

Chief Biribo Doctor Dappa War Canoe House of Opobo Kingdom in the Eastern Niger Delta 1889 – 2007

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Abstract

Doctor Dappa was already a principal member of the Prince Dapu house in Bonny. The steady growth of the House suddenly stagnated with the death of Prince Dapu, leaving a minor son, Dapu- Ye-Fubara. It was Wogo Dappa, the most senior member of the house that tried to revive the fortunes of the house and also nurtured the son of Prince Dapu. By 1854, when King William Dappa Pepple was deposed, Dapu-Ye-Fubara was crowned the new King of Bonny Kingdom. King Dapu-ye- Fubara died after barely one year as king. These two great events of the loss of the father and son led Doctor Dappa and Brown Agent Dappa out of their original house in search of a more stable and economically resourceful house. In the 1869, Bonny civil war, Chief Jack Tolofari preferred to ally with the new chief of the Annie Pepple group, Chief Jack Jaja Annie Pepple and followed him to Opobo. This was how both Doctor Dappa and Brown Agent Dappa became allies of Chief Jack Tolofari and followed him to the new town of Kalaibiam, Opobo, instead of following Chief Wogo Dappa to Opobo main town. The paper therefore examines the successful linkage of the Chief Doctor Dappa House with Wogo Dappa main house and other component houses in the group, yet maintaining the intergroup relations with the other houses in Kalaibiam. For methodology, the paper uses oral tradition, primary and secondary sources, to reconstruct the history of the house.

Keywords: *Dappa, Civil War, Bonny, House, History.*

Introduction

King William Dappa Pepple was deposed on 23rd January 1854, from being King of Bonny. This led to the enthronement of king Dapu-ye-Fubara the same year. But King William Dappa Pepple was the last king of Bonny to enjoy privileges and rights of a natural ruler or monarch. King Dapu-ye- Fubara signed a treaty the same day he was enthroned. Article I of the treaty prohibited him from receiving comeys.¹ Article III prevented him from going to war with any neighboring country without informing the supercargoes of their reasons and necessity for so doing. Articles I and III rendered King Dapu a puppet in the hands of the supercargoes and the Consul. Although his predecessors traded with the hinterland King Dapu was prohibited from venturing out of his domain in Bonny. Article XI further impoverished the King by not being able to purchase his personal needs out of the purview on the supercargoes. It was traditionally wrong for a king to only demand his personal needs from the supercargoes which would be deducted eventually from his comeys. These limitations have proven to be out of course for the tradition and customs of a sovereign.

¹ Alagoa and Fombo, *A Chronicle of Grand Bonny* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1972), 26.

Kalaibiam Community in Bonny and the Doctor Dappa War Canoe House

According to Alagoa and Fombo, Dick Tolofari House was founded by Dick Oruasawo of Kalaibiam, Bonny. He adopted the name Tolofari when he became the Priest of Tolofari, god of Kalaibiam. Tolofari became the name of the house after he became the priest of Tolofari deity. Chief Dick Oruasawo assisted two of his principal men in founding their own war canoes houses of chief Jack Tolofari and Chief Diri Tolofari. Corporately, the three houses became Tolofari group of houses in Kalaibiam Bonny. In the political rivalry between the Manila Pepple and Annie Pepple divided Bonny houses into two fractions under the two royal families. Chief Jack Tolofari and Chief DiriTolofari decided to align with Chief Jack Annie Pepple while Chief Dick Tolofari remained with the Manila Pepple group. By 1865, the political rivalry resulted in forcing the Annie Pepple group to sign an agreement to give up all the independent houses under their control. The two sub-houses of Jack Tolofari and DiriTolofari were among the independent houses. Other independent houses included Gogo Fubara, Finebone, Jim Black Fubara, Strongface, Oko Epelle, Antony John Tom Brown, Tobin, John Africa, Wariso, Semah Sunju, Young Trader and Taribo Alagoa and Fombo, (2001:110). Since it was Chief Dick Tolofari who founded the first house in the group, his house became the main house while the houses of both Chief Jack Tolofari and Chief DiriTolofari became sub-houses.

This crisis affected the political arrangement in the City State. The War Canoe houses in Bonny allied either with Manilla Pepple or Annie Pepple. Chief Jack Tolofari and DiriTolofari allied with the new Head of the Annie Pepple group, chief Jack Jaja Annie Pepple in 1865 for economic survival. The agreement of 1865 which forced Chief Jack Jaja Annie Pepple to give up the independent houses did not change anything both politically and economically because four years later, all the so-called independent houses followed Chief Jack Annie People to Opobo during the civil war. While chief Jack Tolofari and Chief DiriTolofari followed Jaja to Opobo, Chief Dick Tolofari remained in Bonny alone. In Opobo, they re-enacted the historical affinity with the mother community of Kalaibiam Bonny by naming the new settlement, Kalaibiam. By the turn of the century, five chieftaincy Houses, namely, Jack Tolofari, DiriTolofari, IkpoDiriTolofari, Brown Agent Dappa, and Doctor Dappa had come together to build Kalaibiam community as a formidable entity in Opobo Kingdom.

Ancestry

The genealogy of this house listed the following as the principal men that moved to Kalaibiam Opobo-Senibo KuloDappa (a brother) Biribo Doctor Dappa, Abam, Ogbulu son of Okpani, Ekesunju Agent, the father of Brown Agent Dappa and Igbi the son of Brown Agent as the principal men, during the movement to Kalaibiam.

The Death of King Dappu-ye-Fubara1855

It would be recalled that King William Dappa Pepple was deposed on January 23rd, 1854, by Consul Living Stone, and the Chiefs of Bonny. Three events took place on 23rd January 1854. First, King William Dappa Pepple was deposed on this date. Second, Prince Dapu signed a treaty on this date and thirdly, Prince Fubara was crowned in the

same month to replace King William Dappa Pepple. On the same day, an additional commercial treaty was signed between King Fubara and the British. Chief Dick Tolofari and Jack Tolofari signed this treaty with other chiefs of Bonny as political leaders.

King Fubara – A King without Power and Authority

Consul Livingstone informed King Fubara that the treaty precluded him from receiving comeys, he could not go to war without the approval of the British Consul in the river and the court of equity instead of King Fubara was now the authority in Bonny.² We would not bore ourselves with the intricacies that led to the removal of King William Dappa Pepple on 23rd January 1854.³ After King Fubara's coronation, he was honored with a 21 gun salute from Her Majesty's gun boat Antelope.

Alignment and Realignment after the Death of King Fubara 1855

King Fubara's death in 1855, just one year in office, was very devastating for his household. This was the origin of the realignment of some of his family members with other more stable traders in the River. For instance, Principal members of the Dapu Household like Brown Agent Dappa and Doctor Dappa voted with their feet and strongly associated with Jack Tolofari and Diri Tolofari and by 1869 Bonny Civil war, they followed them to Kalaibiam (Opobo) and settled permanently with them. Since this was not a matter of redemption but association, they still maintained their allegiance to the Dapu group of houses. According to Ikime, "It was competition for resources and office within the colonial state that forced hitherto separate socio-political groupings to begin to see themselves as having certain common interests which they began to come together to defend"⁴ It was the political and economic interest of the times that Doctor Dappa and Igbi Brown Agent Dappa responded to, by supporting Chief Jack Tolofari of Kalaibiam (Bonny), after the death of King Fubara, instead of remaining with Chief Wogo Dappa, the new leader of Dapu House. With this colossal loss of a dependable king, his followers did the needful in the circumstance. Ashiru asserted that the rulers have the mandate to provide political leadership, direction and general wellbeing to their people.⁵ It should also be noted that in the Eastern Niger Delta, competition for resources and the ability for sustainable development was the hallmark of the chiefs of the 19th century that forced the hitherto separate political groupings to begin to see themselves as having certain common interest.⁶ Coming from a separate political grouping of Dapu (Annie Pepple), into another political grouping Chief Jack Tolofari (Tolofari), both men began to see themselves as partners with Chief Jack Tolofari. This is what Ikime regarded as intergroup relationship

² G.I Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria* (London. Oxford University Press, 1963), 118.

³ G.I Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria* (London. Oxford University Press, 1963), 118.

⁴ O. Ikime, *Can Anything Good Come Out of History?* (Ibadan, Book craft, 2018). 154-155.

⁵ D. Ashiru, 'Chieftaincy institution and Grassroots Development in Nigeria' in T. Babawale, A. Alao & B. Adesoji (eds), *Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria* (Lagos, Lagos Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), 2010, 116.

⁶ D. Ashiru, 'Chieftaincy institution and Grassroots Development in Nigeria' in T. Babawale, A. Alao & B. Adesoji (eds), *Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria* (Lagos, Lagos Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), 2010, 155.

between hitherto separate people, this time between Doctor Dappa, Igbi Brown Agent Dappa and Chief Jack Tolofari of Kalaibiam community. It was their off springs, Doctor Dappa and Igbi Brown Agent Dappa, sons of Okpani and Ekesunju Agent respectively that were able to launch their war canoes.

Alagoa and Jones had already identified three categories of groups and their movements, and we are only interested in the third category, which are households of free born members who belonged to other groups and in order to advance their fortunes had moved to the other community and attached themselves to the household of the founder of the other canoe house.⁷ With the sudden death of king Fubara in 1855, Doctor Dappa and Igbi Brown Agent decided to move out of the Dapu household under the Annie Pepple group and attached themselves to a more prosperous war canoe house, this time, the Jack Tolofari house of Kalaibiam, Bonny.

On 20th January 1869, a treaty for the preservation of peace and unity in Bonny. This referred to the signatories of the 7th January, 1869 as neutral party and they were directed to be heads of their own respective houses and were not under the pretext whatsoever, allowed to sell themselves or give themselves or houses to either Annie Pepple or Manilla Pepple's house. That the neutral party are forbidden from date to assist either Annie Pepple's or Manilla Pepple's houses. That the neutral party are forbidden to give or allow Manilla Pepple or Annie Pepple's houses to take any of their work bars. In 1869, when the civil war broke out, the neutral party became partisan and fifteen of them followed Jaja to Opobo in total disregard of the treaty of 1865, in violation of the regulations of the treaty and no punishment was meted out to them by the Consul or the vice Consul or the court of Equity.

Doctor Dappa Chieftaincy House 1889 -1924

At the conclusion of plans for the establishment of the war canoe both Kulo and Chief Jack Trouble (Okpani) died. AmaSenibo Kulo was to serve as caretaker because Doctor Dappa was a minor at this time. By 1900 Chief Doctor Biribo Dappa was successfully installed as a chieftain of the house. Chief Doctor Dappa was born in 1841 in Bonny to the family of Okpani and Ayasaki Igbogo. Chief Doctor Dappa was twenty-eight years old when they moved out of Bonny. As a young man he witnessed all that happened, the events that led to the secession. A very good listener and very observant, he was gifted in recalling events long after the event had taken place.

Chief Doctor Dappa's Achievements

Chief Doctor Dappa traded in Palm kernel with the supercargoes. This was also the time the British penetrated the hinterland. With the introduction of railways running through major towns like Port Harcourt and Aba, River transport dropped drastically. To augment his resources, he started farming like Chief Ebranga Dappa. He traded more in palm kernel with the supercargoes and prospered also with the building of settlements for collecting and bagging of the palm kernels. By 1914, trade began to decline in the

⁷ G.I Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria* (London. Oxford University Press, 1963), 165.

territory due to the commencement of the First World War. The chiefs of Opobo contributed to men and materials to the war efforts, thereby further depleting the meagre resources in the local economy.

Chief Doctor Dappa and Egwenga Land Case 2012

In the 1870s, the following companies established factories in Egwenga, Alert factory, Day spring, Fort Hahnemann, King's Beach, Laughland Factory and Stanley Beach. By 1887 the above listed factories formed the African Association Limited. When palm kernel entered the International Market from 1910, one new company established its factory at Egwenga, the African Oil Nuts and Company started business in 1960. By this time Egwenga was competing with other business centers developing in Nigeria like Eket, Aba, Kano, Zaria and Lagos in economic importance. By the 1940s, United African Company (UAC), had four Beaches at Egwenga, the Hospital or Dispensary, the Prison (now Correctional Centre), the Treasury, the market square, the German bridge, United African Company (UAC), African Nuts and Company and others were all located at Egwenga. As early as 1886, Roebuck, Pickering and Company established a branch of the company at Egwenga.

Also in early 1900, Egwenga became the Headquarters of Opobo District, with Prison (Correctional Facility, Dispensary, Consul Residential Quarters. It was because of both political and economic importance of Egwenga during the colonial period that necessitated the Ikot Obong people to come back to ask for their land which they had already sold to King Jaja of Opobo. In 1912, Chief Akpan Owo of Ikot Obong sued King Sunday Jaja, Jeki II claiming ownership of all the land in Egwenga. When Chief Doctor Dappa heard of this claim, he volunteered himself as a witness. He then took some members of both Opobo and Ikot Obong to the portion where the parchment showing Jaja's title to ownership was buried. The bottle containing the parchment or title Deed was dug up and broken, and the document or parchment was retrieved. This document became evidence, which was eventually tendered in court, showing that Egwenga was officially purchased from Ikot Obong people. According to oral tradition of the Chief Doctor Dappa's house, the native doctor that came with the Ikot Obong people, was so angry and furious knowing that he has lost the case, pointed his finger towards Chief Doctor Dappa and said, "You come to see" It was believed by the members of Chief Doctor Dappa house that his blindness and eventual death in 1924, was a result of the charm of the native doctor. His death notwithstanding, the evidence now led the Court to request for the Survey Plan of the area called Egwenga. From the ongoing, it was no longer in doubt, about the rightful owner of Egwenga. The Ikot Obong people never relented in their quest to get back the estate from King Jaja descendants. From 1953, 1999 and 2016, the case continued because part of the estate had been sold to members of the public and even Akwa-Ibom State Government. According to Jaja House Estate Committee, a surveyor plan had since provided showing the area in dispute. Egwenga is in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Egwenga was also King Jaja Sea Port for the evacuation of palm produce.

The dispute that would have arisen between King Sunday Jaja, Jeki II and Ikot Obong people was averted by the intervention of Chief Doctor Dappa. After he testified

and actually pointed out the area where the parchment was buried, Chief Sunday Jaja donated part of Egwenga to him in appreciation for the love of his father land Chief Doctor Dappa named the area of Egwenga given to him as Doctor Farm. He utilized the available labor in the house to work the Doctor farm.

Egwenga became one of the commercial centers of Nigeria and in the colonial period it was one of the urban centers also. House members found jobs in the construction of Egwenga road, linking it to the hinterland for the evacuation of produce for export through Port Harcourt.⁸ As a landowner in Egwenga some of his supercargo associates rented houses around the farmland and paid rents.

He planted variety of cash crops in the farm and also built a big settlement where house members lived whenever they travelled to Egwenga. It was also a holiday resort for the chief, elders, and his European trading partners.

Egwenga gradually became a growing urban center for establishment of new companies. Boahen observed that there was rapid growth of urban population from 1919, immediately after the First World War, Egwenga, as an urban center undoubtedly improved the quality of life for its teeming population.⁹ By the 1940s, a boat building company, established the Egwenga Boat Yard, which created employment for young school leavers.¹⁰

Chief Doctor Dappa: External Relations within the Kingdom

Chief Doctor Dappa and Christianity

In as much as Tolofari deity had gained deep recognition by its adherents, in fact Chief Doctor Dappa House has produced one of the priests of Tolofari deity, the person of Ogbulu son of Okpani in Kalaibama Bonny. Christianity spread rapidly because of better and improved system of communication during the colonial period. In 1908, when St. Paul's Church, Opobo was being built, he generally contributed to the growth of the church. The chiefs of Opobo were also instrumental to the erecting of a befitting monument for King Jaja in 1909, Doctor Dappa participated in that event.

Chief Doctor Dappa and the Events of 1920s

In the 1920s, after the end of the First World War, there was rise in price of palm produce. According to Epelle, a puncheon of oil in Opobo was selling for £50. The economic turnaround put smiles on their faces and money in their pockets.¹¹ In the same period, the British Colonial Administration introduced the British currency notes. This was sequel to the clumsiness of the use of traditional manila as a legal tender. Although

⁸ A. AduBoahen, 'Colonialism in Africa: its impact as significance' in A. AduBoahen, *The General History of Africa vol. vii: Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880 – 1935* (London, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1985) 795.

⁹ A. AduBoahen, 'Colonialism in Africa: its impact as significance' in A. AduBoahen, *The General History of Africa vol. vii: Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880 – 1935* (London, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1985) 795.

¹⁰ E. Adagogo-Brown, 'Opobo Egwenga, Egwenga Opobo: A seaport of King Jaja of Opobo', *Port Harcourt Journal of History and Diplomatic studies (PJHDS)*, 6/2 (2019), 132.

¹¹ E.M.T. Epelle, Opobo In A Century: A Sketch History of Opobo Town 1870 –1970 History of Dapu Section, Opobo Kingdom, 2013 unpublished, 23.

Opobo traders gradually accepted the coins, the hinterland, producers refused to accept it as a legal tender. They still demanded for the traditional Manila for supply of palm produce. The same period there was economic growth in Europe. The factories and industries demanded of palm oil which they used for lubrication of their machines and the manufacture of soaps and body cream.

In response to the rejection of the coins by the hinterland producers, the Administration devalued the currency to the financial advantage of Opobo traders. This new development led to the exchange of the Manilla for the currency which further boosted the resources of Opobo merchants. The big merchants like Chief Doctor Dappa dug up bags of manila which were buried and exchange same for the British coins. This economic development cushioned the effect and the impact of the First World War.

Chief Doctor Dappa House

Chief Doctor Dappa died in 1924 and from that date the house had not been able to fill the chieftaincy stool. The challenges include the inability of the house to pick a consensus candidate, the crisis between Chief Doctor Dappa House and Amasenibo KuloDappa's family and the change of name of the flag of the house.

The World Economic Depression of the 1930s

The entire world experienced economic depression from the 1930s, the recession drastically affected export trade. For instance, palm oil prices fell, and this affected revenue and profit margin of most traders. After the death of Chief Doctor Dappa, The house therefore decided to allow the leadership to be piloted by caretaker committees in the interim. The first caretaker committee was that led by Opusenibo Samuel Doctor Dappa (Ada Sam) and Opusenibo Gabriel KuloDappa, sons of Doctor Dappa and KuloDappa respectively. So, Opusenibo Samuel Dappa would not have performed magic to provide funds to build up the house. There was general instability in the world economy. Most of the traders could not cover their expenses, much less of making profits. Even Doctor's farm could not produce much at this period. For instance, Chief EbrangaDappa, one of the chiefs of Dapu group of houses, bought large expanse of land this period for the cultivation of rubber but the business collapsed under the weight of the depression.

Again, the reorganization of Native Administration from 1943, introduced elective representation. Some house representatives were elected. All the houses in the Dapugroup elected their representatives. Senibo Samuel Dappa was elected to represent Doctor Dappa house while Chief Nathaniel Tom Pepple represented the Chief WogoDappa main house. Chief WogoDappa was founder of the Dapu group of houses.¹²

The construction of roads and railways through the hinterland caused the decline of Egwenga as a seaport. In the 1940s, the bar silted and most of the companies evacuated their goods. The traders had to migrate to the new urban township of Port Harcourt and Aba.

¹² E. Adagogo-Brown, 'Chieftaincy Institution in Opobo Kingdom of the Eastern Niger Delta 1891-2003', Ph.D Thesis (2018), 252.

Timothy A. Dappa (Offor) led Committee 1950 – 1958 and the Succession Dispute

In 1950, the house dissolved the Opusenibo Samuel Dappa's committee and elected Timothy A. Dappa as the new chairman. Other members of this committee include Sunday T. D. Dappa, Mark D. Dappa, and Franklin Sunday D. Dappa. It was during his tenure that the house witnessed a succession dispute to produce a successor for Chief Doctor Dappa. It would seem that the introduction of the Urban County Council and the Ward System of the 1950s had necessitated the urge for the occupation of the vacant stool in the house. Although, there was indication that Senibo Timothy A. Dappa tenure ended in 1958, but there was no indication of any election of a new committee until 1970 after the end of the Nigerian Civil War. How was the house able to survive without a chairman? Did it allow the chairmanship of Senibo Timothy A. Dappa to continue into Nigerian's Independence and the Civil War? The succession dispute must have probably led to factional politics in the house. This could account for the collapse of Senibo Timothy Dappa's leadership. From 1958, the house could be said to have drifted away without redemption until the end of the war in 1970.

Another reason for the agitation for the occupation of the vacant stool may not be unconnected with the creation of a House of Chiefs in the Eastern Region in 1956.¹³ Fractionalization weakened the process of nomination, election and installation of a new chief in the house. Three years after, an Ordinance was passed for the classification of Chiefs under the (No.14 of 1959). By this provision king Douglas Jaja, Jeki IV not only became a member of the House of Chiefs but also a first-class chief. He was thereafter appointed a Minister in the Eastern Region. His tenure also witnessed a reorganization in the native administration of Opobo district, in the third schedule as Opobo Town Urban County Council with Opobo receiving the highest annual grant of £500 under the Eastern Region Local Government Law of 1955. In 1956, the Eastern Region created a House of Chiefs and in 1959 passed an Ordinance to provide for "The classification of chiefs in the Eastern Region (No. 14 of 1959).

By this Ordinance, King Douglas, Jaja Jeki IV became a first-class chief and a member of the House of Chiefs. Each Province was given the power to nominate and appoint its representatives. This was in preparation for the party politics of the period. On 1st October 1958, the Eastern regional house of chiefs was revoked. The new Council consisted of twenty-four councilors, twenty-three elected and one appointed. King Douglas Jaja, Jeki IV was appointed into this Council as its President. The Council comprised of 23 Wards and Dapu Polo designated Ward 22 with the 8 War Canoe Houses making up the Ward as follows: Ada Tom Pepple was elected a representative of the Ward. Chiefs Doctor Dappa, Brown Agent Dappa, Opusunju Dappa, Tilibo Dappa, Kalasunju Dappa, Ada Tom Pepple and Wogo.

Chief Ebranga Dappa War Canoe House was regrettably omitted from the Ward list as a war canoe house, not because Chief Ebranga Dappa was not part of this Ward but could possibly be a typographical error.

¹³ G.I Jones, 'Chieftaincy in the Former Eastern Region of Nigeria' in M. Crowder and O. Ikime, ed., *West African Chiefs: Their changing status under Colonial Rule and Independence* (Ife, University of Ife Press, 1970), 322.

Nigerian Independence 1960 and the Administration of the House

After the initial jubilation of gaining independence from the British, Nigeria was plunged into political, economic, and social problems. This crisis refused to be resolved until it led to the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 to 1970.

The Election of Wari Senibo G. K. Dappa 1970 – 2006

One of the activities at the end of the Nigerian Civil War, was the election of a new executive committee to pilot the affairs of the house. Warisenibo G. K. Dappa emerged as the chairman of the two houses of Doctor Dappa and Brown Agent Dappa. It is pertinent to note that the dispute between the chief Doctor Dappa house and Ama-senibo Kulo factions seemed to have been abated significantly which had allowed the unity between the two families.

The Conflict over the Change of name of the Flag between Chief Doctor Dappa House and Ama-SeniboKuloDappa Family

The name originally on the flag of the house was Chief Jack Trouble Dappa War Canoe House. By 1979, during the leadership of Honorable Justice W. D. Dappa, the chief Doctor Dappa House insisted on the change of name on the flag from Chief Jack Trouble War Canoe House to Chief Doctor Dappa War Canoe house. On the other hand, the Ama-SeniboKulo family rejected the new name. This was the bone of contention for several years. So, it was the Honourable Justice W. D. Dappa and Opusenibo M. D. Dappa that were mandated to provide a new flag for the house. This committee after several attempts provided a new flag for the house with the name "Chief Doctor Dappa" War Canoe House. The lion which was the logo of the former flag was maintained in the new one. Also, the navy blue color of the former flag was also maintained. This new flag was first used during the funeral ceremony of King Douglas Jaja, Jeki IV, Amanyanabo of Opobo in 1980. The crisis which the change of name of the flag generated was only resolved by the combined efforts of both the Chief Brown Agent DappaSeniapu Council with the supervision of the DapuSeniapu Council on the 15th January, 2005 at Chief WogoDappa's Courtyard. According to Okpevra diplomacy should be applied as a tool to resolve conflict for peace and tranquility to be restored. It was this diplomacy that the two arbitrators mentioned above applied to resolve the conflict, so that the house can move forward.¹⁴

From 1980 – 1990 Warisenibo Wilfred Owupele Sunday Dappa took the mantle of leadership with Ishmael Dappa as secretary, who was regarded as very active and the longest served secretary of the house. Having served the house for a decade, he stepped down for Wari-seniboSobere Emmanuel Dappa. Another election took place and Wari-senibo Sunny Mark Dappa retained the chairmanship for the next three years, while Wari-seniboSobere Emmanuel Dappa retained his position as secretary, until 2004.

¹⁴ U.B Okpevra, 'Diplomacy as a Tool for Conflict Resolution in Pre-Colonial South Central Nigeria: Isoko and Her Neighbour', *Journal of Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Nigeria Defence Academy*, 7(2015),142.

The Birth of the New Order

According to the members of the house “It was after the settlement of the rift that the house charted a new course with the election of a new executive comprising, chief Doctor Dappa House and Ama-seniboKuloDappa family. Wari-senibo Sunny Mark Dappa was elected the chairman, Warisenibo Fred K. Dappa as Vice Chairman, Warisenibo Sunny ChibuzorDappa as Secretary. One year after, this vibrant executive committee expanded theSeniapu Council in order to inject fresh blood and capacity into the engine room of the house. Members of the expanded seniapu included Sunny Mark Dappa, Arinye Mark Dappa, Fred K. Dappa, Israel G. K. Dappa, Enyinna Offor Dappa, Sunny Chibuzor Dappa, Mac-Jerry F. Dappa, Joshua G. Dappa, Siminialayi Godfrey Dappa, Joseph Sunday Dappa and Datubo Moses Dappa. Datubo Moses Dappa died, and his position was replaced by Sodienye Moses Dappa. The Warisenibo Mark Dappa’s Executive was accused of non-performance. For fear of total collapse of the House, the Seniapu council called for the dissolution of the Sunny Mark Dappa’s led executive on August, 2011.

In the new year meeting of 2nd January, 2012, the house elected yet another executive committee with Warisenibo Arinye Mark Dappa as chairman, Senibo Fred K. Dappa as Vice Chairman, Senibo Sobere Emmanuel Dappa as Secretary, Senibo Moses Sodienye Dappa as Treasurer, Senibo John C. F. Dappa as Financial Secretary, Senibo Sunny Chibuzor Dappa as Public Relation Officer and Senibo Adonye as Special Adviser. The committees’ first assignment was the revival of the house towards the call for the return of members that have lost interest in the house. This was pursued vigorously to the admiration of the Seniapu Council.

Conclusion

We have identified the intricacies concerning the challenges of Doctor Dappa House. The ability of members of the Doctor Dappa house to resolve the multifaceted conflict in the house is commendable. By 2012 peace and unity had returned to the house. Also, the inter group relations between the Jack Tolofari group and the two houses of Doctor Dappa and Brown Agent Dappa houses of Dapu group had remained intact. For instance, the Tolofari group had been seen not to interfere in the internal crisis of the Doctor Dappa house. Rather the Brown Agent Dappa house had continued to offer the needed assistance until the two Seniapu Councils brought the needed atmosphere and level playing ground for all the arms of the house. The autonomy and independence of the each of the houses are sacrosanct.

The only way to link the main house to the component house is by the adoption of the family name, like Jack adopted the family name of Tolofari even though he had moved to Opobo with his own flag, Ekere, Ngelenge and the war canoe and gigs. These are the paraphernalia of a full-fledged War Canoe House. No individual in Opobo kingdom can own a War Canoe, a war Canoe Flag, the war canoe drums and the xylophone, no matter how rich that individual might be. All members of the war canoe house pay allegiance to the Chief of the house no matter his economic status.

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