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## THE JAMAICANS IN CALABAR, 1900 – 1940: A NEGLECTED THEME

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### Abstract

Although the history of European missionary activities in Calabar has been adequately documented in historical literature, the contributions of Jamaican missionaries in Calabar have received less attention. Hence, this paper intends to remedy the situation, and further examine the impact of these liberated Christians on the people and the city of Calabar between 1900 and 1940. The study has made use of published and unpublished materials.

It has revealed that the Jamaican missionaries many of whom were teachers made their impact felt in almost all departments of the school where they taught, and that their impact went beyond these schools to embrace the larger Calabar community.

## THE JAMAICANS IN CALABAR, 1900 – 1940: A NEGLECTED THEME

Although the history of European missionary activities in Calabar has received the much-desired attention in historical literature, the contributions of the Jamaican missionaries in Calabar have been a neglected theme. Consequently, this paper intends to remedy the situation and furthermore, examine the impact of these liberated Christians on the people and the city of Calabar between 1900 and 1940.

The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed the gradual emancipation of Negroes in Europe and the New World. Consequently, the pace of missionary activities intensified in Europe down to the West Indies. As early as 1834, the liberated Africans in Jamaica, side by side the European missionaries with African

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experience felt the need to extend the good news of Christendom to Africa (Waddell, 1863: 206). Their contact with Liverpool ship captains trading with Old Calabar from whom they received favourable reports of the people and their enthusiasm to receive Christianity (Aye, 1987: 3) made Calabar an ideal place for evangelism. This favourable letter further strengthened the information received by the Jamaican Presbytery in 1843, from the King and Chiefs of Old Calabar, requesting their presence in the town (Mcfarlan, 1957:8).

Accordingly, in September 1844, at Hampden, Jamaica, the Society and Mission to Old Calabar was first formed with Rev. Hope Waddell as the first missionary Representative among the team to Calabar (Mcfarlan, 1957: 10). On the 6th of January 1846, Hope Waddell and his small party made up of a few Europeans and Jamaican missionaries sailed on the ship, Warree, from Liverpool, and on the 10th of April of the same year, arrived Calabar.

The early missionaries recruited the Jamaicans for service in Calabar. Besides assisting in evangelism, many Jamaicans came as teachers, while a few were skilled workmen. Those that left an indelible impact on the Calabar community, however, were teachers (Aye, 1/8/2001: int). Among these were Messrs Samuel Mordecai Hart; F. E. Jones; S. M. Gordon. R. B. Watson.; L. E. Lace; and F. A. Foster. Others included Messrs Messam, Rev. N. W. Ward and J. Manderson-Jones. They all arrived in the first decade of the twentieth century (Aye, 1/8/2001, int) and made their impact felt not only in Duke Town School and Hope Waddell Training Institute, where they served, but also in Calabar as a whole.

Samuel Mordecai Hart was one of the most outstanding Jamaican figures in Calabar. Hart was a distinguished academic and contributed to the growth and development of Duke Town School where he served as Headmaster for thirty-three years, 1904 – 1937. On his assumption as Headmaster on the 23rd of March 1904, he met an attendance of 152 pupils and 5 teachers (D.T.S Log Book, Vol. I). This figure was rather low considering that Duke Town School was established since 1846, and was among the first formal school established by the missionaries in Calabar. Nonetheless, due to his determination and hard work, by 1918, there were 1600 pupils and 65 teachers (D.T.S Log Book, Vol. I and II) Hart recorded other

achievements in Duke Town School such as the introduction of the school Log Book system which is vital for preserving, for posterity, information and records concerning the school (Nyong, 1997: 24). During his tenure, the Duke Town School Log Book was made up of three volumes covering the periods 1904-1916; 1916-1926 and 1927-1937 (Nyong, 1997:24). He also introduced the staging of plays, annual concerts and operettas, which were first held in 1905 (D.T.S Log Book, Vol.1, 1904). This latter became an annual event, which greatly enhanced the social life of the Calabar people. Old students, Government Officials, Managers of Commercial Houses, and the community at large, looked forward to these annual events and were over the years entertained with interesting and exciting operettas and plays, performed by the students and staff of Duke Town School (Nyong, 1997: 28). These events were usually documented in the Log Book from 1915. The Log Book entry of 28th of November 1916, stated, "the pupils of standards V and VI with pupil teachers rendered a cantata entitled "Inspector for An Hour" (D.T.S. Log Book, Vol. I, 1916) which was very popular with the audience, and the next day, 17th of November staged an English play entitled "King of Sherwood" (D.T.S. Magazine, Jan 1918). The School staged its 40th annual concert tagged "Dulcinea" in 1950 (Nyong, 1997: 100). These annual events which were tagged "The Duke Town School Tradition" not only enhanced the standard and quality of education in the school, but added spice to the social lives of the Calabar populace.

In 1915, Hart established the Duke Town School library (D.T.S. Log Book, Vol. I, 1915). This was to encourage, among the pupils and teachers a wider scope of reading beyond prescribed textbooks. In 1920, 1927 and 1935 he increased the volume of books (Nyong, 1997: 33) in the library by making available an additional stock of fictional, informative and historical materials. This improved the pupil's knowledge of various subjects like geography, literature, history and the science.

Hart would also be remembered for establishing the Duke Town School Magazine in 1917 (D.T.S. Magazine, First Edition, Sept., 1917). Hart, S. M. Gordon and F.E. Jones, all Jamaicans,

Thought it would be a good thing to have a little school paper to

coordinate and unify the work of the school in its various departments and activities, to supply the senior pupils with a certain amount of news, local and foreign, to encourage them to write to keep the school in touch with pupils (Nyong, 1997:33)

In the foreword introducing the first edition of the 'Magazine' in September 1917, it was written,

We thought it good to introduce a monthly leaflet into the life and work of the school. The place has grown so much that pupils who attend the school daily within the same grounds may not see each other for months... It is our hope that this leaflet will help to foster the spirit of esprit de corps among the pupils and staff of this school (D.T.S Magazine, Sept., 1917).

Indeed, the Duke Town School Magazine helped in keeping students, teachers, old students and the Calabar society abreast with the activities of the school, as well as Calabar and beyond. For instance, memorable events that occurred and were documented in the magazine included; the opening of the Secondary Department of Duke Town School in September 1920, with a class of 14 students, with R. B. Watson, a Jamaican as the only teacher. This information was given in the October 1920 edition of the magazine. The establishment of the Boy Scouts Movement in Duke Town School in 1921, with Mr. Sam Solomon as the first Scoutmaster was reported in the Magazine in 1921. The September 1933 edition mentioned the arrival in Calabar of Prof. Eyo Ita by M. V. Apapa on 13th of August 1933, after obtaining his education abroad. Also, the February 1936 edition recorded the death of His Majesty, King George V of England at 11.55pm on Monday, 20th of January 1936. The Magazine also reported in its edition of May 1937, the coronation of King George VI

on Wednesday 12th of May 1937. The Duke Town School Magazine which obtained a new name, 'Record', in 1928 (Nyong, 1997:34) was widely circulated monthly in Calabar and read in 'some quarters in the West Indies, Britain, America and some West African countries by past pupils as well as admirers' (Nyong, 1997: 34) of the school. The impact of the Duke Town School Record on the pupils, teachers and the community at large was tremendous. Aside aiding the staff and pupils develop their literary skills through the reporting of a wide range of issues, it kept the Calabar community knowledgeable and well informed about events within and outside Nigeria.

With the encouragement given by Hart and his Jamaican counterparts like S. M. Gordon and F. E. Jones, the Old Boys Association of Duke Town School was inaugurated in 1917 (D.T.S. Log Book, Vol. II, 1917). The Log Book entry of July 1917 reported that

At the invitation of the Jamaican teachers on the staff, a number of the Old Boys of the school met on 25th August, and formed an Old Boys Association (D.T.S. Log Book, Vol. II, 1917).

Hart was also involved in laying the foundation for the observation of Duke Town School Founder's Day (Nyong, 1997:48). This was a day set aside to bring both past and present pupils together in a friendly atmosphere. Sporting activities like football, athletics and other games were usually competed for "to honour the memory of the founders of the institution and to remind themselves of their common heritage" (D.T.S. Log Book, Vol. II.). It was first observed in 1919 and fixed for every third Saturday of November yearly (D.T.S. Log Book, Vol. II. 1919). It is interesting to note that the event usually drew a large crowd from the Calabar community.

The Duke Town School Hymn as well as the motto of the School "Labor Omnia Vincit" was the initiative of Hart. The translation of the school Motto, which means "Labour Overcometh All Things", was said to have reflected his philosophy of life, for Hart believed strongly in the spirit of hard work above all things (Nyong, 1997,31). He followed strictly this philosophy and injected it into his



staff and pupils. During his stewardship as the Headmaster of Duke town school, the institution attained discipline, academic excellence and better performance in sport and drama.

Samuel Mordecai Hart's achievements in Duke Town School received much commendation from the people of Calabar. Indeed he was well loved by them and often addressed as Etubom Hart (Aye, 1/8/2001, int). On his retirement in 1937, he was honoured with a chieftaincy title (Aye, 1/8/2001 int) and immortalized with a street-Hart street. F.E. Jones, another Jamaican who had served with him as Deputy Headmaster for seven years succeeded Mr. Hart.

Messrs F.E. Jones and S.M. Gordon, both Jamaicans, also contributed to the growth of the Duke Town School. Both men were qualified agricultural instructors. Gordon was in charge of the manual workshop, which was established in 1918 (Nyong, 1997:30). Under his tutelage, pupils were trained in carpentry, raffia work, basketry and sculpture. The workshop also acted as a service center for the repair of school furniture and equipment (Nyong 1997:30). During special public functions organized by the school, the products from the workshop like stools, wooden shelves, tables, benches, chairs and baskets were displayed for sale to the Calabar society (Nyong, 1997:30-31).

Hart, Jones and Gordon established gardening as a viable vocational practice in the Duke Town School. Training was given to the pupils in the maintenance of farm beds at the school farm, which was located at the Mission Hill (Nyong, 1997:30). Under their supervision, pupils planted assorted crops like corn, yam, ginger, sweet potatoes, plantain, groundnuts, fruits and vegetables (Nyong 1997:30). During the era of Hart and Jones, this tradition existed and was only stopped by the middle of the 1950's (Nyong 1997:31).

The Jamaican impact on the people of Calabar through the Duke Town School cannot be emphasized. McFarlan rightly concluded that

The School (Duke Town School) with its many activities is a living memorial to his (Mr. Hart) wise guidance as headmaster, and today its former pupils are to be found in responsible

positions all over Nigeria (McFarlan, 1957: 168-169).

The impact of the Jamaicans on Calabar was not limited to the Duke Town School only. It was actively extended to the Hope Waddell Training Institution where Jamaicans, like Messrs Foster, Messam, Sinclair and J. Manderson – Jones, recorded their achievements in the institution as heads of the industrial departments such as the Carpentry, Brick making, Agricultural and Tailoring departments, especially from 1902.

Interestingly these departments also served the needs of the Calabar society. For instance the Brick making Department which was started near Ikot Offiong had its products bought largely by the Government for the erection of most of its living quarters and administrative buildings (Aye, 1986: 10). The Calabar High Court, the Prison Wall, the Police Barracks amongst others were products of the H.W.T.I. Brick making Department. Similarly, the Carpentry Department had a workshop and was credited with the erection of the Edgerley Memorial Girls' School building. Aye noted that on the 5th of August 1931, the school (Edgerley Girls) building, which was handed over to the Mission Council, was erected by the H.W.T.I. Carpentry Department (Aye, 1986: 115).

With regard to the Agricultural Department, which was earlier established in 1896, the Jamaican teachers encouraged the cultivation of fruits like the coffee plant, bananas and mangoes although some of these crops, such as coffee could not survive because of the tropical climate. They also introduced the avocado pear and the breadfruit tree into Calabar, as well as the decorative palm tree on the H.W.T.I. Chapel premises (Aye, 1967: 144-145). The avocado pear has become a popular fruit within Calabar, and many houses in the city to add beauty to their environment, now plant the decorative palm tree known by the Efik people as "Isip Hope".

Furthermore, when the Bakery Department was incorporated in the institution, the Europeans and Jamaican Missionaries introduced the art of bread making and cake making to Calabar. But because the local people were unfamiliar with the consumption of bread and cakes, this department failed to progress (Aye, 1967:

144). Today, bread has become a staple breakfast in most homes in Calabar.

In 1902, Rev. Luke introduced the game of football to H.W.T.I and Calabar at large. The first match that was won by the institution was played on the H.W.T.I. premises on the 15th of June 1904 (Aye, 1986: 22). From then onwards, football became popular in Calabar and was known as "Calabar Game". It was not until the 1930's that it was officially recognized as Nigeria's national game. Encouraged by Rev. Luke's progressive outlook and love of sports, Foster, the Jamaican who took up position as assistant teacher in the Secondary Department introduced the game of cricket to the institution (Aye, 1986: 23). In 1903, Foster led the H.W.T.I. team within and outside Calabar to places like Umuahia and Uzuakoli for cricket competitions. For instance, on the 30th of May 1935, the H.W.T.I. Cricket team led by Smith and Foster went to Umuahia College and Uzuakoli Institute for a friendly competition (Aye, 1986: 122). Although they lost to Uzuakoli, they defeated Government College Umuahia. This game continued unabated, and it was not until 1964 (Aye, 1986: 214) that interest in Cricket lost out to football and athletics.

Foster, Messam and Sinclair, all Jamaicans, contributed in improving the literary skills of the H.W.T.I. students through the Literary and Musical Society. Foster was the Chapel organist and encouraged the learning of music. When the Literary and Musical Society was formed on the 26th of January 1928, he held the position of the Vice President of the society (Aye, 1986: 100). Annual concerts similar to those of Duke Town School were held. This encouraged literary and creative skills for students, and also brought people from the Calabar society together for the purpose of relaxation. The literary and Musical Society, which later changed its name to Literary, and Dramatic Society influenced the formation of the Calabar Dramatic club in the 1940's (Akoda, 2002: 243). In the 40's and 50's, this club made its impact felt in Calabar through the staging of dramas in the African Club located on Calabar Road.

An informant while confirming the positive impact of the Jamaican missionaries in Calabar stated that they worked very hard at their jobs and made better teachers than the Europeans who brought them (E. B. Effiom, 18/7/2001, int.). In addition, they taught with conviction by wedding morality with academics. Interestingly,

many of them were not university products, but were graduates of Mico College in Jamaica (Aye, 1/8/2001, int). They, therefore, gave one the impression of that college as outstanding in its rearing of teachers. Sinclair was a specialist in Arithmetic and knew his job well. Similarly, Foster taught Latin and was the Chapel organist and choirmaster. A native of Kingston, he became the head master of the Secondary Department when the school expanded and held this position until his retirement in 1937. His introduction of the game of cricket into Calabar in 1903 made him most popular with the Hope Waddell boys. Indeed there were many occasions when the boys imitated his style of walking and his handwriting (O.A. Ita, 2/8/2001, int). Foster was also admired and respected by the Calabar people. This admiration and influence, which he earned among them, led to the immortalization of his name through a street named after him – Foster Street.

In 1911, when the H.W.T.I. expanded to include the Teachers College (known as Normal college), J. Manderson – Jones, another Jamaican teacher was attached to this college. Manderson - Jones specialized in School Method, and was in charge of that special subject in the college (A.I. Edem, 2/3/2001, int). This made him have a powerful influence on the student teachers in training considering that School Method was a core subject for those training in the teaching profession (Aye, 1/8/2001/int). With the introduction of the Teachers Certificate of Education, the college competed favourably and its students excelled. It was observed that

In 1919, of the 293 candidates in the whole country who sat this examination, there were only 69 successes. Of the successful candidates Hope Waddell had 21 out of the 25 sent in (Aye, 1967:146).

Consequently, H.W.T.I. trained teachers were very much in need by other early missions whose schools began to expand by the first half of the twentieth century. Hence, other missionary bodies that had no Teacher Training Colleges of their own sent their teachers for training at Calabar (Effiom, 18/7/2001, int.).

Aside, being teachers, the Jamaicans in Calabar would be remembered as a group that assisted in the spread of the gospel

(Akoda, 2002:245). During the Founders' Day Celebration in 1953, the Principal of H.W.T.I., Rev. J.A.T. Beattie "spoke on the faith of the Jamaican Christians who made Christianity available in Calabar" (Aye, 1986: 177). The Jamaican teachers of H.W.T.I organized the students for Sunday school training and went beyond that to encourage and give hope to prisoners in the Calabar prisons, and the sick in hospitals through weekly prayers and Sunday school services. The H.W.T.I. Chapel, which was dedicated on the 22nd of November 1927 (Aye, 1986: 276), became the live wire of the institution and attracted a good number of Europeans and Africans alike for Sunday worship. Rev. N. W. Ward, a Jamaican, contributed a great deal to disseminating the gospel through the institutions chapel (Ita, 2/8/2001, int).

Similarly one of the major contributions of the Jamaicans besides teaching was that they helped their black contemporaries in Calabar to develop a sense of dignity and pride. As Africans who were directly affected by the travails of slavery, the Jamaicans came to Africa not only to spread Christianity and education, but also to improve on the battered image imposed on the black race by the western world, by encouraging their students to develop racial pride and self-confidence. Old Boys of the two schools (Duke town and Hope Waddell) that were opportune to be taught by these teachers affirmed that the Jamaicans taught their students with that conviction in order to elevate their spirit from inferiority complex. (A.I.Edem,2/3/2003,int ;Aye, 1/8/2001,int).

They did not feel or act superior to blacks but encouraged the latter through regular visits to their homes (Edem, 2/3/2001,int) hence establishing a relationship between Africa and the Africans in Diaspora. In all their activities, however, the Jamaicans suffered few limitations: As subordinates to their European masters, they were obliged to take instructions from them and could not operate freely at all times.

By the late thirties and forties, many Jamaicans were retiring from active services. Some returned to Jamaica, while few others such as J. Manderson- Jones returned from Jamaica to settle in Calabar where he studied and became a Lawyer and later a Magistrate (Edem, 2/3/2001,int).

## CONCLUSION

Indeed, the contributions of the Jamaican missionaries in Calabar cannot be overemphasized. They made their impact felt by managing nearly all schools in Calabar and the provinces. The Duke Town School and the Hope Waddell Training Institute are notable examples. Their impact went beyond these two schools to embrace the Calabar society. They were instructors in the Industrial departments, Sport masters, evangelists, choirmasters and organists. They also served as very good teachers and were professionally committed in their field of specialization. Their dedication to duty should serve as an example to present-day teachers. But most of all, their attempts at instilling in their black brothers a sense of dignity in their race and confidence to govern themselves marks them as outstanding from their European counterparts. It may be justified, therefore, to end this work on Jamaicans in Calabar with McFarlan's word, which observed that:

The close link with Jamaica which was formed when the Jamaican mission presbytery sent Hope Waddell to Africa has remained strong throughout a century and more of Calabar history. In all, forty Jamaicans have served in Calabar since the first landing in 1846. Not least among the many gifts they have brought to West Africa have been the fruits and flowers of the West Indies. These have taken root and flourished wherever the Missionaries have set up a school, a hospital, a church, or a home (McFarlan, 1957: 168 – 169).

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