

From Slave Trade to Empire

Europe and the colonisation of Black
Africa 1780s–1880s

Edited by Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

**Also available as a printed book
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Pétre-Grenouilleau has provocatively contextualised in a century-long global process what we still too often contemplate as an ‘event’ or a ‘transition’. He allows his contributors to suggest the full multi-centred complexity of what historians have tried and failed to describe convincingly in terms of single global processes, political or economic. This book thus makes very timely contributions to rethinking both national and global historiographies.

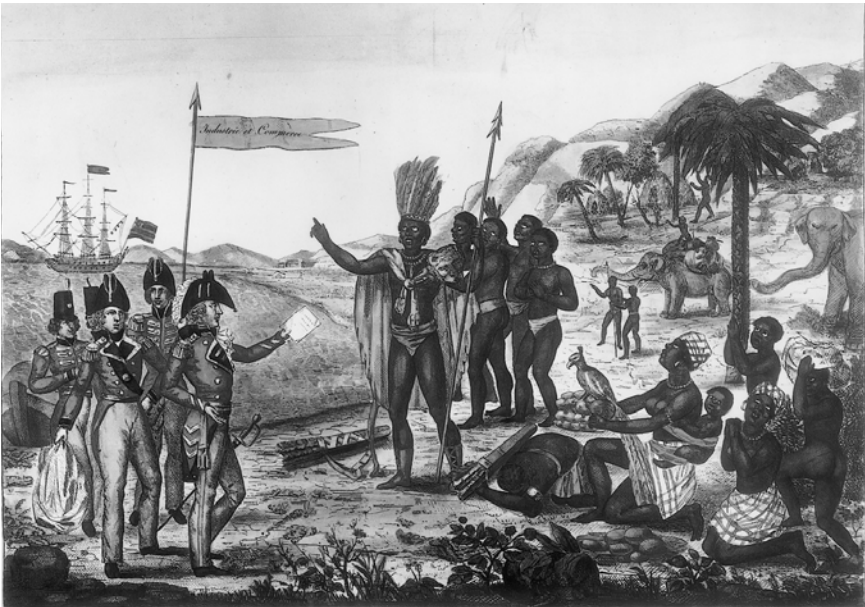
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The latest thinking on European involvement in Africa, emphasising the continuity of the relationship from the Slave Trade to Colonisation.

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Frontispiece 'Les Anglais faisant part aux Africains du traité sur l'abolition de la traite', engraving, Paris, M. Sanne, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

From Slave Trade to Empire

Much has been written about the origins of the great push which led Europe to colonise sub-Saharan Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. This book provides a new perspective on this controversial subject by focusing on Europe and a range of empire-building states, Germany, France, Italy and Portugal. The chapters in this volume consider economic themes in addition to the political and cultural aspects of the transition from commerce to colonies.

Unlike other texts on the subject, this refreshing new volume redresses many imbalances, by:

- considering a number of empire-building states, instead of just one of them
- giving prominence to powers other than Britain
- giving weight to economic themes without losing sight of the equally important political and cultural aspects of the transition from commerce to colonies
- taking the analysis beyond the 1880s, and revealing the broader picture – covering the time of the first attacks against the slave trade (during the 1780s) to the premise of the Scramble (1880s)
- considering the period 1780s–1880s for its own sake and not as a function of what preceded or followed it
- reviewing the colonial process (excepting that of Great Britain) as the reaffirmation and exacerbation of the *ancien régime* (as well as an icon of modernity), and partly as a reflection of the highest form of mercantilism rather than the highest form of capitalism
- illuminating the importance of circumstantial phenomena, at the level of Europe and its different countries.

By emphasising the variety of those involved, and the diversity of regional and local situations, this book shows how necessary it is to link the general history of ideas, national and micro-history. The contributors suggest a truly cosmopolitan history of imperialism, one which is of great relevance in our times of globalisation and reconstruction since September 11, 2001.

Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau is Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Lorient. He has worked extensively on the French slave trade and French maritime expansion. Previous publications include a biography, in French, of Claude-Henri de Saint Simon (1760–1825). A global and comparative history of slave trades (occidental, oriental and internal) is also forthcoming, in French (2004) as well as in English. He is a member of the Institut Universitaire de France.

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First published 2004
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-32309-2 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-714-65691-7 (Print edition)

The chapter by Albert Wirz is the last he wrote, before his death. We would like to dedicate this volume to him.

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1 Introduction

A missing link? The significance of the 1780s–1880s

Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau

Much has been written concerning the origins of the great push which led Europe to colonise sub-Saharan Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. It is one of those controversial subjects wherein the issues are such that the debates which arise are constantly renewed.

There is a tradition concerning this subject which, to some extent, still finds some basis in linking imperialism and colonisation, explaining the latter by the spread of the former. However, today, when speaking of the United States of America, we refer to it as an imperial power whereas its influence on the world is not only expressed by direct political domination and lasting territorial occupation, as is generally understood by the idea of colonisation. In addition, although the concept of imperialism is multifaceted (since one can speak of political imperialism as well as cultural imperialism), it is primarily one of these facets – the economy, which has been emphasised, studied and debated. In short, we questioned specifically how economic factors could explain the imperialist and colonialist fever to which the old continent succumbed at the end of the nineteenth century.

This economic theory is based on the supposed interests of Europe for a given period in time, the second age of industrialisation, when it became vital to search for new markets, sources of raw materials and areas suitable for potential capital investment. The dynamics of the growth in production boosted by industrial capitalism seemed to have come up against the weak growth of internal demand. In order to reduce this imbalance, a ‘competitive regulatory system’ as defined by the economists Boyer and Mistral, was set up, forcing the great nations to look abroad for the markets which were lacking at home.¹ At that time, however, being tempted by protectionism to varying degrees, the industrial countries of Europe sought what they needed beyond their own borders, particularly in Black Africa. The relatively obvious coinciding of indications of problems to come and the beginnings of colonialist fever is also enough to stimulate interest and it is not surprising that it has intrigued analysts for a long time. In 1917, in his famous *L’impérialisme, stade suprême du capitalisme (Imperialism, the Highest Form of Capitalism)*, Lenin sought to find a relationship of cause

and effect, colonisation being only a logical and inescapable phenomenon, made almost obligatory by the nature of capitalism itself. In the same year, Schumpeter voiced a completely opposite opinion. In his *The Sociology of Imperialism*,² he wrote that only the vestiges of a pre-capitalist mentality, unfortunately rooted within the ruling classes of the great European nations, were able to go that far because, essentially rationalistic and calculating, capitalism could not result in conquest and war. Despite their conflicting opinions, Lenin and Schumpeter progressed along the same lines: they showed to advantage the limitations of the rose-tinted interpretation of the colonial process which, until then, had often been explained solely by Europe's philanthropic desire to go and civilise the rest of the world, as illustrated, for example, in Kipling's famous *The White Man's Burden*. But Lenin and Schumpeter only seemed to provide answers to the problem through analysis of economic structures involving Europe alone. This view seemed even more obvious following the Second World War, to the extent that a manual published in one of the leading collections of Presses universitaires de France (*Les Grandes Civilisations*) could be entitled *L'essor industriel et l'impérialisme colonial*³ (*Industrial Expansion and Colonial Imperialism*).

Since then the debate has become much more complex; on the one hand because the nature, importance and limits of the 'crisis' which affected industrial Europe for part of the period 1870–80 have been bitterly debated and, on the other, because the importance of the economic variable in the colonial process has been considerably minimised by some writers whose books have become classics. In 1960, in his famous *Mythes et réalités de l'impérialisme colonial français*, Henri Brunschwig explained the colonial process by combining three main factors:⁴ the nationalist upsurge, advances in economic liberalism and the idea of a clear conscience, a necessary development for the progress of civilisation. Within a context of national competition, the support of an increasingly chauvinistic public enabled various individuals (politicians, academics, geographers and a handful of businessmen financially involved in colonial expansion) to force the country into an absurd economic enterprise. In the end, as far as Brunschwig is concerned, the economic sector played only a secondary role in what was predominantly a political and ideological process, not remotely profitable to the nation. It should also be added here that all too frequently one forgets that the more obvious facts and coincidences can often very easily be countered by other, equally disturbing, statements. Therefore it is perhaps not without interest to note that countries such as Portugal, which were not great industrial powers, were nonetheless interested in the colonial process, while others, with a stronger industrial infrastructure, were far from being totally dependent on this process for their foreign policy. After all, France at the end of the nineteenth century was just as concerned (if not more so) by the effective protection of its agriculture and regulation of imported foodstuffs and animals from the Americas

and the antipodes. Concerning historical coincidences, one could agree with Seymour Drescher, that 'temporal coincidence is the weakest form of causal inference'.⁵

'The attitudes adopted in colonial policy are always explained by international circumstances', wrote Brunschwig in 1971, in *Le partage de l'Afrique noire*. This statement reflects a historiographical change inspired by a book published ten years earlier which aroused passionate debate – *Africa and the Victorians* by Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher and Alice Denny.⁶ In France, as in the United Kingdom, comparable views were then developed emphasising the role of circumstantial phenomena: changes in nationalism during the last decades of the nineteenth century; the intervention of Léopold II in Central Africa; Franco-Italian rivalry in Tunisia; the Portuguese intervention; or the Berlin conference in 1885. Economic importance was replaced by political importance. Paradoxically, two aspects of the old interpretation were confirmed. First, a reversal of circumstances (one goes from the idea of the determining role of a market crisis to a crisis of international relations), then being caught up in a spiral, an inescapable process from the moment it began, once the signal for the famous Scramble had been given. From which point endless debates have ensued. Some historians, particularly Jacques Marseille, have tried to reconcile politics and economics when studying their stormy relationship with regard to the French colonial empire. Others have looked more deeply into the circumstantial and political perspective of colonial expansion, following the example of Henri Wesseling, a historian interested in the great players on the African scene, trying to understand the conditions in which they made their decisions.⁷ Gradually the mechanisms of the colonial process have been taken apart.

The increasing complexity of the analysis has therefore led to the old, unambiguous theories based on the essential role of only one factor being beaten into shape. However, this process of complication has not yet finished. For example, the role played by Africa itself has been illuminated by a pleiad of studies, amongst which those by David Northrup, Joseph C. Miller, Patrick Manning, Paul Lovejoy, Claude Meillassoux and Emmanuel Terray. The process which led from slave trade to legitimate trade, then from legitimate trade to colonisation is more and more taken into account.

As a result, many new issues have been raised, like that of the 'adaptation crisis'. First pointed out by K. Dike, in 1956, applied by Antony G. Hopkins to the case of Yorubaland (south-western Nigeria) in 1968, and then more clearly formulated by him in a pioneering synthesis devoted to the economic history of west Africa, in 1973, the 'adaptation crisis' is a theory following which the ending of the transatlantic slave trade produced dramatic changes for west African rulers previously involved in slave trade. Suddenly lacking the outlets for slaves, they faced a shortage of cash. Therefore, they came up against fierce competition from small

plantation holders stimulated by the rise of legitimate trade, as well as from some former slaves. As a result, political instability became more pregnant yet, prompting and facilitating European colonisation. This theory gained support from Martin Klein in 1972. A great controversy followed, supplied by arguments from Ralph Austen and Patrick Manning, as well as by the seminal work by Robin Law.⁸ We now know that the passage from slave trade to 'legitimate' commerce was much more a process than a simple transition, that things evolved in different ways according to the different places and times in west Africa, that sometimes a 'crisis of adaptation' occurred and sometimes it didn't, but the debate is still widely open. This controversy shows us that the role played by the Africans in the colonisation process is an important element to be taken into account. This issue, nevertheless, will not be really developed in this volume.

Some deliberate choices have been made, indeed. The first and the most important, since it determines our framework, is to focus on Europe. African historiography has been considerably renewed during the past three or four decades. New issues have also been pointed out regarding the European framework, notably due to the key work by Henri Wesseling and that by William Roger Louis⁹ and Antony Hopkins,¹⁰ but still a lot remains to be done in that field. This is the reason why a return to Europe may be fruitful, and complementary to the other fields of research linked to colonisation and imperialism.

Other factors have been even more neglected and remain virtually unexplored. This is the case for the type of cultural systems of representation at work behind the ideologies which favoured colonisation. Let us take one example amongst many, Jules Ferry's argument on the virtues of emancipation and civilisation through colonisation, or even the necessity that France of the Third Republic had to open up colonial markets for its industry. Brunschwig has shown that this theory is groundless. However, it is another issue to study the origins of Ferry's arguments; why they were put together in one way rather than another; and why some of his contemporaries found the arguments plausible. The players in the political, as in the economic, game, do not always operate in the same rational way, and sometimes their arguments do not correspond either to their acts or to the reality of their thoughts. To study the genesis of these arguments would perhaps reveal certain myths linked to the colonial process. Without this, the myths will inevitably survive. They can be seen even today in school and sometimes university books, where Ferry's arguments continue to be taken literally, as if they really revealed the hidden side of the colonial process. This leads to the confusion of the reasons for this process with the arguments which were employed to justify it. Here we are still faced with a much-neglected question concerning the cultural beliefs behind the political action concerning colonisation.

However, perhaps we can try to enrich the debate in another way, not

only by multiplying the angles of approach but also by re-centring the arguments in terms of time and space. Despite the extreme diversity of national attitudes concerning colonisation, we still too often tend to generalise based on just one single and often specific experience, that of the British. It is deliberate that Great Britain is referred to only briefly in this research. I thought that trying to account for the originality of the national attitudes in Europe would be of greater use than focusing on a well-known model. Four other states are widely represented here – Germany, France, Italy and Portugal – each by historians from these different countries. In other respects, it seemed that the fact of presenting the colonial move as an inescapable process which was strongly linked to particular circumstances could partly be explained by the period generally chosen to be studied. The majority of work on European penetration into Africa rarely analyses beyond the 1780s–1880s. In these circumstances, it is difficult to distance oneself from an analysis which centres primarily on the mechanisms and dynamics of colonial expansion. It is difficult to confirm whether the factors listed in order to explain the European colonial fever at the end of the nineteenth century are really new or, if they are older, how they could have evolved or reformed. A third choice was made, chronological: to study a sufficiently long period; a period which is too often forgotten, between the end of the slave trade and the premise of the Scramble. How far back should one go? The choice of the 1780s seemed logical enough. In fact, this was the period when the number of signs indicating a change in Europe's attitude to Black Africa increased: the peak period and questioning the slave trade, the beginnings of political economy, the start of a debate concerning interests in legitimate trade between Europe and Africa, the first expeditions into the African interior (for example, it was in 1803 that Mungo Park was sent by the Colonial Office to go up the River Niger and explore means of establishing commercial relations with the people of the region).

How can a better understanding of relations between Europe and Black Africa during the long transition period between 1780 and 1880 help us? Definitely not to provide ready-made answers. Perhaps to try and develop the formulation of certain questions regarding the colonial process in general: what common points and what differences can be established between the way in which the European states regarded Black Africa between the 1780s and the 1880s and the earlier forms (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries) and later forms (imperialism in the true sense) of European expansion? How does the colonisation phase of sub-Saharan Africa differ or not from previous periods, when European and African traders appeared on an equal footing? Many and sometimes opposing forces were assembled in different ways during the period 1780–1880. Can one nevertheless consider that it constitutes as much a period in itself (and not just a long, inarticulate transition between two periods), as the colonial periods both before and after it? In this case, how could we really define this

period which, while being absent from the treaties in the history of colonisation, was certainly not without effect on the long history of European expansion?

Second, a better understanding of this transition period could perhaps help us to re-evaluate the role of the different variables in play in the colonial process at the end of the nineteenth century. This raises many questions. In the long term, can we see here a change in the way of looking at the economic potential of Black Africa? How did Black Africa–Europe economic relations evolve during the long century which preceded the Scramble? Did economic interests really only play a role *after* the beginning of the colonial process, as Brunschwig has emphasised, or were they also present beforehand? What were the real interests? Were they representative of capitalists losing momentum, grasping at monopolistic situations, or did they herald this new, more financial-style capitalism that Paul Leroy-Beaulieu described in his famous *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*. Was it economically useful for Europe to colonise Black Africa? What agreements or disagreements is it possible to emphasise between the colonialist argument, the reality of Europe/Africa trade and the progress of European influence on the ground? Could the establishment of special, economic relations with Black Africa only have been made through political domination? If not, why and how was the path to colonisation finally taken?

There are, therefore, many questions which define the problematical framework of this research. The first part is devoted to a global weighing-up of the economic relations between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa as well as the role that the slave trade continued to play in these relationships until a fairly late date.

David Eltis opens the debate by indicating a whole series of major differences between the colonial period and that when economic relations between Europe and Africa revolved around slave-trading. It was not simply a break in time of nearly half a century between these two periods, there is also a difference in nature. At the time of the Atlantic slave trade, Africans were trading partners with Europeans and they freely played a decisive role in the organisation and development of trade. The demand for slaves varied from one region of Africa to another which explains why only 5.2 per cent of the slave ships for which we have sufficient information, went to trade in more than one region of Africa to stock up with slaves. Natural factors, such as the presence of deepwater anchorages, islands, rivers and breaking waves, could affect the slave trade. However, what had been advantageous in the eighteenth century (for example, islands where shelter from African attack could be negotiated) were no longer so from the moment the English sent battleships to suppress the slave trade (the islands were then directly under threat from British cannon and the trade preferred to take refuge on the mainland, particularly using the estuaries). Moreover, a site like Ouidah, with no port and

difficult access, was one of the most important slave-trading sites and, although nearer Europe than all the slave-trading regions and therefore more likely to generate shorter, less costly voyages, Senegambia made only a very modest contribution to the development of the slave trade. Which all goes to show that the local, political conditions influenced the slave trade much more than the natural environment. As elsewhere in the world, trade in Africa required stability, whether assured by a powerful state or by lineage groups. The nature of the state was of no consequence, nor did it have to be transformed into a warring nation to produce slaves (because it could just as well purchase them). A detailed analysis of the organisation of the slave trade and its development within each of the main regions of Atlantic Africa, enabled us to come up with one conclusion: 'trade thrived where African political conditions allowed it to thrive'. The slaves also played an important role through their revolts; they forced the ship-owners to take on more crew members to oversee them. This increased the cost of the trade and consequently limited the number of slaves eventually transported. Overall, Eltis contributes 'to moving Africa towards the role of agent in shaping the direction and composition of the slave trade'. If we add that the slave trade remained important and profitable for the African powers for a long time (throughout the history of the Atlantic slave trade, nearly half of the captured slaves were transported after 1775), we can only subscribe to Eltis' conclusion that 'except for the very important factor of European racial attitudes, the direct connection between the slave trade era and the colonial partition of most of the African continent . . . does not appear to have been very direct'.

David Richardson's contribution first of all completes that of Eltis. In fact, Eltis shows that, in the nineteenth century from a methodological point of view based on a regional analysis of things, four-fifths of the Atlantic slave trade were sent from only nine embarkation points. He also emphasises the need for more detailed research at local level; and it is in fact, at this level that Richardson intervenes, by analysing the evolution of credit relations between 1700 and 1891 in the two sites of the Bight of Biafra, Bonny and Old Calabar. In both cases, credit granted by Europeans (particularly by the English) in the form of an advance of goods, played an important role in the rise of the slave trade. On each occasion there was a fairly rapid conversion between slave trade and legitimate trade, always aided by European credit. The study of these two sites clearly brings out the interest in continued European influence. Richardson begins by breaking down the mechanisms at work behind the credit circuits which, in Old Calabar, evolved around the 'institutions of human pawnship' and in Bonny, around 'two canoe houses'. However, in both cases, the role of the lineage groups was of primary importance. Supporting Eltis regarding the role played by African agents in the slave trade, Richardson writes that 'each system represented an effectively adaptive use of local practices by Anglo-African trading partners in order to

promote international exchange'. Despite the continuation of their illegal trade, the ban on the slave trade destabilised this system, made profits scarce, and consequently increased 'the competition for rents' within the local élite. At the same time, other regions of Black Africa were also converted to legitimate trade, competing strongly with Bonny and Old Calabar. The result was a rise in local tension and increasing difficulties for the English in collecting their debts. This source of tension was somewhat hastened by the English intervention in the region and the 1885–91 annexation. In total, they did not intervene in order to lay their hands on the much sought-after wealth (trading relations with these two sites were in decline during the decades preceding the English intervention). And in some ways it is an exaggeration to say that they did it in order to make the region safer for British interests. Besides, as Richardson remarks, 'Unlike the Americas, where European trade and colonisation grew in tandem, development of European trade with Atlantic Africa essentially preceded colonisation of the continent by almost four centuries.' In these circumstances, it is difficult to believe that the establishment or the strengthening of trade relations with Africa had necessarily to take place through colonial conquest.

All the more so, as Bouda Etemad indicates, since Black Africa had always been of very little economic importance to Europe. Despite the inherent difficulties of collecting information from different sources and periods, Etemad presents us with a precise, shrewd and serious statistical analysis to which he holds the secret. The orders of grandeur which he reconstitutes are indisputable. Sub-Saharan Africa's share of exports at its historical peak at the beginning of the 1970s, only represented 2.5 per cent of world trade. It was in the 1780s, at the height of the Atlantic slave trade, that Black Africa absorbed most French and English manufactured goods. This trade then declined very sharply until the middle of the nineteenth century, only really increasing in the inter-war period, particularly favouring the old, declining industries at that time. The same death knell sounded on Black Africa's role as a market for European capital. On the eve of the First World War, only 4 per cent of investments made by European nations beyond the borders of the old continent were localised in Black Africa. As for Portugal, it was only really able to benefit from its colonies through the intermediary of foreign capital invested there, which only increased its dependence on foreign trade. Etemad finally indicates that the financial groups on which Belgian industry relied at the beginning of the nineteenth century theoretically had reason to invest in the Congo and that they did in fact make good and sustainable profits. However, he also notes that they waited nearly 20 years before deciding to invest there and that, overall, their profits only served to reinforce the existing imbalance in Belgium between a few large industrial and financial groups and the rest of the economic, political and social élite, which was perhaps not a very good thing.

A country like Great Britain could mobilise enormous resources due to its own dynamics and its influence worldwide. Therefore for Britain, Black Africa was not of vital importance economically. But what was the situation for the less powerful countries which were sometimes in financial difficulty? For them, could colonial expansion have been, if not essential, at least important, both in economic terms and in terms of national prestige? And what can be said of a country like Germany on the other hand, which underwent phenomenal development from the end of the nineteenth century and which began to develop the idea that it deserved land in keeping with its power? It was in an attempt to answer these questions that the cases of Italy, Portugal and Germany have been grouped together in the second part of this work.

Romain Rainero presents the case of Italy. Its role in the colonial process was both late and limited, and not always centred on Black Africa as such. The Bay of Assab in east Africa, where the Italians arrived in 1869, served as a springboard for the conquest of Eritrea. Then Italian lust was attracted to Somalia, Ethiopia and Libya but, as Ragionieri says, 'weak imperialism does not necessarily mean less dangerous imperialism'. To be convinced, we need to remember the role played by Italian expansionism in the hardening of international relations during the 1930s. In addition, we find problems here in common with other countries concerning possible explanatory factors and it is therefore interesting to see to what extent their configuration was original. Traditionally, Italian imperialism is explained either by assertion of a prestige policy, or by what might profit certain industrial and social classes. Rainero shows, by analysing in detail the tribulations of the Benadir company (1895–1905) set up by industrialists from Milan, that colonisation could indeed benefit certain economic classes through their connections in political circles. However, their activities were more akin to seeking monopolies and even more to dubious, speculative projects. Furthermore, Italy itself at that time offered very interesting possibilities for this kind of enterprise and it was not necessary to look for them abroad. Italian colonial expansion was in no way an enterprise under pressure from the economic classes; some were just content to take advantage of it. There was another reason from which colonial expansion benefited much more – emigration. For Italy in the grips of major economic problems this was a real disaster. Both left-wing and right-wing politicians presented colonisation as a possible remedy – by obtaining in the empire the means of conserving Italy's living strength for its sons, a possibility which was not available at home. What is important to note, however, is that Italian emigration towards the empire was negligible, particularly due to the very negative image the Italians held of Africa, which they saw as some sort of tomb. In all, the theme of emigration seems to have been used more as a distraction from the country's problems than as a genuine solution. This enabled the small, power-sharing political élite to avoid resolving the real problems, throwing the

country into the hands of the Fascists. The latter took up the torch and made colonial expansion the symbol of a return to the values and power of Ancient Rome. Italy therefore presents the case of a country where colonisation was undertaken above all for internal political reasons, to create a distraction from serious internal tensions. This 'pauper's imperialism' was a great drain on the budget and brought absolutely nothing to the country. On the contrary, it resulted in making the internal problems even more insurmountable. Thus the path towards final catastrophe was traced.

Portugal shows certain similarities with Italy. Luis Felipe de Alencastro invites us first to reconsider a certain number of preconceptions. With Eltis and Richardson we see that Africa played a direct role in the slave trade and an indirect one in its own colonisation. Alencastro reinforces the idea of a colonial process, the reasons for which are not exclusively to be found in the history of the different European nations. If 1808 marks a turning point in the history of relations between Portugal and Africa, it is not only, he says, because Rio de Janeiro became the capital of the Portuguese Empire from that time until 1821. It is also because England ceased trading in slaves then and, in abandoning this trade, it gave the Brazilian slave-traders a free hand when they could quite easily also obtain supplies from the English market. Alencastro shows that the links between the regions of Brazil and the regions of Black Africa were already clearly established in the seventeenth century and that, from that time a part of the so-called 'Portuguese' colonies depended much more on Brazil than on Portugal. It is not surprising therefore that, in 1822, at the time of Brazil's independence, attempts at secession (in fact, bringing Brazil closer) took place in Portuguese Africa? Better still, due to the fundamental role played by Brazil in the Atlantic slave trade (until the banning of the trade in Brazil in 1850), links between the largest Latin American state and Portuguese Africa were only strengthened during the first half of the nineteenth century. Angola, the slave coast, as well as Mozambique, had close ties with Brazilian interests at that time. Moreover, until 1850, the continuation of the Brazilian slave trade had the effect of slowing down the progress of legitimate English trade and thus of British commercial penetration in Africa.

Valentim Alexandre completes these observations. In fact, his chapter concerns the resumption of the Portuguese expansionist process after losing Brazil. The last Portuguese Empire, centred on the African continent, was made up of two vast territories (Angola and Mozambique) and another smaller one (Guinea). In total, it was nearly 2 million square kilometres, an area quite out of proportion to Portugal's political and economic influence in the international system. The idea of building up a new empire in Africa appeared very early, starting in 1820–23. However, it was not until the Liberal victory in 1834 and the coming to power of Sà da Bandeira, that a great project appeared, both for the reform and expansion of the Portuguese colonial system. This was intended to open up

markets for the home country without exporting cash (a scarce commodity in Portugal), it was encouraged by the decline in the slave trade (and therefore in the old colonial system) after 1851, and by a spontaneous process of adapting to the African economies. But they came up against considerable opposition: reticence in trading and colonial circles which preferred the old system, failure of the policy to settle Portuguese families (who saw Africa as a land of exile and death), lack of interest by capitalists and problems of finance (to set up development projects in the African Empire, foreign debt had to be increased and investments, needed at home, had to be reduced). Greater rivalry in Europe during the 1870s again encouraged colonial expansion projects. As regards this, Andrade Corvo, partisan of a moderate and peaceful policy, was the most skilful propagandist. But, as before, opposition came from colonial circles as well as from the pragmatists who preferred to expend their energy in modernising the home country. It was only in the 1880s that these restrictions lifted due to an increasing wave of popular, urban, nationalistic and radical belief, according to which a large part of Central Africa belonged to Portugal through historical right following the great discoveries of the fifteenth century. Overall, Portuguese imperialism appears therefore to have been the expression of political will taking advantage of a change in international circumstances and public opinion. It corresponded to strategic imperatives (to balance Madrid's centripetal influence) and ideological imperatives and particularly to two lines of thought – first, the colonies should provide the wealth necessary for the country's regeneration. This was an illusion. The other, which was revived at the end of the nineteenth century, was that the colonies should be, as in the past, a reflection of the country's greatness. Since Portuguese aspirations to link Angola to Mozambique had been thwarted by other nations, the result was deeply traumatic and was buried for a long time in the Portuguese collective memory. It was only after the partition of Africa and the adoption of the ultra-protectionist customs tariffs that Portuguese possessions in Africa became useful to the national economy or rather to a sort of 'new mercantilism', as described by William Gervase Clarence-Smith.¹¹

Albert Wirz and Andreas Eckert bring a dramatic conclusion to the second part of the work with an article on Germany, offering more general perspectives which the authors think can be applied to a large part of Europe. Here, colonialism is seen as one of the elements of European modernity, both writers giving it common characteristics: a nationalist idea, 'territorially oriented' within the framework of the nation-state. Hence the importance, the authors note, of the 'so-called hinterland clause' which figured in the Congo Agreement resulting from the Berlin Conference. A clause which 'transposed the territorial thinking of contemporary European politics into the colonial realm'. The overthrow of the balance of power in Europe around 1860–70, under these circumstances, could only revive the rivalries between nations. From then on

‘competition fed further competition’. Better still, ‘there was no need for further arguments in favour of colonial intervention as long as being part of the game was accepted as a legitimate reason for action’. Today, we are used to about-turns in public opinion and political volte-faces. This was not so at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time, once they had entered into the colonial dance, the élite European politicians could no longer go back on their word. The aim of this thesis by Wirz and Eckert is first of all to situate the famous Scramble in both the long history of Europe and the shorter period of the circumstances at the time. Second, they link it to a particular form of political culture. Everywhere in Europe, say the authors, decision-makers were prisoners to a concept of modernity, associating Europe with progress, culture and civilisation. ‘They interpreted colonialism as an idiom of modernity.’ Continuing in this light, they seek elements in the middle-class culture of the time that could account for the European attitude to Black Africa. The emphasis is then put on a culture which assumed a certain millenarianism, both wildly optimistic (since Europe believed it represented the final stage of human development) and pessimistic (due to the strong feeling of decadence in fashion at the time, and also due to the developing awareness that everything was temporary and that life was just a struggle). It was therefore both pushed by the ideology of progress and the fear of entropy (we could say by modern ideology and the developing awareness of its limits) that Europe went to colonise Black Africa. The economy is not forgotten by Wirz and Eckert: they merely note that the economic potential of Africa in no way had the necessary means to make European capitalists dream, that those who decided to invest did so with precaution and that when the states realised how little their colonies were worth economically (quickly enough at the beginning of the twentieth century), they opted for a policy of so-called ‘development’, enabling them to believe (or make believe?) that they would be more useful later. This gamble on the future, the date of which was constantly postponed, only bore fruit much later, shortly before decolonisation.

The third part of the book is dedicated entirely to France, the second colonial power in Europe at the end of the *ancien régime* and which, despite its vicissitudes, had regained this position on the eve of the First World War, thanks to the building of a new, largely African, Empire. Three angles of approach, both simultaneously different and complementary, make it possible, in the French case, to link some of the arguments put forward in the first two parts of the book.

Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau is interested in the cultural systems of representation which could have favoured the colonial process and provides arguments supporting this. Thus it can be seen that most of the theories developed by Jules Ferry at the end of the nineteenth century were already familiar to the French élite a century earlier. The confusion between colonial interests, commercial interests and France’s interest was

initially maintained by the mercantilist theory before being developed by French slave-traders at the end of the eighteenth century in order to protect their own interests. The idea of colonial competition in which France had to take part in order not to be outdone by England, also appeared at the same time, well before the Scramble. Finally, links between the projects for establishing new trading relations with Black Africa, ideas of progress, 'regeneration' and a certain concept of a republican state, were also already established at the end of the eighteenth century, which confirms Austen's arguments.¹²

It would be exaggerated, however, to reduce imperialism to the intent to dominate others, since the wish to intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries is not sufficient to define imperialism. Otherwise most nations in most historical periods could be labelled imperialists. Imperialism has also to be defined according to its results, which can take various forms including an informal as well as a formal empire. Imperialism is also the desire for 'empire', as well as the result of a strong feeling of superiority sometimes encompassing the sentiment of having something like a 'historical mission'. Desires which, it seems, had not been aroused in France before the last decades of the nineteenth century. The fact that some arguments used to legitimate nineteenth-century projects of colonisation can be located a century earlier also does not imply the existence of an ideological continuity between the end of the eighteenth century and the end of the nineteenth century. In fact, Pétré-Grenouilleau insists on the structural weaknesses of the arguments supporting the establishment of new commercial links with Black Africa, as well as the long-term influence of it being perceived as a hostile continent, incapable of supplying anything other than its men. The elimination of the Girondist Party after 1792, the Santo Domingo revolt, the Napoleonic wars and many other political factors, also contributed to discredit the projects of a new-style colonisation on African soil. Although old, the arguments supporting these projects have in fact been constantly reformed to respond to the demands of the moment and to the interests of the various players. The only obvious continuity is that France never had any economic interest in colonising Black Africa. On a national scale, as on a regional scale and at port level, trade with Africa was always of secondary importance for France. The idea of commercially useful colonisation which was developed from around 1830–60 (thus replacing the old projects of agricultural colonisation) in no way corresponded to the reality. What is more, for many of its supporters, it did not necessarily imply the establishment of direct political domination. On the other hand, some merchants and trading houses could benefit from such colonisation. Pétré-Grenouilleau therefore emphasises the interest in further researching the reports between the development of representations in Black Africa and those involved.

It is in fact those involved in the French colonial expansion in east Africa that Valérie Valey studies in her chapter. First, she reminds us that,

contrary to ideas still rooted in France, the world of the plantation was far from being in decline and that there was renewed vigour in the nineteenth century, particularly in the Mascarene Islands, and that the French were quite aware of the model supplied at the time by the commercial empire of the islands of Pemba and Zanzibar. Nonetheless, the French planters remained faithful to the old mercantilist ideas. It was only because of the abolition of the slave trade and then slavery, that some were forced to ask for the colonisation of new land, particularly Madagascar, in order to overcome the problem of the lack of available labour. Comparable remarks are then made regarding the French ship-owner-traders involved in trade with east Africa. Traditional trading methods were common practice. French trade there was hindered by its recent presence and by the small number of home goods likely to interest the indigenous traders. However, it benefited from the fact that the soldiers responsible for suppressing the slave trade were less strict than their British counterparts – a plus in the eyes of traders of all origins who continued to benefit from the slave trade in the region. In addition, spread over a very small number of trading houses, the profits made from trade with east Africa were not insignificant. As the French commercial structures here were ill adapted to modern competition after the opening of the Suez Canal, gradually some merchants were tempted to make more demands for protection from the French army. These soldiers enjoyed relative autonomy because of the length of time taken to transmit orders from Paris and sometimes the indecision of the Parisian administration. Therefore the soldiers, who were often anti-English, played quite a significant role in colonial expansion, particularly from the 1880s, when competition between the countries made their desire for action more popular with the parliamentarians. Altogether, Valey's chapter enables us to emphasise the diversity of opinions concerning colonial expansion, as much between the different groups involved as within the groups themselves. The author also shows that these opinions have evolved considerably and that the expression 'colonial expansion policy' often commonly used by contemporaries, in fact does not correspond very well to the reality of a process which evolved in a somewhat erratic manner, more often under the impetus of traditional groups protecting their already acquired advantages rather than at the request of modern middle-men.

Xavier Daumalin, studying in detail a milieu which he knows perfectly, highlights the activities of the merchants of Marseille who, with their counterparts in Bordeaux, made up the élite French merchants who were most involved in trade with west Africa. They became involved quite late on. Not greatly active in the Atlantic slave trade, Marseille was little interested in Black Africa before the period 1830–40. At the time, the soap industry, which was of great importance to the town, was confronted with problems of adaptation due to the price of olive oil and the growing competition from England. To solve the problem, new fatty acids miscible

with olive oil had to be used, hence the interest in the African oleaginous plants. At the same time, the Marseille merchants involved in the trade of gum arabic with Senegal were undergoing difficulties. Conversion was rapid, thanks particularly to the Régis brothers and, in 1848, Marseille had already absorbed more than 95 per cent of French imports of west African groundnuts. Thus the town prospered for 40 years or so. Trade in oleaginous plants required a specific organisation *in situ*, more complex than for slave-trading operations. In Dahomey, the Marseille merchants benefited from a virtual monopoly due to an agreement with King Guezo. In the Ivory Coast, local populations acted as middle-men between the Marseille merchants and the communities in the interior who produced the palm oil. This created tensions which led the Marseille traders to request military intervention. On the other hand, they were reluctant to do this on the Guinea rivers for fear of changing the situation which worked in their favour, due to local protection. From this we can see that trade did not have very fixed ideas regarding colonial matters and that it often preferred agreements or armed trade to annexation. Everything changed after the 1880s. At that time, the global market in oleaginous plants underwent serious structural changes and the Marseille trade gravitated from Senegal and the Gambia to Dahomey. In order to limit competition, the Marseille traders used their influence to press for war, albeit to little effect, since the annexation of Dahomey was far from bearing the fruits expected by the Marseille traders. Through this very revealing example, colonial expansion finally appeared as a reflex reaction of a protectionist type, serving to protect trading interests more than financial ones. The role of certain personalities is also pointed out since, on each occasion, it required only a few well-placed individuals with contacts in Africa, Marseille and Paris to press for war and colonisation.

Finally, a number of convergent ideas between the different chapters in this book can be noted. The first is that trade, attitudes and traditions long continued to influence relations between Europe and Black Africa as well as the way the former perceived the latter. A second element lies in the fact that there was hardly any economic advantage in colonising Black Africa, but that small groups of individuals had interests there. At the same time, the image of African riches supplied the arguments for colonisation, on condition that they were considered a gamble on the future which only rarely, and then very much later, paid off. Colonial expansion, the fruit of little-founded economic hopes (though exaggerated in official arguments), seems also to have been the result of marginal interests and isolated individuals who acted in relation to different and fluctuating interests. Arguments and alibis justifying them, polished over long periods, have very often been reshaped depending on the interests of the moment. Globally, with the exception of Great Britain which is little discussed here, Europe entered into the colonial process due to the re-affirmation and exacerbation of the strength of the *ancien régime* (more commercial

expansionism than industrial, more linked to political and 'mercantilist' interests of the nation-states than to a new-style capitalism, and so forth).

From a historical point of view, a period of transition, breaking with that of the Scramble, has been restored to favour. It corresponds to a type of economic expansionism which is mostly commercial, hardly requiring annexation and colonisation. Between the 1780s and the 1880s, supporters of a declining capitalism rivalled and sometimes even won over those of early industrial capitalism, as if colonisation had been more a reflection of the highest form of mercantilism than the highest form of capitalism. From a methodological point of view, the importance of phenomena themselves have been emphasised, either in Europe (competition between nations, idea of a certain modernity or even fear of entropy) or in some of its countries (in particular the existence of a rather original 'pauper's imperialism'), or in Black Africa itself and in certain European ex-colonies, such as Brazil. However, the variety of those involved and the diversity of regional and local situations have also been stressed. Hence the interest in trying to link the general history of ideas, national history and micro-history. We can see that there is a lot left to be done, which is certainly reassuring.

Before leaving the reader to make up his or her own mind on the subject, by reading in detail the texts of the scholars who have participated in this research, I would like to thank Professeur Leonhard Harding of the University of Hamburg. It was during a conversation we had that the idea came to me of organising the conference on which this book is based. Putting the idea into practice has not been easy. Although the subject concerned here refers to important questions concerning the process of colonisation and development, it is increasingly difficult to bring together specialists from different countries to discuss the subject. In fact, for some time now, twentieth-century cultural and political history has attracted researchers much more than the economic and social history of the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries. On a financial level, I thought I would be able to count on the support of the Brittany region where the University of Lorient is situated and where the conference was held in September 2001. This was not the case, as we would have had to work on purely regional questions to obtain financial support, albeit at a time when we speak of the role of the regions within a great Europe under construction. Fortunately, other institutions have kindly given us their material support. I would particularly like to thank the French Ministère de la Recherche as well as the University of South Brittany in Lorient whose grant towards the expected financial contribution doubled in order to compensate for the lack of support from the Brittany region. The Institut Universitaire de France played a considerable part. Thanks to my secondment to this Institute, I have indeed been able to benefit from something which has become a rare commodity: the time necessary to create and carry out projects. The annual grant accorded to the members of the Institute has also enabled me to contribute to the financing of nearly half the expenses resulting from

the conference and the preparation of its acts. Finally, I must thank Solito (the maritime history research team at Lorient) for its financial support, as well as Valérie Sauvaire who has worked hard in the secretariat so that, on a practical level, everything was ready at the appropriate time.

Notes

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Part I

**Economic relations
between Europe and
sub-Saharan Africa**

A global weighing-up

2 African and European relations in the last century of the transatlantic slave trade

David Eltis

From Atlantic to regional patterns

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced movement of peoples in history, and up to the end of the period covered here it was the largest inter-continental movement of people of any status, free or coerced, ever to have taken place. Despite the regional importance of gold and ivory, the traffic dominated relations between Europe and Africa for three centuries, and of course, provided a vital source of labour for the Americas at a time when most commerce in the Atlantic was dependent in one way or another on plantations. The slave-trade era also immediately pre-dated the era of colonial partition and occupation, and for many scholars the former – a traffic of such unprecedented scale – led naturally to the latter. Europeans first dominated Africa through the slave trade and then, when the slave trade was no longer possible, a direct imperialism was instituted that seamlessly continued the European ability to shape the fortunes of the subcontinent.

Yet there are strong grounds for revising the first of these propositions and qualifying the second. Except for Portuguese Angola, Europeans were unable to establish a presence in Africa during the slave trade, and thus slaves embarked on the middle passage after a market transaction between European and African slave-traders that was largely free of monopoly pressures. An essentially open commercial environment such as this ensured both buyers and sellers an influence on the resulting patterns of trade. In addition, this was a trade in a human commodity, and as a consequence, the ‘commodity’ itself inevitably had some capacity to insert an additional influence on outcomes. The slave-trade era was thus fundamentally different from the colonial period. Failure to recognise this reality has the unfortunate, unintended, but inevitable effect of reducing the role for Africans in both African and Atlantic history. Second, the discontinuities between the slave-trade and colonial eras express themselves most markedly in the form of a temporal hiatus. Except for some palm oil-producing areas, trade and indeed any contact between Europeans and sub-Saharan Africans fell off sharply in the aftermath of the decline of the

slave trade. Whatever the reasons for partition and colonial occupation, protecting trade, as opposed, perhaps, to reviving it, cannot have been a central consideration.

A clearer look at these themes is possible by a closer examination of the last century or so of the slave trade, when its volume peaked, at the regional and local level in western Africa. The aim here is to understand shifts in the trade not just between, but within, regions. Philip Curtin's 1969 book, *Census* and the modifications it has spawned¹ have formed the basis of most attempts to understand the slave trade and such work has necessarily focused on aggregated and macro trends. A new and more refined approach, based entirely on shipping data, has become possible with the publication of the Transatlantic Slave Trade CD-ROM.² These data comprised 27,233 voyages at publication at the end of 1999, and now contain 28,564, of which 13,956 sailed in the period after 1775. The voyages comprise close to three-quarters of all the transatlantic slave voyages ever made, and for the period with which this chapter is concerned, the new data probably include more than four out of five voyages undertaken.³

Figure 2.1 presents new estimates of departures from major African regions for quarter centuries for 1651–1867. The regions are defined as follows: Senegambia is anywhere north of the Rio Nunez; the Sierra Leone region comprises the Rio Nunez to just short of Cape Mount; Cape Mount up to and including the Assini River defines the Windward Coast; the Gold Coast runs east of here up to and including the Volta River; Bight of Benin covers the Rio Volta to Rio Nun, and the Bight of Biafra,

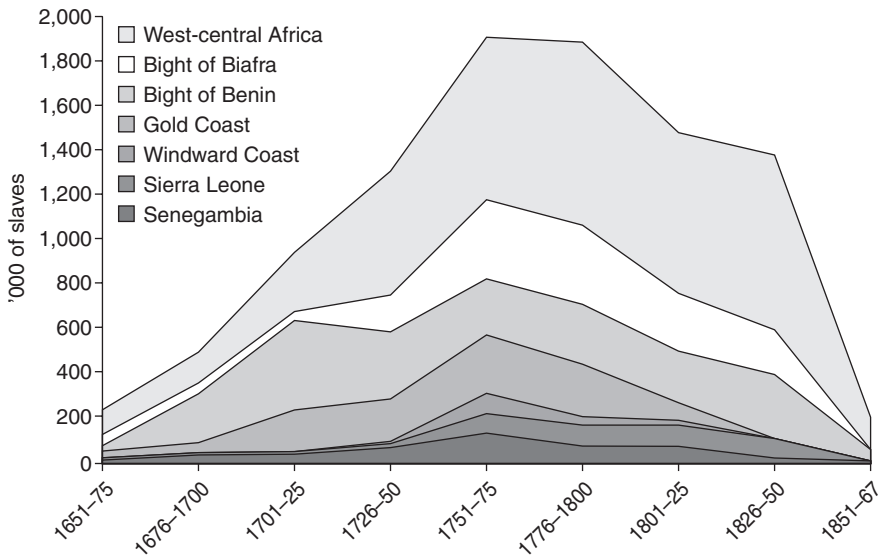


Figure 2.1 Transatlantic slave trade from western Africa, 1650–1867.

east of the Nun to Cape Lopez inclusive; west-central Africa is defined as the rest of the western coast of the continent south of this point. Less than 7 per cent of the transatlantic slave traffic occurred before 1651 – or 770,000 slaves – almost nine out of ten of whom left from west-central Africa. From a little over 3,000 a year in the sixteenth century, the traffic rose to 10,000 for most of the seventeenth and 20,000 in the 25 years after 1675. Mass forced migration – in the sense of later free transatlantic migration – belongs in the period 1700–1850 when nearly nine out of ten of all Africans boarding a transatlantic slave vessel began their voyages. The volume of the traffic almost doubled in the first quarter of the eighteenth century and then doubled again in the next 50 years. From 1751–1800, an average of 76,000 people a year were forcibly removed from Africa including 1 million alone between 1783 and 1792. Even as abolition of the slave trade began to take effect in the first half of the nineteenth century, the average was still 64,000 a year – four times the level of departures in the seventeenth century. This is well below the half million a year Europeans going to the Americas voluntarily after 1840, but Africans far outnumbered Europeans crossing the Atlantic before 1840 – in the eighteenth century, 85 per cent of migrants were slaves.⁴

As this suggests, for two centuries Europe obtained only people from sub-Saharan Africa. Yet despite the fact that the object of trade was the same everywhere, the regional patterns of trading in this era were as diverse as any that developed in the aftermath of the slave trade, when the focus switched from slaves to commodities. In fact, trading was limited to one region much more often than is commonly thought. In sending ships to the African coast, merchants selected cargoes for specific markets because Africans had regionally distinct preferences for merchandise. Of the cowries carried to the coast, 95 per cent went to Bight of Benin ports. Almost all the metal shipped from Europe to Africa went to Senegambia or the Bight of Biafra, and manillas (wristlets) would sell only in the latter region. Almost all New England rum sold on the Windward, Sierra Leone and Gold Coasts (mainly the Gold Coast), and all rolled tobacco from Bahia went to the Slave Coast. Textiles were welcomed in many places, although a pattern and texture that would sell in one place would often sell nowhere else. Slave ships would normally ‘sort’ a cargo of merchandise with the intention of obtaining slaves on only one part of African coast, though sometimes at several locations in that region. Given the very specific regional requirements it was just too complicated to load merchandise for a broad range of trading points. Only 11.5 per cent of vessels in the data set traded at two or more places, and of these, only 812 voyages, or 5.2 per cent of all records with information on place of trade, traded across regional boundaries. Except for the Gold Coast–Slave Coast link early in the slave-trade era, a slave vessel rarely slaved at more than one African region.⁵

Figure 2.1 shows other aspects of this regional distinctiveness clearly.

The slave trade neither evolved nor declined in all areas of Africa at the same time. There was a series of stepped expansions in individual regions down to 1750, and the ending of the traffic after 1800 followed a similar pattern in that it is possible to see a sudden single-step decline in each region after 1750. Moreover, some regions were more important to the slave trade than their geographic locations and populations would lead us to expect, and for others the reverse was true. Overall, the dominance of west-central Africa is striking – before 1650 and after 1840 it dispatched more slaves than all other regions combined. Between 1775 and the last phase of the traffic after 1850, its share of the traffic increased from 40 to 75 per cent. The Bight of Benin was the most important region in west Africa, but a dramatic rise and decline between 1740 and 1840 in the Bight of Biafra meant that for most of that period, the Bight of Biafra, rather than the Bight of Benin was the leading supplier of slaves in west Africa. The Upper Guinea regions, though close to Europe and the Americas, supplied relatively few slaves. And when the slave trade did come to an end, in one part of western Africa – the Bight of Biafra – the trade in produce exceeded the trade in human beings immediately, but in most others there was a time lag of up to a quarter-century before this happened. During this interval, however, world trade outside Africa had moved ahead strongly, and while African produce trade grew rapidly, it has never again kept pace with the growth of either Atlantic or global trade.⁶ In short, if we wish to understand the volume, composition and direction of the transatlantic slave trade, a close examination of the traffic at the regional and local level is essential. In the balance of this chapter, we will first use the new empirical data to trace these regionally distinct characteristics of trading for slaves in the period after 1775, then show how these local factors explain the broader patterns of the transatlantic movement of Africans, before finally drawing general conclusions for relations between Africans and Europeans in the century prior to partition and colonial occupation.

Regional and local patterns of slave trading

For Senegambia, the new data indicate that the traffic continued well into the nineteenth century.⁷ The region's involvement in the slave trade hinged on rivers. There were four separate delivery systems centred on first, the Senegal, second, ports south of the Senegal from Gorée in the north to the Saalum River in the south, third, the Gambia River, and finally, the smaller southern rivers grouped together. The first, including Fort St Louis, and the second, including Joal and Portudal, were dominated by French slave vessels. The third, including Fort James and Albreda, near the mouth, was dominated by the English. The major port in the fourth was Cacheu, but includes also Bissau and Casamance, with almost all the trade in Portuguese hands, albeit based in Brazil. The Gambia was

the only major river with year-round navigation and it accounted for nearly half the total number of Senegambian deportees. From the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century, it was the central conduit for slaves bound for the Americas.

Table 2.1 shows the new estimates for the region after 1750, when the Gambia remained a major supplier. Of the other three Senegambian delivery systems, Fort Saint Louis, established by the French in 1659, and the Senegal River whose estuary it dominated, supplied a little more than a quarter of Senegambian departures for the whole slave-trade era, and it was a major outlet for the transatlantic trade (in the sense of embarking about 1,000 a year) only in 1761 to 1790, with departures at other times averaging less than half this figure. In its peak years it was in the hands of British (more precisely, London) merchants, not French.

Between the Senegal and the Gambia lay the minor embarkation points of Gorée, Rufisque, Portudal and Joal. The last three acted as outlets for the kingdoms of Kajoor, Baol and Siin, respectively, and traded mainly via the entrepôt island of Gorée. There was also some trade between Gorée and the Saalum River, but collectively, these ports supplied less than 40,000 slaves over the whole slave-trade era, with most of them departing from Gorée. Almost half of them left during a single quarter at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and it is probable that direct sales of slaves across the Atlantic became significant only when departures from the major rivers of the region were pushed up to maximum capacity late in the eighteenth century, and later during suppression.⁸ Finally, the so-called southern rivers of Casamance, Cacheu, Geba and Corubal, south of the Gambia, collectively supplied less than half the slaves leaving Senegal River alone. The same temporal pattern, but even more pronounced, is apparent here as in the smaller ports between the Gambia and Senegal rivers. Three-quarters of the 29,000 slaves estimated to have left the southern rivers embarked in the nineteenth century. The numerous creeks and the Bisagos archipelago, as well as a nineteenth-century Portuguese colonial authority friendly to the slave trade provided an ideal environment for escaping cruisers attempting to suppress the trade. The Portuguese fort at

Table 2.1 Estimated departures of slaves (in thousands) from ports in Senegambia by quarter-century, 1776–1850

	<i>Senegal R. St Louis</i>	<i>Gorée to Portudal</i>	<i>Gambia</i>	<i>Southern Rivers</i>	<i>Cape Verde Islands</i>	<i>Total</i>
1775–1800	32.3	8.6	31.5	0.0	–	72.4
1801–25	21.2	13.8	16.6	20.6	1.8	74.0
1826–50	0.5	0.4	0.0	11.2	6.8	18.9

Source: Calculated from *TSTD*.

Cacheu played the same role that Fort Saint Louis, Gorée and Fort James did in the subregions to the north. It supplied 80 per cent of the slaves who entered the Atlantic trade from these minor rivers.⁹ Most went to Brazil.

To the south of Senegambia lay Sierra Leone, the region with the shortest length of coast of any of the eight sub-Saharan Africa areas.¹⁰ Table 2.2 shows five subregions: Rio Nunez, Rio Pongo/Isles de Loss combined, Sierra Leone/Bance Island combined, Rio Sherbro/Bananas Island combined and the Galinhas. All are dominated by estuaries, three of them incorporating, or having adjacent, an island that provided a base from which European factors carried on their trade. One of the two centres lacking an island base, the Nunez, was by far the least important of the subregions, and the other, the Galinhas, became important only in the nineteenth century. The table shows that overall the Rio Pongo and the Isles de Loss together were rather more important than either the Sierra Leone (actually, the Rokal) River, Bance Island or the Galinhas subregions overall. On the other hand Sierra Leone/Bance Island, with its cache of London-based slave-traders, was easily the major embarkation centre of the Sierra Leone region *before* 1790. As trading routes, the Pongo, Sierra Leone and Galinhas (on or near the Kerefe and Mos Rivers) had nowhere near the importance of the major centres in the Bight of Benin and in Angola, but they nevertheless dominated their region's slave trade just as much as did the major northern rivers. The Sherbro to the south (together with York Island) probably supplied as much produce as it did slaves (by value) overall, though little but slaves after 1776. The Nunez to the north provided trivial quantities of either people or produce. Galinhas supplied only slaves.

The Windward Coast was the third largest of the eight broad sub-Saharan coastlines on which slave trading occurred yet it accounted for no more than a few hundred slaves a year on average over three centuries of slave trading. While such a rate meant 200,000 slaves in total, as Figure 2.1 suggests, this constitutes less than 2 per cent of all slaves entering the transatlantic traffic from Africa. Historians, of course, have noted the lighter population densities, lack of major navigable rivers, as well as cul-

Table 2.2 Estimated departures of slaves (in thousands) from ports in Sierra Leone by quarter-century, 1776–1850

	<i>Rio Nunez</i>	<i>Rio Pongo/ Isles de Loss</i>	<i>Sierra Leone/ Bance Island</i>	<i>Rio Sherbro/ Bananas Island</i>	<i>Galinhas</i>	<i>Total</i>
1776–1800	3.4	47.3	36.7	3.8	0.5	91.7
1801–25	2.8	32.6	14.5	7.1	31.9	88.9
1826–50	3.3	15.3	0.0	10.0	51.0	79.7

Source: *TSTD*.

tural factors in their efforts to explain the relative absence of Atlantic-oriented slave-trading activity on this range of the coast.¹¹ Although this was the least important of the eight regions, Figure 2.1 points to a temporal profile that is more dramatic than for any other coastal region in sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly half of all slaves leaving this section of the coast did so in one 25-year period from 1751–75, and almost four out of every five departures occurred between 1751 and 1825. Geographically, the pattern was more dramatic again. The three northernmost of the five subregions into which Table 2.3 divides the Windward Coast – Cape Mount, Mesurado and Junk/Grand Bassa – are each located in or near the estuaries of the Lofa, St Paul, Junk and St John rivers respectively, and define a range of coast only 60 miles wide – out of a region which, as defined here, is nearly 400 miles in length.¹² These three subregions accounted for the departure of nearly 95 per cent of Windward Coast slaves carried across the Atlantic directly. After an unprecedented but temporary jump in the quarter-century preceding 1776, especially in the three major subregions, the slave trade was already in decline in 1776.

Outside this dramatic quarter, departures normally averaged less than half the annual rate implied by this busy phase, and few slaves at any period left from a wide swathe of the coast stretching from Manna to the Gold Coast.¹³

For vessels sailing from Europe or North America, the Gold Coast was the first of the really major slave-supply regions with which they were likely to come into contact. Nevertheless it entered the traffic late and left relatively early. An all-time peak of 13,000 a year left during the five years immediately preceding our period (1771–75) and Table 2.4 shows the trade declining steadily between 1776 and 1820, with occasional departures continuing until 1860. In contrast to the Windward Coast, the Gold Coast had by far the largest European land-based presence of any part of sub-Saharan Africa, except for Angola, prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Where Senegambia and Sierra Leone had islands, the Gold Coast had fortifications, albeit built with the permission of African rulers. Eventually, such establishments totalled over 30, and interspersed were a further half-dozen or so lightly defended factories,¹⁴ but an African could still inform

Table 2.3 Estimated departures of slaves (in thousands) from ports on the Windward Coast by quarter-century, 1776–1850

	<i>Cape Mount</i>	<i>Mesurado</i>	<i>Bassa/ Junk</i>	<i>Manna to Tabou</i>	<i>Ivory Coast</i>	<i>Total</i>
1776–1800	25.8	2.0	10.5	0.5	0.2	39.1
1801–25	12.9	5.8	3.6	0.0	0.8	23.1
1826–50	0.3	0.3	2.7	0.0	0.0	3.3

Source: *TSTD*.

Table 2.4 Estimated departures of slaves (in thousands) from ports on the Gold Coast by quarter-century, 1776–1850

	<i>Cape</i>	<i>Anomabu</i>	<i>Elmina</i>	<i>Cormantine</i>	<i>Danish Gold Coast</i>	<i>All other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1776–1800	113.0	87.2	2.6	4.6	30.8	0.6	238.8
1801–25	49.0	9.5	2.2	0.0	16.8	0.0	77.5
1826–50	0.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.7

the Dutch ‘forts don’t protect us – we protect the forts’.¹⁵ Most slaves came from the eastern rather than the western Gold Coast. As in earlier periods dominated by the great chartered companies, Anomabu and Cape Coast Castle supplied over 80 per cent of slaves from the region.¹⁶ The prominence of Cape Coast Castle, by now in the hands of private traders – stemmed from the strong growth in the rum-based slave trade, especially from Rhode Island. Ships carrying a single commodity, such as low-grade tobacco from Bahia, or rum from the Caribbean and New England, normally had to carry out a preliminary trade to assort their cargoes prior to initiating slaving activities. Much of this took place with slave vessels from Europe, but the Castle at Cape Coast was ideally suited as a substitute for such inter-ship trading of goods. The peak of the traffic after 1750 and its era of decline was associated with Asante expansion – the major Asante trade routes to the coast terminating at Elmina, Cape Coast Castle, Anomabu and Accra. The slaves themselves originated as tribute sent to Kumasi, the Asante capital, by Asante’s neighbours.¹⁷ The collapse of the traffic from the Gold Coast after 1807 was as sudden here as anywhere.

For nearly three centuries until 1865, more people left the Bight of Benin, or Slave Coast as it was known, than any other region except west-central Africa. For most of the eighteenth century, 70 per cent of slaves leaving the Bight of Benin went through Whydah, but Table 2.5 shows that in the last 25 years of the century there was no dominant port, though Porto Novo was the single most important port of call for slave vessels. In the nineteenth century, Lagos embarked almost three out of every five Bight of Benin slaves, with Whydah accounting for most of the remainder.¹⁸ Why was the Slave Coast such a major supplier of slaves to transatlantic markets and what accounts for the rise and fall of the dominant ports? The region had no forts to match those on the Gold Coast, few islands, and, for those approaching from the sea, dangerous surf. Nor did it have easy access to large navigable rivers that provided access to the heart of the continent. It did, however, have states that not so much enslaved people as enforced order and debt collection at the point where the African slave became the property of Europeans. Credit was the greatest

Table 2.5 Estimated departures of slaves (in thousands) from ports in the Bight of Benin by quarter-century, 1776–1865

	<i>Popo^a</i>	<i>Whydah</i>	<i>Offra/Jakin</i>	<i>Epe</i>	<i>Porto Novo</i>	<i>Badagri/Apa</i>	<i>Lagos/Onim</i>	<i>Benin</i>	<i>All Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1776–1800	15.0	78.3	5.6	0.5	96.8	18.1	24.0	25.1	0.9	264.4
1801–25	7.2	72.5	0.9	0.0	19.2	14.1	114.2	4.6	4.7	236.6
1826–50	11.9	82.9	1.9	0.0	7.7	5.2	170.6	1.2	6.8	288.4
1851–65	1.1	24.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9	0.0	7.0	37.7

Note

a As the point of embarkation was often termed 'Popo', this column combines Little Popo and Great Popo, even though these ports were 30 miles apart. For those voyages where the prefix was supplied, 95 per cent embarked their slaves at Little Popo.

single irritant in European–African slave-trade relations (indeed, European–American, too). To carry out such functions states did not have to be large, or even, politically stable. Whydah (in its heyday), Porto Novo and Lagos, were small, and often not even formally independent, but they could offer Europeans security and abundant slaves.¹⁹

Whydah's importance declined in the half-century after the Dahomean conquest. In our period, the decline was halted, but as Table 2.5 shows, it was overtaken by first Porto Novo, and then, after the decline of that port, Lagos, before re-emerging as the leading embarkation point at the very end of the trade. The defining feature of this period was the struggle between Dahomey and the eastern ports for slaves originating in the interior east of Dahomey, as far east, in fact, as Benin. Badagri then Porto Novo prevailed in this struggle initially, but both were ultimately undermined by Dahomey.²⁰ Dahomey could do little about Lagos, however. About 1,000 slaves a year left Lagos in the 1790s, and British slave-traders almost doubled this in the years before 1807. Thereafter, Portuguese slavers, mainly carrying slaves to Bahia, were the main purchasers. As the transatlantic slave trade came to a close, Lagos and Whydah sent between them 90 per cent of all people entering the Slave Coast traffic, with Lagos alone accounting for 60 per cent prior to the British occupation of the island in 1851, 16 years before the rest of the transatlantic traffic ended. Politics and geography shaped the late rise of Lagos.²¹ Unlike Dahomey, the city-states of the east not only bought almost all the slaves they sold, they offered the opportunity to outsiders to trade on their own account. Many representatives of Brazilian-based firms, drawn from the Afro-Portuguese community, carried on business in Lagos.²² Lagos was also closer to the major source of slaves than other ports, given that the collapse of the Oyo Empire probably generated most of those embarked for the Americas from the Slave Coast after 1825. Yet Lagos was also more susceptible to direct attack from the sea than any other major port. In sharp contrast to Whydah and Porto Novo, naval vessels could bombard slave-traders' facilities at Lagos, and maintain an occupation at relatively low cost. Lagos was not occupied until 1851, but unlike Whydah, occupation was possible and ended the slave trade immediately. It is striking how well slave departures accord with political and military activity of this period.

While the Bight of Benin supplied the most slaves of any west African region, the Bight of Biafra hinterland was subjected to the most concentrated pressure from Atlantic slave markets in that the large step-up in the volume of departures occurred only after 1735. Exactly 100 years later, the decline in the traffic was even more dramatic. In 1841–45, departures fell to just over 1,000 a year from 9,000–10,000 in 1836–40. During the extraordinary intervening century, the Bight of Biafra sent more slaves to the Americas than any other African region except for the much larger west-central area, and did so without any permanent European shore-based

establishments. The emergence of large-scale trade with the Atlantic in this area, first in slaves and then in palm oil, coincided with the spread westward of the Aro network from Arochukwu. This was primarily a trading diaspora with enormous prestige and the ability to carry out some judicial, religious and military functions, but it never became a centralised state, conquered what is now south-east Nigeria, or traded directly with Europeans in this era.²³ Not only was there no counterpart to Dahomey in the Bight of Biafra, there was no Badagry, Lagos or Porto Novo either. Bonny and Old Calabar became specialised slave-trading emporia over time, but never city-states in the sense of minor military powers forming alliances and embarking on wars of conquest. Traders were heads of houses whose wards or towns would form the major part of the ports Bonny and Old Calabar. Because slave-captains advanced goods on credit to African merchants – transactions that supported credit relations in interior markets – regulation and enforcement of debt were a central concern. In Bonny, under the Pepple (or Perekuele) family, the king was a financial intermediary between African and European traders as well as an enforcer. In Old Calabar, Ekpe, a secret society to which all African slave-merchants belonged, helped regulate the behaviour of members and enforce debt collection. Orderly market transactions were even more likely here than in the city-state ports of the Slave Coast.²⁴

As elsewhere, just a few ports account for nearly all departures. Bonny, New Calabar and Old Calabar on a coastal range of just 150 miles, dispatched over 90 per cent of all departures (1.3 million people).²⁵ During the peak of the slave trade from the region, between 1750 and 1825, more than six out of ten slaves leaving the Bight of Biafra passed through the port of Bonny – almost as many as left Britain for the Americas in the two centuries after 1620.²⁶ Table 2.6 shows this predominance continuing after 1775, but also that the less important ports – the Cameroon estuary, Gabon and Corisco Island together, and Cape Lopez²⁷ – which had come into the transatlantic business in the 1760s when demand for slaves from the Americas surged – continued to be important when demand fell back after 1807. These minor embarkation points offered advantages to traders in the illegal phase of the slave trade and

Table 2.6 Estimated departures of slaves (in thousands) from ports in the Bight of Biafra by quarter-century, 1776–1850

	<i>Bonny</i>	<i>New Calabar</i>	<i>Old Calabar</i>	<i>Cameroon</i>	<i>Gabon/ Corisco</i>	<i>All other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1776–1800	207.9	37.8	82.5	16.6	11.3	2.6	358.7
1801–25	161.8	17.7	41.8	17.6	9.3	9.2	257.4
1826–50	82.6	5.4	49.2	12.3	21.4	27.4	198.2

eventually became the only source of slaves in the region after the major ports pulled out of the trade.²⁸ These ports, located 300 miles south of the Bonny–Old Calabar nexus and spanning only 60 miles, accounted for almost all slaves leaving the Bight of Biafra after 1841. Any explanation of the movement of the Bight of Biafra out of the plantation complex must focus on Bonny.²⁹

West-central Africa, from which 45 per cent of all slaves left for the Americas between 1776 and 1850, was the only region in Africa where Europeans had some territorial presence during the slave-trade era and therefore some control over the routes by which slaves reached the coast. From an Atlantic perspective there were two distinct coastal segments in 1776, the division between the two lying somewhere between Ambriz and Luanda, with the Portuguese trading south of this line (and claiming the greater share of slaves) and other Europeans drawing almost exclusively north of it.³⁰ After 1807, however, the Portuguese, whose demand derived from an exploding coffee sector in south-east Brazil, quickly absorbed the north into their own South Atlantic system except for a few Spanish vessels (or Spanish-owned under the Portuguese flag) headed for Cuba after 1835. The division between the northern ports and the south extended to the organisation of the trade. In the northern ports, slaves moved from African to European control on the coast, much as in west Africa. During the peak slave-trade era, the three major ports north of the Congo, Loango, Malemba and Cabinda were outlets for the states of

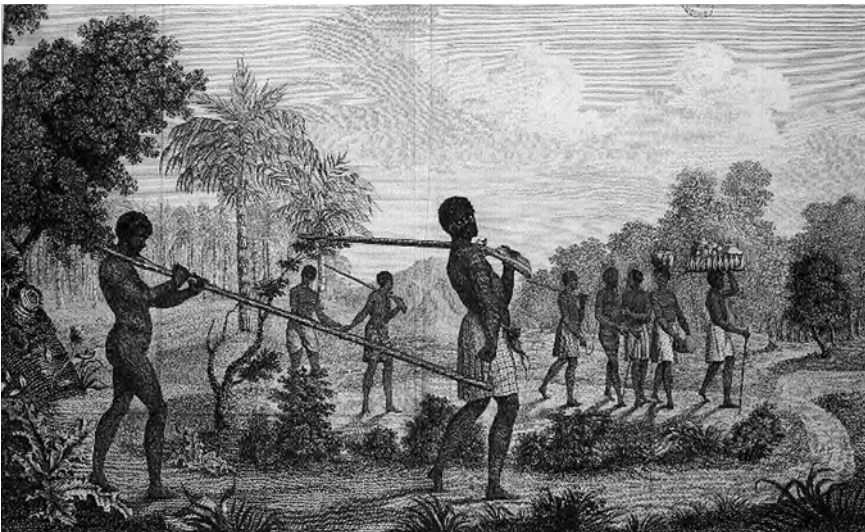


Plate 1 Slave trade in the region of Congo (Noir au bois Mayombe) (source: L. Degrandpré, *Voyage à la côte occidentale d'Afrique fait dans les années 1786 et 1787*, Paris, an IX (1800–1801), vol. 2, p. 49).

Loango, Kacong and Ngoyo respectively, states that shared a language, similar laws, customs and government structures, but were also competitors. Permanent and extensive slave barracoons on land were not a feature of trade here until the illegal phase of the trade in the mid-nineteenth century made them a safeguard against naval attacks.³¹ In Portuguese Angola by contrast, a limited European territorial presence meant that trade routes to the interior were more susceptible to European control. A central part of the trading system was the role of an intermediary group of peoples of mixed African and Portuguese ancestry called *pombeiros*, who initiated what colonial settlement there was in Angola outside Luanda and who provided the *pombeiros* (after the word for market – eventually slave market – *pombo*), and provided the transportation and credit links between Luanda and the slaving frontier beyond the Kwango River and Bihé Plateau.³²

Tables 2.7 and 2.8 show the 25- and 5-year distributions of slave departures for the period after 1775.³³ Luanda's large-scale and steady contribution to the transatlantic slave trade is particularly striking. Its Brazilian focus largely insulating it from the frequent wars in North America, annual departures rarely fell below 9,000 and in the early nineteenth century peaked at 14,000. Departures began to fall only after 1830 as the Portuguese authorities belatedly adopted an abolitionist stance toward the slave trade. Even then the slave trade continued from Luanda for a further 20 years after 1830, but actual embarkations of slaves occurred outside the city.³⁴ The direct trade from Benguela to Brazil began later and continued to 1847. It typically ran at from a half to two-thirds that of Luanda through to 1830, still sufficient to rank the port second in the region. Cabinda sent out the largest number of slaves among ports north of the Congo, and in most five-year periods as well. It was closer to both the mouth of the Congo and the supply networks south of the Congo, and had the best harbour on the northern coast. When the French traffic was at its height in the 1780s, however, Malimba and Loango, especially the former, were far more important than Cabinda. Both ports declined with the French trade, and first Cabinda re-attained its old dominance in the nineteenth century, and then, as the anti-slave trade patrols blockaded ports open to the Atlantic, the Congo River and Ambriz became important. The sharp

Table 2.7 Estimated departures of slaves (in thousands) from ports in west-central Africa by quarter-century, 1776–1865

	Loango	Malimba	Cabinda	Congo	Ambriz	Luanda	Benguela	Other	Total
1776–1800	43.2	168.1	42.8	49.9	46.2	260.9	194.6	9.5	815.3
1801–25	15.0	6.8	155.9	87.6	14.9	297.4	133.6	0.7	711.9
1826–50	31.6	6.0	198.8	61.5	140.7	105.1	213.2	24.8	781.7
1851–65	5.5	1.4	15.7	86.1	15.0	0.0	1.6	7.0	132.2

five-year fluctuations shown in Table 2.8 are explained by wars in the North Atlantic that occasioned the sudden withdrawal of the Dutch from Malimba and the French from Malimba and Loango.

From local to Atlantic-wide patterns of trade

What does this regional look at the slave trade as departures peaked and then declined tell us about the broad patterns of trade after 1775? First, slave departures had always been concentrated in a relatively few ports, but in this period the degree of concentration increased markedly. After 1820 the Windward and Gold Coasts left the trade altogether except for occasional departures, and Senegambia was of minor importance. But even before this happened, a trend toward just two or three ports supplying over three-quarters of the slaves leaving was apparent in the remaining participating regions. In Sierra Leone, it was the Galinhas and Pongo rivers; in the Bight of Benin, Lagos and Whydah; in the Bight of Biafra, Bonny and Old Calabar continued their old domination, before both were replaced by Gabon in the 1840s; in the larger west-central Africa region, three ports typically occupied this position at any given point in time, drawn from Luanda, Benguela, Cabinda, Malimba and the Congo River. Thus, after 1800 a total of only nine embarkation points, at any given point in time, spread over the sub-Saharan western African coast, accounted for nearly four out of five of the slaves leaving for the Americas. This pattern certainly contributed to the southward drift in the centre of gravity of the volume of the trade already noted. All three regions that severely reduced their involvement of the trade lay north of the equator, and whatever the factors driving the concentration, all but two of the leading embarkation points after 1800 were located in the Bight of Benin or points south.

A second pattern thrown up by the new local evidence is that after 1800 slave trading between Africans and Europeans moved away from islands and on to the mainland – though usually into estuaries. In Sierra Leone, a comparison of groupings of Bance, de Loss, and Bananas Islands on the one hand, and the Nunez, Pongo, Sierra Leone, Sherboro and Galinhas estuaries, on the other, shows that before 1801, 50 per cent more slaves left from the island group than embarked from riverine mainland bases; by contrast, after 1800, only one slave left the island group for every 12 leaving the mainland.³⁵ Moreover, the island group serviced larger slave-ships and loaded more slaves per vessel. The island bases themselves were supplied with slaves by large fleets of small craft that covered all parts of the coast.³⁶ Islands, in effect, provided security against attack from Africans and appropriately reinforced, could repulse attacks from individual ocean-going vessels owned by European competitors, including pirate vessels. They were also more likely to provide deep-water anchorages. They could not, however, withstand assaults from well-armed naval vessels, and in the era of suppression after 1807, European slave-trading

Table 2.8 Estimated departures of slaves (in thousands) from ports in west-central Africa by five-year periods, 1776–1867

	<i>Loango</i>	<i>Malimba</i>	<i>Cabinda</i>	<i>Congo</i>	<i>Ambriz</i>	<i>Luanda</i>	<i>Benguela</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1776–80	9.1	33.5	7.5	–	–	45.1	31.9	1.5	128.7
1781–85	50.1	42.3	10.5	–	–	50.1	36.8	1.0	150.1
1786–90	9.3	61.7	13.5	1.1	10.6	56.1	35.4	1.1	188.7
1791–95	7.1	18.0	5.3	26.9	20.7	59.5	54.3	1.1	192.9
1796–1800	8.4	12.6	6.0	21.9	14.9	50.1	36.1	4.7	154.8
1801–05	8.7	3.2	5.5	47.8	66.8	70.6	37.8	–	174.2
1806–10	4.6	1.2	6.5	30.9	–	62.2	27.5	0.7	133.6
1811–15	0.9	–	30.8	4.2	1.4	58.7	21.5	–	117.5
1816–20	0.8	0.5	81.9	3.4	0.6	50.9	23.6	–	161.7
1821–25	–	1.9	31.2	1.3	12.8	55.1	22.7	–	125.0
1826–30	–	5.6	49.3	8.5	24.7	50.3	23.6	–	162.4
1836–40	–	–	71.2	35.9	22.8	12.9	61.2	3.1	207.0
1841–45	–	–	31.4	2.5	12.9	3.1	48.9	6.6	105.5
1851–55	–	–	–	10.8	2.5	–	–	–	13.3
1856–60	5.5	–	10.4	46.6	11.4	–	1.6	7.0	82.4
1861–65	–	1.4	5.2	27.3	1.2	–	–	–	35.1
1866–67	–	–	–	1.4	–	–	–	–	1.4

factors abandoned the islands, and relocated along the many shallow creeks feeding the Sherboro, Nunez, Pongo and Galinas rivers. The security they thereby obtained from the navy and the smaller colonial vessels from Sierra Leone, more than offset the reduced protection they now had from Africans.³⁷ Lack of such facilities was one reason the Windward and Gold Coasts dropped out of the trade. Whydah on the Slave Coast, had no estuary, but was nevertheless protected from the sea, and Bight of Biafra ports had always been located on estuaries. The Congo River was the last bastion of the trade in west-central Africa as the Portuguese in Luanda and Benguela succumbed to abolitionist pressure.

While much of the relocation of the slave-trading activity after 1775 seems directly related to attempts to suppress the trade, the underlying pattern of concentration had a major African influence as its root. The prerequisites of foreigners trading on the western African coast were no different from those in European or Asian coasts, or, indeed, anywhere market exchange occurred. Security and order, more specifically a set of rules known to and enforced impartially on all, were essential. Powerful states were not necessary, as the histories of Venice, Genoa and the Hanseatic towns make clear in a different context, but a land-based authority that could offer these characteristics at the point where the exchange of commodities or slaves took place, clearly was. That the African authority should have the ability to enslave was not a prerequisite. Before the Dahomean conquest in 1722, John Atkins wrote '[a]t Whydah, more slaves are brought, than on the whole coast besides'. He went on 'And Why? The King of that Country, and his next Neighbours understand Sovereignty better than others . . . On the rest of the coast, there are trading towns dispersed up and down, under the direction of chief men, who, as their power is weaker and more controllable, export fewer slaves.'³⁸ Adams could have made the same comment about King Siaca in the Galinhas, the kings of Bonny, the Ekpe society at Old Calabar, King Kosoko at Lagos, and the Vili kings on the northern Angola coast. The only places in western Africa where the Europeans supplied the environment necessary for trade was in Luanda and Benguela, though in Anomabu on the Gold Coast they made a partial contribution to such an environment. Given the many different ways in which slaves were acquired in Africa, the key African political structure necessary for the development of a large transatlantic slave trade was not a militaristic state dedicated to slave-raiding, but an organisation that could offer an environment conducive to trade. On the seaward side this meant being open to ships of a range of nations and, landward, having access to (but not necessarily control of) networks of slave supply. Above all it meant having the power to impose a set of rules under which exchange occurred. The produce trade that dominated relations between Africans and Europeans before 1660 and after 1840 had quite a different distribution across the western African coast. Its centre of gravity was the gold of the Gold Coast

in the earlier period and the palm oil trade of the Bight of Biafra in the later. But what was true for trade in human beings during the slave trade era – that significant trade could occur only where a strong, if local, African authority existed – also held for the trade in produce.³⁹

As in other parts of the early modern world, large stretches of the western African coast could not supply such an environment. The principles laid out in the preceding paragraph of course held for markets everywhere, including numerous markets for slaves in the hinterlands of the major embarkation point. But the nine ports where most slaves boarded ship after 1800 dealt with much higher volumes of trade than any market in the interior, and most of that trade was profoundly cross-cultural. Except for Portuguese Angola, the southern rivers of Senegambia, and to a lesser extent the Gold Coast, there were no European diasporic communities to help broker contact across the cultures. Further, in much of Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast and Gabon in the southern part of the Bight of Biafra, it was not only slave revolts on board vessels leaving these regions that Europeans feared, but also a diffusion of political power that resulted in frequent breakdowns in trade and *panyarring* (kidnapping) of Africans by Europeans and vice versa. This problem worsened in the second half of the eighteenth century, and helps explain why Europeans would trade in these regions only when slave supplies elsewhere were tight, despite their geographic proximity to Europe and the Americas.⁴⁰ Political fragmentation and ethnic diversity could contribute to weak state and judicial structures, as well as encourage off-shore slave revolts, given that the former was a more promising environment for those escaped slaves who did manage to make it to land. The Royal African Company refused an invitation to trade for slaves in the Congo River because ‘Trade cannot be driven with that Security and Faithfulness as we find in other places.’⁴¹ In the nineteenth century, ‘Security and Faithfulness’ became even more important as the major coastal slave entrepôts moved on to the mainland in all regions.

Thus trade thrived where African political conditions allowed it to thrive. As a small independent state dispatching slaves originating from areas far beyond the king’s fiat, Whydah was probably the dominant coastal slave emporium in the whole of Africa at times in the seventeenth century. The Dahomean conquest of Whydah in 1727 drastically reduced the number of slaves leaving the port, and at the beginning of the period under study here, annual departures were still just half what they had been before 1727. The centralised administrative structure and the inability of an imperial government to deal with outsiders on the basis of trade rather than force had the paradoxical effect of impeding the flow of slaves. While a private sector emerged in Dahomey in the second half of the eighteenth century, the chief players initially were state officials. Whydah’s position as second leading embarkation point on the Slave Coast in the nineteenth century could not have been maintained without the effective elimination

of the royal monopoly on slave sales.⁴² Among minor ports, Badagri's prominence in the 1770s and subsequent decline were clearly associated with its links with the Oyo Empire and political instability within the town's ward system.⁴³ In the northern range of west-central Africa, the broad patterns correspond well with long-run decline in the Vili Kingdom of Loango. In the seventeenth century, it held formal suzerainty over a wide range of territory including that of its later competitors, Kacongo (using Malemba as its Atlantic outlet) and Ngoya (whose slaves left through Cabinda), to the south, as well as Mayomba in the north. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, all these kingdoms were effectively independent. Kacongo and Ngoya were able to syphon off slaves crossing the Congo River from the south and perhaps from Malebo pool. Like leading ports on the Slave Coast, they drew slaves from a vast range of territory beyond their own borders.⁴⁴ In the Bight of Biafra, the more formal government structures established under the Pepple family were clearly more conducive to moving large volumes of slaves through the market, than were the largely non-governmental institutions at Old Calabar under Ekpe. Indeed, for most of the period considered here Bonny was the most successful slave port in sub-Saharan Africa. It is difficult to see how rising demand for slaves or European intervention alone could have caused the rise of Bonny or any of the ports mentioned here. The shifting importance of particular embarkation points and the changes in political structures are best explained by developments in Africa. What else can explain the two-century-long importance of Whydah in the slave trade when it had an unrelenting surf and no harbour? The ebb and flow of political and judicial stability in western Africa helped set patterns of trade here, as in the rest of the world.

Implications for African and European influence on the shaping of the Atlantic world

What do the new estimates tell us about the African impact of the slave trade and Afro-European relations in general? The decline of the Atlantic slave trade across African regions was a mirror image of its expansion – a series of major once-only reductions in the volume of departures in one region after another. Numbers declined first across the Windward Coast after 1780, then in Senegambia, and the Gold Coast after abolition by the United States and Britain. The Bight of Biafra followed at the end of the 1840s, and Sierra Leone thereafter. This left the Bight of Benin and west-central Africa, mainly the latter, supplying Cuba until 1867⁴⁵ when the final single step down to zero occurred. Between the sixteenth century rise and the post-1850 decline of the slave trade, the African centre of gravity of the trade, as already noted, first swung away from and then returned to west-central Africa. The reasons for these large and profound movements cannot be taken up here. Clearly demand for slaves from the plantation

sugar complex (nine out of ten of all transatlantic slaves went to work in sugar), and behind that, everyday demand for sugar from North Atlantic consumers, was central. Yet the distribution of the slave trade across Africa, and the composition of the trade, both demographic and cultural, display such regional and local variations, that these could have had little to do with Europe. A quarter-century of working with these data has pointed time and again to patterns that are not easy to explain if the focus is only on Europe and the Americas. Thus, for example, as I have argued elsewhere, the gender and age structure of the Atlantic slave trade are mysterious indeed, if we were to consider only what the planters and mine-owners in the Americas wanted to buy in the way of slaves.⁴⁶

This leads us to a more profound point arising from the pattern of shifts between ports in the last century or so of the slave trade – the main topic of the present chapter. There is in fact a general proposition that would be regarded as something of a truism if made about market behaviour other than that involving the slave trade. In the absence of monopoly power, the outcome of any market transaction will reflect wishes of sellers as well as buyers. To get the slaves they needed, Europeans could have gone to many different African regions, and, having chosen a region, to ports within a given region, and quite possibly other continents as well – given the heavy use of indigenous Americans in the early Brazilian sugar economy and the Asian slaves that the Dutch carried from India to South Africa in the eighteenth century. For their part, Africans could also have sold slaves at more than one coastal outlet, or to markets within Africa, or indeed in many cases, to markets across the Sahara. Except for very temporary instances, one can find very little market power among either buyers or sellers anywhere on the western African coast that was other than transitory. If a buyer and a seller agreed to a transaction freely, then that transaction reflected the wishes of both parties. What transpired on the Atlantic coast of Africa, and, by extension, in the formation of many of the trading patterns of the Atlantic beyond, was a joint creation of Africans and Europeans. This situation held through both the slave-trade era and the much shorter period of ‘legitimate’ trade that preceded Europe’s comprehensive breach of African territorial integrity later in the century.

Equality at the point of exchange manifested itself in many ways. A few Africans who were not considered slaves in their port of departure, but who ended up in the Americas anyway through duplicity or bad debts, were on occasion sought out and returned to Africa via Europe in the interests of smoothing the path of future exchanges. All the known cases of return were to embarkation points where the Europeans were dependent on the African authorities for orderly trade.⁴⁷ There were many more European merchants on the coast of western Africa than there were African merchants in Europe and the Americas, yet for every European

merchant who penetrated to African interior markets prior to the mid-nineteenth century – entirely dependent on Africans, of course for his safe return – there was an African dependent on Europeans who travelled to Europe via the West Indies and back to Africa with essentially identical aims – satisfying curiosity and obtaining information useful to business. Effectively, a wall divided African from European spheres of activity on the coast. But just as some Europeans attempted to establish businesses in the interior, so there were Africans who attempted to reach across the ocean with their own business activities, though neither resulted in a substantial business presence of Europeans or Africans on the side of the wall with which they were least familiar.⁴⁸ Finally, as noted above, regions exhibited very pronounced differences in preferences toward the trade goods that Europeans brought to the coast. Such goods were assembled from the Orient, the Americas, and the Indian Ocean as well as many different countries within Europe itself and having the right mix of goods for a particular market was the difference between success and failure. Europeans as well as Africans had to pay careful attention to each other's preferences. Again, monopoly profits in the slave-trading business were rare.

But influence on the trade patterns of the Atlantic world was exerted by two broad groups of Africans, not just one. There were the sellers of slaves, and then there were the slaves themselves, who resisted on both land and sea and thereby increased the price of labour – and ultimately the price of cane sugar in the North Atlantic markets.⁴⁹ Resistance on board ship raised the price of slaves by raising transportation costs, most specifically through the extra crew needed to subdue the human cargo. Higher costs meant higher prices and given a downward sloping demand curve, fewer slaves transported. At least 1 million fewer slaves crossed the Atlantic because of the economic consequences of resistance. This estimate excludes those who resisted on land. In addition, pronounced regional differentials have emerged from the new data in the incidence of slave-ship revolts. Ships leaving the Upper Guinea Coast, north of Cape Three Points were far more likely to experience rebellions than those from further south and east. These are precisely the areas that sent the fewest slaves into the Atlantic. Europeans in effect avoided these areas because of revolts, despite the fact that they were much closer in both miles and voyage times to Europe and the Americas than were the Slave Coast and west-central Africa. This was as true in the 1776–1867 era as in earlier times. Thus fewer people arrived in the Americas and those who did were drawn from south of the Windward Coast.

In summary, about half of all slaves removed from Africa to the Americas embarked after 1775. These were the years when the Atlantic trade was its peak and when the pressures on western Africa from the Atlantic world were at their most intense. Yet African states between 1776 and 1850 continued to maintain their territorial integrity and political sovereignty. African slave-owners continued to trade with their European coun-

terparts on the coast on an equal basis. There was nothing to match the impact of the period after partition. Given the new distribution of the trade presented here, the greater part of the impact of the slave trade must have been on west-central Africa. Except for the very important factor of European racial attitudes, the direct connection between the slave trade era and the colonial partition of most of the African continent later in the century does not appear to have been very direct. It should also be noted that slaves were generated by such a wide range of political structures that it is probably not very useful to try to generalise (at least for western Africa as a whole) along the lines of the slave trade creating autocratic or militaristic states, or particular kinds of class structures. The one requirement was for a trade-friendly environment, and apparently small, open, well-governed polities at the point of exchange. It was the rise and fall of such structures that characterised the centuries of trade preceding the colonial invasions.

The major broad impact of the recent work on the slave trade is to move Africa toward the role of agent in the shaping of the direction and composition of the international trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There is now widespread scholarly recognition that Europeans had to buy the slaves they needed on the African coast, as opposed to stealing or raiding for them. Likewise, the theory of unequal exchange whereby Europeans supposedly paid trivial amounts of cheap goods for their slaves does not appear in the literature as often as it used to do two decades ago. Nevertheless, the implications of the several centuries of market exchange between African and Europeans that preceded partition are still not adequately appreciated. Scholars may have moved away somewhat from casting the continent only in the role of victim, but they have yet to take the next step of seeking out how Africans shaped the Atlantic world in the centuries preceding partition.

Notes

- 1 Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).
- 2 David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1527–1867: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), referred to hereafter as *TSTD*. Readers should note that the computations on which the present chapter is based were carried out on the expanded post-publication version of the data.
- 3 For estimates of national participation, see David Eltis, 'The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 (2001), pp. 17–46; and David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt and David Richardson, 'A Participação dos Países da Europa e das Américas no Tráfico Transatlântico de Escravos: Novas Evidências', *Afro-Asia*, 24 (2000), pp. 9–50. This procedure is based on estimates of the distribution of slaves carried on national groupings of ships from Europe and the Americas over the eight African coastal regions. The estimates are not presented here,

- but are easy to derive for almost any period after 1675 from *TSTD*. For the derivation of the regional estimates presented in the present chapter, see David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt and David Richardson, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A New Census* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
- 4 David Eltis, 'Free and Coerced Migrations from the Old World to the New', in David Eltis (ed.) *Coerced and Free Migrations in Global History* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 33–74.
 - 5 David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 167–78, 299–301; *TSTD*, 'Introduction'.
 - 6 For an elaboration, see David Eltis and Lawrence C. Jennings, 'Trade Between Western Africa and the Atlantic World in the Pre-Colonial Era', *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), pp. 936–59.
 - 7 Philip D. Curtin among others has argued that the region was the first of the major regions to drop out of the trade, *Census*, p. 258, and 'The Abolition of the Slave Trade from Senegambia', in David Eltis and James Walvin (eds) *Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa and the Americas* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), pp. 83–97.
 - 8 For a review of the controversy over the volume of the slave trade from Gorée, see Ralph A. Austen, 'The Slave Trade as History and Memory: Confrontations of Slaving Voyage Documents and Communal Traditions', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, vol. LVIII, no. 1, January 2001, pp. 229–44.
 - 9 Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 46–8.
 - 10 Sierra Leone is the only one of the eight African regions bearing the same name as a major port within the region. There is some ambivalence about the meaning of 'Sierra Leone' in the shipping records. The port of Sierra Leone may be under-represented in Table 2.2.
 - 11 The estimate presented here is subject to a modest downward bias. Wind and ocean currents ensured that slave-vessels from North America and Europe that obtained most of their slaves from regions to the east and south had to sail past the Windward Coast where they likely acquired a few slaves in casual trade.
 - 12 On the Admiralty charts of the 1840s, the Lofa River is shown as entering the Atlantic at Cape Mount (British Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons, 1850, vol. IX, 'Report of the Select Committee on the Slave Trade'). On modern maps it enters the Atlantic some 20 miles to the east of this.
 - 13 Adam Jones and Marion Johnson, 'Slaves from the Windward Coast', *Journal of African History*, 21 (1980), pp. 17–34.
 - 14 For a detailed survey, see Public Record Office, Treasury, Series 70 piece 175 (henceforth T70/175), pp. 8–15, 65–88. See also, A.W. Lawrence, *Trade Castles and Forts of the Gold Coast* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1963).
 - 15 Albert Van Dantzig, *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, 1674–1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague* (Accra, GAAS, 1978), p. 81; J.A. de Marée, *Reizen op en Beschrijving van den Goudkust van Guinea*, 2 vols (Amsterdam, Van Cleef, 1817–18), vol. I, pp. 1, 72, 183 cited in Douglas Coombs, *The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands, 1850–1874* (London, Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 6.
 - 16 This probably overstates Anomabu's importance as the precise location of most Dutch slave-purchasing is as yet unknown.
 - 17 J.K. Fynn, *Asante and its Neighbors, 1700–1807* (London, Longmans, 1971), pp. 116–17, 119, 125; Margaret Priestley, *West African Trade and Coast Society: A Family History* (London, Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 11–12, 73–4.
 - 18 The adjacent ports of Offra and Jakin are grouped together in this analysis, as are Apa and Badagri. The term Badagri actually refers to two adjacent loca-

- tions. Slave trading activities centred on Offra in the seventeenth century, then moved to Jakin. A similar switch occurred between Apa and Badagri in 1736–37. Benin, too, includes not just the Kingdom of Benin whose slaves passed through Ughoton (see A.F.C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485–1897* (New York, Humanities Press, 1969), pp. 91, 125, but those purchased in the main Benin River, most originating in the diverse Delta region.
- 19 Robin Law, 'On Pawning and Enslavement for Debt in the Pre-colonial Slave Coast', in Toyin Falola and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds) *Pawnship in Africa: Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1994), pp. 55–69. Enforcement in Whydah is obscure, but apparently contained a large private element. It clearly worked in the sense that Europeans continued to extend credit over many years.
 - 20 Robin Law, 'A Lagoonside Port on the Eighteenth Century Slave Coast: The Early History of Badagri', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 28 (1994), pp. 1–21; Caroline Sorensen-Gilmour, 'Slave-Trading Along the Lagoons of South-West Nigeria: The Case of Badagri', in Robin Law and Silke Strickrodt (eds) *Ports of the Slave Trade (Bights of Benin and Biafra)* (Stirling, Centre Of Commonwealth Studies, University of Stirling, 1999), pp. 85–6.
 - 21 This paragraph and the next are based on David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1987), pp. 168–9.
 - 22 For the slave trade in the Lagos of the 1840s, see the correspondence of King Kosoko captured by the British and published verbatim in British Parliamentary Papers, House of Lords, 1852–53, vol. XXII, pp. 327–66. These show the king selling slaves on commission in Bahia, but accounting for less than 10 per cent of all slaves sold in 1848 and 1849. Kosoko also had his own slave vessel built in Bahia. See also the enclosures in H. Wise to Calhoun, 1 November 1844, US Congress, H. Exec Doc. no. 148, 28–2, pp. 44–7. For Whydah, see Robin Law, 'Royal Monopoly and Private Enterprise: The Case of Dahomey', *Journal of African History*, 18 (1977), pp. 559–71; and 'Slave-Raiders and Middlemen, Monopolists and Free Traders: The Supply of Slaves for the Atlantic Trade in Dahomey, c.1715–1850', *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), pp. 45–68.
 - 23 For the debate on the Aro see *ibid.*, pp. 114–45 and Kenneth O. Dike and Felicia I. Ekejiuba, *The Aro of South-Eastern Nigeria, 1650–1980: A Study of Socio-Economic Formation and Transformation in Nigeria* (Ibadan, University Press, 1990), pp. 54–93. For Aro expansion, see G. Ugo Nwokeji, 'The Biafran Frontier: Trade, Slaves and Aro Society', (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1999), pp. 38–66.
 - 24 Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, 'Trust, Pawnship and Atlantic History: The Institutional Foundation of the Old Calabar Slave Trade', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), pp. 333–55; *idem*, 'The Business of Slaving: Pawnship in Western Africa, c.1600–1810', *Journal of African History*, 42 (2001), pp. 67–89; *idem*, '"This Horrid Hole": Commerce and Credit at Bonny, 1690–1840', (unpublished paper, 2001).
 - 25 For Bonny, see S.M. Hargreaves, 'The Political Economy of Nineteenth Century Bonny: A Study of Power, Authority, Legitimacy and Ideology in a Delta Trading Community from 1700–1914' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1987), though the present data place the emergence of the port earlier than does Hargreaves' study. For Old Calabar, see A.J.H. Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600–1891: The Impact of the International Economy on a Traditional Society* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973).
 - 26 For an estimate of free migrant departures on British ships – mainly from British ports – see the appendix to Eltis, 'Free and Coerced Migrations', pp. 63–74.

- 27 Cape Lopez is the most important port in the 'other' category. For the Cameroon, see Ralph A. Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland, c. 1600–c. 1960* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1–47; for Gabon, see K.D. Patterson, *The Northern Gabon Coast to 1875* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 3–75, and Henry Bucher, 'The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Gabon Estuary: The Mpongwe to 1860', in Paul Lovejoy (ed.) *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), pp. 136–54.
- 28 G. Ugo Nwokeji and David Eltis, 'Characteristics of Captives Leaving the Cameroons for the Americas, 1822–1837', *Journal of African History*, 43 (2002), pp. 191–210.
- 29 Bonny managed the extraordinary average of 5.78 slaves loaded per day in this period (number of cases = 59, standard deviation = 3.7), compared to 5.1 in the Congo River (n = 16, sd = 1.7), 4.9 at Porto Novo (n = 19, sd = 2.3), and 3.6 at Anomabu (n = 33, sd = 2.8). For higher prices for Bonny slaves in the Americas, see David Eltis and David Richardson, 'Markets for Slaves Newly Arrived in the Americas: Price Patterns, 1673–1865', David Eltis, Frank Lewis and Kenneth Sokoloff (eds) *Slavery and the Development of the Americas* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); see also Hargreaves, 'The Political Economy of Nineteenth Century Bonny', p. 181; Latham, *Old Calabar*, pp. 19–20.
- 30 The north-west Europeans obtained many slaves from ports south of the Congo via coastal vessels. In the early 1770s the Portuguese sent a major naval expedition north from Luanda to establish a fort at Cabinda. It called in at the Dande estuary, just 25 miles north of Luanda, and was faced by the hostility of the traders there who feared the loss of their coasting trade with the Loangan coast (David Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and their Neighbours under the Influence of the Portuguese, 1483–1790* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 157.
- 31 Phyllis C. Martin, *The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576–1870: The Effects of Changing Commercial Relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 17–92. Eltis, *Economic Growth*, pp. 176–7, 181–4. For the British attempt at a fort, see British Library, Add. ms. 25,556, pp. 51, 99.
- 32 Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 245–83. Miller describes this group as 'Casualties of Merchant Capital' but they certainly had a strong presence in the later illegal slave trade.
- 33 These figures are broadly consistent with estimates for selected years derived from the correspondence of colonial officials in Joseph C. Miller, 'The Numbers, Origins, and Destinations of Slaves in the Eighteenth Century Angolan Slave Trade', in Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman (eds) *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 77–115.
- 34 Eltis, *Economic Growth*, pp. 95, 114, 174.
- 35 No table is provided here, but the comparison is easy using the *TSTD* interface.
- 36 For a good description of links between the mainland and Bance Island, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 191, 202–3.
- 37 Eltis, *Economic Growth*, pp. 165–6, 181–3. Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 198–9, overemphasises the novelty of the island-based slave-trading system associated with the London-based Grant, Oswald and Co.
- 38 John Atkins, *The Navy Surgeon: Or a Practical System of Surgery* (London, J. Hodges, 1734), pp. 18–19 of 'Observations on the Coast of Guinea'; Robin

- Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550–1750* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 127–33.
- 39 Luanda and Benguela were exceptions in that they were under Portuguese control and few non-Portuguese vessels traded there. These ports, however, were mainly bulking centres, and the key exchanges and markets here (the counterparts of Bonny and Lagos) were not on the coast, but in the interior where the European buyers were represented by *pombeiros*.
- 40 Stephen D. Behrendt, David Eltis and David Richardson, *African Agency in the Atlantic: Resistance in the Slave Trade* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). The disorder in the Gabon is shown in the following comment ‘they [Africans at Pongo Island in the Gabon] panyarred me and all the men ... Capt Serjeant was panyarred att the Gabboones 9 days before mee ... The 30th the Prince and about 30 people more came on board ... and we panyarred the Prince ... I understand there has been 2 Portugeeze taken ... after the same manner as I was ...’ (Thomas Woolman, São Tomé, to Cape Coast Castle, 25 August, 1683 in Robin Law (ed.) *The Local Correspondence of the Royal African Company of England, 1681–1699* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 331–2.
- 41 The letter continued ‘and is due to Traders alsoe of you that are concerned in the Govern’t seeke such advantages as you cann take of the Comanders of our Shippes and perticulerlie when a Shipp have a Quantity of Slaves aboard you then require new duties & higher prices then att first wch is very unjust & if you alone of other Kings of Angola Expect we Continue to Trade with you you must consider itt must be from Incouragemt’. (RAC to King of Cacongo, 16 February 1688, T70/50, p. 57).
- 42 Law, *Slave Coast of West Africa*, pp. 183–91, 300–8; idem., ‘Royal Monopoly and Private Enterprise; and ‘Slave-Raiders and Middlemen, Monopolists and Free Traders’.
- 43 Law, ‘A Lagoonside Port on the Eighteenth Century Slave Coast’; Sorensen-Gilmour, ‘Slave-Trading along the Lagoons of South-West Nigeria’, pp. 85–6.
- 44 Martin, *External Trade of the Loango Coast*, pp. 117–35.
- 45 Eltis, *Economic Growth*, pp. 164–84.
- 46 Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, pp. 94–113.
- 47 The largest of which I am aware was the return of ‘Seventeen Free Trading Negroes’ from Barbados to the Gold Coast (probably Anomabu). See Charles Thomas, Barbados, 4 May 1703, T70/13, p. 18. For others to Cabinda, see Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 vols (Washington, DC, Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930–33), vol. I, p. 360. And to Whydah, see T70/958, p. 50 (marginal note at end of accounts).
- 48 That there was more of the former than the latter was in part due to the European monopoly of ocean-going transportation. The pace of European exploration ventures into Africa picked up considerably in the nineteenth century, but before Mungo Park, movements of Europeans beyond the sub-Saharan coast were usually extensions of commercial activities (see A.W. Lawrence, ‘Some Source Books for West African History’, *Journal of African History*, 2 (1962), pp. 227–34). Letters from African rulers and merchants seeking contacts are commonplace in European archives. For Africans traders crossing the Atlantic, see ‘Observations on the Trade of Africa and Angola by the Reverend Mr. Gordon’ (1714) in Stowe ms, ST9, p. 48, Huntington Library, ‘About three years ago a Young Negro Man came to Barbados and brought about 20 slaves with him, and sold them there, and from thence came to London, bought goods and returned back to the Coast.’ And the case of Venda Lawrence, a female slave-trader from the Gambia who settled in South Carolina (Lillian Ashcraft-Eason, ‘She “Voluntarily Hath Come to ... [The Georgia] ...

Province”: A Gambian-Woman Slave Trader Among the Enslaved,’ unpublished paper, 1999). There are several instances of African-based traders having interests in slave-vessels, for example Feliz de Souza at Whydah. King Kosoko at Lagos sold slaves on commission in Bahia and had his own slave-vessel built in Bahia (British Parliamentary Papers, House of Lords, 1852–53, vol. XXII, pp. 327–66; see also the enclosures in H. Wise to Calhoun, 1 November 1844, US Congress, H. Exec Doc. no. 148, 28–2, pp. 44–7).

- 49 Paragraph based on D. Eltis, S.D. Behrendt and D. Richardson, ‘The Costs of Coercion: African Agency in the History of the Atlantic World’, *Economic History Review*, 54 (2001), pp. 454–76.

3 Background to annexation

Anglo-African credit relations in the Bight of Biafra, 1700–1891

David Richardson

Introduction

In his *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, Adam Smith observed that while possessing ‘many considerable settlements’ on the coast of Africa and in the East Indies, Europeans had yet to establish in these regions ‘such numerous and thriving colonies as those in the islands and continent of America’.¹ Seeking to explain this dichotomy, Smith argued that while Africa was ‘inhabited by barbarous nations’ these were ‘by no means so weak and defenceless as the miserable and helpless Americans’. Indeed, he went on, ‘in proportion to the natural fertility of the countries which they inhabited’ they were ‘much more populous’ than those in America, a fact he attributed to the settled nature of even the ‘most barbarous’ African societies. By comparison, ‘the natives of every part of America, except Mexico and Peru, were only hunters; and the difference is very great between the number of shepherds and that of hunters whom the same extent of equally fertile territory can maintain’. As a result, in Africa it was more difficult ‘to displace the natives, and to extend the European plantations over the greater part of the lands of the original inhabitants’. For Smith, therefore, European trade with Africa was founded on negotiation with indigenous peoples, not colonisation.

Smith’s observations have perhaps received less attention from historians of Atlantic history or African colonisation than they deserve. His views on the uncivilised state of Africans are curious, given the tenor of his other remarks, but in other respects his argument anticipated by over two centuries the findings of much recent research on the nature of Afro-European trade relations in the age of the Atlantic slave trade.² Linking Afro-European co-operation in trade to European acknowledgement of African power, his analysis is also consistent with interpretations of the late nineteenth-century ‘Scramble for Africa’ that seek to relate annexation of African territory by European metropolitan states to so-called crises ‘at the periphery’.³ Breakdown of authority and the insecurity of property created locally by such crises have been considered by some as critical in prompting annexation of territory by European powers anxious to protect

established commercial interests of their citizens in the territories in question. Underlining the importance of stable political authority to the promotion and protection of market exchange, Adam Smith's observations provided, therefore, remarkable insights into understanding the changing political framework of Afro-European trade between the eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries.

One implication of Smith's analysis, of course, was that, even when dealing in the eighteenth century with so-called 'barbarous nations' outside Europe, colonisation by Europeans was not necessarily the only or even the most efficient way of ensuring the stability and order needed to promote trade. Unlike the Americas, where European trade and colonisation grew in tandem, development of European trade with Atlantic Africa essentially preceded colonisation of the continent by almost four centuries.⁴ Moreover, largely as a result of the shipment of some 10–11 million enslaved Africans to European colonies in America in the two centuries after 1650, Africa's share of European overseas trade tended to grow during the lifetime of Adam Smith.⁵ By comparison, the continent's share of European trade seems to have declined during the half-century or so preceding the Scramble.⁶ Put another way, the peak of 'black' Africa's relative importance to European trade coincided with Britain's dominance of the Atlantic slave trade in 1750–1807, while its falling share of European trade thereafter was associated with the British-led suppression of the transatlantic traffic in enslaved Africans in 1807–50. The latter may have helped to provoke local African political crises at this time. Persisting into the later nineteenth century, these may have promoted, in turn, European efforts to establish overrule in some areas. Thus, just as favourable political and social arrangements can improve trade performance, so socio-political uncertainty may discourage trade growth and even prompt merchants to try to reform the local environment within which they work.

The general trends described above disguise a diversity of trade patterns between European nations and Africa in the two centuries or so before the Scramble, reflecting changes in demand for African exports, in the political parameters and organisation of trade, and other factors. This diversity suggests that more regionally focused studies are needed in order to explore further long-term inter-relationships between local political conditions and trade development. Accordingly, we focus in this chapter on Afro-European trade relations at Bonny and Old Calabar, the two principal trading states in the Bight of Biafra in west Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷ Apart from the period 1815–40, when French and other slave-traders were frequent visitors, the local merchants dealt almost totally with British traders from the 1740s onwards.⁸ Annexed by Britain in 1885–91, the two trading states experienced both substantial growth and structural adjustment in exports during the preceding century and a half. They dominated the rapid growth of slave exports from the Bight of Biafra between 1740 and 1807 – a growth which saw the region's

share of total African shipments of slaves to America rise sharply⁹ – and they continued to be major suppliers of slaves for export until 1840. By this date, however, they had both become leading exporters of palm oil to Europe, thereby playing a central role in the early nineteenth-century transition to so-called ‘legitimate’ trade in the subcontinent.¹⁰ Traders in the Bight of Biafra continued to be leading suppliers of palm oil in the second half of the nineteenth century but their relative contribution to African exports declined in the face of growing oil exports from other regions, notably the Slave Coast and Gold Coast.¹¹ In the half-century before British annexation in 1885–91, therefore, the impressive record of commercial success enjoyed by traders at Bonny and Old Calabar with their European partners in the century after 1740 tended to ebb away.

Patterns of trade development at both ports from the 1740s onward were obviously shaped by external factors, notably transatlantic demand for slaves, the British-led anti-slave trade campaign after 1807, and European demand for industrial raw materials after 1815. The response of both ports to changes in the international commercial environment was also conditioned, however, by local factors. These included dynamic and politically powerful merchant communities, water transport links with the interior, and the development of extensive inland commercial networks.¹² But effective mobilisation of these resources also depended on external capital. As trade at Bonny and Old Calabar was conducted from ship to shore rather than, as at some other places in Africa, at bases built ashore, capital investment by Europeans in the Bight of Biafra consisted almost exclusively of commercial credit in the form of advances of trade goods. Without such credit, trade growth and, after 1815, trade restructuring in response to changing international parameters of trade would have been severely constrained.¹³ To understand the evident success that merchants at Bonny and Old Calabar achieved in developing trade in partnership with Europeans in the century after 1740, we need to understand how merchants at these two ports managed to compete effectively against others for European, particularly British, credit. Evaluating the factors that allowed each port to succeed in attracting credit before 1840 also sheds light on why ‘trust’, as credit was known, became a major source of concern among British traders in the half-century before annexation.

Inflows of credit into Bonny and Old Calabar were clearly affected by creditors’ assessment of the market prospects for the products that credit helped to generate. They were also influenced by their assessment of the risks involved in advancing loans to borrowers, including the likelihood of recovering debts should borrowers default. Shared moral codes and personal relationships are often considered important in providing creditors with protection against malfeasance,¹⁴ and personal relationships evidently developed between African and British traders in the Bight of Biafra during the course of their business dealings.¹⁵ The sharing of moral codes was nevertheless problematical when, as in Anglo-African trade, exchange

crossed cultural boundaries. Moreover, personal relationships sometimes proved ambiguous, since they were used not only to build trust but also to deceive.¹⁶ While British traders to Bonny and Old Calabar invested in building personal relationships with local merchants, they also sought, in alliance with their African partners, to devise other mechanisms to secure their loans, adapting local customs and organisations for this purpose. As we shall see, the credit protection system that emerged at Bonny differed from that at Old Calabar, but each system represented an effectively adaptive use of local practices by Anglo-African trading partners in order to promote international exchange.

Below we look at the credit protection mechanisms developed at Bonny and Old Calabar during the period of British involvement in the slave trade before 1807. Thereafter, we discuss how these mechanisms adjusted in 1807–40 to meet new trading conditions following Britain's abolition of its slave trade. Finally, we explore how credit relations in the region deteriorated in the half-century before Britain assumed political control of the two ports.

Credit protection mechanisms before 1807

It is difficult to uncouple the credit protection arrangements that evolved at Bonny and Old Calabar before 1807 from the nature of local political structures. Studies of political life at each port tend to centre on lineage groups, known as houses at Bonny and wards at Old Calabar, and their relationship to other organisations, notably the Amanyabo (or king) and Council of Chiefs at Bonny and the village council and Ekpe society at Old Calabar. Commercial competition between lineages is usually considered as critical to the economic success of both ports between 1700 and 1850, though the lineage basis of houses and wards became blurred in time as a result of changes in their structure and membership. At Bonny, in particular, commercially talented slaves rose to hold prominent positions in trading houses by the early nineteenth century. While competition may have proved healthy in terms of commercial success, it also created political tension as houses and wards manoeuvred for control of offices that shaped relations with Europeans and the apportionment of benefits locally arising from external trade. Competition was particularly severe for control of the position of Amanyabo at Bonny and of leading positions in the Ekpe society at Old Calabar.¹⁷ The resulting distribution of power among houses or wards over such institutions was, in turn, largely instrumental in shaping the credit protection arrangements in overseas trade that emerged at the two ports. Methods of credit protection might vary, therefore, from place to place or even at the same place through time depending on whether power over key institutions was concentrated in one ward or house or distributed among several.

According to Latham, 'the tendency within the Efik state was towards

the emergence of a dominant ward'.¹⁸ Rarely, if ever, during the period of British participation in the slave trade, however, did a single ward succeed in gaining control simultaneously of key offices such as *Obong* (or head of the village council) and Eyamba and Ebunko (president and vice-president of Ekpe). The political history of Old Calabar before 1807 seems in fact to have been punctuated by rivalry and at times by open violence between wards for control of trade and related institutions such as the council and the Ekpe society. In 1740–1807, the principal source of conflict was rivalry between wards based at Obutong (Old Town) and Atakpa (Duke or New Town), which had been established as communities separate from the original Efik settlement at Creek Town. This rivalry culminated in 1767 when Duke ward conspired with British traders to massacre members of Obutong, including members of its leading family, the Robins.¹⁹ Subsequent action against Obutong ensured its almost total eclipse commercially and politically by the end of the century.²⁰ Despite the eclipse of Obutong, the key political offices at Old Calabar continued to be shared until the 1810s between Duke and Eyamba wards of Duke Town and Eyo ward of Creek Town.²¹

Subdivision and rivalry of wards thus ensured that before 1807 no single unified authority emerged at Old Calabar to which British traders could look for resolution of debt or other problems. In such circumstances, as Thomas Clarkson and other contemporary British observers noted, credit advances by traders at Old Calabar had to be protected by other means. The principal instrument for doing so was human pawnship.²² Adapted from indigenous procedures for protecting credit,²³ the arrangement required those seeking credit to lodge hostages with their creditors to guarantee future repayment in slaves of goods advanced. Failure to discharge debts within an agreed time could – and indeed did – result in those held hostage being carried away to America and sold as slaves. This outcome may have proved particularly costly and embarrassing for the debtor when the hostages seized included his own kin, an apparently not uncommon practice that tied credit protection to lineage. Whoever the hostages or ‘pledges’ were, an agreement between local merchants and British traders to adapt local practices of human pawning provided, in the absence of an appropriate political mechanism, some protection for credit advances at Old Calabar, thereby allowing local merchants to attract British credit. The institution of human pawnship thus underpinned the export slave trade of Old Calabar before 1807.²⁴

If contemporaries were aware that credit arrangements at Old Calabar rested on pawning humans, they were equally aware that pawning was uncommon, if not unknown, at Bonny.²⁵ Moreover, there is no evidence in trading accounts or merchant correspondence relating to Bonny that British or other traders took pawns as security for credit. So how was the credit that European traders advanced at Bonny secured?

The most comprehensive recent study of Bonny’s pre-colonial history

has claimed that ‘the pull of the central political force was far weaker than that of the village’ in the era of the slave trade.²⁶ Nevertheless, commercial power by the early nineteenth century was largely concentrated in just two canoe houses, namely, Fubara Manilla Pepple and Opubo Annie Pepple. Moreover, by this time the Perekuele (or Pepple) family appears to have established supremacy over and even dynastic succession to the key central office of Amanyabo. Originally the leader of the armed forces of the villages that constituted Bonny, the holder of the office of Amanyabo received a share of the duties levied on trade ‘as an indemnity for his outlay’ on military defence.²⁷ In addition, the office holder assumed authority on behalf of the community to negotiate terms of trade with Europeans. In effect, therefore, the office of Amanyabo came to be invested with, in Hargreaves’ words, ‘an over-abundance of latent power’.²⁸ As a result, though the Council of Chiefs determined the succession, the position of Amanyabo became a coveted one for ambitious lineages such as the Pepples. Two issues relating to the office of Amanyabo remain, however, unresolved in the historical literature. One is the date of the assumption of tax and other powers by the officeholder. The other concerns the range of powers invested in the office. Specifically, did it include protection for British creditors against default by local dealers in slaves?

War between Bonny and its neighbour, Andony, in the early eighteenth century is traditionally seen as having been instrumental in establishing the local political status of the office of Amanyabo, sometimes seemingly referred to as King of Bonny or ‘Bandy’ by Europeans.²⁹ There is evidence, however, that by 1700 the ‘king’ was already an important figure in trade relations between Bonny and the British. Arriving at Bonny in 1699, Jean Barbot described how the ‘king of Bandy’, named William by Barbot but probably Awusa, ‘ingag’d to furnish five hundred slaves for our loading, all lusty and young’.³⁰ Subsequent conferences involving the king and his representative, Pepprell (or Pepple), described as ‘the king’s brother’ by Barbot, finalised the terms of trade and duties thereon, ‘none of the natives’ daring ‘to come aboard us . . . till the king had adjusted the trade with us’.³¹ When trade was concluded and the ship prepared to sail, the king and his officers were entertained on board, this being ‘an advertisement to the Blacks ashore’ to pay the outstanding slaves or provisions ‘they have contracted to supply us . . . else the king compels them to it’.³² Barbot’s account suggests, therefore, that as early as 1699, political regulation and monitoring of trade and debt enforcement by central authority were already established at Bonny.³³ Other evidence reveals continuing regulation of external trade relations by the same authority later in the eighteenth century, the opening of trade being subject to the king’s approval and succession to the position of Amanyabo depending not only on lineage but also on candidates’ commercial acumen and success.³⁴ The substantial growth of the port’s slave trade is testament to the confi-

dence that these arrangements for monitoring and enforcing contracts engendered among British creditors to traders at Bonny in this period.

In alliance with local merchants, therefore, British merchant-investors devised different institutional mechanisms to protect credit at Bonny and Old Calabar before 1807. Reflecting variations in levels of development of local centralised authority, these mechanisms facilitated trade without formal settlement by outsiders while allowing local traders to compete for British credit. As Britain was the principal source of credit to both ports, its ending of its slave trade in 1807 was potentially a major threat to the credit flows that had facilitated their trade success over the preceding 70 years. An immediate collapse of credit inflows and exports after 1807 was nevertheless reversed within a decade as slave exports revived and palm oil exports climbed rapidly after 1815, each underwritten, it seems, by European credit. How this credit was secured in the new trading environment after British abolition will now be considered.

Credit protection mechanisms adjusted, 1807–40

Most studies of trade in the early-nineteenth century Bight of Biafra have focused on palm oil, annual exports of which rose approximately 25 fold (or from about 800 to 20,000 tons) between 1815 and 1850.³⁵ Concentrated initially at Old Calabar and then from 1830 onwards increasingly at Bonny, this rapid growth in the trade in oil, historians agree, was impossible without credit. The British, who dominated the trade, provided almost all this credit or ‘trust’, as it was known. Palm oil was not, however, the most valuable export from the Bight of Biafra for most of the quarter-century after 1815. On the contrary, though annual levels of slave exports after British abolition generally remained below those reached between 1780 and 1807, in value terms slaves almost certainly remained the most important export from the region before the late 1830s, clearly outstripping oil in most years between 1807 and 1835.³⁶ French, Portuguese and Spanish shippers dominated these exports of slaves.³⁷ As African suppliers of slaves at this time were likely to have demanded as much credit as their eighteenth-century counterparts, credit from non-British sources was crucial in helping to revive the export slave trade from Bonny and Old Calabar after 1807.³⁸ In aggregate, such credit may well have exceeded that provided by British palm oil traders for almost a quarter of a century. Compared to British credit, however, hardly any research has been done on how the new post-1807 entrants into the Bight of Biafran slave trade sought protection against default on credit. An important element in the story of the growth and restructuring of trade at Bonny and Old Calabar between 1807 and the ending of the export trade in slaves in the early 1840s has thus been overlooked.

Studies dealing with ‘trust’ or credit in the Bight of Biafra in the early nineteenth century place considerable weight on continuities in personal

relations between the years before and after 1807. This is particularly so in the case of Liverpool traders in the region.³⁹ Though personal agency in the operation of credit arrangements after 1807 cannot be ignored, as we shall see, some of the supposed continuities in trade relations across British abolition are questionable.⁴⁰ Even if they were real, however, their role in cushioning European creditors against default by African borrowers after 1807 can be exaggerated, since personal relations with local merchants did not persuade the British to refrain from using institutional mechanisms to protect credit at Bonny and Old Calabar before 1807. Furthermore, the resurgence of slave exports from both ports after British abolition depended on the entry of new national carriers.⁴¹ Britain's abolition of its slave trade thus posed a test of the flexibility of the institutional credit protection arrangements devised at Bonny and Old Calabar before 1807.

The indications are that, at Bonny, these arrangements proved very flexible, with the Amanyanabo's role in contract enforcement seemingly remaining as fundamental after 1807 as before. In the 1820s King Pepple, presumably Opubo, was evidently at the centre of trade and credit arrangements in the French slave trade at the port. In 1820, 'le roi Pepper' was said to have supplied 300 'noirs de nation "Eboe"' to the ship *Fox*.⁴² Five years later, Jean Jacques Guimbert, master of the *Fortunée*, observed ten ships at Bonny trading 'avec le Roi[,] à passer chacun à son tour d'après le Reglement établi par Messieurs les Capitaines que aucun bâtiment ne pourra traiter avec le peuple'.⁴³ In the same year, the master of a newly arrived French ship received advice from the king on the vessels he was currently trading with, including the dates on which they would be paid their slaves.⁴⁴ Although evidence relating to other national carriers is as yet unavailable, French slave-traders at Bonny seemingly relied at least as heavily on the Amanyanabo or king to oversee trade arrangements as their British predecessors.

A similar pattern was also evident in the palm oil trade, where the British were the principal creditors. A report of 1826 suggested that until 'King Pepple' opened trade, no African oil-broker could trade with Europeans. The king's approval of trade, it was said, was signified by a ceremony involving breaking eggs against the ship's hull and entertaining the king on board ship.⁴⁵ As in the past, the Amanyanabo's influence over, and income from, trade ensured fierce competition for succession to the post, even when the dynastic line seems to have been established, as witnessed in the 1830s when Opubo's death around 1830 provoked conflict among the leading canoe houses over the succession. A treaty signed by the Amanyanabo, William Dappa Pepple, with Britain in 1837 confirmed his right to levy duties on trade and his liability for debts incurred by traders recommended by him.⁴⁶ This treaty is sometimes seen as the outcome of a deal by William Dappa Pepple to gain British recognition as Amanyanabo.⁴⁷ But, in so far as it clearly allowed him to regulate entry into trade, it

may be interpreted as an opportunity for the British politically to reinforce an established and successful credit protection arrangement dating from the eighteenth century. Underlining the Amanyanabo's role, the treaty thus acknowledged the adaptability and flexibility of credit security arrangements at Bonny, provided the holder of the office was locally considered legitimate and acted impartially. In theory a 'de-personalised' arrangement, it could also accommodate changes of European personnel involved in trade as long as newcomers understood and accepted the Amanyanabo's authority to regulate external trade.⁴⁸ Overall, recognition of, and respect for, the Amanyanabo continued to underpin credit at Bonny after 1807, thereby fostering trade recovery and restructuring at the port.

If continuity characterised credit protection methods at Bonny, change seems to have marked the situation at Old Calabar. There, British abolition and subsequent efforts to suppress the slave trade undermined methods of international credit protection based on human pawning, the dominant mechanism before 1807. For slave-traders, holding pawns on board ship increased the risk of seizure by anti-slave trade patrols, while allowing pawns to remain on shore raised supervision costs. To British palm oil traders, to use human pawns to protect credit was of limited value once the threat of foreclosing on them was removed by British abolition. On the whole, therefore, methods of credit protection at Old Calabar had to be reformed after 1807 in order to allow local merchants to continue to attract international capital.

Some traders of Old Calabar were evidently so powerful by 1815 that they were able to secure credit on the basis of personal reputation. This was particularly so in the case of Efiom Edem (or Duke Ephraim), who managed to acquire extraordinary commercial and political power at Old Calabar between 1810 and his death in 1834. Described as 'the most influential man in Efik history' and someone who acquired a 'legendary credit-worthiness', Duke Ephraim was the port's greatest trader even before British abolition.⁴⁹ By 1821 he had become Obong and Eyamba, offices previously held by Egbo Young of Duke ward, and by the 1820s effectively monopolised collection of coomey or duty on European trade. This could only have strengthened his ability to borrow on promissory notes, as evidenced by his dealings with one French ship in 1828.⁵⁰ But Duke Ephraim's position was exceptional, and the evidence suggests that promissory notes, whatever the status of their issuer, were alone insufficient to encourage European traders to advance credit at Old Calabar. Human pawning no longer being practical, European creditors at Old Calabar after 1807 resorted to another local institution to try to protect their interests, namely, the Ekpe society.

Ekpe was a secret, exclusively male, graded society headed by the Eyamba (president or Chief Priest), one of the two major political offices in Old Calabar, as we saw above. Originally a masquerade associated with

the leopard, Ekpe was probably introduced to Old Calabar in the seventeenth century.⁵¹ According to one historian, those responsible for its introduction tried to transform it into an 'effective governmental institution' to enable the different wards of the community to interact and resolve disputes.⁵² Other historians have sought to identify Ekpe's rise with the external slave trade, at which time 'the Efik began both to receive and give credit, adopting a new institution, Ekpe, to cover the inevitable problem of bad debts'.⁵³ By the 1790s, almost all of the free males in the community were forced to buy membership, if they did not join willingly, but because the higher grades of the society cost more, they were largely confined to wealthier members, who thus dominated its council. The powers of Ekpe included the determination, collection and distribution of duties on trade. They also covered law-making and the punishment of offenders, the principal instrument of which was 'blowing' Ekpe. This involved imposing summary justice on offenders, including debtors, by using the authority of the Ekpe society to ostracise economically and socially those deemed guilty of some offence until restitution was made. Because of this, the Ekpe society has often been considered crucial in policing credit arrangements at Old Calabar.

Though Ekpe was involved in debt recovery, it did not do so directly in support of European traders, at least before 1807. There is some evidence that the society could require reinstatement of pawns who absconded while being held by British traders, but where pawns were in danger of being taken away, Ekpe was known to take action to prevent British traders from foreclosing in order to recover debts. Where debt recovery was concerned, Ekpe's actions were essentially aimed at protecting insiders, and as far as one can judge, before 1807 only Efik, or local Africans, purchased membership of the society.⁵⁴ Whether the British were reluctant to buy membership or were refused admission at this time is unknown, but because they remained outside, they were disqualified from exploiting its powers. British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, however, seems to have produced a change, and by the 1820s, if not even earlier, masters of British ships were evidently seeking and achieving membership of the society, thereby gaining influence in the most powerful political body at Old Calabar.⁵⁵ Moreover, driven on by credit protection motives, they seem to have continued to do so up to and including the 1870s, though whether this was regular policy or a response to credit difficulties at particular times is unclear.⁵⁶ Still, by joining Ekpe, British traders could advance credit to their Efik trading partners without collateral and could, in principal, call on the society to 'blow Ekpe' on those who defaulted. How far they did so in practice is uncertain, as there is evidence that British traders sometimes preferred to seize or *panyar* (kidnap) debtors rather than work through Ekpe.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the admission of Britons to the Ekpe society seems to have transformed a local political institution from an inward-looking contract enforcement agency into one with an

international remit, thereby providing British creditors with sufficient confidence to advance credit to Efik traders and allow them to respond to changing trade parameters.

Because the British were the leading trading partners of merchants at Bonny and Old Calabar in the late eighteenth century, Parliament's decision in 1807 to outlaw the British slave trade potentially threatened economic ruin for the two ports' merchants. Flexibility and adaptability in local credit arrangements, however, helped to underpin a market-led recovery in export earnings at both ports from 1815 onwards. Based on an expansion in slave exports by non-British carriers and a British-dominated growth in palm oil exports, recovery and restructuring of trade revolved around the creation of new Afro-European commercial partnerships and renewal of credit inflows. The Afro-British alliance that had dominated commercial relations in the Bight of Biafra in Adam Smith's day thus became an Afro-European one, at least for a quarter-century after 1815. In turn, this adjustment probably allowed merchants based at Bonny and Old Calabar to sustain and even to improve their share of west African overseas trade in 1815–40 at a time when Africa's share of Atlantic trade as a whole may have been falling. After 1840, however, this situation changed as Bonny and Old Calabar experienced relative decline as African trading venues over the following half-century.

The deterioration of credit relations after 1840

There is little doubt that the entry of other European nations into slave-carrying cushioned the impact of Britain's abolition of its slave trade in 1807 on the economic fortunes of Bonny and Old Calabar merchants, at least until 1840. Indeed, though developments in palm oil have attracted much attention, slave exports continued to generate more income for merchants at the two ports until at least the early 1830s, often accounting for two-thirds or more of export earnings.⁵⁸ In these circumstances, Britain's use of naval force, diplomacy and financial inducements to bring about a 'relatively abrupt termination' of slave exports from the region after 1835 caused a major loss of export earnings for which oil exports could not immediately compensate.⁵⁹ On the contrary, it is likely that the total export earnings of merchants at Bonny remained below those achieved in 1830–35 for at least a decade after the export slave trade ended, while at Old Calabar recovery probably took even longer to achieve.⁶⁰ The suppression of slave exports was, therefore, an important factor in reducing the Bight of Biafra's share of European or Atlantic trade after 1835, reversing the trend that had begun a century earlier with the rapid growth of the region's slave exports.

If elimination of slave exports was initially the primary cause of the reversal of the Bight of Biafra's standing in international trade between 1830 and 1850, palm oil exports were probably insufficient to allow the

region to recover its position in the second half of the nineteenth century. In volume terms, growth of palm oil exports from Old Calabar was, at best, modest between 1850 and 1890, remaining in most years at or only moderately higher than those achieved before 1850.⁶¹ Figures on palm oil exports from Bonny are sparse after 1850, but some growth evidently occurred in the 1850s, as local oil-brokers built on earlier gains, thereby at least consolidating, if not increasing, their share of the region's palm oil trade up to 1860. Thereafter, however, Bonny's share of the Bight of Biafra's palm oil exports declined in tandem with a general decline in the region's overall contribution to palm oil exports from Africa. By the 1880s, traders of Bonny supplied less than 20 per cent of the region's palm oil exports. At the same time, the Bight of Biafra's share of African palm oil exports fell from about 60 per cent at the height of Bonny's influence over the trade to about 40 per cent a quarter of a century later.⁶² The dominance established by Bonny and Old Calabar over Africa's palm oil trade thus faded rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century in the face of emerging competition from other regions. Moreover, whereas other African regions made rapid progress in developing palm kernel and other exports, growth of such exports was evidently much more modest in the Bight of Biafra than elsewhere.⁶³ Such trends helped to ensure that, while Britain remained the principal consumer of African palm oil and palm-kernel exports, the Bight of Biafra became more marginal to British commercial interests in the decades before Bonny and Old Calabar were annexed in 1885–91.

The problems faced by palm oil brokers at Bonny and Old Calabar in the second half of the nineteenth century have attracted much attention from historians. Central to their difficulties, it is agreed, were declining prices of palm oil and deteriorating terms of trade, the effects of which were to depress oil brokers' incomes, especially in the decade before British colonisation.⁶⁴ Ironically, however, such trends were perhaps exacerbated by inflows of European capital, which, by helping to enlarge the overall African capacity to produce palm oil as well as to produce substitutes such as palm kernels, ultimately contributed to the overproduction of oil. Without such capital inflows, growth of total African palm oil output after 1850 would have been just as difficult to achieve as earlier in the century. Yet, trends in output of oil suggest that after 1850 increasing proportions of external investment in palm oil production were directed to places other than Bonny and Old Calabar, notwithstanding the existence of commercial ties between oil brokers in these ports and their British trading partners by 1850. To understand the Bight of Biafra's declining international commercial standing after 1850, therefore, we need to explain why these two ports lost favour among external investors in the palm oil sector in Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century.

A complete answer to this question requires an investigation of how other regions in Africa (and other parts of the non-European world) were

able to compete for external, particularly British, capital after 1850. Such an investigation is impossible here, but the historical literature has highlighted various inter-connected problems in the relations between the oil brokers of Bonny and Old Calabar and their British trading partners in the 40 years or so before 1885.

First, relations were periodically disrupted by outbreaks of violence, in part because local brokers sought, for the most part successfully, to protect their control of trade by preventing British traders from establishing direct contact with inland suppliers of oil. The brokers of Bonny and Old Calabar were not alone in trying to protect their interests in this way. Linked perhaps to growing pressures on brokers' incomes, this violence between brokers and traders seems, nevertheless, to have been a new and, in commercial terms, damaging phenomenon of Anglo-African trade relations at both ports from the 1840s.⁶⁵ Second, beginning in 1850 with Bonny and Elem Kalabari and later in the 1860s with Old Calabar, British traders were, in Lynn's phrase, 'increasingly ready' to rely on local consuls to try to regulate by treaty commercial practices in the palm oil trade.⁶⁶ Such treaties sometimes sought to abolish 'trust' as part of a strategy to regulate trade and curb the hold of coastal brokers over trade with the interior. Competition among traders for oil ensured that such moves to abolish or restrict credit were almost invariably unsuccessful, but they may have hindered growth of credit by increasing uncertainty in trade relations and by undermining other mechanisms for monitoring credit. Third, notwithstanding British moves to regulate credit, periodic crises erupted, with reported levels of debt among local oil brokers frequently running into thousands of pounds and sometimes disrupting trade. In 1855, over £250,000 was reported to be held in credit by Efik traders at Old Calabar, a level of debt that proved difficult to clear and may have contributed to a collapse in trade in 1862.⁶⁷ Just two years later, in 1864, Europeans boycotted Creek Town in Old Calabar because its traders owed oil to 20 ships, while in 1888 some 23 Efik traders were under threat of being banned from trade because of debts.⁶⁸ Information on debts at Bonny is less abundant, but in 1865 Bonny reportedly owed British traders 3,000 puncheons of oil.⁶⁹ Overall, issues relating to credit protection (or debt recovery) seem to have emerged as chronic sources of tension in Anglo-African commercial relations at Bonny and Old Calabar from the late 1840s onwards, helping to prompt increasing British intervention into local politics.

The background to these tensions in Anglo-African commercial relations was a rise of political disorder at both ports. The death of Duke Ephraim in 1834 prompted a surge of prolonged and bloody inter-ward political factionalism over succession to the posts he held. This politically crippled the erstwhile dominant Duke ward and promoted division or stalemate among other wards for control of leading offices, allowing British officials to interfere in local political processes. Moreover,

inter-ward division encouraged local groups excluded from political structures to assert themselves politically. The outcome of these various developments was, according to Latham, a 'noticeable degree of political disintegration' by the 1870s, as 'both wards and individuals appealed more and more to external powers against the traditional authorities'.⁷⁰ Although differing in detail, an even more intense disintegration of political order occurred at Bonny during the same period, as factional conflict after the death of Amanyanabo Opubo around 1830 began to undermine the legitimacy of the office in facilitating or impartially regulating external trade and credit. Ongoing political rivalry between canoe houses, notably those headed commercially by the slave-born and highly successful traders Oko Jumbo and Jaja finally culminated in civil war in 1869–73 and the removal of the groups allied to Jaja to Opobo, from where they competed against Bonny in the oil trade.⁷¹ In such circumstances, efforts by local British consuls and traders to reform credit relations and bypass coastal broking states are hardly surprising. The lack of success they experienced in such endeavours was also likely to act as a constraint on British credit inflows and thus on expansion of palm oil exports in the Bight of Biafra by the 1870s.

Events at Bonny and Old Calabar from the 1830s may be seen as examples of the 'crises at the periphery' that, some argue, prompted British territorial overrule in Africa and elsewhere in the late nineteenth century. Be this at it may, the pace at which disorder descended on political life at Bonny and Old Calabar from the 1830s is intriguing, since it occurred after a century of relatively harmonious Anglo-Biafran trade relations underpinned by institutional stability or adaptability. Explanations of the disintegration of order at Bonny and Old Calabar have largely centred on the locality and the personalities involved, sometimes reminding us that factional conflict pre-dated the 1830s and was inherent in the political structures of the communities.⁷² Yet another theme is to relate local crises in the Bight of Biafra to post-1850 developments in the organisation and performance of the palm oil trade. The former arguments, however, have yet to explain why local factionalism did not inhibit credit-based trade expansion for a century or so before the 1830s and why factionalism precipitated political disintegration only after the 1830s.⁷³ Similarly, arguments centring on post-1850 developments in the palm oil trade probably underestimate the economic impact and political implications locally of earlier British moves to terminate the export slave trade from the region. Estimates presented above suggest that the financial costs at Bonny and Old Calabar of Britain's actions in 1835–42 were far from negligible. But their political impact also deserves attention, not least because political conditions at Bonny and Old Calabar had been important in shaping credit protection and trade success at both ports before 1840.

Evaluating the political fallout of British anti-slave policy at Bonny and

Old Calabar requires one to recognise that slave-trading generated surpluses. Historically, the distribution of surpluses from such activity was highly uneven, being largely dictated by competition among rent-seeking local socio-political élites. It is recognised that competition for rents sometimes prompted political and military conflict between African societies. The possibility that competition for rents might promote internal discord and violence within African states has, however, tended to be much less emphasised. Such competition might become particularly destructive when, because, say, of some external intervention, a sharp fall in total earnings from exports occurred. This might provoke heightened tension and even conflict among politically powerful groups keen to retain or secure positions that were likely to protect or enhance their share of their incomes from remaining sources of exports. Moreover, where curtailment of export levels induced suspicion of the market, 'the inevitable temptation' might be 'to resort to greater and greater [political] intervention', thereby increasing the amount of economic activity devoted to rent-seeking rather than production itself.⁷⁴

Rent-seeking theory exposes plausible connections between British intervention to end the slave trade and the crisis of political authority and thus credit insecurity at Bonny and Old Calabar from the 1830s onwards. In particular, it correctly anticipates the intensity, and at times brutality, of competition that occurred among Bonny's canoe houses and Old Calabar's wards to gain control of, or share, key political offices, or failing that, to deny the benefits of tenure of such offices to their rivals. Either way, the outcome was a situation in which political conflict became interspersed with periods of political stalemate, when key offices actually remained vacant, thereby producing an enfeebling of local institutions that had served to protect credit and nurture trade in the past. The weakening of local credit protection regimes, in turn, further encouraged political disintegration as deteriorating credit security inhibited external investment in palm oil and prompted further British political intervention. At least some of the post-1850 difficulties surrounding development of the palm oil trade at Bonny and Old Calabar, therefore, had their roots in political problems generated by British termination of the export traffic in slaves at the two ports in 1835–42.⁷⁵

Conclusion

In 1846, 70 years after Adam Smith wrote about Afro-European relations, another Celt, the Presbyterian missionary Hope Masterton Waddell, visited Creek Town, Old Calabar, where he presented King Eyo Honesty with 'an elegantly bound folio Bible'. Honesty, Waddell reported, was grateful to receive the gift, but after conferring with his chiefs, indicated that some did not wish to 'encourage white people to live in the country, lest more come and take it altogether'. Seeking to reassure them, Waddell

noted that had England wanted ‘to take Calabar, it might have done so a hundred years ago, and would not have waited till missionaries come to them’. He insisted, moreover, that ‘we would not encourage any such scheme, nor would our countrymen, who had so long traded with them, and who had taken nothing, and wanted nothing but their oil, and that only by paying for it’. The fears of Honesty’s chiefs were, therefore, ‘groundless’, a claim that, Waddell reported, satisfied them all.⁷⁶

Waddell was probably over-optimistic in his assumption about Britain’s capacity to colonise eighteenth-century Old Calabar. Nevertheless, in his emphasis on exchange, he clearly echoed Smith’s views on the historical course of Anglo-African relations, at least until the late 1830s, while in denying Britain’s territorial ambitions in Africa he anticipated modern historians’ conclusions about the reluctance of the British in the late nineteenth century to colonise the Bight of Biafra. On this occasion, however, it was an Efik rather than a Celt who more accurately predicted what the ultimate outcome might be of British efforts, through missionary activity and the termination of slave exports, to redefine Anglo-African relations, or, as Hopkins has suggested, to impose the first development plan on Africa.⁷⁷ Certainly, the fears of Eyo Honesty’s chiefs in 1846 contrast sharply with those of Eyo Honesty’s own grandfather over 60 years earlier. Concerned about the lack of British ships visiting Old Calabar during the War of American Independence, in 1780 the elder Eyo Honesty co-signed with two other leading local traders a letter to Liverpool traders urging them to resume their trade for slaves with the port. To encourage their Liverpool counterparts, the three Efik traders reminded them that ‘we make Great Law’ to protect ‘whitemen’ from being hurt, a not unimportant issue following Liverpool’s traders’ involvement in the 1767 massacre at Old Calabar. Without British trade, they argued, ‘We Spoill Directly for we have nothing to Live but Ship [slaves?]’.⁷⁸ For the grandchild of Adam Smith’s Efik contemporary, of course, the situation could hardly have been more different: by then, it was not the absence but the growing intervention of the British in their lives that was seen to threaten their economic well-being and social order. Indicative of a profound ideological and economic transformation in Britain after the 1780s, the different concerns of the two leaders of Creek Town in 1780 and 1846 also revealed an acute understanding of the implications of that transformation for their own lives. This chapter has sought, among other things, to expose some of those implications. In particular, it has shown how, after a century of successful Anglo-African co-operation in promoting market-led growth and change in exports from the Bight of Biafra, British-led suppression of the region’s export slave trade undermined the politico-institutional foundations upon which the earlier economic partnership had been based. This in turn encouraged further British intervention while, paradoxically, constraining growth of capital inflows and palm oil exports. Almost 50 years were to elapse, of course, between British suppression of the slave trade

and assumption of overrule at Bonny and Old Calabar. But as Eyo Honesty and his chiefs understood in 1846, an emergent British cultural imperialism was to have profound implications for political order, trade performance, British intervention and ultimately political sovereignty in the region in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Notes

I am grateful to David Eltis for comments on an earlier version of this chapter. The usual disclaimer applies.

- 1 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 2 vols (1776) (ed. Edwin Cannan) (London, Methuen, 1961 edn), vol. II, p. 150.
- 2 See, for example, David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 6, where it is argued that the rise of the transatlantic traffic in enslaved Africans reflected African ability to resist European colonisation and the planting of sugar cultivation on the African mainland. It is also evident that far from being only victims of enslavement, some Africans profited from slave-trafficking with Europeans. The distribution of profits was shaped by political factors, among other things; see E.W. Evans and David Richardson, 'Hunting for Rents: the Economics of Slaving in Pre-Colonial Africa', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 48 (1995), pp. 665–86. We shall return to this issue below.
- 3 For a summary of this approach and its limitations, see P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688–1914* (London, Longman, 1993), pp. 8–11.
- 4 The main exception to this was Portuguese colonisation of Angola.
- 5 For the most recent assessment of the volume of slave shipments across the Atlantic, see David Eltis, 'The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment', *William and Mary Quarterly*, LVIII (2001), pp. 17–47.
- 6 This is not to imply that the total value of exports from those areas of western Africa that had supplied slaves to the Americas fell over the nineteenth century. On the contrary, the total value of commodity trade from western Africa after 1850 was well in excess of what values of slave exports had been before 1850. The suppression of slave exports meant, however, that the overall growth rate of exports from western Africa was slower than it might otherwise have been and tended to be lower than from other parts of the Atlantic world. For estimates of exports from western Africa between 1680 and 1870, see David Eltis, 'Trade between Western Africa and the Atlantic World before 1870: Estimates of Trends in Value, Composition and Direction', *Research in Economic History*, 12 (1989), pp. 197–239. On changes in Africa's share of exports and imports of Britain, France, Portugal and other European nations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Bouda Etemard's contribution to this volume, pp. 69–81.
- 7 The many studies of European trade with the Bight of Biafra include K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885* (Oxford, 1956); G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers* (London, 1963); E.J. Alagoa, *A History of the Niger Delta* (Ibadan, 1972); A.J.H. Latham, *Old Calabar 1600–1891: The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society* (Oxford, 1973); David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford, 1978); Susan M. Hargreaves, 'The Political Economy of Nineteenth Century Bonny: A Study of Power, Authority, Legitimacy and Ideology in a Delta Trading Community,

- 1790–1914’ (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1987); and Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1997).
- 8 Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, ‘Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History: The Institutional Foundations of the Old Calabar Slave Trade’, *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), p. 338; idem, ‘“This Horrid Hole”: Commerce, Credit and Royal authority at Bonny, 1690–1840’, *Journal of African History*, forthcoming.
 - 9 Lovejoy and Richardson, ‘Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History’, p. 337.
 - 10 For data on palm oil shipments from Bonny and Old Calabar before 1850, see Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, ch. 1.
 - 11 *Ibid.*, p. 131.
 - 12 Northrup, *Trade without Rulers*, chs 4–5.
 - 13 Dike (*Trade and Politics*) was the first to emphasise the importance of credit or ‘trust’ in trade development in the Delta. Others have followed suit, notably in discussing the nineteenth-century palm oil trade. For a more recent statement that extends Dike’s interpretation back into the eighteenth century slave-trade period, see Lovejoy and Richardson, ‘Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History’.
 - 14 Mark Granovetter, ‘Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 91 (1985); Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, 1995).
 - 15 For examples at Old Calabar, see Lovejoy and Richardson, ‘Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History’. The Liverpool captain, Hugh Crow, refers in his memoirs to the honesty of ‘the more respectable of the Bonnians, among whom I have on some voyages sold goods on credit to the extent of £600 or £800, for which, when I remind them of payment by merely giving them notice by signal, in the course of three or four days the whole of their debt would be punctually liquidated’ (*Memoirs of the Late Captain Hugh Crow of Liverpool* (London, 1830), p. 225).
 - 16 The clearest instance of the use of friendship to deceive trading partners was the so-called massacre of Old Calabar in 1767, when, during a dispute between two local townships that disrupted trade, several British captains offered to mediate between the two as a pretext to entrapping members of one of the towns involved. As one contemporary remarked, ‘the sincerity of the proposition of the captains to bring about a reconciliation’ between the parties was critical to the deception (Sheila Lambert, ed. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, 145 vols (Wilmington, D.E., 1975), vol. LXXII, p. 516, evidence of Thomas Hall).
 - 17 For fuller discussion of these issues, see Latham, *Old Calabar*; Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers*; and Hargreaves, ‘Political Economy of Bonny’.
 - 18 Latham, *Old Calabar*, p. 49.
 - 19 For a review of the rivalry between Obutong and Atakpa and other sources on the massacre, see Lovejoy and Richardson, ‘Trust, Pawnship and Atlantic History’.
 - 20 For the post-1767 decline of Obutong, see Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, ‘Anglo-Efik Relations and Protection against Illegal Enslavement at Old Calabar, 1740–1807’, in Sylviane Diouf (ed.) *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* (Athens, OH, 2003), pp. 101–21.
 - 21 See Latham, *Old Calabar*, pp. 43–8 for a discussion of office holders.
 - 22 Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African* (London, 1785, 2nd edn 1788), pp. 27–8.
 - 23 Toyin Falola and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds) *Pawnship in Africa: Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* (Boulder, CO, 1994).
 - 24 For a more detailed discussion of pawnship in the export slave trade at Old Calabar, see Lovejoy and Richardson, ‘Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History’.

- 25 Lambert (ed.) *Sessional Papers*, vol. LXXI, p. 17, evidence of James Fraser.
- 26 Hargreaves, 'Political Economy of Bonny', p. 131.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 148–9. The English Royal African Company was in correspondence with the 'Great King of Bandie' in 1702 (Public Record Office, T 70/51, f.150).
- 30 P.E.H. Hair, Adam Jones and Robin Law (eds), *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa 1678–1712*, 2 vols (London: Hakluyt Society, 1992), vol. II, p. 685.
- 31 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 688.
- 32 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 696.
- 33 Cf. Hargreaves, 'Political Economy of Bonny', pp. 129–30, who argues that, during the days of the slave trade, 'each Bonny village conducted trade separately' and that there was 'no central organisation as such which managed this trade'.
- 34 Lovejoy and Richardson, "‘Horrid Hole’".
- 35 Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, p. 14. These estimates are based on imports into Britain, which dominated palm oil exports from the Bight of Biafra before 1850. Following Lynn (p. 18), they also assume that about 80 per cent of the palm oil imports into Britain came from the Bight of Biafra. For data on exports from Old Calabar alone, see Latham, *Old Calabar*, p. 151.
- 36 Annual earnings from palm oil by brokers in the Bight of Biafra averaged about £30,000 in the late 1810s, £55–70,000 in the late 1820s, and £160–200,000 in the late 1830s (Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, 'The Initial "Crisis of Adaptation": the Impact of British Abolition on the Atlantic Slave Trade in West Africa, 1808–1820', in Robin Law (ed.) *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 48. By contrast, data on numbers of slaves exported and real coastal prices of slaves suggest that earnings from slaves exported from the Bight of Biafra were about £100,000 a year in the late 1810s and rose to almost £200,000 a year in the early 1830s before falling to about £150–160,000 a year in 1836–40 (*ibid.*, pp. 35, 49). These figures may be compared with Eltis' estimates, which suggest that slave and oil exports from the Bight were worth about £180,000 and £120,000 a year, respectively, in 1833–37 (David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford, 1987), p. 360).
- 37 Eltis, *Economic Growth*, pp. 62–4.
- 38 The major part of the Spanish and Brazilian slave trades after 1807 was underwritten by credit from British merchants (see David Eltis, 'The British Contribution to the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Slave Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 32 (1979), p. 220), but the concern here is with transactions at the African coast where the Spanish were presumably creditors to Africans.
- 39 A.J.H. Latham, 'A Trading Alliance: Sir John Tobin and Duke Ephraim', *History Today*, 24 (1974), pp. 862–7; Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, pp. 82–4.
- 40 This issue is more fully explored in Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, 'from Slaves to Palm Oil: Afro-European trade relations in the Bight of Biafra, 1767–1841' in Nigel Rigby (ed.) *Maritime Empires* (Manchester, forthcoming).
- 41 The French had taken some slaves from Bonny and Old Calabar in the late eighteenth century (Lovejoy and Richardson, 'Trust, Pawning, and Atlantic History', p. 338), but there was an hiatus in Afro-French trade in the region between 1793 and 1813. Portuguese and Spanish traders were conspicuous

- by their absence in the region before 1809. According to some as yet unpublished evidence, 25 Portuguese and two Spanish ships took about 10,000 slaves from the Bight of Biafra between 1809 and 1813. Shipments by all three non-British groups increased after 1813.
- 42 Serge Daget (ed.) *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises à la traite illégale (1814–1850)* (Nantes, 1988), pp. 129–30.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 392.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 424.
- 45 R.M. Jackson, *Journal of a Further Residence in the Bonny River* (Letchworth, 1934), pp. 73, 77.
- 46 Hargreaves, 'Political Economy of Bonny', p. 200.
- 47 Martin Lynn, 'Factionalism, Imperialism and the Making and Breaking of Bonny Kingship c. 1830–1885', *Revue Française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 82 (1995), p. 177.
- 48 The experience of the French shipmaster, Jean Jacques Guimbert, at Bonny in 1825 is instructive in this context. Guimbert assumed that, despite other ships being due to receive slaves from the king before him, he had an agreement with the king to be supplied with 230 slaves within 45 days. Should he fail to meet this deadline, the king was expected to pay a forfeit of a further 60 slaves. Seeking with the help of an interpreter and in front of other shipmasters to demand payment of the penalty after the deadline had expired, Guimbert was advised that other ships were still to be supplied before him. Guimbert eventually left Bonny some ten months after his arrival, having traded 255 slaves, or just 25 more than his original target, (Daget, ed., *Répertoire*, p. 392).
- 49 Latham, *Old Calabar*, pp. 48, 79.
- 50 Daget, (ed.) *Répertoire*, p. 380.
- 51 For the history of Ekpe, see Lovejoy and Richardson, 'Trust, Pawnship and Atlantic History', pp. 347–9 and the sources cited therein.
- 52 Monday Efiogh Noah, *Old Calabar: The City States and the Europeans 1800–1885* (Uyo, Nigeria, 1980), p. 30.
- 53 Latham, *Old Calabar*, p. 29.
- 54 Lovejoy and Richardson, 'Trust, Pawnship and Atlantic History', p. 349.
- 55 An English visitor, James Holman, reported in 1828 that Englishmen were sometimes admitted to Ekpe. He instanced one Liverpool ship captain who held the rank of 'Yampai, which is of considerable importance', enabling him 'to recover all debts due to him by the natives' (Donald C. Simmons (ed.) *Holman's Voyage to Old Calabar* [1828], Calabar, 1959), p. 12.
- 56 See, for example, National Maritime Museum Archives, JOD 69, Logbook of Ship *Magistrate*, 18 June 1841; Latham, *Old Calabar*, p. 80; Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers*, p. 109.
- 57 For the seizure in 1846 by British oil traders of one prominent Efik trader in order to force repayment of debt, see H.M. Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa: A Review of Missionary Work and Adventure 1829–1858* (1863; London, 1970 edn), p. 274. It is possible to interpret this event as a case of Ekpe being blown by the British against a defaulting trader. Interestingly, other traders secured the release of the offending trader by assuming surety for repayment of the debts in question. In 1872, the British consul in Old Calabar sought to outlaw seizure or *panyarring* of local traders by British captains, a measure that, according to Latham, prompted several British traders to join the Ekpe society during the following decade (Latham, *Old Calabar*, p. 80).
- 58 See above, note 36, for relevant calculations of export earnings. Eltis' figures for export earnings in 1833–37 from the Bight (Eltis, *Economic Growth*, p. 360) suggest that slaves remained more valuable than oil through to at least 1837, making the point made here even stronger.

- 59 G.I. Jones, 'Introduction', in Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years*, p. xxi. It is worth noting that British financial bribes to African traders proved largely ephemeral before 1848. Old Calabar and Bonny certainly found some other routes through which to export slaves for a few years after 1840, but the total level of their slave exports overseas at this time, though impossible to quantify, was equally certainly very much reduced (Eltis, *Economic Growth*, pp. 172–3).
- 60 According to Lynn (*Commerce and Economic Change*, pp. 19–20), palm oil exports from Old Calabar rose little, if at all, between 1830 and 1850, averaging around 4–5,000 tons a year, whereas exports from Bonny rose sharply in the same period and by 1850 were probably over 50 per cent greater than at Old Calabar. In 1850, Old Calabar still accounted for perhaps 20 per cent of British oil imports from west Africa, while Bonny probably accounted for at least a further 35 per cent. On the basis of British oil prices (Latham, *Old Calabar*, p. 70), in 1850 palm oil exports from Old Calabar and Bonny were perhaps worth as much as £150,000 and £240,000, respectively, in Britain. Assuming oil prices at the coast were about 40 per cent of those in Britain (Lovejoy and Richardson, 'Initial "Crisis of Adaptation"', p. 48), this suggests that local earnings from palm oil exports at Old Calabar in 1850 were about £60,000 and at Bonny were close to £100,000. These compare to possible earnings locally of some £150–200,000 a year from slave exports from the Bight of Biafra as a whole in the 1830s (see above, note 36). At least 60 per cent of these probably accrued to merchants at Bonny and a further 20 per cent to those at Old Calabar (Lovejoy and Richardson, "'Horrid Hole'"). Bearing in mind that both Bonny and Old Calabar were already substantial exporters of oil by the 1830s, total export earnings at both ports in 1850 were probably significantly below pre-1835 levels, with the shortfall being more severe at Old Calabar than at Bonny.
- 61 According to figures supplied by Latham (*Old Calabar*, p. 151), palm oil exports from Old Calabar rose from about 4,500 tons in 1855–64 to just over 7,000 tons a year in 1883–87. In the latter period, therefore, they were about 40 per cent higher than before 1850.
- 62 Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, pp. 152–4. For reasons alluded to later, we include palm oil exports from Opobo in those of Bonny in calculating Bonny's share of the Bight of Biafra's oil exports. Some figures suggest that in the late 1870s Bonny's annual exports of oil were up to 50 per cent higher than Opobo's but that by the early 1880s Opobo's exports matched those of Bonny at about 6,000 tons each. This combined total was probably lower than Bonny's exports 20 years earlier (Hargreaves, 'Political Economy of Bonny', pp. 307–9).
- 63 Figures supplied by Latham (*Old Calabar*, p. 152) reveal that palm kernel exports from Old Calabar were modest before the 1880s. Data on kernel exports from Bonny are sparse, but the rise of palm kernel exports was evidently much less marked in the Bight of Biafra than in other regions such as the Bight of Benin (Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, p. 125). On the general growth of commodity exports throughout western Africa after 1850, see Eltis, 'Trade between Western Africa and the Atlantic World'.
- 64 Figures on brokers' earnings from oil do not exist. However, the value of total African palm oil imports into Britain fell from about £1.7 million a year around 1855 to about £1.5 million a year around 1880 (Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, p. 114). As the Bight of Biafra's share of these imports fell by almost a third between these dates, the value of its exports of palm oil to Britain perhaps fell by 40 per cent or more in this period. This sharp fall in incomes from palm oil exports to Britain was unlikely to have been fully compensated by palm oil sales elsewhere or by increased palm-kernel exports.
- 65 In 1847, British attempts to use Elem Kalabari to bypass brokers at Bonny culminated in attacks on British seamen and three deaths (Lynn, 'Factionalism',

- p. 178). Twenty years later, a similar attempt to bypass Bonny and trade via Andony directly with the hinterland was stalled by an attack by 200 Africans. In the ensuing disruption to trade, it was reported that in 1867 'the level of Bonny trade was two-thirds short' (Hargreaves, 'Political Economy of Bonny', p. 282). Efforts by British traders to establish links with oil suppliers in the hinterland of Old Calabar also failed in the face of coastal resistance (Latham, *Old Calabar*, pp. 81–2).
- 66 Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, p. 164.
- 67 Latham, *Old Calabar*, p. 80. In 1861, one firm was said to be still owed 1,000 tons of oil (*ibid.*, p. 62).
- 68 *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 122.
- 69 Hargreaves, 'Political Economy of Bonny', p. 269.
- 70 Latham, *Old Calabar*, p. 123.
- 71 For a review of these events, see Hargreaves, 'Political Economy of Bonny'.
- 72 See, for example, Lynn, 'Factionalism'.
- 73 Such deficiencies leave arguments relating to crises at the periphery open to the charge that they focus more on 'the symptoms rather than the cause' of local political crises, or at least may mistake 'part of the cause for the totality' of causes of such crises (Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 10).
- 74 On the theoretical bases upon which this paragraph is based, see A.O. Krueger, 'The Political Economy of the Rent-Seeking Society', *American Economic Review*, 64 (1974), pp. 291–303 (quotation, p. 299). For an earlier application of the theory to slave trading in Africa, see Evans and Richardson, 'Hunting for Rents', pp. 665–86.
- 75 The analysis here is restricted to the impact of the ending of the slave trade on local politics and credit protection in the Bight of Biafra, the main concern of this chapter. A rent-seeking approach is also useful in exploring how, for example, William Dappa Pepple, who became Amanyanabo in 1837, exploited the office to promote his own position in the emerging palm oil trade, in the process damaging the status of the office in the longer term (Hargreaves, 'Political Economy of Bonny'). Rent-seeking theory is also useful in explaining efforts by coastal brokers to prevent British traders dealing directly with inland producers of oil in the late nineteenth century. Monopolising access to inland suppliers of oil was crucial to the incomes of coastal brokers but also led them into violent confrontation with the British, thereby damaging trade relations.
- 76 Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years*, pp. 252–3.
- 77 A.G. Hopkins, 'The "New International Economic Order" in the Nineteenth Century: Britain's First Development Plan for Africa', in Law (ed.) *Slave Trade to Legitimate Trade*, pp. 240–64.
- 78 Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, 'Letters of the Old Calabar Slave Trade 1760–1789', in Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould (eds) *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic* (Lexington, KY, 2001), pp. 109–10.

4 **Economic relations between Europe and Black Africa c. 1780–1938**

A quantitative analysis

Bouda Etemad

The main aim of this chapter is to determine the intensity of the economic relations between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa over a long period of time. To be more specific, the author wishes to assess the weight of the Black Continent in the external trade and foreign investments of colonial Europe from the eighteenth century to the inter-war period.

The statistical sources required by such an endeavour offer uneven information. In some European trade statistics, Africa is included as of the beginning of the eighteenth century. The data concerning Europe's foreign assets (that is, portfolio and direct long-term investments) are, however, only available as of the end of the nineteenth century. And, if available at all, the data only come in the shape of rough estimates. Hence, it can only be considered as orders of magnitude. To some extent, the same could be said of the trade statistics. Nonetheless, if one disregards their imperfections, these data do at least have the advantage of outlining the broad trends and serving as a basis for comparison.

Black Africa as an outlet and a source of supplies

Measured against world trade, Black Africa seems to be negligible during the last three centuries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Black Africa's exports (excluding the slave trade) accounted for between 0.5 and 1.0 per cent of the world total.¹ This share increased to 2.2 per cent in 1936–38; it then peaked at 2.5 per cent at the beginning of the 1970s, before falling back to 1.0 per cent again at the end of the twentieth century, that is to say, to a level similar to the one attained in the nineteenth century. By way of comparison, Latin America and Asia (excluding Japan) at present account for about 5.0 per cent and 40.0 per cent, respectively, of world exports. Today, Singapore and its 4.1 million inhabitants export twice as much as the whole of Black Africa with its population approximating 630 million.

Thus it comes as no surprise, when looking back in history, that Europe should have considered Africa a marginal trading partner. As indicated in Table 4.1,² Africa supplied a mere 0.5 per cent of the imports of Great

Table 4.1 Estimated share of Black Africa in the foreign trade of Great Britain, France and Portugal (not including re-exports) during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century (as a percentage of each country's total exports and imports)

	% of total exports	% of total exports of industrial products	% of total imports
<i>Great Britain</i>			
1700–01	0.2	...	0.4
1750–51	1.0	...	0.5
1784–86	3.6	4.1	0.7
1794–96	2.0	2.3	0.5
1834–36	2.1	2.2	2.9
1854–56	2.6	2.8	3.4
<i>France</i>			
1716	0.6	–	0.6
1787	4.2	7.6	0.7
1829–31	2.6	...	3.0
1859–61	1.8	...	2.4
<i>Portugal</i>			
1796	0.2	–	0.1
1819	0.7	–	0.0
around 1830	2.0	...	1.5
around 1860	3.0	...	2.5

Notes and sources

Here, in the case of Great Britain, the data cover the whole of Africa, including North Africa and South Africa.

Great Britain, 1700–01 and 1750–51 (England and Wales): after B.R. Mitchell, with the collaboration of P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 279–314. Other years: after R. Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1979), pp. 86–125.

France, 1716, 1787: after P. Léon, 'Structure du commerce extérieur et évolution industrielle de la France à la fin du XVIIIe siècle', in F. Braudel *et al.* (eds), *Conjoncture économique et structures sociales. Hommage à Ernest Labrousse* (Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1974), pp. 423–32. Other years: after *Tableau décennal du commerce de la France avec ses colonies et les puissances étrangères* (Paris, Administration des douanes), various issues.

Portugal, 1796 and 1819: after A. Balbi, *Essai statistique sur le Royaume du Portugal et d'Algarve* (Paris, Rey et Gravier, 1822), vol. I, pp. 430–45. Other years: after P. Lains, 'An Account of the Portuguese African Empire, 1885–1975', in *Revista de historia econômica*, 16, 1 (Winter 1998), p. 240; and *Estatísticas de comercio externo* (Lisbon, Instituto nacional de estatística 1968), vol. I, p. xxxiii.

Britain, France and Portugal in the eighteenth century.³ As an outlet, the Black Continent did slightly better, absorbing up to 2–4 per cent of Great Britain's and France's exports at the end of the eighteenth century.

Africa's contribution increased further as measured exclusively against exports of industrial products (see second column of Table 4.1). In this case, it exceeded 4 per cent in the 1780s with respect to Great Britain and 7 per cent with respect to France. Textile sales linked to the Atlantic slave trade offer the main explanation for these peaks.

From the 1750s to the 1780s, that is, during the crucial period of the Industrial Revolution, western Africa on average absorbed up to 30–40 per cent of exports of English cotton goods. This share declined subsequently and stagnated around 2 per cent until the middle of the nineteenth century.⁴ With respect to France, Africa absorbed 7.6 per cent of the exports in manufactured goods and up to 8.5 per cent in textile sales at the beginning of the 1780s. At that time, while ‘fabricated products’ accounted for 34.2 per cent of France’s total exports, these goods accounted for 60.5 per cent of exports to Africa as against approximately 30 per cent with respect to Europe and Asia, and 50 per cent with respect to America. It is interesting to note that during this short period the region of Senegal–Guinea was, of all the parts of the world France traded with, the one which, proportionally, bought the largest amount of France’s ‘fabricated products’ (mostly linen cloth, but also woollens, silk goods, iron and hardware).⁵

Focusing on the long term reveals a surprising aspect, which otherwise would surely have remained hidden: the importance of the African outlets for Great Britain and France in the 1780s will only be exceeded again in the inter-war period (Tables 4.3 and 4.4). With this difference: the African markets absorbed a fraction of the output of industrial branches (namely textiles and iron industry), which were young and dynamic industries at the end of the eighteenth century, but had become ageing branches 150 years later. Trade statistics may conceal structural changes, which alternatively cause foreign markets to either drive or slow down economic growth.

Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 show that throughout the nineteenth century, African outlets and sources of supplies were not of significance for Europe. The fluctuations in the British and French imports from Africa in the 1830s and 1850s (Table 4.1) can be explained primarily by the increasing sales of cane sugar by Mauritius and Réunion, on the one hand, and by the sales of palm oil products by west Africa, on the other hand.

At the very end of the nineteenth century, Britain began to integrate her west African colonies into an open, multinational settlement system, the centre of which was located in Great Britain. Benefiting from increasing surpluses arising from trade with certain of her colonies (mainly India and Australia, to a lesser extent west Africa), the metropolis managed to compensate for deficits in trade with continental Europe and the United States, from which Great Britain was increasingly purchasing manufactured goods. These industrialised partners, for their part, were increasingly purchasing raw materials (Indian cotton, Australian wool, Malaysian rubber, west African oil palm) directly from the empire, commodities for which they were showing a growing need and the output of which exceeded the metropolis’ capacity of absorption. Thus, on the eve of the First World War, the African markets contributed, albeit still timidly, to

Table 4.2 Black Africa in colonial Europe's foreign trade in 1879–81, 1911–13 and 1936–38 (as a percentage of the total value of exports and imports of Portugal, France, Great Britain, Germany and Belgium, value expressed in millions of current US dollars and three-year annual averages)

	1879–81	1911–13	1936–38
<i>Exports</i>			
Total share of the colonies	22.4	16.1	32.1
Settlement colonies	8.9	6.5	14.4
South Africa	1.0	0.8	2.3
Tropical colonies	13.4	9.6	17.7
Black Africa	0.5	1.3	4.0
North Africa	1.7	2.0	4.6
Asia	9.5	5.7	7.4
Exports to the colonies (in millions of dollars)	388.9	1,056.8	777.9
Total exports (in millions of dollars)	1,736.6	6,561.5	2,420.1
<i>Imports</i>			
Total share of the colonies	16.3	10.0	29.8
Settlement colonies	7.1	4.4	14.2
South Africa	0.9	0.3	0.8
Tropical colonies	9.2	5.6	15.6
Black Africa	0.5	0.8	4.7
North Africa	0.8	1.2	3.2
Asia	6.3	3.1	6.1
Imports from the colonies (in millions of dollars)	467.5	814.0	1,185.5
Total imports (in millions of dollars)	2,867.4	8,114.8	3,981.3

Notes and sources

Germany appears in this table only in 1911–13; and Belgium only in 1911–13 and 1936–38.

For conversion of exports and imports expressed in national currencies into US dollars, see the exchange rates given in note 2 of this chapter.

Great Britain, 1879–81, 1911–13 and 1936–38: after *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom* (London, Board of Trade), various issues.

France, 1879–81, 1911–13 and 1936–38: after *Tableau général du commerce extérieur* (the title varies slightly) (Paris, Direction générale des douanes), various issues.

Portugal, 1879–81: after *Statistical Abstract for the Principal and Other Countries in Each Year from 1872 to 1881/82*, 10 (London, 1883), p. 125. 1911–13: after *Estatística comercial. Comercio e navegação. Ano de 1913* (Lisbon, Direcção geral de estatística), pp. xviii–xix. 1936–38: after *Comercio externo. Ano de 1938* (Lisbon, Instituto nacional de estatística, 1939), p. xxi.

Germany, 1911–13: after *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* (Berlin, Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt), various issues.

Belgium, 1911–13 and 1936–38: after *Annuaire statistique de la Belgique et du Congo belge*,

the regularisation of trade between Great Britain and the rest of the world.⁶

It was mainly during the inter-war period that African colonies proved their 'usefulness' to the metropolitan countries. During that period, colonial Europe stepped up trade with her African colonies in order to secure stable markets in difficult times. Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 show clearly that, in the category of so-called tropical colonies, reliance on one's empires

Table 4.3 Estimated share of the colonies in the exports (not including re-exports) of Portugal, France, Great Britain, Germany and Belgium in 1879–81, 1911–13 and 1936–38 (as a percentage of the total value of each country's exports and three-year annual averages)

	<i>1879–81</i>	<i>1911–13</i>	<i>1936–38</i>
<i>Portugal</i>			
Total	3.2	14.1	11.6
Black Africa	3.1	13.9	11.5
<i>France</i>			
Total	6.2	14.0	29.0
Black Africa	0.5	1.6	4.6
North Africa	4.5	10.5	19.6
Asia	0.2	1.2	3.6
<i>Great Britain</i>			
Total	33.0	36.0	43.6
Settlement colonies	14.8	18.0	25.1
South Africa	3.0	4.4	8.3
Tropical colonies	18.2	18.0	18.5
Black Africa	0.5	1.9	4.4
Asia	15.5	15.0	11.7
<i>Germany</i>			
Total	–	0.6	–
Black Africa	–	0.5	–
<i>Belgium</i>			
Total	–	0.7	1.6

Notes and sources
See Table 4.2.

mainly affected African colonies. This period of reliance lasted only until the 1950s, when decolonisation and the economic integration of Europe had the effect of loosening substantially and in a lasting manner the commercial ties between the former metropolitan countries and the former colonies. Over a period of 60 years – from 1936/38 to the end of the 1990s – the share of the former European colonial powers in African exports fell from 55 per cent to less than 10 per cent.⁷

Black Africa as a capital market

On the eve of the First World War, European investment in sub-Saharan Africa amounted to approximately US\$1.3 billion, or nearly 4 per cent of the foreign assets held worldwide by the Old Continent. Around 1938, this share was still the same. Of all the destinations for European capital during this period, Asia experienced the strongest thrust (Table 4.5). This impression of the relative stagnation of Africa is confirmed by the geographical structure of the capital invested by the colonial powers in their empires in the inter-war period (Table 4.6).

Table 4.4 Estimated share of the colonies in the imports (not including the goods destined for re-exports) of Portugal, France, Great Britain, Germany and Belgium in 1879–81, 1911–13 and 1936–38 (as a percentage of the total value of each country's imports and three-year annual averages)

	<i>1879–81</i>	<i>1911–13</i>	<i>1936–38</i>
<i>Portugal</i>			
Total	2.0	3.2	10.5
Black Africa	1.9	3.1	10.4
<i>France</i>			
Total	4.8	10.7	26.4
Black Africa	0.8	1.8	6.5
North Africa	2.5	6.0	13.8
Asia	0.2	1.5	4.3
<i>Great Britain</i>			
Total	22.2	20.4	35.6
Settlement colonies	10.7	11.8	22.4
South Africa	1.3	0.9	1.3
Tropical colonies	11.5	8.6	13.2
Black Africa	0.3	0.5	3.3
Asia	9.4	7.5	8.2
<i>Germany</i>			
Total	–	0.5	–
Black Africa	–	0.4	–
<i>Belgium</i>			
	–	1.2	8.1

Notes and sources
See Table 4.2.

All this fits in with the image of an under-‘exploited’ colonial Africa, to employ a nineteenth-century term. Yet, one merely has to measure metropolitan investments against the populations of the colonies to shed a different light on the African possessions. Per capita, colonial Black Africa (with a population of 125.3 million in 1938) received more metropolitan capital than colonial Asia (with a population of 551.8 million). According to this yardstick, sub-Saharan Africa no longer ranks below, but above the average of tropical colonies, but still far, very far, below the dominions (in particular Canada, Australia, New Zealand), the prototypes of European settlement colonies (Table 4.7).

The tables listing Belgium and Portugal indicate that the former's ties with its colonies (mainly the Congo, and secondarily Rwanda–Burundi) were closer in terms of capital flows than in terms of commodity trade, while for the latter (with colonies such as Angola, Mozambique and Guinea–Bissau), the opposite was apparently the case (see Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.7). It is interesting to compare these two small colonial powers – small only in terms of size and population – because it introduces the criterion of level of economic development into our analysis.

Table 4.5 Estimations of the geographical structure of Europe's foreign investments around 1913 and 1938 (as a percentage of the total and expressed in millions of US current dollars)

	1913					1938				
	UK	France	Germany	Total	UK	France	Germany	Belgium	Total	
Europe	5.3	51.9	44.0	23.8	7.6	27.3	35.7	24.0	12.4	
North America	35.3	5.5	19.8	25.0	23.8	11.7	14.3	12.0	22.3	
Latin America	18.5	17.7	15.5	17.8	21.4	10.4	21.4	28.0	17.0	
Oceania	11.0	1.1	-	6.6	14.6	9.4	
Japan	2.5	2.2	-	2.0	1.1	-	-	-	0.7	
Asia without Japan	15.3	11.6	12.1	13.8	21.8	23.4	21.4	8.0	23.0	
Black Africa	3.5	1.1	8.6	3.7	3.9	6.5	-	28.0	4.2	
North Africa	1.0	7.7	-	2.6	0.9	19.5	-	-	2.7	
South Africa	7.8	1.1	-	4.7	4.4	1.3	...	-	3.0	
Others	-	-	-	-	0.5	-	6.9	-	5.3	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Total in 10 ⁶ \$	20,000.0	9,050.0	5,800.0	34,850.0	22,900.0	3,850.0	700.0	1,250.0	35,500.0	

Notes and sources

Around 1913, the UK, France and Germany accounted for about 85 per cent of all European investments abroad.

In 1938, Belgium, including Luxembourg.

The total for 1938 includes, besides the four countries mentioned, the Netherlands (4.8 billion dollars), Switzerland (1.6 billion) and Sweden (0.4 billion). With this amount of 35.5 billion dollars, these seven countries accounted for about 90 per cent of Europe's total investments abroad.

The weight of the Dutch investments in Indonesia explains the high average of Asia (without Japan) in 1938.

The data contained in this table were calculated after C. Lewis, *Debtor and Creditor Countries: 1938, 1944* (Washington, DC, Brookings Institute, 1945), pp. 292-7; and W. Woodruff, *Impact of Western Man: A Study of Europe's Role in the World Economy 1750-1960* (New York, St Martin's Press, 1967), pp. 154-7.

Table 4.6 Estimations of the regional distribution of investments of the United Kingdom and France in their respective empires around 1913 and 1938 (as a percentage of the total and expressed in millions of current US dollars)

	1913		1938	
	UK		UK	
	France	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	France
North America	31.3	-	-	24.0
Oceania	22.3	-	-	29.8
South Africa	17.3	-	-	8.9
Asia	22.3	40.0	16.3	30.7
Black Africa	6.7	20.0	18.8	6.7
North Africa	-	40.0	61.3	-
Others	0.2	-	3.6	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total in 10 ⁶ \$	8,950.0	500.0	800.0	1,100.0
				2,100.0

Notes and sources

For the UK and Alternative 1 for France, the figures are based on Lewis, *Debtor and Creditor Countries*, pp. 292-7; and Woodruff, *Impact of Western Man*, pp. 154-7. Alternative 2 for France, taken from J. Marseille, 'La politique métropolitaine d'investissements coloniaux dans l'entre-deux-guerres', in M. Lévy-Leboyer (ed.) *La position internationale de la France. Aspects économiques et financiers. XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris, Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1977), pp. 387-97.

The heading 'Others' includes Réunion, Martinique, Guadeloupe, New Caledonia and the French possessions in India.

Table 4.7 Metropolitan investments in the European colonies around 1913 and 1938 per capita (in current US dollars)

	<i>Dominions</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Black Africa</i>	<i>North Africa</i>	<i>Averages without the dominions</i>
<i>Around 1913</i>					
UK	319.4	6.2	17.2	–	7.3
France					
Alternative 1	–	11.5	7.0	17.5	11.6
Alternative 2	–	7.5	9.2	43.0	17.4
Germany	–	–	34.5	–	34.5
Belgium	–	–	16.4	–	16.4
Averages					
Alternative 1	–	6.5	18.0	17.5	8.7
Alternative 2	–	6.3	18.4	43.0	9.3
<i>Around 1938</i>					
UK	237.0	8.6	16.0	–	9.3
France					
Alternative 1	–	16.8	9.9	26.9	16.7
Alternative 2	–	16.0	17.8	73.7	31.3
Belgium	–	–	36.4	–	36.4
Portugal					
Alternative 1	–	–	10.9	–	10.9
Alternative 2	–	–	17.6	–	17.6
Averages					
Alternative 1	–	9.0	16.9	26.9	11.0
Alternative 2	–	9.0	19.7	73.7	12.9

Notes and sources

For the UK, for Alternative 1 for France, Germany, Belgium, for Variation 1 for Portugal and Alternative 1 for the averages, the figures are based on Lewis, *Debtor and Creditor Countries*, pp. 292–7; and Woodruff, *Impact of Western Man*, pp. 154–7.

For Alternative 2 for France, the figures are based on Marseille, ‘La politique métropolitaine’, pp. 387–97.

For Alternative 2 for Portugal, the figures are based on H. Frankel, *Capital Investment in Africa: Its Course and Effects* (New York, Howard Fertig, 1938), pp. 158–61.

For Alternative 2 for the averages in 1938, the figures are based on the quoted studies of Lewis and Woodruff; and, for France, on Marseille, ‘La politique métropolitaine’, pp. 387–97; and, for Portugal, on Frankel, *Capital Investment in Africa*, pp. 158–61.

To understand fully how the Congo ‘served’ the Belgian economy, one has to study the origins of the mother country’s industrialisation.⁸ Belgium’s industrialisation came early and was swift. It successfully combined the technology of the English Industrial Revolution with abundant and cheap local labour. On the eve of the First World War, Belgium was, after Great Britain, the most industrialised country in Europe, with a level of industrialisation which was, at the time, six times as high as Portugal’s.

The industrialisation of Belgium relied on a limited number of large,

capital-intensive industries (for example, mining, metallurgy) which specialised in the export of semi-finished goods. These large manufacturing enterprises were controlled mainly by financial holdings, in the hands of the French-speaking, Catholic bourgeoisie.

During the last third of the nineteenth century, both under external pressure (slowing down of economic growth in Europe, compounded by a rise in protectionism and international competition) and internal pressure (workers' demands for better working and living conditions), the large Belgian financial groups turned to non-European markets to seek a more favourable environment. It is in the context of this quest for new investment fields that one has to see the colonisation of the Congo after 1887, the origins of which had nothing to do with economics, but much with the initiative of King Léopold II, mindful of his country's prestige and grandeur.

It took the Belgian financial groups (*Société générale*, *Banque de Bruxelles*, *Empain Group* and *Cominière*) about 20 years to decide to set up business in the Congo, once the copper mines were discovered in Katanga. From then on, they moved swiftly to account for nearly 75 per cent of total capital invested in the colony. In comparison with their activities in the mother country, controlling the Congo's mines, transportation and plantations earned the Belgian financial groups high revenues until the 1950s. As early as 1926, King Albert of Belgium proclaimed with satisfaction that the 'Congo and its population were highly productive and earned the mother country a lot of money.'

One of the particular features of the Belgian colonial system in the Congo was its development while remaining closed in on itself. The Belgian economic, social and political circles, opposed to the large financial groups' control of the Congo, were unable to loosen their grip on it. While remaining a haven sheltered from the actively contesting forces in the mother country, and hence continuing to be a place where capital could accumulate unhindered by institutional constraints, the Congo reinforced the social and political status of the financial groups in Belgium by providing them with a secure and high return on their colonial investment. This is how the Congo proved its 'usefulness' between the 1920s and the 1950s.

The case of Portugal was completely different.⁹ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the country became a satellite of England. England not only turned Portugal into her supplier of wine and farm produce, she also appropriated part of Portugal's colonial profits by controlling Portugal's foreign trade. This dependency became even more pronounced in the nineteenth century, a period marked by the loss of Brazil (1822) and the free-trade policy imposed by England, which hampered the industrialisation of Portugal, incapable of withstanding competition from imported manufactured goods.

It took Portugal until the serious crisis of 1890–92 to opt for a very protectionist system. The African possessions were at the heart of the meas-

ures adopted to overcome the crisis. Angola and Mozambique, from then on protected markets, were supposed to be able to absorb Portuguese manufactured goods (textiles, in particular), goods protected by high customs tariffs. Moreover, the trading by the metropolis of a growing proportion of colonial commodities was supposed to remove the chronic deficit from the Portuguese balance of trade.

Portuguese merchants and industrialists quickly realised that in order to expand the colonies' capacity of absorption and production, they had to be 'developed'. Given Portugal's low level of economic development, there was, however, little capital in the mother country and less to be invested in the colonies. Therefore, Lisbon turned towards foreign financial groups both for the development of the transport system and for the exploitation of Angola's and Mozambique's agricultural and mining wealth. It is interesting to note that around 1938 the share of Great Britain, France and Belgium in the total capital invested in their African colonies was about 85–100 per cent, whereas Portugal's share in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe was less than 50 per cent.

As long as the tree of 'the imperialism of the poor' is showered with the privilege of sovereignty, it can bear fruit. Metropolitan bourgeoisie succeeded to some extent in bending the financial policies of the British, Belgian and French investors to their own purpose. Thus, the 'development' of the Portuguese colonies in Africa by means of foreign capital prevented industries liable of competing with the metropolitan manufacturing activities from establishing themselves. Furthermore, non-Portuguese investment focused on the production of raw materials (cotton, for example), indispensable for the supply of Portuguese industries (such as textiles).

Conclusion

The first conclusion to be drawn from this exercise in compilation is also the most obvious one: given the minor importance of sub-Saharan Africa in Europe's external trade and foreign investment, her 'usefulness' could only have been marginal. Second conclusion: only for some special branches of the metropolitan economies, and only during certain periods, when for example, the development gap between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe was small (as was the case in the eighteenth century) or on the contrary became larger (as was the case after the middle of the nineteenth century), did the Black Continent fulfil the shifting hopes placed in it. Third conclusion: inasmuch as they performed the function attributed to them, African markets hardly counted prior to colonisation, though they did so more in the last decades of the white man's domination. The final conclusion, which adds a shade of meaning to the previous one, is that African markets either drove or slowed down Europe's economic growth, according to whether they were the outlets for dynamic or ageing industries.

Notes

- 1 From P. Bairoch and B. Etemad, *Structure par produits des exportations du tiers-monde 1830–1937* (Geneva, Droz, 1985), pp. 20–1.
- 2 General notes regarding the tables. As percentages are rounded off, the totals and subtotals are not always equal to the exact sum of their components.

Key to symbols:

- strictly zero or negligible
- ... not available
- 0.0 smaller than half of the used unit

Dominions:

Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Only these four colonies are defined as settlement colonies. Algeria counts as a tropical colony.

Applied exchange rates:

One US dollar equals:

- 0.2055 pounds sterling in 1816–1914; 0.3397 in 1936; 0.3425 in 1937; 0.3465 in 1938.
- 5.183 French francs in 1803–1914; 27.62 in 1936; 41.84 in 1937; 58.82 in 1938.
- 1.105 Portuguese milreis in 1829–31; 0.925 in 1854–1913; 37.43 escudos in 1936; 37.79 in 1937; 38.24 in 1938.
- 4.198 Reichsmarks in 1871–1913.
- 5.183 Belgian francs in 1911–13; 49.95 in 1936; 50.15 in 1937; 50.10 in 1938.

The US dollar was devalued by 40.94 per cent on 30 January 1934. The ‘pre-devaluation dollar’ was used for 1936–38. To convert the ‘pre-devaluation dollars’ into ‘new dollars’, the figures must be multiplied by a coefficient of 1.693.

- 3 At the end of the nineteenth century, these three countries ‘controlled’ 80 per cent of colonial Black Africa.
- 4 On this subject, see R. Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1979), pp. 86–125; and J.E. Inikori ‘Slavery and the Revolution in Cotton Textile Production in England’, in J.E. Inikori and S.L. Engerman (eds) *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas and Europe* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 344–79. It should be noted that as the share of cotton goods increased in the total value of English exports, the proportion absorbed by west Africa declined.
- 5 P. Léon ‘Structure du commerce extérieur et évolution industrielle de la France à la fin de XVIIIe siècle’, in F. Braudel *et al.* (eds) *Conjoncture économique, structures sociales: Hommage à Ernest Labrousse* (Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1974), pp. 407–32.
- 6 S.B. Saul, *Studies in British Overseas Trade 1870–1914* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1960), in particular pp. 43–64.
- 7 B. Etemad, ‘La structure géographique du commerce extérieur de l’Afrique subsaharienne au XXe siècle’, in H. Bonin and M. Cahen (eds) *Négoce blanc en Afrique noire: L’évolution du commerce à longue distance en Afrique noire, du 18ième au 20ième siècle* (Paris, Société Française d’Histoire d’Outre-Mer, 2001), pp. 77–85.
- 8 The only author to have treated the subject from this point of view, is J.-P. Peemans, ‘Imperial Hangovers: Belgium. The Economics of Decolonization’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15 (1980), pp. 257–86. See also by the same author: ‘Le modèle spécifique de développement hérité du système colonial

belge', in F. Bézy, J.-P. Peemans and J.-M. Wautelet, *Accumulation et sous-développement au Zaïre, 1960-1980* (Louvain-la-Neuve, Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 1981), pp. 9-47.

- 9 Some have been discussed by W.G. Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825-1975: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1985).

Part II

Southern Europe and Germany

About the ‘imperialism of the poor’ and
the desire for power

5 An imperialism with no economic basis

The case of Italy, 1869–1939

Romain H. Rainero

Italy and European imperialism

Italian historians have always posed the question of the real origin of imperialism in Italy, a country without financial surplus, without a surplus of manufactured goods and, above all, far from having solved the problems of its backward regions, the *Mezzogiorno*, at home. The answers have been confused and contradictory; all too often, the deep causes of this imperialism have been seen as the absolute need for a vigorous, young state to affirm itself in the world, without having to take into account conditions which other forms of imperialism enjoyed. All the difficulties of accepting this imperialism have been glossed over to enhance the grandeur of a modern, nationalist, Fascist Italy which had nothing to reproach itself with regarding the continuity of the grandeur of the classical *Imperium* of Rome. The ideal continuity between the past and present was seen to construct the future of a 'Great Nation'. In the post-war era, other historians underlined the validity of a 'Marxist' analysis of the Italian case, emphasising the economic advantages which this imperialism had brought not only to the Italian state as such, but to certain groups of Italian industrialists, such as ship-owners, arms manufacturers and industrialists (Fiat, Pirelli, Montecatini and so forth), or to other social classes such as the higher civil service and military class. It is now time to put some order into the analyses of this imperialism which has aspects which are very different from other forms of imperialism.

Generally speaking, it is easy to argue that Italian imperialism was far from being the product of economic expansion into a metropolis, and all Italian colonial initiatives were undertaken without the presence of any element deemed essential to provoke them, considering the financial and economic state of the nation. Almost always, in the Italian case, we must refer to other reasons. These range from vague aspirations to participate in a lucrative trade in the colonial world, to the hope of finding in Africa the solution to multiple domestic problems: the demographic explosion, and hence over-population, and the absence of any serious prospect of economic future development into a metropolis. It is clear



Plate 2 Cotton harvest in Somalia, 1930. A rose-coloured vision of Italian colonisation (source; with the authorization of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Société de Géographie de Paris).

that these elements, while very much relevant, were only accessories or pretexts as far as the colonial policies of the Rome government were concerned. The real motive for this often blustering imperialism was the search for a form of domestic prestige which this policy aroused in eyes of a public whose attention was engaged by information on the subject and hence dominated by one obsession, that of the building of a young Italy with a national ambition worthy of memories of the ancient Roman Empire. And this despite the fact that in the general history of European colonial penetration in Africa, the part played by Italy appeared modest and tardy. The fact that these imperialist aspirations may have clearly merged with the interests of certain economic activities of some industrialists, seems to us no more than an accessory, useful for its beneficiaries, but entirely without consequence or financial gain for the Italian state.

We must, moreover, underline that this colonial presence and this imperialism concern only four colonial regions, all of which are situated outside Black Africa. But the interest of this analysis remains as part of the European dimensions of the history of European imperialist expansion. On this subject we must make some observations on imperialism in non-Black Africa, which may be of some interest for the general analysis in the relationship between imperialism and its economic bases. The geographical areas in which Italian imperialism took place are in east Africa,

in the Bay of Assab where Italy arrived in 1869, and which was to be the departure point for the colonisation of Eritrea. It was followed by that of Benedir, which was later to become Italian Somalia, and lastly Ethiopia, where Italian domination was to arrive very late and be very short-lived, with a native population which was Amharic, with some Arab and Black elements. The last stage of Italian imperialism took place in North Africa, in Libya, where the native Arab and Berber population was dominated by Italy. There were three waves of colonisation, none of which had any economic basis. Their goal was to seek prestige and in some cases there was no financial gain, either in the conquest of a territory, in its exploitation within the general frame of a 'useful' emigration, or in any utility of those territories whose conquest was to cost the Italian treasury very dear and would yield absolutely nothing.

All these features were to give Italian expansion in the colonial world a specific aspect which was like no other imperialism, but merely a costly, useless show. An important Italian historian, Ernesto Ragionieri, clearly described this character when he stated, 'weak imperialism in reality almost always means ridiculous imperialism, but weak imperialism does not necessarily mean less dangerous imperialism'.¹ The accelerated concentration of capital, the improvised cartels and all the power phenomena of state interventions in economic processes in the hope of making them correspond to and harmonious with the need and goals of a policy of expansion and aggression brought about profound crises in the precarious balance of Italian society, with ruptures and dramas which have left a negative impact on national life. Italy's historical situation was the reason for the last start of its colonial policy and even if the first decision for colonial settlement goes back to the inauguration of the Suez Canal, in 1869, the realities of an Italy united, but prey to almost insoluble problems in its economic and social life, were to be the very cause of the episodic aspect of all its colonial activity.

Italian emigration and the illusion of a necessary imperialism

The great problem which Italy had to face after its unification, which was not the 1861 declaration but the conquest of the capital, Rome, on 20 September 1870, lies in the economic, political and social bases of the new state, which were all fragile and lacking in cohesion. On the political level, there was the censorial, authoritarian structure of a government with a Parliament whose Senate was nominated by the King, while the lower Chamber was the result of electoral laws which only gave 605,044 Italians the right to vote out of a population of 26,801,154. And even among the Italians with a right to vote, only 369,627 took part in the elections (1879). This says more than any analysis about the 'cliques' which dominated government decisions and which gave them a specific, and far from

popular, significance. Popular discussions, ideologies pronounced and decisions made were the result of this situation which clearly favoured the wealthy, neglecting the poor and unemployed masses to whom the prosperous minority could present their decisions as being the best for their future without fear of contradiction. In the presence of this situation it is clear that all the decisions regarding imperialist policy were only the outcome 'of a few ship-owners, a few civil servants of the Foreign Office in Rome and a few consuls abroad who expounded the ideal of expansion'.² Appeals to public opinion were meaningless since they were directed to the minority sectors of the electors and those eligible to vote, not to the country as a whole.

On the social level, it was the poverty of the majority of the country which generally characterised an Italy which could certainly not afford to be counted among the 'Great Nations'. The famous description of an Italy which saw herself as the 'smallest of the Great Nations and the largest of the Small Nations' has no real meaning, but is part of the propaganda of governments. The problem of the survival of a population in constant demographic expansion became the great issue, not of governments which appeared unable to take into account the gloomy conclusions reached by the Agrarian Enquiry undertaken by Senator Stefano Jacini, but of the people and the lower classes in the southern regions (Sicily and Calabria) as well as in the pre-alpine regions of the north (Piedmont, Lombardy, Friuli and Veneto). With no future and insufficient means for survival, the population took flight, in a wide-scale emigration in search of any possible means of survival. For some politicians the phenomenon of Italian emigration led to the illusion of a necessary imperialism and colonial conquest, considered as the most effective means to deal with this biblical exodus. Among the people, there was no illusion of this kind: flight abroad was the only real solution, and people were departing without taking any notice of the endless rhetoric of the men in power who took no decisions on emigration. The historical Right did not recognise the problem: on coming to power in 1876, the traditional Left did not solve the problem either, but transformed it into a simple question of policing. In the political debates at the turn of the century we may note that some supported the departure of single people in accordance with the laws, others indulged in sterile debates on whether emigration should be combated as a loss of manpower for the country or whether it was better to encourage it as a vehicle of future wealth. This debate was the basis for the evocation of a colonial alternative as an outlet for this national evil. The imperialist option appeared to some observers, such as Senator Leopoldo Franchetti, as the only route to follow. The issue of emigration went hand-in-hand with that of imperialism: to avoid the drain of human resources which emigration was causing the nation, it was definitely necessary to have colonies which would make it possible to keep workers and soldiers. The social issue thus seemed inevitably associated with the colonial problem. It was a veritable

windfall for some, since the proportions of this emigration, which was spreading like wildfire, demanded colonial risks. A few figures suffice to provide some definite reference points on this emigration.³ During the period 1876–1915, Italian emigrants in the world numbered 14,027,100. Their destinations were mostly Europe (44 per cent) and the Americas (30.5 per cent in the North and 23.5 per cent in the South), with a scattering elsewhere. Regarding the demographic outcome of the Italian colonies which were the key element of pro-imperialistic propaganda, the data we have are extremely significant.

Despite the dimensions of emigration, the Italian colonial initiatives which at first appeared somewhat timid and even useless for the ends of emigration, continued to be so in other periods. At Assab and Massawa, which had been baptised ‘Italian possessions and protectorates on the Red Sea’, the tropical climate and the absence of any trading future had not encouraged emigration. In 1882, 13 years after the first occupation there was a total population of 177 inhabitants, with only seven Italians present (five men and two women), figures which certainly did not fulfil the hopes of a rapid, numerous colonisation. We may note that during that same year, 1882, some hundreds of thousands of Italians emigrated. This lack of social utility of the colony naturally reinforced anti-colonialist opposition, but government policies concerning colonial ‘prestige’ did not change in any way.⁴

On the territorial level, Italian policies attempted to spread towards the high plateaux of Abyssinia which were fertile and had a favourable climate. But there, the political and military obstacles clashed with the ambitions of Rome. The defeat of Adua (1896) was clearly the shock which complicated the emigration issue on colonial horizons: the exodus shifted elsewhere. But the illusions survived and it was again on ‘emigration–colonialism–imperialism’ that subsequent governments focused their attention. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Antonino Di San Giuliano was among those who still cultivated colonial illusions, recalling that it was urgent to find a solution. ‘This painful, humiliating need [for emigration] obliges us to swiftly envisage, with seriousness and a clear awareness of our goals, the whole of the colonial question and this urgency is more acute in Italy in that it reflects the importance which emigration to America is assuming in our country.’⁵

Having long deluded himself, according to the climate of the times, with complacent, fantastic calculations on the ‘regular gold mine’ which emigration would bring to the domestic economy and on the ‘safety valve’ which it represented for social and demographic problems, San Giuliano saw in this clearly limited, superficial judgement a great danger for Italy. ‘What are the effects of this flight for Italy?’, he wrote:

One was harmful while the other was beneficial: in lessening the impoverishment of the working classes and the perils of disorder and

internal difficulties it anaesthetised public opinion and postponed the necessity to attack the problem of both emigration and colonisation. What do our politicians care if all these strong workers, essential in constituting a powerful driving force to make Italy a magnificent, great country, are numerous outside Italy; what do our politicians care if this safety valve dispenses higher bids and difficulties, so long as it continues to carry out its role?

For him this problem was of the greatest importance and it was essential to apply remedies before others thought of it, with their 'codification impervious to any whisper, to any appeal, of national feeling'. The reason for this colonisation was, for him, ineluctable; none of the arguments put forward by his adversaries could stop him. 'The need for colonial possessions is unavoidable, even for the most reluctant.' But colonisation at home (the demands of the opposition and in particular of the socialists were for this policy) had to precede colonisation abroad. He went on to add, 'But, this cannot suffice: we may put off its accomplishment but not the need . . . The reason for it is very clear. Italy has a density of population far higher than she can afford; this is why Italians are driven to emigrate, to seek elsewhere what they lack at home.'

For Italy, emigration had been an exodus, for the most part useless, of work and human capital, in that a great number of emigrants were absorbed by the other culture or, at least, deprived of their nationality, to the point of losing all connection with their mother country. Faced with the reality of this fact, which anti-colonialists did not taken into account, San Giuliano countered that the colonisation of countries such as Africa could offer the most in terms of wealth and suitability for development at that moment.

Our colonial policy must be democratic or must not be; in other words, it must bring our emigrants land and work while preserving a homeland for them . . . Colonial policy must not be made to further enrich capitalists, but with care for the immediate interests of Italian landowners, which in the long run will translate into a general interest for the whole nation.

This was, in short, his thinking on colonialism, whether against extreme colonialists, fired by military imperialism or against those parties active in the opposition, indulging in humanism and pacifism. The failures in Eritrea and elsewhere seemed, naturally, to weigh in his opinion, but not to the point of making him abandon the idea of a demographic colonisation designed to resolve, for Italy and Italy alone, the lacerating problem of migration.

Colonial policy had not had the foreseen results, due to the Italian lack of preparation, but it was found suited to meet fundamental, vital needs:

I am convinced that an emigration policy can only go hand-in-hand with the foreign policy to which it is closely linked; if it slows down, it harms the workers because it increases the supply of labour and work and contributes to lowering wages; if we liberalise access to countries with a different language and nationality and with an advanced culture, this remains, for the most part, as far as Italy is concerned, and in the short and long term, an asset, for the future of our race, of our language, of our position in the world . . . Hence the need to have possessions where our emigrants may keep their nationality and their language, and even absorb elements, instead of being absorbed.

In this sense, this theory coincided with the burgeoning ideas of Italian nationalism and its warmest advocate, Enrico Corradini, anticipating the ideas and positions of the Fascist regime, did not hesitate to declare: 'When things are this way it is necessary to win colonies, to emigrate or become Malthusian. But becoming Malthusian is cowardly, emigrating is servile and only the conquest of colonies by work is worthy of a free, noble people.'

This rapid incursion into the political and parliamentary domain was necessary to show to what extent the men in power were removed from the realities of migration, and how all their thinking was dominated by 'high politics', since, for emigrants, the problem was much more fundamental, more direct and immediate in that it was linked to the question of work and survival.⁶

The tribulations of the Benadir Company (1895–1905)

It is important to underline a forgotten aspect of this period: although the colonial issue was controversial, the financial aspects of a certain industrial wealth were in no way apparent. Italy remained backward in terms of finance and industries, in a situation where money did not circulate, where financing was very profitable without the hazards of colonial initiatives and, lastly, where Italian manufacture succeeded in covering only a modest part of the needs of the domestic market. All these conditions together opposed a formal and historical denial to the theses of Marxist origin on the imperialist issue and on its 'inevitable' birth. Italy was to have a completely original form of imperialism, an imperialism of the poor, of the wretched as Giuseppe Maione has described it, *un imperialismo straccione* (a ragamuffin imperialism).⁷

Within this framework, we still have some specific aspects to examine before drawing any conclusions on the subject. First, concerning the finance behind imperialist policy, we must recall the case of the 'Benadir colony'. This was an exceptional episode in which, far from being the product of financial activity, the colony was a pretext for certain entrepreneurs to get rich thanks to the funding of the Italian state, without,

however, committing itself to a policy of colonial investment. Benadir, on the former Italian Somalia, was the official object of Italy's colonial activities, but on this subject, and for the first time in the history of Italian colonial initiatives, the state agreed to undertake a relationship regarding Somalia of the classical charter company type based on a partnership of businessmen and Milanese banks, which in 1895 founded a specific enterprise, the 'anonymous Italian trading company of Benadir'. Let us examine the substance and nature of the members and their goals.

We must first say that the deal was concentrated in the hands of 'new' men from the industrial city of Milan. On the historiography level, the 'private' aspects of the 'Benadir affair' have been ignored by Italian historians, unless we take into consideration those pro-colonialism historians who, after Botarelli, praised 'the elevated feeling of love for the nation' of the Milanese group, 'who invested in the [Benadir] company the capital which the state delayed in providing'.⁸ Only the studies of Milanini Kemeney and Grassi have clarified these false interpretations which, moreover, came up against strong opposition. The first negative statements on the 'generosity' of the 'company' men in fact date back to a famous Italian Republican, Arcangelo Ghisleri, who from the outset denounced this expression of the worst imperialism.⁹

But let us take a closer look at the people involved in the affair. From the outset in 1895 a cotton manufacturer, Giorgio Mylius, took it upon himself to explore the possibilities of the Italian textile industry, which in the last years of the century was enjoying exceptional health and vigour, using Somali production and their market. Located almost entirely in the north of Italy, the textile industry's concentration greatly facilitated contacts between manufacturers, and the enterprise of the latter was backed up by a financial standing which enabled them to look for new ventures but above for all new, more profitable investment. Somalia appeared to be the land most suited to this enterprise. It was officially declared that the interest of the members of the company was of a patriotic nature and added to this was the fact that the Somali market offered definite outlets. The structure of Somalia's foreign trade was characterised primarily by the import of cotton fabric from the Indian area, while, on the other hand, a certain amount of production activity existed which could be encouraged and modernised, and this was the field of activity which the industrial initiatives linked to the group around Mylius seemed to wish to favour for the future of Italian colonisation.

From that time on the national value of an increased Italian presence in this region took on the allure of a mission which the state had to encourage with its protection, and above all, with its financing. The meetings which multiplied in Milan after the return of the Mylius mission, underlined, on the one hand, the willingness of some manufacturers to throw themselves into an initiative in Somalia but, on the other hand, their desire

to rely on the effective support of the Italian government, support which the then Prime Minister, Crispi, declared he was ready to give. The company was subsequently founded; its financial composition at the moment of its formation, on 21 November 1895, included 34 leading industrialists, a bank, the Banca Commerciale Italiana, and a finance company, the Società di Esplorazione in Africa. Some names must be mentioned. As well as Mylius, there were well-known industrialists such as Benigno Crespi who, along with cotton factories, also owned the leading Milanese daily, the *Corriere della Sera*, Erba and Pirelli (chemical and rubber manufacturers), two explorers, Pippo Vigoni and Manfredo Camperio, and so on. Regarding the Banca Commerciale Italiana, its participation was important since it appeared at the start of this initiative which took shape under the guidance of its largest clients.¹⁰ Benigno Crespi, pressed by Mylius, declared not only his agreement but also his convinced desire to set up the company, immediately investing a share of 75,000 Italian lire, which made him the third partner, declaring that he would make up the difference if the sum collected did not reach the desired target of 1 million lire. And in fact he made a second contribution of 114,500 lire, making it possible to collect the million required and making Crespi the largest shareholder with an investment of 189,500 lire.

Let us now look at the declared aims of the 'company'. First and foremost, colonisation, with support from the state which, on the one hand, declared itself willing to contribute 400,000 lire to the company 'for its activities' and for representing Italy, and, on the other hand, decided to cede to the 'company' the attributes of sovereignty which Italy had obtained on the coast of the future Somalia after the London agreements of 3 August and 18 November 1889 with the Sultan of Zanzibar. We may observe that the agreement must have seemed suspect on the domestic level: in an early phase, the first agreement between the Italian state and the 'company' was signed (15 April 1896) on the very day following the serious Italian defeat at Adua (1 March 1896). The excitement aroused by the Ethiopian question was such that the convention passed unnoticed by public opinion. The second episode in the relationships between the Italian state and the 'company' took place in another period of crisis, this time domestic. The social upheaval in early 1898 which led to popular revolt in Milan in May of that year seemed to favour the signature of the agreements on Benadir: on 24 January 1898 regarding the protocol on indirect administration, on 25 May regarding the convention whose financial aspects, so favourable to the administrators of the company, caused an outcry of horror from the Republican member of the opposition, Arcangelo Ghisleri, who wrote on this subject: 'It is truly the right moment for generous, noble, patriotic actions, a period during which the cannon shots fired in Milan, the state of siege and military courts have eliminated any annoying control of free discussion and press.'¹¹ And another democratic member of the opposition, Gustavo Chiesi, did not hesitate to write:

the Convention was approved on the spot since the Minister for Foreign Affairs, E. Visconti Nenosta, had taken it on himself as a favour to his Milanese friends attracted by its advantageous aspects . . . The expenditure by the state of large sums of money in exchange for far lesser commitments and the opportunity to establish and to pocket the taxes and customs duties still to be fixed . . . If this was not a golden opportunity, we would not know to describe it.¹²

It would be interesting to follow these tardy debates which were often smothered under the cover of patriotism. In fact, the agreement between the Italian state and the company came into force despite the quite serious fact, even irregular from the legal point of view, that in reality the founder-partners of the company considered themselves free to pay only 300,000 lire out of the million they had promised. In exchange, the government paid its 400,000 lire and thus began the adventure of Benadir, which, from the start, turned out to be a great windfall for the company. Despite the promises, the 'activities of agricultural settlement' and the plan to lay down the bases for demographic colonisation remained on paper. The 'good intentions' were renewed but, in reality, the company limited itself to managing government funds, to paying a few civil servants and to presenting requests for funding to the various Italian governments. However, and this appeared in the annual report for 1900–01, the company directors declared a fairly high profit. That year it stood at 53,455 lire, which was a very high percentage in relation to the state funding. The list of the company's financial commitments was also very significant: travel, occasional expenses for the setting up of 'offices' in Benadir, were, after payment to the Sultan of Zanzibar, the only items on the debit side of the budget. Certain observations must be made on this subject. Was the budget transparent? Especially concerning benefits? The figures for taxes, duties and customs duties which the company deducted from its overall management are completely absent, they seem to have been lost in the meanderings of a 'simple' administration which was the very cause of the 'scandal' which was soon to explode. There is another observation to be made concerning the company's activities: the abolition of slavery which it had promised in the agreement was not enacted and the 'disengagement' of the Italian colonial administrators was such that they taxed slavery as a business activity despite the international agreements and commitments undertaken.

In the reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the most varying pretexts were used to explain the delay in the achievement of the 'great' projects of colonisation. First, the sequels to the events which shook Mogadiscio, with the assassination at Lafolé (February 1896) of the explorer and Italian Consul General in Zanzibar, Antonio Cecchi; then the Bimal revolt with tragic repercussions in the insurrection at Mad Mullad. The official missions which began to multiply on the Benadir

coast, however, confirmed the doubts about the nature of the company's activities. It is sufficient to read, especially as far the plans for settlement are concerned, what the company itself communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome – completely ridiculous statements. On 29 September 1900, the entire list took into account . . . ten Italians established in the colony (of whom two were on leave in Italy): five people in the capital, including the Governor E. Dulio, a resident and a businessman at Merca, a vice-president in the towns of Brava, Gumbo and Bardera.¹³ The cry of alarm was launched by the Italian navy and by other observers, among them the Milanese explorer and philanthropist, L. Robecchi Bricchetti, and then the scandal exploded. The discussions in the press and in the Chamber of Deputies in Rome brought to light the abuses of a company which had clearly set out to appropriate government money along with the proceeds from the various activities which the agreement had empowered it to undertake, but which had carried out no initiatives for the economic transformation or colonisation of the country. The appeal of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Prinetti, to the management of the company on 9 October 1901 was a serious summons which the company chose not to understand. For the company, it was a question of overcoming the protests by evoking the general difficulties and asking the government to increase its aid. In response to Prinetti, the Board of Directors reiterated the patriotic nature of the company's activities and the need to administrate the country tactfully and without haste.¹⁴ We must here underline that, according to the company's activities were actually zero or almost zero, and this led to the vehement polemics which developed in the democratic opposition press and even in a section of the pro-government press. The company's 'miracle', as A. Ghisleri aptly described it, did not lie in its colonial activities but in its metropolitan friendships. The concealed aspects of the affair were slow to come to light; the crisis was sparked off by issues linked to slavery and its permanence (in a form termed 'domestic' slavery) under the protection of the company itself. But here too the company showed an exceptional ability. The leading accuser was a Republican Member of Parliament, Gustavo Chiesi, who, at the start of the crisis accused the Benadir Company of having betrayed the confidence of the government and having administered the country with the sole goal of exploiting every opportunity to get rich. The attacks in the newspapers in which he wrote were so forceful that parliamentary discussions very quickly turned into an almost unanimous request for an inquiry into the company. The company immediately forestalled all attacks and made an agreement with Deputy Chiesi entrusting him with an inquiry financed by the company, appointing him High Commissioner for the company in Somalia. The strangeness of the affair was that Chiesi declared his willingness to accept the (not only honorary but also well paid) task, 'in order to better further its activities for public advantage' (2 April 1903). This time the scandal was directed against the accusers: the Republicans expelled

Gustavo Chiesi from their party but he had already tendered his resignation. The inquiry, as had been clear from the start, ended in a final report where the company's good faith was often emphasised together with the real difficulties of the local situation, while the question of domestic slavery was not discussed. The general tone of the report was, however, against the possibility of continuing under the company's regime an administration which still had to be set up, since the problems to be solved were above all of a general political nature, and hence the responsibility of the Italian state.

The accusations did not stop there, however, and the Benadir crisis, which the government reports underlined despite the company's statements, could only concur with the government's decision on 14 May 1904 to withdraw the concession granted to the Milanese company. With the agreement of 29 January 1905, Benadir passed under the direct administration of Italy but, for the company which, as Paolo Valera wrote, 'had done nothing in the colony',¹⁵ a long period began in which it negotiated with the government for the compensation for the property it had left in the colony and for the activities which the government's 'premature' decision had interrupted. The negotiation game, which lasted several months, benefited the company which received from the government a 'reimbursement' which the archives often described as exaggerated. The end of the company's activities was in fact accompanied by large payments by the Italian state, officially to compensate it for the early termination of its charter, but in reality to further increase the financial advantages of a colonial activity which had hardly started, and which also involved several politicians and businessmen in excellent relations with authority.

Conclusion

The Italian state's perverse game and financing had achieved the opposite of normal relations between financiers and imperialism. It was not finance which boosted imperialism but the political game within certain circles which used imperialism as a pretext to find hidden, risk-free financing. The Benadir case was not the only one. The war against Tripoli proved once again that the rules had been overturned by Italian industrialists. Far from being the mirror of healthy financial activity, the military operations concealed the benefits of industrialists in search of a monopoly and financiers in search of safe, profitable activities.

As to the other pretext for Rome's imperialism, the search for colonies for emigration, the results were negative and this was also true of Mussolini's great adventure, the conquest of Ethiopia. In 1934, there were only 4,500 Italians in Eritrea and 1,600 in Somalia. If we subtract the numbers of civil servants and the military from these figures, we may realise the total failure of the desired emigration. As to the empire proclaimed in Italian east Africa (Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia) in 1936, the Italian

population in 1940 comprised 184,824 Italians (151,224 men and 33,224 women), but the men included 109,212 military. In Libya the Italian population in June 1940 was 102,281 people, of whom 40,000 were at Tripoli and 20,000 at Benghazi. Here too, the majority of the population was made up of civil servants and military.

These figures must be compared with the dimensions which emigration had reached since the beginning of Italian imperialism. They are worth citing, almost as a conclusion: 18,382,340 Italians had chosen the road to exile and this figure confirms the nature of this state imperialism which was wholly negative and different from all other forms of imperialism in that period.

Notes

- 1 E. Ragionieri, *L'unità d'Italia* (Florence, Giuntina, 1962), p. 28.
- 2 J.-L. Miège, *L'impérialisme colonial italien de 1870 à nos jours* (Paris, Sedes, 1968), p. 26.
- 3 On Italian emigration, see above all E. Sori, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana* (Bari).
- 4 R.H. Rainero, *L'anticolonialismo italiano da Assab ad Adua* (Milano, Comunità, 1971), p. 43.
- 5 A. Di San Giuliano, 'L'emigrazione negli Stati Uniti', *Nuova Antologia*, 1 July 1905.
- 6 R.H. Rainero, *Les piémontais en Provence: aspects d'une émigration oubliée* (Nice, Serre, 2001).
- 7 G. Maione, *L'imperialismo straccione* (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1979).
- 8 A. Botarelli, *Compendio di storia coloniale italiana* (Rome, House of Deputies, 1914), p. 160.
- 9 A. Milanini Kemeny, *La Società d'esplorazione Commerciale in Africa e la politica coloniale 1879-1914* (Florence, Nuova Italia, 1973); F. Grassi, *Le origin dell'imperialismo italiano* (Lecce, Micella); R.H. Rainero, *La politica coloniale nelle riviste di A. Ghisleri, in I periodici ghisleriani* (Bergamo, I.I.A.G., 1979), pp. 142f.
- 10 It is regrettable that the archives of the Banca Commerciale Italiana are not available for consultation, under the pretext of their re-arrangement.
- 11 A. Ghisleri, *Nascita, vita e miracoli della Società del Benadir* (Milan, 'Vita italiana', 1904), p. 8.
- 12 G. Chiesi, in *Il Tempo, Giornale della democrazia italiana*, Milan, 29 December 1901.
- 13 List of Italian personnel resident in Benadir (Italian Somali) in Archives of the African Museum.
- 14 See the letter to the minister from the company's administration, dated 28 August 1901.
- 15 P. Valera, in *La Folla*, Mila, 28 February 1904.

6 Continental drift

The independence of Brazil (1822), Portugal and Africa¹

Luis Felipe de Alencastro

Convergences in 1808

In Brazilian historiography, the year 1808 is presented as a pivotal, almost canonical, date when the colonial past is summed up and Brazil's modern and contemporary period begins. The economic aspect as much as the political aspect of historiography lend a major role to the events of 1808.

In fact, during this year two decisive episodes occurred in succession. There was the arrival of the Portuguese court in Brazil and the elevation of Rio de Janeiro to the status of capital of the Lusitanian Empire (1808–21). Never before known in Western history, these events led to important changes. In 1815, Brazil was elevated to the rank of United Kingdom with Portugal and, in 1822, following the return of the court to Lisbon (1821), the country became independent in the form of an empire which was the only government of the monarchic type in the New World (1822–89). What is more, while the four Spanish dominions of America broke up into several independent countries, Brazil conserved all the territory of the Lusitanian dominion united around a central government in Rio de Janeiro.

This evolution followed a main theme linked to the dynamics generated by the transfer of the Portuguese court. For this reason, the implantation in America of a European national bureaucracy reinforced the role of Rio de Janeiro, endowing the Brazilian imperial capital with a state system and a trading centre capable of supervising the territory and population of the old Portuguese dominion.

On an economic level, the year 1808 was marked by a decision, the consequences of which were just as important. The royal edict decreeing the opening of the Brazilian ports to trade and shipping 'with states in peace and harmony' with the throne of Braga – meaning in the diplomatic and military context of the period – to trade with England, was signed by the Prince Regent John VI, on 28 January 1808. It was hardly five days later that the Portuguese fleet, escorted by vessels of the Royal Navy, landed on the American continent at Bahia. The agreements of the decree were

ratified by the Anglo-Portuguese treaties of 1810 sanctioning English pre-eminence in Brazilian foreign trade.

In reality, since the nineteenth century, Brazilian historiography has developed around the idea that the arrival of the court initiated a political and economic split which concluded in 1822 with the independence of the country and the founding of the Empire of Brazil.²

In the continental sphere, the year 1808 represents also a turning point in Spanish America, in so far as the fall of the Bourbons and the accession of Joseph Bonaparte to the Spanish throne (1808–13) hastened the split of the American colonies with Madrid.

Affecting the whole of the Iberian–American regions, this process of disassociation between the two home countries and their colonies provided a wider framework for the changes which marked this part of the New World. Events seemed to follow on, one after the other in an inexorable sequence: the Napoleonic invasions led to international conflicts which in turn led to the military domination of Spain and Portugal by English troops; these events broke off relationships between the Iberian capitals and their American possessions and facilitated England's penetration into the Iberian–American world. The independence of the countries in the region only confirmed this state of affairs. This is a summary of the main historical events of Latin America in general, and Brazil in particular.³ However, given the prolongation of the Atlantic slave trade, the Brazilian situation clearly agrees with this explanation and, if the case arises, with the analyses of the independence of other American nations.

As in many other similar works, a recent study comparing the independence movements of the countries of the New World does not grasp the specific diplomatic framework which weighed heavily on the emergence of the Brazilian Empire. At the same time as observing that these movements follow distinct directions relating to the colonial context of each one of the American regions, the author of this study is unaware of the amount of international argument created by the continuing slave trade to Brazil.⁴

In order to weigh up the determining factors of Brazilian independence, the repercussions of another event must be taken into account – this time linked to Africa – which took place in this same year of 1808: the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade by England and the United States. Following the English and American retreat from the Atlantic slave market, Brazil became the most important importer of Africans in the New World – for at least three reasons. First of all, the Brazilian system of slavery was spread over virtually the whole continent; second, the retreat of England, the United States and other nations which traded in slaves, left the main African slave trading regions in the hands of dealers who provided Brazil and, to a lesser degree, Cuba; finally, from 1808, British exports to Brazil provided new goods for barter which stimulated the slave trade.

As shown in Table 6.1, Brazil monopolised a third of the total volume

Table 6.1 Number of African slaves transported (by thousands of individuals)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Brazil</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Total number of individuals landed in all Atlantic regions</i>
1551–1575	10.0	16.3	61.3
1576–1600	40.0	42.6	93.8
1601–1625	150.0	63.1	237.8
1626–1650	50.0	37.8	132.3
1651–1675	185.0	50.2	368.5
1676–1700	175.0	29.0	602.5
1701–1720	292.7	34.2	855.1
1721–1740	312.4	33.7	926.3
1741–1760	354.5	29.6	1197.2
1761–1780	325.9	24.8	1309.7
1781–1790	181.2	24.0	754.1
1791–1800	233.6	34.6	686.7
1801–1810	241.3	39.6	609.0
1811–1820	327.7	60.5	534.3
1821–1830	431.4	72.4	595.3
1831–1840	334.3	60.5	552.1
1841–1850	378.4	87.3	433.0

Source: Tables by Philip C. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), reviews by David Eltis, in *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* for the period 1781–1870. For a discussion on these figures, see L.F. de Alencastro, *O Trato dos Videntes*, appendix 7.

of the slave trade in the first half of the eighteenth century, at the time of gold mining at Minas Gerais. The decline in gold production in the second half of the century reduced the Brazilian share to a quarter of the total number. In the nineteenth century, with the Anglo-American withdrawal from the slave-trading areas, free trade with England and the development of coffee plantations in Brazil, the country's share increased to represent nearly two-thirds of Africans landing in America. As a result, the Brazilian percentages reached and exceeded the level observed during the years 1576–1625, to its highest point in sugar production, when Portuguese America shared with Spanish America nearly all the transatlantic trade.

The origins of the Brazil–Angola system

It is known that the presence of Portuguese American colonists' interests in Angola was felt from the mid-seventeenth century. From this time on, colonists and Portuguese merchants from Brazil exporting tafia and other goods, established bilateral trade with Angola.

Of course, this trade was not solely commercial. Colonial service officials, missionaries, merchants and soldiers travelled between Brazil and Angola and contributed to the increase in Portuguese domination of central Africa. With regard to this, we should remember that, contrary to

the other European possessions in modern Africa, Angola was the country of real colonial settlement. From the seventeenth century, there were two municipal chambers (Luanda and Maçangano), an episcopal headquarters and a network of garrisons in the interior. The region had between 1,000 and 4,000 Portuguese and Luso-Brazilian inhabitants, the figure varying with the number of soldiers present.

On a military level, development of the fronts of the Thirty Years War in the South Atlantic illustrates the strategic and economic complementary nature between Brazil and Angola. The Dutch West India Company took possession of the sugar area in the Nordeste region of Brazil in 1630. However, the directors of the WIC at Pernambuco realised the necessity of also occupying the Portuguese slave-trade ports in Africa to ensure the viability of the undertaking. Elmina was taken in 1637 and – against the advice of the directors in Amsterdam who were seeking to occupy Salvador de Bahia, still in the hands of the Portuguese – in 1641, the Dutch from Pernambuco launched the expeditionary forces – for the invasion of Angola. Conversely, the Portuguese and the Luso-Brazilians from Rio de Janeiro recovered Angola (1648) before obtaining the surrender of the WIC in Pernambuco (1654).

Between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, there were at least ten armed expeditions organised by Brazil to come to the aid of the colonists in Angola. Defeated by combat in a tropical environment – particularly by their experience in fighting against the Dutch, the Amerindian tribes and the coloured communities of Brazil (the *quilombos*) and made up of soldiers of mixed race relatively immune to the region's diseases, these troops served to expel the Dutch from Luanda and to beat the native resistance during the following decades; so much so, that one can talk of real 'Portuguese and Luso-Brazilian colonial joint management' in the South Atlantic. In fact, the contribution of the Brazilian colonists to the consolidation of the 'Pax Lusitana' in the South Atlantic is emphasised by the chroniclers of the colonial period. A Luso-Brazilian historian writing in 1757, with particular reference to the troops originating from Pernambuco, paid homage to the seven expeditions which set off from Recife to Angola and 'spilling their own blood and that of their enemies, held in their hands this part of the Portuguese Empire'.⁵

On a political level, it can be noted that between 1648 and 1810, a dozen governors of Angola occupied similar posts in Brazil, before or after having assumed their functions in Luanda.⁶ On the cultural and ideological level, it should be noted that the Jesuit missionaries from Angola were involved in the organisation of the slave trade, transporting contingents of African slaves for their colleges situated in Portuguese America. On the whole, the Portuguese Jesuits clearly supported the transatlantic slave trade. On the one hand, with the introduction of Africans the missionaries saw a means of alleviating the pressure the colonists and authorities put on the labour force liable to *corvée* gathered from the Amerindian villages.

African slavery became a necessary complement to the catechism and the freedom of the Amerindians. On the other hand, the adversity of climate and the health risks of central Africa, as well as the hazards of the Portuguese presence, hindered the tasks of evangelism in Angola.

Very influential in Portugal, Brazil and in Angola, the Jesuits, plus all other European religious orders, were directly confronted with the management of the slave trade and black slavery. Very early on they supported the idea that the Atlantic trade allowed Blacks to be brought to Brazil, a Christian land, who, in other circumstances, would die in paganism in central Africa. This doctrine, clearly stated in the seventeenth century by the Jesuit Antonio Vieira, a politician and highly prestigious religious writer, was presented as one of the most powerful modern justifications for the slave trade.

In Brazil, Angola, Portugal and in certain European capitals, the idea was developed that Portuguese America and Angola formed one system, shared between a centre of production using slaves in the Brazilian area and a centre of reproduction of slaves formed by the Angola region. During the Luso-Dutch conflict in the South Atlantic, a Jesuit missionary specialising in Angolan affairs put forward the idea which would enjoy great success during the following decades and presented it to the Overseas Council in Lisbon: 'Without Angola there is no Brazil.'

Taking one single text from among the dozens of documents of all sorts reiterating this thought, let us quote the reply addressed to the Portuguese Overseas Minister in 1800 by a governor of Angola, following comments on the administration of the African colony: 'I would like . . . V.E. to think again, because Angola is not Brazil; everything we shall try to do in Africa will be lost; conversely, everything that we invest [will be] profitable . . . in [Portuguese] America . . . this African colony is only a means of making the agriculture and mineralogy [*sic*] of Portuguese America prosper.'⁷

Bahia and the Slave Coast

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, tobacco exports from Bahia initiated the bilateral relations between this Brazilian port and the slave-trading ports of the Slave Coast. Given the characteristics of the Portuguese presence in the Gulf of Guinea, limited to a few trading offices on the coast, the activities of the Luso-Brazilians in the region would take on a different meaning, as we shall see later.

Obviously, the expansion of bilateral shipping between Brazil and Angola on the one hand and Brazil and the Gulf of Guinea on the other, does not exclude the continuity of the traditional, 'triangular' trade carried out by ships which left Portugal with European, Asiatic or American merchandise for barter, then took on slaves in the African ports and set sail again for Brazil. All the same, we should at least question this 'triangular trade' and, more specifically, the third and last leg of the journey. In fact,

we are not certain that the ships leaving Portugal to take on slaves in Africa were, after their stopover in Brazil, returned to Europe with Brazilian merchandise.⁸

Nevertheless, the development of inter-colonial trade in the Atlantic totally changed the overseas territories of Lusitania. According to our calculations, Brazilian exports of tobacco and tafia would have permitted the acquisition of 48 per cent of the 2,027,000 Africans landed in Portuguese America during the period 1710–1810. If the exports of horses, leather, manioc, sugar and dried, salt meat and fish as well as the smuggled gold and diamonds are added, it can be estimated that more than half the Africans introduced into Brazil during the eighteenth century were directly acquired with Brazilian merchandise in the context of bilateral trade. In fact, the statistics for the period 1736–70 show that the origin of the boats putting in at Luanda is mostly Brazilian: 41 per cent coming from Rio de Janeiro, 22.5 per cent from Pernambuco, 22 per cent from Bahia and just 15.3 per cent from Lisbon. Similarly, nearly all the captives deported from the Gulf of Guinea were transported within the framework of the bilateral navigation with Brazil.⁹

Rio de Janeiro, hub of the slave trade in the South Atlantic

Although it is true that imports of English and European merchandise were added to the regional products of barter after 1808, to activate the Brazilian slave trade, it is just as certain that not all the Africans imported to Brazil remained there. In fact, the port of Rio de Janeiro was used on several occasions as the hub of the slave trade to La Plata during the period of dynastic union between Portugal and Spain (1581–1640). In the final decades of the eighteenth century, trade between Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires started up again. As a result, Madrid authorised this trade, made profitable by the Portuguese and Luso-Brazilian slave merchants, to re-launch trade with La Plata, following maritime disturbances provoked by the US War of Independence. This trade led to a rise in the price of slaves which was not in the interests of the Rio de Janeiro planters. The Crown then followed a contradictory policy in which it tried to protect the Brazilian planters while at the same time stimulating exports of Blacks to La Plata.

The ambiguity of these initiatives was evident in a report by the Viceroy of Brazil, the Count of Rezende. In a letter dated 1799 to the court, he announced his difficulty (*mortificação*) in harmonising the order to avoid the smuggling of Blacks to La Plata with other court instructions charging him ‘to facilitate the trade with Buenos Aires efficiently, by seeing if we could extract a large amount of piastres from it to benefit the kingdom’s trade’. It is certain that the returns in piastres from Buenos Aires greatly helped the trade, then in full boom, from Portugal with Asia where white metal constituted the standard currency. According to Rudy

Bauss, during the period 1780–1810, between 2,500 and 3,000 slaves were exported annually from Brazil, particularly from Rio de Janeiro, to the ports of Buenos Aires and Montevideo.¹⁰

Following the anti-Spanish uprisings in the region, the trading of Blacks between Brazil and La Plata declined, forcing the Rio de Janeiro slave merchants to look for other markets. The ports of Pernambuco and Maranhão then began to be frequented by slave-traders coming from the Bay of Guanabara. It therefore became obvious that the high number in the African slave trade ports was used to re-launch the demand for slaves on the South American coast.

The impact of Brazil's independence on Portuguese Africa

In these circumstances, it is important to emphasise the development of the main Portuguese trading areas in Africa after the court was installed in Rio de Janeiro.¹¹ What, in fact, were the repercussions of the changes in Portuguese America on the level of Atlantic trade?

In reality, Brazil's independence provoked the emergence of pro-Brazilian movements in Cap Vert, in Angola, Ouidah and Mozambique, indicating that the main areas of slave-trading traditionally frequented by the Portuguese had concrete interests on the other side of the ocean. Moreover, the fears of Lisbon and London concerning the secessionist movements in Portuguese Africa, and the eventual annexation of these colonies by the new Brazilian state, forced the two European nations to take diplomatic and military steps. In 1828, a mutual defence pact was signed between England and Portugal. The following year, Lord Strangford, English plenipotentiary in Rio de Janeiro, defined the field of application of this pact. In a warning addressed to the Brazilian government, he informed that any intervention in the Portuguese possessions in Africa would be defended by the Royal Navy.¹²

Leaving aside Cap Vert and Senegambia, let us look at Central Africa, the Slave Coast and Mozambique, the origin of most of the Africans deported to Brazil in the nineteenth century.¹³

Angola

From the 1780s, the re-launch of agriculture for Brazilian export resulted in a greater number of slave-ships from Brazil to the ports of Angola, Gulf of Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique.

In central Africa there was a sharp contrast between the land networks with an outlet at Benguela and those which led to the interior of the continent from Luanda which were regularly monopolised by competition from the non-Portuguese ports at the mouth of the Congo. Apart from the competition between Luanda and Benguela, there was an important change in the structure of the Angolan slave trade. While the relative stag-

nation of Luanda showed a weakening of the local traders linked to Portuguese home trade, the rise of Benguela resulted from an intensification in trade by the merchants from Rio de Janeiro. As the statistics analysed by Joseph C. Miller for the period 1795–1820 show, most of the deportees from Benguela landed in Rio de Janeiro, whereas those from Luanda were also directed to other Brazilian ports. For the decade 1820–30, José C. Curto's research confirms the continuity of this regional distribution.¹⁴

In this context, Brazil's independence, proclaimed in September 1822, aroused a movement of support in Angola. It was particularly in Benguela that this movement was most active. In 1823, documents seized in Angola by the authorities faithful to Lisbon, indicated 'that the government of Rio de Janeiro legislates for this province [of Benguela] in the same way as the Cortés of Portugal'. A rebellious climate against the government of Lisbon was maintained throughout the colony by merchants linked with Brazil. An Angolan government Junta report sent to Lisbon said 'Public opinion is directed by a few rich men whose interests are narrowly linked to the slave trade with Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco.'¹⁵ Recurring rumours in Angola and Portugal refer to the preparation of a Brazilian naval expedition to occupy Luanda and Benguela.

On the other side of the Atlantic, important personalities followed these intrigues. In August 1823, in a debate of the Constituent Assembly sitting at Rio de Janeiro, one of its most important members, the representative for the province of São Paulo, Nicolau Vergueiro, openly defended the support for the pro-Brazilian movements in Angola and other parts of Portuguese Africa.¹⁶

Ouidah and Dahomey

Ending the British slave trade and the treaties of 1815, concerning the abolition of the trading of Blacks north of the equator, disturbed the Kingdom of Dahomey. With the support of the Brazilian Francisco Felix de Souza, who controlled the Portuguese fort at Ouidah, Ghézo became the country's sovereign. Once again, Ghézo reinforced the centralisation of the kingdom. At the same time, he separated the functions concentrated in the hands of his most eminent dignitary, the *yovoghan* (*avoga*). There would be one *yovoghan* for the Africans and one *yovoghan* for the Whites, responsible for foreign trade. This latter function would be entrusted to Francisco Felix de Souza, whose nickname 'Xaxà' would from then on be assimilated with the post he held.¹⁷ With the support of his three sons, Xaxà controlled the slave trade. His influence was added to that of Domingos José Martins, also born in Bahia, and who became successor to the Brazilian João de Oliveira, in Porto Novo, exercising his influence on the slave trade in Benin and the cities of Egba. We should also note the activities of João José Lima settled in Lomé and of Joaquim de Almeida living in Agoué, as well as other Afro-Brazilians present in

several slave ports of the region.¹⁸ All these slave merchants formed Bahia's powerful trading network on the Slave Coast.

But it was Xaxà who played the central role in this network, and it was from him that came the most significant gesture of support for Brazil: the fact that several weeks after Brazil's independence, Xaxà clearly indicated his position. After hoisting the flag of the Brazilian Empire on the Portuguese fort, he placed the fort under the sovereignty of the new Brazilian state. In 1824, it was still the Provincial Treasury of Bahia which settled the running expenses of the fort at Ouidah. During the two decades which followed, it was in fact the Brazilian slave-traders who held sovereignty over the enclave. The Portuguese flag did not fly over the fort at Ouidah again until 1844 after a unit of the Portuguese army, sent from the island of São Tomé had formally taken back possession of the area.¹⁹

The 'Atlantisation' of Mozambique

Up until the last decades of the eighteenth century, while receiving intermittent shipments of east African slaves, Brazil did not have a regular trade circle with Mozambique although Portuguese slave-traders established in east Africa replenished the Arab networks turned towards the north and the French networks of the Mascarene Islands. There were more regular shipments to Brazil from 1790 on.²⁰ Previously, authorisation

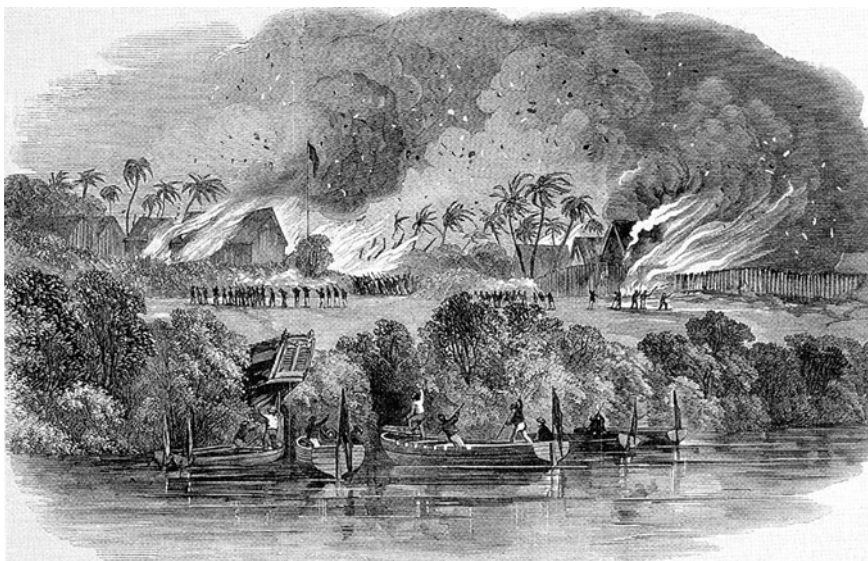


Plate 3 Burning of a slave establishment by British seamen and marines at Keonga, Mozamba River, in the Mozambique channel (source: *Illustrated London News*, 18 January 1851).

for slave trade between Mozambique and Brazil had been granted by the Crown, but these initiatives were hindered by other measures aiming to restrain the smuggling of textiles from Asia. In fact, the royal edict of 18 November 1772 severely limited navigation from Brazil to Mozambique with the aim of stopping the introduction of Indian merchandise to the Brazilian ports by slave-merchants from east Africa.²¹ However, the move of the court to Rio de Janeiro changed the deal.

The royal edict of 4 February 1811 freed direct trade between Brazil and east Africa. Gradually the ports of the island of Mozambique and the region of Quelimane were secured by the slave-trade networks organised by the Pinto da Fonseca brothers, slave-merchants based in Rio de Janeiro.²² Following the example of the process observed in Angola, Brazil's independence brought to light a movement of support for the Rio de Janeiro government from the Mozambique province of Rios de Sena to the Zambeze.²³ Lisbon's hold on the region seemed uncertain. In addition, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, communications between Portugal and Mozambique were made through the intermediary of Rio de Janeiro in view of the absence of direct links between Portugal and east Africa.

During this period, the intensification of bilateral trade between Mozambique and Brazil disrupted the traditional bilateral trade which united the ports of Mozambique with India. Trading communities originally from Gujerat (*baneanes*), which were settled on the island of Mozambique, started trading across the Indian Ocean. Gold, ivory and African slaves were traded for Indian cotton fabrics. However, after 1808, consignments from Brazil consisting of Brazilian and Portuguese merchandise also included the re-exportation of British textiles. The penetration of English manufactured goods into east Africa, transiting through Rio de Janeiro, contributed to redirect trade of the region's goods towards the west creating what we have called the 'Atlantisation' of Mozambique. 'With the slave trade [to Brazil], everything is thrown upside down', the Portuguese Crown Procurator in Mozambique wrote in 1842.²⁴

Africa and the issue of Brazil's independence

In this context, the events of 1808 in Brazil took on quite another meaning. As we have seen, trade with England provided the Portuguese and Luso-Brazilian slave merchants with an increase in goods for barter which would allow the extension of the African slave trade to Brazil. The quantity of British goods imported to Brazil was the decisive factor in this trade. Indirect calculations for the period 1848–49, the height of the slave trade, show that out of the total value of merchandise re-exported from Brazil to Portuguese possessions in Africa, 89.5 per cent came from England, 4.9 per cent from the United States, the rest being shared between Belgium, France, Argentina and Portugal.

From this point of view, English commercial penetration into the

Brazilian market remained limited to trade previously directed towards Europe. Trade with Africa, the slave trade, continued as before, and up till 1850 was dominated by Portuguese and Brazilian merchants and interests eventually in partnership with British traders settled in Brazil.

It was only in 1808 or even 1822, that changes came which definitively altered the Brazilian economy's field of activity within the world market. Indissociably linked with the development of the African continent, the crisis of the Old Regime of the Portuguese colonies and Brazilian independence should be studied in the long term, ending in 1850, the definite end of the slave trade with Brazil.

Notes

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- 2 For the political historiography, see the major work of F.A. Varnhagen, *História Geral do Brasil*, 3 vols (São Paulo, SP, 8th edn, 1975). A detailed interpretation of this point of view is developed by Maria Odila da Silva Dias, 'A Interização da Metrópole', in Carlos Guilherme Mota (1822 – *Dimensões**, São Paulo; SP, 1972). The key book on the economic breakdown of 1808 is that of Roberto C. Simonsen, *História Econômica do Brasil 1500–1820* (São Paulo, SP, 1937), the periodisation of which is taken up by Caio Prado Jr, *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (São Paulo, SP, 1942), translated from the English, *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley, CA, 1967); by Celso Furtado, *Formação Econômica do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1957), trans. Am., *The Economic Growth of Brazil: A Survey from Colonial to Modern Times* (Westport, CT, 1984); and by Fernando A. Novais, *Portugal e Brasil no crise do antigo sistema colonial 1777–1808* (São Paulo, SP), 1979.
- 3 For Latin America, see, for example, Tulio Halpherin Donghi, *Historia de América Latina* (Madrid, 1985).
- 4 David Bushnell, 'Independence Compared: The Americas North and South', in A. McFarlane and E. Posada-Carbo, *Independence and Revolution in Spanish America: Perspectives and Problems* (London, 1999), pp. 68–83.
- 5 Domingos Loreto Couto, *Desagravos do Brasil e glórias de Pernambuco* (1757), (Rio de Janeiro, 1904), pp. 421, 437–8.
- 6 Anne W. Pardo, 'A Comparative Study of the Portuguese Colonies of Angola and Brasil and Their Interdependence from 1648 until 1825' (Ph.D. thesis, Boston University, 1977), pp. 192–4.
- 7 A. de Albuquerque Felner, *Angola, Apontamentos sobre a ocupação e início do estabelecimento dos Portugueses no Congo, Angola e Benguela*, 3 vols (extraídos de documentos históricos, Coimbra, 1940), vol. I, pp. 245–6.
- 8 As is known, this return trip was not as frequent as suggested in the case of the 'triangular trade' ships linking Europe, Africa and the Caribbean or North America. On this point, see Herbert S. Klein, who does not hesitate to talk of the 'myth of the triangular trade', *The Atlantic Slave Trade: New Approaches to the Americas* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 96–102.
- 9 Corcino Medeiros Dos Santos, 'Relações de Angola com o Rio de Janeiro 1736–1808', *Estudos Históricos*, 12 (1973), pp. 7–68, table 1; José C. Curto, 'Alcohol and Slaves: The Lusobrazilian Commerce in Alcoholic Beverages with West-Central Africa (Mpinda, Luanda and Benguela) During the Atlantic

- Slave Trade c. 1480–1830’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988), table 9, p. 109. For tobacco exports to Africa, see Pierre Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le Golfe de Bénin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du XVIIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, La Haye, 1968), and Jean-Baptista Nardi, *O Fumo brasileiro no período colonial* (São Paulo, 1996).
- 10 Rudy Bauss, ‘Rio Grande do Sul in the Portuguese Empire: The Formative Years, 1777–1808’, in Susan Socolow, *The Atlantic Staple Trade*, 2 vols (Aldershot, Brookfield, 1996), vol. II. On the slave trade of Rio de Janeiro during this period, Manolo G. Florentino, *Em Costas Negras: Uma História do Tráfico Atlântico de Escravos entre a África e o Rio de Janeiro, séculos XVIII e XIX* (São Paulo, 1997).
 - 11 For a study on this question, see Valentim Alexandre, *Os sentidos do Império: questão nacional e questão colonial na crise do Antigo Regime português* (Porto, 1993).
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 - 13 On Cap Vert and Guinea Bissau, see C.J. de Senna Barcelos *Subsídios para a História de Cabo Verde e Guiné*, 7 vols (Lisbon, 1899–1913), vol. II, p. 287.
 - 14 Joseph C. Miller, ‘Legal Portuguese Slaving from Angola: Some Preliminary Indications of Volume and Direction, 1760–1830’, *Revue Française d’Histoire d’Outre-Mer*, 226–7, 63 (1975), pp. 135–76. José C. Curto, ‘Luso-Brazilian Alcohol and the Legal Slave Trade at Benguela and its Hinterland’, in Hubert Bonin and Michel Cahen (eds) *Négoce Blanc en Afrique Noire* (Abbeville, Société Française d’Histoire d’Outre-Mer, 2001), pp. 351–69.
 - 15 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Angola, Papéis Avulsos, caixa 142, documents 5, 33, 40, 57 of the year 1823 (old classification).
 - 16 *Diário de Assembléia Geral Constituinte e Legislativa do Império do Brasil*, 3 vols (1823) (Brasília, DF, 1973), vol. II, p. 677.
 - 17 Isau Santos, ‘Relações entre São Tomé e Daomé 1844–1894’, (degree essay, Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Política Ultramarina, Lisbon, 1973); Pierre Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le Golfe de Bénin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du XVIIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, La Haye, 1968), pp. 240, 361, 427, 460–8.
 - 18 *British Parliamentary Papers*, (Slave Trade) (Shannon, Irish University Press, 1968), vol. 40, class B, p. 246.
 - 19 Santos, ‘Relações entre São Tomé e Daomé’, p. 165; J.J. Lopes De Lima, *Ensaio sobre a estatística das possessões portuguesas na África ocidental e oriental; na Ásia ocidental; na China, e na Oceania*, 5 vols (Lisbon, 1844–62), vol. II, pt 1, p. 38A and pt 2, p. 41; ‘Reconhecimento da Independência do Império do Brasil pelos reis d’África’, *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, 54, 2 (1891), pp. 161–3.
 - 20 José Capela, ‘Le négoce des esclaves au Mozambique aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles’, in Bonin and Cahen (eds) *Négoce Blanc*, pp. 371–86.
 - 21 *Collecção das Leys ... que comprehende o ... Reinado del Ray ... Dom José I, ... desde o anno 1750 até o de 1774*, 4 vols (Lisbon, 1777), vol. III, pp. 252–4.
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 - 23 *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, Moçambique, Xavier Botelho a Conde de Sub-serra, 25 December 1825, Documentos Avulsos, maço 24 (old classification).
 - 24 *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, Moçambique, ‘Tudo ficou invertido’, Manoel Antônio da Fonseca at the Ministry for Naval and Overseas Affairs, Mozambique, 29 August 1842, p. 6 (old classification).

7 The Portuguese Empire, 1825–90

Ideology and economics

Valentim Alexandre

Introduction

At the end of 1807 the Portuguese court set sail for Brazil, fleeing Napoleon's troops. When he arrived in the Americas, D. João VI, who was then the Prince Regent, decreed that the Brazilian ports would open up to the ships of friendly nations, thereby bringing to an end the commercial monopoly which metropolitan Portugal had until then enjoyed. This was the beginning of the disintegration of the Luso-Brazilian Empire, which would culminate in 1822 (after the court had returned to Lisbon the previous year) with the American kingdom's declaration of independence. These developments had the most serious consequences for Portugal's economy, above all because of the drop of around 90 per cent which took place towards the end of the 1820s in re-exports of Brazilian colonial products, which at the beginning of the century had accounted for almost two-thirds of all foreign exports. Thus did the main source of capital accumulation evaporate, both for the mercantile bourgeoisie (especially in Lisbon) and for the state itself, the finances of which relied mainly on the customs duties charged on trade with Brazil and the outside world.¹ From the political point of view, the country also declined in importance in the international context, since it now had little more to offer its traditional ally – Great Britain – than the strategic position of the port of Lisbon. Once the Luso-Brazilian Empire had been dismantled, Portugal was left with several dispersed territories throughout the world, the remnants of earlier systems. Such was the case of the small enclaves of Goa, Daman and Diu in the east, in the Indian subcontinent, the port of Macao, in Chinese territory, and Timor, in the East Indies; and in Africa, there were a few posts in the so-called 'rivers of Guinea', namely Bissau, Cacheu and Ziguinchor, two areas which had Luanda and Benguela as their respective centres, and a few points on the Mozambican coast, as well as Sena and Tete, on the line of the river Zambezi. In addition, there were the archipelagos of Cabo Verde and S. Tomé e Príncipe.

At the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the relations of these possessions with metropolitan Portugal were very

tenuous. The African colonies' main connection was with Brazil by way of the slave trade, which remained strong until 1851, despite having been outlawed. As for those in the east, following the end of the long-distance trade boom which took place in the final decades of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, and which gave them links to Brazil and Portugal, they were tending to become part of local trading networks in the Indian Ocean. On a political level too Lisbon's sovereignty was little more than nominal, with the government of the colonies being *de facto* in the hands of the dominant local interests.

On this very fragile foundation would come to be built the last Portuguese Empire, centred in the African continent, with two very large territories (Angola, with an area of over 1,200,000 square kilometres; and Mozambique, with an area of 783,000 square kilometres), and a third, smaller territory (Guinea, with an area of 36,000 square kilometres). During the partition of Africa, Portugal, resisting all sorts of pressures, was able not only to maintain the position it had started out with, but to increase substantially on it, creating a vast domain which was out of all proportion to its political and economic significance in the international system.

There are two opposing theories among historiographers regarding the motivation for this expansion. For one of them – the best example of which is the book by R.J. Hammond entitled *Portugal and Africa, 1815–1910: A Study in Uneconomic Imperialism*, published as early as 1966 – the Portuguese case is the clearest example of 'prestige imperialism', strongly characterised by historical tradition and almost wholly uninfluenced by economic interests. Others, by contrast, see in these economic interests the true mainspring of nineteenth-century Portuguese expansionism, and see this as a 'new mercantilism' involving a search for new markets and the pressing need to obtain foreign currency: this is the core argument of the book by Gervase Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825–1975: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (1985), which remains the key work in this line of thinking.

This whole issue needs to be reviewed in the light of recent developments in historiography, both in respect of Portuguese colonialism itself and the development of Portuguese society over the last two centuries. From the methodological point of view the approach today is also no longer the same as it was: the issue today is no longer to look for the key factor which gives order and meaning to a complex phenomenon such as imperial expansion, but rather to analyse the specific combination of elements which moulded Portuguese colonial activity in the nineteenth century.

The first imperial plans*Turning to Africa*

The idea of building a new empire in Africa, to compensate for the loss of Brazil, emerged very early on in Portugal: it is to be found in the press during the first Liberal period (1820–23), in articles written by some of the main journalists of the time. Born of the tensions which arose out of the crisis and the disintegration of the imperial system, the new plan sought to provide an answer to a fundamental issue – that of national identity, at a time when Portugal’s already centuries-old role as the head of an empire was in danger. Traditionally, for most of the Portuguese political élites, concentrating their efforts on the European territory and abandoning the possibility of colonial expansion was not a viable proposition, because, even in the best case scenario, it would lead to a merely formal autonomy, in the shadow of a much stronger power (in principle this was Great Britain, Portugal’s ally since the seventeenth century), whose protection was needed in order to avoid absorption by Spain. Viewed in these terms, the colonies were naturally seen as the best ground for asserting Portugal’s identity in the concert of nations, thereby giving continuity to a long historical tradition. This idea was all the more easily accepted to the extent that people in metropolitan Portugal were generally unaware of the strict limits on the exercise of sovereignty by Portugal in Africa, and above all of the obstacles involved in trying to strengthen and enlarge that sovereignty. On the political level, that new interest in the African possessions was reflected at once in the adoption of defensive measures to prevent their annexation by Brazil (to whom they were closely tied by the slave trade), together with a first attempt at developing their trade with metropolitan Portugal. The initiative for this came from the government (this was already after the fall of the Liberal regime, in 1823), which sought to encourage tradesmen from Lisbon to establish direct trading links with the African colonies, granting them a variety of privileges. But nothing came of these attempts: on the one hand, the trading establishments which ventured to send their ships to Africa quickly realised that the only available return goods were the slaves, a trade which had been under the control of merchants based in Brazil since the eighteenth century; at the same time, the dynastic crisis in Portugal from 1826 onwards, which would eventually lead to civil war between the Liberals and the Absolutists, between 1832 and 1834, was of itself an impediment to any larger-scale project.

With their victory in 1834, the Liberals took up the imperial plan once again, especially through Sá da Bandeira, the most significant personality in Portuguese colonial policy in the whole of the nineteenth century.² The idea was now altogether more ambitious: the whole system would be restructured, the overseas administration would be reformed, new protectionist tariffs would be imposed and Portuguese dominion over the various

possessions in the African continent would be consolidated through the effective occupation of strategic positions. On top of this there was one essential aspect: the outlawing of the slave trade, which came about through a decree dated 10 December 1836. Although the trade had been outlawed, it had not in fact been suppressed: effectively the decree was never applied, on account of the resistance of dominant local interests, which relied on the active complicity of most of the colonial authorities and the lack of political will on the part of the governments in Lisbon (Sá da Bandeira was one of the few, at this stage, who argued for abolition).

In the years which followed, the slave trade, in which Portugal occupied a marginal position, continued to mobilise all enterprise and all available capital, particularly on the coasts of Angola and Mozambique – and this effectively prevented the implementation of any plan for the modernisation of the colonial system. The plans for consolidating territorial dominion also came to nothing, on account of a lack of resources. All that took place was a few exploratory naval cruises in the areas round the mouths of the Congo and Cunene rivers, to the north and south of Angola (thereby giving rise to the foundation of the town of Moçâmedes in the latter, semi-desert, region). The reform of the colonial administration itself also failed, with the essential organisation structure of the previous regime remaining basically intact, the governors in principle holding extensive powers, but in fact being highly vulnerable to the influence and control of dominant local interests. The only moderately significant results, although even these were very limited in scope, occurred in the area of trade, where, shielded by protectionist measures, a group of a few dozen companies was formed, specialising in the African transit trade, especially with Angola, which mainly re-exported some foreign manufactures in exchange for colonial products (this trade grew from some tens of contos annually, in the 1830s, to hundreds of contos,³ in the 1840s – a significant increase, but one which started out from a very low base, and which was of minor importance in the context of metropolitan Portugal's external trade).⁴

It was only from 1851 onwards that conditions became more favourable for the development of the colonies. On the one hand, the definitive closure of the Brazilian market to imports of slave labour, in that same year, changed the backdrop for the economic development of the African possessions: the slave trade did not cease – it carried on to other destinations (Cuba and various points in the Indian Ocean) but there was a drastic decline in its numbers, so that this trade no longer had the overwhelming importance in Angola and Mozambique which it had had in earlier decades.⁵ On the other hand, in Portugal, the *coup d'état* of 1851, which brought in the regime known as the 'Regeneração', brought with it a phase of relative political stability, and this enabled government to be exercised with greater continuity.

In this new context it fell to Sá da Bandeira to re-launch the imperial plan, as chairman of the Overseas Council (*Conselho Ultramarino*) from

1851–59, a job which he held jointly with that of Minister of Marine and Overseas from 1856–59. Basically the objectives he set himself were the same as those which prevailed in the 1830s: suppression of the remaining slave traffic; reform of the apparatus of colonial government, with a view to establishing representative institutions, even if in embryonic form, involving some strata of the local population; consolidation of dominion over the territories by means of the occupation, in Angola, of the whole coastline between parallels 5° and 12° (north of the mouth of the River Congo) and 18° latitude south, and, in Mozambique, of the coast between the River Rovuma in the north and the bay of Lourenço Marques (Delagoa Bay) in the south – to which would have to be added, in both cases, a strengthening of the Portuguese presence in strategic points inland, through the establishment of centres of population, wherever possible, with migrants from metropolitan Portugal. Once again it should be noted that, apart from a greater insistence on measures to encourage colonial production, there was a clear aim of abolishing slavery, albeit in the long term (in order to get round the problem of compensation payable to slave owners), by means of a series of statutes introduced during this decade.

For Sá da Bandeira, the whole of this vast plan would find its ultimate justification in the economic benefits it would bring to metropolitan Portugal. In his own words, the possessions afforded Portugal access to advantageous markets, permanently open to its industrial and agricultural products, with no control by the policy interests of foreign governments; they would supply, through the medium of exchange and without the need to export cash, the commodities which the country lacked; and they would provide Portuguese shipping and the industries associated with it with gainful employment.⁶

As far as economic interests were concerned, Sá da Bandeira was not alone at this stage of the colonial plan. It was commonly believed among the Portuguese political élites at the time that the African possessions contained great wealth, that the tropical soils were extremely fertile, and that they abounded in deposits of precious metals, which had yet to be exploited. This theme already dominated the press in the early years of the Liberal regime after 1834, appearing in dozens of articles and in the journals of every political faction. It thus served as the foundation for the argument that the colonial scheme was the best way of regenerating the nation's fortunes and compensating for the loss of Brazil. In its more developed forms – which looked to a distant Eldorado where the nation would fulfil its destiny and would finally recover its status as a Great Power, this mythical approach persisted throughout the whole empire period, becoming practically structural in nature.

However, this was not the only form of colonial ideology current at this time. There was another point of view which saw the empire above all as evidence of the glories of the past, of the saga of the Discoveries, which were standard-bearers for Portugal's historic civilising mission, which had

to be safeguarded, otherwise the country would also lose its national identity. While generally lying dormant, this underlying principle would rise to the surface whenever any danger arose and there was an imminent risk, either real or imagined, that one of the possessions over which Portuguese sovereignty was claimed would be lost. This helped to ward off the temptation either to abandon colonialism itself, or to abandon any one of the territories in particular, however difficult it might be to hold on or to exploit that territory.

One or other of these principles of colonial ideology predominated according to economic circumstances at the time. In principle, the idea of empire as a ‘sacred legacy’ was conservative in its effect, while the belief in the ‘boundless riches’ of the colonies was more of a stimulus to action.⁷

Obstacles

Sá da Bandeira’s policies in the 1850s naturally fell into the first type of approach. But the problems started to mount up as soon as the move was made from simple rhetoric to action on the ground.

A plan such as that drawn up by the Overseas Council demanded enormous resources, which the Portuguese state could hardly make available. Around this time the network of roads and railways was starting to be built in mainland Portugal. These were essential for creating an internal market, and were funded through government borrowing from abroad. In order to cover the expenditure required on the colonies, it would be necessary either to increase foreign indebtedness or to reduce the level of internal investment. Both these possibilities were strongly resisted, and it was difficult to extract from Parliament allocations of funds for the overseas colonies beyond current expenditure: it was a common notion that the colonies should at least be self-sufficient, and that they should not overburden the home country with their budget deficits.

As for private capital, it was rare that any private investor would be willing to invest in any major project in Portuguese Africa. The conditions prevailing in the Portuguese capital markets – scarcity of resources, strong demand for capital on the part of the government and, in consequence, the high price of money – account for this unwillingness: it was far safer and more profitable, at least in the short term, to invest at home, particularly in government bonds, rather than to risk one’s money in long-term enterprises of dubious profitability.⁸ It is true that from time to time both Portuguese and foreign businessmen would appear, asking for concessions of various kinds, with a view to setting up colonial companies but these were generally speculative ventures of short duration.

The difficulties which the government had in obtaining support from among Portuguese investors in order to convert its colonial plans into reality are clearly evident in the efforts on the part of the government, in the second half of the 1850s, to set up a steamship company to provide a

regular service between mainland Portugal and the possessions on the west coast of Africa. After several unsuccessful attempts, the Portuguese *Companhia União Mercantil* was finally established in 1858, with subsidies from the state. The company benefited from a legal system which provided substantial incentives for the use of Portuguese vessels to export and import goods to and from the colonies. In spite of this, the company, right from the outset, did not do well. Only a part of its capital was paid up – which meant it had to buy second-hand ships at far too high a price – and it went bankrupt in 1864, with the service from then on being provided by a British company. In analysing the case, a commentator at the time attributed the crisis at the *Companhia União Mercantil* to the ‘inauspicious influences which lie heavy on anything we do’, not as a result of plain bad luck, but ‘because of our lack of knowledge of business, our small-mindedness, and the excessive desire to make a lot of money very quickly, using as little capital as possible and not making a very great effort’ – defects which were present in statesmen as well as among businessmen.⁹ In other words, we would say today that there was a lack of business mentality and entrepreneurship, typical of a country which was still predominantly pre-capitalist.

One might nevertheless have surmised that Sá da Bandeira’s imperial design would at least have had the unreserved support of that part of the mercantile sector which lived mainly from the colonial trade, and which was already well established in Lisbon. But because it had very close ties with Luanda, this sector was resistant to the more modernising aspects of the plan, both from the social angle (abolition of the slave trade and of slavery itself, and outlawing of the forced labour of *carregadores* (loaders) and from the economic point of view (they supported sail ships as opposed to steamships). The only aspect of the plan which did suit their interests – the taking of the area at the mouth of the Congo, which would do away with that port’s competition with the Luanda trade – did not go ahead on account of the opposition from Great Britain, when an attempt was made to do this, in 1855–56. The idea of occupying that area from the interior, which was tried out in subsequent years, also failed, on account of lack of resources and the resistance of the inhabitants of the left bank of the Congo.

The plan to consolidate and modernise the imperial system was also opposed by the colonial centres in Africa, not just by those social groups with vested interests in slavery and in the slave trade, but also by the colonial administration itself, which had close ties to the traditional methods of exploiting the territories. As peripheral areas of the empire which had been centred on Brazil, the African possessions had inherited from the old regime an administrative apparatus in which private and public authority were inextricably intertwined, with the holding of official positions being translated into access to stronger means of coercion, which were then systematically used for the furtherance of personal gain. We were a long

way from the structures of a modern state based on the distinction between public and private interests. At the same time, there was no well-defined territorial entity based on the exercise of state power, but rather a zone of influence in which the influence of the Crown was exercised either more slackly or more tightly according to the seasons and the region in question, and which tended to disappear in the more peripheral reaches of each of the colonies.

Historically, this administrative apparatus was linked to the slave trade, and for the most part lived off it (especially in Angola, the situation in Mozambique being rather more complex). That was in fact its job, during the time of the Luso-Brazilian Empire, in which the African colonies' role was to supply labour to the American continent – a role which persisted for many years after Brazilian independence. It is not surprising that that administrative apparatus should have been resistant to change, especially in the field of slavery and forced labour. Hence the impotence of the central government, which often found that all the instruments which it had available to it to act in the colonies were often turned against it.

For all these reasons, Sá da Bandeira's imperial design of the 1850s was an almost total failure. It was not even possible to set up the few centres of white population which had been envisaged: the mainland population had started emigrating to Brazil in significant numbers – a trend which would accelerate in the subsequent decades. Its reluctance to emigrate to the dark continent was insurmountable: it was held to be the land of banishment and death.¹⁰ Far from consolidating Portuguese dominion over these lands, the period saw a decline during the 1860s, particularly in Angola, both on account of local difficulties and of the financial problems which then affected metropolitan Portugal.

It is true that towards the end of that decade there were signs that some of the overseas territories were beginning to change and develop in economic terms. In Angola, coffee exports grew and rubber exports began,¹¹ both of these commodities being spontaneously produced and harvested inland by the African population (only a small amount of coffee came from the plantations, at this stage). There was also an increase in the growing of sugar-cane, particularly for the manufacture of brandy, which was used in trade with the hinterland, replacing that which previously had been transported in the slavers returning from Brazil.¹² In Mozambique, the export of oils and oilseeds was developing, encouraged by the presence of representatives of two well-known trading establishments from Marseille, 'Fabre et Fils' and 'Régis et Aîné',¹³

Both in Angola and in Mozambique, however, these favourable trends owed nothing to metropolitan Portugal, but were merely the result of local adjustment to changes outside the Portuguese colonial system – amongst others, the closure of the Cuban market to imports of slaves in 1866 and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Only in the islands of São Tomé e Príncipe – an archipelago located in the Gulf of Guinea, close to the

Gabon coast – was Portugal's role crucial in starting up a plantation economy based on coffee, funded by capital derived from the slave trade but encouraged from the 1860s onwards by capital flows from the Portugal itself.¹⁴ The Banco Nacional Ultramarino, founded in 1864, and subsidised by the state, had branches in this territory. It was the only financial institution which set up operations in the Portuguese African colonies, and held the monopoly of banking operations and the privilege of issuing the currency.

The Portuguese colonial design and the partition of Africa

The drive to modernisation

The overall background to the Portuguese imperial plan changed as a result of the increased European interest in the African continent during the 1870s. Portuguese political élites became aware of this change around 1875–76, as a result of the news of the journeys of various explorers in Africa (such as Stanley and Cameron, who came close to the Portuguese dominions) and also as a result of the setting up of the International African Association by King Léopold of Belgium in 1876. In reaction to the perceived threats, the *Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* (Lisbon Geographical Society) was founded in Portugal in 1875. In the years to come it would play a significant role in defining Portuguese colonial policy. In the short term, it inspired the Portuguese journeys of exploration which started in 1877.

As far as the government was concerned, the increase in external pressures breathed new life into the imperial plans. The whole climate of increased awareness of colonial matters in Europe in the final quarter of the nineteenth century did not bring about the Portuguese state's interest in the overseas colonies, which, as we have seen, dated from well before this time, but it affected the way it acted, and made colonial issues much more pressing. Those who argued in favour of a policy of modernisation and development of the empire began to gain in influence, even if this involved some sacrifice of metropolitan Portugal's interests. This line of thinking was personified in Andrade Corvo, who for most of the 1870s was both Foreign Minister and Minister for Overseas.¹⁵ In his official reports and in the *Studies* he later published, Corvo represented the reformist approach to the empire. Its main feature was the desire to break with the isolationism which had dominated Portugal's overseas policy, implicitly or explicitly, in earlier years.

We cannot continue to live in isolation, as used to happen when our colonies in Africa were reserves for the production and breeding of slaves, or little more than that. Today's world is a world of work, not indolence; the earth belongs to mankind, and nobody can withhold

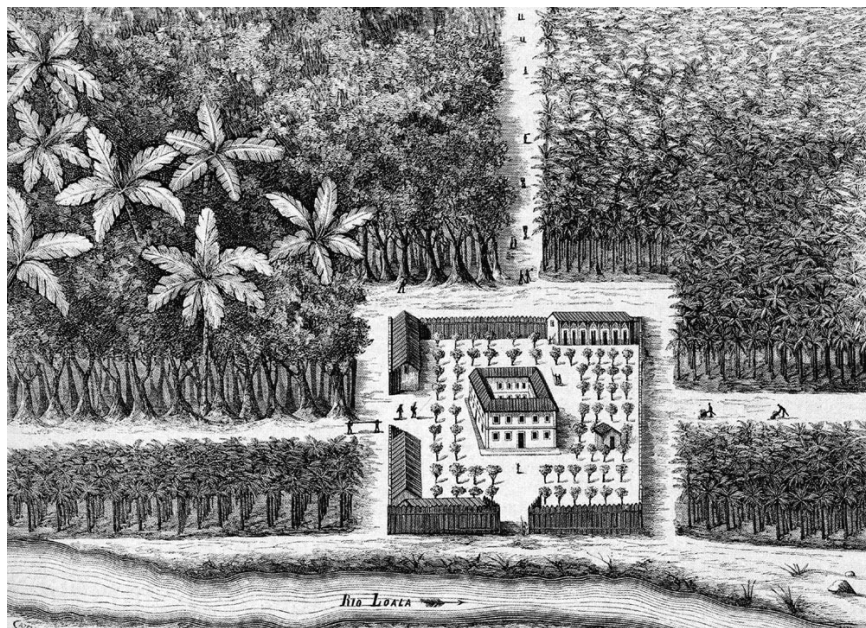


Plate 4 Trade point in the Kwanza River, Angola (source: J.A. da Cunha Morais, *Africa Occidental: Album Photographico e Descriptivo*, 1885–1888).

from civilisation that which rightfully belongs to it. We have to produce, and produce in large quantities, in those places where nature has concentrated its productive strength . . .

he wrote in the first volume of the *Studies*. And in another passage he added:

To lock ourselves up at home; to close our ports with exclusive rights, privileges, monopolies; to leave roads covered with undergrowth and impassable; to do nothing productive in the erroneous belief that we are economising; to regard isolation as a strong point and railways as a weakness, to close our eyes against the light so as not to see that others don't see us; to do nothing to further civilisation and humanity and still want others to respect us; to occupy vast areas of the world without frankly accepting the responsibility that this entails for us; these are the mistakes that at every instant disturb the reason and weaken the physical and moral strength of our country.¹⁶

As this very critique implied, there were various ways in which the country would have to open up to 'civilisation' and to 'progress'. One of these was

obviously the liberalisation of trade, the ending of monopolies, exclusive rights, special privileges and other 'hindrances to foreign trade' which stifled 'competition, and with it life itself'.¹⁷ Another was the development of means of transport which would enable the wealth of the colonies to be exploited.¹⁸ In the social field it was not only slavery which had to be suppressed (this had already been achieved, on paper at any rate, through the decree dated 25 February 1869), but also the forced labour to which the 'freedmen' were subjected (this category encompassed former slaves and Blacks who continued to be bought in the interior of the African continent).¹⁹

Andrade Corvo was also in favour of moderate expansionism in Africa, which should never stretch beyond available resources, bearing in mind the territories' productive capabilities and the necessary capital requirements. This expansion was to be achieved not by military means, but by more peaceful means, through the 'attraction' which the 'native' population would feel for the development afforded by 'civilisation'. At the same time, Corvo envisaged a broad policy of agreed arrangements with Great Britain to delimit frontiers in Africa and for economic co-operation in the whole of the overseas empire.

Despite the huge gap which normally existed between the general idea and practical realisation, not all of this vast plan remained on the drawing board. For the first time a serious effort was made to encourage economic infrastructure in the overseas territories, by means of the so-called 'public works expeditions' which took place from 1877 onwards, and which were funded by loans specifically contracted for that purpose. And a practical start was made on trade liberalisation with the tariffs promulgated for Guinea and Mozambique in 1877. In the following year, the concession of a large part of Zambezia, in Mozambican territory, to a Portuguese officer, Paiva de Andrada, whose aim was to set up a company to exploit the area, was a first step towards opening up the overseas empire to foreign capital. Another fundamental part of the plan – the abolition of slave labour – did go ahead, in the legal domain, with the promulgation of the law dated 29 April 1875.

The area in which Andrade Corvo's measures to reform the empire was most strongly felt was undoubtedly that of foreign relations, where the aim was to establish closer relations with Great Britain. The first initiative in this direction led to the signing of a treaty on Goa (a Portuguese territory in India), in 1878, under which the British government agreed that a railway line should be built to link the port of Mormugão to the British railway network in the Indian subcontinent, in exchange for Portugal's doing away with the trade barriers which protected the products of its colony. The second step was the negotiation of the Treaty of Lourenço Marques, in 1879, whereby that port in southern Mozambique was linked to the Transvaal, against certain military trading concessions granted to Great Britain. According to Corvo, the two treaties were part of a 'system'

which would encompass a third agreement relating to the delimitation of Angola's northern border, under which Portugal would gain sovereignty over the lower reaches of the left bank of the Congo.²⁰

As with Sá da Bandeira 20 years before, Andrade Corvo's plan for modernisation of the empire went against existing colonial vested interests. In Africa there was strong resistance to the abolition of forced labour, and ways were found round it by means of local regulations which continued to allow the traffic of Blacks from the interior of the continent to the colonial settlements, thus providing legal cover for practices which were not far removed from slavery. At home, those sectors which were involved in trade with the overseas colonies, and which were sheltered by protectionist tariffs and preferential duties, naturally looked askance at the opening up of the empire to foreign capital and at the liberalisation of commerce with the outside world.

In the political arena, the idea of investing in the colonies continued to encounter opposition from the traditional wing which believed that the overseas possessions should be self-sustaining, and that the development of the home country should not be put in jeopardy on their account. In Parliament, this approach prevailed, in part, with the result that the amount of loan for public works overseas was reduced in relation to the amount initially envisaged by Andrade Corvo, and the 'expeditions' were brought to an end at the beginning of the 1880s.

A few, very infrequent, sceptical voices went further, questioning the whole viability of the colonial plan itself. One such was Rodrigues de Freitas, who appealed in the Chamber of Deputies for a rational and dispassionate appraisal of the whole business. It is worth quoting his words in full here, as they go to the heart of the matter:

Nothing is easier than making the country believe – erroneously – that it can expect to find enormous riches and the greater glory of Portugal overseas, enough resources to enable it to pay off all its debts, and to develop to our full economic and political strength.

It is all too easy to do this; but if we take a close and serious – and even patriotic – look at the matter, at what we are, what we have, what these colonies are and what they require of us, we will surely reach more advantageous and more logical conclusions; and those conclusions do not sit ill with our feelings, nor with our love of our country (*Hear! Hear!*).²¹

To take a close and serious look at the issue meant taking into consideration that to profit from the alleged riches of the overseas possessions demanded certain elements – capital, credit, workmen, a navy and an army – which Portugal lacked, and so it should restrict itself to more moderate expectations of the potential advantages to be had from the possessions:

But if until now we have been unable to obtain in sufficient degree even one of these elements, how much more difficult is it going to be for us to achieve the combination of all of them? It is clear that we must exercise all possible caution when we describe the riches of the overseas colonies to the country as being extensive; let us make sure to tell them at the same time, in long sentences and at considered length, about the difficulties we have in colonising these territories.²²

Admitting nonetheless that Portugal might ‘within certain defined limits, be a colonising people’, Rodrigues de Freitas thought it essential that there should first be a period of reflection: ‘Before we colonise, let us understand what we are and what we can be; in fact it is to the colonies that the little strength we have now at home will flow bit by bit (*Hear! Hear!*).’ Above all, what was needed, and was an essential task, was a reform of the kingdom itself, and this should be carried out before any other task: ‘We need to commit all our efforts to ensuring that the government of metropolitan Portugal is a good government, that all branches of the state administration improve and that the moral and intellectual level of the nation is raised (*Hear! Hear!*).’²³

The emergence of radical nationalism

But this cold view of the issue would become increasingly difficult to sustain over the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as a result of the emergence of a new factor which was ideological in nature: the taking root of a radical nationalist current with strong imperialist sentiments, able to mobilise significant numbers of the urban masses in the main cities of the country (Lisbon and Porto) on issues relating to the colonies.²⁴ The more extreme nationalist rhetoric was used by all parties when in opposition and was the basis for the propaganda of the recently constituted Republican Party. In 1879 it was used to attack the Zambézia concession in favour of Paiva de Andrada (regarded as a camouflaged sale which endangered the wholeness of Portugal’s national territory) and, in 1881, the Treaty of Lourenço Marques (criticised as a surrender to Great Britain, which would lead to the loss of the Portuguese dominions in Africa). In this latter case the campaign was successful in that it prevented the treaty from being ratified.

For those who followed this tendency – which became dominant in the 1880s and affected both colonial and foreign policy – most of central Africa belonged to Portugal as a historic right deriving from the maritime Discoveries of the fifteenth century and from the journeys and expeditions into the interior of the African continent conducted from both the east and the west coasts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In itself this idea was not new: invoking historic rights had always been used as an

argument in defence of the Portuguese position in Africa, in the legal sphere. The novelty lay in the degree to which this new viewpoint was taken up, expanding and affecting the whole of the politically aware population (it would end up becoming so entrenched in the national consciousness that it is still current even today).

The emergence of this populist nationalism had contradictory consequences in the political domain: on the one hand, it provided a stimulus to imperial plans, which were able to take advantage of the new level of interest which the colonial question aroused; on the other hand, it made it difficult for the Portuguese state to adjust to an international system which was in rapid transformation.

This constraint had already made itself felt in the campaign against the Treaty of Lourenço Marques – and, as we saw earlier, had actually prevented it from coming into effect – and it affected the foreign policy of several governments over the following decade, obliging them to adopt a uncompromising position in negotiations for the delimitation of the borders of the African territories which were then taking place.²⁵

The process of defining frontiers had begun at the end of 1882, at a time when conversations started between Lisbon and London on the lower Congo (or Zaire) region, which had long been claimed by Portugal. Great Britain, which had consistently opposed this region falling under Portuguese rule, was now more receptive to the idea, because it would indirectly allow it to oppose France's ambitions to establish itself in the territory following the treaty signed by Brazza and King Makoko in 1880, and its ratification by the French Parliament two years later. But the negotiations dragged on, with the two sides having difficulty in reconciling the differences in the two governments' approaches to this issue: London saw it as a concession to be made to Portugal (to compensate, essentially, for commercial privileges to be granted to the British in Angola and Mozambique and by a territorial agreement which would exclude Lake Nyasa in east Africa from Portuguese rule). For Lisbon, Great Britain was doing nothing more than recognising Portugal's historic rights, and therefore had no right to any compensating clauses it might try to introduce. The Treaty of Zaire was finally signed on 26 February 1884, giving Portugal sovereignty over the final stretch of the river (albeit with some limitations on the exercise of that sovereignty).

The agreement was at once fiercely attacked in both countries – in Britain, by trade associations and anti-slavery organisations, who saw it as a threat that Portugal should establish a presence in the lower Congo region (this campaign was also encouraged by King Léopold of Belgium); in Portugal, by all shades of the opposition, based on the argument that only a small part had been obtained of that which belonged to the Portuguese nation as a historic right. The Lisbon Trade Association (*Associação Comercial de Lisboa*), in which colonial interests carried significant weight, also reacted unfavourably, holding it as unacceptable that there

should be total free trade for the Congo region as provided for in the treaty.

From the Berlin Conference to the British ultimatum of 1890

France and Germany also raised objections to the treaty, which led the London government to drop it. The Congo question gave rise to the Berlin Conference, which took place between November 1884 and February 1885, with the aim of setting the rules to be observed in trade with the African continent, in particular the major inland waterways like the rivers Niger and Zaire, and to establishing the principles which would govern new territorial occupation.

In Portugal – which was one of the 14 countries represented at the conference – the reaction to the calling of the conference fluctuated between the triumphalist assertion of historic Portuguese rights, together with the certainty that these would be recognised by all the powers involved, and the more frequently expressed fear that the country would once again be robbed under a new ‘division of the spoils’. As we now know, the negotiations which went on in the wings led to the recognition of the Congo Free State and of its sovereignty over most of the Congo river basin. Portugal gained the left bank of the Congo river, from its mouth up to Noqui, and, to the north of the river, the territories of Cabinda and Molembo.

In objective terms this outcome represented an expansion of the territory, in an area where the Portuguese presence amounted to little more than a few trading posts, which were outnumbered by those of other countries. In subjective terms, given the expectations and the widespread belief in the importance of Portugal’s historic claims, this outcome was seen as a disaster and as a serious blow to Portuguese sovereignty in Africa. This produced a strong feeling of having been victimised, which was exacerbated by the accusations which were levelled at Portugal from abroad, particularly in England, as the negotiations for the Zaire Treaty were coming to a close, whereby Portugal’s ability to develop trade and civilisation in its overseas colonies was called into question, and fingers were pointed at its complicity in the slave trade. The internal and external images of the nation were in open contradiction – and this helped to encourage the more radical forms of nationalism.

The Berlin Conference also reinforced the tendency of those in Portugal who argued for the need to invest in Africa, demonstrating greater initiative and greater capacity in the economic sphere, in which, after the semi-failure of Andrade Corvo’s ‘public works expeditions’, only one success had been recorded: the formation with Portuguese capital, in 1881, of the *Empresa Nacional de Navegação* (National Shipping Line), subsidised by the state to carry out a regular liner service from metropolitan Portugal to the colonies on the west African coast and back. In June 1885,

in the immediate aftermath of the conference, the Parliament rapidly approved a plan to which it had several times refused to give the go-ahead in earlier years: the construction, by a Portuguese company, of an inland railway starting out from Luanda, in Angola, with a guaranteed return on the investment. In the debate on the draft statute, the planned railway acquired a symbolic value: apart from dealing with the problem of the anticipated competition from the Congo Free State, it would also bear witness to the Portuguese ability to achieve things in Africa, opening up the whole hinterland to the advance of civilisation (the reality would turn out to be quite different: short of money, the building of the railway was to drag on for years and years, and became a bottomless pit for the public purse).

Two other conclusions were drawn from the conference. The first related to the occupation of the area between Angola and Mozambique, an old objective which now took on a new urgency, given the appetite for Africa which the various powers had shown at the Berlin Conference.

The second conclusion had to do with foreign policy. By now it was clear that in the colonial sphere the world was no longer dominated by a single hegemonic power, but that there was a multipolar system, in which Great Britain would find it difficult to impose its will on its own. This required Portugal to play a broader-based game, diversifying its sources of



Plate 5 Residence of an Afro-Portuguese landlord, Quelimane, Mozambique (source: *O. Occidente*, 11 January 1888).

support, and all the more so because during the Conference the London government had abandoned Portuguese interests to their fate. This was why there was now a change in the direction usually followed by the government in Lisbon, which sought the prior agreement of France and Germany – formalised in the conventions of 12 May and 30 December 1886, respectively – in order to guarantee recognition of a Portuguese zone of influence in the lands between Angola and Mozambique. Thus began a balancing act between the various powers, with an appeal being made above all for German support to counteract British pressure.

Historic rights were also invoked as the foundation for Portuguese territorial claims – the ‘opening up of sub-Saharan Africa to the world’, the setting up of trading posts, the spreading of the gospel, the presence in the interior of the continent as a result of ancient expeditions and journeys of inland exploration, documented in maps which anticipated Livingstone’s recent geographical discoveries. For most of the political élites, territory belonging to Portugal on the basis of these titles would include, in addition to the lower Congo (lost to King Léopold of Belgium), the whole area lying between the occupied territories of Angola and Mozambique (thus connecting the western and eastern coasts of Africa) as well as the region of Lake Nyasa.

Once again the increasing pressure of the interests of the various European powers in Africa rapidly put paid to these illusions. In this particular case, the Portuguese claims were in conflict with British plans for northward expansion from the Cape, headed up, at the end of the 1880s, by Cecil Rhodes and his British South African Company. For their part, the Scottish missionaries established in Blantyre (Nyasaland) reacted unfavourably to the idea of incorporation of that territory into the Portuguese dominions.

The Lisbon government, faced with Great Britain’s refusal to recognise Portuguese rights in these regions at the end of 1887, tried to resist, seeking German diplomatic support (which never came) and strengthening the Portuguese presence on the ground through a series of expeditions. In unofficial negotiations, held in March–April 1889, Foreign Minister Barros Gomes was willing to give up the territory connecting Angola and Mozambique, provided that Portugal obtained the area of Lake Nyasa; London, however, did not accept this proposal. But this was the most the Portuguese government could concede, given the pressure of imperialist populism at home (it was not even certain that this compromise could have appeased the anger of the dominant radical nationalist tendency).

But by this time Salisbury had already made up his mind to teach a lesson to a small country which dared to interfere in a Great Power’s plans. A few months later, using the pretext of a clash between one of the Portuguese expeditions and the *makololos*, south of Nyasa, who were under British protection, the British government demanded the with-

drawal of that expedition and of all other Portuguese forces in the disputed territories. This was the ultimatum of 11 January 1890, to which the Lisbon government gave in on the following day.

You will not find any record of this episode in the history of international relations, but it is a key date in Portuguese history. Taken as the theft of irrefutable rights and perceived as a national humiliation, the ultimatum was a tremendous jolt to Portugal: nationalist pressure, built up over the previous ten years as a result of the 'lack of regard' from the outside world and imperial populism, finally exploded, convulsing the country for several months and leaving its mark on a whole generation.²⁶

In this context, a first attempt to reach an agreement with Great Britain through a treaty signed on 20 August 1890 failed. The treaty could not be ratified on account of the wave of unrest which it provoked. The monarchy itself was threatened: on 31 January 1891, there was an attempted republican *coup d'état* by the military in Porto. In Africa, the Portuguese position was deteriorating: in the absence of a territorial delimitation treaty, Cecil Rhodes' 'British South African Company' increased its sphere of influence at the expense of Mozambique.

Finally, the crisis led the monarchist parties to rally together, to resolve their internal differences and to seek a rapid solution to the conflict with Great Britain – a solution which came with the treaty of 11 June 1891. By this time the wave of unrest had subsided, and the agreement – which was no more favourable to Portugal than the one from the year before – was ratified without dispute.

Under the terms of this agreement, the west bank of Lake Nyasa remained under British sovereignty, as did the highland plateau region in the interior of central Africa. This put an end to Portuguese ambitions to connect Angola to Mozambique, by means of dominion over a continuous stretch of land running between the west coast and the east coast. In objective terms, the new territorial limits set by the treaty represented a major expansion for Portugal, which was granted vast swathes of territory over which had until then it had had no power or influence. But the perception of these events and their outcome in the country itself were completely different: the collective memory retained the notion that a vast empire had been lost at the end of the nineteenth century, by imposition of the will of a hegemonic power at the time, Great Britain.

Conclusion

The significance of the fact of having colonies and the heavy weight of ideological factors in discussion of this fact are the most obvious observations which come out of the brief summary conducted above of how the Portuguese colonial plan developed throughout the nineteenth century, in the long period of transition which runs from the secession of Brazil to the consolidation of the new system centred on Africa.

With this conclusion I tend to be closer to Hammond's thesis than to Clarence-Smith: economic interests clearly played a minor role in consolidating Portuguese dominion overseas, and the sectors connected with the colonial trade were fairly small. Imperial designs were not born of pressure from a financial and mercantile bourgeoisie which had known its last burst of prosperity at the turn of the century and which barely survived the series of disasters which befell it over the following decades – the invasion of Portugal by Napoleon's forces in 1807, and the subsequent war, which spread to the whole of the Iberian Peninsula, and lasted until 1814; the royal court's move to Brazil, also in 1807, which led to the opening up of that American colony's ports to foreign shipping, with the consequent very sharp decline in metropolitan Portugal's trade flows with the outside world; severe political disturbances, punctuated by civil wars, during a period of political and social unrest which did not end until 1851. Moreover, the main trade of the Portuguese colonial settlements in Africa – the slave trade – was firmly controlled from Brazil, as we saw above, which made any attempt to establish trading houses in metropolitan Portugal both risky and unattractive.

We therefore should see in Portugal's colonial plans in the nineteenth century the expression of a political desire, driven by imperatives of a strategic nature (creating a counterweight to the centripetal tendencies of Madrid) and of an ideological nature (the country's image of itself and its image as built up and emphasised by the Portuguese élites, based on a colonising and civilising mission – or, in a different register, an evangelising mission – which had its origins in the maritime voyages of the fifteenth century).

There is nevertheless a degree of ambiguity in this ideology: it contains various different and sometimes conflicting ideas regarding the role of the empire in the national consciousness as a whole. Although there is a risk of oversimplifying a complex issue, it is possible to distinguish two key tendencies: that which saw in the colonies above all the legacy of past greatness, an inheritance to be preserved, by virtue of the position it occupied in the nation's memory and identity; and which hoped to see the overseas lands spill over with riches which would revive the mainland economy and consolidate its political independence.

The function of the first of these ideas was, in principle, purely passive – to forestall any temptation to forsake the colonial path – either in general terms or in any one territory in particular, however difficult and however unprofitable it might be to exploit those territories; and to insist on the most stubborn resistance to any external threats to the integrity of all that which supposedly belonged to the empire. It would be legitimate to describe this as 'passive imperialism' – provided that we bear in mind that this conception of empire, by taking root in the politicised urban class, ended up acting as the basis for Portuguese colonial expansion at the end of the century.

But the imperial plans formulated before the partition of Africa were based mainly on the second point of view – that which saw in the overseas possession a potential Eldorado. Here there was already a direct relationship with economic facts, on several levels. Even though the core objective of the plans was political in nature, there was from the outset an awareness that mere possession of a vast empire was not enough to fulfil those plans: the advancement of the nation, or even its simple survival, would depend above all on its ability to develop an economy centred on itself, with the colonies serving as a complement to the narrow national market. In order to get there, it would be necessary to mobilise capital and private enterprise – a task which, even though it was tried several times, turned out to be very difficult to put into practice, as we have seen earlier. Two sets of reasons, which are not mutually exclusive, can be invoked to explain this unwillingness to invest in colonial undertakings: the adverse conditions in the internal capital market and the lack of an entrepreneurial spirit of the vast majority of those with financial power in Portugal.

The sector involved in trading with the overseas colonies was made up of small firms, which had few resources to undertake more ambitious projects. Although it played a fundamental role within the empire, by maintaining the scarce relations which connected the home country with the overseas territories, this sector was also a brake on its modernisation, in both the social and economic fields. The position of the owners of the coffee and cocoa plantations (*roças*) on the islands of S. Tomé and Príncipe was no different. In general these were absentee owners, and as a rule they reinvested their capital in Portugal.

In this connection, if the imperial plan did finally achieve any success at all, it did so for reasons which were outside the realm of economics. But it would clearly be wrong to derive from this conclusion any argument in favour of an overall theory which sees in European imperialism merely the expression of political and ideological factors. In fact, if we were to extend our analysis over time, looking at the three subsequent decades, we would see that the picture we have just outlined would in fact change, on account of the greater importance which economic interests took on once the partition of territories in Africa had taken place. The introduction of extremely high protectionist customs tariffs in 1892 enabled Portuguese economic production – in this case cotton textiles and wine – to export significant quantities of product to the African colonies for the first time. At the same time, the transit trade in colonial goods played a decisive role in helping metropolitan Portugal to recover from its severe economic crisis in the 1890s, in that it brought in foreign currency at a time when emigrants' remittances from Brazil were in decline. Finally, many members of the ruling class occupied positions as directors of the colonial companies formed at this time, usually in partnership with foreign investors.²⁷ So, in this period, Clarence-Smith's thesis, with its emphasis on the economic nature of Portuguese imperialism, is closer to the facts of the matter.

From this we can draw one final conclusion, which is of a general nature, and that is the futility of trying to explain a complex question such as Portuguese colonial expansion by means of one interpretative formula alone, and of seeking to use that single formula to give it meaning. The same will hold good, with even greater reason, when analysing late nineteenth-century European imperialism as a whole.

Notes

- 1 Exports of products from the colonies amounted to two-thirds of Portugal's total exports to foreign countries. The capital employed in the burgeoning (textile) industry came from the colonies. See Borges de Macedo, *Problemas de História da Indústria Portuguesa no Século XVIII* (Lisbon, 2nd edn, 1982), p. 72; Valentim Alexandre, *Os Sentidos do Império – Questão Nacional e Questão Colonial na Crise do Antigo Regime Português* (Porto, 1993), pp. 765–92; Jorge Pedreira, *Estrutura Industrial e Mercado Colonial – Portugal e Brasil 1780–1830* (Lisbon, 1994), pp. 261–375. On the significance of the oceanic trades to the Portuguese State Treasury from the sixteenth century onwards, cf. Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, 'Finanças e Estrutura do Estado', in *Ensaio* (Lisbon, 2nd edn, 1978), vol. II, pp. 29–74.
- 2 Sá da Bandeira, Marquis of (1795–1876). A soldier with technical training (in engineering and mathematics), he played an important part, on the Liberal side, in the civil war of 1832–34, which led to the fall of the Absolutist regime. Throughout his extensive political career – during which he was at various times Prime Minister, Minister for War and Minister of Marine and the Overseas Colonies – he was always in favour of the formation of a new Portuguese Empire in Africa, as an essential condition for Portugal's economic development and even for the preservation of its independence. This point of view is already evident in the report he presented to the Cortes on 19 February 1836, in which Sá da Bandeira bases the colonial plan on two fundamental arguments: the Portuguese imperial tradition, which went back to the fifteenth century; and the economic advantages which would stem from the African territories, both as markets and as suppliers of raw materials and precious metals. These twin arguments were current at the time, and in the years that followed would be taken up by many politicians and journalists, both in Parliament and in the national press. On all these points, see Valentim Alexandre, 'A viragem para África', in Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri (eds) *História da Expansão Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1998), vol. IV, pp. 60–87.
- 3 One conto was equal to 1,000,000 reis. At the time the pound sterling was worth approximately 4,500 reis.
- 4 The transit trade, based in Lisbon, became significant towards the end of the 1830s, benefiting from the protection afforded by the customs tariffs of 1837. The re-export of foreign products to Africa, of which there had been practically none in the first half of that decade, rose to 122.2 contos in 1842, 387.6 in 1848 and 519.5 in 1851. Re-exports of African products to other countries in these same years reached 244, 210.5 and 360.6 contos. Despite these increases, these numbers were low in absolute terms. See Jorge Pedreira, 'O Sistema das Trocas', in Bethencourt and Chaudhuri (eds) *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. IV, pp. 241–2.
- 5 David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York and Oxford, 1987), tables A.8, A.9 and A.10, pp. 249–54.
- 6 Valentim Alexandre, 'Nação e Império', in *ibid.*, pp. 90–104.

- 7 Valentim Alexandre, 'A África no imaginário político português (séculos XIX e XX)', in *Velho Brasil – Novas Áfricas – Portugal e o Império 1808–1875* (Porto, 2000), pp. 219–29.
- 8 The chronic deficit of the Portuguese public purse throughout the nineteenth century meant that it was easy for Portuguese investors to purchase government bonds, which had high rates of interest. See Magda Pinheiro de Sousa, 'Chemins de Fer, Structure Financière de l'Etat et Dépendance Extérieure au Portugal 1850–1890' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Paris I, 1986), vol. I, pp. 291–378 and 412–14.
- 9 Andrade Corvo, article in *Jornal do Comércio*, 22 August 1861.
- 10 In the whole of the nineteenth century up to the end of the 1880s, the numbers of people emigrating voluntarily from Portugal to Africa came to no more than a few dozen each year. The various government attempts to encourage colonisation failed, except for the project which began in 1884 in the southern uplands of Angola, with 222 colonists. Meanwhile emigration to other countries – almost entirely to Brazil – ran at around 3,000 departures annually from 1836 to 1849, and subsequently reached some 8,850 in the 1850s, 6,000 in the 1860s, 12,800 in the 1870s, and 17,300 in the 1880s. See Robert Rowland, 'Velhos e Novos Brasis', in Bethencourt and Chaudhuri (eds) *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. IV, pp. 303–23.
- 11 Exports of Angolan coffee, which amounted to just 3 tonnes in 1844, rose to an annual average of 1,815 tonnes from 1870–76 and 2,680 tonnes from 1880–85. Rubber exports rose from 14.6 tonnes in 1872 to 362 in 1873, 259 in 1874, 395 in 1880, 1,257 in 1884 and 1,718 in 1889. See Tito de Carvalho, *Les colonies portugaises au point de vue commercial* (Paris–Lisbon, 1900), pp. 56–7.
- 12 Jill Dias, 'Angola', in Jill Dias and Valentim Alexandre (eds) *O Império Africano – 1825–1890* (Lisbon, 1998), pp. 379–471.
- 13 Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique* (London–Nairobi–Ibadan, 1980), pp. 64–9; Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (London, 1995), pp. 317–23.
- 14 On the start-up of the plantation economy in S. Tomé e Príncipe, see Tony Hodges and Malyn Newitt, *São Tomé e Príncipe: From Plantation Colony to Microstate* (Boulder, CO, 1998); and Augusto Nascimento, 'São Tomé na segunda metade de oitocentos – a construção da sociedade colonial' (unpublished MA thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa), 1992.
- 15 João de Andrade Corvo (1824–90), a military engineer, started out on a technical and scientific career, in the field of agronomy. Elected to Parliament in 1865, he became a member of the government for the first time in the following year, as Minister of Public Works. He became famous mainly on account of his performance as Minister of Foreign Affairs, a portfolio which he took on jointly with that of Minister of Marine and Overseas Colonies during most of the 1870s. He was also ambassador to Paris, from 1883 to 1886.
- 16 Andrade Corvo, *Estudos sobre as Províncias Ultramarinas* (Lisbon, 1883–87), vol. I, 212; vol. II, p. 378.
- 17 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 363.
- 18 *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 212.
- 19 *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 64.
- 20 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 40–2, 162.
- 21 José Joaquim Rodrigues de Freitas (1840–96), an engineer and economist, was a professor at the Porto Polytechnic Academy. He was the first republican deputy to the monarchist Cortes, in the years 1870–74, 1878–82 and 1889–93. But in his opinions on the colonial issue he was in a minority within the Republican Party, which followed a radical nationalist line.
- 22 *Diário da Câmara dos Deputados* (14 February 1879), p. 445.

23 Ibid. (11 March 1879), p. 770.

24 On the emergence of radical nationalism and its importance in Portuguese political life in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, see Valentim Alexandre, 'Nação e Império', in Bethencourt and Chaudhuri (eds) *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. IV, pp. 112–42.

25 On Portuguese diplomatic history at the time of the Scramble for Africa, see Eric Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa, 1875–1891* (Johannesburg, 1976); Françoise Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo au XIXème siècle: Étude d'histoire des relations internationales* (Paris, 1972); Charles E. Nowell, *The Rose-Colored Map: Portugal's Attempt to Build an African Empire from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean* (Lisbon, 1982); Carlos Motta, 'Portugal em África face à Europa 1875–1916' (Louvain, 1989), three volumes (poli-copied thesis).

26 Basílio Teles, *Do Ultimatum ao 31 de Janeiro* (Lisbon, 1905).

27 See Jorge Pedreira, 'Imperialismo e Economia', in Bethencourt and Chaudhuri (eds) *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. IV, pp. 268–301.

8 The Scramble for Africa

Icon and idiom of modernity

Albert Wirz and Andreas Eckert

Introduction

Why did Germany take part in the Scramble for Africa? This is still somewhat of a riddle which we do not propose to solve. However, we do propose some new lines of argument, which we think might help to find an objective answer. We start from the assumption that it is essential to take the role of Darwinian revolution and its aftermath in nineteenth-century thinking more seriously in writings about colonial expansion and imperialism. Furthermore, we opt for a more situational approach than historians under the impact of structuralism were ready to do, highlighting the contingency in political decision-making. Moreover, while our argument will focus on Germany, we would like to stress the fact that modern colonialism was part and parcel of the great Western project called modernity. Thus while focusing on Germany, our perspective will not be exclusively German, quite the contrary. For what we are going to say is rather informed by the conviction that German history differs less from that of other European nations than historians make us think. The prevalent view among historians for a long time was that Germany followed a unique trajectory among European nations. Hence the talk of a German *Sonderweg*.¹ We think that this interpretation is the logical result of an essentially nationalist perspective in history.² For what is nationalism all about? It is about the construction of so-called national differences in a world of competing nation-states. Fair enough, German history is different from French history, it also differs from British history, not to mention Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands; Germany nonetheless shares many things with her neighbours. Each nation has its particularities, but they have also many things in common.

One of the shared traits of these European nations is their experience of an Industrial Revolution in the course of the nineteenth century. Another is the fact that their politicians all opted for the model of a nation-state. In addition, one of the main characteristics of nation-states is their desire to create a homogenous 'national' culture based on a single written language, codified by grammarians and taught in public schools.

This goes hand-in-hand with the construction of a single political unit and the creation of a single economy within the carefully policed state-borders. Nationalist thinking then was essentially territorially oriented. Political, economic, juridical and cultural spaces, all were conceived in territorial terms. Hence, nation-states were, and still are to this day, primarily territorial states. Revolutionary France had shown the way, the others had followed her example. Germany was among the last to achieve unification with the creation of the Reich in 1871.

Yet, western European nations had other things in common as well, not least their active participation in colonial expansion. All or most of them had annexed colonies by the end of the nineteenth century. And those who like France, Great Britain, Spain and Portugal had already been colonial powers before had taken the opportunity to enlarge their empires of old. There were few who did abstain from the Scramble for Africa, and those who did, did so rather because they lacked the necessary means or the opportunity than as a result of any fundamental opposition. Rather, people in Europe thought they had a right if not a duty to colonise the non-Western world. Many, however, had doubts when it came to the political and economic value of colonial dominions.

Prominent among those who queried the purpose of colonies was Bismarck, the powerful chancellor of the newly united German Reich.³ Yet, for all his doubts, he became one of the main actors in the Scramble for Africa. In 1884, he invited the Great Powers of the day to come to Berlin to find ways and means to channel their competing claims on African territory.⁴ The conference resulted in the well-known Congo Agreement which, contrary to a widely held belief, did not partition Africa, but laid down the procedural and legal frames of reference for colonial acquisitions. Chief among these prerequisites was the so-called hinterland clause, which transposed the territorial thinking of contemporary European politics into the colonial realm. The Congo Agreement also led to the international recognition of King Léopold II of Belgium's private colony in the Congo basin as *Etat Indépendant du Congo*, a tellingly absurd misnomer. Shortly before the formal opening of the conference, Bismarck had ordered his envoys to hoist the German flag on the banks of the Cameroon River, in Little Popo, in Lüderitzbay and in Bagamoyo, a port-town opposite the island of Zanzibar where German traders and colonial adventurers such as Carl Peters had negotiated protection treaties, some serious, some bogus, with local authorities. Hence, it was Bismarck, the colonial sceptic, who was responsible for the creation of a German colonial empire.

When it came to the establishment of colonial administrations, Bismarck again hesitated. Not wanting to burden the Reich with further tasks, he opted for a form of private indirect government, staffed and paid for by those who had a direct stake in the colony. He was soon to discover that this system did not work. In east Africa the officials of the charter

company charged with administrative duties behaved so arrogantly that they provoked armed resistance along the coast, which quickly developed into the so-called Arab wars. On the Cameroon coast, the Hamburg traders were hardly any more successful.⁵ Ultimately, Bismarck accepted that the imperial government had to take charge of the colonies, which it had annexed in 1884/85. He could have pulled out. Germany would hardly have been less well off than before. Yet, he opted to stay put and to go further down the road to colonial rule. This is significant. It is puzzling only when looked at *ex post facto* and with the benefit of hindsight.

So, in the end, Bismarck proved to be flexible enough to swiftly adapt his policies to changing circumstances. A sceptic of colonial expansion at the beginning, he turned into an enthusiastic flag hoister, only to find himself at the head of a widespread colonial empire in the early 1890s. Many in Germany shared his scepticism, more particularly those on the opposition benches in Parliament, the socialists among others. Actually, one expects to find the socialists among the most outspoken critics of Bismarck's colonial venture, as they turned out to be the most vociferous critics of colonial imperialism in later years. Yet the Scramble was a different pair of shoes. Later, the socialists would condemn the horrors of German colonialism, such as the genocidal wars perpetrated by German colonial armies in Namibia and in east Africa. They would uncover many a colonial scandal and they would repeatedly attack the colonial administration for its brutality, either in the administration of justice or the recruitment of labour. Yet, they, too, accepted what at the time was called the white man's burden. Their critique of colonial policies did not prevent them from accepting colonisation as such. Reading the parliamentary debates of the day, one cannot help being bewildered by the fact that the German socialists perceived colonialism as a sort of development aid for the 'people without history'. Thus, their political philosophy was hardly less colonialist than that of their political adversaries.⁶ Neither of the two was able to discard the shackles of a Eurocentric vision of the world. Both were prisoners of a mindset which associated Europe with progress, culture and civilisation. In addition, like most of their contemporaries, they mistook historical contingency for development, history for nature. In the event, they interpreted colonialism as both idiom and icon of modernity, ambiguity which brings to mind the position of Joseph Conrad, author of *Heart of Darkness*, the novel that was to become one of the foundational texts of literary modernism. Conrad had worked briefly as captain of a riverboat in the Congo Free State in 1890, experiencing at first hand the greed and brutality of colonial agents and traders in the area. Worse was to come, until the Congo Reform Association, led by the English journalist Edmond Morel, made these unparalleled atrocities public. The European public was scandalised and reacted with moral indignation, pushing the Belgian government to quickly take over. For his part, Conrad had spoken plainly in his novel.⁷ However, while criticising

the horrors of unbridled colonial exploitation, he had reaffirmed the very basis of colonial thinking by juxtaposing man and the environment, moral debasement and tropical nature. We shall come back to this point shortly.

For the moment, let us rather stress the fact that the colonial project was a Western project, shared by most people in Europe. Yet, nineteenth-century Europeans were not the only people who saw in colonisation an instrument of progress. A number of Africans were of the same opinion, more particularly those who had been educated in Western schools. According to them, Africa lacked civilisation, worse still, nineteenth-century Africa was also suffering from more than three centuries of slaving and slave trade. The ensuing economic and moral crisis could only be overcome, according to this line of reasoning, when modern European ideas and institutions were brought to Africa. Hence, they favoured European interventions and tended to take these as a prerequisite for the hoped-for Renaissance of Africa to its ancient glory. Christianity, literacy, technology, property rights and civil liberties proved to be such an attractive mix of things that almost everyone who was exposed to them fell under their spell.⁸

Dr James Africanus Horton is a case in point.⁹ Son of a freed Igbo slave settled near Freetown in Sierra Leone by his British liberators, Horton was educated by English missionaries. Later he studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh. After graduation, he joined the British Armed Forces stationed on the west African coast as an army surgeon. His pride in being an African, as expressed by his middle name, did not prevent him from favouring the military conquest of the Asante Empire, the sooner the better, because, according to him, Asante, the leading power in the region, was a bulwark of heathenism and a barbarian slaving state where terror reigned supreme. Was Horton, then, a colonialist? Not really, because contrary to his British superiors, he also called for the convocation of a west African Parliament, and he even anticipated the eventual independence of the Gold Coast, his elected fatherland. His sharing of colonial ideas and ideals did not prevent him from propagating nationalist ideas. Later generations of African intellectuals would rightfully revere him as one of the founding fathers of west African nationalism.

The life of Horton reminds us of two main paradoxes of nineteenth-century history: first, it points to the fact that Europe, the slaver, turned abolitionist and reinvented itself as a champion of civil liberties in Africa and elsewhere in the early nineteenth century. In theory at least, European intervention, social progress and political modernisation married well. Reality, however, proved different, not least because intervention led to colonial rule, and this rule favoured the further rise of racism. Horton himself discovered this fact when his superior refused to share a meal with him and even threatened to have him whipped when he did not keep his assigned subordinate place. Hence, even before the abolitionist campaign had reached its lofty targets, Europe transformed itself once more from a

champion of civil liberties into an agent of colonialism, inaugurating in the process a new period of servitude in Africa. The sons of Europe, self-declared defenders of human rights, turned out to be, once more, able and ready to violate these very same human rights. This we might call the second paradox. Contrary to what Horton had thought, colonialism and liberty did not match. And although colonisation and slavery differ in many respects, both regimes were based on violence, a violence that subjugates, confiscates and segregates.¹⁰ Racism, which was itself a product of modern slavery, engendered the prejudices that helped to legitimate wars of conquest, colonial servitude and colonial expropriation.

To be fair, let us quickly add that at the beginning of the twentieth century new ideas gained some ground in colonial circles. The talk of a right of conquest that was so prevalent at the time of the Scramble was replaced by a developmentalist discourse, which pretended to be liberal and rational at the same time. Thus, when Bernhard Dernburg, a banker, was appointed Secretary of Colonies in Berlin in 1906, he initiated what he called a rational colonial policy.¹¹ Its basic tenets were very close to the ideas held by Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, and those of the French policy-makers who asked for a speedy *mise en valeur* of the colonies. But did this new policy really break with the past? Certainly in regards to the means employed. The new colonial policy propagated peaceful means over war and conquest and it stressed the prime importance of capital investments as a prerequisite for the rational exploitation of natural resources. In the same vein the colonised were redefined as the 'main economic asset' to be husbanded accordingly, and with care. Yet, when it came to the goals of colonial domination, Dernburg did not offer any new ideas. The goals remained essentially the same. As before, the goal was prosperity at home. Once again, the interests of the colonising nation were put before anything else although Dernburg pretended that what was good for Germany by necessity was also best for the colonised. He had no doubts that what he did was in harmony with the laws of progress. And let us not forget that his policy meant more government in the colonies, not less, and a strengthening of disciplinary regimes.

Colonial partition as betting on the future

Before further elaborating our argument, let us pause and look at the state of research on the matters treated here. Instead of discussing the whole range of publications, which deal with the partition of Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, we shall focus on one single interpretation, the one presented by the Dutch historian Hendrik L. Wesseling, who is a pre-eminent expert of European overseas expansion. We do this because we think that Wesseling's interpretation, for all the low-key conventionalism of his methodological approach and narrative style, does point the way to a better understanding of the Scramble. His account of the history of

colonial partition of the African continent that was published in 1996 focuses mainly on events and the diplomatic wheeling and dealing during the Scramble for Africa.¹² Hence, it is mainly a story of great men. Nonetheless, it makes a seminal contribution to the existing literature because Wesseling proposes a self-consciously European interpretation, reaching far beyond the strictly national confines of more orthodox interpretations. Thanks to his European perspective, Wesseling comes up with a much more convincing history of Africa's colonial partition at the end of the nineteenth century than others. Another strong point of his interpretation is the stress he puts on the contingency of the events described.

According to Wesseling, the motives behind colonial expansion differ from country to country, from period to period, and from place to place. In some cases, strategic motives went hand-in-hand with financial goals, in other cases economic opportunism merged with political megalomania. He argues that it is impossible to isolate one particular interest as the driving force from which all the others ensued. He distances himself from Marxist interpretations and with good reasons as South Africa with its huge deposits of diamonds and gold discovered in the 1860s and 1870s was almost the only place with vast exploitable high value resources in Africa south of the Sahara at the time. There was barely anything in Africa south of the Sahara to captivate the fantasies of industrialists, bankers and the others who held the reins of power in late nineteenth-century Europe. True enough, some did invest some capital in different colonial ventures with an eye on speculative profits and quick returns. True enough, some did brisk business with oil products, ivory, gum and schnapps as long as the European economies were growing and supplies were cheap. Others had cast their eyes on rubber. Still others started to imagine the thousands and thousands of well-dressed Africans, which travellers like Heinrich Barth had encountered in west African cities, as prospective customers for the manufacturing industries of their home countries. However, when it came to take investment decisions, the rich and the fortunate of the day hesitated.¹³ No one wanted to risk serious amounts of capital in African colonies where not even property rights were guaranteed. No one wanted to get his fingers burned. Therefore, colonial enterprises were as a rule heavily under-capitalised and had to work on shoestring budgets. The traders from Hamburg and Bremen, together with members of several missionary societies, were the only people in Germany with a serious stake in the African territories annexed in 1884. Under normal circumstances, they would never ever have had the leverage they got during the Scramble for Africa. True, there were also the members of the *Kolonialgesellschaft* who were very vocal propagandists of colonial ideas, indeed. Yet hardly one of them was ready to risk more than a tongue.

Wesseling also distances himself from those who foregrounded geostrategic reasons in their interpretations of the Scramble. Instead, he privileges the political dimensions and the diplomatic stakes involved.

More particularly, he argues that the following developments in Europe had a determining impact: first, what he calls the collapse of Great Britain's hegemonial position in the aftermath of the unification of Germany and Italy. The creation of these two nation-states, Wesseling argues, engendered a new constellation of power in Europe and led to new and unforeseen inter-state rivalries. Furthermore, Wesseling draws attention to the rise of strong states in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. Technological innovations, economic growth and democratisation helped to bring about strong states which differed from earlier forms of political organisation by the number and the efficiency of the means of intervention available to the individual governments.

According to Wesseling, state and society henceforth were integrated so intimately that it is impossible to separate political from economic motives. The strength of Wesseling's arguments lies in linking industrialisation and imperialism, on the one hand, while at the same time asking for careful differentiation. What he proposes is a contextual interpretation, privileging the circumstantial and the contingent in history. Another of Wesseling's insights carries, we think, even more innovative potential than the ones just mentioned: his comparison of the Scramble with a lottery. Partition, he says, followed less the conventions of traditional foreign policy-making than the rules of a game of hazard. Furthermore, he stresses the divergence between intent and result. He argues that the majority of those involved had not much more in mind than to make territorial claims when they entered the game. Consequently, they were content with purely performative acts such as the signing of so-called protection treaties and the hoisting of the national flag in the coveted territories. What troubled them most was a pledge from the other European powers that they would not interfere in the regions where claims of colonial sovereignty were made. Local opinion, on the other hand, was hardly taken into account nor sought, as only Western nations were seen as sovereign states and hence accepted as full members of the international community. Finally, he argues, the governing of the colonial territories was seen as a matter to be dealt with later, just as the exploitation of local resources was left to the future. Hence, partition was first of all a diplomatic and a symbolic or even fictitious act, a sort of betting on the future, which we might arguably compare to the behaviour of stockjobbers. The recent bull-market and the new economy bubble indicate the power of desire and the far-reaching effects of a collective craze. As long as the going was good, even seemingly normal people such as well-settled neighbours turned into avid stock buyers, ignoring all risk-warnings. The media did their very best to keep the fire burning with stories of stockbrokers and up-and-coming internet entrepreneurs, young, cool, innocent and glamorous, even propagating the idea of day-trading as a way to quick riches. Being part of the crowd seemed all of a sudden more reasonable, or certainly more fun, than a laid-back approach in financial matters. In the event, many lost a good

part of their savings. Better off were those who had hedged their bets and had only bought a strictly limited amount of shares.

Hedging bets was also the preferred way of most metropolitan decision-makers in the late nineteenth century. They, too, wanted to be part of the game without committing themselves too deeply. Hence they opted for a strategy of a minimal presence in the coveted territories, such as port towns and a sprinkling of military stations in the immediate hinterland.¹⁴ If only the men on the spot had shared these ideas. Yet these men thought of themselves more in terms of shakers and breakers.¹⁵ Hence, after an interval of wait-and-see, the first military columns started their march towards the imagined riches in the 'unknown' interior. Some of these columns spread destruction wherever they went, others intervened in local conflicts, while still others, such as those who ventured into Beti country in south-central Cameroon had the good fortune to receive a friendly welcome by people eager for change.¹⁶ As a rule, the colonial officers allied themselves with those who flattered them most. In the event, complex networks of shifting alliances, of dependency and commandment were established.

Quite clearly, these colonial agents posed as powerful masters, although they were not always seen nor treated as such, because local dignitaries knew well that the power of the intruders was precarious at best. None was able to survive for any length of time without the hospitality of local people. Colonial domination was for quite some time strictly limited in its reach. There were few places where the power of the Europeans reached beyond the fortifications of their isolated footholds, which were spread out like islets in an immense sea. And if the colonial agents found almost everywhere people who clung to them out of self-interest, there were others who turned doing into an art form. There were those who welcomed the Europeans with signs of joy, there were those who kept their distance, and there were those who immediately took to the arms.¹⁷

Our main point is to stress that nowhere did colonial partition usher in colonial rule in its conventional sense right away. Rather it inaugurated a period of transition, full of misunderstandings and contradictory claims. This transitional period was a period of anxiety and unease, but also of new opportunities to be taken. At least in this period of transition, whose duration differed from place to place, local people had good reasons to think that the European presence would not last or, better still, that it might be incorporated into local political networks according to traditional rules of coping with competing and multiple sovereignties. Things changed when the large-scale recruitment of young men for portage, road and railway constructions began. Yet even then, local people had good reason to believe that they were still in charge of their own affairs, not least because the Europeans had to rely on intermediate forms of government. In Cameroon, the real threshold of a new epoch was only reached when the Germans started to expropriate the most fertile soils on the slopes of

Mount Cameroon for plantation purposes and when they started to suppress local trade monopolies for the benefit of European commerce in the mid-1890s.

But what about the terror spread by modern guns? It is true; many of the German men present were ever ready to use their superior military power in order to get what they wanted from the outset. Wherever they encountered resistance, they burned villages, hanged suspects, and killed as many people as they could. This colonial terror was far more devastating than any form of terror local people may have experienced before: 'We have never seen such killings', lamented the horrified people of Kribi in southern Cameroon when the Germans began to hunt down the rebels who had attacked the local station in 1889.¹⁸ Whether this experience changed the perception of the intruders, we do not know for sure. We might even argue the opposite, as local wise men will have known that the terror could not last. Africans thus had reasons to think that colonial intrusion was something that would pass quickly, and leave no lasting traces. And it made sense to think that the colonial agents were men to be manipulated and caught in local political webs.

If this turned out to be wrong, we should bear in mind that local politicians were not the only ones to be deceived, the colonisers were deceiving themselves as well in the sense that the predominance of purely performative acts in the transitional period also masked the seriousness of the situation for the competitors, thereby encouraging others to do the same. In this sense, we might even argue that the initial weakness of European colonial authority on the spot fostered partition. As long as all the others were staking out claims and were, thanks to press reports, seen to be doing so, there was no need for further arguments in favour of colonial intervention. As long as the show was going on, being part of the thrill was accepted as a legitimate reason to act. Competition bred competition. Surprisingly enough, no government ever came to the conclusion that it might be better to back down and withdraw from Africa, not even the British government in 1865 when it had serious doubts about further extending colonial rule in west Africa and set up a special parliamentary committee to deliberate on the matter. In the end, the expansionists carried the day although the committee had reported against further extension of direct control.¹⁹

This going further and further down a road once chosen may have to do with the then prevalent idea of authority, which stipulated that decisions taken by those in power were inherently right and that a change of opinion would be a sign of both lack of will and weakness of character. Today, sudden changes of opinion are an accepted part of the political game. Politicians even venture to say that only those incapable of learning would never change their first opinions. However, when it comes to matters of life and death such as the 'war against terror and the axis of evil' as proclaimed by President George W. Bush in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of

11 September 2001 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, politicians even nowadays tend to follow through on their initial proclamations, not least, we think, because they feel challenged in their honour.

We cannot match the sense of tragedy nor the scathing irony of the Gikuyu tale of the friendship between Mr Elephant and the man as told in Jomo Kenyatta's justly famous *Facing Mount Kenya: The Traditional Life of the Gikuyu*²⁰ which articulates Gikuyu experiences with British settler colonialism and builds on the moral insight that he who laughs last, laughs longest. It is a story of trust betrayed, of humiliation, dispossession and ultimate revenge, and it is a tale of a world turned upside down with the Europeans in the role of savage beast posing as reason incarnate.

All started so amicably well. An elephant had become friends with a man who 'had a little hut at the edge of the forest'. During a thunderstorm he asked him for shelter. The man duly obliged, inviting his friend 'to put his trunk in gently'. Mr Elephant, however, flung his friend out in the rain saying: 'My dear good friend, your skin is harder than mine, and as there is not enough room for both of us, you can afford to remain in the rain while I am protecting my delicate skin.' The man did as asked, but not without grumbling. As soon as the lion, the king of the jungle, heard the dispute, he called on his lords to form an 'Imperial Commission'.

The commission worked strictly according to rules, only to turn into a travesty of justice. When the victim asked why no one from his side was allowed to sit on the commission, they lectured him that 'no one was well enough educated to understand the intricacy of the jungle law'. The report followed a similar line of argument and echoing colonial discourses poured further insult on the poor man stipulating that the 'dispute had arisen through a regrettable misunderstanding due to the backwardness' of the man's ideas. The commission furthermore concluded that Mr Elephant had 'fulfilled his sacred duty of protecting [his friends'] interests' by putting the space 'to its most economic use', which the man was considered 'unable to do', as he had 'not yet reached the stage of expansion which would enable [him] to fill it'. The commission, therefore, confirmed Mr Elephant's right to stay on while the man was 'give[n] permission . . . to look for a new site'.

Worse was to come. As soon as the man had built a new hut, Mr Rhinoceros evicted him. The Lion King appointed a new Royal Commission that came up with a new removal order. This very same procedure was repeated until all the jungle lords were accommodated. The man built hut after hut, but to no avail. In the end the greedy intruders even started to fight amongst each other for his hut. This quarrel changed everything. Without much ado the man set the hut on fire and burnt it to the ground, 'jungle lords and all'. And to top it off he said to himself: 'Peace is costly, but it's worth the expense.' Violence had to be met by violence. Frantz Fanon said much the same in his analysis of colonialism and its impacts on the psyche of the colonised.²¹

The place of colonial partition in European history

What was the place of colonial partition in European history? According to Wesseling, the Scramble for Africa was happening on the margins of the European political arena; it was also, he thinks, only of marginal interest to Europe. Other historians had said the same before. And from an economic and financial point of view, the argument is certainly valid. The Scramble was a thing to be dealt with amongst the political élites of the day, and these élites had other preoccupations as well. Hence, the Scramble appears as a sideshow of contemporary European politics, whose importance differed from nation to nation. Yet, colonial partition was framed by a common set of aspirations and an encompassing political vision. For all their differences, these European élites had one thing in common: their thinking and their visions were profoundly nationalist. As mentioned before, nationalism meant competition and territoriality. Wesseling's history of the Scramble documents this in all conceivable details. Separating nationalism from colonialism, however, he misses the point that the creation of nation-states and colonial imperialism were but two sides of the same coin. Charles S. Maier from Harvard has foregrounded this in a recently published magisterial article on the history and the future of the nation-state.²²

Looked at from this perspective, the Scramble for Africa appears all of a sudden as a manifestation of the moving forces which shaped European politics at the end of the nineteenth century, its political and economic marginality notwithstanding. Hence, it might make sense to assign colonial partition a much more prominent place in European history than has been done before. When we also include the impact which the colonial experience has had on metropolitan cultures and societies, then it was arguably even one of the decisive political developments in the half-century before the First World War whether the colonies mattered in economic terms or not.²³

The African colonies quickly disappointed those who had dreamt of great economic gains as only some individuals of adventurous spirit and a certain roughness were able to make their fortunes in Africa, some traders, some land speculators, some mining companies and the royal family in Belgium. Most of the colonial enterprises, however, proved to be more or less disastrous, they made no profits and they failed sooner rather than later. Ironically, it was only towards the very end of formal colonial domination, when the process of decolonisation was already well under way, that the colonial powers profited in any critical sense from their African colonies. In the years immediately after the Second World War, the African colonies helped to pay for the economic reconstruction of the war-ridden European countries and to balance the metropolitan budgets. Not to forget the contribution Africans made to the war effort in both world wars. Many thousands of Africans sacrificed their lives in the

worldwide struggle for liberty. There is also Africa's contribution in cultural domains to be taken into account, such as popular music, jazz, rock and pop, the fine arts and dance. None of these contributions, however, can balance the negative effects of the colonial adventure. And in the absence of colonial rule, these cultural transfers might have come about with much more ease.

The racism so prevalent in modern Europe, on the other hand, is certainly one of the fatal legacies of colonialism in the West. Hannah Arendt, the philosopher, even argued that there is a direct link between colonial racism and the racism of the Nazis, between colonial wars and the Holocaust.²⁴ So far, this thesis has not been proven in any detail. Yet there can be no doubt that colonialism and Western modernity are linked in such intimate ways that we can hardly consider one without the other. Hence, it might be useful to have a closer look at the world-views of those who were in favour of colonial annexations at the end of the nineteenth century.

Colonial discourse and counter-discourse

In discussing Bismarck's colonial policy we stressed his ambivalence and his hesitancy. We have further argued that colonial domination was marginal in economic and strictly political terms. Yet it was at the core of modernity and its ideological underpinnings.

There are other paradoxes to be dealt with in the history of colonial partition. One of the most striking aspects of the Scramble was arguably the fact that even among colonial agents there were many who feared their endeavours would lead nowhere. In this respect, they were surprisingly close to their African adversaries. These doubts and anxieties were, however, rarely made public as it went against the pride of those whom the contemporaries in Germany called 'pioneers', 'heroes' and 'our Africans'. Hence, when they addressed the wider public, these people preferred to outline grandiose schemes, built on the visions of a prosperous and peaceful Africa, an Africa full of promises. Henry Morton Stanley, who was the son of a housemaid and a drunkard, educated in one of the ill-famed workhouses of nineteenth-century Britain, excelled in this sort of prose. He maintained that Africa's prosperity was in immediate reach. His was a deeply millenarist vision, which obviously touched a nerve in contemporary Europe.²⁵ We would like to argue that it addressed core notions of bourgeois society, that is, the idea according to which a man with determination can overcome whatever obstacles are on his way and the related notion of life as an never-ending struggle.

Stanley's books turned out to be instant bestsellers, not only in Germany, but also in Switzerland. Among Stanley's readers was many an adolescent youth fond of adventure stories, but also very sober gentlemen such as Gustave Moynier from Geneva.²⁶ Moynier was a pre-eminent representative of that enlightened bourgeoisie which so deeply influenced

nineteenth-century politics. A lawyer by profession, he was also a politician with deeply felt Christian convictions. He gained fame as co-founder and president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from 1864 until 1910. As a Swiss citizen, he was not directly involved in colonial partition, yet he was party to colonialism nonetheless. Henry Dunant, his joint activist at the head of the ICRC and future Nobel laureate, was more directly involved. Dunant, the great humanitarian, had even tried to establish himself as a colonial entrepreneur in Algeria. Moynier and Dunant both perceived colonisation as a Western civilising mission, which followed inevitably from the universal laws of progress.

We do not know of any colonial investment by Moynier. Yet, we do know that he supported as well as he could the endeavours of King Léopold II in the Congo. For a number of years Moynier published (and funded) a journal dealing primarily with African affairs. It had the telling title *L'Afrique explorée et civilisée*. To judge from what he said in his journal, Moynier sincerely believed that colonisation was the best for Africa and its peoples. He perceived colonisation as a form of reparation for the harm done by the slave trade. Hence, it is even more disturbing that he did not utter a word of criticism when the horrors of the Red Rubber Scandal in the Congo were made public. Was it because of his age? Alternatively, did he keep quiet because what had happened in the Congo Free State threatened the very substance of his Whig interpretation of history? In the absence of any private papers, we can, unfortunately, only guess.

Moynier's public life and his humanitarian struggle refer back to the very special experiences of the European bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century. Horton, whom we mentioned earlier, had much the same experiences. Moynier had been in the forefront of those who tried to reinvent Europe under the sign of modernity. He had been chased from Geneva by the enemies of the aristocracy. Weathering the popular storm in Paris, he later helped to build a liberal democracy in Geneva. He also witnessed enormous technical progress with the construction of railway lines, which linked the four corners of Europe and acted as symbols of a future of peaceful exchange. His experiences at the head of public welfare institutions in Geneva, one of the most progressive cantons in Switzerland, furthermore taught him that it was possible to find managerial solutions to social problems. He learned that it was possible to avoid misery as well as revolution if only the state was ready to invest in education and to secure property rights, and as long as the economy was growing. Born into a well-to-do Genevan family with links to the French aristocracy, he approached social problems with a robust paternalism. Geneva was a microcosm of the wider world to him. He was in no doubt that what was good for the small republic on the shores of Lake Geneva was just as good for the world, and more particularly for Africa. Africa for him, it is true, was still in a state close to barbarian beginnings, yet this did not alter his opinion that change

in Africa was possible. Rather, he was convinced that colonisation, scientific research, international law, education, Christian churches and commerce might quickly transform the continent and put it on the same path towards progress as Europe.

With the benefit of hindsight we now know that Moynier was wrong. Colonisation did not inaugurate a period of peace and progress, but a period of war, destruction and death. It may well be that this outcome did not really surprise him, as his optimism was tinted by a somewhat pessimistic hue. He repeatedly said that modern civilisation was a very precarious thing, adding that technical progress went hand-in-hand with destruction, in Europe as well as elsewhere. In any case, it was the Battle of Solferino with its associated horrors that had pushed the brave gentlemen from Geneva to create the Red Cross in the first place. Thus, we might even argue that Moynier's positive outlook on the world was rather rhetorical. Moreover, when one thinks about it, there can be no doubt that he, too, shared the same sort of millenarist thinking which we noted in Stanley. To be sure, Moynier's version was more religious than that of Bula Matari, the crusher of rocks.²⁷

This particular form of bourgeois millenarism was easily compatible with the idea of a crusade, which was at the heart of Moynier's endeavours, just as it easily matched with the drive towards colonies. Moynier fought for a more humane law of war, the colonial agents rallied around the idea of a crusade against slavery, against Arab slavers and also against Islam, which was feared as a force capable of mobilising mass resistance against colonial intrusions. Hence the colonial movement was able to exploit some of the same compassion and religious prejudices and the same visions of social equity which had constituted the strength of the abolitionist movement, the very first mass movement with humanitarian goals. Harry R. Rudin, one of the pioneers of German colonial history, called this colonial crusade, tongue in cheek, the strangest beast ever saddled on the way to the market.²⁸

If there was a grain of pessimism in Moynier's thinking, one finds much more of it in colonial reports and in travel accounts written at the time of partition. Reading these publications as attentively as they deserve, one quickly learns that the optimism of their authors was tainted by profound anxieties. One might even argue that there is a counter-discourse of fear and imminent defeat to be discovered in all these accounts, and more especially in those coming from equatorial Africa. The reason for this state of affairs is easily detected. First, many colonial agents became seriously ill while in Africa. As long as the aetiology of malaria was unknown, there was an appallingly high mortality rate. Others easily developed psychological problems such as the notorious *Tropenkoller*, or 'tropical neurasthenia'.²⁹ Second, contemporary ideas of Africa became increasingly negative.

The European colonialists of the day knew that they were not the first

invaders in Africa. There had been others before, such as the Arabs and other nomadic people coming from Asia. These ideas culminated in the so-called 'hamitic theory' as developed by German (and English) linguists and anthropologists in the late nineteenth century. According to this line of thinking, African states such as the Rwandan kingdom were founded by invading 'hamitic' herders from the north-east who subjugated the local 'Bantu peasants'.³⁰ The idea of earlier invasions helped to legitimate colonial conquest by inscribing it deep in the history of the continent. The idea of a continent criss-crossed by large-scale migrations also informed the thinking about the so-called Bantu expansion until quite recently, consolidating along the way what one might call a heroic vision of the African past.³¹ Tied to Hegel's vision of Africa as a continent with no proper history, unchanged and unchanging since time immemorial, this produced a rather unsettling image.³²

No doubt, both arguments had a racist bias. Yet, they had other aspects that were no less troubling. For if Africa had not changed at all, what, then, would happen under colonial rule? Would colonial domination be able to bring about significant change? Nothing was less certain than this in the minds of the colonialists. To mention but one example, the German geographer Siegfried Passarge, after travelling through the northern parts of Cameroon, had come to the conclusion that Africans were like a barren and debilitating morass, suffocating all initiatives and all progress.³³ His use of a topological trope to summarise what Africa was all about, was a distinctive feature of geographic and ethnographic discourses at the end of the nineteenth century. More particularly, it was at the core of what was called the German school of geography. According to this school of thinking, there was an intimate inter-relationship between climate and society, environment and culture. The argument had an intellectual ancestry reaching back to the Classics, and it had gained new prominence in the eighteenth century. What set the German school apart was the roughness, if not to say the violence, of its argumentation. The metaphor of the swamp used by Passarge referred first to the idea of Africa, the unchangeable. Second, however, it referred to a place beyond the reach of culture. Finally, the metaphor referred back to death. Swamps and 'toxic airs' emitted by them had been considered the prime causes of deadly tropical fevers such as malaria.

Hence in the colonial imagination the vision of a fundamental transformation thanks to European intervention was contradicted from the very beginning of colonial rule by a vision of Africa as a killing field. Africa was put once again under the sign of death. The same idea had been at the root of its representation in the period of the slave trade while the fight against slavery had engendered a short-lived vision of renewal, rebirth and new life. The conversion back to the idiom and the icon of death was clearly related to colonial anxieties and the will to rule. The image of death was furthermore associated with other negative stereotypes such as the notion

of a primordial chaos, or the idea that Africa was home to incessant wars and a place of cannibalism. Each taken individually, but more so when bundled together, these images and ideas tended to put Africans on the very margins of humanity. At the same time, they helped to justify the use of violence when dealing with the colonised or those to be colonised. Even Moynier argued that the lack of civilisation put Africans outside the laws of war as codified in the Geneva Convention.

This privileging of death over life in descriptions of Africa also articulated, we would like to argue, the anxieties of degeneration, decadence and entropy, which spread like wildfire in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁴ In the end, it stands to reason that the Scramble turned Africa into a battleground against these ‘epidemics’.

Notions of progress and entropy

The fear of entropy, which agitated more and more of Europe’s bourgeois societies, was rather paradoxical when the progress achieved in the nineteenth century is taken into account. It is even more puzzling when we consider the notions of superiority so prevalent in colonial and racist discourses. Were the intellectuals not disseminating the idea that European societies represented the highest stage of evolution? The very least one can say is that Europeans were very proud of what they had achieved. And any comparison with overseas societies, and notably those which travellers and colonial agents had encountered in Africa, made them even more self-satisfied. On the other hand, Europeans had learned that nothing was permanent. Europe had discovered this in a whole series of devastating wars, political revolutions and in the turmoil of the Industrial Revolution. According to Charles Darwin, nature herself was in perpetual evolution. Or to quote the eminent geographer Friedrich Ratzel, one of Darwin’s German disciples, life is permanent movement and change.³⁵ Swahili poets had made similar observations when they looked at German colonial agents. Hence, they described German officials as people who were always on the move, which pleased those so portrayed quite a bit. In the local imagination, however, it was rather double-edged praise because it put the Germans on the same level as jinns and sorcerers. This the poets did not say, but they knew it. And their audiences knew it as well. The generic term *mzungu/wazungu* used for white people all over east Africa speaks to the surprise of the first encounter with these ‘aimlessly wandering’ crazy people.³⁶

Any prolonged delay was considered stagnation in contemporary Europe or worse still as a sign of inevitable decline. Following Darwin, the intellectuals also learned to see society and nature as one. Natural sciences discovered the historical dimension of natural phenomena; social sciences discovered the natural dimensions of social phenomena. The outcome was a rather harmful tendency to naturalise the ideologies of the day. In addi-

tion, while technological progress seemed to accelerate lived time, geology, palaeontology and archaeology demonstrated that there were other time dimensions to be discovered, which went far beyond any historical time. Fossils and dinosaurs drew the attention of the curious who tended to take them as mementos of what happens to those who cannot change and cannot adapt. To the surprise of many, these vestiges of a past long gone proved to be as popular as the latest inventions when they were put on show in London in 1854.³⁷ The discovery of vast ruins of ancient civilisations such as the Khmer, the Maya or the pre-Columbian Inca in the midst of lush tropical forests seemed to tell a similar story. Yet, there were also tragic things happening at the time such as the 'death of the last Tasmanian' in 1869, that is, the brutal extinction of the indigenous population living in Tasmania in the aftermath of its colonisation by Great Britain.³⁸ And what to make of the presence of animals and plants in the tropics that had vanished from Europe for thousands and thousands of years? People became aware that the world was a large cemetery of efforts. The rise and fall of the Roman Empire was another story to give a sense of vertigo.

More interesting than the mere recognition of the omnipresence of death in the lived world was, however, the interpretation given to these different phenomena in nature, history and society. Darwin came up with the notion of 'survival of the fittest', which meant that only those who had a long-term future were able to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Sociologists translated this fundamental Darwinian notion as survival of the strongest and propagated the idea that life was a never-ending battle, thereby creating arguably the most dangerous and long-lasting misunderstanding of Darwinian thought. The Marxist idea of class conflict testifies to the strength of this vision in the recent past. Similar ideas cropped up in the most unlikely places such as in analytical descriptions of tropical rainforests written in the period of colonial partition and after!³⁹ Hence, it is not surprising to learn that military values were held in high esteem while societies, which highlighted other values, were quickly considered to be decadent. In addition, decadence in this heroic but pessimist vision of the world was but a precursor of decline and death, whether the subject was a state, a society or what in its time was called a race. Hence, it made sense to take on any challenge, where and when it offered itself.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we should like to repeat that economic interests did not play a significant part in the colonial partition of Africa south of the Sahara if we exclude the rather untypical case of South Africa and Rhodesia and if we redefine the interests of the traders who did gain some leverage in the process as sectional, rather than economic. Furthermore, we share Hendrik L. Wesseling's interpretation that the Scramble for Africa

for all its drama did not really preoccupy European politicians of the time. Yet, contrary to Wesseling, we argue that colonial expansion was nonetheless important for German (and European) history for the simple reason that we cannot dissociate colonialism from modernity. Rather, colonialism and modernity are part and parcel of the Western world's rise to pre-eminence in modern history. Furthermore, we think that cultural factors were important forces shaping the conquest of Africa. We also stressed the idea that the model of the nation-state with its vision of territorial sovereignty influenced colonial conquest on two levels. First, it furthered competitive politics. Second, it prefigured colonies as territorial states, which meant that it was not enough to establish a limited local presence overseas, but paramount to conquer and eventually administer vast territories. In a further twist of our argument, we highlighted Africa's unique place in the colonial imagination as an abode of death and as a continent in need of help with no time to spare as the enemies of progress were already there or just around the corner. The idea of a crusade and the metaphor of death were, we stated, nothing but refractions of the related ideas of progress and decadence and the Darwinian notion of life as perpetual competition. Hence, colonial partition refers directly back to the horror which lies at the heart of the modern world, and to the constitutive forms of modernity. Although the Scramble happened on the very margins of the European political arena, it nevertheless articulated core notions of contemporary European thought, translating them into actions. And if, finally, the Scramble of Africa had all the aspects of a game, it was a game with far-reaching consequences for all involved.

Notes

- 1 For the historiographical debates about the German *Sonderweg*, see among many others Thomas Welskopp, 'Identität ex negativo. Der deutsche Sonderweg als Metaerzählung in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft der siebziger und achtziger Jahre', in Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (eds) *Die historische Meistererzählung: Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 109–39.
- 2 Stefan Berger *et al.* (eds) *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800* (London, 1999).
- 3 Still fundamental for this issue: Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* (Cologne, 1969).
- 4 Stig Förster *et al.* (eds) *Bismarck, Europe, and Africa: The Berlin Africa Conference 1884–1885 and the Onset of Partition* (Oxford, 1988).
- 5 On events on the east African coast, see Jonathan Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1888* (London, 1995), Part III. The problems of the German traders on the Cameroon coast are discussed in the relevant chapters of Helmuth Stoecker (ed.) *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1960 and 1968); Ralph A. Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroon Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland, c.1600–c.1960* (Cambridge and New York, 1999), pp. 99ff.

- 6 This has been shown in detail in the example of Gustav Noske. See Hans-Christoph Schröder, *Gustav Noske und die Kolonialpolitik des Deutschen Kaiserreiches* (Berlin and Bonn, 1979). The unusual level of legislative colonial concern among German politicians in general (and socialists in particular) did not derive from the substantive interest in Africa among German strategic or economic interest groups but as rather an artifact of the general position of the German Parliament, the Reichstag, in the Wilhelminian state. The conservative Prince Otto von Bismarck had designed the new political system so as to deprive the Reichstag of real control over such critical issues as the selection of the chancellor and the military budget. The Reichstag thus devoted a huge and disproportionate amount of its considerable energies to the colonies, a matter left fully under its jurisdiction. Ralph A. Austen, 'Mythic Transformation and Historical Continuity: The Duala of Cameroon and German Colonialism, 1884–1914', in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds) *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon* (Oxford, 1996), p. 64; Karin Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika: Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun vor 1914* (Zürich, 1970), pp. 50f.
- 7 The horrific and brutal regime of King Léopold's Congo has recently been brought back to the awareness of a wider audience by Adam Hochschild's, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Boston and New York, 1998).
- 8 Paul Jenkins (ed.) *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century: C.C. Reindorf and Samuel Johnson* (Basel, 1998); Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville, VA, 2000), ch. 2.
- 9 Christopher Fyfe, *Africanus Horton (1835–1883): West African Scientist and Patriot* (New York, 1972).
- 10 Not surprisingly, the colonial rulers were not only reluctant to attack slavery, in many cases they actually supported it. See Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein (eds) *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London, 1999). For a case study on German east Africa, see Jan-Georg Deutsch, 'The End of Slavery in German East Africa', unpublished Habilitation thesis, Humboldt University, Berlin, 2000.
- 11 For a brief evaluation of Dernburg's 'rational colonial policy', see Albert Wirz, 'Die deutschen Kolonien in Afrika', in Rudolf von Albertini, *Europäische Kolonialherrschaft 1880–1940* (Stuttgart, 1976). However, Johanni Koponen, *Development for Exploitation: German Colonial Policies in Mainland Tanzania, 1884–1914* (Hamburg and Helsinki, 1995) insists upon the fact that Dernburg's reforms hardly led to significant changes in the colonies themselves. Along the same lines argues Jürgen Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner: Staatlicher Machtanspruch und Wirklichkeit im kolonialen Namibia* (Münster and Hamburg, 2001).
- 12 Hendrik L. Wesseling, *Divide and Rule: The Partition of Africa, 1880–1914* (Westport, CT and London, 1996).
- 13 Boris Barth, *Die deutsche Hochfinanz und die Imperialismen: Banken und Außenpolitik vor 1914* (Stuttgart, 1995) shows that German financial investments hardly took place in Africa, and not at all in Germany's colonies. For the French colonial empire, see Jacques Marseille, *Empire colonial et capitalisme française: Histoire d'un divorce* (Paris, 1984).
- 14 In Cameroon in 1913 approximately 2,500 Europeans were facing about 2.5 million Africans. More than half of the Europeans lived in the coastal cities of Douala, Victoria and Kribi as well as in the capital Buea on the slopes of Mount Cameroon. See Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, p. 202.
- 15 The importance of the 'men on the spot' for the partition of Africa has been stressed, among other, by David K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire*

- (London, 1973) and Ronald Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', in Roger Owen and B. Sutcliffe (eds) *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London, 1972), pp. 117–40.
- 16 Philippe Laburthe-Tolra, *Yaoundé d'après Zenker* (Yaoundé, 1970) and *Vers la Lumière? Ou le Désir d'Ariel. A propos des Beti du Cameroun. Sociologie de la conversion* (Paris, 1999).
- 17 See Henri Brunschwig, *Noirs et blancs dans l'Afrique noire française, ou comment le colonisateur devient colonisé* (Paris, 1983). The port-city of Douala in Cameroon is a good case in point. See Austen and Derrick, *Middlemen*; Andreas Eckert, *Grundbesitz, Landkonflikte und kolonialer Wandel: Douala 1880–1960* (Stuttgart, 1999).
- 18 M. Heepe (ed.) *Jaunde-Texte von Karl Atangana und Paul Messi* (Hamburg, 1919), pp. 147. More generally on the colonisers' strategy of 'selected terror' (based on evidence from Togo), Trutz von Trotha, *Koloniale Herrschaft: Zur soziologischen Theorie der Staatsentstehung am Beispiel des 'Schutzgebietes Togo'* (Tübingen, 1994).
- 19 See J.F. Ade Ajayi and B.O. Oloruntimehin, 'West Africa in the Anti-Slave Trade Era', in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. V, John E. Flint (ed.) (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 218.
- 20 London, 1938. See Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, 'The Labors of Muigwithania: Jomo Kenyatta as Author, 1928–45', *Research in African Literatures*, 29 (1998), pp. 16–42.
- 21 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York, 1967; French orig. 1952); *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1966; French orig. 1961).
- 22 Charles S. Maier, 'Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era', *American Historical Review*, 105, 3 (2000), pp. 807–31.
- 23 Generally for this argument, Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in Stoler and Cooper (eds) *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), pp. 1–56. For the German case, see Sebastian Conrad, 'Doppelte Marginalisierung: Plädoyer für eine transnationale Perspektive auf die deutsche Geschichte', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), pp. 145–69; Andreas Eckert and Albert Wirz, 'Wir nicht, die Anderen auch: Deutschland und der Kolonialismus', in Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria (eds) *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus* (Frankfurt-am-Main and New York, 2002), pp. 373–93.
- 24 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1973).
- 25 Henry M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures, and Discoveries in Central Africa; Including Four Months' Residence with Dr. Livingstone* (London, 1874); *Through the Dark Continent or, The Sources of the Nile Around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa and Down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean* (London, 1878); *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State: A Story of Work and Exploration. With over One Hundred Full-Page and Smaller Illustrations, Two Large Maps, and Several Smaller Ones* (London, 1885); *In Darkest Africa: or, The Quest Rescue and Retreat of Emin Governor of Equatoria* (London, 1890), and *Autobiography* (London, 1909).
- 26 See Albert Wirz, 'Die humanitäre Schweiz im Spannungsfeld zwischen Philanthropie und Kolonialismus: Moynier, Afrika und das IRKK', *Traverse* 5 (1998), pp. 95–111.
- 27 In the Congo, Bula Matari or the 'crusher of rocks' was the nickname for Henry Morton Stanley. See Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, CT, 1994), p. 1.

- 28 See Harry R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884–1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism* (New Haven, CT, 1938).
- 29 Frieda Freiin von Bülow, *Tropenkoller: Episode aus dem Kolonialleben* (Berlin, 1896), and H.-S. Stannus, 'Tropical Neurasthenia', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 20 (1927), p. 330. On malaria prophylaxis and colonial discourse in German Cameroon, cf. Albert Wirz, 'Malaria-Prophylaxe und kolonialer Städtebau: Fortschritt als Rückschritt?', *Gesnerus* 3, 4 (1980), pp. 215–34.
- 30 Edith R. Sanders, 'The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Function in Time Perspective', *Journal of African History*, 10 (1969), pp. 521–32.
- 31 For a critical statement, see Jan Vansina, 'New Linguistic Evidence and the Bantu Expansion', *Journal of African History*, 36 (1995), pp. 173–95, and Albert Wirz, 'Migrationen: Das Problem der Bantu-Expansion', in Jan-Georg Deutsch and Albert Wirz (eds) *Geschichte in Afrika: Einführung in Probleme und Debatten* (Berlin, 1997), pp. 35–52, for a historiographical synthesis.
- 32 As Hegel wrote in *The Philosophy of History* (posthumously published in 1837): '[Africa] is no historical part of the World, it has no movement or development to exhibit . . . What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Underdeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature and which has to be presented here as the threshold of the World's History' (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York, 1956), p. 99).
- 33 Siegfried Passarge, *Adamaua: Bericht über die Expedition des Deutschen Kamerun-Komitees in den Jahren 1893/94* (Berlin, 1895), pp. 517–18.
- 34 David N. Livingstone, 'Climate's Moral Economy: Science, Race and Place in Post-Darwinian British and American Geography', in Anne Godlweska and Neil Smith (eds) *Geography and Empire* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 147–53; Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918* (Cambridge, 1989); Rosalind Krauss, 'A User's Guide to Entropy', *October* 78 (Fall 1995), pp. 89–106.
- 35 See Friedrich Ratzel, *Über Naturschilderung* (Oldenburg, 1906), p. 335.
- 36 Katrin Bromber, 'Ein Lied auf die hohen Herren: die deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in der historiografischen Swahili-Verkunst der Jahrhundertwende', in Andreas Eckert and Albert Wirz (eds) '*Alles unter Kontrolle*': *Disziplinierungsprozesse im kolonialen Tansania, ca. 1850 – 1960* (Cologne, 2003), p. 89, and personal communication.
- 37 Steve MacCarthy, *Crystal Palace Dinosaurs: The Story of the World's First Prehistoric Sculptures* (London, 1994), and W.J.T. Mitchell, *The Last Dinosaur Book* (Chicago, 1998), ch. 14.
- 38 See Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (London, 1872), ch. 7.
- 39 Such as James Rodway, *In the Guiana Forest: Studies of Nature in Relation to the Struggle for Life* (New York, 1894).

Part III

France

From a civilising mission to the highest form of mercantilism?

9 Cultural systems of representation, economic interests and French penetration into Black Africa, 1780s–1880s

Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau

One of the questions concerning the motives that led Europe to subdue Black Africa still remains obscure; that of the cultural systems of representations working behind the ideologies and practices of colonisation. It is often said more or less explicitly that some of the arguments used to legitimate and/or to encourage the process of colonisation were already present at the end of the eighteenth century, notably in the discourse of the Enlightenment and of the abolitionists. Then, moral considerations would have been challenged by political and economic interests. The presence of political and economic interests from the very beginning would have facilitated the transition from one system of thought to the other. All in all, colonisation would have been the logical result of forces at work long before the break-up of Africa and the implementation of colonial policies.

However, to establish that some arguments, subsequently used to legitimate colonisation, can be located in some narratives at the end of the eighteenth century is not sufficient to conclude that the same logic has worked in favour of colonisation since that time. Detected in texts from different epochs, the same words and wording may have been used to advocate projects which were totally opposed. Thus, the historian who focuses solely on material extracted from its context will only be led to reify his or her own presuppositions, whatever they may be. Another problem lies in the fact that one is often tempted to analyse historical documents in the light of what we have learnt about the latter process of colonisation. It would be better to try and forget the colonial and post-colonial discourse in order to study the earlier discourse on Black Africa independently. What kind of links can we establish between the representations of Black Africa, those related to French commerce and the French penetration into the Black continent? That is the problem I would like to tackle here. I shall go back to the end of the eighteenth century when the first series of arguments began to build up, for or against the opening of new economic links between the French kingdom and the Black African territories. I shall then try to see how this first set of arguments can be compared with those elaborated between 1815 and the

1840s, that is, between the end of the French Wars and the tangible beginnings of the French 'legitimate trade'. Finally, in order to compare the realities of this trade and the discussion related to it, I shall analyse the evolution of this commerce from the 1840s to the 1880s.

Projects without apparent issue, 1780s–1815

Let us first focus on the years 1780–1815, a time of confrontation when opposing arguments began to crystallise, a time of projects without apparent issue and apparently largely disconnected from the following period.

Factors conducive to the establishment of new economic relations with Black Africa

At the end of the *ancien régime*, at least four factors were working in favour of the opening and development of new economic relations with Black Africa. The first one relates back to the spectacular progress of the French slave trade at the end of the eighteenth century. According to J. Mettas,¹ the first dramatic rise in the French slave trade, between 1712 and 1755, corresponds to a yearly average of 33.5 campaigns – if we exclude the years 1745–47 when the slave trade was at its lowest level. More regular, the second stage – 1763–78 – witnessed a higher average, with 50.8 expeditions each year. The last period, between 1783 and 1792, was a time of spectacular growth, with 1,009 expeditions. The motives for this phenomenon, at a time when the Danish were about to abolish their own slave trade, are well known.² The main point here is to understand that this dramatic rise led all important French ports to be interested in the slave trade, and consequently in Black Africa. At the same time new slave-trade regions were being prospected. After 1763, the French slave trade began to leave the Gulf of Guinea to focus more on the regions of the Congo and Angola. About ten years later, it moved towards Mozambique. At that time, an increasing number of French ships were being sent to India and some slaves were shipped directly to the French islands in the Indian Ocean. As a result, the Mascarene Islands played a new and growing role in the French colonial system. Masked by the revolutionary and Napoleonic storms, this phenomenon saw a powerful renewal between 1815 and the 1860s, with the growth of the plantation system in La Réunion.

So, on the eve of the revolution, French maritime circles were more aware of African affairs than ever before. To be convinced of this, it is sufficient to note the general outcry aroused by the idea of abolishing the slave trade and slavery in the French colonies. The ship-owners then said that the slave trade was necessary for the colonies, while the colonies were necessary for foreign trade. The latter being essential to the nation, as it

was formulated in the mercantilist theory, the slave trade was declared to be a fundamental element of national prosperity. This syllogism was only designed to defend private interests by labelling them as directed to the public benefit, but its simplicity was to facilitate convincing a wider public. It also reflected a profound change in politico-economic thought since it borrowed from the mercantilist theory while contributing to distract it from its initial objective. Trade was no longer justified solely by the interest of the prince or by the grandeur of the state; declared to be of public interest, it was thus to be protected by the state. We must bear in mind this skilful U-turn initiated by the colonial circles at the end of the *ancien régime* because it has often been used thereafter. This was notably so from the end of the nineteenth century onwards – when the cultural origins of this idea were forgotten – not to defend an old system, but in order to justify new colonial expansionism.

The second factor conducive to the development of more important economic relations with Black Africa appeared between the 1760s and the 1780s, when the reform of the French colonial system was under discussion. Choiseul (1761–66) thought that to abandon Canada was, in a way, to plant a time-bomb within the British Empire. That abandonment could reassure the Americans. The theory was that, no longer being directly threatened, they would inevitably be led to claim their own independence. A similar calculation was sometimes made for the French Antilles. Too small to respond indefinitely to a growing demand in tropical produce, they would one day get their emancipation. Subsequently, an alternative solution had to be found for metropolitan France. In French ministries, Burma and some other regions of Asia were seen as possible short-term solutions. Nearer France, well-populated and a useful stop on the route to India, Egypt was judged more attractive yet. This global policy was implemented through the generalisation of voyages of exploration which sustained and legitimised the means allowed to the navy. Behind the scientific interest, elements of new colonial openings were prepared.

In fact, two groups were opposed. The first gathered those who thought that the old colonial system could be reformed. Within the other group, new solutions seeking to replace this old order were being sought. In 1771, in the *Ephémérides du Citoyen*, the physiocrat Dupont de Nemours tried to compare the costs and benefits of the American plantation system with those that might generate a new type of trade based on free labour within Black Africa. The latter seemed to him to be economically more efficient and also more logical, since the African climate and soils would be more adapted to sugar production. Three years later, Dupont wrote to Turgot to create and manage such a new colony on the African coast. Encouraged by British attempts in Sierra Leone, from 1787, other projects saw the light of day. For example, in 1789, Pruneau de Pommegorge promoted the agricultural colonisation of the banks of the Senegal River³ as well as the control of gold mining in the region of Bambuk.

This kind of project was partly linked to a more global and liberal frame of reference in which commerce was perceived as a factor of civilisation,⁴ notably in some essays by Condorcet:

Let us glance through the history of our enterprises, our establishments in Africa or Asia, you will see our commercial monopolies, our treacheries, our bloody scorn for men of another colour or belief, the arrogance of our usurpation, the eccentric proselytising and the intrigues of our priests shattering that feeling of respect and benevolence earlier gained through the superiority of our enlightenment and the advantages of our trade. But the moment is definitely coming when, ceasing to show them as only corrupters or tyrants, we shall become for them useful instruments or generous liberators. The establishment of sugar cultivation in the immense African continent will ruin the disgraceful robbery which has corrupted and depopulated it for two centuries . . . European nations will learn at last that privileged companies are only a tax on them . . . Then, limiting themselves to a free trade, and being too enlightened about their own rights to jest about those of the other nations, Europeans will have respect for that independence they have violated until now with such audacity . . . [and these] trading posts of bandits will become colonies of citizens spreading the principles and the example of what is freedom, enlightenment and European reason within Africa and Asia.⁵

In 1801, at a time when most merchants remained cautious, Louis Ohier de Grandpré, a ship-owner and former slave-trader from Saint-Malo, also advocated the opening of a new type of trade with Black Africa:

This rapid account demonstrates the ease of establishing flourishing colonies in that country. From its soil we shall get the same commodities as in our Antilles, and . . . [we will] owe [this produce] to free men, attracted to our workshops by a modest salary . . . Such an enterprise does not present considerable difficulty . . . the country is peopled with inhabitants devoted to trade; our merchandise has become a true need for them. . . ; they can speak our language, they are shaped to serve, they are industrious and quiet, gentle and too cowardly to oppose the setting up of an establishment in their backyard. They will see as beneficent gods those who, coming to occupy their country . . . will teach them to cultivate it instead of selling it. To persuade them it would suffice to tell them . . . instead of selling me captives, give me the fruit of your work. Together we shall cultivate land which belongs to nobody. I shall pay those who will help me . . . Is there a fair man, free from prejudice, who could think that right and simple savages would hesitate to accept such proposals?⁶

We do not know what motivation, whether mercantile or philanthropic, was the strongest, but one thing brought all these projects together. Slaves excepted, the new African commerce would look like the old one, leading only to move the Caribbean system towards Africa. For the most convinced abolitionists, the liberal message and the economic interest joined a more humanist view of things. Their purpose was to put an end to a slave trade perceived as opposed to the laws of civilisation and to favour the 'regeneration' of Africa, an expression that then signified much more than just the spreading of European Enlightenment over Black Africa.⁷ The idea that all was possible, that things would be radically changed, was linked to that of a 'conversion'. The feeling that the sense of things could be reversed was largely shared. An abhorred power could be turned into a new and democratic state, a corrupting and devastating trade into a virtuous and useful one. A legitimate trade dealing with natural produce and from human endeavour seemed for some a means of bringing together the people of the two continents, Europe and Black Africa.

The forming of an 'industrialist' lobby⁸ within the Brissotin circles during the revolutionary period constitutes the fourth factor conducive to a reshaping of French commercial policy. The *Société des Amis des Noirs*, focused on two themes which promised a great future – that of the prodigious agricultural and mining riches of the dark continent and that of the necessity to act in order not to be outflanked by England which was very interested in Sierra Leone. 'Would it not be fair and interesting', said Bonemain in 1790, 'to leave in Africa the men placed here by the Deity in order to teach them how to cultivate a soil from which they could get treasures?'⁹ France, thundered Athenas, in 1790, 'must not wait any longer to settle free establishments along the coasts of Africa'.¹⁰ It is thus clear that the idea of a colonisation inscribed in the logic of the expansion of European Enlightenment, as well as in the logic of the competition between European nations, was well established, long before the Scramble.¹¹ According to Dorigny, Mirabeau, the banker Etienne Clavière and Brissot himself were tempted to rely on British abolitionists like Clarkson and Wilberforce.¹² During the first years of the revolution, these projects fitted into larger perspectives. Clavière and Brissot, among others, advocated a double reorientation of French foreign trade. First, geographic, due to the desire to develop trading relations with the United States of America. Second, political and moral because of a new apprehension of the links that were to be established between the new republican state and a 'civilising' trade.¹³ As early as 1787, Clavière and Brissot had written that, instead of bartering precious metals for manufactured goods, or merchandise for human beings, trade should rather be devoted to a true 'exchange', that of 'work for work, pleasure for pleasure'.¹⁴ The revolution gave them the opportunity to outline their ideas, but the Victory on the Mountain, between 1792 and 1794, led them to put these projects on ice.

When reorganised in Year II of the republican calendar, the old *Société*

des Amis des Noirs took a new and significant name, that of the *Société des Amis des Noirs et des Colonies*. More than the previous society,¹⁵ it extolled the virtues of the integration of the old colonies into the nation. Favourable to a policy of assimilation,¹⁶ it wished also to open France to new colonies in order to transfer a plantation economy fuelled by free labour there, particularly in Black Africa and in Madagascar. It is essentially what was recommended by Wadström, a Swede who was very involved in the second *Société*. In 1794, he published in London an *Essay on Colonisation, Particularly Applied to the Western Coast of Africa*. His *Observations on Slave Trade*, in 1789, were translated into French and included in 1794 in a more general book entitled *Voyage au pays de Dahomé*. African trade, he claimed here, has been distracted from its noble virtues because of the 'spirit of personal interest and monopoly'. It would be sufficient, he added, to give trade back its natural qualities and to spur on the African interest for European commodities to establish free trade, profitable for everyone and respecting the great universal principles:

Primitive nations [do not have many needs] but as soon as their judgement and their spirit begin to be developed . . . about what may make life more pleasant . . . luxury inevitably appears . . . By luxury I mean all the pleasures leading beyond what is necessary for animal life [consequently, to live in a civilised society is already a sort of luxury]. We shall have to present them with new items likely to excite new desires and to develop the faculties which remained latent because they have not been practised; then, according to the increase in their progress, you will have to introduce among them what we generally call luxury . . . That passionate love that African people are nourishing for all European trinkets is a proof that we could establish a profitable trade with them, not costly in trouble and expenses.¹⁷

Black Africa has wealth in abundance, he wrote, before going through and minimising all the natural obstacles generally advanced by those who doubted the seriousness of such projects. Wadström was not alone. Denyau, a former director of the trading post of Ouidah, wrote in 1799 an account in favour of the colonisation of this region. The year before, Burnel suggested doing the same in Madagascar, while Geoffroy de Vileneuve also proposed to act in Senegal.

In all, between Thermidor of Year II and Brumaire of Year IV, a mixing of economic liberalism, of republicanism and philanthropy, contributed to the idea of a colonisation within African territories taking root in limited, but influential, circles. Further research would surely be necessary in this area, particularly in order to appreciate what was most important to these men:¹⁸ a true political colonisation or only commercial expansion. Nevertheless it seems that most of them only envisaged the set-

tlement of trading posts devoted to spurring on the productive abilities of Africans through unconscious imitation, emulation and interest.¹⁹ So, their insistence on African wealth as well as on the relative ease of increasing it did not inevitably lead to vast projects of political domination. On the one hand, because those projects would have been in opposition to the liberal principles put forward by these men, and on the other hand, because the discourse on African wealth was partly motivated by tactical purposes:

We must not forget, while reading books today published about Africa, the opinion of their authors on the slave trade. Those who think that it must be abolished will praise a very fertile country which needs to be cultivated a little too much; those who are against that abolition will disparage a too ill-known climate.²⁰

Headwinds

Despite their enthusiasm, partly derived from their belief in the law of 'progress', the instigators of colonising projects remained relatively moderate. The means they recommended to implement their plans were not important, and were based mainly on the persuasion of Africans. Colonisation could then only be a long-drawn-out job, which is the reason they wished to begin implementing their projects as soon as possible. The very emphatic style of the time must not also lead us to forget that they were aware of the importance of contrary forces, an importance which explains why they were tempted to present their projects in such a favourable light.

The first problem, an 'internal' one, lay in the heterogeneous character of the élitist circles interested in those enterprises of colonisation. Some joined the group through the abolitionist question, like the abbé Grégoire,²¹ others due to the necessity of finding a credible alternative to the old colonial system. Most of these people believed in liberal ideas. Some considered liberalism as a way to reach their objective more quickly. For the others, liberal ideas were essential and, even really desired, abolition was only perceived as a happy consequence of its implementation. This pooling of such mixed forces, which never knew or wished to win over public opinion, could only be fragile, particularly during the troubled times of the French Revolution when domestic political considerations dominated.

To that let us add some external obstacles. Traders were needed to implement the projects for commercial colonisation. However, although accustomed to putting forward liberal values in order to praise the merits of trade as well as their own usefulness to the nation, traders were not very enthusiastic at putting them into concrete action. Claiming at the same time the end of 'monopolies' – in fact, the end of the competition exercised by others – and the maintenance of state subsidies, in general, they were far from ready to advance the human and financial means to con-

tribute to the growth of a new and legitimate trade with Africa. In addition, most of the traders were attached to the old colonial system, through financial, familial and cultural links. Moreover, since the end of the seventeenth century, a number of prejudices and stereotypes had been formed and spread within slave-trading circles. They put forward the idea of a hostile Black Africa, whose coasts were not yet sufficiently well known, whose interior remained mysterious, whose climates were unhealthy, whose populations were barbarous and dangerous. In short, they advocated the impossibility of establishing relations other than those linked to the slave trade. With the beginnings of the revolution, slave-trader circles became yet more radical.²² Their prejudices remained entrenched until the end of the illegal French slave trade, and, because of circumstances, they even tended to spread over larger circles. The rebellion of slaves in Santo Domingo, the breaking-off of good relations with England, and then the French wars, contributed to silence the French abolitionist movement whose arguments, less and less economic, were perceived as anti-national. The dreams of a new style of French colonial policy also collapsed in face of the importance of the continental challenge taken up by Napoleonic power. Finally, deprived of maritime wars, French ship-owners began to idealise the last days of the *ancien régime*, and with them those of the apogee of the slave trade. This explains its short-lived resumption in 1802 and the more lasting one under the Restoration. According to Deschamps, 53 books about the colonies were published in France in 1789, 108 in 1790, 97 in 1791, around 80 per year until 1795, between 30 and 60 from 1795 to 1800. These figures enabled him to conclude that the colonial cause was largely tackled during the French Revolution. Nevertheless, he also added that the authors advocating new forms of colonisation were, for the great majority, thinking about Guyana and Louisiana, not about Black Africa.²³

When the idea of a potential to be exploited began to challenge that of a barbarous and repulsive Black continent, 1815–40s

Without disappearing totally²⁴ – a point that would be interesting to highlight through further research – the will to explore the interior of Africa was partly eclipsed in the Napoleonic period. How did it evolve after 1815?

The time of Senegalese false hopes and the apparent abandonment of the projects for ‘new’ colonisation

Apparently, the projects for a ‘new-style’ colonisation expressed during the revolutionary period had been forgotten. When peace returned, some ship-owners tried to explore new outlets, but mainly in the direction of

continental America, Asia and the Indian Ocean.²⁵ Despite some vague attempts, the Restoration government showed itself to be very cautious in matters of repressing the slave trade. For reasons of prestige, and so as not to give the impression that it would submit itself again to British power, the French government opted for an autonomous strategy to repress the illegal slave trade. A strategy not really implemented and thus inefficient. Besides, the army and the notables were inclined to defend the conservative colonial lobby, particularly at the time of the dispute over the two types of sugar which opposed the planters and ship-owners to the industrialists and beet-growers. Only Senegal, restored to France, seemed to raise the spirits. This region was part of a significant trade with some ports and trading-houses, particularly in Bordeaux. However, poorly thought out and badly executed, the attempts to develop Senegal's potential all failed.²⁶

In fact, until the 1830s, the main debate did not focus on the ways of extending and modifying the forms of French influence within Africa. It opposed the advocates of the old colonial system and those who did not want to hear of it.²⁷ It is revealing to note that the very official *Annales maritimes et coloniales* opened its columns but sparingly to trade with Black Africa. Among only 17 articles on the topic, published between 1819 and 1847, eight concerned Senegal, three the too-little explored question of fishing (notably whaling), and four various other subjects. Only two later articles announced the opening of new centres of interest. They were published from 1844 on and focused on the French trading-posts of the Gold Coast, Assinie and Gabon.²⁸ Thus it is quite clear that this publication did not reflect new ideas about African colonisation. The subjects it tackled evolved according to the development of French initiatives on the ground, following rather than preceding them. Even the French abolitionists of that time seemed to tone down the idea of developing a legitimate trade with Black Africa. Daget and Jennings, who have studied the French abolitionist movement, do not mention such projects in their works²⁹ and, according to Brasseur, the more frequent image in French abolitionist campaigns was that of a totally unreal Africa.³⁰ Let us add that Morenas, author of a famous *Précis historique de la traite des Noirs et de l'esclavage colonial*, only condemned slave trade from a moral viewpoint. Following Clarkson, he added that the slave trade killed a great number of sailors who would have been useful elsewhere, and that slaves would have been more productive and more numerous through natural increase if they had been better treated in the colonies. In addition, the produce acquired at a high price from these colonies, because of monopolies and customs protection, could be purchased at very little cost from Egypt, India or the United States. However only a few lines were devoted to the question of legitimate trade; a subject neither developed nor linked to any enterprise of colonisation: 'When the slave trade is abolished, the trade in natural African produce will soon be considerable, spreading more abundant and

more durable wealth than the slave trade has ever been able to provide at the time it was more flourishing.³¹

Permissive factors

Nonetheless, little by little, some combined factors contributed to the idea of a potential to be exploited which began to supplant that of a barbarous and repulsive Black continent. These should be called 'permissive factors', since they must not be confused with causes of colonisation, and three of them will be distinguished here. The first is linked to the fashion of voyages to Africa. Favoured by the vogue of geography, by the French desire to restore its image after the cruel defeat of 1815, and, moreover, by the search for adventure shared by a handful of people, these voyages led to a refining of the inventory of Black Africa's potential wealth. Nevertheless, an analysis of the main narratives resulting from the voyages undertaken in Western Africa between 1795 and 1830 shows that, while contributing to drawing the outlines of a more favourable context for European penetration, these voyages did not really encourage colonisation. For French authors, such as Gaspard Théodore Mollien or René Caillié, it is quite clear that the inventory of African potential was simply considered as necessary to justify the interest of their voyages.

In order to talk realistically about colonisation one needs to go beyond the stage of the inventory of the potential richness to reach that of the sensible projects planned to develop them. These projects (the second of our permissive factors) became more numerous. They emanated often from French citizens temporarily settled in Africa. Among a plethora of relatively serious schemes, whose exhaustive inventory remains to be drawn up, that of Hautefeuille, in 1830, is interesting in many respects. First, because it explicitly linked trade, colonisation and civilisation, in the tradition of the projects elaborated at the end of the eighteenth century, something clearly pointed out through the objectives announced: '1 – the civilisation of Africans; 2 – the expansion and emancipation of French trade; 3 – the real and definitive abolition of the slave trade.' Second, Hautefeuille noted the 'impossibility of reforming' the old colonial system, presented as only profitable for '25 or 30 thousand Negro-floggers'. Finally, he advocated the foundation of 'vast agricultural colonies, without slaves', using 'means ... in harmony with liberal ideas', the 'habits of Negro populations and the demands of their country'; all that near Saint-Louis, in Senegal, 'at little distance from the mother country'. 'I propose', he wrote, 'the clearance of immense and fertile regions, uncultivated and abandoned until now ... peopled by still savage, but robust, men.'³²

His *Plan de colonisation des possessions françaises dans l'Afrique occidentale...* intended to establish 'within Africa, in the interest of the French kingdom, a sort of feudal regime tempered by severe laws'. It would be necessary to be inflexible with local chiefs, but just with indigen-

ous populations. He advocated distinguishing three categories of people. The 'free serfs', tied to the land, would be fed and accommodated by their 'master', for whom they would work for a salary five days a week. The other two would be free to work for themselves. Another category, that of the temporary workers, would contribute to the expansion of the system through a process of unconscious imitation when returning home. Finally, a sort of militia would be formed by a category of people called 'laptots'.³³ The planters would be carefully selected and controlled by the state in order to prevent them from inflicting humiliating treatment on Africans. By these means, working in some cleared and then fortified areas, traders could gradually penetrate into the interior of the continent. Linking commercial expansion and agricultural production in a framework of fortified plantations, this system is comparable to that of the Arabs *zeribas* located westwards from the Nile valley at the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century. However, it also differs in one very important fact. The Arabs sacked entire regions around their *zeribas*, while Hautefeuille wished to extend commerce and civilisation with the help of the indigenous populations mobilised against their natural leaders. We do have here, around the 1830s and 1840s, an example of what could be a project for agricultural colonisation borrowing from the ideas of the eighteenth century.

Hydrographic and economic accounts produced by French naval forces on patrol along the western coasts of Africa are to be added to this kind of agricultural colonisation project. In 1848, the information gathered allowed Bouët-Willamez to publish his famous *Commerce et traite des Noirs aux côtes occidentales d'Afrique*.³⁴ Former governor of Senegal (1843–44) and chief of the French naval forces in Africa, its author insisted mainly on the advantages of establishing new commercial relations with Black Africa. He carefully listed the types of European merchandise likely to be exchanged for African products, as well as the ways to trade. It is quite interesting to note that he rejected the famous gunboat diplomacy:

It often happens that the goods [meaning the African merchandise] are not always complete . . . English traders were accustomed to that problem and they have found a way to avoid losing money. That is not always the case for ours, who are prompt to call for the assistance of French vessels. Sometimes, they even overexploit the situation and constantly call out our vessels and their guns. We do not need to point out how drastic such a habit is . . . With the exception of the cases of pillage and piracy, the use of force and guns against trading and timorous populations can only . . . be harmful to the development of their commercial transactions.³⁵

In his inventory of the main African trade to be developed, six categories can be distinguished. The products linked to what he called 'grains' (rice,



Plate 6 Before the 'invention' of the oil rivers. A slave used to the production of palm wine ('habitant du Sénégal. Nègre libre faisant monter son esclave en haut d'un palmier pour en détacher une calebasse pleine de vin palmiste') (source: Xavier de Golbéry, *Fragments d'un voyage en Afrique fait pendant les années 1785, 1786 et 1787*, Paris, 1802, vol. 2. p. 399).

corn, *malaguettes*) seemed to him to be very profitable. He briefly presented gum Arabic and the products of Senegal, largely because they were well known, and because he did not believe a lot in them. He meant to indicate that 'bartering', that is, the non-specialised trade, could be greatly increased, but remained very obscure on that topic. In fact, three things were essential to him. We can divide them into two categories. First, woods for staining and cabinet-making, which could be purchased together with ivory from Gabon and coffee from the islands of Principe and São Tomé. Second, oleaginous plants which he really wanted to promote,³⁶ namely groundnuts from Senegambia and palm oils. His reasons were commercial and not industrial since he claimed that they would bring more benefit to commercial navigation, 'the ultimate target' of 'our effort':

Groundnuts ... are first in order because of the importance of their financial value and moreover, because of their weight. This produce presents a great advantage for commercial navigation, it requires a lot of space on ships, numerous ships and numerous sailors ... Thus the increase in commercial navigation and in naval and human resources, which are the ultimate targets we have to pursue with all our effort.³⁷

Economic relations between France and Black Africa between the 1840s and the 1880s

From project to reality, the move is sometimes great. So, what became of those projects? What we know is that the agricultural colonisation schemes faded to the benefit of commercial plans, a shift which still remains insufficiently studied and which it would be useful to focus on. Several important shifts occurred between the 1860s and the 1880s. First, French traders involved in African trade began to insist more than before on mercantilist ideas, in order to defend their positions from more acute competition. Second, at the same time, French policy evolved from free trade to protectionism. Third, within Black Africa, some colonial administrators and military officers acted in favour of a revival of colonisation projects.³⁸ So, little by little, the idea that force was to be employed in order to protect and extend French interests within Black Africa gained more importance. An 'alliance' between these spokesmen of colonisation and traders invoking mercantilism thus became more plausible. Fourth, during the same period, the French Republicans – in power after 1870 and 1879 – converted to the idea of a civilising colonisation.³⁹

As far as commercial relations are concerned, one of the main questions is whether the economic interests only played a role *after* entering into the colonial process, as was suggested by Brunschwig, or whether they were also present previously. Were they the reflection of an old economic regime or did they announce that new type of more financial capitalism advocated by Leroy-Beaulieu in his *De la colonisation chez les peuples*

modernes? It is difficult to answer these questions since we do not know the economic relations between France and Black Africa *before* the 1870s. Brunschwig has centred his studies from the 1870s onwards while the starting point of Marseille's thesis is the 1880s. Hence the importance of some rare works⁴⁰ and of the research being done at present – see V. Valey's article in this volume.

From slave trade to legitimate trade?

That question has been the object of numerous studies, mainly centred on Britain's experience. The French case still remains partly obscure, and the distinction between these activities is not always easy.⁴¹ Some pointers can nevertheless be indicated from the attitude of the ship-owners from Nantes, a city which alone represented 70 per cent of all French metropolitan slave-trade expeditions in the era of illegality.⁴² According to Daget, legitimate trade would have been ignored by Nantes. Only some rare and new traders, not former slave-traders, would have been interested in it. Two main motives have been invoked to explain this absence. First the lack of significant economic incentives, since there were no big outlets in Nantes for African products,⁴³ and second, a true ideological reluctance. All in all, largely involved in the illegal slave trade, the ship-owners from Nantes would not have understood that Black Africa could offer anything other than her human beings. That idea has been completely confirmed by my own works on Nantes, partly carried out from private archives, which enable us to understand maritime circles from their interior. Largely involved in the illegal slave trade, and so accused by French abolitionists, Nantes merchants were very cautious at the time of the discussions relating to the abolition of slavery in the French colonies, in 1848. They were not really involved in the coolie trade then. For a great majority of them, the end of the slave trade signified the end of economic relations with Black Africa.

In that context it is not surprising to note that through 18 years of illegal slave-trade activities, Nantes fitted out more ships destined for Black Africa (318) than it did within the 40 years of legitimate trade (311 ships between 1833 and 1872 sent out from the Loire estuary, that is, no more than 7 per cent of Nantes' maritime traffic). In addition to the weakness of the involvement we note the extreme irregularity of the legitimate trade, 'a year of effort' being 'rarely pursued the year after'. That trade 'as things come' was in fact practically sustained by only one trading house, that held by Serpette and Lourmand involved in the trading of palm and coconut oils, mainly for the manufacture of soap. Their ships sailed mainly to Gambia and Sierra Leone.

The other direction taken by Nantes' legitimate trade, to Gabon and the region of Grand Bassam, can also be explained by the activity of one single ship-owner, Adolpe Le Cour de Grandmaison, who decided to take advantage of the presence of French establishments on the African coast.

Unknown by Daget, this great ship-owner merits more than a simple mention. His dreams were to establish a model for tropical agricultural farming in Gabon, as well as Christian missions and a naval station. He invested time and money, and failed. Not the least bit discouraged, in 1845 he attempted to create a company endowed with 1 million francs of capital in order to promote sugar cultivation on the island of Mayotte. He was also interested in Senegal and Indian concerns. It is noticeable that his family had been involved in the illegal slave trade as well as in its repression since its members claimed to benefit from the bonuses allowed to people who acted for the liberation of captives embarked on slave ships. Adolphe had himself boarded a slave ship in 1819–20. Some years later, in 1849, he became a titular member of the *Institut d'Afrique*, an honourable international institution working for the 'regeneration of the African race through the abolition of the slave trade and the universal colonisation of Africa'. That did not prevent him writing, in 1848, the very year of the abolition of slavery in the French colonies, that the emancipation of Black people was a 'utopia'. It would be better, he added, to put African human resources to use through 'free labour'. In that amazing mixture two things are noticeable. The interest of the trader, and his conviction that Africa must be exploited, by whatever means. Among his associates we can find three former slave-trader captains, Amouroux, François Bignon and François Pécarère. It is not necessary to develop here the relatively well-known cases of Victor and Louis Régis, from Marseille, who formed a partnership with Calvé in order to trade on the Ivory Coast and in Dahomey. All had been more or less involved in the illegal slave trade and all manifested their interest in African trade during the same turning-point of the 1830s and 1840s, when the slave trade began to be replaced by legitimate trade.

They embody the reality of an ideological and human welding between these two types of trade, as well as its true weakness. The passage from slave trade to legitimate trade was far from massive. First, it only involved a small number of families. Second, their involvement in the slave trade was often late and of minor importance. All belonged to the growing class of families trying to climb the social ladder. So, they represented the new trading classes more than the old ones.

The growth of African trade and the question of its economic importance, c. 1840s–1880s

We have seen that French legitimate trade was only weakly linked with the old metropolitan maritime circles, but what about its importance to the French economy? What we learn from the available statistics is that the role of African trade in French foreign trade remained totally insignificant between the 1840s and the 1880s, although it never ceased to grow (see Table 9.1). This was the case with the French trade with the western coasts

Table 9.1 The role of African trade for France, 1869 and 1909 (in French million francs)

	1869						1909					
	'General trade'			'Special trade'			'General trade'			'Special trade'		
	Imports	Exports		Imports	Exports		Imports	Exports		Imports	Exports	
West Africa and Congo	12.6	15.2		12.3	7.6		110.4	74.3		103	58	
Madagascar	2.5	0.7		2.2	0.3		28.4	34.3		12.7	32.1	
Somali Coast	—	—		—	—		3.9	3.4		1	1.8	
Total	15.1	15.9		14.5	7.9		142.7	112		117.5	91.9	
Total French foreign trade	4,009.0	3,153.0		3,994.0	3,075.0		7,856.0	7,482.0		6,246.0	5,718.0	
% of total French foreign trade	0.37	0.50		0.36	0.25		1.81	1.49		1.88	1.60	

Source: E. Levasseur, *Histoire du commerce de la France, de 1789 à nos jours*, 2 vols (Paris, A. Rousseau, 1912), vol. II, pp. 331, 559, 618.

of Africa (excluding Senegal), which increased more than six-fold between 1840 and 1846, but moved only in value from 1,743,000 French francs to 10,502,000 French francs. In comparison, the value of French exports towards the western coasts of Africa amounted to 18,000,000 *livres tournois* on the eve of the French Revolution.⁴⁴ In 1869, as well as in 1909, the role of African trade remained of no importance on the scale of French foreign trade.

The *Tableau général du commerce et de la navigation* enables us to focus not on the value of African trade but on its impact on national commercial navigation, and thus, on the main concerns for Bouët-Willaumez. The graph shown in Figure 9.1 has been established through a survey carried out every five years. It indicates the cumulative tonnage of all French ships engaged in the trade with sub-Saharan Africa. To arrive at these figures, we have included that of the ships entering and those leaving French ports, whether they were loaded or in ballast. The islands of the Indian Ocean have been included. All has been done in order to give an account of the highest levels, not the lowest.

Despite all these precautions it must be admitted that the ‘African trade’ remained of trivial importance on a national scale. The total tonnage involved never reached the volume of 250,000 a year. In comparison, Marseille, the biggest French harbour, saw a cumulative tonnage of 7,204,000 tons in 1887 (all ships entering and leaving). That said, we can see a rapid growth in French–African trade between 1850 and 1860,

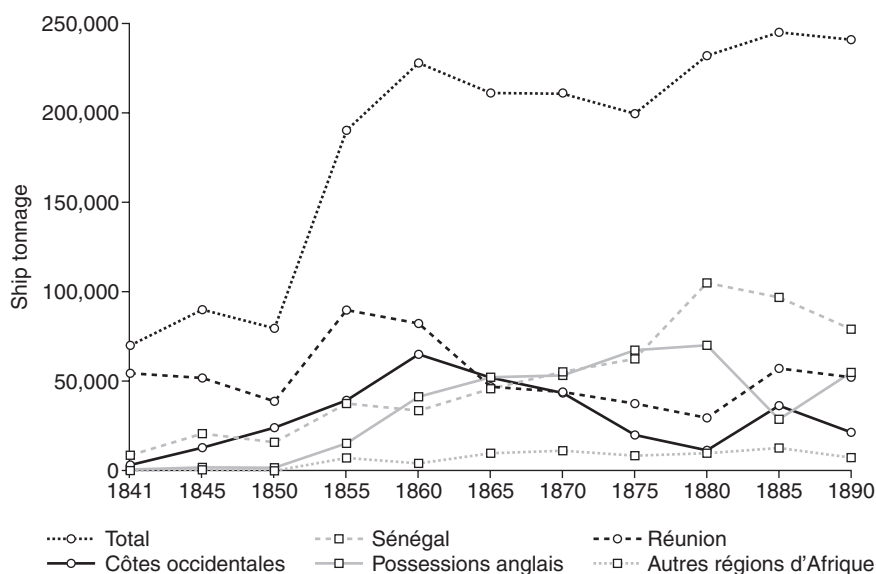


Figure 9.1 French commercial navigation with sub-Saharan Africa in amount of ship tonnage involved, 1841–1890.

mainly due to the increase in traffic to the island of La Réunion, not very typical of Black African trade. The only interesting point, for the future, is the fact that the trade with the coasts of west Africa then began to outstrip the more traditional one with Senegal. Behind a global stabilisation of the trade, after 1860, some shifts must also be noted: the decline of the trade with the Indian Ocean islands, the important recovery by Senegal, and, more important still, the relative dynamism of French trade with the British African colonies. The latter ranked in third place in 1860, first in 1870 and 1875, and second in 1880 and 1890.

This pattern reflects at least two things. First, the capacity of French traders to prospect for new markets in Africa. Second, their will not to be limited by national barriers. They knew very well how to claim they were working in the national interest in order to get the state's protection – see the case of the French military intervention in Dahomey in Daumalin's chapter in this volume. However, protection by the national flag was only ever an alibi for them. They could ask for colonial expansion if their interests led them in that direction, but they could also be opposed to that expansion if they considered it harmful to their trade, and that situation was far from restricted to the French case.⁴⁵ We can add that the interests of the traders from Nantes were not inevitably the same as those of Bordeaux or Marseille and we will see that it is not possible to argue that colonisation was pursued in order to fit the interests of 'French trade'. Paradoxically, the lessons to be learned from a macro approach are, as far as commercial motives are concerned, that the process of colonisation could be better enlightened through regional and local approaches.

At this level, a small number of ports (see Table 9.2), each to some extent specialised in one type of African trade, distinguished themselves. Bordeaux was more attracted by Senegal, Marseille dominated French trade with the African coasts and its traders were active in prospecting for new African markets, while Nantes was much more efficient in the Indian Ocean.

Nevertheless, even at this scale, African trade was not very high. One example will be sufficient, that of the links between Nantes and the Indian Ocean. Between 1874 and 1884, and despite its local role, that trade never involved more than 12 per cent of the ships attached to the port.⁴⁶ With the exception of La Réunion, the other destinations within the region were of minor importance. An account for the period between 1825 and 1884 indicates that the trade with the islands of Mayotte and Nossi-Bé began in 1845, with only two ships. It became regular between 1855 and 1869 (with an average of 2.2 ships per year), and then between 1879 and 1884 (two ships per year). As far as the trade with Madagascar is concerned, things began between 1854 and 1856 (one ship per year) but with no real further results: one ship in 1862, 1866, 1883 and 1884. As a matter of fact, if African trade was ever of a certain importance it was neither on a national

*Table 9.2 Towards a division of African trading areas by ports, 1841–1890. The share of Bordeaux, Marseille and Nantes in some African trading destinations, in percentage of French trade (tonnage) with those destinations (according to the *Tableau général du commerce et de la navigation*)*

	1841	1845	1850	1855	1860	1865	1870	1875	1880	1885	1890
Bordeaux and the Senegalese trade	31.5	28.6	35.2	25.6	41.0	36.4	61.4	37.0	39.7	55.9	68.7
Marseille – and the western coasts of Africa	63.8	36.6	81.0	82.2	79.5	81.2	60.8	47.0	73.5	8.6	86.8
– ‘and other African regions’ ^a	0.0	0.0	–	100.0	100.0	94.0	100.0	95.2	97.6	63.7	94.7
Nantes and – La Réunion	40.0	42.5	33.5	52.9	64.8	1.99	71.4	54.2	44.5	12.4	14.4
– Nossi-Bé, Mayotte, Madagascar	–	–	0.0	78.0	100.0	64.0	72.3	0.0	–	16.0	0.0

Note

^a That is, regions not included in the other categories mentioned here.

scale nor on a regional one, but only at the level of some trading houses, towards which future research would have to be directed.

Let us leave the universe of traders to focus on industrial sectors and some comparable conclusions will be drawn. In Nantes, the refining of sugar was boosted by the trade with La Réunion, mainly during two decades (1840–64), before encountering real difficulties.⁴⁷ In Marseille, the African oleaginous plants cycle was also short-lived (1840s–80s). These two economic cycles were shaped by the spirit of speculation intrinsically linked to maritime trade.⁴⁸ Hence, it led to some frequent problems, like the return to Nantes of ships in ballast from La Réunion because of the excessive number of ships outfitted. The same spirit spread over the manufacturers, leading finally to the decline of the local refining industry which came under the control of Parisian capital after 1886. In Marseille, the industrial oleaginous cycle was conditioned by ship-owners' strategies. African oleaginous plants were imported and processed in Marseille in order to be traded for English cotton fabrics, ultimately destined to satisfy African customers. In this system, industry was only an element, and not a new one. According to Daumalin, African oleaginous plants played a not insignificant role in launching the Industrial Revolution in Marseille, but we must not forget that the industry of fatty substances was an old one here. Twenty-one soap factories were functioning in 1723 and 48 after 1783, even without taking into account the manufacture of candles, as well as the many other manufactures in the region.⁴⁹

Conclusion

To conclude I shall emphasise four points. First, the importance of the time elapsed since the first French projects for settlement into sub-Saharan Africa were planned, but also their fragility. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the most important ones had been considered within narrow, but influential, circles. For their authors, the advantages were numerous, namely, the possibility of contributing to the progress of civilisation and to the abolition of the slave trade, to favour national interest, to implement a liberal, and sometimes an ethical, vision of trade. The idea of rivalry between nations was also clearly perceived, long before the so-called Scramble. Nevertheless, for French thinkers, Egypt, the Indian Ocean region, Guyana and Louisiana were often judged as more attractive than Black Africa. It is also difficult to talk about 'colonisation' projects. Though sometimes used, the term did not have the meaning it took on a century later. Often magnified by the style of the time and the enthusiasm of their authors, those projects concerned mainly the settlement of some trading posts. They claimed a great future was promised them, but they did not consider rapidly colonising large territories, simply because this task was against their views and impossible to carry out without the consent of the indigenous populations. When these people became more

influential, at the beginning of the French Revolution, and afterwards, under the *Directoire*, such projects became more viable, as well as the links between a new-style colonisation and the Republican state. At this level of analysis some comparisons can be pointed out with some of the Republican discourses at the time of Jules Ferry. The same alliance of moral, political and economic arguments was apparently concluded, but the way of linking these arguments was not far from identical. At the end of the eighteenth century, French thinkers pointed out political and moral factors much more clearly than economic motives. Less attracted by it than their English counterparts, the French also lacked concrete support from traders, predominantly uninterested in the establishment of new trade with Black Africa. So, these vast projects were easily swept away by the revolutionary and Napoleonic storms.

The second main idea, that of a break with the following period, then appears quite logically. The projects formed at the end of the eighteenth century had not been totally forgotten, but nothing worked concretely in their favour. During the two or three decades which followed 1815, the idealisation of the past and the wish to rebuild something comparable to the old colonial system did not leave much room for great projects regarding Black Africa. Even though it was of minor importance for the French economy, Senegal was sufficient to keep the national honour busy, to crystallise French colonial hopes and failures. It is even difficult to talk about a French transition between the slave trade and legitimate trade because of the weakness of the links between the rare merchant families involved in the later and the old dynasties of traders.

Third, things only began to change slightly between the 1830s and the 1860s. The conquest of Algeria was costly and many members of Parliament did not want to hear about new projects of that style. According to Schnapper, some well-placed persons in the ministries at least then tried to avoid freezing French influence in Africa. Hence, in 1843, Guizot's doctrine of the '*points d'appui*'. With the exception of some traders from Marseille and of Lecour from Nantes, French merchants were not interested in such affairs. Nevertheless, one thing is noticeable: the gradually increasing importance of the projects concerning commercial influence and the decline of those more linked to industrial interests and agricultural colonisation. The new colonies, wrote Leroy-Beaulieu, in 1886, are not intended to create planter societies. They are exclusively devoted to 'trade with the indigenous populations'. However, though converted to the idea of this new type of colonisation, and one of its main spokesmen, he did not believe in the chances of achieving great results in Black Africa.⁵⁰ Colonisation there was, for him, something akin to gambling on the future.

In fact, Leroy-Beaulieu was perfectly aware of the economic realities. His study on trading relations between France and Black Africa shows that the former had absolutely no economic interest in colonising the latter (fourth main idea).⁵¹ Only some trading houses would have been

tempted to act in that direction, and only in particular circumstances, notably, as indicated by Daumalin, when they had to face growing and fierce competition. Let us add that French capitalists were not really important in the French colonial movement.⁵² Since some traders had been active in African trade, the idea of French economic circles reluctant to engage themselves in a colonial adventure, as suggested by Brunschwig,⁵³ would have to be reconsidered. However, one of his main ideas appears to be confirmed: only some private interests and a small number of people wished colonial expansion in sub-Saharan Africa, which was useless to the nation. Brunschwig also added that this expansion was costly for France. That is another debate. What is certain is that the break-up of Africa was neither inevitable nor inscribed in the logic of history.

Notes

- 1 J. Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, SFHOM, 1978 and 1984). The data on French slave cargoes in the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (A Database on CD-ROM*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), by D. Eltis, S.D. Behrendt, D. Richardson and H.S. Klein, depend largely on Mettas' directory.
- 2 Scholars generally insist on the intervention of the state through the bonuses allowed to ship-owners, according to the tonnage of slave cargoes in 1784, and then, in 1786, to the number of slaves introduced into Santo Domingo. These bonuses resulted in making the slave trade more attractive – since it then became apparently financially more certain – to some circles not really interested in it before that date. Indeed, we can see a clear growth of the role played by Parisian financiers in slave-ships sailing from La Rochelle (the role of Parisian capital was only 4 per cent before 1763, it increased to 12 per cent in 1785). However, the intervention of the state seems only to have contributed to favour the attraction already exerted by the slave trade for other reasons. One of the main explanations for that growing attraction lies in the very speculative character of that trade and in the importance of its potential benefits. The average profits from Caribbean trade were in decline during the second half of the eighteenth century, so some ship-owners became more interested in investing in the slave trade. An analysis centred on the strategies pursued throughout the century by the different French ports confirms this hypothesis. In Nantes, as well as in Bordeaux, La Rochelle or Saint Malo, the development of the slave trade on a larger scale clearly coincided with the difficulties or the decrease of more traditional trade. The reverse was also true, that is, a return to older types of trade when they became attractive again, as with the trade between India and Saint Malo, after its liberalisation in 1769.
- 3 'The river of Senegal is within European reach. It offers France as much and even more wealth than the Americas to the Spanish and Portuguese. France can assure herself of its use in a very few years by the protection of the indigenous populations, instead of destroying them.' *Pruneau de Pommegorge, Description de la Nigritie* (Amsterdam and Paris, 1789), pp. 81–2 (my translation as for all other texts quoted from the French in this article).
- 4 See A.O. Hirschman, *The Passion and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1997).
- 5 Condorcet, (Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, Marquis of) *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (Paris, GF-Flammarion, 1988),

- pp. 268–9. According to Condorcet, facing ‘the independence of the New World’, and taking advantage of ‘the swift decadency’ of great oriental religions, Europe could do nothing but spread its enlightenment and its free trade over Africa and Asia (p. 270).
- 6 Ohier de Grandpré, *Voyage à la côte occidentale d’Afrique* (Paris, 1801). Quoted by A. Roman, *Saint-Malo au temps des négriers* (Paris, Karthala, 2001), pp. 287–8.
 - 7 Here I am following, and even amplifying, some of F. Manchuelle’s remarks (‘The Regeneration of Africa: An Important and Ambiguous Concept in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century French Thinking About Africa’, *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines*, 144, 1996, pp. XXXVI–4, 559–88). Manchuelle analysed this concept of ‘regeneration’ as the meeting of three factors: the aristocratic and liberal reactions to Absolutism and the influence exercised by the life sciences through the ideas of generation and degeneration. He indicated that, although not totally ignored by French philosophical thought – see the idea of redemption and the case of l’abbé Grégoire – the Christian meaning of ‘regeneration’ was often secularised. As has been pointed out by M. Ozouf, the concept of ‘regeneration’ set the tone for the revolution, revealing its two opposite characters, one liberal and the other authoritarian (‘Regeneration’, in F. Furet and M. Ozouf, *Dictionnaire critique de la révolution française*, Paris, Flammarion, 1988, pp. 821–31). Combined with the principle of progress defended by the Idéologues, the idea of regeneration was not only understood as a return to a true nature which would have been corrupted by Absolutism, as has been suggested by Manchuelle. It was also, and moreover, seen as a new start synonymous with a moral and material progress, the opportunity to create a new Man. So, the abolitionists who wanted to implement that idea did not restrict their objective to the sole expansion of European Enlightenment. They imagined combining two operations: 1 to help the Africans recover their true and good nature perverted by slavery and the slave trade; 2 to contribute to the improvement of their daily life through the moral and productive virtues of free labour.
 - 8 The members of that lobby demanded stricter regulations concerning trade with India in order that its products would not compete with French articles, but it was not only formed by Girondists and did not bring all of them together. On that topic, see M. Dorigny, ‘La place de l’océan Indien dans l’économie coloniale “girondine”. Une réorientation industrialiste de la colonisation?’, in Cl. Wanquet (ed.) *Révolution française et l’océan Indien* (Paris, L’Harmattan, 1996), pp. 95–102.
 - 9 *Régénération des colonies, ou moyens de restituer graduellement aux hommes leur état politique et d’assurer la prospérité des nations* (Paris, Cercle Social, 1792), p. 114; quotation, p. 43.
 - 10 F.X. Lanthenas, *M. Lamiral réfuté par lui-même, ou réponse aux opinions de cet auteur sur l’abolition de la traite, suivies de quelques idées sur les établissements libres que la France ne doit pas différer de faire au Sénégal* (Paris, 1790), p. 80.
 - 11 Another example of that idea is given to us by C.B. Wadström: ‘I understood that, sooner or later, the establishments would be settled, that they would definitely be successful and more and more strengthened, and that the greatest advantages would be obtained by the nations which would have them in their possession, mostly those who would be the first to engage themselves in such a profitable enterprise.’ (*Voyage au pays de Dahomé . . . suivi d’Observations sur la traite des nègres*, Paris, Gay and Gide, an III, 1794, p. 220). As a matter of fact, the title is that of Norris’ book, translated into French and published with Wadström’s *Observations sur la traite des nègres*, as an introduction.
 - 12 M. Dorigny, ‘La Société des Amis des Noirs et les projets de colonisation en Afrique’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 3–4 (1993), pp. 422–9.

- 13 This ethical problem equally appeared in 1792 through the debates linked to the possible abolition of privateering. On that topic, see F. Le Guellaf, *Armement en course et droit des prises maritimes, 1792–1856* (Nancy, Nancy University Press, 1999).
- 14 ‘The trade of exchange is more profitable’, they wrote. J.P. Brissot, E. Clavière, *De la France et des États Unis, ou de l’importance de la révolution d’Amérique pour le bonheur de la France* (London, 1787), pp. 13, 292.
- 15 The register of deliberations of the *Société des Amis des Noirs* (19 February 1788–11 June 1790) and some accounts related to the second society, notably for 1796–99, have been published and presented by M. Dorigny and M. Gainot (*La Société des Amis des Noirs, 1788–1799: Contribution à l’histoire de l’abolition de l’esclavage*, Paris, UNESCO-Edicef, 1998). Dorigny insists on the fact that economic arguments would have been massively used by French abolitionists: a slave trade described as unprofitable, free labour declared as more productive and more likely to benefit from technical progress than slavery, and so on. It seems, nevertheless, that these ideas were only developed by a handful of people, notably Clavière, Brissot, Lavoisier and Lafayette, and without real unity in their discourse. These individual stances have not been pointed out in the register of the first society. The information coming from England was then selected and adapted to ‘the taste of the French reader’ before translation, and the nature of the selection is quite revealing. Th. Clarkson’s *Essay on the Impolicy of the Slave Trade* was for French abolitionists only interesting through its moral arguments. Wishing to insist on the facts ‘with a dark colour’ (session of 11 March 1788), the members of the society have missed a great part of the economic dimension of the English abolitionist discourse. Besides, reading these published papers raises the question of whether the economic theme – when it was questioned – was not mainly seen as a tactical tool in order to show planters that their interests would not have been ruined in the case of the abolition of slavery; an attitude quite directly suggested to French abolitionists by Loménie de Brienne and La Luzerne. The second society was more interested in political economy than the first one. Its members sought to reshape French colonial policy. Jean-Baptiste Say, former secretary to Clavière, was one of the active members of that society. Perhaps he found in it some principles he later defended as an economist, such as the idea of ‘colonisation without territory’, that is, a commercial colonisation. From a more general viewpoint, see Ph. Steiner, ‘L’esclavage chez les économistes français 1750–1830’, in M. Dorigny (ed.) *Les abolitions de l’esclavage 1793, 1794, 1848: De L.F. Sonthonax à V. Schoelcher* (Paris, 1995), pp. 165–75. During the eighteenth century, writes Steiner, French ‘economic thought is not markedly interested in the question of slavery’ (p. 165).
- 16 Gensonné’s profession of faith, *Opinion sur les colonies* (Paris, 1792, p. 23), may be interpreted in that sense: ‘Colonies are a part of the French Empire; they are not confederated republics with their metropolitan area’ (ibid. p. 6).
- 17 Wadström, ‘Observations sur la traite des nègres’, in *Voyage au pays de Dahomé...*, pp. 204–5, 207. It is quite interesting to note the similarity with Norris’ discourse: ‘Once the principles of trade had been distracted from the noble aim of its institution – an institution which favoured the free circulation of goods, the extent of knowledge, the wealth and the prosperity of nations – and once the spirit of monopoly and private interest have moved them away from that universal goal, . . . [trade] only became the object of individual meanness, separated from the good of all’ (*Voyage au pays de Dahomé...*, p. 169). Some parallels could also be pointed out with Condorcet’s ideas. That is the sign that some common points could have brought together French and English abolitionists. However, although emphasising moral arguments, the latter knew

- to mention the economic advantages of the legitimate trade (S. Drescher, 'People and Parliament: The Rhetoric of the British Slave Trade', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XX: 4, Spring 1990, pp. 561–80) while the French abolitionists seem to have been reluctant to do that, despite the joint influence of some foreign personalities – like Wadström – and the nascent French political economy, through Condorcet and the physiocrats.
- 18 Until now, the history of the French abolitionist movement has only tackled biographical, political and institutional topics. The question of the nature of abolitionists and anti-abolitionists' arguments has been quite neglected. One can hope that the last and great book by S. Drescher (*The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002) will contribute to boost studies in this field.
 - 19 This was particularly the purpose of Wadström, though influenced by English abolitionists and very favourable to colonisation: 'So, let us form new establishments along the coasts of Africa, establishments which will only be devoted to invite Africans to enrich themselves through produce extracted from the cultivation of their own country and consequently to civilise them, a double object for which they are very capable of taking great care with keenness and pleasure' ('Observations sur la traite des nègres', in *Voyage au pays de Dahomé...*, p. 234).
 - 20 *Ibid.*, p. 6, Foreword by the translator of Norris's book published in the introduction to that of Wadström.
 - 21 According to Dorigny, the first references about Africa as a land for new colonisation in Grégoire's texts seem to go back to the beginnings of the *Directoire* (M. Dorigny and Y. Bénot, *Grégoire et la cause des Noirs, 1789–1831: Combats et projets*, Paris, SFHOM, 2000, p. 95), a fact which again reinforces the importance of that period in the genesis of a new French colonial policy. Three reasons explain Grégoire's involvement: Africa is 'a land *par excellence* for an evangelical mission... , a land available to welcome European sciences and arts; lastly ... the place *par excellence* where we must fight against slave trade through the cultivation and development of crops exported from American islands' (*ibid.*, pp. 94–5).
 - 22 S. Drescher, 'The Ending of the Slave Trade and the Evolution of European Scientific Racism', *Social Science History*, 3 (1990), pp. 415–50.
 - 23 L. Deschamps, *Histoire de la question coloniale en France* (Paris, Plon, 1891), pp. 356–69.
 - 24 See, for instance, the creation, in Marseille, in 1800, of the Société de l'Afrique intérieure, the objectives of which were, according to M. Dorigny, 'to explore the regions of the African continent remained forgotten by the voyages undertaken by traders too much attached to the sole control of the coasts ... Through the recognition of the interior of the continent, its mining wealth could be listed and its agricultural potential developed.' See Y. Bénot and M. Dorigny (eds) *Grégoire et la cause des Noirs, 1789–1831*.
 - 25 O. Pétré-Grenouilleau, *Les négoce maritimes français, XVIIe–XX siècles* (Paris, Belin, 1997), pp. 161–9.
 - 26 We note that Lainé de Villevêque, a friend of Cyrille-Auguste Bissette (an abolitionist from La Martinique who played a major role in the radicalisation of the French movement during the 1830s), defended in the Chamber the projects to colonise Senegal, as early as 1819. Great things were attempted under Governor Schmaltz. Trying to convince his contemporaries of the interest in settling a new type of colony, Baron Roger also had in mind the case of Senegal where he was governor from 1822 to 1826. All this indicates that it would be useful to analyse how Senegalese projects influenced the French way of seeing colonisation. But, given the lack of modern studies, *La mise en valeur du*

- Sénégal de 1817 à 1854*, published in Paris in 1921 by G. Hardy still remains the book of reference.
- 27 In 1821, Lainé declared to the other members of the Chamber: 'We need new colonies, founded on a different basis and for other purposes than those which directed our ancient colonisers.' On the other hand, Jean-Baptiste Say denounced the 'burden of colonies' (Archives parlementaires – French Parliamentary Papers).
 - 28 To this list could be added nine other articles, published between 1817 and 1847, relating to the region of the Indian Ocean. As for Senegal, they concern territories long prospected by French trade, and we cannot see, when reading them, the signs of an opening towards new forms of colonisation.
 - 29 L.C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802–1848* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000); S. Daget, *La France et l'abolition de la traite des Noirs de 1814 à 1831* (Paris, 1969), and *La répression de la traite des Noirs au XIXe siècle: L'action des croisières françaises sur les côtes occidentales de l'Afrique, 1817–1850* (Paris, Karthala, 1997). Nothing more on the topic in P.M. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814–1848* (London, Macmillan, 2000).
 - 30 P. Brasseur, 'Les campagnes abolitionnistes en France, 1815–1848: l'Afrique sans l'Afrique', in S. Daget (ed.) *De la traite à l'esclavage* (Nantes/Paris, CHIRMA-SFHOM, 1985), pp. 333–42.
 - 31 E.J. Morenas, *Précis historique de la traite des Noirs et de l'esclavage colonial* (Paris, Firmin Didot, 1828, Geneva, Slatkine reprints, 1978), p. 386. In 1818 and 1819, Morenas 'had worked in Senegal as an agricultural researcher' but 'he got on badly with the authorities, especially Schmaltz, whose scheme to promote large plantations he thought impractical' (Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression*, p. 96).
 - 32 L.B. Hautefeuille, *Plan de colonisation des possessions françaises dans l'Afrique occidentale au moyen de la civilisation des nègres indigènes* (Paris, Levasseur, 1830), quotations 10, 20, 5–6.
 - 33 *Ibid.* Quotations, pp. 10, 20, 6, 5, 7, 142. We have to transform some 'half savage Africans' into 'a people of serfs tied to the soil and subjected to his masters' (p. 119). But given the fact the 'new colony would have to be settled among Negroes' and that it 'would only thrive through their support', one should be careful 'not to offend their prejudices and affections', as well as to 'treat with equality the Christian, the Muslim and the Idolater' (pp. 123–4).
 - 34 E. Bouët-Willamez, *Commerce et traite des Noirs aux côtes occidentales d'Afrique* (Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1848, Geneva, Slatkine reprints, 1978). One part was initially published in 1845, in the appendix of the *Annales maritimes et coloniales*, and entitled *Description nautique des côtes de l'Afrique occidentale*.
 - 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 86–7.
 - 36 'Until that day, French trade did not really follow the example given by English trade, in the sense that it did not send ships of heavy tonnage exclusively designed for the oil trade directly to Bonny and the Calabars. French trading ships appeared there in order to complete their load with palm oil and not to trade entire cargoes with them' (*ibid.*, p. 181).
 - 37 Bouët-Willamez, *Commerce et traite des Noirs*, p. 51.
 - 38 C.W. Newbury and A.S. Kanya-Forstner ('French Policy and the Origins of the Scramble for West Africa', *Journal of African History*, 10, 2 (1969), pp. 253–76) insist on the role played in such circumstances by Brière de l'Isle (governor in Senegal in 1876) and Jauréguiberry, a former governor of Senegal who became the French Marine minister in 1879.

- 39 F. Manchuelle, 'Origines républicaines de la politique coloniale de Jules Ferry', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre Mer* (hereafter *RFHOM*, 279, 1988, pp. 185–206. Ch.R. Ageron has shown the importance of the role played by Faidherbe and Gambetta in the Republican colonial policy: ('Gambetta et la reprise de l'expansion coloniale', *RFHOM*, 215, 1972, p. 165).
- 40 Some studies are sometimes remarkable as these by X. Daumalin *Marseille et l'Ouest Africain: L'Outre-Mer des industriels 1841–1956* (Marseille, 1992), B. Schnapper, *La politique et le commerce français dans le golfe de Guinée de 1838 à 1871* (Paris, Mouton, 1961), and O. Goerg, *Commerce et colonisation en Guinée 1850–1913* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1986), but the second does not give any statistics concerning French trade, and the latter focuses more on the effects of trade within African societies than on trade itself.
- 41 European merchandise used for slave trade and legitimate trade were comparable, so slave-traders could easily argue, when captured, that they were trading legally. Sometimes it has even been officially suggested to French merchants that they provide African slave-traders with English products in order to insert themselves better into African economic networks (S. Daget, 'La navigation nantaise pour le commerce légitime à la côte occidentale d'Afrique, 1833–1872', *Enquêtes et Documents*, Nantes, 1980, pp. 85–113, see p. 110).
- 42 A part of the French illegal slave trade was organised from outside: from Senegal and, mostly, from the French Antilles. A share of that trade was doubtless financed by traders from Nantes. In all, 318 slave-ships left Nantes during the Restoration period. Bordeaux, the port in second position, with 48 shipments, was far behind, as well as Le Havre, the third (42 shipments). See O. Pétré-Grenouilleau, *Nantes au temps de la traite des Noirs* (Paris, Hachette, 1998), pp. 172–224.
- 43 Particularly for the oleaginous seeds, then the African produce the most used in European manufacturing. Between 1845 and 1865, the share of Nantes in French imports of that item fluctuated between 2.94 per cent (in 1858 – 3,636 tons) and 0.30 per cent (in 1853 – 255 tons). Between 1857 and 1866, the yearly average of Nantes' imports was 45 million francs for sugar, coffee and cocoa, and less than 3 million for African oils, skins and woods.
- 44 More than 10 of the 18 million were constituted by foreign merchandise imported into France to be exchanged thereafter in Africa (Ambroise-Marie Arnould, *De la balance du commerce et des relations commerciales extérieures de la France* (Paris, Buisson, 1791, vol. 1, p. 300).
- 45 In a very interesting article, Harding shows that, until 1914 and despite the establishment of colonial rule, the trade of French, English and German west African colonies was far from being entirely dominated by their respective metropolitan areas. For instance, in 1910, only 52.1 per cent of imports and 42.8 per cent of exports of the French AOF (French west Africa) were carried out through trading relations with France. L. Harding, 'La pêche dans l'eau des autres: le commerce des étrangers dans les colonies nationales d'Afrique de l'Ouest, 1890–1914', in H. Bonin and M. Cahen (eds) *Négoce blanc en Afrique noire: L'évolution du commerce à longue distance en Afrique noire du 18e au 20e siècles* (Paris, SFHOM, 2001), pp. 255–67.
- 46 The percentages are as follows: 12.86 per cent (1874), 5.60 per cent (1875), 6.25 per cent (1876), 3.50 per cent (1877), 5.54 per cent (1878), 4.88 per cent (1879), 3.91 per cent (1880), 3.92 per cent (1881), 6.62 per cent (1882), 5.06 per cent (1883) and 9.13 per cent (1884). According to ADLA (Archives départementales de Loire-Atlantique), Nantes, 6JJ, 180 'Liste des navires attachés au port de Nantes' and B 90 registers of outfitting and laying up.
- 47 O. Pétré-Grenouilleau, *L'argent de la traite. Milieu négrier, capitalisme et développement: un modèle* (Paris, Aubier, 1996), pp. 300–11; O. Pétré-

- Grenouilleau, 'Les trois âges de l'agro-alimentaire à Nantes, XVIII-XXe siècles', in J. Marseille (ed.) *Les industries agro-alimentaires en France: Histoire et performances* (Paris, Le Monde Editions, 1997), pp. 167–91.
- 48 This fact is also pointed out by B. Schnapper: 'French merchants made less distinction between trade and speculation than their English rivals' (*La politique et le commerce français dans le golfe de Guinée*, p. 260).
- 49 In 1787, the manufactured products exported by sea from the *généralité* of Aix-en-Provence amounted to a value of 18 million *livres tournois*. Behind Brittany (20.3 million, notably textiles), the region was the second in France for the exportation of that kind of product. With the addition of the 17.2 million of merchandise produced around Montpellier, but exported from Marseille, that port was by far the most important for French manufactured products exported at the end of the eighteenth century.
- 50 Leroy-Beaulieu was in favour of commercial colonies, but his plans were more directed towards French North Africa than towards sub-Saharan territories. He described the trade in the Congo and Gabon as something 'puny', and did not see any signs of future development there, while small livestock farming was painted as the only thing to get from Madagascar. In his opinion, some lines of penetration could have been opened in these regions, in order not to freeze French influence, but he did not really talk about colonisation (P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*, Paris, Guillaumin, 1886, 176, pp. 495–8). Levasseur also thought that the economic value of these regions was 'mediocre' and 'could grow' only with 'time', in his *Histoire du commerce de la France*, II, *de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris, 1912), p. 552.
- 51 All-important French conquests before 1870 (Algeria, Senegal, Cochin China) were the result of political factors, whether domestic or international. In addition, before 1914, foreign traders benefited more from French colonial expansionism than French trade (H. Brunschwig, *Mythes et réalités de l'impérialisme colonial français*, Paris, 1960, pp. 15, 100).
- 52 C.M. Andrew, P. Grupp and A.S. Kanya-Forstner ('Le mouvement colonial français et ses principales personnalités de 1890 à 1914', *RFHOM*, 229, 1975, pp. 640–73).
- 53 H. Brunschwig, *Mythes et réalités*, p. 71.

10 The place and role of the players in colonial expansion

France and east Africa in the nineteenth century

Valérie Valey

At the end of the eighteenth century, the independence of the United States seemed to have rendered obsolete any idea of colonial domination in an identical form to that of the *ancien régime* by the European states. Later, trade resulting from this old colonial system also seemed to be doomed to failure confronted with the development of a new economy based on industrial capitalism. It may seem surprising therefore that, decades later, Europeans colonised Africa.

It is true that Africa has always aroused the curiosity of Europeans and many of them ventured into the interior during the nineteenth century in order to discover what was still a *terra incognita*. In spite of the many obstacles encountered, scientific expeditions financed by geographical societies and religious missions increased. This detailed exploration, which only lasted half a century, led to a better understanding of Africa as well as encouraging greed. Scientific and religious, as well as commercial, military and political aims were therefore more or less mingled with the various aspects linking together and evolving differently over time. Caution is necessary when stating that these expeditions were the forerunners of colonisation which would end up as a real sharing out of eastern Africa, according to Henri Brunschwig.¹

Various theories have been put forward to explain this 'break-up of Africa': some maintain that the Scramble resulted from the circumstances. Hubert Deschamps, ex-governor of the colonies, declared that colonisation is the result 'of personal impetus, methods that were improvised to suit the circumstances, intentions stated then floundering in the unforeseen, practices which inspired doctrines and doctrines which aimed to justify practices'.² For others, the colonisation of Africa is the consequence of various deeper causes. Their work puts forward the importance of motives which were economic (prospecting for markets and raw materials), political (the influence of nationalism and imperialism) and demographic or cultural (religious proselytisation and anti-slavery philanthropy). In spite of these differing views, the majority of theses consider colonisation of Africa, as it was at the end of the nineteenth century, as a more or less inevitable phenomenon resulting from an inescapable logical process.

The vocabulary used by contemporaries did not always imply the idea of inevitability, although it often reflected that of a logical process. In France at the end of the nineteenth century, colonial expansion was presented as a policy rather than a logical process. In fact, the expression which crops up most frequently in designating the expansionist movement in the speeches of the decision-makers of the time is 'the colonial expansion policy'. The word 'policy' suggests the designation of objectives (the extension of French influence), the existence of various options (colonisation, protectorate and so forth) and methods, such as military conquest, as well as the allocation of means to attain these objectives. As if an argument, an organisation and activities concerning the colonial question had been thought out, elaborated and set up by political leaders. The word 'policy' also indicates debate in a republican state and therefore that the 'policy of expansion' is the result of complex discussions. Does this way of presenting things therefore correspond to the reality of the time?

Looking at the question in this way, one forgets that colonisation represented only one possibility amongst a range of options. Alternatives to military conquest and political domination would just as well have enabled the powers of the old continent to create special relationships with Africa. Based on this postulate, it may be interesting to analyse the various factors which played a role in the construction of this policy of colonial expansion, to emphasise their relationships and above all, to place the main 'players' of this policy at the centre of the study. In fact, although colonisation was the choice of a few great statesmen,³ it was also the result of a strategy developed by groups of players whose sometimes opposing views must be taken into account. The aspirations of the colonists, traders, naval officers and local populations must be analysed because they are central to the construction process of this colonial policy.

In order to understand this slow process better, our study is based on the whole of the nineteenth century. In fact, even though the territorial occupation of Africa only started around 1880, it was throughout the whole of this century that the constitutive elements accumulated and led to the process of creating future colonial empires. Long-term hindsight also makes it easier to see the marked developments between the colonial system of the *ancien régime* and the new one. To do this, we have selected a region which has been little studied from this point of view – east Africa. This includes the area covered by present-day Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Zanzibar as well as Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands. Limiting the study to this area enables us to observe an original situation which does not exist in the Gulf of Guinea. In fact, it is possible to make comparisons between old and new forms of colonial influence. There was an old colonial power – Portugal, settled in Mozambique since the fifteenth century, two nations, rivals for many years, France and the United Kingdom, and a new arrival, Germany which had its eye on the rich expanses of land in future Kenya. Although the French pres-

ence in western Africa has been studied, the same cannot be said for the east of the continent, so a comparison between the two is all the more interesting.

The existence of original documents which have not yet been analysed with this in mind, confirms this choice: the archives of the French naval division of the Indian Ocean,⁴ the *General Table of Trade between France and its Colonies and Foreign Powers*, the *Moniteur universel*, diplomatic and consular archives and even the press of that time. From these sources we can try to understand the real intentions of the various governments, the amount of freedom left to individual initiative in the process of colonisation, the reality of commercial trade between France and Africa and the nature of public support for the colonial idea. We shall try to show that, on the French side, the Scramble was not the consequence of an inescapable logical process and, above all, that the local players often played a more important role than is sometimes supposed. To do this, we shall try to present the various groups which participated in the elaboration of the colonial expansion policy, to define their interests and to analyse the evolution of their ideas concerning colonial expansion. First of all, the study of large landowners and small planters will allow us to understand a group of men involved in the traditional plantation system. Then it will be interesting to compare this first group with the group of traders and ship-owners, often presented as 'new' men, heralding a new type of capitalism. Finally, after recalling some essential data concerning European and indigenous political representatives, we shall concentrate on the players too often unrecognised in French colonial expansion in east Africa: the officers of the French naval station in the region.

Colonists and French planters in east Africa: supporters of an old colonial system

Europeans owning large plantations in the islands of the Indian Ocean form the ruling class of these insular societies because the colonial economy is based essentially on farming the land. These men should have been all the more zealous supporters of the colonial conquest since they had been able to take advantage of a previous phase of expansion to acquire their properties. However, they did not encourage colonisation; they saw in the appropriation and consequent development of new land, the possibility of new competition. If they did sometimes encourage colonisation, it was only to try to ensure the survival of an economic system in decline since the abolition of slavery.

Limited French settlement until the mid-nineteenth century

The first Europeans landing on the African coasts described this continent as being a land of great wealth and prodigious fertility. The idea that it was

the nature of the soils that made them very productive is often taken up by the newspapers of the nineteenth century, as this extract from an article in the weekly *Illustration* shows:

Due to its altitude and geology, Great Comoro enjoys a temperate and very healthy climate. It is without water courses and there are no insalubrious swamps as in the neighbouring islands. The rainy season lasts 8 months at least and maintains extreme fertility in all areas. There are immense forests which offer all the marvels of tropical vegetation . . . Bananas, maize and potatoes are cultivated: entire woods of coffee bushes are to be found everywhere so cultivation would be easy.⁵

Accounts of nineteenth-century explorers continued to convey this idea of fertility, for example, Speeke's remarks: 'The fact is that there are food shortages generally throughout the country, through no fault of the soil which is naturally fertile, but due to the inhabitants who hardly cultivate it, devour the harvest half green and then live either on fish caught in the river or on tortoises collected in the interior.'⁶

Anxious to take advantage of the supposed wealth of this tropical environment, from the seventeenth century France attempted to establish itself in the region, more or less successfully. In practice, the French presence was limited to a few tropical islands in the Indian Ocean – Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands. Taking possession of them corresponded to at least two requirements: finding a port of call on the route to the Indies and incidentally setting up plantations.

The project for colonising the 'great African island' ended in failure despite numerous attempts to settle. In 1643, the French created a trading post at Fort Dauphin on the point of Taolankara in the hopes of rapidly founding a colony. In practice, the enterprise proved to be a disaster and the 400 colonists sent to the island in 1667 had to abandon Fort Dauphin in 1674. As a result, in the eighteenth century only a few slave-trade ports held by French colonists remained on the eastern coast of Madagascar. A century later, France only had control of the small islands of Sainte Marie, Nossi-Bé and Mayotte. The resistance of the local population and the hostility of the climate and the topography partly explain this failure. In fact, Madagascar has varied bio-climatic areas which can prove to be particularly unattractive, such as the swampy and humid areas in the east or the mountainous areas in the centre. In reality, the main reason for this failure was that the French did not take the time to weigh up the agricultural potential of the island and therefore to introduce viable crops. However, the idea of profit was dominant in the minds of the policy-makers back home, being those who gave the financial backing to the enterprise.

On the other hand, the hope placed in the colonisation of the Mas-

carene Islands was perfectly rewarded since these islands, benefiting from an excellent climate, were colonised and planted. When the French seized the island of Bourbon in 1642 and the island of France in 1715, they quickly cultivated them to provide the home market with tropical goods, particularly with coffee, indigo, cotton and sugar. However, the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* which had obtained preferential rights on the Mascarenes, had to abandon them in 1767 due to its large deficit. This situation also affected the agricultural production of both islands: Bourbon started growing foodstuffs to satisfy the needs of its neighbour while the island of France produced newly introduced spices, such as cloves and nutmeg. Although it was not the main objective, the population increased. On the eve of the French Revolution, each island had approximately 46,000 inhabitants, of which 37,000 were slaves. However, this growth led to a decrease in the average surface area of plantations. Finally, France lost the island of Mauritius to the English through the treaties of 1814.

The idyllic descriptions of some nineteenth-century explorers do not correspond entirely with reality. They do not take into account the difficulties confronted by the first colonists. The system in place during the second half of the nineteenth century was greatly inspired by the system established under the *ancien régime*, at the time of the *Exclusif*, when the colonies had to provide tropical goods and raw materials exclusively for the home country.⁷ The great sugar plantations of the island of Bourbon which constituted the main economy of the island, continued to spread until the 1870s. As in the past, most of the agricultural production was either consumed on the island or exported to France. The colonists settled on the islands still believed in this old idea of the economy. During the whole of the second half of the nineteenth century, they were very keen to preserve the specific financial and political links with the home country.

The plantation: still a dynamic economic model during the second half of the nineteenth century

This system was a real reference model in economic terms for the majority of the explorers, colonists and missionaries arriving in east Africa. Captain Germain⁸ relates that some missionaries cultivated plants for export, for example, coffee, while at the same time growing maize, rice, manioc and vegetables to meet the needs of their small religious communities. When Europeans obtained new concessions, they attempted to reproduce the classic plantation system. The only innovation was in the introduction of new plants considered to be more productive (maize, rice and manioc). It was rare to find European factories processing the raw materials on the island, like the Creole, Napoléon de Lastelle's sugar refinery, or the real industrial complex of the French entrepreneur, Jean Laborde (who, amongst other things, established a foundry, earthenware factory, glassworks, indigo dyeing unit, a papermill and a soapworks in Madagascar).

Similarly, small factories opened by missionaries who taught the indigenous people a trade other than agriculture were exceptions.

If these men continued to apply and protect the old colonial system, they did so because it was viable and could prove to be lucrative. The plantation economy spread throughout most of the islands in the Indian Ocean because of their outstanding advantages in terms of climate, soil composition and access to a large labour force due to their proximity to the African continent. However, other factors came into play as in the case of Zanzibar and Pemba, which built their reputation on the quality of their spices, particularly cloves. In fact, restrictions on the slave trade, until then the main activity and source of revenue of the inhabitants of Zanzibar, and competition with the Indians on all the markets, prompted Sultan Seyid Saïd to pass a law allowing the extension of the cultivation of clove trees. These islands offered the most favourable bio-climatic conditions for the cultivation of this spice and, for several decades, production continued to increase, reaching 5,472 tonnes in 1865.⁹ From 1856, extension of the plantations stopped but the value of clove exports from Zanzibar and Pemba continued to increase. In 1859, exports represented US\$382,000 before reaching US\$1,260,000 in 1881.¹⁰ Since the price of cloves remained high until the middle of the century, investing in its cultivation reaped substantial rewards. It seems all the more logical therefore that this economic system should be preserved and protected since it proved to be very lucrative.

The case of Zanzibar and Pemba is original in certain respects, but it is far from being the exception. Agricultural production from most of the plantation colonies continued to increase throughout the century. The island of Bourbon produced 7,000 tonnes of sugar in 1821 before exceeding more than 72,000 tonnes in 1861. The old economic model was therefore followed beyond the period of the French Revolution and it was not until the last third of the nineteenth century that new elements appeared and hastened the decay of this system.

A shortage in the labour force aggravated by the abolition of the slave trade

Most tropical plants, although they do not need much maintenance, require a large labour force at harvest time. The colonists' plantations had therefore been developed by Blacks sent from Africa by slave-traders. The islands of the Indian Ocean were able to take advantage of these forced shifts in population because they are situated at a stone's throw from the African continent. However, this booming economic system was destabilised by the banning of the slave trade, followed by the abolition of slavery. It is clear that the mass freeing of slaves far from pleased the colonists. On the contrary, they were worried, fully aware of the economic, social and demographic repercussions that such a measure was likely to



Plate 7 A slave market in Zanzibar, 1864 (source: with the authorisation of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Société de Géographie de Paris).

have on their livelihood, on the islands and on the rest of the African continent. As Captain Fleuriot de Langle noted, the recent reforms resulted in an immediate shortage in the labour force and an increase in production costs:

Questions of work were always the most urgent for the colonies; the shortage of labour has made colonial work so expensive that it is only accessible to the landowner who has credit or an advance; up till now, recruitment has been incapable of reducing the price of labour and one can only with the greatest of sacrifices ensure the continuity of work whereon the existence of the colonist depends and for whom the least strike would be total ruin.¹¹

Zanzibar and Pemba, dependencies of the sultanate of Zanzibar, escaped this problem, at least until 1867¹² because the local authorities refused to abolish the slave trade. The planters of the island of Bourbon tried to fill this shortage in the labour force by turning to the illegal slave trade, actively practised by the inhabitants of the Comoro Islands. The latter had small craft available that were sufficiently discreet and rapidly equipped. Situated near the African continent, they had the advantage of flying the French tricolour flag, because Nossi-Bé and Mayotte were French dependencies. Everyone knew that personnel in the French naval division responsible for controlling the dhows were too few to carry out effective surveillance.

The French government was quick to investigate this problem because it was not unaware of the fact that the fate of the colonies was closely linked to the contribution of the labour force from abroad, because the colonists claimed insistently for measures to be taken and finally because the Foreign Office had several times alerted its French equivalent to the illegal slave trade practised by French nationals. Taking on indigenous workers by purchasing their slave status appeared to be the answer to restore the balance between the demand for and offer of work. The colonists and some officials responsible for the repression of the slave trade supported this idea, showing they could not imagine anything other than indigenous workers, whatever the arrangement.

Moreover, through the debates intending to convince public opinion of the justification for this solution, it can be seen that the portrayal of the indigenous people had hardly evolved. They were still considered as 'beings deprived of any intelligence'¹³ in the best case, or as simple production tools, according to Captain Loyer's remarks: 'The Blacks are indispensable for cultivation and other work in tropical countries; but since these Blacks have few or no needs, they will only ever work by force, so it will always be necessary to employ force to have workers.'¹⁴

Once the principle of resorting exclusively to forced labour by the indigenous population was admitted, the local authorities attempted to set up relatively efficient systems of recruitment. Most of the experiments, enrolling all men by force without a work contract,¹⁵ attempts to buy back slaves in order to make them sign an agreement¹⁶ and voluntary recruitment failed. Similarly, the coolie trade, experimented with since 1827 on the island of Bourbon, was abandoned in 1885. It was considered to be immoral by some of the academic élite who maintained that the procedure resembled slave-trading; and the colonists themselves were opposed for other reasons: 'The emigrants were transported from very distant countries to the place of work so that it was a burden in itself and the price of recruitment became all the more expensive so the advantage was lost in transport and acclimatisation.'¹⁷ Threatened by the abolition of slavery as well as by the development of sugar beet in the home country, some colonists began to take more of an interest in Africa and Madagascar, not

to farm but to tap their human resources. They encouraged their governments to sign agreements so they could recruit men in eastern Africa. Negotiations were not carried out with African chiefs as in the time of the slave trade, but with the colonial power 'controlling' the coast – Portugal. Some planters demanded more and declared themselves to be in favour of occupying certain points of the Madagascar coast in order to guarantee a regular supply of agricultural workers. Several naval officers shared this point of view, although it only involved strengthening certain places considered to be strategic: 'I shall summarise here the formal and unanimously voiced opinion on all the ships along the Coast regarding the question of porters. If France wants to find porters, the only way is by occupying forcefully and permanently the main points we would like for this...'¹⁸

Subsequently, the inhabitants of the island of Bourbon, particularly the major landowners, participated actively in the creation of French colonial policy, notably regarding the conquest of Madagascar.

Merchants and ship-owners: pragmatism and opportunism

Not long after their arrival in east Africa, the Portuguese set up trading posts in several places along the coast to facilitate trading. However, the Westerners participated in a very small proportion of commercial trading in the region. In the nineteenth century, scientific expeditions drew up a particularly detailed inventory of the various natural and mineral resources of east Africa. Believing they had discovered real economic potential in this area, several French trading companies did not hesitate to take the risk in the hopes of making a fortune. From then on they were torn between the desire to colonise this new land at least to have the security necessary for their activities, and the fear of thus attracting competition, even from their compatriots.

A difficult introduction into the region's trading circles

First, it must be remembered that trading is an age-old activity in east Africa. In fact, very early on the indigenous population established solid trading routes covering the whole of their territory. Trade with the interior of the country was organised around three main routes which then divided into numerous branches.¹⁹ Each route went from the region of the great lakes and joined one of the ports on the coast, such as the route linking the inhabitants of Lake Nyanza with those of the ports of Mombasa, Lamu, Merka, and so on. Taking advantage of the coast, the natives set up profitable trading relationships with the outside world where Arabs and Indians held a privileged position as middlemen. These networks already set up were an obstacle to French trade. However, trading structures can evolve as was proved by the new and rapid expansion of Zanzibar from

the 1840s. The French admired this dynamism, as Commander Pallu remarked:

Zanzibar, central point of trade with India and Europe on the eastern coast of Africa, is a beautiful Arab town whose wealth increases daily at the same time as its commercial importance. It is destined to become the New York or the Calcutta of this part of the maritime world which it dominates and commands.²⁰

Trade was particularly varied, to such an extent that, regarding the ships berthing in Zanzibar, Captain Hugueteau de Chaillé declared:

From Madagascar they bring: archil, rice, ebony, sandalwood, tortoise shell, sea cucumber, dried beef, shark fins and tails, honey, wood for construction and wax. From the Comoros: cowrie shells, goats, Sayon tubers and sugar. Nothing from Mayotte. Exports for Arabia from Zanzibar comprise sorghum, iron, cotton fabric, honey, rice, empty sacks, etc.; for Mayotte, cotton fabrics, guns, oil, soap, salt, dates, gunpowder, butter, glass beads, etc.²¹

This text omits to mention the slave trade which enabled Zanzibar to become rich as a transit point for sending Blacks to the Red Sea perhaps because, to French officers, Zanzibar was a model of influence and expansion, although a competitive model. From their point of view, French traders considered this island to be a real obstacle to their business. Some Europeans rapidly found themselves up against the hostility of the local traders and they were penalised by the high taxation imposed by the Sultan, as shown by the failure of Schoelsing and Co: 'Out of 250,000 francs worth of merchandise, we have made 25,000 francs. These are the considerable losses that negligence and the ill-will of the Sultan of Zanzibar's governors have caused us...'²²

To integrate into the region's trading circles and therefore reap part of its trade, the French used methods inherited from the *ancien régime*, at the same time modifying certain aspects in order to make them more efficient. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, merchants 'bartered under sail' which meant anchoring in several places, one after another, and waiting for the natives to come in their dugout canoes to exchange their goods. They also entrusted African middlemen with their transactions: this was 'barter on land'. Since the risk of insolvency of the black middlemen was too high, the French set up trading posts on the coast. Overseas trade was therefore controlled by a few large trading companies with sufficient means and who perfectly understood the requirements of the indigenous populations.

Since there were only a few of them, they had the advantage of a virtual monopoly on the sale of manufactured goods. This was the same on the

Swahili coast where nearly all the trade was in the hands of Régis aîné et cie and Augustin Fabre et fils.²³ It was the same on certain islands, such as Zanzibar where, in 1868, Roux de Fraissinet declared:

We have been established in this island for 20 or so years; we have a large import and export business for all sorts of goods. Our agency is managed by M.P. Cottoni who always has six or seven French employees under his orders. Our only serious competitors are M. Oswald Brothers of Hamburg, Prussians and Prussian consuls in Zanzibar.²⁴

These companies had several trading establishments on the coast and a sufficiently large fleet to ensure their liaison with the home country. Managers were placed in charge of each trading post to receive and send on all the articles from the coast likely to interest the home market and to sell the merchandise coming from Europe. In this way structures set up in east Africa were not very different from those in west Africa.²⁵

French traders had to take into account a quantity of variable data, sometimes contradictory. First, they had to face problems linked to the nature and value of the goods traded. As far as imports were concerned, there were traditional products like coffee, spices and skins. However, there were also new products like rubber and gutta percha, a malleable substance derived from latex which was only imported into France from 1870.²⁶ It was particularly oleaginous seeds which enjoyed a tremendous boom. Imports of groundnuts and touloucouna nuts represented 1,662,229 francs in 1885, instead of 207,196 francs in 1855. The demand for fatty substances boomed due to the development of industries in Europe which needed to lubricate their machines and improve the quality of their products. Some companies were even entirely dependent on these goods, such as soap-works or oil-mills. However, all the countries of the old continent did not develop at the same rate. France was behind Germany and England concerning the production of palm oil.

This late development limited the impact of the weaknesses in French export goods. Colonial trade was modelled on the slave-trade economy in so far as no raw material was processed on the African continent. On the one hand this situation could be regarded as positive for the merchants since they were the only ones to offer manufactured goods. However, on the other hand, since the value and bulk of the merchandise traded were not the same, they had to find a solution to avoid ships' cargoes coming from France being too light. They arrived onto an already well-structured market with consumer habits which changed little, hence the difficulty of selling certain manufactured goods. In addition, they had only a small range of goods to offer the élite natives and colonists. Amongst the 48 types of goods itemised in the *General Table of Trade between France and its Colonies and Foreign Powers*, only seven articles were regularly traded

between 1855 and 1885: wine and eau de vie, fabrics, weapons, metal objects and glass beads. French companies do not appear to have had goods which were likely to lead to large transactions until the last decade of nineteenth century because the French market at the time was too limited.²⁷

A final problem resulted from the necessary adaptation of French trade to the changes in international trade. The classic commercial structures based on trading companies owning their own ships and having a number of managers spread throughout the trading posts had inevitably to evolve in order to keep up with the arrival of the big shipping companies, genuine import–export companies. Due to the arrival of steam ships and the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869, shipping companies with immense financial means appeared and ventured into the Indian Ocean. At first they provided a postal service in order to benefit from government subsidies after which they resorted entirely to the transport of merchandise and passengers.²⁸ Considered as competition, these companies also enabled the trading companies to reach new markets and to make higher profits; however, they forced the trading companies to invest further.²⁹

The importance of east African commerce in trading circles and in the colonial debate

France participates in a large share of the trade in all these countries; the capital invested represents very large sums and there is every reason to preserve such useful relations on the coast of Madagascar, as well as the African coast; they increase from year to year, benefiting our import trade as much as our export trade.³⁰

This declaration by Commander Le Helleco seems to indicate that trade with east Africa was already important and remunerative in 1875, but was the economic situation of trade between France and east Africa really advantageous? And how did colonisation improve it?

In fact, east Africa had a very small share in French exports; for the whole of the period 1855–85, it only represented 0.04 per cent of total sales. Furthermore, sales of French products were irregular due to the international economic situation which oscillated between free trade and moderate protectionism, and the competition between European companies. Finally, if the value of French exports to Africa is compared, it can be seen that it is the western regions which absorb most of the French products. In fact, the value of French exports reached only 700,000 francs for east Africa whereas it represented 10.8 million francs for Senegal in 1855. French exports to east Africa increased, exceeding 2.4 million francs in 1885. This could substantiate Jacques Marseille's thesis³¹ according to which French colonial trade increased as the debate on colonial expansion evolved. However, on a national

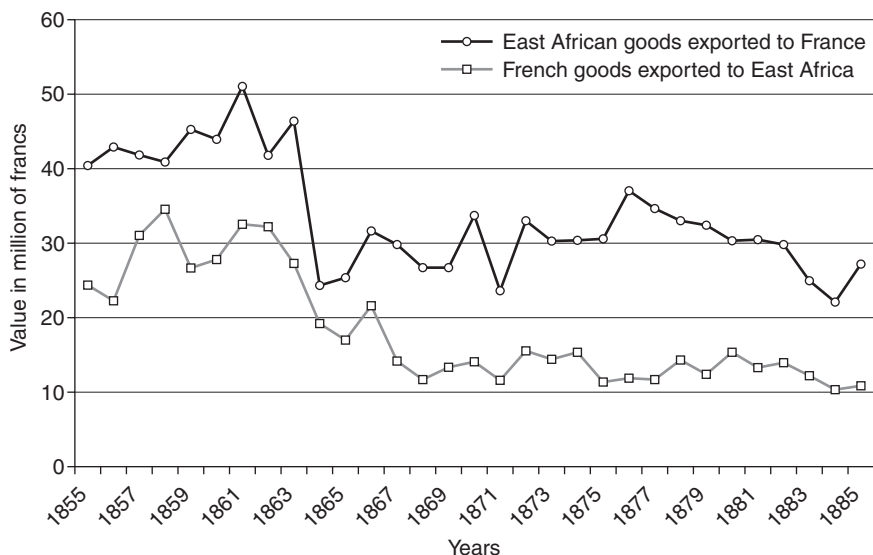


Figure 10.1 Trade between France and east Africa (including Mayotte, Nossi-Bé, Ste Marie and La Réunion, 1855–1885).

level, the sums involved were much too small to be significant. The value of French imports of African goods was higher; it reached 4.4 million francs in 1855. Moreover, trade developed, since in 1885 it exceeded 9 million francs. However, this trade constituted no more than 0.1 per cent of all French purchases. By way of comparison, France imported 28.7 million francs worth of goods from Senegal in 1885.

If we limit ourselves to these figures, the share of east African trade in the French economy is absurd. It is true that some sectors of the French economy benefited from the spin-offs of this trade. Certain sectors are more directly involved in this trade with east Africa, such as flour milling, textiles, metallurgical industry and the wine trade. In fact, the wine sales in east Africa exceeded 5 million francs and fabrics reached 4.6 million francs between 1855 and 1885. At the same time, innovatory companies such as soap-works were created, basing their production on the processing of natural, tropical substances. Furthermore, imports of oleaginous seeds represented 32.5 million francs between 1855 and 1885. Finally, some ports specialising in the transport of colonial goods benefited from this trade with Africa, for example, the ports of Le Havre, Bordeaux, Nantes and particularly Marseille. The majority of the commercial companies involved in this trade were to be found in the Phocæan city, as well as the largest shipping companies such as the Messageries Impériales.

Above all, it must be remembered that there were a limited number of

trading companies interested in this business. Profits proved to be very high because only a limited number of beneficiaries shared them. The balance sheet of the trading company Fabre et Régis, drawn up by Commander Le Helleco, confirms our point of view:

The working capital invested in the east coast of Africa by these two companies, whose turnover is approximately the same, can be evaluated at between 6 and 7 million; to this must be added 2 million francs worth of houses, boats and equipment of every kind in the different agencies. They import 12 to 15 million francs worth of merchandise annually and 500,000 to 600,000 francs in cash or bills of exchange. In an average year, the exports for both companies together make up the cargo of 22 300-ton ships, four of which take cowries to the Guinea coast.³²

The world of trade with interests in colonial Africa maintained complex and reserved relations with colonisation, each seeking to preserve its own interests. However, colonisation presented as many advantages as drawbacks. On the one hand, it put an end to the system of local middlemen, such as the Swahilis and the Banians³³ and did away with abusive local taxes which penalised French goods to the extent that some companies were unable to survive. In 1883, the French company Roux de Fraissinet closed with liabilities of 5 million francs:

Complaints from our compatriots have been increasing in size and number for several years without finding any solution; their efforts to develop their trade constantly comes up against the systematic opposition of the local authorities, so, the irritation provoked by the lack of business, whether commercial or political, maintains an antagonism which is becoming more violent every day.³⁴

The trading fraternity in favour of colonisation could count on their representatives in the *Chambre des députés* (Chamber of Deputies) as well as on the support of some naval officers and some more or less influential financial lobbies. On the other hand, colonisation caused concern because it implied the end of the monopoly by a few trading companies. In fact, French merchants, who were almost the only ones on this eastern coast, already indulged in a merciless war, to the great despair of sea captain Hugueteau de Chaillé, who was an eye-witness to this battle in Mozambique:

It is sad to say that in this country where exceptionally French trade is the most important, the only two French companies represented there are in fierce battle and both compete with each other creating prejudice against themselves and our relations in general. The Régis

company which buys trade goods at seven or eight times their value and the company Lasnier company (ex Régis).³⁵

In all, the merchants generally only wanted a reinforcement of the French presence on the African coast in order to ensure the respect of commercial agreements signed with the natives.

Seeds of change in political matters

Since commitment to the colonisation process cannot really be explained by economic elements, we must look at the political factors. In the mid-nineteenth century, the French and English governments decided to intervene in east Africa to put an end to the slave trade which was continuing on the coast. However, the Europeans were not only acting out of philanthropic concerns, political and economic interests also came into play. The English intervened for strategic reasons: they wanted to control the route to the Indies. As far as the French were concerned, politicians wanted to avoid any situation which would compromise national honour and if they were involved, it was to avoid suffering any consequences. As a result, the evolution of the international context again changed their outlook on east Africa.

A discreet French presence linked to the repression of the slave trade

In order to enforce the abolition of the slave trade, considerable material means had to be available. France and Great Britain signed a series of bilateral agreements between 1816 and 1845 which involved creating naval squadrons responsible for the surveillance of shipping and, if necessary, to curb smuggling. It was in this context that the naval division of the African east coast was founded in 1858,³⁶ taking over the task which had been assigned to the division sailing on the west coast.³⁷ Its main aim was to assist the fight against the slave trade by supervising French shipping movements in the local waters. The effectiveness of this suppression is very debatable and even naval officers, such as Commander Loyer, remained sceptical:

However active surveillance is in reality, it is certain to be inefficient as long as the demand outstrips supply and, at present, the slave trade is the only element of trade at present in the countries of its origin in Africa and with slaves still existing in the importing countries – Turkey, Persia and Egypt.³⁸

The result proved to be very poor when compared to those of the English patrol in west Africa. In fact, no large-scale capture was made, so the slave

trade continued in other forms by means of an indirect³⁹ trade and a disguised⁴⁰ trade. Such an outcome can be explained by the insufficient number of ships constituting the repressive patrol, the French naval division consisted of only five ships⁴¹ which was absurd considering the immense area to be patrolled.

However, the repression of the slave trade was also, and above all, made difficult by a particularly complex political and economic situation. The eastern slave trade dates back a long way and was set up by the Arabs even before the arrival of the Europeans in the region. In addition, it was in full boom during the second half of the nineteenth century in order to meet the needs of planters in Oman. The ivory trade and plantation economy, active since the 1820s, also played an important role in the development of the African slave trade. In each case, the slave was indispensable, either for carrying merchandise or for cultivating the land and consequently Europeans were faced with the hostility of local potentates. Remarks by Salmé Ruete, princess of Zanzibar, clearly reflect the apprehensions of the Zanzibar dignitaries:

If one really believes that it is possible gradually to abolish slavery and carry out all the conditions necessary to such an enormous revolution, it should be done with infinite tact and forethought. First of all the Negro must get used to working; also, the masters should be informed as to their real interests and shown clearly and precisely that they could economise the work of a hundred slaves by using efficient agricultural machines and implements. The Arab must recognise that he is not to be dispossessed but that we are concerned for his rights as much as that of the Negro.⁴²

Using the French patrols as an influential instrument in the region

Under these conditions, English repression hardened, provoking numerous complaints such as that of the dhow owner, Mohamed Souely, who maintained that an English sailor 'having remained behind to continue his visit in the hold of my dhow, before withdrawing, urinated into the container of drinking water'.⁴³ These excesses irritated the local population and played in favour of the French whose repressive methods were far from being so draconian. For Captain Tricault, French indulgence regarding the slave trade favoured French influence in the region: 'Inexplicable violent acts which revolted everyone are no longer mentioned. These excesses have resulted in local sympathies developing for the French; there is hope in us, whereas the English are feared.'⁴⁴

England also tried to make the countries participating in slave-trading join in the repression by extorting signatures of treaties. A convention was signed in 1848 with the Sultans of Muscat, others joined England with

Zanzibar.⁴⁵ From the moment the English tried successfully to influence the region's state politics and obtained certain exclusive advantages, relations with French officers deteriorated considerably. The British attitude, far from calming tensions, reinforced the feeling of defiance in French sailors, as noted by Captain Gizolme:

They consider it their good fortune to be stationed on ships here as a means to acquire certain affluence. Also, their constant aim is to take Blacks, for which they receive a payment of 125 francs per head, whatever their sex or age, and a certain sum proportionate to the size of the ship destroyed and also to the value of the cargo confiscated . . . The captain of the *Nymphe* estimates that, for the seven months he has been on station, he must have earned about 20,000 francs.⁴⁶

Incidents multiplied regarding the non-respect of ships' flags and the nature of relations between the two fleets changed radically. A sort of competition started up between the two patrols and they abandoned their original objective of fighting against the slave trade. Obeying orders from Paris requiring them not to encourage any discord with the English, French state representatives analysed the situation with bitterness:

England has been able to acquire supremacy here, a reputation of superiority over other nations, an exclusive influence which it would be difficult to fight against, even supposing one wished to do so. Our predecessors' reports have shown the means they employed to obtain this result. Repression of the slave trade, continual interference in the Princes of Zanzibar and Muscat's family quarrels as well as in local troubles, gifts and pensions widely distributed to influential personalities, positions exceptionally given to their agents, protection not agreed but imposed upon numerous Indians who hold all the interior trade, a large part of foreign trade and the farming of customs duties, imposed violence against the natives, as well as reserve, indifference and disdain for other governments; it has known how to put everything into practice and to take the best part of everything with this assertive view, this practical skill, this calculated audacity, this risky, tenacious and jealous policy in which it excels, and which on the contrary, are so little in our custom.⁴⁷

Individual initiatives sometimes exceeding ministerial directives

The French sought to maintain their influence in the region while trying not to provoke quarrels with England. Ministers thought they had found the best compromise by signing peace and trading treaties and protectorates with the native authorities in 1841.⁴⁸ The articles of these agreements guaranteed French nationals freedom of movement and enterprise

within defined limits in function of the privileges obtained by other European states. French trade also enjoyed the advantage of being the nation with the lowest taxation. In exchange, the local population benefited from French military and political protection. Native chiefs sometimes also received an annual pension paid for life. Unfortunately, most of these treaties were not respected. One of their clauses was based on the principle that a French person could purchase land; however, in Africa nothing can alienate land handed down by ancestors. The application of these agreements came up against the reticence of the native population and the local authorities, particularly in Madagascar. This situation resulted in a certain bitterness and mistrust on the part of the French regarding the local potentates who always went back on the agreements they had signed.

Carried away by patriotic fervour or their Anglophobia, some officers tried to force respect of the agreements and to impose their flag on the local population. They tried to impress the local population with their prestige which had been recommended by ministerial directives. To obtain the support of local dignitaries, ships were paraded, as related by the Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat: 'As you have indicated, it is important that, in a country where you must catch the eye and fire the imagination, our prestige is not diminished to the point of compromising our dignity and the success of your mission, particularly when another nation is represented there.'⁴⁹

However, it happened that some officers, intoxicated by the unsigned private agreement delivered by the government, went beyond their instructions. It was so much easier for them to act in such a way that the different ministries on which they depended trusted them. On the other hand, the extreme slowness with which the orders were transmitted left them with a wide margin for manoeuvre. The time lapse between sending and receiving letters often exceeded six months and state officials complained of this problem, for example, the French consul in Zanzibar: 'We are only in contact with Nossi-Bé and Mayotte from one monsoon to the next and our correspondence stays there eight months before reaching us, the letters from Europe held at Mahé wait there for four months when they are regularly brought by a passing English battleship.'⁵⁰

Nevertheless, when they went too far, the naval personnel were reprimanded. Fleuriot de Langle signed agreements with certain Madagascan chiefs and was reprimanded by Admiral Hamelin:

It seems indeed from your reports which have been subjected to considerable thought that, without ad hoc powers and without previous authorisation, first with the Kings of Bouëni and Ambougou, then with the chiefs Makafales of Salar and with the King of the Sakalaves of Feherigu, you have strayed completely from the political line for Madagascar that the Emperor's government decided to follow until further orders.⁵¹

Although the political authorities shared the Anglophobia of their officers, they did not back any initiatives which may have caused offence to England. From the second half of the century, the balance in Europe was beginning to change, so governments felt obliged to act with caution and reserve. In order to avoid the rivalry in east Africa between France and England taking a dangerous turn, agreements of political non-interference were signed, for example, for Madagascar: 'In 1856, the Emperor's government was led to sign an agreement with the English government stating that each party would abstain from any political activity in the island.'⁵²

In addition, the number of ships making up the French naval division did not increase except in 1883, when France launched an offensive against Madagascar (Figure 10.2). The small numbers in the French patrol made the officers' mission more difficult. Not having the necessary means at their disposal to take over by force, the officers went to seek the favours of the local authorities. Some agreed to create markets with the Europeans, which enabled them to preserve their personal privileges and to modernise their country.⁵³ Others, with the support of their population, obstinately refused any agreement and took up arms in the regions of Mozambique where control was difficult.

An imperialism which gradually won over the assemblies

At this time, many associations were created which brought together individuals interested in the value of the colonies and anxious to extend French influence. For example, the *Comité de défense des intérêts français*

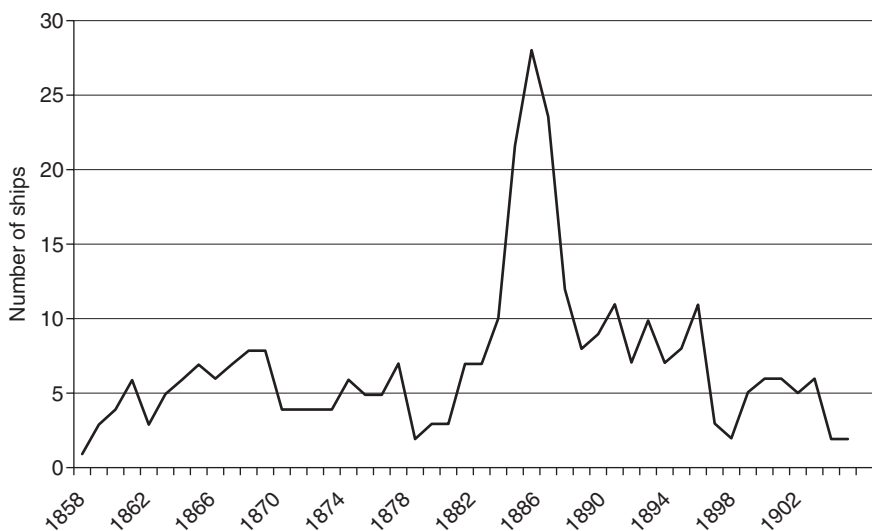


Figure 10.2 Strength of the French naval division in the Indian Ocean, 1858–1902.

d'outre-mer (Committee for the protection of French interests overseas) and the *Comité de l'Afrique française* (Committee for French Africa). The members of these committees were few in number but they came from various walks of life and sometimes had close links with ministerial Cabinets for foreign affairs or the colonies. Colonial ideas therefore affected a wider public then gained the political scene. There were also members in the *Chambre de députés* dedicated to the colonial cause such as the representative for Réunion who called for military intervention in Madagascar. Louis Brunet, representative for Réunion, proposed the agenda that led the French government to undertake the second campaign in Madagascar (1894–96). Finally, a study of the parliamentary debates shows the existence of a 'colonial party' which, in 1902, grouped 200 deputies from various political factions. A true pressure group, the main objective of this 'party' was, not to conquer new lands, but to develop the colonies already acquired.

It was basically the new competition between the European countries which instigated a change in attitude and the desire to annex new territories, as indicated by the deputy of Bouches-du-Rhône, Maurice Rouvier on 21 November 1882:

As France is closer to the African continent than the majority of the other nations, more directly interested than them in the future of this continent because of its possessions, Algeria, Senegal and Gabon, and by the numerous French trading posts established on the west coast, it cannot afford not to take part in this movement taking Europe towards the African regions where we are beginning to glimpse its riches.⁵⁴

Competition became increasingly lively because land which had not already been shared out was becoming scarce. The situation reached crisis point when some cast a covetous eye on the dependencies of other European nations' on the pretext that there was no real authority in place. It was vital from then on, not only to be present, but to colonise. From the moment methods of territorial annexation were defined and officially recognised after the conferences of Berlin and Brussels, the states of the old continent thrust themselves forward into the colonial adventure so as not to be overtaken by their competitors. The Western nations, from that time on, developed their expansionist policies in relation to their colonial advance, as Captain Vallon's orders prove in his address to the officers of the naval division of the Indian Ocean: 'You will seek any attempt by other nations to establish themselves on the coasts of Africa or Madagascar; it would be particularly interesting to know the results of the Portuguese efforts which, I may add, we can only see in a sympathetic light.'⁵⁵

We have tried to define the position of some groups and to understand

their role in the development of the colonial expansion policy which ended in the sharing of east Africa. Several ideas can be highlighted. First, it seems clear that support for expansionist ideas was not as obvious, spontaneous and continuous as might be supposed. Ideas concerning colonial expansion are far from homogeneous within each group. Moreover, they evolved over time, under the influence of external factors (fluctuations in the international situation and economic circumstances, and so on) and internal factors (the strategies of trading companies and planters and officers' initiatives). In addition, the initial motivations of each group appear quite distinctly. As far as the colonists were concerned, it was the difficulties encountered in recruiting a cheap labour force adapted to the climate which sometimes led them to lay claim to some parts of the African coast. The merchants, for their part, were more sensitive to the need of ensuring the safety of their business, of the means to end the heavy taxation and the system of middlemen, as well as guarding against foreign competition. Finally, at first the colonial 'party' itself was not specifically interested in annexing new territories. Each category of players therefore held an opinion in the colonial debate in relation to its own interests. This does not exclude numerous interactions between these different groups and the ministerial offices. Also, most of the major trading companies were represented in the government assembly, such as the Réunion planters.

As long as these diverse groupings did not share expansionist aims in east Africa at the same time, no real colonial policy was set up by the ministerial offices. On the contrary, it appears that colonial annexation, which took place during this first phase, was the result of individual initiatives. Naval officers fully participated in this movement because the limits of their orders were not clear and because they developed the concept of treaties. The establishment of protectorates in the little kingdoms in north-west Madagascar is the result of their methods.

Notes

- 1 For H. Brunschwig 'there is sharing of a country when several foreign powers agree to place it, entirely or partially, under their sovereignty. This supposes therefore rivalries and negotiations between those sharing it and the inability to resist by the country to be shared' (*Le partage de l'Afrique noire* (Paris, Flammarion, 1971)), p. 22.
- 2 See H. Deschamps, *Méthodes et doctrine coloniales de la France* (Paris, Armand Colin, 1953), p. 5.
- 3 See H. Wesseling, *Le partage de l'Afrique 1880-1914* (Paris, Denoël, 1996).
- 4 The archives of the French naval division of the Indian Ocean kept at the Service Historique de la Marine in Lorient hold all circulars. We have mostly used the following series:
4C1 = Dispatches and ministerial circulars addressed to the divisional commander;
4C3 = Correspondence from the beginning;

- 4C5 = Miscellaneous correspondence received by the ships and sent on to the commander;
- 4C6 = Various documents on the political affairs of certain islands.
- 5 *Illustration*, 13 March 1886.
- 6 R. Burton and Speeke, *Aux sources du Nil, la découverte des grands lacs africains* (Paris, Phébus, 1988), p. 315.
- 7 The *Exclusif* disappeared only on 3 July 1861 for the island of Bourbon.
- 8 4C5 24B.
- 9 See J.-L. Miège, 'Zanzibar', *Encyclopédia Universalis* (Paris, 1980), p. 975.
- 10 See F. Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (New Haven, CT and London, Yale University Press, 1977).
- 11 National archives, Marine BB 4/764, fos 616–29.
- 12 In practice, the possibilities of recruiting slave labour were notably reduced following the treaty of 1867. Proposed by the British emissary, Mr Churchill, and initiated by the Zanzibar sovereign, this agreement limits the transport of slaves between the 4th and 7th parallels of latitude south.
- 13 4C5 A; 3 August 1859.
- 14 4C37; 10 February 1873.
- 15 An order of 1855, forbidding vagrancy, permitted Mayotte to enlist all the able-bodied, unemployed men. However, this effort was doomed to failure; the villagers rebelled, fled in numbers and were rarely found again because they knew the area perfectly.
- 16 This practice was adopted from 1853 but only really applied in 1856. As the slave trade was severely repressed, the process of buying back had to take place at the place of recruitment, meaning the African coast.
- 17 National archives, Marine BB 4/764, fos 616–29.
- 18 4C5 A22.
- 19 J. Kagabo, 'Les réseaux marchands arabes et swahilis en Afrique orientale', in J. Aubin and D. Lombard, *Marchands et hommes d'affaire asiatiques dans l'océan Indien et la mer de Chine du XIII au XXe siècles* (Paris, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1987).
- 20 4C5 7D; 23 July 1868.
- 21 4C3 3 no. 88; 28 May 1867.
- 22 4C5 64; October 1878.
- 23 In the archives of the naval division of the Indian Ocean, only three French trading companies are mentioned, all based in Marseille: Régis aîné et cie which later became Mante frères et Borelli de Régis aîné, Augustin Fabre et fils which is the descendant of the partnership Cyprien Fabre et cie and Roux et Fraissinet. According to Captain Caillard, in 1882, Régis aîné owned nine trading posts on the Arrican coast and Fabre owned only five (4C5 10F no. 65; 1882).
- 24 4C5 62E; 1868.
- 25 In western Africa, see particularly X. Daumalin, *Marseille et l'Ouest africain: L'outre-mer des industriels 1841–1956* (Marseille, Chambre de commerce et de l'industrie de Marseille-Provence, 1992); O. Goerg, *Commerce et colonisation en Guinée 1850–1913* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1986); E. M'Bokolo, *Noirs et Blancs en Afrique équatoriale, les sociétés côtières et la pénétration française vers 1820–1874* (Paris, Mouton EHESS, 1981); B. Schnapper, *La politique et le commerce français dans le Golfe de Guinée de 1838 à 1871* (Paris, Mouton, 1961).
- 26 Based on the *Tableau général du commerce de la France avec ses colonies et les puissances étrangères*.
- 27 L. Harding, 'La pêche dans l'eau des autres; le commerce des étrangers dans les colonies nationales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, 1890–1914', *Négoce blanc en Afrique noire* (Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 2001), pp. 255–67.
- 28 In the middle of the century, the French government called upon private com-

- panies to ensure the postal service, so, heavily subsidised, the *Messagerie Impériales* opened a line which served the islands of Réunion and Maurice from 1864. In the same way, the English operated the British India Navigation Company which created a regular line between Zanzibar, Mayotte and Nossi-Bé with a contract valid for ten years. Finally, the Germans followed an identical route by founding the *Deutsche Ost Africa Linie*.
- 29 In 1880, the company Mantes frères et Borelli de Régis aîné had funds of 6 million francs, while the social funds of the company Fraissinet reached 12 million francs in 1882.
- 30 4C5 9E; 4 November 1875.
- 31 J. Marseille, *Empire colonial et capitalisme français: Histoire d'un divorce* (Paris, Albin Michel, 1984).
- 32 4C5 9 E; 17 August 1877.
- 33 The term 'Banian' describes the Indians who played the role of middlemen in the region's trade. European merchants had many complaints about them because they monopolised imports and exports as well as the financing of the majority of trading expeditions. This monopolising of the African trade is explained by the fact that they knew the local markets and that a large part of the merchandise traded came from India.
- 34 4C1 20BI; 30 June 1893.
- 35 4C3 no. 125; 20 July 1867.
- 36 On 23 April 1858, France founded the naval station of Réunion and Madagascar. It was placed under the command of Baron Darricau, then under Captain Fleuriot de Langle. The naval division of the east coast of Africa, ships responsible for surveying and protecting the station, came into being on the following 19 December. After changing names several times, the division was shut down in 1871, following the defeat against Prussia. It reappeared from time to time until its real establishment in 1877. In 1885, it obtained its final designation: 'naval division of the Indian Ocean'. It was permanently shut down in 1902.
- 37 S. Daget, *La répression de la traite des Noirs au XIXe siècle: L'action des croisières françaises sur les côtes occidentales de l'Afrique 1817-1850* (Paris, Karthala, 1997).
- 38 4C5 64; 22 July 1873.
- 39 In the 'indirect trade', a first ship brought goods produced through slavery. A second ship there was responsible for gathering the slaves, while waiting for the return of the first ship. Meanwhile, the latter left the area and carried out minor trading activities in the ports along the coast to allay the suspicions of the English and French patrols.
- 40 The 'disguised slave trade' allowed the official purchase of 'freed' slaves and to make them sign a work contract which they did not understand. This second possibility was theoretically regulated by a detailed law limited to certain parts of Africa.
- 41 See Figure 10.2.
- 42 S. Ruete, *Mémoires d'une princesse arabe* (Paris, Karthala, 1991), p. 241.
- 43 4C6 2E; 1872.
- 44 4C3 2 no. 46; 12 October 1864.
- 45 In 1873, the Zanzibar slave market was finally closed under pressure from English diplomats. In 1876, an Anglo-Oman treaty forbade caravans to participate in the continental slave trade. Finally, in 1889, the English obtained the right from Zanzibar to visit its ships.
- 46 4C3 6 no. 66; 4 May 1869.
- 47 Consular archives, Postes, B1; 25 July 1887.
- 48 In 1841, a series of treaties were signed with the islands of Nossi-Bé, Nosy Faly and Nosy Mitsio.

49 4C1 2BI; 26 August 1862.

50 Zanzibar consular archives, Postes, B1; 10 April 1871.

51 4C11 AI; 17 December 1859.

52 4C1 AI; 17 December 1859.

53 After the treaty of 1885 with the Queen of Madagascar, the French promised to build a modern infrastructure on the island in order to develop its economy. These commitments were partly respected, as proved by the creation of a postal service and a telegraph line between Tananarive and Tamatave and the proposal of a French discount trading post to manage the Madagascan loan.

54 Quoted by C.W. Newbury and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, 'French Policy and the Origin of the Scramble for West Africa', *Journal of African History*, 2 (1969), pp. 253–76.

55 4C3 9 no. 13; 26 January 1880.

11 Commercial presence, colonial penetration

Marseille traders in west Africa in the nineteenth century

Xavier Daumalin

For reasons that stem principally from the general structure of a port economy, Marseille had little to do with the slave trade. With a total of 101 expeditions that started out in the eighteenth century, of the 3,000-plus organised by the French ports, they seem to be marginal in a trade which was one of the major elements of the fortunes of many a trader on the Atlantic coast.¹ Marseille's interest in territories situated between the Senegal River and the Niger delta did not really come into being until the beginning of the nineteenth century. It coincided with the boom in the trade of oleaginous plants (groundnut, palm oil, cabbage palm), a series of products that dominated exchanges between Europe and west Africa until the middle of the twentieth century, before being supplanted, in turn, by a multitude of regional micro-cycles fed by other agricultural products or by products of mineral origin. Marseille's long and lasting participation in the oleaginous cycle evidently raises numerous questions. At this stage, we will bear three in mind: What type of economic function was used for these exchanges? Did the privileged relations with the coast of west Africa necessarily depend on political domination? Did the economic hopes for colonisation bear their fruits at a given moment?

The economic basis of the oleaginous cycle

The putting into place of the oleaginous cycle, in the 1840s, was a direct consequence of the different economic problems that simultaneously affected the Marseille soap-making industry and the French trading posts in west Africa.

A soap industry forced to modernise

Under the July monarchy the port of Marseille entered modernity. 'Testing ground for expansion during an entire century, foundation period for debates, conceptions, myths . . . institutions',² the years 1830–1848 were marked by an outbreak of initiatives: dilation of the commercial horizon, a large increase in traffic to the port, an almost twofold population increase

(180,000 inhabitants in 1846), the introduction of steam in the navigation industry and in the majority of processing industries, the construction of new ports, the arrival of the steam train, the industrial connections of the Mediterranean coast due to the creation of several pockets of specialised activity that complemented, but were independent of Marseille's industry³ ... It is 'the second foundation of Marseille'.⁴

During this period of economic euphoria, certain branches proved more difficult than others to modernise. This was particularly the case of the soap-making industry, the most important industry in Marseille.⁵ These problems were not new. Under the First Empire, important changes in production methods had already had to be made in order to compensate for shortages of, then the total disappearance of the supply of vegetable soda (the Spanish war and the economic blockade on the continent). It became necessary to use a so-called artificial soda (carbonate of soda which was obtained from the decomposition of sea-salt by using sulphuric acid – the Leblanc process), equally numerous soap-makers directly participated in the coming into being of the chemical complex of Marseille-Berre l'étang.⁶

From 1820–30, the soap-making industry was once again confronted with difficulties that slowed down its growth. First, it had to face up to the pressures that were weighing on the olive oil market. After a series of bad harvests in the olive groves of the Mediterranean basin, and an increase in the demand in the main soap-making factories in southern Europe, olive oil became a rare product and grew increasingly costly. The situation was all the more worrying for Marseille soap-makers because at the same time the competition in London, Bristol and Liverpool had managed to reduce production costs by putting on sale low-cost soap made from flax, groundnut or palm oil.⁷ The Marseille soap-industry also had to face up to the problems caused by the use of Leblanc soda, as this product had its disadvantages. Richer in alkali than soda of vegetable origin, Leblanc soda allowed a greater quantity of soap to be produced from the same amount of olive oil (roughly 10 per cent more), but this also modified the texture: instead of a soft, supple and compact paste, the mixture of Leblanc soda and olive oil produced a rough, more corrosive soap, which in consequence was difficult to sell. The only way to solve this problem would have been to create mixtures. The soap-makers had found that by mixing in a certain quantity of oleaginous seeds with the olive oil that their soap took on more of its original texture.

All of these difficulties led to a single conclusion: if Marseille soap-makers wanted to reduce their production costs and compete on the European market while maintaining a quality product, they had to agree once again to modernise their production by accepting the fact that they would have to mix olive oil with other fatty products. The innovation may seem simple, even insignificant, but the idea of making soap using other fats than olive oil created a real upheaval which took almost 20 years to

become accepted. In addition to the psychological reticence of some, the soap-makers had difficulty finding fats that could be mixed with olive oil in sufficiently large quantities, without altering the traditional texture, colour and smell of Marseille soap. Several trials were carried out with, in turn, flax, rape seed and sesame seed, but all without much success. Towards the end of the 1830s, Marseille was still in search of a fatty product that would allow them to reduce production costs without altering the product's characteristics.

Replacing the slave trade economy

At about the same time, the economic situation at the trading posts in Senegal was hardly blooming. Since France had joined the fight against the slave trade (Vienna Congress 1815), and since the failure of the different attempts of the Restoration government to transform Senegal into an agricultural colony,⁸ the traders living in Saint Louis, Gorée and Albréda had to content themselves with the only lawful product available, gum Arabic, a product harvested by the Moor tribes of the right bank of the Senegal River.⁹ Several of these traders were from Marseille: Raphaël Cohen, Roch Olive, Jacques Isnard, Jérôme Borelli, Victor and Louis Régis.¹⁰ These houses of commerce exchanged gum for guineas imported from Pondichery, via the port of Marseille. Normally a guinea was traded against 20 to 25 kilos of gum.¹¹ However as the rush for gum intensified, the rates of exchange deteriorated and the competition became disastrous: in 1842 a guinea was exchanged for only 9 or 10 kilos of gum ... The traders' debts mounted up until they were no longer able to reimburse the suppliers. In order to try and escape from the stagnation of the Senegalese trading posts, several traders, among them Victor and Louis Régis from Marseille, sent their boats in the direction of more southern shores, towards Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Niger delta, Angola and even further than the Cape of Good Hope in order to reach the island of Sumatra. In 1833, the Régis brothers were also recorded as being in the Gabon and then in São Tomé (1836), St Helen (1837), Accra (1838) and Benguela (1839). They no longer loaded up sacks of gum but miscellaneous cargoes of ivory, sandalwood, coffee, cocoa, gold dust and silver dust, spices and, especially, barrels of palm oil and balls of 'earth pistachios' (groundnuts), two oleaginous plants that appeared more and more frequently in their cargoes. This trade rarely took place on land. For fear of being attacked and pillaged, the Marseille traders did most of their trading from their sailing ships, a technique known as 'floating trading posts'. Their brigs or their three-masters sailed close to the west coast for several months and put down anchor in secure coves to trade with the village people who came in dug-out canoes to meet them. They only returned to Marseille when all their merchandise was sold.

In theory, this commercial expansion in a region where the slave trade

was still highly active, albeit clandestine, was strictly limited to lawful trade. The reality, however, is a little more complex as, at the time, legitimate and unlawful trade were explicitly linked. Exchanges generally took place in the following way: the African chiefs, notably in Dahomey, sold their slaves for gold to Brazilian or Portuguese captains who still dared to venture into the neighbourhood despite the surveillance of the English squadron based in Freetown;¹² once their captives had been embarked for Cuba, Brazil or America, these same leaders turned to European traders in order to obtain cotton fabric, hardware, wine, gun-powder and guns that they bought with the gold obtained from their transactions with the captains of the slave-traders. The growth of lawful trade depended, therefore, on the profits made from unlawful trade. However, from 1837–40, the African chiefs suffered from a deterioration in the terms of the exchanges. Taking into account the growing difficulties they came across acquiring slaves, the slave-traders started to demand a greater number of slaves for the same amount of gold; then gold was replaced by tobacco and rum. The coastal tribal chiefs lost one of their main means of payment that had allowed them to buy European goods. Whether it was trade in gum from Senegal, or trading from boats along the west coast of Africa, the economic future of these countries seemed to be compromised.

The setting up of the oleaginous cycle

At that moment the Régis brothers, Victor and Louis,¹³ made their appearance. Fully aware of the problems that were affecting the Marseille soap-making industry and west African trade, they suggested following the route already mapped out by certain English traders who were already settled in the neighbourhood:

As far as west Africa is concerned, we have completed 22 expeditions: palm oil . . . is the most important item for the future. The English use it in soap manufacturing: it is the reason for their superiority in the trade. An opening must be found for palm oil in France, but in Marseille we are faced with the opposition of manufacturers who use olive oil.¹⁴

An opening for palm oil and, why not, for the other fatty product that grew in vast quantities in west Africa: groundnut? Had Forster & Smith since 1834–35 not developed with success commerce in groundnut in Gambia to feed its London-based oil-trade?¹⁵ Victor Régis' double bet was thus: encourage the African chiefs to cultivate groundnut and harvest palm oil: convince the Marseille soap-makers to mix olive oil with oleaginous oils of west African origin to make their soap. This was the conception of the oleaginous cycle.

This economic system brought with it the seeds of two major micro-economic transformations. In order to impose west African oleaginous oil on the Marseille market and to overcome the reticence of the local soap-makers, traders themselves had to trial grinding up and refining and became industrialists for a time. In Africa, the system of floating trading posts, well adapted for the periodic exchanges of a few expensive and compact goods, was no longer suitable. As the products now had to be cultivated, stocked and embarked frequently and quickly without the loss of perishable and heavy goods, as was the case with the palm oil and the groundnut, the traders had to take the risk of setting up trading posts on shore. The Régis brothers, Victor and Louis, were preparing to make this move when, on 26 June 1841, they officially asked the Minister of the Navy and the Victor Duperré Colonies for authorisation to set up a trading post in Dahomey at Ouidah, in the ruins of the old eighteenth-century French fort.¹⁶

Happily for them and for the other traders that would follow suit – Rabaud brothers, Roch Olive, Isnard, Aquaronne fils, Féraud & Honorat, and so on – the intrinsic qualities of groundnut oil combined with a preferential customs tariff¹⁷ quickly allowed all uncertainties that may have weighed on the future of the Marseille/west Africa exchanges to be dissipated. As the groundnut was transparent, it could be mixed in large quantities with olive oil without altering either the colour or the quality of the soap. With groundnut, the soap-makers had finally found the ideal fatty product that they had been seeking for years in order to make low-cost soap. As early as 1848, the port of Marseille was attracting more than 95 per cent of all exports of west African groundnut destined for France. The integration of palm oil with its strong yellow colouring that changed the traditional white of Marseille soap took longer to become established. It was not until 1853, with the perfection of a simple and cost-effective process allowing discoloration (the Rougier process) that this oil could be integrated into the fabrication of Marseille soap. In the same year, Marseille entrepreneurs discovered, in a fortuitous moment, the properties of a third oleaginous plant: cabbage palm.

Cabbage palm was used as ballast on ships that came from the African coast and was thrown into the sea when the vessels arrived in Marseille. A captain thought it would be possible to extract oil and crushing was experimented with in a flour mill... The cabbage palm was such a perfect raw material for the soap industry that demand was instantly considerable.¹⁸

The oleaginous cycle was now well established and there was a great deal of growth in the exchanges between Marseille and west Africa. Between 1841 and 1881 imports of west African oleaginous products rose from 5 to 127,200 tons. The west coast had become the main source for the local oil

trade, a new industry, fundamental in the industrial growth of Marseille, which numbered around 40 factories and employed roughly 2,200 workers.¹⁹

As might have been expected, the force of the industrial function can be traced in the micro-economic structures of businesses. All of the great traders from 1840 to 1880 – Victor and Louis Régis, Théodore and Louis Mante, Cyprien Fabre or Charles-Auguste Verminck – had their own businesses. The most spectacular successes are, without a doubt, those of Charles-Auguste Verminck and Cyprien Fabre. In 1881, at the age of 54, Charles-Auguste Verminck,²⁰ nicknamed the ‘king of groundnut’, was at the fore of the biggest deal ever sealed in the trade of oleaginous produce: the *Compagnie du Sénégal et de la Côte occidentale d’Afrique*, an anonymous company with a capital of 15 million francs. The enterprise owned 27 trading posts dotted throughout Senegal and Liberia, a fleet of 30 boats (amongst them the steam ships *Foulah* and *Mandingue*) and two oil mills employing over 700 workers. Although it is different, the example of Cyprien Fabre²¹ is just as impressive. He had made his mark in the trade of palm oil and cabbage palm between Marseille and Dahomey. In 1881 he managed and controlled three companies: the firm of Cyprien Fabre & Cie (5.5 million francs); the *Compagnie nationale de navigation à vapeur* (15 million francs); the *Stéarinerie de la Méditerranée* (400,000 francs), which specialised in the fabrication of candles made from west African oleaginous produce. At the age of 43, he found himself at the head of several groups with fixed global assets of over 20 million francs. His personal fortune was estimated at around 10 million francs, an identical figure to that of Charles-Auguste Verminck at the same time. In recognition of his achievements, Cyprien Fabre was elected president of the Chamber of Commerce in Marseille in 1881. It was the first time in history that a trader with west Africa had been promoted to such a high post.

Free trade or monopoly?

On what economic basis was oleaginous trade founded? Did the traders work in a situation of free competition or were there local monopolies to ensure a certain economic security? Over and above these questions about the nature of the links made at the time of the oleaginous boom, it is necessary to understand why, at a given moment, the Marseille entrepreneurs requested – and sometimes got – French military intervention at some point or other along the west African coast. It is necessary to look at three regions to understand this situation: Dahomey, the Ivory Coast and Guinea.



Plate 8 Boarding of oil barrels, Porto Novo (end of the nineteenth century)
(source: Xavier Daumalin).

Dahomey: under the protection of King Guézo

On 8 September 1841, in agreement with the government of the July monarchy, Victor Régis gave the order to one of his captains to fit out a boat for Ouidah and to create a trading post in the old eighteenth-century French fort called St Louis.²² Right from the start of their occupation, the Marseille agents sought to obtain the protection of the local king, the powerful Guézo. The agreement that was reached is indicative of the ambiguity and the limits of this new trade, whether it is in regard to slavery or freedom of trade. The king received an annual indemnity and took away a sort of tithes from embarked goods as well as from the casks of palm oil exported to Marseille. In exchange, he granted several advantages to the agents: local labour, in theory paid, that would work four days a week in the factory in order to carry out the different jobs necessary for its maintenance; the monopoly of the market on land and the kingdom's supply of Western goods; exclusivity in the purchase of palm oil; protection and maintenance of the palm grove.²³

Put aside the fact that the exact figure for the taxes collected by King Guézo is unknown, there is no doubt that the Régis firm had considerable advantages that placed it in the position of a monopoly. This was all the stronger for the fact that Victor Régis entirely controlled the local currency founded on the use of a shell, the cowry. An agent from the Marseille firm settled in Zanzibar was in charge of buying cowries throughout

the Indian Ocean and of sending them to Dahomey. In such conditions, the Régis house could only prosper: between 1841 and 1880 the quantities of palm oil sent annually rose from 16 to 1,200 tons. A litre usually sold at between 12 and 15 centimes in Ouidah, was then sold for one franc in Marseille, thus one can understand that Victor Régis was able to write that he had ‘won millions in this trade’.²⁴ By the same token, one can understand that he preferred the protection of a local king rather than the king of his own country as ‘wherever officers have laid a finger, trade has suffered’.²⁵ Over and above the inevitable succession of taxes and other administrative expenses, colonisation signified the end of a monopoly as the traders of a colonising country were generally subjected to the same commercial regime.

Victor Régis’ position was all the more interesting as it was to know an unexpected prolongation. In 1856, although he had been participating in trade between Marseille and the coast of west Africa for nearly 30 years, Régis suggested to Emperor Napoleon III the possibility of perpetuating the French influence in Dahomey by educating in France, at the expense of the state, two of the supposed heirs of King Guézo:

Guézo, king of Dahomey, has decided to send two of his sons to France, and this most powerful sovereign of the west coast charges me with asking your Majesty to allow them to be brought up at the Imperial lycée in Paris . . . Herein lies a providential opportunity for progress and civilisation . . . There lies there a conquest which, seeming insignificant, could have the most precious of results for religion and trade.²⁶

Victor Régis wanted to seize the opportunity to try and establish a cultural link between France and the two young princes in the hope of setting down long and lasting ties, in a pacifist manner, with the momentary influence of the Marseille trade. The cultural influence would, in a way, be the guarantor of a certain political and economic domination.²⁷

The Ivory Coast: sheltered from the fortified trading posts

Another significant example of the attitude of Marseille traders in the commerce of oleaginous plants is that of the Ivory Coast. In response to King Louis-Philippe, Victor Régis set up a trading post at Grand-Bassam (1843) in the fortified building that had been prepared by Edouard Bouët-Willamez, governor of Senegal.²⁸ This initiative from the French authorities came following the revelations made after the discovery voyage of the *Malouine* (1838–39) concerned with the commercial progress made by the English in the area.

During the first few months, the Marseille agents were content to trade with the coastal populations – the Jacks-Jacks of King Peter – who brought the palm oil produced inland by other tribes to the trading post. The

Jacks-Jacks worked as intermediaries between the communities of the palm grove and the Marseille traders. However, for commercial reasons, Régis' agents soon attempted to enter into direct contact with the inland communities. King Peter's reaction was immediate: he forbade his subjects to trade with the Marseille trading post, intercepted all the agents headed for the palm grove without his authorisation, threatened several times to kill them, and declared war against all those who dared to trade with the Marseille entrepreneurs without going through his intermediary. This announced the start of the first war for palm oil.

As soon as he heard the news, Victor Régis contacted Jubelin, Vice-Secretary of the Navy and the Colonies, to request military aid. France must open and control the lagoon and the rivers by the force of its main commercial arteries in the region. If not, then they must 'give up their settlements'.²⁹ These were the politics of armed commerce, but no more. If Victor Régis had tried to implicate the government, it was not because he was thinking of founding a colony on the Ivory Coast. After several military interventions, a compromise was finally reached in 1849: King Peter agreed to tolerate the Marseille presence on the condition that their transactions did not exceed 800 barrels of palm oil a year, that is to say only 2 to 3 per cent of all commercialised production on the lagoon. It was little, but Victor Régis was satisfied as then palm oil was not widely used by the Marseille soap-making industry. Everything was to change, however, when the discoloration process was discovered which allowed palm oil to be easily integrated into the fabrication of soap (1853). Victor Régis set up the industrialisation of this process, and ordered his agents to increase operations. Once again it was war. In August 1853, King Peter sent 1,200 warriors to attack the Marseille trading post. The attack was stopped but trade was totally paralysed as the agents had become prisoners at Grand-Bassam. Régis went to the headquarters of the Minister of the Navy and the Colonies to request 200 men, a dozen armed rowing boats and two steam-boats. His analysis had not changed. It was useless to colonise the Ivory Coast, military protection for the agents from the navy which imposed 'on the Jacks-Jacks the consequences of our domination in Grand Bassam'.³⁰ In the case of a refusal he would take his men away and the experience of the fortified trading posts would not last very long.

In itself his programme of action was not original. It bore a striking resemblance to the programme that had recently been defined by the Bordeaux traders Marc and Hilaire Maurel, which had then been taken up by Faidherbe, against the Moor tribes in Senegal who refused to accept the growth in power of the French in their zone: a commercial expansion supported by the fortified trading posts with the forts that were really capable of imposing their French domination.³¹ Unfortunately for Victor Régis, this time his pleas fell on deaf ears: under the influence of the Maurel-Faidherbe duo, France preferred to privilege the penetration of west

Africa from Senegal. Victor Régis, disappointed, was true to his word and left the Ivory Coast in 1860.

The rivers of Guinea: an experience of free trade?

With the rivers of Guinea, we enter into an area where political structures are so bitty that in principle it would be hard to have a monopoly such as that in Dahomey. Numerous adjoining rivers in the region (Rio Cassini, Rio Nunez, Rio Pongo, Forrecareah, Scarcies, Mellacorée, and so on) were used for the evacuation of the groundnut seeds cultivated and harvested by the inland tribes. They were occupied by French or English trading posts that were in hot competition. Some of these rivers were sometimes dominated by one or other of the two nationalities, but without any exclusivity. The French with their Nantes-based company Serpette, Lourmand, Larry & cie and Charles-Auguste Verminck's Marseille agents were also in evidence at Conakry, on the island of Kacouky and in the rivers of the Grand and Petit Scarcies; the English were more dominant on the island of Matacong and on the Forrecareah river notably with the Manchester firm Fischer & Randal. France and England bordered the rivers of Guinea with their respective colonies of Senegal and Sierra Leone but, until the 1870s, the two governments avoided intervention in this zone.

Was it, even so, a free-trade zone? Not really. In order to be convinced, it suffices to look at the contract sealed by Charles-Auguste Verminck with King Bala-Demba following his installation on the Conakry peninsula (1868). With an annual rent paid in goods, Verminck authorised to construct a landing-stage and a port. He could concentrate on the trade of oleaginous goods with exemption from all fees, a privilege to which he had exclusive right and that the king guaranteed to Verminck's successors for an indeterminate length of time.³² Each river was thus occupied by a succession of commercial enclaves where the agents had real economic protection from the local chiefs. The freedom of exchange is, therefore, entirely relative.

The situation in the rivers of Guinea started to worsen in 1878–79. National and international changes were certainly in part responsible: the legitimisation of colonial ambitions of republican France at the Berlin Congress; the revival of the programme for French expansion in Haut-Senegal; the official intervention by the economist Paul Leroy Beaulieu, successor to Jean-Baptiste Say at the Collège de France and leader of the liberals, who favoured economic expansion in west Africa.³³ It was within this context that the Matacong Island incident exploded. In January 1879, Brière de L'Isle, the governor of Senegal, decided to set up a border-control post on the island of Matacong at the mouth of the Forrecareah river. His objectives were simple: penalise the English agents in the zone, increase Senegal's resources and ensure control of an inland route, notably towards Fouta-Djalou. The governor of Sierra Leone, Samuel Rowe, did

not take long to reply. He sent a gunboat to Saint Louis and captured Kacoucy island, where French agents predominated.

As soon as he learnt of these interventions, Charles-Auguste Verminck multiplied initiatives aimed at maintaining political neutrality in the region: pressure on the Minister of the Navy and the Colonies to force him to over-rule Brière de L'Isle's decision, contracts with the French ambassador in London and the leaders of the Colonial Office, intervention from his friend, the deputy of Marseille, Maurice Rouvier, campaigns in the local press in the columns of the *Petit Marseillais*, the *Sémaphore de Marseille* and even in the very royalist *Gazette du Midi*. Despite the changes in the international situation, Verminck remained hostile to any idea of colonial expansion and preferred to preserve the *status quo ante*.

However, for fear of not being listened to, and convinced that public attention would soon be drawn to an area that had until this point avoided colonial rivalries, Verminck decided to take precautions for the future. In 1879 he hastily organised an expedition to inland Sierra Leone in search of the sources of the Niger. Over and above the geographical objective, it was clearly a commercial and political back-up plan that Verminck explained clearly to his team of explorers:

The commercial aim is to extend our business relations to the countries near the Niger, to study their production, to identify the easiest routes to our trading posts and, in a word, to carefully examine all the questions attached to the development of our trade in these countries . . . I'll finish my thinking by adding that it [the expedition] should have an essentially French character. If our journey is a success and brings useful results, I want France to be the first to benefit.³⁴

In a competition where the nation who discovered the region often became the owner, Verminck did not wish to be outrun by the English. The discovery of the sources of the Niger would not only be a good geographical discovery, but, in the event of a territorial split, it would ensure France the right to one of the main communication routes in west Africa while at the same time ensuring commercial control of the back country of the rivers of Guinea and Sierra Leone: Fouta-Djalon. Unfortunately, the end of the affair turned into a series of disappointments. Not only did the expedition fail, but France and England finally agreed to share the region (convention of 28 June 1882). France gained control of the island of Matacong and the Mellacorée basin but lost, to the benefit of Sierra Leone, the two Scarcies where the French had been dominant. The Scramble for west Africa had clearly begun. These examples taken from Dahomey, the Ivory Coast and the rivers of Guinea, lead in the end to similar conclusions. The first concerns the characteristics of the trade in oleaginous plants. The logistical constraints, compared to trade on the floating trading posts, were such that it could not bloom with lasting effect without a minimum of

protection from the African chiefs, especially in areas where European domination had not yet been established. We can note also that the Marseille traders often took advantage of this political protection in order to establish a monopoly which would guarantee economic security and large profits. This explained their hostility towards France's plans, or any other country's, for colonial expansion in west Africa. The Marseille traders did not disagree for fear of not maintaining their theoretic commercial freedom, but above all else because they wished to maintain the established monopolies that they had along the coast with the help of the African chiefs. However, as soon as this support was missing, they did not hesitate to call for military intervention in order to impose their commercial domination. It is an attitude that, following the evolution of economic and political situations, or the state of mind of the traders concerned, could rapidly drift towards the demand for an even stronger commitment on France's behalf. The conquest of Dahomey, asked for and obtained by the Marseille traders, is a perfect example.

Economic recession and colonial expansion

After the remarkable boom in trade between Marseille and west Africa from 1841 to 1881, a boom brought about by the oleaginous cycle, came a brutal recession, the effects of which were to be felt until 1897.

The crushing defeat of the traders

The collapse in trade was spectacular. From 1881–87, imports of oleaginous products fell drastically from 127,000 to 36,000 tons to rise again to 53,000 in 1897. West Africa now represented only 16 per cent of supply to the Marseille oil-trade. As soon as 1885, the *Compagnie du Sénégal et de la Côte occidentale d'Afrique* and the house of Mante & Borelli de Regis aîné³⁵ reduced their capital to 5 and 2.5 million francs respectively; the following year it was the turn of Blanchard & cie and of the *Compagnie française de navigation à vapeur, Cyprien Fabre & cie* to reduce their commitments by 300,000 francs and 3.8 million francs respectively; in 1887 the *Compagnie du Sénégal et de la Côte occidentale* was dissolved and the social capital of the succeeding company, the *Compagnie française de l'Afrique occidentale (CFAO)*, totalled only 7 million francs. Even the powerful Charles-Auguste Verminck was badly hit by the recession. In 1893, his new company's capital was only 200,000 francs: the king of groundnut had fallen. In total, the 1882–87 recession culminated in a 50 per cent drop in invested capital by the Marseille traders in west Africa. Independently of the unfavourable economic situation (phase B of the Kondratiev cycle) and certain dangerous economic practices, such as advances on the harvest, the profound reasons for this recession should be sought in the structural mutations that affected the oleaginous market.

First, in Marseille the oleaginous complex (oil-mills, soap-factories and stearin-factories) that had upheld trade with west Africa since 1841 began to turn to the supply of a product and a market that was more profitable: shelled Indian groundnuts. These groundnuts, freed of their shells on the production site, arrived from the Coromandel coast passing through the Suez Canal. They were transported in the holds of steamers belonging to important English companies (Asiatic Co., Gordon Woodroff Co., British India Co.) that monopolised the traffic by offering low-cost transportation.³⁶ At the same time the new processing centres in northern Europe such as Hamburg, Delft or Rotterdam had managed to get increasing amounts of palm oil and cabbage palm, thanks to the increased rates they were able to offer to African producers.³⁷ Between 1882 and 1897 the Marseille traders in west Africa became the victims of the globalisation of the oleaginous market, whether it was a question of the sources of production or the processing centres.

Obviously this evolution had a deep impact. First, on the organisation of the companies. As soon as palm oil and cabbage palm found a better outlet in northern Europe and, as far as Marseille was concerned, the groundnuts of west Africa had been overthrown by shelled Indian groundnuts, the traders no longer had a reason to keep their oil-mills or their strategies of industrial integration. The new micro-economic model of those years would be that of a purely commercial society that had contacts with the European industrialists who offered the best price for their oleaginous produce. For more than ten years Frédéric Bohn's CFAO would be linked to the *Nederlandsche Olie Fabriek* in Delft. In Africa, the recession forced the traders to reconsider their management methods and their commercial practices. On this point Frédéric Bohn also set the tone, rigorous self-financing, the end of a dangerous system that depended on advancing money on the harvests and the abandoning of a barter economy in favour of a monetary system. His strategy, which broke with normal practice, was a success: between 1887 and 1912 the turnover of the CFAO rose from 7 to more than 50 million francs; the return on capital action went from 3.5 per cent to 25 per cent and the number of trading posts almost quadrupled (46 to 151). Progressively, the CFAO left its bases (Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone) to set up in Sedan, on the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast, in Dahomey and Nigeria by combining internal and external growth. The CFAO absorbed two Marseille companies successively – the *Etablissements Blanchard* (1894), *Cyprien Fabre & cie* (1904) and one English firm (Swanzy in 1898). No French company in west Africa could try and compete with the vastness and density of their commercial network.³⁸

The globalisation of the oleaginous market also changed, as we have seen with the CFAO, the commercial position of Marseille traders. The growing of groundnuts that had gradually spread along the Senegalese coast as far as Sierra Leone, gradually disappeared. Faced with the

competition from shelled Indian groundnuts and the continuous fall in the market-price, African farmers preferred to return to growing subsistence crops or other crops for exportation, such as rubber. The production of groundnuts was reduced to its original proportions, that is it was grown in Senegal and Gambia. At the same time, traders turned to regions specialised in cabbage palm and palm oil: the coast of Dahomey and the Niger delta. In 1880 the whole of Senegal and Gambia represented 52 per cent of Marseille's imports from west Africa (of which 41 per cent was from the colony of Senegal); in 1890, it was only 33 per cent. At the same time, the Dahomey–Niger figure rose from 14 per cent to 40 per cent, of which 34 per cent was for Dahomey alone. In just ten years, the centre of 'African' industry for Marseille traders moved from Senegal to Dahomey.

The conquest of Dahomey

It was within this particular economic context that incidents occurred which led Marseille to demand – and obtain – the colonisation of Dahomey. Towards the end of the 1880s, the coast of Dahomey was occupied by four main trading posts: Porto Novo and Cotonou in the east, Grand-Popo in the west and Ouidah in the centre. Trade went on from several English firms (John Holt, Swanzy), German firms (West African Telegraph Company, Godelt, Wolber & Brohm) and two Marseille-based companies: Mante frères & Borelli de Régis aîné, Cyprien Fabre & cie. Linked regularly to Marseille, the Havre, Liverpool and the port of Hamburg by several steamship companies, Dahomey exported palm oil and cabbage palm and bought mainly alcohol (Dutch gin from Hamburg, absinthe and anisette from Marseille), cloth from Manchester, tobacco (Brazil), salt (Port-de-Bouc) and gunpowder from St Chamas or Hamburg, arms and hardware. In total these exchanges represented roughly 26 million francs.

In 1887, the kingdom of Portugal, which had exerted a sort of protectorate on the Dahomian coast for two years, planned to withdraw. Made aware of this by his agents, Cyprien Fabre immediately informed the Foreign Affairs Minister:

The time is ... near when Dahomey will once again be freed of all foreign domination, and in the interests of France, our government knows, it is important that no influence other than our own should substitute that of Portugal ... We have faith in the vigilance of the government and we do not doubt that they have taken the necessary precautions to protect our rights to Dahomey and to make the other attempts, particularly that of Germany, fail, who covet the country and are waiting only for the Portuguese to leave before trying to gain the country.³⁹

Forced to face increasing competition from the Germans – at least unless the situation was being deliberately dramatised? – he was convinced that they were aiming to take over the area blow by blow, Cyprien Fabre desired a reinforcement of the French influence. The national flag should come to the traders' aid.

On site, the Marseille traders could count on the help of Doctor Jean Bayol, of Provençal origin and governor-lieutenant of the rivers of Guinea. Despite the government's reluctance, he decided to provoke the main political authority of Dahomey, King Gléglé. In order to achieve his aim he used the well-known strategy of geographical exploration. In May 1887, he organised the exploration of the Whémé with the help of the Sicilian agents, Maignot and Foa from the company Mante & Borelli de Régis aîné. This river which flowed in proximity to Porto Novo, had the huge advantage of going up as far as the land of King Gléglé. Each agent had a precise mission: the Sicilian agents, carrying several treaties of no value stamped with the French flag, were to ensure that French protectorate was accepted by the different established chiefs on the Whémé; the Maignot agent would be charged with convincing the local chiefs, more or less slaves to King Gléglé, not to trade with him and to keep their produce for the Marseille firms in Porto Novo; Foa had to take topographical references which could be extremely useful in the event of military intervention. The inevitable happened; the exploration ran into conflict with King Gléglé's warriors and it came close to their being captured and taken hostage at Abomey, the king's capital. From provocations to skirmishes the situation got worse until 1889 when Gléglé sent his warriors to attack Porto Novo. Bayol finally had his *casus belli*. Two companies from the Senegalese infantry were sent. The Dahomey expedition had begun.

Right from the start of the conflict, the Marseille press was unanimous. The daily republican papers (*Le Sémaphore de Marseille* and *Le Petit Marseillais*), bypassing the royalist paper (*La Gazette du Midi*) or the Bonapartist paper (*Journal de Marseille*), all upheld the government's action. Even the Marseille Chamber of Commerce gave its opinion. For the first time since the setting up of the oleaginous cycle, it joined in the fight for total and definitive annexation of an area of west Africa.⁴⁰ It is true that it was equally the first time that the chamber was led by an important west African trader who was well established in Dahomey, Cyprien Fabre. Following a typical schema of far-off conflict, the weeks passed and the conflict dragged on. Despite the blockade on the coast, the resistance of Béhanzin, grandson of Gléglé and his successor, remained effective. Finally, after many ups and downs, a compromise was signed on 3 October 1890: for an annual fee of 20,000 francs, Béhanzin would recognise the French protectorate in Porto Novo and Cotonou.⁴¹

It is useless to state that this treaty did not satisfy Cyprien Fabre. In several public meetings,⁴² he reaffirmed the necessity to conquer the whole of Dahomey and he set out to do all he could so that the 'fatal' agreement

might fail. On 28 November 1891, when Admiral Vallon, president of the parliamentary commission charged with examining the Béhanzin treaty, revealed his conclusions, he asked the deputies not to ratify the treaty using the exact words of the letter sent by Cyprien Fabre shortly before.⁴³ There would not be, therefore, a real debate and the vote was not surprising. Although everyone was entirely conscious of the consequences of rejection of the treaty, the ratification was pushed back with a crushing majority of 437 votes to 54. Troubles began again, new military credits were voted (April 1892) and a few months later, after a difficult campaign, Colonel Doods obtained the surrender of Béhanzin. Cyprien Fabre had his colony. Should it, however, be considered representative of all the Marseille traders installed in west Africa, or even in Dahomey? This is a difficult question. Even if it is true that traders such as the Mante brothers or Georges Borelli were able, at the height of the war against Béhanzin, to publicly announce their doubts about the usefulness of a total conquest in such conditions, they nevertheless let their agents participate in Lieutenant-Governor Jean Bayol's provocations, as if they would later be satisfied with the finished task. Profiting from the hesitations or the benevolent passivity of certain colleagues, Cyprien Fabre used his influence in politico-economic circles in Marseille and Paris, circles which had become increasingly closely interlinked since the 1850s, to set off a dynamic reaction which resulted in the conquest of Dahomey. This incident raises implicit questions concerning the working of the institutions of the Third Republic. The supremacy of personal relations, at the heart of networks of multiple solidarities, the contours of which are not always easy to establish, gives the feeling that the adoption of laws and decrees came more from a battle of wills between the lobbies and the ministers, interposed by deputies and the press, than a real democratic debate representative of the major national interests.

False hopes and real economic issues of colonisation

Did Marseille traders at least profit in order to staunch their commercial decline? One thing is quite clear. 'We had infinitely more freedom under the reign of Béhanzin than under the actual regime', Jules Charles-Roux stated in 1895 at a parliamentary meeting.⁴⁴ By taking between 1.5 and 1.8 million francs a year from trade, added Georges Borelli, 'whereas a gift of a few thousand francs satisfied the indigenous chiefs', the 'possession of the country by France has considerably increased the traders' costs'.⁴⁵ In addition, the competition from Germany had not in any measure been wiped out. In 1896, Hamburg traders imported 101,500 tons of cabbage palm, twice the amount imported in 1888. At the same time, Marseille's supply went from 39,000 to 23,000 tons. The same tendency has been noted for palm oil. Victim of the recession, the colonisation of Dahomey was not, therefore, the best answer to the economic difficulties faced by

the different firms. Quite the opposite, a better idea was to favour the redeployment of Marseille's investments towards equipping the infrastructure, and there is no doubt that this was the real issue in colonial expansion, a domain where foreign competition was not an issue. The time of light-touch trade on the west African coast disappeared before colonial valorisation. In the meantime, before the great wave of port investments of 1920–60, the first big business interest was the railway. In 1897, Georges Borelli, worried by the stagnation of commerce in Dahomey, suggested to the government that they build a Decauville line between Cotonou, Ouidah and Abomey in order to 'syphon off immense quantities of products, up to the present time not used, towards the coast and towards Europe'.⁴⁶ The future company would be compensated for its investments following a method already planned in Madagascar,⁴⁷ that is to say by the concession of 2,500 hectares for every built kilometre of railway line.⁴⁸

On 26 June 1900, after three years of research and laborious negotiations, Georges Borelli obtained the concession for the Dahomey railway for 75 years. In the conditions of the contract, he agreed to set up an anonymous company with a capital of 8 million francs to buy the rolling stock and execute the railway superstructure between Cotonou and Tachaurou, in the hinterland, with a branchline to Ouidah. This was done as early as 1901 with the formation of the *Compagnie française des chemins de fer du Dahomey* (CFCFD), a company in which we find the *Banque d'outre-mer* (17 per cent of the capital), Mante & Borelli de Régis

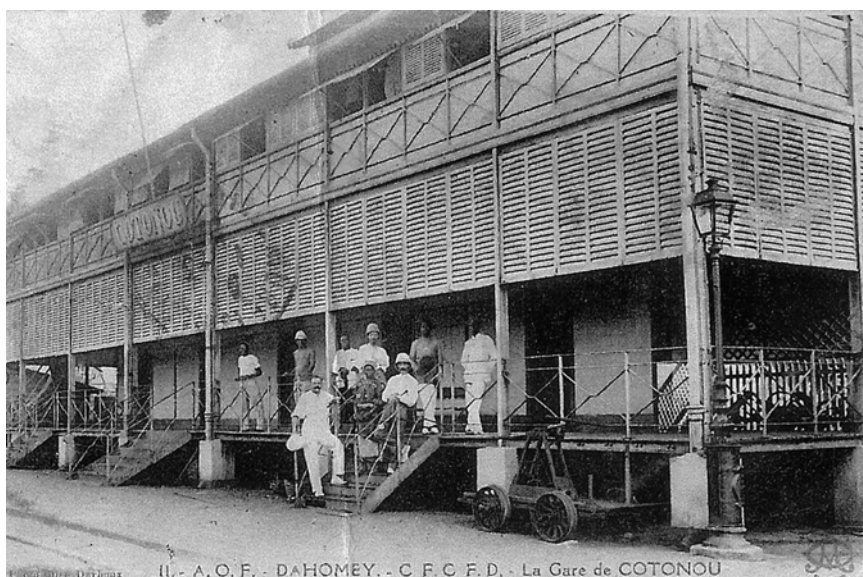


Plate 9 Cotonou's railway station (beginning of the twentieth century) (source: Xavier Daumalin).

ainé (19 per cent) and the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas (8 per cent). In return for his investment, Georges Borelli would receive territorial and financial advantages: a concession of 300,000 hectares, split into three zones, where the CFCFD could freely exploit the mines that were discovered;⁴⁹ authorisation to create and exploit several ports between the border and a point situated 20 kilometres away to the west of Cotonou; a fixed subsidy of 2,000 francs per kilometre for eight years, for each opened section.

More than 6,000 Africans were taken on in this way to work for the 'Central dahoméen'. Started in 1900, the line was already 100 kilometres long in 1902 and Georges Borelli announced a net profit of 230,000 francs to his shareholders. Equally, at the conference that he gave to the Geographic Society in Paris, he promised even better results shortly:

The country is covered with palm oil trees, in groves, in orchards, intersected with fields of all sorts of subsistence crops, gardens that I could qualify as market gardens as they are so well kept . . . There are a lot of palm oil trees in Dahomey and we exploit only 1/10 of them: the other 9/10 are left to waste because of a lack of transport. Once again this proves the usefulness of a railway in these areas.⁵⁰

However, numerous complaints were made about the methods of the CFCFD. Notably in 1901, in a particularly virulent article, the association of French Industry and Agriculture denounced 'a Marseille firm that has hastened to order 20,000 tons of rails and sleepers from the Belgian metal-working industry, while hundreds of French workers are forced to unemployment and the loss of their wages'.⁵¹ In Dahomey the local traders accused the CFCFD of asking for concessions in the regions where there were the best palm groves and of practising prohibitive tariffs 'in a manner that impedes the economic development destined to incite the creation of the penetration route'.⁵² Given the extent of the complaints, the government decided to renegotiate the concession. In a new contract, signed on 4 August 1904, the state introduced several changes: the length of the concession was reduced from 75 to 25 years and the concessions on the mines and the territories were cancelled; henceforth rates were to be fixed by the governor of Dahomey and the takings were to be collected immediately by the colony who, every month, would reassign part to the CFCFD. Equally any material ordered must not only be of French origin but must be transported by French ships. As Georges Borelli bitterly stated, 'the French company of Dahomey railways is now no more than a construction firm for the government'.⁵³ The economic hopes founded on the colonisation of certain areas from the commerce of oleaginous plants had, once again, to be recalculated in more modest terms.

What should be borne in mind from the experience of the Marseille traders and the exchanges with west Africa during the oleaginous cycle?

On the one hand, the fundamental role played by a protectionist reflex that led the traders to want French colonial expansion. Punctual military intervention, as was later the case with colonial intervention, would always be sought in order to try and curb commercial decline or to defend a monopoly position. On the other hand, the different military episodes evoked throughout this analysis show that a few men in the right place at the right time can be enough to set off a colonial expedition. From this point of view, Dahomey was a typical example. Without the activism of the Marseille agents and of Jean Bayol, without the lobbying of Cyprien Fabre, powerful businessman, president of the Marseille Chamber of Commerce and possessor of effective contacts in Parisian power circles, it is highly likely that the Dahomey affair would have taken an entirely different turn, despite the international context of the era. Finally, it seems obvious that the hopes founded on colonisation by those who were waiting for the restoration of their commercial power, or a diversification in their profit sources, were not based on correct economic calculations. Pushed on by particular interests, set off by a few influential people, colonisation seems to be more linked to the affirmation of economic forces of mercantile inspiration rather than the expression of industrial and liberal capitalism.

Notes

- 1 Eighty per cent of the Marseille expeditions took place between 1783 and 1792, which led Charles Carrière to say that Marseille was perhaps becoming a slave-trader port at the end of the eighteenth century (C. Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIIIe siècle: Contribution à l'étude des économies maritimes* (Marseille, Institut historique de Provence, 1973), vol. I, pp. 346–9; O. Pétré-Grenouilleau, *Les négoce maritimes français XVIIe-XXe siècles* (Paris, Belin, 1997), pp. 109–11).
- 2 M. Roncayolo, *L'imaginaire de Marseille: Port, ville pôle* (Marseille, Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Marseille, 1990), p. 134.
- 3 X. Daumalin and M. Courdurié, *Vapeur et Révolution industrielle à Marseille* (Marseille, Chambre de commerce et d'industrie Marseille-Provence, 1997), p. 374; O. Raveux, *Marseille, ville des métaux et de la vapeur au XIXe siècle* (Paris, CNRS, 1998), p. 383; X. Daumalin and O. Raveux, 'Marseille (1831–1865): une révolution industrielle entre Europe du nord et Méditerranée', *Annales H.S.S.*, 1 (2001), pp. 153–76.
- 4 Roncayolo, *L'Imaginaire de Marseille*, p. 184.
- 5 In 1830, the Marseille soap-making industry numbered about 40 factories, employed 700 workers and produced almost 40,000 tons of soap. The global value of this production was 30 million francs, which put soap-making at the top of local industry. The total value of the sugar-refining industry, the second largest industry in Marseille was only 16 million francs (P. Masson, *Les Bouches-du-Rhône: Encyclopédie départementale* (Marseille, Archives départementales des Bouches du Rhône, 1926), p. 71).
- 6 X. Daumalin, 'Ou selau pétrole. L'industrie chimique de Marseille–Berne au XIXe siècle' (Marseille, Ed. Paul Tacussel, 2003), pp. 30–42..
- 7 C. Wilson, *The History of Unilever* (London, Cassel, 1954), Vol. I, p. 16.
- 8 'Plan du gouvernement de la Restauration, cultures, commerce central', *Revue*

- coloniale*, 5 (1850), pp. 23–43; G. Hardy, *La mise en valeur du Sénégal de 1817 à 1854* (Paris, Larose, 1921), pp. 25–6.
- 9 Produced by acacias, gum Arabic gum was used in food production to stabilise emulsions in cream and cakes, but also in the textile industry in the finishing (R. Pasquier, 'Les traitants des comptoirs du Sénégal au milieu du XIXe siècle', in *Entrepreneurs et entreprises en Afrique* (Paris, l'Harmattan, 1983), pp. 141–63; J.-L.A. Weeb, 'The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal', *Journal of African History*, 26, 2–3 (1985), pp. 149–68).
 - 10 For the presence of Marseille entrepreneurs in west Africa, see X. Daumalin, *Marseille et l'Ouest africain: L'outremer des industriels (1841–1957)* (Marseille, Chambre de commerce et d'industrie Marseille-Provence, 1992).
 - 11 Account on the commerce of Senegal, Bordeaux, 20 May 1842, pp. 3–13; 'Le Sénégal et les guinées de Pondichéry', Bordeaux, 1879, 48 pp. (Archives départementales de Gironde, 8M File 14).
 - 12 P. Verger, 'Mouvements des navires entre Bahia et le golfe du Bénin, XVIIè–XIXè siècles', *RFHOM*, 55, 198 (1968), pp. 5–36.
 - 13 The Régis brothers, Victor and Louis, come from a Marseille family which specialised in the making of Tunis hats and in trade with the Levant and Senegal. Following their father's death in 1827, Louis kept the factory and Victor moved towards the house of commerce. Associated with his brother-in-law Jérôme Borelli, and with his brother Louis who financed him, he decided to concentrate his efforts on Senegal and the west coast of Africa.
 - 14 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Senegal III, letter, 19 March 1840.
 - 15 E. Brooks, 'Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialisation of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830–1870', *Journal of African History*, 16, 1 (1975), pp. 32–7.
 - 16 AN SOM, Senegal IV, letter, 26 June 1841.
 - 17 Tariff from 9 May 1845 which taxed sesame seeds between 7 and 14 francs for 100 kilos, according to the origin and the flag, while groundnut was taxed at only 3 francs for 100 kilos.
 - 18 Masson, *Les Bouches-du-Rhône*, p. 419.
 - 19 By number of factories and workers, the oleaginous oil-mills became the leader of industrial activity in Marseille. Followed by mechanic construction (17 factories/2,035 jobs) and the sugar refineries (3 factories/1,496 workers) (Masson, *Les Bouches-du-Rhône*, pp. 206–11).
 - 20 From a poor Belgian family who had arrived in Marseille in 1824, Charles-Auguste Verminck was employed successively by Victor Régis and Maurel & Prom before setting up on his own (1852).
 - 21 Son of trader César Fabre, Cyprien Fabre first of all worked for his uncle, Victor Régis, as a clerk. In 1863, at the age of 25, he was made a partner in the company at the rate of 40 per cent. But when, in 1868, Victor Régis divorced his wife Félicie Fabre, sister of César Fabre, Cyprien left his uncle's company and founded his own trading posts in west Africa.
 - 22 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Senegal IV, letter, 8 September 1841.
 - 23 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Senegal IV, letter, 8 May 1850.
 - 24 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Africa IV, letter, 24 February 1856.
 - 25 Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, 29E 103, letter, 9 November 1847.
 - 26 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Africa IV, letter, 26 February 1856.

- 27 One of King Guézo's sons, but not the future heir, came to France in 1857 until 1859 and studied briefly at the Imperial lycée in Marseille.
- 28 B. Schnapper, *La politique et le commerce française dans le golfe de Guinée de 1838 à 1871* (Paris, Mouton, 1961), pp. 25–9.
- 29 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Senegal XIII, letter, 21 May 1847.
- 30 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Gorée and dependences, XV, letter, 20 May 1856.
- 31 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Senegal I, Faidherbe's report 19 January 1855; L.-C. Barrows, 'The Merchants and General Faidherbe. Aspects of French Expansion in Senegal in the 1850s', *RFHOM*, 61, 223 (1974), pp. 182–3.
- 32 Arch. CFAO, 1868.
- 33 In the *Economiste français* dated 1 February 1879, weekly that he ran, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu wrote notably: 'In the presence of the obstinancy on the part of most young civilised societies that close their barriers on these products, the old world feels the need to discover new openings. Where could they be more sure than in the new countries where there is no fear of border tariffs...? Fifty years ago we believed that Africa was a desert. Today we know it much better, the population is estimated at between 300 and 400 million in this huge part of the world. Explorers have all said that the soil is generally rich, the population harmless. In these conditions the African continent offers itself to Europe as a virgin land that holds within it resources that are waiting only for the European touch.' This is the first time that he declares himself officially in favour of economic expansion in west Africa.
- 34 J. Zweifel, *Voyage aux sources du Niger* (Marseille, Barlatier-Feissat père et fils, 1880), pp. 2–4.
- 35 Théodore and Louis Mante were the biological sons of Victor Régis. When he died (1881), they inherited his fortune and his commercial affairs. Georges Borelli was the son of Jérôme Borelli (1803–52), brother-in-law and ex-partner of Victor Régis.
- 36 The shelled groundnuts produced 40 per cent oil as opposed to 30 per cent for the unshelled version.
- 37 Contrary to Marseille oil-factories who only used cabbage palm for their oil (45 litres of oil for 100kgs of cabbage palm) and did not know what to do with the oil cakes – the residual paste that remained after the extraction of the oil – the industrialists of northern Europe managed to sell their oil cakes to farmers from the region who used it as fodder during the long period of stalling.
- 38 X. Daumalin, 'Frédéric Bohn l'Africain (1852–1923)', in E. Courdurié and G. Durand, *Entrepreneurs d'empires* (Marseille, Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Marseille-Provence, 1998), pp. 198–267.
- 39 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), Senegal IV, 3 January 1887.
- 40 ACCM, letters sent to Paris, vol. 48, 1 April 1890.
- 41 X. Daumalin, 'La conquête du Dahomey: une solution à la récession des échanges entre Marseille et l'Ouest africain?', *Etudes et documents*, 24 (Aix-en-Provence, Institut d'histoire des pays d'outre-mer, 1993), pp. 51–67.
- 42 *Le Petit Marseillais*, 20 and 25 January 1891.
- 43 Journal officiel (hereafter JO), parliamentary debates, sitting of 28 November 1891. Cyprien Fabre's letter, president of the Chamber of Commerce in Marseille, February 1891.
- 44 JO, parliamentary debates, sitting of first March 1895.
- 45 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), TP 131, 2 June 1897.
- 46 Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer (AN SOM), TP 131, 2 June 1897;

- G. Borelli, 'Le Dahomé, ressources économiques et avenir commercial', *Bulletin de la société géographique de Marseille* (1898), pp. 412–23.
- 47 In effect, at the same time, Mante and Borelli were involved in the forming of the company Société française des chemins de fer de Madagascar and requested a concession of 300,000 hectares from the government. The deal failed in 1899 (O. Lambert, *Marseille et Madagascar* (Marseille, Chambre de commerce et d'industrie Marseille-Provence, 2000), pp. 190–9).
- 48 In 1898, the Marseille traders also applied to build a railway between Conakry and the Niger. Defended by the CFAO, the Comptoir national d'escompte, the Société marseillaise de crédit and the Grands travaux de Marseille, the project was finally judged too onerous and it was a Bordeaux-based company, the Société auxiliaire des industries africaines, that got the tender in 1900 (Arch. CFAO, letter from F. Bohn to J. Le Cesne, 16 September 1899).
- 49 The land was exploited by a group of the CFCFD, the Compagnie coloniale du Dahomey, founded in 1902.
- 50 *Bulletin de la société de géographie commerciale de Paris*, 24 (1902), pp. 489–502.
- 51 *Le travail national*, 7 July 1901; *La France coloniale*, 15 July 1901.
- 52 AN SOM, Dahomey XII, report by Gaston Doumergue, Minister of the colonies, to the President of the Republic, August 1904.
- 53 AN SOM, TP 120, 29 June 1905.

Afterword

Towards a cosmopolitan history of imperialism

A.G. Hopkins

The Introduction to this volume has dealt with the subject matter of individual chapters and identified some of the large issues involved in understanding the transition from the era of the slave trade to the era of conquest and control in tropical Africa. Accordingly, it seems appropriate for these concluding reflections to consider how the contents of the book fit into the even wider historiographical context formed by the study of imperial history – a subject still regarded by many scholars as being old-fashioned, but one that is now receiving a new injection of ideas and relevance.¹

The old-style imperial history has long disappeared: it arose in the nineteenth century to accompany the new, or newly-expanded, European Empires; it declined in the middle of the twentieth century, when decolonisation brought the ‘imperial mission’ to an end. Thereafter, the focus of research shifted to the indigenous history of former subject peoples. The study of Western influences lost its centrality. In a decolonised world it survived mainly as a means of showing how the West exploited the Rest, and how, in particular, *Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.² This form of imperial history received a surge of energy at the close of the twentieth century, when postmodernist influences spread into historical studies.³ The theme of exploitation continued, but it was extended to cultural forms generated by faulty stereotypes and race prejudice. Ideas were no longer seen as epiphenomena but as fundamental causes of human action. Representations, or rather misrepresentations, of others shaped policies as well as attitudes. Material forces themselves had not disappeared but they had lost their earlier, seemingly invincible power to move the mountains of the past.

The opening of the new century has also opened a new chapter in the historiography of the Western empires. Two broad developments are now uniting to provide fresh momentum to the study of imperial history. One, coming from within the scholarly body, suggests that postmodernist influences have now run their course. It is no longer new, if it ever was, to suppose that the Western world developed distorted images of other societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴ Valuable empirical studies

of this theme, covering sources of information such as education, museums, exhibitions, architecture and the arts in general, have been completed and more will be published, but the central point has now been made.

The second development has come from outside academia and has taken the form of a growing awareness of the influence of globalisation.⁵ Historians have yet to engage seriously with this development or to take much notice of the immense literature it has generated.⁶ However, like everyone else, they received a dramatic wake-up call on 11 September 2001, when supra-national forces penetrated the national defences of the United States and destroyed the World Trade Center in New York. When the ex-empire struck back, it caused Western observers to redirect their attention to the imperial origins of present discontents. When the United States itself struck back by invading Afghanistan and Iraq, its actions prompted comparison with past episodes of imperial aggression and led to speculation about the creation of a new empire in what was thought to be a post-colonial age. While it is too early to say precisely what effect these conjoined influences will have on future studies of the past, it seems safe to predict that there will be a revival of interest in some of the central economic and political issues that have been marginalised in recent years, and that new impetus will be given to the analysis of geo-politics and long-run structural change and continuity in history.

It is hard to think of a branch of history more suited to these developments than the study of empires.⁷ Empires were by definition transnational, multi-cultural organisations that spanned existing states and provinces. Their rise, like their fall, was the product of material as well as symbolic forces: costs had to be met by revenues; political authority had to be backed by the ultimate threat of coercion; an aura of supremacy and invincibility had to be inculcated and sustained in the minds of citizens and subjects. Their history can be understood only by taking the long view, by trying to discern the structures that shaped the past, and by risking generalisation. The much criticised 'totalising project' has to return to favour because there is no other way of comprehending the history of the world. And if we are to understand what is now being referred to as the new American Empire, the history of its predecessors acquires both relevance and urgency.

The present book contributes to this broad endeavour by offering a new kind of comparative imperial history. In the first place, it gives prominence to the European side of the story without being burdened by the obligations of the past: the authors are not driven by the need either to bestow uncritical approval on the colonial mission or to condemn it without reservation. The central point, which can be made today with greater objectivity nearly half a century after decolonisation, is a simple one: the imperial presence, informal and formal, was important, and now needs to be studied impartially, whatever view is taken of the morality and consequences of empire-building.

The Eurocentric approach adopted here is applied literally, that is by looking at a clutch of empire-building states instead of, as is typically the case, just one of them. A cosmopolitan standpoint has some precedents, but it remains exceptional.⁸ The imperial story is still usually told as part of a national story: one nation dominates the narrative; others enter and exit in minor roles. This striking degree of insularity, reinforced by a strong mixture of entrenched national traditions and continuing language barriers, has had some strange consequences. Books dealing with British imperialism, for example, tend to hold the French responsible for starting the Scramble for Africa; French studies are inclined to attribute blame to Germany; German sources often refer the cause back to Britain. All parties give weight to initiatives taken by Belgium. Thus are the weak made to dominate the strong. This conclusion is rarely challenged because there are few opportunities to place these accounts side by side and so resolve the anomalies they advertise. One of the merits of the present study is that it holds out the prospect of escaping from this type of circularity by enabling the motives of different European powers to be compared in content and significance. Refreshingly, too, it gives prominence to powers other than Britain, which has taken the lion's share of the literature, just as it took the lion's share of Africa.⁹ Moreover, the contributors give weight to economic themes, which have lost favour with historians in recent years, without losing sight of the important political and cultural aspects of the transition from commerce to colonies. Of course, not everything can be covered. The attention paid to the European powers means that, on this occasion, the African side of the story is mentioned rather than explored in detail, though several chapters reveal a sensitive understanding of the issues involved.¹⁰ But that is a project for another conference and another book.¹¹

While the present volume does not deal explicitly with the new literature on globalisation referred to earlier, it makes the process of modernisation a central theme,¹² and the two are closely related: globalisation, it might be said, is the highest stage of modernisation (reached so far). As conceived here, modernisation is intimately bound up with both economic and political change. Economic development in Western Europe was linked to the rise of the nation-state as well as to industrialisation; countries in other parts of the world were challenged to industrialise or to trade,¹³ and in doing so to realign their political structures too. Isolationism remained an option but, as the Chinese found out, it was not one with a long-term future. Some states were able to combine the processes of economic and political development and use them to underpin their independence as new or newly-refurbished nation-states, as was the case with Britain, France, Germany and the United States. Others, such as Russia and Austro-Hungary, were caught between the old world and the new, and by 1914 had achieved only a limited degree of industrialisation and incomplete political unity.

Beyond the Western world, the option lay with trade rather than with industry. Non-Western societies around the globe faced the same problem: how to develop export commodities that could find a place in international markets and hold on to it. The economic issue had its political complement because export growth involved institutional adaptation. Responses varied: just as some commodities were more consistent with institutional continuity than others, so some polities were more capable of absorbing economic change than others.

Accepting the trade option entailed greater involvement with the outside world. But European expansion was not always converted to imperialism. Some societies were able to make the adjustment and retain their independence, though experiencing degrees of informal influence. The Latin American republics are good examples of states in which political independence and 'nation building' were underpinned by successful export growth. At the same time, export growth depended on a degree of external involvement that in some cases, such as Argentina, was powerful enough to create an informal empire.¹⁴ Other societies were unable to complete the process of integration with the required speed or efficiency. In such cases, the chances of external intervention increased. Africa and South-East Asia are prime examples: in both instances, expansion was transformed into imperialism and imperialism converted, via formal annexation, into colonial rule. Some regions escaped annexation: the vast Chinese and Ottoman Empires held out the prospect of formidable resistance and were propped up by agreement among the Great Powers. In both instances, however, the West came to exercise considerable informal influence, which intruded significantly on the sovereignty of the two antique empires and reduced them to the status of clients, even though their formal independence was untouched.¹⁵

Evidently, we are dealing with a process of uneven economic and political development in both Europe and the rest of the world. The concept of 'European imperialism', though not a misnomer, masks significant degrees of diversity that need to be identified if the forces leading to imperialism are to be understood. In drawing attention to these variations, the preceding chapters open up important issues that have yet to be fully explored. One that is implicit in virtually every contribution is the distinction between the imperialism of the rich and the imperialism of the poor.¹⁶ The rich countries were the most developed economically, that is to say the most industrialised, whereas the poor were still primarily rural economies with low levels of income. This is the difference between Britain, France, Germany and Belgium, on the one hand, and Portugal, Spain and Italy, on the other. If this distinction is accepted, for the moment at least, the question then arises as to whether it provides a useful way of classifying the causes of imperialism among the European powers. There are two possibilities. The first is that the imperialism of the rich reflects the power structure of advanced capitalism, whereas the imperialism of the poor

expresses the continuing hold of what Weber called 'feudal remnants'. The second possibility is that the poor are simply smaller, embryonic versions of the rich, in which case the motivation of the two is similar, though the outcome differs because the poor are unable to compete successfully for territory, or at least for the most desirable territory.

Each of these alternatives raises interesting questions. As Etemad's chapter confirms,¹⁷ tropical Africa was of trivial importance to European trade and finance in the nineteenth century. The British may have been a 'nation of shopkeepers', but they never had their hands on the levers of power. The gentlemanly capitalists who did were uninterested in parts of the world that lacked a credit-rating and could not offer security for foreign loans.¹⁸ The French bourgeoisie grew in size and influence in the nineteenth century, but it is not easy to show that their economic ambitions determined imperial policy. Pétré-Grenouilleau recognises here the importance of mercantilist elements but also of the forces of nationalism as expressed in the search for *la gloire* and prestige.¹⁹ This is a more subtle approach than that adopted by Brunschwig, who held that imperialism was the highest stage of nationalism rather than of capitalism.²⁰ Schumpeter extended this line of thinking by arguing that imperialism was the product of what he termed 'objectless' atavistic forces. Subsequent research, stimulated by the debate over the origins of the First World War, has underlined the extent to which rural and aristocratic interests continued to influence policy across a wide range of European states down to 1914.²¹ However, Schumpeter's thesis is not endorsed by the contributors to the present volume. The imperialists who evoked ancient glories seem to have been modern men themselves, even if they were not capitalists.²²

If the stereotype of the rich fragments under scrutiny, so too does that of the poor. One revisionist account, which has been applied to both Portugal and Italy, challenges the idea that the imperialism of the poor was a quixotic set of adventures designed to relive or recreate the glories of the past.²³ Far from being cases of 'uneconomic imperialism', Portugal and Italy sought colonies, it is claimed, because they needed protected markets for their fledgling industries. If these arguments are accepted (and of course they have been criticised), the distinction between rich and poor imperialists breaks down because differential rates of economic development, which are not in dispute, are not correlated with differential motives for imperialist expansion.

This is not the end of the classificatory possibilities. There are other ways of categorising the European states, though they have yet to be considered fully because national historiographical traditions have done little to encourage comparative history. One approach would be to group countries by a combination of size and total resources (whether agricultural or industrial). Such a grouping would keep Britain, France and Germany together while demoting Belgium, which was too small to build a global empire in the circumstances of the nineteenth century, despite having an

advanced industrial sector and having made considerable progress in nation-building after 1830. This taxonomy would be a logical outcome of blurring the distinction between rich and poor imperialists. Of course, it might not add very much to an understanding of cause or consequence, apart from confirming the tautology that power goes to the strong. On the other hand, it might be valuable in revealing that broad similarities contain important variations.²⁴

A further possibility would be to consider the differences between 'early start' and 'late start' imperialist countries. Britain and France were first in the field as modernisers; late-comers had to find places within the framework they created. The old Portuguese and Dutch Empires survived in the nineteenth century under British protection; at the close of the century, newcomers, such as Germany, Belgium and Italy, had to establish themselves in less desirable or at least more difficult territories. Domestic motives for promoting imperialist policies need to be related to available colonial options. Somalia was never going to be India, even when viewed through rose-coloured spectacles. On this hypothesis, the value of colonies depended largely on illusion: they could be presented as being desirable only until their true worth was revealed.

A final possibility would be to classify the imperialist powers according to the extent of their involvement with the overseas world. Such an index would need to go beyond degrees of dependence on overseas trade to include movements of people (emigration) and financial flows. Although a thorough comparison of this kind has yet to be made, one obvious distinction stands out: Britain was in a category by itself because its overseas commitments were far more pronounced than those of any other European power. This does not necessarily mean that British imperialism was intrinsically different in kind from that of other powers: Kuitenbrouwer, for example, has drawn attention to strong similarities between Britain and The Netherlands.²⁵ But it does suggest that the degree of prior involvement with the overseas world is an important variable in any consideration of imperialist motivation.

It is easier to break up the problem than to solve it. The contributors to this volume offer further evidence, if it were needed, of the difficulty of classifying different types of imperialism, while reaffirming the importance of continuing the attempt. In the case of France, Daumalin provides a compelling argument for emphasising the role of commercial pressures in promoting empire in Senegal and Dahomey;²⁶ Valey, on the other hand, identifies a coalition of local interests, military as well as mercantile, as being prime movers in Madagascar;²⁷ Pétré-Grenouilleau, reflecting on the period as a whole, sees that *la gloire* was mixed with *la monnaie* from the outset, which is why he emphasises the mercantilist roots of French imperial policy.²⁸ In the case of the late-start countries, Rainero argues that Italian imperialism was primarily political in nature; industrial and commercial interests were present and hoped to take advantage of imperial

expansion, but they were not responsible for causing it.²⁹ Alexandre shows that Portugal's plans for developing an African empire contained a mix of motives. These varied as the century advanced, but ideology was in general more important than economics at least until 1892, when the empire was included in a new modernisation policy that favoured business interests.³⁰ Wirtz and Eckert also stress the theme of modernisation in the case of Germany, while allowing room in their interpretation for the influence of special economic interests.³¹

These conclusions, though confined to individual cases, point in the same general direction. On the evidence produced here, and leaving the case of Britain aside, it is difficult to distinguish between rich and poor imperialists on grounds of motives: economic and political considerations were present in both cases but in proportions that varied from country to country and also changed over time. It would seem that the imperialism of the rich differed from the imperialism of the poor in degree rather than in kind. If this is the case, is it possible to reach a general judgement about the relative weight of the economic and political causes of imperialism, given that both were present to some degree in all the European countries considered here?

This is of course an extraordinarily difficult question. One way of approaching it is to return to the beginning of the period covered by this study. If the same question were asked of European involvement in Africa in the 1780s, the answer would be straightforward: the motives for engaging with tropical Africa at that time were overwhelmingly economic, as is confirmed here by Eltis and Richardson.³² Other considerations, such as rivalry between the powers and an embryonic sense of patriotism, can be found, but no one has claimed that they were more than minor subsidiaries of the central cause, which was based firmly on the demand for slaves. If economic motives were dominant in the eighteenth century, why should the position be different one hundred years later, when the modernising impulse had greatly expanded Europe's economic reach and need for markets and raw materials?

The main answer to this question is that by 1880 tropical Africa had declined in importance relative both to competing regions in other parts of the world and to its own standing in 1780. In the eighteenth century, tropical Africa and the Caribbean were engines of the international economy; a century later they were backwaters. There was no shortage of economic motives in the history of European expansion in the nineteenth century, but they took more profitable directions. In the case of Britain, overseas trade, investment and migration were attracted primarily to the United States, Latin America, the colonies of recent settlement, notably Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and India. In the case of France, economic expansion occurred largely within Europe, including significant investments in Russia.

Looked at from the perspective of Africa, Britain's economic interests

were concentrated overwhelmingly on Egypt and South Africa,³³ while France focused on the North African littoral. In the late eighteenth century it would have been possible to argue that it was in Britain's national interest to secure tropical Africa. But at that time, as Eltis shows, annexation was not necessary, even if it was possible, because the ends of policy were met by co-operating with African states rather than by taking them over.³⁴ In the late nineteenth century no such case could be made. Tropical Africa had not been discarded, and there were always optimists on hand to exaggerate the still unknown wealth of the regions. But even the most approximate analysis indicated that the costs of expansion were unlikely to be covered by rapid returns. The El Dorados were in the mind rather than just over the hill. Hard-headed realists like Lord Salisbury were well aware of this fact and arranged their priorities accordingly.³⁵

A fuller answer to the question posed above also needs to draw attention to the nature of political change in Europe in the nineteenth century. If economic modernisation took Europe in directions that led away from tropical Africa, its political counterpart, the nation-state, opened up new possibilities for promoting imperialism there – and elsewhere. The creation of nation-states depended on their success in increasing claims on the affiliations of their citizens, even to the point of monopolising them. This undertaking required the shaping of national identities by emphasising both a sense of belonging and a sense of difference. The outside world played an important part in this process: a foreign policy that expressed a common purpose and projected a civilising mission appealed across regions and classes; reflected images of other societies assisted the growth of a sense of nationality by contrasting the commonality of home with the exoticism of abroad. These developments were greatly helped by the extension of the franchise, which enabled a larger (and louder) political voice to be heard and mobilised, and by the spread of literacy and the popular press, which enabled the national interest to be promoted and images of the exotic to be transmitted across regions and, increasingly, social classes. Tropical Africa's relative economic decline was therefore balanced by its rising importance in the politics of Europe's new nation-states.

If this analysis is correct, we have a means of understanding the varying emphases placed on economic and political considerations by the contributors to this volume. It should cause no surprise to find either that European capital did not flood into tropical Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century, or that European enterprise was confined to a relatively small group of firms that were unable to expand their activities significantly without some form of government support. Equally, it is easy to see why tropical Africa, which found itself relegated to the bottom of the racial hierarchy by the close of the nineteenth century, should have been regarded as an especially suitable recipient of the civilising mission

and as an exceptionally effective way of confirming to Europeans their own growing sense of superiority.

It follows that, as far as tropical Africa is concerned, it is unnecessary to engage in scholarly warfare to ensure the victory of either economic or political theories of imperialism. Business lobbies made their presence felt in France, Germany, and Britain because they were well organised and represented powerful shipping, manufacturing and banking interests.³⁶ Similar groups, also connected to the modern sector, appeared in Italy and Portugal, though they were embryonic rather than established at the time of partition.³⁷ Moreover, most of their energies were directed towards opening the domestic market. The colonies on offer to the late-start countries at the end of the nineteenth century were on the whole barren or uninviting. In general, they were attractive to a small number of specialist and companies and a handful of speculators, who hoped to secure gains on the back of government subsidies or support.

None of these lobbies was able to direct foreign policy; the best they could hope for was to gain sufficient influence to promote their own local interests. This does not mean, however, that they represented an aberrant or weak form of capitalism, still less that they should be disregarded. Brunschwig took a rather extreme view of this matter.³⁸ Writing in the 1950s and from an anti-Marxist standpoint, he was reluctant to make concessions to economic theories of imperialism. However, Jacques Marseille has shown conclusively that there was a reasonably happy marriage between French capitalism and the French Empire during this period; the divorce came later.³⁹ Detailed studies have now revealed that business interests played an important part in influencing policy towards intervention overseas.⁴⁰ Even if we agree, in the case of France, that imperialism was the highest stage of nationalism, we should also concede that nationalism consisted of many strands. Along with what Hobson called 'pride, pugnacity and prestige' went, as he very well knew, 'profit', whether as a reality or as an illusion.⁴¹

Tendencies towards expansion did not always lead to annexation. This was the result in tropical Africa because, in the end, the region was judged to be incapable of making the transition from the slave trade to 'legitimate' commerce with sufficient speed to realise its own potential. It lacked the institutions that enabled Argentina and other regions of white settlement to hook up to a major provider, such as Britain. It lacked, too, a central government that might have negotiated terms of survival, as the Ottomans and Chinese were able to do.

These limitations were not as apparent at the beginning of the nineteenth century as they were at its end. On the contrary, the abolitionists were optimistic that the slave trade would wither away and be replaced by successful alternatives without provoking economic or political upheaval. In the event, the transition was long and difficult.⁴² It was incomplete before 1850 and insecure thereafter. The new trade, chiefly in vegetable

oils, was less profitable than the old one, which continued to flourish during the first half of the century. Producers of 'legitimate' exports experienced increasing competition from alternative sources of supply as the steamship drew more distant parts of the world into the international economy. They also found themselves exposed to price fluctuations that were transmitted from Europe and thus were beyond their control. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, amidst a widespread trade depression, the great experiment in bringing modernity to tropical Africa seemed to be on the brink of failure. Optimism turned to pessimism; pessimism was transformed into assertiveness. Withdrawal was no longer an option. European merchants found themselves in a quagmire of potentially bad debts;⁴³ missionaries had renewed their commitment to saving the soul of Africa; colonial outposts needed new sources of revenue if they were to survive. Africans, so it was said, had shown that they were incapable of responding to new, beneficial opportunities. Advanced societies had an obligation to lead backward peoples towards development. Moreover, the means of doing so were now readily to hand: the railway could open up the vast interior; the Maxim gun would ensure that it did so.

There was no informal empire in tropical Africa – only a shifting set of alliances with rulers whose own jurisdiction was limited and often disputed.⁴⁴ Neither the Argentine nor the Ottoman solutions could be made operational. Regime change and reconstruction were advocated to deal with what, in the language of today, would be called failed states. In Africa, as in Iraq, the difficulties and the cost were hugely underestimated; by the time they became known, it was too late to change course. The partition of Africa resolved the problems of transition: labour was applied to land; exports surged. But the resolution involved a major long-term commitment: infra-structures had to be laid down; new states had to be built up. The price was colonial rule.

We do not yet know if we are on the brink of a new imperial age. The action taken by the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq may be a prelude to the further extension of formal rule by force, or it may be an exceptional diversion, like McKinley's war with Spain, which led to the annexation of the Philippines in 1898. What can be said with more confidence is that events at the beginning of the new century have stimulated fresh interest in the history of imperialism. Moreover, this interest is likely to endure, even if the United States reverts to informal means of exercising its power, because the continuing process of globalisation is bound to attract the attention of historians, especially those whose specialisation is the study of empires, the great globalising engines of the past. The present book contributes to the revival of imperial history by reaffirming the importance of the European centres and by laying out a prospectus for comparative studies of Western Empires. What could be more appropriate, in an age of globalisation, than an undertaking by historians to cross the national boundaries that have long confined their thinking?

Notes

- 1 This chapter has been written in response to an invitation from the editor to comment on the final versions of the conference papers.
- 2 The title of Walter Rodney's influential book published in 1972, in London.
- 3 Their influence on imperial history is discussed by Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 24 (1996), pp. 345–63.
- 4 Excellent studies of these themes existed before postmodernism began to influence historical research. See, for example, Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971), and Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850* (Madison, WI, 1964).
- 5 An exploration of the possibilities can be found in A.G. Hopkins, 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History', *Past and Present*, 164 (1999), pp. 198–243.
- 6 One attempt to open up the subject is A.G. Hopkins, *Globalization in World History* (London, 2001).
- 7 The British Empire is placed in this context by P.J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2000* (London, 2001), pp. 661–81.
- 8 See, for example, Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis (eds) *Britain and Germany in Africa* (New Haven, CT, 1967); *ibid. France and Britain in Africa* (New Haven, CT, 1971); Stig Forster, Wolfgang Mommsen and Ronald Robinson (eds) *Bismarck, Europe and Africa* (Oxford, 1988).
- 9 By 1914 France had slightly more territory, but Britain controlled the richest parts of sub-Saharan Africa as measured by indices of population, trade, investment. Size, as Lord Salisbury pointed out in referring to the 'light soils' of the Sahara, is a poor measure of value. See Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, pp. 336, 567.
- 10 See especially Eltis (Ch. 2) and Richardson (Ch. 3).
- 11 The best guide is Robin Law (ed.) *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce* (Cambridge, 1995), which contains a good set of further references. A recent case study is A.G. Hopkins, 'Asante and the Historians: Transition and Partition on the Gold Coast', in Roy Bridges (ed.) *Imperialism, Decolonization, and Africa* (New York, 2000), pp. 25–64.
- 12 See especially Ch. 8.
- 13 This is a major theme of W. Arthur Lewis, *Growth and Fluctuations, 1870–1913* (London, 1978).
- 14 The huge literature on this subject is summarised in Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, Ch. 9. See also Alan Knight, 'Britain and Latin America', in Andrew Porter (ed.) *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), Ch. 7.
- 15 The Ottoman Public Debt Administration exercised considerable control over the Ottoman budget; the Imperial Maritime Customs Administration had a similar effect in the case of China.
- 16 The term 'ragamuffin imperialism' has Italian origins, as noted by Rainero in Ch. 5: Guiseppe Maione, *L'imperialismo straccione* (Bologne, 1979). The phrase often used in the Anglo-Saxon literature is 'the imperialism of the beggars'. The concept has been adapted to the Portuguese case by Gervase Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825–75: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (London, 1985), which followed his criticism of Hammond: 'The Myth of Uneconomic Imperialism: The Portuguese in Angola, 1836–1926', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5 (1979), pp. 165–80.
- 17 Ch. 4.
- 18 This is a reference to the thesis advanced by Cain and Hopkins in *British*

- Imperialism*. The interpretation is discussed in Raymond E. Dumett (ed.) *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire* (London, 1999), and Shigeru Akita (ed.) *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism, and Global History* (London, 2002).
- 19 Ch. 9.
- 20 Ch. 9; Henri Brunschwig, *Mythes et réalités de l'impérialisme colonial français, 1871–1914* (Paris, 1960). The thesis has been extended by C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Climax of French Imperialism, 1914–1924* (Stanford, CA, 1981).
- 21 Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York, 1981). Mayer's argument developed from Fischer's revisionism and has itself been criticised.
- 22 See Rainero's discussion in Ch. 5.
- 23 Clarence Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*; Smith, 'La dynamique de l'impérialisme espagnol, 1898–1945', *Cahiers d'histoire de l'institut de recherches marxistes*, 54 (1994), pp. 51–64. Richard A. Webster, *Industrial Imperialism in Italy, 1908–1915* (Berkeley, CA, 1975).
- 24 A good example comes from the work of Youssef Cassis, who shows that financial élites emerged in the late nineteenth century in London, Paris, and Berlin, but also that London remained distinctive in important respects: 'Financial Elites in the Three European Centres: London, Paris, Berlin, 1880s–1930s', *Business History*, 33 (1991), pp. 53–71.
- 25 Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands and the Rise of Modern Capitalism: Colonies and Foreign Policy, 1870–1902* (Oxford, 1991); Kuitenbrouwer, 'Capitalism and Imperialism: Britain and the Netherlands', *Itinerario*, 18 (1994), pp. 105–16.
- 26 Ch. 11.
- 27 Ch. 10.
- 28 Ch. 9.
- 29 Ch. 5.
- 30 Ch. 7.
- 31 Ch. 8.
- 32 Chs 2 and 3.
- 33 Colin Newbury, 'On the Margins of Empire: The Trade of Western Africa, 1875–1890', in Forster *et al.*, *Bismarck, Europe and Africa*, Ch. 2.
- 34 Ch. 2.
- 35 Britain was untroubled by French advances into the Sahel, but took care to safeguard and extend her interests in what became Nigeria and the Gold Coast – the richest parts of west Africa.
- 36 The phrasing is deliberate: to avoid confusion the term 'finance capital' is best reserved to describe the interpenetration of banks and industry.
- 37 The chronology is important here because these groups were more prominent after partition than before it. See Pierre Guillen, 'L'impérialisme italien à la veille de la Première Guerre Mondiale', *Revue Internationale*, 6 (1976), pp. 125–44. There are valuable case studies in Laboratoire Connaissance du Tiers-Monde (ed.) *Entreprises et entrepreneurs en Afrique XIX et XX siècles*, vols I and II (Paris, 1983).
- 38 Brunschwig, *Mythes et réalités*.
- 39 *Empire colonial et capitalisme français: histoire d'un divorce* (Paris, 1984).
- 40 This is not the place to review the debate over the role of the *parti colonial*. However, it is worth noting John H. Laffey's important work on Lyon, 'Municipal Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century France', *Historical Reflections*, 1 (1974), pp. 81–114; and 'Les racines de l'impérialisme français en Extrême-Orient: à propos des thèses de J.F. Cady', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 16

(1969), pp. 282–99, which revised Cady's argument that the acquisition of Indo-China was a case of 'uneconomic imperialism'. Stuart M. Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby* (Stanford, CA, 1983) provides a balanced overview that gives weight to both economic and non-economic interests.

41 J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London, 1902).

42 Luis Felipe de Alencastro's important essay (Ch. 6) shows how British merchants helped to keep the slave trade alive after 1807 by supplying Portuguese and Brazilian traders with British manufactured goods, thus slowing down the transition to legitimate commerce.

43 See Ch. 3.

44 The best case that can be made is Britain's use of the Sultan of Zanzibar. But the Sultan had very limited political influence on the mainland, despite Zanzibar's importance as an entrepôt, and it was only after the abolition of the slave trade from Zanzibar island in 1873 that Consul-General Kirk began to formulate plans to build up the Sultan's position so that he could serve British interests. These plans were never realised and before long Carl Peters was able to collect the treaties that delivered the interior to Germany.

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