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Chieftaincy Institution and Military Formations in the Eastern Niger Delta of Nigeria

Adagogo-Brown, Edna, PhD.

Associate Professor of History

Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic

E-mail: brownadagogo2@gmail.com

Tel: +2348033091227

Abstract

This paper showed the military formations in the Eastern Niger Delta prior to Nigerian independence which the British colonial government tried to destroy in the wake of the establishment of the Protectorate of the Oil Rivers and Consular paper treaties. The Chieftaincy institution in the Eastern Niger Delta dates to at least 1000 years ago. After the migration story had been completed, the various communities that made up the Eastern Niger Delta commenced the early political and economic institutions with the ward or wari system of government and the long-distance trade with their neighbours. In the early fifteenth century, the Asimini ward in Bonny and Korome ward in Kalabari produced their early kings. The Chieftaincy institution assumed a greater relevance in the kingdoms of Bonny and Kalabari with the emergence of King Perekule of Bonny and King Amachree of Kalabari respectively. These two kings introduced the war canoe house political system in response to the slave trade which had increased tremendously with the entrance of Britain. The risks and the competitions among the City-states of Bonny, Kalabari, Okrika and Nembe-Brass to procure slaves necessitated the acquisition of war canoes to equip and constitute the military arm of the states. The war canoes provided security for the trading canoes and goods. Opobo City-state, the last in the Eastern Niger Delta in the last quarter of the nineteenth century lunched as many as sixty-seven war (Omuaru) canoes and other small units (kalawari) chieftaincy houses before the 1940s.

Background

The use of the open sea and creeks had long been the way of life of most coastal communities in the Eastern Niger Delta of Nigeria. The canoes as means of transportation helped the seafarers out of economic and social difficulties without which life and living would have been very excruciating. Before the fifteenth century, the neighbouring communities of the interior, exchanged agricultural produce for fish and salt from the coastal people. This was the period

of long-distance trade (Alagoa 1971). These people were originally at the Central Niger Delta. Their migration at different times down to the Eastern Niger Delta necessitated the change from farming environment to fishing and salt making environment (Alagoa&Fombo 2001).

By mid-15th century, the Portuguese traders and navigators met the Benin People and started trade with them. Towards the end of 15th century, the Portuguese extended their trade contact with Bonny but had difficulty with the narrow creeks of the Bonny River. According to Alagoa&Fombo (2001, p. 7) it was Asimini that responded to the challenge of widening the water ways, by sacrificing his daughter, Ogbolo, to the river goddess. By making the trade with the Portuguese possible, Asimini was crowned the first King of Bonny (Alagoa&Fombo 2001). Her Majesty, Queen Kambasa, also ruled Bonny under Asimini dynasty and led the first military squad to OpuOkò in Ogoni territory and decisively defeated the Ogoni warriors (Alagoa&Fombo 2001; Jaja 2002, p. 220). After that successful onslaught, the Ogoni made peace and there had not been any recorded conflict between the two neighbours. The last King of Bonny under the Asimini dynasty was King Awusa Halliday whose reign was terminated because of his inability to defeat the Andoni. Before the eighteenth century, when the slave trade was still undergoing the gradual process of expansion, the importation of firearms into the Eastern Delta was minimal. It was believed that the Portuguese traders only supplied arms to their fortified stations on the Gold Coast-Elmina, Shama, Axim and Accra to protect them from other European nations and local people around the neighbourhood (Kea 1971:186). In other words, although the Portuguese traded with Bonny and Kalabari at this period, arms were probably not part of the trade goods. This article will therefore, examine military formations in three of the city-states in the Eastern Niger Delta. Two of the three, Bonny and Kalabari, are rivals in both the trade in slaves and palm oil, while the third, Opobo is a product of the economic and political rivalry in Bonny.

King Perekule and the Military Formation in Bonny

The description of a man linked with the King of Bonny in 1699 by James Barbot as well as King's brother was already a captain by 1699, a year before the beginning of 18th century. The King of Bonny at this time was King Awusa Halliday (Alagoa and Fombo 2001) and not Captain Pepprel as suggested by James Barbot. Jones (1963) was certain that Captain Pepprel must have been a younger man by 1699. It was Captain Pepprel who conducted the trade negotiations with James Barbot because according to Jones (1963) it was the tradition of the Delta States to employ as their spokesmen, their ablest men, and preferably those that can speak a European Language. The European language used in negotiation between James Barbot and Captain Pepprel must have been English and it was probably the English traders that gave him the name Pepple (Jones 1963:106). The account of Alagoa and Fombo associated Perekule (Pepprel) as a trader in beads and spices. Meanwhile, the external trade in beads and spices which started with the Portuguese, entered Bonny during the time of Asimini and continued up to the time of King Awusa Halliday. In the last years of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century coincided with the entrance of the English into the trade and it was Perekule that negotiated the slave trade with the English traders on behalf of Bonny. The reason for the late entrance into the slave trade by the Bonny people might not be unconnected with the protracted Bonny/Andoni war, which impoverished the Duowari chiefs of Bonny. That was the reason they looked elsewhere for a man of ability. The great wealth which King Perekule accumulated might not have come from the trade in beads and spices as claimed by Alagoa and Fombo but by his involvement in the slave trade which remained small as long as it was carried

on by the Portuguese and the Dutch. By 1699, with better naval power and steamship, the English expanded the slave trade and included muskets, gun powder and other related firearms which, were not part of the articles of trade during the Portuguese period. King Perekule would not have had the power and authority to negotiate trade without first knowing the intricacies of the slave trade and the benefit it would attract to Bonny.

The Portuguese prevented the proliferation of arms in their empire, except for their stations. The Esmeraldo records described the Ijo inhabitants as “warlike cannibals rarely at peace,” naked, wearing only copper necklaces... and carrying daggers (Jones 1963, p. 33). Daggers were probably what King Awusa Halliday warriors were using to engage the Andoni in a seven years’ protracted war. According to Alagoa and Fombo (2001), the elders of Bonny invited Perekule to use his military might and enormous wealth to assist Bonny against the Andoni. His fame must have gone abroad because of the new war canoe armed with muskets and trained warriors, which were lacking in the army of King Awusa Halliday. The defeat of the Andoni was decisive and the war technic applied by the warriors of Perekule was new and added impetus to the authority and power of the captain of the war canoe. Perekule’s war canoe became the first of its kind in the territory of Bonny. This is the origin of the war canoe (Omuaru) house political system in Bonny and the gradual development of the military formation in Bonny Kingdom.

With the defeat of Andoni, King Awusa Halliday abdicated the throne for Perekule. Accordingly, King Perekule made it a rule for aspirants to chieftaincy positions to show military capability (Alagoa and Fombo 2001, p. 11). Alagoa and Fombo (2001) recorded the first example of military capability as a criterion for chieftaincy installation, when King Perekule installed Allison Nwaoju as a Chief of his own house. All the attributes of a chief were ascribed to the said new war canoe chief to the amazement of Bonny Duowari Chiefs. Chief Allison Nwaoju war canoe house became the second war canoe house (Omuaruwari) in the Perekule’s dynasty. It was Jones (1963) who aptly described a war canoe house as a compact and well-organized trading and fighting cooperation, capable of manning and maintaining a war canoe. Jones continued by saying that the difference between the former trading canoe and the one in King Perekule’s time was that it was now armed with cannon fore and aft which were lashed to the thwarts and that the paddlers now carried muskets in place of bundles of assegais. Musket can be used to describe any muzzle-loading gun firing a single ball (Gavin White 1971, p. 176). King Perekule made it a policy to show or display a cannon ball as a test of military prowess for aspiring persons to Chieftaincy positions. The first firearm that entered the Eastern Niger Delta was via Bonny and later Kalabari.

The flintlock was very popular with the coastal City-States of West Africa. The flintlock with a cover pan of powder was safe, simple, reliable, cheap and waterproof (White 1971, p. 177). It was likely that Perekule used the flintlock in his war against the Andoni which were not exposed to this type of firearm and as such brought the war to an end sooner than later. The British Brown Bess musket introduced in 1706 also entered into the Bonny territory as trade guns at the early years of the 18th century when James Babot met Captain Perekule (White 1971, p. 177). It was easier for the English to use trade guns for exchange for slaves from the 1680s and Perekule acquired a good quantity of the trade gun, locally regarded generally as Dane guns. Another popular fire-arm in Bonny was the carbine which carried 16 balls pistol or double barrelled of the later 19th and the early 20th century. After the reign of King Perekule, all his successor Kings were required to own their own military-war-canoe houses as basis for the

establishment of the Perekule's dynasty. Kea (1971, p. 200) also referred to the Tower Carbine, with iron mounting. Bonny compared to states like Akwamu, Denkyira, Asante and Dahomey as these states defeated their enemies because of their military prowess.

In Bonny history, houses whose founding chiefs never fought a war were regarded as chieftaincy houses. One way of identifying founding war canoe houses in Bonny is that such houses bear the names of their founders and all the members of such war canoe houses also bear the name of their founders as surname, including the succeeding chiefs to such war canoe houses. The power and authority of a polo chief (group) depending on the number of subordinate houses in the polo. The trading chiefs go to the hinterland markets in a fleet of war canoes, trade canoes and gigs. The more the number of war canoes in a fleet, the more formidable of such polo in the event of any attack by any other fleet.

The military formations in Bonny kingdom were categorised according to the group of war canoe houses belonging to either the Fubara Manilla Pepple or the Opubo Annie Pepple group of war canoe houses. In times of war, all the war canoe houses were mandated by the Amanyanabo (King) to defend the city-state. The following are the Omu-aruwari of Bonny Kingdom that had fought wars and defeated enemies with cannon balls and were rewarded with trophies to show for their contributions. King Fubara Manilla Pepple succeeded his father, King Perekule. From the Fubara Manilla Pepple group, Fubara Manilla Pepple is the main Omuaru (polo). The war canoe chiefs under this group include; Allison Nwaoju, Captain Hart, Jumbo, Banigo, LongJohn, Wilson Pepple and Fine Country (Alagoa and Fombo 2001). On the side of the other royal house, is Opubo Annie Pepple group, with King Annie Pepple Omuaru as the main house. The Omuaru includes: Jaja chieftaincy war canoe house, Saturday, Thomas, Annie Stewart (Kieprima), Okpukpo, Ibifa (Bruce), Iruanya, Epelle, Wogu Dappa, Strongface (Fubara Akworo) (Jones 1963). Cooney is also part of Opubo Annie Pepple group.

The domineering influence of Bonny on the Rio Real, contributed to the movement of the Kalabari people out of the Rio Real into the creeks in 1882. At their new settlements, Bonny did not relent in always supporting one Kalabari village against the other. The war between Chief Will Braide of Bakana and the rest of Kalabari Kingdom would have been successful on the side of Will Braide who had been receiving firearms from Bonny but for the internal civil war between Fubara Manilla Pepple group and the Opubo Annie Pepple group in 1869. The successes which were attributed to Chief Will Braide of Bakana could also be linked with his alliance with Bonny. This military manoeuvre by Chief Will Braide was cut short by heavier supply of superior firearms by King Jaja of Opobo to the Kalabari. Were it not for this timely intervention in 1879 by King Jaja of Opobo, Bakana would have been a separate kingdom led by Chief Braide (Cooney, 1974).

NimiWariboko (2007) claimed that Chief Jaja was an "unknown trader". The elders of Annie Pepple would not have elected him if he were an unknown trader. In fact, they (Chiefs Uranta and Annie Stewart) knew about the capability of Chief Jaja, that was why both of them declined interest in the leadership of the group. They also knew that Chief Jaja would not decline the nomination after the huge sacrifice he made. The emergence of Chief Oko Jumbo as the leader of the Manilla Pepple group was well calculated to march the strength of Chief Jaja. Edna Adagogo-Brown (2018), argued that immediately after the rigours of acculturation and initiation into the owuogbo society, such persons were regarded as full-fledged members of the war canoe house. An ex-slave would try to escape from the grips of his master, refuse to bear

the stigma of ex-slave and still contest the leadership of such a house. Her findings maintained that members of the house were either children or adopted children of the owner of the house, and as members they made their contributions to the growth and development of the house as Chief Jaja Annie Pepple and Chief Oko Jumbo had done. Even the pioneering work by Dike referred to the war as slave revolt. If it were a slave revolt, how many of the slaves escaped to the nearby bushes for cover? Why did Chief Oko Jumbo beg Chief Jaja to return to Bonny? Chief Oko Jumbo's two sons were sent abroad and after their education returned to Bonny (Alagoa and Fombo 2001). Why did they not escape? The ex-slaves and liberated slaves were sent to either Sierra Leone or Liberia but none from Bonny. Why did they remain in Bonny after the slave revolt as Dike (1956) claimed? Dike also claimed that "the ex-slaves challenged authority, when they discovered that they laboured for the welfare of the kingdom". What authority should a Chief like Oko Jumbo be challenging even as he had emerged as the leader of the Manilla Pepple group? To add to the confusion, Alagoa (1980) in one breath agreed that the Eastern Niger City-States grew by binary division, yet found the same city-states wanting as regarding procedure for political leadership. The principle of prosperity breakaway and absorption worked perfectly well in Bonny and Opobo. In Bonny for instance, Chief Jaja war canoe house prospered more than the parent house, absorbed the parent house at Opobo and became the senior house. The parent house which is the Opubo Annie Pepple house was absorbed and appointed Chief Sam Annie Pepple (Cookey 1974) to lead the house. If this arrangement was not traditional, the Annie Pepple house would have protested.

King Amachree and the Military formation in Kalabari

The need to control the trade centres led to clashes of spheres of influence. An oral tradition of Bonny told of how house flags were hoisted at several palm oil yielding communities of the hinterland. The removal of such flags by a competing city-state war lords, resulted in the killing of traders and community-chiefs. The OgoloyeFubara's attempt at spying on the Bonny armaments is one of such cross-carpet movements. The frequency of the conflict depended on the quantity of sellable palm oil at the trade centres. The ten years war between Bonny and Kalabari and their allies remained a source of worry to the British traders. Most of the treaties that were signed among Bonny, Kalabari and Okrika were British reactions to finding a lasting solution to the disruption of trade in the area.

Chief Iju was awarded the title "omulaa polo" by the King Amachree (the war-proof ward) Princewill (1980:7) in *Eminent Nigerians of Rivers State* (Alagoa and Tamuno) war with Okrika, war with AgbaniyeEjike of Bille. Koronogbo club of the head-hunters of Kalabari facilitated the emanation of spies from sister city-states. Amachree was a mud-skipper trader. According to Princewill (1980), it was during the period of King Amachree that guns were introduced to Kalabari which would be dated in the mid-18th century. His wars of expansion could not have been possible without the modern ammunition. The source of the supply of guns was traceable to the British entrance into the slave trade.

King Amachree used the guns (muskets) he acquired from the British traders, in his wars of expansion and inclusion of all the neighbouring villages into his kingdom. That was how Chief IgbaniyeEjike of Bille came under the Kalabari Kingdom. When in 1850, one year after the appointment of John Beecroft as consul on the river, he visited Kalabari and afterwards invited Karibo to return his visit, through the barrel of the guns. Jones (1963) recorded that when Beecroft's messenger returned without the King by a peaceful means, Consul Beecroft

commanded the use of fire power to cause the King's visit. Three gunshots were heard at the roof of one of the Principal houses in Kalabari. Traditionally, it was an insult for the consul to invite a monarch into a ship for a meeting instead of his palace. His refusal to return the visit might not be unconnected with his observance of this tradition. When King KariboAmachree heard the sound of the gun shot which was different from the sound of his own, even the chiefs who prevented him from answering the invitation were all in hiding as the king entered the ship, Jackal (Jones 1963, p. 141). The British consul broke the first Kalabari tradition of forcing their king into a ship. The second Kalabari tradition broken by the consul was when he sent an ordinary boat and not the king's war canoe, to fetch the king (Jones 1963, p. 141). This was how King KariboAmachree became a treaty king after he signed the treaty of 1850. King KariboAmachree allowed what happened to him in 1850 to repeat in 1851 when he suspended trade for nine months. This time the gun shots sounded only twice and his son, Prince Jim Amachree, was so frightened by the sound (maybe different from the sound of the 1850) shots, which Jones recorded that he came out of the King's palace "with the mouth of the king."

King Abbe Princewill succeeded King KariboAmachree in 1863. The warrior-king Abbe PrincewillAmachree recorded at least three external warfares and one internal conflict. The first was with King Constantine Ockiya of Nembe who ascended the throne in 1863 after the death of King Kien (Alagoa, 2018, p. 148). This war was so fierce that King Ockiyé solicited the military assistance of King George Pepple of Bonny over the Engeni market. The alliance between Nembe and Bonny had remained cordial. King Abbe as a warrior-king embarked on a war with the Okrika Kingdom during the reign of King Fibika (Addo V) of Okrika, probably from 1870-1871. What prolonged this war was the entrance of Bonny King George Pepple and his war canoe chiefs on the side of Okrika. King Fibika fought gallantly and also received weapons from Bonny. The war was brought to an end with the treaty signed in 1871 under Consul Hutchison between King Abbe Princewill and his chiefs on one hand, and King Fibika of Okrika and his chiefs on the other. This could be the case since Ogan (1988) put the reign of King Fibika at 1832-1874 and the treaty was signed on board ship H.M. Dido on 28th October 1871. Jones (1963) also listed a treaty between New Calabar and Okrika in 1871.

Okrika and Ohambele were spheres of influence for New Calabar and Bonny respectively and incessant wars were recorded along these centres. This situation came about as a result of the fact that during the slave trade era as Jones rightly observed, "free trade prevailed, and traders went about everywhere and bought slaves in the hinterland." But things began to change with the increase in the demand of palm oil. The ward monopoly, of trade centres by particular city-states removed other traders from such centres. This economic situation necessitated the creation of spheres of influence which were not there before. In a war canoe house, the workforce and the military arm of the house worked together to protect their spheres of influence. The more members a house could admit, the better the trading successes of the house. In all of these, Grand Bonny had the best of the military hardware in the Eastern Niger Delta, followed closely by the breakaway city-state of Opobo.

As long as the palm produce trade lasted, war songs and war drums (EkereUgbogu) sounded everywhere in the Eastern Niger City-states. Whenever the war canoe chief was aboard his war canoe, the Ekere sounded and when he was offshore in his residence (gwula), the Ekere also sounded. The war drums sound announced the presence of the kings and chiefs of the Eastern Niger Delta. Adagogo-Brown (2018) noted that the ekereugbogu was a paraphernalia of and

synonymous with chieftaincy in the Eastern Niger Delta. Without the ekereugbogu, no one is acknowledged as a chief.

The city-states were involved in territorial warfares. The Bonny and Opobo Ibani claimed the Rio Real as their economic territory to the exclusion of Kalabari and Okrika. There is a song which suggested this territorial control:

Tuwo nine ebezinyaname
OkolomanaNkotoruebeziNyaname

Meaning: who owns the sea?

Okoloma (Bonny) and Nkotaru (Opobo) own the sea.
(Adagogo-Brown, 2018:69).

By this song, the Kalabari were chased out of the Rio Real and by 1882 they settled in the creeks in three major towns of Buguma, Abonnema and Bakana (Jones 1963). By this movement, the Kalabari laid claim to both Sombreiro and Orashi Rivers as their new spheres of influence.

Bonny had better access to the markets in the Ibo, Ibibio and Ogoni trade centres before the settlement of Opobo Kingdom at the mouth of the Imo River (Cookey, 1972). When Jones (1963, p.149) agreed with the local tradition of a seeming peace that had returned to the river because “there was a Juju or sacred village on the border whose headman had become justice of peace,” he was oblivious of the fact that the 1869 was the civil war year when Chief Jaja left Bonny. The strength of Bonny waned and by November of that year Opobo had blocked the mouth of the Imo River. To put this seeming peace in perspective, is to say that Grand Bonny had begun to decline in its military authority, and its breakaway state of Opobo with King Jaja as its King had assumed the big-brother-position militarily and also as an arbitrator too strong for any of the other city-states to continue with warfare. The “quietness and peaceful”, resumption of trade was as a result of the takeover of the Rio Real by King Jaja of Opobo since 1870. The Okrika and Brass (allies of Bonny) ceased henceforth from further trouble. By 1871, King Jaja forced the Nembe warriors to clear the water ways and invited his friends, Mac Echean and Charles De Cardi from Brass to resume trade with him (Cookey1974), by the assistance of Chiefs WoguDappa and Oyeawusi (Epelle 1970). The combination of Bonny and Okrika military to fight Kalabari was rebuffed by Kalabari new ally, King Jaja. Even Jones (1963, p. 149) recorded that the war which lasted for a whole day was without effect and at “nightfall they withdrew to their respective countries”.

King Jaja and the Military Formation in Opobo

The Bonny civil war of 1869 was one of the fiercest battles fought on Eastern Niger Delta ground. By the mid-19th century when that war was fought, Bonny soldiers had in their arsenal, muskets of different types which they acquired from the home of Asimini when Bonny drove away weaker communities from their territory to Andoni and Kalabari (Alagoa and Fombo 2001). The musket types included the firelock and muzzle loader firing a single ball. Later Bonny merchants acquired the wheel-lock, having a wheel spinning against iron pyrites to ignite the powder by sparks and the flintlock with a covered pan of powder. Gavin White (1971), an authority in firearm deals, described the flintlock “safe, simple, reliable, cheap and fairly water-proof. White traced the origins of these muskets to the European wars at the time.

Both Kings Fubara Manilla Pepple and Opubo Annie Pepple, respectively, might have used the later version of the Brown Bess such as the India pattern of 1794 – 1814 and the light infantry type. Generally, all the above-mentioned muskets used powder, and powder was in large supply in Bonny (White 1973). A close relation of the musket was the carbine. It was also a flintlock, but according to White, it was shorter which gave it its common name, short barrelled rifles.

The use of bottles and Hatchets can reasonably be attributed to the Andoni warriors because they were shot out from dealing with the Europeans early in the slave trade. Later, Cookey contradicted himself by acknowledging a “prohibition of the use of cannons and firearms, either in Bonny or at the hinterland markets, to confirm the fact that it was not bottles and Hatchets that were used in Bonny Civil war. In the same Cookey’s account of the war, four chiefs of Jaja group were sent back to Bonny from Minima, Chiefs Annie Stewart, John Africa, Finebone and Black Fubara who observed that the Manilla people “fired the first shot and the war began.” This had further confirmed that Bonny soldiers of the 1869 civil war never carried bottles and Hatchets but guns. Furthermore, Cookey (1974) also recorded that Oko Jumbo received “a number of old 32 Ib. Carronades” shipped by two super cargoes from Sierra Leone.

By 1870, Jaja had established himself in the new city-state of Opobo, followed by Britain who acknowledged him, as the King of Opobo in 1873. The treaty between Britain and Opobo signed on board her Britannic Majesty’s ship Pioneer, was actually in recognition of the supremacy of King Jaja in the Eastern Niger Delta. To show how important that treaty was, the commander-in-Chief, of Her Britannic Majesty’s Naval Forces on the Cape of Good Hope and West Coast of Africa Station, Commodore, J.E. Commerell, and the Consul for the Bights of Biafra and Benin, Charles Livingstone, were signatories to that treaty in the name of the British Crown (Cookey 1974, p. 171). The contents of the articles of the 1873 treaty was quite different from the one signed in 1884, when the take-over process started everywhere in the Niger Delta. In the treaty of 1873, all King Jaja’s entitlement and requests were granted. He was allowed to cease any ship that flouted his order and a fire of 100 puncheons of oil placed on such defaulter (Cookey, 1974, p. 171). By 1875, at the peak of his power, King Jaja sent war canoes, heavily equipped with guns and gunpowder to Ashanti in support of her Britannic Majesty’s troops. At the end of that war, her Britannic Majesty, presented a sword to King Jaja in appreciation of his military assistance (Cookey 1974). All indications had shown that King Jaja was firmly in control of the Andoni territory. The military formation in Opobo was unrivalled, as wealth gotten from trade was put in the acquisition of arms and ammunition for the struggle ahead of him in the up country of the Ibo and Ibibio. The power of a treaty king was enormous and King Jaja did not waste any time in bringing both the Imo and the Kwa Rivers under his control. He did this by the several expeditions against the chiefs and people of his new territory.

Cookey recorded the first impression of Jaja’s strength in Andoni internal affairs by forcing an end to the war between Unyeada and Nkoro in 1878. When other Andoni villages threatened the existence of Ikuru, he ran to King Jaja for protection and the hoisting of King Jaja flag in Ikuru town was enough to scare away other Andoni fighters from Ikuru (Cookey 1974). From 1878, King Jaja launched military expeditions against the Annag and Ibibo people along the coast of Okpu-uro in 1875, the Iburo people and the Ikot Udo Obong (Nkpirikpo) in 1877. The successful launch of each of the expeditions was mostly achieved by better weapons of warfare which the Jaja warriors used. Between 1855 and 1867 new flintlocks had penetrated Bonny Kingdom, and Jaja being one of the successful and wealthy traders, had acquired good quantity of these weapons which he did not use in the war with Bonny, reason being that he had already

made up his mind to leave. He conceded defeat and instead used them for the war in his new territory. By 1871, King Jaja had acquired some of the maritime-Henry breech, with a Henry barrel from British super cargoes secretly, since the consul banned British traders from trading with Jaja. Garvin White claimed that it was only in South Africa that firearms were used in hunting. This claim was bogus, because right from the settlement in Opobo, King Jaja and his chiefs went hunting as a traditional practice for games around the environment. The peri ogbo was an example of professional hunters and warriors, mostly found in the Eastern Niger Delta. King Jaja also acquired Birmingham guns from his Liverpool customers. He also acquired Sham Dawn Iron guns locally called (egbecham). Most of the guns used gun powder but the Birmingham type were claimed to be cheaper (White 1971). The hand-made Birmingham muskets were easily tolerated by warriors. The trade muskets also found their way into Opobo as imports by King Jaja. He was able to acquire these arms because of increased comeys he received from the super cargoes from 1874 onwards.

From the records, King Jaja was the Commander-in-Chief, with thirteen Provincial Commanders and fifty-three District Commanders. List of the Provincial Commanders include, Chiefs Annie Stewart, Black Fubara, Ogolo, John Tom Brown, OkoEpelle, Cookey-Gam, Shoo Peterside, John Africa, WogoDappa, Strongface, OkoSunju Minima, Legg-Jack Tolofari and Captain Uranta. His District Commanders include, Chiefs Sunday Jaja (Jeki II), Saturday Jaja, Sam Annie Pepple, Thomas Jaja, OkoJaja, Patesi OkoJaja, Arthur Mac Pepple (Jeki III), Akra Sam Annie Pepple, Accra Jaja, OmuboPepple, Jim Jaja, Bruce Jaja, Aaron Jaja, Toby, Sam Toby, William Toby, Ogbonna Fubara, OgoloFubara, Jungo Manilla, Finebone, Duke Norfolk (Bupo), Gogo, Daminabo, AtabaraOgolo, Joseph Ogolo, Ubani, DamingoUbani, Cockeye Brown, Yellow Owusogh (Nwosu) John Brown, Peter Cockeye Brown, Jacob Afonya John Brown, Sam OkoEpelle, MiriniOkoEpelle, Wariso, George Cookey, Apiafi, Nzekwe, Dodd Peterside, Ibiwangi Africa, KalasunjuDappa, OpusunjuDappa, TiliboDappa, EbrangaDappa, Ada Tom Pepple, Brown Agent Dappa, Doctor Dappa, Yellow Strongface, Okpukpo, DiriTolofari, IkpoDiri, WariboUranta, ItchieUranta and Obomanu (Source: History Concourse 2005).

The destruction that trailed the 1855 civil war affected the Manilla Pepple house so much so that four years after, they could not recover from their losses. This also accounted for their reluctance to pursue after the Annie Pepple group. The importation of arms from 1865 were mostly carried out by the Annie Pepple group. By and large, the impression that the Manilla Pepple group defeated the Annie Pepple group in the 1869 civil war could no longer hold water.

When the British traders clashed with King Jaja in 1887, at Azumini, the number of war canoes that Opobo chiefs paraded were enormous. At the end of conflict, the consul directed that all the war canoes and guns belonging to them be confiscated. Between 1889 and 1890, most of the war canoes and guns were ceased after King Jaja was kidnapped and exiled. By 1891, an agreement was reached whereby the affected chiefs documented their losses. This agreement stipulated that if arms and war canoes were not confiscated in other Eastern Niger Delta city-states, a compensation would be paid to the Opobo chiefs or their descendants (Cookey, 1974; Jaja, 1991). Jaja (1991) presented the Chiefs whose war canoes and guns were confiscated by Her Britannic Majesty as follows: Chiefs Sam Annie Pepple, Cookey-Gam, Black Fubara, Finebone, WogoDappa, Ogolo Annie Pepple, John Africa, Saturday Jaja (Prince), Jacob Annie Stewart, OkoJaja, Toby, John Tom Brown, Bruce Jaja, How I. Strongface, Sam OkoEpelle, DiriTolofari, Ubani (Obanny), Jungo Manilla, Cockeye Brown, Wariso, Jack Tolofari

(Tellifare), Sam Toby and Duke Norfolk (Duke Silk), King Jaja alone had two war canoes, queen and Oby Jack, and each of these war canoes, particularly the queen, carried at least one hundred and twenty musket carrying soldiers. Out of the twenty-six war canoes, two were King Jaja's. From the above, it is clear that Opobo was marked out by the British administration for disarmament and eventual takeover by the colonial administration.

Conclusion

Cannons were the most used guns in the late 19th century. They were large muzzle-loading artillery pieces. They consist of artillery tubes and breech firing mechanisms or base caps. They are guns, howitzers or mortars. They are commonly referred locally as (Kurutu). The sound from a canon is capable of putting ten villages to flight. The cannons were used by King Jaja in his military expeditions as mentioned earlier.

As long as Bonny was supporting Chief AgbariyeEjike of Bille and Chief Will Braide of Bakana, they were able to continue their conflict with Kalabari. But the 1869 Bonny civil war, turned the table against all Bonny's allies. By the time King Jaja settled in Opobo and allied with Kalabari, the Eastern Niger Delta became very calm for trade and commerce.

King Perekule and Amachree who had contact with the British introduced firearms and war canoe political system. King Perekule in particular, introduced capability into the chieftaincy institution and first installed Chief Allison Nwaoji as a winner of cannon ball in the battle with the Andoni.

The Bonny civil war of 1869 was neither a slave revolt nor the challenge of Authority by them but a conflict between the royal arms of the Perekule dynasty which threw up able men of valour like Chief Jaja Annie Pepple and Chief Oko Jumbo of the Manilla Pepple. The acculturation and initiation of members of the war canoe houses permanently rested the idea that there were slaves amongst the Pepple of the royal houses. Jumbo house produced the largest war canoe houses in Opobo. The ranking according to Jones (1993) included the Amanyanabo (the owner of town), the princes, the nobles and the gentlemen.

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