

LINEAGE FACTIONALISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE EASTERN NIGER DELTA DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE NEW CALABAR EXAMPLE RECONSIDERED

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Abstract

This essay is a critical evaluation of the theoretical framework adopted by Jones, Ayandele and Tasié for understanding conversion to Christianity among the Eastern Delta states during the nineteenth century. According to these scholars, reactions either in support or against Christianity were always organised around the pre-existing internal political division between the dominant groups of Houses in the Eastern Delta trading states. At New Calabar, “the Barboy group favoured Christianity” as opposed to the Amachree group; while at Bonny it was the Manilla Pepple group that defended the new faith against the Annie Pepple group who were identified with the old order. With the benefit of more copious evidence, especially in relation to New Calabar, this paper offers two inter-related conclusions. First, the lineage-faction oriented framework does not apply with equal validity to all the states. It may be adequate in explaining why and how the dominant Houses reacted to Christianity at Bonny; but it is certainly inadequate for interpreting the situation at New Calabar. This is because at New Calabar there was no group reaction either in support or against Christianity by the dominant Houses vying for political power. Second, in view of the absence of group reactions, Christianity was not a causal factor in inter-House feuding at New Calabar. For example, whereas the Manilla Pepple House fought the Annie Pepple House in 1869 in part to defend Christianity, the 1879 war between the Amachree and Barboy groups of Houses had nothing to do with religion. Taking all of these related points together, it is the opinion of this paper that: notwithstanding the broad similarities in the socio-cultural, political and economic institutions (including similarities in ecological conditions) of the Eastern Delta trading states, they did not always follow similar or identical trajectories in their relations with the extra-territorial forces of change - the Niger Mission, European traders and Consuls - during the nineteenth century.

Introduction

Between 1857 and 1882 the Niger Mission of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), under the spiritual and secular headship of Bishop Samuel Crowther, established churches and schools in the following communities of southern Nigeria: Onitsha, Gbebe, Akassa, Idah, Lokoja, Osamari, Asaba, Kippo Hill, Alenso, Bonny, Nembe-Brass, New Calabar and Okrika. The propaganda that went with the implantation of the “church-culture”, including the implications of that exercise for the indigenous polities mentioned above, have been discussed by historians of southern Nigeria from different perspectives.

Jones, Ayandele, and Tasié, for example, have discussed the response to Christianity in the Eastern Delta trading states - our area of focus - from a lineage-faction oriented perspective. This approach has markedly differentiated their interpretation of issues from other writers - Horton, Ejituwu and Cookey - interested in the area. Because this essay intends to re-evaluate the lineage - faction oriented response to Christianity, the works of the proponents of this approach will form the core of the literature review below.

Jones postulated an inexorable process of “binary fission” to explain internal sociopolitical and economic relations between the trading Houses (lineages) in the Eastern Delta states - Bonny, Nembe - Brass, New Calabar (Kalahari) and Okrika. This theory argues that the Eastern Delta states eventually polarized under pairs of powerful and opposed leaders; these acquired power after amassing wealth, and engaged in fierce political struggles for the control of the state. At Bonny this struggle was between the Manilla Pepple and Annie Pepple groups of Houses; while at New Calabar it was the Amachree versus the Awo-Barboy groups of Houses.

The leaders of these competing rival groups of Houses, according to Jones, “felt that there were considerable political and economic advantages to be gained by acquiring European religious cults, and missionaries were invited by the chiefs’. What Jones suggested was that the opposing Houses in the Eastern Delta states often courted the favour of the extra-territorial forces-Consuls, European traders and the Niger Mission - to enhance their own positions in the pre-existing internal power politics. Without any doubt this is a useful analytical tool; but some scholars, including Jones himself, have failed to recognise the limits of its strength for understanding and interpreting reactions to Christianity across the trading states of the Eastern Delta.

Thus, influenced by the above theory, Jones interpreted the response to Christianity at New Calabar along the lines of the pre-existing political divide between the Amachree and Awo-Barboy groups of Houses (Discussion on the sociopolitical organisation at New Calabar follows shortly to throw more light on the political divide). Here is part of the relevant excerpt indicating his position: Kalahari, during the period we are considering (up to 1884), had no mission, possibly because Bonny and Nembe had them. When Christianity was accepted by this state its strongest supporters were in Will Braid’s village of Bakana, and in the former Barboy Houses of Abonnema. In the following century, when the religious revival associated with the prophet Garrick Braid of Bakana swept the Eastern Delta, Buguma, the anti-Braid stronghold (*and the home of Amachree group of Houses*) alone among Kalahari villages seems to have remained almost unaffected by it. (my italics) (Jones, 1963:85).

The above passage presents both descriptive and conceptual inaccuracies. Ayandele, Horton, Cookey, Ejituwu and Tasie have all addressed the first problem by noting that New Calabar had a mission before 1884; and the missionaries were invited in part because the states of Bonny and Nembe-Brass were successfully enlisting their services in training their children to work in the export palm oil trade. Regarding the second inaccuracy - that is the interpretation of issues along the lines of the aforementioned political divide - no other writer except Tasie has offered comments.

In support of Jones on the second issue, Taise has argued that: “By 1879 a civil dispute had divided the town (New Calabar) into two opposing factions, the Barboy group of Houses, led by Will Braid (Igbaniho), and the Amakiri group of Houses, led by Abbi (Princewill) Amakiri. *The Barboy group favoured Christianity* ”⁸ (my emphasis) By analysis the response to Christianity along the lines of pre-existing cleavage between the dominant groups of Houses, he appears to have taken Jones’ exposition on New Calabar’s lineage-faction determined response to Christianity after 1884 as correct, and then extrapolated it back to cover the initial period. Put differently, both scholars hold the view that the acceptance, or rejection, of Christianity was corporately undertaken by the competing dominant groups of Houses in pursuit of mutually opposed socioeconomic and political interests.

Ayandele also adopted the above framework in interpreting lineage group response to Christianity at Bonny. For example, he commented that king Pepple of Bonny “knew from the beginning... that patronage of missionaries had political and economic advantages; that a people who accepted missionaries could hardly incur Britain’s displeasure in the era of pacification”⁹. Elsewhere he had argued that: “(The) Manilla Pepples, not yet aware of the potential subversive effects of missionary activity on their social order, embraced Christianity, the Manilla Pepples saw themselves as the defenders of modernisation against their political rivals, the Annie Pepples, who were seen as the perpetrators of the ingenious *status quo*.” The foregoing narrative suggests that Christianity at Bonny was perceived by the dominant groups of House along the lines of the pre-existing political cleavage between them (Details about the different group responses to Christianity will be discussed later).

This essay intends to show that whereas at Bonny inter-lineage political rivalry influenced overall allegiance to Christianity, it was not so at New Calabar. Neither the Amachree nor the Barboy groups of Houses responded *en masse* to Christianity to protect their perceived factional sociopolitical and economic interests. Individual allegiance to Christianity took place among the “war-canoe House” chiefs without undermining the overall unity between the politically affiliated group of Houses. The ways in which the kings and House leaders at Bonny and New Calabar responded to Christianity lend support to the view that:

notwithstanding the broad similarities in the socio-cultural, political and economic institutions (including similarities in ecological conditions) of the Eastern Niger Delta trading states, they did not always follow similar or identical trajectories in their relations with the extra territorial forces of change - European traders, Consuls and the Niger Mission during the nineteenth century.

Before setting out to do a discussion of the ways in which lineage leaders at New Calabar, including the king, responded to Christianity, it is pertinent to briefly discuss the sociopolitical organisation. This is intended to provide the necessary historical background for understanding nineteenth century New Calabar society and its relations with the Niger Mission.

A Brief Overview of the Sociopolitical Organisation of New Calabar in the Nineteenth Century

All of the Eastern Delta middlemen states had evolved dynamic, centralized systems of political government before the nineteenth century. These systems were headed by monarchs who were supported by the merchant politicians of the subordinate primary units making up society-the patri-lineages or “canoe-Houses” known as *wari*. According to Jones, the *wari* or “canoe-House” was primarily a trading outfit; but its personnel could be mobilized into a fighting force or unit in order to defend its interest-political or commercial -or the corporate interest of the state. Hence the “canoe- House” was also called a “war-canoe House”.¹³

The personnel of a “canoe-House” was predominantly made up of the descendants and relatives of the founder, slaves bought for integration and their descendants, individuals and groups who joined voluntarily. Through the use of lineage idiom, members of the “canoe-House” perceived themselves as kin-group or lineage: for example, the founder was called “father”, while his wife (or wives) was called “mother” (or mothers). The overall aim of every lineage was to expand its population through reproduction and incorporation (of slaves and free persons) so that its own workforce would effectively rival or surpass those of rival lineages in the body politic.

Throughout the period under discussion in this essay, politics in the trading state of New Calabar was dominated by two large lineages or groups of Houses and their allies: the Amachree and the Awo-Barboy groups of Houses. The Amachree group of Houses was led by king Princewill Amachree and his de facto prime minister, George Amachree. Among many others, Tiger Amachree, Tom Big Harry, Prince Batubo, West India and Omekwe Horsefall Manuel were the prominent “war-canoe House” chieftains in this formation.

At the other end, the opposing Awo-Barboy formation, which was led jointly by Will Braid (Igbani) and Bob Manuel, had secured the alliance and cooperation of the following powerful and prominent “war-canoe Houses” Young Briggs, Georgewill, Standfast Jack, Don Pedro, and Iyalla. In 1879 a section of this group led by Will Braid and Iyalla (excluding Bob Manuel, Young Briggs, Standfast Jack, Don Pedro and GeorgeWill) revolted against the Amachree formation. The protracted civil war which ensued redivided New Calabar into three quasi autonomous groupings - Abonnema, Bakana and Buguma - between 1881 and 1883.¹⁴

With this development Buguma became the seat of king Princewill Amachree, while Will Braid and Bob Manuel governed Bakana and Abonnema respectively. However, notwithstanding this internal geopolitical realignments, New Calabar related to the extra-territorial forces of change-the Niger Mission, Consuls and European traders-as one unified polity under the suzerainty of Princewill Amachree throughout the nineteenth century.

New Calabar’s political influence as a middleman trading state in the Easter Delta extended over the following primary producing hinterland communities: Elele, Emuoha, Isiokpo, Rumoji, Ibaa, Okpo-Mbu-Tolu, Ogbakiri, Ndelle, Ekpeye, Abua Engenni, Ogba-Egbemma, Idu, Ikri and Oguta. Within the Eastern Delta itself, New Calabar exercised a level of hegemonic influence over the following neighbouring satellite communities: Ifoko, Angulama, Ido, Minama, Idama, Orusangama, Tombia, A’oalama, Sangama, Oporoma, Sama, Bukuma, Udekama, Okpo, Ke, Kula, Obonoma, Illelema, Abissa and Tema. Because of the extent of New Calabar’s influence, the Niger Mission saw it as a veritable staging post, if not a gateway, to the evangelization of the coastal and hinterland populations of southeastern Nigeria.

Introduction of Christianity at New Calabar and the Responses of the Dominant Lineage Leaders During the Nineteenth Century

In April 1865 Bishop Crowther visited New Calabar and discussed the prospects of establishing a mission with Princewill Amachree and “four principal chiefs”.¹⁵ Owing to financial constraints, however, the Niger Mission was unable to implement its programme until 1873/4. From the outset, some “war-canoe House” chiefs were wary of the likely impact of missionary teaching and propaganda on pre-existing socio-cultural institutions in New Calabar. On the insistence of these chiefs, it was unanimously agreed that a clause be inserted into any agreement with the Niger Mission to the effect that New Calabar would monitor the influence of the Mission for ten years, before accepting its presence finally and in full.¹⁶

Those who expressed these misgivings about Christianity-Bob Manuel, Young Briggs, Will Braid, Princewill Amachree and Omekwe Horsefall Manuel - were not drawn along partisan “war-canoe House” groupings; they were united by genuine concerns about the implications of the new faith for the indigenous world view. The principal aim in inviting the Niger Mission to New Calabar was succinctly summarized in a reported conversation between a New Calabar chief (unnamed) and S. A. Crowther in 1875. According to the chief, “(they) did not want religious leaching, for that the children have enough at home, they teach them such themselves, that they want them to be taught how to guage palm oil, and other mercantile business as soon as possible.”¹⁷

As traders, the people of New Calabar sought a type of instruction that was strictly utilitarian or pragmatic in intent. The desire was for a commercial pedagogy that would produce artisans, clerks and men educated in the trading life and language of the coast, 'flic medium in which they wished to receive instruction was English and, in this connection, the chiefs expected the missionaries to continue the tradition of those earlier merchants who had taught the traders to speak some English, who had instructed them in part in the proper accounting and management of trade returns. For example, Bob Manuel had once told a representative of the Niger Mission at New Calabar, Rev. J. D. Garrick: “...teach my people to read and write English book, but leave God palava alone (because) this God palava is a trouble.”¹⁸ In pursuit of this secular objective, a total of twenty six “war-canoe Houses” chiefs, drawn across the political divide, contributed forty two pupils to the missionary boarding school when it was established in 1875.¹⁹

For Bob Manuel and the other “war-canoe House” chiefs mentioned above, including the king, the underlying fundamental spiritual world view of missionary Christianity - “To impart knowledge saving the soul” -and its related secular values of individual freedom and rights, the equality of all persons before God, and the universal brotherhood of humankind, were all capable of undermining the existing traditional *status quo*. To protect this *status quo* from these alien values, these men were overly critical of their dependants - wives, children, blood relatives, and slaves in particular-from attending the church. As they argued: “Those who attend church were breaking the country’s law; are taught to disobey their masters and not work when sent; and that their slaves and women were actually defying and threatening them at home, ...”²⁰ Flere is S. A. Crowther’s commentary on those leaders who flatly rejected the moral and spiritual aspects of Christianity:

The minds of the majority of the chiefs are influenced by mere secular motives for having a mission established among them; they look more for temporal advantages to be derived by their children’s education than the spiritual good to their souls, of which they themselves are total strangers.

As compared to the pro-tradition “war-canoe House” chiefs mentioned above, there were those who made efforts to embrace both the spiritual and secular aspects of Christianity. Notable among these were: George Amachree, West India, Iyalla, Prince Batubo, Don Pedro, Tom Big Harry and Tiger Amachree. These Christian “loyalists” and “friends”, similar to the pro-tradition group, were also drawn across the politically dominant lineages at New Calabar. Before proceeding, however, I need to qualify the loyalty of these “friends” of Christianity. They were syncretists who developed a sense of each religion as having its own areas of strengths and weaknesses; and they were prepared to maximise the expertise provided by Christianity and indigenous religion for solving problems. For this reason, the Niger Mission regarded them as mere “church-goers” who fell short of genuine conversion. The following accounts concerning West India, Tiger Amachree and Tom Big Harry will illustrate how these “loyalists” were unresolved in their commitment to Christianity.

In 1877, according to Rev. W. E. Carew, the Niger Mission parson at New Calabar, West India had “boldly stood up and told the king and (his) brother chiefs that he could not see the use of worshipping juju, that it is time for them to think about what to do with it”, this is because, “it does not improve their country, it does not give them riches, nor does it preserve their lives.”²² On the face value of this comment, West India may be seen as a convert becoming restive about the adequacy of the established world view as a framework for comprehending the rapidly changing economic and sociopolitical realities, and searched about for something new. Put differently, he may be seen as a convert struggling to discover the inner socio- religious, economic and political implications of the Christian ideology for New Calabar. However, as the story below indicates, West India was actually a syncretist.

In 1879-two years after making those comments about the indigenous religious heritage-West India was accused of inappropriate business practices amounting to economic sabotage against New Calabar. Contrary to Christian orthodoxy, he willingly surrendered to the traditional oath taking ordeal to prove his innocence. According to Carew, when West India survived the ordeal “he... thought of making a feast in honour of juju to thank him for exonerating him from the charges laid against him and also to invite all his friends to rejoice with him.”²³ Because the proposed celebrations were considered “heathenish”, Carew tried, but without success, to advise against it. Following West India’s rejection of that advice, the parson in turn rejected an invitation to attend the celebration. Furthermore, Carew turned down a request for the Mission’s musical equipment on the reasoning that: “it was made to sing sacred songs and not sing praises to juju.”²⁴ Much to the chagrin of the missionaries, West India withdrew his wards from the boarding school to enable them participate in this “heathen” festival.

As for his contemporaries, Tom Big Harry and Tiger Amachree, they were attracted to Christianity in part because of its related technology - Western medicine. The Mission agents were at once religious ministers and partisan dispensers of drugs. Their stock of medicines such as expectorants, pills, quinine, and other drugs for common tropical diseases were made available solely to adherents. To take full benefit of the Mission’s services, according to S.A. Crowther, “chief Tom Big Harry.. has built himself a hut at a close proximity to the mission..”

After months of intense preaching and ministration, Harry became very enthusiastic about Christianity. According to Carew he was the:

.. most anxious to learn about Jesus Christ. He is the first Calabar chief that allowed his wives to attend Divine Service on Sundays, and he himself is a constant attendant. Many a time he would come to me (Carew) brining some of his wives and slaves and petty chiefs (who have not the opportunity of coming to church) and say “massa where dim Jesus Christ book, read it for me, and I will explain it to my people.”²⁶

The commentary on Tom Big Harry suggests that he was trying, much in the same way as West India, to identify with the spiritual message of Christianity. Alas, however, S. A. Crowther tells us that in addition to the medication made available through the missionaries, he was also receiving .. .the treatment of a native doctor” for the benefit of his health.²⁷

Finally, Carew tells that, after Tiger Amachree had publicly identified with the Mission and its spiritual values, he angrily burnt his son’s bible for a number of reasons. The son in question, who was a pupil at the mission boarding school and a recipient of the religious and ideological brainwashing of the missionaries, had refused to work on Sundays because he wished to keep the Sabbath holy. “At another time, his father sent for him and told him that heshould assist in making ceremonies to juju; but the boy refused and said that it was folly to do so.” Enragedby these circumstances, Tiger Amachree said that:

If he could only get the rest of the chiefs to side him, they would come out of their country, because that God palaver which they put in their boys’ heads spoils them; for they refuse now to make juju, and when all the old people die, juju will not be cared for...²⁸

Based on the accounts given above, it is very tempting to conclude that West India and his colleagues did not make a clean break with the indigenous religion when they accepted Christianity.

Secondly, their “conversion” did not deeply penetrate the religious dimension of their everyday lives. However, despite the ambivalence and unresolved commitment, these chiefs (unlike the pro-tradition chiefs) were becoming steadily more critical of the traditional social values that had hitherto sustained the world view of society. Their criticisms were, however, not directed or calculated to promote or undermine the interest of any particular group of Houses. Consequently, no group of Houses felt threatened by their criticisms. As we shall see, this was the most crucial difference between the pro-Christianity elements at New Calabar and those at Bonny.

Having done a broad survey of response patterns among the “war-canoe House” heads at New Calabar, I shall now examine the situation at Bonny for comparative purposes. This exercise will help prepare the background for my concluding remarks.

Christianity and Lineage-Faction Oriented Response at Bonny during the Nineteenth Century

In the Eastern Delta, Bonny was the first home of Christianity; and king William Pepple’s initiative of inviting the Church Missionary Society was an inspiration to the neighbouring states, including New Calabar. King Pepple indicated his desire for the church to Bishop Crowther at Fernando Po around the middle of 1854.^{2<^} Pepple was at Fernando Po because John Beecroft, Her Majesty’s first Consul to the Bight of Benin and Biafra (now Bonny), had endorsed a decision to dethrone and exile him. Later in 1854, however, Pepple left for England where he lived until his return to Bonny in August 1861.

While in England, “...he witnessed the blessed effects of Christianity to elevate a nation”, and was subsequently baptized in Christ Church, Middlesex, on 30 October 1856. In 1859, before his confirmation by the Bishop of London, he had developed an “earnest desire that the gospel should be preached to his people as the only remedy for their good both in time and eternity.”³⁰ In 1863, just after regaining the throne, Pepple instructed his son George Pepple formally to write to the Right Honourable and Reverend, the Lord Bishop of London, for the establishment of the church at Bonny. This request, which was forwarded to Bishop Crowther in 1864, eventually led to the commencement of Niger Mission activities at Bonny.

This account shows that William Pepple had fully endorsed the spiritual world view of Christianity - “To impart knowledge saving the soul” - before inviting the Niger Mission. Upon founding the church at Bonny, William Pepple actually tried to demonstrate this endorsement in the following way. He consented hours before his death in 1866 to be relocated “to the mission premises where (the missionaries) had full opportunities of directing his soul to the saviour of sinners, by constantly reading to him the word of God and praying with him ...”³¹ It is interesting to know that when he eventually passed away the Manilla Pepple House, in disregard for tradition, had him buried according to the requirements of Christianity.

This indicates that by 1866 the Manilla Pepple ruling House - as opposed to the rival Annie Pepple House - had fully endorsed Christianity. When George Pepple subsequently ascended the throne, he made a public declaration to support Christianity in these words. “As for me the work (that is, the work of implanting Christianity) which my father has begun, I will never... deny or desert.”³² In pursuit of this policy, on 21 April 1867 (Easter Day) - a scant three years after the formal introduction of Christianity - king George wrote to S. A. Crowther announcing the renunciation and destruction of Bonny’s national deity and totem, the *geeilee* or “iguna”. As if this was Bonny’s Easier Day gift to Christendom, he declared:

You will be glad to hear that yesterday, at the mutual consent of myself and chiefs, the geedee or iguna, Bonny’s juju, was declared to be no longer Bonny juju, and many of the townsmen are killing them.³³

According to Ayandele, George “sought to replace the constitution which rested on indigenous religion, with the chiefs as partners in the government of the country, with a ‘Christian’ constitution in which the traditionalist chiefs would have no place.”³⁴ Arguably, these traditionalist chiefs were members of the Annie Pepple group of Houses.

Another exponent of the above factional position was Oko Jumbo, a coleader of the Manilla **Pepple House** and “Jaja’s” strongest and bitterest enemy.”³² Like the king, he also accepted the spiritual message of Christianity; and “was the first to learn reading and writing, took the Bible to the Qua Ibo river, Bonny’s chief oil market, and indicated that he would not object to Christianity

spreading there.”³⁶ In an earlier speech to mark his own “conversion” to Christianity, Jumbo said: “he had discovered by reading the Scripture, great wickedness in his actions when he was without any light, but now as his eyes begin to be opened, he would leave them off one by one.”³⁷ It is therefore clear that George Pepple and Oko Jumbo, as coleaders of the Manilla Pepple ruling House, were the most enthusiastic acolytes of the missionaries at Bonny. This drew a sharp line between them and Jaja, leader of the Annie Pepple House, who had refused to sign the letter of invitation to Bishop Crowther in 1864.

Quite naturally, given the apparent support of the ruling House, including Bonny’s overall commercial and political pre-eminence in the Eastern Delta during the mid-nineteenth century, it was made the headquarters of the Niger Mission. The Annie Pepple lineage, which had overwhelmingly rejected the underlying fundamental spiritual world view of Christianity, vehemently campaigned against this development in Bonny’s history. The resistance campaign, headed by Jaja, was founded on the reasoning that: Christianity “would imperil and destroy Bonny independence.”³⁸

Jaja’s campaign, according to Niger Mission records, appealed to the following chiefs in the Manilla Pepple formation: Adda Allison, Long John, William Brown, Dublin Green, Squeeze Banigo and William Banigo. Consequently, these men indicated to Bishop Crowther “that after due consideration of the subject (they) find it necessary to decline the honour of having Bonny made the headquarter to the Niger Mission.”³⁹ This objection was however dropped after George Pepple’s plea to the dissenting chiefs:

You told me that Jaja of Opobo had sent you a message deprecating the establishment in Bonny of a headquarters station of the Church Missionary Society of London, for their Lower Niger Mission, represented by Bishop Crowther, and advising you against it, as a measure that would imperil and destroy Bonny independence.

Now I am here through you, to defend and protect that independence; and I can assure you that, that is entirely untrue, you need not entertain the slightest fear on that point. But Jaja must govern his own country, and not ours. He has shown no sympathy towards Bonny hitherto, that we should now give a listening ear to his prattling and smooth-tongued subterfuges.⁴⁰

The anti- Christianity position of the Annie Pepple faction in general, and that of Jaja in particular, is best demonstrated by looking at Opobo.⁴¹ Up until the deportation of Jaja to the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent in 1887, all Christian proselytizers were barred from gaining access to Opobo. Jaja had prevented the CMS Niger Mission from Opobo because “he did not want black missionaries.”⁴² (These black missionaries were the Sierra Leonians in the Niger Mission). However, according to Vice-Consul Harry Johnston’s view, Jaja, who was a staunch traditionalist, did not want Christianity propagated in Opobo by either white or black missionaries.⁴³

Arguable as this may seem, Edward Fitzgerald, editor of the *African Times* and a “representative” of Bonny in London, said that the: “real cause of Jaja’s decision to leave Bonny was his hatred for missionary propaganda.”⁴⁴ However, on the strength of all the foregoing evidence, it may be concluded that the deportation of Jaja Probably smoothed the way for the implantation of the church among the members of the Annie Pepple group of Houses at Opobo.

Concluding Remarks: A Comparative Analysis of Lineage Responses to Christianity at New Calabar and Bonny during the Nineteenth Century

Jones and Taise argued that the competing dominant Houses at New Calabar responded to Christianity as distinct groups in pursuit of their narrow separate sociopolitical and economic interests. The narrative relating to the concerned groups of Houses-the Amachree group under the powerful pair of Princewill and George versus the Barboy group under an equally powerful pair of Bob Manuel and Will Braid -does not substantiate this position. In fact, without reference to factional goals, rulers from both groups were genuinely perturbed about the potential implications of Christianity for the indigenous heritage.

Princewill Amachree, Will Braid and Bob Manuel were all traditionalists who regarded Christianity as a cultural pollutant because of the alien spiritual and secular values it propagated. In this regard they could be compared to Jaja of the Annie Pepple House at Bonny. However, unlike Jaja, they all exhibited greater tolerance in their relations with the pro-Christian elements in New Calabar.

In 1875 S. A. Crowther commented about Princewill's attitude to missionary education and its potential impact on the indigenous heritage:

The king himself has not yet given a single boy to school, he is waiting for the juju priest to precede him; had we to wait for the king or the juju priest to set the example, there would not have been a boy as yet at school. These two persons are afraid of each other who should set the example, to avoid being accused of being the first to encourage the desertion of idolatrous worship, which is the religion of the country, (my emphasis)⁴⁵

Evidence suggests that the king later sent his wards to the boarding school because, like Bob Manuel and Will Braid of the Barboy group of Houses, he fully appreciated the educational value of missionary enterprise.⁴⁶ This was also his main reason for inviting the Niger Mission to New Calabar.

This being so, unlike the kings of the Manilla Pepple group, Princewill did not engage in any public speech to encourage Christianity; and he also tried, but without success, to discourage cabinet members from public speeches calculated to promote the new faith. For example, the Niger Mission agent at New Calabar, Rev. W. E. Carew, tells us that Princewill openly expressed disappointment with West India - a member of the Amachree House and a strongman in the ruling cabinet - for speaking about the virtues of Christianity in 1877.⁴⁷

The above views of Princewill notwithstanding, George Amachree - the de facto prime minister of New Calabar and a coleader of the ruling Amachree group of Houses - supported Christianity. Upon accepting Christianity, George stopped offering the annual propitiatory rituals to the national deity Owamekaso. For that reason, according to Rev. Carew, "everyone reviled him, even women and children..,"⁴⁸ The priestesses of indigenous divinities at New Calabar also rebuked him as a renegade who "... does not care about juju, and refuses to give him rum..,"⁴⁹

The profile of George in the Amachree House could be compared to that of Oko Jumbo in the Manilla Pepple House: first, they were both of servile origin; second, they were both successful wealthy merchant traders; third, they were de facto prime ministers; and, finally, they were both adherents who had accepted the underlying fundamental world view of Christianity. Notwithstanding these similarities in their sociopolitical profiles, George and Jumbo achieved varying levels of success in their efforts to implant Christianity in their respective dominions of influence.

Only one factor accounted for this. The ruling Manilla Pepple group of Houses unanimously stood for Christianity. This gave Pepple and Jumbo the impetus to impose it as the state religion without much regard for the sentiments of the Annie Pepple group of Houses. On the other hand the absence of such Amachree House group support for Christianity undermined George. For example, George could not enlist the assistance or cooperation of Princewill in his evangelical endeavours because, as we have noted, the latter had a very low approval rating for Christianity and its usefulness to society.

What about the competing Barboy group of Houses? They did not also make unanimous group approach to Christianity. Within the formation Will Braid and Bob Manuel coexisted with pro-Christian House heads. For example, Will Braid worked together with Iyalla - a "friend" of the missionaries - to establish Bakana after the civil war at new Calabar between 1881 and 1990. Similarity, Bob Manuel also worked successfully with Don Pedro - described by Bishop Tugwell as the man "most anxious to see the church established in the town (Abonnema, New Calabar) during the same period mentioned above."⁵⁰ For purpose of comparison, let me reiterate that Jaja left Bonny in part because he could not coexist with the pro-Christianity Manilla Pepple group of Houses.

Finally, because allegiance to Christianity at new Calabar was not calculated to protect perceived factional House interests, it did not play a part in intensifying the power politics between the dominant groups of Houses. For example, because it was not one of the factors responsible for the crisis of 1879, persons on either side of the religious fence fought together under the united banner of their lineage groupings. Most importantly, they also worked in unison to foster the overall development of their new settlements after the crisis in 1883. In the case of Bonny, however, Christianity played a strong part in intensifying political polarization between the dominant groups of Houses. The 1869 war, according to the Manilla Pepple faction, was waged in part "on behalf of Christianity against the tribal religion with which the Annie Pepples, Jaja's faction, were uncompromisingly identified."⁵¹

References

1. The ideas and arguments contained in the essay are more fully extended in my discussion of New Calabar's Response to Christianity' in a forthcoming book: Wariboko, W. E. *Planting Church- Culture at New Calabar Some Neglected Aspect of Missionary Enterprise in the Eastern Niger Delta 1865-1918*. Bethesda: UPFWA.
2. G3A3/1885/11 Brief Review of the Niger Mission Since 1857.
3. Ajayi, J. A. (1965). *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891*. London: Longmans.
- Ayandele, E. A. (1966). *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914*. London: Longmans
- Ekechi, F. K. (1972). *Missionary Enterprises and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*. London: Frank Cass
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- Jones, G. I. (1963). *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers* Oxford: OUP.
4. Ayandele, E. A. (1966). op. cit.
- Horton, R. (1970). A Hundred Years of Change in Kalahari Religion in Middleton, J (ed) *Black Africa*. New York: Macmillan Pp 192-211.
- Cookey, S. J. S. (1974). *KingJaja of the Niger Delta: His Life and Times 1821-1889*. New York: Nok.
- Ejituwu, N. (1974). Some Initial Problems in the Establishment of the Church Missionary Society in Kalahari 1875-1885. *Lagos Notes and Records* Vol. 3 August Pp 25-36.
5. Tasié, G. O. M. (1978). *Christian Missionary in the Niger Delta 1864-1918*. Leiden: E.J Brill.
6. For One Example of this Framework in Analysing Politics in New Calabar (Kalahari), Bonny and Old Calabar, See: Nair, K. K. *Politics and Society in Southeastern Nigeria*. London: Fzank Cass 1972, p.189.
7. Jones, G. I.(1963). op.cit Pp 200-201.
8. Tasié, G. O.M. (1978). op. cit P 73.
9. Ayandele, op.cit P 79.
10. Ibid p 72.
11. Ibid p 72.
12. For a Recent Account of Inter-Lineage Rivalry at Bonny during the period covered see: Lynn, M.Factionalism, Imperialism ad the Making and Breaking of the Bonny Kingship c. 1830-1885 *Rev Franc d'outre-mer* t (1995) No 307, Pp 169-192.
13. Jones G. I op.it p 55.

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14. For a Fuller Discussion of this Political History and the Civil War see chapter three in W. E Wariboko, *New Calabar and the Forces of Change ca 1850-1945* (unpublished Ph. D) University of Birmingham 1991.
15. CA3/04/489 S. A Crowther, *Miscellaneous Paper's* April 1875.
16. For Reasons that are not Disclosed, this Clause was not Inserted in the Agreement Available in the CMS Archives. See Relevant Appendix in Wariboko, W. E., *Planting Culture at New Calabar* (Forthcoming).
17. CA3/04/479 D.C. Crowther *Miscellaneous Papers* 31 March 1875.
18. G3A3/1891/23 J. D. Garrick to S. A Crowther 1 December 1890.
19. CA3/04/704 The List of New Calabar Chiefs Who Sent Children to the Boarding School.
20. CA3/1894/83 D. C. Crowther, Report of Visit to CMS Station at Abonnema, New Calabar 19 May 1894
21. CA3/04/747 S. A Crowther, Review of the Niger Mission 1878.
22. CA3/010/19 W. E Carew, A Report 1877.
23. CA3/04/59 W. E to S. A Crowther 6 April 1879.
24. Ibid.
25. CA3/04/746 Report of Bishop Crowther's Visitation to the Niger Mission.
26. CA3/010/9 W. E Carew 1877.
27. CA3/04/746 Report of Bishop Crowther's
28. CA3/04/646 Extracts from the Letters of the Rev. W. E. Carew 22 April 1897.
29. CA3/04/215 S. A. Crowther to Henry Venn 4 - December - 1866 (For a Fuller Account of the Introduction of Christianity at Bonny, and the Role of King William Pepple, See Tasie, G. O. M. Op.CilPp 17-29).
30. G3A3/1884/196 S. A Crowther Reminiscence.
31. CA3/04/215 S. A Crowther to Henry Venn 4- December- 1866.
32. CA3/04/210 King George Pepple to S. A Crowther.
33. CA3/04/232 S.A Crowther to Henry Venn 1- May-1867 (The Iguana Mentioned in the Quoted Extract
Was in Fact the Monitor Lizard. Iguana is a Central and South American, not an African, Lizard. I Am Grateful to Prof. Horton for this Information).
34. Ayandele, op.cit p78.
35. Ibid p73.
36. Ibid p 73.

37. CA3/04/195 S. A Crowther to H. Venn 4 November 1866.
38. G3A3/1883/5 King George Pepple to the Chiefs of Grand Bonny.
39. G3A3/1883/51 The Chiefs of Bonny to Bishop S.A. Crowther (Copy H9) 21-February-1883.
40. G3A3/1883/5 King George op. cit.-5- February-1883.
41. Jaja's Opposition to Christianity at Bonny which started before the war of Secession in 1869 was more intensely pursued after the founding of Opobo in 1870. This was partly a ploy to destabilize the Manilla Pepple group.
42. G3A3/1888/45 S. A Crowther, A Clean Copy of Archdeacon Crowther's Letter to Me dated Opobo at Mr. Zellar's Factory, Stuart and Douglas 30 March 1888.
43. Ibid.
44. Ayandele, op.cit p 72.
45. CA3/04/744 Annual Report of Bishop Crowther on the Niger Mission 1875.
46. CA3/04/704 The List of New Calabar Chiefs who sent Children to the Boarding School.
47. CA3/010/19 W. ECarew A Report 1877.
48. CA3/04/594 W.E Carew Letter 6- April-1878.
49. Ibid.
50. G3A3/1898/90 Agreement with the Chiefs of Obonoma (sic) 4 May 1898.
51. Ayandele, op.cit p 72.