connected with the Delta ports, Goldie and Hutton and Holt,[105] who led the way in pointing out another 'threat' to their government; this was the 'threat' from the French traders allegedly backed

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104. See the 'Qua Ibo Declaration' by Granville in foot-note 92 above.

105. Flint, Goldie, pp.47

by their government in a bid to rob the British merchants of their established sphere of influence.

Still the British Government refused to be hurried into adding to their colonial responsibilities. The Admiralty sent a naval officer to inquire into the alleged French menace in the Oil Rivers; the Report, presented to the Foreign Office in May 1883, declared that "the English influence in the Oil Rivers is too strong for French diplomacy", the only doubtful place being the Camerroons.[106] When, however, Hewett in the following month wrote to the Foreign Office that:

> "all the tribes between the Cameroons and Akassa", expected to be taken over by England..."At Opobo, the Chiefs have no voice in the Government, they are entirely under the subjection of Ja Ja, who'd would demur to his country being surrendered to us, but he, of all the Kings, is the one whom it would be most desirable to remove."[107]

it was clear that Ja Ja, rather than the French was the main danger. Since the majority of the Oil Rivers trading interest repeatedly paid tribute to Ja Ja's beneficient influence, the inescapable conclusion is that Hewett, rather than the merchants, was threatened. It is not intended here to discount any French presence in the Oil Rivers; Holt was in fact soon to send to the Foreign Office a draft of the treaty the French naval officer had offered to Bonny early in 1883. King Ja Ja himself, in a letter announcing his present of a picture of an oil-painting of his house to the Foreign Secretary, had referred to French attempts to secure trading concessions from him.[108] But, as has been seen in the case of the Qua Ibo and New Calabar questions, British government policy was not based on the wishes of merchants who, from the government's point of view, tended always

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106. FO403/19 Encl.II in No. 15, Extract from Memo by Sir Richards, Received at FO on May 31, 1883.

107. FO403/19 No.21 Hewett to Granville, June 11, 1883.

108. FO403/20 No. 8 Ja Ja to Granville, May 14, 1883.

to take a short term view of their interests. The majority of the merchants had had to be coerced by the government into stopping active support of Ja Ja. What bore more heavily on the decision makers were the reports of their representatives on the spot and all along, Hewett had declared King Ja Ja the real threat to the new policies of the British. That the various government departments reflected the views of their representatives is seen in the divergence of views between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office officials on the propriety of punishing Ja Ja over the Qua Ibo question.[109] The dependence on the Admiralty for effective coercive force meant that, when disagreement arose, no such action could be taken.

The effect of naval-Consular disagreement on the Ja Ja question

The gulf between the consul and naval officers was significant in deciding the kind of 'action' taken by the government on the Ja Ja question. It therefore deserves some discussion. As in 1881, so also in 1883 when with the French 'threat' in mind, naval officers reported in favour of Ja Ja. Anene's explanation for this is that, not being under the direct influence of the merchants, naval officers tended to hold a more detached view in traders' disputes with local rulers.[110] But this ignores the fact that the majority of merchants opinion at this stage supported Ja Ja in the conflict with the consul. It is a valid view, expressed by Oliver, that because the duty of protecting traders in the interior would, in the absence of a land force, devolve on the navy, they invariably tended to support the status quo. Of equal importance in the attitude of naval officers was the fact that many of them held rather moralistic views about their relations with the African

109. FO403/18 Encl. 1 in No.8 Hammick to Richards, November 21, 1881; FO403/19, Encl.11 in No.15, Extract from Memo by Sir Richards; FO403/73, Incl. in No. 122, Captain Hand to Rear Adm. Hunt-Grubbe, July 29, 1887.

110. Anene, Southern Nigeria, p.55

peoples with whom they came into contact.[111] Sometimes highly devoted Christians, their ideas of 'civilising' Africans followed the humanitarian prescription of using rather than overthrowing the local rulers. They tended to stand, first and foremost, for the honour of their country rather that for the interest of its trading community. This produced conflicting attitudes between the naval officers and consuls in the case of King Ja Ja who refused to be a mere tool of the British trading interests. Personal interests were involved and Hewett was obliged to write a number of acrimonious letters about naval officers and their reports.[112] In London, both departments supported their men and coercing Ja Ja was then impracticable.

It was French advances in other parts of West Africa which lent urgency to Hewett's call for Ja Ja's deposition and the 'annexation' of his country first made in January 1882. But when, having discounted aggressive measures, the Foreign Office cast about for means to support their consul, Lister had written to the Colonial office:

> Questions have recently arisen between the native Chiefs of the districts on the West Coast of Africa and Her Majesty's consul which may lead to the intervention of Her Majesty's Government, and in case of such an eventuality the Earl of Granville would be glad to learn what is the practice of the C.O. in dealing with native Chiefs, who have real or fancied exclusive rights of trade, and etc. in the districts which the C.O. may at any time find it necessary to annex or place under British protection.[113]

In May, came the oracular voice of the colonial office - the usual method was to conclude treaties ceeding certain rights to the British government - which would admit of no claim to exclusive trading privileges by either the chiefs or other persons unless distinctly mentioned in the treaty.[114]

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111. Captain Owen is a famous example of humanitarian naval officers, Hand, in his Report on the conflict with Ja Ja, wrote rather disgustedly about bombarding Ja Ja's town and submitted his preference for "other means".

112. FO403/31, Nos. 36 and 37, Hewett to Granville, February 1884, and Encls.

113. FO403/19, No. 7, Lister to Herbert, April 25, 1883.

114. FO403/19, No. 8, Meade to Lister, May 2, 1883.

Policy as regards King Ja Ja had been settled and the delay in carrying it out was result of haggling over how the expense of the treaty-making and the projected strengthening of the consular staff was to be met. The 'French threat' had served to quicken the pace of government policy though not quite as fast as Hewett had hoped. Anderson was right in stating that the government had been "forced into a corner"[115] but it was the consul and a few but powerful merchant interests, and not the French, who cornered them into increasing their West African "responsibility".

A 'Protectorate' is declared over the Niger Districts.

It was not till May 1884 that Hewett was able to return to the coast with his batch of treaties to secure a protectorate over the Cameroons and the Oil Rivers.[116] In return for "progress, civilization, freedom of religion and of trade", the local rulers were asked to surrender their foreign relations and all jurisdiction over foreigners in their territories to the British government. King Ja Ja made difficulties; he asked for explanations of the various clauses and rejected outright the free-trade clause. Further he would allow freedom of religion only to non-Africans. He went still further and asked for the meaning of 'protection' used in the treaty. Meanwhile, he signed a two-articled treaty with the consul, just to show that he would not surrender his country to the French or anybody else. On Julyl, Hewett, in reply to Ja Ja's request wrote:

> Dear Sir,
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> I write as you request with reference to the word Protection used in the proposed Treaty that the Queen does not want to take your country or your markets, but at the same time is anxious that no other nation should take them.

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115. FO403/19 No. 19 Memo by Anderson, June 11, 1883.

116. Flint, Goldie, p. 52; Hertslet, Treaties vol i, pp. 131-54; FO403/31, Instructions to Hewett with enclosures.

She undertakes to extend her gracious favour and protection which would leave your country under your government. She has no wish to disturb your rule although she is anxious to see your country get up as well as the countries of the other tribes with whom her people have been for so long trading.

Faithfully yours,

E.H. Hewett,

Consul. [118]

It was on the basis of this definition of 'Protectorate' that King Ja Ja signed the treaty in December of that year. It was on that definition that he stood throughout his conflict with the British government.

On that definition, King Ja Ja had won once again; he had retained his trade monopoly, and had successfully withstood the introduction of non-European missionaries into his kingdom. He had not even ceded those 'certain rights' which would be useful to the British government in settling the questions which had arisen between him and the consul. In fact the protection accepted by King Ja Ja was that defined by Hertslet (the Foreign Office Librarian) in a memorandum to Lister.[119] The Anglo-Opobo Protectorate Treaty was a free contract in the sense that it was voluntarily signed by Ja Ja and his Chiefs after a full discussion of its clauses which amounted to negotiation,[120] but its contractual character was destroyed by the fact that, from the very beginning, neither the British government nor Consul Hewett was willing to accept Ja Ja's understanding of the treaty which was based on Hewett's definition and Hewett was determined to impose a different reading of the treaty upon Ja Ja.

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118. Ja Ja Papers 1/3, from Hewett, H.M.S. Flirt, Opobo, July, 1884.

119. FO403/19, No. 6, Memorandum by Hertslet, April 24, 1883.

120. Cf Hobson, J.A. Imperialism - A Study, London, 1954, 5th ed. p. 259.

The British government stood on the letter of the treaty by which Ja Ja had surrendered to them his foreign relations. This they meant to use, not merely to keep other powers from Ja Ja's territory, but to absorb this territory.[121] The Foreign Office was aware that such treaties of protection as they now entered into with Ja Ja would make the government virtual masters of the king's dominion. Hertslet had defined 'Protectorate' as understood by Ja Ja.[122] But the government officials were not parties to Hewett's letter of 1st July to Ja Ja which, while corresponding with Hertslet's definition, was at variance with settled policy based on Meade's letter of 2nd May.[123] In view of Hewett's part in the campaigns and policy-making that preceded the treaty-making, it is clear that he, the main focus of the "questions that have arisen"[124] in the Oil Rivers, shared his government's understanding of the Anglo-Opobo Treaty; it is impossible to see how he or his government could have meant what he said in his definition of protectorate. Consul Hewett was in a hurry to go to the Camaroons and make treaties of protection; he longed to establish his consular residence in the hills there and either did not think that Ja Ja would keep a copy of his letter of July or simply relied on securing the necessary naval force to overawe him in future.

The Berlin West African Conference of 1884/5 opened before Hewett had finished his treaty-making but, through him and the National Africa Company, the British were able to claim a firmer footing than any other

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121. FO403/19 No. 14, Lister to Herbert, May 22, 1883.

122. Flint, Goldie, Chap. IV, Anene, Southern Nigeria, pp. 61-66 have discussed this fully.

123. FO403/19 No. 8 Meade to Lister, May 2, 1883.

124. See Lister's letter to Herbert already cited and dated 25 April, 1883.

Power on the Niger Region. At that Conference, the European Powers agreed to respect the established spheres of influence of their members and agreed that the Niger waterway should be open to the navigation of all. In the June 1885 issue of the London Gazette, the British government proclaimed a protectorate over the 'Niger Districts' within which lay Ja Ja's empire, and promised to bring forward measures "for the administration of justice and the maintenance of peace and good order" in the new protectorate. In the attempt to implement this promise, the British government came into conflict with Ja Ja. This conflict forms the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE CLIMAX OF CONFLICT 1884-1887

The British attempt to exercise a Protectorate over King Ja Ja's Empire

Consul Hewett had been the dominant figure in bringing about the establishment of the British Protectorate of the Niger District formally announced in June 1885 and embracing the empire of King Ja Ja of Opobo. Due to a further attack of dysentric diarrhoea, an ailment which had kept him from his post in 1881, 1883, and was to do so again in 1887, Hewett spent most of 1885 in England. In his absence, White initially acted as Consul. Early in June, the Acting Consul wrote to Ja Ja informing him "that Her Britannic Majesty's Government will in future allow no monopoly of trade and engages itself to grant equality of trade to Europeans and natives alike."[1] White's declaration was a direct attack on Ja Ja's sovereignty which was based on his control of the interior markets. It was also contrary to the agreement between Hewett and Ja Ja on the basis of which the King had signed the Protectorate Treaty. By the Acting Consul's declaration, the British Government had constituted itself into the sovereign authority for the territory and was calling on Ja Ja, the hitherto acknowledged sovereign of that territory, to recognise this. King Ja Ja's reaction to this attack directed not only against his power as the King of Opobo but also against the traditional values of his society, is the main theme of this chapter. Before considering this aspect of the subject, it would be important to consider what prompted White, two days before the official declaration of the Protectorate, to take the first step in what amounted to usurpation of authority from King Ja Ja.

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1. FO403/86 No. 6, A.K. White to King Ja Ja, June 3, 1885.

It was in January of 1885 that the Secretary to the Admiralty ordered that a survey of the Oil Markets of the Eastern Niger Delta be made. The report was sent to Lister at the Foreign Office. In that communication, it was noted that King Ja Ja, despite his earlier disputes involving Watts and the Foreign Office, had continued to extend his influence in the Eastern Niger. He was known to have opened new Qua Markets up the Essene and Azumini Rivers since 1873.[2] Gertzel, despite this, denies the existence of evidence that the Qua interior had been under exploitation before Watts came there in the early 1880s.[3] News of the prosperity of these inland markets circulated in official and mercantile circles. Two months later, C.S. Salmon, a Gold Coast official, who described himself as 'a merchant, magistrate, Collector of Customs, Colonial Secretary and Administrator' wrote to Herbert at the Colonial Office voicing his dissatisfaction with the existing system of exploitation of West Africa which confined British activities to the coastal fringes. In his view, the coastal footholds should be gates to the interior and the aim should be the complete take-over of the territories and the payment of the local rulers who should be responsible for keeping the roads open and passable[4]. By May, Salmon's plan was communicated to the Foreign Office. It had the virtue that it "will cost little, give no responsibility and it will draw all the Chiefs of the Country to our flag more certainly than any other system or principle I know of."[5]

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2. FO403/71 No. 2 Sec to Admiralty to Lister January 1885.
3. Gertzel, "John Holt", p. 180 Chap.IV
4. FO403/71 Encl. 2 in No. 40 Salmon to Herbert, 23 March, 1880.
5. FO403/71 No. 40 Meade to Lister, 5 May, 1885.

Such was the background to White's letter of 3rd June to King Ja Ja and to the declaration of the Protectorate. Although the records have yielded no evidence of a direct instruction from the Foreign Office to the Acting Consul, it cannot be reasonably imagined that his letter to Ja Ja was entirely on his own initiative, unsupported by the officials in London. White's letter to Ja Ja can be regarded as the local equivalent of the West African Order-in-Council issued in London on the 5th June, 1885. That Order-in-Council provided for the establishment of Consular Courts whose jurisdiction would extend, not only to British subjects, as hitherto, but also to all persons "properly enjoying Her Majesty's Protection" without the limits of the Protectorate as well as within, all natives of Africa who were subjects of any King who by treaty or otherwise consented to their being subject to this jurisdiction. The civil and criminal laws of England were to be administered and enforced within the new Protectorate.[6]

As Gertzel has stated[7], Consul Hewett indeed intended the treaties he made with the local rulers to enable the merchants to overcome the obstacles of price-fixing and confinement to the coast placed on their way by the political control of the middlemen rulers like Ja Ja. They were also to provide a new and more effective legal basis for his regulation of trade;[8] he therefore never intended to honour the definition of 'Protectorate' which he gave to King Ja Ja in July, 1884 and on the basis of which the King signed his Treaty of Protection with the 'free-trade' clause deleted. The majority of the coast merchants also came to look upon the treaties and the Order-in-Council which followed them as intended to render Ja Ja more amenable to their price-fixing demands. They therefore became increasingly

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6. See Hertslet, - Map of Africa by Treaty, vol. XVII, p. 133

7. Gertzel, "John Holt", p. 243

8. Gertzel, "John Holt", p. 262

in favour of the Consul's views. Hence, after the Order-in-Council, instructions were sent to the agents of the various firms by their headquarters to reduce prices. The procedure was the old one of reaching agreement on prices but reinforced, on this occasion, by a price-pooling agreement.

The agents presented a demand for reduced prices to the King of Opobo. His reaction was one of disbelief mingled with fury. He would rather 'eat mud' than accept price dictated by the merchants. He threatened to stop trade completely for two years if the ultimatum were not withdrawn. Finally, he succeeded in detaching the firm of Miller Brothers from the price-fixing pool with an offer of guaranteed supplies of produce to them at his own price. Millers' withdrawal from the combine shattered all hopes of its success. For the firms of the African Association, it meant even more. It portended the end of their long cherished dominance of the oil trade. King Ja Ja controlled the bulk of the oil of the Eastern Niger Delta and as he ceased to deal with the Association firms, Miller Brothers began to ship the bulk of the oil. In the past, the African Association firms had opposed the Consul's attack on Ja Ja's position as middleman-King. On discovering that the price-fixing combine no longer existed on account of Miller's defection, the merchants turned to the Consul for cooperation against Millers but primarily against King Ja Ja for his favoured treatment of the latter which robbed them of their dominance. The immediate reaction of the Association agents was to summon the consul for help to restore the status quo.

Acting Consul White arrived at Opobo and repeated Consul Hewett's earlier instruction to the merchants - if King Ja Ja refused to accept their price, they were to go into the hinterland markets and buy from the producers. The British Government would give them the necessary protection. In White's as in Hewett's view, King Ja Ja had no right to monopolise trade as such

practice was contrary to the principles of free trade which Britain was bound to introduce into the Delta, under the Berlin Act and the treaties with Ja Ja and the other Chiefs. White announced his position thus to King Ja Ja:

> "I have to inform you that Her Majesty's Government have engaged themselves to permit freedom of navigation in the district over which a protectorate will be exercised. Her Majesty's Government likewise intend to give every facility, to countenance no future monopolies and will endeavour to insure equality and freedom of trade for natives and Europeans alike. 9

Here, the Acting Consul had laid down the political programme of his government cloaked in commercial terms. It was a declaration of intent. For the implementation of the programme thus enunciated, the alliance of the commercial community was called for. The discussion up to this point should make it clear that the issue between Ja Ja on the one hand and the merchants and their consuls on the other was not one of free trade versus monopoly as the consuls made it seem. While the majority of British merchants benefited from King Ja Ja's middleman position and while the British Foreign Office and their coastal representative remained satisfied with the limited influence of the latter on the Delta, no voice of condemnation had been raised against Ja Ja's middleman position. The majority of the Delta merchants had in fact supported King Ja Ja against the Consul who spearheaded the attack on the King. The real question at issue was whether Ja Ja, as ruler of his country and possessor of its resources had the right, subject only to market conditions of demand and supply, to determine the price at which he sold these resources. The attack on his political position, initiated by the political arm of the British presence was a denial of his

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9. FO403/77 Encl 3 in No. 6 White to Ja Ja 3rd June, 1885.

right to do so; consuls were now trying to use the merchants to attain a political objective; for, if as has been suggested in Chapter I, the sovereignty of the Delta city-states was inseparably bound up with control of the resources of the hinterland, then any attempt to challenge King Ja Ja's monopoly of the inland markets was a subversion of the sovereignty of Opobo. King Ja Ja's reaction to this attack on his power involved two phases - the commercial phase and the political phase. The former phase will be considered in this chapter while the political phase, which involved the political arm directly, will form the subject of the final chapter.

As the merchants, in response to their consul's demand, attempted to enter the inland markets, Ja Ja's envoys stopped them. The King wrote to the Opobo Court of Equity reminding them that no treaty between him and them provided for free trade in his dominion and that he would never allow Europeans to enter his markets.[10] Ja Ja followed this up with a letter to the British Foreign Secretary reminding him and his government that he, Ja Ja, had not agreed to the free trade clause when he accepted British protection in 1884 and that that clause had accordingly been crossed off the treaty he signed. As far as trade was concerned therefore, the 1873 Treaty, which acknowledged and recognised his middleman position, was the only valid basis of Opobo-British relation.[11] British merchants operating in Opobo had been no less busy than the King. Hall of the Court of Equity had requested the sending of a man-of-war for the purpose of influencing King Ja Ja to accept their demands.[12] Early in December, 1885, Lieutenant

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10. FO84/1780, Ja Ja to Mitchell (Chairman Court of Equity), November 30,1885.

11. FO403/77, No. 1, Ja Ja to Salisbury November 26, 1885, with enclosures, also filed in FO84/1744, Ja Ja to FO, November, 26, 1885.

12. FO403/86, Encl. 6 in No. 1, Opobo Court of Equity to Grubbe, November 12, 1885.

Commander Law was ordered to Opobo, in response to Hall's demand. In an undated "Protest of Traders against King Ja Ja's rule on the River Niger", the merchants protested against Ja Ja's "arbitrary rule" which was hampering their trade and asked whether or not Her Majesty's Government would protect them to exercise "free trade", an obligation that the government, in their view, entered into at the Berlin Conference. They had tried all conciliatory measures with Ja Ja but had received nothing but evasion and personal abuse from him; at their last meeting he had told them that their Queen was a thief for obtaining a Protectorate of his river by false pretences and had threatened to return all treaties with the British government should they allow the traders to proceed up river.[13]

On receipt of Law's report together with the traders' protest, the officer in command of the West Coast Station, Commander Oldham, came to the conclusion that the "dispute between Ja Ja and the traders is a matter for the consul to decide"[14] and instructed the Admiralty accordingly. Oldham's assessment was a correct one; the attack on King Ja Ja's position was politically inspired and the merchants were simply being used to carry it on. The Admiralty communicated their representative's correspondence, together with the traders' protest, to the Foreign Office. The reaction of the Office was to order Consul Hewett and the new vice-consul, H.H. Johnston,[15] to return to the coast immediately. Meanwhile, King Ja Ja had written yet again to Salisbury reporting that the agents, after his letter of November, 1885, had actually gone up to one of his markets to trade; he had foiled their attempts but now put it to the Prime Minister - who was also Foreign Secretary - that "if this Treaty (the 1873 Commercial Treaty) is good, I

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13. FO403/72 Encl. 3 in No.20, Protest of Traders against King Ja Ja's rule in the River Niger, undated.

14. FO403/86 Encl. 1 in No.6, Oldham to Admiralty, Decbr.1885.

15. Sir Harry Hamilton Johnston (1858-1927) explorer and administrator, became interested in problem of partition of Africa, 1879, travelled through Southwest Africa with the 7th Earl of Mayo, 1882...Vice Consul, Cameroon and Niger Delta, 1885...See Oliver R., Harry Johnston.

leave it with you to judge whether it is not dealt with according to the terms of the enclosed Treaty. My Lord, I have no idea about English laws," he went on, "neither having any learning and though a poor ignorant man, yet at the same time I always keep my promise upon any Treaty I signed with Her Britannic Majesty's Government."[16] Ja Ja's second protest letter to the Foreign Office was received on January 14, 1886. The traders' side of the story arrived on the 29th. The Foreign Office considered both and came to the conclusion that:

> Her Majesty's Government cannot permit the interference of Ja Ja with the freedom of commerce of places outside his own territory. Upon this point it is requisite that his position should be most clearly explained to him. [17]

The letter ended by calling Hewett's attention to the Qua Ibo people who "are still at a disadvantage as regards British protection against Ja Ja, as they have not concluded a Treaty definitely placing themselves under the protection of Her Majesty's Government."

Vice Consul Johnston arrived in Bonny before Hewett and on the same day wrote his first despatch in which he recommended that, as a solution to the difficulties of British merchants and consuls, King Ja Ja should be banished.[18] Sir T. Villiers Lister at the Foreign Office fully concurred with Johnston's views which struck him as completely without bias. Lister was convinced that

> Ja Ja is determined to use his exceptional powers and influence among the native tribes to oppose the extension of European trade and to keep traders within such limits as the middleman of the coast may choose to impose. In pursuing this object, he is acting in such a manner as will make the exercise of the British Protectorate difficult unless he is sharply dealt with. Consul Hewett...will no doubt send shortly full

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16. FO403/86 No.4, Ja Ja to Salisbury, December 10, 1885.

17. FO403/86 No. 8, F.O. to Hewett, February 26 1886.

18. FO403/86 No. 9, F.O. to Admiralty March 2, 1886.

> reports. But I am to suggest that, in view of the action which may have to be taken, it would be advisable that the Commander-in-Chief of the Station should be fully acquainted with the reports which have been sent to Her Majesty's Government.[19]

Lister had clearly made a correct assessment of the problem, based, it appears, on the unbiased report of the man-on-the-spot. How factual and unbiased Johnston's report was emerges when it is remembered that it was written from Bonny on the very first day of his arrival and without a visit to Opobo, the centre of the controversy. Lister had always been a strong advocate of a strong line against Ja Ja.[20] That Johnston, his protégé, had made up his mind or had it made up for him even before he left for the coast is clear from this letter of John Holt, one of the earliest advocates of the King's deportation, to his partner, Watts, reporting Johnston's arrival and the prospect that he would do all he could for their business in Qua Ibo before Hewett turned up:

> "I have had a long confab with Johnston who is very clearheaded and apparently anxious to give us all satisfaction[21]

It was thus on the basis of a grossly prejudiced information and Lister's own previously settled position,[22] that the Admiralty was invited once again to cooperate in coercing King Ja Ja. The issue involved, for both Ja Ja and the British Government, not simply one of allowing Europeans to trade where they pleased. It was a question of the entire sovereignty of Opobo which, behind the back of its ruler, had been taken under their jurisdiction by the British Government. King Ja Ja's previous record indicated that he would put up a serious resistance, which might be beyond the power of the consular representatives to cope with.

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19. FO403/86, No. 9, FO to Admiralty, March 2, 1886.

20. See Chap. III

21. Holt Papers 26/30, Holt to Watts, December 22, 1885, Quoted in Gertzel 'John Holt', p. 260.

22. See Chap. III

The Admiralty Agrees to cooperate with the F.O. on the Ja Ja question

The Admiralty agreed with the Foreign Office assessment and instructed their representative on the coast to concert necessary measures with the consular authority. It was agreed that Hewett, who was shortly to arrive on the coast, was to be escorted by a number of gun-boats on his first visits to the Delta ports, especially to Opobo. When therefore Rear Admiral Sir Walter Hunt-Grubbe, recently appointed to succeed Admiral Salmon, appeared in the Bights to confer with Hewett, it was as a result of a new spirit of cooperation between their respective departments in London. On this occasion, Grubbe learnt from the consul that Ja Ja was the sore point and the root of all his troubles on the Delta. Ja Ja's crimes were that

> "he buys in our markets but refuses to allow the traders in the river to use his; that he persists in asserting his right over Qua Ibo; that he has boycotted in favour of the firm of Miller and Co., all the other houses in the river, that he has stopped mails going to Brass, and threatening to fire and his general arrogant behaviour." 23

On these counts, Hewett urged the naval officer to authorise Ja Ja's deportation and exile to Ascension.

While not ruling out for all time the necessity for such a measure, the Admiral suggested that Ja Ja should first of all be given the opportunity of listening to consular advice on these points. In the despatch already cited, the naval officer confided to his superiors in London thus:

> "I am by no means sure that we may not have to resort to some measures of this sort sooner or later, but I would not consent to such a strong one without first giving Ja Ja the opportunity of listening to the advice and remonstrance of so experienced a man as Mr. Hewett, backed by the presence of two gun-boats."

On the same day, the Admiral instructed Captain Musgrave, the Senior Officer on the West Coast Station thus:

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23. FO403/86 Encl. 1 in No.11 Hunt-Grubbe to Admiralty, March 13, 1886.

> Mr. Hewett, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, has represented that, on a favourable opportunity presenting itself, Ja Ja should be made prisoner and exiled for a certain time from the River Opobo, where his presence tends to forment disorder and to stop free trade. I am in hopes that other means may be found at Mr. Hewett's forthcoming visit which may obviate the necessity of so strong a measure. But if the consul, after due deliberation and forethought, required you to concert measures with him for removing Ja Ja and you agree with him, you have my authority to so remove him and send him to Ascension as a prisoner.[24]

It has been suggested in the previous chapter that what prevented direct coercive action against King Ja Ja in 1883-1884 was the divergence of views between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty and the majority of the merchants. At long last, it seemed that the three arms of the British presence on the coast had agreed to act together against King Ja Ja's opposition to their attacks on the sovereignty of his State. But the Commander-in-Chief, would not take the plunge directly; instead he gave a blank cheque to his subordinate and thereby helped to nullify the agreement between the two departments in London. Admiral Grubbe was not convinced of Hewett's case against King Ja Ja. It is interesting, however, that he failed to stand firmly on a definite policy - to coerce or not to coerce - but rather left the final decision to his subordinate. Grubbe's attitude provides another support for the view that the proposal to deport King Ja Ja was a political programme with which no scruples of conscience were to interfere.

The failure of Naval-Consular cooperation against King Ja Ja

Lieutenant Commander Goodrich was sent to accompany Hewett to Opobo with the necessary display of armed force. At a meeting with King Ja Ja, 24 of his Chiefs and all the British agents at Opobo, the Consul levelled

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24. FO403/86, Encl. 2 in No. 11, Hunt - Grubbe to Musgrave, March 13, 1886.

his prepared charges against the King, this time including one accusing him of exacting seven puncheons of oil from each of the agents at the commencement of every voyage. To the charge that he boycotted the beaches of the agents when they tried to impose lower prices, the King replied that his Chiefs were free to trade on whichever beach they chose. On the second charge, that of preventing direct trade with the markets, Ja Ja reminded all present that he had always prevented Europeans from going into the markets. No treaty bound him to allow them access and he would continue to refuse them that. As to the charge that he stopped the mail canoes of the agents, the King disclaimed responsibility for any stoppages, laying the blame on Andonimen.

Goodrich's remarks on the charges and on Ja Ja's answers were that Ja Ja had power over his Chiefs and exercised it; that the King was perfectly correct as regards his rejection of the free-trade clause of the 1884 Treaty; that although the 'Shakehands' were unsolicited, refusal to pay would mean little or no trade by the agent concerned. This was indeed so. 'Shakehands' were customary prerequisites of all trading transactions and failure to pay them would indicate unwillingness to trade. On the question of stoppage of mail canoes, the officer decided that though the Andonies were incited, presumably by King Ja Ja, - they, in the officer's opinion, could not take such action on their own initiative - there was insufficient evidence for a decision to be made and that the matter should therefore be allowed to stand for the moment.[25] On the whole, the officer saw no sufficient ground for the drastic remedy of deporting the King. He adopted instead his superior's recommendation of allowing the King opportunity of of being advised and remonstrated with. Goodrich's verdict showed that although the Admiralty had come to appreciate the issues involved in the

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25. FO403/86 Encl. in No.13 Goodrich to Grubbe, March 30,1886

dispute with King Ja Ja and had accordingly come over to the side of coercion, their representatives on the coast had not. Consul Hewett was dissatisfied with Goodrich's judgment and on the 26th March gave his own judgment on the charges he himself had levelled against Ja Ja. These were that all merchants, despite Ja Ja's non-acceptance of the 'free-trade' clause, had the right of trading up river in accordance, in his view, with the agreement at Berlin (at which of course King Ja Ja was not represented). Ja Ja should pay a fine of 30 puncheons of oil for his infringement of the 1873 Treaty in enforcing payment of seven puncheons by the agents. He should also refund all the oil he had so received. When King Ja Ja, though under protest and promise of an appeal to the British government, agreed to pay Hewett's fine, Goodrich believed that all the recent palaver had been settled. Neither King Ja Ja nor Consul Hewett shared this view. However, consular representatives once again stood alone against the King.

King Ja Ja was understandably far from pleased with Hewett's decision. In another letter of protest, he expressed surprise at the Consul's sudden exception to 'shakehands' which had been given, with Hewett's knowledge, by the agents for several years past. 'Shakehands', Ja Ja informed the consul, were customary gifts "to enable them (the agents) to get more oil from me, and nothing else and it is mere present, which I wish you to note and besides given from their own free will." On the question of the mail-canoes, Ja Ja would like "to save any misunderstanding which may undoubtedly arise between the merchants and the Andoni men through the creek in going up from this (River) to Bonny with the mail, I will ask you to inform them to let same be passing through my hands, they can send one of their men with my people to see it rightly delivered" because:

> ...I require peace in my country with everyone, and are afraid if things allow to go on the way it is now same will never work well

at the end."[26]

Despite the fact, conceded by Hewett himself, that "it was customary at Bonny for the King to open an agent' s trade for which he received a large present,"[27] the Consul did not scruple to deny this privilege to Ja Ja whom his own government had acknowledged as King by the 1873 Treaty. It can be argued of course that the British government had in recent years come out against that Treaty by supporting Watts' violation of its terms and refusing to recognise, any longer, King Ja Ja's jurisdiction over a portion of the area it had formerly acknowledged as his. This fails to explain why the Consul charged King Ja Ja with infraction of the same Treaty while at the same time giving the King notice of the British government's decision to do the same by upholding the right of the merchants to go into the inland markets. The only explanation is that Hewett desperately needed a confrontation with King Ja Ja now that the Admiralty had begun to support the consul's point of view. This assessment explains why the King's appeal for a better understanding with the Consul was met with stony silence from the latter.

On the 2nd April, King Ja Ja and his Chiefs lodged a further complaint to Lord Salisbury. They protested against Hewett's one-sided proceedings which had led them to conclude that owing to bad trade, the British government intended to allow the merchants to go into the interior markets in order to improve their trade returns.

> "If it is so, my Lord," declared the correspondents, "for what we can judge, we and Europeans cannot trade in one market as there will be disturbances always exist, that we will be held unjustly responsible for any such that may have occurred."[28]

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26. FO403/86, Encl. in No. 14, Ja Ja to Hewett, March 29, 1886.

27. FO403/86, No. 16, Hewett to Rosebery, April 2, 1886.

28. FO403/86, No. 14, Ja Ja to Salisbury, April 2, 1886; see also Encl. in No. 17, Hooper to Hewett, April 19, 1886.

King Ja Ja and his Chiefs asked that their middleman position be spared them as they depended entirely on it for their livelihood. On the 'shakehands' question, they repeated their contention that this was traditional practice, not enacted into any treaty, which had governed the Delta trade from time immemorial. To support their argument, they referred the Foreign Secretary to Count de Cardi, a veteran of the Delta trade, and also enclosed a letter from Richard Hooper, a British agent, declaring that 'shakehands' were customary presents from the agents to the King. Since that was the case, King Ja Ja could not understand the sudden exception to 'shakehands' taken by Hewett who must have been aware of the true facts regarding these payments. The King could not therefore help feeling that the Consul must have an undisclosed reason for his biased behaviour and called on Hewett to declare his motive. Ja Ja expressed the suspicion that Hewett's behaviour was because Ja Ja had reported the details of the New Calabar dispute to Lord Granville over the Consul's head. Whatever was Hewett's reason, Ja Ja and his men desired him to declare them that there might be a permanent settlement.

At the Foreign Office, the inconsistency in Hewett's judgment did not escape the officials. Yet his decision was approved on the ground that it had, as its principal aim, the overthrow of King Ja Ja. The Consul was however informed by his superiors of his error of judgment in basing the fine of thirty puncheons of oil imposed on Ja Ja on the King's alleged infraction of the 1873 Commercial Treaty with Opobo.

> "The correct view," Hewett was told, "is that as Ja Ja has persistently ignored his obligations under the Treaty, he cannot appeal to such of its provisions as he may consider to be favourable to him. He has rendered the Treaty nugatory and it is superceded by the Protectorate Treaty. You should not have imposed on him a fine of 30 puncheons of oil as a penalty for breaking the Treaty but should have imposed it on the general ground that his exactions were arbitrary and vexatious."[29]

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29. FO403/86, No. 20, FO to Hewett, June 16, 1886.

It should be pointed out here that the 1873 Treaty had placed no specific obligation on Ja Ja, except that of charging for 'comey' no more than was paid in Bonny. In the circumstances, Hewett was instructed to remit the fine for the present and to reimpose it if fresh abuses on Ja Ja's part called for punishment. Enclosed in the above letter, was another to King Ja Ja informing that:

> Her Majesty the Queen, in assuming the Protectorate of the territories on the Gulf of Guinea, had in view as a principal object the promotion of the welfare of the natives of all those territories, taken as awhole by insuring the peaceful development of trade, and by facilitating their intercourse with Europeans. It is not to be permitted that any Chief who may happen to occupy a territory on the coast should obstruct this policy in order to benefit himself. [30]

After further declaring that the 1873 Treaty had been superceded by that of 1884, the Foreign Secretary finished:

> It is trusted that your loyal conduct will enable this course to be adopted (remitting of the 30 puncheons fine) and that you will henceforth understand that you will not be permitted to subordinate the interests of European traders, of your own people and of neighbouring tribes to your personal aggrandizement.

Consul Hewett conveyed these instructions from the Liberal Foreign Secretary[31] to King Ja Ja adding the personal note that the 'shakehands' should still be refunded. On the 18th August, the Consul reported to Rosebery that, although reluctantly, Ja Ja had "given bills of exchange on an approved firm to the several agents for the amounts he had to refund to them."[32] The last of the 'shakehand' question was yet to be heard however, for early in 1887 King Ja Ja brought the whole matter again to Lord Salisbury, once again in power, "now that he is in office". The Protectorate,

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30. FO403/86 Encl. in No.20 Rosebery to Ja Ja, June 16, 1886.

31. A change of government had returned Rosebery to the F.O.

32. FO403/73 No. 20 Hewett to Rosebery August 18, 1886.

the King complained, had brought strife to his land instead of the increased trade, peace and prosperity and closer friendship between himself and the British government which he was promised. The Consul had been abusive, calling the King 'nigger' in front of all his Chiefs. This he attributed to he himself having reported the details of the 1881 New Calabar dispute to Granville. Ja Ja's motives in reporting the matter had been to avert the danger that would result if a certain course was not adopted. Since that time, it appeared to him that Hewett had been waiting for a chance to suppress him. This, Ja Ja considered unfair and called for a thorough investigation and a final settlement.[33]

King Ja Ja's assessment was only partially correct; Hewett was no doubt influenced by the King's report of the 1881 dispute to Granville but more than personal animosity was now involved. While the Foreign Office remained deaf to Ja Ja's entreaty for peace, its representative on the coast wrote to the King informing him that the traders were now under no obligation to pay him 'comey', the reason being that the 1873 Treaty was no longer valid.[34] It is important to remember that that Treaty had done no more than regulate the amount of 'comey' to be paid to Ja Ja; it had not been the initiator of the system of paying 'comey'. Hewett's stoppage of the King's 'comey' rightly seemed to Ja Ja further evidence of the Consul's bias against him and he wrote again to the Foreign Secretary for explanation of the discrimination and a settlement.[35] In the middle of March, 1887, Salisbury replied to Ja Ja's letters. The Treaty of 1873 had been disregarded by Ja Ja by his exaction of money from traders; its termination, as a result, had

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33. FO403/73, No. 40, Ja Ja to Salisbury, January 13, 1887.

34. FO403/73, Encl. 1 in No. 48, Hewett to Ja Ja, January 14, 1887.

35. FO403/73, No. 48, Ja Ja to Salisbury, January 24, 1887, and enclosures.

been notified to him. However, Hewett was to remit the fine of 30 puncheons if the consul was satisfied that Ja Ja had discontinued the exaction. On the 'comey' question, Ja Ja was right that it was based on pre-existing custom but direct trading, in which the King now indulged, was something contrary to custom, Salisbury declared. "Your letter gives no proof that you've suffered injustice, but I am ready to receive from you further explanation", the letter concluded.[36] In another letter to Hewett, Salisbury informed him that

> "It would be impolitic to place Ja Ja in an exceptional position as regards other Chiefs; he was not to be unduly discriminated against." [37]

Lord Salisbury's judgment was based on a clear appreciation of the issues involved in the dispute with the King of Opobo, mellowed with a high sense of diplomatic skill. King Ja Ja, he was aware, was exercising his prerogatives but his continued exercise of them would hinder the exercise of Britain's own rights as a power which had extended its jurisdiction over Ja Ja's country.

King Ja Ja was grieved by and disappointed with Salisbury's acceptance of Rosebery's decision. On the coast, Hewett, his hands continually strengthened by encouraging replies from London, was arrogating more and more power to himself. He interfered in the internal affairs of Opobo, ordering King Ja Ja never again to take his war canoes beyond Opobo waters into the interior. These activities of the Consul's and Salisbury's acceptance of his predecessor's decision elicited yet another spate of letters of protest from King Ja Ja. In one of these letters, the King expressed displeasure at the fact that Hewett's letter of 1st July, 1884, defining 'Protection' to him and on the basis of which he signed the

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36. FO403/73 No.59 Salisbury to Ja Ja March 14, 1887

37. FO403/73 No.58 FO to Hewett March 14, 1887.

Protectorate Treaty later in the year had not been taken into consideration by his Lordship to whom he now enclosed a copy of that letter. Ja Ja objected strongly to Hewett's interference into the affairs of his country where it did not concern the consul. In reply to the allegation that he was blocking the markets for his own greed, the King answered that the markets were opened by their forefathers and that they themselves had invested thousands of pounds in keeping them up and opening new ones. In other words, he and his people had the right, based on ownership, to regulate the use of those markets. The 'comey' he received as King all went to benefit the markets and enlarge trade with Europeans. As for the 'shakehands', Ja Ja repeated that they were traditional payments which he had witnessed as a boy in Bonny and had been willingly paid to him since he became King of Opobo. Hewett had never objected to these payments until recently:

> We feel that Consul Hewett has not in the slightest degree seek the welfare of our people and taken the prosperity of our country at heart but that he has desire to destroy our place. 38

British Protection had promised King Ja Ja greater prosperity and the welfare of his country and people. In his view, these conditions depended on the observance of certain traditional practices which included going into the hinterland to worship their ancestors. This practice was vital to the security of their society and, the King told Salisbury, had to be maintained; Consul Hewett should therefore abstain from attempts to prevent the practice of going into Ibo for making ju ju. They never went there to kill or frighten the people as alleged, as it was in their interest to remain on friendly terms with the people on whom they depended for produce and to whom they had lent money to trade.

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38. FO403/73 No.77 Ja Ja to Salisbury May 5, 1887.

King Ja Ja's assessment of the aims of consular proceedings was precisely correct. The purpose of Hewett's proceedings was to destroy the King's authority and to put in its place that of the British government, as represented by himself. The order to Ja Ja to cease taking his war canoes beyond Opobo waters was an attempt to confine the King's activities and, ultimately, authority to Opobo town. The success of such a policy would damage the empire of Ja Ja in more ways than one. Opobo would lose its economic taproot and sink to the level of a mere fishing village. But of greater significance to the conservatives would be the fact that the traditional 'ju ju making' which took place in Iboland would cease and dissatisfied ancestors would also cease to intercede for their descendants. Contact with the gods would be non-existent and life itself would probably cease. This was an eventuality that all men of goodwill would attempt to prevent; hence Ja Ja was determined to keep up this practice. For Hewett, however, the attempt to stop Ja Ja going into the hinterland had no more than political and economic significance. It meant more to the people involved and they refused to tolerate it. Consular representatives had failed to subvert Ja Ja's authority single-handed. Increasing attempts were made to enlist the help of of the merchant community, and on this occasion, bad trade conditions helped to win them over.

This is not to suggest that merchant-consul cooperation began in 1887; in fact it had been going on since 1885, but hitherto confined to attempts to enforce lower prices. When, however, merchant-consul cooperation proved totally ineffectual, consular efforts to induce the merchants to go into the interior to trade[39] began to bear fruit. King Ja Ja's reactions to their moves led them to cable their headquarters for assistance. William Couper of Messrs. Couper,

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39. FO403/73, No. 81, Couper Johnstone & Co. to Salisbury, June 23, 1887.

Johnstone & Co. made personal representation to Salisbury. On the basis of this his Lordship cabled the consul thus:

> Ja Ja reported to be stopping trade with interior Proceed at once to Opobo and do your utmost to remove obstacles. If Hewett not available, Johnstone should go. 40

Johnston did go, for Hewett had succumbed once again to dysentric diarrhoea and had left the coast for another of his many sick-leaves. The Acting Consul arrived to Opobo in the month of July. It was in that same month that King Ja Ja, his Chiefs and people sent a petition to the "Queen in Council". The petition referred to Hewett's letter of July, 1884, defining 'protection' to King Ja Ja, and to the Protectorate Treaty which he signed afterwards. It referred to the fact that the 1873 Treaty did not forbid 'comey' and 'shakehands'. Reminding the British government that the markets were divided between Bonny and Opobo by the Treaty of 3rd January, 1873 following the War of 1869-1873, at which Commodore Commerell and Consul Livingstone represented the British government, it protested against "the interference of the five European traders with our markets" and against Hewett's order that Ja Ja should no longer exercise authority in the interior. Qua natives had killed the King's men. "It is customary whenever such occurence happens, they are at once put down by us, and the criminal punished, this having been refused by Consul Hewett, am afraid that in a short time if left unnoticed, our markets will be ruined" as nowadays men were killed trying to collect debts. The 8th clause of the petition was revealing as Ja Ja informed the British government that the five merchant houses "were never present when I was undertaken to make my country....They Charles de Cardi and McKichen have arranged with me not to permit other traders on this River to trade and should I adhere to such for 6 years, 100 puncheons palm oil will be given to me as dash for so doing and in my admitting Messrs. Stuart & Douglas, this

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40. F0403/73 No.83 Salisbury to Consul, June 24, 1887.

amount was forfeited, they Stuart & Douglas have never refunded same although they know it." This clearly explodes the myth of King Ja Ja, the incurable monopolist, struggling against British free traders. Stuart & Douglas, an associate firm of Holt, were one of the recent arrivals to the coast. By admitting them into the Opobo trade, King Ja Ja breached the monopoly agreement with de Cardi and the firm of Millers. Stuart & Douglas failed to compensate Ja Ja for so doing. This resulted in the loss to Ja Ja of 100 puncheons, and his alienation from the new firm. In sum, the view of Ja Ja and his people was that European interference into the markets had unsettled conditions and bred lawlessness; Hewett had denied the King the right to restore law and order according to traditional practice while he himself could do nothing to that effect. This, the petitioners felt, should be righted.[41]

Two points stand out clearly from this petition; King Ja Ja and his people were still claiming the right, based on their ownership, to regulate the use of the interior markets. They were also keenly aware that European activities in recent years were tending to subvert their society, breeding disorder and lawlessness. Any attempt at unbiased settlement of the dispute at Opobo would have been made on receipt of this petition. Such an attempt would have taken into account Hewett's letter of 1st July, 1884, defining 'protection' to Ja Ja and also the King's very pertinent point that no Treaty had made any reference to 'comey' or 'shakehands', the two points on which he was now accused of irregular conduct. No attempt at settlement was made along those lines; in fact there is no evidence that King Ja Ja ever received a formal acknowledgment of his petition. What was taken notice of by the British authorities was the fact of King Ja Ja's continuing

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41. Ja Ja Papers 2, Memorandum of King Ja Ja's Chief grievances dated at Opobo and sent to FO, July 17, 1887.

determination to assert his authority as King of Opobo and its hinterlands. The attempts to use the merchants to subvert Ja Ja's authority had also failed.

Consular Authority attempts a 'peaceful' settlement:

A few days after his arrival in Opobo, Acting Consul Johnston held a palaver. Its purpose was to investigate the charges and complaints levelled against King Ja Ja by the agents of the firms of the African Association. It is not known how the meeting proceeded but according to Johnston, Ja Ja admitted having "at different times - in some cases years, in others, months - before the movement of the British traders to the markets," 'chopped ju ju' with the people of the interior binding them to trade solely with him and his people. This meant that the interior had been, and would remain, closed to British enterprise. To the youthful Acting Consul, with his ideas about the future development of Africa and the strategic importance of the hinterland in terms of the superiority of its material and human resources compared with the coastal fringes,[42] Ja Ja's admission that he had established a system to prevent the movement of the British into the interior was so vital that he decided to abandon the investigation of the direct charges of the agents and concentrate his efforts on securing the annulment of the ju ju. He was willing to make a deal with King Ja Ja. If the King would concede free trade in the interior,

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42. Oliver, R., Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa, London 1959, pp. 99-100.

Johnston's ideas in these respects correspond to those of Dr. Edward Wilmot Blyden; it would be interesting to know whether Johnston read any of Blyden's many works or communicated in any way with him.

> 'I would consider the 'palaver' at an end, would not call the Senior Naval Officer of the division and would ask permission from your Lordship to repay to him the large fine conditionally remitted by the Foreign Secretary.' 43

The method proposed by the Acting Consul involved the King in a two-fold action. Ja Ja was to sign an agreement making himself responsible for the unhindered movement of British traders in his markets. Secondly, he was to send, not later than the 2nd of August, one of his chief lieutenants with the Acting Consul to 'break' the ju ju which, in Johnston's view, bound the interior people to trade solely with him. This was to be followed by a public declaration by the King, of his adherence to the principle of free trade.

As on other occasions, Ja Ja's obstinacy made Johnston loose his temper and exposed his verbosity. He could not help feeling that

> "the five principal firms trading on this river have a very large call on the sympathy and assistance of the British government. Relying on the assurances of protection and support made to them at different times by competent authorities in the Government, they have gone to great expense to adopt a line of policy which has received the consistent support of Mr. Consul Hewett, and which has met with your Lordship's approval. Now that they are about to reap the long-awaited for and sadly needed profits of their praiseworthy enterprise," he went on, "their trade is stopped by the machinations of one of the most grasping, unscrupulous and overbearing of mushroom Kings who ever attempted to throttle the growing commerce of white man with the rich interior."

Johnston was sure that Ja Ja would yield to his terms under the show of force of two gunboats. "But if he continues to resist them, I must respectfully ask your Lordship for means of properly and effectually supporting British authority." Here, Johnston had hit on the crux of the matter as it involved the British merchants. They had been content to confine their trading activities to the coastal fringes; it was on the coast that they had established factories and it was there that they could hope to receive the

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43. FO403/86 No.27 Johnston to Salisbury, July 28, 1887.

protection of the navy in the case of attack from the local people. Movement into the interior involved unforeseeable economic and physical risks. It was their awareness of this fact that led them, even after King Ja Ja had boycotted the majority of them in favour of Miller Brothers following their attempt to dictate prices to him, not to take the initiative to enter his interior markets. It was consular promises of government protection following the declaration of the Protectorate that led them to turn their attention to the hinterland, and plan accordingly.

In the light of previous government decisions on the Ja Ja question, Johnston's demand for means of properly and effectively supporting British authority was not unreasonable. As early as 1881, John Holt had recommended that only King Ja Ja's removal would solve the difficulties of British merchants trying to enter the interior.[44] This point of view became a practical proposition in 1883 but the unwillingness of the Admiralty to cooperate rendered it impracticable. By March, 1887, however, both the Admiralty and the Foreign Office had come to agree that Ja Ja had to be coerced to make possible the exercise of the British Protectorate. The two government departments directly concerned had been converted to the consular viewpoint first advanced by Hewett in 1883 and taken up by his assistant, Johnston, soon after his appointment in 1886 - that only King Ja Ja's banishment could ensure for Britain, the security necessary for her continued control of the coast and advance into the interior. But the naval officer on the spot felt then that it would be desirable to allow Ja Ja some chance of being advised on the question by the consular authority. Consul Hewett's 'advice' had been turned down by the King, often as unworthy of consideration and followed with letters of protest to the Foreign Office.

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44. See Chap. III

In July, 1887, Acting Consul Johnston prepared to tender his own 'advice' and judging from King Ja Ja's previous reactions to consular 'advice' and proceedings together with his continuing determination to assert his authority as King, Johnston was right in deciding that, should his 'advice' fail to secure the desired result, the final solution, the banishment of the King, should be applied, and without further delay.

From King Ja Ja's point of view, Johnston's demands were impossible of fulfilment. His position, not only as the greatest and wealthiest merchant-King but above all, the King of Opobo, responsible for the exercise of ritual functions, depended on his control, as middleman, of the interior. As King, it was his duty, for which he had to account to the ancestors, to maintain the traditional link between the coast and the interior for the welfare of the community, socially, religiously and economically. Ja Ja's industry, his covenants and marriage alliances had, through the years, nurtured the existing pattern of socio-political relationship with the inland people; his industry had maintained the old trade routes and opened new ones. It must have galled him that British merchants and their consuls who had not the slightest knowledge of these socio-political values and had taken no more than indirect part in the development of those markets should now demand unhindered and uncontrolled access to them. Of great importance in the scheme of opening the markets proposed by Johnston, was the ju ju 'breaking' aspect. As has been stated in a previous chapter, 'ju ju chopping' was a perpetual and irrevocable covenant. It had religious as well as socio-political and economic significance. Because it was a customary practice, it had the force of law; its breach therefore had religious, socio-political and economic repercussions. For these reasons, the inland people themselves, as Johnston was to find, would never agree to the disregard of these covenants. Johnston, unaware of the full implications of the 'ju ju chopping' regarded them simply as treaties which, like all treaties, could be adjusted or annulled as circum-

stances demanded. To him, they were no more than King Ja Ja's system of monopolistic economic exploitation, which also enabled the King to exercise political power.

Johnston intended to present his demands to Ja Ja in the presence of at least two gunboats. At the time he wrote to London, he had only one, the Goshawk and was awaiting the arrival of another, Alecto. Meanwhile he made expeditions into two of Ja Ja's markets, Ohambela and Essene. King Ja Ja had married into a prominent family of Ohambela and was therefore taken as a son of the place. He had also lent money to some promising young men of the area and these now acted as trade 'Boys', for him, buying produce on his behalf. The extent of King Ja Ja's commercial activities in this place much increased its prosperity to the extent that its elders could say that Ja Ja had made their town. At Essene King Ja Ja's influence was also supreme. When therefore Acting Consul Johnston arrived at Ohambela without prior information from the King, Ja Ja's resident agents hindered his advance; the local people all fled into the bush hastily. Johnston concluded that the agents were to blame for the local people's reaction on his approach. He also found the behaviour of the agents "very insolent". However, despite the alleged vigilance of the officials, the Acting Consul managed to learn from some of the local people that they were willing to allow Europeans into their territory to trade "provided we either induced Ja Ja to absolve them from the oath he had forced them to take or else agreed to protect them from his vengeance."[45] This was obviously meant for Foreign Office consumption; as the Acting Consul himself was to confess, the difficulties of inland penetration by Europeans lay as much with the interior people themselves as with Ja Ja. Leaving Ohambela, Johnston attempted to visit Essene but his

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45. FO403/86 No. 31, Johnston to Salisbury, August 1, 1887.

advance was barred by a more aggressive demonstration. At Azumini Creek, he saw a group of people, some carrying sticks and others Snider rifles and matchets, blocking the route into the mainland for his party while allowing King Ja Ja's canoes to pass unmolested. As the Acting Consul attempted to proceed, the angry crowd converged on his party and he could escape injury only by the interposition of his umbrella. When he attempted to reason with them, they told him that they had no business with him and that if he wanted to do any business, he should first of all go and make peace with King Ja Ja.[46]

These experiences helped to strengthen Johnston's conviction that Ja Ja's removal was vital to the successful running of the new British Protectorate. Both Ohambela and Essene were very rich in oil and fine cattle. This discovery made Johnston unable to restrain his boundless enthusiasm:

> The placid stream up which we were travelling became a strong mountain torrent. Here is a country where white men may hope to settle and enjoy good health, and it is from lands like these that runaway slaves and upstart Kings like Ja Ja are trying to keep us from penetrating, lest their ill-gotten gains as middlemen may be diminished...When I think of the thousands of pounds which the five British firms have spent in perfecting their arrangements for penetrating to the only part of this country which is worth exploiting, a land where they might hope to enjoy good health and where the products for which they came to trade are produced, and when I reflect that, in attaing this object all the obstacles that are placed in their way come from a grasping, ruthless, overbearing ex-slave whom adventitious circumstances have surrounded with a prestige and importance he does not merit, I can understand the complaints that the merchants make of the lukewarm way in which the British government support British traders.[47]

Here, in a nutshell, was the problem as it presented itself to Johnston; Ja Ja, a runaway slave, an upstart of a King was barring the access of noble Britons to the richest and healthiest part of the Niger coastline in order to preserve his monopoly position. This was intolerable and the British government should bestir itself and give more active support to its traders whom it had roused to the struggle for free -trade against monopoly. This was the

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46. FO403/86 No. 95, Johnston to Salisbury, September 11, 1887

47. FO403/86 No. 31, Johnston to Salisbury, August 1, 1887.

message Britain's representative intended this piece of polemic to convey to his government.

Johnston informed Ja Ja about his desire that the ju ju on the inland people should be broken as part of a scheme to introduce 'free trade' into Ja Ja's territory. However, the King replied that he must await the return of his envoys whom he had sent to present his case to the British Foreign Secretary before giving a definite answer to the Acting Consul's proposal. He once again denied Johnston's allegation that the interior Ibos were molesting the British traders on Ja Ja's instigation. In fact, Ja Ja went on, he always warned the Ibos against molesting white men. "If white men wish to trade better," he disclosed, "They pull their flags down."[48] This statement explains one of the underlying causes of hostility towards the British in the Delta hinterland. The interrelationship of trade and politics in this region has already formed the subject of a well-known work, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta. Attempt has been made in a previous chapter of the present work to show how this interrelation of economics and politics helped to extend the power and influence of King Ja Ja of Opobo. On the Delta, he who held the purse-strings and controlled ritual power held the power to command overall obedience. Such alone was sovereign and entitled to exhibit his flag or staff of office. The British merchants' exhibition of the British flag put a question mark in the minds of the local people over their status as bona fide traders and excited hostility.

Johnston was not satisfied with Ja Ja's reply and on the 5th August, invited the King to a meeting at the beach of Messrs. Harrison and Co., one of the five firms opposed to Ja Ja. The agenda, according to Johnston's

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48. FO403/86, Encl. 2 in 48, Ja Ja to Johnston, July 29, 1887, in less edited form in FO403/73, Encl. 2 in No. 152, Ja Ja to Johnston, July 29, 1887.

letter to the King, was the settlement of all outstanding questions between Ja Ja and the merchants and consuls. King Ja Ja was asked to come half an hour earlier. At Harrison's beach where he turned up at the stated time, the Acting Consul presented him with conditions regarding 'breaking' ju ju and enforcing 'free trade' in the markets and demanded his signature on the document. King Ja Ja, Johnston stated, had no right to Ohambela, Essene and Azumini; he was therefore to cease exercising authority in these places. Signing the document, surrendering to Johnston a beach at Ohambela, and sending his chief lieutenant to 'break' ju ju would end the whole palaver between the King and the British authority. Trade between Ja Ja and the agents would be resumed and so would payment of his 'comey'.[49] The Acting Consul had meanwhile secured the appearance of the desired second gunboat and, from his tone, must have been too confident of having his way with the King. Ja Ja however would not yield; he repeated his earlier reply that he must await the return of his envoys from England as it would not be right for him to settle one way and they another. Johnston retorted that his instruction from London was to settle immediately, whereupon Ja Ja offered to pay the expense of a telegram to the Foreign Office to report postponement of settlement till the envoy's return. The Acting Consul refused to budge, insisting on immediate settlement. In fact he now presented the King with an ultimatum; he was either to sign the document or to pay the running expenses of the five-member firms of the African Association, of the two gunboats and of the consul himself.[50]

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49. FO403/86 No. 48 Johnston's Decision Respecting Free Trade, 5 August 1887, and enclosures.

50. FO403/86 Encl 1 in 48B Ja Ja to Johnston, 5 August 1887.

King Ja Ja clearly hoped for a favourable settlement from the Foreign Office. His correspondence with that office is strewn with references to the government not being in possession of the real facts and issues involved in his dispute with its representatives. It was a measure of his naivety that, in sending a deputation of his Chiefs and sons, he sincerely believed that he would win his case once the senior officials heard the truth. This helps to explain his concern that further discussion of the question be avoided until their return at which time there might be nothing to discuss with Johnston. There was the fact also that King Ja Ja believed that the power to take decisions lay not with the consuls but with their governments in London. From his own local experience of inter-state relations, that government was certain, in his view, to disavow much of the activities of its representatives in King Ja Ja's dominion as these were contrary to accepted standards. To the senior officers in London, however, 'the truth' was what conduced to the effective establishment of their power on the Niger region. It was not, as Johnston believed, fear of reprisals against his envoys,[51] that led King Ja Ja to agree to the advice of Millers' agent to sign the document, but under protest.[52] Rather, it was the King's belief that British power lay not on the coast but in London and that all proceedings at the former place were of little significance. There was also the consideration that the proposed 'breaking' of ju ju which the King knew would have no effect on the existing trading patterns, would be followed, as the Acting Consul had promised, by a resumption of trade. To Johnston and all those who supported a strong line against the King, Ja Ja's envoys were hostages; while they remained

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51. FO403/86, Encl. 4 in 125, Johnston to White, October 3, 1887.

52. FO403/86, Encl. 1 in 48B, Ja Ja to Johnston, August 5, 1887.

away, there was the hope that he would be more easily amenable to consular demands. This was why the Consul refused to postpone the palaver until their return.

As Ja Ja was about to sign the document, Johnston made some oral additions to his demands. He stated that he would waive the application of 'free trade' to "Opobo territory" which he defined thus:

> The limit of Ja Ja's Country on the west is the left bank of the Andoni River from the Sea to a point 10 miles from the mouth of the river. Thence, the boundary strikes east, north-east across the lower portion of the Ogoni Country to the Opobo River which it reaches at a point opposite the mouth of the Essene Creek. Crossing the Opobo River, the boundary follows the left bank of the Essene Creek for a distance of eight miles...[53]

On this definition, "Ohambela, Azumini and Essene are in the British Protectorate" and not Opobo territory. Johnston was here trying, as Hewett had done, though better qualified to do so, to define King Ja Ja's empire. In the process, Johnston accepted, by implication, that King Ja Ja's empire was not within the British Protectorate; in other words, the 1873 Commercial Treaty with the King was still the basis of Opobo-British relation and Ja Ja therefore had the right to exclude whom he chose from his territory, beyond the port of Opobo. Yet, it was on the plea that King Ja Ja refused him access to his territory, that Johnston had sent for a second gunboat to support his authority and had recommended that the King should be banished. This delimitation conflicted with Rosebery's point about one Protectorate and went against the government's declaration of June 5, 1885. Consul Hewett was thus not the only Consul to be inconsistent towards Ja Ja. In the preceding chapter, attempt was made to show the futility of defining Ja Ja's empire. The King's authority was based, not so much on ownership of a particular strip of land as on the everlasting covenants and marriage bonds

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53. FO403/86, Encl. 4 in 59, Palaver at Opobo, August 5, 1887.

which bound the people of Eastern Niger Delta to him. In insisting on the dissolution of these covenants, Johnston revealed his recognition of the fact that King Ja Ja's influence was based on the potency of these alliances. The crucial fact which escaped not only the Acting Consul but also others after him,[54] was that the interior people's traditional practice of subordinating their trade relations to Opobo was sanctioned and ordained by the ancestors. The moment therefore, that Johnston tried to change this pattern by delimiting Ja Ja's territory, he was bound to come up against the opposition not only of Opobo but also of the very people whom he claimed to be liberating from the King's domination.

King Ja Ja, protesting, signed Johnston's document and wrote to the Acting Consul:

> You will please understand that the document I signed today was signed under force, as I told you and all the white gentlemen present including Captain Hand, H.M. Ship Royalist...I was never aware until today, that Ohambela, Azumini and Esseni were not in my territory and I don't see how you can define my territory when I don't seem to know it myself. It is only Ohombela you ask me to send my Chief and I am ready to send him at any time you wish to inform these market people that the ju ju with us is broken; but as you said that if they do not trade with whitemen you cannot interfere further with me.[55]

King Ja Ja had not accepted Johnston's definition of 'Opobo territory' on the ground that this was beyond the Acting Consul's powers seeing that Ja Ja himself did not know where his authority began and stopped. On the ju ju 'breaking' question, the King was satisfied, on Johnston's assurance, that he would no longer be blamed for the behaviour of the inland people towards British traders after he had sent to 'break' the ju ju that bound them to him.

It was on these circumstances that Ja Ja signed Johnston's document. The following day, the Acting Consul, feeling victorious, telegraphed the

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54. Oliver, R. Harry Johnston, p. 109.

55. FO403/86, Encl. 1 in 48B, Ja Ja to Johnston, August 5, 1887.

Foreign Secretary that Ja Ja had removed the restrictions he had imposed on trade. Then began the dispute as to which of Ja Ja's lieutenants was most capable of 'breaking' the ju ju. King Ja Ja's selected envoy did not suit Johnston who preferred Chief Ogolo, as the Chief most likely to represent Ja Ja effectively in the interior. In the end, King Ja Ja agreed that Ogolo should go. On the 7th August, Captain Hand, Johnston himself, the agents of the five firms and three of Ja Ja's Chiefs, started for Ohambela escorted by the gunboats, one of whose steam cutters mounted a Gardiner Gun. At Ohambela beach, Johnston and Hand, desirous of displaying their power to the local potentates, ordered that the latter should be brought down to meet them at the landing place. Etiquette, in this part of the world, desired a visitor to call, and not be called upon by the elders of the people. It would be impolitic therefore for an emissary to suggest to those elders that they were required to reverse the normal procedure. The Chiefs ignored Johnston's orders. When he insisted, they went and fetched four men who, because they could be so brought, held no position in the society.

It was in the presence of these four men that a ceremony of 'ju ju breaking' was concocted and performed by Ogolo.[56] Two points require comment; Johnston had, in his definition of "Opobo territory" excluded Ohambela from King Ja Ja's territory but it was at Ohambela that ju ju 'breaking' took place and under the auspices of King Ja Ja's Chiefs. Secondly, at Ohambela where the local potentates had earlier told the Acting Consul that Ja Ja made and owned their land, the people maintained their loyalty to Ja Ja and refused to confer with Johnston on his terms even when invited to do so by Ja Ja's lieutenants. It cannot be over-emphasized that the 'ju ju breaking' had no significance whatsoever for the people of Ohambela. This was so for two

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56. FO403/86 Incl. 2 in No. 47 Johnston to Ja Ja, August 11, 1887.

main reasons; it was something never before heard of and therefore without basis in tradition. Secondly, it was carried out not with the sanction and participation of the leaders of the people but in the presence of only four 'unknown' members of Ohambela community. King Ja Ja had however fulfilled the letter of the document he signed and now demanded that Johnston should abide by his own side of the arrangement and instruct the agents to resume trade and the payment of 'comey' to the King.

The inefficacy of the 'peaceful' solution:

To the Acting Consul, the ju ju 'breaking' and his other experiences in Ohambela proved anticlimatic. He could not conceal his doubts concerning the efficacy of the whole exercise in producing 'free traders' in the interior. So before the departure of Hand from the Delta, he enquired of the Captain when the Captain would be able to give necessary assistance for King Ja Ja's removal from his territory. Hand replied that he would not be able to spare a second gunboat to come to Opobo before the middle of October:

> "I explained to Mr. Johnston before leaving Opobo," wrote Hand, "the position in which I was placed with regard to the employment of the gunboats and I left under the impression that he fully concurred with my views; that, as he could not receive any effectual support before the middle of October, that as this question of foreigners trading direct with the markets in the interior had been pending for two years, and as Ja Ja had sent a deputation to England... it would be better, should Ja Ja offer any further opposition and fail to comply with the terms of the Agreement he had recently signed, to wait a few weeks, that when action was taken it might be effectual and also executed under instructions from our superior authorities..."[57]

Johnston was against any further delay in dealing with King Ja Ja. He could also sense Hand's lack of enthusiasm for an encounter with the King which he attributed to naval officer's general tendency to look upon the commercial interest of their fellow countrymen as of not much account.[58]

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57. FO403/86, Encl. 1 in 112, Hand to Admiralty, September 30, 1887.

58. FO403/86, No. 111, Johnston to Salisbury, September 24/28, 1887.

Despite his basic disagreement with Hand, Johnston knew that he could do nothing without his assistance and so

> "...I endeavoured to stave off the decisive action which I knew must sooner or later be taken against Ja Ja, and I therefore first employed the stoppage of his trade with British subjects as a means of enforcing the observance of his Agreement and Treaties."[59]

Thus to King Ja Ja's demand for the quid pro quo of his 'breaking' ju ju, which was the resumption of trade and payment of 'comey', the Acting Consul made fresh demands; that Ja Ja should bring to the Acting Consul for punishment for alleged bad behaviour, his Chief lieutenant at Ohambela, Ekike Onitshe. The King, insisting that trade be resumed according to agreement, told Johnston that Ekike was a native of Ohambela, not of Opobo and that if he, Ja Ja, attempted to arrest Ekike, war would ensue between Opobo and Ohambela. Following that reply, Ja Ja wrote to Salisbury, complaining of the Acting Consul's proceedings which were calculated to create disturbances in his territory.[60] The Acting Consul had also been making reports to London, voicing his dissatisfaction with the posture of affairs:

> "I have however reason to believe," he complained to Salisbury, "that neither Ja Ja nor the majority of his Chiefs loyally accept the conditions of the Agreement which the former has signed and that for some time to come we shall have to expect a covert opposition to the establishment of European traders at the markets beyond Ja Ja's territory."[61]

It was part of Johnston's scheme to stave off the decisive action when, after the departure of Hand, he made further trips into King Ja Ja's inland

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59. FO403/86, No.111, Johnston to Salisbury, September 24/28, 1887.

60. FO403/86, No. 49, Ja Ja to Salisbury, August 12, 1887.

61. FO403/86, No. 47, Johnston to Salisbury, August 12, 1887.

markets. At Ohambela, the Ibo elders refused to palaver with him and when they appeared, offered to trade with Europeans only if they would trade in slaves and yams and at their own price.[62] Johnston finally retreated from Ohambela, depressed by the obvious futility of his previous efforts to establish his fellow countrymen in the interior. Writing to Hand on the situation, he could no longer conceal the fact that he had been "expelled by the Ohambela men."[63] On this testimony, the inability of British traders to establish themselves inland was thus not due to Ja Ja making "practical difficulties for the traders, by placing a boom across the river and by terrorizing his up-country producers into refusing to trade direct with whitemen...."[64]

From the interior, Johnston wrote to Captain Pelly stationed off Opobo instructing him to institute a total blockade of Opobo waterways as part of a ban on all trade by British subjects with Opobo and its outlying districts. Following that, he telegraphed to his superiors thus;

> "Through Ja Ja's action Agreement made with us market broken. Obliged prohibit Ja Ja trading until fulfils engagement. 65

It is clear that Johnston was here reporting his proceedings and not asking for permission to institute a ban on trade. This had in fact been in force for some days and had led to open disagreement between the Acting Consul and Turnbull, the Opobo agent of Miller Brothers, in the course of which Johnston threatened to deport Turnbull if he continued to resist consular proclamations and should a fine of five hundred pounds fail to secure his acquiescence.[66] To King Ja Ja, Johnston's attitude grew equally more

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62. FO403/86 Encl. 3 in No. 112 Johnston to Pelly, August 15, 1887.

63. FO403/86 Encl. 7 in No. 112 Johnston to Hand, September 11, 1887.

64. Oliver, Harry Johnston, p. 109.

65. FO403/73 No. 102 Johnston to Salisbury, August 19, 1887.

66. See FO403/86 No. 80 Johnston to Salisbury, August 20, 1887. Encl. in No. 71 Johnston to Turnbull, August 19, 1887 and No. 24B Turnbull to Johnston August 20, 1887.

aggressive, As Ja Ja's trading men tried to ignore the Acting Consul's blockade of their waterways, the gunboat stationed off Opobo gave chase and many of the men were drowned. To the King's complaint regarding this and a failure to abide by the promise to resume trade, the Acting Consul replied:

> Because Ohombela Chiefs, through your people's instigation revoked promises to Hand and myself on 10th August, I am compelled to forbid all trade with Ohombela and all trade with you until this matter is settled, i.e. until the Ohombela Chiefs open their markets to the whitemen and your people at Ohombela cease from putting obstacles for free trade. When whitemen are permitted to trade without restriction at Ohombela and when you remove the man Ekike Notsho...trade will be reopened. 67

King Ja Ja replied, denying that his influence was responsible for the obstacles of the British traders in Ohambela but Johnston was unconvinced; he retorted that the King's influence was great in Ohambela and urged him to use it with the people to open their markets to the British, to remove Ekike Onotshe and bring him to the consul for examination. When he had done these, prohibition of his trade would be removed. Finally, the Acting Consul confessed:

> I feel however, that your intention is to continue your intrigues until the return of your mission from England, hoping thus to wear out my patience and avoid any concession. 68

The difficulties faced by the Consul and merchants in Opobo were now well-known in British political and mercantile circles. The interested firms had been canvassing the Foreign Office, not only indirectly through their M.P.s but also by direct representations to the government officials. On the 15th August, the Foreign Office sent the latest of many extracts from the letters from the Opobo agents of the Association firms to Consul Hewett still on sick leave and asked him to recommend what action should be taken.[69]

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67. FO403/86 Encl. 2 in No. 80 Johnston to Ja Ja August 17, 1887.

68. FO403/86 Encl. 3 in No. 80 Johnston to Ja Ja August 19, 1887.

69. FO403/73 No. 101 F.O. to Hewett, August 15, 1887.

Then followed the receipt at the Foreign Office of Millers' letter complaining of Johnston's stoppage of trade and, above all, informing the office that King Ja Ja's envoys were due to arrive on the 23rd August, and of Johnston's telegram of 19th August, reporting his failure to secure the implementation of his 'free trade' demands. The inescapable conclusion from these developments was that the attempt to secure effective control of Ja Ja's territory by peaceful means had failed. Johnston's moves to subvert the King's authority directly in the interior had proved singularly futile. At Ohambela, the people fled into the bush while their elders made impossible conditions. At Azumini Creek, booms were placed across to bar consular access and attempts to bypass them were met by threats of violence to the consular party, who, as Johnston reported, were told to make peace with Ja Ja before they could be allowed access. All these were minutely reported to the Foreign Office. On the 20th August, the Foreign Office sent Johnston's telegram of the 19th to Hewett asking him to send urgently his views on the course to be adopted towards King Ja Ja.[70] It is well to recall that Hewett had as early as 1883 recommended Ja Ja's deportation as the only permanent solution to merchant and consular difficulties at Opobo. On that occasion, there had been differences of opinion in the government regarding the propriety of the step. By March, 1887, however, both the Admiralty and the Foreign Office had agreed that aggressive action was the only possible permanent solution but their representatives on the coast were unable to agree; the naval officers argued that the circumstances did not warrant the application of the scheme proposed by the consular authority. The men on the coast had failed to solve the Ja Ja question and, as it was transferred to London, Hewett's recommendations were solicited. Those recommendations, the response of the rest of those involved to it, and its implications for the King of Opobo form the subject of the final chapter.

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70. FO403/73, No. 104, FO to Hewett, August 20, 1887.

CHAPTER V

DEPORTATION, EXILE AND DEATH OF KING JA JA

1887 - 1895

The position of the various senior officials on the question of Deporting Ja Ja

Before Consul Hewett's 'views' reached the Foreign Office, Johnston's telegram of the 19th August, together with a letter from Mr. Miller, announcing the arrival of King Ja Ja's envoys and asking for an offical audience for them, were received. It was one thing to have a coast problem but quite another to be presented with a deputation of African potentates. Wylde voiced the apprehension of the entire government when he minuted:

> "This is rather a momentous letter as it threatens the F.O. with a terrible visitation.....If the interview is granted, it will probably last out 'a night in winter'. Miller and Co. further complain of V/C Johnston's action in stopping their trade, and add that they hope the F.O. will not dis approve of their having wired their agents to pay no attention to the consul's fiat. The result of this is that a very edifying spectacle is being presented at Opobo, which cannot fail to be instructive to the blacks." [1]

Johnston's telegram was quickly sent to Hewett who was asked to submit his views on the course to be adopted "with as little delay as possible"[2].

Hewett's views soon arrived and revealed much understanding of Ja Ja's motives for his actions. The King, the consul wrote, was acting,

> "with the undoubted object of opposing and thwarting Her Majesty's Government in what he considers their unjust interference with his rights...and I cannot but think that it would now be advisable, in the interests of trade, for the establishment of amicable relations with the natives of the interior as well as for the destruction of a pernicious system of government that this upstart of a King, a man who is as unprincipled as he is cruel and unjust, should be dealt with in a severe and exemplary manner." [3]

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1. FO403/73 Minutes by Wylde on No. 103 Millers to Salisbury, 19 August 1887
2. FO403/73 No. 104 F.O. to Hewett, August 20, 1887
3. FO403/73 No. 106 Hewett to Salisbury, August 20, 1887

Her Majesty's Consul was clearly not to be outdone in vituperation against King Ja Ja by his subordinate. He now went on to propose that, in addition to a fine of about 200 puncheons of palm oil, Ja Ja should be deposed and deported to St. Helena or Ascension or some other place not on the West Coast of Africa for such a period as the British Government might find expedient. As to the means of carrying out his proposals, the consul suggested that two gun-boats should be sent to Opobo. One of them should carry Ja Ja away while the other remained to ensure good behaviour from Opobo people. For the government of Opobo after the King's removal, he suggested a Council of five Chiefs with Sunday, Opobo's heir-apparent, succeeding to the Headship of his father's House, under consular supervision. A fixed sum of money should be remitted to the British government quarterly by Sunday for the maintenance of King Ja Ja and his suite which should not consist of many persons.

Before sending Hewett's letter to Salisbury, Lister minuted on it:

> Lord Salisbury,
> Ja Ja is a false, cruel Chief under our Protectorate who interferes with British traders and missionaries, breaks treaties and laughs at HMG. The cup of his iniquity is now full and you will see what Consul Hewett proposes to do with him. I have discussed the matter with him, and am quite convinced that any further leniency will have disastrous effect. If you agree, we should send instructions at once to V/C Johnston and tell the Admiralty to carry out the necessary measures...
>
> T.V.L. 22 Aug. 1887. [4]

Lister went on to state that Miller should be told that his Lordship could not consider the question of receiving Ja Ja's emissaries until they put their complaints in writing and that Salisbury "most strongly disapprove their action in instructing their agents to defy consular authority, an act which deprives them of all claims for protection or support..." Salisbury read Hewett's letter with Lister's commentary on it and minuted:

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4. FO403/73 Minute by Lister (on Hewett's memo) 22nd August 1887.

> Before acting on these drastic suggestions, I must ascertain what fleet the Admiralty have disposable and it would [be] well also to know what is the magnitude of the trade concerned. S.22.8.[5]

Up to this point, these were the Prime Minister's reasons for restraint - the availability of fleet to carry out the proposed deportation and the magnitude of the trade which the deed was being done to secure. Miller was, however, instructed according to Lister's suggestion.

On the following day, three key men in the Opobo trade, Hannemann Stuart, T. Stanley Rogerson and Alfred S. Graves appeared at the Foreign Office to complain that King Ja Ja was ruining their Opobo trade and to call for his deportation as the only permanent solution to their problem.[6] It is to be doubted that their visit was not prompted by either Hewett or his supporters in the Foreign Office or both. However, Wylde seized the opportunity of their presence and questioned them about the size of the Opobo trade. They replied that about 7,000 tons of palm oil, valued at £140,000, was exported from that port yearly. In addition, there was kernel up to the annual value of £30,000; India rubber, cocoa, and material for dyes were also exported, the latter was increasing yearly. British exports, mainly cloth, calico, hardware, to the value of £140,000 went to Opobo annually.[7] It was substantial and highly profitable trade of which the visiting gentlemen claimed 5/6 as their share. Further, they stated that their share represented a sufficient proportion of the Liverpool interest to cause the sending of a deputation of Liverpool M.P.s to see the Foreign Secretary. It is probable that Wylde and Lister, both strong advocates of deportation, had actually engineered the representation. They now went

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5. FO84/1828, Salisbury's Minutes on Hewett to Salisbury, August 20, 1887.

6. FO403/73, No. 107, A.A. to Salisbury, August 23, 1887.

7. FO403/73, No. 108, Memorandum and Minutes by Wylde, Lister, and Salisbury, August 23, 1887.

further to apply a little pressure on their Chief when, still speaking for the three, they threatened the Head with a deputation of Liverpool M.P.s. Both men wished to exploit the natural dislike of politicians for such deputations and as an alternative, Lister felt that "Lord Salisbury would probably prefer to deport Ja Ja" rather than receive the deputation. His Lordship was not certain that he would and retorted, "On the whole, I should prefer to deport the deputation." Lister's view was that Salisbury was not in a position to choose between the two and he informed his Lordship so;

> "Lord Salisbury, You will have to receive the deputation and to deport Ja Ja. Great excitement about the matter in West Coast African circles and Mr. Forwood (Admiralty) will introduce the deputation. There will be no difficulty therefore about ships. We must support our consul and if a severe lesson is not given to Ja Ja, all the other Chiefs will become uncontrollable... You have had a Memo as to the large amount of trade and there can be no difficulty about the ships. Pauncefote has no doubts as to our right of stopping trade or deporting Ja Ja.
>
> Aug. 24, 1887. T.V.L."

Lister's argument seemed to be having the desired effect.

In reply, Salisbury minuted:

> "I will speak to Lord George in Cabinet. These West African expeditions are most unremunerative. S."

So far, neither Lord Salisbury nor his subordinates in the government had taken into consideration the basic issue of the right of King Ja Ja to choose with whom he traded and how that trade was organised. At this point Salisbury called for all the papers on the Ja Ja question. After going through those sent to him, he wrote:

> "It is evident we can do nothing until Ja Ja's Embassy has been heard. But the papers sent in this box are incomplete. The whole case against Ja Ja is that he has broken faith, because, unless he has made some promise to the contrary, we are not entitled to call upon him to admit our traders into parts of his country where they have never been admitted before. Please let me have the papers showing the nature of the promises made by Ja Ja which he is alleged to have broken. S. Aug. 25, 1887." 8

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8. FO403/73 Salisbury's memo on Hewett to Salisbury, 20 August 1887.

King Ja Ja had made no unfulfilled promises. Even the document regarding 'free trade' which he was compelled to sign against his will had been fulfilled in letter, if not in spirit, and Johnston himself had testified that the obstacles to the establishment of British traders in the interior included the interior people themselves. Lord Salisbury had clearly read the papers with greater perception than his subordinates and found his government's case weak. Since he had promised Ja Ja's enyoys a hearing if they would put their case in writing, Salisbury felt himself obliged to hear them before taking any drastic steps; Lister and Wylde, probably forgetting the promise of a hearing made to the envoys, were more concerned with supporting the consul and deporting Ja Ja quickly. Furthermore, Salisbury was keenly aware that, in not establishing 'free trade' according to the August agreement, King Ja Ja could successfully plead that he signed that agreement under duress. In those circumstances, the British government had no case against him. A strong case against the King was necessary if his deportation was to receive practical consideration.

Salisbury's minute was most useful in exposing the weaknesses of the government's position on the Ja Ja question. While the permanent officials cast about for means to close the loop-holes in their'case against Ja Ja' Lord Salisbury approached the Admiralty to ascertain what help it could give against the King. Following his Lordship's interview with Lord George of the Admiralty, that department prepared a memorandum in which it expressed the view that effective action against Ja Ja would require the use of West Indian troops and that the only service the navy could render would be to convey Ja Ja to the place decided for his exile "if it should really be considered absolutely necessary to deport Ja Ja."[9] Ranged alongside the

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9. FO403/73, No. 114, Memorandum by Admiral Hood, August 26, 1887.

flimsy case for deportation, was now also the unwillingness of the Admiralty to do other than conveyance duties. West Indian troops were usually suitable in long campaigns in the tropics, such as the Ashanti Wars, because of their supposed immunity from fevers. They tended, on the whole to cost substantial sums of money mainly because of the length of their operation and on account of the large numbers required for such campaigns. Lord Salisbury did not feel able to accept the use of West Indian troops against King Ja Ja. Since the Admiralty would not itself carry out the operation against the King and had expressed doubts about the necessity of deporting him, the head of the government decided to embark on a comprehensive review of policies against the King of Opobo, leading to a slight shift in position on his part as compared with the rest of the Foreign Office officials.

The divergence of views between Salisbury and his subordinates

Meanwhile however, the advocates of deportation, which included the majority of the permanent officials of the Foreign Office, had received Johnston's long and abusive despatch of the 1st of August which tried to prove that Ja Ja had broken promises and disobeyed the orders of the British government. To strengthen Johnston's statements with which the officials also concurred, Consul Hewett was once again approached and asked to write yet another memo on the reasons for Ja Ja's deportation. Salisbury's minute of the 25th August and the Admiralty Memo of the following day suggested to the advocates of deportation that the 'doves' were now gaining an upper hand and they made efforts to prevent this. Hence, the request of another memo from Hewett. It was also part of the campaign of gentle pressure when an official, after reading Johnston's letter and before forwarding it to Salisbury, minuted:

> 'I am given to understand from private sources that Ja Ja is contemplating an appeal to Germany. 1.9.1887.

At this point, Salisbury's views on the Ja Ja question clearly diverged from those of the majority of the Foreign Office officials. Hitherto, he had worried only about the size of the Opobo trade and the availability of ships. On the first point, a memorandum showing that the Opobo trade was substantial had been prepared and submitted to him. On the second point, the findings proved discouraging. The Admiralty memorandum declared the inability of that department to do more than transport Ja Ja to his place of exile; at the same time showing much lack of enthusiasm for deportation. Now, on reading Johnston's letter with the minutes attached to it, his Lordship minuted:

> "Are we sure Ahombela is not his country?...If Ahombela is really under the dominion of Ja Ja, he is only doing what a few years ago was done by France, China and Japan and what is still done by Nepal, Thibet and Formosa. S. 12.9.[10]

The leader of the government was now, unlike his subordinates, putting the Ja Ja question in a world-context, prompted by events such as the Zobier Pasha incident.[11]

Hewett's second memorandum on the property of deporting Ja Ja was soon ready. After the usual recital of the evils that would result from Ja Ja's example going unpunished, the same consul who had proclaimed the cruelty and lack of principle of King Ja Ja paid unwitting tribute to the King's statesmanship:

> "No native chief in my district has so much power in his own territory or wields so much influence among other tribes, as Ja Ja does. Not only would trade be benefitted by his being deported, but the Chiefs in the other rivers would be much more easily managed, as they would be deprived of his bad advice, and Her Majesty's Government would certainly be saved a great deal of trouble and correspondence...[12]

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10. FO84/1828, Salisbury's Minute on Johnston to Salisbury, August 1, 1887.

11. See page 188 below.

12. FO403/73, No. 115, Memorandum by Hewett respecting Ja Ja's Action in opposing the access of Europeans to native markets. Reasons for his deportation etc.

Allowing King Ja Ja to remain in the country he had made, continued the consul, would endanger the lives and property of every European who attempted to go up country. With commendable attention to detail, Consul Hewett went on to outline how Ja Ja should be captured and deported:

> 'Two gun-boats should be sent to Opobo and Ja Ja and his Chiefs should be summoned to attend the Acting Consul on board one of them who will read out and then deliver to Ja Ja Lord Salisbury's letter or telegram (if the latter, a copy should be given to Ja Ja), announcing the steps which Her Majesty's Government have ordered to be taken to punish him. I think it important that, besides the European traders, some influential Chiefs from the markets should be present at the meeting in order that they may carry back a correct version of the proceedings to assure the people that Ja Ja has been taken out of the country...'

Consul Hewett's resourcefulness on this occasion has no parallel in the rest of his dealings with the Ja Ja question. It is necessary to outline in detail his proposals because the measures actually carried out by Johnston corresponded very closely with them. Hewett had even emphasized the need for secrecy and anticipating a possible eventuality, had warned, "If Ja Ja should plead that he cannot attend on account of sickness, a peremptory order, sent with a sick-bay stretcher, some blue jackets and a file of marines in the charge of an officer, will facilitate matters and save further trouble, I'think." As to Opobo people, the consul was sure that they would not dare "to oppose force to the gunboats, but it would be as well to inspire them with fear and show them that all due preparations have been made for action...." After the seizure and deportation, another meeting was to be held by the Acting Consul to inform the Chiefs of the scheme of government for Opobo as outlined by Hewett in his previous memorandum and also of the proclamation of 'free trade' in all the rivers of the Niger Delta.

Attached to Hewett's memo and as a part of the campaign of gentle pressure on the head of the government, was a note by Wyld e that

> 'It should be borne in mind that, in dealing with this Chief, HMG disturb no national sentiment. Ja Ja is not descended from a race of Kings, or from a long line of ancestors settled at Opobo, the people over whom he rules (about 4,000) are bound to him by no ties of hereditary affection or devotion. Originally a slave from Ibo,

> he was brought to Bonny. There, he obtained a certain influence and from thence he was driven by Oko Jumbo. After certain vicissitudes, he settled about 16 years ago at Opobo. It is probable that, on his removal, his influence which is based on a superficial structure would at once decay....

A mixture of truth and falsehood, this note, embodying British egocentricity and lack of understanding of Delta communities, ended with the already nauseating recital of the evils that would result if Ja Ja's disregard of the British government's instruction was condoned. Underneath Wylde's contribution, came Lister's:

> "The particular mode of entrapping and deporting Ja Ja might be left to the Senior Naval Officer, but Consul Hewett has much experience in such matters. Aug. 27, 1887 T.V.L."

Salisbury's response grew more strongly discouraging. In a memo entitled "Complaints against Ja Ja", his Lordship expressed his inability to see, from the papers presented, what offence, deserving of the scheme proposed by Hewett, the King of Opobo had committed.

> "If we are to proceed according to any sort of rules of international right," he went on, "he is evidently the de facto Sovereign or Suzerain of this place, Ahombela and prohibition to trade with Europeans is a matter perfectly within his discretion....But I cannot see that he has resisted the direction given in Lord Rosebery's despatch. That despatch is directed against the practice of using the position at the mouth of a river to intercept trade going up through that river to the interior. If this had been Ja Ja's proceeding, our course would have been very clear. He could not be allowed to stop up a natural highway...I cannot at present see that we have any cause of war against Ja Ja." 13

Even Lord Salisbury had been unable to see clearly through the confusing haze of British policy towards King Ja Ja. By the 1873 Commercial Treaty, the British government had acknowledged King Ja Ja's right to prohibit trade going up from his riverside city-state to the interior. By early 1880s however, that same government established for itself a position denying

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13. FO403/73 No.118 Memo by Salisbury - Complaints against Ja Ja, August 29, 1887.

Ja Ja the right they acknowledged in 1873. Lord Salisbury had personally defended this denial of King Ja Ja's sovereign right.[14] If, as Salisbury now stated, Ja Ja, as de facto Sovereign of Ohambela, had the right to prohibit trade there, could it not be argued that he also had the right to control the use of the waterways leading up to Ohambela, bearing in mind that he as sovereign had not been represented at the Berlin Conference which declared the right of "free navigation"? Salisbury's sense of international justice here conflicted with his awareness of his nation's vital interest embodied in the trade that Opobo controlled.

Since, on Wylde's testimony, "the department are of opinion that the removal of Ja Ja would be most beneficial to English trade..."[15], it is clear that Salisbury's disagreement with the rest of the Foreign Office officials on the Ja Ja question concerned the method of coercing Ja Ja. To him, Hewett's method smacked too much of treachery and greatly offended his subtle sense of diplomacy. Nor was such a method likely to do the government's reputation any good, not only abroad but also at home. As Salisbury saw it

> To invite a Chief on board your ship, carefully concealing the fact that you have any designs against his person and then, when he has put himself in your power, to carry him away, is hardly legitimate warfare, even if we had a right to go to war. It is called 'deporting' in the papers but I think that this is a euphemism. In other places, it would be called kidnapping.

This consideration and the views of the Admiralty expressed in its memorandum (now appended to his own memo by Salisbury) led his Lordship to suggest that a better approach to the question would be to send another gun-boat to Opobo. It should be remembered that there was already one there. The Captain of this second one was to be instructed to remonstrate with King Ja Ja and obtain

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14. See Chap. IV

15. FO403/86, Minute by Wylde & Lister, on No. 27, July 28, 1887.

whatever relaxation of his restrictions on European activity as was possible. "The commander should", Salisbury finished, "however, unless under some unforeseen necessity be precluded from taking any aggressive action without further orders." In fact his Lordship would prefer simply to brow beat King Ja Ja into accepting British demands rather than have him removed.

Now the strong advocates of supporting consular view-point were ready with a stronger case for deportation. Wylde announced:

> Johnston's despatch has been received this morning and it is of much importance, as showing what Ja Ja really does and what he does not do. Johnston's opinion of Ja Ja may be considered as an unbiassed one. I submit that Ja Ja is doing and has for sometime past been doing, the exact acts which are therein (Salisbury's memo of 29th Aug.) held to be so reprehensible. He, situated at the mouth of the Creeks is stopping a river highway over which he possesses no lawful control and is influencing markets situated beyond his territory, to the detriment of British trade...there is undoubted ground for apprehension that if something is not done with Ja Ja, the commercial outcry will be louder than if we had dealt with him...Sept. 1, 1887 EWW.
>
> The deputation, I conclude, should now be received, and V/C Johnston approved by telegram. Sept. 1, 1887 E.W.W.

From Lister came; 'I quite agree.
We have the money for the V/C and only want the man. T.V.L. 14 [16]

It should be recalled that in the letter of 28th July from Johnston which formed the basis of this minute, the Acting Consul, after outlining his experiences with Ja Ja and his proposal to present the King with an ultimatum, had asked for means of effectually supporting British authority should Ja Ja continue to resist his conditions. Johnston wrote this letter before the telegram of 19th August announcing that he had prohibited trade with Ja Ja. That telegram which indicated that the Acting Consul's conditions were still being resisted by the King was received at the Foreign Office a few days later

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16. FO403/86 Minutes by Wylde and Lister on No.27, Johnston to Salisbury, July 28, 1887.

in August and had formed the basis of the first memorandum by Hewett and accompanying minutes by Lister, Wylde and Salisbury already cited. In that telegram, Johnston simply reported the steps he had taken and did not ask for permission to take those steps. On 1st September the issue before the authorities in London concerned the message conveyed by the latest information from Johnston, and not that of the telegram of the 19th August. Wylde's statement approving the Vice Consul in the minute of 1st September, cited above, in fact referred to the demand from Johnston for means of effectually supporting British authority, while Lister's reference to having the money for the Vice Consul was to Johnston's request, in the same despatch of 28th July, for more staff.

As in the case of the ban on trade with Ja Ja, when the Acting Consul took the decision without waiting for approval from London, so also in the case of his need for means of effectually supporting his authority. On the following day, the 29th July, Johnston telegraphed the senior naval officer on the station for assistance in action against Ja Ja. Captain Hand, however, expressed himself anxious to discuss the matter with Johnston before the latter threatened any hostile action. "From what I already know of this question," the captain advised, "there are other means of bringing Ja Ja to his treaty obligation without resort to hostilities."[17] While the Admiralty might find this view in consonance with departmental policy on the question, the Foreign Office was sceptical and called on Hand to prepare a report on what those other means were to which he referred.[18] Until the 29th August, "although the Department are of the opinion that the removal of Ja Ja would be most beneficial to English trade and the security of the coast, they by no means endorse the plan proposed by Consul Hewett for removing him."[19] As has been shown, it was

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17. FO403/73, Encl. in No. 122, Hand to Grubbe, July 29, 1887.

18. FO403/86, No. 30, FO to Admiralty, September 6th, 1887.

19. FO403/86, Minute by Wylde and Lister on No. 27.

in fact only Salisbury who objected to Hewett's means. By the beginning of September, which brought Johnston's despatch of 28 July, the rest of the senior officials of the department felt that the new information from the Acting Consul had strengthened the case for the employment of Hewett's method and was sufficient to induce a change of mind on that point in their Chief.

Salisbury, however, still found weaknesses in the new line of argument based on Johnston's latest information. The Acting General denied Ja Ja's ownership of the disputed territories despite the fact that the ruler of these places had informed him that Ja Ja made and owned the places. To Salisbury; such admission of the King's ownership was "an indication of de facto dominion and any discussion about his title becomes irrelevant. De facto dominion is the only thing of which we can take any notice, for one of us are learned enough to determine the legitimacy, according to native laws, of a Guinea King." It was with this statement that Lord Salisbury rose above his fellows in the whole Ja Ja episode. However, he went on to propose that the Captain of the gun-boat to be sent to Opobo should, on finding evidence of an attempt by Ja Ja to block the highway, inflict whatever punishment he could and thought right. His Lordship thus gave a blank cheque to the investigating officer, probably recalling that what the British side of the conflict might consider as a 'highway' might be, according to native laws Ja Ja's territories; Salisbury instructed the officer to negotiate with Ja Ja and make the nest terms possible if the exclusion was confined to Ja Ja's territory. The head of the government appreciated that to inflict a punishment on the King for refusing to open his territory would be a denial of his sovereign rights. Hence, the necessity for negotiation. In conclusion, Salisbury declared:

> "I am not satisfied with the entire impartiality of Consul Johnston's judgment, though he has gone less astray than Consul Hewett, but I think his action may be approved by telegram and he should be informed of the application we are making to the Admiralty. S.[20]

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20. FO403/73, No. 131, Memorandum by Salisbury, September 9, 1887.

Salisbury planned here to institute a kind of judicial process into the dispute.

The above cited memorandum was written by Salisbury from his holiday resort in France on 9th September. It followed the departmental memorandum by Wylde and Lister written on the 1st September and like the latter, was based on the latest information from Johnston. Salisbury's reference to approving the Acting Consul by telegram clearly was to the demand for means of effectually supporting his authority; his reference to application to the Admiralty was for the gunboat he proposed should go to Opobo to negotiate and remonstrate with Ja Ja. Salisbury's recommendation would involve a sincere effort to determine the extent of King Ja Ja's dominion. Interpreted in the narrow sense of ownership of territory, this would have deprived the King of vast areas over which he exercised suzerian control. If, on the other hand, as Salisbury had stated, de facto dominion was all that could be considered then King Ja Ja would have won his case against Britain's representatives. Such a prospect did not appeal to the forward party in the Foreign Office. Percy Anderson, Head of the African Section of the office, had a way out of such a Ja Ja victory.

Anderson's proposal was that a commission, of which Johnston should be a member should be set up to investigate the question of ownership. "Unless Hewett is absolutely wrong ab initio, which one cannot believe," the commission should "break down altogether, the case of ownership; and as this is now the only case of importance (for it is a matter of indifference what duties are imposed on what Hewett gives to Ja Ja as his dominion), the traders' point would be gained without any high-handed dealing on our part. If Ja Ja were afterwards troublesome, we should then be justified in dealing with him and have a good defence against the attacks of sentimentalists."[21] Anderson's view, like Salisbury's, was that, in the circumstances, Ja Ja had done

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21. FO403/73, Encl. in No. 141, Percy Anderson to Julian Pauncefote, September 10, 1887.

nothing to warrant deportation; although Anderson, like the rest of the members of the department, believed that King Ja Ja's deportation would be beneficial to British trade,[22] and would have to come about sooner or later, if Ja Ja did not mend his ways, Anderson preferred to guard himself first of all against accusations of highhandedness by the institution of a kind of investigation into the dispute which, as he naturally hoped, should settle the question in favour of the consul. As "Salisbury's expedient is virtually Anderson's" Fergusson's only hope was that "it does not put Hewett's nose too much out of joint."[23]

In fact Salisbury's proposed naval inquiry differed radically from Anderson's proposed commission which was only intended to provide a good defence against attacks from sentimentalists. Meanwhile, however, it appeared that Anderson had breached the gap between Salisbury and the rest of the department.

Governmental Approval to Deportation

But before Anderson's letter had been circulated to the rest of the senior officials of the department in London (Anderson, like Salisbury, was away on holiday) there arrived from Johnston a telegram worded thus:

> "Ask immediate permission remove Ja Ja temporarily Gold Coast. Organises armed attacks, obstructs waterways. Intrigues render this course imperative. Despatch following explains. Ask Admiralty telegraph assistance."[24]

On receipt of the above telegram, Pauncefote telegraphed the Acting Consul's message to Salisbury, adding:

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22. FO403/86, Minute by Wylde and Lister on No. 27.

23. FO403/73, No. 141, Fergusson to Curie, September 13, 1887.

24. FO403/73, No. 134, Johnston to Salisbury, Opobo, September 11/12, 1887. For evidence that the 11th is the more likely date for the despatch of this telegram see FO403/73, No. 203, Johnston to Salisbury, September 11, 1887, and FO403/86, No. 94, Johnston to Salisbury.

> Does this telegram modify your Lordship's memo received last night? Ja Ja has no right over Ohombela, as alleged, but he could not be imprisoned at Gold Coast without local Ordinance. He might be kept on board vessel of war until further instructions. Sept. 12, 1887, J.P.[25]

Without waiting for Salisbury's reply, a telegram was sent in Salisbury's name to Johnston on the very same day as the above cited telegram to the Chief. It was worded as follows:

> Your action with regard to Ja Ja approved. Further instructions will be sent after communication with Admiralty.[26]

The instruction embodied here is clear enough but it does not fully convey the message from the Chief's memorandum of the 9th which the Foreign Office had received on the 11th. That message already cited deserves repeating and runs:

> I am not satisfied with the entire impartiality of Consul Johnston's judgment, though he has gone less astray than Consul Hewett, but I think his action may be approved by telegram and he should be informed of the application we are making to the Admiralty.

As has already been pointed out, the application to the Admiralty was to secure a naval officer to inquire into the dispute. Lord Salisbury had expressed lack of confidence in Johnston's handling of the Ja Ja question, yet he went on to add that his action might be approved by telegram. Although his Lordship was referring to Johnston's firmness with Ja Ja and request for means of effectively supporting British authority, Salisbury had played into the hands of those who wished Ja Ja deported without further delay. They seized their opportunity and without waiting for their Chief's reply to Johnston's demand to have Ja Ja deported, despatched an approving telegram to the Acting Consul.

It is indeed true that Salisbury's view of what to do about Ja Ja was different from that of the rest of the officials. This was so because

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25. FO403/73, No. 136, Telegram to Salisbury, September 12, 1887.

26. FO403/73, No. 137, (Telegram), Salisbury to Johnston, September 12, 1887. Already cited footnote 19 above.

Lord Salisbury as a Parliamentary politician, unlike the rest of the senior officials, had to consider the wider implications of policies. While he calculated, the permanent officials forced his hand by despatching the telegram that led to King Ja Ja's deportation without the departmental head having committed himself to it. The traditional explanation for the fact that King Ja Ja was deported without Salisbury's orders to do so has been that Johnston's telegram asking permission to deport received attention at the Foreign Office after the despatch of that from the Office approving his action and that the two telegrams crossed each other on the way. The Foreign Office telegram, the argument runs, was a reply to Johnston's telegrams announcing that he had banned trade with King Ja Ja. Attempts have been made in the preceding pages to show that this was not so; Johnston merely reported action already taken and the Foreign Office sent no countermanding orders. Nor is there any evidence for the statement that Johnston's and the Foreign Office's telegrams crossed each other on the way. It can in fact be stated that they did not; Johnston's telegram, despatched on the sender's testimony, at 8 a.m. on the 11th September[27] received attention before the despatch of the telegram by Pauncefote, which itself supports this view. Careful calculations based on other telegrams to and from the Delta suggest that not more than 5½ hours was required for them to receive attention in London. There is no evidence to suggest that the telegram aksing permission to deport was an exception.

Even if it can be accepted that Johnston's and the Foreign Office's telegrams crossed each other on the way, an explanation is still required for the failure to heed the Chief's final instruction despatched on 13th September:

Adhere to my instructions already given and execute them..."[28]

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27. FO403/73, No. 203, Johnston to Salisbury, September 11, 1887. Geary, Nigeria Under British Rule, pp. 278-252.

28. FO84/1828, Telegram from Salisbury, September 13, 1887.

This telegram reached the Foreign Office on the same 13th. King Ja Ja was not arrested until the 18th. There was thus ample time to send a clarifying note but none was sent. What did happen was that, on the same day that Salisbury's last message was received, the Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, Fergusson, received King Ja Ja's envoys and 'assured' them that a naval inquiry was being instituted into the dispute. During this time, it was being handed about in official circles by the interested parties "that the Consul and naval officers had come to the opinion that the only way of solving the difficulty, after their experiences of this wiley and astute potentate was to have him removed..."[29] No such agreement had in fact come about. A day earlier, the Liverpool African Association had submitted to the Foreign Office their view that "no other course will avail to terminate the increasing difficulty in the Opobo River."[30] In their replies to these notes of approval to deportation, the Foreign Office simply communicated to the headquarters of those firms Salisbury's decision that a naval inquiry would be held at Opobo.[31] It is important to point out that the Foreign Office had as yet not communicated this decision to Johnston, the man-on-the-spot. It never did so.

Deadlock and the only solution - Deportation

At Opobo, events had moved fast to a final deadlock. Johnston had received the telegram approving his action. He immediately telegraphed Hand asking for help in deporting Ja Ja. His message which was a misrepresentation of the instruction he received from the Foreign Office read:

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29. FO403/86, No. 40, Messrs. Couper, Johnston & Co to Salisbury, Glasgow, September 13, 1887.

30. FO403/86, No. 38, A.A. to Salisbury, Liverpool, September 12, 1887.

31. FO403/86, Nos. 41 & 42, FO to AA and FO to Couper & Co., September 15, 1887

> "Government orders Ja Ja's removal to Gold Coast. Await arrival of second gunboat Opobo before acting. Prompt assistance necessary. Telegraph reply."[32]

While Johnston might be justified in construing the telegram of the 12th September as approval of his demand for deportation, the government had clearly given no express orders such as the Acting Consul here attributed to them. On receipt of Johnston's telegram, Hand replied:

> "Remember our last conversation, impossible."[33]

Johnston was undeterred. Since the last weeks of August, he had been making trips into King Ja Ja's markets only to discover that his previous efforts to instal British traders inland had been uniformly unsuccessful. To Ja Ja's letters asking for the quid pro quo of his ju ju 'breaking' which was the promised resumption of trade, and Acting Consul made new demands:

> "Until the Ohombela Chiefs open their markets to the white man and your people at Ohombela cease from putting obstacles for free trade. When white men are permitt d to trade without restriction at Ohombela and when you remove the man Ekike Notsho...trade will be reopened."[34]

By the 11th September, Johnston's frustrations had mounted bursting forth in the telegram asking permission to deport Ja Ja. In the explanatory despatch written on the same day, he outlined proposals for means by which Ja Ja would provide himself in exile.[35] The telegram approving Johnston's action and promising further instructions after communication with the Admiralty was rightly interpreted by Johnston as a vote of confidence in himself, although the head of the government had expressed contrary opinions. It was not to be expected therefore that Hand's discouraging reply would

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32. FO403/86, Encl. 6 in No. 112, Johnston to Hand, September 14, 1887, but in FO403/86, Encl. in No. 96, Hand to Admiralty, September 16, 1887, Hand states that he received Johnston's telegram on September 13.

33. FO403/86, No. 111, Johnston to Salisbury, September 24/28, 1887.

34. FO403/86, Encl. 2 in 80, Johnston to Ja Ja, August 17, 1887.

35. FO403/73, No. 203, Johnston to Salisbury, Opobo, September 11, 1887.

dampen his enthusiasm. If the Senior Naval Officer on the station would not assist in action against Ja Ja, rival local rulers could be persuaded to do so. So, before leaving Bonny for Opobo, Johnston arranged with the Bonny leaders to block Ja Ja's rear with their war canoes to bar his possible escape to his Ibo native district, for

> "Ja Ja, who may be anything but a formidable enemy in open fight to a Power like England would, with his cannon, rifles and war-canoes, his 4,000 fighting men, his personal courage and tactical skill, become a mighty conqueror among the peaceful, timid Ibo peoples at the back of Opobo."[36]

At Opobo, Johnston took counsel with Pelly of the Goshawk. An ultimatum for presentation to Ja Ja was drawn up. Then followed a letter inviting the King to a meeting. After informing Ja Ja that he, Johnston had been instructed to settle all matters in dispute and obtain a decisive answer from the King and his Chiefs, the Acting Consul went on:

> "I therefore request you to attend with all your important Chiefs, a meeting to be held by me at Messrs. Harrison's Beach, Opobo River, on Sunday, Sept. 19 at 11 a.m...."[37]

On the following day, the King replied:

> "I am quite sensible of your position and your capability of doing me any harm. Therefore I am afraid to come. If you know that you mean no harm against me sent (sic) to my house one white man as a security until my return from the meeting."[48]

Once again, Johnston saw his quarry slipping from his hands. For a man of the Acting Consul's times and position, Ja Ja's reactions much have been pu zling. He had tried concilliatory measures with the King, promising that if Ja Ja would use his influence to assist British penetration of the interior, 'free trade' would be allowed to black and white alike, payment of

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36. FO403/86, No. 111, Johnston to Salisbury, September 24/28 1887.

37. Ja Ja Papers, In-Letters 1/3, Johnston to Ja Ja, Opobo, September 17, 1887.

38. Ja Ja Papers,. Out-Letters, to Johnston September 18, 1887.

'comey' to Ja Ja would be resumed and the fine imposed on him by Hewett, remitted. This was, in effect, an invitation to Ja Ja to enter into partnership with the British imperial presence. King Ja Ja's response had been to argue and protest about breaches of his rights as the sovereign King of Opobo and the suzerain of its hinterland. He had in fact turned down the offer. Johnston tried forceful language and abuse with equally unfavourable result. Again, subversion was directly employed by the Acting Consul in the King's markets but the results were uniformly unfavourable. Now, as the Acting Consul tried enticement, failure stared him in the face as Ja Ja voiced his distrust of him and made difficult demands. On the whole, King Ja Ja had proved refractory to the oversimple imagery according to which Johnston's negro was a type of man who could be readily recognised.[39] King Ja Ja had refused to be brought peacefully into domination and all that was left to Johnston was to ensnare him with false promises into a position at which force could be effectively used against him. So, the Acting Consul wrote again to Ja Ja:

> I have summoned you to attend in a friendly spirit. I hereby assure you that whether you accept or reject my proposals tomorrow, no restraint whatever will be put on you, you will be free to go as soon as you have heard the message of the Government. If you do not attend the meeting no further consideration will be shown to you and you will be treated as an enemy of the British Government. I shall proclaim your deposition and hand your markets over to the Bonny men. If you attend tomorrow, I pledge you my word that you will be free to come and go but if you do not attend, I shall conclude you to be guilty of the charges brought against you and shall immediately proceed to carry out your punishment.
>
> I am, Yours obediently,
> H.H. Johnston, A/Consul.[40]

Thus assured, King Ja Ja and his Chiefs went to the meeting at Harrison's on 19th September. As they arrived, the Goshawk cleared for action, with its guns turned on King Ja Ja's followers. Then Johnston

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39. See H.H. Johnston, The Negro in the New World, London 1910.

40. Ja Ja Papers 1/3, In-Letters, from Johnston, September 18, 1887.

read to Ja Ja his ultimatum - that he was to leave Opobo at once for Accra where an inquiry would be instituted into the charges brought against him by British subjects and consular representatives. If the charges were proved, all or in part, he would probably be exiled in perpetuity or for a term of years. Johnston went on:

> In the hope that you will see the absolute necessity of complying with the orders of the British Government, I have been instructed to invite you to surrender yourself to me in a peaceful manner as indeed you would naturally do if you are confident of your innocence...But should you be so misguided as to refuse to submit to the orders of the British Government, it will be taken as an admission that you are guilty of the charges brought against you. I should then proceed to use an armed force which will mercilessly crush any resistance you may offer. You will be deposed and tried for your misdeeds as a common malefactor, your property will be confiscated and your country brought to ruin by the stoppage of trade...But you still are able to choose. Surrender yourself to me, now, at the command of the British Government and accompany me to Accra, and you may count on receiving every consideration... But refuse to do so and you leave this court a ruined man, for ever cut off from your people and your children. I give you one hour to consider and you will give me your answer here...[41]

Johnston had broken his word to King Ja Ja. It could not be imagined that the King now paid any attention to the Acting Consul's promises of Ja Ja receiving every consideration. Since he had anticipated such 'cleverness', Ja Ja had made no preparation for the situation in which he now found himself; Johnston's allegation that he was preparing to escape into the interior had no basis in fact. Yet, it was not so much fear of enduring Johnston's catalogue of punishment as conviction that he was not guilty and that Johnston's actions would be disavowed by his government, that led the King, in less than one hour, to agree to go to Accra.[42] He, one of his

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41. FO84/1828, Encl. in No. 18, Johnston's ultimatum to Ja Ja, September 19,1887

42. 'Guilt' had and still has subtle differences in meaning for people of Ja Ja's and Johnston's background. Take a point such as blocking European access into the interior. If Johnston had evidence to prove that Ja Ja had done this, the King would be declared guilty of that offence, according to Johnston's background. But King Ja Ja would not be declared guilty according to his own background, even though he might admit having blocked access, on the ground that he had a right to do so and doing so was not therefore an offence.

wives, Patience, and the barest minimum of attendants - a cook and a steward - were put on board the Goshawk bound for Bonny. At Bonny, after due exposure to the ridicule of his rivals in that city-state, he and his entourage were transhipped into the mail-steamer, the Calabar, bound for Accra.

Much effort has been spent to deny the existence of any supporting evidence for statements that Ja Ja "was entrapped and the safe conduct dishonoured."[43] Johnston's letter of 18th September, of which there is a copy in the Foreign Office records, Johnston's ultimatum to the King, also deposited in the Foreign Office archives and cited above, and the Acting Consul's successful effort to enlist the support of Bonny warriors to bar Ja Ja's way into the interior, are conclusive evidence that Johnston, from the start, meant to dishonour the safe conduct to King Ja Ja. Nor was he alone in this; all the senior officials of the Foreign Office with the exception of Salisbury who preferred a more subtle procedure, but including Hewett who, it appears, was the author of the scheme, were aware that there was no intention of observing a safe conduct to Ja Ja. Indeed, Johnston's word of honour did not and could not bind others but the main object of the safe conduct was to entrap Ja Ja[44] and most of the Foreign Office officials were aware of this. From the evidence cited, the truth stands out starkly; since Johnston could not send a file of marines to overcome Ja Ja's intransigence, as recommended by Hewett, who was still on leave, Johnston meant to entrap the King by false promises and the fact of dishonouring the safe conduct cannot be denied. As Geary as written,

> The Acting Consul's letter to Ja Ja was, it would seem, a safe conduct and by military and international law, a safe conduct is not to be converted into a snare, the safety of the bearer is guaranteed and the guarantee must be allowed time and liberty to depart in safety. The drawing of a corden behind Ja Ja and

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43. Oliver, Harry Johnston, pp. 116-17.

44. See Hewett's memorandum, FO403/86, No. 27, August 27, 1887, and the attached minutes by Lister and Wylde.

> the allowance of one hour for reply, with threats of instant war, allowed neither liberty nor sufficient time to withdraw, Ja Ja's freedom of action was analogous to that extended by the cat to the mouse.[45]

The Aftermath of deportation in Opobo:

On the 21st September, with Ja Ja imprisoned in the Goshawk, Johnston cabled thus to the Foreign Office:

> Senior Officer, Sierra Leone refuses assistance, so acted as emergency required. Ja Ja surrendered. Am now taking him on mail steamer to Accra. Opobo quiet, no fighting, peaceful settlement. Trade reopened.[46]

That Opobo was quiet was another piece of consular propaganda intended to calm the fears of the 'doves'. The realities of the situation differed greatly from the rosy picture painted by the Acting Consul and throws further doubt on his veracity. It was not a sign of peaceful settlement when, on the 20th September, Johnston had to issue a Notice proclaiming 'free trade' throughout Opobo and its outlying districts in which he threatened Opobo people with a fine if they failed to abide by his conditions.[47] Opobo had answered this with a 'Pro est' and passive resistance to which the reports of Captain Hand and Turnbull, Miller's agent, bear testimony.[48] Despite the removal of Ja Ja or as a result of it, Opobo stood firm against the penetration of British traders into the markets and constantly defied with impunity British government orders banning them from using certain of the inland markets.[49] Soon London had to be made aware of the real situation for by

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45. Geary, Nigeria Under British Rule, p. 283.

46. FO403/86, No. 49, Johnston to Salisbury, Bonny, September 21, 1887.

47. FO84/1828, Notice of Free Trade, Encl. in Johnston to FO, September 24/28 1887.

48. FO403/73, Encl. in 257, Hand to Admiralty, November 2, 1887, and FO403/86, Encl. 4 in 124, Protest, October 6, 1887.

49. FO403/122, No. 261, FO to Admiralty, August 13, 1889.

the end of 1888, trade stoppages intensified when King Ja Ja was taken away had become complete. 1889 brought no improvement and to secure this, Consul Hewett, now back on the coast, was instructed to blockade Opobo town as punishment for its bostile stance against the British. As Bindloss reported more in sorrow than in approbation:

> ...But the spirit of the heathen was still unbroken and they yelled defiance at the carsmen, or crawled among the mangroves for a quiet shot at any who might venture into range. Then the gun-boat's commander died and of all the sickly skeletons on board, there was scarcely enough left to get the gig over the side, and the starving men of Opobo held out grimly yet....[50]

After some months, the gun-boat had to leave Opobo, its mission unfulfilled. For the next three years, looting of European firms established inland since Ja Ja's deportation took place. Factories were burned down at Akwette and their inmates expelled.[51]

In London, however, the truth of Johnston's statements was unquestioned, despite evidence to the contrary. To his telegram reporting his final proceedings, Wylde, after a long statement that was both explanatory and defensive of the Acting Consul, minuted:

> ...We must go on with the question of investigation, as we are bound by the promise to the deputation. At the same time, we cannot altogether overthrow action taken by our Representative.[52]

As a non-British subject, Ja Ja, on reaching Accra would automatically become free. This Wylde wished to prevent; Johnston was at this time urging the Foreign Office not to release Ja Ja until he had been allowed to prefer charges against the King. Wylde's view was that the Accra authorities should be instructed "to entertain Ja Ja there pending the investigation."

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50. Harold Bindloss, In the Niger Country, Edinburgh and London, 1899, pp. 282-84.

51. Gertzel, 'John Holt', Chap. IV.

52. FO403/86, No. 50, memorandum by Wylde, September 21, 1887.

P.C. Currie, sharing Wylde's view that something had to be done to prevent King Ja Ja from regaining his freedom, inquired:

> "Shall the Governor be instructed to endeavour to keep him at Accra by friendly means until some decision can be arrived at, founded on further information from Johnston. Sept. 22, 1887 P.C." [55]

To this, Salisbury replied, "Yes, do not let us have another Zebehr. Sept. 23, 1887. S." His Lordship was referring to the incident involving the Arab leader, (Zobier Pasha) who, as part of a campaign against slaving was inveigled into prison by the British authorities in the Sudan only to be soon released, to the chagrin and disgust of humanitarian-minded Britishers.

When, despite Salisbury's reluctance and preference for a naval inquiry and Anderson's concern to secure first of all, some defence against the attacks of "sentimentalists" by sending a commission of inquiry to the spot, Ja Ja was deported by means which his Lordship had described as 'kidnapping', the head of the government felt it threatened by another Zobier incident. His fears were confirmed when Ja Ja and Miller Brothers soon wrote complaining of Johnston's breach of faith and highhandedness and demanding Ja Ja's immediate release. The Zobier Pasha incident did the government's reputation no good and memories of it must have influenced Salisbury's attitude on the Ja Ja question. In despair, Salisbury exclaimed:

> "It is a mess. No promise ought to have been made to the deputation. I think it would be desirable that a naval officer of higher rank than Hand should go down to Opobo if only to fulfil our pledge. Ja Ja had better be kept at Accra, if necessary, by Consular Ordinance until the inquiry is over. He cannot be detained longer. Sept. 23, 1887.

His Lordship had been won over and the entire F.O. officials closed their ranks on the Ja Ja - Johnston dispute. On the Chief's suggestion the proposed inquiry was thus to be held behind Ja Ja's back. At last, the Foreign Office received Johnston's reply to their routine demand for a report on the circumstances under which he thought Ja Ja's deportation was

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58. FO403/86 Minute by Currie and Salisbury on Wylde's Memo of Sept. 21-Sept. 22, 1887.

necessary. Johnston's reply was as usual filled with untruths - Ja Ja was preparing to escape to a strong place he had got ready in the interior for that purpose. His escape to this place would paralyse the British Protectorate.[54]

The Foreign Office were satisfied with its representative's reply. It now told him that the promise of a naval inquiry made to Ja Ja's envoys would be proceeded with "in view of the widespread interest that is taken in the question by the mercantile firms of Liverpool and Glasgow."[55] Here was the reason for continuing the promised enquiry. Instructions were sent to the Accra authorities to detain Ja Ja when he arrived, if neces ary by a colonial or local Ordinance. The Admiralty was also requeste to investigate the Opobo dispute an officer of higher rank than Captain Hand. Hand was the most senoir officer on the west coast station and second in rank only to Rear Admiral Sir Hunt-Grubbe. It is important to remember that Hand had, as late as July, 1887 expressed the view that means other than a recourse to force or deportation could be found of dealing with Ja Ja. The Foreign Office, with undisguised disapproval, had called on him to furnish a report as to what the "means" were to which he alluded. Hand's report, if he prepared one, had not been published buttthe Admiralty had come out against the use of force in settling the Ja Ja question.[56] If, as Wylde had minuted, it was necessary to support Johnston on the question of deportation, then Captain Hand was not a suitable person to send on the inquiry. Thus, despite the Admiralty's preference to send Hand on the errand,[57] the Foreign Office

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54. FO403/86, No. 53, Johnston to Salisbury, September 23, 1887.

55. FO403/86, No. 54, FO to Johnston, September 27, 1887.

56. See Admiral Hand's memorandum loc. cit.

57. FO403/86, No. 60, Admiralty to FO, September 28, 1887.

insisted on having the Commander-in-Chief. Grubbe was acceptable for the same reason that Hand was not. As early as March, 1886, he had given his approval to deportation. In the past, it was a clear-cut division of opinion between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty that postponed Ja Ja's banishment. Such division still remained in 1887 but the advocates of a strong line had increased their votes on the Coast by the appointment of Grubbe, and thus won an important seat within the Admiralty. Hence while Hand and the officials in London calculated, Pelly and Grubbe acted.

The Inquiry that produced a Trial:

Meanwhile, as congratulatory messages poured in from interested firms for"the decisive action of the officers at Opobo in removing Ja Ja",[58] the Foreign Office primed the inquiring officer on his pending mission.[59] The protest from Miller Bros. was equally loud and clear. Their letters to Salisbury harped on the injustice of Consular proceedings towards Ja Ja and his people and called on his Lordship to make amends by sending Ja Ja back to his homeland.[60] As Miller Bros., Ja Ja's solicitor and private individuals like a George Dobson, FRGS, demanded reasons for Ja Ja's continued detention, the firms of the African Association demanded and obtained Foreign Office assurance that "King Ja Ja will not return to Opobo for the present."[61] On Foreign Office instructions, as Ordinance was quickly rushed through the

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58. FO403/86, No. 63, A.A. of Liverpool to Salisbury, September 28, 1887. And FO403/86, No. 66, Couper & Co. to Salisbury, October 1, 1887.

59. FO403/73, No. 162, FO to Admiralty, September 27, 1887.

60. FO403/86, No. 69, Millers to Salisbury, October 3, 1887; FO403/86, No. 73, same to same, October 4, 1887.

61. FO403/86, No. 76, FO to A.A. October 5, 1887.

Gold Coast legislature providing for the forcible detention of Ja Ja at Accra and of his envoys returning from England.[62] Previously instructions had already been sent to Accra from London to the effect that the envoys were to be detained by peaceful means until the projected inquiry was over. Now the Foreign Office inquired of Admiral Grubbe whether or not Ja Ja should, in his opinion be allowed to be present at the inquiry at Opobo.[63] It is not known what the Admiral's reply was, but Ja Ja never went back to Opobo even for the inquiry.

Ja Ja had arrived at Accra on 31st October, 1887. A house was hired for him at his own expense at the Basel Mission Factory yard in Christiansborg. The envoys had reached Accra earlier on the 11th, and in accordance with Johnston's instructions, Prince Sunda and Chief Peterside had been detained while the others were not allowed to communicate in any way with their King. Two months passed and Ja Ja remained at Accra a prisoner without indictment. Miller Bros. spared no pains in pointing out this fact to the British Government and people. Nothing was done except to instruct Johnston to collect evidence for the Admiral's inquiry while the latter prepared to come to Opobo. At Opobo Johnston was punishing his enemies. As Opobo people continued to resist Consular proceedings and proclamations, the Consular authority stiffened their attitude. On 3rd October Opobo Chiefs were forced to go into the interior and see the Europeans established there. At Ohombela a meeting was held with the elders at which Ball, Chairman of the Court of Equity, and his fellow Europeans learnt from the elders that as Ohombela people had never before traded with Europeans on account of their being 'ju ju' they would not do so now.[64]

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62. FO403/86, No. 102, CO to FO, October 14, 1887.

63. FO403/86, No. 108, FO to Admiralty, October 17, 1887.

64. FO403/86, Encl. 2 in 136, Minutes of Meeting held at Ohombela, October 7, 1887.

Much mental activity had gone on behind the scenes towards evolving means whereby King Ja Ja would spend his exile without expense to the British government. Johnston, improving on Hewett's earlier scheme, went into great detail providing £493 per annum for the King's lodging and maintenance out of an estimated annual 'comey' of £600.[65] By the 2nd November 1887, everything was ready and Johnston was informed that Admiral Grubbe proposed to leave the Cape for Accra, not Opobo, on the 10th. Johnston was to leave all evidence for personal communication to the Admiral and King Ja Ja was to remain at Accra pending the inquiry.[66] Opobo, not Accra, was the scene of all the incidents in the Ja Ja question, all the witnesses were there, yet Admiral Grubbe, on orders from his government decided to go to Accra to hold an inquiry into the dispute. Nonetheless, the Foreign Office, in reply to a communication from the Aboriginees Protection Society, continued to state that steps had been taken for securing a full inquiry into the question on the spot.[67]

On 29th November, 1887, Grubbe opened at Christianborg what was described as a hearing on Ja Ja's conduct. Only Bannerman, an Accra lawyer, was permitted to be present on the King's behalf. Bannerman was no mean African personage. Yet the fact that he and not, say, Miss Emma Johnson, the King's secretary or Count de Cardi, a veteran of the Opobo trade, was chosen to be present on Ja Ja's behalf, was of much significance. The points of the 'hearing' were as follows: Who gave orders to stop Consul Johnston going up Azumini Creek? Who supplied the natives with arms and ammunition for the purpose of stopping Consul Johnston going up Azumini Creek? Why Ja Ja made ju ju after the Treaty of 2nd December, 1884?

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65. FO403/86, No. 116, Johnston to Salisbury, October 4, 1887, and enclosures.

66. FO403/86, No. 121, FO to Chairman, Court of Equity, Bonny, November 5, 1887

67. FO403/86, No. 127, FO to Aboriginees Protection Society, November 10,1887.

On the first point Ja Ja requested Admiral Grubbe to ask Johnston to prove that he, Ja Ja, arranged the obstructions against Johnston or had anything to do with it. Rather than take up this very good point, Grubbe asked Ja Ja who then did, if not Ja Ja, adding that it was ridiculous for Ja Ja to pretend that he did not know who did. Grubbe demanded to have in writing Ja Ja's reply as to who stopped Johnston. At this juncture the Admiral called Johnston to recount the stoppage of himself and the traders in the Azumini Creek. That done, including the reading of affidavits from local people regarding 'dashes' given to other 'tribes' to obstruct trade and swear to trade only with Ja Ja, Grubbe called on Hand to give evidence regarding Ja Ja's interference with the traders. Hand stated that ju ju was put on Ohombela market and that even after its removal the Ohombela Chiefs refused to deal with the Europeans in anything but slaves. Cookey Gam put in that the ju ju on Ohombela was put in 1873 by agreement with Bonny when the markets were divided and Ohombela was part of Opobo markets. Despite the fact that the 1884 Treaty signed by Ja Ja said nothing about ju ju, opening new markets or free trade, Grubbe demanded why the ju ju on Ohombela remained unremoved after that Treaty. Stating that he would have his reply only in writing the Admiral adjourned the hearing.

On Wednesday November 30, the hearing was resumed. There was more said on the boom and its removal. More was also said by Grubbe on Ja Ja's use of his influence to direct the trade of the district which he was alleged to do by ordering the people to give trade to Europeans but not to trade with them. To King Ja Ja's reply that they had no power to thus dictate, Admiral Grubbe retorted that it was beyond doubt that Ja J. had immense power in the district. Now Grubbe switched his interrogation to another point. Count de Cardi was called in and asked to say to whom Essene belonged. The Count replied that it was Ja Ja's. Asked to define Ja Ja's territory, de Cardi replied:

> I do not think I can tell you, I do not think these natives, however they may like an European, ever honestly tell him that. [68]

In other words, de Cardi had not been taken into confidence, neither had his personal knowledge of the area been of any help in enlightening him on this point. The hearing, adjourned on 30th November, was resumed on the 1st December. After summing up, the Admiral read his decision to King Ja Ja. This was that Ja Ja must be deported to a place of his choice among the following places - Ascension, St. Helena, Cape Colony, or a West Indian Island - for at least five years. During his exile he was to receive £800 p.a. for maintenance and his property was to be administered as he thought fit. Moreover, the 30 puncheons of oil fined him by Hewett was to be refunded to him. As a defence of the "apparently lenient sentence I have passed on him," Grubbe felt "very strongly that Ja Ja has been treated injudiciously for years: threatened on several occasions, fined frequently by the Consuls and notably misled by Mr. Consul Hewett in his letter of 1st July, 1884." Under these circumstances and with the necessity for supporting Johnston and also "recognising fully the expediency of once for all settling the case", Grubbe felt bound to soften the blow as much as possible. Johnston believed that Ja Ja's influence would be felt at Opobo if he were permitted to reside within easy reach of that place - hence the Admiral's choice of places further afield. [69]

The promised inquiry turned out to be a trial with many unusual aspects. On the plea that the vernacular of the natives was peculiar, no minutes were taken. Ja Ja's defence, if such it could be called, was demanded in writing. Vital witnesses like Miss Emma Ja Ja Johnston, the King's confidential secretary, were not examined. As an exercise in legal practice the trial

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68. FO403/74, Encl. 6 in No. 6, Precis of Inquiry into Charges brought against King Ja Ja of Opobo, November - December, 1887.

69. FO403/74, Encl. 7, in No. 6, Grubbe to Admiralty, Accra, December 2, 1887. See also memorandum of Grubbe's Address to the Chiefs of the Oil Rivers, December 12, 1887.

was a farce. King Ja Ja was the accused and as such, the onus of proof should have rested on his accuser, Johnston. Rather Grubbe inverted the course of justice by desiring Ja Ja to prove that he was not guilty of the charges brought against him by Johnston. There was no demonstrable evidence of Ja Ja's responsibility for obstructing trade and what evidence was submitted was not critically examined. It was in fact Johnston who closed the creeks but this was not mentioned at the trial. Ja Ja was convicted on two counts. One of these was his alleged failure to abide by the sixth clause of the 1884 Anglo-Opobo Treaty by which he agreed to act on the advice of the Consul in matters regarding the administration of justice, development of the resources of the country and the interest of commerce...Any unbiased attempt to establish guilt should have investigated just what was the Protection King Ja Ja accepted. Hewett's letter of 1st July, 1884 defining 'Protection' for the King should have been thrown into the balance. On the question of refusing consular advice any unprejudiced adjudicator should have conceded the King of Opobo the liberty to seek advice only when he desired it. On this point too, Hewett's letter of 1st July specifically stated that Ja Ja was to remain in control of the government of his country. This could mean only one thing. All these factors were left out.

The second count on which King Ja Ja was convicted was that he had, through the application of ju ju established a trade monopoly. Monopolies were not new to the Niger trade nor was it confined to Ja Ja. All the city states of the Delta patterned their trade along monopolistic lines while the Royal Niger Company established and operated a gigantic monopoly between 1886 and 1900. British merchants of the Delta for whose alleged defence their government waged war on King Ja Ja were themselves monopolists to the core and with their government had on two occasions acknowledged King Ja Ja's right to monopolise the trade at his rear in 1873 and 1884. It was therefore for doing what he had always done, had a right to do and was done by everyone else

that King Ja Ja was tried and sentenced to deportation. That no one in the Delta trade objected to monopoly in principle is demonstrated by the fact of the Niger Company's own monopoly and the attempts of Holt and the Old Coasters encouraged by the British government to obtain a monopoly charter during and after the Ja Ja dispute.[70] From the commercial point of view, what irked the British merchants was that King Ja Ja was supremely successful in exploiting the monopolistic trade system of the Delta and often to their detriment. King Ja Ja's economic supremacy had political overtones which threatened to bar the advance of the political power of Britain into the hinterland. It was hoped that, by deporting the King, his political and economic power would automatically accrue to the British; previous experience with Ja Ja had convinced those affected that only his deportation would secure this end. The formality of a trial that took place at Accra was not therefore for the purpose of establishing justice; it was for the purpose of satisfying sentimentalists.

Reactions to Grubbe's verdict were various. From King Ja Ja came:

> 'I admit freely that from the evidence placed before you, you could hardly decide otherwise than you have done but I still declare my ignorance of the charges.'[71]

Pronounced guilty, yet not convinced of his guilt, Ja Ja was not deceived by the mockery that passed for a trial. In London, the government expressed satisfaction with the proceedings but, as so often happens, Opposition MPs led by Charles Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, harassed the government with questions - whether the Foreign Secretary would state all the circumstances attending the conviction and exiling of King Ja Ja, what offences he was charged with, what evidence was brought in support of the charge, why

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70. Gertzel, 'John Holt', Chap. 5, deals with the charter attempt.

71. FO403/74, Encl. 4 in No. 6, Ja Ja to Grubbe, December 2, 1887.

the trial was not held at Opobo.[72] Outside Parliament, the government also faced criticisms. If Stephen Beresford Rhodes' (he was a British merchant operating at Opobo) demand to read the evidence taken at the trial could be met with a flat refusal from Salisbury,[73] Miller's arguments and claims, with supporting evidence,[74] that Ja Ja had been conviated without a particle of substantial evidence, that they could produce witnesses on oath who could positively deny all Johnston's charges against Ja Ja, were too loud and challenging to be brushed aside. Despite much effort to salve consciences by denying that Johnston sent the "word of honour" letter of 18th September 1887 to Ja Ja,[75] some rea surance from legal experts was thought desirable. Hence the inquiry to the Law Officers whether Her Majesty's Government would be legally justified in proceeding to deport Ja Ja.[76] Soon came the affirmative reply:

> 'Her Majesty's Government will be justified in at once procee ding to deport Ja Ja to one of the West Indian Islands.'[77]

The law officers held Ja Ja's deportation to be legal on the grounds of Buron v Denman. In that case a British naval officer destroyed the barracoons and carried off the property of a Spaniard engaged in slave trade within a territory whose ruler had signed an abolition treaty with the British government. The court, in that case, gave evidence for the captain on the ground that his act was one of state, as having been subsequently ratified

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72. FO403/74, Nos. 37, 41 and 42, Questions in the Commons, March 2, 1888.

73. FO403/74, No. 3, FO to Rhodes, January 5, 1888.

74. FO403/74, Encl. in No. 34, Johnston to Ja Ja, September 18, 1887.

75. See FO403/74, Encl. in No. 34, Minute by Lister, Anderson, Pauncefote, and Salisbury.

76. FO403/74, No. 52, FO to Law Officers, March 13, 1888.

77. FO403/74, No. 62, Law Officers to FO, March 23, 1888.

by Her Majesty's ministers. The Crown was therefore responsible. In Ja Ja's case ministers had continued to maintain that Johnston's action had not been authorised by them claiming that their telegram to him by which he based authority to deport was approving his previous action. It has been shown in the preceding pages that this was not so. Against this argument must be laid also the fact that the telegram did not specify which action, previous or proposed, was being approved. Ministers asserted too that Johnston's telegram asking permission to deport Ja Ja was dated on the same day as their approving his action. Nor are the dates on the telegrams proof of non-authorisation, yet on these bases they argued that the act of deportation was not one of state and needed ratification in order to make it such. Indeed, the government had given no express authority to Johnston to deport Ja Ja but the points it made to prove this are invalid. It was only on the plea that it never gave express authority to deport Ja Ja that they could rightly disclaim responsibility for the act. But even if the telegram was not meant as a reply to Johnston's asking permission to deport and that it had crossed the latter on the way, the fact that no attempt was made to send clarifying orders to the Acting Consul after the receipt of his implies, to say the least, a tacit approval of deportation by ministers on the principle of collective responsibility. Much evidence had already been cited in the preceding pages to show that months before Ja Ja was deported the decision to do so had been arrived at by the majority of the senior members of the Foreign Office. There is indeed no evidence to prove the government's express authority to Johnston to deport Ja Ja, but it did authorise the act implicitly and as Olver has stated, Johnston's action in deporting Ja Ja did not prejudice the basis of government policy.[78] It was therefore a formality when the Foreign Office telegraphed thus to Johnston:

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78. Oliver, R. Harry Johnston, p. 111.

> Doubts having been expressed whether your action has received formal ratification at the hands of Her Majesty's Government. This is to notify the Same.[79]

Meanwhile arrangements for Ja Ja's deportation from West Africa had gone on apace. It should be remembered that Grubbe had given the King a choice of one of four main places at which to spend his exile. Ja Ja expressed the desire to remain in Accra but this was not considered. The Law Officers, in their letter approving deportation, preferred a West Indian Island. The Colonial Secretary, when consulted "thinks Cape Colony out of the question as it might be difficult to obtain enactment of the necessary legislation; Ascension was out because it had been decided that the establishment there had to be transferred to St. Helena." A West Indian Island in the Colonial Office view would be suitable.[80] It was thus agreed that Ja Ja had to spend his exile in the West Indies. Despite continuing pressure, mainly from the supporters of his exile, against Ja Ja's continued stay in West Africa, the choice of which island he was to be sent to was carefully made. Considerations centred around facilities for suitable residence and a place likely to attract the least attention. Finally, the Grenadines, a chain of Islands from St. Vincent to Grenada, was chosen and legislative arrangements made for the King's detention as a political prisoner. The model of the Ordinance sent to Governor Sendall of the Windward Islands were two Ordinances passed in Mauritius to authorise the detention of certain

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79. FO403/74, No. 174, FO to Johnston, April 7, 1888 2p.m. The above date was crossed off and replaced with '25 November 1887'. On the point of suspicious and doubtful dates, see also FO84/1828, to Johnston FO, September 27, 1887, and written in red ink, "S. 17.9.87", and FO403/73, No. 229, FO to Johnston, October 3, 1887, approving his action with regards to Ja Ja.

80. FO403/74, No. 25, CO to FO. February 16, 1888.

prisoners following the 1882 Perak Rising in the Seychelles.[81] It was agreed that King Ja Ja should have with him in exile only one attendant but on the intervention of Governor Griffiths of the Gold Coast, who expressed much personal liking for the King,[82] Commander Annesley of the Icarus was, as part of his sailing instructions, told that Ja Ja could take a maximum of two attendants.[83] On the 8th May, 1888, King Ja Ja, Prince Sunday and two attendants left the Gold Coast for the West Indies.

The exile and death of a King

Official documents are understandably silent on King Ja Ja's life and death in exile. For the rest of this study, information comes from the West Indian Press and the Ja Ja Papers. King Ja Ja and his entourage arrived at St. Vincent from Grenada at 9.25 a.m. on Saturday June 9, 1888.

> The people, anxious to see the Royal party began to congregate at the Market Square and Police Station, Saturday being market day there was soon a large gathering.[84]

King Ja Ja and his party had first been taken to Grenada, the place first chosen for his exile, but that island had no suitable accommodation for a political prisoner of the King's stature. Accordingly, Annesley had been instructed to steer into St. Vincent; here again "the crowd" threatened to mar the arrangement. An excuse was quickly found for postponing Ja Ja's landing and thus reducing the number of people and lessening the possibility of a disturbance.

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81. FO403/74, No. 74, CO to FO, April 9, 1888.

82. FO403/74, Encl. 2 in No. 89, Griffith to Knutsford, April 18, 1888.

83. FO403/74, No. 118, Sailing Orders, April 24, 1888.

84. The Barbados Herald, Bridgetown, June 28, 1888.

> "The crowd was sadly disappointed on learning that no place or house was yet prepared in which His Majesty could reside. In consequence of which his landing was postponed to next day, Sunday."

No definite time having been fixed for the King's landing, the crowd that gathered to see him on that Sunday soon grew impatient and dispersed gradually. When all seemed quiet, King Ja Ja and Prince Sunday arrived and were received at the Police Barracks by "a few members of the legislative council and their ladies. King Ja Ja and Prince Sunday walked through a large crowd who seemed to sympathise with the unfortunate King as they went from the barracks to the hired carriage that took them to Fort Charlotte where they were to reside in the Captain's quarters."

King Ja Ja found residence at the Fort most uncongenial; he preferred to live in the main area of the town were the air was less cold. Accordingly the house of a J.B. Proudfoot in Back Street, Kingston was let to him and the Colonial Engineer was entrusted with the duty of guarding him. King Ja Ja visited the Chief Stores fairly regularly and although he remained a teetotaller he was always careful to keep a stock of good wine in his cellar for the entertainment of visitors who included newspaper men, such as J.E. Hamilton during his tour of the West Indies. Wherever he went, the King of Opobo bore himself with dignity and calm as on the occasion of his visit to the Governor when

> "A great concourse of black people assembled and a riot was feared. It is said that by his calm and dignified demeanour he kept them in order." [85]

In matters of dress, King Ja Ja conformed to his new environment with the exception that he wore an eagle's feather in his hat and lots of expensive jewels around his neck and on his dress both being marks of royalty in his homeland.

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85. The Barbados Herald, May 4, 1891.

From the time he arrived in St. Vincent, King Ja Ja's health had begun to show signs of serious decline. At one time he had to remain in bed for five weeks neither eating nor drinking.[86] This was a major reason for the first petition of the King to Queen Victoria asking Her Majesty to release him from exile. The petition begins by referring to the 1873 and 1884 Treaties and the 'Protection' as defined by Hewett and accepted by King Ja Ja. It went on to complain about the arrest of his Envoys at Accra and the exile of Sunday his son, with him to the West Indies.

> Particularly, I complain that the letters of Acting Consul Johnston to me of 17th and 18th Sept. 1887 have been suppressed...
> I accordingly relied on Acting Consul Johnston's word of honour. At my arrival at the place of the meeting on the 19th Sept. 1887, I received an illumination from Mr. Johnston, of that date, informing me that the Government of Her Majesty the Queen had decided that I was to leave Africa immediately. As I was taken by surprise and had made no provision against such treachery, I was obliged to surrender myself...[87]

King Ja Ja went on to tell of his special trial, condemnation to exile, arrival at St. Vincent and the passage of an Ordinance by the legislature there authorising him to be kept a political prisoner during Her Majesty's Pleasure. Finally he submitted to Her Majesty that,

> the tactics whereby I have been deprived of my country, my markets, and my freedom, are contrary to the spirit of the British nation which abolished slavery...I am now an old man and cannot in the ordinary course of nature expect to live much longer. I wish to visit England before I die, and I wish to spend the remainuer of my years and to die in my native land, and not in exile.

If a reply came from Her Majesty, it would not have been favourable to Ja Ja for he continued his stay in exile.

A year later King Ja Ja addressed a second petition to Lord Salisbury. On this occasion, he expressed himself willing to agree to "any reasonable

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86. Ja Ja Papers 1/6 Out-Letters, Personal, To Mark, September 1, 1888.

87. Ja Ja Papers 1/4 Out-Letters, Petition to Queen Victoria, St. Vincent, August 30, 1888.

demands and requirements" of the British government to be freed from exile. He was willing to go back to Opobo as a private person.[88] Ja Ja was told that his return to Opobo was not po sible "at present".[89] Following this sec nd petition, the Administrator of St. Vincent, on orders from his superiors in London, issued to Ja Ja instructions to regulate his life in exile. According to these, the King was not to sleep away from his residence, not to leave the house for more than four hours and was never to leave the town without permission except for Fort Charlotte or Government House.[90] Furthermore, a policeman always guarded his residence while a constable accompanied him wherever he went.[91] These instructions, coupled with the censorship on all letters addressed to King Ja Ja,[92] were good security measures not calculated to ease by any means the life of a King deprived of his Kingdom. Indeed, the authorities had allowed Patience, King Ja Ja's favourite wife, to join him in exile in October 1888 but the censorship threatened to cut him off completely from the vast majority of his family who remained at Opobo. Ja Ja found a way out of such complete isolation. Thanking "Grandson" for his kind present of which he was very proud, the King instructed

> Write to your mother at Opobo to tell you all the news in town and then you write to let me know. Address all my letters to George Smith, Esq.[93]

Miller Brothers also acted as the King's intermediary with his people. By these means, the King remained in fairly constant touch with Opobo and continued to direct the affairs, not only of his House but also of the city-

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88. Ja Ja Papers 1/4 Out-Letters, to Lord Salisbury, Kingston, November 30,1889

89. Ja Ja Papers 1/4 Out-Letters, To Salisbury, April 5, 1890.

90. Ja Ja Papers 1/3 Letters Instructions to Ja Ja from Administrator, St. Vincent.

91. FO403/74, Encl. in No. 140, Administrator Llewelyn to Knutsford, June 23, 1888.

92. FO403/74, No. 147, FO to CO, July 31, 1888.

93. Ja Ja Papers 1/6 Out-Letters Personal, to Grandson, January 6, 1889.

state, instructing 'grandson' to "take care of the house good and don't make fool of yourself. You and Sunday must have one mind to do everything and none must not be jealous or keep malice with one another but remain in love to one another as brothers."[94] To his Chiefs, the instructions were that they were "not to change any new place of Residence, because the Government will say that it is I who gave the instruction to do so, then they will not let me return back to Opobo."[95] It would be interesting to investigate the circumstances that prompted this letter from the King clearly urging his lieutenants at Opobo not to found a new 'Opobo'. One is struck by the unflinching loyalty that he continued to demand from his subjects, both Chiefs and ordinary people. The letter above cited reveals on the part of the King, complete knowledge of events in Opobo; this knowledge he owed to the people's loyalty.

In April, 1890, Ja Ja again petitioned, on account of his fast deteriorating health, to be allowed to return to Opobo. Annesley, the consul at that city-state, was telegraphed by the government for his views on this. The consul favoured the King's return as most likely to produce greater understanding with Opobo people. The African Association, however, had other views, They voiced their disapproval of any steps to reinstate Ja Ja as this would be disastrous to their interests, and asked the government not to entertain such steps.[96] The outcome of it all was that the government instructed the St. Vincent administration that King Ja Ja could go to Barbados for "a change of air",[97] and in February 1891, the King was transferred from St. Vincent to Barbados. When Major MacDonald became the

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94. Ja Ja Papers 1/6 Out-Letters, Personal, to Grandson Kingston, May 9, 1890.

95. Ja Ja Papers 1/6 Out-Letters, Personal, to Cookey Gam, March 27, 1890. Note here King Ja Ja's intimate knowledge of events in Opobo from his exile.

96. FO403/122, No. 263, AA to Salisbury, August 15, 1889.

97. The Barbados Herald, May 4, 1891.

Commissioner General of the new Niger Delta Administration, he took up Ja Ja's case and was able to convince these involved that King Ja Ja's return would do more good than harm. It was largely as a result of MacDonald's entreaties that the King was granted leave to return to Opobo. But Ja Ja died before he could reach Opobo, at Santa Cruz on the Island of Teneriffe sometime in July, 1891.

Anene puts the date of King Ja Ja's death as 7th July, 1891.[98] There is evidence to suggest that the King was still alive a week after the 7th July, 1891. Nor does evidence indicate that his health was particularly bad then. In a letter full of enthusiasm for his home-coming and dated July 14, 1891, he wrote to Mark:

> I have sent the keys to the cases by the Captain, and I have told him to get a woman from Lagos or anywhere he can and carry with him to Opobo to dress my people. As soon as you hear I am coming, open the cases and let the woman dress each one of them that they may come and meet. I wish her to dress them nicely like English people. The Captain will give you all the news. Hoping you are well, I remain, Yours truly, King Ja Ja.[99]

My sources have yielded no information on the exact date or even month of the King's death. This is in itself not without significance for a man who had made something of a stir in the world. It is not the task of this study to speculate on what might have been had Ja Ja reached Opobo alive. It is, however, important to point out that throughout his life in exile, Ja Ja regarded himself and was referred to by others as the King of Opobo. Even after his death, Opobo regarded Ja Ja as its rightful King, electing no new Head for the Big House until after they had observed the necessary funeral rites for him. It was part of Opobo Chiefs' arguments for the demand that Ja Ja's body be returned that "until their King was buried in their own country, they would always be held up as objects of contempt amongst the neighbouring tribes, and this would lead to quarrels and petty wars, to the

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98. Anene, Southern Nigeria, p. 91.

99. Ja Ja Papers 1/6 Out-Letters, Personal, Teneriffe, July 14, 1891.

detriment of trade."[100] For once, Bonny and Opobo were of one voice, for in MacDonald's first account from his 'show', he reported being told by Bonny Chiefs that "Opobo discontent would disappear immediately proper funeral rites had been paid, (on behalf of King Ja Ja) and trade would go on as before, at present here in Opobo, it is at a stand-still."[101]

The continuing stoppage of trade by Opobo people and the link between this and the non-return of Ja Ja, and later of his body, due to the fact that Spanish law which governed Teneriffe prohibited exhumation within two years of the burial, convinced the British government that persistent application to Spain for a relaxation of this particular law was called for. In the end, their efforts bore fruit when Spain allowed King Ja Ja's body to be exhumed. As reported The Barbados Herald, the obsequies were indeed worthy of a king:

> "Four cases, two of wood, one of tin and one of lead", were provided by Opobo to bear its King home. "On arrival, all the Chiefs of the district came with their big canoes, attired in their best. The outer case was removed from the coffin, which was then wrapped in many folds of costly silk brocade and placed in a large canoe with Ja Ja's brilliant State umbrella erected over it, and guarded by two Chiefs of his House. The big Canoe then headed the crowd of others and proceeded up the river. All native trade was stopped for five weeks and there was feasting, dancing, etc. and cannon-firing..."[102]

Opobo town itself was decorated with many flags, while cannon-fire and music were kept up. The room containing the vault in which the coffin was finally laid was draped round with silk brocade and hung with photographs and pictures of the departed monarch. Inside the room, several of Ja Ja's wives had kept vigil over the body night and day since its arrival.[103] After months of festivity, King Ja Ja was buried within the courtyard of

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100. FO403/171, No. 61, MacDonald to Salisbury, September 1, 1891.

101. FO403/171, No. 55, MacDonald to FO, August 8, 1891.

102. The Barbados Herald, March 17, 1892.

103. The date of the arrival of the body is not disclosed by my sources. It appears however to have been during the first week in September 1891.

his palace, which stood in the centre of a square of small houses and consisted of a well-built wood house with galleries fronted with glass. As befitted a King, much treasure was also buried with the body and until recent years, the vault was always well guarded. Frederick Sunday, whom Ja Ja had intended to succeed him, was elected Head of the Anna Pepple Canoe House, at the age of 18. As desired by the British government, no King was elected to succeed Ja Ja.

Conclusion

As has been shown, King Ja Ja's deportation did not solve the difficulties of the British merchants backed by their government. Conditions, in fact, worsened as looting and arson and the erection of many more booms spread through the immediate hinterland.[104] The improvement which set in after 1893 was largely the result of a resumption by the local people of their traditional trading role as middlemen. In that year, the firms of the African Association, now the African Association Ltd., sold what inland establishments they had erected to Opobo Chiefs for 500 puncheons of oil and agreed to withdraw completely from the markets. In return, Opobo Chiefs agreed to boycott any firm that attempted to establish itself at the markets.[105] The wheel had turned full circle supporting the contention that the merchants came round to supporting the consul against King Ja Ja not, as was their contention, because of his monopolist policy *per se* but because of his greater success as a monopolist than they were able to make themselves in the circumstances of the late 1880's.

As has been suggested in Chapter III, the attack against King Ja Ja originated with the political arm of the British presence. Consul Hewett,

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104. Gertzel, 'John Holt', see Chap. IV for a detailed discussion of the after effects of Ja Ja's deportation.

105. Ja Ja Papers 3, Agreement with Cookey Gam and Sumbo, February 1, 1893.

the spearhead of the attack, at first faced the almost unanimous opposition of the merchant body. It was a victory for the consul when, assisted by deteriorating trade conditions, he detached from his merchant-opponents, a substantial body of men, with promises of government protection if they would push trade into the hinterland which he continuously painted as very prosperous. That protection proved unable to neutralise the power of King Ja Ja, founded on traditional criteria of power and cemented by traditional practice. Consular despatches cataloguing the repercussions to British influence should Ja Ja be allowed to retain his position as King to the full echoed the prophesies of the merchants now alienated from the King. Both pandered to British predilection for power and profits. As King Ja Ja and his men, guided by their own view of life and their position in it, refused to compromise, a deadlock was reached. Ikime, approvingly quoting F.S. James, agreed that Ja Ja's power like Nana's "might well, under careful supervision, have been utilised for the benefit of the country in those early days of the Administration."[106] King Ja Ja and Prince Nana were men of different historical periods from the point of view of British government policy towards their regions; they were also, partly as a result of this, men of different views. It is well to point out too that the basis of Ja Ja's power included more than his great power in trade. In Opobo, Ja Ja was more than a merchant-prince; he was also a ritual head in a much more clearly defined sense than Nana ever was. King Ja Ja's determination to retian to the full, his position as King of Opobo leads to the contention here that, his power, unlike Nana's, was unusable to any but the traditional administration. Only Ja Ja's deportation and death in exile could break the deadlock created by

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106. Ikime O, Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta: Nana Aloma, London, 1969, pp. 173-4.

the conflict between him and the British; a conflict that was essentially one of two cultures. In the final analysis, it was the force of the gun-boat, supplemented by breach of faith, that robbed Ja Ja of his kingdom. Fergusson was right that "he was like Shere Ali, an earthen pot, which would be crushed when it was tried against the brass."[107] Since, however, to the African peoples involved, the power to command obedience consisted of more than the ability to apply physical force, if King Ja Ja had lost his throne, the lost sovereign power did not accrue to Britain.

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107. FO403/74, No. 67, Memorandum by James Fergusson, March 31, 1888.

APPENDIX I

Agreement with the King of Bonny, 1836.

King Pepple's House,
Grand Bonny.

25th January, 1836.

Article 1.

It is hereby agreed, between the undersigned His Britannic Majesty's subjects and the King of Bonny that no English subject shall from this time be detained on shore or maltreated in any way whatsoever by the King or Natives of Bonny under any pretext. By so doing, they will bring themselves under the displeasure of the King of England and be declared enemies of Great Britain and that the Men of War on any complaint will immediately come up the Bonny to protect the English subjects.

II. In case of any misunderstanding between the captains of the English vessels and the King or gentlemen of Bonny that all and every English Captain will go on shore free of molestation and will with the King and gentlemen of Bonny peacably settle all disputes between the parties.

III. English Captains having complaints against any of the Natives of Bonny will come on shore and lay his or her complaint before the King, and they hereby promise to give the complainant redress by punishing the offender, and if any English seaman shall illtreat a Bonny man he shall be punished by the Captain of the vessel to which he may belong.

IV. That for the future all books made between the traders and English captains shall bear the signatures of such responsible officer belonging to the ship with the date and name; by his not doing so the case shall be decided by the Captains of the merchant ships lying in the River who will see that the trader or Native's loss be made good.

V. That after the Captain or Supercargo has paid the regular custom the trade shall be opened, and upon no account shall the trade of any vessel be stopped; excepting the Captain or Supercargo act in opposition to any of the annexed agreements, and refuse to pay fine imposed by the other captains for the infringing of those rules.

VI. That every vessel's property shall be properly protected and that no King, Gentleman, or Natives of Bonny shall roll away the casks of any vessel from the cask house on any pretext whatever.

VII. That the King will be responsible for all monies, oil or goods that may be owing to the English Captains so that the vessel may not be

detained before sailing and that the Captains of the English ship will see all just debts incurred by any vessel are paid by her to Bonny men with bars or oil before leaving the river.

Signed in Old King Pepple's House

This 25th January 1836 in the presence of

ROBERT TYRON. Lt., H.B.M.B. Triniculo.		
ANNA PEPPLE X His mark.		
MANILLA PEPPLE X His mark.		Vere.
WM. H.L. CORBAN		Maryhan.
CHRISTOPHER JACKSON		Meg Merrilees.
JOS. TERNIE		Louisa.
HENRY FRODSHAM	MATE Barque	Huskisson.
J. CRANT		

APPENDIX II

Treaty with the King and Chiefs of the River Bonny, October 3, 1850.

Whereas the two Contracting Parties have deemed it expedient, for the effectual protection of British commerce, to proceed immediately to the revision of all former Treaties existing between the two countries, for the purpose of ascertaining what stipulations contained therein are proper to be continued or renewed, it is agreed that Articles I, II, and III, herewith subjoined, of former Treaty, dated April 9, 1937 are hereby ratified and confirmed.

Article I.

That the King and Chiefs of Bonny pledge themselves that no British subjects shall from this time be detained on shore or maltreated in any way under any pretence; and if they (the King and Chiefs) do so, they will incur the displeasure of Her Majesty the Queen of England and be declared enemies of Great Britain; and the men-of-war will, upon any such complaint being made to them, immediately come to Bonny to protect British vessels.

II. That in case of any misunderstanding between the British ship-masters and the King or Chiefs of Bonny, all and every British shipmaster shall be at liberty to go on shore free of molestation, and will, with the King and Gentlemen of Bonny, peacably settle any dispute between the parties.

III. That British subjects having any complaint against the natives of Bonny, will bring his or her complaint before the King and Chiefs and Masters assembled, and they do hereby promise to redress all such grievances by punishing the offender. And if any British seaman shall maltreat a Bonny man, he shall be punished by the master of the vessel to which such seaman shall belong.

IV. That upon the arrival of any British merchant-vessel in this river for the purpose of trading therein, the supercargoes of such vessels shall, upon the tendering of five bars per register tonnage of such ship, to the King or person entitled to receive such comey, be allowed the privilege of trading without further molestation. The comey to consist of a fair assortment of the goods usually brought out for trade, viz., guns, cloth, powder, rum, salt, beads, caps, knives, iron bars, bars of tobacco, earthenware, brass rods, or any other goods such ship may have in for trade.

The comey to be tendered upon the ship's arrival, or as soon as convenient, and if not accepted by the King, such ship shall be at liberty to commence trade. This, however does not exempt such vessels from paying the usual comey, if subsequently demanded.

V. That if at any time the supercargo of any ship (after having paid or tendered the usual comey for the privilege of trading) can prove that the trade of his ship has been stopped, whether directly or indirectly, upon any pretence whatever, the King is to be held responsible for such stoppage, and pay one puncheon of saleable palm oil per day per 100 tons register to said ship, as compensation for the loss incurred; the said oil to be paid within seven days after such stoppage shall have been made, and continue to pay the same so long as the trade of any such ship is stopped.

VI. That the supercargoes are not responsible to any of the Chiefs for the custom bar, but that it must be collected by themselves and at their own cost.

VII. That after the comey has been paid or tendered to the King, every trader shall be allowed to trade in his own name; and neither the King, nor any other trader is entitled to exact any other comey, custom or tax whatever.

VIII. That the King shall from henceforth set apart for the use of the ships frequenting this river for the purpose of trade, that part of the shore facing the anchorage lying between a small creek called John Africa's Creek, and the point called Execution Point, from low and high water mark for 200 yards inshore from the river; and that the King shall prohibit any of his subjects, under any pretence whatever, from frequenting such beach or any of the cask-houses built thereon. And if any natives are found there, unless with a written order from some white trader, they are liable to be arrested and brought before the King, who shall fine them or those to whom they belong. And if the master of any ship can prove that this cask-house has been illegally entered or broken into by any natives and any property stolen therefrom, the King shall make good all such loss himself.

IX. That in the event of the King or any of the Chiefs making any agreement to take any goods from a ship at a certain rate, all such agreements shall be perfectly binding, and in case the goods agreed for are not paid for at the time specified, such goods shall be forfeited and the oil to be considered due, the same as if the goods had actually been paid; such oil, if not paid during the ship's stay, is to be deducted from comey of said ship upon a future voyage, or from any other ship in the same employ. This clause is not to prejudice any private agreement made to the contrary, nevertheless.

X. That the King shall not, nor shall he permit any of his Chiefs to demand or enforce any trust from any of the ships upon any pretence whatever.

XI. Whereas several boats have been plundered and lives sacrificed, it is deemed just and right that all aggressions and depredations committed upon British subjects or property between this and New Calabar, within the limits of King Pepple's dominions, shall be satisfactorily adjusted by him.

XII. All just debts having been paid, and the ship ready for sea no excuse shall avail or be admitted for being detained for want of a pilot.

XIII. Upon the death of a supercargo of any vessel trading here, no second tax, payment, or comey, can be demanded under any pretence whatever.

XIV. And further, be it enacted, that any breach of this Treaty shall be punished by the party or parties guilty of the same paying 20 puncheons of saleable palm-oil.

XV. Should any person take any trust from any vessel, and be unable to pay his debt, his house and property to be forfeited and sold by the King, the proceeds of the sale to go to the liquidation of the debt, and that he be no longer allowed to trade. The captain or supercargo of any vessel trading with him after his name has been made known, to be liable to a penalty of 10 puncheons of palm oil; after the debtor has paid his debt, he shall again be allowed to trade.

XVI. With reference to Article VIII, it is conceded that the King or Chiefs, with their attendants, any walk during the day for the purpose of exercise, but no other, and on no account after sunset. (The King and Chiefs do mean those that have signed this Treaty.)

Dated at Bonny Town, 3 October, 1850.

JOHN BEECROFT, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, Bight of Benin and Biafra.

NORMAN B. BEDINGFIELD, Lieut. Commander H.M.S. 'Jackal'.

KING PEPPLE
ANNA PEPPLE
MANILLA PEPPLE
DUPPO.

(Signed also by 14 Masters of Vessels, and by five other chiefs, namely)

LOVELL for CAPT. HART.
J.F. ALLISON
ARAMBO for OLD JACK BROWN.

JOHN AFRICA
J. FUGH for
BLACK FOOBRA

APPENDIX III

Additional Articles to the Commercial Treaty with Bonny, January 23, 1854.

It having been deemed necessary for the welfare of the country to depose King Pepple and to elect a new King, Prince Dappo was declared King, and the following additions were made to the Commercial Treaty:

ARTICLE I.

That the newly-elected King, from this time hence forward after paying his present debts, of which due notice must be given shall not be allowed to trade, directly or indirectly (by giving trust to Bonny men) but that he shall receive two-thirds of the comey of every ship coming to trade in the river, for his support; the other third to be placed on one side to go to the exigencies of the country; each party contributing sufficient for the support of Pepple out of their shares, provided he is not possessed of sufficient means of his own. And further, should he, the King, be found trading he shall be fined in his own portion of the first comey that becomes due after the offence. And any person giving such information as shall lead to his conviction of having traded shall be entitled to one puncheon reward; and shall he show any resentful feeling, by committing any act of injustice or oppression upon the person giving such information, he shall be fined a still larger amount at the option of the court.

II. That the King or Chiefs shall not be allowed to seize upon, confine, or oppress or cause to be seized upon, confined, or oppressed, any trader, without first consulting and with the sanction of the court. And further, that no Chief shall be allowed to seize upon the oil, or boys, or any trader so long as the said party owes debts to the ships. Should such an occurrence take place, the party so offending shall be fined for the first offence five puncheons of palm oil, and to be doubled upon a repetition of the offence.

III. That the King or Chiefs shall not be allowed to go to war with any neighbouring country without informing the supercargoes of their reasons and necessity for so doing. And should it be thought necessary for them to do so, it is distinctly understood that all debts owing to the ships must be first paid, saving and expecting they are attacked by any other country, and obliged to defend themselves.

IV. That the headman, officers and slaves of the deposed King who have been in the habit of trading hitherto, shall still be allowed to trade without hindrance or molestation, and with the same freedom as any other house in the Bonny.

V. That all future meetings are distinctly understood to be held in the Court-house, built for that purpose; and after due notice has been given, any supercargo, king, chief, or trader being called upon and refusing to attend, except from illness or other satisfactory reason, shall be fined in one puncheon of palm oil for every such offence.

VI. That the King and Chiefs upon any decision of the court as to fines, or placing any offending party under arrest, must be responsible to the court that those fines are produced within the time fixed upon;

and it is to be understood that all fines are wholly and solely the property of the court, until the present debts upon the house are liquidated, after which time one-half will be used at the discretion of the court, and the other half to the public funds of the country along with the comeys, etc.

VII. As a number of buoys are about to be placed in the approaches to Bonny, we shall hold the King and Chiefs of Bonny responsible for any acts of wilful damage they may receive. And as an act of encouragement to the pilots, should the master of any vessel enter or leave the river upon his own responsibility, and without requiring their services, they shall be entitled to one-half pilotage. Should they be required and attend, they shall be entitled to the whole pilotage as formerly; but if refusing to attend when called upon, they shall lose all claim upon the vessel, and be subject to such other penalties as the court may decide upon.

VIII. That in the event of any difficulty arising from unforseen circumstances, or such as we have not had brought under our notice before, we may be empowered to draw out such fresh clauses as may be deemed necessary; and which, being approved of and signed by Her Majesty's Consul, may be considered as the law of the country.

IX. That in the event of any disturbance arising in the Eboo or other place that injures our trade, and over which we have no control, it shall be the King's duty, assisted by his Chiefs, to immediately send up and take such steps as may be considered requisite for its settlement.

X. That Yaniboo and Ishaca from this time henceforth are to be considered Chiefs of Bonny, and take their parts accordingly.

XI. That upon the arrival of any ship, the King (not being allowed to trade) requiring certain articles for his own personal use, the supercargo and himself shall be at liberty to arrange the matter, the King allowed the amount to be deducted from his comey.

KING DAPPO	ANNE PEPPLE	CAPTAIN HART
MANILLA PEPPLE	SONJOC ALLISON	JACK BROWN
FOOBRA	WORRASCO	BONIFACE
GOGO FOOBRA	GEORGE GOGOGEAD	TOM TAYLOR
TOM BROWN	OGE AFRICA	CHARLEY AFRICA
JACK WILSON PEPPLE	KING HOLLIDAY'S BOY	ISHAKA
JACK TELEFAR	DICK TELEFAR	

Court House, Grand Bonny, this 23rd day of January, 1854.

JOHN BEECROFT, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul.
CHARLES HENRY YOUNG, Lieutenant, Her Majesty's steam-vessel 'Antelope'

Additional Article

XII. Any King, Chief, trader, or boy, coming armed to the Court House, or attended by armed followers, or keeping armed followers in the neighbourhood of the court, during any meeting, shall be heavily fined in 50 puncheons of palm oil, in equal proportions from the King and Chiefs, and will also seriously incur the displeasure of Her Majesty's Representatives.

APPENDIX IV

The Minima Agreement.

Agreement signed by the Chiefs of Opobo Connections, other wise known as the Founders of Opobo, before the outbreak of the civil war in Grand Bonny in 1869.

By virtue of the powers and authority we vested upon Chief Jack Ja Ja Annie Pepple as Successor of Opobo House, we, the undersigned Comrade-Chiefs, comprising the political representatives of the said House, this day, hereby declare our voluntary engagement to elude Grand Bonny with a view to settle elsewhere in Andoni territory and that the said Chief Jack Ja Ja Annie Pepple and ourselves parties thereto, have agreed between us and concluded the following Articles:-

ARTICLE I.

For the better carrying on of the war with the Manilla House people we hereby jointly engage to provide men, arms, ammunition, and to contribute money and property towards all expenses incurred in maintaining the war men with the necessary stores.

II. It is understood that, for our losses in men and property as the result of the civil war, each of us and each of our successors or persons representing our interests, from time to time, shall have the indefinite title to a share of the revenues from Comey, Work-Bar, Custom Bar, and such other imposts and levies after twenty-five per centum of the whole has been reserved as income for the Big House.

III. It is agreed among us that the executive authority for the government of the settlement shall be solely reserved to each of us and to each of our successors or persons representing our interests, from time to time, as lawfully qualified for election and installation as successor to the Big House.

Made at Minima, Grand Bonny, the 13th Oct., 1869.

		Their marks
Signed	Jack Ja Ja Annie Pepple	X
"	BLACK FOOBRA	X
"	JIM WARISO	X
"	WOGO DAPPA	X
"	JOHN AFRICA	X
"	ANNIE STEWARD	X
"	GEORGE DAMAR	X
"	CAPTAIN URANTA	X
"	HOW STRONG FACE	X
"	JOHN TOM BROWN	X
"	OBARNEY	X
"	FINE BONE	X

Signed DEERIE TULEFARE X
" MANILLA X
" JACK TULEFARE X

Witnesses for the 15 marks:-

Signed D. TAYLOR
" J. HEMINGWAY
" D.C. WILLIAMS

APPENDIX V

Commercial Treaty with King Ja Ja, January 4, 1873.

ARTICLE I.

In the name of Her Britannic Majesty's Government we hereby acknowledge Ja Ja King of the Opobo, and fully entitled to consideration as such.

II. The British traders in the River Opobo shall pay the same amount of 'comey' as British traders in Bonny. No tax or impost shall be placed on them. Any disputes which may occur with King Ja Ja's people are to be referred to Her Britannic Majesty's Consul for settlement.

III. After the 5th April, 1873, the King of Opobo shall allow no trading establishment or hulk in or off the town of Opobo, or any trading vessel to come higher up the river than the White Man's Beach, opposite Hippopotamus Creek.

If any trading ship or steamer proceeds further up the river than the creek above mentioned after having been duly warned to the contrary, the said trading ship or steamer may be seized by King Ja Ja, and detained until a fine of 100 puncheons be paid by the owners to King Ja Ja.

Signed on board Her Britannic Majesty's ship "Pioneer", off Opobo Town, 4th January, 1873.

(Signed) KING JA JA
JOHN E. COMMERELL
Commodore
CHARLES LIVINGSTONE
Consul

APPENDIX VI

Treaty signed by the King and Chiefs of Bonny and Opobo, January 3, 1873.

We, the undersigned King and Chiefs of Bonny and Opobo, considering that our mutual security and the good of our countries require that we should be united in friendship, did on the 2nd and 3rd January, 1873, meet together on board Her Britannic Majesty's ship "Pioneer", in the River Opobo, and having referred various matters in dispute to King Amacree and the Chiefs of New Calabar, and the chiefs of the Okrilia Country, as Arbitrators, with Commodore John Edmund Commerell, Esq., U.C., C.B., A.D.C. Commanding Her Britannic Majesty's ship "Rattlesnake", and Commodore Commanding-in-Chief on the Cape of Good Hope and West Coast of Africa, Station, and Charles Livingstone, Esq., Her Britannic Majesty's Consul as Referees, do hereby bind ourselves to the following conditions, which have been mutually agreed to by the Kings and Chiefs undersigned:-

ARTICLE I.

No more war between Bonny and Opobo from the 3rd day of January, 1873.

II. The Bonny men are not to detain any of Ja Ja's men who wish to return, and Ja Ja is not to detain any of the Bonny men who wish to return.

III. The Bonny men are to have the following six markets for their exclusive use: Argualery, Obunku, Urata (four markets).

IV. The roads of these markets are to be open in two months from this date, viz: the 3rd January, 1873.

Any guns or forts which are on the creeks to these markets are to be taken away.

V. All armed men belonging to Bonny and Ja Ja are to be withdrawn in two months from the 3rd January, 1873. Andoney men are to go to any markets they like, and are not to be molested or hurt.

VI. Neither Ja Ja nor the Bonny men are to punish the Ebo men for the side they have taken in the war.

VII. The Arbitrators decide that the Oko Epella and Kuke belong to the house of Ja Ja, and that they should return to Opobo. Ja Ja binds himself in a fine not to exceed 1,000 puncheons not to injure them in any way.

VIII. In case either party infringe any of the Articles of the Treaty, the

matter shall be referred to Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, who will impose a fine not exceeding 1,000 puncheons on the offending party, and all trade will be stopped until the fine is paid.

IX. If the Opobo men attack the Bonny men, or the Bonny men attack the Opobo men, the opposite party is not to retaliate, but refer the matter to Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, who will investigate the case, and fine the aggressors.

X. Any houses may be made by either party for trade, but no great guns are to be put in them.

Signed on board Her Britannic Majesty's ship "Pioneer", in the River Opobo, on the 3rd day of January, 1873.

King and Chiefs of Bonny,
(signed) GEORGE, King of Bonny
WARRABOO, His mark X
OKO JUMBO
ADDA ALLISON, His mark X
CAPTAIN HART

King and Chiefs of Opobo,
(signed) KING JA JA
D.C. WILLIAMS, Secretary
OGODOPPO, His mark X
SAM G. TOBY
BLACK JOHN, His mark X

Arbitrators:

King and Chiefs of New Calabar,
(signed) KING AMACREE, His mark X
GEO. AMACREE "
JNO BULL "
HORSFUL MANAEL "
ARRY BRAID "
BOB MANUEL "
WEST INDIA "
GEO. WILL

King and Chiefs of Okuka
(signed) ABANDA His mark X
TODGIBBO "
SAWMARY "
WAGO "
EURAKA XIOLO "

Referees
(signed) J.E. COMMERELL, Commodore,
Commanding-in-Chief Her Majesty's Naval Forces on the Cape of Good Hope and West Coast of Africa Station.

CHAS. LIVINGSTONE,
Her Britannic Majesty's Consul for the Bights of Biafra and Benin

APPENDIX VII

British Treaty with Opobo, 4 January, 1873.

I. In the name of Her Britannic Majesty's Government, we hereby acknowledge Ja Ja King of the Opobo and fully entitled to all considerations as such.

II. The British traders in the River Opobo shall pay the same amount of 'comey' as British traders in Bonny. No other tax or impost shall be placed on them. Any disputes which may occur with Ja Ja's people are to be referred to Her Britannic Majesty's Consul for settlement.

III. After April 5, 1873, the King of Opobo shall allow no trading establishment or hulk in or off Opobo Town, or any trading vessel to come higher up the river than the whiteman's beach opposite Hippopotamus Creek. If any trading ship or steamer proceeds further up the river than the Creek above mentioned after having been fully warned to the contrary, the said trading ship or steamer may be seized by King Ja Ja and detained until a fine of 100 puncheons be paid by the owners to King Ja Ja.

Signed on board Her Britannic Majesty's ship "Pioneer" off Opobo Town, on the 4th day of January, 1873.

J.E. COMMERELL, Commodore,
Commander-in-Chief, H.B.M. Naval Forces
on the Cape of Good Hope and West Coast
of Africa station.

CHARLES LIVINGSTONE,
Her Britannic Majesty's Consul for the Bights
of Biafra and Benin.

APPENDIX VIII

Johnston's letter to Ja Ja, 18th September, 1887.

"I have summoned you to attend in a friendly spirit. I hereby assure you that whether you accept or reject my proposals tomorrow, no restraint whatever will be put on you, you will be free to go as soon as you have heard the message of the Government. If you do not attend the meeting no further consideration will be shown to you and you will be treated as an enemy of the British Government. I shall proclaim your deposition and hand your markets over to the Bonny men. If you attend tomorrow, I pledge you my word that you will be free to come and go but if you do not attend, I shall conclude you to be guilty of the charges brought against you and shall immediately proceed to carry out your punishment.

I am, Yours obediently,

H.H. Johnston, A/Consul."

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This bibliography is not an exhaustive list of all the literature with some relevance to the history of King Ja Ja of Opobo. It is only an attempt to indicate the main sources consulted.

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Gertzel, J.C. 'John Holt - a British Merchant in West Africa in the era of Imperialism' D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1959.

I am grateful to Dr. Gertzel for permitting me to read this thesis which has considerably helped to render this study of King Ja Ja more critical. I have however indicated in the footnotes where I disagree with Dr. Gertzel.