King Arthur Mac Pepple (Jeki III) and the Sole Native Authority System under Colonial Rule 1916-1936

By

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Abstract

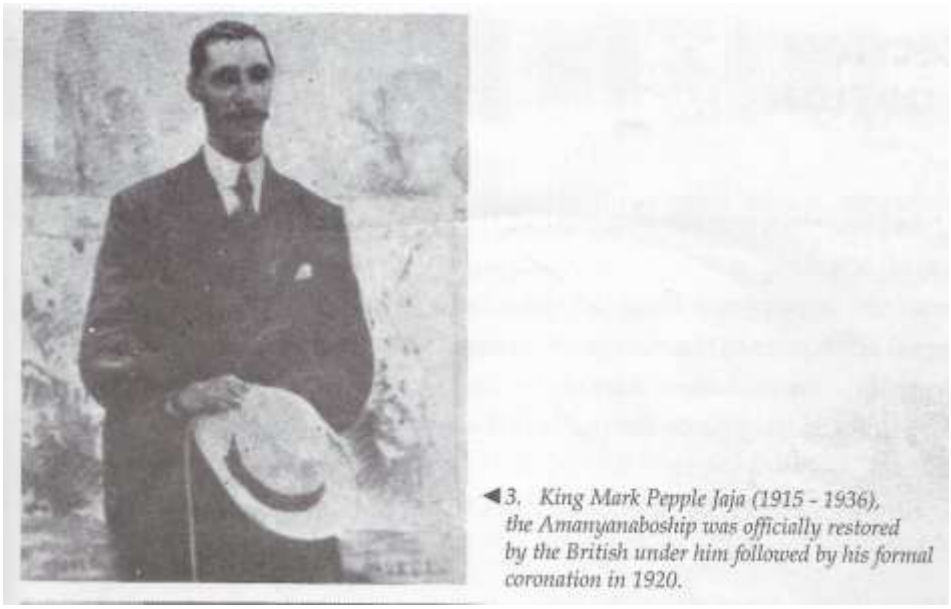
The reign of king Author Mac Papple Jaja started from 1916, at the death of his elder brother, King Fredrick Sunday Jaja, Jeki II in 1915. He was the first Paramount Chief of Opobo Kingdom recognised by the British Government. He was also the first Amanyanabo of Opobo Kingdom to serve in the Nigerian Legislative Council in Lagos. His rulership coincided with the Aba Women war of 1929 but he was able to control the situation and reduced the number of women that would have been killed. There was no succession disputes during his reign and Opobo Kingdom recorded peace during his reign. He died in 1936 and his son, Prince Douglas Jaja ascended the throne in the same year. In reconstructing this history, we adopted the use of secondary sources particularly text books, intelligent reports from National Archives Enugu and Records Office, London.

In Article two of the Will and Testament of King Jaja, he gave one hundred puncheons of palm oil to his grandson Prince Arthur Mac Pepple. This will had positioned Prince Arthur Mac Pepple as the successor to King Fredrick Sunday Jaja. (Cookey 1974: 174).

After the demise of King Fredrick Sunday Jaja in 1915, the election and installation of Prince Arthur Mac Pepple took place one year after, in 1916. His coronation was delayed from 1916 to 1920 because of unforeseen circumstances bothering on Colonial administrative inconsistencies. But the installation, coronation and crowning took a longer time and the reason for the delay would be attempted here.

King Arthur Mac Pepple, Jeki III carried on the administration of Opobo Kingdom for four years without formal coronation. First the Native Authority Ordinance of 1916 shifted attention from the House heads to the Kings once more and this led to the democratization of council by representation. To become a member of council each house was expected to have large number of taxable adults. Any Chief whose house has diminished would not

be represented as a council member. All the residents were directed to furnish the government with the list of Chiefs to be constituted Native Authorities. The resident of Calabar whose territory had most of the monarchs enthusiastically provided government with names of qualified Native Authorities in his domain. From Opobo District the resident sent two names: King Arthur Mac Pepple for Opobo Native Area and Udom Okon for Essene Native Council Area. From Calabar district, two names were sent from Duke and Creek town respectively. From Ikot Ekpene Anoyom Iya of Nja; and Mba Nkoli. With much pressure from other areas of the district the resident reluctantly sent 116 Native Authority members.



◀3. *King Mark Pepple Jaja (1915 - 1936), the Amanyanaboship was officially restored by the British under him followed by his formal coronation in 1920.*

King Arthur Mac Pepple was to exercise executive powers and in 1917, he became the first Paramount ruler of Opobo Kingdom, over and above the Native Court areas. When King Arthur Mac Pepple was nominated the first paramount ruler of Opobo kingdom in 1917, he was put on probation for four years after which his appointment was confirmed by the Residence in Calabar. By the 1920, he had meet all the conditions expected of him as a natural ruler. Such conditions include: loyalty to the colonial government, maintenance of peace and order and the promotion of trade between the supercargoes and the local traders in his domin. In line with Lord Lugard's expectation, with his experience in India, the third generations of the local rulers were always amenable to progress. (Nurudeemn, Abubakar 2010: 18). In any case the hereditary Chiefs were in minority while the Ibo people who

didn't have hereditary chieftaincies were more in number. Because the Ibo people couldn't produce such hereditary chiefs the scheme did not sell. Instead the other Ibo dominated districts requested or suggested broad based education for all and regarded the restricted education for chiefs an artificial creation which according to them was a curse because "this artificial class will resort to all measures to maintain a position which they know they have no natural rights. (Afigbo 1972: 145).

Subsidy Chiefs 1916 – 1936

An annual grant in place of comey subsidy was given to chiefs for the regulation of trade in the districts of Brass, Old Calabar, New Calabar and Opobo under the Oil Rivers Protectorate. The reciepients of such grants shall be issued with certificates. (CAP.23-293) In Opobo the recipient include:

Chief Waribo Uranta

``	Ebranga W. Dappa	``	Obediah Thomas Jaja
``	Jim Wariso	``	Ishmael Waribo Uranta
``	S.K.W. Uranta	``	Sam Toby
``	Harry Toby	``	Gabriel Toby
``	Francis William Toby	``	Jacob Annie Stewart
``	Yellow Strong Face	``	George Cookey Gam
``	Heggs Bruce Jaja	``	Claude Ogolo
``	Rufus Nzekwe	``	Aaron Jaja
``	Dapu Black Fubara	``	Yellow Nwosu (Owusogh John Brown)
``	George Oko Eppelle	``	Daniel Ebranga Dappa
``	Sampson Waribo Uranta	``	Jim Shoo Peterside
``	Amos Sam Oko Epelle	``	Jeremiah Miarigbo D. Ogolo
``	Opusunju Dappa	``	Datiari Opusunju Dappa
``	Robert D. Black Fubara	``	Edward Finebone
``	Stephen U Jaja	``	Randolf Omubo Pepple
``	William Okpukpo Minima	``	Ezekiel Sunday Jaja
``	Sampson Diepiri Ogolo	``	Daniel Saturday Jaja
``	Daniel Annie Stewart	``	Moses Waribo Strong Face
``	Thomas How Strong Face	``	Albert Diri Tolofari
``	Amos D. Ubani	``	Edward Legg Jack
``	Josiah Sam Annie Pepple	``	Peter Cockeye Brown
``	Timothy Peter Cockeye Brown	``	Jacob John Brown
``	Jonah Cockeye Brown		

Source: Opodist 1/5/59.

Most of the chiefs did not receive the annual grants for several years and only treaty towns were scheduled. Under the schedule, the treaty towns are: Abbonema, Buguma, Bakana, Bonny, Calabar, Nembe, Opobo and Twon.

Under the third schedule, Opobo was constituted as Opobo Town Urban County Council with the highest annual grant of £500 for welfare purposes. Other beneficiaries under the same schedule are Nembe County Council with £90; Kalabari County Council with £420; Bonny County Council with £450; Calabar Urban County Council with £400 and Western Calabar County Council with £140. The Opobo Town Urban District Council was established under the Eastern Regional under the Eastern Region Local Government Law. After four years of its establishment, it was revoked on 1st October 1958. The Council consisted of twenty-four Councillors, twenty three were elected and one appointed. In Opobo, the Amanyanabo was appointed as a special Councillor with a higher status of the president of the Council. On the first election of the Council was conducted on 1st October, 1958 a Chairman of Council was elected amongst the twenty three Councillors. One very important function of the Council was an annual levy of a stipulated amount to be shared by the twenty three wards. The money was used for the maintenance of roads, streets, Culvert, Bridges and street drainages.

Before now, the head chiefs were asked to number their taxable adult in order to remain useful in the council. This was in line with the introduction of Native Treasury in the Eastern Provinces as it is in the Northern emirates. Without the introduction of taxation, the Southern Nigeria would not be able to fund its infrastructural Development. The Chiefs were encouraged to participate in the assessment, collection and disposal of revenue and by so doing they would become integral part of government. In Opobo District, tax collection by sectional Chiefs was successful, although some of the Chiefs enriched themselves through it instead of paying the money into the Native Treasury as directed by the Resident in Calabar.

What Sir Lugard was actually looking for were the Chiefs and Kings of the Niger Delta type, where monarchs were held responsible for the growth and development of trade and commerce for over four hundred years yet still able to contend with most of the challenges arising from such contact.

The real reason for the search for Paramount rulers was in the third scheme of Lord Lugard which was direct taxation which implied that each area under a paramount ruler would be made to pay tax to the local government treasury. The establishment of Native Treasuries by 1918 required the abolition of the existing Native treasuries before now

which Lugard refused to acknowledge. The Paramount rulers where found could be used by government to impose direct taxation on the people.The head of houses had several fears to contend with, one of which was the end of their salaries and sitting fees and other incomes which they had enjoyed for fourteen years. By 1907 for instance, the warrant chiefs were in the business of the imposition of fines out of proportion for offences ranging from criminal to civil leading to imprisonment, all in an attempt to have more money (Afigbo 1972: 127).

By 1919, reports from some parts of the Eastern Provinces for instance Owerri, Okigwi, Aba, Omuma, Obonia and Azumini had shown total inability of such districts to produce paramount rulers, instead the Native Courts had been on the increase (Afigbo 1972: 178).But where the paramount rulers were available as in Opobo, Bonny, Kalabari, Okrika, Nembe, Onitsha were able to achieve centralization in the local government administration. For instance when in 1917 King Arthur Mac Pepple became the paramount Sovereign in Opobo he assumed the Sole Authority above the Native courts. He had the traditional rights and personal merit to justify his appointment. On the other hand the Ibo people east of the Niger do not possess the right to merit such appointment. The attempts at some area brought chaos. King Arthur Mac Pepple also became the permanent president of the Native Court. (Box No. 24 file No. 6,7,19).

In the City States, the Sole Authority when absent could appoint a sectional chief to chair the court session and by so doing the section (Polo) Chiefs derived joy in learning and rising to becoming Vice Presidents of Native Courts. To arrive at a consensus each districts sent its own report to the governor. By 1920 the Liutinant Governor at Opobo, Mr. Swanston sent the same type of report bearing the same opinion, that issue of corruption was minimal which led to the general reshuffling of officers. Since it was very obvious that corruption had eaten deep into the fabrics of the Warrant Chief System, it was advised that those investigated and issue of misconduct levelled against them should be dismissed, but for those who were free from any accusation were left in the system. (File Nos. 1,2,3, 86, (1) 86 (II).

The Coronation of Prince Arthur Mac Pepple 1920

The ceremony of the burial of an Amanyanabo who was not the founder of the Kingdom would normally last for sixteen days (Cookey and Adagogo-Brown 2005: 11). The period of mourning was used to prepare the next Amanyanabo-elect for the task ahead which included the crowning ceremony. For the burial of the late King Fredrick Sunday Jaja also followed the same process.

Very important change was the relationship of the political officer (European) with the Native Court. The district officer was no longer a member of the Native Court in order to enable the Native Court to gradually grow into an independent tribunal (Afigbo 1972: 131). The licenses on trade spirits also generated a lot of revenue in the coastal states of Opobo, Bonny, Kalabari, Okrika and Nembe-Brass. Licenses on tobacco traders added an impetus to the receipts issued by Warrant Chiefs. It was illegal for any trader to deal in spirits and tobacco without obtaining licenses from the district in which the trade is carried out.

Mr. Purchas, Assistant District Officer in Opobo Division described these tribunals as "Courts of injustice" and if one wants to peep into the corrupt practices of the Warrant Chiefs ninety percent of them would be imprisoned. Cases of corruption were uncovered from time to time" (Afigbo 1972: 190).So the Chiefs were not quite prepared to shoulder the financial burden of the preparation of house gigs, its decoration, the hoisting of flags and other expenses of even feeding the youth for the days of the coronation ceremonies which included the masquerade displays house by house, the Ngunume (traditional dances) house by house. But the saving grace came early in 1919 as part of Lord Lugard's plan to grow the trading system in the Eastern provinces as in other parts of the country. This was the introduction of British coins and notes (sterling). The government felt that the Manilla as a medium of exchange had impinged trade and in recent economic rearrangement under the new Lugardian system, the Manila had to give way for the British coins. (File 1092/5).

Moreover, traditional currency would not be consistence with Banking Policy. So in 1919, in consonance with the direct taxation policy, all Districts, Divisions and Provinces were directed to commence the issuance of the British coins and the withdrawal of the Manillas from circulation. (Epelle 1970: 25). According to Epelle the Manilla was the most popular currency of palm produce trade with hinterland (Ibo and Ibibio) producers. (Epelle 1970: 25). The rate of exchange being twelve Manillas to one Shilling (1s). A new business venture had just been opened to Opobo traders. It was too attractive for any Opobo trader to ignore and the assurance of an additional income put joy in the heart of those traders who had good quantity of Manilla. This policy was put up for the economic recovery after the First World War of 1914-1918. The administration encouraged traders to adopt the modern currency in three ways:- by demonetizing traditional currencies; by paying its expanding labour force in European coin; and by insisting on receiving taxes in cash rather than in kind.(Hopkins 1978: 206). In Opobo Division up to the 1918, Opobo traders continued to use the Manilla in their hinterland markets. This was confirmed by Hopkins as he referred to the local currencies as transitional currency in Eastern Nigeria, where the

government decision to ban further imports of Manilla from 1902. This resulted to the hoarding of the Manilla from the period by local traders. (Epelle 1970: 25).

By 1919, the Currency Board, acting as money-changer, converting the traditional currency into sterling. (Hopkins 1973: 208). The government controlled the rate of exchange. In 1919, Opobo Division and other sister Divisions experienced trade boom which facilitated the supply of money in the system and caused expansion automatically. Hopkins explained how this worked. For example if a colony had an excess of exports over imports the balance was settled by supplying money into local circulation (Hopkins 1973: 208). This explanation brings us to the experience of the Opobo traders from 1919 when the prices of palm produce (palm oil and palm kernel) rose in favour of local traders. The favourable situation was often short-lived and always unpredictable (Hopkins 1973: 208). For two years 1919 and 1920 and particularly early1920 and the third quarter of 1920, Opobo traders experienced an unprecedented rise in price of their produce. Just as Hopkins explained it, it was sudden and unexpected but the traders responded adequately to the profit accruing from the rise in price of produce by erecting houses for themselves. So by 1920, almost every trader flourished from the increased demand of palm kernel in all parts of Europe (Epelle 1070: 25).

The Golden Jubilee and Coronation of the King.

The Opobo Golden Jubilee actually preceded the coronation from 15th - 18th December. The Chiefs had no problem organizing a war canoe parade of gigs to mark the Golden Jubilee of Opobo Kingdom which coincided with the coronation of the new King. The programme of activities for the coronation started from 27th of December with Ngunume dance at the Monument Square and on the 28th was the gig boat regatter performance by all the compounds and the ceremony ended with a dinner given by the King. By the convergence of well decorated gigs, numbering sixty five in number which raced tos Manimafe, one of the trade centers established by King Jaja, there was no doubt in the minds of the people of Opobo that "money was not the problem but how to spend it" (Gowon during the hey days of crude oil in Nigeria). At least we have been able to recount the possible reasons for the delay of the coronation from 1916 to 1920. King Jeki III Mac Pepple was also given the Golden Jubilee award by the Queen of England in 1920, ably represented by Sir Hugh Clifford, Governor of Nigeria.

Andoni and Opobo Relationship

King Arthur Mac Pepple, received a petition from the Andoni people, agitating to be given their own district and their own Native Court in 1922. As the sole Native Authority in the area, he responded to their petition, which they sent to the Eastern Nigeria government.

In sum, their petitions and agitation called for investigation. The outcome was the granting of separate Court at Ngo for the Andoni people. (Epelle 1970: 27).In 1923, Chief Erefekuma on behalf of Chief Ogboro Aro who had died or deceased instituted a low suit against King Arthur Mac Pepple. Another suit by Akpan Udo Ekpo of Kwa Ibo against King Arthur Mac Pepple and both were joined in the case. These cases had been handled in detail by Epelle and Jaja in their books, (1970 and 1991) what is being done here is a summary of their work. The declaration of title to all land between Andoni and Opobo, together with an injunction restraining Opobo people from interference on the said land. The second one was by the Kwa Iboe for a declaration of title to certain land on the right, bank of the Opobo River and a piece of land known as Uta Ewa on the left bank and an injunction restraining Opobo people from alienating or interfering with the said land. At the end of investigation, the evidence showed that the Kwa Iboe never exercised ownership of any land on the right bank of the Opobe River. The detail of these findings can be found in Opobo since 1870 by Chief (Dr.) Solomon Jaja.

The claim of the Andoni on the other hand after investigation the evidence showed that Islands 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 belonged to Andoni but 3, 5 and 6 have been in the occupation of Opobo for considerable number of years. Injunction which they prayed for was not granted to them but the Opobo people were restrained from dealing in future with strangers as to these lands. The Court also denied them the claim for damages for trespass (Epelle and Jaja, 1970 and 1991).Island 1 is Opobo, Island 2 is Kalaibiama and Island 4 is Nkoro. On the Uta Ewa land issue the judge declared that any royalty received by the Opobo people in respect of the use of the land by Government must be shared in equal proportions. The judge also concluded that the Andoni had not effectively occupied Island 1, 2, and 4 or Queen's town on the main land (Jaja 1991: 37).

To end this summary the observation of the learned Judge is worthy of note here that "the reason for such non-occupation was their desire to keep a fringe of "No man's land" along the river to protect the towns in which they lived from sudden forays from the persons occupying the East side of the river (Jaja 1991: 37).The reasons mentioned above were possibly why Island 1, 2 and 4 were given away by the Andoni Chiefs as a buffer against any attack from Bonny. Now that the war between Bonny and Opobo ended with a treaty of peace in 1873 and King Jaja had been able to protect Opobo and her neighbours up to 1887 when he was taken away, the Andoni people wanted to occupy such Islands.

King Arthur Mac Pepple in the Legislative Council 1923 – 1933

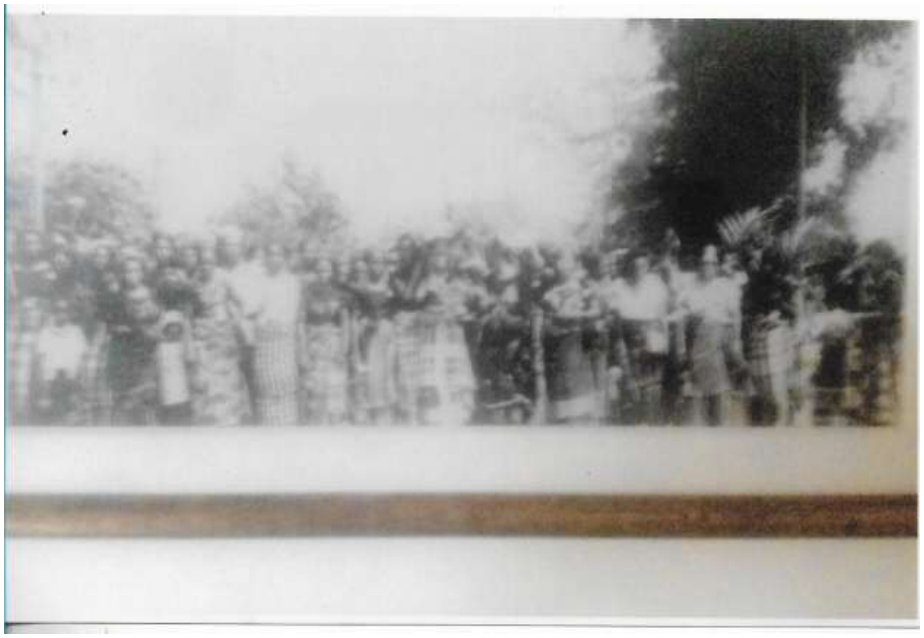
By 1923, the government came up with grouping of the Warrant Chief into those with hereditary rights and those who were appointed by government. It was found that those

without hereditary rights were far more in number than the hereditary Chiefs. Mr. H. O. Swanston's report led to the nomination into the Legislative council of King Arthur Mac Pepple as member in 1923. (Opodist: 1/10/59).In the Legislative Council which commenced with reforms and reorganization of the southern judicial system remolded like the north, the first was the introduction of Native Court and Provincial Courts and to limit the Supreme Court jurisdiction to the colony and some courts situated at the Urban Centre. Opobo was not affected by this reform. Legal practitioners were barred from the provincial courts.

But the major reform of Lord Lugard was the introduction of direct taxation in the south with the establishment of Native Treasuries. The Legislative Council considered some bills and passed some into law. One of such bills that was presented to the Council was the ordinance for the amendment of the Native Ordinance. After much deliberation, it was passed into law. One provision of the Ordinance was that adult males should pay a poll tax roughly 2½% of their annual income as tax. This directive did not pose any problem in Opobo Division. Opobo Chiefs had been in the business of tax payment to their chiefs as duty to the house and paying topping to their kings as part of state revenue. But the thought of paying tax erupted protests all over the Eastern province. It was claimed that about 31 women were shot dead when police opened fire on woman and another 31 wounded at Egwenga. This incidence did not happen in Opobo main town but at Egwenga (now Ikot Abasi) Local Government of Akwa-Ibom State. The council member representing Opobo Division, Hon King Arthur Mac Pepple prevailed on the women preparing to join the others already in the protest not to cross to Egwenga till further notice. News had just filtered into Opobo that Opobo woman were being killed and a lot wounded in Egwenga. He sent a town crier to go round the town to stop every further movement. The angry women destroyed the Native Court, Dispensary and the Staff Quarters with pestles and club (Women war museum, Egwenga)



The grave of the unknown woman at Opobo Division, 1929: **Women War museum Egwenga 2017**



A session of the women after one of their meetings in preparation for the protest Opobo Division Egwenga, 1929: Women War museum Egwenga 2017

Names of Those Who Died During the Protest

1. Mary Nzekwe
2. Regina Cockey
3. Orugba
4. Regal Jaja
5. Oroni Jaja
6. Josphine Jaja
7. Mba Uranta
8. Nwanwa Waribo
9. Suyi Dappa
10. Virginia Ubani
11. Adline Toby
12. Mary Tatare
13. Elizabeth Black Fubara
14. Adline Black Fubara
15. Esther Strongface
16. Abigail Minima

Source: Women war museum Egwenga, 2017

After the 1929 women war, the Legislative Council discussed way forward for the colonies and at the end arrived at a bill for colonial development across the country. When passed into law it attracted £6,500,000 advanced to the area. At least the war did not go unnoticed. Because of his busy schedule in Lagos he directed the Chiefs to deputise for him in his absence. On the list of deputies from the 1920 were Chiefs Claude Ogolo, head of Chief Ogolo War Canoe House; Chief Daminabo, Chief Harry Toby, Chief George Cookey Gam, Chief Aaron Jaja and Chief Black Fubara. The above listed chiefs were called upon as judge of the Native Court in Opobo town.

Chief Enoch Patesi Oko Jaja also presided as acting President of the Native Court within the period while Chief Wari O. B. Fubara and Chief Iloma Strongface were members (1582 A Vol. II). They rotated the presidency amongst them.

In 1930, Chief Jim Shoo Peterside acted as President of the Native Authority in the absence of the President who had travelled to Lagos for official duty at the Legislative Chamber.

Members were

Chiefs Yellow John Tom Brown
Chief Gabriel Sam Toby
Chief Yanibo Saturday Jaja

Chief Adieganori Yellow Strongface
Chief Owutubo Kpokpo of Nkoro.
(*Opodist 1/10/74*).

In 1931, Chief George Cookey acted as President. Other members include
Chief Yellow John Tom Brown
Chief Gabriel Sam Toby
Chief Yanibo Saturday Jaja
Chief Adieganori Yellow Strongface
Chief Owutubo Kpokpo of Nkoro
(Opodist 1/10/74).

In 1931, Chief George Cookey acted as President. Other members include
Chief Iloma Strongface
Chief Timothy Peter Cockeye Brown
Chief Daniel Joseph Ogolo
Chief Owutubo Kpokpo
Chief William Okpukpo

After two weeks, another court held on the 7th of November, 1932 Chief Jim Peterside – President, Chief Yellow Owusogh (Nwosu) John Tom Brown, ChiefGabriel Sam Toby, Chief Faribo Saturday Jaja, Chief Adieganari Yellow Strongface, Chief Owutubo Kpokpo. (Opodist 1/10/65).

These men managed the Native and collected taxes from house members. For tax collection, each house chief collected his house tax from house members and remitted to the Native Treasury and collected receipts.

Big Chiefs of Opobo Kingdom during Colonial period.
Opobo Chiefs were also treated differently. About thirteen Chiefs were designated big chiefs by the Council Native Adinistration and received subsidy.
Jaja House
Fubara House
Cookey House
Ogolo House
Wogo Dappa House
Peterside House
Toby House

Epelle House
Mac Pepple House
Fine Bone House
Brown Agent House
Waribo Uranta House
John Africa House
(Opodist 1/10/90 p. 613).

Amanyanabo in other words means the head of a dynasty (owner of town). To press this argument down, Jones noted that once a ward and its chief had obtained the kingship (as in Jaja's ward) the office tended to remain with it and with that chief's descendants (Jones 1963:197).It was in this light that King Arthur Mac Pepple assumed both the office of the Amanyanabo and the headship of the King Jaja Polo. He doubles as the chairman of the council of chiefs and the chairman of King Jaja Polo. By 1917 he became the paramount ruler of Opobo Kingdom and the natural ruler of Opobo by inheritance. He also commanded the authority of a treaty king. He had the privilege of being educated in England with his elder brother, Sunday during the exile of their father, King Jaja for eight years. He spoke English language fluently and was exposed thoroughly to the culture and tradition of the white man. While Lord Lugard was preparing to educate chiefs and their children in the Eastern provinces, he was already miles ahead of his contemporaries.

Conclusion

The colonial administration abrogated the House Rule Ordinance in 1915 and by 1916, King Author Mac Pepple Jaja recognition as Paramount Ruler was not a surprise to the Local Authorities. The re-organization of the Native Authority was took place during his reign. From 1923-1933 he was in the Legislative Council, a position given only to the Natural Rulers particularly those who received Western Education. He was well covered by his father, King Jaja, who provided him with one hundred puncheons of palm oil for the establishment of his War Canoe House. The first world was affected his coronation. So the coronation was delayed but it still came in 1920.

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CAP 23-293

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(1582 A Vol. II)

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(File 1092/5)