THE ADDERLEY REPORT AND BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN NIGERIA, 1824 - 1865

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A THESIS

in

The Department

of

History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at
Sir George Williams University
Montreal, Canada

September, 1971

ABSTRACT

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Great Britain's failure to implement the Adderley recommendations is one of those enigmas of history that have gone unrecognized for generations, partly as a consequence of astute political engineering by the British Government and partly as a result of historical scholarship which uncritically accepted official explanations of British policy. Perhaps nowhere else in the history of British imperial expansion was the purposefulness and continuity of British policy so well concealed as in the case of West Africa. The measure of Great Britain's success can best be appraised by examining the writings of many prominent historians of Africa, who still argue that Britain in the 1860's acquired a West African empire in a fit of absent-mindedness.

The systematic consolidation of British influence in the Bight of Biafra, which began actively in 1836 with the constant intervention of the Royal Navy in the domestic affairs of the Niger Delta states, was further strengthened by the appointment of Captain John Beecroft as Her Britannic Majesty's resident Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra in 1849. The commitment and ambition represented by the British expul-

sion of Kosoko from Lagos in 1851 and the subsequent annexation of Lagos by Britain ten years later made it unthinkable for Great Britain to withdraw from Nigeria in the 1860's. Therefore the much vaunted scramble for Africa in the 1880's merely symbolized the formalization of the economic and political balkanization of Africa by the imperial powers which, for Nigeria, was already an established fact in the 1860's.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

The Adderley Select Committee Report on the British Settlements in West Africa has been, and still remains, one of the most misunderstood documents in the history of British imperial expansion. In 1865, the Adderley Parliamentary Select Committee recommended the gradual withdrawal of Great Britain's commitments in west Africa. Britain's inability or unwillingness to implement this policy, in spite of her vaunted apathy towards colonial acquisition, is the subject of this study.

Nineteenth century British politicians and recent historians have argued that the British Government played a disinterested role in west Africa. Dr. S. O. Biobaku declared in the "Preface" of The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842-1847 that from 1842 to 1847 "opinion in Britain was against imperialism." In a parliamentary rejoinder to Charles Adderley's motion seeking the establishment of a Parliamentary Select Committee to study the state of British West African settlements, Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for the Colonies, contended that Britain's position in west Africa was "solely and entirely a disinterested one" and that Britain's sole desire had been her wish to "extend the advantages of religion, civilization, and commerce."

At least one of Africa's leading historians has disagreed with Biobaku and Cardwell. Dr. K. O. Dike declares in Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta that "it is a commonplace of West African History to assume that the recommendations of the Parliamentary Select Committee of 1865 advocating partial and gradual withdrawal from the settlements represented the British Government's attitude to West Africa in the sixties. So far as the Niger territories were concerned, nothing can be further from the truth." But to justify his interpretation, Professor Dike had to tell the whole story of British involvement in the Niger Delta and document the systematic trend of British expansion in the Niger Delta.

When one grapples with the problem of the failure of the Adderley Select Committee recommendations in Nigeria it gradually becomes clear that the story of the failure of the Adderley Committee recommendations and that of the story of the development of British Nigeria are actually different aspects of the same story. But, whereas the story of the development of British Nigeria could be told without necessarily mentioning or discussing the Adderley Committee, the story of the failure of the Adderley recommendations in Nigeria could hardly be told without telling the entire story of the development of British Nigeria, since both stories are inextricably

interwoven. Any attempt to tell one part of the story without the other is likely to result in a dismal "scissors and paste" approach which misses the continuity of British imperial policy in Nigeria. So I have had not only to tell the story of the extension of British rule in the Bight of Biafra, thus following the route traced by Professor Dike, I have also had to tell the story of the establishment of British supremacy in the Bight of Benin. But for this difficulty, the retelling of these stories would have been quite unnecessary, since the history of these areas has been dealt with in other works.

This study has been arranged into two parts. Part I consists of Chapters I and II, and these chapters deal largely with the political dissatisfaction arising out of Britain's precipitation of the Ashanti wars of 1863-64, as well as the subsequent parliamentary debates which led to the establishment of the Adderley Select Committee of Inquiry. Part II deals largely with the rise of British hegemony in Nigeria, which began in the city-state of Bonny, and extended eventually to Lagos and its surroundings. Bonny has been identified as the springboard of British expansion since it was here that the first British challenge to the sovereignty of an African monarch took place in 1824. Speaking from this vantage point,

the story of British activity in Bonny then becomes, in microcosm, the story of British activity in what was to become British Nigeria.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND TO THE ADDERLEY SELECT COMMITTEE OF 1865

Although the cause and effect relationship between the Adderley Select Committee and the Ashanti war of 1863-64 is well known, a great deal of what happened in 1865 might be improperly understood unless one takes a hard look at the realities of the British naval and military position on the west coast of Africa prior to 1865, and, in this particular instance, nothing could probably serve this purpose better than the chain of events which led to the Ashanti war of 1863-64. The war itself could be regarded as having marked a definite change in the hardening of the British attitude towards the sovereignty of strong African inland potentates.

Long before 1865, British consuls had rarely faltered in their determination to impose their will and directives on recalcitrant coastal chieftains whose kingdoms were within firing range of the British man-of-war. Between 1851 and 1854 Captain John Beecroft, British Consul to the Bight of Benin and Biafra (1849-54), managed to depose King Kosoko of Lagos,[1] King Aqua of the Cameroons,[2] and King Pepple of

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[1]Sir Alan Burns, History of Nigeria (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1955), pp.118-122. First published 1929.

[2]K. O. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p.129.

Bonny,[3] all in the interest of legitimate trade and civilization. Whereas the African coastal chieftains had reason enough to respect the "de facto" realities of British power on the west coast, the inland kingdoms of Dahomey and Ashanti had very little to fear from the flexing of British naval muscles. In fact, the navy notwithstanding, these monarchs insisted doggedly on exercising their sovereign rights and privileges. Britain on her part showed no desire for inland complications, and avoided any action that would precipitate such a showdown. Nevertheless, by the eighteen sixties, the concept of informal empire came increasingly under attack by west African based colonial governors and consuls who sought to replace these anomalous protectorates with a much more comprehensive system of colonial administration. Britain's reluctance to assume an all-embracing responsibility on the west coast was due to a variety of reasons. The determination of African coastal chieftains to assert their rights in the face of an overwhelming British naval might proved that any attempt at formal or forcible annexation would lead to military complications, which neither an economy minded Parliament nor a recalcitrant Treasury could be expected to approve. In any case, the Colonial Office, whose responsibility it would have

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[3] Ibid., pp.141-143.

been to administer these colonies, was not generally inclined towards the assumption of such responsibilities in view of the incalculable difficulties involved in wrestling any money from a hostile Treasury -- a feat which was marked more by its failure than its success. These problems were further compounded by the fact that Palmerston and Russell, the apostles, if not the architects of informal empire, still held the political stage in Britian during the first half of the eighteen sixties.

Although Palmerston and Russell were approaching the nadir of their political careers, no one could be certain that the concept of informal empire, even if approaching its political demise, could be easily discarded for the more formal type of colonial acquisition. The Colonial Office undoubtedly found itself in a similar situation in the Gambian exchange difficulties, and as Elliott aptly remarked, the Gambian exchange proposition was:

> a question which can only be judged by politicians; the subject has never been publicly agitated, there are no data for forecasting the manner which it would be viewed; and I fear there must be grave doubts as to its reception by those who have never had occasion to acquire information or form an opinion on the measure before, but would be sure to have a strong one the moment that it was announced.[4]

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[4]J. D. Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa (London: Macmillan, 1966), pp.140-141. First published 1963.

One might equate the reluctance of the Colonial Office in the question of the invasion of Ashanti with that of its dilemma in the Gambian exchange controversy. The Duke of Newcastle definitely took a cautious view when Governor Pine first requested permission to invade Kumasi, and his reaction was that of sympathetic refusal:

> . . . /To/ allude to your former despatch of the 12th May, /1863/ in which you submitted a plan of organising a very large force, to consist of 2,000 disciplined soldiers, followed by upwards of 50,000 natives, and of making with that army a regular invasion of the territory of Ashantee: I am not insensible to the encouragement which the unfortunate inaction of the troops and native allies under Major Cochrane's command may afford to fresh aggressions by the Ashantees; but the proposal of a regular invasion to be made upon that nation, and of a march upon their capital, is too serious to admit of my encouraging it . . . .[5]

In refusing Governor Pine's intended march on Kumasi, the Duke of Newcastle might be regarded as having made a sound decision, but this is merely a value judgment made on the basis of hindsight and does not in any way explain his subsequent "volte-face" on this issue. But whatever his reasons might be, the Colonial Office, in a memorandum to the War Office requesting additional reinforcements for the Gold Coast, stated that:

> . . . In expressing this opinion, his Grace would be understood to continue to maintain, as he has always

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[5]G. E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana. Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957 (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), p.296.

> maintained, that the principle of all military proceedings on the West Coast of Africa should be that of defence and not of aggression. It is upon this principle alone that the Government are authorized to make war; and no invasion of neighbouring territories can be sanctioned, unless it can be shown that it is a defensive measure, safer, less costly in blood and money, and more likely to be decisive in its results, than waiting for an attack which is being prepared, and which no peaceful measure can ward off, without loss of that dignity and position which are essential to our security. . . . His Grace feels, therefore, that he cannot refuse to Governor Pine, a conditional authority to strike a blow within the Ashantee territory, if such a blow can be struck without making other or further advance than, in his own opinion, and that of the officer in command, may be consistent with the utmost consideration for the safety of the troops, and provided also he can satisfy himself that the result will be to remove the disastrous impressions caused by the impunity of the Ashantees when they last ravaged the protected territory, and to obtain reparation and secure the peace of the Protectorate . . . .[6]

Having now made the outbreak of hostilities with the Ashantis inevitable, the Government showed a callous disregard of the implications of its actions by sitting on its laurels, and displaying no sense of urgency whatsoever. It took the War Office over thirteen weeks before the troops requested by Governor Pine arrived at Cape Coast.[7] The Gladstonian Treasury also acted according to type by not making sufficient funds available to Major Clarke, an engineer officer who was despatched to the coast to make the necessary arrangements for the reception of the troops.[8] The lack of funds and the

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[6]G. E. Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana, p.296.

[7]Hansard, Third Series, Vol.CLXXV, June 17, 1864, p.1965. See also London Times, June 17, 1864, p.11.

[8]Ibid., p.2001.

inefficiency which characterized the preparations for that war resulted in the premature landing of the troops in the rainy season, when malaria fever was at its peak. To worsen matters, the West Indian troops who were supposed to be immune to African fever, proved that third generation West Indians were no more immune to malaria than Europeans. The Ashantis themselves did not particularly relish the idea of a swampy campaign in the height of the rainy season and judiciously stayed close to their homes. The Ashanti king was undoubtedly aware that the inhospitable climate of his country was inflicting the necessary death toll on the invading troops, and this obviously caused the elated monarch to declare that the white man had come to the bush with his cannon, but the bush proved stronger than the cannon.[9]

The magnitude of the whole imbroglio might have passed unnoticed by the general public, or at least the effects might not have been inflated to crisis proportions, had the British soldier elected to remain silent about the deplorable conditions on the front. But, as events proved, the British soldier, long accustomed to fighting for the glory of the Empire, saw very little that could be described

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[9]W. W. Claridge, A History of the Gold Coast and Ashantee, Vol.I (London: Frank Cass and Co.Ltd., 1964) p.529. First edition published in 1915 by John Murray.

as glorious in that war -- at least he had won no accolades, having now been reduced to the uneviable state of fighting an invisible enemy. The absurdity of the whole situation -- a war with no visible opposition and yet adorned with all the sufferings and casualties of conventional warfare -- proved quite unbearable to the British officer corps. Since there were no journalists covering the Ashanti war, the British officer, not in the least inclined to die an inglorious death, took matters into his own hands, and decided to inform the British public of his heroic death in a military engagement.

The prominent British dailies soon found themselves inundated with protest letters from Cape Coast Castle, and as a result, Whitehall could no longer uphold the veil of secrecy surrounding the military operations at Cape Coast. Writing from Cape Coast Castle on the 18th of April, 1864, a British officer, contravening the accepted ethics of military protocol, declared:

> As it is, here I am, and must make the best of it, but unless you were on the spot, and could see the result of a few weeks residence in the Bush -- as shown in the unhappy persons who have just returned from it -- you would hardly realise the amount of philosophy it requires to come to this sensible resolution. It simply means dying (as many have already) or what is fifty times worse, coming out of it with a constitution ruined forever. No less than 6 officers leave by this mail two or three will never reach England, and the rest can never be what

> they were before. To call the tragedy now being enacted here a farce may appear an anomaly, but so it is, for a war it can hardly be. When they have been in what they call the "field" (the swamp would be a more appropriate term) for the last three months and never seen so much as a single Ashantee man. The amount of human life and money being expended is something awful to contemplate nor can the end in taking Commassie, the capital of Ashantee -- ever be attained -- no not if ten times the number of troops now here were sent, and /how/ well the king knows this; hence his taking no notice and his wise remark 'that though the white man have sent plenty guns into the Bush, the Bush will prove stronger than the guns.' One has only to be here a day or two to perfectly coincide in this sable majesty . . . . If I ever return I shall be very much surprised and pleased, but I am free to confess that I do not in the least anticipate it, for to send us at this season of the year into the Bush with no shelter but what a mud hut affords, and no food but salt pork and biscuits, it is well known to all acquainted to be simply death . . . .[10]

Another officer writing on the same day exclaimed:

> God help us! Here we all are at least! I fancied I had seen some of the worst places there are, but my imagination never pictured such a reality as this. We had been expected for two months, and yet no preparation was made for the reception of 200 men and 29 officers. Most of the men could go into the Castle, none of the officers could do so. Some of them are under tents with some of their men; the rest of us were quietly told to go and shift for ourselves, neither quarters nor lodging money being given . . . . We are allowed a gallon of water a day, for washing, cooking and drinking. When we landed out of 19 officers we found here only three were able to crawl about. Five /will/ go home if they live long enough by this mail; some went by the last and I don't know how many have died before they could be got off. This is from bush work during the dry season; and what are they going to do now . . . . It is not certain that one Ashantee has been seen during the whole time such humbug had been going on, which is now for nearly eighteen months at a cost of up to £1,000,000 a day to you at home.[11]

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[10] Manchester Guardian, May 17, 1864, p.6.

[11] Ibid., p.6.

Other letters from Cape Coast-based troops continued to pour into Britain, all making essentially the same charges. All the petitioning officers complained of having to fight in the rainy season and under such inhospitable conditions. Others could neither see the utility of fighting such a war, nor the probability of winning it. But all deprecated the lack of preparedness on the part of the British government in not making the necessary arrangements for the reception of the troops.[12]

The graphic descriptions of the Ashanti war, as reported in the pages of the Times, did not fail to arouse public indignation against those who sanctioned such an undertaking. Featuring prominently in the attacks against the government were some of those who lost their relatives in the war. Nothing that was being reported by the troops on the Coast could be described as being utterly new. The west coast of Africa had long been notorious for the insalubrity of its climate and Britain's deference to the unhealthiness of this climate had been largely responsible for her avoidance of protracted inland campaigns. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a decision to fight in the Gold Coast had been taken, and British troops had been committed in this

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[12] London Times, May 20, 1864, p.6 and May 23, 1864, p.11.

engagement, therefore, the folly of such an engagement notwithstanding, an attempt at an honourable disengagement had to be expected. Furthermore, for the third time, the British army or a semblance of the British army had been humiliated by the Ashantis, and not all during the rainy season either. In 1806 a large Ashanti army had completely overwhelmed a Fanti levy at the battle of Abora, forcing the British Governor, Colonel Torrane, into making a humiliating peace.[13]

In 1824 the governor of the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, Sir Charles Macarthy, eight of his British officers, and one hundred and seventy-eight British soldiers, besides the Fanti levies, lost their lives in another Ashanti war.[14]

The 1863-64 fiasco was definitely an inconvenient, embarrassing and inexcusable episode. Excuses had to be made and were made to exculpate the government from the charge of wanton mismanagement. The fact that many British explorers had previously died on the west coast, in spite of adequate precautionary measures against the climate, stood the government in good stead. The disasters of Mungo Park's second journey,[15] Clapperton's second journey,[16] McGregor Laird's

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[13] W. E. F. Ward, A History of Ghana (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), pp.151-156.

[14] Ibid., p.179.

[15] A. Adu Boahen, Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan, 1788-1861 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp.30-36.

[16] Ibid., pp.54-59.

1832 expedition[17] and the 1841 expedition[18] all stand as memorable testimonies to the vengeance of a west African climate on alien explorers.

The general indictment of west African climatic conditions was not necessarily designed to excuse the poor performance of the British infantry, rather it was employed as a means of drawing public attention to the intractable and nugatory exercise of trying to commit British land forces to an unsavory African campaign. People with intimate knowledge of the coast did not fail to point to what they regarded as the inexcusable folly of the Government in sanctioning a military initiative of such magnitude on the west coast, and at the worst possible time. One such critic pointed out that the entire west coast of Africa, beginning from St. Louis in Senegal to Benguela in the south was no more than a vast "cesspool of fever, dysentery and everything that is detestable . . . ." He condemned any notion of carrying on military campaigns in these forest belts, which he regarded as being suitable only for ambush purposes. The author further pointed out that the real wealth of west Africa was to be found in the Oil Rivers, where no British military presence was in

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[17] Ibid., pp.95-96.

[18] T. F. Buxton, Buxton Memoirs, (London: John Murray Albermarle Street, 1849), pp.514-516.

evidence, except for an occasional summoning of the British Consul from Fernando Po. The presence of a British man-of-war, he pointed out, was all that was needed to enforce payment, since the Negroes, he claimed, were afraid of these ships, but as for the African levies, the natives, he claimed

> laugh at our drilled Negroes, who must indeed cut a sorry figure floundering through the swamps or marching 'in beautiful order' into ambushcades. It appears to me, and I have studied this matter very carefully upon the spot, that these unhappy soldiers, and their still unhappy officers, are useless in West Africa, and that it is to all intents and purposes an act of cruelty to send them there . . . .

He suggested that the colonies should be encouraged to raise their own militia for their own defence because, "a Napoleonic army would melt away in these great forests like snow. . . ."[19]

It is important to note that in all the series of protests made over the Ashanti war, no one had seriously questioned the wisdom of maintaining colonies on the west coast, rather the criticisms seemed to revolve around the issue of mismanagement, bad timing, the necessity of curtailing the size of British troop concentration on the west coast, and the subsequent editorials in the London Times did nothing to alter this trend of thought. While the editorial of the 17th of June rehearsed and condemned the incompetence which characterized the preparation for the Ashanti war, it

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[19] London Times, June 23, 1864, p.14.

regretted that the lack of adequate preparations had made it impossible to "leave a permanent impression upon a horde of savages . . . and thus allowing the impunity of the Ashantees to go unpunished."[20]

The third and last editorial in October which dealt with colonial questions in general declared that:

> . . . The price we pay for having an Empire upon which the sun never sets is being vulnerable in every quarter of the globe. Perhaps, however, this dominion may be the very anti-dote to, or rather the complement of our insular position, compelling us to rise to larger ideas and virtually providing for us a grander sphere of experience than would otherwise belong to islanders, however free and civilized.[21]

The Parliamentary debates which followed the publication of these letters are important in that they tended to show the disposition of Parliament towards these tropical colonies.

The Ashanti question was first broached in Parliament by Sir John Hay, who enquired from Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for the Colonies, whether it was true that war had commenced between the Ashantis and the British settlement in Cape Coast, and whether proper precautions had been taken to safeguard the health of the troops. Sir John further demanded to know "whether a largely increased expenditure

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[20] London Times, June 17, 1864, p.11. (My italics.)

[21] London Times, October 14, 1864, p.6. (My italics.)

may be looked forward to because of the war."[22]

In his reply, Cardwell confirmed that a state of war existed between the Ashantis "and a friendly tribe adjoining the British settlement," and that the war arose out "of an unprovoked incursion of the Ashantees into that country." He further confirmed that reinforcements had been sent to the Government and that every precaution was being taken to safeguard the health of the troops. He concluded by saying that the latest information indicated that "the troops were in good spirits, and in good health. . . ."[23]

On the 20th of May Sir John Parkington reopened the debate by demanding to know the causes and the objects of the Ashanti was in which many of his brave countrymen were being sent to die "not by the hand of the enemy, -- for an enemy they have never seen but through the effects of exposure to the deadly and pestilential climate of that country."[24] Parkington further derided the projected attack on Kumasi as "a hopeless and impossible task" partly because the King of Ashanti had a considerable army at his disposal and partly because his natural position had rendered him

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[22]Hansard, Vol.CLXXV, May 10, 1864, pp.257-258.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., pp.545-547.

entirely independent of any army since Britain had "no army so strong nor any fortress so impregnable as the dreadful climate and the pernicious atmosphere that prevail over the 150 miles" which lay between Kumasi and the sea coast.

Commenting on the effect of the climate on Europeans, Parkington claimed that "many of our officers are said to have left that country in a state of idiocy the most painful and depressing." The effect of the West African climate on Negroes who were "bred and reared in the West Indies," he claimed, was just as bad as on Europeans. Describing what he regarded as "the hopeless circumstances under which the war must be carried on," he pointed out that the interior of the country was more pestilential than the coast, citing in the process the case of a regiment of 450 men who were sent 100 miles inland to camp on the other side of the river Prah. When the regiment left the camp, eighty out of that number could barely carry a musket. An aggrieved Parkington declared that "brave men ought not to be exposed to such a dreadful fate." He further claimed that the letters he had read in the dailies were written by men who "felt /that/ they were sent to die an inglorious death."

In reference to the expenditure incurred in the war, he stated that he had heard from a reliable source that the war was costing the government an estimated £12,000-£14,000

a month. He hoped that the Government "would be able to give a satisfactory explanation on this subject, and to offer some assurance that this folly . . . would be put a stop to . . . ."[25] It is important to note that those who took the Government to task over the Ashanti war based their criticism on two grounds. Firstly, that the Government had acted "ultra-vires" in not informing Parliament about the war, and in not making adequate preparations for the war, knowing the pestilential nature of the climate. Secondly, because of this failure to make adequate preparations for the war, British lives were being sacrificed unnecessarily. No one questioned the propriety of committing British troops to aggressive land campaigns on the west coast, nor did anyone seriously question the utility of maintaining British troops on the west coast or in Cape Coast for that matter. In effect the Government was being censured, not for becoming involved in the war, but for losing it. Since this trend of thought dominated a great part of the debate, its relevance to the subsequent resolution of Lord Adderley should be noted, especially since many of those who featured prominently in the debate later became members of the Adderley Committee.

On the 17th of June, 1864, Sir John Hay, a Conservative member of Parliament who had lost a brother in the

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[25] Ibid.

war, tabled a motion of censure against the Government. He severely criticized the Government for failing to provide sufficient food and water for the troops, and for its lack of foresight in failing to provide hospital ships for evacuating the sick to a healthier spot on the coast.

The Government was equally criticized for sending out only twelve doctors to the coast, three of whom died, another three were invalided and the remaining six he described as "walking skeletons who have been left to do duty at Cape Coast." After questioning the authenticity of the casualty figures submitted to Parliament by the government, he declared that he was not "now about to question the policy which Her Majesty's government has thought proper to adopt in commencing this war, but as they decided to carry on war upon the Gold Coast" that he was "entitled to inquire how they have conducted it . . . ." (My italics.)

In conclusion, he tabled his motion which read thus:

> Her Majesty's Government in landing forces on the Gold Coast for the purpose of waging war against the King of Ashantee, without making sufficient provision for preserving the health of the troops employed there, have incurred a great responsibility, and the House laments the want of foresight which has caused so large a loss of life.[26]

The motion obviously speaks for itself, since it does not question the wisdom of the Government in becoming embroiled

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[26] Ibid., June 17, 1864, pp.1950-1963.

in such a war, it merely denies the Government's right to lose the war through callous management. As Sir John Hay succinctly put it, "One would imagine that every comfort for troops serving in such a deadly climate would have been immediately sent out," and since the Government decided to wage the war without consulting Parliament, they should not "have starved the war and killed our men."[27]

One critic of the Government who came close to questioning the entire enterprise was Mr. Baillie Cochrane. Cochrane concentrated his attack on the Colonial Secretary, not only for involving the country in a war without parliamentary sanction, but for the bellicose way in which he had egged on Governor Pine to war. He blamed the Government in general for meddling in west Africa, and wondered why the Government had not learned its lesson from the previous encounter with the Ashantis. After questioning the validity of the casualty figures tabled in Parliament by the Government, he concluded by alluding to the fate of Governor Charles Macarthy, which he thought should have served as an effective deterrent against venturesome brinkmanship in African domestic politics.[28] Repeatedly members of Parliament made it quite clear that they were not questioning the Government's

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., pp. 1980-1984.

right to invade Kumasi, but the ineptitude they had shown in planning the invasion. So, by and large, it became crystal clear that the purpose of the entire criticism was centred on government incompetence and not government policy.

The attitude of the Government and their supporters on the issue was that of resentful resignation and self-righteousness. Chichester Fortescue (Under-Secretary in the Colonial Office) accused the Ashanti king of merely using the illegal imprisonment of his two subjects as a pretext for invading Cape Coast. He also denied the existence of an extradition treaty or any understanding to that effect between the government of Cape Coast, and the king of Ashanti. He further argued that even if such an agreement did exist, "that it would be much better to violate it." While conceding that Britain had no political or jurisdictional rights over Cape Coast, and that strictly speaking, natives of Cape Coast were not British subjects, he defended British occupation on its merit, citing the cessation of inter-tribal wars, human sacrifice, and slave exportation as the justification for British occupation. To substantiate his argument, he called attention to the opinion of Earl Grey on this issue:

> Thus for several years internal wars have ceased, and the dread of British power and the knowledge that the united strength of all the chiefs in the district, directed by British officers, and supported by a small

> disciplined force would be promptly exerted to punish aggression upon any part of this territory, has been sufficient to restrain even the most powerful of the surrounding tribes or nations from attempting to injure those who acknowledged our authority.[29]

Elaborating further his charge that the Ashanti king's invasion of Cape Coast was based on a convenient pretext designed to mask his real intentions, he again cited the opinion of Sir W. Winniet, a former Colonial Secretary and Governor of the Gold Coast:

> Collectively these states /Fanti States/ lend a willing deference to English authority, but for the English power, they would fall a prey to the ambition of the king of Ashantee who is ready to find a pretext for war whenever his own thoughts warrant it, and the weakness of the Fante tribes tempts him to the effort to extend his dominion to the Sea Coast, which is an object which the Ashantees are known to have at heart.[30]

Lord Churchill, although a member of the Conservative opposition, came out in support of the Government on this issue. The Ashanti disaster, he argued, was due to the unforeseen early onset of the rainy season and the logistic difficulties involved in transporting British infantry from the West Indies to the Gold Coast. Although he upheld the reasons behind the campaign, he accused the Government of Cape Coast of being "dilatory in making preparations for the transport of troops and /in/ opening up the country by road,"

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[29] Ibid., pp.2013-2015.

[30] Ibid., pp.1990-1998.

which would have been notably useful for military and commercial purposes. On the tactical aspect of the war itself, he accused the Navy of negligence in not blocking the Volta River as a means of stopping the Ashantis from getting supplies of salt and ammunition. In conclusion, he paid tribute to two Negro army surgeons who were then still functioning at Cape Coast and urged "the training of Negro engineers who would assist in the building of roads. . . ."[31]

Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister and leader of the Government, defended the conduct of his Government in the war, while accusing the opposition of making a partisan issue out of it. He further pointed out that British responsibility in Cape Coast was contracted before his Government came to power, and that the continued protection of the /Fantee/ tribes had, for the Government, become a question of honour.[32]

Disraeli dismissed the partisan charge of the Prime Minister by contending that "if great disasters occur in the conduct of a military expedition," that it was the duty of an opposition "to call attention to them, to inquire into their cause, and to ask who is responsible for results which fill the country with mourning."[33] After further debates the censure motion was defeated by a vote of two hundred and

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[31] Ibid., pp.1984-1987.

[32] Ibid., pp.2015-2019.

[33] Ibid., pp.2019-2028.

twenty-six and two hundred and thirty-three against.[34]

The Parliamentary debates had established one fact very clearly, namely, that in spite of Parliament's displeasure over the tactical aspect of the Ashanti invasion, members of Parliament were, generally speaking, not against the invasion. But for Sir James Elphinstone, who seriously questioned the propriety of owning a tropical possession on the west coast, no other member of Parliament expressed any such thoughts.

The measure of Parliamentary complicity on this issue was clearly revealed by the inability of Sir John Hay to carry through a Parliamentary motion of censure against the Government, even though it had been agreed upon "ab initio" by the opposition that the successful passage of such a motion was not to constitute a vote of lack of confidence in the Government.

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[34] Ibid., p.2028.

CHAPTER II

THE ADDERLEY COMMITTEE

On the 21st of February, 1865 Charles Adderley moved a motion for the appointment of a Select Committee "to consider the state of the British establishments on the Western Coast of Africa."[1] Although the motion in itself was noncommital as to Adderley's real intentions, it soon became clear that Adderley meant to attack the entire concept of British territorial involvement in west Africa. From the Government's point of view, the establishment of British settlements on the west coast was based on three premises, namely, that it would help to eradicate the slave trade and other barbarous practices, encourage legitimate commerce, and lead to the civilizing of Africa. Adderley very adroitly tried to prove that none of the three reasons given for the establishment of these settlements had been fulfilled. He argued that the reduction of the slave trade on the west coast was not due to the presence of British settlements, but rather to the fact that Cuba was the only slave trading market left in the western hemisphere, Brazil having been

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[1] Hansard, Third Series, Vol.CLXXVII, February 21, 1865, p.558.

dissuaded from participation through diplomatic pressure. Consequently he felt that what Britain ought to do was to redouble her diplomatic pressure on Spain, rather than to establish or maintain settlements on the West Coast. To buttress his view on this point, he cited the opinion of Commodore Bruce, who had stated that "If the slave trade could be suppressed for 100 years, it would break out again in six months after the removal of the suppressing squadron."[2] Adderley's main contention here was that the rise or fall of the slave trade depended entirely on the demand:

> As long as there was a demand for any commodity, whatever it might be, there would be a supply, and even if a wall were built around Africa, there would not be a stopping to slave trade any more than there was to British Commerce by Berlin decrees.[3]

As to the assumption that British settlements were necessary for the promotion of legitimate trade Adderley pointed out that there was probably

> more trade in palm oil in the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and in groundnuts on the coastline between Sierra Leone and the Gambia, where no colony exists, than in all the British settlements put together.[4]

On the problem of civilizing the Africans, Adderley doubted whether it was right to tax Britain "even for the high

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[2] Ibid., p.542.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p.543.

object of civilizing barbarous tribes in Africa . . . ."[5] He regretted that Sierra Leone which had been the product of "a century of philanthropic efforts" had not advanced the case for African civilization, since a high authority had described the Sierra Leonians as being "the very pests of the neighbourhood." Sierra Leonians, he declared

> . . . are detested wherever they go, and always in bad odour with everyone. The uneducated tribes on the Coast are far more intelligent, and the Natives do more work where the white man has not settled.[6]

Having in effect discredited the basis for which these settlements were established, he tried to discredit each colony individually.

Speaking on the Gambia, he cited the opinion of Governor D'Arcy, who had stated that the whole area was in a state of civil war and that it was very:

> . . . difficult to avoid being mixed up with the troubles of our neighbours. The belligerent tribes seize cattle, ignorant, in all their excitement of war, of the property being British. Our traders make reprisals, or in spite of my forbidding it under penalties, take service under the opposing chiefs. The merchants claim our protection up the river. Where is this to cease.[7]

Regarding the colony of Lagos, he cited the opinion of Governor Freeman of Lagos who declared that:

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[5] Ibid., p.544.

[6] Ibid., p.538.

[7] Ibid.

> From the lawlessness of the Egbas, the state of affairs is going from bad to worse. I have recalled from Abeokuta all persons claiming British protection. The missionaries however, refuse to pay me any attention. I only get opposition from the British merchants and residents in Abeokuta. My influence is undermined.[8]

The impression Adderley was trying to convey here was that of a feeling of disenchantment and disgust by the Governors of West Africa. Lagos and Gambia discredited by their Governors, Sierra Leone impugned for their apparent lack of civilization, and the Gold Coast fraught with Ashanti wars. Adderley's insinuations, as far as these Governors were concerned, were quite misleading.

Governor H. Stanhope Freeman of Lagos was one of the most activist and expansion-minded of the British Governors. While Governor of Lagos, he had pressed for the occupation "of the beach from Cape St. Paul to Lagos" under the pretext of an impending Dahomey invasion of Abeokuta.[9] Furthermore, he had taken the liberty of annexing Palma, Leckie, and Badagry, all without authorization from the Colonial or Foreign Offices.[10]

Although Governor D'Arcy's comment on the Gambia was far from encouraging, it certainly was not indicative of any desire to withdraw from Gambia. Governor D'Arcy cannot, by

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[8] Ibid.

[9] S. O. Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842-1872, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p.70.

[10] Ibid., p.73.

any stretch of the imagination, be considered a peace-loving, retrenchment-minded Governor. The following dispatch from D'Arcy to Cardwell speaks for itself:

> . . . In 1861, with a fine force of military and navy of 2,000 combatants, burning to display their prowness, I signed a peace on the field, after the successful battle of Saba, -- directly the chiefs expressed contrition and gave hostages for future good behaviour. In 1862 I did not fire a shot, but by a firm, though inexpensive demonstration, I prevented the calamity of the slaughter of 600 women and children, and probable invasion of British territory . . . . In 1863 I burned the stockades at Barra, and made a treaty of peace between the rival sects literally amidst the smoke of battle. In February 1864, with great fatigue and exposure, I prevented the civil war from spreading into British Combo and by Commodore Wilmot's aid I made a treaty of peace between the belligerants, . . . and when I reflect that none of these treaties have been broken, and that prosperity has returned to the settlement, owing to my pacific policy, the only reward I have ever received for all my exertions in the holy cause of peace I am necessarily compelled at the risk of being self-laudatory, to compose this hasty recapitulation of my services, and my apology for doing so may be accepted as not unreasonable . . . .[11]

In spite of Adderley's consummate attack on the British settlements, it must not be taken for granted that Adderley was bent on total withdrawal. This is hardly the case since Adderley well knew his limitations in this regard. He knew that Parliament would not sanction or support such a proposal, so Adderley's real intentions could be discerned in the latter part of his Parliamentary speech:

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[11] Parliamentary Papers, 1865, Vol.V, p.432. (My italics.)

> . . . the question for the Committee would be, whether the experience and new circumstances which had since arisen would not lead us, at all events, to concentrate our power there, to contract our engagement and the responsibilities which we had entered into; and whether the new means we had at our disposal and the steam power we could now command might not, enable us to economize our strength, and to make a smaller force far more efficient . . . .[12]

Adderley began his motion by condemning the entire concept of colonial acquisition on the west coast. He also tried to show that the objectives for which these settlements had been established were not being met, and having done that, he might have proceeded to his logical conclusion by advocating total withdrawal from the settlements, but instead, he appeared to have settled for some sort of retrenchment. Adderley knew that he could not carry the House with him, and the subsequent events in the House appear to have borne out his suspicion. In the debate which ensued over Adderley's motion, only Lord Stanley came close to sanctioning territorial withdrawal from west Africa, and besides Adderley, only four other parliamentarians cared to speak on the subject: Lord Stanley, Lord Churchill, Stephen Cave, and Edward Cardwell.

In seconding Lord Adderley's motion, Cave made it quite clear that his support of the motion should not be

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[12] Hansard, Third Series, Vol.CLXXVII, February 21, 1865, pp.544-545. (My italics.)

construed as agreement with everything Adderley had said. His support, he pointed out, was based on two grounds, the first being that a long time had expired since such an inquiry had been held, and the second that the prevailing sentiments in England would no longer support the idea of milking British taxpayers for the express purpose of civilizing Africa. While agreeing with Adderley that the success or failure of the slave trade depended largely on the laws of supply and demand, he nevertheless made it known that he intended to see the blockading West African Squadron maintained, since the high price of slaves at that particular time was due to the efficacy of the Squadron. Cave declared unequivocally that he could not support any scheme favouring total withdrawal from West Africa, for three main reasons: namely, that British prestige would suffer, and secondly that France might take these settlements, and France, he felt, should not be given "a greater share of power on the West Coast." Thirdly, he claimed that these settlements, if properly administered, would be financially self-sufficient.[13]

Lord Churchill's speech on the motion was hardly comforting to Adderley. Churchill pointed out that Adderley's motion had not suggested withdrawal from the west coast and

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[13]Ibid., pp.545-547.

consequently he saw nothing wrong in going along with the motion. But it appeared that Churchill had other reasons in mind, namely, the desire to widen the scope of the inquiry to include the possibility of converting these protectorates into colonies -- a situation Adderley had been trying to discourage. Churchill also drew attention to the abundance of raw materials in West Africa -- materials which he felt were capable of meeting the needs of British industries.[14]

The Government's position on the motion was outlined by Cardwell, who informed Parliament that he had no intention of opposing the inquiry, nor would he try to limit its scope. But he disagreed with Lord Stanley's claim that the "slave trade can be traced back anterior to the time of history and . . . did not originate with the European race." Cardwell pointed out that the slave trade he had in mind "was instituted originally between the Spanish Colonies in America, and the Coast of Africa, and in it unfortunately Great Britain for many years bore a large and disgraceful part." The effort made by Britain to stop the slave trade, he felt, was the brightest page in the history of that nation. He also stated that, since the establishment of a committee of inquiry was soon to be effected, people should go into the inquiry with open minds, and should thus desist from making "a priori"

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[14] Ibid., pp.547-550.

judgments until all the facts were known. The reasons for establishing the settlements as he pointed out were

> . . . first that they should be ancillary to other efforts for the extinction of the slave trade and its attendant cruelties, next that they would tend to the prevention of those horrors which the Committee of 1842 and former inquiries partly now forgotten, brought to light . . . /namely/ human sacrifices and various abominations which prevailed on the coast of Africa, and lastly the introduction of legitimate trade . . . .[15]

In conclusion Cardwell said that he would enter into the inquiry with the greatest "willingness and pleasure" trusting that the results would lead to increased economy and efficiency.[16] When he had concluded his speech, the motion for the appointment of a Select Committee "To consider the state of the British Establishment on the West Coast of Africa" was agreed upon.[17]

One essential sentiment which emerged from the debate was a general feeling of agreement between the Government and members of Parliament against withdrawal. A similar feeling regarding the curtailing of administrative expenditures was equally evident, but there was certainly no desire by the Government or Parliament to withdraw from the colonial business on the west coast even if the slave trade were totally extirpated.

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[15] Ibid., pp.554-558.

[16] Ibid., p.558.

[17] Ibid.

Having steered his motion successfully through Parliament, Adderley grappled with the problem of selecting committee members. He sought to include many of those who shared his point of view, but by and large the Committee, as it was finally constituted, was made up of a variegated group, many of whom shared various and sometimes opposing views. The Committee consisted of fifteen members, namely Edward Cardwell, Chichester Fortescue, Sir Francis Baring, Lord Alfred Churchill, Lord Stanley, Seymour Fitzgerald, Sir John Hay, Charles Buxton, Arthur Mills, W. E. Baxter, William Edward Forster, W. H. Gregory, John Cheetham, Stephen Cave, and Charles Adderley as chairman.[18]

Since many of the Committee members did not always attend the Committee hearings, and some of those who attended did not always participate in the Committee proceedings, special attention will be paid only to those members who featured prominently in the inquiry.

Charles B. Adderley:- 1814-1905, who later became First Baron Norton, was a descendant of Oliver Cromwell. His family residence, which was near that of Sir Robert Peel at Dayton Manor, Tamworth, helped to facilitate the acquaintance between both men. As a result of this acquaintance, Peel soon urged Adderley to enter Parliament which he did in June

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[18] Ibid., p.559.

1841 as a Tory, representing the northern division of Staffordshire -- a seat which he held through eight elections until his retirement in 1878. As a member of Parliament he showed considerable interest in colonial questions, and in 1849 he joined Godley, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, and Lord Lyttelton in establishing the Church of England colony of Canterbury in New Zealand. In the same year he strongly resisted Lord Grey's proposal to establish a convict colony in the Cape, and owing to Adderley's untiring efforts on this issue penal settlements were abolished in 1852. In 1849, Adderley and Wakefield founded the Colonial Reform Society of which he became secretary. In his Some Reflections on the Speech of Lord John Russell on Colonial Policy in 1850 Adderley declared that self-government could only yield "thriving colonies heartily and inseparably attached to England." Although the outbreak of the Maori war in 1860 moved him deeply, he nevertheless advised the colonists to provide for their own defence.

During Lord Derby's third administration in 1866 Adderley became Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and was immediately confronted with the case of Governor Eyre of Jamaica, whom he defended from the attacks of John Stuart Mill. In the same session, he carried through the House of Commons "The British North America Act" which was

instrumental in creating the Confederation of Canada. Adderley continued in office after Disraeli succeeded Lord Derby as Prime Minister, but later resigned with his colleagues in 1868 and was knighted the following year by Gladstone, the new Liberal Prime Minister and a personal friend.

When Disraeli returned to office in February 1874, Adderley became President of the Board of Trade, but owing to his independent streak of character which did not meet with the approval of the Prime Minister, his office was not given Cabinet status. In August 1878, Adderley retired from public office with a peerage, assuming the title of Baron Norton. In 1880, he declined the offer of the governorship of Bombay.[19]

Adderley's desire for retrenchment in West Africa was consistent with his views on colonial questions in general. He was always favourably disposed towards colonial acquisition and made this quite clear in his strenuous opposition to the abandonment of South Africa's Orange State in 1853. Adderley believed that colonies should have a fatherly link with Britain, but should remain financially self-sufficient and largely autonomous. This does not mean that Adderley was democratically inclined, as any such erroneous notions were

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[19]Sidney Lee, (ed.), The Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement, Vol.1, Jan. 1901-Dec. 1911 (Oxford: University Press, 1951), pp.17-20.

quickly dispelled in his publication titled Europe Incapable of American Democracy (1867). But when Adderley talked of colonies, he was referring to colonies populated by English Caucasians. Africans did not fit into his concept and scheme of colonization. As far as he was concerned African possessions were to be avoided or left to their own devices. In attacking the entire scheme of colonial commitment in West Africa, he was only giving vent to his own views on the subject. Furthermore, Adderley was also aiming his fusilades at philanthropists and evangelists of "Exeter Hall" whom he accused of "sentimental colonization" in his parliamentary speech of July 18, 1864.

Chichester Fortescue:- was the youngest son of Lieutenant Colonel Chichester Fortescue of Glyde Farm, in the county of Louth, Ireland. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and later devoted most of his life to politics. As a confirmed Liberal, he was first elected to Parliament on the 10th of August, 1847, representing the county of Louth. He continued to sit for that constituency until the election of 1874 when he was defeated. He became Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies under Palmerston from 1857 to 1858 and again in 1859 until the reconstruction of the administration which followed the death of Palmerston in 1865. He succeeded Sir Robert Peel as Chief Secretary for

Ireland in November 1865 on the formation of Russell's new ministry, and was later named to the Presidency of the Board of Trade on the 14th of January 1871. After his defeat in the general election of 1874 he was at once raised to the peerage as Baron Carlingford of Carlingford in the county of Louth and as a result of the defection of the Duke of Argyll from Gladstone's second administration, he was appointed to the Privy Seal and defended the Irish policy of the Government in that capacity. He succeeded his brother as the second Baron Clermont on the 29th of July 1887, and died on the 30th of January, 1898.[20]

During the Adderley Committee proceedings, Fortescue consistently defended the position of the Government. His ministerial and parliamentary record showed that he was a pliant servant of whatever party he chose to align himself with. His impeccable defence of the Government position in 1865 was quite consistent with his character.

Edward Henry Stanley, later 15th Earl of Derby:- 1826-1893. Lord Stanley was the eldest son of Edward George Geoffrey Smith, 14th Earl of Derby. He studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was a member of the undergraduate society known as 'The Apostles', most of whose members later

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[20]Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, (eds.), The Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement, Vol.XXII (Oxford: University Press, 1937-38), pp.652-654.

became eminent men. In March 1848, he contested for the parliamentary seat in the borough of Lancaster as a protectionist, but was beaten by six votes. Soon after the election he went on a prolonged tour of the West Indies, Canada, and the United States, and during his absence, he was elected to fill the vacancy created by the death of Lord George Bentinck at Kings Lynn on the 22nd of December, 1848. Lord Stanley continued to represent that constituency till 1869 when he succeeded to his father's earldom. As a result of his tour of the West Indies, he published a pamphlet on the West Indian colonies in 1849, followed by a second one in 1851, both of which stated the planters' case very clearly and to their entire satisfaction. While absent on a tour of Bengal, he was appointed to the post of Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in his father's first ministry in December. After the death of William Molesworth, Palmerston offered him the post of Colonial Secretary, but he declined the offer on his father's advice. Lord Stanley, who was a pacifist, was forced to join Bright and Cobden, both Manchester radicals, in 1854 to resist the British entry into the Crimean war. When the second Derby administration was formed in February 1858, Stanley joined it as Colonial Secretary, but was subsequently transferred to the Indian office after the death of Lord Ellenborough and later became the first

Secretary of State for India. During Lord Derby's third ministry, Stanley became the Foreign Secretary and in that capacity he tried to maintain British neutrality as much as possible in continental disputes, in addition to avoiding war by all possible means. Besides the Abyssinian episode of 1868, he was fairly successful in staying clear of military entanglements. He held aloof from the Prussian, Italian and Austrian wars, and mediated between France and Prussia on the Luxembourg question. At the cost of a charge of indifference to human suffering, he steered clear of the Crete rebellion and refused to take sides in the dispute between Turkey and Greece. He declined Emperor Napoleon III's proposal for a conference on the Roman question and did nothing when the French army occupied Rome.[21] Lord Stanley's support for retrenchment in west Africa was among the few aspects of his politcal stand which was not riddled with inconsistency. But on almost every other aspect of his political life, his vacillation and inconsistency became proverbial. Although he was a member of the Conservative party, he supported many liberal bills in Parliament, which included the Reform Bill of 1859, the admission of non-conformists to fellowship, and the Reform Bill of 1866. He earned the wrath of the Conservatives by refusing to vote against the Irish

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[21]Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, (eds.), The Dictionary of National Biography, Vol.XVIII (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), pp.948-951.

Land Bill of 1870, although in a typical "volte-face", he opposed Gladstone's Irish Home rule in 1886. Although he appeared to have a near pathological fear of war, he had no reservations about sending British troops to Ethiopia in 1868. But on African questions his reactions in general appeared predictable, for beneath that thin veneer of Liberalism lay the arrogance and ineluctable prejudices of a born aristocrat. His visit to the West Indies, which sparked a curious sentimental alliance with the West Indian slave-holding landed aristocracy, left him with a deep contempt for the black man. As Colonial Secretary under Gladstone (1882-1885) he stuck to his now familiar slogan of "we don't want any more black men," and thus he resisted all schemes of African colonization. He advocated retrenchment in South Africa, favoured withdrawal from the Sudan, refused to acquire New Guinea, and gave reluctant support to the purchase of the Suez Canal shares. With predilections such as these, his support of Adderley's views could only be described as predictable.

Sir Francis Baring:- an elderly Whig, and spokesman for the Church Missionary Society. He resented the treatment of the Egbas by the Lagos government and equally opposed the expulsion of Kosoko in 1851. He strongly argued that the civilizing or regeneration of Africa should be accomplished

via the evangelical work of trained African missionaries.[22]

Sir John Hay:- a Conservative M.P. for Wakefield; he lost a brother in the Ashanti war of 1864 and moved the vote of censure against the government of Palmerston in June 1864.[23]

Lord Alfred Churchill:- a Conservative who also spoke for the Church Missionary Society. As chairman of the African Aid Society, a philanthropic group, he often harassed the government with numerous schemes for Africa.[24]

Arthur Mills, Seymour Fitzgerald, Stephen Cave:- were all Conservatives with various anti-colonial biases.

Charles Buxton:- grandson of the abolitionist, and John Cheetham, both Liberals, also served on the Committee.[25]

Edward Cardwell:- who later became first Viscount Cardwell, entered Parliament in 1842. He was President of the Board of Trade from 1852 to 1855, Chief Secretary of State for Ireland from 1859 to 1861, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from 1861 to 1864, Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1864 to 1866, and Secretary of State for War

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[22]Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, p.69.

[23]Ibid., p.65.

[24]Ibid., p.71.

[25]Ibid., p.75.

from 1868 to 1874.

Out of the fifteen members of the Adderley Committee, excluding Edward Cardwell and Chichester Fortescue who were members of the Cabinet, and Gregory whose party affiliation is not certain, the breakdown of the remaining members according to party affiliations was as follows: two Liberals, one Whig, and seven Conservatives. The preponderance of Conservatives should come as no surprise since Adderley, who was a Conservative, tried to nominate members of his own party, as well as those he thought would share his views.

Soon after Adderley made known his desire to ask for the appointment of a Select Committee of Inquiry, Cardwell despatched Colonel Ord to west Africa on a fact-finding mission. Colonel Henry Ord, who was the Governor of Bermuda at this time, was in England on an extended leave of absence when he was asked to go to west Africa. He had first visited west Africa in 1850 under the auspices of the War Office, visiting the Gold Coast at this particular time to inspect all the British establishments there, and that assignment had lasted for eight months. He had been sent out again in 1855 and 1856, under the auspices of the Colonial Office, to

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[26]Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana, p.291.

the Gold Coast for an on the spot inspection,[27] so Colonel Ord was not a newcomer to the West Coast. In his letter of appointment, Colonel Ord was informed by Cardwell that he had been selected to visit:

> . . . the four Colonies on the West Coast of Africa to obtain information for Her Majesty's government /on/ how far the objects which this country has in view in maintaining these settlements are now satisfactorily attained, and how far they may be more completely attained by an improved arrangement.

Colonel Ord was reminded that the settlements had never been intended as fit places for European settlement on account of the pestilential nature of the climate, therefore the occupation of these posts by the Government was meant to encourage the legitimate trade of British merchants "not only for its own sake, but for the more effective suppression of the slave trade and other inhuman practices. . . ." Ord was to ascertain the success of these colonies in fulfilling these objectives. A very important part of this letter instructed him to look into the possibility of "judiciously introduced retrenchment which would not impair the efficiency of the Colonies." He was equally instructed to examine the financial structure and expenditure of each colony and to determine the possibility of their being financially self-sufficient. He was to examine the desirability of amalgamating

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[27] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.10.

the four settlements under one administration, and the possible supply of steam communication to the central authority as a means of creating "a greater community of purpose and of action than was at present possible." Finally Ord was instructed to evaluate the moral influence of British settlements on the natives, the problem of entering into negotiations with them and the question of native taxation.[28] A cursory look at Colonel Ord's instructions shows a remarkable resemblance to Adderley's recommendations during his Parliamentary motion.

The device of sending out Government investigators or commissioners of inquiry during a time of crisis had always been a favourite and ingenious recourse of governments in trouble who for a variety of reasons had found themselves in embarrassing situations. By and large, the understood although unexpressed responsibility of these commissioners was always to portray the existing government in a good light. Commissioners who have been careless enough to flout this "gentleman's agreement" by undertaking an impartial investigation with possible adverse results to the government that commissioned them have been invariably made to feel the ire of the aggrieved government. Dr. R. R. Madden learned this

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[28] Ibid., p.416 (412). (My italics.)

lesson to his regret during his 1841 government sponsored fact finding tour of west Africa. His report, which was brutally critical of the British traders and British administration in west Africa, finally led to his dismissal. Colonel Ord, on the other hand, had proved his mettle as a compliant servant of the Government on previous west African assignments, consequently his choice in 1865 was not the result of a random decision.

On Colonel Ord's return from west Africa, he issued the following reports and recommendations which he handed over to Cardwell before the debate on Adderley's motion for the appointment of a Select Committee resumed on the 21st of February, 1865.

COLONEL ORD'S REPORT

In his general report, Ord stated that the slave trade had virtually disappeared from all the neighbouring British settlements as well as in those areas surrounding the Republic of Liberia, and the Dutch and Danish settlements. Of all the contributory factors responsible for the eradication of the slave trade, the existence of British settlements, he felt, was the most effective. To support this view, Ord contended that before the annexation of Lagos, the slave trade and legitimate trade had existed simultaneously -- the annexation of Lagos, he claimed,

successfully put a stop to the slave trade. He traced the success of the slave trade in Whydah, in spite of its long involvement in the palm oil trade, to the fact that Whydah was not a British settlement. Britain came in for a slight remonstrance for her failure to establish a consulate in Abome in 1848 when invited to do so by the King of Dahomey. He thus pointed out that the settlements had fulfilled the objectives for which they were established, namely, the extinction of the slave trade, the promotion of legitimate commerce, and the prevention of human sacrifice and other barbarous practices. With regard to the unhealthy nature of the west African climate, Ord claimed that the climate had been maligned out of all proportion to its actual effects, especially since many Europeans had lived on the west coast for prolonged periods of time without being adversely affected by the climate. To support this view he claimed that from 1857 to 1861, losses in the North American and West Indian squadrons averaged about 28.6 per thousand while those of the West African squadron averaged about 31.14 per thousand. A similar comparison of mortality rates among black regiments employed in the West Indies and west Africa respectively showed an average death rate of 23.92 per thousand for the West Indies, and 32.19 per thousand for west Africa. Ord thus argued that statistical evidence had failed to indicate any alarming differential in the death rates.

In dealing with the problem of government involvement in native disputes, he argued that such occurrences were to be expected "from the circumstances and position of these settlements." Commenting on the often repeated and proven allegation that more trade was carried on in the Oil Rivers where Britain had no settlements than in the British settlements, Colonel Ord pointed out that the position of the Oil Rivers was unique because of the preponderance of palm trees in the area, and that these palm trees were easily accessible because of the existence of a network of creeks and rivers surrounding the area. As a result, British traders experienced no difficulties in encouraging the natives to engage in the palm oil trade. Since the case of the Oil Rivers was an isolated and unique one, he argued, the nee d for maintaining British settlements on the coast had not been obliterated by the singular case of the Oil Rivers; consequently, he refused to recommend the abandonment of any of the colonies, but he did recommend the amalgamation of the four colonies under one administrator based in Sierra Leone, who would be supplied with steam vessels to enable him to communicate easily with the other settlements. For purposes of economy, he recommended that some of the British and West Indian troops on the coast be replaced by Hausa troops, and that what was left of the British and West Indian

troops should be stationed in Sierra Leone.[29]

Colonel Ord's report as presented to the Colonial Office left a great deal to be desired, at least from the viewpoint of factual information. His attempt to minimize the pestilential nature of the climate on the west coast was not very convincing. In determining the statistical average of the North American and West Indian squadrons from 1857 to 1861, Ord had lumped together the averages of two different squadrons. In order to determine the actual mortality rate of those squadrons, vis-à-vis that of West Africa, each squadron ought to have been treated as an entity in itself and then compared to the West African squadron on the basis of their mortality rates. Had Ord done this, the survival rate for either the North American or the West Indian squadron would have been much higher than that of the West African squadron or inversely, the mortality rate of the West African squadron would have been much higher than either of the other two squadrons. Even with the mortality rate of the North American and West Indian squadrons combined, the West African squadron, according to his own calculations, still had a higher mortality rate. Furthermore, Ord had chosen the period between 1857 and 1861, a time of relatively little

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[29]P.P. 1865, Vol.XXXVII, pp. 314-320; also p.336. See Appendix No.29 for mortality rates on the West African, West Indian and North American stations.

naval activity on the west coast. But for the Baddibu expedition in the Gambia in February 1861,[30] no naval or military engagement of any significance took place in west Africa in those years. It should also be borne in mind that as long as the West African Squadron limited their cruising to a few miles off the coast, the crew stood in no danger of coming in contact with malaria-carrying mosquitos. The danger arose only when inland cruising between the unhealthy banks of the west African coasts was undertaken or when sailors had to perform shore duties. Only then would the crew be in mortal danger of becoming victims of malaria, yellow fever or dysentery.

So in selecting this period for his statistical comparison, Ord had chosen a period with virtually no engagements on land. It was common knowledge that British naval commanders rarely relished the idea of exposing their men to the invisible enemy of west African swamps. In fact in 1862, when Lord John Russell decided to despatch another of his abortive missions to Abome, the First Sea Lord, the Duke of Somerset, proved quite intransigent. Writing to Russell on the 22nd of July, 1862, Somerset declared that he could not "risk the lives of British sailors for uncertain

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[30] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.416(412). See also C.W. Newbury, British Policy Towards West Africa - Select Documents, 1786-1874, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p.234.

benefits and the certain hostilities which invariably attend these expeditions . . . ."[31] On the receipt of this letter Russell forwarded it to Lord Palmerston who returned it with the complaintthat:

> No First Sea Lord and no Board of Admiralty, have ever felt any interest in the suppression of the slave trade or taken of their own free will any steps towards its accomplishment, and whatever they have done, in compliance with the wishes of others, they have done grudgingly and imperfectly. If there was a particularly old slow going tub in the Navy she was sure to be sent to the Coast of Africa to try to catch the fast sailing American clippers; and if there was an officer notoriously addicted to drinking, he was sent to a station where rum is a deadly poison. Things go better now, but there is at the Admiralty an invincible aversion to the measure necessary for putting down the slave trade. These prejudices are so strong with the Naval officers of the Board /of the Admiralty/ that the First Sea Lord can hardly be expected not to be swayed by them . . . .[32]

Palmerston had undoubtedly overshot his mark in his criticism of the Admiralty. No one acquainted with the role played by the British Navy during the anti-slave-trade campaign could fail to shower it with admiration. Commodore Wilmot thus summed up this terrible ordeal in one of his despatches:

> The climate is against all military operations . . . . The squadron I have great faith in, but it must have more vessels, and some peculiar speed and stowage. The monotony of the blockade is killing to officers and men. You can form no conception of what they have to undergo. I cannot speak too highly of their conduct under such trying circumstances -- for months at anchor, rolling

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[31] C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, 1949), p. 154.

[32] Ibid., p. 155.

> terribly; thermometer 86 degrees; no change of companions; no supplies of fresh stock, except at long intervals -- We have not sufficient vessels to insure certain reliefs. I hope you will give my testimony to the merits of officers and men for they richly deserve it.[33]

Naval gallantry notwithstanding, the west coast of Africa was still the "white man's grave" and naval officers and men were not adverse to avoiding suicidal missions, especially when they were of doubtful value. A popular verse about the west coast went like this:

> Beware and take care of the Bight of Benin
> There's one comes out for forty goes in.[34]

In the late seventies, passenger companies refused to issue return tickets to prospective west African bound passengers and quite often they never needed them. So the navy's reluctance to undertake these hazardous trips should surprise no one. If Ord had really intended to determine the mortality rate of men serving on the west coast, he should have based his study on the army rather than the navy, since the army was stationed on land and the navy was not.

In 1864, the Under-Secretary of State for War despatched Brigadier-General L. Smyth O'Connor, Commander of the British troops in west Africa, to tour the west African settlements and report on the state of the army. His reports on the Gold

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[33] Hansard, Third Series, Vol.CLXXVII, February 21, 1865, p.542.

[34] Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, p.19.

Coast and Nigeria, written on the 21st of December 1864 and 21st January 1865 respectively, reported as follows:

"Accra: I found Captain Edmunds, the officer commanding Accra, in bed prostrated by low fever and acute dysentery; the sub Lieutenant Sealy, could with difficulty crawl to parade."[35]

In Nigeria General O'Connor was so repulsed by the climatic conditions of the place that he confessed to not having encountered a country or climate so destructive "to the European constitution or where the quarters and absolute wants of life were so little attended to as in Lagos." He claimed that he was "justified in making this brave assertion after an experience of nearly forty years tropical service in the worst stations in the worst climate."[36]

Colonel Ord's report on the effects of the west African climate does not correspond with General O'Connor's observations nor does it correspond with the reports of those naval officers who had served continuously on the coast.

Ord was not only wrong in his assessment of the effects of the climate on British military personnel, he was equally wrong about his claim regarding the preponderance of palm oil tress in the Oil Rivers. The fact is that palm oil

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[35] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.386.

[36] Ibid.

trees do not grow in the Delta because of the swampy and salty soil, therefore all the palm oil sold in the Oil Rivers was normally obtained from the hinterland of Ohambele and Aba areas, and some of these areas are far beyond the limits of the creek waterways. The Ngwa hinterland, which is the seat of the palm tree vegetation, is not at all accessible by waterway except for a small section on both banks of the Imo River, which passes through Owerrinta, otherwise palm oil had to be brought down to the Opobo-Igwenga-Ohambele axis where the Delta middlemen from the Oil Rivers purchased it from their contractual partners in the hinterland. The dynastic wars between the city-states of Bonny and New Calabar in the Bight of Biafra were frequently fought over the control of this hinterland trade.

The eventual death of Bonny as the centre of the palm oil trade was due to the success of King Jaja of Opobo, and formerly of the Anna Pepple House of Bonny, in occupying the strategic river route leading to the palm oil belt in the hinterland. Jaja's eventual mastery and domination of this area of commercial importance soon led to his unavoidable clash with the British proponents of inland trade and this subsequently led to his arrest and exile by Consul Johnston

in 1887.[37] Commenting on the attempt by the people of Bonny to maintain this monopoly, Dr. Madden stated in his 1841 report that:

> the people of Bonny do not suffer the inland natives to bring down oil to the coast. They keep a great number of armed boats, many of them with a carronade or brass swivel mounted on the bow. These boats they send up the river for the oil as far as Eboe /Ibo/, and purchase it from the country people. The price they pay for it is extremely small; in fact, so trifling as hardly to remunerate the sellers for the trouble and expense of gathering nuts and extracting oil from them . . . .[38]

Colonel Ord's report on this issue shows a complete lack of understanding of the economic system of the Oil Rivers. Ord's allegations that the annexation of Lagos was occasioned by the revival of the slave trade has no factual basis either. Sir Francis Baring took pains to point this out to Ord during the Committee proceedings by reading the extract of Lord John Russell's letter to Mr. McCoskry, the acting British Consul in Lagos in 1861 on the subject of the annexation of Lagos. In the letter, Russell made it quite clear that the impending annexation of Lagos was not due to any fault of King Dosumu or any failure on his part to fulfil the anti-slave-trade treaties which he

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[37]Burns, The History of Nigeria, pp.153-156. See also Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, Chapter 10.

[38]Burns, The History of Nigeria, p.111.

had signed with the British Government, Ord was eventually obliged to admit that Dosumu was simply "turned out."[39]

One of the items which Colonel Ord was asked to look into was the question of the moral influence of British settlements on the local inhabitants. This constituted probably the most difficult of Ord's assignments, especially since any aspect of this question which he might have chosen to examine would have had very little to commend it to the Committee. Both European and African observers on the coast have never failed to pay shameful tribute to the effects of British morality. Commenting on this very topic, Dr. Baikie, former British Consul to Lokoja made these observations:

> As an example of the conduct at times of civilized people, I will here relate what had occurred in the Brass river very shortly before this period. A white trader, then agent for an English house, had, out of a mere freak, ordered a native who came on board his ship one day to be seized and flogged. The lad's father, however, was a man of consequence on shore, and, on hearing of this outrage, he summoned his friends, and in two large canoes attacked and boarded the ship. The White Captain armed his kru boys with muskets, but they, unwilling to quarrel with the natives or to fight in a bad cause, gave way; the captain . . . was put into a canoe, taken ashore, and fastened to a tree, where he was left for twelve hours, and the natives said openly they would have killed him, but that they feared a visit from an English man-of-war. The same individual trained his Krumen to fight with the Krumen of other trading ships in the river, and, in short,

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[39] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, pp.60-61.

> endeavoured to carry on his trading by brute force . . .; but what can be expected of native tribes, who see before them, acted by so called civilized men, deedswhich would disgrace every savage.[40]

In 1864 King Aqua of Aqua town in the Cameroons wrote a letter to Consul Burton, British Consul to the Bight of Biafra, complaining bitterly of the wanton crimes committed by British merchants:

> I beg to confess that the repeated oppression of the European on us /in/ this Bight of Biafra is heavily brewing in our mind. I shall now bring before you numbers of us that have been killed by British Trader/s/. 1st Young Lindo was killed by one Mr. Hamington, 2nd Five men together was /sic/ killed by one Mr. Jonathan Scott, 3rd My brother Ned Aqua was killed by one Walker, and my house was broken down by one Consul Hutchinson, 4th on the 15th April, 1862 one Captain Wm. Bagington have comite /sic/ the like crime is murdered one Mongar -- by shooting him in the guts, and severely wounded, three other, in their own town, with his revoleing /sic/ pistol and violent sword. We are led to presume, Sir, that industry, civilization, have sprung from Good England -- and yet from this same country come a class of low adventurers who are trying to imped/e/ the benevolent plans of their wise, and good countrymen.[41]

Another report by Dr. Madden stated that

> The manner in which the trade is carried on in the Bonny, and in which the natives and the crews of these ships are occasionally treated by the masters, calls for immediate attention. The commanding naval officer on this station has been frequently obliged to visit the Bonny and take cognizance of cases of violence and injustice on the part of these persons either against the natives or their own people . . . . In the year

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[40]Burns, The History of Nigeria, p.110.

[41]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.125.

> 1838 a number of Kroomen were sold by the orders of one of our merchant vessels . . . one of the Kroomen had been ordered to keep watch over the shore house, which duty it was alleged was neglected; in consequence of which the master induced the Chief or King of the town, off which the Protector was moored in the Benin, to send the whole Kroomen on board a Portuguese slaver.[42]

The list of these atrocities appears inexhaustible, and, with reports such as these, Colonerl Ord was probably wise in ignoring that part of his instructions.

Although Colonel Ord's report was highly spiced with errors and exaggeration, it appears to have carried considerable weight with the members of the Committee. Almost all of them were in favour of staying on the coast, since except for Lord Stanley, Charles Adderley and Sir Francis Baring, the rest of the Committee members either favoured maintaining the "status quo" on the coast or were inclined towards moderate expansion, as circumstances demanded. Members asked questions which tended or were explicitly designed to support this point of view. During his Parliamentary motion for a Select Committee, Adderley had given the impression of being preoccupied with reducing administrative expenditure, but his subsequent performance in the inquiry ranged over issues which sometimes had no relevance to financial retrenchment. Adderley frequently sought to

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[42]Burns, The History of Nigeria, pp.109-110.

prove that British trade was in no way dependent on the settlements, furthermore that the missionaries needed no protection, and there was equally no dearth of corroborative evidence from missionaries and traders alike. Except for McCoskry,[43] most of the traders testified that British trade needed no protection.[44] Besides trying to prove that British trade and missionary activity needed no British protection, Adderley sought information regarding strong native states which would be able to establish a pax in the hinterland -- the peace and orderliness which were needed for the promotion of legitimate trade. His ignorance of the nature of the native states of west Africa proved a hindrance in this attempt, and often led to a series of quixotic speculations on his part. He wondered whether the Moslem states on the bank of the Niger could not seek political control over the "Eboes" of the Niger.[45]

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[43] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, Quest.1465-1467.

[44] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, Question on Rev. Shrenk's testimony: Quest.3238-40; Vice-Admiral Grey's testimony: Quest. 3537-3540-3549; Captain Andrew Clarke's testimony: Quest. 4365-4376-4395; see David Chinney's, Tobin's respectively Quest. 5055-5077, 5230-5241. See also Rev. Gollmer's testimony, Quest.5865-5876-5877, 6000-6002, 6025-6029.

[45] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.93. See questions 2216-2223, 4919-22, 4386-95.

While it is common knowledge that Lord Stanley's inclusion in the Committee was largely due to Adderley's choice, Stanley's philosophy about the African question was slightly at variance with that of Adderley. While Adderley contended that Britain should withdraw from the west coast, allowing strong native states to run the governments and in general fend for themselves, Stanley seemed to doubt whether Africans were anything more than mere savages, whose prior status of servitude was probably more commensurate with their actual natural state. He found all schemes of African philanthropy unintelligible, and tried repeatedly to expose the contradictions between Britain's anti-slavery campaign and her tolerance of domestic slavery in west Africa.[46] Stanley's venomous Parliamentary attacks were directed against the maintenance of the West African Squadron. He also showed a distinctive dislike for the blacks -- a dislike which he probably had imbibed during his earlier visit to the West Indies, and this subsequently contributed to his diatribe against the loss of life sustained by the officers and men of the West African Squadron:

> . . . I do not believe there is a year or even a month that passes in which the service on that coast does not put an end to some life among our officers, which, measured

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[46]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, Quest.3094-3101.

> by any rational standard of comparison, is worth more than the merely animal existence of a whole African tribe . . . .[47]

A man possessed of such a cultural and racial bias obviously had no business on the Adderley Committee -- but there he was, not contributing much, but always ready with his denigrating remarks. When Captain Burton proposed during the inquiry that Africans should be apprenticed to skilled tradesmen in the West Indies, Lord Stanley wondered "what the effect of sending such large quantities of savages to the West Indies would be."[48] During his tenure of office as Secretary of State for the Colonies under Gladstone, he was credited with saying "we don't want any more black men."[49]

Chichester Fortescue, as Parliamentary Under-Secretary, became the Government's chief spokesman during the inquiry. While acting in that capacity, he invariably framed questions designed to prove that the British settlements on the Coast had contributed substantially to the eradication of the slave trade and the encouragement of legitimate commerce, without being unduly involved in native wars.[50]

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[47] Hansard, Third Series, Vol.177, Feb. 21, 1865, p.550.

[48] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.93.

[49] Metcalfe, Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History, p.274.

[50] P.P. 1865, Vol.V., p.16, Questions 279-281.

Sir Francis Baring, a high Anglican and spokesman for the Church Missionary Society, had not forgiven the Government for the annexation of Lagos, and while in the Admiralty in 1851 he had opposed the expulsion of Kosoko.[51] He fervently believed that African civilization was to be advanced via the route of African-trained evangelists and missionaries and tended to direct his questions to this end. He repeatedly tried to prove that the occupation of Lagos was arbitrary and uncalled for.[52]

Lord Alfred Churchill was a member of the Conservative opposition, and the only member of the opposition who spoke in support of the Government. Churchill's presence on the Committee was as odd as that of Lord Stanley. While the inquiry was deliberating over the probability of retaining or abandoning British settlements on the coast, Churchill framed his questions not only to favour the maintenance of these colonies but also to justify further territorial expansion, in addition to doing his best to drum up support for the Niger trade. He tried to prove that withdrawal would eventually lead to the occupation of these settlements by France.[53]

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[51]Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, p.51.

[52]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, Quest. 1266-1295, 1332-1334, 1622-1686, 1688-1742, 5349-5353.

[53]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, Quest. 717, 1782-1784, 1865-1871, 1983, 7052-7057.

One fact that emerged unmistakedly from the inquiry was that most of the witnesses supported a retention of the settlements, and even those who condemned the erstwhile establishment of these settlements felt that withdrawal would be unwise once the settlements had already been established. The majority of the Committee members overwhelmingly leaned towards retention, yet in summing up the Committee's deliberations Adderley ignored the expressed opinion of the witnesses and launched a tirade against the past policy of the Government and against further expansion in west Africa. Not only did Adderley ignore the evidence presented to the Committee, and the disposition of the majority of the Committee members, he also ignored his own warning, when he declared during the proceedings that: "It might not be so easy for the English, having once assumed the protectorate to withdraw as it might have been to abstain from assumption."[54]

The third and the most important paragraph of the Adderley report, which read thus:

> That all further extension of territory or assumption of government, or new territories, offering protection to native tribes would be inexpedient; and that the object of our policy should be rather to transfer to the natives the administration of all the Governments, with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all except, probably, Sierra Leone.

was amended by Cardwell to read:

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[54] Ibid., p.210.

> to encourage in the natives the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible for us more and more to transfer to the natives the administration of all the Governments, with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all, except, probably, Sierre Leone.

The fourth paragraph of the Report in effect nullified the entire concept of the Report recommendations:

> That this policy of non-extension admits of no exception, as regards new settlements, but cannot amount to an absolute prohibition of measures which in peculiar cases, may be necessary for the most efficient and economical administration of the settlements we already possess.[55]

The report as it was issued did not justify the exuberance generated by its publication. Many of the prominent Africans of that era read their own wishful thinking into the Adderley report. The plight of King John Aggrey of the Gold Coast is perhaps the most classic example. In 1865, the chiefs of Cape Coast elected Aggrey King of Cape Coast, but Cape Coast like Lagos had been in the throes of bedlam as a result of dual administration. A succession of British governors, including Benjamin Pine, claimed jurisdiction over the surrounding area whereas the chiefs were inclined to limit British jurisdiction to their forts. After Aggrey was elected King by the chiefs of Cape Coast, Governor Pine did not request him to swear allegiance to the Queen, nor could it be said for certain that Aggrey would have done so judging from his

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[55] Ibid., p.111, June 26th. (My italics.)

character, nevertheless, Aggrey attached considerable importance to the fact that he was not required to swear allegiance. This omission on the part of the Governor was likely deliberate -- since Aggrey's coronation took place in January 1865. Governor Pine was already in the process of being made a sacrificial lamb because of his part in the Ashanti war of 1863-64. King Aggrey, who was a regular recipient of the African Times from London, had been advised by his group of educated Africans, which included Mr. Martins, the King's African magistrate, that the British were on the verge of leaving the Gold Coast, so Aggrey decided to reassert the traditional authority of the kings which had been eroded and usurped by the British administrators on the Coast. King Aggrey himself stated that the reaffirmation of his kingly prerogatives was calculated to prepare the rulers for self government "so as to relieve the British Government of a task which they seemed to anxious to get rid of."[56] But in actual fact Aggrey was not simply preparing himself to assume complete jurisdiction when the British left, he was challenging the whole concept of British rule in the Gold Coast as his able criticism of Governor Maclean's rule clearly showed. Aggrey declared that Maclean had

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[56]David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p.201.

> in a very peculiar, imperceptible, and unheard-of manner, wrested from the hand of our Kings, Chiefs, and head men, their power to govern their own subjects. The Governor, placing himself at the head of a handful of soldiers, had been known himself to travel to the remotest parts of the interior, for the purpose of compelling Kings, Chiefs, and head men (through fear of man or other feeling) to obey his Excellency's summons or to comply with his Excellency's decrees. A blow was thus struck . . . . A white face, a red jacket was, in consequence, a terror on the Gold Coast . . . many a subject was encouraged and countenanced to throw off with impunity their very allegiance, an allegiance which could not well be disowned and ignored and denied without endangering the security of the King.[57]

King Aggrey was not the only African who took the Adderley Committee seriously or read into it something that was definitely not there. British authorities tended to trace Aggrey's demand for complete autonomy and the conduct of the affairs of his kingdom to the influence of "half-cast and half educated" men who seemed to be informing the Africans "that they are not 'subjects' of Great Britain and therefore owed no obedience."[58] Admitting that there were half castes involved in the King's entourage, although they were nearly all British sponsored half castes, there were other Africans that took the Adderley recommendations seriously, who were neither half castes nor half educated men. A man like Dr. James Africanus Beale Horton, son of an Ibo liberated slave

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[57] Ibid., p.204.

[58] Ibid., p.197.

from Gloucester village also took the Adderley report seriously. Dr. Horton was a British trained medical doctor who joined the British army as an army doctor in 1859, and retired after twenty years service as a major. After the publication of the Adderley recommendations of 1865, Dr. Horton went into a wild spree of speculation as to what constitution independent Sierra Leone was to have:

> But as it is proposed to teach the people self-government, to the ultimate withdrawal of British influence or power, and to leave the natives to govern themselves, there must be chosen either a monarchical or a republican form of government. As in the Gambia a republic is unsuited to the taste of the people, so it is at Sierra Leone . . . . A monarchical government, then, will be the only form, and the King should be elected by universal suffrage, supported for some time by the British Government; he should for a short period be initiated into the art of governing by serving the subordinate position of a governor over the Colony and its Dependencies . . . .[59]

Some of the subsequent difficulties which the British government began to experience in the post 1865 period were inextricably tied to this abortive hope for independence -- a hope which was more illusory than real. In fact the first paragraph of the Report dashed any such hopes. The Report made it clear that Britain meant to keep what she had, and said so in no uncertain terms. Except for an apparent desire to slow down the tempo of acquisition, the first paragraph justified no illusions as to the necessity of maintaining the

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[59]Christopher Fyfe, Sierra Leone Inheritance, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.208.

"status quo" as it then existed:

> THE SELECT COMMITTEE appointed to consider the State of the British Establishments on the WESTERN COAST OF AFRICA:-
> HAVE considered the Matters to them referred, and have come to the following RESOLUTIONS, which they have agreed to report to the House.
>
> Resolved,-
>
> That it is the opinion of this Committee
>
> That it is not possible to withdraw the British government, wholly or immediately, from any settlements or engagements on the West African Coast . . . .[60]

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[60] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.111, June 26th.

CHAPTER III

THE RISE OF BRITISH NIGERIA -- BRITISH PENETRATION IN THE BIGHT OF BIAFRA (BONNY)

The subjugation of the native tribes of Nigeria to British rule owes a great deal to the eventual triumph of legitimate trade over the slave trade. This fact as it stands merely represents the abbreviated resumé of a complex story. If by legitimate commerce we mean trade in commodities other than slaves, then many of the west African states had established, prior to the nineteenth century, a long record of commercial intercourse with Europe based on "legitimate" products. Portuguese traders who dominated the Nigerian coastal trade in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries concentrated on such products as Benin pepper, palm oil, beads, leopard skin, ivory, as well as slaves,[1] but the trade in slaves was quite insignificant at this time, at least from the stand point of volume, when compared to the large item it became in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The dominant feature of the European-West African trade relationship at this time was the ability of the African coastal chieftains to limit European interest and knowledge

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[1]A. F. C. Ryder, "An Early Portuguese Trading Voyage to the Forcados," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, I (1959), pp.294-321.

of west Africa to the coastal regions. In spite of nearly four hundred years of commercial intercourse with Europeans, African coastal chieftains were able to maintain their territorial and jurisdictional authority over the land of their ancestors. European traders on shore in west Africa came under the direct authority of the African rulers. They were allowed neither to own or buy land, but merely rented what they needed for the erection of their stores or barracoons on shore. As a rule, the Europeans conducted their commercial transactions on board their ships, thus avoiding unnecessary contact with the Africans. Furthermore, since living on land exposed Europeans to the attack of malaria fever, as well as placing them under the jurisdictional control of the coastal chieftain on whose land they resided, such practices were considered neither healthy nor politically safe. In a despatch from Gambia in 1678, the Chief Agent of the Royal African Company warned the Company's employees that all trading should be conducted from their ships, "for a factor once settled ashore is absolutely under the command of the king of the country where he lives, and is liable for the least displeasure to lose all the goods he has in his possession with danger also to his life."[2]

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[2]H. A. Wyndham, The Atlantic and Slavery, (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p.59.

The same rule also applied to all the Delta states in the Bight of Biafra. Here the sea captains and the traders stayed close to their ships, and except for their stores and barracoons on shore, all trading with the natives was conducted on board their ships.[3]

Not only were European traders not allowed to have permanent settlements on shore, they were not allowed any access to the interior nor were they allowed to make any enquiries regarding it. In 1734, Captain Snelgrave warned his countrymen against making enquiries about the hinterland for fear that "the natives would have destroyed them, out of jealousy that they designed to make discoveries to their prejudice."[4]

Archibald Dalzel, Governor of Cape Coast in 1793, declared that the prevalent ignorance regarding the geography of Africa arose more from

> the jealousy of the inhabitants of the sea-coasts, in not permitting white men to travel through their country, than from the danger or difficulty attending the penetration: though it must be confessed that it cannot be entirely safe to venture through regions, where the people are often as savage as the beasts of prey. This jealousy originates in their fears, lest either the advantages of their trade with Europe should be lessened, or perhaps transferred from them to their

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[3]P. A. Talbot, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol.I, (London: Frank Cass and Co.Ltd., 1969), p.190. First published in 1926.

[4]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.8.

> neighbours. There are many instances in former writers; of their care and cunning, in concealing from travellers the names and nature of the adjacent countries, and even of the remote parts of their own; nor do we find that this same propensity is abated at the present hour . . . .[5]

In 1752, the Board of Trade forbade the Committee of the Company of Merchants to introduce cultivation in the Gold Coast on the plea that "in Africa we were only tenants of the soil which we hold at the goodwill of the natives."[6] This resistance to European penetration of the interior was remarkably stringent all along the slave coast. But all this was to change during the nineteenth century. The erosion of the political power of the Nigerian monarchs, with the consequent increase of that of the British traders, consuls, and naval officers, took place rather gradually, and in some cases quite imperceptibly. The responsibility for this gradual erosion of African power on the coast was due to several factors; namely, the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, the ever menacing presence of a new intruder -- the West African Naval Squadron, the rise of legitimate trade, and the influx of British missionaries in the eighteen forties. All these factors contributed in

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[5]A. Dalzel, The History of Dahomey (London: Frank Cass and Co.Ltd., 1967), preface, p.xxi. First published in 1793.

[6]Eveline C. Martin, The British West African Settlements, 1750-1821 (London: Longmans, Green and Co.Ltd., 1927), p.48.

their various ways to undermine the power of the African monarchs.

During and prior to the nineteenth century, British interest in Nigeria had been largely that of trade, trade in which British predominance had reached a resounding crescendo during the declining years of the slave trade.[7] The era of the slave trade saw the ports of Bonny, Old Calabar, New Calabar, Lagos and Benin, become as familiar to the British captains as Liverpool, London and Bristol. The British crusade against the slave trade, which started inauspiciously in the latter part of the eighteenth century, had by 1815 assumed epidemic proportions. Writing from London on the eve of the Congress of Vienna, the Duke of Wellington warned that "the /British/ people were ready to go to war for abolition."[8]

The abolition of the slave trade in Britain and the prevention of British participation in the trade did not have a corresponding effect on the other nations who found the trade too lucrative to abandon. The inauguration of the West African naval squadron was triggered by Britain's

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[7]The granting of the Asiento by Spain to Britain in 1713 confirmed her commanding position in the slave trade. For details see Claridge, History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, Vol.I, Chapters 3-6; J. B. Williams, "The Development of British Trade with West Africa, 1750-1880," Political Science Quarterly, I (1935), pp.194-213.

[8]F. J. Klingberg, The Anti-Slavery Movement in England, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968),

determination to render the Atlantic slave trade as hazardous and as unprofitable as possible. In the course of time, the legal technicalities involved in the apprehension of foreign vessels on the high seas forced Britain into concluding bilateral treaties with various European and Latin American countries. The success of these negotiations which culminated in the right of search, the equipment treaties, the payment of large sums in bribes to Portugal and Spain, and the agreement to set up a court of mixed commission in both Sierra Leone and Cuba, merely represents a fraction of the herculean efforts made by Britain to nip the nefarious traffic in the bud.[9]

As far as Nigeria was concerned the important aspects of these efforts were not those made by Britain in Europe or in Latin America, but the ones made by her on the west coast. As the onslaught against the slave trade began to gather momentum in Europe, the need for a corresponding action on land on the west coast began to be voiced. In 1820, James McQueen, the eminent West Indian armchair geographer, suggested that Britain should colonize the whole length of the Niger region starting from the Delta to the sources of the Senegal and the Gambia. "We have done this

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[9]Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, Chapters IV-VI.

in India," he declared, "and why cannot we do it in Africa?"[10]

Although no action was taken on McQueen's suggestions, British and other European explorers began to ask insistent questions about the interior. The Africans themselves began to notice a change in European trading habits, and their pressing desire to enter the interior began to be viewed with ominous skepticism. Frequent complaints by the Africans now began to be heard: "white man now come with new face, talk palaver we do not understand, they bring new fashion, great guns and soldiers in our country."[11]

African resistance to European penetration and dominance proved more resilient in the Delta states than anywhere else on the west coast. Conversely British determination to maintain a foothold in west Africa was more militantly and ruthlessly undertaken in the Bight of Biafra than anywhere else on the coast.

The first British challenge to the sovereignty of a west African monarch took place in the city-state of Bonny in the Bight of Biafra. Between 1822 and 1826 Captain W. F. W. Owen of the British Navy was commissioned by the Admiralty to chart the west African coast line. It was

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[10]Boahen, Britain, The Sahara, and the Western Sudan, 1788-1861, p.98.

[11]J. Corry, Observations Upon the Windward Coast of Africa, (London: Frank Cass and Co.Ltd., 1968), p.127. First published in 1807.

during this period that the coastline from Cape Mount (on the termination of the Windward coast) to the Bights of Benin and Biafra was first surveyed.[12]

Captain Owen's party arrived at Bonny in 1824, and the first British clash with an African monarch in the Bight of Biafra was soon to occur. On reaching Bonny, the Captain proceeded to chart the Bonny territorial waters without first presenting his credentials to King Opubu the Great of Bonny (also known as King Pepple). As Captain Owen himself admitted, he merely despatched a junior officer to the king "to state the purpose for which we had come . . . without any further consideration for King Pepple or his etiquette."[13]

This breach of diplomatic etiquette greatly infuriated King Pepple who quickly ordered all trade with the English to stop. The English community at Bonny quickly arranged a meeting with the King in order to settle this misunderstanding. King Pepple's speech during the meeting gave a clear insight into the working of his mind. Speaking in the pidgin English of the Delta, and in the presence of Captain Owen, the King declared that:

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[12]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.15.

[13]W. F. W. Owen, R.N., Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia, and Madagascar, Vol.II (New York: J. and J. Harper, 1833), p.204.

> If the King of England (George IV), . . . a brother monarch, ordered his warship to embark on a survey of the coast of Africa, I see nothing objectionable in that aim. If brother George commands his battle ships to attack the slave ships of foreign nations that is no concern of mine. But he has no right whatever to send his men-of-war at will into my dominions. It was the plain duty of the English commander to have waited upon me and explained the import of his mission. I declare emphatically that I can never compromise my sovereign powers. On this issue I am adamant. Considering my Kingdom, this land which I hold in trust for the Bonny country and the Spirit of my ancestors, what would be my excuse if my father or grandfather were to rise from their graves and demand to know the reason for the presence of English warships in the territories they had entrusted to my charge.[14]

Captain Owen, who remained contemptuous of the whole proceeding till the end gave his own graphic evaluation of King Pepple and the awe in which he was regarded by the British supercargoes.

> Although Pepple dresses shabbily he has a great idea of his rank and power, and is exceedingly presumptuous in asserting it; but, were he not naturally vain, the deference and respect with which he is treated by the /British/ traders would be more than sufficient to render him so. They administer to his whims and caprice, as if the advantages derived from their traffic were not mutual; and when his anger is roused, instead of opposing his menaces they try to win him back to good-humour by the most servile flattery and gifts. Had a stranger heard the earnest consultations held by these people when the trade was closed upon this occasion, he would have been more inclined to think himself in the purlieus of St. James's than in a negro town on the west coast of Africa.[15]

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[14]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, pp.16-17.

[15]Owen, Narrative of Voyages, Vol.II, p.204.

While Bonny might not have the pomp and brilliance of the purlieus of St. James, at least in Bonny the Pepples ruled supreme, and anyone who was careless enough to forget that did so at his own risk.

Captain Owen was no more than the product of the new age -- the age of incursion and challenge to African territorial integrity, and this new age was to be spear-headed by a new breed of men. To Owen, King Pepple was no more than an untutored savage, with an exaggerated opinion of himself, but to the British traders in Bonny, King Pepple's powers and potential powers were too perilously vivid to be dismissed as the mysterious workings of the imagination.

But be that as it may, the abolition of the slave trade and the dawn of the seemingly ubiquitous floating might of British power, began to consistently challenge the fragile sovereignty of the Delta states. This challenge, which largely owed its success to the technological obsolescence of Delta naval architecture, now began to intrude and unsettle the seeming detachment of the Delta kings. This intruding power was not merely out to penetrate the Delta, but the nature of the intruding force was inevitably designed to widen the circumference of this intrusion. This was the nature of the power

that intruded into the serene and fragile sovereignty of the city-state of Bonny in the nineteenth century. In this respect, the story of Bonny becomes a microcosm of the story of all the Delta states in the Bights of Benin and Biafra.

The story of Bonny, Calabar, New Calabar (Kalagbari) Brass, Lagos, and Benin soon re-echoed with deafening resonance in the military collapse of the Moslem Emirates of northern Nigeria. Since this aspect of the history of Nigeria does not come within the scope of this work, a return to the Bight of Biafra seems in order.

That Bonny should serve as a springboard of this erosion of local power should not come as a total surprise. First of all, the city-state of Bonny was the strongest of the native states in the Delta, militarily and economically. Comparatively speaking it also had an imposing and awe-inspiring monarchy, but most important of all, it was the citadel of the slave trade in the Bight of Biafra. The unique position occupied by Bonny at this time was more or less forced on her by the existing demographic imbalance in the Ibo heartland. The Ibo tribes in the interior were plagued then, as they are now, by the problem of overpopulation. As a result, most of the slaves who were sold in and around the Delta were predominantly of Ibo descent.[16] Furthermore,

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[16]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.29.

the King and the nobility of many of the Delta States were either outright Ibos or were descended from Ibo parents. This was particularly true of Bonny and Kalagbari (New Calabar), where the reigning dynasties were mainland Ibos who had emigrated to the Delta several centuries earlier. King William Dappa Pepple admitted being of Ibo descent to Dr. W. B. Baikie in 1854 during his exile in Fernando Po.[17]

Writing about Bonny in 1822, Captain John Adams stated that:

> This place [Bonny] is the wholesale market for slaves, as not fewer than 20,000 are annually sold here; 16,000 of whom are members of one nation, called Heebo [the Ibos], so that this single nation . . . during the last 20 years exported no less than 320,000; and those of the same nation sold at New Calabar [a Delta port] probably amounted, in the same period of time, to 50,000 more, making an aggregate amount of 370,000 Heebos. The remaining part of the 20,000 is composed of the natives of the Brass Country . . . and also of Ibbibbys [Ibibios] or Quaws.[18]

McGregor Laird put the aggregate number of slaves from the Delta at 200,000 annually "at the lowest calculation."[19] Professor M. J. Herskovits has been able to show that there were four principal slave embarkation areas in West Africa, namely, the Senegal and the Guinea Coast, the Congo, and the

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[17]W. B. Baikie, Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Binue in 1854 (London: Frank Cass and Co.Ltd., 1966), p.335. First published 1856.

[18]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.29.

[19]P.P. 1842, Vol.XI, Pt.I, Appendix and Index No.7.

regions about the mouth of the Niger. He went on to show that "large numbers of slaves were shipped from the Niger Delta region as indicated by the manifests of ships loaded at Calabar and Bonny, the principal ports. These were mainly Ibo slaves representing a people which today inhabits a large portion of this region. In 1853, when Creektown Calabar was the dominant trading centre in Old Calabar, Ibos formed more than half the population.[21]

It was thus quite evident that if the old society in the Bight of Biafra built and reared on the slave trade was to be destroyed, the logical place to launch the attack was the city-state of Bonny. Once Bonny's resilience was broken, the sovereignty of the lesser Delta states would no longer be viable. In order to accomplish this task, Britain followed the traditional imperialistic technique of involving herself in the dynastic quarrels of the native aristocracy; and, as always, supporting one faction against the other and eventually destroying both factions. Britain having, in effect, played a leading role in tipping the scale against one faction, the price to be paid by the beneficiaries was none other than

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[20]M. J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, (Boston: Beacon Press, Beacon Hill, 1958), p.36.

[21]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.29.

subservience to British commercial and political interest. Once Her Majesty's officers were able to establish themselves as king makers, it gradually became clear that the king who owed his crown to British gunboats lost it just as easily through the same source.

To understand British success at Bonny, a look at the island's political organization becomes necessary. King Pepple - Opubu the Great of Bonny, who had the unpleasant confrontation with Captain Owen in 1824, died in 1830. At the time of his death, his son, William Dappa Pepple, was still a minor, and so the problem of governing Bonny was assumed by a regent whom the late King had designated for this post during his lifetime. King Opubu the Great had, before he died, elevated an Ibo ex-slave by the name of Maduka to the exalted position of Regent. Maduka's elevation to this high position was highly unpopular with the aristocratic and free born elements of the population. The unpopularity of Maduka's elevation among the free classes was merely the climax of a simmering discontent over the unheard of latitude granted the former ex-slaves by King Opubu. The assumption of this attitude by the free classes should come as no surprise, for in Bonny, as well as in most of the Delta States, a manumitted slave, even a wealthy one at that, was still socially regarded as a slave and no amount of wealth or manumission could success-

fully erase the stigma. Nevertheless, open opposition to King Opubu's wishes was out of the question, for Opubu was a great man and his desires were not to be taken lightly. Furthermore, Chief Maduka or Chief Madu as he was called, was a man of exemplary ability who was totally dedicated to the service of the Bonny monarchy. This, in short, was the situation when King Opubu the Great died and Chief Madu became the Regent.

On the death of Chief Madu, his son, Alali, took over the Regency. Viewed in retrospect, King Opubu's appointment of Chief Maduka as Regent was no more than an acknowledgement of the "de facto" situation as it existed in Bonny. Long before 1830, nearly 95 per cent of Bonny's population was descended either from actual slaves or from manumitted slaves. In 1848 Koehler noted that "only a small proportion" of Bonny was "free born."[22] In 1863 Richard Burton also recorded that besides the Bonny royal family plus one or two others, the rest of the population were of slave origins, and of the latter some few are "Bonny free", i.e. /born in Bonny/ but none "proper free."[23] Many of those belonging to the class of ex-slaves had by dint of hard work

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[22] Talbot, The People of Southern Nigeria, Vol.I, p.256.

[23] Ibid., p.269.

acquired considerable wealth, and had risen to positions of eminence in the community, both as merchant princes and political pawnbrokers. In 1861, T. J. Hutchinson, British Consul to the Bight of Biafra declared that "in many of the palm oil trading rivers, slavery is purely mythical. In Bonny, the men who rule the roost in political debate, as well as on the palm oil change, are of the slave class."[24] The best thing in the Delta House System said Mary Kingsley, "is that it gives to the poorest boy who paddles an oil canoe a chance of becoming a King."[25]

Nevertheless, although many of these ex-slaves had risen to positions of prominence and power, the notion among the Delta inhabitants that once a slave, always a slave died hard. Many of the gentlemen and "heads of Houses" at Bonny who were ex-slaves were, in spite of their wealth and exalted positions, still treated with studied disdain by the free-born elite. This was undoubtedly the fuse which King Opubu the Great was trying to extinguish by recognizing and accommodating the changed economic and political circumstances of those freed slaves. But by some stroke of ill luck, Prince William Dappa Pepple, the Crown Prince, seemed

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[24]T. J. Hutchinson, Ten Years Wandering Among Ethiopians, (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1967), p.3. First published 1861.

[25]M. H. Kingsley, West African Studies, (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1964), p.365. First published by Macmillan and Co.Ltd., 1899.

to have imbibed too much of the pedantic inflexibility of the free classes on this point by refusing to recognize the changed circumstances of these ex-slaves. Bonny was thus faced with the age old problem of a dwindling and atomised aristocracy refusing to admit a dominant and prosperous bourgeoisie (even if ex-slaves at that) into the inner sanctuaries of political power.

The derision with which the young Crown Prince regarded the class of ex-slaves was returned in kind by Chief Alali (Chief Maduka's son), the Regent, who proceeded to usurp the princely prerogatives of the crown, leaving the young King with only the facade of power. So when Prince William Pepple ascended the Bonny throne, he had by force of circumstances become a king in name only, with the Regent wielding the real power.

This was the state of affairs in 1835 when the equipment treaty was signed between Britain and Spain. This equipment treaty authorized British naval officers on the west coast to seize ships belonging to the signatories of the treaty, if these ships were found to be equipped for carrying on the slave trade.

Armed with this treaty, Lieutenant Tyron, Commander of H. M. S. Trinculo, entered the port of Bonny and boarded

and seized four Spanish slavers waiting to embark slaves. This breach of Bonny's "open door" policy and indirectly a breach of her sovereignty led to violent recriminations which soon reverberated all over the island nation. Alali, who felt that Bonny's sovereignty had been ignominously compromised, summoned a meeting of the National Assembly to discuss the matter and to resolve on an appropriate action.[26]

British supercargoes with long experience in Bonny knew that the summoning of the National Assembly, or rather the consultative assembly, bred ill for the Bonny trading community. If things took their normal course, Alali would definitely suspend all trade with the British and that meant a prolonged stay on the coast, with the ever hovering danger of malaria, yellow fever and other attendant tropical ailments. The British community thus resolved to act at once. Mr. Jackson, a respected British supercargo, was despatched to explain to Alali the legal justification for the British seizure of the four Spanish vessels. According to Jackson, when he found the Regent, he was "in his Palaver or Assembly House, surrounded by the Chiefs, furiously excited at what they termed the violation of their rights, professing to be the protectors of every flag that waved in their territory."[27]

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[26]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.70.

[27]F.O. 2/1 No.1 (Enclosure after Encl.8) Bonny, Jackson to Craigie, 15 March 1837.

In spite of the prevalent boisterous atmosphere in the Palaver House, Mr. Jackson was able to pacify the Regent, who agreed to a meeting the following day, being the 23rd of January 1836, "for the purpose of explaining to them /the Regent and his Councillors/ the treaty with Spain, a copy of which, after a friendly reception, was read to them," by Capsios, the leader of the Spanish traders. But in explaining the contents of the treaty, Capsios resorted to a bewildering array of prevarications, insinuating that the treaty might have been a forgery. When the English party out of desperation demanded an unequivocal answer as to the authenticity of the treaty, "he returned an equivocal answer as to its validity."[28]

The Regent, whose prior sympathy leaned towards the Spanish slavers, and who was already angry with the British, flew into a violent rage at what he regarded as British duplicity, and immediately ordered the arrest of the English delegates. His men quickly seized "Lieutenant Tyron by his collar" while the angry Regent declared "You lie, you be my prisoners and on this we were dragged off various ways and ushered into a dark place of confinement . . . chained by the neck and legs."[29]

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[28]F.O. 2/1 No.1, Encl.8,9,10, Bonny, Jackson to Craigie, 15 March 1837.

[29]Ibid.

The imprisonment of Lieutenant Tyron and the British supercargoes led to the concentration of the West African Squadron in Bonny territorial waters. This show of force had the desired effect, as the prisoners were quickly released. The release of the prisoners was followed by a one sided treaty forced on Alali and his entourage, pledging that such incidents would not occur again.

This 1836 treaty was merely designed to protect British subjects trading in the Bonny rivers. Three of its clauses forbade the imprisonment, detention, or any form of maltreatment of a British subject by the Bonny authorities. Furthermore the treaty provided that disputes between the inhabitants of Bonny and the British traders should in the future be settled by a committee of English traders "with the King and Gentlemen of Bonny" who would be held accountable for any loss or damage of British property or persons on the river.

Finally, the gentlemen and King of Bonny were warned that any infringement of any article of the treaty "will bring them . . . under the displeasure of the King of England, and be declared Enemies of Great Britain" and that "'men-of-war', on any complaint, will immediately come up to Bonny to protect the English vessels."[30]

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[30]Newbury, British Policy towards West Africa, pp.375-376.

Besides the coercive nature of the treaty, the treaty made no provisions whereby a contravening Britisher could be punished. Article III of the treaty stipulated that if any "English seaman shall ill treat a Bonnyman /as often happened/ he shall be punished by the Captain of the vessel to which he may belong."[31] In effect, the Bonny government could not by the stipulation of the treaty exercise any jurisdiction whatever either in the form of arrest, trial, or punishment over an English trader who might commit an offence in Bonny, no matter how serious or trivial the offence might be.

The question arose as to what was to happen to an English captain who refuses to punish his "offending crew member." Or worse still, what was to happen if the captain of the ship (as was often the case) was the offender himself. The treaty made no provisions for such an eventuality even though such cases occurred frequently in Bonny and various other Delta ports. A treaty so deliberately vindictive and one-sided could not be expected to engender any era of peace between the British supercargoes and the inhabitants of Bonny, nor would the African signatories be expected to honour it. Furthermore, the political climate in Bonny at this time was such that even a partial fulfillment of this treaty could not

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[31] Ibid.

be entertained, for Alali, like his father Maduka, was fanatical about the issue of Bonny's independence, and could not be expected to retreat one iota on this point. Nevertheless, the treaty of 1836 was to serve as a clarion call for British commercial and territorial aggrandisement in the Bight of Benin and Biafra. The navy from now on played the role of a disintegrating force in the semi-military society of the Niger Delta.

According to oral traditions and other evidences, the Bonny monarchy was already four hundred years old in 1830, and for four hundred years this monarchy had kept the people together as well as serving the needs of the European community during this period of time. European traders accepted and obeyed native rules, and were in return given native protection. But the events of 1836 proved that this native protection was no longer necessary, for the man-of-war had usurped that responsibility. British traders no longer had any need to obey the laws of the countries in which they traded. They could and did invoke the right to mete out punishment on "native offenders" for infractions which they considered inimical to their interests, while they themselves remained above the law. They had in effect become a law unto themselves by the mere force of naval fiat.

The people of Bonny might have been able to resist this encroachment on their age-long rights, had they been united, but they were not united. Alali and his chiefly partisans were not on cordial terms with the young King and had unashamedly, and unconstitutionally, usurped and exercised royal powers. The King in turn treated them with disdainful arrogance, and whenever the occasion permitted, overwhelmed them with majestic pageantry -- a cowering reminder of their lowly origin. An unbridgeable gap and an unfortunate polarization had thus occurred at a time when the two groups might have closed ranks and arrived at a workable "modus vivendi." Since this did not happen, Alali plodded on as best he could. The treaty of 1836 meant little to him. He might have been temporarily cowed into submission by the men-of-war off his shores, but did not tarry long in regaining his pedantic composure. His erratic nature appeared to be genetically attuned to rebellion, and a justified "causus belli" made matters even worse.

Within a month of the signing of the 1836 treaty, Mr. Ralph Dawson, a master of the British palm oil ship Havannah Pocket, had been unceremoniously treated and interned by Alali for what he regarded as insolent behaviour during a trade dispute. Not long after that, two more

infractions of Article V were reported by the supercargoes,[32] and for all intents and purposes, the 1836 treaty was dead within one month of its precarious existence.

Meantime King William Dappa Pepple saw in the confrontation between Alali and the British supercargoes, an opportunity to revive his tarnished royal powers, and began immediately to plot with the British supercargoes for Alali's downfall. As a prelude to this intended coup, the supercargoes began to flood the Foreign Office with anti-Alali tirades, describing him variously as the "savage tyrant" and "usurper of Bonny." The plot to overthrow him was soon put into operation. In March 1836, Rear Admiral Sir Patrick Campbell, Commander of the West African Squadron, ordered his Senior Officer, Commander Craigie, to proceed to Bonny for the following "reasons."

> (1) The trade of Bonny being of considerable importance and extent, I have to desire that you will cause all proper countenance and protection to be given to his majesty's subjects engaged therein, sending . . . one cruiser into the river occasionally for that purpose. (2) to congratulate the new King on his accession to the sovereignty of Bonny (country) and (3) to obtain the ratification of the new King to these regulations respecting the trade in Bonny /i.e. the trade regulations embodied in the 1836 Treaty/.[33]

A more than cursory look at these stated reasons soon revealed their hollowness. The reference to the trade

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[32]F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.3, H.M. Brig. Lynx off Rio Bonny, Huntley to Craigie, 23 March 1837.

[33]Newbury, British Policy - Select Documents, p.377.

of Bonny being considerable in 1836 should be viewed only in relation to Britain's volume of trade with other nations. The purchasing power of the peoples of West Africa in 1836 could not even begin to compare with that of the North American nations of the same period. Yet there were no plans for sending British naval escorts to the ports of Boston or New York to help protect the British trade at these ports. British traders, whether they happened to be in North America or Europe, were expected to ply their trade in accordance with the trade regulations of the host country. This has always been the rule of thumb, but the Africans were to enjoy no such nationally accepted ethical standard of trade, rather the host country was at all times to submit to the commercial disposition of his guests, no matter whether the guests were right or wrong. So Admiral Campbell's intended despatch of a man-of-war to the Bonny waters was no more than a calculated and naked aggression against constituted native authority. As Mr. Tobin, the Liverpool trader testified in the 1865 Parliamentary Committee, "Trade and Man of war do not go together."[34]

Admiral Campbell's second reason, namely "To congratulate the new King on his accession," sounds equally incongruous. King William Dappa Pepple ascended the Bonny

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[34]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, pp.215-219.

throne in 1835, that is a whole two years before Campbell thought it necessary to congratulate him. Had the West African squadron intended to congratulate the new king, they might have done so in 1835, since after all, Fernando Po, their naval base, was only a day's sailing from Bonny. But then, there was no directive from the Admiralty, or Campbell, recommending such an action. But most important of all, a large concentration of British naval vessels had congregated in Bonny waters in 1836, when Alali had imprisoned Lieutenant Tyron and some of the British supercargoes during the "Equipment Treaty" dispute. That was a whole year after Pepple's coronation, and the navy might just as well have given him a belated congratulation in 1836, but somehow it simply never occurred to them, therefore the navy could not have gone to Bonny in 1837 for the purposes of congratulating the new king.

When Commander Craigie arrived at Fernando Po in 1837, in pursuance of these orders, he despatched one of his junior officers, Lieutenant Huntley, "to proceed up the Bonny and inform the King of my intention, shortly, to appear there in order to wait upon him." Huntley was "to make himself generally acquainted with the state of the parties amongst the chiefs of the Bonny."[35] Huntley's report

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[35]F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.2, Craigie to Campbell, 13 April 1837.

showed that at this time, the King was virtually without power, while the Regent still determined policy.[36]

On the 5th of April, 1837 Commander Craigie arrived at Bonny, and quickly informed the King that he planned to "appear, attended by a retinue of officers, the masters of the British ships, and a guard from my own ship." This impressive retinue of officers was calculated to impress Alali and his chiefs, but Alali contemptuously ignored the whole group, with the result that when Craigie landed, expecting to be given the red-carpet treatment, only the virtually powerless and lonely King Pepple was there to welcome him. Alali's boycott of the meeting, as Pepple explained to Craigie, made it impossible for his chiefs to attend.

Finding that his presence in the town had been completely ignored, Craigie despatched one of his junior officers, Lieutenant Acland, accompanied by three ship masters to Alali, requesting his presence. An angered Alali lashed out rudely at the foursome, threatening to have them slaughtered in spite of their bodyguards and declaring that if Commander Craigie wanted to see him, he should come to his house. Commander Craigie, who was by now totally convinced that nothing could be accomplished by a further stay in Bonny, prepared to leave, when the young King imploringly pressed

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[36] F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.3, Huntley to Craigie, Bonny River, 27 March 1837.

him gently, pointing out that Craigie's departure would only identify him in the eyes of his people as a traitor who wanted to sell his country to foreigners.[37] Pepple thus pleaded with Craigie to come to his house with him. Craigie finally agreed and went with the King to his own house where he met secretly with some of the King's followers, and "several Head Traders." Craigie left no account of what really transpired during this clandestine meeting, except his report which stated that "after a most amicable interview, it was arranged that the King, and all the Chiefs of Bonny, should meet me next day."[38]

On returning to his ship, Craigie held another meeting with the British supercargoes, only to find out that these British traders, who were well versed in the intricacies of Bonny politics, had no intention of risking another confrontation on land with Alali, without adequate naval protection.[39]

The supercargoes appear to have learned their lesson well. So on the next day, being the 9th of April, 1837, Craigie assembled a flotilla of British warships in Bonny, and after all military precautions had been taken, he again sent for the King saying that he "was now ready again to

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[37] F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.2, Craigie to Campbell, 13 April 1837.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

meet himself and several chiefs on shore . . . and that I insisted on the presence of Anna Pepple (i.e. Alali)."[40]

By noon of the same day, all the "invited" guests including Alali had responded to the "invitation." Commander Craigie then "called forward Anna Pepple, and distinctively stated that, in consequence of the gross insults he had offered the British officers; also for the oppression and unjust manner in which he had usurped the power in the Bonny country, and conducted the affairs of trade with the British merchants engaged here; that I had determined to remove him from all control over, or interference with, the British, excepting as a trader." It was also reported that the

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[40]The name Anna Pepple refers to the extended family to which every Bonny citizen, whether free or slave belongs. This extended family name is referred to in the Delta as "House." This practice is common among the Ibos, although the custom is carried to extreme length in the Delta States. A man refers to his uncle as his Father, as well as referring to his real father as Father. In the same token, a man refers to his nephew or niece as his brother or sister, as well as referring to his real sisters and brothers as sisters and brothers. Nephews and cousins quite often answer the same family name. Since the Ibo language has no word for cousin or nephew, the common terms, brother or sister, serve the purpose. So in this regard both Alali and his father Chief Maduka were Royal Slaves, i.e. slaves belonging strictly to the Royal House of Pepple, hence the designation Anna Pepple. So both Chief Maduka and his son Alali would be referred to in Bonny as Maduka Anna Pepple. Therefore in referring to Alali as Anna Pepple Commander Craigie was obviously hitting below the belt by reminding Alali that he was still technically a royal slave belonging to the Pepple dynasty, a position which his wealth could not erase. It was a calculated insult.

Regent who "at first assumed a haughty and menacing carriage, now seemed to fall, before just accusation" and "signed a document accepting the terms of his deposition."[41]

It is important to note that the deposition of Alali by a foreigner was to signal the beginning of the end of Bonny's independence. A precedent had been set, and was to be repeated again and again in the Bights. If Britain could depose an African chief, even an overbearing one at that, and enthrone or shore up the decaying foundations of an existing king, she could also withdraw her support when the new king no longer toed the British line. But in spite of all the naval pageantry and official punctiliousness associated with these authenticated aggressions, neither the British naval officers on-the-spot nor the supercargoes were really able to discern the nature of the disagreement between Alali and his king. If Alali was stiff-necked in his relationship with the British, it was because Bonny's independence had become an article of faith with him. On this particular issue, he shared the same sentiments with King William Dappa Pepple. His only crime, as far as Pepple and the Bonny royal bloods were concerned was that Alali had wrongly usurped royal powers -- powers which an ex-slave was innately and constitutionally prohibited from exercising. Other than

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[41]F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.2, Craigie to Campbell, 13 April 1837.

this, both Alali and Pepple shared the same objective in their foreign policy. No sooner did King William regain his powers than the supercargoes realized that a change in personnel did not necessarily imply a change in foreign policy. Nevertheless, King Pepple and Alali were essentially two different kinds of people. While Alali was naturally haughty, irrascible, and had a blustering air about him, the young king was essentially a diplomat and a political tactician of the first order. He and Alali pursued the same objective but with different means. Although he was as determined as Alali to maintain Bonny's independence, he invariably preferred a diplomatic approach, rather than a hostile confrontation which might have led to a physical confrontation -- a confrontation which he could not have sustained unilaterally. But in failing to effect a rapprochment between himself and Alali, he failed to realize the implication of Britain's intervention and depositon of Alali. Britain had now assumed the role of a royal broker, and as Pepple soon learned, the royal broker who could make kings could just as easily unmake them. The fall of the Regent was soon followed by the revision of the treaty of 1836.[42]

The treaty of 1837, like that of 1836, was designed to protect British traders in Bonny, and the Navy drew it up

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[42]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.78.

in close consultation with these supercargoes.[43] In fact the treaty could be said to have been dictated by the British traders in Bonny. The contents of the treaty were so favourable to the British traders that the letter of gratitude which the traders sent to Commander Craigie declared that the treaty and the recent events in Bonny had placed "The British trade and character" in an "elevated position." The letter equally confirmed "the total overthrow of the tyrannical chief and usurper, Anna Pepple. Neither the Foreign merchant or Native trader, being no longer under the fear of the ferocious and vindictive mind, we conceive the produce of the inland country will, when his fall is generally known, arise in great abundance." Here is a real eye opener -- these same traders maintained that they conceived that "by the elevation of the rightful heir, Dappa Pepple, to the rule of the Bonny country, that the ascendancy of the British flag is undoubtedly, and henceforward established in the River, namely, to the exclusion of others." And finally, they equally pointed out that "by the present treaty, the whole feature of the trade, is greatly and advantageously changed for the British interest."[44]

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[43] F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.3, H.M.S. Lynx, Bonny River, Huntley to Craigie, 27 March 1837.

[44] F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.7, H.M.S. Brutus, River Bonny, Masters to Craigie, 11 April 1837. (My italics.)

Here is proof, if proof is needed, to discredit the imbecilic notion that the "British Empire was founded in a fit of absent mindedness." Craigie, who was being pressured by Bonny supercargoes to send the treaty to England for ratification,[45] despatched Lieutenant Huntley with it to London.[46] On examining the treaty, both the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade felt that since the treaty was drawn up by the British traders on the spot, who were evidently supposed to know the merits and demerits of the treaty, that they would not oppose its ratification, except for the little matter of ascertaining whether there was "any precedent of such an agreement with savages (called a treaty) and of the manner in which it was dealt with."[47] The legal experts finding nothing particularly unusual about this unusual precedent, Admiral Sir George Elliot, the new Commander-in-Chief of the West African squadron, was despatched to Bonny to ratify the treaty. For ratifying this treaty, all King William Dappa Pepple received from the British government was "a case containing three handsome shawls of British manufacture, and three pieces of broad cloth, each of size

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[45]F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.7, H.M.S. Brutus, River Bonny, Masters to Craigie, 11 April 1837.

[46]F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.2, Craigie to Campbell.

[47]F.O. 2/1, and its enclosures. F.O.J.B. Nov. 30, 1837 minutes on Bonny Paper.

sufficient for a large cloak; which articles Lord Palmerston conceived will be suitable to present to the King of Bonny, on the occasion of ratifying the treaty."[48]

Having now re-instated himself and his power with the help of the British navy, King Pepple sought to disentangle himself from the clutches of his overbearing friends. Pepple, like his servant Alali, was determined not only to maintain his independence, but to hold on to all the surviving paraphernalia of power accumulated by the four hundred years' existence of the Bonny monarchy. King Pepple, like everybody else in Bonny, knew that the presence of the British navy in the Bonny territorial waters was due to the disagreements which often arose between the inhabitants of Bonny and the British supercargoes, and if the source of these trade agreements could be removed, then the incidence of British naval intervention in matters which he regarded as purely domestic would be minimized or at least reduced to manageable proportions. Pepple concisely traced the source of all these trade disputes to the "Trust System" which was widely practiced all over the Delta except in Kalagbari (New Calabar), where it was prohibited by King Amachree.

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[48]F.O. 2/1, F.O. 28/37, Admiralty, Palmerston to Wood.

The "Trust System" was a West African phenomenon reminiscent of the present day credit system of North America. A British merchant intending to engage in the palm oil trade anywhere in the Bights usually began by procuring goods which he farmed out to his prospective African middlemen in lieu of a specified amount of palm oil which he was to receive from the middlemen. Until that specified amount of palm oil was delivered to the British creditor, the African middleman was, according to the ethics of the trade, not allowed to trade with anyone else.

The middleman, on the other hand, having now equipped himself with the goods received from the British supercargo, headed for the interior where he was judiciously expected to garner the maximum amount of palm oil with a minimum amount of goods. During the earlier part of British trade in the Delta, the goods which the British traders gave in exchange for the palm oil were normally goods of very inferior quality which they often procured for little or nothing in the penny and dime stores of Britain. On reaching the coast, the African middlemen were usually told that these ridiculous goods, many of which were articles of clothing, were those worn by the European nobility. As a result, the value placed on these goods by the British traders was abnormally high. So the

African chiefs, or middlemen, as the case may be were now expected to supply the British trader with quantities of palm oil valued at these ridiculously inflated prices.

The Africans did not remain ignorant of European values indefinitely. In the course of time, they were able to distinguish genuine and costly articles of clothing from mere frauds. In a letter written to Commander Raymond of H.M.S. Spy, regarding the anti-slave-trade treaty which he had just concluded with the British Government, King Eyo Honesty II of Creektown, Calabar, made it quite plain that in lieu of payments for his subsidy as provided by the treaty, the British government should send him genuine articles of clothing and that he would not tolerate any foolery: ". . . what I want for dollar side is proper India Romall and copper rods, I no want fool thing . . . ."[49] One might even allow oneself to slide into the dreamland of absent-minded altruism by taking issue with King Eyo Honesty for even entertaining the thought of being cheated by His Majesty's government. After all, His Majesty's government should not be held accountable for any crimes of commercial nature committed by the British traders. But the fact is that the Government was not only aware of what the traders

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[49]H. M. Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa, 1829-1858, (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1970), p.664. First published in 1863. (My italics.)

were doing, but even gave them moral and naval support in their officially sanctioned robbery, and sometimes indulged in it itself.

Writing to the Foreign Office in 1839, after the conclusion of the first anti-slave-trade treaty with Bonny, regarding the $2,000 worth of goods which King Pepple was to receive as payment for signing the treaty, Admiral Elliot of the West African Squadron warned the Foreign Office to be circumspect in sending out goods for the first year's subsidy because Africans might discover the real value of articles of clothing and other goods in England since "the price usually put on English goods in Bonny is very high, and that this discovery might create difficulties with traders."[50]

Commenting on the commercial treachery of British traders in the Bight of Biafra, McGregor Laird, who visited Calabar in 1832, reported that:

> I have seen the Chiefs of Old Calabar and Cameroon, men who annually do business with English ships to the extent of a quarter of a million /pounds sterling/, strutting about with nothing on but the 'clout', now changed from the 'bark of trees' to a bandana handkerchief, and their heads covered with a gold or a silver-laced footman's hat, which the palm oil captains had persuaded them was the distinguishing mark of a noble man.[51]

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[50] F.O. 84/340, No.142, Simon's Bay, Elliot to Ward, 5 November 1839. (My italics.)

[51] Burns, History of Nigeria, p.108.

During the Adderley Committee proceedings of 1865, John Tobin, head of Messrs. Tobin and Horsfall, and the largest importer of palm oil in Britain, testified that "Formerly, it was the custom of white men to fancy that anything was good enough for a black man, and they attempted to impose upon them. /Now/ they are as well able to distinguish between genuine articles and fictitious /ones/ as any person in this country."[52]

As the Africans gradually began to realize that they were being enormously cheated, especially in being made to supply a volume of palm oil whose value was far greater than that of the articles they received, they began to resort to various means of obviating this lopsided commercial agreement. They either refused to supply the amount of palm oil which they had been cajoled into promising previously or, more often, they handed their supply of palm oil to other European traders, preferably European newcomers to the Bonny River. According to the prevailing Delta parlance, the practice of consigning palm oil which had been previously promised to another supercargo was known as giving "double trusts",[53] and this invariably led to "chopping oil", an expression which meant the

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[52]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, Q.Q. 5356-7.

[53]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.109.

forcible seizure of a middleman's palm oil, which was already consigned to another trader, by his former contractual partner.

Writing in March 1837 to Commander Craigie, Lieutenant Huntley described "oil chopping" as:

> the indiscriminate seizure of oil, that may be in canoes coming off because some native of Bonny is indebted to the ship so seizing the oil. The result is first, a conflict between the boats of the ship seizing, and the ship for which the oil was embarked (this indeed I witnessed only yesterday). Secondly a stop is put to the trade by the Native Powers, because a canoe with oil has been forcibly carried by an English boat, to an unintended destination; and thirdly a general suspicion of the English character, is engrafted upon the native.[54]

Where this stoppage was prolonged for any unforeseen reasons, the British traders always resorted to the device of summoning the navy. The navy arrived, and invariably began to meddle in local affairs, and frequently unequal treaties were forced on the indigenous inhabitants. This tended to become the pattern, and it was this emerging pattern that King Pepple sought to nip in the bud by removing the irritant. In pursuance of this policy, the King entered into a new agreement with the British Government, an agreement signed by Commander Castle of the H.M.S. Rylades on behalf of His Majesty's government. This treaty absolutely forbade the giving of "trusts" in any form whatsoever, as well as stipulating that the King could not be held responsible for trusts

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[54] F.O. 2/1, No.1, Encl.3, Huntley to Craigie, 27 March 1837.

or debts incurred by his subjects without his knowledge or consent. The treaty also slightly increased the import duties.[55]

Without anticipating the reaction of the British traders to this new treaty, it really did not require an experienced eye to see that the King's surgical approach to Bonny's economic-cum-political ills would fail. First of all, King Pepple appeared to have forgotten that he had become King by the grace of His Majesty's Navy, at least from 1837, and his new status had in effect transformed his relationship with the British supercargoes. Therefore, in insisting that the King could not be held responsible for any "trusts" given with his knowledge, the King was in effect annulling the total trusts held by the people of Bonny, and this amounted to a considerable sum, according to a Board of Trade enquiry.[56]

It was undoubtedly foolhardy for Pepple to think that the supercargoes would allow their "debts" to be wished away by the mere signing of a treaty. Under the best of circumstances, the traders would have resisted the nullification of trusts because of the fantastic profits which they made by it. The King might have approached the problem by seeing

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[55] F.O. 84/340, King's House, Grand Bonny, Pepple to Ethos, 25 April 1840.

[56] F.O. 2/3, Misc.93, F.O. 16 December 1847, Palmerston to Board of Trade, and F.O. 2/3, No.128, Board of Trade to Foreign Office.

to it that under a royal guarantee, all previous debts owed to the supercargoes in "trusts" were to be paid off. Then all the natives of Bonny had to do was refuse to accept any more trusts, and since no one could possibly force the native to voluntarily go into debt except by the persuasion of his own greed, the King might have placed the onus of responsibility on the British traders. But instead, King Pepple left himself open to the accusation of unjustly encouraging his subjects to renege on their debts. This is what it would have amounted to in practice. To make matters worse, he proceeded to increase the import duties at the same time. Assuming that the treaty had been ratified, British traders would have lost their investments in Bonny which were largely owed in trust. After that, they would have had to look for a fresh capital with which to buy goods, and since the Africans were no longer easily fooled, this would have amounted to a considerable sum of money. Having bought and shipped these goods to Bonny, they would be expected to pay a new high import duty on them in addition to their lost investment.[57]

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[57]There are no figures for British investment in the Delta or in Bonny for 1837, but there are figures for 1858, 1851, and 1855. British goods given out in trust in 1854 were estimated at £80,000, and the total British investment in Bonny at this time was estimated at £800,000. Although these figures were most likely exaggerated, the corrected figures are likely to be prohibitive just the same. For details on British investment in the Delta at this time, see Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, Chapter VI; F.O. 84/858, No.70, Beecroft to Palmerston, 27 October 1851; F.O. 84/975, No.80, Bonny, Lynslager to Skene, 21 September 1855.

On being informed of this treaty, Admiral Elliot of the West African squadron rejected it outright. His objections were based on the grounds "that the import duties on British goods will be increased." Furthermore, that according to the stipulation of the treaty, the King could not be held responsible for detained or lost British goods, and finally that "the difficulties of exacting the penalty on masters for placing any part of their cargo in trust, would be beyond the power of the King, and if attempted would lead to violence."[58]

Admiral Elliot had been very undiplomatic in turning down Pepple's treaty, and perhaps he could not have been otherwise under the circumstances. Pepple was in fact made to realize that although his analysis of the source of the Bonny-British quarrel was correct, the solution to it was not to be a negotiated one, but an imposed peace -- a peace imposed from above for a price, and that price was to be the acceptance of trusts as it was practiced in Bonny in return for allowing the King the exercise of a watered down sovereignty over his people. As to the British traders they had become an "imperium in imperior", and Pepple knew it.

All Pepple could do was to regret "sincerely . . .

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[58] F.O. 84/340, No.53, H.M.S. Wolverene at Sea, Elliot to Admiralty, 3 July 1840. (My italics.)

that the Articles of convention entered into between myself and Commander Castle of H.M.S. Rylades on November 19th, 1838, has been cancelled in as much as the said Articles prohibited any trust whatsoever to be given out under a heavy penalty." Pepple perhaps incorrectly sensing the import of Elliot's letter, reminded Elliot that Britain recognized him as King of Bonny in 1837 and that "while he keeps the treaties of Amity and Commerce inviolate," that Britain should graciously protect him from any undue or illegal interference in the exercise of his just prerogative as King of Bonny.[59]

This was precisely the point. A supposedly sovereign African monarch had placed himself in a position where he had to be obliged to petition a foreign nation for permission to exercise his own sovereign powers. This might have been a beautiful opportunity for King Pepple to resolve his quarrel with Alali and the ex-slaves in order to present the British traders with a united front. But the unrepentant King stuck to his jaundiced views regarding the proper relationship between slaves and masters, and allowed the opportunity to slip by. Alali meantime was biding his time.

Pepple's humiliation as a result of his failure to obtain the ratification of the 1838 treaty was soon exacerbated by the extension of the anti-slave-trade treaties to

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[59]F.O. 84/340, Admiralty, Vol.III, 25 April 1840.

the west coast. The first of these treaties was signed with Bonny on the 11th of March 1839, after a prolonged negotiation between Commander Craigie and the King in Council. The King and chiefs were to receive an annual subsidy of $2,000 payable in goods for five years.[60] To expedite the remittance of the promised goods during the first twelve months of the signing of the treaty, Admiral Elliot wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Mr. Wood, stating that "in the hope that the goods alluded to /i.e. the first year's subsidy/ may be sent out, I have directed the Senior officer in the West Coast of Africa to take an early opportunity of acquainting the King and Chiefs of Bonny with the intention of His Majesty's Government."[61] For some unexplained reason, Britain never honoured this treaty since no goods were sent out, so an aggrieved King Pepple, who had been r luctant to sign the treaty in the first place, felt justified in openly carrying on the slave trade.

Commander Tucker, who succeeded Elliot, visited Bonny in September 1840, and while there, he reported that

> . . . a constant supply of slaves are sent by canoe through the creeks to the rivers Nun and Brass for shipment. Three hundred and sixty having been taken by a Spaniard previous to my arrival in the River . . . dollars and doubloons

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[60] P.P. 1847-48, Vol.LXIV, p.4(16), Encl.4 in No.1.

[61] P.P. 1847-48, Vol.LXIV, p.7(19), Encl. in No.6.

> are plentiful in Bonny which is always the case after the arrival of a slaver in the Nun or Brass River, as most of the slaves shipped off from there are purchased at Bonny.[62]

King Pepple held the view that he felt no constraints about resuming the slave trade until Britain was willing to honour her treaty obligations. That incidentally was also the opinion of Lord Palmerston, who felt that there was no point berating the Delta chief for dishonouring the treaty until Britain was willing to fulfil her own obligations. But the Treasury held a different view. They argued that it was "inexpedient that any stipulation for the presents should be inserted in the treaty" and were generally opposed to giving subsidies unless there was "bona fide" proof that the slave trade had actually stopped.[63] In appending this condition to the treaty, the Treasury was resorting to a non-justifiable double standard, for Britain had concluded several anti-slave-trade treaties with various countries without demanding that the slave-trade be totally stopped before payments could be made.

In 1817 Britain had signed an anti-slave-trade treaty with Radama, King of Eastern Madagascar, and in accordance with the stipulations of this treaty, Radama was to receive

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[62] P.P. 1847-48, Vol.LXIV, p.10(22), Encl.3 in No.12.

[63] P.P. 1847-48, Vol.LXIV, pp.6-7(18-19), No.4, 4 July 1839, Secretary to the Treasury to the Hon. W. Fox Strangeways.

$10,000 a year for three years, together with an astonishing assortment of articles, including "100 muskets, 400 red military jackets, a quantity of swords, two horses, and a full dress coat, hat and boots all complete for the King."[64] From 1815 to 1853, Portugal had received a total of £2,850,965 as bribe offered her to stop the slave trade. Yet Portugal carried on the slave trade through the intermediary of her former colony of Brazil.[65] The same thing had happened with Spain, which received by 1853 a total of £1,134,179. Yet Spain continued the trade through her colony of Cuba.[66] In all these treaties, there were no provisos by the Treasury requiring that eligibility for the payment of subsidies was to depend on the total and "a priori" stoppage of the slave trade. McGregor Laird, in an attempt to expose the futility of these bilateral agreements, had pointed out that in 1815 Britain had paid £300,000 for the right to confiscate Portuguese ships engaged in the trade as well as giving up in the same year to Portugal an additional £600,000, which was the balance of a loan she had borrowed from Britain.[67]

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[64]Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, p.199.

[65]Ibid., p.45.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

Yet in 1823 another treaty was concluded with Portugal, and by 1839, five such treaties had been concluded. But in spite of all these treaties, and the money paid out, argued Laird, the Portuguese slave trade had increased from 25,000 in 1807 to 56,000 in 1822.

> . . . and in 1839, 48 vessels, under the Portuguese flag (out of a total of 71 slave vessels) were condemned at Sierra Leone. With Spain we commence [treaty making] in 1808, but did nothing until 1814, when we offered the Spanish Government a bribe of £800,000 to abolish the trade . . . . Having more honesty than the Portuguese, the Spaniards refused, and . . . the money was saved . . . . In 1815 we got her to sign, with other powers at the Congress of Vienna, a declaration 'that the slave trade is repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality.' In 1817 another treaty was got on our paying £400,000 for it; and in 1822 a third; yet 'the sea swarmed with slave ships, carrying on the slave trade under the flag of Spain.'[68]

One need not go into the French and American violations to see how indefensible the argument of the Treasury against Bonny was in 1840, especially if it is realized that many of these countries that were being paid enormous bribes were signatories to the Congress of Vienna in 1815 which solemnly declared:

> . . . that, considering the universal abolition of the Slave Trade as a measure particulary worthy of their attention, conformable to the spirit of the times and to the generous principles of their august Sovereigns, they are animated with the sincere desire of concurring in the most prompt and effectual execution of this measure by all the means

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[68]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.82.

> at their disposal and of acting in the employment of these means with all the zeal and perseverence which is due to so great and noble a cause.[69]

Notwithstanding Palmerston's desire to have the treaty ratified, the Treasury held to its guns, and refused to pay the subsidies. Commander Tucker, on his part, was not convinced that Pepple would or could keep his own part of the bargain, but this did not seem to be Tucker's real reason. His real reason appeared to be that Pepple owed his throne to the British navy, and he was quite unhappy that Pepple was preoccupied with such trappings of independence as a bilateral treaty with Britain. As far as Tucker was concerned, Britain owed Pepple nothing, but Pepple although he appeared to be forgetting, owed Britain an inexhaustible amount of gratitude -- i.e. his throne. In a despatch to the Foreign Office, Tucker recalled the "debt" which Pepple owed to Britain because "/Commander/ Craigie in 1837 firmly established King Pepple on the throne." Furthermore, he argued that the King had since received nearly £4,000 a year by way of tonnage duty levied on British ships, and he could see no viable reason why Pepple should be paid any subsidies.[70]

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[69] P.P. 1816, Vol.XVII, pp.132-133(466-467), Act. No.XV, Declaration of powers, on the abolition of the slave trade, 8 February 1815.

[70] P.P. 1847-48, Vol.LXIV, p.15(27), Encl. in No.24, Captain Tucker to the Secretary to the Admiralty.

Tucker's reasoning with regard to British ships paying duty in Bonny holds no water at all, because Britain had also concluded anti-slave treaties with lesser chiefs in the Bight of Biafra, as well as paying the promised subsidies. Yet in all these places, British traders not only continued to pay tonnage duty on their trade, but also paid the customary "comey" to all the Delta chiefs. On the 18th and 19th of September Lieutenant Pollard of H.M.S. Buzzard concluded both a commercial and anti-slave-trade treaty with Chiefs Aqua and Bell of the Cameroons,[71] and in January 1842 this treaty was ratified and the annual subsidies paid. In 1842, King Eyamba and Eyo Honesty, of Duke Town and Creek Town respectively, signed a treaty abolishing the slave trade in return for $2,000 subsidy for five years. Both Captain Foote and Lieutenant Raymond who conducted these treaties spoke of the friendly disposition of these two rulers. This treaty also was ratified in December 1843.[72] A similar treaty was also concluded with the little town of Bimbia, also in the Bight of Biafra, the only difference being that the subsidy was reduced to $1,200. In all these cases, the treaties were duly ratified and there

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[71] F.O. 84/436, Canning to Admiralty, 15 January 1842.

[72] F.O. 84/493, No.171, and its enclosure, Foote to Herbert, 12 December 1842.

was not a single instance in which the British traders were not obliged to pay duty on their shipping. Furthermore, none of these towns was as significant as the town of Bonny.

The fact was that very few people within the British Government believed that Pepple would keep his agreement. Furthermore, Tucker's contention that Pepple was indebted to them might have been the overriding reason, but no matter what the reasons might have been the fact remains that King Pepple regarded the whole proceeding as symptomatic of British bad faith. It is important to note that King Eyamba, who signed a treaty of "Amity and Commerce" with Britain in 1841, had declined to sign an anti-slave treaty with Britain because of his professed desire to indulge in what little slave trade there was available in his territory.[73] His signature to the anti-slave-trade treaty was not obtained until 1842.

It must be borne in mind also that this rebuff to Britain took place in 1841, whereas King Pepple signed his first anti-slave-trade treaty with Britain in 1839. As to the imputation that King Pepple would not keep his part of the bargain, the question that has to be answered is, how many of the European or African signatories of the treaty were willing, or did in fact keep to the terms of the treaty.

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[73] F.O. 84/384, Vol.II, No.56, at Sea. Tucker to O'Pawel, 30 July 1841.

We have just had a review of Spanish and Portuguese duplicity on the slave trade issue in spite of the huge subsidies which they were paid. If the failure of the Europeans to keep the treaty did not prevent them from receiving more subsidies why should it become an impediment to King Pepple? Furthermore, the sincerity of some of the African signatories to the treaty is quite open to question. Although King Eyo signed the treaty as well as receiving his subsidy in 1842, he was all set to continue the trade in 1850. As a result of the French sponsored African emigration scheme of 1850, which was no more than a disguise for the revival of the slave trade -- a disguise which King Eyo himself confirmed and condemned to Rev. Hope Waddell of the Presbyterian mission of Calabar[74] -- the king was busy scheming with his fellow chiefs and "gentlemen" of Calabar to resume the slave trade. As Eyo's letter will show the "gentleman" was not a bit fooled by the emigration scheme. In fact, as he quite correctly pointed out, the natives of Calabar would not voluntarily leave of their own accord for the West Indies, they would have to be bought, and sold:

> I now write you to-day to say we be glad for supply you with slaves. I speak with King Archibong and all Calabar gentlemen, and they be very glad for do same. Regard to free emigration, we man no will go for himself. We must

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[74]Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, p.424.

> buy him, all same we been do that since slave trade live. We be very glad for them man to come back again for Calabar, but think that time they go for West Indies, they no will come back here. We all agree to charge four boxes of brass and copper rods for man, woman, and child, but no can supply all you want one time. I think we can get four hundred or five hundred for one vessel, and load her in three or four months, for we no can get them all ready to wait for ship. Ship must be here, and take them on board as they come, because we no have place on shore for keep them. The ship will have to pay Comey to me and Archibong, but no other gentlemen - say ten thousand coppers for each tour, in cloth or any other trade goods. I be very glad if these terms suit you, for we not be able to do for less price, and man to be paid for with rods. I be very glad you write me again, to make arrangements with yourcaptain what time the ship will come.[75]

The failure of Britain to ratify the 1839 treaty with Bonny meant then that Bonny was the only outstanding country in the Delta that had not signed the anti-slave-trade treaty with Britain. So Palmerston now pressed for the signing of another treaty with Bonny, but by 1841, King Pepple and the chiefs of Bonny were in no mood for signing treaties. The rulers of Bonny had been called upon to sign four consecutive treaties between 1836 and 1839, and except for the 1837 treaty, none of these treaties had been ratified. Even the 1837 treaty was not being honoured by the British traders. So when Commander Tucker came in 1841, for another bout of treaty signing, Pepple was already disgusted with the whole exercise of treaty making. Furthermore, Pepple

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[75] Ibid., Appendix, p.667. (My italics.)

could not understand why a treaty which was already signed had to be ratified. The natives of Bonny are Ibo speaking people, and there is no such word as "ratification" in the Ibo language. So Pepple gradually came to regard the word "ratification" as no more than an ingenious exercise in "linguistic brinkmanship," devised by Britain for the purpose of evading his contractual commitments. Speaking to one of the English merchants, the infuriated Pepple declared "One white man come, and make book /treaty/ and another white man come tomorrow and break it; white man be fool, best treaty is in my head."[76]

Pepple was not the only one disgusted with British indecision with regard to Bonny. Some British traders were equally disgusted with Foreign Office vacillation on the issue. Captain Midgely, a Liverpool merchant trading at Bonny, told the parliamentary Select Committee of 1842 that these treaties would serve as a great incentive to trade, provided they were honoured, but if Britain had no intention of honouring these treaties, then Britain, he argued, should stay out of Bonny river altogether. Midgely complained that he had piloted one vessel up the river and was party to a treaty, and then within a month or two, another officer had come to say that "I have orders from the Admiralty that this

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[76]P.P. 1842, Vol.XI, Pt.I, QQ 4240-3.

treaty shall be null and void."[77] It became quite evident to Commander Tucker that obtaining a new treaty from Pepple would require hard bargaining, and possibly the offering of more attractive terms to the King, and that he proceeded to do. First of all, Tucker informed the King that the treaty would be "ipso facto" ratified as soon as it was signed. Secondly Pepple demanded and got $10,000 a year for five years, as his price for signing a new treaty. In his despatch to the home government regarding this new treaty, Tucker informed them "that the King considered the treaty ratified, and expected the first payment will be sent him immediately on receipt of this."[78]

By the time this new treaty was signed, Palmerston was out of office, and was replaced by the Earl of Aberdeen, who complained that the new treaty "differed widely from those proposed in Lord Palmerston's letter of April 8th, and are not such as should meet with the concurrence of H.M. Government." He therefore advised the Admiralty to pressure Pepple into accepting the terms of the 1839 treaty.[79] (The one which Britain also failed to ratify.)

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[77] P.P. 1842, Vol.XI, Pt.I, QQ 4240-4.

[78] P.P. 1847-48, Vol.LXIV, p.16(28), Encl.1 in No.25, Captain Tucker to the Secretary of the Admiralty; also, ibid., pp.17-18(29-30), Encl.2 in No.25, Engagement with the King and Chiefs of Bonny.

[79] Ibid., p.22(34), No.27, Viscount Canning to the Secretary to the Admiralty.

Britain's refusal to honour this treaty was more like lighting a smouldering fuse. The King, who had never wanted to sign the treaty in the first place, was to endure another humiliation. The town of Bonny was electric with excitement. Aberdeen's refusal to honour this last treaty was more like the breaking of diplomatic relations in anticipation of the outbreak of hostilities and these hostilities were not long in coming.

In 1843, the Admiralty was warned that King Pepple was threatening to seize the British ship Lady Paget as compensation for Britain's failure to honour the 1841 treaty, particularly the non-payment of $10,000 which was due to him. The Admiralty was thus instructed to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of British interests in case of an attack.[80] A report from Captain John Beecroft in 1844 revealed that war had broken out between the supercargoes and the people of Bonny and that King Pepple had somehow managed to get the supercargoes ashore and threatened to roast them alive if they refused to dismantle their guns.[81] These British traders, who were now herded into prison, complied with the King's demand, and landed their guns; the Lady Paget, which Aberdeen had warned the Admiralty about, was

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[80] Ibid., pp.30-31(42-43), No.38, also p.32(44), No.39.

[81] F.O. 84/549, Encl.2, in Admiralty letter of 12 June 1844, Beecroft to Nicolls.

damaged.[82]

Native feelings against the British now reached fever heat. The Bonny high priest, Awanta, sent out armed commandos from his seat in Ju Ju town to murder British traders. A Liverpool supercargo, Mr. Hartley, was murdered while on his way to claim a debt from the people of New Calabar.[83] Not long after, two British sailors were killed in the river.[84] Requests from British traders for protection were ignored by the West African Squadron. It should be remembered that Tucker made his entry into West Africa full of all sorts of enthusiasm, as well as a disposition to defend the British trader. That in fact seemed to have been the attitude of the navy since 1836. But by 1844, the ardour of the navy brass towards the British traders had cooled considerably. The Admiralty was beginning to find out that legislating for the British "palm oil ruffians" who had been schooled in the hard facts of Delta trade was no easy proposition. Commander Tucker himself had begun to show signs of disillusionment when he complained in 1840 that the English traders trading in Bonny including:

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[82]F.O. 84/549, Encl.2, in Admiralty letter of 12 June 1844, Beecroft to Nicolls, 20 February 1844.

[83]F.O. 2/3, No.125, Misc.69, River Bonny, Price to Clarendon, 15 March 1847.

[84]F.O. 2/3, No.125, Misc.80, Ward to Stanley, Admiralty, 9 July 1847.

> many of those who signed the Treaty of 1837 are in the constant practice of evading the fifth article of that treaty by inducing natives to supply them with palm oil which had been previously agreed and paid for by other masters and supercargoes, thereby setting the natives a bad example and causing them to have a bad opinion of the honesty and justice of British Traders.[85]

But the volume of letters pouring into the Foreign Office made it difficult for an activist like Palmerston, who was now back in the Foreign Office, to ignore these complaints. He therefore approached the Admiralty for more information on the matter.[86] But the Admiralty showed very little interest in the matter, although they promised to investigate.[87]

The investigation by the Admiralty only evoked a reply from Sir Charles Hotham, Commander of the West African Squadron in 1847, a reply which was in fact a defence of the navy's nonchalant attitude towards the Bonny dispute. Sir Charles pointed out that:

> The trade of Africa is formed on credit, and until the basis of that trade was altered it was little use trying to mediate between Africans and Europeans. Even in the imperfect state of trade the ignorant black adheres to all the stipulations and performs his part creditably and well. There may be exceptions, but, on the whole, their behaviour will stand a favourable comparision with that of more civilized nations.[88]

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[85] F.O.84/340, No.53, H.M.S. Wolverene at Sea, Tudor to Admiralty, 3 July 1840.

[86] F.O. 2/3, No.125, Misc.69 and 56, Bonny River, Price to Clarendon, 15 March 1847.

[87] F.O.2/3, No.125, Misc.77, Admiralty, Ward to Addington, 5 July 1847.

[88] F.O.2/3, No.125, H.M.S. Penelope, Ascension, Hotham to Ward, 3 May 1847. (My italics.)

He then blamed the British traders for the disturbances, and disavowed any desire to use the navy to support British commerical malfeasance. In reply to a petition from Bonny merchants asking for protection, Hotham declared that he was prepared to protect British lives and property where there was justification for such an action, but he warned the supercargoes that if by protection they meant "influence, either moral or physical, to recover your debts I am bound to tell you that it will be denied. To adopt such a cause might benefit the owners of ships at present in Bonny, but would forever affect the interests of those who will succeed you, and sap the foundations of legitimate trade."[89]

This was precisely the case King Pepple tried to make in 1838. Hotham, like Pepple, had traced Bonny's commercial difficulties to the "trust system" and until that system was changed, the navy would forever be called upon to intervene in Bonny's trade disputes, and this intervention had all the makings of a perpetual enterprise.

There is hardly any doubt that both Commander Hotham and the Admiralty completely misjudged the nature of the conflict. What was at issue was not simply trade, it was rather the dawn of a new imperial era which merely utilized the coercive commercial treaties as a means to an end. Until it

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[89]F.O.2/3, No.125, Encl.2, Ascension, Hotham to Bonny masters and others.

became necessary for Britain to undertake the formal but costly administration of these areas, cheap informal rule by force, a role which the navy was called upon to fulfil, was to remain the dominant instrument.

Lord Palmerston, whose name soon became synonymous with this policy, decided to come to the aid of the supercargoes, but meantime he had been assured by the Board of Trade that the property at stake was considerable.[90] The behaviour of the Board of Trade on this issue was highly hypocritical, since the Board, more than any other agency of the Government, knew exactly what was happening on the coast. In fact the Board had previously gone further than the mere recognition of the trade situation by issuing a statement in justification of African recalcitrance towards the fulfilment of their trade obligations.

> . . . complaints are received by Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State, by nearly every mail from the African coast, against the arbitrary and unjust proceedings of the British supercargoes towards the native chiefs and traders -- of violence to their persons, and the forcible detention of their goods; and there is reason to apprehend that, ruined by their share in their transactions, or disheartened and disgusted by an occupation in which they do not find ultimate advantage, these native dealers are occasionally driven to abandon peaceful and industrious pursuits, and betake themselves again to civil anarchy and the slave trade . . . . The prices at which European articles are pressed upon them in the first instance are unnecessarily exhorbitant, . . . It is not

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[90] F.O. 2/3, Misc.93, 16 December 1847. Palmerston to Board of Trade, and F.O. 2/3, No.128, Board of Trade to F.O., 24 December 1847.

> to be wondered that the native debtor aware of the disadvantageous terms on which he had originally contracted his engagement, on returning to the coast, and bringing with him the articles collected during his long circuit in the interior, should hesitate to deliver them to the creditor, and should yield to the bait of better terms offered by a rival European agent . . .[91]

Notwithstanding these admissible facts, Palmerston informed the Admiralty "that Sir Charles Hotham ought to be instructed to compel King Pepple and the chiefs of Bonny, by force, if necessary, to respect the lives and property of Her Majesty's subjects, and that the Commodore will be justified in enforcing the payment of debts due to British subjects."[92]

A reluctant Sir Charles entrusted this task to Commander Birch, one of his more energetic officers. One of Birch's first actions was to put an end to the Juju-town inspired murders of British traders by arresting the high priest, Awanta. But this proved a very difficult and ticklish problem for, in Bonny's theocratic state, the person of the high priest was sacred, just as that of the King, and could neither be touched or harmed. Pepple declined to arrest Awanta but gave the British permission to do so.[93] Birch proceeded than to forcibly arrest Awanta, whom the navy left

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[91]Hutchinson, Ten Years Wandering among Ethiopians, pp.189-192.

[92]Newbury, British Policy - Select Documents, p.383.

[93]F.O.2/3, No.125, Misc.80, and 65, Ward to Stanley, 9 July 1847.

to die on an unnamed island somewhere on the African coast.[94] By submitting to the arrest of Awanta, Pepple had gone one step further in totally undermining his own position. Since Awanta's person was as sacred as that of the King and since this sacredness or "juju" had been violated with the King's sanction, it then stood to reason that the King's person could be just as easily violated. After the arrest and expulsion of Awanta, pressure was brought to bear on Pepple to sign another treaty in 1848. Birch insisted that the 1848 treaty should include a clause guaranteeing that Bonny would give every protection in its power to the persons and property of British subjects trading in the river and "to send two trusty men, our subjects, in each boat trading between River Bonny and New Calabar for the purpose of guarding the said boats from attacks made on them by our people, but without our knowledge or approbation." The commercial stipulations of the 1848 treaty were soon followed by another anti-slave-trade treaty in which Pepple was forced to accept a $2,000 subsidy as had been stipulated in the 1839 treaty, instead of the $10,000 agreed upon in the 1841 treaty.[95]

Throughout the negotiations, Pepple reminded Birch of previous British bad faith, in which he accused Britain of

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[94] F.O. 2/3, Misc.5, Encl.14, C.O., Grey to Palmerston. See also, Newbury, British Policy - Select Documents, pp.381-383.

[95] P.P. 1850, Vol.IX, pp.427-428, Encls.1,2 and 3.

defrauding him of fifty thousand dollars which he claimed would have been the amount due him had he received his regular subsidy from 1841.[96]

These frequent incidents in the Delta meanwhile had convinced Palmerston that the desultory authority exercised by the navy was no longer sufficient to ensure the safety of British traders. Consequently, the Foreign Minister decided to appoint a Consul to look after British interests in the Delta. So on the 30th of June, 1849 the celebrated Captain John Beecroft was officially appointed Her Britannic Majesty's Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra, an area covering not only the Niger Delta and Lagos, but which also included the Kingdom of Dahomey.[97]

John Beecroft was a man who, on account of his long residence on the coast, had come to believe that the European occupation of West Africa was merely a question of time. He had also come to regard Africans with condescending affection. Long before his appointment as the British Consul for the Bight, he had already become an institution in the Bight of Biafra. To those African monarchs who were well disposed towards Britain's imperial ambitions, he maintained a fatherly

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[96]F.O. 2/3, Misc.5, H.M.S. Penelope, St. Helena, Hotham to Ward, and its enclosures, 11 November 1847.

[97]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.1(227), Palmerston to Beecroft. For details of the life of Beecroft, see K. O. Dike, "John Beecroft (1790-1854), Her Britannic Majesty's Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol.I (1956), pp.5-14.

and amiable relationship. But those chiefs who relished taking an independent line, he deposed with impunity. In 1851, he prematurely initiated naval action against King Kosoko of Lagos, and at the same time he deposed the reigning King Aqua of the Cameroons, placing Prince Him to reign in his place. A man of his temperament was not likely to take Pepple's regal pretensions lightly.

Nevertheless, it seemed that circumstances had contrived to play a cruel trick on Pepple, for once again the British government failed to ratify the 1848 treaty, a treaty Pepple was not in the least willing to sign. Not only was Pepple angry on this issue, and justifiably so, but the fact that the smaller Delta state of Kalagbari (New Calabar), once a tributary state of Bonny, was openly carrying on the slave trade rankled badly in his mind. In 1850 the master of the H.M. brig Contest captured a ship laden with about 152 slaves from Kalagbari.[98] King Amachree of the little state of Kalagbari could do as he pleased, yet Pepple, the descendant of Opubu the Great was to remain shackled to the terms of unratified treaties. Although the Foreign Office acknowledged that Pepple was justifiably angry, and forwarded an apology through Consul Beecroft to Pepple,

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[98] F.O.84/816, F.P. Beecroft to Palmerston, 4 May 1850.

Beecroft was not at all in the mood for apology. Although Beecroft grudgingly admitted that he was "only sorry that the fellow /King Pepple/ has not received his presents /subsidies/," he also pointed out that "the King should not be allowed to use it as an excuse for maltreating British traders."[99]

When the disturbances between Bonny and the British traders had broken out in 1844, Beecroft had advised that it was "highly necessary that there should be a Consul" to deal with the persecution of British traders in Bonny waters,[100] but in 1850 Beecroft was that Consul, and was determined to use his powers. This was the state of affairs when King Pepple became paralyzed in May 1852.[101]

During his period of illness, Pepple again completely ignored the party of the ex-Regent, and appointed two of his spineless but favourite supporters, Yanibo and Ishacco, "to administer the government in his name as Regent."[102] But Alali and his more numerous and powerful allies ignored all orders issued in the name of the King.[103] So Pepple now

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[99] F.O. 84/816, F.P. Beecroft to Palmerston, 13 August 1850.

[100] F.O. 84/549, Encl.2, in Admiralty letter of 12 June to F.O., F.P. Beecroft to Nicolls, 2 February 1844.

[101] F.O. 84/920, Encl.3, in No.62, Bonny River, Supercargoes to Beecroft, 31 August 1852.

[102] F.O. 84/920, F.P. No.3, Beecroft to Palmerston, 4 February 1853.

[103] Ibid.

resorted to one of his brilliant and adroit political manoeuvres. Not possessing the physical force to subdue Alali and his followers, he sought to enlist the support of the supercargoes by making them party to the choice of his two confidants. In pursuance of this policy, he "requested the masters and supercargoes of the various vessels to call a meeting of his chiefs to appoint two competent persons as Regents," and at his own clandestine request, Yanibo and Ishacco were chosen.[104] Pepple's strategy was simple. If Alali and his followers refused to attend the meeting which he expected they would, then they would be opposing not just the wishes of their King, but also the combined wishes of the supercargoes and the Consul. It worked out just as Pepple had expected. Alali and his followers refused to attend the meeting, and the supercargoes soon complained to the Consul that "we in conjunction with King Pepple, convened a meeting of chiefs to take such measures as would be thought advisable in the present confused state of affairs, when the authority of the King and ourselves was set at defiance by the parties refusing to attend although they had twenty-four hours notice."[105]

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[104] F.O.84/920, F.P. No.3, Beecroft to Palmerston, 4 February 1853.

[105] F.O.84/920, Encl.3, in No.62, Bonny River, Supercargoes to Beecroft, 31 August 1852.

Beecroft, on receipt of this letter, acted according to character. He informed the chiefs of Bonny "that it was their bounden duty to attend to the wishes of the Regents as they would now be properly appointed, during the King's pleasure, or as long as he continues indisposed."[106] Pepple had in fact succeeded in making the chiefs appear as trouble-makers, and by any standard, his suave intrigue was undoubtedly a veritable masterpiece of political engineering. But it was frustrating engineering at best, for Pepple in the long run merely succeeded in antagonizing both groups against himself. The King was Machiavellian to the marrow. He neither cared for the British traders nor the class of ex-slaves, but merely tried to use both groups against each other when it suited him. At one time he would exploit the nationalistic feelings of his people against the British, and at another time, he would enlist British help to subdue the opposition at home. Eventually both groups came to distrust him. At the end of November 1853 Pepple was well enough to take the reigns of government in his hands. His first move was directed against the class of ex-slaves. He tried to undermine the basis of their power through impoverishment. In 1852 it was decreed that no Bonny merchant was to be permitted to trade in the

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[106] F.O. 84/920, F.P.No.3, Beecroft to Palmerston, 4 February 1853.

interior market unless they took "trusts" from the King. Although this law was meant to impoverish the wealthy class of ex-slaves, this same class of people owed a lot of "trusts" to the supercargoes, and the law would in practice lead to the nullification of all outstanding debts owed to the British supercargoes. The supercargoes predictably complained to the Consul about the "injury done to trading interests here by the King compelling individuals to take trust from him at exhorbitant and ruinous prices before they can be allowed to trade at any market in the interior and knowing the said parties have trusts from the ships, in all probability of older date than his own."[107]

Most important of all was the fact that this same Pepple had tried to have the "trust system"abolished, and had even succeeded in aligning the naval brass behind him. The man was thoroughly without principles, and seemed to enjoy playing both sides against the middle. First he antagonized the ex-slaves, and now he succeeded in antagonizing the supercargoes. Having destroyed both flanks of his support, he found himself almost without friends or allies, and true to type, the old political dexterity of the King was again reactivated. Pepple now decided to embark on a foreign

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[107] F.O. 84/920, Encl.4, in No.62, Bonny River, Supercargoes to Beecroft, 31 August 1852.

war as a means of revitalizing the nationalistic spirit in Bonny, since it could no longer be fanned against the British, who shortly were his allies against his own countrymen.

In November 1853, Pepple ordered his people to put their war canoes in readiness on the pretext that he intended to go to the birth place of his mother as a token of his recovery from illness.[108] Although it was customary for people who have recovered from illness to give thanks to the spirit of their ancestors, Pepple's chiefs did not believe that his projected visit had anything to do with his previous illness. Nevertheless, they equipped their canoes for war, while hoping that the whole thing would be no more than an academic exercise. Meanwhile Pepple had written to the supercargoes, informing them of his desire "to pay a visit to Billa country /Kalagbari or New Calabar/ -- and I shall feel much obliged if two or more captains or supercargoes will go with me in their boats as far as Calabar River, to invite King Amachree on board my canoe as I wish to see him and make him a small present. This is a perfectly friendly invitation on my part, and if Amachree will not accept it, I beg that one Captain will remain at King Amachree's as a guarantee that he may come back safe -- I intend to leave

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[108] F.O.84/950, Encls.1 and 2, in No.57, Chiefs of Bonny to Beecroft.

Bonny in 4 days time. The Billa is the native country of my mother."[109]

Pepple's letter was quite puzzling. If the King intended to go on a sort of pilgrimage to his mother's birth place, one thing he obviously did not need was a British supercargo, since such a foreigner would have no part to play on such an auspicious occasion. Furthermore, the point of leaving a British supercargo as a hostage meant that Pepple had something up his sleeve, for it was very unlikely that Amachree or his people would accept a British supercargo as hostage. If they were at all inclined in that direction, they were more likely to demand a member of the royal family as hostage. It was not unlikely that the nimble King had calculated that with a British supercargo serving as hostage, he would be free to break his promise knowing full well that the natives of Kalagbari would not kill a British citizen without calling forth the wrath of the Consul and the navy. Whatever the King might have had in mind, the supercargoes viewed his letter with suspicion, and appealed to Pepple not to go to war. Pepple treated their advice with contempt and continued with his plans. The alarmed supercargoes now appealed to Beecroft for

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[109] F.O.84/950, Encl.3, in No.57, Pepple to Supercargoes, Bonny, 9 November 1853.

protection.[110]

After completing his preparations, Pepple left for Kalagbari, and on arriving there he ordered his war canoes to blockade the river channels separating the quarters occupied by the foreign merchants from that of the native compounds. Over half of his war captains refused to obey the order and returned to Bonny. On their return, the rebellious captains wrote to Beecroft, stating that they had refused "to proceed, seeing too that we had no cause for going to war. On our return to Bonny the whole voice of the country called for his removal, and we accordingly declared him no longer King."[111]

This so-called letter written by the chiefs to Consul Beecroft should be viewed with reservations. First of all, although this letter was signed by Alali, and some of his followers, it was not signed by all the chiefs, nor was it signed by any of the freeborns. Furthermore, neither Alali nor his followers could read or write. The said letter was written by supercargoes, and the wishes embodied in the letter were those of the supercargoes and not Alali's. But most important of all, Alali and his followers were still ex-slaves,

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[110] F.O. 2/9, Bonny River, Supercargoes to Beecroft, 15 December 1853.

[111] F.O. 84/950, Encls.1 and 2, in No.57, Chiefs to Beecroft, November 1854.

who had no constitutional authority according to Bonny native laws and customs to depose a king. Even Alali and his followers, in spite of their wealth, knew their constitutional limitations. This is not to say that Alali and his followers had not been anxious to deprive the King of his powers, that they probably meant to do, but depriving him of his powers meant, in effect, a return to the "status quo ante bellum" -- a return to the constitutional situation as it existed before 1837. That meant the existence of a largely powerless king occupying the throne of Bonny, while Alali and his followers wielded the real power. It should also be remembered that Bonny was a theocratic state, a state where Juju occupied a central position in the body politic of the nation. Bonny kings were divine kings and not subject to deposition according to the stipulations of their Juju. Although the high priest Awanta had been deposed, an even more formidable high priest, Juju Peterside had taken his place, and there was no proof that the implied repercussions that were supposed to result from such a violation of the Juju had diminished one iota in 1854.

Although Captain Beecroft and the supercargoes made it appear that the King followed Beecroft for his own safety, since he had been deposed by his chiefs,[112] incontrovertible

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[112]Burns, Nigeria, p.141; Sir W. N. M. Geary, Nigeria Under British Rule (London: Frank Cass and Co.Ltd., 1965), pp.86-87. See also Newbury, British Policy - Select Documents, pp.391-392.

evidence to the contrary exists. The fact is that Pepple was removed by the Court of Equity, presided over by Captain Beecroft, the British Consul. According to Beecroft's subsequent report which differed markedly from his previous one, after Pepple had been deported:

> The whole of the Chiefs said that sooner than Pepple should be taken away, they would let him be King again . . . they also thought that if he was taken away the Ebo /Ibo/ men would not pay either his debts /the trusts they held in the interior markets/ or theirs . . . that it was contrary to their Jew-Jew to do away with their King.[113]

So these reports by Beecroft prove beyond doubt that the chiefs did not depose him. The report does in fact corroborate the King's own version of the incident during his meeting with Dr. Baikie in Fernando Po in which the King showed Baikie two letters from English trading captains testifying that he had left of his own volition.[114] In fact Beecroft's later elucidations on the incident more than confirm these contentions, as well as disproving the notion that Pepple was expelled by his chiefs. As Beecroft later stated, he had to find the means of soothing the fears of Pepple's chiefs, by making it appear that "he was not taking him away, but allowed him to go at his own request."[115]

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[113] F.O.84/950, Encl.1, in No.57, Beecroft to F.O., 20 February 1854.

[114] Baikie, Narrative of an Exploring Voyage, p.334.

[115] F.O.84/950, Encl.2, in No.57, Bonny Chiefs to Beecroft, November 1854.

The deportation of King Pepple marked another milestone in the British penetration and occupation of Nigeria -- a penetration which made it impossible for her to withdraw from the engulfed territory after 1865. Britain's success in Bonny as we have seen was due to her adroit exploitation of the domestic quarrels between the aristocracy and the class of ex-slaves. Having ingratiated herself first with one faction, and then with another, she was able to entrench herself in an unassailable position through which she expanded her activities to the other areas of Nigeria, by largely repeating the Bonny experiment whenever such comparable situations arose. This success could then be regarded as having launched her in her career of territorial expansion in the Bight of Benin and Biafra.

CHAPTER IV

BRITISH PENETRATION IN THE BIGHT OF BENIN (LAGOS) AND THE DAWN OF MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN NIGERIA

The British penetration of Nigeria and the subsequent weakening of the power of the native rulers was accentuated by the emergence of British missionaries on the west coast. This surge of missionary activity which began in the eighteen forties was a direct result of Thomas Fowell Buxton's ideas as expressed in his book, The Slave Trade and Its Remedy. Thomas Buxton was the veteran parliamentary leader of the anti-slave-trade faction who had come to the conclusion that naval patrols and bilateral treaties had failed to put down the slave trade, and should therefore be relegated to a subsidiary role. The slave trade, he felt, should be attacked at its source through the agency of legitimate trade, the conclusion of anti-slave-trade treaties with native rulers, missionary endeavours, and the cultivation of the soil.

On the effects of legitimate commerce, Buxton argued that:

> legitimate commerce would put down the slave trade, by demonstrating the superior value of man as a labourer on the soil, to man as an object of merchandise; and if conducted on wise and equitable principles, might be the precursor, or rather the attendant, of civilization, peace, and christianity, to the unenlightened, warlike, and the heathen tribes who now so fearfully prey on each other, to supply the slave markets of the world. In this view of the subject, the merchant, the philan-

> thropist, the patriot, and the Christian may unite, and should the government of this country /Britain/ lend its powerful influence in organizing a commercial system of just, liberal, and comprehensive principles -- guarding the rights of the native on one hand, and securing protection of the honest trader on the other -- a blow would be struck at the nefarious traffic in human beings, from which it could never recover . . . .[1]

As to the missionary aspect of the enterprise, Buxton had looked to liberated Africans in Sierra Leone and the West Indies to undertake the regeneration of their benighted brethren in Africa.

> . . . Africa would present the finest field for the labours of Christian missionaries which the world has yet seen opened to them. I have no hesitation in stating my belief, that there is in the Negro race a capacity for receiving the truths of the Gospel beyond most other heathen nations; while, on the other hand, there is this remarkable, if not unique, circumstance in their case -- that a race of teachers of their own blood is already in course of rapid preparation for them; that the providence of God has overruled even slavery and the Slave Trade for this end; and that from among the settlers of Sierra Leone, the peasantry of the West Indies, and the thousands of their children now receiving christian education, may be expected to rise a body of men who will return to the land of their fathers, carrying Divine truth and all its concomitant blessings into the heart of Africa.[2]

When Buxton talked of legitimate commerce, he was not referring to the old fashioned trade in palm oil based on the familiar ports of Liverpool, Bristol, and London; nor

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[1] T. F. Buxton, The Slave Trade and Its Remedy (London: John Murray, Albermarle Street, 1840), p.306.

[2] Ibid., p.11.

was he referring to the same class of traders whose notoriety had become a byword on the coast. He had a different group of trader in mind, as well as a different kind of trade which would be largely based on the products of native agriculture, missionary efforts, and the cooperation of school masters, all leading to the elevation of the native mind, and the flourishing of civilization.

> . . . We must elevate the minds of her people and call forth the capabilities of her soil . . . . Let missionaries and school masters, the plough and the spade, go together and agriculture will flourish; confidence between man and man will be inspired, whilst civilization will advance as the natural effect, and christianity operate as the proximate cause, of this happy change.[3]

Just how this civilization was to spring from these isolated undertakings was never properly explained, but nevertheless, the British Government totally accepted Buxton's prescription and the result was the Government-sponsored 1841 expedition. In spite of the meticulous care, expertise, and expense which marked the expedition, the 1841 expedition proved a total fiasco. Of the one hundred and fifty Europeans who took part in the expedition, forty-five died of malaria fever, and a nervous and bewildered government quickly recalled the expedition to avoid the total decimation of the crew.[4]

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[3]Buxton, The Slave Trade and Its Remedy, pp.282 and 511.

[4]J. F. A. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1842-1891, (London: Longmans, Green and Co.Ltd., 1965), pp.11-13. See also Boahen, Britain, the Sahara and the Western Sudan, pp.99-100.

Rev. Hope Waddell has left us an account of the influence of Buxton's book on himself and his Jamaican Presbytery.

> From the day the sun of negro freedom arose in 1834, it was hoped by all friends of Africa, that, among the emancipated Christians of the West Indies, valuable agents would be found for propagating the gospel in the land of their progenitors. The subject engaged the attention of our Presbytery in 1839. But on many essential points we were so deficient in information, that we could resolve only to make it a matter of reflection, inquiry, and prayer . . . . Ere the appointed period came round, the necessary information was unexpectedly supplied. A venerable and honoured relative in Dublin sent me Sir T. F. Buxton's book, just then published, on 'The Slave Trade and its Remedy,' which opened up the whole subject. And when the Presbytery met at Goshen, in July 1841, and resumed consideration of it, the conviction was produced in all our minds that the way was ready for our going forward . . . .[5]

The Jamaican Presbyterian Church did go forward by sending Rev. Hope Waddell to Calabar, and soon other missionaries followed suit.[6] Having arrived in Nigeria, those missionaries who were stationed on the coast found it expedient to call on the aid of the Consul and his man-of-war, just as the supercargoes had done before them whenever they ran into native intransigence. While Britain sought through naval and consular intervention to change or manipulate the political system of the country, the missionaries sought, often with British backing, to alter the social patterns of the people.

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[5]Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa, 1829-1858, p.206.

[6]Ibid., p.241.

Hope Waddell and the other British missionaries in Calabar were able to undermine and eventually destroy in a relatively short time, such Calabar customs as slave immolation, substitutionary punishment, ordeal by poison of the Esere beans, and human sacrifice. It cannot be denied that a great many of these Calabar customs were decidedly barbarous, especially if considered retrospectively, nevertheless the fact remains that these local customs were equivalent to our present day written constitutions, and by undermining them, the only basis of effective government evolved through centuries of adaptation was completely destroyed. The result of this became glaringly evident in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when local customs or local authority of any meaningful magnitude in Calabar became a relic of the past.

In spite of these "negative" results of missionary presence in Calabar, the missionary, by and large, stood head and shoulders above the British trader in all respects. Furthermore, the missionaries, through their presence in the town, sought to act as a sop against the despicable excesses of the trading community in Calabar, often aided and abetted by the British Consul.

One of these excesses occurred in February 1855, when Acting Consul Lynslager arrived at Calabar on the invitation of the resident British traders, who had demanded the destruc-

tion of "Old Town", one of the towns making up the city-state of Calabar, on the grounds that human sacrifice had taken place there during the burial rites of Chief Willy Tom Robins of that town who had died in 1854. The Presbyterian missionaries resident in Calabar strenuously opposed this measure, which they felt would punish both the guilty and innocent alike, and suggested instead that the guilty ones alone be punished since their identities were known. But as was often the case, the views of the traders prevailed, and Old Town was bombarded by H.M.S. Antelope.[7] As soon as the news of this atrocity reached England, the traders tried to shift the blame to the missionaries, who were not even consulted when the nefarious scheme was being hatched by the supercargoes. In spite of the facts of this case, the rumours associating missionaries with this episode became widespread in Britain. They circulated variously in some of the newspapers as well as in Parliament, and, as of the present, their resilience was clearly proven by Dr. E. A. Ayandele, who stated in his version of this incident that:

> . . . in 1855, at the deliberate wish of missionaries and traders, Old Town, . . . was completely levelled because 'the total destruction of that place would be a great benefit to the other towns (and) to the advancement of civilization.'"[8]

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[7] Ibid., pp.549-556.

[8] E. A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1966), pp.16-17.

But the footnote cited by Dr. Ayandele as his authority for this assertion said nothing of the sort:

> We the undersigned masters and supercargoes of British vessels trading in this river, do hereby certify upon honour, that the village named Old Town in the river has been for many years the scene of diabolical murders, and poisoning by the chop-nut, alias poisonous nut . . . and we are fully of opinion that from the great number of natives who were murdered or poisoned at the death of the late chief, Willy Tom, such scenes will never cease until some very strong and decisive measures are taken. And we are further of opinion, that the total destruction of that place would be of great benefit to the other towns /and/ to the advancement of civilization . . . .[9]

There was no mention in this letter of the missionaries being party to this Consular representation, and furthermore, none of the nine signatories of this letter was a member of the missionary establishment in Calabar, but all the signatories were members of the British trading community in the town as the letter appropriately stated in the opening sentence. The signatories were Charles Calvert, Edward Davies, J. Cuthbertson, Peter Crompton, John W. Morgan, George Alex Lewis, J. Boak, John Holmes and William Woodfine. This is not by any means an attempt to totally defend the role of the missionaries in Nigeria, but rather an attempt to prove that the undermining of local authority in Nigeria by the missionaries, from the eighteen forties to the end of the eighteen sixties, was due

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[9]P.P. 1854-5, Vol.LVI, p.163(171), Encl.4 in No.122.

largely to the indirect result of missionary activity in the country, and the missionaries at this time honestly believed that they were acting in good faith, or at least in consonance with the concept and beliefs of Christian doctrines.

The opprobrium which was later heaped on the missionaries as a result of their activities in West Africa did not really become relevant until the beginning of the eighteen seventies, when the new crop of young missionaries became living testimonies to the replacement of the concept of informal empire with that of imperial nationalism. With the revival of the "new imperialism" in the eighteen seventies, God was grudgingly relegated to a second class seat while "Pax-Britannica" occupied the only prominent position. In spite of the good intentions of the British missionaries in the eighteen forties, the evocation of the Consular umbrella over nearly all the aspects of missionary activity in Calabar merely blurred the differences which existed between the missionary and secular sphere of British activity in the Bight of Biafra, and this in turn rendered the missionary suspect in the eyes of the indigenous inhabitants.

That Rev. Hope Waddell of the Presbyterian mission was already worried about this danger became vividly evident in his reaction to the accusation levelled at the missionaries over the bombardment of Old Town.

> The imputation of such a crime to us was ridiculous, as well as injurious and untrue. We were servants of the Prince of Peace, bound and disposed to promote peace between man and man, as well as between man and God; and we neither threatened the natives with 'men-of-war' nor, without proper and public cause, went to them when they came up our river. The Creek Town people, at least, knew well that we never sought such aid in our Lord's work, and were deeply afflicted by the punishment of Old Town . . . we were all of one mind, that our gospel work could never be carried on in league with the embodiment of foreign power, and, in fact, would be ruined, if the natives should suspect that our endeavours at reformation were a snare to entangle them in promises, to be enforced by the thunder of war guns . . . .[10]

But no matter how much Waddell or any other British missionary might regret the action of the secular arm of British authority in the Bights, the imposing presence of the British Consul appeared to have become a "sine qua non" for the successful discharge of the routine activities of British missionaries.

In 1857, three slaves took refuge in the mission house at Duke Town, and when Duke Town missionaries refused to return them, an angered Duke Ephraim "blew Egbo on the mission House." (Blowing Egbo meant the forbidding of any contact with missionaries on the pain of death.)[11] Consul

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[10] Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa, p.555.

[11] The Egbo society was a free-masonry society to which all the leading Kings and Chiefs of Calabar belonged. Through the Egbo society, laws governing the free citizens and slaves were promulgated. Egbo laws were promulgated by masked messengers. Participation in Egbo deliberations by the uninitiated or women always meant death. For details of Egbo functionaries, see Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years..., Chapters 8, 13, 16, 21 and 22.

Hutchinson, who was immediately sent for both by the British traders and missionaries, arrived in H.M.S. Scourge. On arrival, he sent for Duke Ephraim and the other Calabar chiefs, informing them that, by virtue of the paper which they had signed with the missionaries in 1846, they, the chiefs of Calabar, including King Eyo Honesty of Creek Town, had forfeited their land forever.[12] Not only did the chiefs forfeit their land, they were made to promise that from then on they must patronize the missionaries and desist from anti-missionary activities since they could only do so at the "displeasure" of the Queen.[13]

In spite of the progress made by the Presbyterians in Calabar, the reverse was the case in Badagry, Lagos, and Abeokuta, where the eighteen forties saw an energetic missionary assault on these strategic areas in the Bight of Benin. The subsequent dominant British activity in Lagos and its surroundings becomes more intelligible only if viewed retroactively from the efforts of these missionaries before the advent of consular jurisdiction. It is therefore safe to state that the rise of British power in the Bight of Benin in the eighteen fifties was directly due to the pioneering activities of British missionaries in that part of Africa.

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[12] P.P. 1857, Vol.XLIV, pp.55-56(203-204), Encl.5 in No.70.

[13] Ibid.

The advent of British missionaries in the hinterland and along the Yoruba shores was caused by the gradual and sometimes illicit emigration of liberated Africans of Yoruba descent from Sierra Leone to Lagos, Badagry, and Abeokuta. Unlike the Maroons from Jamaica or the Nova Scotians from Canada, these Yoruba slaves were quite often captured after only a few days sailing from their point of embarkation in the vicinity of their homeland. Yet their eventual return to their native homes was not all due to nostalgic longings for the fatherland, but was rather triggered by the harsh economic realities of Sierra Leone. Although many of the liberated Sierra Leonians had prospered in their chosen fields of endeavour, for the majority the prospects of economic improvement were bleak. Since the soil in Sierra Leone was not conducive to agriculture, many of them took to trading as a means of maintaining their livelihood. Soon some of them, either singly or collectively, bought condemned slave ships and began to trade along the coast of Badagry and Lagos.[14] While trading along these coastal points, they soon began to meet old family acquaintances, and as Bishop Crowther later described it "some found their children, others their brothers

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[14]Christopher Fyfe, Sierra Leone Inheritance (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp.147-150. See also Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, pp.25-30.

and sisters by whom they were entreated not to return to Sierra Leone." Several of them had gone into the interior altogether. Others in the colony had messages sent them by their parents and relations whom the traders met at Badagry.[15]

Through this inauspicious beginning, many of the liberated slaves began quite unofficially to return to their homelands. But in 1839, twenty-one leading Yoruba merchants in Sierra Leone led by Mr. Thomas Will petitioned Governor Doherty, imploring the British government officially for permission to allow Yoruba immigrants to settle in Badagry, as well as requesting that Badagry be given Crown protection. The humble petitioners:

> . . . feel with much thankful to Almighty God, and Queen of England who has rescued us from being in a state of slavery, and has brought us to this Colony, and set us at Liberty, and thanks be to the God of all Mercy who has sent his servant to declare unto us poor Creatures the way of Salvation, which illuminates our understanding, so we are brought to know we have a soul to save, and when your humble petitioners look back upon their Country people, who /sic/ now living in darkness, without the light of the Gospel, so we take upon ourselves to direct this our humble petition to your Excellency.
>
> That the Queen will be graciously to sympathize with her humble petitioners to establish a Colony to Badagry that the same may be under the Queen's Jurisdiction, and beg of her Royal Majesty will be pleased . . . to send missionary with us, and by so doing the slave trade can be abolished, because the slave dealers can be afread to go up to the aforesaid place, so that the Gospel of Christ can be preached throughout our land . . . .[16]

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[15] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.27.

[16] Ibid., pp.27-28.

First of all, this pious sounding request from the liberated Africans should not be taken at its face value since the petitioners had other selfish reasons for making it. Badagry at the time in question was divided into wards, and each ward had its chief who was virtually independent. Furthermore, all Badagry chiefs at this time were inveterate slave traders and any unprotected African living among them was likely to find himself or herself enslaved and sold again. So in asking that Britain take over Badagry, the liberated Africans were mainly thinking in terms of their own safety rather than displaying any feelings of vassalage to the crown. In effect, all these honourable petitioners were demanding naval protection, and after 1861, these very Sierra Leone immigrants were to become staunch opponents of British rule in Nigeria.[17] The request for British missionaries should also be viewed with skepticism. The life of the liberated African in Sierra Leone had always been closely associated and interwoven with religious ethics. Anglicans, Wesleyan Methodists, and others had been prominent in the affairs of the colony. So in requesting missionaries, the petitioners were acting in accordance with an expected pattern of behaviour. Their upbringing as well as their missionary friends inclined them to ask for missionaries, and so

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[17] P.P. 1865, Vol.XXXVII, pp.46-47(332-333), Appendix D.

they did; furthermore, such requests were normally guaranteed to achieve favourable response from officialdom. This does not mean that the petitioners had not acquired some affection for Christian ethics, but rather it seems that because of their long sojourn in Sierra Leone, these liberated Africans had become enamoured by the routine and pomp of Christian liturgical exercises, although they had in fact no serious desire of becoming chained to the demands of rigorous theology. This became particularly obvious when the Church began to tighten up on sliding Sierra Leone "Christians" who had relapsed into polygamy and other "heathen vices"[18] on arrival in Abeokuta.

Governor Doherty, who was favourably disposed towards the petitioners at first, forwarded the petition to London where the Government turned it down on the grounds that they could not send them "without giving them protection which implies expense. But they can go if they wish."[19] Governor Doherty's earlier enthusiasm about the project soon evaporated when he discovered that none of the well-to-do signatories of the petition had any intention of leaving Sierra Leone. As soon became evident to the Governor, only the relatively poor ones who could not make a go of it in Sierra Leone

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[18]Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.35.

[19]Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.28.

desired to return home.[20] Even the missionaries began to display a certain hostility towards the project. Henry Townsend, the young Anglican missionary in Sierra Leone spoke regretfully of Christian parishioners leaving "the country where God was known for this where God was not known; thus turning their backs upon them."[21] But the publicity given to the 1841 expedition in Sierra Leone created a completely different atmosphere overnight. The Governor who had once spoken derisively of the restless poor leaving Sierra Leone because they could not get jobs now began to talk of merchants who wished "to carry back among their country men the art and improvements of Europe which they had acquired here, with the fortunes which had been amassed by them."[22]

The Methodists, who had played a less conspicuous part in the 1841 expedition, were the first to give full-hearted support to this emigration scheme as a means of penetrating the interior of Nigeria. As a result, the Methodists soon despatched Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman, the Negro superintendent of the Methodist mission at Cape Coast, to occupy Badagry as an extended part of his Cape

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[20] Ibid.. Professor Ajayi gives the number of signatories as 23 but the actual number is 21. See Fyfe, Sierra Leone Inheritance, p.149.

[21] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.29.

[22] Ibid..

Coast diocese. Freeman arrived in Badagry with a Fanti assistant by the name of William de Graft, and bought a small piece of land on which he built a temporary chapel at a cost of about £300.[23] Although Freeman began to hold prayer meetings even before his chapel was completed, he soon realized that most of his congregation had left or were leaving Badagry for the inland town of Abeokuta, so he decided to visit Abeokuta where he was well received by Chief Shodeke, the paramount chief of Abeokuta at the time.[24]

The Church Missionary Society, not willing to be outdone by the Methodists, soon despatched Henry Townsend to Badagry and Abeokuta where he was also well received by Chief Shodeke. Townsend soon returned to England to have himself ordained as a minister before returning to Abeokuta. The friendly reception which the missionaries received at Abeokuta was not occasioned by any desire on the part of Chief Shodeke to become a Christian, but was rather due to the geo-political problems which Shodeke had to face. The break up of the Old Oyo Empire, occasioned first by the peaceful invitation of the Moslems into Ilorin, and later by their forcible seizure of Ilorin, gave rise to a series of wars which completely destroyed Yoruba political hegemony. By 1842, the year Freeman

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[23] Ibid., p.31.

[24] Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, pp.26-27.

visited Abeokuta, the Egba (a generic name given to the inhabitants of Abeokuta) had only occupied their present site for twelve years.[25] They had arrived at that specific site around 1830, after having barely escaped decimation and slavery at the hands of the people of Ibadan.[26] Yet, even their escape to the Abeokuta site did not solve their problems, since they were still sandwiched between three formidable enemies, Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode and Dahomey.[27] So in welcoming the missionaries, Shodeke was anxious to obtain European allies which he hoped would serve him in good stead in time of crisis. The subsequent history of Abeokuta proved the wisdom of his foresight.

Once the missionaries established themselves in Abeokuta, they found themselves inextricably involved with the political problems of the town. Abeokuta's primary problem had always been that of obtaining access to the sea, and conversely, it had always been the desire of Ibadan and Ijebu-Ode to block this ambition by preemptory military action. The Owiwi war of 1832 and the attempt by Abeokuta to subdue Egbado were all part of the attempt by Ibadan and Ijebu-Ode to prevent Abeokuta from gaining access to the

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[25] Ibid., p.16.

[26] Ibid., p.17.

[27] Ibid., pp.16-20.

coast.[28]

An easy access to the coast meant that Abeokuta would be able to obtain gunpowder easily, and would thus be in a position to maintain her independence or occasionally engage in aggressive wars of her own, as she did in the case of Egbado and Otta. The eventual occupation of Lagos by Britain should be viewed from this vantage point, i.e. Abeokuta's desire, and invariably the desire of the missionaries to obtain access to the sea. When the first Methodist and C.M.S. missionaries arrived in Badagry in 1842, Akitoye was still the King of Lagos, and Egba's access to the sea was still assured. But in 1845, a palace revolution engineered by Prince Kosoko led to the ouster of Akitoye and the usurpation of the Lagos crown by Kosoko. Akitoye meantime took refuge with his maternal relatives in Abeokuta -- an affront which Kosoko never forgot. So when the missionaries returned in 1845, they found the political situation in Lagos completely changed. Kosoko was antagonistic to Egba ambitions and had closed all Egba access to Lagos, so the Egba had to depend on the port of Badagry for their military provisions. The subsequent conquest of Egbado and Otta by the Egbas had then become necessary for without the subjugation of these two strategic areas, Abeokuta's access to Badagry would also be

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[28] Ibid., pp.19-21.

in jeopardy. The conquest of Egbado on the other hand brought Abeokuta dangerously close to Dahomey's political sphere of interest. Furthermore, as long as Abeokuta remained a middle sized power, Dahomey remained quiescent, but the geographical position of Abeokuta, which placed her in constant danger of encirclement, made her constantly restive, and her subsequent defeat of the two military giants of Yorubaland, Ijebu-Ode and Ibadan,[29] merely catapulted her into military prominence -- a prominence which Dahomey found difficult to ignore, and which subsequently led her to regard Abeokuta as a dangerous upstart which must be reduced to obedience.

Dahomey's attempt to relieve the siege of Ado in 1844 led to her defeat by the Abeokutans. King Ghezo, who led his army in person, barely escaped capture, as he left his umbrella, war charms and stool behind,[30] while beating a fast retreat.

This battle was still raging when Henry Townsend, the C.M.S. missionary, returned in 1844 and he was therefore not able to proceed to Abeokuta immediately. The interim death of Chief Shodeke further detained Townsend because of the succession dispute which it occasioned, but later on Townsend and Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the Yoruba evangelist, were given

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[29] Ibid., pp.19-24.

[30] Ibid., p.31.

permission to proceed, and they entered Abeokuta on the 3rd of August 1846. The Wesleyan Methodists also followed suit later on in 1847.[31] In 1848 Townsend left Abeokuta for Britain on leave, arriving there just in time to testify in the Hutt Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry which was deliberating on the utility of retaining the preventive squadron.

William Hutt, MP for Gateshead, felt that the Preventive Squadron was expensive both in human life and financial resources, in addition to being ineffective in stopping the slave trade. He argued that the slave trade could best be stopped through the intensification of bilateral treaties with European countries, as well as by cultivating a more active commercial relationship with the west coast of Africa.[32] His attack, which began in a parliamentary debate on June 24, 1845, was called into question by Sir Robert Peel, Sir George Cockburn, Admiral Sir Charles Napier, and the Prime Minister, all of whom defended the work of the navy.[33] Nevertheless the attack continued intermittently till it came to a head on the 22nd of February 1848, when Hutt reopened the whole question in a parliamentary speech. He repeated his previous

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[31] Ibid., p.33.

[32] Hansard 1845, June 24, Vol.LXXXI, 3rd Series, pp.1156-1172.

[33] Hansard 1845, June 24, Vol.LXXXI, 3rd Series, pp.1172-1182.

accusations of 1845, and again requested the establishment of a Select Committee to consider the whole question afresh.[34] Hutt's motion for a Select Committee was agreed to, and worst of all, he was asked by the House of Lords to become the Committee chairman. The consequences of such an action became rather obvious, for this was no more than an earlier prototype of the Adderley Committee. After interviewing hundreds of witnesses, beginning with Lord Palmerston and a list of African missionaries which included Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the committee adjourned "sine die", but with the commissioners equally divided on the issue. So Sir William Hutt, now using his prerogative as the committee chairman, cast a dissenting vote against the continuation of "an undertaking, the success of which this country has endeavoured to ensure by great sacrifices of human life, and for which it has consented to place at constant hazard the peace of the world."[35]

Having guessed that such an outcome was in the making, the Church Missionary Society, led by its Secretary Henry Venn, organized a rival committee using Bishop Wilberforce, a member of the House of Lords and the son of the more famous William Wilberforce, to call for a fresh committee

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[34]Hansard 1848, Vol.XCVI, February 22, House of Lords, pp.1091-1131.

[35]Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, p.111.

hearing. This new committee, which was chaired by Wilberforce, began sitting in 1850 and interviewed the same witnesses but came to a completely opposite conclusion.

> That the evidence which has been given before this committee has led me to the conclusion, that although the efforts of Great Britain have not supressed the Slave Trade, and although it is doubtful whether the number of slaves exported during the last two years is not greater than in some preceding years, that upon the whole a large reduction of the Trade has been effected, and its probable increase has been prevented. That all the evidence goes to prove that the prevalent impression as to the general unhealthiness of the Cruising Squadron is without foundation; and further, that the withdrawal of the cruisers from the coast of Africa would cause a great immediate increase in the Slave Trade, and would inflict most serious injury on the legitimate commerce of Africa . . . . That to abandon the suppression of the Trade, to which in the face of the whole civilized world, Great Britain is solemnly and repeatedly pledged, would be a fatal blow to her national honour.[36]

The House of Commons was now faced with two diametrically opposite recommendations and it became obvious that Parliament would have to vote for one or the other. In preparing for this crucial vote, Henry Venn galvanized into a formidable pressure group a plethora of missionaries, naval officers, politicians, and the new British Consul to the Bight of Biafra and Benin, Captain John Beecroft. But because of the uncertain mood of Parliament, Prime Minister Russell transformed the vote on this issue into a vote of confidence in the Government. That in effect meant that an

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[36]P.P. 1850, Vol.IX, pp.577-592, House of Lords.

unfavourable vote would have led to the resignation of the Government and the calling of a fresh election. Even this device did not completely reassure the Prime Minister as to the outcome of the vote. So as the debate dragged past midnight, the Prime Minister rose, and spoke in defense of the preventive squadron. He declared that Britain could not abandon a thirty years' task nor could she abandon Africa, or give up the protection of commerce which was regarded as a global necessity:

> We must not despond, even if the task of clearing the seas seemed at the moment to present insurmountable difficulties . . . . Nothing but our being faint-hearted on this subject, and saying we are unable to cope with the great evils to be met, will finally give a permanent sway and supremacy to the Slave Trade . . . . It appears to me that if we give up this high and holy work, and proclaim ourselves no longer fitted to lead in the championship against the curse and the crime of slavery, that we have no longer a right to expect a continuance of those blessings, which by God's favour, we have so long enjoyed.[37]

The debates ended at 2:15 A.M. with one hundred and fifty-four members voting for Hutt's motion, and two hundred and thirty-two against it.[38]

During the parliamentary wrangling caused by the Hutt Committee proceedings, the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society were able to make a lasting impression on Lord Palmerston, for they not only supported the retention

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[37]Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, pp.112-113.

[38]Ibid., p.113.

of the squadron, but wished to see British influence penetrate the hinterland of Western Nigeria. With a predominant British influence established in the hinterland, the missionaries would then be in a position to receive protection from British-oriented potentates, at no cost to the British Government. Furthermore, British traders would equally reap rich harvests with the necessity of calling in the navy.[39] With this view in mind, the missionaries proceeded to build up Abeokuta as a prospective centre of Christianity and civilization as compared to the barbarism and slave trading predilection of Dahomey and Lagos. Abeokuta also had the added advantage of having "Christian" Sierra Leone immigrants who were originally from that place and the surrounding area, as well as being British subjects.

On paper the case for Abeokuta looked impressive. But the sponsors of Abeokuta did not merely stop at these "self-evident facts," they even resurrected the ghost of the disastrous 1841 expedition which had cost Britain about £100,000 sterling and forty-five lives. The objectives of this expedition, which could not be achieved in 1841, were now said to be within reach through Abeokuta by merely following the readily accessible and navigable Ogun River, and

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[39]Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.66.

> Traders from the banks of the Niger visit the principal markets of Abeokuta and there is little doubt that the road to Ega and Rabbah, the former of which towns was the highest point teached by the Niger Expedition, might be opened for trade through the channel.[40]

Leaving nothing to chance the missionaries made capital of the "fact" that the Egba chiefs were well disposed towards the English and that the native language was being reduced to writing by the Church Missionary Society missionaries. Furthermore the Sierra Leone immigrants were said to have helped spread the use of the English language at Abeokuta. In conclusion Abeokuta was incredibly described as being governed "under a free form of constitutional government different from the tyranny of Dahomey and Ashantee."[41] The last allegation was calculated to impress Palmerston, the champion of liberty and constitutional government in Europe.

In actual fact, very few of these enumerated advantages of Abeokuta could be regarded as completely true, and if subjected to close scrutiny, all would be proved largely false. The government of Abeokuta, which had been paraded as a constitutional government, was nothing less than a military oligarchy, and it had to be because of the instability of the entire Yoruba kingdom. Abeokuta was divided into

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[40]P.P. 1852, Vol. LIV, p.34(260) Reverend Townsend to Reverend Venn. See also P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.29-30 (255-256) Viscount Palmerston to Consul Beecroft.

[41]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.34(260)

different townships, and each township had its Ologun or War Chief. After the Owiwi War, these Ologuns reorganized themselves under Chief Shodeke, who now took the supreme title of Balogun.[42] Although in between the short periods of peace Shodeke sought to introduce a civil constitution, this experiment was localized to the Egba Alake section of Abeokuta township, while the other three sections remained aloof. In any case, this experiment in civil administration was extremely short lived.[43]

As to the contributions which the liberated slaves from Sierra Leone were supposed to make in enhancing British prestige in the interior, the opposite appeared to have taken place in a great majority of cases. In 1848-49, just two years after the missionaries had settled in Abeokuta, the persecution of Christian converts broke out in one section of Abeokuta. This persecution was triggered by the burial of the first native Christian convert who was buried in accordance with Christian rites in a church cemetery instead of in the family compound. In the process of exercising this Christian rite, the Ogboni, a native free masonry organization, was deprived of its traditional burial fees, and the Babalawo (heathen priests) were also deprived of their accustomed role

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[42]Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.21

[43]Ibid., p.22.

on such occasions.[44] These outbreaks in themselves might not have proved so serious had not the natives been encouraged by Sierra Leone immigrant "Christians", who use the opportunity to embarrass the missionaries for not looking the other way when they took additional wives in accordance with the established practice of their "benighted brethren" to whom they had desired to bring the Christian message.[45] These were the very Christians who were being depended upon to play extraordinary roles in helping to spread Christianity and civilization in the hinterland. But then, these were facts which no one cared to investigate at the heat of the moment of parliamentary triumph. Palmerston, now completely won over by the missionary argument, despatched Captain John Beecroft, the newly appointed British Consul to the Bight of Benin and Biafra to visit Abeokuta in order "to ascertain, by inquiry on the spot, the actual wants and wishes and disposition of the Yoruba people." He was also to report on the Lagos succession dispute. His instruction also engrafted the Church Missionary Society memorandum on Lagos which stated that "Lagos is therefore said to be the natural port of Abeokuta; but the slave trade being carried on at Lagos with great activity, the Yoruba people have been obliged to use the port of Badagry, between which . . . Abeokuta communi-

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[44] Ibid., p.55.

[45] Ibid., p.35.

cations are carried on by a difficult road by land."[46]

The net result of all this missionary pressure was the deflection of Palmerston's attention from the Bight of Biafra to the Bight of Benin. Yet in spite of the apparent missionary influence on Palmerston, he seemed to have exercised considerable restraint in bowing to the Church Missionary Society appraisal of the Abeokuta picture. He preferred to await Beecroft's report before making up his mind. As late as February 1850, he was still awaiting Beecroft's report.[47]

But before going to Abeokuta, Beecroft first visited Dahomey to remonstrate with Ghezo regarding the conclusion of an anti-slave-trade treaty with Britain. Ghezo, as usual, refused to sign any anti-slave-trade treaties with Beecroft, although Beecroft held the opinion that Ghezo's refusal to sign the treaty was due to the influence of his chiefs.[48] Beecroft, however, was quite mistaken in this appraisal, for Ghezo was descended from a distinguished dynasty which had long embarked on a policy of territorial aggrandizement. The advent of the military might of Dahomey arose from the determination of the Fon tribes to check the imperial pretensions of the Oyo-Yorubas whose vassals they had been

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[46] P.P. 1852, Vol. LIV, p.29(255). (My italics.)

[47] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.67.

[48] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.40-43 (266-269).

for a considerable period of time. During the reign of the fourth King of Dahomey, Agaja, Dahomian desire to seek an outlet to the sea led to her subjugation and annexation of Whydah. This acquisition opened new vistas to the monarchy and aristocracy of Dahomey. Contact was made with Brazilian, Portuguese, Spanish and English slave traders, and Dahomey soon acquired her notoriety as the largest slave trading entrepôt in the Bight of Benin.[49] As the slave trade increased, the wealth and notoriety of Dahomey also increased. That King Ghezo was not convinced of the propriety of substituting the palm oil trade with its slow returns for the slave trade and its quick returns was made clear by the King himself.[50]

Furthermore, Beecroft was only one in a line of envoys that had visited Dahomey to remonstrate with Ghezo on the subject of the slave trade since the eighteen forties. Mr. Freeman, the Wesleyan Methodist missionary stationed in the Gold Coast, had visited Whydah and Abomey at the end of 1842, and again in 1843, but failed both times to obtain any assurances from Ghezo, regarding the cessation of the slave

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[49]Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.38. Dahomey became a tributary vassal of the Oyo-Yorubas in 1747 when she purchased peace from the annual troublesome Oyo cavalry. But between 1818 and 1858 during the reign of Ghezo, Dahomey threw off Oyo tutelage.

[50]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.43-44(269-270), Encl.9.

trade.[51]

Governor H. H. Maclean's successor in the Gold Coast made similar trips to Whydah but returned with no promises.[52] Governor Winniet, also of the Gold Coast, repeated this apparent pilgrimage to Ghezo in 1847 without any result, and so did Brodie Cruikshank, Chief Magistrate at Cape Coast, in 1848.[53] Nevertheless, Britain insisted on reviving the illusion that a treaty could be signed with Ghezo. Although Beecroft failed to convince Ghezo of the wisdom of stopping the slave trade while he was in Abomey, he learnt of the King's intention to attack Abeokuta, and promptly warned the missionaries on his return from Dahomey.[54]

Having fulfilled the first part of his assignment, Beecroft left Dahomey for Abeokuta via Badagry. While in Badagry he was able to feel the pulse of the mounting discontent between the natives of Badagry and the immigrant Sierra Leonians who were now competing with the Badagrians for the little existing trade in the town. Furthermore, the former exiled King of Lagos, Akitoye, had by now moved to

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[51] Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.50.

[52] Ibid., p.51.

[53] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.6(232), November 3, 1848.

[54] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.40-42(266-268), Consul Beecroft to Viscount Palmerston.

Badagry from Abeokuta in order to be better able to monitor the political rumblings in his former kingdom of Lagos.[55]

Akitoye's move to Badagry antagonized Kosoko against the people of Badagry and the Badagrians themselves hardly concealed their reluctance in being forced to harbour an unwanted and embarrassing guest. Before Beecroft left for Abeokuta, he asked Akitoye to prepare a list of his grievances against Kosoko for him as well as a declaration of his readiness to accept an anti-slave-trade treaty.[56] On arriving at Abeokuta, Beecroft was faced with a heavy schedule of activities already arranged for him by the Reverend Townsend. He was first taken on tour of the mission establishments of the Methodist and Church Missionary Society missionaries; he later held a meeting with the Abeokuta chiefs who made known their willingness to sign an anti-slave-trade treaty with Britain, and Beecroft in turn presented them with the ammunition sent to them by liberated Africans in Sierra Leone, in preparation for the second Dahomian invasion of Abeokuta. Beecroft was impressed by what he saw at Abeokuta and became convinced that King Kosoko had to be replaced. By the time Beecroft returned to Badagry, the petition from King Akitoye

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[55]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.97(323), King Akitoye to Consul Beecroft.

[56]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.91(317), Consul Beecroft to Viscount Palmerston.

was duly prepared by the Reverend Gollmer of the Badagry Church Missionary Society mission, and was awaiting his perusal. In his petition, Akitoye proceeded, after the usual greetings to the Queen, to recount his expulsion from his throne by Kosoko, and how he took refuge with his relatives in Abeokuta who protected him against Kosoko's designs on his life. After regretting that his distressful circumstances had obliged him to beg for assistance, he concluded his petition by appealing to the

> . . . Representative of the English Government, who, it is well known, is ever ready and desirous to protect the defenceless, to obtain redress for the grievance of the injured, and to check the triumph of wickedness, /to/ take Lagos under your protection, that you would plant the English flag there, and that you would re-establish me on my rightful throne at Lagos, and protect me under my flag: and with your help I promise to enter into a Treaty with England to abolish the Slave Trade at Lagos, and to establish and carry on lawful trade, especially with English merchants . . . .[57]

Besides Akitoye's petition, other petitions were pouring into the Foreign Office and quite often under the invisible hands of missionaries or British traders, and all saying roughly the same thing.

One such petition was written by Mr. Hutton, the agent of a British concern with stores in Badagry. After returning from a visit to Whydah, Mr. Hutton despatched a letter to

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[57]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.97-98(323-324), King Akitoye to Consul Beecroft.

the Foreign Office in which he alleged that the King of Dahomey had told him in confidence

> that unless the Slave Trade is first put a stop to at Lagos, /that/ it will be useless for the British to send him treaties for his agreement as he considers it would be derogatory to his dignity, and lower him in the eyes of his subjects and the nations around who would not be able to understand the reason that an interior King should be the first that is made to stop the Slave Trade, while the sea-side King of Lagos, so near to come at, is not even spoken to on the subject and carries on the trade as if he was sanctioned in it.[58]

Having decided on his course of action, Beecroft resolved to take Akitoye away from Badagry as a protective measure, for he had just become Britain's trump card. Akitoye demurred, pleading that an unceremonious exit would appear as though he was deserting his friends and supporters, but Beecroft's soothing insistence finally overcame his resistance. Meanwhile Beecroft despatched his long awaited report on Lagos to Lord Palmerston, in which he argued that

> . . . if the legitimate Chief could be seen and communicated with, so as to make a treaty with him for the suppression of the foreign Slave-Trade, and place him at Lagos, his former seat of Government, it would release the people of Abeokuta from the jeopardy that they are continually in, from the fear of the King of Dahomey. Her majesty's steamer Gladiator has captured two empty slavers. Her majesty's steamer Hecla two with slaves, lately from Lagos. I believe they have been trying it hard there latterly.[59]

Akitoye's absence from Badagry merely accelerated the tempo

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[58] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.38-40(264-266). See also P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.37-38(263-264).

[59] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.43(269).

of the already highly charged political atmosphere, and this atmosphere was rendered thoroughly volatile when a group of women traders from Lagos attending the Badagry market began singing derogatory songs about the cowardice and poverty of the absentee Akitoye as compared to the manliness and prosperity of Kosoko. The pro-British party led by Chief Mewu and the Reverend Gollmer of the Church Missionary Society mission met at once and signalled the navy for help. Five days later, Commander L. G. Heath arrived in H.M.S. Niger, and informed Gollmer that he would advise all European residents in Badagry to come on board his man-of-war, since his sailors could not defend them on land because of the approaching rainy season. Gollmer refused on the grounds that they could not desert their friends, and furthermore, that the Sierra Leonians whom they would be leaving behind were also British subjects who were entitled to protection. Gollmer requested instead that they be issued with arms and ammunition. Commander Heath then issued arms to the Europeans and Sierra Leonians on shore to the tune of 1000 pistol balls, and two thousand musket ball cartridges.[60]

Domingo Martinez, the erstwhile notorious slave trader, donated twenty guns, twenty kegs of gun powder,

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[60]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.127(353), Encls. 11 and 12, No.41.

twenty iron bars for shot, and a quantity of rum to Chief Mewu to help heighten the pugnacious atmosphere.[61]

In the civil war which shortly ensued, the pro-Kosoko followers were soundly thrashed and driven from the town. Further successive attempts by the defeated party to fight their way back to Badagry were repulsed. Although the pro-Kosoko forces were driven from the town, they continued to received help both from Lagos and Porto Novo and were able to keep Badagry under virtual siege. As a result, Captain Jones and Commander Bruce saw to it that warships came frequently to aid the English party in Badagry.[62] Meanwhile, the war in Badagry spurred the Egba into action, supposedly in defence of their Badagry allies. Oba Sharon, the second in command of Abeokuta forces, led a contingent of Abeokuta troops towards Badagry, and on arriving there he presented a petition to Captain Jones, the senior naval officer in the area. After rehearsing the problems which had led to the expulsion of Akitoye from his throne in Lagos, he pleaded that Akitoye be taken under British protection as a means of assuring his safety. He then proceeded to point out that Badagry was the only sea port through which they could obtain ammunition. In conclusion he beseeched the British govern-

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[61] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.70.

[62] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.101-102(327-328), Encl.4, No.35.

ment to interfere on their behalf to save their lives from

> the impending storm, and to prevent our being cut off as a nation, which you can easily do by overthrowing Kosoko and his slave-town of Lagos and reinstating Akitoye on his lawful Throne there, before Kosoko should be able to carry his designs into execution . . . if Lagos is destroyed and Akitoye restored, we should have little to fear, as it is the mainspring by which all other parts are put in motion. I would also humbly request that the Queen should take possession of this town, and that she should place some person of authority here, which would greatly contribute to our safety and the welfare of this country at large . . . .[63]

In spite of the swarms of petitions that flooded the Foreign Office advocating the British takeover of Lagos, it must not be assumed that all the petitioners had identical interests at heart, nor were all the petitioners agreed on what the term "British protection" meant. Each group of petitioners appeared to have their own selfish reasons for demanding the British takeover of Lagos, and the reinstatement of Akitoye.

In reading Akitoye's or Oba Sharon's petition, it must be borne in mind that neither Akitoye nor Oba Sharon could read or write English, therefore a great deal of what was expressed in the petition was no more than the wishes of the missionaries who wrote the petitions. A notation in the Reverend Gollmer's journal throws considerable light on how much of the contents of Akitoye's petition depended on him.

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[63]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.180-181(356-357), Encl.18, No.41.

> Akitoye sent for me this morning to tell him what to do. I accordingly went and told him that he should clearly state his right to the Lagos Throne, how he was expelled, that he desires the British government to plant the English flag there and establish him under it.[64]

More revealing still was the fact that in the final draft of the petition which was handed to Beecroft, the words "he desires the British Government to plant the English flag there and establish him under it" was most likely changed by Akitoye's insistence to "establish him under my flag." In demanding this change, Akitoye wanted to make it clear that he intended to establish his reign in Lagos under his own flag rather than under the British flag. Protecting Akitoye under the British flag would have meant that the sovereignty of Lagos had reverted to the British crown, and since land is corporately owned in West Africa, Akitoye could not sign it away without the authority of the Idejo chiefs.[65]

The same case could be made for Oba Sharon's letter in which he expressed a desire to see Lagos taken under British protection. That the Abeokutans had intended no such thing was made quite evident in 1861 when Britain annexed Lagos. As was clearly pointed out during the

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[64]Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, pp.69-70. (My italics.)

[65]For details on laws governing corporate ownership of land in Nigeria, see T. O. Elias, Nigerian Land Law and Custom (London, 1950), pp.6-7.

Adderley Committee proceedings of 1865, Abeokuta's difficulty with the Lagos government began soon after the annexation of Lagos.[66] Not only did the Egbas resent the annexation of Lagos, they also refused to welcome a permanent resident British Vice-Consul in Abeokuta on the grounds that it might lead to the annexation of Abeokuta.[67]

There is no doubt that Akitoye may have been naive in thinking that Britain would permit him to exercise unrestricted sovereignty over Lagos after having gone to so much expense and risked the lives of British sailors to reinstate him. It would appear that Akitoye merely wanted to play on Britain's distaste for the slave trade as a means of regaining his crown. Prior to that, Akitoye had recruited the aid of Domingo Martinez, the Badagry based inveterate slave trade, who completely financed Akitoye's first solo abortive attempt to recapture Lagos. Martinez had hoped that a successful military operation against Kosoko would have gained for him the exclusive use of Lagos as his base for slave-trading operations, just as Da Souza had done in Whydah.[68]

The British traders and missionaries who sought the

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[66] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, pp.62, Quest.1332-1334 and 119, Quest.2850, 2852. See also Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.69.

[67] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, pp.238-239, Quest.5888-5889. See also Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.71.

[68] Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.48.

British takeover of Lagos also had their own parochial reasons, which could not in the final analysis be regarded as being compatible with that of the British Government. The British traders themselves had not always shown unanimity of thought on the slave trade issue. Many British traders would have just as well resumed slave trading, but for the navy and the severe penalties which awaited British participants in the trade. The enthusiasm with which some of the British traders in Calabar welcomed the French sponsored African emigration scheme in 1850 clearly showed the fickleness of their attachment to the principle of legitimate trade. In 1850 King Eyo Honesty showed the Reverend Waddell a letter he had received from a Liverpool based supercargo inquiring whether Eyo could provide "ten thousand men, women, and children, as the quota from Old Calabar river."[69] Waddell himself stated that it grieved him to see that some of his countrymen had confessed that they "would as soon take a live cargo as any other,"[70] and he traced this inherent habit to the fact that Englishmen, having been "long in the coast trade had grown familiar with the ideas and practices of the slave traffic, and would easily have been allured, by the

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[69]Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa, p.433.

[70]Ibid., p.434.

prospect of great and rapid gains, to embark in it under a new name instead of the slower, if honester one in which they were engaged."[71] These differences and in some cases sheer hypocrisy by the proponents of the reduction of Lagos were to lead to difficulties with the missionaries, traders, and the Lagos (British) Government, but until the occupation of Lagos was accomplished in 1851, these differences remained in abeyance.

As to the much vaunted British desire to install the legitimate ruler on the Lagos throne, there is no evidence that Britain cared one iota about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the case, for Lord Palmerston was quite willing to deal officially with Kosoko, had Kosoko been inclined towards the signing of an anti-slave-trade treaty with Britain. Captain Beecroft was in fact instructed to conclude an anti-slave-trade treaty with Kosoko and if Kosoko proved recalcitrant, he was to warn him:

> That Great Britain is a stronger Power both by sea and by land, that her friendship is worth having and that her Displeasure it is well to avoid . . . if the Chief should show a disposition to refuse compliance, you should beg him to remember that Lagos is near to the Sea, and that on the Sea are the ships and the Cannons of England and also to bear in mind that he does not hold his Authority without a Competitor . . . .[72]

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[71] Ibid.

[72] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.85-86(311-312), Viscount Palmerston to Consul Beecroft.

It seems quite clear from this despatch that Britain was merely using Akitoye as a bargaining alternative, and not because of any legitimate rights which he might have had to the throne of Lagos. Even on this issue of legitimacy, Akitoye's case is extremely weak. If the word legitimacy is to be given a strict interpretation, then Kosoko certainly becomes the legitimate heir to the Lagos throne. The following genealogical history weakens Akitoye's claim to legitimacy.

> . . . Ologun Kutere, a grandson of Ado, was the next King, and was succeeded by his son, Adele, who was deposed in favour of his elder brother, Oshinlokun. This King was succeeded by his elder son, Idewu Ojulari, who was so unpopular that the King of Benin was appealed to by the Lagos people to order his deposition; /and/ on the order being given Idewu poisoned himself. The Throne should now, in the ordinary way, have passed to Kosoko, the younger brother of Idewu, but this individual had fallen afoul of a powerful chief, the Eletu, whose privilege it was to crown the Kings of Lagos. Taking advantage of his position as a member of the ruling house, Kosoko had carried off a young woman who was betrothed to the Eletu, and this was the beginning of a feud which brought to Lagos much suffering and bloodshed . . .
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> The Eletu was determined that Kosoko should not succeed his brother . . . . During the reign of Oluwole the Eletu had the remains of Kosoko's mother disinterred and cast into the sea, and after this insult it was more than ever necessary to keep Kosoko out of Lagos. The Eletu's influence was therefore used in favour of Akitoye, the third son of Ologun Kutere and the uncle of Kosoko, who succeeded to the throne in 1841 . . . .[73]

As to the petition submitted to the Foreign Office by Mr. Thomas Hutton intimating that Ghezo, the King of Dahomey, had

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[73]Burns, History of Nigeria, pp.42-43. (My italics.)

demanded action at Lagos before he could consider the cessation of the slave trade, an examination of Hutton's possible motives throws considerable light on his interest in the matter. It should be pointed out that agents of Hutton had tried unsuccessfully for years to compete for palm oil with the French firm of Regis in Whydah, and he had now come to look to Lagos as an area of greater prospect where his firm could carve out an exclusive monopoly of the type Regis had carved out for his firm in Whydah.[74] Furthermore, during the civil war in Badagry, the pro-Kosoko forces burnt down his factory, and as far as is known, he received no compensation for his losses.[75] What else would have pleased Hutton more than to see Kosoko and his followers driven out of Lagos? It seems that no one ever questioned how the occupation of Lagos could possibly bring Ghezo to his knees, or prevent him from exporting slaves through the other outlets like Porto Novo, Little and Big Popo, not to mention Whydah, and various other clandestine outlets available to him. As a rule, Ghezo did not export his slaves through Lagos, since the distance between Abomey and Lagos would have ruled out such a venture.

The French firms in Whydah stated in 1852 that slaves were not exported from the port between 1850 and 1852 "not

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[74]Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.53.

[75]Ibid.

because of the Preventive squadron, but because the governments of Brazil and Cuba had prohibited further imports."[76] Even then, the export of slaves from Lagos was only subsidiary to those emanating from Whydah, so if any action was contemplated, it should have fallen on Whydah and not on Lagos, but attacking Whydah would have meant declaring war on Dahomey, which in turn would have entailed protracted warfare on land, with all its attendant ghastly tropical vicissitudes. It was much safer then for Britain to rationalize her attack on Lagos as being calculated to impress Abomey, although no one ever bothered to explain how such geo-military gymnastics could have been accomplished.

The most surprising thing of all was the failure of either Britain, Beecroft, or the missionaries to realize that by occupying Lagos, a great deal of the export trade in slaves and other products would be diverted to the port of Whydah where British supervision would not be entertained. In fact, the King of Dahomey had made just such a demand in a letter addressed to the Queen of England in 1848 and again in 1850. Ghezo pleaded with the British government to see to it that the other ports around his vicinity were put out of action, since the exports which should have passed through his port of Whydah were now being absorbed by the other surrounding

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[76] Ibid., p.55.

ports, and as a result, the revenues which were being collected at Whydah had declined considerably, while those from the other ports were enriching his vassals. In making this request of the Queen, Ghezo specifically referred to the ports of Lagos, Badagry, Port Novo, and Quittah.[77] So in occupying the port of Lagos, the British were merely complying with Ghezo's demands of 1848 and 1850. In the midst of all this confusion, Ghezo attacked Abeokuta in March 1851, as he had promised that he would do. This "unprovoked" attack gave Mr. Henry Venn, the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, the excuse he needed for galvanizing public opinion for action. Prayers were offered all over England for Abeokuta and Lord Palmerston now approached the Admiralty for action on Lagos. The cautious Lords of the Admiralty reacted by arguing that no British persons or property were detained in Lagos and, consequently, that they had no legal basis for attacking Lagos.[78]

To make matters worse, the First Sea Lord, Sir Francis Baring, was not on the best of terms with Palmerston, and this estrangement did not make for mutual cooperation. So all Palmerston would do under the circumstances was to direct Beecroft to inform Kosoko "that lawful commerce is more advan-

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[77] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.6(232), dated Abomey, November 3, 1848. See also pp.43-44(269-270), Encl. in No.9, July 4, 1850, King of Dahomey to Queen Victoria.

[78] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.71.

tageous to the nations of Africa than slave Trade, and that, therefore, the British Government, in putting down Slave Trade, and in encouraging lawful commerce, is conferring a benefit upon the people and chiefs of Africa . . . ."[79]

When Henry Venn saw that nothing positive was being done, he decided to appeal directly to British public opinion by sending for the Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the former slave boy who had been set free by the naval squadron in one of the captured slave ships off the coast of western Nigeria, and had now become an Anglican minister. On his arrival in England, a series of interviews were arranged for Crowther with Lord Palmerston, Sir Francis Baring, the First Sea Lord, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, the Prince Consort. In addition to these interviews, meetings were arranged for Crowther all over England, including one at Cambridge University. The Church Missionary Society paraded Abeokuta as "a native tribe struggling with uncommon energy and bravery to suppress the interior traffic in slaves."[80] Nothing could of course be farther from the truth, for the Abeokutans remained inveterate slave traders until the latter part of the eighteen sixties when there was no longer a demand from Cuba.

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[79]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.85-86(311-312), Viscount Palmerston to Consul Beecroft.

[80]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.134(360), No.42. Secretary of Church Missionary Society to Viscount Palmerston.

Nevertheless, the Church Missionary Society made two specific requests, first that

> efficient aid might be rendered by allowing a few natives of Yoruba who have been trained artillery men in Sierra Leone -- and there are many such -- to return to their native land with two or three light pieces of artillery to defend the walls of Abeokuta against a second attack;

and secondly that

> Crowther is able to show that if Lagos were under its 'lawful' chief and in an alliance with Great Britain, an immense extent of country, abounding with cotton, of which he has brought specimens, would be at once thrown open to commerce, extending from the coast to the River Niger at points 200 or 300 miles from the mouth of the river.[81]

During the interview between Crowther and the royal family in which Aboekuta and Lagos were specifically discussed, Prince Albert came to the conclusion that "Lagos ought to be knocked down by all means . . . ."[82] As Crowther was getting ready to return to Abeokuta, Palmerston wrote to thank him "for the important and interesting information with regard to Abeokuta and the tribes adjoining that town;" and he further requested Crowther to assure his countrymen "that Her Majesty's Government /would/ take a lively interest in the welfare of the Egba nation, and of the community settled at Abeokuta, which town seems destined to be a centre from which the lights of Christianity and civilization may

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[81] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.133-134(359-360).

[82] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.73.

spread over the neighbouring countries."[83]

The way was now clear for action, so Lord Palmerston drew up a memorandum for the Admiralty, pointing out that the Government could no longer tolerate the accomplishment of the abolition of the slave trade being thwarted by Kosoko and "Gezo", and declared that Ghezo's attack on Abeokuta should be regarded as a sufficient "causus belli" for commencing an attack on Lagos. The lords of the Admiralty were therefore ordered to blockade the Dahomian port of Whydah, as well as issuing orders for the restoration of Akitoye.[84]

The reluctant lords of the Admiralty now issued instructions ordering Commander Bruce* to blockade Whydah "according to the views of Lord Palmerston" while leaving the subjugation of Lagos to his discretion. Commander Bruce was however instructed by the Admiralty that he was not to retain the possession of Lagos nor to tarry there any longer than necessary.[85] Land engagements on the west coast had never appealed to the navy nor did it appeal to them in 1851. Furthermore, Sir Francis Baring, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was opposed to British action in Lagos. When he later became a member of Parliament and subsequently a member of the Adderley Committee, he tried to prove that the annexation

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[83]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.142(368), No.50, 18 December 1851, Viscount Palmerston to Reverend Samuel Crowther.

[84]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.135-136(361-362), No.43.

[85]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.138(364). (My italics.)

* See p.185a. following.

* Commander Bruce has been referred to variously as Commander, Commodore and Admiral. Before the twentieth century, British naval squadron commanders were referred to generally as Commodores, and Commander Bruce was so addressed in the Foreign Office and Board of Admiralty despatches. This study has retained the various designations as they appeared in the official despatches.

In the 1850's, the operational wing of the West African Naval Squadron had three different commanders, viz. Commander Bruce, Commander Wilmot, and Commander Forbes, of which Bruce was the ranking Senior Commander. Confusion about the chain of command was ended by the promotion of Commander Bruce to the rank of Rear-Admiral in 1853.

of Lagos had been unnecessary and uncalled for.

On receiving the orders regarding the occupation of Lagos, Commander Bruce proceeded to Fernando Po to see Akitoye. After his audience with Akitoye, he sent off a message to the Admiralty claiming that

> Akitoye does not appear to me to be a man likely to maintain his place by physical influence, if he could be reinstated, and if Akitoye could not rule, what would be the future of Lagos?

Commander Bruce also pointed out that, although the European trade with Lagos was considerable, it was mostly with Hamburg vessels -- perhaps this was a tacit way of saying that Lagos was a German problem and should not concern Her Majesty's navy. He also raised objections regarding the insalubrity of the climate, but his most potent argument had to deal with article VI of the convention of May 1845 between Britain and France. By terms of this convention, England and France agreed not to resort to force on the African coast without the consent of either of the signatories.[86]

While Bruce dilly-dallied and hankered after paper technicalities, Captain Beecroft, a man after Palmerston's heart and not one to be stopped by conventions, proceeded

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[86]Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.75. Article VI states that "whenever it shall be necessary to employ force, conformably to the law of nations in order to compel the due execution of any Treaty made in pursuance of the present Convention, no such force shall be resorted to either by land or sea without the consent of the Commanders both of the British and of the French squadrons."

quickly to Badagry in H.M.S. Bloodhound , arriving on the 17th of November 1851, accompanied by Akitoye and a few of his followers. On arriving off the coast of Lagos, Beecroft met with Commander Wilmot of H.M.S. Harlequin, who reported that he had found a safe channel that led into the Lagos Lagoon. On the 20th of November 1851, ten boats approached the Lagos Lagoon where they landed on a sandy beach flying the white flag. While they were there, a messenger arrived from Kosoko warning the ten boats against making any further advance unless they desired to be fired on. The message stipulated however that one boat carrying the requisite officer would be allowed to go through. Beecroft agreed to the arrangement and proceeded to see Kosoko with two naval officers. After delaying the unwelcome guests for two hours, Kosoko made it clear that his position regarding the signing of an anti-slave-trade treaty remained essentially the same, although he tried to resort to legal technicalities by claiming that he had no authority to sign any treaty since he was a vassal of the King of Benin. However, when pressed by Beecroft on the issue, he adamantly refused to sign any anti-slave-trade treaty, as well as pointing out that he did not wish to be friends with the English.[87]

Beecroft now approached Commander Forbes for a proper

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[87]P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.145-147(371-373).

and overwhelming escort, since, according to Beecroft, "It was decided to collect such a force as the moment could supply, with the firm belief that such a force, judging from the character of African chiefs, would have the effect by simple demonstration of our power, to cause him to accede to our terms."[88] For once, Beecroft miscalculated the African character, since Kosoko and his followers were prepared to do battle.

In any case, preparations were made in accordance with Beecroft's appraisal, and on the 25th of November 1851, H.M.S. Bloodhound entered the lagoon with twenty-one armed boats in tow, and a fighting force consisting of three hundred and six officers and men. On approaching the shore the Bloodhound went aground, and soon after musketry and cannon fire opened up against the invading forces. The British men-of-war returned the fire and the battle raged on. After a day of cannon fire exchanges, the attacking British squadron retired without having achieved its aim.[89] As a result of this technical defeat of the British navy, the first by an African monarch, Beecroft received a serious reprimand for not informing Commander Bruce of his intention to attack

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[88] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.145-147(371-373), No.55.

[89] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.147(373).

Lagos.[90] British prestige was now at stake, and the temporary victory of Kosoko had to be reversed, so instructions were sent to Commodore Bruce accordingly. On the 18th of December 1851, Bruce and Beecroft met off the coast of Lagos to coordinate their plans, and on the conclusion of this meeting, Beecroft proceeded to Badagry to re-embark Akitoye whom he had left there after the first abortive attempt.

On the 23rd of December, the invading forces crossed the Lagos bar, and on the 26th of December Bruce's forces began their attack on Lagos. The complete force consisted of H.M.S. Bloodhound, H.M.S. Teezer, H.M.S. Sampson, and H.M.S. Penelope. Kosoko's defenders fortified the island from the southern point to the northern point -- the area now know as the Marina -- for a distance of about two miles, and this provided excellent cover for Kosoko's sharp shooters. During the early stages of the battle, the Bloodhound was grounded, and earlier the Teezer had also been grounded on the southern part of the island. Four hundred British officers and men were involved, and all

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[90] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, p.210(436), Granville to Beecroft: "I have to acquaint you that Her Majesty's Government are of the opinion that you were not borne out, either by the circumstances of the case, or by your instructions from Her Majesty's Government in directing that Her Majesty's naval forces should land and attack Lagos . . . I regret to be obliged to disapprove of your conduct in this affair . . . this too was the opinion of Commodore Bruce."

day the battle raged and by the end of the day Kosoko's men had captured one British lifeboat; meanwhile, one British officer and thirteen British sailors had died. The battle resumed the following day, the Teezer which had been grounded earlier joined the battle, and during the affray the cannon shot from one of the ships engaged in the battle landed right on Kosoko's concealed ammunition dump and all the ammunition went up in an explosion. An uncontrollable fire began to rage in the whole city and Kosoko, being now without ammunition, and knowing that further resistance was impossible, managed to escape from the island with his followers before the British could land. On the 28th of December, the British invited Akitoye to land and take possession of the island. On the 1st of January, 1852, King Akitoye of Lagos went off to H.M.S. Penelope to sign a treaty with Commodore Bruce and Captain Beecroft for the abolition of the slave trade.[91]

The occupation of Lagos was largely a joint effort between the British Government and the British missionaries, with the missionaries playing a preponderant part. As a result, in the treaty that was signed with Akitoye, Article 8 guaranteed the missionaries complete autonomy.

> Complete protection shall be afforded to missionaries or ministers of the Gospel, of whatever nation or country,

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[91] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.187-190(413-416).

> following their vocation of spreading the knowledge and doctrines of Christianity, and extending the benefits of civilization within the territory of the King and Chiefs of Lagos . . . . Encouragement shall be given to such missionaries or Ministers in the pursuits of industry, in building houses for their residence, and Schools and chapels. They shall not be hindered or molested in their endeavours to teach the doctrines of Christianity to all persons willing and desirous to be taught; nor shall any subject of the King and Chiefs of Lagos who may embrace the Christian faith be, on that account, or on account of the teaching or exercise thereof, molested or troubled in any manner whatsoever. The Kings and Chiefs further agree to set apart a piece of land, within a convenient distance of the principal towns, to be used as a burial ground for Christian persons. And the funerals and sepulchers of the dead shall not be disturbed in any way or upon any account.[92]

By the terms of this treaty the missionaries had in effect become an arm of the government, but this cooperation was to receive a series of discomforting shocks, for the traders and missionaries who had cooperated in sponsoring the occupation of Lagos soon fell out over the spoils of their victory. To the missionaries, the occupation of Lagos was only incidental to the task of building up Abeokuta as the cradle of Christianity and civilization. As the missionaries had stated earlier, Lagos was merely the port of Abeokuta. But the traders did not see it that way at all. To them Lagos was important as a centre of trade, and they had come there to make money and not to preach Christianity or spread civilization. Within the framework of their values, Abeokuta

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[92] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.191-192(417-418), Encl.69, Engagement with the King and chiefs of Lagos.

was merely useful as a source of raw material, and unless the Abeokutans could bring this raw material to Lagos, Abeokuta was no more useful or unique than any other source of raw material and trade in the hinterland.[93] In effect, Lagos to them had become the end rather than the means to the end. An angry British trader based in Badagry, Mr. Sandeman, declared that "Akitoye was made a tool to carry out the ambitious views of these two men, Messrs. Gollmer and Townsend."[94] (Two Anglican ministers.)

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[93] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.79.

[94] Ibid., p.76.

CHAPTER V

THE BRITISH ANNEXATION OF LAGOS

The first British Consul to take over the administration of Lagos, Benjamin Campbell, took over from Vice-Consul Louis Fraser, a Lagos trader, in 1853.[1] Initially Campbell stayed with the Church Missionary Society missionaries and seemed to share the missionary view of pursuing an unrelenting war against Kosoko, but about a year later Campbell changed his view to that of reaching an accommodation with Kosoko, who had by now taken refuge at Epe, and was preventing the palm oil produce of Ijebu-Ode from reaching Lagos. In taking this view, Campbell was not merely bowing to the wishes of the traders, he was also coming to grips with the commercial realities of Lagos, for the importance of Lagos as a commercial centre depended on her serving as an entrepôt for the produce from the hinterland. Spurred on by the British trading community in Lagos, which believed that Kosoko should be appeased at all costs, Campbell concluded a treaty with Kosoko in which Kosoko's autonomy in Palma and Leckie was recognized, and he was guaranteed a pension of 2,000 heads of cowaries or an option of $1,000 a year for life, provided that he ceased his hostile action against

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[1] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.78.

Lagos by allowing the hinterland products to reach Lagos.[2]

Campbell also had to deal with King Sodji of Porto Novo, an ally of Kosoko who had closed the Ossa lagoon to the palm oil traffic between Porto Novo and Lagos. Besides being an ally of Kosoko, Sodji had an additional grievance against Lagos. Chief Mewu of Badagry, an exile from Porto Novo who had taken refuge in Badagry, had allied himself with the missionary-Abeokuta party in Badagry and had in the process antagonized Sodji. Furthermore, after the civil war in Badagry in which Chief Mewu figured prominently, those defeated Badagry chiefs who were allied with Kosoko were driven out of Badagry. In order to improve the relationship between Porto Novo and Lagos, Campbell sought to reinstate these exiles to their seats in Badagry. The British Consul's strategy required that Mewu be removed from Badagry peacefully or by force. At first Campbell tried to pressure Mewu into leaving voluntarily, and sought to enlist the assistance of the Rev. Townsend and the Abeokuta chiefs. Both Townsend and the Abeokuta chiefs opposed the plan vehemently. They refused to turn against the man who had helped them in their time of need against the hated Kosoko. Consequently, Consul Campbell forcibly drove Mewu from Badagry, and Mewu took

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[2]Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, pp.49-50.

refuge with Dosumu in Lagos while the pro-Kosoko Badagry chiefs, Wowu and Possu, returned to Badagry.[3]

Campbell justified his action to the Foreign Office by accusing Mewu of slave trading,[4] but Mewu was no more guilty of slave trading than Possu or Wowu, and still no guiltier than the King of Dahomey; for even after Campbell had signed a peace treaty with Kosoko guaranteeing him an annual pension, Kosoko and the King of Porto Novo continued to clandestinely organize slave trading with the Brazilian, Carvalho.[5]

The Foreign Office was not at all pleased with the expulsion of Mewu and needed much convincing before it would accept Campbell's explanation. Campbell came up with the incredible story that the King of Porto Novo genuinely needed Badagry as a palm oil port, and that Mewu had been warned by Rear-Admiral Bruce in 1853 to keep to the provisions of the anti-slave-trade treaty or be removed. Campbell also claimed that by removing Mewu he had "ipso facto" dissolved the coalition between Dahomey, Porto Novo and Kosoko against Abeokuta, thus preventing a general revival of the slave trade.[6]

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[3] Ibid., p.50.

[4] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.78.

[5] Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.63.

[6] Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.51.

But the real reason for Campbell's action could be discerned in his letter to the Rev. Townsend which cited "The oil palm trade between Badagry and countries watered by a fine navigable lagoon extending through more than 100 miles of country yielding a commerce in palm oil alone of the present value of about a quarter of a million pounds sterling, nearly the whole of which is at present monopolized by Domingo Martinez."[7]

The infuriated Church Missionary Society missionaries sent a scathing despatch to Lord Clarendon accusing Campbell of befriending slave traders and antagonizing Britain's friends, especially the Egbas on whose behalf Britain had intervened in the affairs of Lagos. They further pointed out that "the best hope of introducing civilization into that part of Africa and of putting /an/ effectual stop to the slave trade was through the encouragement of the Egba tribe situated at Abeokuta which contains a thousand British subjects in the persons of Sierra Leone immigrants."[8] The lot of the British Consul could hardly be described as a bed of roses. Between 1853 and 1855, the missionaries attacked Campbell for allowing himself to be unduly influenced by traders, and in 1855-56 the traders attacked him for meddling too much in their trade affairs and for expelling

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[7] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.78.

[8] Ibid., p.79.

Madame Tinubu who owed them much "trust" from Lagos. The fact was that the British Consul was trying to grapple with a much more elusive problem, the problem of filling the political vacuum which was created by the establishment of a dual government in Lagos. So far, there were the British traders who insisted on having their own way, the missionaries who had their private axe to grind in the occupation of Lagos, and the British Government which was disclaiming responsibility for the administration of Lagos, while it was in reality the "de facto" authority on the island. Standing between these factions were the Sierra Leonian and Brazilian immigrants, who were trying to carve out a sovereign enclave for themselves. Dosumu, who later became the titular administrator of Lagos, found his authority circumscribed on all sides by the British traders, the British Consul, the Sierra Leone and Brazilian immigrants, and the missionaries. In the midst of such chaos, effective government became an impossible goal.

By the device of consular fiat, Akitoye, Dosumu and the Idejo chiefs were denied jurisdiction over European traders, and, by implication, the liberated Sierra Leonians. Of these only the British traders had been strictly entitled to the armed protection which the Consul could call in,[9]

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[9]Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.56.

although, in practice, many of the Sierra Leonians were regarded as British subjects -- a habit encouraged by the missionaries.[10] In 1855, the Sierra Leonians established their own tribunal for settling debt cases among themselves.[11] To appreciate the magnitude of the problem Dosumu had to face, one must understand the intricacies of Lagos financing. The occupation of Lagos attracted the attention of many of the traders who later became the principal palm oil factors of the region. William McCoskry, Legresely, and J. Sandeman had already corned the Badagry market for the firms of Hutton, Banner Brothers, and Steward and Douglas. When Lagos was occupied by Britain, they all moved to Lagos from Badagry and were soon joined by Captain Lorenz Diedrichsen who arrived from Whydah, the Italian, G. B. Scala, agent of Chillingworth and Co., two Germans, Meyer and Johannsen, and the numerous employees of the Frenchman, Victor Regis, of Dahomey fame.[12]

After the occupation of Lagos, King Akitoye and later his son, King Dosumu, who succeeded him in 1853, were granted fixed revenues by treaty, that is revenues that were to be collected from the levy of export and import duties in return for guaranteeing that the leasehold and freehold rights of traders would not be violated, and furthermore, that native debtors would be brought to justice. The King also agreed

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[11] Ibid., p.61.

[12] Ibid., p.57.

to retire from trading and promised that merchants and thieves would be apprehended and punished. Merchants who were engaged in giving "double trusts" (i.e. trading with middlemen who were already indebted with trusts) were to be fined 1000 gallons of palm oil.[13] While these terms looked fine on paper, they could not be enforced. The European traders balked at paying either import or export duties. The Sierra Leonians, Brazilians, and native traders acted accordingly. Both Akitoye and Dosumu were robbed from all sides and could not employ the administrative personnel needed for the efficient administration of the island.

Realizing his powerlessness, Akitoye soon obtained the Consul's consent to farm out the collection of the customs dues. The first man to try his hand at customs collecting was the Consulate's interpreter, S. B. Williams, a Sierra Leonian, who was thoroughly cheated by the whole community, Europeans and Africans alike. The King then asked Signor Scala to collect the custom duties. Scala became so meticulously efficient at collecting these dues that he was soon hated by Europeans and Africans alike. Open opposition to Scala was fraught with dangers since his position

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[13]P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, p.2, No.2(342), Article II just below Article IX. Engagement between King Akitoye and his Chiefs and British and other Europeans, merchants trading in Lagos.

as an agent of the steamship company placed him above the coastal traders. Frustrated and angry, the traders vented their rage on Consul Campbell, whom they accused in a petition to the home government of "undermining the authority of King Dosumu."[14] It is also important to note the names of the leading signatories of this petition, viz., William McCoskry, Sandeman, (former Vice-Consul) Hansen, H. Woodhead, Legresely, and five Sierra Leonians, F. Thomas, W. E. Cole, Jim Turner, John Macauly and James Davis.[15]

Between 1859 and 1860, it was McCoskry's turn to try his hand at customs collection, which he did with considerable profit to himself.[16] Since law enforcement officers could not be recruited without revenues, in a majority of cases apprehending a debtor required the help of the Consul. Sierra Leonians had their own debt settling courts, and could not be touched; all debt cases concerning Europeans were handled by the Consul.[17] Apprehending a small debtor in Lagos proved to be a difficult task in a population estimated at about 25,000[18] especially since a small debtor could

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[14]Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.61.

[15]Ibid., p.61, (footnote 2).

[16]Ibid., p.61.

[17]F.O. 84/976, 2 August 1855, Campbell to Clarendon.

[18]F.O. 2/28, 28 December 1853. See also Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.56.

take refuge in any one of the smaller surrounding hamlets like Abeokuta, Epe, Ijebu-Ode, Egbado, Palma, Leckie, etc. -- areas where the King of Lagos had no jurisdiction.[19]

If apprehending a small debtor proved difficult, taking action against an important one like Madame Tinubu (a trader from one of the Ijedo families) proved even more difficult, if not outright dangerous. Her subsequent deportation from Lagos by Campbell for plotting against the Consular government raised a great hue and cry from European traders, to whom she owed "trusts" to the tune of £5,000.[20] Worse still, fines imposed on important traders like William McCoskry and upheld by the Consul made influential enemies. The treaty signed between Akitoye and the British Government after the expulsion of Kosoko forbade any one resident in Lagos to trade with slave dealers, including Kosoko, yet McCoskry, after serving as acting British Consul in Lagos, initiated a clandestine trade with Kosoko in violation of this edict. Dosumu, after obtaining the Consul's consent, fined him one hundred and twenty sacks of cowaries (about £80 or £90 at the prevalent rate of exchange).[21]

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[19]Although Lagos is an island, accessibility to the mainland was only a question of minutes by canoe and any debtor could easily disappear into the indefinite recesses of the hinterland.

[20]Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.57.

[21]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.74, Quest.1655-69.

In 1857, agents for the firm of Oswald were also fined by Dosumu after consultation with the Consul. The Hamburg firm protested angrily to the British government demanding British naval and consular protection. Lord Clarendon promised that in future Consul Campbell would be instructed to intervene on its behalf,[22] but the Consul justified the fines levied on the firm. Clearly Dosumu could not have levied any fines on the firm without the Consul's approval or instigation since all affairs concerning Europeans came under the jurisdiction of the British Consul. By the middle of the eighteen fifties it was becoming quite clear that the fragmented authority of the Lagos Government was causing problems. But the major problem facing Lagos was still that of obtaining sufficient money to finance the administration of Lagos, and until that problem was solved Lagos could not expect any respite from her financial and administrative woes. Lagos also continued to be plagued by the problem of privileged persons who remained above the law. These personalities caused untold problems for Dosumu and the Consul. Whereas Dosumu was pressured into executing four Yoruba thieves in 1859, wealthy and influential thieves often escaped with no punishment at all, especially if they happened to be Europeans.

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[22]Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.62.

Campbell had forcibly removed Chief Mewu from Badagry in order to appease Sodji, the King of Porto Novo, and thereby attract the palm oil trade from that area into Lagos, but Campbell's strategy proved a complete failure since Sodji made his own economic calculations. Instead of diverting the palm oil traffic through the Ossa lagoon to Badagry and Lagos, Sodji diverted the trade to Cotonou and Whydah by canoe through Weme, So, and to Porto Novo through Lake Nokue, partly because of the attraction of higher prices, and partly because of his lively interest in the slave trade which had revived in Whydah and Cotonou[23] after the occupation of Lagos, just as Ghezo said that it would.

Sodji's diversion of the produce coincided with the Ijayi war which had just erupted in the Yoruba interior. The war started as a private vendetta between Ibadan and Ijaye, but quickly spread to Abeokuta after some Ibadan contingents destroyed some Egba farms on their way to Ijaye.[24] The destruction of the Egba farms was no more than a convenient excuse, for the Egbas had been seriously contemplating a preventive war against Ibadan before these farms were destroyed. The growing power of Ibadan was seriously upsetting the balance of power in the interior and Ibadan had openly solicited the

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[23] Ibid., p.64.

[24] Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.66.

alliance of Dahomey, Abeokuta's inveterate enemy. Since Abeokuta was expecting a fresh attack from Dahomey, it was feared that a victorious Ibadan might join forces with Dahomey against Abeokuta.

The struggle in the interior stopped all trading with Lagos. This was roughly the situation when Consul Benjamin Campbell died. Campbell was succeeded by George Brand, formerly Vice-Consul at Loanda, in November 1859.[25] Faced with a new invasion of Abeokuta from Dahomey, plus a precipitous decline in Lagos exports, Brand attempted to mediate between Ibadan and Ijaye but failed. The instability of the hinterland, accompanied by the chaotic administration of Lagos induced Brand to suggest to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on April 9, 1860, that:

> . . . There is a measure which, if adopted, would tend to put an end to the slave trade, and increase the legal commerce and industrial prosperity of this line of coast to an unlimited extent, the occupation of Lagos, either as a possession or by way of Protectorate.
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> . . . Lagos, at present, may be said to have no government; there is no effective protection of property, no mode of enforcing the payment of debts applicable to Europeans, and the wonder is that in such a state of things there are so few disturbances . . . .[26]

Consul Brand might have made this suggestion out of sheer disillusionment, but whatever the reasons, he did not

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[25] Ibid., p.63.

[26] P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, pp.4-5(344-345), Brand to Russell. See also P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.61, and Geary, Nigeria Under British Rule, pp.39-42.

live long enough to do much about it. He died of dysentery in Lagos in June 1860, and was temporarily succeeded by Lieutenant Hand who took over as acting Consul.[27]

Henry Grant Foote, former Consul at Salvador finally took over as Consul for the Bight of Benin. Consul Foote tried to break out of the vicious circle by taking some energetic action against Porto Novo. The King of Porto Novo, who had continued his policy of diverting trade away from Lagos, was given a taste of Palmerstonian foreign policy. Foote sailed into the port of Porto Novo and bombarded the town on the 24th of February 1861.[28] But Foote lasted only five months in Nigeria before he died of malaria fever. Within a month of his death, Lord John Russell, the Foreign Secretary, had come to the conclusion that Lagos must be annexed.[29] The Foreign Secretary conceded that

> It was not without some reluctance that Her Majesty's Government have determined, by the occupation of Lagos, to extend the number of British Dependencies on the African Coast; but they have been induced to come to this determination because they are convinced that the permanent occupation of this important point in the Bight of Benin is indispensable to the complete suppression of the slave-trade in the Bight, whilst it will give great aid and support to the development of lawful commerce, and will check the aggressive spirit of the King

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[27] Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.66.

[28] Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.64.

[29] F.O. 84/1141, Russell to Foote, 22 June 1861. See also P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, p.5 (339).

> of Dahomey, whose barbarous wars, and encouragement to slave-trading, are the chief cause of disorder in that part of Africa . . . .[30]

After the death of Consul Foote, William McCoskry, the notorious British trader, became acting Consul. It was now up to McCoskry to see that the annexation of Lagos was accomplished. On the 30th of July 1861 Acting Consul McCoskry and Commander Bedingfield, the senior naval officer in charge of the Bight Division, invited Dosumu for a conference aboard H.M.S. Promotheus .[31]

Commander Bedingfield has left us an account of what transpired at the meeting:

> July 30. Palaver was held at 12.30. The Consul, Interpreter and the King and Chiefs being present, explained to Docemo and his chiefs that H.M. Government had decided upon permanent occupation of Lagos allowing him a proper pension. Requested Docemo to sign a deed of cession giving him until Thursday to consider and talk it over with his Chiefs.
>
> August 1. Proceeded with the acting Consul and interpreter to the King's house to receive his answer to the proposition made to him on the 30th. Docemo declined to sign any paper giving up his country and barely treated H.M. Consul and myself with respect. He expressed a doubt that we were empowered to make any such proposal and wished to see the paper signed by all the head men in England. We asked Docemo to reconsider the matter.[32]

The last sentence of Bedingfield's account should be interpreted with reservation. It is reasonable to assume that Dosumu was pressured into signing the treaty by the presence

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[30]P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, pp.5-6(345-346).

[31]P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, pp.7-8(347-348).

[32]Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, p.161. (My italics.)

of the man-of-war off shore, in addition to the presence of armed marines who accompanied McCoskry and Bedingfield to the King's house.[33] Furthermore, Kosoko was still alive, and the British Government could very well have switched its support to Kosoko or any other accommodating Lagos prince. The Government was thoroughly without morals when it came to this type of manoeuvre, as evidenced in the cases of King Pepple of Bonny, Prince Acqua of the Cameroons, King Jaja of Opobo, the Emir of Nupe, the Sultan of Sokoto, the Emirs of Zaria and Kano, etc..[34] That Dosumu undoubtedly signed away his territory under duress is beyond speculation, as he himself admitted that:

> As men, women, children and youths were in great disturbance of /sic/ the annoyance that Commander Bedingfield is proposing to fire in the town, simply because I refuse to sign the paper he brought me. To prevent this destruction induces me to sign the said paper.[35]

The annexation of Lagos and the reasons given by the British Foreign Secretary for authorizing such a measure hardly explain all that is known about this affair. A re-examination of the testimonies rendered during the Adderley Committee proceedings on the annexation of Lagos prove

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[33] P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, pp.7-8(347-348).

[34] For details see John E. Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, (Oxford University Press, 1960), pp.246-263; Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, pp.128-152; Burns, Nigeria, pp.140-150; D. J. M. Muffett, Concerning Brave Captains, (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1964), all chapters.

[35] P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, pp.11-12(351-352).

exceptionally valuable on this issue. Colonel Ord's testimony in particular reveals an array of extraordinary inconsistencies as well as a deliberate prostitution of the facts. The fact that Colonel Ord was thoroughly briefed both by the home and the Lagos governments meant that some of his obvious misrepresentations of the facts were deliberate. When he was asked why the British Government annexed Lagos, he stated that the annexation was due to the fact that human sacrifice and slave trade were rife in Lagos.[36]

As Sir Francis Baring subsequently pointed out to Ord, had human sacrifice and slave trading been prevalent, Consul Foote would have pointed this out to the British Government. Furthermore, in his letter to Consul Foote regarding the annexation of Lagos, Lord John Russell made it quite clear that Dosumu had not in any way broken the anti-slave-trade treaty which he had signed with Britain:

> . . . You will carefully explain to King Docemo the motives that have induced Her Majesty's Government to take this step. You will inform him that Her Majesty's Government are not actuated by any dissatisfaction with his conduct but that on the contrary, they have every wish to deal with him in a liberal and friendly spirit, and that their object in taking this step is to secure forever the free population of Lagos from the Slave Traders and kidnappers who formerly oppressed them, to protect and develop important trade of which their own is the seat, and to exercise an influence on the surrounding tribes which may it is to be hoped, be permanently beneficial to the African race.[37]

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[36] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.60, Quest.1274-1280.

[37] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, pp.60-61, Quest.1284. (My italics.)

But in spite of this incontrovertible evidence, Colonel Ord and William McCoskry testified that Lagos was annexed because Dosumu could not stop the slave trade. McCoskry's testimony becomes even more mystifying, considering the fact that Lord Russell's letter on this issue was handed over to him after the death of Consul Foote. Although the letter was originally addressed to Foote, he died before the letter arrived. As acting Consul, McCoskry became the sole recipient of all such official correspondence. A British trader based in Lagos testified that the slave trade was not carried on at Lagos. He went even further to point out that King Dosumu had people "watching out for the slave traders in the lagoons."[38] When subjected to further questioning by Sir Francis Baring on this point, Colonel Ord admitted that "Docemo was simply 'turned out'".[39]

An examination of McCoskry's testimony shows it to be even more puzzling than that of Colonel Ord. When questioned by members of the Select Committee about the reasons for the annexation of Lagos, McCoskry gave various reasons for the annexation. Firstly, that the annexation of Lagos put an end to the Lagos slave trade,[40] secondly, that the

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[38]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.208, Quest.5073.

[39]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.61, Quest.1295.

[40]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.83, Quest.1981-1982.

annexation of Lagos was due to the inability of Dosumu to settle trade disputes,[41] thirdly that Lagos was annexed because lives were not safe in Lagos under the rule of Dosumu,[42] fourthly, that Lagos was annexed because of the lack of effective government control in the immediate neighbourbood of Lagos.[43] None of these four reasons hold up under close scrutiny.

The hollowness of the slave trade charge has already been dealt with earlier and need not be repeated. As to the allegation that lives were not safe in Lagos, McCoskry later admitted under questioning by Sir Francis Baring that no European civilian had ever been killed in Lagos.[44] Regarding McCoskry's charge that Dosumu was unable to settle trade disputes, it should be pointed out that Dosumu had no jurisdiction over European traders. That was the responsibility of the British Consul.[45] But then, the European traders themselves rarely tolerated outside interference in their internicine trade disputes, and the leading exponent of this tradition was none other than the Honourable William McCoskry.

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[41] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.73, Quest.1642.

[42] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.74, Quest.1648-1651.

[43] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.71, Quest.1548.

[44] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.74.

[45] Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.56.

In 1855-56, he had spearheaded a petition against Consul Campbell for "meddling too much with trade affairs" because Campbell was trying to grapple with the intractable problem of "trusts" which had long become the bane of the west African coastal trade. He and his friends also accused Campbell of "antagonizing Kosoko /the arch-slave trader/ unnecessarily, and expelling Madame Tinubu /another slave trader/ who owed him much 'trust'".[46] It should be remembered that Kosoko was a confirmed and unrepentant slave trader, and that even after his expulsion from Lagos, he continued his slave trading activities in league with King Sodji, of Porto Novo. Ironically, McCoskry, who attacked Dosumu's inability to stop the slave trade during the Adderley Committee proceedings was the only British trader caught and fined for trading with Kosoko,[47] and since Kosoko's trade was largely based on slaves, it is conceivable that McCoskry might have dabbled occasionally in it himself.

The case of Madame Tinubu is also revealing. Her expulsion from Lagos by the Consul was one of McCoskry's bases of complaint against the Consul. That Madame Tinubu owed considerable "trusts" to European traders no one doubts, but her expulsion was a result of her other illegal activities.

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[46] Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.82.

[47] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.74, Quest.1655-1669. See also Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.62.

In 1854 Campbell linked her with a plan to revive the slave trade in Lagos, she having allegedly acted as the "middleman" between the slave traders and the "Egba vendors" using the Oke-odan route.

During the Adderley Committee proceedings, McCoskry had pointed out how Abeokuta's trade could be diverted to Porto Novo by using the Oke-odan route. This was in fact the route through which slaves from Abeokuta and Badagry were transported to Porto Novo.[48] McCoskry really ought to have known because in 1854 he had managed to have himself appointed unpaid Vice-Consul for Badagry and Porto Novo. During McCoskry's Vice-Consularship, Consul Campbell noticed that slave trading was reviving in Badagry and promptly warned the newly restored Badagrian chiefs to sever their relationship with Carvalho, the slave trader who had been frequenting Badagry for slaves.[49]

In 1855, while Campbell was visiting Abeokuta, Madame Tinubu led a rising supposedly against Sierra Leone immigrants whose influence was branded as being subversive to the Lagos monarchy.[50] Professor Michael Crowder has stated

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[48]Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.51.

[49]Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.63.

[50]Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, pp.56-57.

that the rising was against Dosumu himself.[51] It is unlikely that Madame Tinubu's "putsch" was directed against Dosumu or the Sierra Leonians since the King was reluctant to deport her from Lagos and had to be forced by the Consul to do so. Furthermore, before Madame Tinubu was finally escorted to Abeokuta at Campbell's own expense, she had taken refuge in the home of a prominent Sierra Leonian trader, a Mr. Turner,[52] a colleague of William McCoskry. The main point here is that McCoskry was deeply involved in the resistance to Madame Tinubu's expulsion.[53] This fact, combined with McCoskry's various other clandestine activities, all tend to render his testimony exceedingly suspect.

McCoskry's last contention that the annexation of Lagos was due to Dosumu's inability to control the immediate neighbourhood of Lagos makes even less sense than his previous reasons. The question one had to ask is how could the annexation of Lagos help to maintain peace in the interior unless the British government intended to maintain Vice-Consulates and standing troops in the interior. In fact, Commander Bruce made just such a suggestion in 1851, immediately after

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[51]Michael Crowder, The Story of Nigeria, (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p.167.

[52]Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.57.

[53]Ibid.

the occupation of Lagos, but it was turned down.[54] Consul Foote repeated a similar suggestion again before he died, but the Foreign Office again refused it.[55]

In making his last charge, McCoskry had implied that Dosumu ought to have been able to maintain some sort of a "pax" in the interior. Without money, naval support and troops, this was impossible. Furthermore, Dosumu was King of Lagos, and his authority did not extend any farther than the island of Lagos. Even within the island of Lagos, his authority was being undermined by men like McCoskry. In spite of the treaty provisions and all other considerations, the source of power in Lagos was still the British Consul, and not Dosumu, so if any one had been in a position to maintain any sort of a "pax" in the interior, it ought to have been the British Consul. McCoskry admitted as much during the Adderley inquiry when he declared that between 1851 and 1861 the British Consul at Lagos was for all practical purposes the real Governor of Lagos.[56] Consul Brand spoke of his mushrooming responsibilities in 1860 in one of his despatches to the Foreign Secretary:

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[54] P.P. 1852, Vol.LIV, pp.212-214(438-440), Bruce to Admiralty.

[55] Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.66. It is worth noting that Foote suggested the use of Black Vice-Consuls for Badagry, Abeokuta, and Benin. Consul Foote was obviously ahead of his time.

[56] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.67, Quest.1449.

> . . . This consulate exercises at present a feeble, irregular, and irresponsible jurisdiction over a variety of judicial, police, and even administrative matters, which have gradually been pressed within the range of its actions, /and/ which occupy nearly the whole of the Consular officer's time, but which have no relation whatsoever to a Consul's ordinary duties. This jurisdiction has been acquiesced in by the various sections as a matter of necessity, knowing that the Consulate is the only place where their cases will be heard with impartiality; but, in a large and increasing commercial community, there are questions of great importance affecting trade and property frequently arising, which the Consul has not the means, even if he had the authority, of dealing with it in a satisfactory manner . . . .[57]

Here lay the crux of the entire Lagos problem. It was not a question of the consuls not having authority to act, it was rather a question of their not having the means of implementing such authority. In other words, the means needed to cure the ills of Lagos were unavailable and could not be obtained without a major committment of funds. In that respect the problem had very little to do with the competence or incompetence of either Akitoye or Dosumu. This is not to imply that traces of incompetence were absent in both administrations, but rather, that the existence of such administrative maladies was subsidiary to the central issue of the inadequacy of funds. The crisis of Lagos was therefore due to Great Britain's lack of confidence in the financial potentialities of the island. The subsequent British annexation of Lagos proved no cure for the ills of Lagos since the British Treasury expected

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[57] P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, p.5(345). (My italics.)

Lagos to be financially self-sufficient.[58]

The first Governor of Lagos who arrived there on January 21st, 1862 found the island's financial needs quite pressing. Increasing the customs duties in Lagos immediately would have driven the trade to other independent, nearby ports. For the moment, Governor Freeman decided to annex the port of Badagry after which he imposed a four per cent import duty on all goods entering Badagry in order to help pay for the administration of the place.[59]

Thomas Tickel who had been Vice-Consul at Badagry for just over a year was promoted to Resident Agent and collector on a salary of £100 a year.[60] In annexing Badagry Governor Freeman violated the first injunction placed on him by the Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Newcastle, who had instructed him to establish a reasonably sized colony.[61] In spite of these instructions the government could not make do with the revenues they were obtaining, and, by 1863, Governor Freeman had found is necessary to annex both Palma and Leckie. Kosoko, whose jurisdiction over those areas was

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[58]W. H. Scotter, "International Rivalry in the Bights of Benin and Biafra." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of London, 1933), p.120.

[59]Crowder, The Story of Nigeria, p.167.

[60]Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p.67.

[61]Scotter, "International Rivalry," p.120. See also Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p.70.

previously confirmed by the Lagos government, was granted a life pension which he received until his death in 1872.[62] Kosoko had made known his wish to spend the rest of his days at home in Lagos, and Governor Freeman was more than willing to welcome him, even though it was against the expressed wishes of Dosumu. Governor Freeman also had his own reasons for desiring a rapprochment with Kosoko, even had Kosoko not desired to return to Lagos. As long as Kosoko exercised jurisdiction over Palma and Leckie, European and African traders would prefer the cheap customs duties levied at Palma to those at Lagos, and whatever these revenues might amount to, they would be lost to the Lagos treasury.

The acquisition of Palma and Leckie did not meet with the approval of the Colonial Office, and Governor Freeman was reminded that "It is the policy of the Government to confine our acquisitions in the neighbourhood of Lagos to the smallest limits."[63] It should be pointed out that the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office did not always see eye to eye on the question of colonial acquisition. While the Foreign Office, dominated by Palmerston and Russell, had always favoured the extension of British influence on the west coast by force if need be, the Colonial Office, whose

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[62]Burns, Nigeria, p.132.

[63]Scotter, "International Rivalry," p.122.

responsibility it was to administer these areas once they were acquired, preferred the cheap informal empire, which involved neither expensive financial outlays nor administrative and military complications with local rulers.

Colonial Office intransigence on this issue can be traced to three main sources, viz. the reluctance of the British Treasury to spend money in Africa, the inevitable possibility of entanglement with the indigenous inhabitants, and, perhaps the most important of all, the still popular views of the Manchester School which in colonial terms meant limited territories, small government establishments, and above all, financial self-sufficiency.[64]

Although the annexation of Palma and Leckie was not approved by the Colonial Office, the entire scheme was largely underwritten by the Foreign Office. Lord Palmerston had always viewed the affairs of Lagos with an eye to what the French might be doing around the area. When the British Consul in Lagos reported the arrival of the French steam frigate Danae and its projected visit to Kosoko, Palmerston wondered whether it would not be possible to pressure Kosoko into signing a treaty with Britain whereby he would place himself under British protection with a promise not to alienate any part of his territory without Britain's consent. "If we don't

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[64]C. A. Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism, (Copenhagen, Denmark: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag A.S., 1968), pp.32-60.

take this step the French will be before us and to our great detriment, he declared.[65]

Lord John Russell, in his capacity as Foreign Secretary, was for the annexation of Lagos. He had argued that "We have almost all the responsibility of possession without the power which would enable us fully to carry out our views"[66] and therefore recommended action to the Colonial Office. Its seems that Foreign Office thinking in this case was again dominated by the fear of the French. A Foreign Office memorandum clearly indicated:

> Nor would Her Majesty's Government view with indifference the establishment there by French agents of a Depôt, for Negroes to be exported as labourers to the French Colonies, a measure which was threatened during the last year, and might still be carried into effect, if the French should fail in procuring a supply of labour for their Colonies from other than African sources.[67]

On the question of Lagos, the Colonial Office demurred as usual, by raising all sorts of objections. The annexation of Lagos could hardly be limited to the island of Lagos, and this, it was claimed, might lead to complications involving domestic slavery. Lagos might become a refuge for runaway slaves from the interior, and the restoration "might not be so easily winked at as in Cape coast."[68] The Duke of

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[65]Scotter, "International Rivalry," p.91.

[66]Ibid., p.89.

[67]Ibid., pp.89-90.

[68]Ibid., p.90.

Newcastle later agreed to a temporary annexation, but was dead set sgainst any territorial proliferation that might use Lagos as an epicentre.[69]

In the final analysis, the annexation of Lagos, like all the other British annexations on the west coast, again cast Britain in the role of an exacting creditor. Kosoko had been overthrown by Her Majesty's navy, and Britain was again demanding full payment for her role as a king maker. Great Britain's payment was to be total jurisdiction over the island of Lagos. Lord Russell's attitude on this issue made this point inexorably clear.

> . . . Her Majesty's Government would be most unwilling that the establishment of British sovereignty at Lagos should be attended with any injustice to Dosumu, the present Chief of the Island; but they conceive that as his tenure of the island in point of fact depends entirely upon the continuance of the protection which has been afforded to him by British naval authorities since the expulsion of Kosoko, no injustice will be inflicted upon him by changing this anomalous protectorate into an avowed occupation, provided his material interests are secured. It will be right therefore, to assign him an adequate pension, to be paid out of the revenue of the island . . . .[70]

Even after the annexation of Palma, Leckie, and Badagry by the Governors of Lagos, the colony still suffered from chronic insolvency, and it soon became necessary for it

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[69] Ibid., p.91.

[70] P.P. 1862, Vol.LXI, p.5(345). Papers relating to the occupation of Lagos. Dosumu's pension was fixed by McCoskry at £1,030 sterling a year. See Biobaku, The Egba and their Neighbours, p.69. (My italics.)

to depend on grants from the home government in order to make ends meet. The cost of administering Lagos proved exhorbitant. It cost the Government £6,510 for the second half of 1862, and nearly £16,708 in 1863. In 1864 the cost soared to £22,805.[71]

To meet the rising cost of administering Lagos, the Government began borrowing from Lagos based merchants. Up until December 20, 1864, debts were specified as follows: The West Africa Company, £367; William McCoskry, £46; the hire of the steamer Eyo Honesty, £450; drafts on the agent general, £2,142; advances from the treasury chest, £694; a loan from Henry Eales, Lagos trader, £525.[72] These debts were incurred in spite of the Parliamentary grants which ran to £2,822 in 1862; £704 in 1863; and £4,455 in 1864.[73]

It is quite evident from looking at these figures that neither Akitoye nor Dosumu could have administered Lagos competently without adequate financial resources. The fact that they tried to do so for a period of ten years (without the benefit of parliamentary grants, drafts from the agent general, the treasury or private loans from British traders

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[71]P.P. 1865, Vol.XXXVII, p.42(328), Appendix No.25.

[72]P.P. 1865, Vol.XXXVII, p.43(329), Appendix No.28.

[73]P.P. 1865, Vol.XXXVII, p.42(328), Appendix No.26.

not to mention the fact that the customs duties which they had pegged at a comparatively low level were rarely collected) proves that Akitoye and his son Dosumu did quite well considering their circumstances.

In view of the above facts, the British annexation of Lagos could only be said to have been undertaken for reasons quite different from the ones stated during the Adderley Select Committee proceedings.

CHAPTER VI

THE FAILURE OF THE ADDERLEY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The failure of the Adderley Committee recommendations was rendered inevitable by the series of events which preceded the Ashanti war of 1863. French-English rivalry on the west coast of Africa was greatly heightened by the Napoleonic wars. The Parliamentary Select Committee of 1812 which recommended the abandoning of British forts in Whydah as well as all over the west coast clearly stipulated that these condemned forts were to be sold only to British born subjects, and that such forts should on no account be sold to foreigners[1] (meaning the French). All through the Adderley Select Committee proceedings it was implied again and again that any territories abandoned by Britain would most certainly be taken over by France.[2] This concern with France, as we have already seen, largely coloured the views of the Foreign Office on the issue of the acquisition of Lagos. To understand the genesis of the Anglo-French rivalry on the west coast, we must return to the outbreak of the French Revolution.

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[1] Scotter, "International Rivalry", p.6.

[2] P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.115, Quest.2759; p.159, Quest. 3663; p.171, Quest.4029.

The first English reaction to the French Revolution was decidedly favourable, at least until the summer of 1790. Englishment generally told the story of the French Revolution as an epic of heroic grandeur. Then Edmund Burke published his Reflections on the French Revolution,[3] sounding the alarm on the evils of the French Revolution and its possible repercussions on Britain. The more egalitarian the Revolution became, the more it was disliked and ridiculed by Englishmen. As the Parliamentary battle over the slave trade raged in 1795, William Pitt argued that it was:

> incumbent upon a British legislature to show, by its conduct, the contrast between the wild, spurious, and imaginary tenets of the 'Right of Man' and the genuine principles of practical justice and rational liberty. It was incumbent upon the house to take the speediest measures to heal the wound which humanity has suffered from the prosecution of the slave trade, and thereby to disarm the Jacobins of their most dangerous engine of attack, and provide for the country the surest and most effectual means of safety.[4]

The defeat of France in 1814 merely deepened the suspicion and animosity of France against Britain -- an animosity which could be traced to the Seven Years War, with the consequent loss of the French colonies in Canada and the West Indies.

After the Napoleonic wars, France was again in a

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[3] W. E. Lunt, History of England, (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p.599.

[4] Hansard, 1795, Vol.XXXI, p.1343. (My italics.)

position to lose her colonies, consequently, French delegates at the Congress of Vienna were convinced that Britain's crusade against the slave trade was merely designed to cripple the commercial resurgence of the French colonies in the West Indies.[5] Although this fear was unfounded, it gradually developed into jockeying for "spheres of interest" on the west coast of Africa between Britain and France.[6]

Another reason for the failure of the Adderley Recommendations is probably not obvious at first sight, but it pervaded the entire Anglo-African relationship on the coast -- the rise of racism on the part of the English. Racism had always been present in Britain, but its existence did not visibly affect Anglo-African trade relationships on the west coast of Africa until the eighteen thirties. Up to this time, British reaction to racism was influenced by two elements, viz., the anthropological debates on racism which had long been in existence, and the impact of the African slave trade on Europeans in general. The discussions on racism beginning from

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[5]Klingberg, The Anti-Slavery Movement in England, pp.143-153.

[6]For a discussion on the French-British rivalry on the west coast, see J. D. Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, (London: Macmillan, 1966), Chapter III. On the French activities in West Africa dating from the 16th to the 20th centuries, see J. D. Hargreaves, (ed.), France and West Africa - An Anthology of Historical Documents, (London: Macmillan and Co.Ltd., 1969), particularly Chapter IV.

the age old "Hamitic theory" to the subsequent theories of "monogenesis" and "polygenesis" were largely based on "scholarly" speculation and did not begin to have popular following until the emergence of Darwin and his "scientific theory". But even before Darwin, the writings of Dr. Robert Knox, Thomas Carlisle, Mott, Gliddon, Bulmer Lytton, and Count de Gobineau, had gradually but effectively undermined the prevailing evangelical fervour of the late eighteenth century.[7]

The depth to which xenophobic feelings against the African had percolated within British society was clearly in evidence during the Adderley Committee proceedings. Many of the Committee members sought to verify the "fact" that Africans were congenitally incapable of either civilization or self-government. Although many of the traders, travellers, and missionaries pointed out again and again that Africans were quite capable of self government, the questions persisted.[8] It became quite clear that the point at issue was no longer whether or not the Africans were really capable of self government, but whether some of the members of the Committee could eke out enough evidence to justify their preconceived

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[7]For an abridged discussion on these racist doctrines, see P. D. Curtin, The Image of Africa, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), pp.28-57 and 363-387.

[8]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.132, Quest,3120; p.133, Quest. 3138-3143; p.201, Quest.4832; p.225, Quest.5523; p.232, Quest.5699; p.240, Quest.5917-18.

notions of the African. Key government witnesses like Colonel Ord and Captain Edmonston hardly bothered to camouflage their anti-African feelings.

Sir Francis Baring pointed out to Colonel Ord during the proceedings that since the Africans themselves had been capably spearheading the evangelization of Africa, it would be advisable to gradually hand over the administration of these settlements to them. Colonel Ord declared that he did not think the Africans were capable of self government, and in any case, that it was likely to cause friction between the Africans and the European residents.[9] When Captain Edmonston of the Royal Navy was asked if he would consider taking some African apprentices on his boat, he declared emphatically that he did not want to have Negroes on board his ship.[10]

A great deal of the dislike and contempt in which the Sierra Leonians were held was due to the fact that Sierra Leonians had by and large undermined Britain's comfortable stereotype of the African. Sierra Leone Africans had become successful theologians, teachers, ship captains, marine engineers, medical doctors and lawyers, and had in general acquitted themselves well in various fields of endeavour. They had proved that Africans were capable of considerable

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[9]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.86, Quest.2045-2046.

[10]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.176, Quest,4184-4185.

achievement. But by the mere fact of these achievements, Sierra Leonians were unknowingly and unwittingly robbing Englishmen of their excuse for holding on to the African settlements. For it had been stated again and again, especially in the eighteen sixties, that Britain should stay in west Africa until some time in the indefinite future when Africanswere capable of ruling themselves. Pessimists hopefully held on to the view that the potential ability of the African in this respect was seriously circumscribed by some undefined congenital inhibition, which in effect meant that Britain was to remain there indefinitely.

While these developments were taking place, Sierra Leonians were demanding, and in fact obtained for a relatively short period of time, the right to trial by jury -- a mixed African and European jury. Racists were hard put to explain away the achievements of the various African peoples, and they were in fact explained away as isolated exceptions. But the more these isolated exceptions increased, the more the Sierra Leonians were hated for upsetting the apple cart. In the course of time, British traders on the coast assumed that they had the right to treat their African counterparts as they pleased, and insisted that this right be upheld by the British navy. As Professor Ajayi has clearly stated:

> As long as the European traders could not expect armed support from Europe, particularly with the transition from the trade in slaves to trade in oil, which took longer to collect and required more stability on land, it was often in their interests to encourage such strong African governments on the coast. And in fact they fostered the influence of monarchs like Eyo I and Duke Ephraim of Calabar who had a reputation for fairness in adjudicating between European traders and their African customers. But when philanthropists had a consul invested with naval power far in excess of what the African rulers possessed, and when they strengthened his hand on land by the privileges they secured for missionary intervention, they were weakening the African states and turning the Europeans from negotiators to arbiters of trade.[11]

That Europeans had become the arbiters of trade in Nigeria was already an established fact long before 1865. An extract from the following petition written by the British supercargoes in Bonny to Lieutenant Huntley in 1836 spells out clearly the pattern of the new trade relationship.

> . . . That it should be clearly impressed upon the King and Chiefs of the Bonny territory that a vessel of War can always be called by the Masters of British Vessels in the river and will always come in whenever protection is required by the said British ships, that while the British are most desirous of having their trade with the Bonny territory carried on upon the most friendly terms yet every case of insult to the Flag or oppression to a British subject will be severely resented whenever it is made known. . . .[12]

African chiefs and African traders were to be cowed into submission by the man-of-war, but there were to be no similar prescriptions for British offenders. British naval officers

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[11]Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria, p.87.

[12]Newbury, British Policy Towards West Africa - Select Documents, 1786-1874, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p.378.

and British consuls had already destroyed such prospects by claiming to have no power to punish British offenders on the west coast. Professor C. W. Newbury states that:

> During the last years of the 1850's, however, it was made clear that laws to regulate trade were not approved by the Foreign Office because British traders could not be bound to observe them; Consuls were permitted to help form Courts of Equity on the model of the one at Bonny, but they were forbidden to interfere in their hearings or to act as court of appeal until 1862.[13]

In view of the prevailing circumstances, the Adderley Committee was definitely naive in even contemplating that the privileged position, unequal treaties, and the officially sanctioned commercial robbery which the British trader had gained in Nigeria would be given up by the mere fiat of a Parliamentary Select Committee. That the Committeeitself recognized the futility of this measure was clearly evidenced by the wording of the Committee recommendations (see Chapter 2). In spite of the much heralded British public opinion against colonial acquisition in the eighteen sixties which eminent historians like Dike, Ajayi, Hargreaves, Flint and many others appear to have accepted, there is not the slightest shred of evidence to support the existence of such an opinion. The

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[13] Ibid., p.375. In 1827 the British government passed the Foreign Jurisdiction Act. By this Act, the Consul was given the power to try and punish British subjects under certain conditions, by fine up to two hundred pounds sterling, by imprisonment up to 21 days or by banishment for 12 months. This law was never enforced in the Bights. See Scotter, "International Rivalry", p.257.

same thing could be said for the government officials who testified during the Adderley Committee proceedings. Neither Mr. Chichester Fortescue, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, nor Colonel Ord, nor Mr. William Wylde of the Foreign Office opposed territorial expansion. They all made known their desire to stay in West Africa. Furthermore, they advised that British presence in West Africa be maintained even after the cessation of the slave trade.[14] If the government officials were not responsive to "public opinion," who then was to speak for public opinion in this case. After the death of Lord Palmerston in 1865, Mr. Hughessen, Parliamentary Under-Secretary declared that:

> The half and half policy of Great Britain for which he considers Adderley's Committee partly to blame could end in nothing but disaster. Public opinion would not permit the withdrawal of British authority from the Coast.

Hughessen then went on to suggest that:

> the best thing that could happen for Lagos, and indeed, the whole of West Africa, whether as regards the safe and certain extension of commerce or the general and gradual improvement of the natives, would be that the whole of the Seaboard should be under British control.[15]

It appears that the much maligned British opinion has been used by the Government mainly for its own ends. If

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[14]P.P. 1865, Vol.V, p.16, Quest.279-280; p.64, Quest. 1365; p.84, Quest.1991-2; p.114, Quest.2747-53.

[15]Scotter, "International Rivalry", p.156. (My italics.)

the Government found itself unenthusiastic about spending money in Africa on particular projects or for particular reasons, public opinion was used as an excuse for not making the necessary sacrifice. At such a time, public opinion is said to be against territorial acquisition, but if the Government for one reason or the other sanctioned territorial aggrandisement at any particular place, it was normally said that public opinion would not favour withdrawal. So one is confronted with a situation where public opinion is used as an excuse for acquiring territories as well as not spending money in Africa or not acquiring certain territories -- and all depending on the circumstances and priorities of the British Government at the particular time.[16]

The bare fact was that the British appear to have specialized in manufacturing reasons for doing whatever they felt inclined to do. Why they insisted on manufacturing excuses for every act, even in the cases of plain outright aggression, belongs perhaps to the realms of meta-history. Nevertheless, reasons and excuses had to be supplied for every act. During the period of the slave trade, coercive treaties were forced on them in order to protect the British trader. To guarantee the operation of the "trust" system by

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[16]Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa is full of these contradictions. See Chapters 2-4.

which Britain made enormous profits, the navy was called in to enforce the payment of British debts, as well as to protect legitimate British traders, even when the Government admitted that Africans were being grossly cheated by British traders. According to the characteristic Palmerstonian language of the day, "It may be true in one sense that trade ought not to be enforced by Cannonballs, but on the other hand trade cannot flourish without security . . . ."[17]

Having established British legitimacy on the coast, support was given to missionaries who sought to establish an identical "pax" in the hinterland. The reason given this time was to promote civilization and Christianity even though the unhappy victims of this civilization wanted no part of it. From the eighteen forties on, British treaties with Nigeria began to include coercive clauses guaranteeing freedom to missionaries. Perhaps no one recognized better Britain's dexterity in acquiring both formal and informal empire by this means than the renowned Irish playwright, Sir Bernard Shaw, who stated that:

> Every English man is born with a certain miraculous power that makes him master of the world. When he wants a thing he never tells himself that he wants it. He waits patiently till there comes into his head, no one knows how, the burning conviction that it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who have the things he wants. Then he becomes irresistible. Like the aris-

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[17]Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.175.

> tocrat he does what pleases him and grabs what he wants; like the shopkeeper he pursues his purpose with industry and steadfastness that come from strong religious conviction and deep sense of moral responsibility. He is never at a loss for an effective moral attitude. As the great champion of freedom and independence he conquers half the world and calls it colonization. When he wants a new market for his adulterated Manchester goods, he sends a missionary to teach the nations the gospel of peace. The natives kill the missionary; he flies to arms in defence of Christianity; fights for it, conquers for it; and takes the market as a reward from heaven . . . . There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find an Englishman doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle. He fights you on patriotic principles, he robs you on business principles, he enslaves you on imperialistic principles, he bullies you on many principles, he supports his King on loyal principles, he cuts of his King's head on republic principles. His watchword is always duty; and he never forgets that the nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side of its interests is lost.[18]

Sir Bernard Shaw's analysis of the English character was not only relevant in west Africa, it was equally true of many other parts of the world. The eighteen sixties actually saw Britain flexing her imperial muscles on a global scale. In 1806, an Anglo-French force occupied Peking and exacted humiliating concessions from the Chinese Government.[19] In 1864, British land forces were engaged in a savage war on the Punjab frontier[20] -- a sorry reminder of the fact that the

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[18]William L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p.91. First published 1929.

[19]R. A. Albrecht-Carrie, A Diplomatic History of Europe from the Congress of Vienna, (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p.115.

[20]The Times (London), January 29, 1864, p.6.

Indian mutiny of 1857 had made no appreciable dent on Britain's predilection for colonial acquisition. In the same year, Vice-Admiral Kuper was busily engaged in the bombardment of the Japanese port of Kagoshima on the pretext that one Mr. Richardson, an Englishman, was murdered in the town. Not only was Japan burdened with a penalty of £100,000, Prince Satsuma was required to hang the culprits in the presence of the British Consul.[21]

But what was happening in the Far East could hardly be characterized as an imperial spasm, since similar occurrences were taking place elsewhere. In New Zealand, another series of the recurring Maori wars had also broken out, and the editorial opinions of the leading British dailies hardly conveyed the impression of a nation interested in colonial retrenchment. On October 14, 1864 a ringing editorial in The Times of London accused the Maoris of trying to enclose the colonists in little strips of land "beyond which no extension should be made and thus to range at large themselves while they confined a more numerous, as well as a more civilized population to a corner of the soil." The editorial concluded by prophesying that ". . . when once we establish ourselves on the soil of New Zealand, the course of events

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[21] The Times (London), February 6, 1864, p.9.

was inevitably marked out -- two races were brought into contact with interests necessarily antagonistic and it was certain that the superior race would prevail."[22] A subsequent editorial from another daily accused the Maoris of coveting "the land of English settlers from the savage instinct which impels him to seize that which he sees is of value to someone else . . . ."[23]

In spite of these widely held opinions, the impression that Britain was no longer interested in colonial acquisition persisted during the eighteen sixties. Professor J. D. Hargreaves maintains that ". . . if mercantile opinion did not in general support territorial expansion, /in the eighteen sixties/ government officials were even less inclined to do so."[24] But the point at issue here is not how the British trader felt about the formal empire. To the British trader formal empires implied high import and export duties. Within the framework of the informal empire, however, British traders found all the benefits of preferential consideration without the accompanying financial sacrifice. Nowhere else in west Africa was this attitude so markedly pronounced and practiced

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[22] The Times (London), October 14, 1864, p.6. (My italics.)

[23] Manchester Guardian, April 29, 1864, p.2.

[24] Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, p.31.

than in the Bight of Biafra.[25] Customs duties were comparatively low, and the "trust system", as Professor Dike pointed out, meant that "Africans were no longer free to trade with all comers."[26] It stands to reason, then, that mercantile opposition to formal empires was largely due to economic expediency rather than an intrinsic dislike for colonial acquisition.

The numerous intercessions of British consuls on behalf of British traders in the Bights proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the British trader had come to equate prosperity with political leverage, and political leverage implied the existence of a certain amount of formal or informal control. As to Professor Hargreaves' reference to the antipathy of government officials towards colonial acquisition, the evidence and testimony of government officials have not only proven to be unreliable, but have also proven to be notoriously contradictory.[27] It appears that Professor Hargreaves has based his judgment on the behaviour of the Treasury towards colonial expenditure, but what was happening in the Gladstonian Treasury had no direct bearing on the issue of colonial retrenchment since the Treasury's financial axe actually fell indis-

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[25] See Chapter III of this study.

[26] Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, p.109.

[27] Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, Chapters 2-4, especially pp.81-82, 109, 137-138, 139-141, 143. See also Chapters II and IV of this study.

criminately on all aspects of government expenditure, both domestic and foreign. Professor Hargreaves has also admitted that the Treasury appeared to have insisted that "financial considerations should be decisive in the formation of policy." He concedes that the stand of the Treasury department drove "many statesmen -- even Prime Ministers -- to impotent fury . . . ." And yet, as Lord Salisbury was to note, "Treasury control was singularly indiscriminating."[28] The attitude of Mr. Gladstone on this issue was made quite clear during a speech in the Liverpool Town Hall on "The Responsibility of Extended Empire". He pointed out then that the country could "not consent to be charged with payment of vast sums of money for the sake of performing duties which belonged to the colonists rather than to us." He also pointed out that "accepting privileges of freedom without submitting to its burdens" was demoralizing.[29] As to Gladstone's view on colonial retrenchment, there was not a mention, but he did give us considerable insight into his state of mind on the issue. "Nations," he declared, "will not always wait for influence to come of itself . . . <u>it is a happy necessity which gives us ample scope for energy and ambition without meddling in continental quarrels</u>."[30]

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[28] Hargreaves, <u>Prelude to the Partition of West Africa</u>, p.32.

[29] <u>The Times</u>, (London), October 14, 1864, p.6.

[30] <u>Ibid</u>. (My italics.)

The editorial comment on Gladstone's speech was more outspoken in its views on colonialization:

> Reflexion forces itself upon us, as it evidently does on Mr. Gladstone, that the extent of territory, distributed as ours all over the world, stands in an inverse ratio to military power. The price we pay for having an empire upon which the sun never sets is the being vulnerable in every quarter of the globe. Perhaps, however, this dominion may be the very antidote to, or rather the complement of, our insular position, compelling us to rise to larger ideas, and virtually providing for us a grander sphere of experience than would otherwise belong to islanders, however free and civilized.[31]

The measure of Britain's policy in the eighteen sixties does not lie in the pious professions of government ministers or government officials, but in what the Government actually did during this period. From 1860 to the end of that decade, Britain had either occupied or annexed Lagos, Oudh, Lower Burma, Kowloon, Transvaal, St. Lucia Bay, Delagoa Bay, as well as other places,[32] and unless these acquisitions could be attributed to "a fit of absent mindedness" the only rational interpretation would be to assign it to the vitality of Britain's acquisitive instinct. As Professors Gallagher and Robinson aptly asked, "Are these the actions of ministers anxious to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire? Do they look like an 'indifference' to an empire rendered superfluous by free trade? On the contrary, here is a con-

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[31] Ibid.

[32] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," Economic History Review, 1953, Second Series, Vol.VI, No.1, pp.2-3.

tinuity of policy which the conventional interpretation misses because it takes account only of formal methods of control . . . ."[33]

Not only had the British people become deeply attached to their empires in the eighteen sixties, the nation's law-makers had come to recognize the sacredness and inviolability of the colonial issue. As a result, no serious British politician could take a wrong position on it without exposing himself to serious repercussions. Replying to an invitation to participate in the Adderley parliamentary committee, Benjamin Disraeli informed Adderley that he was in agreement with his views respecting

> our colonies, but I can't conceal from myself that the country is not yet ripe for them. It has been so long accustomed to the idea of what they call Colonial Empire, and the power and profit they erroneously associate with their obsolete conceptions, that it is in the highest degree painful and perplexing for them to contemplate the altered relations which now exist between the metropolis and its settlements. I think we could count on no united party support in favour of a resolution which in such matters asserted a principle; but a committee of Inquiry, as you contemplate is another affair, and in my opinion it would be a favourable move . . . .[34]

Disraeli's suspicions on this issue became largely prophetic. When the Adderley motion for a committee of Inquiry came up for discussion in Parliament, the issue was tardily discussed, encouragements were few and far between, even those who seemed to support Adderley's idea on the Select Committee of Inquiry

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[33] Ibid., p.3.

[34] Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, p.70. (My italics.)

made it quite clear that their interests were largely academic.[35] Adding to Adderley's woes of tardy support were those members of Parliament who took issue with Adderley for even making the suggestion. Mr. Henry Seymour, a Liberal back bencher, accused Adderley of

> riding his hobby too hard when he designed to confine England to the limit of these islands; it seemed to him absurd to talk of restraining this nation within such narrow limits . . . the natural course of a people so powerful, vigorous and enterprising as that of England was to expand and occupy nearly every region of the world; and if Napoleon had seen the present wealth, power and influence of this country in all parts of the world, he would have approved of the policy of the British Government for the last thirty or forty years . . . .[36]

When a speech of this nature, made in 1864, is associated with the numerous chauvinistic editorials in the prominent British dailies, as well as the numerous territories occupied or annexed by Britain within this period, the myth of the eighteen sixties becomes incomprehensible.

In questioning the failure of Britain to withdraw from west Africa in accordance with the Adderley Committee Recommendations of 1865, one is in effect lending credence to an implied myth -- the myth that the Adderley recommendations were actually meant to be carried out or the myth

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[35]See Chapter II of this study.

[36]Hansard, 1864, 3rd Series, Vol.CLXXVI, pp.1674-1676. (My italics.)

that the eighteen sixties were a period marked by a definite apathy in Britain towards colonial acquisition.

One conspicuous fact that has emerged in an indirect way from this study has been the recurring evidence showing that Britain was not only prolific in acquiring colonies in the eighteen sixties, but, that by the end of the eighteen sixties Britain's imperial map of west Africa had been unalterably drawn. To maintain that what happened in the eighteen seventies and eighteen eighties was sudden and unplanned, is to deny the obvious chain of historical continuity. The so called scramble for Africa which is said to have begun in the eighteen eighties was no more than the international confirmation of a "fait accompli" which was consummated in the eighteen sixties and the pre-1860 period. This assertion should not be construed as an attempt to state that Britain's presence in west Africa during the early part of the nineteenth century was not largely determined by the commendable forces of humanitarianism and philanthropy. On the contrary this is merely an attempt to show that around the middle of the nineteenth century, what began as a British attempt to atone for "two hundred years of crime against humanity" gradually and almost imperceptibly developed into an avowed territorial occupation. Even long after humanitarianism and philanthropy ceased to account for British presence on the west coast, the

pretense of eradicating the slave trade and promoting legitimate trade and civilization was kept up, and as Gallagher, Robinson and Denny, clearly stated "the official mind took pleasure in supposing that in its pursuit of national interest it was putting down the slave trade and spreading sweetness and light. Hence it was natural rather than hypocritical to clothe its African actions in the public garb of philanthropy."[37]

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[37] R. Robinson, G. Gallagher, and A. Denny, Africa and the Victorians, (London: Macmillan and Co.Ltd., 1961), p.24.

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