

**That Most Perfidious Institution:  
The slow death of slavery in nineteenth century Senegal and the Gold  
Coast**

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## **Abstract**

*That Most Perfidious Institution* is a study of Africans - slaves and slave owners - and their central roles in both the expansion of slavery in the early nineteenth century and attempts to reform servile relationships in the late nineteenth century. The pivotal place of Africans can be seen in the interaction between indigenous slave-owning elites (aristocrats and urban Euro-African merchants), local European administrators, and slaves themselves. My approach to this problematic is both chronologically and geographically comparative. The central comparison between Senegal and the Gold Coast contrasts the varying impact of colonial policies, integration into the trans-Atlantic economy; and, more importantly, the continuity of indigenous institutions and the transformative agency of indigenous actors. By evaluating the different outcomes of attempted reforms both in these regions in general and within sub-regions and societies, this dissertation develops a fuller picture of both slave agency and the resistance of slave owners.

Slavery in these regions during the nineteenth century was characterised by a normative model in which local elites were able to resist, divert, and appropriate metropolitan attempts to end or restrict their access to and control of slaves, often with the cooperation of administrators. This contrasted with the ability of slaves to liberate themselves or to take part in mass emancipations in certain situations, illustrating the circumstances under which the political-economic hegemony of slave-owners could be circumvented. The general 'failure' of emancipation masks a series of compromises, negotiations, and self-liberations which took place largely outside the official record. However, the continuity of indigenous social attributes - especially the social/kinship characteristics of indigenous slavery - constrained the ability of slaves to effect their liberations. This situation could be transformed only by the introduction of new economic opportunities, the decreasing reliance of administrators on slave owners, and politicisation and social change amongst slaves themselves.

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## CHAPTER 1: An Introduction

### Historiography

This dissertation is a comparison of the transformation, reform, and attempted abolition of slavery in French Senegal and the British Gold Coast in the nineteenth century. Comparative studies such as this one are by definition studies in opposition. In some respects, this makes it difficult for the author to achieve the specificity of a purely local study. However, the tension inherent in the contrast of places and times can also reveal overarching themes; and this, in turn, can aid our interpretation of evidence of continuity and change at the local level.

In his influential 1983 synthesis *Transformations in Slavery*, Paul Lovejoy pointed out that the discourse on slavery in Africa has in particular lacked such studies, pointing out that this topic “has suffered from the opposite problem to that of over-synthesis... There are some brilliant local studies, which have their own implications in terms of the study of slavery in general, but these... suffer from a failure to place the particular case in the context of Africa as a whole, or even specific regions within Africa.”<sup>1</sup>

Lovejoy was writing at the crest of a renewed academic interest in African slavery. Historians of African descent such as Walter Rodney had begun to investigate the evolution of slavery in several regions of West Africa in the late 1960s<sup>2</sup> and during the next decade monograph-length studies had been produced on servitude in areas as diverse as Zanzibar and Sierra Leone.<sup>3</sup> The regions of Senegal north of the Gambia River and southern Ghana, the subjects of this study, were no exception. The French priest and missionary François Renault compiled a framework study of the origins and impact of French policies on slavery in Senegal while historians at Dakar’s *Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire* also approached the problematic of emancipation, most notably M’Baye Guèye’s seminal article on emancipation in St. Louis and Gorée.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile in 1982 the African-American

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<sup>1</sup> Lovejoy, Paul, *Transformations in Slavery*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p.xi.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney, Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London, 1972. See also Rodney, Walter, “African Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade.”, *Journal of African History*, 1966 (7), 431 – 443.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, Frederick, *Plantation Slavery on the East African Coast*, New Haven, 1977. Grace, John, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, Frederick Muller, London, 1975.

<sup>4</sup> Renault, François, *Liberation D’esclaves et Nouvelle Servitude*, Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, Dakar, 1976. Guèye, M’Baye, “Le fin de l’esclavage à Saint-Louis et à Gorée en 1848”, *Bulletin de l’Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire*, 1966 (28), pp.637-656.

historian Ray Kea published a superb study of seventeenth century society in the Gold Coast, including a number of insights on the socio-political and economic roles of slaves.<sup>5</sup>

Paul Lovejoy thus had a variety of materials to draw from when writing *Transformation in Slavery*. In addition to a number of regional studies, the Africanist community's interpretation of slavery had been advanced by comparative anthropological studies such as Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death*,<sup>6</sup> and by Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Mier's anthology of anthropological and historical studies, *Slavery in Africa*.<sup>7</sup> As a result, Lovejoy was able to effectively identify and approach a number of major issues introduced by regionally-based studies. Among these were themes in domestic and trade servitude; the impact of transformations wrought by Islam, the Atlantic slave trade and its abolition; and manumission and emancipation.

The modern study of emancipation, of which this dissertation forms a part, arose out of this dynamic discourse on slavery. For his chapter on "The abolitionist impulse", for example, Lovejoy drew heavily upon a recently published and somewhat revisionist article of emancipation on the Gold Coast by Gerald McSheffrey, in which McSheffrey stressed for the first time the agency of slaves in emancipating themselves in this region.<sup>8</sup> McSheffrey's article formed only one contribution to a growing discourse on emancipation in the Gold Coast. During the same period, Raymond Dumett analysed the formation of anti-slavery ordinances from the perspective of the British colonial apparatus<sup>9</sup>, and Marion Johnson began to study the supply of slaves to and from what would become the Northern Territories.<sup>10</sup> These two historians collaborated to produce a 1988 chapter engaging with McSheffrey's arguments and outlining further research questions which could contribute to our understanding of emancipation in the Gold Coast and other regions

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<sup>5</sup> Kea, Ray, *Settlements, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast*, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1982.

<sup>6</sup> Patterson, Orlando, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Kopytoff, Igor and Suzanne Miers, (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: historical and anthropological perspectives*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1977.

<sup>8</sup> McSheffrey, Gerald, "Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade, and the Impact of Abolition in the Gold Coast, 1874-1910: A Reappraisal", *Journal of African History*, 1983 (24), pp.349-368.

<sup>9</sup> Dumett, Raymond, "Pressure groups, Bureaucracy, and the Decision-Making Process: The case of slavery, abolition, and colonial expansion in the Gold Coast, 1874", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1981 (9), pp.193-215.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, Marion, "The Slaves of Salagah", *Journal of African History*, 1986 (27), pp. 341-362.

of modern Ghana.<sup>11</sup>

Dumett and Johnson's article appeared in an anthology on emancipation, *The End of Slavery in Africa*.<sup>12</sup> Edited by Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, this volume was promoted as a sequel to *Slavery in Africa* and included studies encompassing diverse regions of Africa. Perhaps most importantly, it proposed a theoretical and comparative framework for exploring a number of themes, such as the role of the colonial state, modes of liberation, the 'ambiguities' of freedom, and the impact of emancipation on indigenous societies.<sup>13</sup>

Another contributor to Miers and Roberts' volume was Martin Klein, who wrote on slave agency and emancipation in Coastal Guinea.<sup>14</sup> Klein was an increasingly important figure in the study of slavery and emancipation in French West Africa, and in 1993 he produced the seminal anglophone article on emancipation across French colonial West Africa.<sup>15</sup> His work did draw on that of Guèye and Renault, but it also added new dimensions both by exploring African initiatives and by expanding the field geographically to encompass the French protectorates as well as Senegal colony. Building on the foundation of this article, and aided by some recent excellent studies of emancipation in West Africa such as Lovejoy and Hogendorn's work on northern Nigeria and Ibrahim Sundiata's exploration of post-emancipation Fernando Po and the Bight of Biafra<sup>16</sup>, Klein in 1998 published a monograph on emancipation in French West Africa, including Senegal, entitled *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*.<sup>17</sup> This volume is, in many ways, a model for addressing the questions of colonial imposition of reforms to slavery, the extent and characteristics

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<sup>11</sup> Dumett, Raymond and Marion Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti, and the Northern Territories", in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1988.

<sup>12</sup> Miers, Suzanne and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Kopytoff, Igor, "The Cultural Context of African Abolition", in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1988. Roberts, Richard and Suzanne Miers, "The End of Slavery in Africa", Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1988.

<sup>14</sup> Klein, Martin, "Slave Resistance and Slave Emancipation in Coastal Guinea", in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Klein, Martin, "Slavery and Emancipation in French West Africa", in Klein, Martin, ed., *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Lovejoy, Paul and Jan Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: the course of abolition in Northern Nigeria 1897-1936*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993. Sundiata, Ibrahim, *From Slaving to Neoslavery: The Bight of Biafra and Fernando Po in the Era of Abolition, 1827-1930*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Klein, Martin, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1998

of slavery in several regions, and the initiatives of slaves. Nevertheless, its generous scope, while achieving a necessary synthesis, forced Klein to concentrate on certain major regional transformations rather than following more subtle local trends.

Interest in slavery on the Gold Coast has similarly accelerated. Much of the new research has been carried out by a Ghanaian scholar, Kwabena Opare-Akurang, who has written intensive articles dealing with both colonial policy and slave agency in the post-emancipation Gold Coast.<sup>18</sup> Opare-Akurang's work has provided new perspectives but raised interesting questions as to the interpretation of the actions of both Europeans and indigenous peoples. Emancipation also forms an important component of the recent work of Peter Haenger, whose excellent study of slavery and reform deals largely with the impact of the Basel Mission on slaveholding but also illuminates a number of other issues surrounding the end of legalised slavery on the Gold Coast.<sup>19</sup>

### Conceptual Framework

With the recent profusion of studies of emancipation in Senegal and the Gold Coast, any new work on the topic would have to represent a significant advance on previous literature. This study makes such advances in three ways: the use of innovative *sources*, an *approach* that prioritises the agency of Africans and Euro-Africans; and finally a comparative *scope*.

Despite the relatively developed discourse on emancipation into the two regions which this study encompasses, several sources have traditionally been under-utilised. Among these are missionary sources. The *Archives de la Congregation de Saint-Esprit* (ACSE) in Villejuif, France, as well as those of the Basel Mission (BMS) in Basel and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) are used in this dissertation largely as supporting evidence for generally accepted assertions previously understood only through rather sketchy administrative sources. More importantly, the sources they contain illuminate the role of missionary groups in shaping the outcome of emancipation, which for the CSE and WMMS at least has been generally unexplored. A number of BMS sources

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<sup>18</sup> Opare-Akurang, Kwabena, "The Administration of the Abolition Laws, African Response and Post-Proclamation Slavery in the Gold Coast 1874-1940", *Slavery and Abolition*, 1998 (19), pp.149-166. Opare-Akurang, Kwabena, "Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast: Colonial Modes of Emancipation and African Initiatives", *Ghana Studies*, 1998 (1), pp.11-34.

<sup>19</sup> Haenger, Peter, *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast: Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage*

were also made available to me through the assistance of Veit Arlt, as well as in abstracts translated by Paul Jenkins.<sup>20</sup>

This study also undertakes an in-depth analysis of important but underutilised archival sources such as the Colonial Judicial (SCT) files of the National Archives of Ghana. The new quantitative and qualitative data contained in these records are central to my discussion of the post-emancipation period for the Gold Coast. Sources in the Central Region Archives of the Gold Coast (NAG-CR) were also useful in illuminating events in the western regions of the Protectorate. Together, all of these sources assisted in the interpretation of events beyond the understanding generated by previous sources and complemented my research at the Public Records Office (PRO), National Archives of Ghana (NAG), *Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer* (ANSOM), and *Archives Nationales du Sénégal* (ANS).

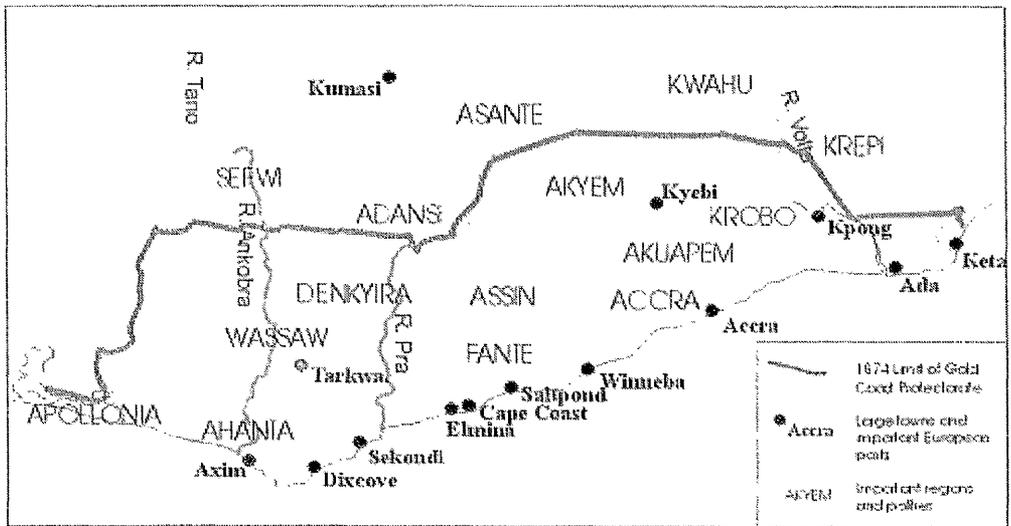
However, this new information would represent only moderate advances upon the works of Klein, Dumett and Johnson and of Opare-Akurang if this dissertation did not undertake an original approach. This work is intended to meet perceived gaps in exploring the central role of Africans – slaves and slave-owners – in the process of reform and emancipation. While not primarily an ethnographic study of indigenous societies, it is an attempt to place Africans as agents both in the formulation of implemented colonial policy toward slavery and in the success and failure of reforms culminating in emancipation. It therefore incorporates an appraisal of the conditions under which reform, abolition, and emancipation could occur, and places this within the framework of emancipation developed in the historical discourse. The dynamic positions and strategies of slaves, slave-owners, and Europeans are discussed against the backdrop of a changing local environment and the conflicting demands of European metropolises for both stable, profitable African colonies and the abolition of indigenous slavery. By locating Africans within this model, this study illuminates the role of slave owners in shaping reform, as well as the agency of slaves in formulating modes of liberation and desertion, negotiating settlements, and developing post-emancipation means of existence.

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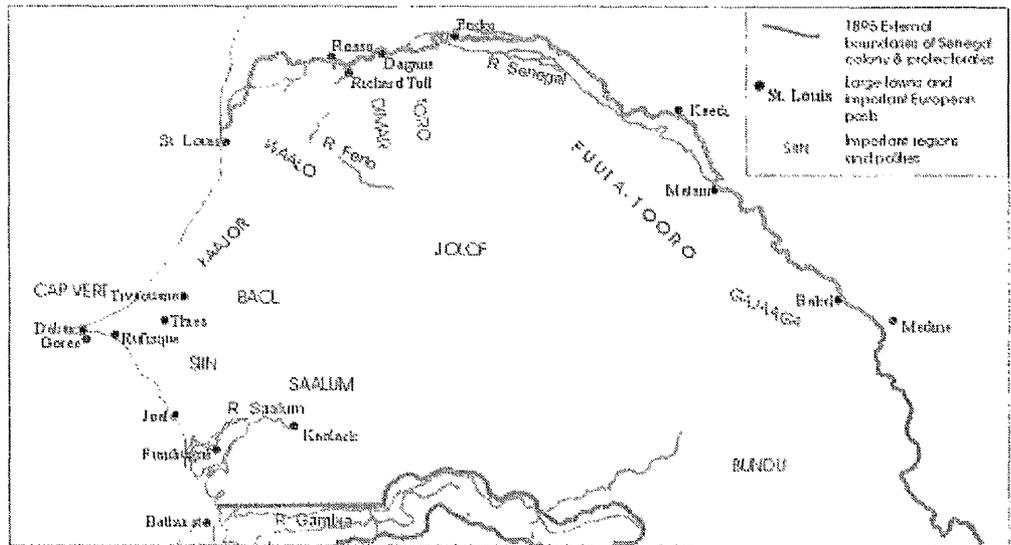
*in West Africa*, ed. by J.J. Shaffer and Paul Lovejoy, P. Schlettwein, Basel, Switzerland, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Jenkins, Paul, "Abstracts from the Gold Coast Correspondence of the Basel Mission", Unpublished.

Map 1.1 The Gold Coast region with principal towns and polities



Map 1.2 Senegal between the Gambia and Senegal Rivers, with principal towns and polities



## The Comparative scope

The most important feature of this study, and its greatest innovation, is that it undertakes a comparison between two geographically and ethnically distinct African regions which nevertheless underwent comparable transformational processes which resulted in both dissimilar and similar results. By comparing the experiences of (French) Senegal and the (British) Gold Coast, this dissertation makes significant advances in addressing two problematics central to the discourse on emancipation: whether European-initiated emancipation generally represented continuity or transformation, and the relative importance of internal (African) and external (European) agency.

By the era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, the regions that would become the Gold Coast and Senegal had been formed by divergent local geographies and by transformative events, in both cases largely initiated from the interior. Senegalese polities had been formed through a series of immigrations from the great states of the Western Soudan. In the south, the Sereer states of the Siin-Saalum delta had been created by an influx of Manding lineages driven by the expansion of the Mali Empire. In the north, the Wolof-led states of the Jolof Confederation, the Fulbe-dominated Fuuta Toro, and the Tukolor monarchs of Tekrur based their states on the Sudanic model in which authority over people was more important than control of the dry sahel land.<sup>21</sup> As a result, these states developed complex social stratifications based on three principal categories: freemen, servile artisan castes, and slaves.<sup>22</sup> Immigrants from the north and east had also brought with them the revolutionary ideas of Islam.

The Gold Coast had also been receptive to immigrants from the dry interior, particularly the Akan peoples – the Guan, Fante, and Twi speaking populations.<sup>23</sup> The Akan migrants absorbed a number of pre-existing groups only a few of which, such as the Ga-Adangme of the Accra coastal plain, remained largely independent. Within the region, the fertility of the bush and fecund highlands provided a food

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<sup>21</sup> For more on this period, see Barry, Boubacar, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998. Also, Gellar, Sheldon, *Senegal: An African Nation between Islam and the West*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1995, p.10.

<sup>22</sup> In Waalo these were the gèêr, the nyeenyo, and the dyaam respectively. Barry, Boubacar, *Le Royaume de Waalo: le Sénégal avant le Conquête*, Françoise Maspero, Paris, 1972, pp.87-88.

<sup>23</sup> See McCarthy, Mary, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast: The Fante States: 1807-1874*, University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 1983, pp.2-3.

surplus which stimulated the formation of non-productive elites. While there was some diversity in both the sophistication and design of the resulting socio-political institutions, the dominant model was one of matrilineal paramount states supported by a council of chiefly officeholders and division heads in the Akan states. The Ga-Adangme system was similar although largely patrilineal.<sup>24</sup>

These differences between the two regions only serve to highlight the similarities of their slave systems. While it is evident that slavery was diverse across Africa,<sup>25</sup> it is also clear that the institutions of slavery in the Gold Coast and Senegal shared certain characteristics. Amongst these traits was the dominance in both regions of a 'domestic' mode of production based upon the lineage and client systems over a slave mode of production. Ray Kea's work suggests that production in the Gold Coast was centred upon peasants in agrarian hamlets, while some highly organised polities maintained a tributary mode of production based on labour contributions or rent in kind.<sup>26</sup> In Senegal there is an absence of evidence for organised slave labour in sorghum and millet cultivation, despite investigation of the problem by Boubacar Barry and Martin Klein.<sup>27</sup> In both regions this can be explained to some extent by the dominance in slave-owning of aristocrats and chiefly officeholders prior to European intervention, to the exclusion of merchants and peasants.<sup>28</sup> The undermining of these characteristics during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries forms one point of comparison of this dissertation.

Slavery in both regions was a function of the kinship form of organisation central to political and social institutions amongst their populations. In studying West African slavery, Claude Meillassoux and Paul Lovejoy identified this as a means of denying 'aliens' the benefits which accrued to kin.<sup>29</sup> As a result, however, as slaves adopted their masters' cultures over time they underwent a process of assimilation.

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<sup>24</sup> For local studies illuminating this see Kwamena-Poh, MA, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State 1730-1850*, Longman Group, London, 1973; Addo-Fening, Robert, *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1943, from Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta*, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, 1997; and Wilson, Louis, *The Krobo People of Ghana to 1892*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1991.

<sup>25</sup> Manning, Patrick, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.25.

<sup>26</sup> Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics*, pp.5,18. See also Kaplow, S., "African Merchants of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gold Coast", Unpublished PhD Thesis, Columbia, 1971, p.52 which shows that family labour dominated the production of palm oil.

<sup>27</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp.31-32. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.12.

<sup>28</sup> Searing, James F., *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: the Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p.15. NAG ADM 11/975, *Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast*, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>29</sup> Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, p.2.; Meillassoux, Claude, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of*

The Akan, for example, had a complex slave hierarchy, in which *odonko*, or persons purchased in the market, and *domum*, or war captives, were assimilated over time into domestic slaves who could in some cases marry, amass property, and even seek legal redress.<sup>30</sup> Klein has identified a similar assimilative structure in Senegal, especially the Sereer states of Siin and Saalum.<sup>31</sup> In both regions, however, assimilation was neither uniform nor guaranteed. These characteristics, too, would be transformed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The transformations that subsequently took place would result from the impact of European intervention - first in the Atlantic slave trade and through the formation of coastal zones of interaction, later through colonisation and the attempted reform and extermination of some forms of slavery. It is here that Senegal and the Gold Coast can be shown to be unique cases for comparison. Both regions were integrated into the world economy earlier than their neighbours. Northern Senegal attracted Portuguese slave-seekers in the 1440s, and the Gold Coast attracted their gold-searchers in the 1470s. In the third decade of the seventeenth century, Dutch ascendancy at sea led them to establish two early African posts: Gorée island off the coast of Senegal (1639) and El Mina on the Gold Coast seaboard (1637).<sup>32</sup> Subsequently, Senegal became the seat of French Empire in West Africa, and the Gold Coast was the site of the first major British investment in the region.

In the nineteenth century these parallels would continue. Groundnuts in Senegal and palm oil in the Gold Coast would help transform slavery and strengthen European involvement more rapidly than in many neighbouring locales. The extent of this involvement would, in turn, lead to the first strong European initiatives against indigenous slavery in West Africa – the 1848 act of emancipation in colonial Senegal and the proclamation of emancipation in 1874 on the Gold Coast. These initiatives, based on nineteenth century perceptions and beliefs, share characteristics which contrast with the more prevalent twentieth century anti-slavery initiatives carried out in other parts of West Africa. Another product of the unique histories of these two regions, however, was the organisation of particular types of resistance. The long

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*Iron and Gold*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, pp.11-35.

<sup>30</sup> Rattray, R.S., *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, Oxford University Press, London, 1929, pp.41-42. Admittedly Rattray was writing on Asante society, but the parallels appear valid.

<sup>31</sup> Klein, Martin, "Slavery and Emancipation", p.173.

<sup>32</sup> See chapter 2.

history of European interaction had led to the establishment of strong Euro-African trading communities protective of their rights to own slaves, but the nineteenth century was also a period of resistance in which chiefly and Islamic indigenous elites resisted the expansion of Europeans. The opposition of these groups would have its own impact on attempts to reform slavery, leading to the implementation in both regions of forms of indirect rule which would be intrinsic contributors to post-emancipation settlements.

The specific results of emancipation in Senegal and the Gold Coast were a result of both the variance and the similarities between the two regions. Likewise, this dissertation undertakes to analyse various differences in the outcome of attempts to reform or end slavery in divers sectors - urban and rural, coastal and interior, ethnically and historically diverse - within both regions. By carrying out these comparisons, this dissertation advances the scholarship on emancipation for several topics specifically. It presents a new understanding of how local factors - the attitudes of European administrators, intercontinental economics, and most importantly significant indigenous resistance - centralised Africans in the resolution of slave reforms - largely resulting in the failure of the implementation of reform. It contributes to our comprehension of in what circumstances this failure could be transformed, especially through the initiative of slaves. It investigates the mechanisms of slave desertion and emancipation. Finally, this dissertation expands our knowledge of the integrated slave routes which fed slaves into the coastal regions and the extent to which they were extinguished in the nineteenth century.

#### A note about orthography

One unfortunate legacy of the haphazard attitude towards African culture and society which characterised nineteenth century European intervention is a marked confusion over the spelling of indigenous personal and place names. Administrators and missionaries tended to impose their own preferred names for people and regions, and one place where this is most obvious is in the judicial record where, as I show, the interior origins of many slaves left magistrates baffled as to their identities.

In the post-colonial period, Africans have attempted to reclaim their own locales and histories, and I support that by trying, where possible, to use either the modern appellations designated by African governments or, failing that, the spellings preferred by African academics of note. As a result, I have largely adhered to the

orthography of the Senegalese historian Boubacar Barry and the Ghanaian scholars Robert Addo-Fening, Francis Agbodeka, and Akosua Perbi.

## **CHAPTER 2:** **The era of the Atlantic slave trade and its impact**

Societies and states are in a constant state of evolution, and the West Africans who are the central characters in our nineteenth century narrative were heavily influenced by the social, political, and economic events and changes of the preceding eras. Amongst other transformations, the period leading up to the nineteenth century witnessed the integration of both Senegal and the Gold Coast into the intercontinental economy in general and the Atlantic slave trade specifically. The experiences of the slave trade - in Africa, the middle passage, and the Americas - have been the subject of numerous monographs and countless articles. In West African history, it is sometimes portrayed as *the* defining feature of the pre-colonial period, causing radical social and economic changes. This notion is highly politicised and must be qualified somewhat. While the Transatlantic slave trade was a catalyst which instigated socio-cultural change within small seaboard 'frontier' areas of Euro-African interaction, its effect became more diffuse the further one travelled from the coastal zone. The central objective of this chapter is the review of the academic discourse and introduction of new evidence evaluating the varying impact of these events on the socio-political institutions and dependency relationships in Senegal and the Gold Coast.

### Origins of the slave trade: 1400-1700

The Atlantic slave trade was catalysed by a combination of the introduction of the labour-intensive sugar crop to Europe by crusaders and a concurrent decline in the number of labourers available to work the sugar fields as a result of the Black Death plague. Therefore when the King of Portugal granted Giovanni della Parma a license to begin growing sugar in the Algarve region, della Parma turned to slave labour recruited from the Canary Islands.<sup>1</sup>

Africans had already had a long history as slaves. As early as the tenth century, slaves from as far south as modern Tanzania and west to the Sahel were actively sought after by Arab, Turkish, and Egyptian masters. The Ottoman crown was a particularly consistent purchaser.<sup>2</sup> West African slaves, particularly from the bend of the Niger River, had been acquired from Berber traders by Spaniards in Morocco. However, there is no evidence that this trans-Saharan slave route had a significant impact in

<sup>1</sup> For a textbook narrative on this see Reader, John, *Africa: A Biography of the Continent*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1998, pp.325-336.

<sup>2</sup> Renault, François, and Serge Daget, *Les traites négrières en Afrique*, Éditions Karthala, Paris 1997, pp.17-38 and map p.29.

Senegambia or the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>3</sup>

This situation was transformed by the entry of the Portuguese, motivated by a combination of rising labour demands for sugar cultivation and enabled by new seafaring technology. From 1441 onwards, having run out of Canary Islanders<sup>4</sup>, the Portuguese turned to the African mainland for labourers. In 1445, a royal expedition established an outpost at Arguin, north of the Senegal River<sup>5</sup>, and from 1441-1446 an estimated 927 slaves were shipped from the African mainland to Portugal.<sup>6</sup> By the sixteenth century, Portuguese agents were exporting approximately 800-1000 slaves per year.<sup>7</sup>

The Portuguese also introduced the Gold Coast to the Atlantic world. In the 1470s, Portuguese merchants began to invest in the long-running local coastal trade in slaves. Here the motivation was gold rather than labour. The Portuguese purchased slaves, mainly in the Bight of Benin, and bartered them for gold from mines in the Ankobra and Tano river basins of the Gold Coast.<sup>8</sup> The Akan, who dominated these gold fields, joined the Atlantic system as slave importers, rather than exporters.

The sixteenth century was an era of Portuguese dominance, but by the first quarter of the seventeenth century, they were being expelled by the Dutch trading powers who were investing in the New World and Africa. The first two Dutch stations in Africa were Gorée in Senegal, bought from Lebu rulers off the coast of the Cap Vert peninsula in 1639 and the Fante town of El Mina, acquired from the Portuguese in 1637.<sup>9</sup>

The Dutch were the first of the northern European powers to become involved in the Atlantic trade - previously the sole prerogative of Catholic, southern European monarchs. Events were to unfold rapidly. French acquisition of Caribbean islands for the production of sugar led to the formation of the *Compagnie des Indes Occidentales* in 1664, which almost immediately secured Senegalese slaves to work its plantations, building the post of St. Louis on an island in the Senegal River delta in 1659. In 1677, the French monarchy acquired Gorée, which had meanwhile changed hands between

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<sup>3</sup> The Gold Coast is situated on the Gulf of Guinea.

<sup>4</sup> Thornton, John, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.34.

<sup>5</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.36.

<sup>6</sup> Azozara, G.E. *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea, 1441-1448*, translated by Beazley, C.R. and G.W.B. Huntingford, Cambridge Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, vol. 95 (1896), pp.90-91.

<sup>7</sup> Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo*, p.117.

<sup>8</sup> Reynolds, Edward, *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast 1807-1874*, Longman Group, New York, 1974, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> The name El Mina, or Elmina, is Portuguese for 'the mine', which is indicative of the centrality of the local gold trade for Portuguese agents. Renault and Daget, *Les traites négrières en Afrique*, p.80.

the Portuguese, Dutch, and British several times.<sup>10</sup>

British merchants also began to acquire African interests in the seventeenth century. Unlike the French in Senegambia, however, the British were initially interested in exploiting locally produced goods - including gold - rather than slaves. In 1672, the Royal African company was formed to trade to the Gold Coast, and consequently forts were built along the coast at "Dixcove, Secondee, Commendah, Anamaboe, Winnebah, and Accra, [as well as] Cape Coast Castle."<sup>11</sup> The Danish West India and Guinea Company was formed in 1697, and became the last important trading power to settle on the Gold Coast, with headquarters at Christiansborg fort, Accra.<sup>12</sup>

#### Rise and decline: the eighteenth century

The patterns of slave trading in Senegal and the Gold Coast are both similar and distinct from other West African regions. Not only were both regions involved in the slave trade very early, but also both experienced a cycle of slave trading in the 18<sup>th</sup> century which contrasted with the steady rise of the export trade from the Bight of Benin, Biafra, and the Congo.

The early 1700s marked a transformation in slave trading on the Gold Coast. By 1705, gold, the product that brought European trade to the region, was no longer a primary export, that trade being superseded by the export of slaves. A Dutch officer of that period remarked:

Concerning the trade on [the Gold Coast], we notified your Honours already that it has completely changed into a Slave Coast, and that the natives nowadays no longer occupy themselves with the search for Gold, but rather make war on each other to furnish slaves.<sup>13</sup>

The export slave trade on the Gold Coast continued to expand until 1750. This expansion can be attributed both to an increased demand by planters in the New World and the rising ability of coastal states to supply slaves. The early 18<sup>th</sup> century was the era of Asante expansion, and the massive wars occasioned by the growth of that inland empire resulted in the creation of large numbers of slaves, who were traded to the coast through a network of Asante merchants and coastal middlemen.<sup>14</sup> Asante expansion to

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<sup>10</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.47.

<sup>11</sup> PRO, Colonial Office List, 1874, p.134.

<sup>12</sup> Nørregard, Georg, *Danish Settlements in West Africa: 1658-1850*, Boston University Press, Boston, 1966, p.84.

<sup>13</sup> Op. Cit in Reader, *Africa*, 1998, p.416.

<sup>14</sup> Reynolds, Edward, *Stand the Storm: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Allison and Busby, London, 1985, p.96.  
Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, p.12.

the northeast also meant a diversion of the gold trade towards the interior to North-Africa trade routes.<sup>15</sup> During this period, the major slave buying powers on the Gold Coast were the British, French, Dutch, and North Americans, but by the 1780s Iberian and South American flagged carriers were taking over much of the trade.<sup>16</sup>

Regional slave exports peaked in the period 1750-59<sup>17</sup>, but declined for most of the remaining decades of the century. This period was characterised by a series of sharp declines occasioned by stability in Asante and on the coast during the reigns of *Asantehene* (King) Osei Kwadwo in the period 1764-1777 and European wars in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century that deflected shipping away from West Africa.<sup>18</sup> Trade on the Gold Coast picked up again to about 74,000 captives exported per year in the 1790s<sup>19</sup>, concurrent with a general expansion of the Atlantic slave trade, driven by increased exports from the Bight of Benin, Biafra, and the Congo regions. However the relative importance of the Gold Coast continued to diminish; the region provided only approximately 7%-8% of African slave exports at the turn of the century.<sup>20</sup>

Senegal experienced a somewhat similar cycle. Following the French acquisition of Gorée in 1679, slave exports stayed below an average of 3,000 a year for the entire Senegambia region, and many of these came from the British Gambia and Casamance regions<sup>21</sup>, outside of Senegal proper. French and British shipping data show that slave purchases largely declined after 1730, excepting brief flurries following regional upheavals, as in 1775 when approximately 8,000 were shipped from St. Louis.<sup>22</sup> Most of the slaves initially came from the interior, either the Galaam region or deep into the Western Sudan.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, Senegalese states tended to retain the best slaves,

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, Marion, "The Ounce in Eighteenth Century West African Trade", *Journal of African History*, 1966 (7) pp. 197-214.

<sup>16</sup> Eltis, David, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987, p.47.

<sup>17</sup> Richardson, David, "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700-1810: New Estimates of Volume and Distribution", *Journal of African History*, 1989 (30), p.17.

<sup>18</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast*, p.12.

<sup>19</sup> Richardson, "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa", p.17.

<sup>20</sup> Estimates differ. Richardson, synthesising sources from the W.E.B. DuBois Institute, approximates 7.3%. Richardson, "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa", p.18. However Stephen Behrendt, using Parliamentary and Treasury records, Caribbean gazettes, and Lloyd's *Registers of Shipping and Lists*, suggests a slightly higher number. Behrendt, Stephen, "The Annual Volume and Regional Distribution of the British Slave Trade, 1780-1807", *Journal of African History*, 1997 (38), pp.187-212.

<sup>21</sup> This takes into account the most liberal estimates available. Curtin, Philip, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1975. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*. Becker, Charles, "Les Effets Démographiques de la traite des Esclaves en Sénégal: Esquisse d'une Histoire des Peuplements de XVIIe à la fin du XIXe Siècle", in Daget, Serge, *De la Traite à L'esclavage*, Bibliothèque D'Histoire d'outre-mer, 1988.

<sup>22</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.66.

<sup>23</sup> Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo*, p.117. Delcourt, Jean, *Gorée: Six Siècles d'Histoire*, Éditions Clairafrique, Dakar,

especially males, for their own purposes.<sup>24</sup> By the time the Atlantic slave trade was outlawed by the British in 1807, followed by the Americans in 1808 and the French in 1819<sup>25</sup>, Senegal, like the Gold Coast had ceased to be a major supplier of slaves to the Atlantic market<sup>26</sup>, contributing only approximately 3% of slave exports around the turn of the century.<sup>27</sup>

#### Beyond the number's game: war, depopulation, and stagnation

In 1898, a British abolitionist contended that:

[F]rom the middle of the seventeenth to near the end of the eighteenth century, statistics show that nearly 2 1/4 millions of negroes were deported from their own country by European adventurers to work in the British colonies in the West Indies.<sup>28</sup>

This early attempt to quantify the Atlantic slave trade initiated a debate that would occupy many pages of historical texts: exactly what was the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa, and can it be expressed statistically? Understanding the number of slaves taken from Africa is only the first step to resolving this debate, but it is an important one for historians who place the blame for war, depopulation, and economic stagnation on the despoiling effects of this trade.

The debate surrounding slave exports from Senegambia, comprising Senegal, the Casamance, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau, is an excellent model of the dynamics of this quantitative debate. The seminal work on this topic is Philip Curtin's *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa*. Curtin presents what even his critics admit is a highly detailed study on export numbers<sup>29</sup>, presenting a total export estimate of 304,330 slaves from 1681-1810.<sup>30</sup> Paul Lovejoy, in his important 1983 work *Transformations in Slavery* largely accepted Curtin's pre-1750 figures, adding only a statistically insignificant 3,200 slaves.<sup>31</sup>

However, Curtin's statistics have now come under an attack mounted mostly by

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1984, p.74.

<sup>24</sup> Delcourt, *Gorée*, p.73.

<sup>25</sup> Revolutionary France had abolished slavery in 1793, but it was never enforced and the edict was revoked by Napoleon in 1802. The abolition of the Atlantic slave trade will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

<sup>26</sup> Curtin, Philip, "The Abolition of the Slave Trade from Senegambia", in Eltis, David, and James Walvin eds., *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1981.

<sup>27</sup> Richardson, "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa", p.17.

<sup>28</sup> Macdonald, George, *The Gold Coast: Past and Present*, London, 1898, p.84.

<sup>29</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.62.

<sup>30</sup> Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa*, pp.162,164.

<sup>31</sup> Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, p.46, p.48.

African scholars, and at the fore are Charles Becker and Boubacar Barry. Their challenge is significant not just in debating abstract figures, but for understanding the concrete significance of the slave trade to Africa. Curtin's statistics had been used to support an argument that the importance of the Atlantic slave trade to Africa had been exaggerated.<sup>32</sup> He imputed that the value of the slave trade to the region was less than that of the internal trade and that the resultant social changes were, to some extent, changes that would otherwise have occurred due to the integration of the region into the Atlantic trading complex. In short, the effect of the Atlantic slave trade was limited.<sup>33</sup> Supporters of this theory, including JD Fage, drew on Curtin's statistics to support their arguments, suggesting that slaves were largely drawn from the most populous parts of Africa, thus mitigating the impact of the trade.<sup>34</sup>

Becker and Barry attack this attempt to "minimise the importance of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade".<sup>35</sup> Becker in a response published a year after Curtin's work, and Barry as recently as 1998. They assert that Curtin omits important sources, including data on smugglers,<sup>36</sup> and that he advances arbitrary figures without adjusting for missing data.<sup>37</sup> Becker and Barry advance the theory that slavery was much more important as a transforming force in West Africa than Curtin allows, irreversibly retarding the development of West African states. "Contrary to Curtin," Becker states, "we estimate that the evolution of Senegambia cannot be understood except in the precise context of the Atlantic trade."<sup>38</sup>

All of these scholars agree that the importance of this quantitative data is not in determining an abstract numerical value, but in applying the data to the practical issues of social and economic transformation in the societies of origin. Clearly, deliberations must move beyond the attempts to quantify the impact of the slave trade in order to understand its effect on African societies and on indigenous forms of slavery.

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<sup>32</sup> Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa*, p.xxii

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.146-157.

<sup>34</sup> Fage, J.D., "Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History", *Journal of African History*, 1969 (10), pp. 393-404.

<sup>35</sup> A phrase used by both Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.67; and Becker, Charles, "Le Sénégal à l'époque de la traite des esclaves. A propos d'un ouvrage récent de Philip D. Curtin: Economic change in Senegambia in the era of the slave trade.", *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, (64), 1977, p.214.

<sup>36</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.62.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.63.

<sup>38</sup> Becker, , "Le Sénégal à l'époque de la traite des esclaves", p.214.

### The political impact of the Atlantic slave trade

It can no longer be disputed that the Atlantic slave trade prompted some type of adjustment within many West African societies. Of the many arguments in favour of this 'transformation' view, some are unproved, and some may be discounted, but the mass of evidence suggests that socio-economic, military, and possibly demographic changes occurred in the region between the mid-sixteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, and that the slave trade was a contributing factor behind some of these changes.

The Atlantic slave trade tended to induce the formation of three distinct types of societies: slave-producing, slave-supplying, and slave-selling.<sup>39</sup> Much of the confusion about the impact of the Atlantic slave trade is a result of a failure to differentiate between these societies, each of which played a particular role in the mechanics of the slave trade. Slaves originated from slave-producing societies, often in the interior, which were the objects of slave raids or wars. The populations of slave-producing societies may thus be seen as the 'commodity' of the Atlantic slave trade.

There is no doubt that the era of the slave trade, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century specifically, was for Senegal and the Gold Coast an era of war. Regional histories describe massive conflict in the Senegalese regions of Waalo<sup>40</sup>, Kaajor, Baol,<sup>41</sup> Siin, and Saalum.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, this was the era of Asante expansion in the Gold Coast interior, and the various states of Akyem<sup>43</sup>, Akwamu,<sup>44</sup> and Akuapem<sup>45</sup> contested with Asante and each other for regional dominance. However it is unclear whether these wars were created by the Atlantic slave trade. Curtin suggests that these conflicts would have occurred without the impetus of the slave trade, as a natural expression of state-building; the acquisition of slaves was simply a bonus for the victors. This 'political' view of these conflicts is supported by evidence from the *Asantehene* (paramount chief) Osei Bonsu of the Asante, who told a trader, Joseph Dupuis, that wars were fought for political reasons, and not specifically to capture slaves.

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<sup>39</sup> van Dantzig, Albert, "Effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade on some West African Societies", in Joseph Inikori, ed., *Forced Migration*, Hutchinson, London, 1982, p.189.

<sup>40</sup> Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo*, p.109

<sup>41</sup> Becker, Charles and Victor Martin, "Kayor and Baol: Senegalese Kingdoms and the Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century", in Joseph Inikori, ed., *Forced Migrations*, Hutchinson, London, 1982, p.118-125.

<sup>42</sup> Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1968, p.29.

<sup>43</sup> Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa*, p.24.

<sup>44</sup> Perbi, Akosua, "Domestic Slavery in Asante, 1800-1920", Unpublished MA Dissertation, U. of Ghana, Legon, 1978, p.14-15.

<sup>45</sup> Kwamena-Poh, MA, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State, 1730-1850*, Longman Group, London, p.20.

I cannot make war to catch slaves in a bush, like a thief... But if I fight a king, and kill him when he is insolent, then certainly... his gold, and his slaves, and the people are mine too.... I did not make war for slaves, but because Dinkera (the King) sent me an arrogant message and killed my people.<sup>46</sup>

It can, however, be convincingly argued that the Atlantic slave trade changed the nature of war from political to economic<sup>47</sup>, supporting Becker and Barry's thesis. Observers on the Gold Coast testified before the British parliament that "the pretexts [for wars] are various; the real cause...the desire for plunder<sup>48</sup>" and that "slaves formed the principal part<sup>49</sup>" of that plunder as late as 1842. Furthermore, the growth in scale and ferocity of conflict amongst Akan states seems to have occurred in the 1700s concurrent with the expansion of the slave trade, and states such as Akwamu and Akyem Abuakwa had efficient mechanisms for sending slaves to coastal entrepôts.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the 1730 defeat of Akwamu by Akyem and the 1744-45 and 1746-7 Asante victories over Gonja and Gyaman directly coincide with periods of increased slave exports from the Gold Coast.<sup>51</sup>

There are explanations as to why the slave trade may have caused an expansion of warfare. Before this period, trade routes had been directed towards the interior. The availability of guns, which became desirable trade items in the seventeenth century,<sup>52</sup> is argued to have revolutionised warfare. Elites, it is postulated, desired firearms for defence and conquest acquired slaves in order to buy the weapons, and then used the weapons to acquire more slaves. As one state or party established superiority with their firearms, their neighbours were also forced to arm, and a vicious cycle appeared. The gun-slave cycle was especially clear in Senegal, where existing *tyeddo* armies were perfectly adaptable to slave raiding - especially armed with firearms and equipped with horses.<sup>53</sup> On the Gold Coast, the acquisition of large numbers of flintlock muskets in the 1680s and 1690s<sup>54</sup> closely followed the development of missile-armed *levée* armies in

<sup>46</sup> Dupuis, Joseph, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee*, London, 1824, p.163-164.

<sup>47</sup> This dicotomy was introduced by Curtin in *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa*, pp.153-168.

<sup>48</sup> PP 1842 XII.1, 551, Evidence of Maclean, p.83.

<sup>49</sup> PP 1842 XII.1, 551, Evidence of Cruickshank, p.86. Cruickshank is admittedly are only slightly more creditable than Osei Bonsu.

<sup>50</sup> Kwamena-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*, pp.19-20, Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa*, p.24.

<sup>51</sup> The 91,400 slaves traded from the Gold Coast in the 1740s represents an apex for the 18<sup>th</sup> century, falling to a recorded 66,300 in the 1750s. Numbers are from Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, p.50.

<sup>52</sup> Alpern, Stanley, "What Africans Got for their Slaves: A Master List of European Trade Goods", *History in Africa*, 1995 (22), pp. 4-53.

<sup>53</sup> Becker and Martin, "Kayor and Baol", 1982, p.118-125.

<sup>54</sup> Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics*, p.161.

the interior states of Akwamu and Denkyira<sup>55</sup>, and directly precedes intense periods of expansion, including the annexation of Akuapem. These actions led to increased slave exports and an increase in the number of slaves being co-opted into the military retinues of aristocrats and kings. The demand for slaves on the coast prompted slave-selling coastal societies to promote conflict in the interior, an obvious method of increasing their supply of slaves.<sup>56</sup> As the demand for imported goods, guns, and monies grew, rulers also began to raid their own people to sell into the intercontinental trade.

Nevertheless, this theory is not as compelling as it may initially appear. John Thornton has pointed out that many wars which appeared to be only slave raids actually had political motivations which are not transparent to us.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, he explains the acquisition of slaves as war spoils more in terms of continuity than disruption. Since slaves were the primary sources of wealth in African regions such as the Gold Coast and Senegal where land was not privately 'owned', the accumulation of slaves, rather than the acquisition of territory, had traditionally been the objective of wars.<sup>58</sup> Although Thornton's evidence is based largely on Benin and Kongo, this argument compels us to re-evaluate whether European intervention and the Atlantic Slave Trade were responsible for vastly elevated levels of warfare. Evidence for both the Gold Coast and Senegal, for example, suggests that European guns and horses were not as central as previously believed to the expansion of warfare in these regions, bringing the gun-slave cycle into question. The shift in warfare on the Gold Coast was largely brought about by socio-economic changes in the interior states of Akwamu and Denkyira<sup>59</sup> rather than on the coast, and preceded the introduction of firearms. Horses, moreover, were useless in the forest zones of this region. Similarly, the horses which were so useful to the *tyeddo* of the Senegalese *sahel* largely came from Sudanese breeders, rather than European traders, and early models of the musket - incredibly difficult to utilise on horseback - were probably not as useful as has previously been thought.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, the pillaging of peasant villages for human spoils did have a profound effect on some slave-providing societies. Waalo, for example, served not only as a raiding ground for Trarza Moors supplying slaves to the Portuguese and French after the sixteenth century,<sup>61</sup> but was subject to the depredations of its own *tyeddo*.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.156.

<sup>56</sup> Klein, *Islam and Imperialism*, p.29.

<sup>57</sup> Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, p.100.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.107.

<sup>59</sup> Kca, *Settlements, Trade and Politics*, pp.161-164.

<sup>60</sup> Law, Robin, "Horses, Firearms and Political Power in Pre-Colonial West Africa", *Past and Present*, 1976 (72), pp.112-132.

<sup>61</sup> Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo*, p.109

Thus by 1819 large parts of Waalo had been rendered “entirely sterile” despite the region’s productivity.<sup>63</sup>

There is also evidence that the economic realignment resulting from the Atlantic slave trade encouraged the instability of Senegalese states. The Jolof confederation broke apart as its coastal provinces gained power from their status as middlemen for the slave trade. Coastal Kaajor won its independence first but was soon followed by Waalo and Baol. The Jolof core in the interior was isolated from the Atlantic trade, and quickly lost its regional hegemony.<sup>64</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century, land and ascendancy struggles between the succession states of Kaajor and Baol continued to provide fresh slaves for export.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout Senegal, small armed states remained the dominant system of organisation, but older principles of state administration rooted in lineage relationships gave way to the dominance of war-lord aristocracies supported by slave armies.<sup>66</sup> As a result, Barry and Becker argue that development stagnated, locking these states into subsistence economies.<sup>67</sup> The Gold Coast shows similar signs of suffering long term economic injury from slave raiding.<sup>68</sup> Ga-Adangme towns in the Accra region, for example, were destroyed by Akwamu attacks in 1677-1681 following which Ray Kea has suggested that much of the cultivated area of the coastal plain reverted temporarily to wilderness.<sup>69</sup> The densely populated Nyanoase region of Akwamu similarly suffered from conflict in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, reflected in figures that show a decline in the number of men it could muster for operations from several thousand in 1695 to ‘a few hundred’ in 1735.<sup>70</sup>

Proponents of the theory that the Atlantic slave trade retarded economic development in West Africa point to evidence suggesting massive depopulation - both directly by exporting a large part of the population, and indirectly through warfare, migration, and famine - held Africa “below the critical density needed to force a breakthrough in agricultural development.” For example, sources from the 1820s indicate that French plantations in Waalo failed partly because of decreased populations

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<sup>62</sup> ANS K25, *L’esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906, cites *Relations du Royaume d’Issyny*, 1714.

<sup>63</sup> ANS 2B4 Gouverneur à Ministre, 5 Juin 1819, St. Louis

<sup>64</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.44.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p.86.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p.80.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.31.

<sup>68</sup> Macdonald, *The Gold Coast*, p.85.

<sup>69</sup> Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics*, p.139.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.140.

leading to labour shortages.<sup>71</sup> Barry argues that this proves direct depopulation due to the Atlantic slave trade<sup>72</sup>, although it appears that much of the depopulation was due to a more indirect factor: emigration to escape the slave raids of Trarza Moors.<sup>73</sup>

Depopulation certainly appears to be a logical result of the slave trade. Unfortunately, outside of a few coastal regions quantitative evidence has been difficult to produce. Patrick Manning attempted to overcome this in a 1985 study in which he extrapolated the effect of the slave trade from 1931 West African population censuses. His results appear to show that from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, population growth slowed significantly,<sup>74</sup> a result he confirms in his 1990 work *Slavery and African Life*.<sup>75</sup> Manning, however, has based his argument on a controversial assumption. Gervase Clarence-Smith points out that "although we know a great deal about how slaves were exported from Africa... we have no idea what the [previous] population of Africa was."<sup>76</sup> Manning's statistics for pre-slave trade populations are "estimated by backward projection from colonial-period population figures,"<sup>77</sup> an undertaking made difficult since, as Manning admits, the slave trade had a "seriously negative and distorting impact" on the African population.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Manning is unable to show that West Africa, which bore the brunt of the effects of the slave trade, travelled a statistically different demographic path from regions of Africa unaffected by this trade.

David Eltis has suggested that the Atlantic slave trade was too diffuse over time and place to have a major effect on West African populations.<sup>79</sup> Statistical analyses drawn from the integrated database of the W.E.B. DuBois Institute, containing records of slave voyages by European and American slavers from 1595-1845 suggest that certain regions may have experienced a demographic shift.<sup>80</sup> Data for the Gold Coast indicate that about 90% of all slave departures took place from just three ports - Accra (British and Danish), Anomabu, and Cape Coast Castle,<sup>81</sup> while trade in Senegal focused on

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<sup>71</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/8, Ministre à Administrateur Roget, 9 Janvier 1822, Paris.

<sup>72</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 1998, p.107.

<sup>73</sup> ANS 2B4, Administrateur Schmaltz à Ministre, 5 Juin 1819, St. Louis.

<sup>74</sup> Manning, Patrick, "The Impact of Slave Trade Exports on the Population of the Western Coast of Africa, 1700-1850", in Serge Daget, ed., *De la Traite à L'esclavage*, Bibliothèque D'Histoire d'outre-mer, 1988.

<sup>75</sup> Manning, Patrick, *Slavery and African Life*, pp.60-86.

<sup>76</sup> Clarence-Smith, WG, "Review of Patrick Manning *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 1993,(26), pp.176-178.

<sup>77</sup> Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, p.60.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p.59.

<sup>79</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth*, p.71.

<sup>80</sup> Richardson, David and David Eltis, "The 'Numbers Game' and Routes to Slavery", in *Slavery and Abolition*, 1997 (18), pp.1-15.

<sup>81</sup> Richardson, David and David Eltis, "West Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Evidence of Long-run Trends," in *Slavery and Abolition*, 1997 (18), p.23.

Gorée and St. Louis. Periodic population declines did occur in specific regions such as Great Accra and Waalo, but only following disruptive and infrequent events such as conquest or civil war. In general, however, there is little evidence of drastic population shifts. While we cannot exclude the possibility that these may have occurred, and while statistical data is increasingly available, mass depopulation amongst Gold Coast and Senegalese societies simply remains unproven.

### The evolution of coastal society

The popular conception of the malignant impact of the slave trade on African society, while undoubtedly true, rests to some extent on the almost universally accepted depiction of Africans as wholly victims of European predation. Add to this the well chronicled suffering of the middle passage<sup>82</sup> and the harsh treatment of slaves in America, and it is easy to ignore the fact that some Africans played an important role in the Atlantic slave trade<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, if Europeans had had to capture slaves in the interior of Africa themselves, the impact of the trade would undoubtedly have been greatly reduced. John Thornton has argued that the slave trade must be viewed as “not unlike international trade anywhere in the world of that period.”<sup>84</sup> Indigenous merchants and elites clearly participated in the export of slaves, and it is clear that generally “Europeans possessed no means, either economic or military, to compel African leaders to sell slaves.”<sup>85</sup>

If slave-supplying societies were clearly victims, then the slave producing-societies who raided them were active participants in the profitable slave trade. However those who benefited the most were the slave-selling societies of the coast. The states of Akwamu and Fante on the Gold Coast grew greatly in power by monopolising trade to the Dutch and some British coastal factories.<sup>86</sup> The Elminans were especially active participants. Following the Asante victory over Akwamu in 1730, they encouraged the *Asantehene* to send them slaves, initiating a relationship that would continue into the nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> Likewise, we have seen how the coastal states of the Jolof

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<sup>82</sup> The historical record is more poignant on this subject than even the profusion of secondary sources. See especially CO 137/88 *The Report of the Assembly of Jamaica on the Slave Trade*, 20 October, 1789.

<sup>83</sup> The position taken here is much criticised, but was pointed out by Stanley Engerman in his article Engerman, Stanley, “Some Implications of the Abolition of the Slave Trade”, in Eltis, David and James Walvin, eds., *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1981, p.4.

<sup>84</sup> Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, p.72.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, p.125.

<sup>86</sup> van Dantzig, “Effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade”, p.190.

<sup>87</sup> Irwin, Graham, “Precolonial African Diplomacy: The Example of Asante”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 1975 (8), p.86.

Confederation used profits from the Atlantic trade to break away from the core state. Some of these states were able to halt the export of their own productive population, instead dealing in slaves from the interior and further profiting by selling provisions to the slave caravaneers.<sup>88</sup> In these slave-supplying societies of both the Gold Coast and Senegal, it was the traditional elite of chiefs and kings who conducted much of the trade, utilising slave armies such as the *tyeddo* and *ahenfo*<sup>89</sup> and sanctioning raids and wars for the acquisition of trade slaves.<sup>90</sup>

However it was the development of distinct Euro-African middlemen communities around European posts, rather than the involvement of traditional African polities, which led to the reconception of dependency relationships on new terms. By 1702, there were 26 forts - British, Danish, and Dutch - on the Gold Coast, from Beyin by the Tano river to Prampram near the Volta.<sup>91</sup> European merchants, especially the factors of chartered trading companies, did conduct a floating trade along the entire coast, but only a few forts developed large settled middleman communities. Along with others which would fade in importance were the Dutch commercial establishment at Elmina, the British headquarters only kilometres away at Cape Coast Castle, and the Ga-Adangme polity of Accra which hosted Dutch, Danish, and British forts.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, despite the construction of inland factories along the Senegal river, urbanised Euro-African communities in Senegal were largely confined to the island entrepôts of St. Louis and Gorée. Within these towns, the simple 'floating trade' in slaves and other commodities was replaced by a more complicated and centralised commercial system.<sup>93</sup> For the slave vendors, this system represented a major advance as slaves could be securely 'stored' in the forts or in stronghouses until a trading ship arrived. However these entrepôts were designed more for the convenience of the slave buyers, who profited greatly from the concentration of slaves, provisions, and ship repair facilities in the same location.

These municipalities were frontier zones, areas of interaction and fusion between African and European peoples. Gorée and St. Louis were populated mostly by an African and Euro-African trading class known as *habitants* and their slaves, in addition to a smaller number of *noires libres* (free blacks) and European administrative and merchant personnel. *Habitants* were the middlemen of Senegalese commerce. The

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<sup>88</sup>Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, p.29-30.

<sup>89</sup> Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Polities*, p.163. Like chiefs' retinues on the Gold Coast in general, the *ahenfo* were composed of slaves, pawns, and free retainers.

<sup>90</sup>Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, p.13.

<sup>91</sup>Dickson, Kwamina, *A Historical Geography of Ghana*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, p.116.

<sup>92</sup> Others included Nassaw, Fort Kormantse, and São Jorge. Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Polities*, p.207.

<sup>93</sup>Austen, R., *African Economic History*, James Curry/Heinemann, London, 1987, pp.88-91.

*habitant* community was quite exclusive; membership was limited to freeborn individuals of high social rank and a professional or trading occupation - the gum trade having the highest status.<sup>94</sup> Most of the *habitants* were *metis* - the descendants of French merchants and their African wives and concubines who were known as *signares*. The *signares* maintained the prevailing Senegalese matrilineal traditions, but adopted European dress and took French or Portuguese names - amongst them were Laports, Franciers, Pécarres, and Baudins.<sup>95</sup> It is not too bold to say that the *habitants* and *signares* were the bourgeoisie of Senegal. Certainly, they so perceived themselves. As a class, they struggled against the monopoly of the royally chartered commercial companies, such as the *Compagnie commerciale d'Afrique* who monopolised the Transatlantic leg of the slave and gum trades.<sup>96</sup> In 1789, they expressed their perceived French bourgeois identity by sending *cahiers de doléance* to the *Estates Generales*<sup>97</sup> demanding an end to the company's monopoly. *Habitant* families were not only related to indigenous elites but made political and economic alliances with them through marriage and contract.<sup>98</sup>

Similar merchant societies rose in the Gold Coast in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>99</sup> These polities were also highly mixed - indigenous Africans commingled with the descendants of company servants brought from other parts of Africa, Euro-African families with names such as Bannerman, Cleland, Hesse, Barnes, and Swanzy, and slaves. The resulting communities adopted many of the attributes of local cultures - the populations of Cape Coast and Elmina generally took on the *abusua* (matrilineal group) customs of the Fante,<sup>100</sup> while divisions in dominantly Ga-Adangme Accra remained patrilineal in nature.<sup>101</sup> While Euro-Africans tended to dominate middlemen positions between European merchants and African traders<sup>102</sup>, and adopted an identity somewhat removed from 'tribal' life<sup>103</sup>, the line between the two populations was highly permeable.

<sup>94</sup>Marcson, Michael, "European-African Interaction in the Precolonial Period: Saint Louis, Senegal 1758-1854", Unpublished PhD Thesis, Princeton U., Princeton, NJ, 1974, p.34. My use of the class structure in describing Franco-Senegalese society will be justified in later chapters

<sup>95</sup>ANS K9 and K10, 1849.

<sup>96</sup>Delcourt, *Gorée*, p.60.

<sup>97</sup>Biondi, Jean-Pierre, *Saint-Louis du Sénégal: mémoires d'un métissage*, Éditions Denoël, Paris, 1987, p.7, pp. 72-73.

<sup>98</sup>ANS, 2B2, Schmaltz à Ministre, 19 June, 1919.

<sup>99</sup>For a superb analysis of the economics of trade at these ports, as well as a number of biographies of important figures, see Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Polities*, p.206-247.

<sup>100</sup>Kaplow, "African Merchants of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gold Coast", p.19.

<sup>101</sup>See Parker, John, "Ga state and society in early colonial Accra, 1860s-1920s", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London - School of Oriental and African Studies, 1995.

<sup>102</sup>Feinberg, Harvey, "Elmina, Ghana: A History of its development and relationship with the Dutch in the Eighteenth Century", Unpublished PhD Thesis, Boston University, 1969, p.122.

<sup>103</sup>Reynolds, *Stand the Storm*, p.41.

Moreover, Euro-Africans carefully maintained important economic and consanguineal links with the indigenous community, and in practice often filled the important economic and political positions within these trading zones.

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Within these societies, for the first time in West Africa, slavery moved from a largely cultural institution to a dominant mode of labour and economic organisation. The selling of slaves was the foundation of the process by which this occurred. These coastal forts and posts dealt, by the 1700s, with the majority of slaves being sold into the Atlantic trade.<sup>104</sup> Many of the slave vendors were chiefly officeholders or merchants, but small traders selling one or two slaves are also present in the historical record.<sup>105</sup> Relatively swiftly, large numbers of slaves were diverted from the trade and retained for use within the community. The European powers each maintained slaves as workers and artisans, and even sent them as traders into the interior. In Elmina, there were about 184 company slaves in 1645.<sup>106</sup> British records show 367 slaves at Cape Coast serving as carpenters, gold takers, coopers, gunners, cooks, brickmakers, blacksmiths, chapel servants, canoemen, doctor's servants, goldsmiths, armourers, and common servants.<sup>107</sup> By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century large numbers of slaves were in the hands of individual merchants - some of whom owned up to several hundred individuals. Evidence indicates they were used as porters, domestic servants, trading agents, and in cultivation.<sup>108</sup>

The rise in slave holding in these areas was directly linked to the development of merchant capital; as the concentration of wealth led to the accumulation of labour power as well as land and goods by wealthy merchants.<sup>109</sup> Ray Kea has pointed out that in the Gold Coast slaves not only produced foodstuffs, but generated cash money for their masters through the sale of agricultural goods in town markets and through the production of gold.<sup>110</sup> It is unclear how complete this transformation was and exactly when it took place. Certainly early in the seventeenth century the evidence indicate that

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<sup>104</sup>Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.49. Richardson, David and David Eltis, "West Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade", p.23.

<sup>105</sup>The papers of Richard Miles provide excellent examples of these minor traders in the form of lists of purchases from Africans, op. cit. Metcalf, George, "A microcosm of why Africans sold slaves: Akan consumption patterns in the 1770s", *Journal of African History*, 1987 (28), pp.377-394.

<sup>106</sup>Feinberg, "Elmina, Ghana", p.121.

<sup>107</sup>PRO, From First Schedule of the Act of 1752 (25 George II, cap.40).

<sup>108</sup>PRO CO 267/56, McCarthy to Bathurst, May 16, 1822.

<sup>109</sup>Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics*, p.56.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid, p.200. Apropos the use of slaves for gold production.

the goods sold in market towns and along the coast were more prevalingly “the surplus production of peasant family households rather than that of slave family households.”<sup>111</sup> However, there is some evidence from the 1630-1640s that wealthy indigenous merchants established farming villages near Cape Coast which may have been worked by slaves. Moreover, Kea suggests that in some regions at least, by the eighteenth century “slaves and bonded freemen... became the principal sources of subsistence for nonfarming urban dwellers and of social wealth for the dominant classes.”<sup>112</sup>

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Urban Senegalese slavery evolved around French needs. The French government did not keep its own slaves. Instead, slaves were acquired by the *habitant* community and rented to the French government, resident merchants, and ship’s captains. Slaves were employed as *laptots* (canoemen), skilled workmen, millet grinders, cleaning women, laundry workers, and even musicians.<sup>113</sup> The defence of the two islands was also dependent on slaves who were mobilised by their masters when conflict threatened.<sup>114</sup> The relationship between slaves and masters that evolved here differed from that of traditional Wolof and Sereer society. Male slaves, especially *laptots* received a wage, consisting of a portion of the money paid to their master for their services, and could acquire considerable property.<sup>115</sup> This fusion society thereby created a class of slaves whose role was entirely economic, supplementing the domestic and trade slaves in the community. These slaves even appear to have enjoyed a certain type of economic - if not social - mobility<sup>116</sup>; using their wages to purchase boats and hire their own labourers. However this mobility did not extend to enfranchisement - it was rare for slaves, however wealthy, to be able to purchase their own freedom.

In addition to the slave as labourer, *habitant* society recognised the slaves as status symbol. These captives, such as female parasol bearers, accompanied the *signares* on their promenades along the *n’dar tout* or around town as a signifier of elite

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p.16.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, pp.16, 165.

<sup>113</sup> ANS K9 and K10, 1849.

<sup>114</sup> ANSOM Senegal VIII, 36/3, 11 December, 1832.

<sup>115</sup> PRO CO 267/29, Maxwell to H.M. Commissioner, Gorée [sic], undated 1810.

<sup>116</sup> The comments of d’Amfreville and Dumet are quoted by Benoist, Joseph “Typologie et fonctions des captivités goréenes”, in Samb, Djibril, ed., *Gorée et L’esclavage: Actes du Séminaire sur ‘Gorée dans la Traite atlantique: mythes et réalités’*, IFAN Cheik Anta Diop, Dakar, 1997, p.127.

status.<sup>117</sup>

### The expansion of slavery

In 1853, Brodie Cruickshank suggested that "there is reason to believe that, during some period of their history, the slave was protected by a more humane code of laws."<sup>118</sup> However he was forced to admit that indigenous slavery in the nineteenth century was not as benign an institution as depicted by colonial and company sources. Indeed, evidence suggests that over the preceding four hundred years the slave trade had acted as the catalyst for a transformation in both the numbers and the position of domestic slaves. The growth of slavery within Africa was most marked in the previously discussed coastal societies where the export trade was most important. The ratio of slaves to free people within the Gold Coast is posited to have risen to as high as 50% in some areas, while that in Siin, Saalum, Kaajor, and Waalo grew similarly.<sup>119</sup> By the nineteenth century, the consensus amongst European visitors was that "here, [on the Gold Coast] domestic slavery is the root and foundation of the whole social system..."<sup>120</sup>

Although it has been argued that this transformation to a slave mode of production was complete throughout West Africa, it was really quite limited before the nineteenth century, especially in the interior. Still, there is a great amount of evidence to suggest that the change, while gradual, was evident in both the Gold Coast and Senegal. As slaves became more valuable as trade commodities, slave owners developed new methods of acquisition, a phenomenon of which the growth of warfare is only one indication. Punishment was another method of procurement. Meredith noted that "during the slave trade, [the laws] all agreed in their ultimate tendency, that of slavery: for a trifling offence a man lost his liberty..."<sup>121</sup> Enslavement also appears to have replaced fining as the most common punishment in the Sereer states.<sup>122</sup> Other Europeans noted a growing trend towards slavery as the result of famine and insolvency. Parents unable to feed their children began to sell their children, or even themselves, into slavery to avoid starvation. It also became more difficult to achieve liberation. In Senegal, the manumission of children born to slave mothers and free fathers appears to have become virtually unknown,<sup>123</sup> and Captain Maclean, long-time

<sup>117</sup> Guèye, "Le fin de l'esclavage", p.637.

<sup>118</sup> Cruickshank, Brodie, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of West Africa*, 2 vols, London, 1853, p.240-243.

<sup>119</sup> Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, p.157, p.190.

<sup>120</sup> PRO CO 96/25, Cruickshank to Smith, 26 August, 1851, Cape Coast Castle. Also in same file see Native Traders to Hill, 15 Dec 1851, CCC, and British Resident Merchants to Governor Jeremie, 24 March 1841, CCC.

<sup>121</sup> Meredith, Henry, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, London, 1812, p.27.

<sup>122</sup> Klein, *Islam and Imperialism*, p.29.

<sup>123</sup> ANS K17, *Rapport sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905.

administrator of the Gold Coast, reported that by the nineteenth century slaves were "seldom manumitted by their masters."<sup>124</sup>

It was not only methods of slave acquisition and retention that were affected by the adjustments wrought by the needs of the Atlantic slave trade. As intercontinental trade grew, slaves were to some extent sucked into the production of trade goods and foodstuffs. Much has been made of this 'transformation of slavery', proposed by Paul Lovejoy in his book of the same name:

The pull of the market had the effect of pushing indigenous forms of slavery further away from a social framework in which slavery was another form of dependency in societies based on kinship relationships to a system in which slaves played an increasing role in the economy.<sup>125</sup>

One of the cornerstones of Lovejoy's hypothesis is the logical assumption that the slave trade must have stimulated the production and sale of foodstuffs to feed the unproductive trade slaves. It is clear that millions of slaves were moving from the interior to the coast, where they were housed, sometimes for long periods of time, until a slave ship appeared to carry them away. These slaves therefore needed to be fed at three stages - in caravans, in the barracoons, and on the ships themselves. Add to this the evidence that large numbers of slaves were being retained by coastal West African societies, and that urban populations who were not agriculturally productive were growing, and it seems likely that these slaves were employed in a slave mode of production. James Searing, Martin Klein, and other historians agree with Lovejoy that this must have occurred.

Unfortunately, the evidence for a rising slave mode of production during this era is unclear. Much is made of evidence that Cape Coast merchants employed slaves in 'plantations' by 1822.<sup>126</sup> But we know from the reports of explorers that the word 'plantation' was often loosely applied to the cultivation of crops for local consumption. Still, it is not too far a stretch to believe that slaves belonging to merchants here may have been engaged in farming of crops for sale in the towns and forts; the chiefly office holders (caboceers), merchants, and resident Europeans of urban Gold Coast settlements fed themselves on produce from slave-worked farms.<sup>127</sup> Certainly by the seventeenth century peasants in coastal societies were beginning to pay land 'rent' in

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<sup>124</sup> PP 1842 XII.1 (551), Evidence of Captain Maclean, p.82.

<sup>125</sup> Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, p.19.

<sup>126</sup> PRO CO 267/56, McCarthy to Bathurst, May 15, 1822, no place.

<sup>127</sup> Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics*, p.43.

the form of gold, which they acquired by selling a portion of their goods at urban markets.<sup>128</sup> However, this phenomenon appears to have been limited to the neighbourhood of urban coastal enclaves. States in the interior such as Akwamu and Akuapem seem to have turned more towards promoting commerce than agricultural production, and to have viewed slaves as products for export rather than the production of foodstuffs.<sup>129</sup> The exception to this may have been the clearing of forests for agricultural production in forested regions of Adanse and Amanse, which Ivor Wilks argues became a task for unfree labour in the fifteenth and sixteenth century.<sup>130</sup> Here too, the surge in slavery was related to the accumulation of merchant capital created by a rise in the mining and trade of gold in these regions - the profit from this industry being used by merchant families to purchase land and slaves.

In Senegal, the evidence for a slave mode of production is slightly more compelling. Slaves heading toward St. Louis were conveyed along a great distance, as many of them came from Gaajaga and Bambara territories. Searing has suggested that during this period slavery "was associated with both an extension in the size of agricultural units and intensification of the labour process."<sup>131</sup> Indeed, French sources indicate that many Wolof slaves worked their masters' land for several days a week during this period.<sup>132</sup> However, peasant subsistence production remained dominant.<sup>133</sup> French plantation administrators as late as the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Waalo, for example, found that this region - neighbouring St. Louis - could still only provide free labour, and that slave labour for the purpose of cultivation was not readily available.<sup>134</sup> It appears that while the transformation of slavery to a more obviously economic arrangement began to spread to African societies during the Atlantic trade, it was still an initial, rather than complete, transformation.

#### The transformation of pawning on the Gold Coast

The institution of pawning, on the other hand, was radically reinvented by the Atlantic slave trade. It appears probable that indigenous institutions of pawning, or debt bondage, originated as a method by which a husband's *abusua* could acquire rights to

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>129</sup> Perbi, "Domestic Slavery in Asante", p.14-15.

<sup>130</sup> Wilks, Ivor, "Land, Labour, Capital, and the Forest Kingdom of Asante: A Model of Early Change", in J. Friedman and M.J. Rowlands, eds., *The Evolution of Social Systems*, Duckworth, London, 1977, pp.508-512.

<sup>131</sup> Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, p.48.

<sup>132</sup> ANS K17 *Rapport Sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905.

<sup>133</sup> This was still true when groundnut farming became dominant in the 1850s.

<sup>134</sup> ANSOM Senegal II/2, Roger à Ministre, 12 Janvier 1820, St. Louis.

his wife's labour and children in a matrilineal society.<sup>135</sup> In the era of the slave trade, however, pawning underwent a transition from a negotiated transfer of authority between lineage groups to a fundamentally commercial transaction. The demand for slaves led to the clandestine selling of contractually acquired pawns into slavery, often for export. By the nineteenth century, Gold Coast societies were allowing the sale of pawns outright to a purchaser, ignoring the traditional protections of pawn status.<sup>136</sup> The line between pawns and slaves was thus blurred.

As pawns became vulnerable to the export trade, and as the demand for labour to replace individuals lost from slave-producing societies and to grow food for coastal communities continued to rise, elites developed strategies to enlarge their potential supply of pawns. Among the most significant methods by which they accomplished this appear to have been the development of punishment pawning and the growth in debt-producing customs. Throughout the eighteenth century, the size of fines given as punishment climbed precipitously. Indigenous chiefs levied increasingly enormous fines as punishment in cases of dispute. Evidence shows that not only those found guilty, but even occasionally the victors in litigation ran up such enormous fees that they became insolvent and were pawned to the very chiefs who heard their cases.<sup>137</sup> Heavy damages were levied in cases such as adultery, which had not previously been punishable by financial penalty, and many imagined cases were brought before chiefs for the specific purpose of gaining pawns.<sup>138</sup> Interest rates similarly surged. Before the Atlantic slave trade, there is no evidence that interest was laid on pawns,<sup>139</sup> but during the eighteenth century interest of 50-100% became common both in pawning cases and for the borrowing of money in the coastal states.<sup>140</sup> In both cases creditors began to seize members of the debtor's *abusua* (matrilineage) and sell them as slaves. When this did not satiate their demands, it became common for creditors to kidnap and sell "any person or persons belonging to the said family, or even to the same country, state, or town, with the debtor."<sup>141</sup> This type of kidnapping, known as *panyarring*, was closely related to the increased demand for slaves and pawns created by the redirection of

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<sup>135</sup>The best analyses we have regarding pawning in Akan societies comes from Asante. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, p.48. For more on Akan pawning, see Austin, Gareth, "Human Pawning in Asante, 1800-1940: Markets and Coercion, Gender and Cocoa", in Toyin Falola and Paul Lovejoy, eds., *Pawnship in Africa*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1994, pp.119-159.

<sup>136</sup>Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, p.53. Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, p.19.

<sup>137</sup>PRO CO 879/33, *Fairfield Report*, 1874.

<sup>138</sup>Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast*, p.30.

<sup>139</sup>Rattray argues this was true up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Asante. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, p.54.

<sup>140</sup>Cruikshank, *Eighteen Years*, p.322. PRO CO 879/33, *Fairfield Report*, 1874.

<sup>141</sup>Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast*, p.29.

unfree individuals into the Atlantic slave trade. The 1842 Parliamentary Select Committee, which generally accepted pawning as “voluntarily entered into” and “not abstractly unjust or unreasonable” nevertheless argued that by that date the spread of the practice of *panyarring* had made the institution of pawning “liable to much abuse, and much resembling slavery” and argued that thus “it should be the object of our policy to get rid of [pawning], even among the natives.”<sup>142</sup> Evidence of *panyarring* became especially prevalent with the introduction of missionaries in the 1850s and 60s,<sup>143</sup> but some sources make it clear that it occurred in the late eighteenth century and the early 1800s as well.<sup>144</sup> It seems evident that it was the voracious demand of the Atlantic slave trade that distorted the traditional custom of pawning. African elites took the initiative to find new supplies of people for export, and the institution of pawning was convenient for their needs. There is evidence that the *panyarring* of individuals found “on pathways, in forests, and on plantations” had become an accepted part of both inter-state and inter-divisional conflicts, and that individuals captured in this manner were sold to slave-dealers on the coast.<sup>145</sup>

Not only was *panyarring* an efficient method of recruiting slaves for export, but due to the kinship-based roots of the institution, the children of female pawns (the majority of pawns were still female because of the nature of traditional pawning) belonged to creditors, lending them additional value as retained slaves. Given the new high interest rates, pawns were unlikely to be redeemed, and if they were, creditors still stood to make a great profit. The combination of high interest rates, *panyarring*, and the clandestine export of pawned individuals for export combined to make pawning an important tool for slave merchants.

In this environment changing cultural traditions contributed to the rise in pawning. Funeral and initiation rites reach a destructive level of extravagance in the eighteenth century as families put themselves in debt to pay for vastly inflated ceremonies and rituals.<sup>146</sup> Records of colonial tribunals do not stretch back this far, but governmental reports speak of “ruinously expensive fetish ceremonies” and the economic embarrassment of “the expenses attending the celebration of all the principal events of

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<sup>142</sup> PP 1842, XI.1 (551), *Report from the Select Committee on Slavery on the West Coast of Africa*, vi and vii.

<sup>143</sup> See Chapter 4

<sup>144</sup> PP 1842, XI.1 (551), *Report from the Select Committee on Slavery on the West Coast of Africa*, Evidence of J.G. Nicholls, p.7. Nicholls specifically refers to the period before 1831 (date of a treaty banning *panyarring* along much of the coast, discussed in later chapters).

<sup>145</sup> BMS, D-1.1, Riis, 28 May 1836, Akropong. BMS D-1.10, Obobi, no date 1858, Odumase.

<sup>146</sup> NAG ADM 11/975, *Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery*, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

life"<sup>147</sup> greatly expanding the practice of pawning. By the nineteenth century, the widespread institutions of *panyarring* and pawning bore little resemblance to the lineage-based model from which they developed.

### The Atlantic slave trade and gender

Social transformation in the wake of the Atlantic slave trade was not confined to the institution of pawning. The role of gender in Senegalese and Gold Coast societies was distorted by the demands of the trade and, more importantly, the accompanying demands on labour by coastal societies servicing the slave trade. In order to understand this phenomenon, we have to briefly return to the statistics.

Women, we know, had traditionally formed a significant proportion of slaves in West Africa. Because of local cultural paradigms, women in both Senegambia and on the Gold Coast were important workers in agricultural and marketing contexts,<sup>148</sup> tasks which became prevaillingly the role of slaves in coastal societies during the era of the slave trade. Women were also valuable for their reproductive capacity. In bride-wealth societies, which characterised the populations of both the Gold Coast and Senegal, marrying a woman required a large outlay of resources.<sup>149</sup> In addition, in the dominant matrilineal societies of both regions, women and their offspring still belonged to their matrilineage after marriage. Reproducing with slaves was a strategy that outflanked both of these constrictions, as masters avoided expensive bride-price payments and retained ownership of the offspring. Unions with female slaves were probably not preferable for first marriages, as they conferred no status, but certainly slaves were useful as additional wives and concubines, increasing as they did a man's reproductive and production potential.<sup>150</sup>

Statistics indicate that the Atlantic slave trade reinforced this equation. Plantation owners in the new world paid preferable prices for slaves they perceived to be the best workers - young men,<sup>151</sup> and these therefore formed the majority of the Atlantic trade. This phenomenon has been quantified by a series of historians. A survey of slaves imported into Jamaica from the Gold Coast for the period 1764-1788, for example,

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<sup>147</sup>PRO CO 879/33, *Fairfield Report*, 1874.

<sup>148</sup>Roberts and Miers, "The End of Slavery in Africa", p.6-8.

<sup>149</sup>I thank Professor Robert Addo-Fening for information on marriage customs amongst the Akan. Similarly, French sources indicate that men made several ceremonial payments to matrilineages amongst the Sereer and Wolof. ANS K17, *Rapport sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905, p.37.

<sup>150</sup>Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, p.14.

<sup>151</sup>Studies carried out in Jamaica, Virginia, and other slave destinations bear this out. See especially Galenson, David, *Traders, Planters, and Slavers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p94-96, for British Caribbean territories.

included 11,176 women and 5,565 men.<sup>152</sup> French shipping statistics from the Senegambia indicate a ratio of 175 women for every 100 men withdrawn from the coast,<sup>153</sup> while another study suggests a statistics of 4:1 for the Senegal river region alone.<sup>154</sup> Together, records of pre-abolition Atlantic slave traders indicate that their shipments included approximately 60% men and 40% women - leaving perhaps 3,000,000 extra women in coastal markets towns and along the slave route.<sup>155</sup>

While these statistics show that consumers favoured male slaves, the explanation is not simply a question of demand. African slave vendors probably preferred to retain female slaves both for their own domestic needs and because they brought a higher price in the Saharan trade.<sup>156</sup> The demand for men and women from slave-producing societies, therefore, was somewhat balanced, if serving several markets. Consequently, the rise of female slavery in coastal societies was largely a question of choice. Local slave owners preferred to retain female slaves and export a greater percentage of males. Coastal communities during this period tended to experience a marked rise in polygamy,<sup>157</sup> and to exhibit a high proportion of females in slavery. Much of the evidence uncovered for this occurrence dates from slightly later than the Atlantic slave trade period, but is still illustrative in showing the effects of this transition. The slave population of French Senegal (the vast majority in Gorée and St. Louis) in 1845, for example, was 4248 males and 5865 females.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, the Methodist Missionary Society indicates a high proportion of slave wives amongst their congregants at Cape Coast in the 1830s,<sup>159</sup> and Claire Robertson argues that nineteenth century Ga-Adangme slavery in Accra revolved around the owning of female slaves.<sup>160</sup> As we will see in later chapters, British colonial records indicate similar trends after the inception of organised judicial records some 50 years after the end of the Atlantic slave trade. It is not too bold to argue from these various sources that by the nineteenth century women formed the majority of slaves in coastal regions, especially as traditionally female tasks

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<sup>152</sup>Inikori, *Forced Migration*, p.23

<sup>153</sup>Geggus, David, "Sex Ratio, Age, and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records", *Journal of African History*, 1989 (30), pp.23-40.

<sup>154</sup>Klein, Martin, "Women in Slavery in the Western Sudan", in Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1983, pp.70-71.

<sup>155</sup>Inikori, *Forced Migrations*, p.25.

<sup>156</sup>Joseph Inikori estimates that from 1500-1890 4,590,000 women and 2,260,000 men were transported across the Sahara. Inikori, *Forced Migrations*, p.25.

<sup>157</sup>Manning, Patrick, "The Impact of Slave Trade Exports", p.125.

<sup>158</sup>ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Tableaux Statistique, 1845.

<sup>159</sup>MMS West African Correspondence, G. Wrigley to Committee, 20 February 1837, Cape Coast, Box 258.

<sup>160</sup>Robertson, Claire, "Post Proclamation Slavery in Accra: A Female Affair?", in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1988, p.220-223.

such as market vending and domestic work made up the majority of slave tasks in towns such as Cape Coast, Accra, Gorée, and St. Louis.

### Conclusions

West African society, in general, did not radically evolve within the era of the Atlantic slave trade. Instead, the effects of the Atlantic slave trade were just the beginning of a long period of transformation. The export trade was simply a catalyst that initiated a longer period of new economic development, integration into the Atlantic world, and transformation of indigenous social and political institutions. Much of this change occurred only after the 'abolition' of the export trade across the Atlantic in the nineteenth century. Still, for Senegal and the Gold Coast, the traces of the changes to come were becoming evident by 1800. African states were in disarray: large empires had broken up and economic development in the interior was stagnant, while Europe and its allies on the African coast were the beneficiaries of a realignment of trade routes and power towards the Atlantic ocean. These coastal communities incorporated African culture and combined it with European ideas such as mercantilism. It was here that social and economic paradigms shifted first, spreading slowly to neighbouring societies and then inland to the larger states of the interior. Slave modes of production did not become the norm, but slaves began to grow crops for sale in town markets and for provisioning the convoys of export slaves. The number and proportion of locally-held female slaves grew and larger numbers of slaves were retained by the trading powers and by individuals. On the Gold Coast, pawning underwent a systematic change, becoming harsher and losing its connection to the lineage system from which it developed. As Senegal and the Gold Coast entered the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were societies in flux, having lost the strength of large states and strong traditional organisation without having gained much in return. At this critical juncture, European powers unilaterally decided to end the slave trade. In the resulting crisis of abolition merchants, administrators, slave-owners, and slaves would all struggle to impress their desires on the face of post-Atlantic trade slavery.

### **CHAPTER 3:** **The crisis of abolition, legitimate trade, and the continuity of slavery**

The criminalisation of the Atlantic slave trade did not induce a reversion to pre-contact traditions of slavery in West Africa. Rather, its termination induced a wider and sociologically more significant transformation of dominance relationships in less than half a century than had the slave trade. For slaves, slave-owners, and administrators abolition was a prototype crisis, a practice round for emancipation. Consequently, slave-owning elites developed the strategies of negotiation, evasion, and opposition which they were to put to effective use in subsequent periods. European administrators were forced to balance metropolitan demands for increased commercial productivity, the threats to the political and economic integrity of the colonies caused by African opposition to anti-slavery legislation, and the stringent demands of the abolitionist lobby. On a fundamental level, administrative structures were put into place in coastal enclaves which would form the models for later colonial states.

Slavery itself changed in response to the crisis of abolition. The role of slaves in the cultivation of trade goods and as labourers and soldiers expanded while fluctuating slave prices and increased demand for agricultural labour promoted slave owning outside traditional social groups. The trend towards a slave mode of production begun by the Atlantic slave trade was fed by the expanding production of legitimate goods during this period - an era in which the traffic in people was replaced by a trade in raw materials.

#### **Abolition de jure**

The abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade was a nineteenth century story. The first significant calls for the institution's demise began in the 1780s, but it took more than two decades before the first of the major carrier states joined the movement towards abolition of the export of slaves from Africa to the new world.

Abolitionism caught hold first in Protestant northern Europe. On March

16, 1792, Denmark became the first European power to forbid the slave trade to its citizens.<sup>1</sup> Only a small number of slaves were carried annually on Danish-flagged ships, however, and the decree only took effect in 1803. Even after this date British and German plantation owners in the Danish Caribbean continued to utilise slave labour.

It was during this period that abolitionism firmly took hold in Britain. While there were distinct philosophical roots to abolitionism, "it was mainly religious conviction, insight and zeal which made it possible for anti-slavery feeling to be subsumed in a crusade against the slave trade and slavery."<sup>2</sup> In England, the Quaker anti-slavery discourse and evangelical and missionary ideals took hold amongst a class beginning to accumulate capital. Beginning in the 1780s, educated English and Scotsmen such as Sir Samuel Romilly, Thomas Clarkson, and Thomas Walker - men who had links to both capitalist institutions and the church - began to lead petition drives meant to influence Parliament. Due to the credentials of the movement's leaders, these efforts quickly gained the support of "cities and towns, churches and vestries, and a wide range of private and public organisations."<sup>3</sup> By 1793, lower class radicals had emerged as a major force in the abolitionist movement, which was also driven by an environment of "intellectual and theological change".<sup>4</sup>

The abolitionist movement was closely related to the mature state of capitalism within England. The mobilisation of a massive system for exporting slaves over the previous centuries, accompanied as it was by conflict, the plundering of agricultural villages, and reduction of production potential, interfered with the gathering and export of raw materials from Africa.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Nørregard, *Danish Settlements in West Africa*, p.172.

<sup>2</sup> Anstey, Roger, "The Pattern of British abolitionism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries", in Bolt, Christine and Seymour Drescher, eds., *Anti-slavery, religion, and reform: essays in memory of Roger Anstey*, W. Dawson, Folkestone, 1980, p.20.

<sup>3</sup> Walvin, James, "The Public Campaign in England against Slavery, 1787-1834", in David Eltis and James Walvin, eds., *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1981, p.65.

<sup>4</sup> Anstey, Roger, "Religion and British Slave Emancipation", in David Eltis and James Walvin, eds., *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1981, pp.37.

<sup>5</sup> Austen, *African Economic History*, p.45.

industrial revolution's demand for these materials<sup>6</sup> drove the abolitionist process amongst mercantile interests. There is some debate which factor - ideological or commercial - was more significant in contributing to abolitionism in Britain, much of the evidence for ideological factors residing in the fact that many merchant abolitionists were acting against their own interests. However the involvement of merchants in the abolitionist movement<sup>7</sup> was vital to its success, and contributed to the government's decision to abolish the slave trade in 1807. The general consensus of historians is that "industrialisation created social classes and political groups which, lacking any strong vested interest in Atlantic slavery and jockeying for power with older mercantile forces which did, allied with those who opposed the dealings in human beings on theological and humanitarian grounds."<sup>8</sup> The subsequent Act of Parliament banning the export of slaves from Africa was no half measure, and the prescribed punishment included the forfeiture of any ship involved in the slave trade and a £100 pound fine for each slave confiscated - a substantial amount for the time.<sup>9</sup> The law was further amended in 1811 to include punishment by transportation to a penal colony for the arrested officers of slave ships.<sup>10</sup>

The French embraced abolition somewhat less enthusiastically. Pre-revolutionary French society did not develop the social and economic circumstances which created an environment in which abolitionism could flourish. The revolutionary government's prohibition of slavery in 1794 was therefore something of a shock, and the decree was not enforced in either the Caribbean colonies or Africa<sup>11</sup> before being revoked by the *premier consul* Napoleon in 1802. Napoleon did issue an imperial decree forbidding the slave trade to French shipping during the 100 days' rule of 1815, but the Restoration

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<sup>6</sup> Agbodeka, Francis, *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast 1868-1900*, Northwestern Press, Evanston, 1971, p.18.

<sup>7</sup> PRO CO 267/54, Committee to Bathurst, June 24, 1814, Africa Office. PRO CO 267/54, Barnes to Bathurst, 23 April 1814, Africa Office. Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast*, p.214.

<sup>8</sup> Austen, *African Economic History*, 1987, p.42.

<sup>9</sup> PP 1806-7, I, (41, 45, 53), An Act for the Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

<sup>10</sup> PP 1810-11, I, (275), An Act to render more effectual the Act for the Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

<sup>11</sup> Roberts and Miers, "The End of Slavery in Africa", p.14.

monarchy chose to ignore it.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, abolition was imposed upon France by the alliance formed against it (chiefly Britain) through the second Treaty of Paris in 1815. The abolition clause, perceived by the French populace as an attempt by maritime Britain to impose its ambition to control the seas, was also largely ignored. When, in January 1817 a royal ordinance reprised Napoleon's 1815 decree forbidding the slave trade, and on April 15, 1818 it was finally promulgated, a cruiser squadron was almost immediately despatched to West Africa - not in hopes of catching slavers, but in order to challenge British supremacy over the region.<sup>13</sup> As a result, French enforcement of laws intended to eradicate the export trade in slaves was extremely weak.

#### Enforcement and evasion: the illegal slave trade

The abolition of the export of slaves from Africa was decreed by the European metropolises, who intended that much of the responsibility for its enforcement would be held by officials dispatched from Europe - specifically the commanders of cruiser squadrons. In the event, however, officers of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and colonial officials based in coastal posts and towns played a large role in the struggle against the illegal trade. Simultaneously, African and Euro-African slave traders attempted to elude patrols and evade abolition laws. Contrary to European expectations, the campaign to end the slave trade was therefore largely a local affair.

The strong British naval presence off the Gold Coast caused an immediate decline in the scale of the export slave trade, from approximately 8,000 slaves per year in 1800 to about a quarter of that in 1815.<sup>14</sup> The Danish had already promulgated abolition, and the Dutch followed suit in 1813, although they continued to recognise the export of unfree 'apprentices'.<sup>15</sup> British cruisers

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<sup>12</sup> 27 March 1815. Daget, Serge, "Le Trafic Négrier Illégal Français de 1814 à 1850: Historiographie et Source", *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan*, 1975 (3), p.27.

<sup>13</sup> Daget, Serge, "France, Suppression of the Illegal Trade, and England, 1817-1850", in David Eltis and James Walvin, *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1981, pp. 195-196.

<sup>14</sup> Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, p.66.

<sup>15</sup> van Dantzig, Albert, "Elmina, Asante, and the Abolitionists: Morality, Security, and Profits", in Serge Daget, ed., *De la Traite à L'esclavage*, Bibliothèque D'Histoire d'outre-mer, 1988, pp.583-602.

were given the right to search Dutch vessels through an 1819 treaty with the Netherlands, a condition subsequently extended to the Spanish, Portuguese, and other European and American vessels as well.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the export slave trading from traditionally active ports such as Accra, Elmina, and Commenda declined quite drastically. The major drawback of such seaports for slave smugglers was their exposure to the ocean. More effective ports in Guinea and Nigeria were hidden behind mazes of creeks, but from Apollonia to the Volta River, the Gold Coast seaboard was more open. The effect of abolition on the commercial establishment of the Gold Coast was therefore almost immediate. Bowdich and other travellers of this period report evidence of abandoned slave-trading factories near the coast. Large slave markets such as Mansu were found in ruins.<sup>17</sup> As late as 1821 Hutton visited Commenda, Apollonia, 'Tatum', and 'Succondee', and noted that they had been abandoned by the servants and officials of the Company of Merchants due to lack of trade.<sup>18</sup> The Dutch settlements were similarly crippled by abolition, especially after 1818.<sup>19</sup> The British Company of Merchants was so impoverished that the Crown assumed possession of their assets in 1822.<sup>20</sup>

Concurrent with abolition, however, 1807 was also the year that the Asante state defeated an alliance of Akan states, taking enormous numbers of captives.<sup>21</sup> With the collapse of the Atlantic trade — Asante's traditional market for war captives - the *Asantehene* cast about for other possible solutions. No doubt a portion could still be sold in coastal states, but this market was already glutted; prices in the littoral had declined from more than 9 ounces in 1803<sup>22</sup> to around 7 ounces in 1807<sup>23</sup>. The *Asantehene* begged the British authorities to

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<sup>16</sup> PP 1819, I.-A, (119), (Netherlands). PP 1818, I, (314), (Spain). PP 1818, I, (333), (Portugal).

<sup>17</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, p.45.

<sup>18</sup> Hutton, William, *A Voyage to Africa, Including a Narrative of an Embassy to One of the Internal Kingdoms*, London, 1821, pp. 74-75.

<sup>19</sup> Coomb, Douglas, *The Gold Coast, Britain, and the Netherlands, 1850-1874*, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> PRO CO 267/54, An Act for Abolishing the African Company, 17 May, 1821.

<sup>21</sup> La Torre, Joseph, "Wealth Surpasses Everything: An Economic History of Asante, 1750-1874", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of California Berkeley, 1978, p.436.

<sup>22</sup> La Torre, "Wealth Surpasses Everything", p.426.

<sup>23</sup> Hutton, *A Voyage to Africa*, p.53.

reinstitute the trade at least until 1820<sup>24</sup>, but following their refusal Asante merchants began increasingly to redirect trade east to the Volta River. The region around and beyond the Volta was not only outside British authority, but was characterised by convoluted creeks perfect for hiding both canoes and ocean-going vessels.<sup>25</sup> It is not inconceivable that many Akan slaves were diverted down these routes and subsequently exported from Slave Coast ports. Much of this illegal trade was run by merchants from Accra, Ada, and other eastern communities with a significant European presence. Euro-Africans especially figure prominently. Sam Kanto Brew was an anglophone Mulatto who acted as a middleman in the illegal trade, acquiring the *Asantehene's* friendship and exchanging Spanish guns for Asante slaves.<sup>26</sup> Euro-African traders from Dutch Accra were so deeply involved in the trade that the British resorted to bombarding the town in an effort to disrupt their activities.<sup>27</sup> Despite the risks and British interference, the potential profits were more than lucrative enough to appeal to coastal merchants. In 1817, a Company officer wrote to his superiors in despair:

The people of the Coast are the brokers of those of the interior who supply the slaves...This trade is... beyond all comparison so indolent and lucrative, that even were there any appeal to their feelings, it would not influence it in competition with such inordinate gain.<sup>28</sup>

While strict British law deterred most British ship-owners from the trade, it could not limit the availability of slaves, and merchants of other European powers were eager to take the place of the British. From 1815 onwards, Spanish, Portuguese, and Brazilian vessels began to appear off the western Gold Coast, often crewed by Americans and Cubans and largely geared towards the voracious market for plantation labour in Brazil and Cuba.<sup>29</sup> As the availability of slaves shifted eastward away from regions of effective British control, these

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<sup>24</sup> Dupuis, Joseph, *Journal of a Residence*, pp. 162-164.

<sup>25</sup> La Torre, "Wealth Surpasses Everything", p.436.

<sup>26</sup> PRO T 70/41, William Hutchinson to J.H. Smith, 11, October, 1817, no place.

<sup>27</sup> PRO CO 267/54, Gordon to J.H. Smith, 5 November, 1817, Cape Coast Castle.

<sup>28</sup> PRO T70/36, Smith and Officers to Committee, 15 March 1817, Cape Coast Castle.

<sup>29</sup> PRO T 70/74, Committee to Castlereagh, 21 February 1817, London. PRO T 70/74, Committee to Castlereagh, 1 November 1816, Africa Office.

slave ships did so as well. Quite early, records show that European slave vessels had ceased to appear along the sandy, well-populated coast between British Accra and Cape Coast Castle. As late as 1858, however, Spanish ships were being captured east of Accra.<sup>30</sup> In 1860, slave marts were still supplying these vessels from Keta and along the Volta<sup>31</sup>. It was only in 1873 that an administrator, Governor Harley, was able to report that “no slaves have been exported from this settlement within the last three years.”<sup>32</sup> The export trade, far from being easily abolished, had lingered for more than half a century,<sup>33</sup> slave commerce simply being diverted to new areas. An alliance of flexible indigenous elites and mercenary European merchants had adapted the trade to exploit geographic holes in the enforcement of abolition.

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Senegal also experienced an appreciable initial decline in slave exports following the promulgation of abolition.<sup>34</sup> The British occupation of St. Louis and Gorée at the beginning of the century and the blockading of continental Europe led to a temporary cessation of all export trade from Senegal, including slaves.<sup>35</sup> However as slaves began to accumulate on both islands, the *habitant* community began to exert pressure to restart the trade, and when they failed to sway the British administration, they began to smuggle slaves through villages on the Waalo Coast.<sup>36</sup> The returning French were faced with an established smuggling network upon their reacquisition of St. Louis in 1816. However, the illegal trade in Senegal was insignificant compared to that of the Gambia and Southern Rivers region, since the sandy beaches off northern Senegal were

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<sup>30</sup> PRO CO 96/41, Governor Pine, 19 September 1857, Sierra Leone. PRO CO 96/44, Acting Governor Bird to Sir Bulwer Lytton Bart, 20 December 1858, Cape Coast Castle.

<sup>31</sup> PRO CO 96/47, Governor Andrews to Newcastle, 5 June 1860, Cape Coast Castle.

<sup>32</sup> PRO CO 96/100, Governor Harley to Kimberley, 16 July 1873, Cape Coast Castle.

<sup>33</sup> Export numbers were probably statistically insignificant after 1820, as evidenced by a marked decline in mention of slave ship sightings and captures after this year.

<sup>34</sup> PRO CO 267/54, Barnes to Bathurst, 23 April 1814, Africa Office. Curtin, Philip, “The Abolition of the Slave Trade from Senegambia”, p.88.

<sup>35</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp.130-131.

<sup>36</sup> PRO CO 267/82, Maxwell to Castlereagh, 15 January 1809, Gorée

easily patrolled.<sup>37</sup> Still, slavers off the Senegalese coast openly flouted the abolition act, and French authorities were initially powerless to stop them. In June 1818, the brig *La Dorado* hove to at Gorée, then at Saint Louis, and evaded attempts to board her before taking on a human cargo at Portudal. The disraught Commandant of St. Louis apologised "I cannot... discharge my responsibility with such feeble resources."<sup>38</sup>

In June 1818, French warships were finally dispatched to West Africa. However the cruisers, manned by apathetic crews and initially directionless, did not capture their first slave ship for 20 months.<sup>39</sup> In the absence of naval power, coastal authorities were forced to take up the slack, taking three ships in 1818 alone.<sup>40</sup> In 1819, the French crown finally dispatched an envoy, Baron Mackam, to investigate accusations made by the Governor of Sierra Leone of slave trading during Administrator Schmaltz's term of office as Administrator of Senegal.<sup>41</sup> The Baron returned with a strongly worded report condemning both naval and civil authorities. However, the case went no further. Schmaltz's hastily written explanations had been accepted by the Minister who demanded that these "odious imputations" ceased.<sup>42</sup> Nor was there any serious official support for a more stringent approach. As late as 1826, the ordained punishment for slave trading was simply confiscation of ship and cargo, and for the ship's captain an interdiction from the King's vessels for life.<sup>43</sup>

This situation, however, was transformed over the next year. A groundswell of support for abolition had risen amongst influential businesspeople in the mid-20s, and in 1826, 300 ship owners petitioned against the trade.<sup>44</sup> This lobby could not be ignored as previous abolitionists groups had been, and the *Loi relative à la répression de la Traite des Noirs* was promulgated on the April

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<sup>37</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>38</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/1bis, Commandant et Administrateur à Ministre, 30 June, 1818, Saint Louis.

<sup>39</sup> Daget, Serge, "France, Suppression of the Illegal Trade, and England", p.196.

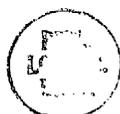
<sup>40</sup> Reports from ANSOM Senegal XIV/1, 1818-1831.

<sup>41</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/2, Note, Ministre, June 1818, St. Louis.

<sup>42</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/2, Ministre à Schmaltz, 13 September 1819, Paris.

<sup>43</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/1, 1818-1832.

<sup>44</sup> Daget, Serge, "France, Suppression of the Illegal Trade, and England", p.198.



25, 1827.<sup>45</sup> The act increased punishment for slave traders, including banishment for Captains and up to 5 years imprisonment for the crews of slavers. Indicative of the complete reversal of French attitude towards slavery, application of the new law was swift, and the Captain of the *Deux frères*, captured in October 1827, was banished, his backers fined 17,080 francs.<sup>46</sup> A portion of the fine went as prize money to the crew of the cruiser that captured the slave ship - as provided for by an 1825 ordinance.<sup>47</sup> If the declining numbers of French slave ships sighted are any indication, the new laws were effective, and as French smugglers disappeared and prize money was offered the motivation of naval crews, now operating largely against Iberian and Brazilian flagged vessels grew conspicuously. By mid century, French patrols had proved reasonably effective, and smuggling from Senegal to the Americas ceased to be significant.

#### Slave owners and the crisis of abolition

The abolition of the overseas commerce in slaves represented a defining crisis for the numerically small but powerful community of Africans and Euro-Africans who participated in the trade, and those who supplied them both with slaves and with the provisions necessary to carry on the slave trade. We have already seen how the European presence on the Gold Coast was greatly reduced in the years following abolition.<sup>48</sup> African slave merchants encountered similar difficulties. As the overseas slave market disappeared and no other commodity emerged to take its place, there was a marked decline in export earnings, leading to a decline in income for merchant elites.

For northern Senegal, the abolition of the export slave trade coincided with a decline in gum production.<sup>49</sup> Despite the continuation of the overland slave trade into the region, the period directly following British abolition saw a decrease

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<sup>45</sup> ANS K4, Loi relative à la répression de la Traite des Noirs, 25 April 1827.

<sup>46</sup> ANS 2B13, Gouverneur à Ministre, 9 October 1828, St. Louis

<sup>47</sup> ANSOM Généralités ,172/1384, 2 August 1825.

<sup>48</sup> PRO T70/35, Governor Torrane to Committee, 4 February, 1808, Cape Coast Castle. Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast*, p.ii.

<sup>49</sup> The gum trade would revive in 1830 following the failure of French attempts to develop a plantation

in the island's population for the first time in a century as the economic situation took a sharp downturn and *habitants* sold off their slaves and released their free servants.<sup>50</sup> But abolition posed the greatest threat not to merchant elites but to the aristocracy. The overland slave trade in Senegal, as we have seen, was mainly the prerogative of traditional rulers and their *tyeddo* armies, who used the profits to secure their power in the form of guns and men, resources which gave them the ability to procure more slaves and conduct them safely to the coast. The end of the Atlantic slave trade threatened this monopoly, "depriv[ing] the aristocrats of their main source of income and power."<sup>51</sup> The *habitant* community no longer demanded slaves, since local consumption needs were satisfied and export trade had declined,<sup>52</sup> and Wolof and Sereer aristocracies came under threat.

Africans in Senegal and the Gold Coast initially reacted to this crisis through the strategy of evasion. Asante traders sought to escape the effects of abolition by diverting their export in slaves to regions not controlled by the British, whereas *habitants* in Senegal and coastal merchants on the Gold Coast clandestinely supplied smugglers with humans. The drawback of this option was that it entailed a high margin of risk. In areas such as the Bight of Benin and southern Senegambia slave trade exports do not show a marked decrease, but Senegal and the Gold Coast did witness a massive decline in slave exports, indicating that smuggling was not the preferred option.<sup>53</sup> It soon became clear that the reduced demand for slaves could not meet the consistent supply, and large numbers of slaves had to be retained in coastal towns and around former slave-trading posts.<sup>54</sup>

Conceivably, slave-owners could have ceased to trade and own slaves entirely. However, we have seen that slaves were important assets for both

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system in Waalo. Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.140.

<sup>50</sup> PRO CO 267/29, Lt. Col. Maxwell to H.M. Commissioner, undated 1810, Gorée.

<sup>51</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.308.

<sup>52</sup> ANS 2B13, Gouverneur à Ministre, 1 April 1829, St. Louis.

<sup>53</sup> Richardson, "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa", p.17.

<sup>54</sup> In Gorée, British officers noted the existence of a "horde of slaves". PRO CO 267/32, Maxwell to Castlereagh, 15 January 1809, Gorée.

Senegalese and Gold Coast elites. Administration reports from as late as the 1830s and 1840s indicate that in neither area did slave imports to the coast decline. By 1836, around 10,000 slaves lived in St. Louis and Gorée, and importation into the colony from as far away as for Galaam was still common.<sup>55</sup> Colonial Office sources for the Gold Coast were also reporting “a large body of persons held in slavery in the African forts”<sup>56</sup> in 1841, as well as in the surrounding regions.

This rather pedantic exercise shows that slave-owning classes, both along the coast and in the interior, apparently opted for third alternative. Abolitionists had long argued that there had been a rising demand for non-slave African commodities in Europe. They postulated that the growth of this ‘legitimate’ commerce was being retarded by the slave trade in petitions and in testimony before Parliament. The crisis of abolition therefore led some African and European merchants to attempt to tap into this potential trade and, consequently, to join in the production of ‘legitimate’ goods, as an alternative to the slave trade.

This new strategy necessitated a rather fundamental transformation of slavery in certain specific regions; namely the diversion of slaves into an internal servility in which slaves became labourers in the production of export goods. This alternative promised to both preserve their wealth and did not entail the risk of slave confiscation inherent to the export trade. To exploit this opportunity, however, these elites had to forge a union with the very European company and administrative officials who criminalised the export trade, and who were now casting around for ways to save their decaying presence on the coast.

#### The European plan to resolve the crisis of abolition

Abolition was an act of the metropole, imposed from above on administrators, company officials, and Africans alike. The wishes of the metropole, however, had remarkably little impact on the day to day running of the African possessions. Not only was it recognised that administrators in Africa had

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<sup>55</sup> ANSOM K7, Notes de l’Ordonnateur sur l’affranchissement des captifs, Commissaire Guillet, 29 January 1836, St. Louis.

more experience and knowledge than those in Europe, but quite simply the logistics of communication meant the responsibility for carrying out initiatives, and responding to challenges, resided in officials in Africa. In the absence of telegraphs and telephones, and depending on the availability of passing ships and the vagaries of wind, it often took several months for enquiries to reach the metropole, be acted upon, and for replies to return to administrators.<sup>57</sup>

Both the French government, which directly administered the Senegal colony and its dependencies<sup>58</sup> and the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, who exercised the Queen's authority in the Gold Coast forts and up to a cannon shot away, were interested in promoting trade and cultivation. In 1822, the *Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies* wrote to Baron Roger, the first French *Commandant et Administrateur de Sénégal et Dependancies* of "the firm intention of the government to encourage the development of cultivation... in Senegal."<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the Company of Merchants instructed Governor Torrane to instruct chiefs to "turn their thoughts to *Agriculture* and *Commerce* as the only means of obtaining [European Goods]."<sup>60</sup> But however much the home offices were in favour of increased legitimate trading, and to whatever extent they felt they could provide ideas, resources, and motivation,<sup>61</sup> the ball was obviously in the court of the administrators on the coast themselves.

On the Gold Coast, those responsible parties were officials of the *Company of Merchants trading to Africa* at least until its bankruptcy in 1821. For the large part, the company officials were merchants themselves, and had owned and dealt in slaves previous to the 1807 abolition and suffered in the decline following abolition.<sup>62</sup> They therefore had a vested interest in reinvigorating trade, and based on common economic assumptions of the time

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<sup>56</sup> PRO CO 267/168, Minute by James Stephen, June 1841, Colonial Office.

<sup>57</sup> This time lag is very visible in the French and British communique registers. PRO CO 343 and ANSOM Senegal I.

<sup>58</sup> Saint-Martin, Yves-Jean, *Le Sénégal Sous le Second Empire*, Éditions Karthala, Paris, 1989, p.105

<sup>59</sup> ANS Senegal I/8, Ministre à Administrateur Roger, 9 January, 1822, Paris.

<sup>60</sup> PRO T 70/73, Committee to Governor Torrane, undated 1808, Africa Office.

<sup>61</sup> "We are anxious to learn what progress has been made in Agriculture and Commerce...", T 70/73, Committee to Governor, undated 1808, Africa Office.

<sup>62</sup> PRO T 70/149, Committee Minutes, 2 March, 1807, London.

the mechanism they chose for this regeneration was the plantation.

Most of the raw materials bound for England from the Americas came from plantations, but plantation cultivation had never really been successfully carried out on a large scale in Africa despite several experiments on the Gold Coast and elsewhere. In 1778, The Danish entrepreneur and scientist Dr Paul Isert had mobilised slave labour for an attempted coffee plantation on the Accra plains, but the plantation had failed after his death in 1789.<sup>63</sup> The Danish made further attempts to cultivate sugar, cotton, and tobacco, but failed due to damage done by Asante invaders and the kidnapping of slave labourers from the plantations.<sup>64</sup> Attempting to learn from the failure of these attempts, the officers of the Company of Merchants planned to promote coffee cultivation in mid-sized, independent plantations around each of the coastal forts, where they would be better protected. It was believed that the local populace would soon see the profitability of this venture. "Let the people dependant on our Forts employ their free time clearing small spots of Ground for Coffee Plantations, for their own sole emolument. The Free Natives will soon... follow the example," argued the Company's board of directors in London.<sup>65</sup>

During the same period, the French government was also searching for a marketable commodity to replace the slave trade as a money earner for the colony. The gum trade revived somewhat after abolition, to the delight of the *habitants*, but could not alone justify the continuing expense of the colony to the French government. Baron Roger, in his 1821 *memoires*, lamented that "during the abolition... gum has nearly exclusively... commanded the attention of commerce,"<sup>66</sup> and recommended expansion into other areas. The minuscule French settlements - St. Louis, Gorée, and a few small factories along various waterways - comprised very little arable land, but Roger believed that only cash-crop cultivation could save the Colony. Therefore at the begin of Roger's term in 1819, attempts were made to buy land from Waalo aristocrats, and a plan was

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<sup>63</sup> Kwamena-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*, p. 99. Kwamena-Poh bases his argument on Danish documents, J.F. Ripnasse to Copenhagen, 2 February 1789.

<sup>64</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, pp.64-65.

<sup>65</sup> PRO T 70/73, Committee to Governor Torrane, undated 1808, Africa Office.

accepted by the *Ministre de la Marine* calling for European-owned land outside of the colony, to be worked by wage-labourers.<sup>67</sup> Thus the conclusion of both European administrations - French and British - was that cultivation by plantation was the key to economic success for their colonies.

### Palm oil and slave labour on the Gold Coast

However the growth of agriculture on the Gold Coast did not occur in the way the Company of Merchants had conceived. For suppliers, production is driven by the demands of the market, and in this case it did not involve coffee or cash-crop plantations under the protection of British cannon. Instead, farmers in the interior quickly seized on a commodity in high demand in industrial Britain - the viscous fat produced by the oil palm.

Slave prices within the Gold Coast littoral had continued to fall after 1807; in some accounts purchasers were paying as little as 3 ounces for an adult slave - less than a third of the 1803 price.<sup>68</sup> This phenomenon made slave owning affordable for the first time for farmers and traders outside of the urban merchant class and the chiefly elite, although still out of reach for most peasants. Prices stayed low for about a decade, before recovering around 1820, as internal demand grew.<sup>69</sup> Although between these dates the production of agricultural exports did not increase significantly, unlike gold exports<sup>70</sup>, the recovery of slave prices was largely attributable to the expansion of palm oil production in the Akuapem and Krobo regions.

Palm oil had been imported from West Africa to England for decades. The orange pulp extracted from the seed of certain African palms was useful for soap and other household products. But the sudden increase in demand was attributable to another of its qualities. Palm oil was a superb machine lubricant, and in the nineteenth century industrial England was suddenly awash in

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<sup>66</sup> ANSOM Senegal II/2, *Memoires*, Baron Roger, 1821.

<sup>67</sup> ANS 1B6, *Rapport pour le Ministre de l'Interieur*, enclosed in *Ministre (de la Marine) à l'Administrateur*, 20 December 1819, Paris.

<sup>68</sup> LaTorre, "Wealth Surpasses Everything", p.426.

<sup>69</sup> McSheffrey, Gerald, "Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade", p.366.

<sup>70</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, p.59.

machines. In 1818, the first year in which export figures are clear, Great Britain imported 29,310 cwt of treated palm oil. By 1821, trade had reached the level of 102,490 cwt.,<sup>71</sup> and seemed destined to continue to rise. The regions which produced the most of the palm oil crop, Akuapem and Krobo<sup>72</sup>, were however located in an area of the interior which was especially susceptible to Asante attacks. Between 1821 and 1830, first British crown officials and later the 'Committee of Merchants'<sup>73</sup> saw their fledgling recovery disappearing in the face of Asante attacks.<sup>74</sup> In exasperation, in 1830 the committee installed a new Governor, Captain George Maclean, with a mandate to restore commerce by any means possible. Maclean offered the Asante a truce, promising to safeguard their merchants' access to the Atlantic through the coastal states, thereby satisfying their most important demand.<sup>75</sup> By acquiring the agreement of the rulers along the coast - especially the several Fante Kings, who after 1823 were firmly in the British camp - Maclean in 1831 ushered in an unprecedented peace.

In the previous chapter, we saw how the Atlantic slave trade had encouraged the growth of small-scale merchant-owned plantations around Accra and to some extent other coastal towns, producing crops for urban consumption.<sup>76</sup> In the interior, however, this transformation had not taken place. Maclean's peace changed all that by enabling extensive palm oil cultivation for export to develop in a secure environment. Palm oil production was labour intensive, especially as expressing and treatment of the oil had to take place prior to export.<sup>77</sup> Because even extended families could not supply all the labour necessary, slaves became incorporated into the process. Despite the fact that slave purchase prices rose alongside demand in the 1820s and 1830s, slave

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<sup>71</sup> PP 1845, XXXIV, (187), 20 March, 1845.

<sup>72</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, 1974, p.69.

<sup>73</sup> The Committee of Merchants took possession of the crown territories in 1828 Reindorf, C., *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, Basel Mission Book Depot, Basel, 1887, p.338.

<sup>74</sup> The decline is documented in PRO CO 267/93, Abstract of the Amount of Exports from the Settlements...upon the Gold Coast, 1822-1827.

<sup>75</sup> Metcalfe, G.E. *Maclean of the Gold Coast*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962.

<sup>76</sup> Kea, Ray, "Plantations and labour in the south-east Gold Coast from the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century", in Robin Law, ed., *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce: The commercial transition in nineteenth century West Africa*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.135.

<sup>77</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/7, Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture in the Gold Coast, 1889.

labour was still cheaper than wage labour in a region where land was largely available to free members of the community. Some historians have argued that palm oil cultivation “took place within the framework of traditional agriculture,”<sup>78</sup> but it is clear that slaves in fact began to play an important role in the production of this commodity. Cruickshank, for example, personally observed that slaves sold in Krobo and Akuapem by Asante traders were used by the palm oil industry,<sup>79</sup> and more recently Inez Sutton has shown that there was an ownership connection between slaves in Akuapem and merchant owners in Accra.<sup>80</sup> However it is from Basel Missionary sources in Krobo that the most compelling evidence comes.

Much of this information deals with Ologo Patu, the Konor, or paramount chief, of the Yilo Krobo state. In 1851, Patu was fined 1000 *Kabes*<sup>81</sup> by a Magistrate, probably Bannerman, for not appearing in a court case. Patu was known to possess a massive number of slaves<sup>82</sup>, but his ability to produce palm oil in order to pay off the fine surprised the BMS, who noted that his wives processed palm all “all year round” on a central farm. The oil was cultivated on an extensive series of oil palm plantations surrounding this central site, throughout which were spread *crooms* for his “slaves and children.”<sup>83</sup>

By the mid-1860s the evidence for slave labour on oil palm plantations is even more compelling. During the intervening period, Krobo merchants had developed a system of *huzas*<sup>84</sup>, rectangular strip oil palm plantations somewhat distant from the Krobo heartland. Slaves worked on these new farms to clear the bush, planting young oil palms alongside food crops. While these oil palms developed over a period of 3-5 years, foodstuffs grown between and in the shade of the palms not only fed the cultivators but also were transported into the towns and sold in markets. These young plantations were cleared and at least

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<sup>78</sup> Kaplow, *African Merchants of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gold Coast*, p.52.

<sup>79</sup> Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast*, pp.244-5.

<sup>80</sup> Sutton, Inez, “Labour in Commercial Agriculture in Ghana in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries”, *Journal of African History*, 1983 (24), pp.461-483.

<sup>81</sup> Probably heads of cowries.

<sup>82</sup> BMS D-1.3, Stanger, 30 September 1851, Christiansborg.

<sup>83</sup> BMS D-1.4a, Dieterle, 31 May 1852, Akropong.

<sup>84</sup> Hill, Polly, *The Gold Coast Cocoa Farmer*, Oxford University Press, London, 1956.

initially worked mainly by slaves who “produce[d] a rich harvest for themselves and their heads of family.”<sup>85</sup> After the palms matured, their produce provided a further profit for the slaves’ masters. Missionary Roes noted that the slaves lived in meagre huts and worked “mostly naked” in the fields, and that free labourers worked amongst them.<sup>86</sup> Joseph Mohr, in Akropong (Akuapem) also noted that by the mid-1850s families were “retaining their slaves in order to make a lot of palm oil.”<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, as both Krobo and Akuapem lacked the rivers which made transportation of palm oil in regions outside of the Gold Coast so cheap, and since pack animals were not available in the forest zone, human portage was the only alternative for carrying treated oil and nuts to the coast - porters who probably included a large number of slaves. Ologo Patu had the capacity to send as many as 200 ‘people’ to the coast at a time.<sup>88</sup>

The internal sale of slaves, previously directed toward domestic and stool slavery, easily expanded to incorporate the dealing of slaves for agricultural use after 1807. Maclean’s peace of 1831 further facilitated the commercialisation of agriculture, to which unfree labour was directed.<sup>89</sup> Abolition, rather than ending slavery on the Gold Coast, facilitated its replacement by an indigenous market that furthered the integration of servile labour into the capitalist production system. The next few decades would see the completion of this shift.

### The failure of plantations in Senegal

Although the merchants and aristocrats of the Senegalese coastal regions experienced a similar crisis to those of the Gold Coast their response followed a somewhat different path, largely engineered by *habitants* for whom slaves continued to be a valued asset. There was, however, some similarity in the outcome. As on the Gold Coast, the agricultural anticipations of the French

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<sup>85</sup> BMS D-1.17, *Jahresbericht*, Roes, 17 January 1866, Odumase

<sup>86</sup> BMS D-1.17, *Jahresbericht*, Roes, 17 January 1866, Odumase

<sup>87</sup> BMS D-1.16, Mohr, 30 May, 1855, Akropong, op.cit. in Hanger, *Slaves and Slave Holders*.

<sup>88</sup> BMS D-1.3, Stanger, 30 September 1851, Christiansborg.

<sup>89</sup> PP 1842, XII.1, (551), *Report from the Select Committee on Slavery on the West Coast of Africa* Evidence of Captain Maclean (Cape Coast), J. Topp (Accra), and B. Cruickshank (Anamoboe).

metropole went largely unsatisfied, and an unsuccessful colonial administration found itself at least temporarily outmanoeuvred by an alliance of slave-owning groups. Meanwhile, in the interior, the resurgent commerce in gum further expanded the use of slaves for production. The combination of French attempts at plantation agriculture, the gum trade, and the supply of *recaptives* taken from slave ships led to the widespread use of indentured servitude in the form of the 40-year long *regime des engagés à temps*.

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The *habitant* communities of St. Louis and Gorée had used the confusion of the revolution and the Napoleonic wars to make significant inroads into the power of the French *compagnies*. Before 1789, trade from the Senegalese coast had been controlled by French companies who had received a royal mandate to trade in slaves and gum. The last of these was the aforementioned *Compagnie commerciale d'Afrique*, which was given an exclusive patent in 1774.<sup>90</sup> The *habitants* chafed under the company monopoly which kept them from freely selling their slaves, gum, and millet to transatlantic merchants. In 1789, as the *Estates General* were considering their *cahier*, the St. Louisian *habitants* terminated their contracts to provide slaves for the *compagnie*. Within the year, the *Estates General* had granted the community self-government with popular suffrage for all landowners,<sup>91</sup> under the authority of a mayor (*maire*), who replaced the *compagnie*-appointed *magistrat municipal*.

As *habitant* self-government, the office of *maire* came to assume an important administrative role, both in St. Louis and in Gorée. By the end of the 1820s, the *maires* were largely responsible for hygiene and petty justice. They were important intermediaries and spokesmen for the autochthonous population, and were given a monopoly on recruiting labour, interpreters, and clerks for the French authorities.<sup>92</sup> In 1824, their power was expanded still further to include

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<sup>90</sup> Delcourt, *Gorée*, p.60.

<sup>91</sup> ANF C6/20, Ministre à Boucher, 7 September 1970, op. cit. in Marcson, "European-African Interaction in the Precolonial Period", pp.72-75.

<sup>92</sup> Delcourt, *Gorée*, 1984, p.76-77.

policing of the town and judicial authority over slaves and unpropertied Africans, and their position as middleman with neighbouring states was formalised.<sup>93</sup> In 1829, Governor Jubelu informed the minister that the *maire* had been charged with ensuring slaves were not illegally brought into St. Louis,<sup>94</sup> a significant devolution of power. In 1819, Euro-African trader Michel Pellegrin represented France in peace negotiations with the *Trarza* Moors.<sup>95</sup>

It is no surprise, therefore, that Schmaltz, the *Administrateur et Commandant* in charge of making Senegal profitable again, should turn to the *habitants* for assistance in making their plantation plan work. The requirements for the plantations were cheap labour, available land, and easy transportation. The first area therefore considered was the vast expanse of Fuuta Tooro, where land would be rented by the administration and turned over to *habitants* and French entrepreneurs who would purchase labourers from local chiefs.<sup>96</sup> However the Muslim rulers of the Fuuta saw the plan as a cover for French expansion, and the plan fell through.<sup>97</sup> Schmaltz therefore transferred his attention to Waalo, which was both proximate to St. Louis and relatively fertile, and asked the *maire* to negotiate a treaty with the *Brak* (King) of Waalo in 1819.<sup>98</sup> By the provisions of this treaty, the French agreed to pay an annual fee in return for land suitable for cultivation and the *Brak's* aid in recruiting labour.

The *Brak* had agreed to the treaty largely because he saw the French as an ally against the *Trarza* Moors who had been raiding Waalo for slaves and booty.<sup>99</sup> However, although the treaty stipulated that the chiefs of Waalo would provide labourers and replace runaways, the *Brak* felt no real need to enforce this stipulation,<sup>100</sup> and the French were forced to turn for their labour needs to the *habitants*, most of whom also declined to contribute their valuable slaves to

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<sup>93</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/8, Commandant et Administrateur Roger à Ministre, 10 April 1824, St. Louis.

<sup>94</sup> ANS 2B13, Jubelu à Ministre, 1 April 1829, St. Louis.

<sup>95</sup> Zuccarelli, François, "Les maires de Saint-Louis et Gorée de 1816 à 1872", *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire*, (35), 1973, p.553.

<sup>96</sup> ANSOM 2B2 Schmaltz à Ministre, 8 July 1817, St. Louis.

<sup>97</sup> Marcson, *European-African Interaction in the Precolonial Period*, p.107.

<sup>98</sup> ANSOM 2B4, Schmaltz à Ministre, 10 April 1819, St. Louis.

<sup>99</sup> ANSOM 2B3, encl., Ministre à Schmaltz, 27 November 1818, Paris.

<sup>100</sup> ANS Senegal II/2, Roger à Ministre, 12 January 1820, St. Louis.

the low-paying cultivation work.<sup>101</sup> The French needed labour, but the government could not own slaves, and nobody else would provide free labour.<sup>102</sup> Meanwhile captives freed from slave ships were beginning to accumulate in the two coastal cities. In 1818, a decision was made to solve both problems with a single solution

The catalyst for this decision was the seizure of the slave brig *de Postillion* in early 1818.<sup>103</sup> The ship was carrying a number of slaves, of whom at least 26 appear to have survived, and these were placed in the hands of the *maire* for employment “on works of public utility,”<sup>104</sup> mostly in the St. Louis hospital. The subsequent labour shortage in Waalo led to the redeployment of these workers. By 1823, eight of them were working on the colony’s plantations at Richard-Tol and the *habitation Royale*.<sup>105</sup>

The act to formalise this forced labour of ostensibly freed *recaptives* was written by Governor Roger, who had replaced Schmaltz in 1822, and was prompted by the metropole’s growing concern for Senegal’s commercial future. The *Ministre de la Marine* had approved the use of freed slaves in January 1822, provided they were treated as free labourers and definitively manumitted after 14 years of labour for the government.<sup>106</sup> This system of indenture, in which the labourers were known as *engagés à temps*, was sanctioned by an 1823 ordinance. *Engagés* were to be appropriated for the government’s use as labourers from amongst captives confiscated from slave ships or brought illegally into the colony. They were to be engaged for 14 years or until the age of 21 if a minor. However, this act contained a flaw with unforeseen consequences; article 4 did not limit indenture to the government, but in some cases permitted its extension to private individuals.<sup>107</sup>

By 1825, 34 private plantations had been set up in Waalo. Many of

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<sup>101</sup> ANSOM 1B6, Ministre à Schmaltz, 20 December 1819, Paris.

<sup>102</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Annexe au Procès-Verbal, Commission des Affaires Coloniales, May 1842.

<sup>103</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/1bis, Commandant et Administrateur à Ministre, 3 May 1818, St. Louis.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/20, Roger à Ministre, 7 January 1823, Senegal.

<sup>106</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/8, Ministre à Roger, 9 January 1822, Paris.

<sup>107</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/18, Arrêté concernant le régime des engagés à temps, 28 September 1823, St. Louis.

the owners were French, but a considerable number appear to have been St. Louisian *habitants*.<sup>108</sup> With considerably more than 600 hectares under cultivation, these establishments were of significant size. The administration's plantations added approximately 230 hectares. The number of *engagés* working the private plantations is unknown, but approximations can be teased out from the records. In January 1823, the government had 36 *engagés* working its four plantations,<sup>109</sup> by the end of 1824, that number was up to 72.<sup>110</sup> During the next 4 years the total number of government *engagés* hovered around 100, but it is uncertain how many of those worked in the fields.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, between 1823 and 1839, 213 individuals were engaged to private subjects in Gorée,<sup>112</sup> and in total throughout the colony there were 2,930 indentures between 1818 and 1842.<sup>113</sup> A proportion of these indentures made by the government were for purposes other than cultivation, and some *engagés* acquired by private individuals were utilised as domestic servants, but clearly a large number of *engagés* were directed towards labour in the fields. It is unfortunate that the names of purchasers are missing from the St. Louis records, as these could reveal a link between plantation owners and indentures. However, from the Gorée documents it is clear that the family of Jean Pierre, who owned a 21 hectare plantation at Lampsar, acquired 29 *engagés* in 1835, the majority of whom were young males perfect for cultivation labour.<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, even the influx of labourers brought by the *engagé* system was not enough for the success of the plantations, despite Roger's 1826 claims of success.<sup>115</sup> Roger's successor, Gerbidon, reported that the plantations were a failure in 1827,<sup>116</sup> and in 1831 the government's plantations were abandoned.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Statistics come from ANS Q16, Tableau des établissements de culture, 1 May 1825.

<sup>109</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/20, Rapport, Roger, 4 Janvier 1823.

<sup>110</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/20, Etat Nominatif des Noires engagés pendant 1824, Roger, 1825.

<sup>111</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/12, Roger à Ministre, 18 July 1826, St. Louis; 1 January 1827, St. Louis.

ANSOM Senegal XIV/20, Roger à Ministre, 4 March 1828, St. Louis.

<sup>112</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Relevé des Rachats suivis affranchissements, 1823-1829, Gorée.

<sup>113</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Relevé des Rachats suivis d'affranchissement conditionnel, Decarrett, 31 May, 1843, St. Louis.

<sup>114</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Relevé des Rachats suivis affranchissements, 1823-1829, Gorée.

<sup>115</sup> ANS 2B10, Roger à Ministre, 28 September 1826, St. Louis.

<sup>116</sup> ANS 2B11, Rapport, Gerbidon, 25 August 1827, St. Louis.

By 1837 the last private cultivators had given up as well.<sup>118</sup>

The failure of the plantation scheme was a result of an alliance of elites who opposed the plantations. As early as September 1819, the *Trarzas* had revoked their treaty with the French and begun raiding Waalo villages.<sup>119</sup> In subsequent decade several peace agreements were signed, but were uniformly followed by a resurgence in raiding. In addition, the aristocracy of Waalo was not firmly behind the French. Part of the problem lay with mistranslations in the 1819 treaty. The French believed they had purchased arable land. The Wolof understanding, however, was that the land was only leased, and several landowners disputed French claims so strongly that in 1827 a gunboat had to be placed on the Senegal River.<sup>120</sup> In addition, the peasantry of Waalo was increasingly coming under the influence of Muslim leaders from the east and north. In 1830, the marabout Diile Faatim Tyam Kumba declared a holy war and invaded Waalo. The invasion was quickly defeated, but added greatly to the confusion in the region.<sup>121</sup> Without *habitant* labourers and slave soldiers, the French could not hang on to the region, and the majority of the *habitants* were unwilling to help the French, and were openly antagonistic to the plantation plan. The unified *habitants*, under the *maire*, saw the plantations as threatening peace in the region and potentially as alienating the *Trarza*. This would have cut off the gum trade upon which they relied for their income.<sup>122</sup> Gum was cultivated mainly by slaves, working in gangs of up to 50 in southern Mauritania<sup>123</sup>, significantly upriver from St. Louis, and a portion of the slave trade had been redirected to feeding the growing demand for labourers in these orchards.<sup>124</sup> The *habitants*, following the crisis of abolition, depended on a flourishing gum trade. Accordingly, they refused en masse to assist the French, instead carefully

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<sup>117</sup> Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo*, p.244.

<sup>118</sup> ANSOM Senegal VII, 26Bis, Procès-Verbal de Conseil, 19 November 1841.

<sup>119</sup> ANSOM Senegal IV, 16C, 24 September 1819, St. Louis.

<sup>120</sup> ANS 13G2, Convention avec les Chefs du Waalo, 5 December 1827.

<sup>121</sup> Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo*, p.268.

<sup>122</sup> ANS 2B5, Schmaltz à Ministre, 27 May 1920, St. Louis.

<sup>123</sup> Caillié René, *Journal d'un Voyage à Temboctou et à Jenne dans l'Afrique Centrale*, 1829, Paris, Volume 1, pp.133-135.

<sup>124</sup> Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, p.168.

tending their relationships with the Trarzas.<sup>125</sup>

The French were therefore forced to abandon plantations, but they did so relatively unscathed. Waalo, on the other hand, was left with a civil conflict involving aristocratic *tyeddo*, a rising Islamic force supported by peasants, and *Trarza* invaders. After 1840, and with the advent of groundnut cultivation, the effects of this destabilisation would become more pronounced, widespread, and significant.

#### A preview of emancipation: The *regime des engagés*

The *regime des engagés* was originally conceived as a system of employing captives seized from illegal slave traders in agricultural production for 14 years before definitive manumission would occur. This institutionalised 'liberation', while gradual, must have seemed almost honourable, even to abolitionists. However the 1823 ordinance allowed *engagés* to fall into the hands of private individuals.<sup>126</sup> This, together with the labour and military demands of colony and empire, were to expropriate the system over the next 20 years; transmuting the *regime des engagés* into a form of institutional slavery open to abuses by both the administration and elites. Conversely, the regulations governing engagement also provided a loophole for some slaves to seek their freedom. This grand experiment presaged the struggles of the post-emancipation period as the metropole's intentions were subsumed by the practical needs of the administration, the manipulation of the habitants defending their dominant position, and the limited agency of slaves.

French abolitionism was at its height in the 1820s, and the *regime des engagés* was apparently perceived as an acceptable alternative to slavery by abolitionists. French activists even went so far as to suggest that the system be adapted to replace domestic and agricultural slavery:

It seems to me... that the city of St. Louis, which is the seat of your

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<sup>125</sup> ANS 2B15, Quernal à Ministre, 25 August 1833, St. Louis.

<sup>126</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/18, Arrêté concernant le régime des engagés à temps, Article 4, 28 September 1823, St. Louis.

administration, would have a great interest in not employing or possessing slaves, and substituting *engagés* for service with families, in small cultivation, and in commerce.<sup>127</sup>

The commonly held sentiment that the *regime des engagés* represented an “egalitarian, honourable, and useful” alternative to the slave trade lent a moral dimension to the plan and facilitated two major permutations.<sup>128</sup> First, the idea that the *habitants* could be induced to replace slavery with engagement led to Article 4 of the 1823 Ordinance allowing private ownership of *engagés*. Equally importantly, this concept facilitated a shift in the mode of acquisition of *engagés* by the government from confiscation to purchase.

The French government appears to have purchased its first slave in April 1818, when an 18-year-old male slave named Hametdour was acquired in an ‘exchange’ with a slave owner in St. Louis.<sup>129</sup> However the majority of *engagés* continued to be acquired through confiscation<sup>130</sup> until the system was opened to private owners in 1822 (see chart), following which alternative sources were explored. Between 1825 and 1829, the administration hired the *compagnie de Galam* to purchase at least 433 mostly Bambara<sup>131</sup> slaves from the interior, representing 14% or more of all *engagés* during this period.<sup>132</sup> In the 1830s, the government also attempted to purchase outright privately owned slaves who performed well while under contract to the administration. There are several cases of slaves who were rented by the government to work in the hospital, for example, who were subsequently purchased from their masters in 1837 and 1838 and converted into *engagés*<sup>133</sup>.

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<sup>127</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/1bis, M. Portalin(?) à Roger, 20 February 1821, Paris.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/20, Roger à Ministre, 7 January 1823, Senegal. Alternately spelled Hamer-doux. Probably Amado University

<sup>130</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/20, Rapport, Roger, 4 January 1823.

<sup>131</sup> It is not clear how many really were Bambara and how many were mislabelled simply because they came from the interior. However Bambaras were renowned amongst the French as superior soldiers.

<sup>132</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, no title, 1 October, no year, no place.

<sup>133</sup> ANS 3E12, Conseil d’Administration, Séances 20 October 1837, 4 November 1837, 8 December 1837, and 9 June 1838.

Year	Type of <i>Engagist</i>	Number of <i>engagés</i>	source
1818	Government (all)	25	a
1819	Government (all)	none	a
1820	Government (all)	1	a
1821	Government (all)	40	a
1822	All	145	a
1823	All	175	a
1824	All	170	a
1825	All	183	a
1826	All	219	a
1827	All	183	a
1828	All	207	a
1829	All	104	a
1830	All	105	a
1831	All	126	a
1832	All	48	a
1833	All	93	a
1834	All	151	a
1835	All	172	a
1836	All	145	a
1837	All	54	a
1838	all	99	a
1839	all	160	a
1840	all	98	a
1841	all	120	a
1842	all	107	a
1843	Government	44	b
1844	Gorée (private)	27	c
1844	St. Louis (all)	185	d/e
1845-46	all	39	f
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3225</b>	

a: ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Relevé des nombre des Rachats suivis d'affranchissement conditionnel, Decarrett, 31 May, 1843, St. Louis.

b: ANSOM Senegal XIV/20, Bouet à Ministre, 23 February, 1843, St. Louis.

c: ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Matricule des engagés à temps de Gorée, 2 January 1844.

d: ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Affranchissements Conditionnels par le Gouvernement pendant l'année 1844, Decarret, St. Louis.

e: ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Affranchissements Conditionnels Par diverse de St. Louis pendant l'année 1844, Decarret, St. Louis.

f: ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Matricule des engagés, l'année 1846, St. Louis.

*Engagés* were utilised by the government not only on plantations, but also as boat workers, on construction, and especially in hospitals.<sup>134</sup> By 1840, the *regime des engagés* was so central to labour recruitment in Senegal that the administrative body of Senegal colony, the *conseil d'Administration*, agreed unanimously that it could not be ended without threatening both the commerce and the defence of the colony.<sup>135</sup>

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Defence was an important issue for the French administration, especially since European soldiers easily succumbed to African disease. Therefore in 1819 Schmaltz suggested that liberated slaves be used, first as workers for engineer platoons,<sup>136</sup> and then as enlisted soldiers.<sup>137</sup> In order to induce recruits to join, a signing bonus was promised. Yet in practice, as the government failed to recruit free Africans, this money often simply represented the fee to masters who turned their slaves over to French authorities. The advantages of this practice helped 'convince' authorities in the metropole of the moral righteousness of this policy of *rachats* (repurchases).<sup>138</sup> The result was the 1831-1832 expansion in *engagé* purchasing evident in Table 3.1.

In 1827 the policy of *rachats* was taken a step further. The abolition of slavery had led to a labour shortage throughout the French Empire. Consequently, in April that year, the Minister ordered Governor Gerbidon to investigate the formation of a battalion of 600 men, not only for domestic service, but for use overseas in Madagascar and French Guyane. The mode of recruitment he left open to the Governor's discretion.<sup>139</sup> Gerbidon chose to purchase slaves for the usual indenture of 14 years, train them, and put them on ships without disclosing their destination.<sup>140</sup> The parallels to the slave trade were

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<sup>134</sup> Senegal XIV/20, Jubelu à Ministre, 10 April 1829, St. Louis. Roger à Ministre, 7 January 1823, St. Louis.

<sup>135</sup> ANS 3E13, Conseil d'Administration, Séance 6 July 1840.

<sup>136</sup> ANSOM Senegal XVI/3, 7 month unclear 1819, St. Louis.

<sup>137</sup> ANS 2B4, Schmaltz à Ministre, 4 September 1819, St. Louis.

<sup>138</sup> ANS 2B4, Ministre à Schmaltz, date unclear September 1819, St. Louis.

<sup>139</sup> ANSOM Senegal XVI/3, Ministre à Gerbidon, 10 April 1827, Paris.

<sup>140</sup> ANS 1B14, Gerbidon à Ministre, 31 July 1827, Paris.

evident to contemporary abolitionists. In 1828, a letter was published in the liberal anti-slavery merchant paper *Journal de Commerce* which charged that the "slave trade is recommencing in Senegal... and the government itself is conducting this trade."<sup>141</sup> The government's response, in the royalist *Messenger des Chambres*, was to argue that the engagement, for a limited period, was a vast improvement for recruits who had formerly been slaves, and that the soldiers would help enforce the abolition of slavery in Madagascar.<sup>142</sup>

The blandishments of the abolitionist press had little effect on the recruiting system. Between 1828 and 1848, *rachat* remained the primary recruiting tool for French Senegal. In 1828, the blueprint for a military contingent called the *compagnie des noirs* was developed, and in 1832, King Louis-Phillipe approved 65,680.70 francs to pay for the enlistment, armament, and training of the company, although the unit did not become fully independent until 1836.<sup>143</sup> There were to be two types of recruits: volunteers enrolled for seven years, and slaves 'ransomed' by the government from the interior and indentured for 14 years.<sup>144</sup> In the event, no volunteers enrolled, and the 119 members of the unit in 1845 were all *engagés*<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, they had all been acquired under an exclusive contract in which the *compagnie de Galam* undertook to recruit Bambaras at Bakel.<sup>146</sup> This forced movement of unfree individuals from the interior to St. Louis is strikingly similar to the forced migration, along the same path, which occurred during the Atlantic slave trade. In seeking to replace the system that provided labour during the Atlantic slave trade, the French response was essentially to emulate it.

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The commercial elite of the Senegal colony, the *habitants*, also managed

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<sup>141</sup> ANS K4, Lettre, A. Correard, *Journal de Commerce*, 11 November 18

<sup>142</sup> ANS K4, *Messenger des Chambres*, 15 November 1828.. ANSOM Senegal XIV/2, Note pour le *Messenger des Chambres*, Ministre de la Marine, 1 November 1828, Paris.

<sup>143</sup> ANSOM Senegal XVI/3, Ministre à Roi, 16 August, 1832, Paris.

<sup>144</sup> ANSOM Senegal XVI/3, Pujol à Ministre, 30 May 1836, St. Louis.

<sup>145</sup> ANSOM Senegal XVI/3, Extrait d'un Rapport de M. Rostolant, 1843.

<sup>146</sup> ANS 1B41, Ministre à Thomas, 21 October 1844, Paris.

to profit from the crisis that initially threatened to destroy their power. I have already described how the power of the Afro-European St. Louisian community grew in the period following abolition. *Habitants* were initially opposed to the *engagés*, whom they feared would threaten the rental market for slave artisans.<sup>147</sup> From 1820, however, they had begun to acquire *engagés* for themselves. Post-1824 registers especially reveal a pattern of acquisition of individual *engagés* by private Africans and Euro-Africans, while important *habitant* families and European companies such as Maurel & Prom often owned as many as forty.<sup>148</sup> Although acquired legally as *engagés*, these individuals were often treated as slaves. Unable to command their own labour or seek their freedom, *engagés* were often reported as deceased and reintroduced into the slave market when prices rose.<sup>149</sup> Most of the others were retained past their fourteen-year term. A comparison of the number of definitive manumissions after 14 years in Table 3.1, with the number of *engagés* initially acquired in Table 3.2 gives some idea of the disparity between the figures.

Year	Definitive Liberations
1831	50
1832	4
1833	2
1834	4
1835	8
1836	12
1837	4
1838	6
1839	4
1840	3
1841	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>

ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Relevé des nombre des Rachats suivis d'affranchissement conditionnel, Decarrett, 31 May, 1843, St. Louis.

<sup>147</sup> Zuccarelli, François, "Le Regime des engagés à temps au Senegal", *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 1962 (7), pp.420-461.

<sup>148</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/21, Relevé des Rachats suivis affranchissements, Gorée, 1823-1839.

<sup>149</sup> ANS 2B18, Charmasson à Ministre, 4 October 1839, St. Louis.

Although death and desertion undoubtedly claimed many *engagés*, of the first eleven year-groups only 7% appear to have been definitively liberated 14 years later, a suspiciously low number. This abuse drew the notice of abolitionists and some administration officials, although condemnation was strongest in the metropole.<sup>150</sup> In 1827, Roger introduced an ordinance requiring patrons to account for *engagés*, instituting punishment for missing *engagés*, and requiring that new *engagés* be informed of their rights, but enforcement appears to have been lax.<sup>151</sup>

In response to pressure from the metropole to address this problem, Governor Bouet, overlooked his own opposition and that of the *conseil d'Administration*<sup>152</sup> and reluctantly drafted an ordinance forbidding the introduction of *engagés* into the colony as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1844, excepting only military recruits.<sup>153</sup> The ordinance, like so many before it, was never properly implemented, and debate continued. Opponents argued that ending the regime would lead to a revival of slavery, despite the fact that it had never significantly decreased.<sup>154</sup> This argument was nevertheless to ensure that the system continued until 1846, when a new law was passed to replace the 1844 ordinance, and the *regime des engagés* was finally ended.<sup>155</sup>

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I have argued that *engagés* ended up being, in many ways, *de facto* slaves. Their situation was similar to slaves in that they had no control over their own labour and no freedom to leave employment, at least for 14 years. Thus they had few options. *Engagés* could simply attempt to serve their 14 years, hoping for freedom, although we know that many never received that liberation. If they worked for the government they could attempt to gain an early release for

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<sup>150</sup> ANS K8, *Rapport sur la Question des engagés à temps*, de Polignac, 22 January 1846, St. Louis.

<sup>151</sup> ANS 1A14, Arrêté Locale 18, Roger, 13 May 1827, St. Louis.

<sup>152</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/18, Conseil d'Administration, Séance 16 January 1844.

<sup>153</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/18, Arrêté Locale 6, Bouet, 18 January 1844, St. Louis.

<sup>154</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/28, Les Memoires de Gouverneur Thomas, 9 November 1845, St. Louis.

<sup>155</sup> ANS 1B49, Houbé à le President de la Cour d'appel, 23 August 1846, St. Louis.

'good behaviour', although examples of this parole are thinly spread in the historical record.<sup>156</sup> *Engagés* could, and did, run away - a common strategy for slaves as well. There is evidence of desertion as early as 1818, but exact numbers are not known.<sup>157</sup> Certainly it was difficult for those recruited by the *compagnie de Galam* from the interior to return home through high risk areas where they were likely simply to be captured and re-enslaved.

What is even more interesting is that the system of *engagés* provided an opportunity for slaves. Slaves and *engagés* worked alongside one another, and just as masters converted *engagés* into slaves, slaves often pretended to be *engagés* and claimed their freedom from authorities.<sup>158</sup> It is unclear exactly how this worked, but it appears that slaves would pretend to be an *engagé* previously owned by their own masters, who had been sold, deserted, or had died. In the era before photography validated identity papers this subterfuge could have succeeded. By 1844, a significant number of cases such as this occurred, but administrators usually decided against the slave.<sup>159</sup> The exact number cannot be determined, as there are no quantitative legal records for this period. Additionally, some cases where a master was attempting to fraudulently retain an *engagé* by alleging they were slaves could have been perceived as cases of impersonation by the usually *pro-habitant* officials.

### Conclusions

The impact of abolition was distributed unevenly in West Africa. For the inhabitants of coastal entrepôts, especially St. Louis and Accra, the effect was quite pronounced, threatening their position as merchants and owners of the means of production. For the European companies who interacted with them, abolition threatened profitability, and the European presence on the coast was consequently initially reduced. Slave-owners and slaves in the interior were less affected, although slave traders faced a possible loss of revenue.

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<sup>156</sup> ANS 2B13, Jubelu à Ministre, 8 November 1828, St. Louis.

<sup>157</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/20, Roger à Ministre, 7 January 1823, Senegal.

<sup>158</sup> ANS 1B41, Ministre à Thomas, 4 October 1844, Paris.

<sup>159</sup> ANS 1B41, Ministre à Thomas, 24 October 1844, Paris.

The long-term response of merchants and trading communities was to replace the slave trade with a commerce in 'legitimate' goods, fortunately becoming feasible just as abolition was implemented. The British and French governments encouraged this activity. However, their schemes for putting into action these plans were invariably the encouragement of plantations of export crops near the coastal forts. In both the Gold Coast and Senegal administration officials reckoned without the needs and abilities of indigenous elites. Initially, chiefs and merchants organised an illegal slave trade and diverted slave caravans to areas where abolition was not enforced, but this was not an effective long-term strategy. Therefore on the Gold Coast, merchants moved to quickly exploit the British demand for palm oil by sponsoring organised production in Akuapem and Krobo. Similarly, Senegalese *habitants* sabotaged the Waalo plantations which threatened their expanding interests in the gum trade. As a result, the monopoly companies failed and the British and French governments had to become more involved in the colonies - the British by assuming control of the possessions on the Gold Coast from 1822-1828 and again in 1843 and the French by investing heavily in Waalo. Through these choices, the great powers were drawn towards expansive colonialism in both regions.

The crisis of abolition never actually threatened to end slavery within Africa. During abolition and the subsequent rise in legitimate commerce slavery, rather than replacing slavery with wage labour, was resilient enough to survive, and thrive, in several forms. In the Gold Coast interior, palm oil plantations were worked by slaves cheaply available after the export trade in people had diminished. Likewise, gum, the major crop of the early 1800s in Senegal, was worked by groups of slaves.

The colonial state also began to experience a labour and recruitment shortage. The French system of *engagés a temps* was initially intended to replace slave labour with freed captives who were conditionally liberated under a 14 year indenture. However, the manpower requirements of the French government and the active involvement of *habitants* led to its transformation into an enormous regime under which more than 3,000 individuals were placed in a

servile relationship, and only a small proportion eventually liberated. While some slaves exhibited agency in attempting to use the system to gain their liberation, the system of *engagés* remained a dependency relationship that was slavery in all but name. This type of interaction between slaves, slave-owners, colonial officials, and the metropole, allowing the institution of slavery to stave off externally generated challenges will appear in later chapters.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **Rules and reality: ante-proclamation slavery and society on the Gold Coast**

At first glance, it could be argued that following the abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade (1807), the administration of the Gold Coast gradually prepared the way for emancipation (1874). In this teleological view, ante-proclamation policies represented a deliberate attempt to reduce the central role of slavery within society in preparation for the introduction of capitalism and wage labour.

However the path to emancipation was neither methodical nor planned, and the mid-nineteenth century did not witness a gradual transition toward emancipation. Instead, policy towards slavery in the ante-proclamation period was marked by series of experiments which - despite a series of external edicts and the interference of an enlarged missionary community - left dependency relationships largely unaffected for the majority of slaves.

This argument is not intended to imply that the period preceding emancipation was marginal to that process. During these crucial years, the various modes of liberation were explored by members of servile classes. Organisations of traditional and educated elites coalesced which would be crucial in organising post-proclamation resistance, and the attitudes and strategies which would be applied by government and missionary agents in the post-proclamation period were formulated and discussed. At a fundamental level, during this period British power increased at the expense of other European powers, leaving Britain alone as a colonial power facing another powerful external adversary - the rising Asante<sup>1</sup> nation to the north. However while important social and economic factors were developing, slavery was not really any closer to being ended in 1873 than it was in 1807.<sup>2</sup> It took the shock of the 1873 Asante War, and the attention it focused on the region, to cause the radical departure from previous policy that ushered in emancipation.

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<sup>1</sup> Asante's history during this period has been extensively discussed. See McCaskie, T.C., *State and Society in pre-Colonial Asante*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995. Wilks, Ivor, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The structure and evolution of a political order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> In 1873, the Chief Justice of the Colony, Marshall, argued that it was necessary to "recogn[ize]... the rights of masters as well as... of the servants" in defending his judicial decisions to return slaves to their masters. PRO CO 879/33, Marshall to Wolseley, 24 December 1873, Cape Coast, enclosed in Wolseley to Kimberley, 26 December 1873, Cape Coast.

## Restricting slave owning in the wake of the 1834 emancipation

Slavery lost its legal recognition in most parts of the British Empire through *the Act for the abolition of slavery throughout the British Colonies* in 1833<sup>3</sup>, in which provision for the abolition of slavery (by August 1, 1834) was introduced. All slaves in regions under British suzerainty henceforth became 'apprentices' and were "absolutely and forever manumitted."<sup>4</sup> In the confusion surrounding the promulgation of this act, Governor Maclean, acting for the Committee of Merchants, wrote to the Colonial Office asking how the 1833 act applied to the Gold Coast.<sup>5</sup> The response, embodied by a Royal Order in Council, was that it did not. That great philanthropic act applied only to crown colonies - Antigua, Bermuda, Bahamas, St. Christopher, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Mauritius, and the Cape Colony.<sup>6</sup> The Gold Coast administrations of Maclean and his successors by this decision retained great leeway in dealing with slavery. As a result, other than requiring the chiefs signatory to the 1831 treaty to restrict *panyarring*<sup>7</sup>, Maclean declined to interfere with slave-owning amongst the settlements' allies and neighbours.

The 1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade had already forbidden slave owning within the British Isles<sup>8</sup>, but did not constrain slave holding in the colonies. On the Gold Coast, even Company officers continued to hold slaves, often *within* the forts.<sup>9</sup> After the Committee, responding to abolitionist pressure, forced this practice underground in the 1830s, officers simply purchased debt contracts from African merchants and became the 'patrons', and *de facto* masters, of large numbers of pawns.<sup>10</sup> Although Maclean's administration was largely absolved of responsibility for this state of affairs by the Parliamentary Committee on West Africa in 1842<sup>11</sup>, such abuses were one reason the Colonial Office, sensitive to the abolitionist lobby, brought the possessions back under Crown control in 1843.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>3</sup> PP 1833, IV, (209) *Bill for the abolition of slavery, for Promoting the Industry of Manumitting Slaves, and Compensating the Persons hitherto entitled to the Service of such Slaves..* As amended PP 1833, IV, (233).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast*, p.262.

<sup>6</sup> PP 1834-5, XLI, (1137), King's Order in Council, 31 July 1835.

<sup>7</sup> PP 1842, XI.1 (551), *Report from the Select Committee on Slavery on the West Coast of Africa*, Evidence of J.G. Nicholls, p.7. While domestic slavery was considered generally benign, panyarring was viewed as barbaric and unnatural.

<sup>8</sup> PP 1806-7, I, *An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 41,45,.53.

<sup>9</sup> PRO CO 267/168, Minute by James Stephen, June 1841, Colonial Office.

<sup>10</sup> WMMS *West African Correspondence* Box 258, G. Wrigley to Committee, 20 February 1837, Cape Coast.

<sup>11</sup> Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast*, p.280-283.

<sup>12</sup> PRO CO 267/168, Minute by James Stephen, June 1841, Colonial Office. PRO CO 96/2, Maclean to Stanley, 13 September 1843, Cape Coast.

The Act for the More Effectual Suppression of the Slave Trade in 1843 was similarly a response to the state of affairs both in the Gold Coast and other West African possessions. The Act 'extend[ed] and appl[ied] to British subjects wheresoever residing' provisions of previous acts including slave dealing, importing slaves, and the holding of slaves and pawns.<sup>13</sup> Although the act applied only to Europeans, Maclean's successor Governor Hill (RN)<sup>14</sup> was immediately faced with a number of Fante and Ga-Adangme chiefs who were labouring under the impression that their slaves were to be confiscated.<sup>15</sup> The apprehensive Hill quickly reassured them that their slave-owning rights had never been at issue. He further informed them that "the slave-trade was all that we prohibited"<sup>16</sup>, a patent untruth.

The administration did not again attempt to extend the prohibition against slave-owning until 1851, when another Governor (Major Stephen) Hill issued a proclamation on the advice of his Executive Committee withdrawing legal recognition of the slaves of "educated natives" of Cape Coast, Accra, and Anomabu. This act had an economic, rather than moral, motivation. The British merchants represented by this committee simply felt these Euro-African and African traders held an unfair advantage over their European competitors through their access to unfree labour.

But both Hill and the committee members were stunned by the indigenous response to the act. The paramount chief of Cape Coast immediately recalled labourers he had undertaken to provide for civil construction projects, and the proclamation was ripped from town walls.<sup>17</sup> More significantly, a coalition of urban leaders opposed to the act quickly emerged, led by such important traders as Joseph Smith, William de Graft, and James Thompson. These activists pursued several strategies - defending 'domestic servitude' as essentially benign; disputing the legality of the law; and demanding compensation for their potential losses.<sup>18</sup> This proved too much for Governor. Recognising that his position was legally tenuous and that the support of the Euro-African elite was politically essential, Hill declined to enforce the act.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> NAG ADM 4/1/1, 'Act for the More Effectual Suppression of the Slave Trade', 6&7 Victoria, 24 August 1843.

<sup>14</sup> The first Crown-appointed Governor following the 1842 transfer of authority.

<sup>15</sup> Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, p.29.

<sup>16</sup> PRO CO 96/4, Hill to Stanley, 6 March 1844, Cape Coast.

<sup>17</sup> PRO CO 96/25, Hill to Colonial Office, 12 December 1851, Cape Coast.

<sup>18</sup> PRO CO 96/25, Native Traders to Hill, 15 December 1851, Cape Coast.

<sup>19</sup> PRO CO 96/25, Hill to Colonial Office, 12 December 1851, Cape Coast.

## Political and economic realities in the aftermath of abolition

If the administration had no mandate and no will to end slave owning amongst the urban elite who professed loyalty to the Crown, it is perhaps no wonder that the British had even less interest in moderating slave-owning outside of this group. British authority outside of the coastal 'possessions' was extremely limited. The informal influence of the Committee of Merchants had reached no farther than the towns abutting their forts until the end of the 1830s when some authority was reasserted by Maclean,<sup>20</sup> on the basis of his personal reputation and the 1831 treaty establishing peaceful relations between the coastal powers and the *Asantehene*.<sup>21</sup> While this treaty guaranteed the role of Asante as a major power in the region, it also extended the administration's commitment as guarantor for the coastal states. Following the reassertion of British authority, the Colonial Office and its appointees were largely content to maintain this *status quo*.<sup>22</sup>

It is also clear from the incident that concludes the preceding section that it was politically and economically expedient for administrators to support or overlook institutions of slavery. The production of legitimate goods suddenly expanded during this period, in the wake of the 1831 treaty which made long-distance trade safe for the first time in decades.<sup>23</sup> Palm oil export values climbed from £16,750 to £42,745 in 1841 accompanied by a similar growth in guinea grains and to a lesser extent coffee<sup>24</sup>, and internal trade increased commensurately. European administrators attempted to direct commerce toward specific crops, and in this they were assisted by Basel Missionaries who had been invited into the region by the Danish administrator of Accra in 1828.<sup>25</sup> The Basel Mission Society began to cultivate coffee at a model farm in Domonasi in 1840, and supported British attempt to promote coffee and fruit cultivation amongst indigenous planters.<sup>26</sup> This operation took on a distinctly evangelical air under the influence of the BMS. At Domonasi, autochthonous leaders were invited to observe the entire coffee preparation

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<sup>20</sup> PP 1842, XI.1, (551), *Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, 1842.

<sup>21</sup> PP 1842, XI.1, (551), *Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, 1842, evidence of J.G. Nicholls.

<sup>22</sup> PRO CO 96/14, Winniett to Grey, 31 January 1849, Cape Coast Castle. Governor Winniett makes clear the distinction even between Cape Coast Castle and Cape Coast Town.

<sup>23</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, p.78.

<sup>24</sup> PP 1842, XII, *Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, Appendix.

<sup>25</sup> Kwamena-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*, pp.112-113.

<sup>26</sup> NAG EC 6/ Basel Mission Periodicals, *Mission Magazine*, 1847.

operation<sup>27</sup>, and were encouraged to take seeds, equipment, and knowledge back to their communities. Coffee cultivation became something of an obsession with administrators as well, who turned to it to repair the commercial damage wrought by abolition.<sup>28</sup> But ironically coffee plantations, strenuously promoted along the littoral by the European establishment, utilised the very unfree labour that abolition was intended to abolish. The largest plantations, owned by such Euro-African merchants as Swanzy, Lutterodt and others, were mainly worked by slaves.<sup>29</sup> The economic hopes of the administration therefore rested completely on the backs of slaves, and although high international tariffs kept coffee cultivation from attaining the necessary critical mass<sup>30</sup>, the interests of administrators were now firmly intertwined with that of slave owners. Thus throughout the 1840s and 1850s slavery remained integral to the economic success of the region through the cultivation and transportation of both palm oil and coffee.<sup>31</sup>

Political concerns also contributed to making emancipation an unattractive option for the administration. As we have seen, the colonial administration's reliance on indigenous urban slave owners enabled them to successfully resist challenges to their slave owning rights in 1844 and 1851. British colonial policy was also bound by consideration of the Asante to the North. A renewal of conflict with Asante would have threatened the economic development of the region, and the administration therefore carefully avoided alienating Asante authority. This was a policy made more difficult by the 1843 *Act for the More Effectual Suppression of the Slave Trade* promulgated from the metropole, which prohibited British officers from assisting in the "carrying away of slaves to be dealt with as slaves."<sup>32</sup> Committee of Merchant's authorities had habitually returned slaves who sought refuge in their posts during the previous decade, a policy which allowed Asante traders the freedom to use slave carriers to transport goods to the coast. The 1843 Act threatened this informal convention, and the British administration reacted by ignoring this clause for as long

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<sup>27</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Reverend Robert Brooking, 1846 Report, p.81-2.

<sup>28</sup> PRO CO 96/11, Governor Winniett's Report on the Blue Book, 31 December 1847, Cape Coast.

<sup>29</sup> 1842.XI.1, (551), *Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, 1842, report of Dr. R. Madden. Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Extracts from Stanger's Diary, No. 17, 29-30 March 1848, Accra.

<sup>30</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, 1974, p.65.

<sup>31</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Stranger's Quartel Bericht, August 1854. The use of slaves in palm oil cultivation is discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>32</sup> NAG ADM 4/1/1, *An Act for the More Effectual Suppression of the Slave Trade*, 6+7 Vict., 24 August 1843.

as possible.<sup>33</sup> When attention was finally drawn to their inactivity by the abolitionist press in 1855, Acting Governor Henry Connor suggested, not that further resources be given to aid enforcement of the act, but that a royal dispensation be given to exclude the Gold Coast from these provisions, since the colony could not survive an Asante onslaught.<sup>34</sup> Realpolitik continued to triumph into 1858, when Governor Bird not only continued to choose not to enforce the 1843 runaway slave provisions, but threatened to fine or imprison any British subjects harbouring or protecting runaway Asante slaves.<sup>35</sup> Throughout this entire period, British magistrates continued to return runaways, "well knowing that if sent back, [many] would be beheaded instantly on their return."<sup>36</sup> In hindsight, the British were correct in considering this issue an important keystone in their relationship with the Asante; a fact made evident by the *Asantehene's* decision in 1863 to launch an invasion of the coast in the wake of a British decision not to deliver up runaway slaves.<sup>37</sup>

Nor were slaves themselves active in promoting emancipation. When, in the 1840s, Dr. Madden, who had been charged by Parliament to report on slavery in West Africa, instructed a number of slaves that they were free, they refused to take up their liberations unless "the Queen intended to give them something to eat, [otherwise] they would prefer to serve their masters who supplied their wants."<sup>38</sup>

If Governors could not, until 1863, even bring themselves to accept the letter of a law restricting the return of slaves to an outside power, and could not count on significant slave agency, they were even more reluctant to promote emancipation. The mass liberation of slaves would have endangered their own economic projects and threatened to alienate the powerful urban merchants and chiefly office holder lobbies within the Gold Coast. Colonial officials had to operate in the face of these realities while at the same time responding to abolitionists in the metropole. The result was the development of colonial propaganda which insisted that slavery on the Gold Coast was relatively benign. Perhaps Governor Benjamin Pine best explained the view exhibited by his contemporaries:

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<sup>33</sup> PRO CO 96/33, Connor to Herbert, April 7, 1855, Cape Coast.

<sup>34</sup> PRO CO 96/33, Connor to Herbert, April 7, 1855, Cape Coast.

<sup>35</sup> PRO CO 96/43, Proclamation by Bird, 18 May 1858, Cape Coast.

<sup>36</sup> PRO CO 96/43, Bird to Bulwer Lytton, 11 August 1858, Cape Coast.

<sup>37</sup> PRO CO 96/57, Chief Justice's Remarks on the Emancipation and Slave Trade Suppression Acts, encl. in Andrews to Newcastle, 10 April 1862, Cape Coast. Governor Pine refers directly to a case of two slaves who had been granted refuge in a British post, to the direct anger of the *Asantehene*. PRO CO 96/60, Pine to Newcastle, 13 February 1863, Cape Coast.

The universal prevalence of Domestic Slavery throughout the Gold Coast is admitted by the stereotyped phrase of its apologists that it is 'interwoven into the whole framework of society there'... it has been represented as a mild form of slavery scarcely deserving of the name, but rather to be regarded as a patriarchal system of government whereby the mass of the people is kept in subjugation and provided for. It has been compared to the rule exercised by Chiefs over their clansmen or to the authority of Lords over their Vassals.

This notion was an effective tool for justifying the administration's complicit recognition of domestic slavery, and it was soon put to use. Starting in the 1850s, officials were forced to defend their stance on slavery in the face of pressure not so much from distant metropolitan concerns, but generated by a new non-governmental group within the region: the missionaries.

#### Slavery, missionaries, and policy 1833-1870

The Committee of Merchants, who administered the British possessions from 1828 to 1843, had no real policy towards slavery beyond ensuring that nothing interfered with the increasing production of and commerce in legitimate goods. The Committee, a purely commercial venture, was even more vulnerable to economic considerations than a colonial government, and therefore while their agents undertook various schemes to promote agriculture, they exhibited little interest in indigenous slavery beyond attempting to use it for their own ends.

Governor Maclean, however, was the exception to this rule, and was responsible not only for ending war with Asante and reopening trade routes, but for the first experiments with a domestic servitude policy attempted by a European administration on the Gold Coast. Maclean was not tempted to emancipate domestic slaves or end pawning. He regarded pawning as generally no worse than the English apprenticeship system, and argued that in England and the colonies "to relieve a debtor of his obligations and to accept his services in lieu of the debt, is not uncommon."<sup>39</sup> In defending his role in allowing pawning to continue, Maclean argued that he "could not release [pawns] from their pecuniary engagements," but that he had guaranteed that their labour should not be coerced.<sup>40</sup> To this end, the Governor did force several merchants to allow their pawns to work off the principal of their debt,

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<sup>38</sup> Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast*, p.236.

<sup>39</sup> op. cit. Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast*, p.220.

<sup>40</sup> PRO CO 96/2, Maclean to Stanley, 13 September 1843, Cape Coast.

but only in a small number of cases.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Maclean allowed the gradual manumission of some long-standing slaves when their masters died, "class[ing] them as debtors to the estate... on condition of their serving [either the estate or individuals who lent them money to pay of the debt] at low wages until they should come ask to repay the money advanced."<sup>42</sup> Maclean also freed a small number of domestic slaves who could prove abuse, but otherwise did not interfere with the institution.<sup>43</sup>

Maclean's successors, the Governors of the Settlements on the Gold Coast following the reversion to Crown rule in 1843, did not diverge from his policies other than the manumission of slaves who were abused or could disprove the validity of their enslavement.<sup>44</sup> Like their predecessors on the Committee of Merchants, these colonial administrators had no real policy regarding domestic slavery. It was only with the appointment of Benjamin Pine in 1857 that this changed. While Pine acknowledged that the actions of the colonial government in exercising jurisdiction over much of the coast implied official recognition of domestic slavery, he realised that mass emancipation could not be effected with colonial resources.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Pine felt that as the British influence protected the people of the coast from the threat of invasion, human sacrifices, and the oppression of chiefs, "although our jurisdiction necessarily involves some recognition of slavery, yet this is scarcely to be regarded as an evil, since it enables us to prevent its abuses..."<sup>46</sup> As a compromise measure, he therefore issued a memorandum that in many ways presaged the methods of emancipation 13 years later. By Pine's command, no magistrate would compel a slave or pawn to return to his/her master, although only in cases of abuse or ownership by a British subject were magistrates ordered to emancipate the slave, non-intervention otherwise being the watchword. Pawns who were seized because of a debt owed by a relative or countrymen were also to be freed by officers.<sup>47</sup>

The result was more a whimper than a bang. Pine was replaced by Governor

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<sup>41</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, p.159.

<sup>42</sup> PP 1842, XL1, (551), *Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, 1842, report of Dr. R. Madden, encl, Maclean to Russell, 13 April 1841.

<sup>43</sup> PRO CO 96/2, Maclean to Stanley, 13 September 1843, Cape Coast.

<sup>44</sup> Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast*, pp.228-229. There is no other evidence that this took place, and Cruickshank was not the most objective observer.

<sup>45</sup> PRO CO 96/41, Pine to Labouchere, 20 October 1857, Sierra Leone.

<sup>46</sup> PRO CO 96/41, Pine to Labouchere, 20 October 1857, Sierra Leone.

<sup>47</sup> PRO CO 96/41, Memorandum for the Guidance of the Courts as to cases involving Slavery and Pawning, Governor B. Pine, 30 October 1857, Cape Coast Castle.

Bird less than a year later, and courts largely persisted in actively returning slaves to masters. Few 'illegally' *panyarred* pawns appear to have come forward, partly because there was little advertisement of the proclamation.<sup>48</sup> Still, by introducing into Gold Coast law the idea of non-recognition of slave relationships, rather than active emancipation, Pine pioneered a model strategy in mediating between British abolitionism and Gold Coast political realism.

Other schemes were to emerge from another source - the activities of Protestant missionaries. Missionaries had been inconsistently active on the Gold Coast since 1482. Portuguese Augustinians were the first, followed by French Capuchins at Assini in the 1630s, the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Cape Coast in the later part of the seventeenth century, and the Dutch Moravians at the beginning of the eighteenth.<sup>49</sup> However these missionaries had largely been interested in the spiritual wellbeing of the European community, and generally confined their activities to the larger coastal trading posts. The nineteenth century missionaries were different. The Basel Mission Society settled the first missionary 'communities' on the Gold Coast in 1828 in the Danish zone of influence<sup>50</sup> - not only Accra but for the first time in the interior regions of Akuapem and Krobo. The European missionaries were assisted by a group of Jamaican families who were brought over to form the hub of the BMS congregations. The Basel Missionaries dispersed into the interior, teaching the catechism and preaching the gospel. Along the coast, they and opened mission schools for training teachers, clerks, skilled labourers, and catechists.<sup>51</sup>

The BMS was joined by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1836. The WMMS was equally evangelical, but although the congregation sent agents as far as Asante<sup>52</sup>, most of its effort was initially focused on the Cape Coast area.

Both of these societies reviled the institution of slavery, Wesley himself having had much to say on the subject<sup>53</sup>, and both could have played a central role in promoting abolitionism in the Gold Coast at least by acting as a watchdog over the administration. Nevertheless, pragmatism often intrudes upon idealism, and the

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<sup>48</sup> NAG SCT 2/4, Accra Judicial Assessor's and Divisional Court, 1860-; SCT 5/4, Cape Coast Judicial Assessor's Court, 1866-.

<sup>49</sup> Wilson, *The Krobo People*, p.135.

<sup>50</sup> Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change*, p.75.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, *The Krobo People*, pp.136-137.

<sup>52</sup> WMMS, Box 258/31, West African Correspondence, Journal of T.B. Freeman, 1839.

<sup>53</sup> Much of it contained in WMMS Box 662, Anti-Slavery Papers.

realities of operating in an African environment were not long in making themselves clear to the missions' officers. Missionary personnel were despatched to remote locales and charged with building churches, chapels, schools, and houses for themselves. Free labour was not readily available, especially where indigenous regimes were unsympathetic, and missionaries often had to employ pawns and slaves. The Wesleyans tried to palliate this operation by purchasing the contracts of pawns and deducting a portion of their wages until the purchase sum was cleared.<sup>54</sup> In the late 1850s through to the early 1870s the BMS similarly instituted a policy of purchasing slaves and allowing them to work off their 'debt' to the mission, similar to the French policy of *rachats*.<sup>55</sup> However, they were also often forced to rely on the hired labour of slaves.<sup>56</sup> There was a thin division between liberating slaves by purchase and purchasing slaves for labour and the missionary groups were clearly sometimes forced to operate on the 'wrong' side. This situation was somewhat embarrassing for the missions, and colonial officials used such practices to deflect criticism of administration policy emanating especially from WMMS sources, at one point intimating that a leading Methodist, the Reverend Freeman, was one of the largest purchasers of pawn contracts in the entire region.<sup>57</sup>

The congregations themselves initially attracted alienated or peripheral members of the community, such as slaves<sup>58</sup>, but Euro-African merchants, eager to associate themselves with their European identities, formed the most influential faction within the Wesleyan community.<sup>59</sup> Both the slave and slave-owning constituencies had their own ideas on the role of dependency relationships in society, and these further complicated the role of missionaries on this important subject, as clergy could not freely agitate against an institution supported by important members of their flock. The WMMS consequently decided not to directly agitate against slavery, but rather to promote a capitalist mode of labour in order to "assist in creating a market-force economy to free slaves."<sup>60</sup> Based on the theory that cash

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<sup>54</sup> Metcalfe, *Maclean of the Gold Coast*, p.311.

<sup>55</sup> BMS D-1.19b, Zimmerman, 11 January 1868, Odumase. Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Suss to Basel, 24 April 1856, Akropong; Baum to Basel, 14 July 1857, Akim.

<sup>56</sup> BMS D-1.21b, Zimmerman, 16 August 1869, Odumase. BMS D-1.11, Zimmerman, 30 January 1861, Odumase.

<sup>57</sup> PRO CO 96/2, Maclean to Stanley, 12 September 1843, Cape Coast.

<sup>58</sup> BMS D-1.11, Zimmerman, 30 January 1861, Odumase. BMS D-1.10, Zimmerman and Aldinger, 25 January 1860.

<sup>59</sup> WMMS Box 258, West African Correspondence, Wrigley to Committee, 20 February 1837, Cape Coast.

<sup>60</sup> WMMS Box 662, Anti-Slavery Papers, Printed letter regarding cultivation of cotton in Africa, 24 December

cropping would stimulate wage labour they carried out several schemes to promote the growth of cotton and other goods from a model farm at 'Domonassi', aided by a grant from the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade.<sup>61</sup> The farm failed, but the missionaries clamoured for further resources for a second attempt.<sup>62</sup> The Wesleyans even at one point attempted to recruit American ex-slaves<sup>63</sup> to return and lead the project, but this effort was once again unsuccessful. These experiments in using capital to promote wage over unfree labour proved only that the Gold Coast was not ready for the wage labour revolution.

The Basel Missionary Society's experiment with emancipation was even more interesting, and in the event was almost adopted as colonial policy. The BMS, operating largely in the interior, and drawing less of its support from urban elites, ironically had a more free hand to pursue anti-slavery policies. Slavery had been an issue discussed by missionaries in the field for some time, and in the early 1860s the debate came to a head, culminating in a debate between the missionary leadership in Basel and a number of lay missionaries in Africa. The Committee, supported by Eisenschmid in Kyebi and several other field agents, argued that slavery was not only evil in and of itself, but also the root of many other social and economic problems in indigenous society.<sup>64</sup> In the end, the strict abolitionists emerged victorious, and in 1863 the BMS banned slave-holding among its members. Rather than alienating or expelling their slave-owning congregates, however, the BMS forged a compromise whereby the slaves were declared debtors for a sum equivalent to their purchase price. The slaves were thereafter paid a monthly wage for their labours, a portion of which was refunded to repay their masters. A significant number of these slaves also received the right to work a piece of land for themselves.<sup>65</sup> Alongside this policy, the Basel Missionaries also began to reject important potential converts who were not willing to liberate their slaves.<sup>66</sup>

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1860.

<sup>61</sup> WMMS Box 258, West African Correspondence, Instructions to Rev. Freeman and other missionaries of the Society on the Gold Coast, and in Ashantee, undated 1835.

<sup>62</sup> WMMS Box 266, West African Correspondence, MMS Synod Minutes, 23-25 May 1842.

<sup>63</sup> WMMS Box 662, Anti-Slavery Papers, African Aid Society Paper for intending Settlers in Africa, undated 1860. This strategy was possibly influenced by the ongoing attempts to settle freed American slaves in places such as Liberia.

<sup>64</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Eisenschmid's letter, 5 May 1862, Akim.

<sup>65</sup> PP 1865, V, (412), *Report from the Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, Evidence of Rev. Elias Shrenk, 1865.

<sup>66</sup> A number of "heads of families" were rejected for baptism because they refused to put aside their slaves and their wives - monogamy being the other major hurdle to conversion for wealthy individuals. BMS D-1.16,

While this gradual liberation scheme drew inspiration from Maclean's efforts 30 years earlier, its scope was somewhat greater as the BMS congregation had several thousand members<sup>67</sup>; and its effect was heightened when in 1865 the plan was presented in parliament and its results evaluated, bringing the matter to the attention of the Crown.<sup>68</sup> Although the action was limited to Methodist congregations, the idea of transforming slaves into bonded workers was a precedent when, 10 years later, administrators had to decide what form emancipation would take.

### Slaves to the state?: colonial recruiting

Before the 1870s, British policy on the Gold Coast was generally anti-expansionist<sup>69</sup>, a reflection of prevailing attitudes and lack of colonial fervour amongst the British population. The result was the policy of limiting British jurisdiction discussed above, with the coastal forts and settlements administered by a small European staff in an effort to control costs.<sup>70</sup>

Both for budgetary reasons and because European soldiers were susceptible to tropical disease, the colonial administration quickly turned to African troops to enforce what authority they had.<sup>71</sup> The idea of using Africans as soldiers was not a novel one. In earlier chapters, we saw how European merchant companies had often relied on town militias (*asafo*) as auxiliaries. In other parts of West Africa, the recruitment of Africans had a long history. The British had begun recruiting indigenous troops in Gorée, Senegal in 1808, soon after capturing the island.<sup>72</sup> There they had encountered a wall of apathy in attempting to enlist volunteers, and turned to slaves, whom they felt "would be happy to change their state" and could be purchased "for the consideration of about eighty to a hundred dollars each".<sup>73</sup> The British administration in Senegal also incorporated slaves confiscated under the 1807 anti-slave trading act into their military forces.<sup>74</sup>

The officer in charge of this effort, Administrator Maxwell, was raised several

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Zimmerman, 28 September 1864, Odumase; D-1.19b, Zimmerman, 16 February 1867, Odumase; D -1.22a, Zimmerman, 30 March 1870, Odumase.

<sup>67</sup> The Akropong congregation alone had 956 members. PP 1865, V, (412), *Report from the Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, Evidence of Rev. Elias Shrenk, 1865.

<sup>68</sup> PP 1865, V, 412, *Report from the Committee on the West Coast of Africa*, 1865.

<sup>69</sup> Agbodeka, *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast*, 1971, pp.34-35.

<sup>70</sup> PRO CO 96/18, Fitzpatrick to Grey, 10 March 1850, Cape Coast.

<sup>71</sup> PRO CO 96/4 Hill to Stanley, 2 March 1844, Cape Coast.

<sup>72</sup> PRO CO 267/32, Maxwell to Castlereagh, 14 September 1808, Gorée.

<sup>73</sup> PRO CO 267/32, Maxwell to Castlereagh, 15 January 1809, Gorée.

years later to the position of Governor of Sierra Leone (and thus the senior Government official in West Africa). In that role he promoted the recruitment of Africans to serve in British forts throughout the region, and communicated with the Committee of Merchants on the Gold Coast the possibility of inducing Fantes to join such a force.<sup>75</sup> The Committee of Merchants, unsure that they could find voluntary recruits, turned to slaves 'emancipated' by the British cruiser squadron, requesting the conscription of about 200 men to serve at Gold Coast forts.<sup>76</sup>

The number of ex-slaves recruited in this manner is unclear, but could never have been very large as the Committee of Merchants did not maintain a significant military force. The crown administration inherited from the Committee of Merchants only 191 soldiers of the Gold Coast Corps and the militia<sup>77</sup>, who were then augmented by the 1<sup>st</sup> West Indian Regiment brought over to form the garrisons of the major forts.<sup>78</sup> Governor Hill, sensing the need for a larger force and unable to form a large body of volunteers, filled out the militia by 'borrowing' slaves from local slave owners. Membership in the militia carried a monthly wage, and Hill found it quite simple to pay a portion of that wage to the slaves' masters, continuing a long tradition of administrator's 'wink[ing] at' such arrangements.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, slaves continued to form the bulk of the Gold Coast Corps throughout the 1840s and 1850s. A majority of voluntary recruits were runaway slaves, as many as 90% according to one colonial source.<sup>80</sup> Military officers tended to accept these runaways out of a desperate need for recruits, but the complaints of aristocrats and slave-owners led to a restructuring of the recruiting process in 1858 to a method whereby chiefs were required to produce a quota of free recruits each year.<sup>81</sup>

While the administration faced opposition from slave-owners to their policy of recruiting runaway slaves, the purchase and indenture of slaves was also soon forbidden by an 1852 decision by Secretary of State for the Colonies Newcastle that "the plan of purchasing men... even if in reality likely to tend to their ultimate freedom... could scarcely be understood in Africa except as implying a recognition by

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<sup>74</sup> PRO CO 267/32, Maxwell to Castlereagh, 15 January 1809, Gorée.

<sup>75</sup> PRO CO 267/54, Barnes to Bathurst, 25 November 1813, Africa Office.

<sup>76</sup> PRO CO 267/54, Committee to Arbuthnot, 24 September 1819, Africa Office.

<sup>77</sup> PRO CO 96/4, Hill to Stanley, 2 March 1844, Cape Coast.

<sup>78</sup> PRO CO 96/4, Hill to Stanley, 2 March 1844, Cape Coast.

<sup>79</sup> Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast*, p.234.

<sup>80</sup> PRO CO 96/43, Pine to Labouchere, 10 February 1858, Cape Coast.

<sup>81</sup> PRO CO 96/43, Pine to Labouchere, 2 February 1858, Accra; CO 96/43, Pine to Labouchere, 10 February

her Majesty's Government of the principle of Slavery."<sup>82</sup> The subsequent decline in the muster of the Gold Coast Corps and the West Indian Regiment (which was being reinforced with local recruits) continued until 1862, whereupon the threat of war with Asante forced the military commander of the region, Major Cochrane, to review policy. Cochrane, desperate for troops, concluded that Governor Pine's 1857 order that administration officials should not "compel or order a slave or pawn to return to his master"<sup>83</sup> implied that "every British officer... might refuse to view any person as a [slave or] pawn" and thus allow for their enlistment as a free individual, a policy he ordered military recruiters to adopt.<sup>84</sup> When Governor Pine reported this strategy to the Colonial Office, Secretary of State Newcastle firmly reiterated to Governor Pine that "the enlistment of Slaves or Pawns to serve in Her Majesty's Forces is not to be practiced."<sup>85</sup> Following this order and complaints from several slave-owners<sup>86</sup>, Pine thereafter instructed the military establishment to cease recruiting slaves and pawns in no uncertain terms.<sup>87</sup> Despite appeals, the Colonial Office upheld the decision ending the recruitment of unfree individuals and runaway slaves in December 1863.<sup>88</sup>

The upshot was the continuation of recruiting problems for the military, which sought any potential solution that would raise the number of enlisted personnel. The first possibility, raised in the wake of the 1863 War, was to authorise a paid Native Levy in times of conflict<sup>89</sup>, but the limitations of this untrained force were clear - it was simply no substitute for regular units. As the demand for police and garrison troops<sup>90</sup> increased following the annexation of the Dutch forts in 1871<sup>91</sup>, a decision was taken to recruit troops outside of the region at Lagos, a significant departure from previous policy. The success of this experiment would have serious ramifications on labour opportunities for liberated slaves and freemen alike in the next quarter century.<sup>92</sup>

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1858, Cape Coast.

<sup>82</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/10, Parkington to Hill, 18 December 1852, London.

<sup>83</sup> PRO CO 96/41, Memorandum for the Guidance of the Courts as to cases involving Slavery and Pawning, Governor B. Pine, 30 October 1857, Cape Coast.

<sup>84</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/20, Newcastle to Carnarvon, 26 September 1862, London.

<sup>85</sup> PRO CO 96/58, Newcastle to Pine, 4 March 1863.

<sup>86</sup> PRO CO 96/62, Pine to Newcastle, 14 October 1863, Cape Coast.

<sup>87</sup> PRO CO 96/62, Pine to Newcastle, 7 November 1863, Cape Coast.

<sup>88</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/21, Newcastle to Pine, 14 December 1863, Enclosed in Sir Lugard to Military Secretary, 7 December 1863, London.

<sup>89</sup> PRO CO 97/1, Ordinance 1 of 1864, Governor R. Pine, 22 February 1864.

<sup>90</sup> PRO CO 98/2, Legislative Council Minutes, 6 October 1871.

<sup>91</sup> PRO CO 98/2, Legislative Council Minutes, 9 March 1872.

<sup>92</sup> NAG ADM 1/10/1, Belles to Pope-Hennessy, 8 May 1872, off Elmina.

### The waxing of indigenous elites: 1861-1873

The colonial administration, supported by meagre resources from the metropole and unable to recruit significant African auxiliaries, found itself unable to exercise much authority in the regions protected by the 1831 treaty. British authority east of Cape Coast went into decline and failed to recover even following the 1850 acquisition of the Danish territories in the east - the forts of Accra, Prampram, Ningo, Keta, Ada, and treaty authority over the rich regions of Krobo and Akuapem.<sup>93</sup> The administration attempted to rectify this situation by ordering a direct poll tax in the protected territories to raise revenue for infrastructure projects and personnel in 1852<sup>94</sup>, but the tax was extremely unpopular, and by 1854 a revolt was spreading from the former Danish regions west into Fanteland.<sup>95</sup> Opposition crystallised around the theme that the money was being misspent<sup>96</sup> as the British administration failed to improve the infrastructure or place significant garrisons. By 1857, Governor Pine was recommending a retreat from protectorate responsibilities.<sup>97</sup> The 1863 Asante raids further aggravated the situation, and the disgruntled Colonial Office refused to release funds to deal with the resulting turmoil in districts recently vacated by Asante forces.<sup>98</sup>

The environment of resistance engendered by the Poll Tax Revolts<sup>99</sup> carried over to the late 1860s, as coalitions of aristocrats and educated merchants coalesced to control their own political destinies.<sup>100</sup> Among the Fante, this spirit of empowerment found its expression in resistance to a proposed exchange of territory between the British and the Dutch. The exchange, intended to normalise the European powers respective coastlines, would have transferred authority over roads leading to Fante from Wassaw and Chama to the Dutch, traditional allies of the

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<sup>93</sup> PRO CO 96/18, Winniett to Early Grey, 30 March 1850, Cape Coast.

<sup>94</sup> Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, p.207.

<sup>95</sup> PRO CO 96/30, Hill to Newcastle, 29 January 1854, Cape Coast.

<sup>96</sup> PRO CO 96/52, Andrews to Newcastle, 25 April 1861, Christiansborg.

<sup>97</sup> PRO CO 96/41, Pine to Labouchere, 10 October 1857, Cape Coast.

<sup>98</sup> Parker, "Ga state and society in early colonial Accra", pp.114-115.

<sup>99</sup> Opposition to this, the first attempt to levy a direct tax on Gold Coast inhabitants, was perhaps the first shot in a long history of Ghanaian (and African) resistance to colonial taxation. Similar examples outside the Gold Coast include the Hut Tax War in Sierra Leone and the revolts over hut and dog taxes in South-West Africa. Extensive commentary on the Poll Tax Revolts can be found in the Cape Coast - Central Region Archives.

<sup>100</sup> PRO CO 96/77, Kennedy to Colonial Office, 7 November 1868, Cape Coast; CO 96/85, Ussher to Kennedy, 11 July 1870, Cape Coast.

Asante.<sup>101</sup> The Kings and Chiefs of Fante refused to allow Dutch power over their neighbours, who also rejected Dutch authority, instead maintaining “their resolution... whether accepted or not to maintain their true allegiance to the British flag under all circumstances and adversities.”<sup>102</sup> As a result, the Fante nobility rejected Dutch authority. Their principal complaint appears to have been the proposed exchange, however the recent imposition of the poll tax and British failure to pay promised stipends led the combined chiefly office holders to choose to form an independent Confederation.<sup>103</sup> The resulting convention proceeded to swiftly create a national militia, and began to collect taxes.<sup>104</sup>

Although the move towards Confederation was initiated by kings and chiefs<sup>105</sup>, the bureaucracy was soon necessarily transferred into the hands of missionary- and colony-educated Euro-African merchant families, who began to exercise executive control.<sup>106</sup> As chiefly officeholders became disaffected by their declining power over the situation, they turned back to the British, and in 1872 important chiefs began to disavow the Confederation, seeing in British jurisdiction a way of regaining their authority.<sup>107</sup> As a result, not only did the Confederation fail, but a significant wedge was driven between the British officials and chiefs on the one hand and the merchant elite on the other which was to prove important to future events.<sup>108</sup>

The decline of British authority led to an inability on the part of the administration to influence indigenous slavery in any manner. The only remaining method by which the British could influence slave-owning was through the courts, but aristocrats had begun to withdraw their support for colonial courts in the late 1860s.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, Benjamin Pine’s order to magistrates not to interfere with slavery left the few slaves who chose to assert their freedom in the hands of their

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<sup>101</sup> NAG-CC #72, Aborigine Rights Protection Society, Granville to Cardwell, 13 September 1869, Cape Coast.

<sup>102</sup> PRO CO 96/79, Simpson to Kennedy, 2 March 1869, Akwamu.

<sup>103</sup> NAG-CC #72, Aborigine Rights Protection Society, Granville to Cardwell, 13 September 1869, Cape Coast. PRO CO 96/80, Simpson to Kennedy, 15 June 1869, Cape Coast, enclosing Kings of Cape Coast to Kennedy, undated, Cape Coast. Also see PRO CO 96/80, Simpson to Kennedy, 15 June 1869, Cape Coast, enclosing Kings of Cape Coast to Kennedy, undated, Cape Coast.

<sup>104</sup> Webster and Boehn, *West Africa Since 1800*, pp.158-164.

<sup>105</sup> Chiefs of “Assin, Abrah, Ququah, Anamaboe, Mankessim, Ajimacoo, Dominassie, Akumfie, Akim, and Goomoor”, CO 96/85, Horton to Granville, 2 May 1870, Cape Coast.

<sup>106</sup> NAG ADM 12/1/1, Salmon to Kennedy, 3 January 1872, Cape Coast.

<sup>107</sup> NAG ADM 12/1/1, Salmon to Kennedy, 20 January 1872, Cape Coast. CO 96/85, Ussher to Kennedy 11 October 1870, Cape Coast.

<sup>108</sup> PRO CO 96/92, Kennedy to Kimberley, 2 January 1872, Cape Coast. Salmon to Kennedy 3 January 1872, Cape Coast.

<sup>109</sup> Agbodeka, *African Politics and British Policy*, p.15.

masters.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, magistrates did effect the release of individuals, especially children, placed in bondage for debts contracted by persons other than themselves or their parents.<sup>111</sup> While relatives of pawns did sometimes use the courts in this manner, the general paucity of cases during this period reflects both the reluctance of Africans to use British courts and the limited extent of British authority.<sup>112</sup>

### Conclusion

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1873, the King of Holland gave up his forts on the Gold Coast to the British in what would prove to be a watershed event for the Gold Coast region.<sup>113</sup> The succeeding two years would see Asante power on the coast broken, British hegemony established, and slavery banned.

On the eve of the exchange, however, none of this could have been foreseen. Most specifically, there was no established plan and no impetus for ending slavery. The preceding half-century had been an era, at best, of experimentation with various small-scale schemes of ending servile relationships, the most significant of which were not even initiated by the administration. Lacking the resources to effect such policies even if they had been found desirable, Governors largely allowed Africans to decide the fate of slaves, a strategy that culminated in Benjamin Pine's non-interference strategy. At no point during this period was the 1834 Emancipation Act promulgated in any part of the Gold Coast, outside of the few physical structures that comprised the British forts, and even there runaway slaves were generally returned until 1863, after which they were still not encouraged to seek refuge.

Nevertheless, the experiments of the ante-proclamation period were crucial to defining the post-proclamation settlement. The failure of military officials to obtain sanction for slave-recruiting policies would have significant ramifications for ex-slave labour and enlistment. Pine's non-interference strategy would form the basis of the adoption of the 'Indian Model' of Emancipation. The alienation of educated urban elites from the administration in the wake of poll tax resistance and Confederation

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<sup>110</sup> Slaves could bring civil cases to court charging their masters with "wrongly claiming [defendant] as slaves/pawns" if they could prove they were illegally sold or captured. eg NAG SCT 17/4/1, Accra JA Court Gold, Brown v. Adjua, 13 April 1874. NAG ADM 1/10/2, Bentil to Ussher, 2 February 1870, Mumford.

<sup>111</sup> NAG SCT 2/4/9, Accra Divisional Court, Accra Divisional Court, 2 August 1871.

<sup>112</sup> 23 cases involving slaves and pawns in the Accra and Cape Coast Judicial Assessor and Accra Divisional Courts between April 1867 and November 1874. NAG SCT 2/4/6-2/4/11 and 5/4/15.

<sup>113</sup> PP 1873, XLIX, (266), No.33, Received 6 May 1873.

would have great effect on their power to resist the ordinances of emancipation, while the reconciliation of many chiefs would lend them authority to negotiate their own solutions. Lastly, the firm establishment of missionaries would push the development of wage labour and the rehabilitation of slaves further in the next quarter-century.

**CHAPTER 5:**  
**The grand experiment - emancipation in Senegal Colony, 1832-1854**

If slavery in Senegal and the Gold Coast prior to the sixteenth century was in varying degrees related to the lineage system, largely social and political in nature, and only one of a complex set of organising principles, then the periods of the Atlantic slave trade and abolition introduced important innovations in slave-holding and dealing within these societies. European initiatives - highly-organised commerce of the Atlantic slave trade and its subsequent abolition, the demand for 'legitimate' goods - had led to the commercialisation of captivity and later a slave mode of production in some sectors of local culture. However, these plans, European in conception, had largely been hijacked by indigenous merchants and chiefly officeholders.

On the Gold Coast, experiments with expanding opportunities for manumission were similarly defeated or deflected by local elites, while the French *regime des engagés* was simply appropriated by *habitants* to serve their own needs. Indeed, the free inhabitants of St. Louis and Gorée were largely satisfied with prevailing conditions and locally posted officials saw little reason to rock the boat. Thus, as in the Gold Coast, there was little reason to expect a drastic change in the state of affairs. Events in the metropole were to change all this. The principles behind the 1848 revolution in France were to be expressed in a drastic reversal of policy and a revival of humanitarianism and abolitionism, culminating in an emancipation decree promulgated throughout the empire. The administration's view of slavery in the fledgling colonies had always been linked to politics in the metropole, and the impact of this decree in the Senegal colony would influence the fate of the colony's 6000 slaves. Moreover, it would serve as a prototype for a pattern in policy and action that would continue until the end of the century.

These events have been discussed to some extent by Martin Klein, who devotes half of a chapter to emancipation and its immediate impact, and another half to more long-term effects which manifested themselves during and after Faidherbe's expansion in the 1854-1865 (discussed in chapter 6 of this dissertation).<sup>1</sup> However while Klein's treatment of the subject does form a framework for understanding the

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<sup>1</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, pp.19-27 and pp.28-36 respectively.

events surrounding emancipation, this chapter is an attempt to provide a deeper narrative by approaching several topics outside of Klein's scope. The first section covers the debates on and attempted reform of slavery prior to 1848. These events illuminate the motivations and strategies of administrators in the metropole and in Senegal as well as slave owning elites, and assist us in understanding the crisis of the sudden shift to emancipation. Much of this chapter is also concerned with the days surrounding the episode of emancipation, in which we can see at play the specific social and economic characteristics of slavery in St. Louis and Gorée which lead to a unique outcome for emancipation. Using this information, I am able in the last sections to engage with Klein, Mohamed Mbodj and other historians including Louis Faidherbe himself to discuss the *de facto* impact of emancipation.

#### Formulating emancipation?: manumissions and debates 1832-1848

Following the economic failures of the Waalo plantations in 1827, the French monarchy turned its attention to domestic concerns and Senegal was somewhat neglected. A series of inexperienced governors was imposed upon St. Louis, one for each of the 21 years between Roger's disgrace in 1827 and emancipation in 1848.<sup>2</sup> None of these administrators lasted long enough to formulate and carry out their own policies, and the Ministry of the Navy directly imposed most of the period's procedural regulations.<sup>3</sup> The various Governors were solely responsible for the implementation of these regulations and the running of day-to-day affairs during their brief tenures.

The policy on official manumission policy was a case in point. The administration had a policy of *affranchisements définitives* for *engagés* who managed to survive their fourteen-year indenture. However when the French government began to come under increased pressure from abolitionists following the July 1830 revolution, the Ministry of the Navy began to investigate the possibility of allowing slaves to purchase their own freedom. Consequently, they solicited the opinions of the various colonial Governors.<sup>4</sup>

In Senegal, it was Governor Saint-Germain (1831-1833) who was reluctantly forced to confront this issue. The constant changeover of administrators had vested the

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<sup>2</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/12 to I/33, Correspondence Générale.

<sup>3</sup> The *Ministre de la Marine* was responsible for administering overseas colonies.

*habitant* community with an inordinate amount of power, and Saint-Germain was aware that they would not support any proposed system of *rachats*. Furthermore, whereas in the Caribbean colonies there were relatively few slaves who could afford to purchase their freedom, many of the slaves of the islands of St. Louis and Gorée, endowed with a share of their own wages, could conceivably have purchased their freedom en-masse.<sup>5</sup> Saint-Germain therefore brought three objections before the *Ministre de la Marine*.

First and foremost, Saint-Germain appealed to the Ministry's inherent thriftiness and predilection for public order, suggesting that the introduction of *rachats* would exacerbate slaves' inclinations to flee their masters, becoming vagabonds and thus drains on the public purse. He furthermore suggested that any policy incorporating *rachats* would alienate slave-owners whose support the administration relied upon.

Saint-Germain realised both of these issues were insufficient justifications for opposing an extension of self-liberations. Instead he argued that the *habitant* class, relying as they did completely on their slaves for income, would be irreparably ruined by the loss of their skilled slaves; and reminded the *Ministre* that *habitants* and their slave labourers were the basis of the region's economy. Saint-Germain suggested as a solution that if *rachats* must be allowed, slaves in Senegal should be required to purchase their freedom by "replace[ing themselves] with another slave of the same value."<sup>6</sup>

This suggestion ran directly counter to the Ministry's main objective of pacifying abolitionist critics, and was largely ignored. Instead, in 1832, a royal ordinance was passed allowing slaves to purchase their freedom. The act required slaves to submit "through the mediation of either their master or the *procureur du roi*, a demand to be definitively recognised as free" after a six month waiting period.<sup>7</sup> The act made clear that these manumissions could occur only with the agreement of the slaves' owners, to whom the slaves were presumably required to pay a certain amount.

The 1832 ordinance deliberately left unclear the mechanisms under which these

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<sup>4</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/1, Saint-Germain à Ministre, 5 April 1832, St. Louis. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.19.

<sup>5</sup> ANS K6, Notes de l'Ordonnateur sur l'affranchissement des Captifs, Commissaire Guillet, 29 January 1836, St. Louis.

<sup>6</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/1, Saint-Germain à Ministre, 5 April 1832, St. Louis.

<sup>7</sup> Ordonnance Royale, 12 July 1832, in Duvergier, J.B., *Collection Complète des Lois, Décrets, Ordonnances, Réglemens et Avis du Conseil d'Etat*, Tome 37, Pommeret et Guénot, Paris, 1838.

*rachats* would occur, which perhaps explains why it has been ignored by many historians of emancipation even though available records do indicate a small number of slave manumissions prior to 1848.<sup>8</sup> Analysis of the documents is made even more difficult by the unfortunate blending of *rachat* records with those of other forms of manumission, including the definitive emancipations of *engagés*. However that specific cases are *rachats* can be concluded from marginalia and details in tables. A scrawled notation in one notebook, for example, indicates that the freedom of a four year old girl named Fara was purchased by Tiaye M'Baye, a carpenter, for 500 francs<sup>9</sup>, and similar records of what appear to have been re-purchase prices in other documents seem to similarly indicate occurrences of *rachat*.<sup>10</sup>

Alongside the records of *rachats* there is evidence of a small number of individuals freed by the administration. Amongst these, the singular record of Aminata stands out. Aminata was a young female slave freed by the magistrates of St. Louis due to abuse at the hands of her master.<sup>11</sup> This appears to have been a unique occurrence, as was the case of an unregistered *engagé* named Foutoura, freed by the courts because she had been introduced into the colony illegally, although it is not clear how or why.<sup>12</sup> However like all slaves manumitted by these executive judgements, by the mechanism of *rachats*, or after 14 years of service as *engagés*, Aminata and Foutoura became freedwomen but did not acquire the rights of citizens of the colony until three years after their manumission or, if minors, until three years after they had reached their *majorité*.<sup>13</sup>

It is unclear how many slaves purchased or were granted their freedom between 1832 and 1848. Records held in the French archives in Provence and in Dakar do not agree on this issue, and it is often unclear whether the individuals discussed in the documents in either location were freed *engagés* or manumitted slaves.<sup>14</sup> Records from Dakar tell us that only 261 slaves purchased their freedom between the years 1830 and

<sup>8</sup> ANS K6, Actes d'affranchissement, 1834-1841.

<sup>9</sup> ANS K6, Actes d'affranchissement, 1834-1841, No. 122, 18 December 1836.

<sup>10</sup> ANS 3E20, Procès-Verbal, Séance de Conseil d'administration, 5 February 1848, St. Louis.

<sup>11</sup> ANS K6, Actes d'affranchissement, No. 124, 10 December 1836.

<sup>12</sup> ANS K6, Actes d'affranchissement, No. 20, 18 May 1841.

<sup>13</sup> ANS 1B23, Ministre au Pujol, 4 September 1835.

<sup>14</sup> i.e. ANS M3, Rapport sur la Service Judiciaire, Greffe de l'Île de St. Louis and Greffe de Gorée, various dates.

1841, about twelve a year, and this suggests that *rachats* were periodic occurrences rather than a major manifestation.<sup>15</sup> For the *Ministre*, the 'failure' of the *rachats* policy was an embarrassment. The blame for this must be placed firmly on the administration which either by oversight caused by the excessive gubernatorial turnover rate or by design failed even to pass an ordinance officially confirming the royal act until 1840.<sup>16</sup>

The administration's reluctant compliance with the *regime des rachats* was symptomatic of its self-acknowledged inadequacy. The colony was so diminutive - French sovereignty still encompassing only the two principal islands and a small number of posts along the river- that anti-slavery laws should have been eminently enforceable.<sup>17</sup> But with no effectual leadership within the Colony, and with France more than a month away by ship, no real policy against slavery was formulated.

Yet while attitudes and policy remained essentially stagnant in Senegal, attitudes were beginning to change in the metropole. The prospect of emancipation was first seriously broached within the government in the 1830s, as the newly reinforced abolitionists began to flex their muscle in France. Senegalese colonial officials, however, continued to dismiss the idea. While accepting that the metropole controlled both budgets and means of personal advancement, administrators had to deal with the realities of their situation in Senegal. As a result they became increasingly defensive of the compromises they were forced to make with local elites. In their despatches to their superiors they attempted to deflect the increasing abolitionist pressure by suggesting that emancipation would carry its own humanitarian dangers. They suggested that the welfare of slaves - especially the aged or infirm - would suffer if masters were released from their responsibilities, and that emancipation would turn slaves into vagrants and create a class of the voluntarily unemployed. Artfully, they also appealed on the political and budgetary grounds likely to concern ministerial officials: that neighbouring peoples would withdraw from their commerce with the colony, that it would become necessary to mount expensive police operations in the interior of the region, and that local customary law would break down and foment anarchy.<sup>18</sup> Despite the breadth of their arguments,

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<sup>15</sup> ANS 4E1, Procès-Verbal, Séance de Conseil Générale, 14 November 1842, St. Louis

<sup>16</sup> ANS 2B18, Charmasson à Ministre, 6 October 1839, St. Louis.

<sup>17</sup> ANS K17, *Rapport sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905.

<sup>18</sup> ANS K6, Notes de l'Ordonnateur sur l'affranchissement des Captifs, Guillet, 29 January 1836, St. Louis.

the solutions proposed by officials in Senegal reveal that their primary concern was to avoid alienating the *habitants*, upon whom the weak Governors relied for stability. Governor Guillet, for example, proposed that if emancipation were necessary, slaves should be indentured to their masters for 14 years, at the end of which an indemnity would be given, thus both softening the blow and compensating local slave owners.<sup>19</sup>

Although unable to effect the local enforcement of anti-slavery policies, the *Ministre de la Marine* continued to feel pressure from abolitionist sources, and in 1840 the emancipation debate reached a new level culminating in the appointment of a special commission to study the question of slavery in the colonies. This committee identified three potential modes of emancipation:

1. Emancipation of children as they are born; the adult generation of slaves to remain with their masters.
2. The purchase of all slaves from private owners by the state, which would then collect a portion of the slave's wages until the purchase price were fully paid.
3. Conversion of slaves into apprentices for a period of time, following which they were to be definitively emancipated.<sup>20</sup>

All of these suggestions proposed a gradual transition from domestic slavery to emancipation, the central variance being the role the state would play. Remarkably, these suggestions were rejected not by abolitionists, but by the Commandant of Gorée. The Commandant dismissed the idea of state regulation of gradual liberations, correctly perceiving that the administration in place could not competently regulate the work of slaves. On the other hand, he recognised that Senegalese slaves, generally richer and more skilled than their Caribbean counterparts, would not accept apprenticeship. "It is necessary", he wrote, "for their liberation to be both instantaneous and definitive."<sup>21</sup> Under such a formula slaves, he believed, would stay at their jobs and would cause a minimal disruption to commerce and society. However, the Commandant further argued, if this were to occur an indemnity must be simultaneously paid to *habitant* slave-owners. These arguments do not really reflect a surprising reversal of opinion, instead

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<sup>19</sup> Idem

<sup>20</sup> My paraphrasing. ANS K25, *L'esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906, pp.15-17.

<sup>21</sup> ANS 2E2, Procès-Verbal, Séance d'arrondissement de Gorée, 4 September 1842.

displaying a continuing pragmatism. Faced with the increasing possibility that French abolitionists would force through some sort of emancipation deal, the Commandant simply chose to channel his resources into getting the best possible deal for *habitants* and other slave owners.

The early 1840s were a period of intense debate on the question of the abolition of domestic slavery. In May 1842 a colonial commission was appointed in Paris by the Naval Ministry which invited comments from all the colonies on the possible consequences of emancipation and on the best mode of liberation to adopt.<sup>22</sup> In the event, the contentions of Senegalese officials, supported by evidence assembled from hearings in St. Louis and Gorée, were effective. The opinions of the various classes were unsurprising. The *noires libres* and Europeans were divided on the subject of emancipation, but both *signares* and *habitants* declared themselves opposed to any such plan, despite the offer of a cash indemnity. Nor was there any division amongst the ranks of the slaves, who unanimously supported emancipation although suggesting that they would probably be happy to remain in residence with their owners.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless they could not hope to compete with their owners. The statements of the *habitants* were very convincing. Carefully phrased and eloquently stated, in direct contrast to the evidence of their uneducated slaves, the *habitants'* statements recognised the moral appeal of emancipation. However, they argued, slaves in the colony were not only more secure and had a higher standard-of-living than many *noires libres* but were also instrumental in conducting commerce and in feeding the colony.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the Paris commission recognised the differences between Senegalese and Caribbean slavery. They agreed not only that there were differences between the two in the roles slaves played in the economy, but also that in Senegal, unlike the Caribbean, most masters were non-European and both they and the slaves were Muslims. The commissioners also recognised the significance of the colony's position, surrounded as it was by slave-owning societies.<sup>25</sup> Thus the Paris commission yielded to pressure from an alliance of *habitants* and the colonial administration, declining to apply to Senegal the

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<sup>22</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Rapport à la question de l'affranchissement des Captifs au Sénégal, 16 April 1847, Paris.

<sup>23</sup> Summarised in ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Rapport à la question de l'affranchissement des Captifs au Sénégal, 16 April 1847, Paris.

<sup>24</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Procès-Verbal de Commission d'Inquete, November 1848, Saint Louis.

law of 18 July 1845 which established conditions for gradual emancipation in the Caribbean colonies.<sup>26</sup>

The limited compromise of 1848 did not satisfy the abolitionist community. On April 24, 1847, a petition was presented to the *Assemblée Nationale* containing 11,000 signatures, comprising amongst them “3 bishops, 19 *vicaires généraux*, 858 priests... 7 members of the institute, 151 elected counsellors, 213 magistrates...” and more than 9000 property-owners and merchants.<sup>27</sup> Amongst other issues the abolitionists remonstrated the lack of any emancipation plan for Senegal.

In response, the Naval Ministry prepared a draft of a gradual emancipation ordinance for the colony in 1847. The act was to have set up a system enabling slaves to request their emancipation, each case to have been considered by the Governor on an individual basis. The administration was to have been given the power to force masters to accept a ‘reasonable’ *rachat* price.<sup>28</sup> This further attempt to reach a compromise between metropolitan abolitionist pressure and colonial concerns implied that full emancipation would still be a long time in coming.

### Emancipation

In the event, the 1847 royal ordinance was never passed, and in 1848 everything changed. In February of that year Parisians took to the streets and ministers on the left seized power, ejecting the royal family and proclaiming a Republic in early May. The Republican leaders were reformers and had close ties to the abolitionist movement, and it took only four days for the new government to name a commission, led by abolitionist Victor Schoelcher<sup>29</sup>, charged with “preparing an immediate act of emancipation in all the colonies of the Republic.”<sup>30</sup>

The decree ultimately adopted was no compromise, but an intellectual heir to the *declaration des droits de l'homme*. The young optimistic Republican government did not

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<sup>25</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Commission des affaires coloniales, Annexe au Procès-Verbal, Séance du Mai 1842.

<sup>26</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Rapport, le Conseiller d'état, 31 July 1847, Paris.

<sup>27</sup> Gaston-Martin, *histoire de l'Esclavage dans les Colonies Françaises*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1948, p.291.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Reasonable’ as defined by the administration. ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Projet d'ordonnance royale sur les affranchissements, 1847.

<sup>29</sup> Schoelcher was to be instrumental in the 1880 initiative for the eradication of slavery as well.

<sup>30</sup> ANS K25, *L'esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

feel bound by local considerations of politics and economics. For Schoelcher and his colleagues, emancipation was about “human dignity” and slavery was castigated for “destroying the liberty of man” and “suppressing the natural principle of rights and needs”.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the operative clauses of the decree were powerful and straightforward. Slavery was “entirely abolished”, as was the *regime des engagés*. Furthermore, it became illegal for any French citizen to “possess, own, buy, or sell slaves” anywhere in the world. Since the inhabitants of Senegal had been granted representation in the *Assemblée Nationale* by Article 6 of the decree, this interdiction was extended to Senegalese *habitants* and *signares*. For contravention of this decree, the provisional government decreed the worst imaginable sanction - the loss of French citizenship.<sup>32</sup>

These provisions of the 1848 decree provided the framework for an envisioned post-emancipation settlement - a definitive end to domestic slavery in a society tightly integrated with France, peopled by citizens for whom the threat of losing citizenship was enough to ensure compliance. The provisional government’s single concession to the slave-owners was the promise of an indemnity to mitigate the loss of the income provided by the rental of their slaves.

The most controversial clause in the document was Article 7, which declared that “[t]he principle that ‘the soil of France emancipates the slave who touches it’ is applied to all colonies and possessions of the Republic.”<sup>33</sup> This principle that touching French soil immediately conveys freedom, or *sol affranchis*, was a threat to the economic and political ties with neighbouring slave-owning societies. For thirty years, French policy had been engineered specifically to avoid conflict over this issue, which, it was anticipated, would alienate indigenous rulers and merchants. The clauses of the 1848 decree, so different from those suggested by the 1847 draft of the royal ordinance, threatened to crash into the unprepared colony like a cue ball, sending *habitants*, slaves, *colons*, and neighbouring Wolof and Sereer chiefs into their corners and then provoking a collision of interests.

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<sup>31</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Decree portant l’abolition de l’esclavage dans les Colonies, le Gouvernement provisoire, 27 April 1848.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Decree portant l’abolition de l’esclavage dans les Colonies, le Gouvernement provisoire,

Nevertheless, the provisional government made it clear to Governor Baudin that this time, at least, there was to be no exemption from any part of the decree for Senegal. On May 7<sup>th</sup>, the newly appointed Naval Minister Arago sent a letter to ensure that the instructions contained in the decree were clear. Anticipating that resistance from the administration in Senegal would center on Article 7, Arago wrote:

According to Article 7, the establishments on the west coast of Africa all become French territory...therefore all slaves who touch the soil receive the right of freedom. The situation of these establishments, in close proximity of countries where slavery exists, without doubt gives to this measure... a particular [difficulty]. But this cannot be sufficient reason to place Senegal outside this essential national principle...<sup>34</sup>

Arago's instructions on this and other matters clearly stated that the law must be implemented in Senegal with only a two month warning before execution<sup>35</sup> and without exception. However, in addition to the indemnity (which, to Baudin's relief, Arago continued to promise) the government made one concession to prudence. While in principle forbidding *engagés*, Arago agreed that the government could keep under indenture soldiers who garrisoned the inhospitable interior trading posts,<sup>36</sup> effectively creating a loophole in an otherwise solid decree - an exception which would be instrumental in facilitating the conquest of indigenous states in the following decade. On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1848, Acting Governor<sup>37</sup> Du Château promulgated the royal decree for Senegal colony, setting a definitive emancipation date of August 23<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>38</sup>

#### The execution of emancipation: July and August 1848

In the months leading up to August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1848, St. Louis and Gorée seethed like a pair of anthills opened to the sun by the rocks of playful children. The slaves of the

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27 April 1848, Article 7.

<sup>34</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Ministre à Baudin, 7 May 1848, Paris.

<sup>35</sup> ANS K8, Ministre à Baudin, 7 May 1848, Paris.

<sup>36</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Ministre à Baudin, 7 May 1848, Paris

<sup>37</sup> The official title for French colonial Governors during this period was *commissaire*, but I have chosen to use the term Governor since the duties appear to have remained the same and within a few years the title Governor had returned.

<sup>38</sup> ANS K8, Arrêté Local, Commissaire Du Château, 23 June 1848, St. Louis. Guèye, M'Baye, "Le fin de l'esclavage", p.641.

colony, comprising as they did skilled craftsmen and entrepreneurs as well as wage-earning *laptots* and *pileuses*<sup>39</sup>, were a politicised and somewhat mobile class. As a group, they felt secure that in the event of emancipation demand for their services would remain high following liberation. As a result, they were overjoyed by the promulgation of the emancipation decree and in St. Louis there were instances reported of slaves prematurely refusing to obey their masters.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the commandant of Gorée reported in July that a number of slaves had expressed the intention of leaving their masters as soon as possible.<sup>41</sup> Searching for support for a policy he expected to be unpopular amongst the *habitants*, Governor Du Château even sponsored 'Emancipation Clubs', which organised approximately 500 slaves to oppose anti-emancipation agitation by masters.<sup>42</sup>

Slave owners, led by influential *habitant* families such as the Franciers (who amongst them owned 30 slaves) and the Pécarres (69), and by *signares* in Gorée and the influential *maire* of St. Louis, actively opposed the proposed emancipation. Before 1848, threats by *habitants* to leave the colony in order to conserve their slaves had been instrumental in keeping anti-slavery legislation at bay, but these were shown to be a bluff.<sup>43</sup> After the April decree, slave-owners were forced to accept *de jure* emancipation, and began to pursue a new set of strategies. The slave-owners' position was no longer based on ideological arguments that domestic slavery was benign or benevolent - arguments which they correctly perceived would have been ineffective in the abolitionist environment created by the provisional government. Instead they turned away from ideological arguments and attempted to salvage their economic positions from potential ruin.

The provisional government expected that the promised indemnity would convince the *habitant* and *signare* community to collaborate with emancipation. However, the amount of the indemnity was the subject of great debate in the *Assemblée Nationale*<sup>44</sup>, and neither Baudin nor Du Château received instructions on the subject

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<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 2

<sup>40</sup> Guèye, "Le fin de l'esclavage", p.642.

<sup>41</sup> ANS 4B15, Commandant Gachot à Du Château, 1 July 1848, Gorée.

<sup>42</sup> Marcson, "European-African Interaction in the Precolonial Period", p.229.

<sup>43</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/13, Du Château à Ministre, 18 September 1847, St. Louis.

<sup>44</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Ministre à Baudin, 7 May 1848, Paris.

during the pre-promulgation period. This vague promise did little to reassure slave-owners. As a result, some *habitants* tried to limit their losses. As early as April, some of the older *signares*, anxious about the possibility of losing such an enormous portion of their wealth in their old age, moved their slaves to the up-river trading entrepôts, *les escales*, prepared to sell them to the Trarza and Wolof markets if the indemnity proved too low. As emancipation jitters grew, other slave owners began to move slaves to villages in Kaajor and Waalo. Many of these slaves were smuggled out of the city even after the implementation of the August 23 emancipation, and then sold.<sup>45</sup> Since *habitants* had strong links with the local communities, and often owned mainland plantations which provisioned the colony, many also converted their urban slaves into farm labourers, but this was a strategy of last resort as masters who did so lost most of the income of their skilled wage-earning slaves.<sup>46</sup>

The majority of masters did hang onto their slaves until emancipation, at which time they were given a further promise of an indemnity. In September, soon after emancipation, they were promised 219.90 francs per slave<sup>47</sup>, but the indemnity was not actually delivered until June 1852.<sup>48</sup> In the intervening period, while *signares* in Gorée begged the government for payment of compensation to replace their “sole means of existence”<sup>49</sup>, many others were forced to sell their indemnities to speculators such as the Maurel and Prom company for a small percentage of their face value.<sup>50</sup> In the end, the indemnity was reset to 330.15 francs per slave, and the speculators walked off with enormous profits.<sup>51</sup>

While some *habitants* and *signares* sold their slaves or hid them outside the colony, the vast majority grudgingly accepted the government’s offer of an indemnity in exchange for acceptance of emancipation. To a certain extent, this was because some slaves resisted attempts to deprive them of their liberation. The emancipation clubs

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<sup>45</sup> ANS 3B64, Ardo-Labaytre, Chef des Peules de Ouadabé à Baudin, 3 October 1848, Kaajor. ANSOM Senegal XIV 15a (several files).

<sup>46</sup> Mbodj, Mohamed, “The Abolition of Slavery in Senegal 1820-1890: Crisis or the Rise of a New Entrepreneurial Class”, in Martin Klein, ed., *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1993.

<sup>47</sup> ANS 1B49, Ministre à Baudin, 4 September 1848, Paris.

<sup>48</sup> ANS 2B31, Protet à Ministre, 8 June 1852, St. Louis.

<sup>49</sup> ANS 4B15, Notables de Gorée à Commandant, 16 March 1849, Gorée.

<sup>50</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.25.

organised by Du Château kept slaves informed and organised to great effect. Their power climaxed in the weeks leading up to the August 23<sup>rd</sup> date of emancipation. During this already tense period, a *habitant* was arrested in St. Louis for beating a slave. The ensuing trial brought about a protest by a group of slave-owners opposed to the conviction of the slave owner. The protesters to their surprise found themselves confronting approximately 400 slaves, members of the emancipation clubs, who forced their masters to stand down.<sup>52</sup> For the first time in the history of Senegal Colony, slave-owners did not confront solely the administration over slavery-related issues, but were forced to cope with the opposition of their own slaves, and this factor made all the difference. The politicised slaves had much more at stake in the emancipation process than the administration, and refused to compromise. Their owners appeared defeated.

#### The impact of emancipation: masters and slaves

Much of the historical commentary on the 1848 emancipation has concluded that this event signalled the beginning of the demise of the *habitant* slave-owning class. Francophone historians such as Guèye<sup>53</sup> and Pasquier have concluded that *habitants* “were... the victims of that apparent *égalité*.”<sup>54</sup> Pasquier in 1967 calculated that the level of the indemnity could never have equalled the income masters had previously generated from their slaves, in addition to which many impoverished slave-owners were forced to sell their indemnities for a fraction of their value to European merchant houses. Even James Searing agrees that emancipation “undermined [the] social power” of the *habitant* class.<sup>55</sup>

The events of Emancipation Day, August 23, 1848, seem to bear out this opinion to some extent. In St. Louis, the Governor posted the emancipation order at 8:00 in the morning. By eleven, “a vast quantity of men rehabilitated by France reformed in the *place*... [with] flags and signs of joy and liberty floating above the sea of human

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<sup>51</sup> ANS 2B31, Protet à Ministre, 8 June 1852, St. Louis.

<sup>52</sup> ANSOM Senegal VII/49, Du Château à Ministre, 19 August 1848, St. Louis.

<sup>53</sup> Guèye, “Le fin de l’esclavage”.

<sup>54</sup> Pasquier, Roger, “A propos de l’émancipation des esclaves au Sénégal en 1848”, *Revue française d’Histoire d’Outre-Mer*, 1967 (54), pp.188-208.

<sup>55</sup> Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, p.175.

heads.”<sup>56</sup> The joyful crowd, having cleansed themselves of the dirt of bondage with the waters of the Atlantic ocean, cried “a thousand times” *vive la France, vive la liberté* and banged on drums, exulting in their freedom. Gorée was the sight of somewhat less exuberant celebrations.<sup>57</sup>

But after the demonstrations died down, and despite the free status of the former slaves, the basic fact of the 1848 emancipation is that for slaves of colonial inhabitants little had really changed. In Gorée, the administration had desperately prepared to temporarily house and feed slaves who left their masters.<sup>58</sup> In the event, the newly freed men and women chose to remain with their masters almost unanimously, and there were initially no requests for housing and food aid from former slaves.<sup>59</sup> Even in St. Louis, only 200 former slaves from a population of several thousand chose to seek shelter in the tents erected by the Governor on the *pointe du nord*.<sup>60</sup>

Why did slaves choose to remain with their masters? Governor Faidherbe, who was appointed to lead the colony in 1854, noted that some *signares* had been so impoverished by the 1848 emancipation that their former slaves voluntarily continued to share their wages with them.<sup>61</sup> Faidherbe’s view was somewhat facile. What was really happening was not a case of rich ex-slaves pitying their former masters. In fact, as Mohamed Mbodj suggested in his 1993 criticism of Pasquier and Guèye, the *habitants* and *signares* continued to dominate their former slaves by controlling the supply of labour and housing.<sup>62</sup> St. Louis and Gorée were both islands, and both had a limited availability of land. However, both were also the exclusive centres of wage employment in their regions. Former slaves were thus unable to leave and use their wage-earning skills on the mainland. As Klein points out, they were also unable to purchase any of the expensive and largely unavailable land in the two towns.<sup>63</sup> Freed slaves therefore found themselves with no option but to remain with their former masters. As a result in both Gorée and in St. Louis a situation arose whereby former slaves, rather than paying a

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<sup>56</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Du Château à Ministre, 23 August 1848, St. Louis.

<sup>57</sup> ANS 4B15, Commandant Roche à Citoyen Commissaire, 26 August 1848, Gorée.

<sup>58</sup> ANS 4B15, Commandant Gachot à Gouverneur, 1 July 1848, Gorée.

<sup>59</sup> ANS 4B15, Commandant Roche à Citoyen Commissaire, 26 August 1848, Gorée.

<sup>60</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Du Château à Ministre, 23 August 1848, St. Louis.

<sup>61</sup> Faidherbe, G. Louis, *Le Sénégal, la France dans l’Afrique Occidentale*, Paris, Hachette and Co., 1882, pp.115-116.

<sup>62</sup> Mbodj, “The Abolition of Slavery in Senegal”, p.198.

<sup>63</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.26.

share of their wage to their masters, paid a rental fee to their former owners. The *habitants* retained power not only through their control of residences, but by their ownership of the majority of the colony's boats and construction equipment, and by their position as providers of wage employment. As a result, relatively little social change occurred, in view of which historians are perhaps justified in declaring that "emancipation did not change anything great in the social order."<sup>64</sup>

#### Article 7: The predictable reaction of indigenous states

Despite the grand experiment of emancipation and the particularities of slave-master relations within the colony, Senegal's administrators faced a remarkably similar political and economic situation to their British counterparts on the Gold Coast. Senegal Colony was surrounded by independent Wolof, Tukolor, and Sereer states, all to some extent Islamicised and all led by autocratic traditional aristocracies.<sup>65</sup> French influence with these states was uneven, and even the few armed posts along the Senegal River were feebly implanted.<sup>66</sup> In all of these societies slavery was a highly integrated social and economic institution.

The economic changes of the nineteenth century acted to preserve this situation. In 1829, the first recorded shipments of peanuts from the British Gambia were reported<sup>67</sup>, and during the same period French merchants became interested in these 'oily nuts'. In December 1828, a group of merchants urged Governor Jubelu to purchase a peanut oil press for the Colony, although there was still little interest amongst peasant cultivators.<sup>68</sup> The level of interest rose, however, throughout the 1830s as *habitants* searched for a replacement for the gum trade which was again in decline in the years leading up to emancipation, and by 1840 the administration had begun to grant groundnut concessions to *habitants*.<sup>69</sup> This expansion was matched by a growing

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<sup>64</sup> Hardy, G., *La Mise en valeur du Sénégal de 1817 à 1854*, Paris, 1921.

<sup>65</sup> Although some of those aristocracies were by this time besieged by Islamic revolutionaries.

<sup>66</sup> Renault, François, "L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal: L'attitude de l'administration française", *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 1971, (58), p.20.

<sup>67</sup> Brooks, George E., "Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialization of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830-1870", *Journal of African History*, 1975, (16), p.32.

<sup>68</sup> ANSOM 2B13, Jubelu à Ministre, 20 February 1829, St. Louis.

<sup>69</sup> ANSOM 1B48, Extrait d'un Mémoire de M. Héricé relatif à quelques améliorations à porter à la Colonie de Sénégal, 18 February 1848, Paris. ANSOM 2B18, Baudin à Ministre, 30 October 1840, St. Louis.

acceptance of peanut oil in French commerce and industry, and Parisian *commerçants* demanded a reduction of the peanut oil tariff in 1843.<sup>70</sup> By this time, the British had made their decision to concentrate on palm oil for their industrial needs and the French, with their access to predominantly drier regions, consequently chose to concentrate on peanut oil.<sup>71</sup> As a result, cultivation of the groundnut soared in Senegal. In 1849, 3 million kilograms of peanuts were shipped from Kaajor, the center of cultivation, and large amounts also originated from along the Saalum and Senegal Rivers.<sup>72</sup> The demand for peanuts could not entirely be met by the peasant populations of these regions, however, and peanut farm owners turned to slaves to assist in production.<sup>73</sup> The shortage of labour in Senegal also led to suggestions that freed slaves from Gorée be conscripted as cultivators on the Cap-Vert peninsula.<sup>74</sup>

It was these economic and political realities that convinced the Governors of the 1830s and '40s that emancipation was unrealistic, and even in 1848 it was recognised that the real challenge to emancipation came not from the *habitants*, whose reliance on French commerce hamstrung their opposition to the plan, but from the governments of neighbouring states.

Because the 1848 decree only emancipated slaves in the Colony it was hoped that the rulers of Senegalese states would not object. However, the principle that "the soil of France frees the slave who touches it" threatened to alienate the Colony's neighbours. The *habitants*, recognising that their personal fortunes were tied into commerce with the interior, tried to convince the metropolitan government of this in a petition of 15 February 1849, calling for the revocation of the 'soil liberates' policy.<sup>75</sup>

As anticipated, in the period following emancipation a number of slaves from Waalo, Kaajor, and the Sereer states fled to Gorée and St. Louis. Governor Baudin was sympathetic to the plight of indigenous slave owners, but told the Chief of Wolof/Lebu Dakar that his actions were constrained by orders from the metropole, and he could only

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<sup>70</sup> ANSOM 1B35, Préfet de la Seine à Ministre de Commerce, 2 March 1843, Paris.

<sup>71</sup> Brooks, "Peanuts and Colonialism", p.42.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, pp.43-45.

<sup>73</sup> Bowman, Joy, *Ominous Transition: Commerce and colonial expansion in the Senegambia and Guinea, 1857-1919*, Avebur, Aldershot, 1996, pp.20-21.

<sup>74</sup> ANS 2E2, Procès-Verbal, Séance de Conseil d'arrondissement de Gorée, 3 January 1846, Gorée.

<sup>75</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Petition, 15 February 1849, St. Louis.

advise that masters living in the vicinity of the colony guard their slaves carefully.<sup>76</sup>

While many of the slaves who sought refuge were actually the very slaves whom *habitants* had sold to the mainland in order to escape the effects of emancipation<sup>77</sup>, many more were slaves who transported the trade and food products from the interior upon which the colony relied.<sup>78</sup> As a result, indigenous traders began to refuse to bring their goods into Gorée and St. Louis<sup>79</sup>, although they relied on commerce with the colony as much as the *habitants* relied on commerce with them. The traders exerted political pressure upon their own rulers.<sup>80</sup> In February 1849, the situation came to a head with an argument over the slave of a Waalo trader who had sought refuge in St. Louis. When Baudin refused to return the individual, the *Brak* withheld cattle destined for the colony and the *Damel* of Kaajor embargoed shipments of peanuts<sup>81</sup>, and as the conflict widened the Trarzas closed the gum trade.<sup>82</sup> The fears of administrators and *habitants* had been confirmed, and indigenous responses to emancipation threatened the existence of the Senegal colony.

#### Two steps back: expulsion of runaways and *conseils de tutelles*

The 1848 emancipation decree was definitively worded and clearly supported by colonial officials in France. There could be no confusion as to its purpose. But within a year of its execution authorities in France relinquished their abolitionist role and allowed the emasculation of two of the decree's most important clauses.

Article 7, which stated that 'soil liberated' was the first to go. On the very day that saw the commencement of the joint embargo of goods to the colony, February 12<sup>th</sup> 1849, Governor Baudin wrote to Minister Arago:

I agree that the principle which declares all slaves who touch French soil are free is just, but in certain local conditions and needs, like those found in place in Senegal, the rigorous application is difficult and appears *contrary to human*

<sup>76</sup> ANS 3B61, Baudin au Chef du Dakar, 20 January 1849, Senegal.

<sup>77</sup> ANS 2B27, Baudin à Ministre, 3 February 1849, St. Louis.

<sup>78</sup> ANS 2B27, Du Château à Ministre, 22 August 1848, St. Louis.

<sup>79</sup> Richards and Miers, "The End of Slavery in Africa", p.14.

<sup>80</sup> ANS 3B64, Damel à Baudin, 26 August 1848, Kaajor.

<sup>81</sup> ANS 2B27 and Senegal I/35, Baudin à Ministre, 12 February 1849, St. Louis.

<sup>82</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.27.

rights.<sup>83</sup>

Baudin pleaded for a face-saving solution to his quandary. He argued that the colony would starve without food grown on the mainland, and painted a picture of thousands of refugee slaves overrunning the two islands. He was aware, however, that metropolitan officials had to satisfy their own abolitionist constituencies and could not backtrack on their actions.

The solution to the problem was provided by the *maire* of St. Louis, who suggested to Baudin that refugee slaves be expelled through the operation of an 1835 civil ordinance that gave him the power to eject 'vagabonds'<sup>84</sup> who threatened public health and safety. By arguing that unemployed refugee slaves threatened the safety of the colony, Baudin could authorise civil authorities to return runaway slaves. Minister Arago consequently found himself confronted by a situation engineered entirely by Africans. On the one hand, indigenous powers threatened the economic future and provisioning of the colony. At the same time, the relatively high number of slaves fleeing to the two towns was overwhelming their resources.<sup>85</sup> Arago, aware that he would be unable to convince his colleagues to rescind Article 7, seized on the compromise. On April 18<sup>th</sup> he wrote to Baudin agreeing to the plan, which had already been effectively implemented without his sanction. "In proclaiming the principle of liberation by [French] soil," Arago explained, "the Government of the Republic... never thought to do damage to the safety which is a right of French citizens living in our overseas possessions."<sup>86</sup>

The *habitants* and their allies had won a signal victory, and showed that their power was undiminished. Not only had they still retained the services and some of the income of their former slaves, they had also achieved the *de facto* repeal of Article 7. The administration soon gave into a further concession. Unable to care for emancipated child slaves, Baudin acceded to suggestions from local leaders and allowed *patrons* (guardians) to take the children on as apprentices, to be compensated for housing and food costs by the child's labour.<sup>87</sup> In the event, the *patrons* were generally the children's

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<sup>83</sup> ANS 2B27 and Senegal I/35, Baudin à Ministre, 12 February 1849, St. Louis.

<sup>84</sup> ANS 2B27 and Senegal I/35, Baudin à Ministre, 12 February 1849, St. Louis.

<sup>85</sup> ANS K17, *Rapport sur la Captivité*, Administrator Poulet, 1905.

<sup>86</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Ministre à Baudin, 18 April 1849, Paris.

<sup>87</sup> ANS M3, Arrêté Locale de 13 April 1849, Gouverneur Baudin.

former masters, and the system was essentially a return to slavery, but the so-named *conseils des tutelles* were nevertheless approved by the Ministry on November 13<sup>th</sup> of the same year.<sup>88</sup> Between 1849 and 1847, 213 children were subjected to the authority of the *conseils*. Many were child slaves returned to their masters in 1849. Others were simply orphans from the colony, from the posts along the Senegal River or Petite Côte, or even from Gabon. Most of the *patrons* were *habitants*, although some were French officials or in very rare cases relatives of the children. Even notorious slave-owners such as Marie Labouré were allowed to act as *patrons*. Such a state of affairs appeared reasonable to the decision-making *conseils*, which were generally composed of several influential and formerly slave-owning *habitants* and an approximately equal number of French *commerçants* and administrators.<sup>89</sup> Governor Faidherbe did attempt to reform the system in 1857 by ensuring that all minors were freed upon reaching the age of eighteen<sup>90</sup>, but children continued to be bound into this condition of near-slavery until 1862.<sup>91</sup>

### Conclusion

Like every previous metropolitan policy aimed at limiting the institution of slavery, the emancipation of 1848 did not go as planned. Admittedly, the provisional government was successful in some respects; most importantly, around 6,000 slaves in St. Louis and Gorée received their *de facto* freedom. However, many former slaves simply continued to be dependants, clients, and tenants of their former masters. Since they had enjoyed certain advantages - including wages - prior to emancipation, their position was relatively unimproved even in terms of mobility. Certainly they could now leave their masters if they wished, but only to find another similar patron within the colony or to brave the dangerous paths of Waalo and Kaajor, attempting to evade the slave-traders long enough to reach home. In the event, most chose to stay with their masters. After 1854, the army also became an option, although not a desirable one.

The slaves of the colony of Senegal were 'liberated' in 1848, except for those

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<sup>88</sup> Ministre à Baudin, 13 November 1849, Paris.

<sup>89</sup> M3, Registre les deliberations, les Procès-Verbaux des Séances et les transaction du Conseil du Tutelle des Enfants... à St. Louis, 20 April 1849 - 18 February 1857, St. Louis.

<sup>90</sup> Arrêté Locale, 5 December 1857, Gouverneur Faidherbe.

under 18 who were returned to their masters as apprentices under essentially the same conditions they had previously endured. However, after February 1849 slaves seeking refuge in the colony were ejected from the islands as 'vagabonds' and dumped on the shores of the mainland where their masters clustered to pick them up and re-enslave them. The golden glow of France's paternalism was already tarnished by these events when, in 1854, a new Governor took up his post in St. Louis and began plotting to expand French influence into the previously independent states of Senegal and beyond.

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<sup>91</sup> ANS K17, *Rapport sur la Captivité*, Administrator Poulet, 1905.

## **CHAPTER 6:** **Pragmatic policies in periods of expansion, 1854-1880**

By the middle of the nineteenth century, slavery had become integral to the economies and societies of both the Senegal and Gold Coast regions. The effects of four centuries of the Atlantic slave trade and the rise in legitimate trade far outweighed forty years of half-hearted European policies aimed at controlling the use and transport of slaves and mitigating their social circumstances. The 1848 emancipation in Senegal Colony had been limited both in scope - two diminutive island towns - and in effect. Similarly, the British had implemented few procedures affecting slavery outside of restricting European possession of slaves in the few forts and settlements they controlled.

The mid-nineteenth century, however, witnessed the beginning of an unheralded increase in European involvement in both these regions which led to significant changes in colonial policy toward slavery. During the preceding periods, the extent of both French and British sovereignty had been limited to coastal entrepôts and 'factories' or 'posts' along major trading routes. In the Gold Coast, *de facto* authority had been temporarily extended by Maclean in the 1830s, but colonial sovereignty was still limited to a small number of coastal positions. In Senegal, French authority beyond the two islands of St. Louis and Gorée was limited to the posts of Merinaghen in Waalo and Dagana, Bakel, and Senou-débon on the Senegal River.<sup>1</sup>

The subsequent expansion of European authority provided the basis for a *potential* watershed for the institutions of slavery in both these regions, as European ideals of abolition were brought into play for greatly enlarged geographic regions and populations. This chapter introduces the framework of official policy within which the effect of European hegemony, the resistance of slave-owners, and the agency of slaves will be discussed in the following chapters.

### **Harnessing slavery to expansion: Senegal**

French power was surprisingly limited in Senegal, considering several decades of commercial experiments and political interference in neighbouring indigenous states. The failure of plantations in Waalo had limited French influence as well as further

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<sup>1</sup> The French, additionally held a few positions in the Gambia and Casamance which are outside the geographic area of this dissertation. Renault, "L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal", p.6.

weakening a state already disrupted by the depredations of the slave trade.<sup>2</sup> The *tyeddo*-supported aristocracy had lost its primary source of income with the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and was reduced to bickering over the rents paid by the French for plantation land.<sup>3</sup> Their authority was further reduced by the increasing Islamization of the peasant population inspired by the jihad of Shayk Umar upriver in Gaajaga and Fuuta Tooro.<sup>4</sup> The internal turmoil in Waalo also provoked the Trarza Moors to attempt to assert their power over the region in another attempt to control the trade in gum arabic.<sup>5</sup> The French were alerted to the threat of Moorish hegemony by their own merchant companies who continuously called for a military solution to the problem.<sup>6</sup> Governors and officials in Senegal were easily won over to their side by persuasive economic and political arguments. "The time has come", Governor Pujol wrote the naval ministry as early as 1834, "when Waalo must pass under the domination of the French or that of the Maures...".<sup>7</sup> Successive governors were, however, unable to take the initiative to bring Waalo firmly under French influence.

At this crucial juncture, however, there came into this situation an individual who, much like Maclean in the Gold Coast, transformed the entire situation. Captain Louis Faidherbe had initially been appointed to organise the colony's defences, but in 1854 he was placed in the position of Governor. In France, the bureaucrats of the *Second Empire* (which had replaced the *Deuxième République* in July 1852<sup>8</sup>) were not as convinced of the need to interfere in Waalo as the local administration. Faidherbe was instructed by the *Ministre de la Marine* only to "assist peaceful development of commercial interests" and was warned quite clearly, "your nomination is neither the beginning nor the continuation of a belligerent era."<sup>9</sup>

But Faidherbe, like Maclean, was not one to be limited by such instructions. He understood that the profitable exploitation of commercial agriculture in Senegal was the main concern of his superiors<sup>10</sup>, and he was further convinced by the local French *commercants* that French control of the peanut-growing areas was the means to achieve

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<sup>2</sup> See chapters 3 and 5.

<sup>3</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.177.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent account of this important figure in Senegalese and Soudanic history, see Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> ANS 3B52, Gouverneur à M. Caille, 16 March 1843, St. Louis.

<sup>6</sup> ANS 2B30, Protet à Ministre, 14 April 1852, Saint Louis.

<sup>7</sup> ANS 2B16, Pujol à Ministre, 7 March 1834, St. Louis.

<sup>8</sup> ANP A1191-1218, Lois du Deuxième République.

<sup>9</sup> Barrows, Leland, "General Faidherbe, the Maurel and Prom Company, and French expansion in Senegal", Unpublished PhD Thesis, UCLA, 1974, p.231. Barrows is especially detailed on the invasion of Waalo.

<sup>10</sup> France had both lowered import duties on peanuts and funded scientific expeditions to analyse potential peanut growing sites. See Marcson, "European-African Interaction in the Precolonial Period", p.199.

this goal. Halfway through the century, more than 1 million kilograms of groundnuts were leaving St. Louis on an annual basis<sup>11</sup>, and the French commercial companies operating in the Colony were looking to the peanut trade to assist them in breaking the *habitants'* domination of commerce and to reduce the power of the Trarzas in Waalo. The temporary detachment of Gorée from the Senegal Colony in 1854<sup>12</sup> was in part intended to allow the Governor of Senegal in St. Louis to concentrate on issues in Waalo and the Governor of Gorée on the production of peanuts in the Siin-Saalum basin, Gambia, and the Casamance. Thus in the early 1850s, the French merchant houses induced Faidherbe to place forts on the river at Dagana and Podor in Waalo in order to protect their investments.<sup>13</sup> Following this action, Faidherbe convinced the Minister to support his initiatives and in January 1855 he was authorised to "render the states left [south] of the river independent of the Maures."<sup>14</sup>

Faidherbe was obviously not reticent to proceed, and it was scarcely a month before he was at the head of a column marching into the interior of Waalo. In February 1855 he launched a combined land and river assault against the Trarzas at Nder on the Ferlo River.<sup>15</sup> To his great surprise, however, the majority of the Wolof aristocracy, including the nominal Queen N'Detté-Yallo, chose to support the Trarzas.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Faidherbe's superior column of French regulars, colonial recruits, and a small force of auxiliary *tyeddo* won several victories and he proceeded to install a pro-French *Brak* on the throne of Waalo.<sup>17</sup> The puppet-king failed, however, to generate the necessary support<sup>18</sup>, and on December 30, 1855, Faidherbe replaced him with a more direct system of administration. The state was divided into four *cercles*, to be administered by pro-French chiefs, at the same time as forts such as Dagana, Podor, and Richard-Toll were placed under direct colonial control.<sup>19</sup>

However, Faidherbe did not stop at the borders of Waalo. French policy in Senegal continued to be dominated by economic issues, and Faidherbe, the "master architect"<sup>20</sup> who initiated French hegemony, convinced his superiors that expansion into the interior would secure the profitability of the colony. In 1858 he wrote to the *Ministre*

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<sup>11</sup> ANS 2B31, Protet à Ministre 21 August 1852, St. Louis.

<sup>12</sup> ANS 2E3, Conseil d'administration de Gorée, Procès Verbal du Sèance, 29 January 1855.

<sup>13</sup> Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo*, p.301.

<sup>14</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/41B, Ministre à Faidherbe, 19 January 1855, Paris.

<sup>15</sup> Barrows, "General Faidherbe, the Maurel and Prom Company", p.270.

<sup>16</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/41B, Faidherbe à Ministre, 11 March 1855.

<sup>17</sup> Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo*, p.307.

<sup>18</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/41B, Faidherbe à Ministre, 3 April 1855, St. Louis.

<sup>19</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/41B, Faidherbe à Ministre, 6 June 1856, St. Louis.

<sup>20</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.190.

*de la Marine* that:

The political line we have adopted in Senegal... generally consists of protecting the sedentary black cultivators against the Moor nomads... and in particular... against the brigandage of the [*tyeddo*].<sup>21</sup>

Operating on a pretext that was both so convincingly humanitarian and so amenable to the metropole's economic goals, Faidherbe invaded Kaajor in 1856, hardly giving his troops a rest from their first campaign. To his allies amongst the indigenous elite, Faidherbe maintained that Kaajor had given refuge to France's defeated opponents from Waalo, but it was clear that he intended to opportunistically exploit a civil war between rival aristocratic factions within Kaajor.<sup>22</sup> Faidherbe's campaign was approved by the *Ministre* as it would have the effect of bringing the Kaajor peanut crop under French control and allow the French government to effectively tax that commodity.<sup>23</sup> After an extended campaign, the French acquired the right to fix tariffs on groundnuts leaving Kaajor for French-controlled ports such as Dakar and Rufisque as well as gaining the right to appoint members of the *Damel's* Council of Electors.<sup>24</sup> Faidherbe then briefly went to France for consultations, returning to command a newly reunited Senegal Colony once again incorporating Gorée.<sup>25</sup> He subsequently proceeded to launch yet another campaign aimed at securing the peanut-growing Siin-Saalum delta<sup>26</sup>, in which he succeeded after limited resistance and the burning of Fatick. As a result, both kingdoms, while remaining nominally independent, were drawn into the French sphere of influence. Furthermore Faidherbe acquired the Petite Côte as a protectorate, further increasing French control of the peanut-trading coast.<sup>27</sup> The conquest of the satellite states of Dimar and Toro on Waalo's flank in 1859-60 completed this period of French expansion in Senegal.<sup>28</sup>

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Faidherbe's conquest was made possibly by the officially sanctioned exploitation of the indigenous system of slavery. His administration continued and expanded

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<sup>21</sup> ANSOM Senegal IV/46, Faidherbe à Ministre, 13 March 1858, St. Louis.

<sup>22</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.191.

<sup>23</sup> Barrows, "General Faidherbe, the Maurel and Prom Company", p.651.

<sup>24</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.191.

<sup>25</sup> ANS K17, *rapport Sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905.

<sup>26</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/46B, Ministre à Faidherbe, 1 September 1859, Paris.

<sup>27</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.193.

<sup>28</sup> Renault, "L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal", p.11.

previous administrators' policies of *rachat* in which slaves, under conditions similar to the *engagement* of the pre-emancipation period, were purchased for use as soldiers. Directly following the decision to emancipate the colony's slaves in 1848, the provisional government had agreed to *Commissaire* Baudin's requests that *engagés* in military service could be retained in their positions in order to assure the security of the colony.<sup>29</sup> The only proviso, in keeping with the republican ethos, was that the administration was required to treat such soldiers exactly the same as their white colleagues in terms of food, dress, and training.

However, while pragmatic considerations necessitated the retention of the military *engagé* system, the emancipation act prohibited any *new engagements* and forbade the policy of *rachats*.<sup>30</sup> After 1849, colonial officers were thus forced to attempt to recruit volunteers from within the Colony, but military duty was apparently unpopular amongst the urban St. Louisian and Goréean populations. Commanders saw the muster of their units decline rapidly as *engagés* completed their terms.<sup>31</sup> In the three years following emancipation, a grand total of three African volunteers appear to have joined local *compagnies*.<sup>32</sup> In 1851 a local commission appointed to deal with this issue advised Governor Protet that the only conceivable solution was to reinstitute the policy of *rachats*, but the Republican government was unwilling to accept such a move.<sup>33</sup> It was only following the Restoration of 1852 that this situation changed. The bureaucrats of the *Second Empire*, like their predecessors who ruled prior to 1848, managed to convince themselves that the policy of *rachats* was not only necessary but also actually humanitarian. They praised the policy for liberating captives at the 'small price', to those so released, of a few years military service.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, they suggested that such soldiers would be perfect for service in the New World, sparing French troops for European duty.<sup>35</sup> The *Ministre de la Marine* consequently re-authorized the *regime des rachats* on November 30, 1854, instructing Governor Protet to form two *compagnies indigènes*.<sup>36</sup> Protet designed the *compagnies* to intermingle free and indentured recruits

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<sup>29</sup> ANSOM Senegal XVI/3, Ministre à Citoyen Commissaire Baudin, 27 May 1848, Paris.

<sup>30</sup> As indicated by subsequent sources, this suppression of military engagement (under Article 2) was in fact put into effect. See ANSOM Senegal XIV/18, Ministre à Protet, 15 April 1852, Paris.

<sup>31</sup> ANS 2B27, Baudin à Ministre, 14 January 1849, St. Louis.

<sup>32</sup> Echenberg, Myron *Colonial Conscripts, the Tirrailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960*, Heinemann Books, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1991, p.9. Echenberg's monograph focuses largely on the twentieth century.

<sup>33</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/18, Ministre à Protet, 15 April 1852, Paris.

<sup>34</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/18, Ministre à Protet, 15 April 1852, Paris.

<sup>35</sup> ANSOM Senegal XVI/4, Le Chef de Division pour des Côtes Occidentales d'Afrique à Ministre, 23 November 1853, Gorée.

<sup>36</sup> ANS K25, *L'esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

and planned to recruit 450 individuals.<sup>37</sup> As a sop to the nagging abolitionists in the metropole, he suggested that the *engagés* should serve for a shorter term than previously - only 7 years instead of 14.

However, the invasion of Waalo, carried out partly by indigenous troops, convinced Faidherbe that the available *compagnies indigènes* were insufficiently trained, unmotivated, and of too small a size to carry out his grand plan of conquest. In 1857 he therefore convinced the *Ministre de la Marine* that a more highly paid and trained fighting force should be constructed with repurchased former slaves. The name he proposed was the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*.<sup>38</sup>

A small minority of the *tirailleurs* subsequently recruited were mercenaries, often former *tyeddo*, from outside French jurisdiction. There were also some recruits to the force from amongst the disenchanté of the lower classes and special castes of Wolof society - especially blacksmiths and *griots*.<sup>39</sup> However, by far the majority of those enlisted were slaves purchased from traders. When recruitment dropped, the administration simply contrived to raise the 'bonus', in fact a fee paid directly to slave dealers and owners.<sup>40</sup> The number of *Tirailleurs* doubled to 1,000 by 1867<sup>41</sup> and continued to stay above that mark throughout the period of expansion<sup>42</sup>, increasing again in the early 1880s.

There is no doubt that the *tirailleurs* played a major role in the French conquests of the 1850s and '60s. *Tirailleurs* were the largest contingent of trained troops in Faidherbe's and his successors' campaigns on the Senegal River and in Siin-Saalum and Kaajor.<sup>43</sup> Without the policy of *rachats*, even the *Ministre* admitted that the pacification of the peanut region would have been much more difficult and would have utilised huge amounts of French resources.<sup>44</sup>

Not only were the French willing and even eager to purchase slaves for the military conquest of peanut-growing areas, but most of the infrastructure that supported the export of peanuts was also built by slaves. The ports of Dakar and Rufisque, where slavery was still legally recognised, were purpose-built for the export of the Kaajor and

<sup>37</sup> ANS 13G23, Protet à Ministre, December 1854, St. Louis.

<sup>38</sup> ANS 2B32, Faidherbe à Ministre, 16 December 1857, St. Louis.

<sup>39</sup> ANS 2B67, Thomas à Ministre, 6 June 1890, St. Louis.

<sup>40</sup> Klein, "Slavery and Emancipation in French West Africa", p.176.

<sup>41</sup> Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, p.7.

<sup>42</sup> Although Echenberg notes a decline in conscripts to 625 in 1872, my evidence suggests that the number of *tirailleurs* stayed quite high even during the French withdrawal of the 1870s. ANSOM Senegal II/5, Memoire, Gouverneur Serval, November 1871 - lists 1065 *tirailleurs*.

<sup>43</sup> ANSOM Senegal IV/45 Fleuve 1854-1879, IV/46, Cayor 1855-1860; and Senegal IV/50 Sine et Saloum 1859-1877.

<sup>44</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/54, Ministre à Pinet-Laprade, February 1868, Paris.

Siin-Saalum groundnut crops. Local slave holders may have been reluctant to provide slaves to Gorée and St. Louis due to the high risk that slaves would claim their freedom on French soil, but the ports of Dakar and Rufisque were outside of French territory and as a result the administration freely contracted for the labour of slave *manoeuvres*.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, hundreds of skilled artisans, many of them former slaves living in Gorée, were mobilised to supervise the construction of railway stations, forts, chapels, schools, and telegraph systems in the 1860s.<sup>46</sup>

The French administration was careful to ensure that neither the policy of *rachats* nor the unfree contract labour used in the construction of Dakar and Rufisque could technically implicate them in re-introducing slavery into the colony. *Rachats* continued to be portrayed and to some extent accepted in the metropole as a humanitarian means of liberating slaves. Construction in Dakar and Rufisque lay outside the colony where, although the administration clearly knew of the use of slaves and paid their masters for their labour, such an operation was technically if not morally acceptable.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, it is obvious that the administration was willing to subvert the spirit of the emancipation laws in support of the commercial needs of the colony and consequently their perceived success as administrators. Furthermore, this was only one manifestation of the erosion of the 1848 emancipation policy, as political and economic realities prodded Faidherbe and his successors to dismantle that progressive act step by step.

#### French expansion and the dismantling of the 1848 emancipation

Immediately following the 1848 act of emancipation, indigenous regimes in Waalo, Kaajor, and the Petite Côte had forced the colonial administration to refrain from enforcement of Article 7, which had been intended to liberate any slaves setting foot within French-administered territory.<sup>48</sup> The extension of French authority after 1853 only increased the complications surrounding emancipation. As the colony expanded, new regions were brought under the *de jure* rule of abolition. The peanut-growing regions, which the *Ministre de la Marine* depended upon to make the colony profitable, had been specific targets of the expansion. Cotton cultivation experiments carried out in Waalo in the 1860s, had failed to take hold due to difficulties with irrigation.<sup>49</sup> Peanut production,

<sup>45</sup> This argument is effectively made by Mohamed Mbodj. Mbodj, "The Abolition of Slavery in Senegal". The subject is directly mentioned in ANS K11, Faidherbe à Commandant Gorée, 22 February 1865, St. Louis. The hiring of slaves is also indirectly mentioned in Valière à Commandant du Gorée, 24 March 1874, St. Louis.

<sup>46</sup> ANS P1, Petition des Notables de Gorée à Commandant, 1 December 1869, Gorée.

<sup>47</sup> Mbodj, "The Abolition of Slavery in Senegal 1820-1890", p.205.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>49</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/51, Pinet-Laprade à Ministre, 25 May 1866, St. Louis. Senegal I/46, Faidherbe à Ministre, 12 June 1860, St. Louis.

on the other hand, had continued to increase and spread, thriving in the dry climate of the Wolof states.<sup>50</sup> Thus Faidherbe's successor as Governor, Jauréguiberry, was cautioned to concentrate his efforts on cultivation with similar instructions to those given to his predecessor. The colonial military, he was instructed, should be directed towards protecting the cultivating peasant population from brigands - whether Moors or *tyeddo*.<sup>51</sup>

Peanuts and slavery were by this time inextricably linked in West Senegal. The short June-November growing period of the peanut necessitated intensive labour for short periods.<sup>52</sup> Thus, while free peasants profited from and were empowered by their production of a saleable cash crop<sup>53</sup>, there arose "a heavy dependence on slave labour in the Peanut Basin"<sup>54</sup> during the growing season. Furthermore, while St. Louisian *laptots* had been liberated, most of the other labourers involved in transporting the peanut crop were slaves.<sup>55</sup> With the new ports of Dakar and Rufisque opening, merchants were able to use slaves to transport peanuts to the major peanut-trading ports without ever entering French territory.

But the same policy of expansion that was intended to protect the peanut fields threatened this arrangement. The 1848 act forbade *habitants* and residents of French posts from owning slaves, threatening to exclude these owners of capital from the peanut trade. Worse, the French occupation of the C ap Vert peninsula and acquisition of the Petite C ote from Siin in 1861 threatened the groundnut delivery network by technically expanding the 'soil liberates' policy to these regions.

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As the cultivation of peanuts enriched and empowered Sereer and Wolof peasants, they increasingly turned to Islam to liberate them from the aristocrats and *tyeddo* who continually preyed upon them. Many in Waalo and Kaajor were especially impressed by a scholar and leader who was rising in Fuuta Tooro. El Hajj Shayk Umar, head of the Tijaniyya brotherhood, had taken his first tour of the Wolof States in 1846. Operating along the upper river, and attracting Manding, Wolof, and Fulbe followers, Shayk Umar was by 1854 the ruler of a large territory bordering the French up to the

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 5 for the origins and early years of peanut production in northern Senegal. ANSOM Senegal I/43E, Journal du Havre, enclosed in Faidherbe   Ministre, 13 June 1857, St. Louis. Senegal I/51, Pinet-Laprade   Ministre, 25 May 1866, St. Louis.

<sup>51</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/48, Ministre   Jaur guiberry, 17 December 1861, Paris.

<sup>52</sup> Moitt, Bernard, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 1989, (22), pp.27-50.

<sup>53</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.178. This phenomenon is well-documented.

<sup>54</sup> Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin", p.27.

<sup>55</sup> Renault, "L'abolition de l'esclavage au S n gal", p.19.

post of Bakel.<sup>56</sup> Even more threatening to French *commerçants* was Maba Jaakhu. To the French a notorious bandit, Maba was a Tijaniyya leader from the Gambia basin who is well-beloved in Senegalese popular memory. Maba clashed with the French in Saalum and later occupied Jolof, fighting to a draw with Governor Pinet-Laprade in Saalum in 1865. Maba's marabouts fought several wars both with the French and secular rulers<sup>57</sup> until his death in battle in 1867 by the *Bur* of Siin.<sup>58</sup>

Noting the hostility of secular-political rulers such as the *Bur* towards popular Islamic leaders, the French quickly realised the usefulness of the divide and conquer policy. Faidherbe and his immediate successors supported aristocrats against Muslim revolutionaries, aided pro-French parties within states, and installed puppet rulers wherever possible. But because of their reliance on elements of indigenous elites, the French had to be careful not to alienate any possible allies. The extension of the emancipation policy, unpopular amongst even those elite families of northern Senegal and the Siin-Saalum delta who were French allies, was perceived by Faidherbe as potentially disastrous. Indeed, apologies by French officials presenting the official version of emancipation in Senegal in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century blame the military-political situation for the lack of progress on emancipation during the 1850s and '60s. "This [period]", administrator Poulet argued in 1905, "was certainly not the moment to impose... this grand measure of emancipation."<sup>59</sup> Deherme similarly implored his readers to realise the great difficulties which 'forced' Faidherbe to neglect emancipation :

It [was] war throughout [Senegal]. Oualo, allied with the *trazas*, had been invaded. The river was becoming more and more dangerous, and trade was halted up to Podor. It [was] the hour of El Hajj [Shayk U]mar and the situation was critical...<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, the mutual incompatibility of Faidherbe's expansionist policies and colonial anti-slavery laws had become evident with his first forays into the interior. The forts, which he constructed in 1854 at the behest of the French merchant community were by law French territory, and subject to the articles of the 1848 emancipation. Faidherbe had previously approved stratagems in place to expel as 'vagrants' slaves

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<sup>56</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp.152-187.

<sup>57</sup> Klein covers Maba's campaigns quite extensively in his history of the Siin-Saalum region. Klein, *Islam and Imperialism*, pp.63-93.

<sup>58</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp.195-199.

<sup>59</sup> ANS K17, Rapport sur le Captivité, administrateur Poulet, 1905.

<sup>60</sup> ANS K25, *L'esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

seeking refuge in these forts<sup>61</sup>; but technically the inhabitants of the villages surrounding the posts were French subjects, and Faidherbe was legally obligated to liberate their slaves. Faced with this dilemma, Faidherbe turned to his advisors for ideas. In a meeting on April 27, 1854, he told them of his “intention to declare as French..., all the villages which [exist] on the river within cannon shot of our forts.” However, he admitted that the question of slaves made this position politically difficult.<sup>62</sup>

The Chief Justice, obviously briefed beforehand, was ready with a solution for the Governor. Opening with the by-now familiar arguments that Senegalese slavery was benign, and furthermore the practical consideration that enforcing emancipation would only strengthen the hand of the colony’s enemies, he suggested that the inhabitants of the new territories were subjects, rather than citizens, of France. As such they were entitled to retain their slaves. The Administrative Council, agreeable to a solution that met both their personal commercial needs and the colony’s political interests, unanimously assented.<sup>63</sup> *Ministre* Hamelin condoned this arrangement whereby individuals living “under [the French] flag” could “keep their slaves.”<sup>64</sup> The Minister’s approval had been the sole obstacle to Faidherbe’s plan, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October he issued a decree stating that for “the populations established under our posts, other than St. Louis... the decree of emancipation is not applicable...”<sup>65</sup>

The invasion and conquest of Waalo, however, brought to light a number of new problems for Faidherbe. As his forces captured towns, villages, and swathes of land, members of the resident slave population began to claim their freedom under French law.<sup>66</sup> Although the number of refugees seems to have been small at first, Faidherbe had to face the fact, based on experiences in St. Louis and Gorée in 1848, that a mass influx could occur at any time. He recognised that this could alienate his allies, but also saw the usefulness of refugee slaves for induction into the *tirailleurs*. Thus in 1857 he moved to solve this dilemma, acting to reassure the slave-owners in conquered territories that their slaves would not be taken from them, or even allowed to leave them. Eschewing the very public path of issuing an ordinance, Faidherbe instead sent out a closed policy circular to his Chief Justice, the Imperial Procurator, and the Director of

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<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>62</sup> Using the formula of claiming land ‘within cannon shot’ seems to have been common amongst Europeans on the west coast of Africa. ANS 3E26, Procès-Verbal du Séance, Conseil d’Administration, 10 April 1855.

<sup>63</sup> ANS 3E26, Procès-Verbal du Séance, Conseil d’Administration, 10 April 1855.

<sup>64</sup> Considering that Faidherbe wrote to him on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, and that boats took from 3-5 weeks for a one-way voyage to France, his reply on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June seems quite swift. ANSOM Senegal XIV/15B, *Ministre à Faidherbe*, 21 June 1855, Paris.

<sup>65</sup> ANS K11, *Arrête*, Faidherbe, 18 October 1855.

<sup>66</sup> Renault, “L’abolition de l’esclavage au Sénégal”, 1971, p.11.

Native Affairs.<sup>67</sup> The instructions contained within the circular limited emancipation to the localities that had constituted the colony prior to June 27, 1848 and reaffirmed the policy of allowing French subjects, as opposed to citizens, to retain their slaves. Furthermore, Faidherbe resorted to a pragmatic ploy to both satisfy his allies and increase his forces:

If it has been officially declared that we are at war with a state... a decision of the governor can make it known if the fugitive slaves from that state... will be received in our establishments or given their liberty...if the slaves [seeking refuge] come from states at peace with us, we will expel them as vagabonds dangerous to public order and peace, for the reclamation of their masters who are free to reclaim them outside the forts.<sup>68</sup>

The absolute pragmatism of this decision was completely acceptable to Faidherbe, who unlike his predecessors, did not even deign to justify this policy on humanitarian grounds. Nor was he averse to completing the abandonment of the *sol/affranchis* act. He not only confirmed the actions taken by Baudin to expel runaway slaves but extended the policy to exclude from liberation the slave attendants of "gentlemen or chiefs" visiting St. Louis for "political affairs". Once again the metropole was forced, after the fact, to affirm an action carried out entirely by a local agent. In this case, *Ministre* L'Amiral seemed somewhat pained by the action, pointing out that Faidherbe's policy compromised a central principle of French humanitarianism, but reluctantly agreed that this policy was "gravely inconvenient" in Senegal and approved the action.<sup>69</sup> In 1862, just in case there were any questions, Faidherbe reprinted the 1857 circular restricting emancipation to St. Louis and its suburbs of Guet N'dar, Bouet-Ville, and N'dar Tout; to Gorée; to Sédhiou and Carabane in the Casamance; and to the "ancient military posts of the colony of Senegal."<sup>70</sup>

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Faidherbe's policy of expansion proved an economic success for the Colony. Admittedly, the production of peanuts initially dropped due to the conflict of expansion and counterattacks by Islamic leaders such as Maba.<sup>71</sup> But by 1867 Governor Pinet-

<sup>67</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Circulaire Confidentielle, Faidherbe au Chef de la Justice, Procureur Impérial, Directeur des Affaires Indigènes, 14 November 1857, St. Louis.

<sup>68</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Circulaire Confidentielle, Faidherbe au Chef de la Justice, Procureur Impérial, Directeur des Affaires Indigènes, 14 November 1857, St. Louis.

<sup>69</sup> ANS K11, Ministre à Faidherbe, 5 February 1858, Paris.

<sup>70</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15, Circulaire Confidentielle, Faidherbe à les officiers, 15 November 1862, St. Louis.

<sup>71</sup> ANS 13G23, Pinet-Laprade à Ministre, 18 June 1863, St. Louis.

Laprade was able to report exports of 2.5 million kilograms of groundnuts from the Senegal River region, 4.5 million kilograms from Rufisque/Dakar, and 450,000 kilograms from the smaller ports at Portudal and Joal on the Petite Côte.<sup>72</sup> French administration throughout the region had at this time evolved along much the same path as in Waalo. The 1<sup>er</sup> Arrondissement, based on St. Louis, included the annexed region of Waalo, while the 2<sup>eme</sup> based around Gorée encompassed the indirect administration of much of Kaajor and Siin and parts of Saalum. The 3<sup>eme</sup> was composed of those regions of Dimar, Toro, and Fuuta-Tooro based around the riverbank forts of Bakel, Médine, Saldé, and Matam which were accessible to French patrols. Only in Waalo was there an effective French administration. Kaajor and the 2<sup>eme</sup> Arrondissement were largely controlled by chiefs dependant upon French aid, while Siin and Saalum had maintained their nominal independence at the price of the Petite-Côte.<sup>73</sup>

1869, however, was a temporary high water mark for French influence. The high cost of Faidherbe's wars of conquest had emptied colonial coffers, and in December of that year an inspector sent by the *Ministre de la Marine* proposed abandoning some of the more distant posts including Kaolack and Portudal, while concentrating resources on Cáp Vert and the 1<sup>er</sup> Arrondissement.<sup>74</sup> Governor Valière further reduced expenditures by coming to an agreement with Lat Joor renouncing French claims to the interior of Kaajor, but preserving a safe passage for the planned Paris-Dakar railroad.<sup>75</sup> Later in 1870, the disasters of the Franco-Prussian war solidified the French retreat, sapping resources from the administration and, after the fall of Paris, casting it adrift. Faidherbe, who had returned home from Senegal some years earlier, figured quite significantly in actions to relieve Paris; but in the colony the lack of resources severely restricted the successive governor's ability to manoeuvre.

Saint-Martin, in his 1989 monograph *Le Sénégal Sous le Second Empire* argued that "the incompatibility of fitting France with the indigenous system of slavery played a large part in the origins of de-annexation in 1871."<sup>76</sup> The difficulties encountered by Faidherbe would certainly make it convenient to believe Saint-Martin's assertion, but Faidherbe and his successors seem by the 1870s to have effectively dealt with the concerns of indigenous slave-owners by abandoning the principles of the 1848 emancipation. The local administration seems by and large to have accepted the role of slavery in the regions under their jurisdiction, to the satisfaction of local elites. After

<sup>72</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/54, Pinet-Laprade à Ministre, 28 October 1867, St. Louis.

<sup>73</sup> Biondi, *Saint-Louis du Sénégal*, p.124.

<sup>74</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/56d, General Reboul à Ministre, 15 December 1869, Dakar.

<sup>75</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/56b, Valière à Ministre, 6 January 1870, St. Louis.

<sup>76</sup> Saint-Martin, *Le Sénégal Sous le Second Empire*, p.605.

1880, abolitionist pressure would again build in the metropole and the colony. For now, however, it appears that the de-annexation of Kaajor and the dismantling of Faidherbe's empire was largely a symptom of the disastrous French war against Prussia, and, more significantly, effective resistance by local elites - something which will be discussed further in later sections.

#### Dutch withdrawal, the Asante war, and British hegemony on the Gold Coast

Unlike Faidherbe's expansion in Senegal, the creation of the British Gold Coast Protectorate was not only unanticipated but also unlooked-for. The first step towards the creation of British hegemony was the withdrawal of Holland, the only European competitor remaining on the coast. But the Dutch flight of April 1873 was not the result of British pressure.<sup>77</sup> Instead, it resulted from the resistance of the inhabitants of Dixcove and nearby Fante towns which had been placed under Dutch authority by the territorial exchange agreement of 1867.<sup>78</sup> The major cause of indigenous opposition was Holland's alliance with Asante, a state that had territorial designs for a coastal outlet.<sup>79</sup> The relationship centred around Dutch recognition of Asante's claim to the town of Elmina, which led to the siege of that town by the nascent Fante Confederation in 1868, a conflict which continued until 1870 and brought Asante forces into the region in support of Elmina.<sup>80</sup> In May 1870, a Dutch fleet was forced into a prolonged bombardment of Dixcove.<sup>81</sup> As expenses continued to mount and trade suffered, the Dutch Parliament decided to cut their losses and agreed to a handover of territory to the British in 1873, who seized upon this opportunity to monopolise Gold Coast trade.

While the interior states of Akyem Abuakwa and Akuapem and the coastal powers accepted at least nominal British hegemony, the administration's refusal to honour the Asante 'note' to Elmina and Britain's obvious bias towards the Fante infuriated the Asante.<sup>82</sup> It was this issue that seems to have caused *Asantehene* Kofi Kakari to order an invasion of the British-protected provinces<sup>83</sup>. Kofi Kakari is alleged to have stated that "Elmina is transferred but not in the heart."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>78</sup> PRO CO 96/77, Kennedy to Colonial Office, 7 November 1868, Cape Coast.

<sup>79</sup> NAG-Cape Coast #72, Aboriginal Rights Protection Society, Granville to Cardwell, 13 September 1879, Cape Coast.

<sup>80</sup> See PRO CO 96/80 and CO 96/81 for accounts of this conflict. For more on Asante-Dutch relations, see Yarak, Larry, "The Elmina Note: Myth and Reality in Asante-Dutch Relations", *History in Africa*, 1986, (13), pp.363-382.

<sup>81</sup> PRO CO 96/85, Horton to Granville, 2 May 1870, Cape Coast.

<sup>82</sup> Yarak, "The Elmina Note: Myth and Reality in Asante-Dutch Relations", 1986.

<sup>83</sup> PRO CO 96/98, Marginalia by Kimberley in Harley to Minister, 14 April 1873, Cape Coast.

<sup>84</sup> PRO CO 96/98, Harley to Minister, 14 April 1873, Cape Coast.

There was some justification for the *Asantehene's* anger. Not only had the British refused to recognise Asante's claim to sovereignty over Elmina which payments of the rental 'note' would have acknowledged, but since the early 1860s they had given refuge to fugitives fleeing the *Asantehene's* justice.<sup>85</sup> It was also the result of politics within Asante. Kofi Kakari's ascent to the stool had brought to power the "war party" within Kumasi, which authorised the 1873 invasion of the protected territories.

The subsequent campaign, involving on the British side the intervention of and considerable casualties among both indigenous and European soldiers, considerable cost to the British taxpayer, and the eventual destruction of Kumasi, ended in a conclusive British and Fante victory over Asante in 1874. It was this military conquest, rather than the withdrawal of Holland, that enabled British hegemony over the Gold Coast and subsequent emancipation. The defeat of Asante initiated a flurry of secessions from amongst its provinces; Juaben, Bekwae, Adansi, and others withdrew their support from Kumasi and raised the standards of rebellion, crippling Asante power and leaving the colonial administration the solitary remaining major power on the coast.<sup>86</sup>

The bewildered British thus found themselves the leaders of a victorious coalition of states, exercising hegemony and committed to establishing some sort of colonial administration, whereas they had fought only to repel an invasion that threatened their economic interests. Furthermore the war had focused the attention of the British metropole on the region, including that of the abolitionist lobby who forced popular debate into Parliament and called for emancipation in the territory. Raymond Dumett, in his article on the origins of the 1874 ordinances "Pressure groups, Bureaucracy, and the Decision-Making Process" picks out political, economic, and humanitarian concerns at work in this process.<sup>87</sup> To some extent, the movement for increased imperial responsibility in this region was a result of pressure from newspapers and parliamentarians who perceived both military and economic gains from greater responsibility. However emancipation was forced into this process by humanitarian groups especially the Aborigines Protection Society and British and Foreign anti-Slavery Societies, which conducted a campaign of letter-writing and publications and were supported by reports from the field by reporters confronted with the realities of slavery in the Gold Coast.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, pp.220-222..

<sup>86</sup> Ramseyer, F and J Kühn, *Four Years in Ashantee*, James Nisbet and Co., London, 1875, p.296.

<sup>87</sup> Dumett, Raymond, "Pressure groups, Bureaucracy, and the Decision-Making Process", pp.193-211.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p.206.

As a result, and despite their own opposition, colonial officials were forced to confront the fact that the expansion of British control meant the extension of British law, which technically forbade the institution of slavery. The subsequent proclamation of the Protectorate called not only for civil and commercial jurisdiction, administration, and taxation but also the "Abolition of Slave dealing" and "[m]easures with regard to domestic slavery and pawning."<sup>89</sup>

Secretary of State for the Colonies Carnarvon was thus faced with a similar conundrum to that which faced Faidherbe, in that stringent anti-slavery laws were clearly as incompatible with British expansion as they had been with French. As a politician he was forced to respond to the British public's calls for a more stringent anti-slavery policy in the newly formalised Protectorate. Personally, also, he was opposed to what he considered the 'worst excesses' of slavery. To his mind this was represented by the importation and sale of slaves within the Protectorate, a practice he called "an outrage and a crime [to be] punished as such wheresoever the authority of the British Crown can avail to bring it to justice."<sup>90</sup> Carnarvon was thus disposed towards taking action against the slave trade. Conversely, he recognised that both long-standing export goods such as gold and palm products and the potentially profitable crops of gum-copal and coffee, which had recently been introduced into the interior, relied to some extent upon slave labour for production and transportation.<sup>91</sup> He had clearly been informed of the prevalence of domestic slavery both in agriculture and gold production and in domestic service to established chiefs and trading/land owning elites.<sup>92</sup>

Even more importantly, the cost and difficulty of implementing a fully staffed colonial administration complete with military, judicial, and executive officers had been made clear by the expense of the Asante War, and the Colonial Office was eager to secure the support of chiefs in order to limit the size and cost of colonial administration. They were forced to acknowledge, however, that the authority of these chiefly officeholders was based on their control of land and labour, much of which was unfree, a situation which was to remain true throughout the remainder of the century. "It seems doubtful", an administrator wrote as late as 1927", whether the system [of chief's rule] can be long maintained in this country... but for what remains of the domestic slave

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<sup>89</sup> Agbodeka, *African Politics and British Policy*, pp.55-56.

<sup>90</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1139), Carnarvon to the Officer Administering the Government of the Gold Coast, August 21, 1874.

<sup>91</sup> Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa*, p.26.

<sup>92</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1139), Carnarvon to the Officer Administering the Government of the Gold Coast, August 21, 1874.

system.”<sup>93</sup> Therefore, while Carnarvon perceived that actions taken to enforce anti-trading ordinances would appeal to abolitionists in the metropole but threaten the livelihoods only of a relatively small number of full-time slave traders, he was nevertheless wary of undertaking the difficult task of enforcing emancipation for the bulk of the Protectorate’s slaves.

The Colonial Office was therefore interested in achieving the dual goals of appeasing abolitionists at home while maintaining the support of the slave-owning elite of the Protectorate. This effort resulted in three proposals, which Carnarvon subsequently put before the Gold Coast administration. The first proposal, by which the *government* would purchase the slaves by payment of £8 per slave and then make use of them for a number of years on a policy basically identical to the *regime des engagés*<sup>94</sup>, was quickly rejected. What was acceptable to French society in the 1840s was not acceptable to Britain in the 1870s. Similarly, the Sixes Model, based on the Basel Missionary Society’s actions of the 1860s<sup>95</sup>, was rejected by Governor Strahan. This programme, through which a slave was to have been immediately awarded one free day to work for his/herself and purchase the other days from his/her master over a period of years, appealed to the Colonial Office because of its intrinsically gradual approach. But it was that very attribute which also threatened to make it unacceptable to the British public, as Strahan noted when he wrote to Carnarvon “only very slowly would this method operate (if ever it sufficed) to wipe out the reproach of slavery in the Protectorate”.<sup>96</sup> Strahan also argued that the logistics of implementing such a proposal amongst numerous slaves without a strong commitment by the understaffed administration to keeping records and policing the scheme would lead to its failure.<sup>97</sup>

Carnarvon therefore put his weight behind a third proposed system of emancipation, the Indian Model, which required the administration to immediately end the legal status of slavery but forced the slaves themselves to take legal action in order to win their emancipation. The Indian Model had the dual advantages of immediately

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<sup>93</sup> NAG ADM 11/975, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>94</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1139), Carnarvon to the Officer Administering the Government of the Gold Coast, August 21, 1874.

<sup>95</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>96</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, September 19, 1874, Cape Coast

granting slaves the right to seek their emancipation while making it somewhat difficult to achieve, thus limiting the chance of a mass exodus of slaves from the entourages of their masters and their positions in transportation, agriculture, and mining. The Indian Model was also accepted by the local merchants and administrators who made up the Colony's Legislative Council<sup>98</sup>; and in September 1874 Governor Strahan adopted drafts of two ordinances based on this plan to be enacted on December 17.

However, while the administration clearly had the power to implement this act in the Colony which was "nothing but the forts and lands immediately around them or actually acquired by the Government"<sup>99</sup>, the case was not as apparent for the bulk of the Protectorate. Carnarvon, however, stated in no uncertain terms that if Britain were to accept increased defense and administrative responsibility for these districts, they would have to be allowed to exercise certain rights of control. He therefore informed the local administrators that he was willing to "incur some risk for the sake of removing the dishonour and moral taint which is incurred by a toleration of slavery".<sup>100</sup> He argued that the states of the Protectorate owed this favour to his government which:

...as their deliverer [in the 1873-4 Asante War], is entitled to require of them a greater degree of deference and conformity. ... Their conformity is required in pursuit of... the immediate abolition of slave dealing and the importation of slaves, to be followed by such regulation of the relations between master and slave as shall, ultimately, and in the long course of time, effect the extinction of slavery itself.<sup>101</sup>

With this argument, Carnarvon not only rationalised the extension of British jurisdiction, but also stressed that the extinction of the slave trade, rather than the suppression of domestic slavery, was Britain's priority. This prioritisation was again reflected in Strahan's two ordinances on December 27, 1874, which were accepted by the Legislative Council in Cape Coast with little debate.<sup>102</sup>

The first part of his carefully coordinated scheme was the Gold Coast Slave

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<sup>97</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, September 19, 1874, Cape Coast.

<sup>98</sup> PRO CO 98/2, Legislative Council Minutes, 17 December 1874.

<sup>99</sup> NAG ADM 12/3/2, Griffith to Knutsford, 14 June 1888, Accra.

<sup>100</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1139), Carnarvon to the Officer Administering the Government of the Gold Coast, August 21, 1874.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> PRO CO 98/2, Legislative Council Minutes, 17 December 1874.

Dealing Abolition Act which dealt with the crimes of slave dealing and the importation of slaves. The charge of slave dealing was to be applied to anyone who “shall... deal or trade in, sell, barter, transfer or take any slave... or any person in order so that such person should be held or treated as a slave.”<sup>103</sup> The same charge was also, confusingly, applied to individuals placing or receiving a pawn.<sup>104</sup> Further, slave dealing applied to both the exportation of slaves from and importation of slaves into the Protectorate. For all these activities, the administration decreed punishment of up to five years imprisonment and a fine.<sup>105</sup>

The second ordinance, the Gold Coast Emancipation Ordinance, implemented the more passive Indian Model. The Emancipation Ordinance was intended both to demonstrate the administration’s commitment to allowing slave liberations and its support for the status quo in slave-master relationships. The operative clauses of the ordinance simply ordered:

...all courts to ‘refuse, disallow, discharge, and dismiss’ any claims held by one person over another... providing always that this enactment shall not be construed to include or apply to such rights as under the ordinary rules of English law applicable to the Gold Coast Colony may arise under and by virtue of contracts of service between freemen.<sup>106</sup>

While the ordinance did not, as Strahan had originally intended, go so far as to recognise “tribal [dependency] relations according to the customary law of the Protected Territories”<sup>107</sup>, it went some way towards reassuring slave-owners that their slaves would not be encouraged to seek liberation. The punishment for “compelling the service of any... free person” was set at five years’ imprisonment.<sup>108</sup>

Strahan informed Carnarvon that this ordinance satisfied the government’s intention not to actively encouraging slave liberations. “I do not anticipate”, he wrote,

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<sup>103</sup> PP 1874, LII, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 28 December 1874, enclosure 1, Gold Coast Slave Dealing Abolition Act, Article 4.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, Article 7. Carnarvon and the Acting Colonial Secretary on the Gold Coast both argued for a heavier sentence. PP 1874, LII, (c.1139), Carnarvon to Strahan, October 29, 1874, London. PRO CO 98/2, Legislative Council Minutes, 17 December 1874.

<sup>106</sup> PP 1874, LII, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 28 December 1874, enclosure 2, The Gold Coast Emancipation Ordinance, Article 4..

<sup>107</sup> PP 1874, LII, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 19 September 1874, enclosure 3.

<sup>108</sup> PP 1874, LII, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 28 December 1874, enclosure 2, The Gold Coast Emancipation

“that the slaves will immediately in any large numbers leave their masters.”<sup>109</sup>

### The immediate impact of the emancipation ordinance in the Gold Coast

Strahan was only the first in a long line of administrators and then historians to try to define the impact of emancipation, for the issue has been the subject of rigorous debate by the colonial and academic communities. Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, in his 1927 *Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast*, tells his readers that “there [had been] no general eagerness for manumission”<sup>110</sup>. This was the official position presented in government documents, supported by Strahan’s letters to Carnarvon which suggested that there was little disturbance caused by the emancipation ordinances.<sup>111</sup> This ‘continuity’ theory was largely accepted by the colonial establishment, but historians such as Paul Lovejoy began to ask serious questions about abolition and emancipation in Africa at the end of the 1970s, suggesting that emancipation was in some regions the cause of massive social and political shifts. These ‘transformational’ ideas were best represented in the historiography of the Gold Coast by Gerald McSheffrey’s 1983 article “Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade, and the Impact of Abolition in the Gold Coast 1874-1910: A Reappraisal.”<sup>112</sup> McSheffrey utilised recently translated excerpts from the Basel Missionary Archives which suggested that there were mass self-liberations by slaves, especially in the interior of the Protectorate, to argue that emancipation caused a major dislocation in slave-owning on the Gold Coast. His evidence was mainly letters which claimed that in Ada “From almost every master some slaves have gone”<sup>113</sup>, in Akyem Abuakwa’s capital of Kyebi “about 100 slaves have left their masters”<sup>114</sup>, and in Akuapem “about 200 slaves have run away...”.<sup>115</sup> McSheffrey’s article especially focused on Akyem Abuakwa which was both a minor producer of palm oil and was well monitored by BMS missionaries.

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Ordinance. Article 5.

<sup>109</sup> PP 1874, LII (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 19 September 1874, Cape Coast.

<sup>110</sup> NAG ADM 11/975, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>111</sup> PRO CO 96/115, Strahan to Carnarvon, 26 March 1875, Cape Coast.

<sup>112</sup> McSheffrey, “Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade”, pp.349-368.

<sup>113</sup> Jenkins BMS Abstracts, J. Binder to Mader, Basel Missionary Factory Ada, 3 July 1875.

<sup>114</sup> Jenkins BMS Abstracts, Asante, Mohr and Werner to the Basel Mission Slave Emancipation Committee, 26 June 1875, Kyebi.

However McSheffrey has himself come under significant criticism for overlooking BMS documents which suggested that relatively few slaves actually left their masters in Akuapem, Krobo, and other internal regions.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, the Akyem mission's reports on which he relies have since been brought into question as the chief missionaries were concurrently embroiled in a conflict with the local government based largely on the confrontational tactics of indigenous missionary David Asante, a cousin and rival of the *Okyenhene*.<sup>117</sup>

The case against McSheffrey's transformation thesis has been put forward by Raymond Dumett and Marion Johnson, who argued that the administration held a "gradualist, noncoercive policy with respect to slaveholding and pawning" and its efforts were "meliorative and eroding rather than abolitionist in effect."<sup>118</sup> Although something of a return to the official colonial theory of "continuance", Dumett and Johnson's article was well supported by a variety of administrative and missionary sources.

However, the "continuance" theory has again been questioned recently, not least by John Parker, who in his study of the urban history of Accra argued that "the available evidence points neither to the historiographical polarities of 'continuity or 'rupture', but rather to a whole range of responses often involving negotiations between masters and slaves...".<sup>119</sup> Kwabena Opere-Akurang also muddies the waters by suggesting that there was a division between the Colony, where British enforcement was strong and there was a large slave response, and the Protectorate, where enforcement and consequently response was weak.<sup>120</sup>

While Opere-Akurang's arguments are made somewhat suspect by his apparent failure to accept the nineteenth century definition of the Colony as only the few forts and settlements of the coast and not their surrounding districts<sup>121</sup>, Parker has to a large

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<sup>115</sup> Jenkins BMS Abstracts, Mader's cover letter to Basel, 25 August 1875, Akropong.

<sup>116</sup> Jenkins BMS Abstracts, Dieterle to Basel, 22 June 1875, Aburi. Eisenschmid to Basel, 25 June 1875 Akropong. Schönefeld to Mader, 8 July 1875, Odumase.

<sup>117</sup> This will be discussed in depth in Chapter 7. See Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa*, pp.57-71.

<sup>118</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", pp.106-108.

<sup>119</sup> Parker, John, "Ga state and society", p.144.

<sup>120</sup> Opere-Akurang, Kwabena, "The Administration of the Abolition Laws, African Response and Post- Proclamation Slavery in the Gold Coast 1874-1940", *Slavery and Abolition*, 1998, (19), pp.149-166. Opere-Akurang, Kwabena, "Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast: Colonial Modes of Emancipation and African Initiatives", *Ghana Studies*, 1998 (1), pp.11-34.

<sup>121</sup> For my response to Opere-Akurang's assertions see my article "The Case for Africans: The Role of Slaves and

extent pointed the way to a new direction for understanding emancipation. The evidence for the Gold Coast in general matches that Parker has found for Accra. The 1874 emancipation, while not immediately revolutionary for most slaves and slave-owners, did result in a long-term transformation and in a wide variety of negotiated outcomes for slaves and their masters.<sup>122</sup>

In the short-term, however, the colonial administration largely succeeded in providing a route for emancipation without encouraging a rupture in the local economy or society. While McSheffrey, and to some extent Opare-Akurang, claim that there is “ample testimony that serious disruptions had indeed occurred”<sup>123</sup>, their evidence rests unevenly on a very few unquantified statements in letters emanating largely from the BMS, aside from one purely anecdotal reference by Strahan.<sup>124</sup> Much of the evidence for this is only now emerging from the SCT colonial magistracy files in the National Archives of Ghana, which both McSheffrey and Opare-Akurang ignored but which contain valuable quantitative and qualitative information.

It is clear from these sources that it was British rather than indigenous courts which dealt with slave-related crimes during the post-proclamation period (and up to the end of British rule on the Gold Coast). The 1853 Supreme Court Ordinance had been an attempt to marginalise indigenous jurisprudence in the towns contiguous with British settlements and forts<sup>125</sup>; and the extension of the Protectorate in 1874 favoured the promulgation of this policy throughout the newly ‘protected’ districts. However the scarcity of healthy European administrators meant that Africans, and more frequently Euro-Africans, continued to play a significant role in judicial and civil administrations.<sup>126</sup> Important Africans, including known former (and possibly current) slave owners were in rare instances even appointed to senior judicial posts. One of the most important of these figures was George Cleland. A notable slave owner, relative of the *Alato Mantse* and one-time acting holder of that Jamestown stool, Cleland had led a militia of his

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Masters in Emancipation on the Gold Coast, 1874-2000”, *Slavery and Abolition*, 2000 (21), page numbers forthcoming.

<sup>122</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>123</sup> Opare-Akurang, “Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast”, pp.17.

<sup>124</sup> PP 1875, LII (c.1343), Strahan to Carnarvon, March 6, 1875, Cape Coast.

<sup>125</sup> Gocking, Roger, “British Justice and the Native Tribunals of the Southern Gold Coast Colony”, *Journal of African History*, 1993 (34), pp.94-96.

<sup>126</sup> Opare-Akurang, “The Administration of the Abolition Laws”, p.152.

slaves in support of the British in 1873, and after having headed an indigenous tribunal for several years, was appointed as a Justice of the Peace by Strahan in 1874.<sup>127</sup> Cleland, who had been indicted for purchasing a slave in 1868, was nevertheless given jurisdiction over British subjects within the Colony for an indeterminate period, although not without some controversy.<sup>128</sup>

While the appointment of Africans and Euro-Africans to such major posts was uncommon, even during the transition period of 1874-5, educated locals continued to serve as clerks, translators, and of course in the police. In addition, both the Judicial Assessor's court, which initially dealt with slave-related crimes, and the Divisional Court in Accra which replaced it in 1878 allowed participation by local notables in the judicial process.<sup>129</sup> Defendants at the Divisional Court could request trial by a jury of their peers, who to the frustration of the administration frequently chose to acquit individuals whom the administration believed to be guilty.<sup>130</sup> Even when defendants did not insist on jury trial, the Chief Justice of the Divisional Court was usually assisted by both European and non-European assessors.<sup>131</sup> Although the presiding Justice could legally disregard the opinions of assessors, their advice was generally accepted.

District Courts did not deal with slave-related crimes during this period, and slaves who wished to follow the only path to legal emancipation available to them under the Indian Model - the courts - had to travel to Cape Coast or Accra to receive their emancipation.<sup>132</sup> This was probably a greater hindrance to emancipation than the frequently cited argument that slaves were ignorant of the proclamation.<sup>133</sup> It is therefore indicative of the agency of some individual slaves that they trickled in from the Akuapem hills, Akyem Abuakwa, and further to receive their certificates of liberation.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> My thanks to John Parker for this biographical information.

<sup>128</sup> NAG ADM 1/12/3, Chief Magistrate Marshall to Lt. Colonel Johnston, April 9, 1874, Accra. Cleland was indicted in NAG SCT 2/4/4, Regina v. Sarah Smith, Accra Supreme/Divisional Court, 20 May 1868.

<sup>129</sup> The court sat in Cape Coast until 1876 and later in Accra. NAG SCT 5/4/14-5/4/19 and 17/4/1

<sup>130</sup> PRO CO 96/203, Hodgson to Knutsford, 8 July, 1889, Accra.

<sup>131</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1 (1879) - 2/5/13 (1899)

<sup>132</sup> The Accra District Court was the first to hear slave dealing cases in 1882. See Chapter 7.

<sup>133</sup> Jenkins BMS Abstracts J. Binder to Mader - Basel Missionary Factory Ada, 3 January 1875 claimed slaves in Ada did not know of emancipation. Ignorance of the proclamation was also used as a defence by some defendants. See NAG SCT 5/4/15 Regina v. Quacoe Bart, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 9 March 1875; Regina v. Ashun and Kofi Dontoh, Cape Coast Judicial Court, 1 March 1875.

<sup>134</sup> Jenkins BMS Abstracts, Dieterle to Basel, 22 June 1875, (Aburi). SCT 5/4/19 Regina v. Acquassie Mirriwa, Cape Coast JA Court, 1 December 1876 (Mampong); SCT 5/4/19 Regina v. Kofi Tando, Cape Coast JA Court, 2 December

Nevertheless, initially the numbers of slaves seeking their liberation was not proportionally significant. Certainly there were few who chose to use the legal intervention of the courts. SCT records indicate only approximately 20 cases of slaves or their families using the legal system to effect their liberation before 1880 in the Judicial Assessors' and District courts combined, and most of these individuals were recently introduced slaves rather than long-time servitors.<sup>135</sup> At the same time, Dumett and Johnson rightly point out that even the most dramatic (and questionable) mass self-liberations suggested by the Basel Missionary archival evidence number only 100-200 slaves, while in many areas even BMS sources indicate few liberations indeed.<sup>136</sup>

The agency of slaves is the topic of the next chapter, but it is interesting to note that there is no evidence at all during the period of initial emancipation (1874-1880) of judicial authorities commissioning proactive investigations into slave holding or even slave dealing. Of the 48 cases involving slavery or pawning heard by these courts, 28 apparently resulted either from police acting on the advice of a witness, slave-owners belatedly hearing of the emancipation acts and throwing themselves upon the mercy of the court (which was usually given), or a police constable happening upon a crime being committed.<sup>137</sup> However while there are no cases during this period of magistrates commissioning investigations, when the abolitionist press got hold of a story such as the sale in Little Popo of two Gold Coast girls, the administration was willing to go to great lengths to reclaim or repurchase those individuals.<sup>138</sup>

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The expansion of British authority after 1873 necessitated an increasing commitment in terms of military power. The failure of Major Cochrane and his successors in the Gold Coast Corps to recruit coastal peoples into British units or to receive permission from the Colonial Office to recruit slaves had resulted, at the

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1876 (Domassie in Akyem).

<sup>135</sup> Most cases do not make it clear the exact mechanism by which slaves brought into British jurisdiction were identified.

<sup>136</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", p.91.

<sup>137</sup> This information is all drawn from NAG SCT 5/4/15-18; SCT 17/4/1; SCT 2/5/1; and SCT 2/4/11.

<sup>138</sup> NAG ADM 1/9/1, Freeling to Rottman and Cole, 3 September 1877, Accra.

beginning of the Asante War, in a divided constabulary.<sup>139</sup> Most of the coastal forts were manned by small contingents of the 171-man "Fantee Armed Police", but the largest force was the "Houssa Armed Police", recruited mostly by missions to Lagos and the upper Volta, whose 211 members largely formed the garrisons of Cape Coast and Elmina.<sup>140</sup> These small forces were totally insufficient in the face of the Asante invasion, however, and despite augmentation by both British regulars and West Indian units, the campaign commander General Wolseley initiated a levy of coastal peoples, who often willingly volunteered for duty against Asante, either individually or in *asafo* companies. By 4 November 1873, Wolseley had more than 3200 indigenous auxiliary combatants.<sup>141</sup> The number of associated carriers is unknown but must have been even larger.

In the face of the Asante military threat, however, at least one of Wolseley's officers decided to reconsider the inclusion of slave recruits in their forces. Captain Glover, the former Governor of Lagos, actively recruited slaves in late 1873 for a column aimed at striking through the bush for Kumasi. Glover's recruiting agents directed their efforts at "slaves of persons residing at Cape Coast and other places on the Gold Coast" and a number of slaves clearly saw a opening and seized the opportunity to enlist.<sup>142</sup> Luckily we have details of the origins of some of the recruits, although only for September 1873 whereas we know recruitment continued into November. The inducted slaves and ex-slaves were almost entirely northerners, and according to the registrars mostly Muslim, and were officially enlisted in the Houssa Armed Police.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> See Chapter 4

<sup>140</sup> NAG ADM 1/10/2, Monthly State of the Fantee Armed Police and the Gold Coast Houssa Armed Police Force, 24 June 1873.

<sup>141</sup> PRO CO 96/103, Wolseley to Kimberley, 4 November 1873, Cape Coast.

<sup>142</sup> NAG ADM 1/10/20, Sworn declaration, HAPF Recruits, 12 August 1873.

<sup>143</sup> NAG ADM 1/10/2, Nominal Roll with Particulars of Recruits medically examined for Houssa Armed Police, September 1873.

**TABLE 6.1**

**Recruits to the Houssa Armed Police,  
September 1873**

Status	Number	Percent
Current slave in Colony	26	47%
Current slave outside Colony	8	15%
Former slave, purchased freedom	2	4%
Former slave, manumitted	1	2%
Former slave, freed by Governor Hill	1	2%
Former slave, refugee from Asante	6	11%
Former slave, freed by death of master	5	9%
Former slave, runaway from master	4	7%
Free individual, no slave history	2	4%
Total	55	

NAG ADM 1/10/2, Nominal Roll with Particulars, September 1873

A plurality of recruits was individuals, who, until joining the force, were slaves within the Gold Coast Colony, while many others were from allied states abutting colonial towns. It is clear from correspondence surrounding this recruitment effort that their masters were strongly opposed to their induction, and at one point at least this led to a street riot in which several enlisted slaves and masters were injured.<sup>144</sup> Other inductees were slaves who had either bought their freedom or been given their liberty upon the deaths of their masters, or in some cases slaves who had fled their owners several years previously. These former slaves were probably convinced to join up by the promise of a recruitment bonus and wages inflated by the war. At least one recruit had been freed by Governor Hill over thirty years earlier! Only two enlistees were free individuals who claimed to have had no slave background.

However, unlike the French *Ministre's* approval of the *tirailleurs sénégalaises*, the Colonial Office balked when Captain Glover suggested that recruitment efforts could be aided if masters were paid a £5 bounty for allowing their slaves to join up.<sup>145</sup> Glover had authorised this policy, but not without alerting General Wolseley, and Wolseley communicated the proposition to Secretary of State for the Colonies Kimberley. Kimberley deemed the issue important enough to consult with Gladstone himself, and

<sup>144</sup> PRO CO 96/103, Captain Glover to Wolseley, 6 November 1873, Accra.

<sup>145</sup> PRO CO 96/103, Captain Glover to Wolseley, 6 November 1873, Accra.

the Prime Minister did not approve.<sup>146</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, 1873, Kimberley consequently instructed Wolseley to forbid Glover from recruiting on this basis. While "mak[ing] full allowance for the difficulty in which Captain Glover has found himself placed in recruiting for the Houssa Force", Kimberley stated that:

As his actions, although beneficial to the slaves in procuring their emancipation and enabling them to engage in a well paid and honourable service, may be misconstrued and might lay her Majesty's government open to the charge of encouraging the traffic in slaves, I think it desirable that he should discontinue the practice of making payments to masters on account of the enlistment of their slaves, and I request you to so instruct him.

There are several reasons why the British rejected a policy which the French in Senegal embraced. The most obvious is the greater pressure of abolitionism both in Britain and at this later date. Second, there was the precedent of Newcastle's order against such recruiting methods in 1862.<sup>147</sup> More practically, the Colonial Office was wary of offending the very chiefly officeholders upon whom they depended for the bulk of their auxiliaries, an important contingent of the British forces, by accepting their slaves into service. But perhaps most importantly, British commanders on the Gold Coast were simply not facing the same recruiting problems as Faidherbe. Whereas Faidherbe's conquests had been largely unpopular with Senegal's neighbours, Wolseley, fighting a defensive action alongside the coastal powers rather than a war of expansion, was strongly supported by the militias of neighbouring states. He simply did not need to resort to the same measures as Faidherbe. A cynic might suggest that even abolitionist England might have allowed the recruitment of slaves if it had been strictly necessary from a military point of view, but in this case it was not.

After 1874 the issue of the recruitment of slaves seemed a moot point as slavery had lost its legal status, and slaves did not technically exist in the Protectorate or Colony. However, the administration continued to be starved of recruits to both constabulary forces. The militia for coastal peoples - the "Fantee" constabulary, was cut down to 200 troops due to a lack of volunteers, while the "Houssa" force was given a larger share of responsibility for the Protectorate at 900 individuals. There is evidence

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<sup>146</sup> PRO CO 96/103, Holland to Kimberley, Telegramme, 16 December 1873, London.

<sup>147</sup> See Chapter 4.

that some slaves who left their masters in 1874 and 1875 joined the “Houssa” constabulary, at least from the coastal areas, but clearly not *en masse*, since commanders continued to recruit from outside the Protectorate in order to fill their units.<sup>148</sup> In 1875, Captain Barrows led a successful recruiting drive along the Niger River<sup>149</sup>, but in 1879, another mission had to be carried out in the same region and in Salaga north of the Protectorate.<sup>150</sup> Within the year, Ussher was forced to request permission to send yet another recruiter to the area.<sup>151</sup> At one point, the desperate administration was even considering enlisting from Manding communities in the Gambia.<sup>152</sup> Unlike in Senegal, the recruitment of slaves and former slaves in the Gold Coast was clearly not a success.

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While there were obvious differences between European attitudes towards slavery in the Gold Coast and Senegal during their respective periods of expansion, the general goal of both administrations was to ensure the profitability and the security of the colonies. As in Faidherbe’s Senegal, the immediate post-proclamation period on the Gold Coast witnessed the introduction of administrative attempts to control labour supplies for profitable cash products. Governor Freeling, for example, introduced rules governing apprenticeship in 1877, which allowed for court-sanctioned apprentice positions for individuals between the ages of 9 and 16 not only in the trades but also for domestic servitude.<sup>153</sup> Thus the administration could place youths, especially orphans, in positions which had been previously generally, although not exclusively, filled by slaves. On the other hand, Governor Freeling crafted the ordinance with a view to preventing apprentices from becoming slaves by setting up a mandatory certification process and forbidding the removal of apprentices from the Protectorate. Unfortunately, I have found little further evidence on this subject, but the system does not appear to have been

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<sup>148</sup> Jenkins BMS Abstract, J. Binder to Mader, Basel Missionary Factory Ada, 3 July 1875. Again, this topic will be discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>149</sup> PRO CO 96/131, Ussher to Colonial Office, 10 November 1875, Cape Coast.

<sup>150</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/48, Hicks Beach to Ussher, 3 July 1879, London.

<sup>151</sup> PRO CO 96/131, Ussher to Kimberley, 13 September 1880, Accra.

<sup>152</sup> PRO CO 96/115, Strahan to Carnarvon, 22 June 1875, Cape Coast.

<sup>153</sup> PRO CO 97/2, Ordinance 16 of 1877, “Masters and Servants”, 23 July 1877, Governor Freeling.

extended to agricultural work. This fact can be interpreted as indicating that there was no labour shortage in agriculture, and thus no major exodus of slaves from this field, although the connection is tenuous.

Still, Carnarvon's and Strahan's plan to implement an emancipation policy that would not strip workers and domestics from their positions appears to have succeeded. Between 1875 and 1876 production of palm oil grew from 2.68 million gallons to 3.87 million gallons, and palm kernels exports climbed from 4,677 tons to 7,655 tons, while gold exports increased to 17,280 ounces from 11,801 ounces.<sup>154</sup>

At the same time, the administration largely avoided censure by the abolitionist missionary communities throughout the Colony. While in 1874 the Methodists were attracting 10,400 attendants to public worship in 23 chapels in coastal towns and had a combined membership of 2513, their only response to emancipation was to welcome its implementation in 1875.<sup>155</sup> In the next five years there is no evidence that they issued any complaints as to the pursuit of slave policy by the government. The Basel Missionary Society was somewhat more active, requesting police presence in Kyebi to monitor slavery in 1875 and accusing the *Okyenhene* of slave holding in 1879, but otherwise appears to have largely accepted the implementation and enforcement of the Indian Model.<sup>156</sup> Colonial governors encouraged this acquiescence through the judicious use of propaganda. The annexation of Keta in 1879 was largely aimed at claiming the mouth of the Volta before any other colonial power and stopping the smuggling of legitimate goods in order to avoid British tariffs<sup>157</sup>, but it was also useful propaganda since the region continually hosted major slave trading markets.<sup>158</sup> In the face of such evidence it is difficult to express British attitudes towards slavery between 1874 and 1880 better than Dumett and Johnson, who wrote that:

[our] impression gained is that of a government which hoped by mere expressions of disapproval to reduce the harsher aspects of indigenous slavery gradually - but which preferred the status quo and looked paternalistically on slaves remaining close to former masters as the most effective means of social

<sup>154</sup> Dumett, and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", p.81.

<sup>155</sup> WMMS Reports XIX, Tabular View of the Gold Coast District, 1874.

<sup>156</sup> WMMS Reports XIX, Gold Coast District, 1875.

<sup>157</sup> PRO CO 96/28, Ussher to Hicks-Beach, 9 December 1879, Keta.

<sup>158</sup> See Chapters 4 and 9.

control.<sup>159</sup>

### The reinforcement of pragmatic policies during the French retreat, 1870-1880

Colonial regimes in both Senegal and the Gold Coast approached the question of slavery and emancipation with the dual goals of satisfying abolitionist pressure while maintaining the socio-economic *status quo*. While the Gold Coast administration specifically engineered the Indian Model so as to minimise the impact of emancipation, the French in Senegal had to work around a much more stringent document which called for the active liberation of slaves.

As we have seen, Baudin, Du Château, and Faidherbe used subterfuge to mitigate the implications of the 1848 emancipation so as to assure the colony's profitability and security. For these actions, they were continually able to secure the sanction of their superiors in the metropole, their respective Ministers of the Navy. Unfortunately for them, however, the implication of the 1848 extension of citizenship to inhabitants of St. Louis and Gorée also placed the Colony's justice system under the *Minister de la Justice*. Both justices and prosecutors were appointed by and reported to the Ministry of Justice<sup>160</sup>, and their actions were likely to be shaped by metropolitan pressure rather than (or as well as) pragmatic colonial concerns.

Fortunately for the executive officers of the colony, the only punishment for slave dealing dictated by the 1848 emancipation laws was the loss of citizenship for the perpetrator.<sup>161</sup> The implication of this law was that only citizens could be punished for slave trading or owning offences, which meant, to Faidherbe's relief, that subjects of Waalo, Kaajor, and other areas brought under French control were immune from judicial sanction.<sup>162</sup>

The tribunals of Gorée and St. Louis in the 1840s and early 1850s were completely ineffective in dealing with slavery.<sup>163</sup> These tribunals had not been fundamentally altered by the 1848 emancipation, and there is no evidence that a single

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<sup>159</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", p.86.

<sup>160</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.60.

<sup>161</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>162</sup> Their slaves could still, according to the 1848 law, seek their liberation on French soil (which they were nevertheless unlikely to receive). However the masters were immune to prosecution for owning these slaves.

<sup>163</sup> ANS M3 Rapport sur le Service Judiciaire, 20 March 1842, St. Louis.

case of slave dealing was brought before them<sup>164</sup>. However the reunification of Senegal and Gorée in 1854 resulted in an imperial decree by Louis Napoleon codifying justice in Senegal. The supreme court which emerged, the *cour d'assises*, sat at St. Louis and heard all major cases in the colony, including those involving slave dealing. In a nod to the power of both the *habitants* and the local administration, the 1854 decree put much of the court's power for determining guilt or innocence not in the hands of the French *président de la cour impériale* but in those of four assessors "taken from among the notables...composed of [officers], former officers, and the principal landowners and merchants of St. Louis and Gorée".<sup>165</sup> The responsibility for justice was thus placed in the hands of the prime proponents of a pragmatic slave policy.

Conversely, the 1854 imperial decree guaranteed the independence of the colonial prosecution, and prosecutors were the individuals charged with bringing cases to court. Within months of the decree public prosecutors charged three Moors with having brought two female slaves and a young boy into the colony - allegedly for sale. Aware of the limitations of the 1848 proclamation, they chose to pursue this case under an 1831 law intended to punish maritime slave traders exporting slaves to the New World, but which could be construed to include traders importing slaves into the Colony by land.<sup>166</sup> The two cases were so open-and-shut that even the tilted *cour d'assises* handed down 20 and 15 year penalties to the traders. However, the decision was reversed on appeal on the basis that the "accused were strangers and that the crimes were committed in foreign countries."<sup>167</sup> When Minister Ducos was faced with the *fait accompli* of the reversal of the conviction he argued that the crimes had in fact been carried over to French territory. Nevertheless he agreed that the subject status of the accused was enough to guarantee that they should be found innocent. There is no record that the newly-appointed Governor Faidherbe personally took a hand in the appeal, but certainly the case became a precedent for guaranteeing immunity for French subjects just in time for Faidherbe's expansion and the introduction of large numbers of individuals as subjects.

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<sup>164</sup> There is a total absence of slave dealing cases in ANS M3, ANS K11, and Senegal XIV before the 1850s.

<sup>165</sup> ANS M3, Décret Impérial portant Organisation Judiciaire, 9 August 1854.

<sup>166</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>167</sup> ANS K11, Ministre à Faidherbe, 28 December 1854, Paris.

The appeals court's decision dealt something of a blow to proponents of a vigorous prosecution of slave-related laws, and there is no record of further slave-dealing cases for a full 20 years, other than the rather straight-forward prosecution of the Commandant of Bakel for the sale of slaves captured in battle, for which crime he received only one month's imprisonment.<sup>168</sup> Consequently, the arrival in 1874 of Prosper Darrigrand, a lawyer and abolitionist who had practised in the West Indies, was something of a local disaster for the administration's pragmatic approach to slavery.<sup>169</sup>

Darrigrand had been appointed by the *Ministre de la Justice* to the post of *président de la cour d'assises*, from which position he launched his attack on slave dealing. His first strike came in 1875 when he charged two *habitants*, Gasconi Diop and Goza Jean Cartier, with having sold and bought a slave girl respectively. Darrigrand considered the case watertight, and so apparently did the defendants who "contested neither the reality nor the gravity of the charges." Nevertheless, the assessors - French officers and fellow *habitants* - acquitted the defendants, arguing incorrectly that the 1831 law applied only to "slave vessels."<sup>170</sup>

The disgruntled Darrigrand refused to be so easily defeated by the 'old boy network' of colonial officials and *habitants* that conspired to limit the impact of emancipation. In 1878 he managed to bring to court four more individuals accused of slave dealing. Three of them were clearly subjects and not citizens, as they lived in the village of N'Diogo.<sup>171</sup> However the fourth, N'Diaye N'Diaye, was an *habitant* and owned property in St. Louis as well as farms and 15 slaves in Waalo.<sup>172</sup> Therefore Darrigrand pursued him despite the resistance of Acting Governor Leguay, who in the absence of Governor Brière de l'Isle wrote to the Minister for assistance.<sup>173</sup> Leguay's frantic calls for assistance brought Brière de l'Isle thundering back to confront Darrigrand. The Governor feared the alienation of both the Waalo aristocracy and that of the pro-French Muslim cleric Bou-el-Mogdad, at whose residence the sale had taken place.<sup>174</sup> In the

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<sup>168</sup> ANS K11, Faidherbe à Ministre, 15 December 1857, St. Louis.

<sup>169</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.60.

<sup>170</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/16, Darrigrand à Valière, 28 May 1875, St. Louis.

<sup>171</sup> ANS K11, Leguay à Ministre, 1 August 1878, St. Louis.

<sup>172</sup> ANS K11, Brière de l'Isle à Ministre, 8 December 1878, St. Louis.

<sup>173</sup> ANS K11, Leguay à Ministre, 18 August 1878, St. Louis.

<sup>174</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.61.

end, N'Diaye was found guilty and sentenced by Darrigrand to six months imprisonment.<sup>175</sup>

But Darrigrand's victory was short-lived. By the time he was able to bring another slave dealing case before the *cour d'assises*, former Governor Jauréguiberry had been appointed *Ministre de la Marine* and in support of Brière de l'Isle he convinced the Ministry of Justice to pull Darrigrand off the case.<sup>176</sup> The judicial challenge to the administration's slave policy had been defeated, and pragmatic politics had won again.

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In the 1870s, while the French were detaching themselves from responsibility for large areas of the interior due to lack of resources, the metropole became increasingly aware that the balance of the peanut trade had shifted to Siin-Saalum and Kaajor and therefore to the entrepôts of C ap Vert. Thus while French colonialism was on the retreat elsewhere, Governor Vali ere noted in 1874 that Dakar and Rufisque were becoming increasingly valuable ports and indeed massively profitable for France, and moved to formally annex the two settlements. The decision prompted a debate in the colonial administration over whether or not the 1848 proclamation should be extended to these regions. In fact, the issue had been discussed before. In 1865, when the importance of Dakar became apparent, Governor Pinet-Laprade had suggested extending emancipation to Dakar and indeed the entire C ap Vert peninsula.<sup>177</sup> Although Pinet-Laprade had ordered the Commandant of Gor ee to warn the Dakarois of the imminent extension of French law to their town<sup>178</sup>, and received the support of the Minister<sup>179</sup>, the move was never implemented.

In 1874, therefore, the Commandant of Gor ee, Canard, rightly pointed out again that annexation of the two ports, while securing their status as French possessions, would necessitate the previously unrealised emancipation of the many slaves who lived

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<sup>175</sup> ANS K11, Bri ere de l'Isle  a Ministre, 8 December 1878, St. Louis.

<sup>176</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15d, Bri ere de l'Isle  a Ministre, 17 February 1879, St. Louis.

<sup>177</sup> ANS K11, Pinet-Laprade  a Ministre, 20 February[?] 1865, St. Louis.

<sup>178</sup> ANS K11, Pinet-Laprade  a Commandant de Gor ee, 22 February 1865, St. Louis.

<sup>179</sup> ANS K11, Ministre  a Pinet-Laprade, 30 April 1865, Paris.

and worked there.<sup>180</sup> Valière agreed that Canard was correct, and feared that move would alienate the Lebu slave-owners of the towns. Valière recognised that the inhabitants of Dakar and Rufisque would need some time to move their slaves to villages and farms along the coast or make other arrangements. He therefore ordered Canard to warn the chiefs of the two towns of the imminent decision, but added that “it seems to me in all justice [we must] give the *habitants* a reasonable delay” so that they may not suffer “too much” at the loss of their slaves.<sup>181</sup>

In the event that ‘reasonable delay’ became 3 and 5 years in Dakar and Rufisque respectively. Despite continual statements by Valière that “the moment ha[d] come” to apply emancipation to Dakar and Rufisque<sup>182</sup>, and a further warning to the slave-owners of Dakar by Canard in July 1875, it was only on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1877 that the legality of slave-owning was removed from the locality of Dakar.<sup>183</sup> Emancipation took two years longer in Rufisque, and was applied only on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1879.<sup>184</sup>

The extension of emancipation to Dakar and Rufisque was a complete compromise. Slave-owners within the towns had been given a period of years to move their slaves outside the fairly small area of enforcement, which they had used to great effect.<sup>185</sup> Likewise, Canard, who as Commandant of Gorée had direct control over enforcement, refused to follow a policy of vigorously enforcing emancipation in case it might “produce very serious political complications.”<sup>186</sup> In a large part this came about because of the administration’s obsession with the development of the towns<sup>187</sup>, in which important projects for the improvement of transport and port facilities were being carried out by an industry constantly in need of workers.<sup>188</sup> The slave owners of Rufisque fought to “keep their slaves” right up to the date of emancipation<sup>189</sup>, but despite administrative fears of heavy opposition to emancipation in Rufisque<sup>190</sup>, these never

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<sup>180</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15c, Canard à Valière, 23 January 1874, Gorée.

<sup>181</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15c, Valière à Canard, 4 February 1874, St. Louis.

<sup>182</sup> As he wrote again in a letter to Gorée, ANS K11, Valière à Commandant de Gorée, 24 March 1874, St. Louis.

<sup>183</sup> ANS K11, Comandant de Gorée à Brière de l’Isle, 1 December 1877, Gorée.

<sup>184</sup> ANS K11, Telegramme, Commandant de Gorée à Brière de l’Isle, 20 June 1879, Dakar.

<sup>185</sup> ANS 4B64, Commandant de Gorée à Brière de l’Isle, 1 July 1879, Dakar.

<sup>186</sup> ANS 4B64, Commandant de Gorée à Brière de l’Isle, 1 December 1877, Dakar..

<sup>187</sup> ANS 4B64, Commandant de Gorée à Brière de l’Isle, 1 January 1878, Dakar.

<sup>188</sup> ANS 4B64, Commandant de Gorée à Brière de l’Isle, 1 December 1877 and 1 July 1878, Dakar.

<sup>189</sup> ANS 4B64, Commandant de Gorée à Brière de l’Isle, 1 May 1879, Dakar.

<sup>190</sup> ANS 4B64, Commandant de Gorée à Brière de l’Isle, 1 December 1877, Dakar.

materialised. Nor were there inordinate increases in the number of slaves seeking documents of liberation in either year, despite the fact that slaves remaining in these two towns were legally allowed to receive such documents.<sup>191</sup>

The argument that emancipation was neither effective nor disruptive seems to be supported by Commandant Canard's refusal to extend emancipation throughout C ap Vert in 1880, in which he confirmed that slaves had been removed to villages "not far from [the] towns... of Dakar and Rufisque" but that if all Diander [C ap Vert] were liberated the situation would become untenable for Lebu slave owners.<sup>192</sup> Thus the administration, while forced to extend emancipation to the two ports, believed that it had succeeded in its stated intention of giving slave-owners every opportunity to conserve their slaves.

### Conclusion

I have argued that the policies of administrators on the Gold Coast and Senegal towards emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century were pragmatic. In the face of increased responsibility, and with little physical assistance from the metropole, administrators formulated and carried out policy themselves and only applied afterwards for support from their superiors. However, if their policies were 'pragmatic', it was a pragmatism born out of the realities of a situation in which the socio-economic and political state of the colony, and potentially their own chances of advancement, relied largely on the co-operation of slave owners and the complacency of slaves, neither of which were simple to ensure. If it seems that I have implied in this chapter that administrative policy was more central to emancipation's outcome than indigenous agency, it is only because in the next two chapters I intend to show how Africans and Euro-Africans were major players in limiting the *de facto* effectiveness of emancipation and slave-policy.

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<sup>191</sup> *Moniteur du S en egal, 1868-1888*, from Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.72.

<sup>192</sup> ANS K25, *L'Esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

## **CHAPTER 7:** **Slaves and masters in the post-proclamation Gold Coast**

The emancipation policy that the British administration carried out on the Gold Coast was removed from its abolitionist origins not once, but twice. In the last chapter we saw how the administration and the Colonial Office cast the anti-slavery ordinances in a mould shaped in part by their recognition of their partnership with slave-owners and in part by their fear of the economic and political chaos threatened by a mass slave exodus.

The larger deviation, however, came not in the *production* of a policy informed by the administration's concerns but in its *execution*. Under the Indian Model, the administration abdicated its central role in the emancipation process to these two groups. Thus, while anti-slavery policy was created by the metropole and carried out by the local administration, in the event the most important actors would be slaves and their masters. The primacy of slave choice is generally recognised by historians, Dumett and Johnson having argued in their 1988 article that "[t]he most formidable roadblock against wholesale emancipation... was the reluctance of slaves themselves to come forward...".<sup>1</sup> The evidence I present here largely supports their view of how slave agency affected the course of emancipation. However relatively little attention has been given to the views and actions of slave owners beyond the peripheral subject of monetary compensation, which in the event Her Majesty's Exchequer declined to approve.<sup>2</sup> However, slave-owners were in fact central participants in the process; devising mechanisms to avert, evade, and mitigate the potentially ruinous transformations resulting from the emancipation ordinances.

The major contribution of the administration was in providing a catalyst for and recognition of a slave's free status. This emancipation potential, although largely not taken up, enabled a re-evaluation of slaves' relationships with their masters in which those two groups negotiated individual solutions largely without the interference of Europeans. In the words of Igor Kopytoff, "the existence of the option of emancipation could usually play in the 'slave's' favour as long as the option was not exercised."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", p.85.

<sup>2</sup> For more on this see Opare-Akurang, "Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast", 1998, pp.27-32.

<sup>3</sup> Kopytoff, "The Cultural Context of African Abolition", p.499.

### Slave owners: resistance

In order to understand the roles played by masters in affecting the course of emancipation, it is necessary to take a step back and look at who owned slaves in the Gold Coast Protectorate of the 1870s. It is perhaps inaccurate to argue that there was a slave owning 'class' or 'classes', but certainly the ownership of slaves was intricately connected to wealth, status, and power. In earlier centuries, slaves had been the dominant "form of private, revenue producing property"<sup>4</sup> in a region where land tenure was generally vested communally - in the family or stool - rather than privately.<sup>5</sup> The increasing British hegemony had only served to formalise this situation as administrators tried to impose a normative set of laws for a region in which there had previously been some variety.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Basel Missionary agents complained about the resulting refusal on the part of the administration to turn stool land over to private individuals, especially ex-slaves.<sup>7</sup> Thus when emancipation was promulgated a large proportion of slaves, especially in the rural setting, were still tied to chiefly officeholders and were used for agrarian, artisanal, military, and status purposes.<sup>8</sup> BMS agents identified the slaves of important chiefs as particularly poorly-treated<sup>9</sup>, but their conflicts with local leaders who were often hostile to slavery may have contributed to this view.<sup>10</sup>

In any event, the evidence suggests that a greater percentage of slaves was held not by stool-holders but by families of lesser status. The Basel Missionary agent Zimmerman specifically identified the majority of slave owners as being not aristocratic.<sup>11</sup> Similarly Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson as late as 1927 noted that "there is no family of any note in the whole country which does not have amongst its members one or more domestic servants... over [which]... heads of families

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<sup>4</sup> Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, p.75. Also see my arguments in chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> Although the use of title deeds was becoming more prevalent in the late eighteenth Century along the coast and in the nineteenth Century made limited headway in gold-bearing regions of the interior. See NAG ADM 12/5/184, Brandford Griffith to G.E. Eminsang, 13 September 1890, Accra. Nevertheless the vast majority of land appears to have remained vested in the stool or *abusua*. See NAG ADM 5/3/7, *Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture in the Gold Coast*, 1889.

<sup>6</sup> NAG-CC #55 Hayes-Redwar, HW, *Comments on Some Ordinances of the Gold Coast Colony*, 1909. NAG ADM 5/3/7, Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture in the Gold Coast, 1889.

<sup>7</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi; Eisenschmid to Basel, 25 June 1875, Akropong.

<sup>8</sup> I have already shown how colonial sources linked slavery inextricably to the authority and wealth of chiefly officeholders.

<sup>9</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi; Asante, Mohr, and Werner to the BMS Slave Emancipation Committee, 26 June 1875, Kyebi.

<sup>10</sup> See below.

<sup>11</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi.

in the past... exercise[d] unlimited authority” and pointed out that “not... every slave-owning family possessed a stool.”<sup>12</sup> Slavery had become more prevalent during the era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, as an increased number of slaves moved through the region for export and some were retained for domestic use.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, also, a number of ‘slaves’ so identified may have been pawns in debt bondage, an institution which had also become increasingly prevalent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or even apprentices or members of an inferior branch of the *abusua*. Such slaves, pawns, and other dependants participated in family production of subsistence and market crops, as well as performing domestic functions.

The third slave owning group were the merchants of coastal settlements, some of whom held chiefly office as well. Zimmerman argued that these “educated slave owners” and “merchants of the coast” were especially harsh masters.<sup>14</sup> Whether this is true or not is unclear, but certainly the role of their slaves was largely linked to the production of commodities and had been formed by the growth in legitimate trade of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Such slaves, and often pawns since merchants were prominent money-lenders, worked in fields to provide food to the coastal settlements, provided domestic service, and carried trade goods to and from the interior. Others ran market stalls selling goods produced on their masters’ rural farms both in coastal cities and regional market hubs.<sup>16</sup> The purely economic role of many of these unfree workers may have distanced them from the traditional relationship of ‘benign slavery’ which Gold Coast administrators alleged had prevailed in the region.

The leadership of the slave owners rested in the hands of the chiefly officeholders and coastal merchants. It was these two groups who could potentially lead resistance to the emancipation of their slaves. However, the capacity of the coastal elite to oppose the colonial administration, forged largely through their common experiences in such institutions as the Fante Confederation, was to some extent weakened both by their reliance on Britain as trading partners and by their cooperation in the Asante War. Likewise, while the administration was progressively driven by its financial and personnel problems to rely upon the cooperation of chiefly officeholders, the chiefs themselves depended on British military power to defend them from a potentially resurgent Asante threat and to shore up their finances and authority. Few wanted to end up like the King

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<sup>12</sup> NAG ADM 11/975, *Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast*, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>14</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>16</sup> BMS D-1.60, Ga-Adangme Distriktkonferenz, 3 December 1894 - 6 December 1894, Christiansborg.

of Denkyira who by 1890 was forced to lease stool land<sup>17</sup>, and fewer still like the rulers of Akyem Abuakwa and Wassaw who, as we will see, were exiled by the British. In the wake of the Asante war, British power, while incomplete, was evidently strong enough to reprimand or remove individual rulers and to assist others.

Thus it is understandable that there was little forcible opposition by elites to the promulgation of the 1874 Slave Dealing Abolition and Emancipation ordinances. Indeed, Governor Strahan famously informed Carnarvon five months after the ordinances were promulgated that:

Public tranquillity has not been disturbed; on the contrary, I am confident that at no time in the history of the Protectorate has there been greater regard for established authority or more ready obedience to the laws than at present.<sup>18</sup>

Since the fortunes of both chiefs and merchants were now inextricably tied to the administration, forcible opposition on their part was unlikely. Instead, indigenous leaders dutifully appeared at meetings called by Strahan on November 3, 1874 in Cape Coast for the western chiefs<sup>19</sup> and November 5 in Accra for chiefs in the eastern districts<sup>20</sup> to explain the two anti-slavery ordinances. Strahan reported that his presentations were well received, and the kings and chiefs generally accepted the interdiction against buying and selling slaves. However, at the meeting in Cape Coast a murmur of opposition was raised against the liberation of 'old pawns' and 'those who live with us'.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, a number of Fante chiefs appear to have laboured under the misunderstanding that Strahan had implied that slaves could not leave their masters without proving abuse, as had been the case previously. Thus when, in December 1874 and January 1875, the first few slaves began to claim their liberation, a number of chiefs formally asked Strahan to restore the conditions in place prior to emancipation.<sup>22</sup> The one thing Strahan could not do was to officially re-recognise slavery, and he declined their request. Several days later, however, a petition in the same handwriting was presented to Strahan with 86 signatures from the "Kings, Chiefs, Headmen, Captains, and other principal men" of the western districts complaining that the act "leaves the slave-holding population impoverished" and warning that "[t]he slaves themselves have no landed property; they have no village or *croom* to which they can claim a right" and

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<sup>17</sup> NAG ADM 12/5/184, Brandford Griffith to G.E. Eminsang 13 September 1890, Accra.

<sup>18</sup> PRO CO 96/115, Strahan to Carnarvon, 26 March 1875, Cape Coast.

<sup>19</sup> PP LII, 1875, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, received 24 November 1874, from Cape Coast.

<sup>20</sup> PP LII, 1875, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 5 November 1874, Accra.

<sup>21</sup> PP LII, 1875, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 3 November 1874, Cape Coast.

<sup>22</sup> PP LII, 1875, (c.1159), Strahan to Carnarvon, 3 January, 1875, Cape Coast.

again imploring Strahan to rescind the act of Emancipation.<sup>23</sup> A petition “from the ladies of the Gold Coast Protectorate”<sup>24</sup> soon followed, asking either for the annulment of the ordinances or compensation.

Although it seems clear that there was some participation in this petition by chiefly officeholders and kings, Strahan immediately suspected that the guiding hands were those of the same educated merchants whom the Colonial Office believed responsible for conceiving the Fante Confederation. He noted that the petition from the ‘ladies’ had “2 signatures and 17 marks apparently by the same hand” and that the handwriting on two of the petitions was the same, and indeed the content was very similar to the other petitions.<sup>25</sup> Carnarvon concurred, commenting that:

I did not fail at once to observe that the composition and language of the petition, which are drawn with a great command of English, are in remarkable contrast to those which the persons purporting to be the petitioners are themselves in the habit of using... I cannot doubt that you are right in attributing this document to some one or more of the educated Fantis who have on previous occasion advocated their views on colonial and other subjects in similar manners<sup>26</sup>

When Strahan mentioned the petitions in a second letter to Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies sniffed that “I have already... put you in full possession of the views of Her Majesty’s Government”<sup>27</sup>, and instructed Strahan to henceforth ignore the documents. The petitioners, those whose signatures were on the petitions and those who may have guided their hands, were forced to acquiesce to the emancipation decision.

Despite the fact that strategies of open resistance and direct political action were both now unavailable to slave owning elites, they refused to give in entirely. Knowing that the British administrators tacitly supported the *status quo*, chiefs in the interior felt free to carry out a campaign of passive non-cooperation, in at least one case allegedly neglecting to carry out a public reading of the proclamation.<sup>28</sup> More importantly, they did not feel compelled to actively liberate their slaves, and many continued to take new

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<sup>23</sup> PP LII, 1875, (c.1159), Strahan to Carnarvon, 8 January, 1875, Cape Coast.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/39, Carnarvon to Strahan, 19 February 1875, London.

<sup>27</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/39, Carnarvon to Strahan, 23 March 1875, London.

<sup>28</sup> If the BMS agents in Kyebi are to be believed. Jenkins, *BMS Extracts*, Eisenschmid to Basel, 25 June 1875,

ones. The King of Akomfi<sup>29</sup>, the King of Gomoah<sup>30</sup>, the Chief of Adomsine<sup>31</sup>, and other chiefly officeholders were charged and often fined for slave dealing following emancipation. Joining them were numerous anglophone urban merchants such as Kate Payne<sup>32</sup> and John<sup>33</sup> and Ellen Quartey<sup>34</sup> who persisted in purchasing or brokering slaves. As late as 1890, a Chief in Keta “possessing the confidence of this government” and so loyal that “it has been the custom of the [DC] to communicate through him with other native chiefs and people” was actively buying slaves.<sup>35</sup> Traders who judging from their dress were probably merchants from the coast were actively participating in importing slaves into the Protectorate.<sup>36</sup> There appears to have been no geographic region where the merchant and chiefly elites did not try to retain their slaves, and it is therefore hardly surprising that non-aristocratic inhabitants of the Protectorate also tended to retain and trade in slaves long after the emancipation edict. Firminger, travelling to Salaga through the eastern interior districts “learned... that a very large number of slaves were still held in the [P]rotectorate” and that “there were large numbers of Hausa, Fulah, Moshi, and especially Grunshi slaves held by the Aquamoos, Krepis, and Kroboes.”<sup>37</sup> The fact that 54 cases of slave dealing were prosecuted in 1888 in Accra, Cape Coast, East Akyem, Winneba, Saltpond, and Dixcove Districts alone is indicative of the prevalence of slave owning in the Protectorate throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

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When citizens of the Protectorate or Colony were caught with slaves, they carried their resistance into the judicial arena. Since the victims of the internal slave trade were now largely young females from north of the Protectorate who were deemed less likely

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Akropong.

<sup>29</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/16, King Tando and King Akimmy v. Owuoh Cudjoe and Offlay, Cape Coast JA Court, 8 May 1875.

<sup>30</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/18, Queen v. Abbom and Abrobah, Cape Coast JA Court, 4 August 1876.

<sup>31</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/12, Queen v. Chief Ahinkorah, Accra Supreme/Divisional Court, 4 September 1895.

<sup>32</sup> PRO CO 96/208 DC Peregrine to Assistant Colonial Secretary, 29 July 1889.

<sup>33</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/2, Achampong v. John Quartey, Accra District Court, 27 July 1882.

<sup>34</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/9, Regina v. Ellen Quartey, Accra District Court, 20 June 1890.

<sup>35</sup> NAG ADM 1/9/4, Griffith to DC Kwitta, 1 October 1890, Christiansborg (Accra).

<sup>36</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Hall's Report on the Journey to Anum, 25 February 1887.

<sup>37</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/88, Firminger to Colonial Office, 30 April 1889, West Kensington.

to escape or seek their liberation than male adults, a common ploy was to claim that girls had been purchased 'in the traditional way' to be a wife. In the colonial courts, this was an effective defence. Magistrates were quite ready to believe that "the Fanti<sup>39</sup> purchases his wife - for conceal it how one might; it is a purchase and held to be [so]...".<sup>40</sup> However, in retrospect we know that this argument was often false. 'Brideprice' as such as not standard across the Gold Coast, and many southern Akan peoples especially made only customary payments, more symbolic than tangible.<sup>41</sup> Some slaves were themselves aware of the distinction. A Grunshi woman named Mansah, bringing a suit against her master, Torro, and in conjunction with another wife, Korkor, stated that she "ha[d] not been married to [Torro] by native laws or customs."<sup>42</sup> In this case, despite the support of another co-wife, Ammah, for Torro, the District Commissioner found him guilty and sentenced him to two months with hard labour. Still, the 'wife defence' figures at least 12 times in the very incomplete SCT records. A number of similar cases also occurred in which masters claimed to have bought children to be their 'sons' and/or 'daughters'. Indicted slave owners from the interior also sometimes argued that they were unaware of the edicts of emancipation<sup>43</sup>, and the verity of their defences is hard to gauge although the Chief Justice accepted them in principle, despite conceding that "a generally correct understanding of its scope and purport has spread rapidly and widely".<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, some defences were probably somewhat more valid. Slaves and pawns, as traditional items of wealth, had been used as barter commodities for centuries, and a significant portion of slave dealing cases in 1875 and 1876 occurred because coastal merchants trading outside the Protectorate, especially in Asante, had been paid for their goods in slaves which they were forced to accept or face financial

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<sup>38</sup> The year for which we have the most records, although also a year of increased enforcement - see Chapter 9

<sup>39</sup> The name 'Fanti' or 'Fante', and their supposed customs, were also commonly applied to larger parts of the Protectorate which had not joined the Confederacy.

<sup>40</sup> NAG ADM 1/12/5, Sanitary Report on the Station of Elmina, 1883, Elmina.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Professor Robert Addo-Fening, 27 November, 1998. I am indebted to Professor Addo-Fening for his assistance.

<sup>42</sup> eg NAG SCT 17/5/12, Regina v. Tarro, Accra District Court, 30 September, 1891. For more on the Mossi people see chapter 9.

<sup>43</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/15, Regina v. Quacoe Bart, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 9 March 1875; 17/4/1, Regina v. Adjuah Sharry, Esserifi, and Agreman, 8 March 1877, Accra Judicial Assessors Court.

<sup>44</sup> PP1875, LII, (c.1343), Srahan to Carnarvon, 6 March, 1875, Cape Coast, enclosure 1 'Chalmers Report'. NAG

ruin. While gold, cowries, and woven cloth were also accepted currencies, traders were sometimes forced to accept what Asante merchants, themselves impoverished following the razing of Kumasi, could offer. Bossum Akinnee, for example, was supposed to be paid for goods sold to Kofi Karikari himself in 'country cloth, but was instead forced to accept payment partly in cloth and partly in two children to keep "as pawns... until he should be able to pay the account."<sup>45</sup>

Pawning especially was too inextricably linked with the lineage system for many magistrates to understand. Some accusations of pawning were really custody battles brought by *mmusua* against sons-in-law, by husbands against wives for custody of children, and by nephews against their uncles for whom they were forced to work.<sup>46</sup> Mixed in with these were valid cases brought by pawns and their families. The magistrates must have found it difficult to sort the wheat from the chaff.

Masters who were brought before the courts were often aided by the indigenous 'notable' officers. Prior to the formal establishment of the Gold Coast Protectorate, missionaries had bemoaned the fact that important slave owners were largely responsible for enforcing administrative policy.<sup>47</sup> To a large extent this continued to be the case after 1874, especially as locally-recruited juries and assessors played a central role in colonial jurisprudence. Governor Hodgson expressed his disappointment with an 1889 jury decision to acquit a slave owner "although no defence was raised by Counsel on his behalf, on any point of law, or on the merits" and despite the fact that three children had testified that he had kept them as slaves.<sup>48</sup> In a similar situation, the four appointed assessors cleared a defendant on the grounds that the alleged slave was the defendant's wife, despite the fact that the defendant had made no such argument.<sup>49</sup>

While there was therefore a level of passive resistance amongst slave owners, both within and outside of the courts, there appears to have been very little active

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SCT 5/4/15, Regina v. Kofi Dontoh and Ashun, Cape Coast JA Court, 1 March 1875.

<sup>45</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 5/4/18 Regina v. Bossun Akinnee, Cape Coast JA Court, 6 April 1876. See also 5/4/18, Regina v. King Enimil Quow, Cape Coast JA Court, 28 February 1876;

<sup>46</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Sarah Brown, Accra Divisional Court, 5 February 1883; 17/5/8, Ashong v. Tontoo and Harshani, Accra District Court, 14 September 1888; 17/5/9, Regina v. Acossadah, Accra District Court, 22 March 1890.

<sup>47</sup> BMS D-1.21b, Zimmerman, 24 August 1869, Odumase.

<sup>48</sup> NAG ADM 12/13/3, Hodgson to Knutsford, 8 July 1889, Accra. PRO CO 96/203, Hodgson to Knutsford, 8 July 1889, Accra, enclosure 1, Chief Justice to Colonial Secretary.

opposition to the anti-slave ordinances either on the coast or in the interior. Slave-owners were to some degree hamstrung by the new political-economic situation in which the balance of military and executive power was shifting to the British. Thus there were few instances of violent resistance to the imposition of British law, although some exceptions did occur. Agbodeka has identified two such incidents in Akuapem. In November 1886, District Commissioner Williams was assaulted while attempting to serve a summons. Members of the Gold Coast Constabulary sent to arrest his assailant were subsequently attacked at Adakrom and their prisoner released. Likewise, in early 1887 the *Akuapemhene* refused to assist members of the Constabulary sent to arrest the mob's leaders.<sup>50</sup> Despite such occurrences, violent resistance did not figure significantly in slave-owners' responses to emancipation.

#### Chiefs: between collaboration and resistance

I have already argued that chiefly officeholders generally attempted to appear supportive of the colonial administration, mostly to secure support from the administration, and because of their reliance on British military power. However it is clear that the cooperation of chiefs was primarily self-interested in nature. Chiefs who collaborated in such activities as road building, military and police actions, and other projects expected some reward or did so when it suited them.<sup>51</sup> In the same respect they acted in support of the anti-slavery rules only when it served their own interests and the interests of their subjects, and often combined collaborative policies with the passive resistance strategies discussed above. For example, the *Osu Mantse*, a senior Christiansborg chief, assisted police by turning suspects over to them<sup>52</sup>, as did the Paramount Chief of Akuapem when served with a direct request in 1883.<sup>53</sup> The most cooperative chiefs often had the most obvious ulterior motives. The King of Juaben, who had fled from Asante to Akyem, and later to Cape Coast for his role in the 1873 alliance victory, and many of whose subjects had become war captives in the process,

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<sup>49</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Tuitalaboo, Accra District Court, 5 October 1881.

<sup>50</sup> Agbodeka, *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast*, pp.104-108.

<sup>51</sup> PRO CO 96/156, Rowe to Derby, 18 March 1884, Accra.

<sup>52</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/9, Regina v. Mamah, Accra District Court, 3 October 1890.

<sup>53</sup> Although three years later his relationship with the administration had broken down enough for the incidents described above to take place. NAG ADM 1/9/3, Turton to King Quamin Fori, 20 July 1883, Christiansborg.

informed on anyone he found owning slaves of Juaben origins.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, there are records of other chiefs attempting to stop pawning in instances which involved their own constituents being seized.<sup>55</sup> A ruler who protected his own people not only protected his power base but gained legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects.

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It is no wonder that the chiefs of the Protectorate felt trapped between their dual reliance upon slaves and the administration for both money and status. They were further confused by the Indian Model and what consequently appeared to them to be a lack of enforcement of the emancipation edicts, which convinced them they could safely own slaves. Conversely, the administration continued to prosecute individuals for slave dealing and even pawning, which further blurred the line between what was acceptable and what was not. Thus chiefs who owned slaves were walking a very thin line, something they could not always do successfully. The prosecution of two important chiefs for slave dealing highlights this situation very clearly.

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Colonial sources mention little about Enimil Quow, the paramount chief of East Wassaw, prior to his prosecution in 1876. He appears to have been a supporter of the administration and British officials had some hand in his accession to the stool.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, although he had plenty of opponents ready to move in after his fall he seems to have been quite popular with his subjects.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, when he appeared at the Cape Coast Judicial Assessor's court in 1876 in response to Acting Judicial Assessor Melton's summons, he had every reason to believe he would get off lightly, and he admitted his guilt. He had bought as many as seven slaves from a relative in Asante ostensibly to assist the relative in paying a debt but also probably because adult male slaves were now difficult to acquire within the Protectorate.

While admitting the charge, Quow protested his loyalty to the government, "I am

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<sup>54</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/18, Regina v. Quabina Keamie, Cape Coast JA Court, 29 May 1876.

<sup>55</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/18, Regina v. Awhabon, Cape Coast JA Court, 19 February 1876.

<sup>56</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/18, Regina v. Enimil Quow, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 23 February 1876.

<sup>57</sup> PRO CO 96/121, Freeling to Carnarvon, 5 April 1877, Accra.

your Honor's Captain... I have not offended before,"<sup>58</sup> he implored the magistrate. Quow saw no contradiction between his allegiance to the Crown and his evasion of the law. He was therefore unpleasantly surprised to be fined 100 ounces of gold, exiled to Lagos for three years, and forced to abdicate his stool.

Enimil Quow had tried to have his cake and eat it too, believing that he could own slaves and still maintain his position with the administration. Unfortunately, he had crossed a line he did not know existed. His crime was not *owning* slaves, but importing them from outside the Protectorate. The commission of a crime which Carnarvon and Strahan had promised to extinguish, and by such a prominent figure whose actions could so easily come to the attention of missionaries and abolitionists, led to a sentence "such as to mark most strongly and emphatically the intolerance with which the law regards all offences of the nature committed by him."<sup>59</sup>

Much more is known about *Okyenhene* Amoako Atta I, the paramount chief of Akyem Abuakwa who also strayed beyond the pale of tolerated slave owning. Atta had been an ally during the Asante war, and for that reason the administration initially sided with him in conflicts which arose between BMS agents and his officeholders.<sup>60</sup> The disagreement initially centred on the conversion of state officials to Christianity, which threatened the *Okyenhene's* authority.<sup>61</sup> However, the conflict expanded over issues surrounding the promulgation of emancipation, during which period the Kyebi missionaries took a strict stance, publicising the new laws and offering slaves employment if they left their masters.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, Atta's cousin David Asante led his compatriots in what can only be called a persecution of the Akyem royal family. Asante unsuccessfully prosecuted highly placed officials including members of the *Okyenhene's* family for allegedly assaulting the wife of Reverend Dale, but it was the *Okyenhene* who was his particular target.<sup>63</sup> In 1877, Asante brought a case against the King for insulting

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<sup>58</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/18, Regina v. King Enimil Quow, Cape Coast JA Court, 23 February 1876. As noted previously, the 'stool' is the Akan equivalent of the European 'crown' or 'throne'.

<sup>59</sup> PRO CO 96/118, Strahan to Carnarvon, 4 March 1876, Cape Coast, encl. 1, Chalmers to Strahan, 1 March 1876.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 6. Jenkins, *BMS Extracts*, Asante, Mohr, and Warner to Slave Emancipation Committee, 26 June 1875, Kyebi.

<sup>61</sup> Agbodeka, *African Politics and British Policy*, p.60.

<sup>62</sup> Rathbone, Richard, *Murder and Politics in Colonial Ghana*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993, pp.22-24. Agbodeka, *African Politics and British Policy*, pp.64-65.

<sup>63</sup> NAG SCT 2/4/12, Asante v. Crown Prince of Kyebi and Others, Accra Divisional Court, 17 December 1877.

and attempting to exile him, but the magistrate found that Asante had “tried to lure away [the *Okyenhene*’s] people, interfered in litigation, and made a general nuisance of himself.”<sup>64</sup> Asante was subsequently transferred to Akuapem.

Perhaps Amoako Atta I could be excused for feeling that he was vindicated by the 1877 decision. He clearly believed that he had been given a free hand in Akyem Abuakwa, and subsequently increased his attacks on the Basel Missionary community.<sup>65</sup> This harassment, however, was the factor that turned the administration against him. The *Okyenhene* was not conscious that the Governor’s support had ebbed away, partly due to unreduced pressure from the BMS, and was therefore surprised when, in May 1880, he was brought to Accra on charges of slave dealing.<sup>66</sup> He had been accused not only of pawning, but also of “direct importation and purchase of slaves from countries outside of the Protectorate.”<sup>67</sup> This conscious participation in slave dealing had further transformed the administration’s attitude from one of pragmatic support to opposition, as was made clear from Governor Ussher’s anger following the two slave dealing cases in which Amoako Atta prevailed, despite the administration’s views, as the witnesses against him failed to appear or to prove their cases.<sup>68</sup> The jury, requested by Atta, was made up of chiefly officeholders and local merchants, and they found him resoundingly not guilty, to Ussher’s disgust.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, Atta had crossed a line and Chief Justice Marshall subsequently managed to get him convicted of the lesser charge of malicious arson, which resulted in a five year exile in Lagos before returning in 1885 to the acclaim of many of his subjects.<sup>70</sup>

These two cases of leading slave-owners reinforce several theories that I have posited. First, it is clear that the administration’s reliance on slave-owning elites led them to largely ignore the prevalence of domestic slavery. However they were forced by political and, to be fair, moral imperatives to act on allegations of slave dealing and the importation of slaves into the Protectorate. Paramount Chiefs Amoako Atta I and Enimil

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<sup>64</sup> NAG SCT 2/4/12, *Asante v. King Attah of Kyebi*, Accra Divisional Court, 18 December 1877.

<sup>65</sup> Rathbone, *Murder and Politics*, pp.22-24.

<sup>66</sup> PRO CO 96/130, Ussher to Minister, 12 February 1880, Accra.

<sup>67</sup> PRO CO 96/130, Ussher to Minister, 25 March 1880, Accra.

<sup>68</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1, *Regina v. Atta* (two cases), Accra Divisional Court, 4 May 1880.

<sup>69</sup> PRO CO 96/131, Ussher to Minister, 25 May 1880, Elmina.

<sup>70</sup> PRO CO 96/165, Griffith to Minister, 12 May 1885, Accra. Some, however, were opposed to his re-elevation.

Quow crossed that line. It is evident that neither of these leaders was aware that they had made a move that would put them in disfavour. The position of slave-owners was a difficult one, walking a thin line between their reliance upon slaves and their need for support from the administration, and if pro-British chiefs like these could so easily get into trouble, the position of their slave-owning subjects was even more confusing.

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I have shown above how slave-owners collaborated with or resisted the 1874 ordinances. Yet however much they evaded or organised resistance to emancipation, it appears that they were forced to make some changes. The subjects and strategies of the internal slave trade, for example, were drastically transformed to evade prosecution and more importantly to limit the proportion of runaways.<sup>71</sup> As we will see in later sections, even the owners of domestic slaves had to make concessions to their dependants in order to ensure they would remain. However some historians have also suggested that masters turned away from slave owning towards pawning, and that the post-proclamation period witnessed a surge in pawning cases.<sup>72</sup> The evidence for an expansion in pawning points towards an increase in debt-producing practices such as expensive funeral customs and high interest rates, and the seizing of individuals for the debts of relatives.<sup>73</sup> However there is simply not enough evidence to show this, and it is possible to argue that this intensification of pawning not occur. All of the evidence named above in fact reflects processes introduced during the last period of the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: a rise in interest rates<sup>74</sup>, the *panyarring* of lineage-group and polity members for the debts of their fellows<sup>75</sup>, and the growth of debt through litigation or expenses associated with expensive rituals.<sup>76</sup> The horrified reports of increased pawning in the 1880s may merely have been a reflection of an increased awareness of pawning. This in turn was brought about by the increasing

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<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 10.

<sup>72</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", p.94.

<sup>73</sup> *Gold Coast Chronicle*, Vol. III, No. 93, 12 September 1892. NAG ADM 5/3/7, *Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture in the Gold Coast*, 1889.

<sup>74</sup> Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast*, London, 1853, p.322. PRO CO 879/33, *Fairfield Report*, 1874.

<sup>75</sup> PP 1842, XI.1, (551), *Report from the Select Committee on Slavery on the West Coast of Africa*, Evidence of J.G. Nicholls. The information refers specifically to the period before 1831.

<sup>76</sup> Meredith, Henry, *An Account of the Gold Coast*, p.30. PRO CO 879/33, *Fairfield Report*, 1874.

prevalence of administrators and missionaries in the interior and rural areas especially, informed by a growing number of Christian converts, and not an actual increase in the practices of pawning or *panyarring*. This may have been exacerbated by the fact that Christian congregations continued to attract a large proportion of low-status individuals such as pawns throughout the last decades of the century, and these converts were the missionaries' primary informants.<sup>77</sup>

### The unaffected slaves

Before we consider those slaves whose position was changed by the potentiality of emancipation, either drastically or marginally, we need to look at those who were unaffected by the proclamations, if such a group existed. The truly unaffected are in many cases difficult to distinguish from those slaves who were only marginally affected. Admittedly their existence can be posited from affidavits given by missionaries and administrators. Still, I would like to suggest that those slaves whose existence was unchanged by the proclamation were minority groups within larger environments for whom specific factors counteracted the alternatives offered by the newly legalised modes of liberation.

The first arguments as to why these slaves remained with their masters rested upon the supposed benign nature of Gold Coast slavery. This argument, which had survived the abolition of the slave trade and other nineteenth century challenges, was an intrinsic argument behind the Indian Model. The major colonial reports on slavery in the Gold Coast, most importantly the *Fairfield Report* commissioned by Parliament in 1874, continued to stress that "economically, the condition of a slave is an advantageous one as compared with that of a free labourer" and still argued that "slavery is an emanation of parental and family authority."<sup>78</sup> Nor did this attitude fade after emancipation. More than half a century after the two proclamations J.C. de Graft Johnson, an African administrator of Euro-Fante descent, would write that:

the slave is invariably well treated and regarded rather as a member of the family... and not infrequently succeeds in accumulating a considerable amount

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<sup>77</sup> BMS D-1.70, Kölle, 12 February 1990, Odumase.

<sup>78</sup> PRO CO 879/33, *Fairfield Report*, 1874.

of personal property...<sup>79</sup>

Many Basel missionaries signed on to this theory. An agent in Christiansborg wrote that “the majority [of slaves in Accra] have remained with their masters [partly] because they are well-handled and are part of the family...”.<sup>80</sup> However, BMS agents carefully distinguished between this form of domestic slavery and what they saw as harsher slavery under “educated slave-owners, the merchants of the coast, mulattos, and the great princes among the [T]wis.”<sup>81</sup> Such theories did help shape colonial policy. Some magistrates, for example, tended to withhold punishment for slave-owners if they could prove that they treated their slaves well, in direct opposition to the 1874 ordinances!<sup>82</sup>

Thus for a minority of slaves, remaining with their masters may have been as much an example of ‘free’ choice as deserting. Basel Mission agent Tabitha Schönefeld reported the narrative of one such Ewe slave, who was purchased along with her aunt by an apparently Christian family in Krobo in 1873. After emancipation, her father sent for her to return home, but she chose to stay. In the intervening period, her aunt had married into her master’s family, and she was expected to do so shortly as well. She had also been receiving training from the Basel Missionary. It is unclear if her father had initially sold or pawned her voluntarily, but in such a situation, she clearly preferred to stay in Krobo.<sup>83</sup>

However, simply arguing that slavery was relatively benign does not sufficiently explain why some slaves remained with their masters. While domestic slavery as it existed in the Protectorate largely did entail certain protections for slaves, many of these had been worn away by the transformative impact of the Atlantic slave trade. Furthermore, however assimilative domestic slavery may have been, slaves were still slaves - that is they still had no social status within the lineage group, no land ownership rights, no legal profile within Akan law, and their movements were restricted.

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<sup>79</sup> NAG ADM 11/1/975, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>80</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Fritz to Basel, 28 July 1875, Christiansborg.

<sup>81</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi.

<sup>82</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Oduku and David, Accra Divisional Court, 9 June 1880; Regina v. Timbuctoo, Accra Divisional Court, 5 October 1881.

Why then would they allow themselves to remain in such situations? There are several convincing arguments why some slaves were unable or unwilling to exploit their new opportunities. Dumett and Johnson, for example, suggested that some slave agency was blocked by “the strong dependency/welfare element inherent in Akan traditional servitude, plus powerful group pressures with the threat of ostracism or worse if a slave testified against his master.”<sup>84</sup> These social factors were certainly considerable for slaves who originated within the southern Akan region or who wished to remain within their community after leaving, and furthermore restricted a slave’s ability to recruit the assistance from potential witnesses for use in the courts. Even indigenous officials such as interpreters were “roundly abused” by local people for “bringing down the white man” in such cases.<sup>85</sup>

These cultural constructions were central to court cases in which a number of slaves, both men and women, actually resisted their liberation in court cases brought on their behalf, choosing instead to remain with their owners.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, as late as 1889 some slaves who initially approached the constabulary requesting judicial liberation recanted under peer and community pressure.<sup>87</sup> The officers dealing with these cases appear to have remained oblivious to the cause of their retractions.

In the face of such societal obstructions, and knowing the potential earned advantages assimilation could bring a slave, Dumett and Johnson were consequently unsurprised when their research showed that “most slaves did not seem anxious to give up this paternalistic system of subordination.” However, these two historians also recognised other equally substantial hurdles to slave liberations. “Many [slaves]”, they argued, “knew no other home than that of their masters, or could not return to their place of origin because of distance or continual slave-raiding.”<sup>88</sup> Clearly if slaves could overcome social pressure to remain with their masters, and definitively liberate

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<sup>83</sup> BMS D-1.27, Tabitha Schönefeld, 1875, Odumase.

<sup>84</sup> Dumett and Johnson, “Britain and the Suppression of Slavery”, p.85.

<sup>85</sup> PRO CO 96/120, Freeling to Carnarvon, 30 January 1877, Cape Coast; enclosure Brown to Acting Colonial Secretary, 19 January 1877, Accra.

<sup>86</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Oduka and David, Accra Divisional Court, 9 June 1880; 22/4/51, Regina v. Antamo Cudjoe, Dixcove District Court, 11 February 1880; 17/5/12, Regina v. Kuasie Abbe, Accra District Court, 21 October 1891.

<sup>87</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/4, Regina v. Arjaba Yarba, Accra Divisional Court, 9 September 1889.

<sup>88</sup> Dumett and Johnson, “Britain and the Suppression of Slavery”, p.78.

themselves, they would have to leave the communities in which they lived. The risks in leaving were daunting. Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson listed the challenges such slaves would have faced:

Many could hardly find their own people again even if they were able to trace the native villages from which they or their parents were originally abducted. Some may have no relations left in their own country. A large number can no longer speak their mother tongue. Very few indeed could adapt themselves easily to new surroundings and almost everyone would be very sadly disappointed to find in the end that he or she had only exchanged one kind of servitude for another.<sup>89</sup>

Basel Missionary agents and contemporary administrators similarly noted that many slaves who initially celebrated emancipation and left their masters soon "gave it up and voluntarily returned to their original work"<sup>90</sup>, obviously daunted by the difficulties associated with their independence. Others simply had themselves "declared free, and then returned to their masters" and the safety of the known, having achieved a symbolic victory and perhaps negotiated some change in status.<sup>91</sup>

Some groups of slaves faced special difficulty in returning to their former homes. Slaves with northern origins who chose to liberate themselves had to travel through regions where slavery was still practised, through wars and disruptions created by the break-up of greater Asante, to families perhaps little remembered. If they had been captured as children, they might not even be able to locate families, or their kin-groups might not exist in the same location. Some slaves may have even forgotten their childhood languages. Others saw no advantage in returning to kin-groups that may have voluntarily sold them into slavery. The assimilative nature of Gold Coast slavery meant that for older slaves retention of their assimilated status was preferable to the risks of the road.

Claire Robertson has argued that women slaves especially were unable to leave their masters. In addition to the difficulties faced by other slaves, women found it much more difficult to start up trading businesses or find wage labour on their own. Even more

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<sup>89</sup> NAG ADM, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>90</sup> PRO CO 96/208, DC Riby to Colonial Secretary, 30 January 1890, Aburi.

<sup>91</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Fritz to Basel, 28 July 1875, Christiansborg.

importantly, female slaves feared the loss of the children they had borne to their owners. Magistrates did tend to confirm the rights of masters to such children, and in at least one case conferred upon a female master the children of a female and a male slave, both of whom belonged to her, when the children asked to remain with her.<sup>92</sup> Women slaves also tended to be assimilated more quickly, especially if they were the mothers of their masters' children, and had much more to risk. At the same time, Robertson argues, British magistrates - perhaps reflecting Victorian values - were unsympathetic to those women who did seek their liberation and often returned them to their owners as apprentices.<sup>93</sup> These factors probably did play a part in limiting the range of choices available to female slaves and in inducing them to remain with their masters, but neither Robertson nor I have found sufficient evidence to prove this.

A last obstacle to liberation that must be mentioned is ignorance of the specifics of emancipation. We know that a number of individuals accused of slave dealing and pawning used ignorance of the 1874 proclamations as a defence. Some of these defendants in the initial post-proclamation period such as 'Oweaguow' who turned himself in to the authorities in 1875 after he learned of the ordinances, are quite convincing.<sup>94</sup> However Kwamina Ansa and Baidu Amta, caught during a period of increased vigilance in 1897, more than twenty years after emancipation and in Cape Coast District rather than any outlying region, are less believable.<sup>95</sup> Administrators have suggested, and I am inclined to believe, that in the bulk of the Protectorate the emancipation laws were widely disseminated at least by the late 1870s.<sup>96</sup> We also know that some chiefs acted immediately to inform their subjects of the new laws.<sup>97</sup>

Still, as late as 1890 there were "parts of [the Protectorate] which have seldom, if ever, been visited by a Government Officer" according to Acting Governor Hodgson.<sup>98</sup> The prevalence of slave owning in districts that were peripheral to the Protectorate

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<sup>92</sup> eg NAG SCT 17/5/9, Eccusah Ajishe and Neepow Kwah v. Garmamir, Accra District Court, 20 November 1889.

<sup>93</sup> Robertson, Claire, "Post Proclamation Slavery in Accra", pp.227-230.

<sup>94</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/16, Regina v. Oweaguow, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 14 December 1875.

<sup>95</sup> NAG SCT 23/5/4, Regina v. Kwamina Ansa, Cape Coast District Court, 24 September 1897; 23/5/4 Regina v. Baidu Amta, Cape Coast District Court, 24 September 1897.

<sup>96</sup> See Chapter 6. Also PRO CO 96/208, Hodgson to Knutsford, 17 February 1890, Accra. PP 1875, LII, (c.1343), Strahan to Carnarvon, March 6, 1875, enclosure 1, *Chalmers Report*.

<sup>97</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/15, Regina v. Kofi Dontoh and Ashun, Cape Coast JA Court, 1 March 1875.

<sup>98</sup> PRO CO 96/208, Hodgson to Knutsford, 17 February 1890, Accra.

seems to have remained much more obvious than in the central coastal districts.<sup>99</sup> Border districts such as Keta and Axim especially retained large numbers of slaves in their original state.<sup>100</sup>

At the risk of foreshadowing some of my conclusions, I must state here a problem with sources and with historians who have argued that slaves did not leave. Many of them, it seems, saw only two alternatives for slaves - liberation of some form or another or the rejection of emancipation for the security of their current position. Later in this chapter, I will be suggesting that many slaves who are identified as remaining unaffected by the 1874 ordinances were in fact participants in a gradual transformation which remained largely invisible to administrative and missionary sources. Very few slaves indeed were completely unaffected by the promulgation of emancipation.

#### Modes of liberation

While it can be argued that the position of some slaves remained constant despite the 1874 emancipation, and while I will argue that the majority of 'former' slaves remained local and affiliated to their masters, it must be acknowledged that some slaves chose to completely liberate themselves from their dependant relationships. This group has been the subject of a widespread but somewhat shallow historical debate on emancipation. The main argument of McSheffrey's 1873 article, for example, was that "the demand for emancipation seems to have been both immediate and widespread [and] was not just confined to the servile populations of the towns... but was equally evident in the traditional communities of the interior."<sup>101</sup> However McSheffrey relied largely on generally anecdotal Basel Missionary sources and vague statements by Acting Chief Magistrate Chalmers. Dumett and Johnson, partly in rebuttal to McSheffrey, posited that "only a tiny number of slaves took advantage of the colonial courts" and that the number who deserted was "relatively small."<sup>102</sup> However, they found it equally difficult to quantify slave liberations.

Perhaps this reluctance on the part of historians to propose numerical solutions to

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<sup>99</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/88, Firminger to Colonial Office, 30 April 1889, West Kensington.

<sup>100</sup> PRO CO 96/311, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 29 January 1898, Accra. PRO CO 96/208, Heron to Colonial Secretary, 2 August 1889, Accra.

<sup>101</sup> McSheffrey, "Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade", p.354.

the question of 'how many slaves' was in fact a responsible choice. Opere-Akurang, by contrast, has stirred together figures suggested for slave cases during diverse periods of time and within a region which is not clearly defined, and proposes the figure of 632 for the number of slaves liberating themselves by judicial means for the period between 1874 and 1918 in the Colony alone.<sup>103</sup> He uses this information to support his thesis that the demand and support for emancipation within the Colony was greater than that in the Protectorate. Because this research does not reflect information from a number of primary sources, Opere-Akurang has made a number of errors in producing this figure. First, he accepted all cases dealing with slavery as instances of self-liberation, whereas many were brought by witnesses or family or discovered by the constabulary. Additionally, Opere-Akurang fails to recognise that many of these cases refer to crimes that took place outside of the minuscule Colony, but were brought to courts in Accra or Cape Coast because, initially, those were the only criminal courts in the Protectorate and because the legal mandate of magistrates based in Accra and Cape Coast covered large portions of territory which were not part of the Colony.<sup>104</sup> The dangers of quantifying the unquantifiable are obvious from this.

While I therefore decline to produce numbers, there is a large body of qualitative evidence available that can be used to reveal new information about modes of liberation. There appear to have been two major types of liberations: those which were carried out by slaves themselves and those which were organised by their families.<sup>105</sup> The Chief Magistrate of the time, Chalmers, noted that "nine-tenths" of cases related to slaves brought before the judicial bodies immediately following the emancipation ordinances were brought by kin<sup>106</sup>, and this statistic has unfortunately been accepted by some historians.<sup>107</sup>

An actual investigation of cases brought before colonial courts unfortunately pulls out all the supports from under this theory. Of those cases heard by the Cape Coast Judicial Assessor's Court and the Accra Divisional Court in 1874-5, a minority appear to

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<sup>102</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", pp.88-89..

<sup>103</sup> Opere-Akurang, "The Administration of the Abolition Laws",p.157.

<sup>104</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>105</sup> There were also a limited number of liberations organised by the administration for various reasons.

<sup>106</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1343), Strahan to Carnarvon, 6 March 1875, Cape Coast, enclosure 1, *Chalmers Report*..

<sup>107</sup> Opere-Akurang, "The Administration of the Abolition Laws", 1998,p.156.

have been brought by kin - usually fathers or uncles - on behalf of their slave relations.<sup>108</sup> Slaves themselves figure at least equally often, and 'witnesses' and police constables appear to have been the most significant informants.

What does this signify for kin liberation? It is obvious from the judicial record that some families were indeed operative in freeing their relatives. Such cases initially formed a significant proportion (although nowhere near nine-tenths) of slave-dealing cases, to some degree tailing off after 1877 but not disappearing by the end of the nineteenth century. In an article appearing in *Ghana Studies Journal*, Opare-Akurang has suggested that these kin liberations occurred largely amongst slaves who were originally pawns who "had not been redeemed, and hence had fallen into perpetual bondage."<sup>109</sup> Opare-Akurang is correct in identifying pawns as the main subjects of kin liberation within the courts. Families found the courts a convenient way to reclaim pawned individuals, especially for recently contracted debts.<sup>110</sup> Most of these individuals were also obviously living close to their families.<sup>111</sup> But I have been able to identify only two instances of slaves, rather than pawns, being redeemed by kin, and one of these was as a result of the influx of slaves followed by a migration of families caused by the Asante-Juaben war.<sup>112</sup> Clearly, kin liberation was largely the province of pawns and their families.

Self-liberation was an entirely different affair. As we saw in the previous section, it took serious agency on the part of slaves to leave a secure, if dependant, position and face the risks of an unsecured, but free future. It might be logical to deduce from this that slaves of long-standing service, with ties to local families, and having acquired some status and wealth would be more likely to have the agency and resources to seize their freedom and leave. However, as Dumett and Johnson pointed out such slaves were more likely to feel a strong sense of dependency and even loyalty to their masters.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, slaves who had been assimilated were less likely to risk their gains in

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<sup>108</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/15-17 and 2/4/11.

<sup>109</sup> Opare-Akurang, "Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast", 1998, p.24.

<sup>110</sup> eg NAG SCT 5/4/15, Cudjoe Amooar v. Benfoo, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 10 February 1875; NAG SCT 5/4/16, Regina v. Quacoe Appeah, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 1 May 1875.

<sup>111</sup> eg NAG SCT 5/4/16, Regina v. Quacoe Appeah, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 1 May 1875 (Aquapem); 17/4/1, Regina v. Quacoe Teah, Accra Judicial Assessors Court, 8 March 1877 (Krepi).

<sup>112</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/19, Regina v. Acquassie Mirriwah, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 1 December 1876.

<sup>113</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", 1988, p.85.

status and economics for an uncertain future. Most significantly I am not convinced that a large body of slaves, rather than pawns, actually lived locally to a free kin group - especially since we know that most slaves were acquired through warfare and, less frequently, by kidnapping.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, even those sources that suggest that local slaves ran away tend to refer to slaves originating from a neighbouring or nearby state rather than their owner's polity.<sup>115</sup>

Instead, there is a large body of anecdotal evidence pointing to higher frequencies of self-liberation amongst newly acquired slaves brought into the region from the north. Chalmers, for example, noted that "considerable number of [imported slaves] have availed themselves of their freedom, and left their masters."<sup>116</sup> Governor Griffith noted the regularity with which newly (and illegally) imported slaves ran away 17 years later.<sup>117</sup> John Parker reports similar evidence for war captives in Accra.<sup>118</sup>

While it is difficult to get beyond hearsay evidence to prove that newly-acquired northern war captives fled from their masters in larger numbers than longer-serving slaves from within the Protectorate, primary evidence for self-liberation amongst this group is more convincing in so far as use of the courts is concerned. The vast majority of slaves (excluding pawns) who brought cases against their masters in the 1870s had been recently acquired from Asante, Juaben, or further north.<sup>119</sup> This trend did not end in the 1880s even though the slave trade from the interior turned to female and young slaves brought down from markets in Wa, Asante, and Salaga.<sup>120</sup> Chalmers' argument that the majority of "imported slaves" who liberated themselves "scarcely at all appeared before the courts...", but instead simply returned to their homes seems to indicate similar statistics for desertions.<sup>121</sup>

Slaves from the north exhibited a wide variety of other liberation strategies as well. There is evidence of recently-imported slaves seeking assistance from their fellow

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<sup>114</sup> Opare-Akurang argues that a large population of slaves of indigenous extraction existed in the Protectorate.

Opare-Akurang, "Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast", p.24.

<sup>115</sup> For example Ewe slaves in Akuapem. Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Bieterle to Basel, 22 June 1875, Aburi.

<sup>116</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1343), Strahan to Carnarvon, March 6 1875, Cape Coast, enclosure 1.

<sup>117</sup> PRO CO 96/222, Griffith to Knutsford, 27 February 1892, Accra.

<sup>118</sup> Parker, "Ga state and society in early colonial Accra", p.145.

<sup>119</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/15-5/4/19, 2/5/11

<sup>120</sup> See Chapter 9.

<sup>121</sup> PP 1875, LII, (c.1343), Strahan to Carnarvon, 6 March 1875, Cape Coast, enclosure 1, *Chalmers Report*.

countrymen in Hausa Constabulary camps in Accra and Cape Coast<sup>122</sup> and transferring their loyalty to new and presumably less harsh masters.<sup>123</sup> Imported slaves often did not leave their masters until they were beaten or maltreated<sup>124</sup>, but because they had only recently been torn from their homes and had not been assimilated to any degree into their new positions, self-liberation remained more open and more attractive to them.

It is clear that the primary criterion inducing slaves to leave their masters was the likelihood that they had a safe, secure home to which to return. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that slaves' occupations, geographical locations, and the demands of their owners may have influenced their decision. Zimmerman, as we have already seen, argued that slavery was harsher amongst "educated slave owners, the merchants of the coast" who did not observe the 'traditional rights' of Akan and Ga-Adangme slavery, and that self-liberation was higher amongst their slaves.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, even McSheffrey agrees that there is no evidence outside of the BMS sources indicating increased self-liberation amongst the slaves of coastal merchants.<sup>126</sup> Nor do any other sources corroborate Zimmerman's claims that the slaves of "great princes among the [T]wis", especially in Akyem, tended to liberate themselves.<sup>127</sup>

Nevertheless some slaves who could not easily return to their places of birth still liberated themselves, and these individuals must be considered. Such incidents were largely a question of economic opportunity. Slaves who wished to claim their freedom would only do so if they believed they had options superior to remaining with their owners, and these opportunities were functions of location, learned skills, and job or land availability, as we will see in the following section.

### Means of post-liberation existence

Other than the few captives who could return to homes generally outside of the Protectorate, dissatisfied slaves had a limited selection of viable economic alternatives

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<sup>122</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/9, *Regina v. Afeli*, Accra District Court, 25 March 1890.

<sup>123</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/19, *Regina v. Quacoe Agay*, Cape Coast JA Court, 6 December 1876.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*; also 17/5/2 *Karfor v. Coffee Assally*, Accra District Court, 20 October 1882; 2/5/1, *Regina v. Awah*, Accra Supreme/Divisional Court, 12 January 1884.

<sup>125</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi.

<sup>126</sup> McSheffrey, "Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade", p.354.

<sup>127</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi

to their dependant means of existence. Their preferred option would have been the acquisition of a plot of land large enough for food subsistence and the sale of surplus, a goal which would have been closest to achievable in coastal areas and in regions bordering trade routes. These areas had a high demand for foodstuffs<sup>128</sup>, were already populated by pre-existing and largely accepted immigrant communities, and were more strongly under the influence of British law than was generally the rule. Missionary sources, for example, indicate that "several" freed slaves with northern origins moved into the Kyebi region, which was a growing market for foodstuffs both because of the mission school and as a trading crossroads.<sup>129</sup> While these former slaves were granted plots of land<sup>130</sup>, in more densely populated coastal regions of the Gold Coast there was little land unattached to either stool or family.<sup>131</sup> British rule in these regions had led to a formalisation of land tenure rules and by 1874 only a small portion of arable ground was privately held in the Protectorate, despite the emerging land market leading to privatisation in select urban areas, and stool land could not legally be alienated.<sup>132</sup> Ex-slaves who wished to cultivate plots commonly had to pay a 'tribute or royalty' in kind and thus became dependants of the landowners.<sup>133</sup> While this remained an option for slaves in especially abusive positions, for most dependants it was not necessarily superior to pre-existing arrangements and assimilated status with a former master.

Urban areas, however, continued to attract former slaves, although few became wage labourers as had been predicted. Paid employment was not widely available during this period<sup>134</sup>, and slaves appear to have been reluctant or unable to take on wage labour.<sup>135</sup> While there is some evidence that hired labour became more difficult and expensive to obtain after emancipation as skilled slaves left their masters, this was

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<sup>128</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/7, *Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture on the Gold Coast*, 1889.

<sup>129</sup> Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa*, pp.223-224.

<sup>130</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Mohr to Basel, 7 January 1880, Kyebi; Muller to Basel, 4 March 1893.

<sup>131</sup> NAG-CC #55 Hayes-Redwar, HW, *Comments on Some Ordinances of the Gold Coast Colony*, 1909. Stool land was not yet generally being alienated to migrant farmers.

<sup>132</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/7, *Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture in the Gold Coast*, 1889.

<sup>133</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/9, *Report upon the Customs Relating to the Tenure of Land on the Gold Coast 1895*, reports of HK Vroom (DC Tarkwa), Inspector General Scott (GC Constabulary), AW Thompson (DC Prampram). NAG ADM 11/975, *Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast*, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>134</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", p.92.

<sup>135</sup> ADM 11/975, *Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast*, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927. Excluding a few carrier positions along major trade routes. Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa*, p.233.

only amongst highly skilled artisans - a category that excluded most slaves, especially those from the interior.<sup>136</sup>

Even if wage labour was not in high demand in the colonial towns and missions, such areas potentially provided other opportunities. Some BMS stations, for example, accepted self-liberated slaves as congregational members and workers.<sup>137</sup> Such arrangements appear to have been commonly initiated by the slaves.<sup>138</sup> However it was the administration which provided the greatest opportunity for slaves. Officials continued to view northerners - whom they still lumped together as 'Hausas' and 'Muslims' - as superior recruits for both the military and law enforcement for the Protectorate. The 'Fante Constabulary' and later the Police Constabulary remained an unpopular profession for coastal peoples<sup>139</sup> and those who joined had a high rate of desertion.<sup>140</sup> Thus while Governor Hodgson raised pay in 1894 in an effort to attract recruits<sup>141</sup>, other administrators argued that local recruits were inferior to the northerners and were not worth the effort.<sup>142</sup> As a result the administration continued its policy of recruiting on the Niger and at Salaga, often recruiting escaped or manumitted slaves from these regions<sup>143</sup>. In this environment, slaves with northern origins were also happily accepted by the administration.<sup>144</sup> Muslim slaves in the far interior of the Protectorate who had previously been unable to leave their masters often joined recruiting missions on their way to Salaga and were happily accepted by the recruiting officers anxious to reach their quota.<sup>145</sup>

Still, the pull of a military career on former slaves should not be over-estimated. The Constabulary was never very large.<sup>146</sup> While we are unable to firmly quantify the

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<sup>136</sup> PP 1878, LV, (c.2148), *Report... on the Effects of the Steps Taken by the Colonial Government*, Chalmers. PRO CO 96/185, White to Minister, 5 November 1887, Accra.

<sup>137</sup> Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa*, p.194.

<sup>138</sup> BMS D-1.30, Weiss, 4 September 1878, Odumase.

<sup>139</sup> PRO CO 96/272, Commissioner Kitson to Maxwell, 2 April 1896, Accra.

<sup>140</sup> PRO CO 96/191, Half-Yearly Report on the Gold Coast Constabulary, 20 February 1888, Elmina.

<sup>141</sup> NAG ADM 12/3/3, Hodgson to Minister, 9 February 1894, Accra.

<sup>142</sup> NAG ADM 12/3/3, Brandford Griffith to Minister, 3 December 1892, Accra. PRO CO 96/294, Maxwell to Colonial Office, Telegramme, 30 June 1897.

<sup>143</sup> PRO CO 96/183, Acting Queen's Advocate to White, September 24, 1887, Accra. PRO CO 96/263, Maxwell to Minister, 5 March 1896, Accra.

<sup>144</sup> ADM 11/975, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>145</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/88, Firminger to Colonial Office, 30 April 1889, West Kensington.

<sup>146</sup> PRO CO 96/115, Strahan to Carnarvon, 22 June, 1875, Cape Coast Castle. NAG ADM 5/1/72; Departmental

number of slaves who joined, average total recruitment - including free volunteers, ex-slaves, and foreigners recruited outside the Protectorate - rarely exceeded 100-150 per year, except in 1896 when soldiers were needed for garrisons in Asante.<sup>147</sup>

While some former slaves were willing and accepted as soldiers, they could rarely be found in other positions with the colonial state. Few could be induced to take up menial labour jobs available with the administration, despite a general shortage of labour for infrastructure projects. Furthermore, there was a strong view amongst British administrators that Akan and Ga-Adangme workers were "not gifted with a strong desire for work"<sup>148</sup>, but certainly former slaves would have been accepted by the labour-starved administration, which was forced to import 'Kru' workers to finish the most important projects.<sup>149</sup> For most slaves, such hard labour jobs generally offered less security and inferior working conditions to those they experienced with their masters, and there is no record of former slaves leaving their positions on farms and in domestic situations to become gang-labourers for the colonial government.

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Still, while we can see that the increase in European intervention in the region did not initially offer many new and viable alternatives to the slave means of existence, it could be postulated that the accelerated production of legitimate goods during this period opened up new opportunities in mining and agriculture. Recently freed slaves potentially could have taken advantage of these new industries to provide a living.

The increase in commercial mining after 1878<sup>150</sup> created some employment opportunities in the interior as companies formed by Europeans<sup>151</sup> and indigenous coastal merchants<sup>152</sup> purchased concessions, especially in Tarkwa District (Eastern Wassaw). However these companies preferred to hire free 'Fantis' or even more frequently Kru labourers.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, a new and exhaustive study by Raymond

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Reports, 1895; etc.

<sup>147</sup> NAG ADM 5/1/73, Departmental Reports, 1896.

<sup>148</sup> NAG ADM 5/1/72, Departmental Reports, 1895.

<sup>149</sup> NAG ADM 5/1/72, Departmental Reports, 1895.

<sup>150</sup> NAG-CC #217, *Gold Coast Times*, Vol I,10, June 16, 1881.

<sup>151</sup> NAG ADM 1/12/4, Report on the Tarquah District, Commander Ramsay, 9 August 1882, Accra.

<sup>152</sup> NAG-CC #217, *Gold Coast Times*, Vol I,40, April 22, 1882.

<sup>153</sup> NAG ADM 13/1, *Gold Coast Chronicle*, Vol III,118, March 11 1893.

Dumett has shown that the gold rush of the post-proclamation period was largely based on a rise in small-scale pre-capitalist traditional mining carried out by mobilised family labour.<sup>154</sup> Finally, while the increase in gold extraction may have provided opportunities for a small number of former slaves, it only began to do so in 1878, and did not figure in the initial calculations of slaves following 1874.

Similarly, the demand for cash crops, especially cocoa and coffee, did not exist on any scale in the 1870s and 1880s and did not provide opportunities for Protectorate slaves. The BMS coffee plantations in Akuapem which had been destroyed in the 1869 Asante invasion had only been replanted in 1881<sup>155</sup>, and it wasn't until early 1890 that small-scale coffee cultivation took off in the eastern districts.<sup>156</sup>

**TABLE 7.1**  
**Value of Coffee Exports from the Gold Coast**<sup>157</sup>

Year	Value in £	Source
1882	0	ADM 5/3/7
1883	11/10/00	ADM 5/3/7
1884	8/11/06	ADM 5/3/7
1885	63/9/4	ADM 5/3/7
1886	75/3/6	ADM 5/3/7
1887	85/9/0	ADM 5/3/7
1888	115/14/3	ADM 5/3/7
1889	49/18/9	ADM 5/2/1
1890	247/6/0	ADM 5/2/1
1891	473/6/3	ADM 5/2/1
1893	630	ADM 5/1/74
1894	1265	ADM 5/1/74
1895	1753	ADM 5/1/74
1896	4065	ADM 5/1/74
1897	3068	ADM 5/1/74

**TABLE 7.2**  
**Value of Cocoa Exports from the Gold Coast**

Year	Value in £	Source
1893	93	ADM 5/1/74
1894	546	ADM 5/1/74
1895	470	ADM 5/1/74
1896	2275	ADM 5/1/74
1897	3196	ADM 5/1/74
1898	6420	ADM 5/1/74
1899	6447	ADM 5/1/74

<sup>154</sup> Dumett, Raymond, *El Dorado in West Africa: The Gold Coast Mining Frontier, African Labour, and Colonial capitalism in the Gold Coast 1873-1900*, James Currey, Oxford, 1998, pp.267-268.

<sup>155</sup> It is unclear how these plantations were destroyed, as the invasion of 1869 mostly took place in Peki. However the Commissioners did interview locals and are very clear on this point. NAG ADM 5/3/7, Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture on the Gold Coast, 1889.

<sup>156</sup> PRO CO 96/219, Hodgson to Minister, 9 November 1891, Aburi.

<sup>157</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/7, Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture on the Gold Coast, 1889. ADM 5/1/74,

Similarly the cocoa industry, despite the support of Basel missionaries and the administration, was largely ignored by indigenous producers until 1890<sup>158</sup>, probably because of the high investment and low initial returns necessitated by the five-year maturation period of the cocoa tree.<sup>159</sup> Cocoa production thus only took off as demand and prices rose in the early 1890s and increased production came online around 1893 (see chart) and it was not until 1897 that the Department of Agriculture reported “hundreds” of small-scale plantations in Akuapem, aided by nurseries set up by the administration at Aburi.<sup>160</sup> Cocoa production was also geographically confined at least initially to the climatically, geographically, and politically suitable eastern provinces, whose more advanced infrastructure and proximity to the Volta river and well-developed trade pathways also facilitated delivery to the coast. Thus while cocoa provided opportunities for wage labour after 1900 and may have attracted recently liberated Asante slaves, it was not a major factor in ex-slave opportunity in the late nineteenth Century Protectorate.<sup>161</sup>

As a last resort, former slaves could have enlisted with one of the European companies recruiting labourers for overseas labour. French companies were active in the early 1890s, recruiting small numbers of Elminan labourers for French colonies<sup>162</sup> such as Grand Bassam and the French Congo, as was the Royal Niger Company.<sup>163</sup> However overseas labour was an unpopular proposition for indigenous workers. John Parker has argued that most of the Accras who worked overseas, for example, were really slaves and followers of important ‘bigmen’ who were coerced into serving overseas, their patron retaining the recruitment commission.<sup>164</sup> Because of such abuses, recruitment by overseas companies was legally limited by the Masters and Servants and Foreign Employment Ordinance of 1893.<sup>165</sup> In any case, former slaves had such an aversion to working overseas that those few who deserted without any

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Departmental Reports, 1993. ADM 5/2/1, Report on the Census of the Gold Coast Colony, 1891.

<sup>158</sup> PRO CO 96/193, Brandford Griffith to Knutsford, 24 August 1888, enclosure 2, Customs to Colonial Secretary, Accra.

<sup>159</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/7, Report of the Commission on Economic Agriculture on the Gold Coast, 1889.

<sup>160</sup> Hill, *The Gold Coast Cocoa Farmer*, p.103.

<sup>161</sup> Sutton, “Labour in Commercial Agriculture in Ghana”, pp.461-483.

<sup>162</sup> NAG ADM 13/1/6, Executive Council Minutes, 19 January 1894.

<sup>163</sup> PRO CO 98/7, Executive Council Minutes, 25 June 1889.

<sup>164</sup> Parker, John, “Ga state and society in early colonial Accra”, p.148.

prospects or skills generally preferred vagrancy to the unknown of a foreign land.<sup>166</sup>

### Negotiated Outcomes

So far in this chapter, I have argued that, on the one hand, the majority of slaves were in some manner affected by the emancipation ordinances. On the other hand, I have shown that few slaves chose to use the courts to liberate themselves, nor does it appear was there a great deal of available opportunity for private acquisition of land use rights, for wage labour, or for service in mines or cultivating cash crops. However, until now I have not presented any evidence as to what the majority of slaves actually did do.

Gold Coast slave-owners could not entirely control access to the means of existence - missionary sources show that a limited number of ex-slaves were able to arrange for tenancy rights to land in the interior and certainly some few slaves enlisted for service overseas, with the administration, or managed to gain employment with the Basel Missionaries. Some may, as Dumett and Johnson have suggested, have become casual workers, odd-job men, or petty traders.<sup>167</sup> However the communal structure of land ownership and the assimilative nature of Gold Coast slavery, combined with the paucity of waged and cash-cropping opportunities during this period, meant that few slaves other than recently captured northerners and some pawns perceived any situation preferable to remaining with their masters.

Nevertheless, while the majority of slaves chose not to liberate themselves, slaves were to varying degrees able to mitigate their social and economic status within their dependant relationship, and this is what I believe took place on a regional scale. The majority of slaves were neither unaffected by emancipation nor did they liberate themselves. Instead the prospect of emancipation prompted slaves and masters to renegotiate their relationships, usually to the benefit of the slaves. The process by which slaves attempted to exploit the opportunity of newly legalised paths to emancipation and masters accommodated certain of their slaves' demands in an effort to limit their losses was probably a complex and gradual process.

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<sup>165</sup> NAG ADM 4/1/17, Ordinance 8 of 1893, Masters and Servants and Foreign Employment Ordinance.

<sup>166</sup> NAG ADM 11/975, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>167</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", pp. 92-93.

It is impossible, with the sources available to us, to mark geographic or cultural differences between the manner in which negotiations were carried out and settlements agreed upon in different regions or under different types of masters. Dumett and Johnson settled for identifying two general types of negotiated outcomes. In the first, slaves cleared new farms which were within the locality of their masters but which their masters did not occupy, and which were somewhat removed from their masters' lands. In the other, somewhat closer relationship, Dumett and Johnson argue that slaves continued to work their master's land but in a sharecropping arrangement.<sup>168</sup> Opare-Akurang has recently studied the matter in greater depth, relying on the somewhat questionable evidence gleaned from a relatively small number of interviews he carried out in a limited area of the Gold Coast the 1990s. His argument stresses that such agreements were in fact "not based on usufruct use of land" but involved either "slaves rent[ing] land from their former holders" or "sharecropping". Further, he insists that such arrangements occurred "especially in the burgeoning export commodity and staple crops producing areas of the Birim-Censu-Pra basin of the Eastern Province."<sup>169</sup>

Incidents of negotiation were, in fact, widespread. Such shifts in status were noted by a District Commissioner in Saltpond<sup>170</sup> as well as by Basel Missionaries in Akuapem.<sup>171</sup> Slave-master relationships also clearly shifted in urban settings<sup>172</sup>, in the western districts<sup>173</sup>, and in the plantations of the Accra plains where slaves reportedly "neither pay[ed their masters] part of their produce nor work[ed] for [them] three days in the week as was the case before."<sup>174</sup> However BMS sources regarding the land and produce-rich eastern interior do seem to indicate that slaves there were able to negotiate from an extraordinarily strong position, "farming the land given them by their masters as free men."<sup>175</sup> These sources date from mid-1875 before a full picture could have possibly become clear, but it is entirely possible that slaves in Akuapem and Krobo may

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<sup>168</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", pp. 88-89.

<sup>169</sup> Opare-Akurang, "Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast", pp.19-21.

<sup>170</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/9, *Report upon the Customs Relating to the Tenure of Land on the Gold Coast*, 1895, H. Cummings, DC Saltpond.

<sup>171</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Dieterle to Basel, 22 June 1875, Aburi.

<sup>172</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/1, Regina v. George Napoleon, Accra District Court, 22 March 1897.

<sup>173</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/9, *Report upon the Customs Relating to the Tenure of Land on the Gold Coast*, 1895, H. Cummings, DC Peregrine.

<sup>174</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi.

have been able to negotiate from a position of relative strength due not only to the high levels of agricultural production in these regions, but to the influence of Basel Missionaries.

As early as 1863, Basel Missionaries had required their congregants to liberate slaves using the Sixths model, converting these individuals to wage labourers - especially bricklayers, carpenters, and wheelwrights - or more rarely assisting them in gaining possession of a piece of their former masters' lands.<sup>176</sup> The basis for a waged mode of existence for former slaves who nevertheless remained under the purview of their former masters was thus developed quite early in the Volta District, including Krobo, at least within the Christian community. The experiences of this group appear to have served as an example motivating slaves 'liberated' in 1874. Thus Volta District administration sources noted that slaves who negotiated their status in this district "in the generality of cases ha [ve] [their] own piece of land to farm, and if an artisan ha[ve] all the wages [they] earn...".<sup>177</sup> Evidence from the early twentieth century indicates that former slaves in this region continued to be associated with their former masters' children, including joining Christian congregations together.<sup>178</sup>

However, most evidence regarding negotiation strategies throughout the Protectorate and Colony suggests that agricultural slaves largely remained upon their master's land, but occupied their own fields and paid 'rent' in service rather than cash or kind.<sup>179</sup> Administrators such as DC Cummings of Saltpond and DC Riby of Volta are very clear on that point.<sup>180</sup> Similarly, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson wrote (albeit in 1927) that:<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Dieterle to Basel, 22 June 1875, Aburi.

<sup>176</sup> PP 1865,V, (412), Report from Committee on Africa (West Coast), Evidence of Reverend Elias Schrenk, of the Basel Mission, Q. 3334-3341.

<sup>177</sup> PRO CO 96/208, Former DC Rigby to Colonial Secretary, Aburi 30 January, 1890.

<sup>178</sup> BMS D-1.98, Josenhans, 25 January 1912, Odumase.

<sup>179</sup> Admittedly, this is contradicted by at least one source. BMS D-10.3, Binder, 3 July 1875, op. Cit. In Hainger, *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast*, p.126.

<sup>180</sup> NAG ADM 5/3/9, *Report upon the Customs Relating to the Tenure of Land on the Gold Coast*, 1895, H. Cummings, DC Saltpond. PRO CO 96/208, Hodgson to Knutsford, 17 February 1890, Accra; encl. 14, DC Riby to Colonial Secretary, 30 January 1890, Aburi.

<sup>181</sup> NAG ADM 11/975, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

The [former slaves] have portions of the family or community lands assigned to them to make farms, the produce of which is their own property and without paying any portion thereof as tribute. *They certainly help their masters also to make their farms*, and those who stay in the same house perform such household duties as hired servants in European countries do. In return they are fed and clothed and are given all the privileges of children... Otherwise they are only required occasionally to perform such duties as selling, going on errands, etc. They make occasional presents to their masters, who never fail to give return presents.<sup>182</sup>

There is no opposing evidence to suggest that sharecropping was a preferred negotiating outcome for either slaves or masters. The system of *abusa*, by which the labourer receives one third of produce and the land-owner two thirds, and which has figured so largely in cocoa production in the twentieth century<sup>183</sup>, appears not to have entered the Protectorate until after the First World War.<sup>184</sup>

Aside from suggesting that slaves largely paid for their land tenancy by giving service, Johnson's arguments reveal the social dependency that remained with most slaves despite their augmented status. By giving ritual presents slaves acknowledged their dependency, and while slaves exerted some economic rights they still acted as servants and clients of their former masters. In Accra, Cape Coast, and other urban settings, masters appear to have allowed slaves to remain in houses they owned<sup>185</sup>, but maintained these slaves as part of the domestic servant population, a group which as late as 1891 made up approximately 12% of the populations of both Cape Coast and Accra.<sup>186</sup> These and other dependants who had renegotiated their positions were still social inferiors, and libel cases reveal that they were frequently reminded of their dependent status and slave origins. Wherever possible, these individuals sought to assert a higher status by reworking their family trees<sup>187</sup> or suing their antagonists, who

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<sup>182</sup> NAG ADM 11/975, Memorandum on the Vestiges of Slavery in the Gold Coast, Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs Johnson, 1927.

<sup>183</sup> See Robertson, A.F, *The Dynamics of Productive Relationships: African Sharer Contracts in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984; and Austin, Gareth, "The Emergence of Capitalist Relations in south Asante Cocoa-Farming, c.1916-1933", *Journal of African History*, 1987 (28), pp.259-279.

<sup>184</sup> Hill, *The Gold Coast Cocoa Farmer*, p.12.

<sup>185</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/5, Regina v. George Napoleon, Accra District Court, 22 March 1897.

<sup>186</sup> This total probably included both former slaves, pawns, and free dependants.. NAG ADM 5/2/1, *Report of the Census of Gold Coast Colony for the year 1891*.

<sup>187</sup> Gaps appear in the family trees of many coastal Ghanaian families during this period..

were usually their former masters or their relatives, with whom they were economically forced to remain in contact.<sup>188</sup>

Opare-Akurang has also suggested that female slaves whose masters desired to retain their services were able to renegotiate their position through the institution of marriage.<sup>189</sup> Such negotiations would probably have been carried out by the slaves' families. Remarriage as a free woman would have benefited the former slave by completing her integration into her husband's family with the status of a fully free individual, while benefiting her family by reattaching her to her own matrilineage. At the same time, such an arrangement preserved the labour of the woman and her children for the former master. Unfortunately, the sole evidence for these remarriages comes from David Chalmers - the Chief Justice following emancipation. In an 1878 report, Chalmers reported that "the sentiments attaching to free marriage [were] so much appreciated that persons who had been married as slaves... have subsequently [married] a second time as free persons" and noted that marriages were "more frequently than formerly contracted through the interposition of the blood relations of the woman."<sup>190</sup>

To place this theory within the debate over whether emancipation represented a "continuation" or a "dislocation" of socio-economic and cultural institutions on the Gold Coast, it seems clear that, despite McSheffrey's hypothesis, there was no mass exodus of slaves from masters anywhere within the Protectorate. Slaves neither used the courts nor chose to flee en-masse unless they had highly marketable skills or could return to their families - either because of proximity or because they had only recently been captured. Nevertheless, relatively few slaves remained unaffected by emancipation in the long term. Emancipation did not cause them to liberate themselves. However it was a catalyst which gave them the leverage to renegotiate their economic position within the authority of their masters, who saw such negotiations as their own best response to the possibility of losing the power, economic stability, and status for which they needed their slave clients. The role of the administration was only, and could only be, to prepare an

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<sup>188</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 17/5/6, Owoo v. Quartay Hupah, Accra District Court, 1 September 1887; 23/4/131, Abba Ackireh vs. Lana Akebua, Anamaboe District Court, 25 January 1895. 23/5/2, Araba Qukraku vs. Assuwai, Cape Coast District Court, 1 March 1895.

<sup>189</sup> Opare-Akurang, "Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast", pp.26-27.

environment in which change could take place. It was slaves and their masters who, influenced by cultural, economic, and social imperatives, created the compromises that characterised the post-proclamation settlement.

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<sup>190</sup> PP LV, 1878, (c.2148), *Report... on the Effects of the Steps Taken by the Colonial Government*, Chalmers.

## **CHAPTER 8:** **Slaves and masters in French-Administered Senegal**

In the post-proclamation Gold Coast, as in Senegal Colony after 1848 and Gorée and Rufisque in the late 1870s, reluctant enforcement of abolition laws by colonial administrations empowered slaves and forced masters to react, resulting in the creation of new relationships and economic arrangements. In the bulk of 'protected' Senegal, however, enforcement of emancipation was non-existent in the two decades of expansion following the 1848 emancipation. Nor did this change in the 1870s, as the French withdrawal allowed indigenous leaders to firmly reclaim authority over most of the states of Senegal.

As a result, there is relatively little historical evidence of a growth in slave resistance or a transformation of dependant relationships. Consequently there has been little scholarly interest in this period as compared to either the 1848 Senegal Colony emancipation or the 1874 anti-slave ordinances on the Gold Coast. François Renault did investigate late nineteenth century slave policy in both his 1971 article on emancipation in Senegal and in the subsequent volume published in 1976.<sup>1</sup> But Renault, however talented, was a member of the clergy and not a trained historian; these works while excellent surveys on colonial policy generally ignore social and cultural issues and the agency of Africans - especially slaves. Besides Renault, the course of slavery in post-1850s Senegal outside of the colony was generally only discussed as a peripheral issue in articles and volumes<sup>2</sup> until Martin Klein's well researched *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*.<sup>3</sup> Klein's work is exceedingly useful for historians studying this period. While lacking in narrative and somewhat disjointed in presentation, *Slavery and Colonial Rule* introduces massive amounts of quantitative information and points to previously untapped sources.

Klein's research does not, however, indicate that there were any major changes in dependant relations in the regions surrounding the Colony in the 1860s and 1870s. During this period French authority was simply too remote and too thin to offer reasonable alternatives for all but the most determined of slaves. On the other hand, data collected by Klein and myself does suggest that pressure from the metropole to implement emancipation measures after 1878 may have had some impact on the Senegalese states again falling under the authority of French administration. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Renault, "L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal"; Renault, *Liberation D'esclaves*.

<sup>2</sup> Although I must commend the treatment of this subject by H. Olu Idowu. Idowu "The Establishment of Protectorate Administration in Senegal".

<sup>3</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*.

especially true as that administration grew in size and became more intent on implementing policy during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. As a result, it was during this period that some change occurred.

#### Public pressure to reform anti-slavery policy, 1879 -1882

Faidherbe's restriction of emancipation to the small entrepôts and posts occupied by France prior to 1848 remained unchanged until slavery was abolished in Dakar in 1877 and Rufisque two years later.<sup>4</sup> Substantive French authority outside of these areas was confined largely to Waalo and the Petite Côte, while limited *de facto* control was exercised over Dimar from the posts of Dagana and Podor.

As late as 1878, there seemed little motivation for a revision of this *status quo*. In that year, the *Ministre de la Marine*, Pothnau, wrote to Governor Brière de L'Isle that he continued to believe that while the administration "must enforce... our ideals of justice and civilisation", care must be taken "not... to put at risk our good relationships with... the indigenous protectorates."<sup>5</sup> The Ministry had no reason to challenge that policy, and Brière was merely another in a long line of military men who, since Faidherbe, had refused to drop their opposition to what they perceived as a dangerously unsound policy of emancipation.

However, in the event, 1879 was a year of unexpected change in the metropole's attitude towards this pragmatic approach to slave policy. It was two nineteenth century bastions of abolitionism, the Protestant clergy and the press, which initiated this change. French public opinion by this time was recognisably abolitionist, and the report from Senegal of a French Pastor named Villéger indicting the administration for their policy of expelling slaves seeking refuge in the Colony in the expectation that they would be reclaimed by their masters caused an immediate sensation.<sup>6</sup> The republican papers *La France*, *Le Marseillaise*, *Petit Parisien*, and *Lanterne* indicted not only the administration but also former Minister Jauréguiberry for failing to suppress slavery within the colony.<sup>7</sup> An editorial in *La France* declared that "slavery exists in France, if it exists in Senegal" and attacked the administration for expelling refugee slaves and allowing their sale within the coastal towns. Such accusations rested largely on evidence provided by

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> ANS K25, Ministre à Brière de L'Isle, 13 December 1878, Paris.

<sup>6</sup> ANS K11, Genouilly à Pinet-Laprade, 11 June 1866, no place. Renault, "L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal", 1971, pp.31-32.

<sup>7</sup> *Petit Parisien*, 12 January 1880. *Lanterne*, 10 and 12 January 1880. *Le Marseillaise*, 5 October 1879. *La France*, 3 October 1879.

Villéger and church publications.<sup>8</sup>

Although the radical *Lanterne* also attacked the Ministry and administration for withholding emancipation from most of the peoples under their authority, the major issue of the scandal revolved around lax enforcement of emancipation within the Colony, and it was to this that Pothnau responded. Pothnau did not bother to deny the charges, instead claiming that the incident to which Villéger referred was “a regrettable error.”<sup>9</sup> The Minister quite clearly understood the need for this subterfuge and was aware that the incident was not a mistake but an unwritten administrative policy. In a letter to Governor Brière de L’Isle he accepted the rationale that the Colony was “surrounded by populations possessing slaves which serve to transport their produce to our factories...” and supported the policy of expelling slaves who were, he argued, largely vagabonds in any case. In no way did he suggest that the administration should change their procedures.<sup>10</sup>

Pothnau, however, had underestimated public interest in the issue and the abilities of his opposition. The scandal reached the French Senate on the March 1, 1880, when Victor Schoelcher<sup>11</sup> charged the administration with three crimes. First, he indicted them for allowing slave-owners to reclaim their slaves up to 3 months after they had sought refuge within the Colony. Second, he claimed that slaves were “freely bought and sold” in Dakar. In addition, Schoelcher deplored the “free crossing of French territories” by slave caravans.<sup>12</sup> In a thundering speech, he decried the authorities’ betrayal of the “right to asylum that is our greatest heritage.”<sup>13</sup> Brière de L’Isle clearly saw which way the wind was blowing and decided to at least make noises in the right direction. Following his advice, the merchants and officers of Senegal’s *conseil général* quickly passed a resolution “demanding strict application of the 1848 decree.”<sup>14</sup> Real change was slower, however, as one of Pothnau’s successors, Minister Rouvier, noted in 1882.<sup>15</sup> Administrators continued especially to turn a blind eye slave-owners seeking to recover slaves claiming refuge in the Colony

<sup>8</sup> “L’esclavage en France”, *La France*, 3 October 1879.

<sup>9</sup> Renault, “L’abolition de l’esclavage au Sénégal”, 1971, p.32.

<sup>10</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15d, Ministre à Brière de L’Isle

<sup>11</sup> The famous Republican abolitionist and former head of the commission which authored the 1848 emancipation act.

<sup>12</sup> It is not clear whether Schoelcher realised the contemporary limits of French authority. France still technically held Protectorates over several interior and coastal states, but had not exercised them for a full decade.

<sup>13</sup> ANS K25, *L’Esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906. *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 2 March 1880.

<sup>14</sup> q.v. Idowu, “The Establishment of Protectorate Administration in Senegal”, pp.253.

<sup>15</sup> ANS K12, Ministre à Canard, 31 January 1882, Paris.

### The Waalo and Dimar exodus

However an era of pragmatic military administrators came to an end in December 1882, with the appointment of Senegal's first civilian Governor, René Servatius. Servatius' greatest impact on slave policy was to defy many of his own officers by eliminating formalities which slowed the processing of runaway slaves and made them vulnerable to reclamation by their masters.<sup>16</sup> Although he died after only six months in office, Servatius was succeeded by other civilian bureaucrats who pursued a similar agenda.

It was his immediate successor, Bourdiaux, who took the legally mandated and extremely tardy step of extending certain anti-slavery ordinances to Waalo and Dimar.<sup>17</sup> Following a reaffirmation of French control of these territories in October 1882, the first step in a post-war re-expansion of French authority in Senegal, Bourdiaux outlawed the further sale and purchase of slaves in the directly administrated territories on January 8, 1884<sup>18</sup>

While Bourdiaux's proclamation was intended to eradicate the slave trade in Waalo, even he was not so bold as to announce any policies carrying out his responsibility to eradicate the long-standing and extremely pervasive institution of domestic slavery in the floodplain states. Nevertheless, this failed to calm the fears of Fulbe, Tukolor, and Wolof slave-owners. As early as 1883, indigenous leaders had deduced that steps to limit their slave-owning rights would follow the 1882 'clarification' of French authority; the more mobile Fulbe and Tukolor subsequently began to leave the region for the interior, some in small groups but in other cases entire clans and settlements.<sup>19</sup> Servatius initially attempted to stem this flow by ordering the *Commandant* of Dagana to allow the emigrants to leave, but at the same time to confiscate any slaves they attempted to take with them.<sup>20</sup> However this move only stoked the fears of the indigenous population, who over the next seven years departed in increasing numbers. By 1889 approximately 2/3 of the Fulbe and Tukolor population, 20,000 people, had migrated to the east<sup>21</sup>, some travelling as far as Niore in Kaarta - some 800 kilometres away.<sup>22</sup> Significantly, a number of the more sedentary Wolof slave

<sup>16</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.64.

<sup>17</sup> A functionary named Le Boucher had held the position for less than two months following Servatius's death.

<sup>18</sup> ANS K25, *L'Esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

<sup>19</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/68, Servatius à Ministre, 20 May 1883, St. Louis.

<sup>20</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/68, Servatius à Ministre, 20 May 1883, St. Louis.

<sup>21</sup> ANS K12, Ministre à Clément -Thomas, 18 December 1889, Paris.

<sup>22</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/68, Servatius à Ministre, 20 May 1883, St. Louis. This movement must be compared with the Great Trek of the Boers in 1830s southern Africa, also largely to escape abolitionist laws.

owners also fled French rule for the interior.<sup>23</sup>

There is little doubt that the issue of slavery was the primary impetus for this migration. Yamar, the pro-French *chef du Canton* of Merinaghen, and his constituents both Fulbe and Wolof complained that limiting their right to acquire slaves “is our ruin” and demanded that the French “let us judge our affairs like you always let our fathers.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly Abdul Bokar Kane, the Bosean aristocrat who had recently risen to the leadership of Fuuta and a temporary French ally, warned France that “[any] who would have good relations with us must leave [our slaves] in our hands or we cannot remain”.<sup>25</sup>

By this time it was evident even to the civilian Governor of Senegal that Waalo and Dimar, the breadbaskets of the north, would be entirely depopulated if nothing were done to stop this emigration. Even more ominously, as the Colony expanded, it was becoming clear that the implementation of similar policies in other *cercles* would likewise result in mass emigration and economic destabilisation. Therefore on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, 1889, Clément-Thomas formally requested that he be allowed to transform Waalo and Dimar into Protectorates<sup>26</sup>, similar to the disposition of the remainder of the region between the Senegal and Gambia rivers, the conquest of which was underway throughout the 1880s.<sup>27</sup> In December 1889 the Naval Ministry agreed, writing “the sole means that we actually have at our disposal to stop emigration movements which have already affected the colony, and for [encouraging] a return resides in *disannexion*, and the constitution of small principalities placed under the protection and suzerainty of France.”<sup>28</sup> The implementation and publication of this strategy, as discussed below, was almost immediately successful in encouraging the re-entry of large numbers of *émigrés* in 1890 and 1891.<sup>29</sup> It was clear that the slave-owners had won this round.

### The policy of ‘association’: The results of the Senegal River Delta exodus?

As we have seen, a stricter colonial anti-slavery policy was being promoted from the metropole in the early 1880s. However the result of the attempted implementation of this policy in Waalo had been a massive response from indigenous slave-owners which effectively forced the colonial administration to back down. This confrontation was especially significant as it coincided with a new expansionism pursued not only by

<sup>23</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.66.

<sup>24</sup> ANS K12, Les notables du Canton de Mérinaghen, Peuls et Wolofs, à Quintrie, 3 June 1888.

<sup>25</sup> ANS 15G32, Commandant Supérieur du Soudan Française à Clément-Clément-Thomas, 4 January 1889.

<sup>26</sup> ANS K25, *L'Esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

<sup>27</sup> See the following section.

<sup>28</sup> ANS K12, Ministre à Clément-Thomas, 18 December 1889, Paris.

<sup>29</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/91, Lamothe à Ministre, 21 June 1891, St. Louis.

militant Governors such as Brière de L'Isle but also promoted by metropolitan policy seeking to revive French glory after the disastrous Franco-Prussian War.<sup>30</sup> The position of *Commandant Supérieur* of French Soudan had been created to coordinate expansion along the upper Senegal, shifting administrative attention to the interior, while renewed importance was attached to groundnut production. The spectre of Muslim revolution had been largely removed with the death of Maba, but taxation and the imposition of tolls by chiefly officeholders still restricted the ability of French merchants to deal directly with peasant (and largely Muslim) farmers.

As a result it was not difficult for Governor Servatius to gather support for an attack on Kaajor in 1882. The justification for the offensive rested to a large extent on the opposition of the *Damel*, Lat Joor, to a proposed railway linking St. Louis with Dakar and the groundnut growing regions in between.<sup>31</sup> The conquest was completed by March 1883, although Lat Joor managed to flee to the protection of Alhuri Njaay in Jolof.<sup>32</sup> However, Njaay's turn was to come several years later when, following a disastrous famine he placed himself under French protection and abandoned Lat Joor to defeat. His protected status, however, did not save him from a similar betrayal by Governor Clément-Thomas who turned on Njaay after the capture of Segou in 1890.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile Siin and Saalum, left weak after Maba's defeat<sup>34</sup>, sought the protection of British forces in the Gambia. But this only served to enrage the French, who in April 1887 moved to turn the region into a protectorate.

Thus by 1890 the French were in possession of all the states of Senegal north of the Gambia River, as well as a significant portion of modern-day Mali.<sup>35</sup> However the exact shape this regime would take remained unclear. Governor Clément-Thomas was hesitant to further extend the policy of assimilation, under which the population of the Colony was considered French citizens, not least because this would have required the enforcement of anti-slavery laws. Such a policy was likely to result in a repeat of the Waalo/Dimar exodus in other newly conquered regions, and the Governor had to consider that this might be especially disastrous in the economically indispensable groundnut-growing regions. As a result, Clément-Thomas rejected a policy of assimilation, and instead developed one of association which would become a pattern

<sup>30</sup> For more on this see Charles, Eunice A., "French West African Policy and Muslim Resistance in Senegal 1880-1890", Unpublished paper presented at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, October 31-Nov 3, 1973, Syracuse.

<sup>31</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp.224-227.

<sup>32</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/68, Servatius à Ministre, telegramme, received 21 May 1883, Lisboa-Paris.

<sup>33</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp.234-237.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>35</sup> See Colvin, Lucie, *Historical Dictionary of Senegal*, Scarecrow Press, London, 1981, p.29.

for French colonial policy elsewhere. Under association, the newly conquered territories joined Senegal as protectorates in the same manner as Waalo and Dimar, administered indirectly through African chiefs but with executive power retained by the French *Commandant de Cercle*.<sup>36</sup>

The conquest and formal acquisition of the Senegalese states did not prompt a major revision of administrative attitudes toward slavery. Colonial officers administering these Protectorates were quick to recognise that they had only very limited resources - too few administrators, limited transportation, and tiny budgets, and that they therefore had to rely largely on client chiefs and village headmen who were predominately slave-owners.<sup>37</sup> More importantly, however, it was the successful resistance of slave-owners that convinced the administration to implant a system of administration which could largely ignore abolitionist pressure from the metropole. The resulting 1890 protectorate treaty signed by loyal chiefs from Waalo, Jolof, and the St. Louis region embodied cosmetic measures forbidding the purchase and sale of slaves and providing a mechanism by which slaves could liberate themselves by paying a 500 franc indemnity. However it failed absolutely to forbid or regulate domestic slavery.<sup>38</sup> In fact, French policy was so lax that when, in 1890-1891 Britain and France redrew the borders between Senegal and the Gambia, a number of chiefs who found themselves on the Gambian side of the line moved north largely, it has been suggested, to escape British abolitionist laws.<sup>39</sup>

#### Occupations and characteristics of local slavery in the late nineteenth century

In order to analyse the strategies of slaves in these new Protectorates, it is necessary to discuss what we know about slave populations, characteristics, and occupations within these regions, particularly Waalo. My analysis of this subject is based on our knowledge of traditional characteristics of slavery in Senegal and the postulated transformations that took place during the eras of the Atlantic slave trade and the post-abolition period. However it is also informed particularly by the results of a 1904 questionnaire circulated to the commandants of the various *cercles* within the then colony of *Afrique Occidentale Française*. This document, folio K18 of the Senegalese

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> For more on this see Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin", pp.36-38..

<sup>38</sup> Signed by the chiefs of Waalo, Jolof, Giandol and Ndiambur in 1890. ANS K12, Traité, 15 February 1890, Lamothe. Additional treaties signed by the chiefs of Dimar, Toro, the independant Sereer states, Baol, Siin and Saalum between February and September 1890. ANS K12, Traité, 1 September 1890, Clément-Thomas. Interestingly, the French explained their condemnation of *slave trading* by referring to Chapters 24 and 43 of the Koran.

<sup>39</sup> Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal*, p.152..

National Archives, is made up of administrators' reports including estimates of the number and percentage of slaves within each region, their occupations, the ethnic group of their owners, their genders and ages.<sup>40</sup>

**TABLE 8.1**

**Suggested slave statistics for protected territories of Senegal, 1904**

Cercle or administrative region	Approximately corresponding to	Main ethnic groups	Approximate # of slaves	Proportion of Population	Percent adult female	Percent child
Kaolack	Saalum	Sereer		1/3		
Foundiougne	Town only	Sereer	50	1/20		
Thiès	Siin	Sereer	750	1/70		
Baol Occidental	western Baol	Sereer/Wolof	20,000	1/4		
N'Diourbel	eastern Baol	Sereer	1000	1/45		
		Wolof	3000	1/7		
		Fulbe	1300	1/7		
Petite Côte	Petite Côte	Sereer/Lebu	1000	1/30		
Tivaouane	Kaajor	Wolof	15000		28%	29%
Louga	Waalo	Wolof/Fulbe	8940		41%	29%
Dagana	Dimar	Fulbe	26,000	1/2		
Podor	Toro	Wolof/Fulbe	18,609	1/5	54%	11%
Matam	regions of Fuuta	Fulbe	20,000		56%	9%
Bakel	Gajaaga	Fulbe/Tukolor	35,000			

K18, Reponse aux questionnaire, 1904

Although the statistics given by *Commandants de Cercle* and *Sergents de Villes* are not entirely reliable, the qualitative information indicates that a number of arguments made by colonial officials and later by historians are correct. The first is that slavery was ubiquitous within the Protected territories. Slave holding extended to all ethnic groups during the late nineteenth century, as statistics from N'Diourbel especially reveal. However the responses of officers from Siin and Fundiugne suggest that the Sereer, who as I postulated above had a traditionally more egalitarian society, continued to hold a smaller proportion of slaves than other ethnic groups.

The French commercial and political order appears to have had some effect upon the institution of slavery. Groundnut producers, like many other cash croppers, perceived male slaves as better workers, which reversed the traditional Senegalese preference for retaining female slaves. In the interior, Fulbe and Tukolor slave-owners

<sup>40</sup> While this data was produced after the period of this chapter, the very fact that it confirms trends and statistics given in anecdotal sources prior to the 1880s enables it to replace information we do not have on slaves and slave-owners for the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps, therefore, I must present the following information with the proviso that it is largely extrapolated from sources prior to and following the period in question.

still largely preferred women - only approximately 35% of slaves in these areas were adult males, compared to around 55% adult females. However in groundnut-producing Kaajor 43% were adult males and only 28% were adult females - the rest were youths for whom we have no gender statistics. Likewise, the presence of groundnuts has been postulated as stimulating slave owning. Supporting that is the inordinately high return of slaves in Saalum, unique amongst the Sereer states in supporting a population which was 1/3 unfree.

The origins of these slaves, on the other hand, had not changed significantly. Slaves still appear to have been sourced predominately from the interior, although warfare between Muslim reformers, traditional leaders, and the French in the 1850s-1880s generated large numbers of war captives, and the *tyeddo* were still active in some regions.<sup>41</sup> More and more, however, it was Moorish slave traders who supplied the demands of Senegalese slave-owners.<sup>42</sup>

Slaves still largely worked in the economic capacities that they had come to fill in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. French administrators from regions as separated as Kaolack, Fundiugne, and Dagana identified cultivation and harvesting as the primary roles of slaves, and a number were also engaged in herding sheep and goats.<sup>43</sup> In most of these areas slaves were given as many as 240 days/year or as few as 104 days/year to cultivate their own food, working the rest of the time on their masters farms, herds, or groundnut fields.<sup>44</sup> Domestic tasks such as the preparation of food, especially the pounding of millet, and weaving, were also carried out by slaves<sup>45</sup>, although not exclusively so. In addition to domestic slaves, in most regions there still existed a caste of royal or chiefly slaves (*captifs/captives de la couronne*) who largely occupied symbolic or military roles.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> ANSOM Senegal I/71, Seignac à Ministre, 9 May 1884, St. Louis. ANSOM K18, Reponse de l'administrateur de Dagana, 1 February 1904.

<sup>42</sup> See Chapter 9. ANSOM K18, Reponse de l'administrateur de Dagana, 1 February 1904.

<sup>43</sup> ANS K18, Reponse de l'administrateur de Dagana, 1 February 1904; Reponse de l'administrateur de Kaolack, 26 January 1904; Reponse de la Sergent de Ville, Foundiougne.

<sup>44</sup> ANS K18, Reponse de l'administrateur de Kaolack, 26 January 1904; Reponse de l'administrateur de Podor.

<sup>45</sup> ANS K18 Reponse de l'administrateur de Kaolack, 26 January 1904; Reponse de la Sergent de Ville, Foundiougne.

<sup>46</sup> ANS K18, Reponse de l'administrateur de Louga, 25 January 1904; Reponse de l'administrateur de Tivuouane, 29 January 1904; Reponse de l'administrateur de Kaolack, 26 January 1904.

### Slave liberation: *Patents de liberté*

Technically, of course, the status under which these slaves laboured was recognised as legal by the French government and the administration of Senegal. Outside of Waalo and Dimar, where between 1882 and 1890 slaves could technically liberate themselves under the 1848 law, the administration had rejected the emancipation of slaves beyond the Colony through the establishment of protectorates. Thus there was a fundamental division between the non-recognition of slavery on the Gold Coast and the Senegal administration's sanction of slavery within the protected states.

In practice, admittedly, there were some very close parallels between the two administrations' policies, which in both regions tended to force slaves into similar situations. We have seen how, during most of the 1870s and 1880s, slaves in the Gold Coast had to trek to Cape Coast or Accra to seek judicial support for their liberation. Similarly, the principal of *sol affranchis*, strenuously enforced following the appointment of Governor Servatius in 1883<sup>47</sup>, meant that slaves from the interior who managed to escape to St. Louis, Gorée, or one of the Senegal River posts could receive *patents de liberté*. In Senegal as in the Gold Coast, there were added difficulties constraining female slaves from seeking their freedom. The French, like the British, recognised children as belonging to their fathers and would not liberate them if a slave-owner indicated his paternity. Additionally, as Administrator Poulet noted women had little to gain from liberation since there was little call for them in the wage labour market and female runaways generally found themselves carrying out the same tasks in similar conditions as domestic servants in the Colony as they had as slaves.<sup>48</sup>

However the significant variance between the administrations of the two regions was instrumental in defining the different responses and modes of liberation of slaves. In the Gold Coast, enforcement of the same law throughout the Protectorate enabled liberated slaves to travel and settle safely as free individuals, whereas in Senegal *patents de liberté* went largely unhonoured outside of the Colony. Similarly, while in the Gold Coast families of pawns especially enjoyed some support from the administration in reclaiming their kin, masters in the Senegal Protectorate could easily and legally reclaim fugitive slaves unless they made the sometimes difficult journey to 'free soil'. Thus it was generally only slaves with access to French territory - largely those who transported goods to the coast either on their backs or as *laptots* - who could liberate

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<sup>47</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.64.

<sup>48</sup> ANS K17, *Rapport sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905.

themselves in this manner.

The French administrators, in fact, recognised only one legal mode of liberation for slaves outside of the Colony - the *rachat*. After 1890 (in some regions 1893) any slave who could pay their masters 500 francs could legally purchase their freedom.<sup>49</sup> The likelihood of this was pretty low, however, for the largely rural slave population occupied in cultivation, herding, and domestic employment.

There is unfortunately very little known about modes of liberation in late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Senegal. Surprisingly, however, it appears that a relatively large number of slaves were able to liberate themselves by seeking refuge within the Colony, both before and following the loosening of restrictions in 1884. Unfortunately the quantitative records we have for this type of liberation, published in the *Moniteur du Senegal*, are not greatly illuminated by other, more qualitative, sources.

**TABLE 8.2**  
**Slave liberations in Senegal, 1868-1895**

Year	Total liberations
1868	102
1869	139
1870	148
1871	129
1872	91(incomplete)
1873	55(incomplete)
1874	85(incomplete)
1875	328
1876	278
1877	349
1878	347
1879	440
1880	609
1881	643
1882	919
1883	1266(incomplete)
1884	841
1885	1060(incomplete)
1886	676
1888	254 (incomplete)
1894	1218
1895	1438

1868-1888, Klein, Slavery and Colonial Rule, 1998, p.72.

1894-5, Deherme, Esclavage en AOF, 1906.

<sup>49</sup> ANS K12, Traité du 15 Fevrier 1890, Lamothe.

This, unfortunately, has led to a number of misunderstandings. Renault, for example, saw these liberations as a direct reaction to the scandals of the 1880s. He hailed them as an example of “governors... achiev[ing] real redress. They were made aware of the necessity of ending the worst abuses.”<sup>50</sup> Even Boubacar Barry ascribed the large numbers of slave liberations partly to European agency, arguing that “the Colony of Senegal encouraged the flight of slaves towards [French soil]. The Colony thus created a series of enclaves surrounding the Senegambian kingdoms.”<sup>51</sup>

I disagree fundamentally with these arguments. Although civilian Governors after 1884 may, under pressure from France, have made it easier for runaway slaves to gain their emancipation, Barry and Renault provide no primary evidence to show that they encouraged slaves to run away. Indeed they patently did not. French administrators predominately regarded the liberated slave population as a drain on their resources. “In general”, one administrator was to comment in 1904, “all slaves who seek their liberty are parasites, and those who claim abuse to recover their liberty are almost always liars who wish to be vagabonds.”<sup>52</sup>

Liberation by *patents de liberté* was, in fact, generally the result of action either by slaves or by masters. In fact, until the mid 1880s a large, although incalculable<sup>53</sup>, proportion of slaves liberated were women and children brought into the Colony to act as concubines or domestic servants and liberated by their masters in order to legitimise the arrangement in the eyes of the *gendarmes*.<sup>54</sup> Slave-owners trusted that the lack of opportunity for these individuals, imported from far away and bereft of any support structure, would keep them dependent on their masters, and therefore perceived no danger in registering them for *patents de liberté*. The slaves may not have even been informed of their freedom, or might simply have been unable to exploit it due not only to the lack of economic opportunity but also of housing. Females and children were especially chosen for importation in to the Colony in the belief that their inferior social position made it unlikely they would run away. Although the actual number of children ‘liberated’ in this manner appears small, Deherme suggested that most such liberations went unrecorded, and the number may have been as much as three times larger.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Renault, “L’abolition de l’esclavage au Sénégal”, p.37..

<sup>51</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.214.

<sup>52</sup> ANS K18, Reponse de l’administrateur de Kaolack (Lefilliatre), 26 January 1904, Kaolack.

<sup>53</sup> Klein has noted, and I agree, that the data on freed slaves is missing large chunks of information and is somewhat unreliable.

<sup>54</sup> i.e. ANS AE4, *Moniteur du Senegal*, 24 April 1883, No. 1423.

<sup>55</sup> ANS K25, *L’Esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

On the other hand, most of the *patents de liberté* granted after 1882 probably resulted from either self- or kin-liberations. While many children brought into the Colony were essentially slaves purchased for domestic servitude and registered by *habitants* and French administrators, others have been identified by Klein as being vouchsafed to relatives.<sup>56</sup> Anecdotal evidence supports the notion that relatives may have kidnapped or redeemed their children or younger kin, and then had them formally liberated in St. Louis or Gorée.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, evidence from refugee slaves in Podor includes a number of stories of slaves 'saved' or 'stolen back' by their brothers, fathers, or uncles.<sup>58</sup> Their family members, without having the lawful sanction for such actions enjoyed by families in the Gold Coast, were forced to spirit them away to safety within the Colony.

However a large number, probably the majority, of *patents* were granted as a result of slave agency. Almost all of the liberations granted at the *postes* were brought about by slaves fleeing masters or traders. Prior to 1884, such requests for liberation were granted only in cases where slaves could show they had been born as free individuals within the Colony or in regions under direct annexation (Waalo and parts of Kaajor), or who could prove they had been abused by their masters.<sup>59</sup> Any others were expelled if claimed by their masters<sup>60</sup>, and if their masters failed to claim them, they were conferred upon local notables as dependants with few safeguards as to their free status. For example Djerry, the chief of the village of Podor, was the recipient of 14 wards between 1866 and 1868.

After 1884 the political situation rendered such a pragmatic solution indefensible and all slaves reaching French soil were in theory given certificates of liberation.<sup>61</sup> The number of slaves seeking refuge had been climbing since 1880, and the news that slaves could expect to receive *patents* encouraged the increase in liberations Renault ascribed to administrative agency.<sup>62</sup> Soon after, Bambara slaves from Banamba began to trickle into St. Louis, a drip that by 1905 would become a flood.<sup>63</sup>

Unfortunately we have little other information on who the vast majority of these

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<sup>56</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.72.

<sup>57</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15c, Chef du Service Judiciaire à Vallon, 11 October 1882, St. Louis.

<sup>58</sup> i.e. ANS 3G124, Commandant Podor à Pinet-Laprade, 27 April 1868, Podor. Cases of Makadou Touré, Fatima Diop, and Seyni M'Djoro Gay.

<sup>59</sup> i.e. ANS 3G124. Cases of Ma Goné, N'Codou Sal, Biram, Yacine. Regarding abuse see ANS 3G124. Case of Fatima Diop.

<sup>60</sup> i.e. ANS 3G124. Cases of Mengueye N'Diaye, Mabigué Couta, and Diati Gueya.

<sup>61</sup> ANS K13, Directeur des Affaires Politiques à Administrateur de la Cercle St. Louis, Telegramme, 7 September 1894, St. Louis.

<sup>62</sup> ANS K13, Administrateur de Matam à Directeur des Affaires Politiques, 1 December 1894, Matam.

<sup>63</sup> ACSE, *Bulletins Generaux* XIV, No.7, August 1887, p.230. See the chapter on the Banamba exodus in Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, pp.159-179.

fugitive slaves were. Klein has attempted to calculate their origins, and found that 21.4% originated in Kaajor and a total of 47.6% from the Wolof and Sereer states (including Kaajor), while about 19.2% originated in Western Mali. However he relied mostly on names to distinguish points of origin and his findings are uncertain at best.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps our best indication comes again from the 1904 reports in the K18 files, in which officials highlight several likely scenarios by which slaves might chose to liberate themselves. *Captifs de la couronne*, for example, enjoyed a number of privileges of assimilation and rank and performed little labour and were consequently the least likely to seek their liberation.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand those most likely to emancipate themselves appear, as in the Gold Coast, to have been recently acquired slaves who had accumulated none of the benefits of assimilation and whose memories and links with their homes were strongest.<sup>66</sup> However, although in some ways requests for *patents* are surprisingly numerous, even as late as 1904 there was no mass self-liberation of slaves in the Protectorate despite arguments that they were “all more or less desirous of reclaiming their liberty”.<sup>67</sup> After all, as we have seen there were at least between one and two hundred thousand slaves remaining with their masters at the time of the questionnaire; the approximately 1000 - 2000 per year seeking their liberation after 1884 seems a drop in the bucket in light of this.

#### Missionaries as agents or means of liberation

In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the missionary promise of the *Congregation de la Saint-Esprit* was by no means fulfilled. After 1848 the *Pères* had attempted to expand outside of St. Louis and Gorée<sup>68</sup>, but they accomplished little and made few conversions.<sup>69</sup> Those few who ventured into the interior lamented the lack of resources and the small number of their brethren<sup>70</sup>, but it was not this that stopped them from having an impact on slavery in the Protectorate. Instead, the *Pères* largely accepted domestic slavery as “no more than a sort of domesticity”<sup>71</sup> and concentrated on a policy of *rachats*. What attention the missionaries spared for slavery was aimed at purchasing

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<sup>64</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.73.

<sup>65</sup> ANS K18, Reponse de Sergent de Ville de Foundiougne, 30 May 1904; Reponse de l'administrateur de Louga, 25 January 1904.

<sup>66</sup> ANS K18, Reponse de l'administrateur de Louga, 25 January 1904.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. See also ANS K18, Reponse de Sergent de Ville de Foundiougne, 30 May 1904; Reponse de Resident de Baol Occidental, 10 January 1904; Reponse de l'Administrateur à Tivaouane, 29 January 1904.

<sup>68</sup> Picciola, André, *Missionnaires en Afrique, L'Afrique Occidentale de 1840 à 1940*, Denaël, Paris, 1987, pp.57-58.

<sup>69</sup> Picciola, *Missionnaires en Afrique*, pp.127.

<sup>70</sup> ACSE, *Missions Catholiques*, XXI, 1889, p.588.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

children to act both as servants and as the core of nascent congregations; a policy followed by both Protestant and Catholic churches.<sup>72</sup> Even the famous *villages de liberté* which came to house huge numbers of refugee slaves throughout French West Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were only begun in 1897 in the Soudan, and were never instituted by missionaries in the Senegal Protectorate.<sup>73</sup> In fact, the missions were more the object than the instigators of liberation efforts. While not interested in liberating the general slave population, former converts who had been sold outside of the colony sometimes approached travelling missionaries. Such slaves, if they could recite the catechism, could count on Church support in gaining *patents de liberté* - effectively the only slaves liberated by European action outside of the Colony.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, young slaves in Joal sometimes turned to the *Soeurs de St. Joseph de Ngozobil*, usually after incidents of abuse, and were confiscated from their masters with the reluctant support of local administrators.<sup>75</sup>

Slaves seeking refuge within the Colony also found that churches were a rare source of food and lodging in otherwise crowded towns. The Catholic and Protestant missions competed for these converts to such a degree that in 1887 Monseigneur Riehl of the *Congregation de la Saint-Esprit* opened a Church Annex in Sor, across the river from St. Louis, in order to outflank the Protestant mission on the landward side of the island.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, even in the Colony it was generally the fugitives who sought out the missionaries, rather than the other way around.

### Means of existence for ex-slaves

If liberated slaves in the Gold Coast had few alternative means of existence, they could only be envied by their counterparts in Senegal. Most freed slaves had no choice at all. Lone children, for example, were simply conferred on *habitants*, free citizens of St. Louis Colony, and French officials as servants.<sup>77</sup> Amongst these were a number who had been purchased by French-Senegalese citizens as slaves, legally liberated, but kept in virtual slavery by their purchasers despite their *patents de liberté*.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15d, *Journal Officiel de la Republique Française*, 2 March 1880. ACSE, Missions Catholiques, XXI, 1889, p.587.

<sup>73</sup> A topic subjected to a thorough treatment by Denise Bouche. Bouche, Denise, *Les Villages de Liberté en Afrique noire Française 1887-1910*, Mouton, Paris, 1968.

<sup>74</sup> ACSE Missions Catholiques, IV, 1871-1872, p.696.

<sup>75</sup> ACSE Bulletins Generaux, XII, No. 185?, May 1885, pp.667-668.

<sup>76</sup> ACSE Bulletins Generaux, XIV, No. 7, August 1887, p.230.

<sup>77</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15e, Canard à Ministre, 23 May 1882, St. Louis. The identities of the conferees are discussed in detail by Klein. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, pp.73.

<sup>78</sup> ANS K25, *L'Esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

Adult slaves also had few choices. While the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was a period of increased opportunity for peasants due to the growth of peanut farming, and while this appears to have led to a massive demand for slaves in the groundnut regions, free labour was not as welcomed by peasant land-holders and liberated slaves could not ensure that their *patents* would be honoured outside of the Colony.<sup>79</sup> They were therefore largely excluded from this agricultural transformation.

The military was always open to ex-slaves. The retreat of the 1870s led to a demand for African troops to replace French soldiers recalled to fight in France, while the subsequent re-expansion kept that demand so high<sup>80</sup> that around 200 young male slaves were purchased and 'liberated' specifically for conscription.<sup>81</sup> During subsequent decades, Africans remained the preferred soldiers for the more dangerous and unhealthy posts in the interior. However most of these recruits were slaves purchased directly from dealers. The French continued to specifically prefer Bambara recruits<sup>82</sup>, whom they viewed as a martial people, and freed slaves appear to have largely declined to join the military.<sup>83</sup>

Still, military service remained an option, if an unattractive one, for young male liberated slaves. Women and children had no such choice. "Most of the women and all children", Canard reported in 1882, "serve new masters who [give] them food and lodging, in exchange for the profits" of their labours.<sup>84</sup> The culture of slavery in St. Louis and Gorée continued as largely the same arrangement under a different name, since a small elite still dominated both housing and employment, and many new slaves were simply integrated into the local economy as washerwomen, domestic servants, millet pounders and preparers of food.

Other than becoming dependants of *habitant* patrons, there was little work available. Governor Canard admitted in 1882 that "in effect, no institution has been created with the aim of regenerating these poor [people]."<sup>85</sup> He lamented the fact that "slaves who we declare free... are generally terribly fitted out... [They] do not wish to work, [and] live on petty theft and charity" and he placed upon them the blame for "the

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<sup>79</sup> See Chapter 6. Also Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, pp.202.

<sup>80</sup> ANSOM Senegal II/6, Memoire, Serval, 1871-1888.

<sup>81</sup> Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, pp.1-18.

<sup>82</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>83</sup> If the administration's increasingly desperate attempts to recruit soldiers while large numbers of ex-slaves were still unemployed is anything to go by. See Klein, "Slavery and Emancipation in French West Africa", p.176 for details on recruitment reforms.

<sup>84</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15e, Canard à Ministre, 23 May 1882, St. Louis.

<sup>85</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15e, Canard à Ministre, 23 May 1882, St. Louis.

numerous fires that have broken out.”<sup>86</sup>

It was partly to capitalise on the availability of former slaves that, in the 1890s, various European companies and governments began to recruit labourers in the Colony for other parts of Africa. Local administrators at first actively encouraged the export of these unemployed former slaves, which they saw as beneficial both to the Colony and to the individuals themselves. The administration had already attempted to compel young male ex-slaves into working for the *Directeur d'artillerie* and the works commission, while others had been conferred upon the church.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the recruitment of labour for overseas had a long history in Senegal.<sup>88</sup> However, the days of forced engagement for other regions had been ended by a *Décision impériale* of 1856 following a scandal in which Gabonese labourers meant for Guyana had been purchased and exported as slaves.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, African labourers could no longer be legally compelled to travel overseas.

Nevertheless, the demand for labour in African colonies had never been higher than in the 1890s. Agents of Leopold of the Belgians were combing West Africa for soldiers and labourers to facilitate the rubber extraction process in the Congo.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, the administration of French Congo demanded workers and craftsmen for Libreville<sup>91</sup>, and seemed to prefer Senegalese recruits to act as *tirailleurs*.<sup>92</sup> However voluntary recruits in the ports of Dakar, St. Louis, and Gorée remained elusive.<sup>93</sup> Some recruiters thus turned to the interior, recruiting peasants and possibly providing an opportunity for slaves, but this was a dangerous strategy that sometimes brought down the wrath of indigenous leaders.<sup>94</sup>

The largest number of recruits, however, were the “Sarakolés, Woloffs, and Toucouleurs who find themselves without work”<sup>95</sup> in the Colony. The soldiers recruited for the French Congo were described as “porters, dockers, shoe-shine boys, about 16 to 22 years old with little military bearing.”<sup>96</sup> Similarly, men recruited in Dakar for the

<sup>86</sup> ANS K12, Canard à Ministre, 20 March 1882, St. Louis.

<sup>87</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15e, Canard à Ministre, 23 May 1882, St. Louis.

<sup>88</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/24, Gouverneur de Martinique à Ministre, 7 April 1870, Fort-de-France; Senegal XIV/23b, Hamelin à Chef du division navale, 19 December 1856.

<sup>89</sup> Renault, “L’abolition de l’esclavage au Sénégal”, pp.35-46.

<sup>90</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/28, Lamothe à Ministre, 9 July 1894, St. Louis.

<sup>91</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/28, Commissaire Général du Congo Française à Ministre, 21 November 1896, Libreville.

<sup>92</sup> Martin, Phyllis, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p.25.

<sup>93</sup> ANS K31, Maire Gorée à Lamothe, 8 December 1891, Gorée.

<sup>94</sup> Note the experience of a team recruiting for Gabon along the Senegal River, who were fired upon and forced to turn over a number of alleged ‘slave’ recruits to local chiefs. ANSOM Senegal IV/68, Docteur Collomb à Seignac, 7 Mars 1885, Saldé.

<sup>95</sup> ANS K31, Delaleu à Directeur de l’Interieur, 19 May 1892, Dakar.

<sup>96</sup> Martin, *Leisure and Society*, p.25.

Belgian Congo in 1894 included massive numbers of “*manoeuvres*” and unemployed individuals, many of whom originated in the interior - especially Galaam and Fuuta Tooro.<sup>97</sup> While not a single person enumerated in these records admits to a slave background, several factors indicate some may have been former slaves. The date, for example, is concurrent with increased slave liberations, while the interior origins of many recruits as well as the gender and age and lack of skilled experience suggest they may have included a number of runaways.

### Conclusion

It is unfortunate that there is so meagre a discourse on slave liberations and means of existence in Senegal Protectorate in the 1870s and 1880s, but there is a logical reason for this in the paucity of primary information in French and Senegalese archives. As a result of effective resistance by slave-owners in Waalo and Dimar, the importance of slaves to groundnut cultivation, and a lack of conviction by local administrators, the French turned to the Protectorate system so as not to infringe upon slave-owning outside the Colony. Thus, unlike in the Gold Coast, there was no great threat to slave owners and the majority of slaves were unable to renegotiate their position. Nor would this change until after the implementation of the 1905 Comprehensive Slavery Decree and the expansion of the *navetane* labour system for groundnut production.

There is tantalising evidence that the slave and slave-owning populations of Rufisque engaged in some sort of negotiations in the aftermath of the 1879 extension of emancipation. The situation in that town was quite unique. As early as 1874 Governor Valière had warned masters in Rufisque that emancipation was imminent, and that they should attempt “to conserve for themselves the service of their freed slaves”<sup>98</sup>, and masters used the intervening time wisely. The mostly sedentary inhabitants of Rufisque, profiting from a burgeoning trade in groundnuts, did not have the option of fleeing French authority like the slave owners of Waalo, and despite Canard’s fears no such exodus took place.<sup>99</sup> As I have pointed out, many slave owners probably transferred their slaves to villages outside Rufisque. However the temporary demand for workers created by the government’s programme of infrastructure improvements in C ap Vert<sup>100</sup>, the accessibility of *sol libre* even for slaves who were moved, and (according to Bri ere

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<sup>97</sup> ANS K31, Le d elegu e de l’Interieur [Dakar]   le Gouverneur, 28 February 1894, Gor ee.

<sup>98</sup> ANS K11, Vali ere   Commandant de Gor ee, 24 March 1874, St. Louis.

<sup>99</sup> ANS 4B64, Canard   Bri ere de l’Isle, 1 December 1877, Dakar.

<sup>100</sup> ANS 4B64, Canard   Bri ere de l’Isle, 1 July 1878, Dakar.

de l'Isle) the example of the more egalitarian neighbouring Sereer states<sup>101</sup> may have created an environment in which slave owners were "forced to make 'arrangements' with their slaves."<sup>102</sup> It is unfortunate that I have been unable to uncover little further evidence regarding these arrangements.

The situation in Rufisque, however, was exceptional. By and large, slaves could still liberate themselves only by travelling to French soil, and there was little incentive to do so - especially since there was no available land in the Colony. Young male slaves were not only the most able to seek their liberation but also the most likely to find some kind of labour; either overseas or in the military. Most of them, however, and almost all women and children who sought their liberation, found only a continuation of their lives of labour for a master, despite their legally emancipated status.

Historians who write about this period agree that emancipation for most of Senegal's slaves would have to wait until the twentieth century.<sup>103</sup> However while domestic captivity was tolerated by late nineteenth century colonial authorities, public pressure to end the 'odious commerce' of the internal slave trade had begun to mount. During the last decade of the century, Senegal's administration was given a final opportunity to show the resolution and ability to eradicate one of the most abusive aspects of Senegalese slavery in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>101</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15d, Brière de l'Isle à Ministre, 8 May 1880, St. Louis.

<sup>102</sup> ANSOM Senegal XIV/15d, Brière de l'Isle à Ministre, 8 May 1880, St. Louis.

<sup>103</sup> Renault, "L'abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal", p.81. Saint-Martin, *Le Sénégal Sous le Second Empire*, p.606. Becker, Charles, "Les Effets Démographiques", 1988, p.91.

## **CHAPTER 9:** **Toward the eradication of the overland slave trade?**

The British and French policies discussed in the last five chapters were celebrated by turn-of-the-century historians as the gradual unveiling of a great teleological plan, in which the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in the first decades of the nineteenth century had been the first major step.<sup>1</sup> If we judged solely from the tone of their accounts and the text of their reports, the decreed abolitions of slavery in 1834 and 1848 and the extension of emancipation policies to the Gold Coast Protectorate in 1874 would seem to be logical rungs on a ladder stretching toward the goal of the total extermination of slavery in Senegal and the Gold Coast.

Such a view, however, is entirely fallacious. The settlements on the Gold Coast were excluded from Britain's emancipatory policies between 1834 and 1874. The French emancipation of 1848 did take effect in the minuscule Colony of Senegal; however even the highly politicised slaves of St. Louis and Gorée had simply become clients in a less formalised but still dependant relationship with their former masters. Perhaps the extension of British hegemony over the Gold Coast in 1874 was expected by some to transform slave-owning, but the watered-down measure eventually handed to the colonial administration by the Colonial Office resulted only in a gradual re-evaluation of dependent status for slaves rather than massive liberations. Meanwhile, resistance by slave-owners in Senegal was so effective that the French authorities there did not even attempt to emulate the Gold Coast policies after the disastrous failure of a prototype policy in Waalo in the 1880s.

In fact, as the nineteenth century drew to a close it became apparent that even the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade had been limited both in its scope and in its results. While the last ships smuggling slaves to the New World appear to have sailed in the 1860s, thousands of slaves were still kidnapped, captured in wars, and purchased in the African interior. Captives still made the terrible and often fatal journey to coastal territories where demand for them was high, and they were still to be found in the slave markets of Senegal and the Gold Coast. What was more, they were sold before the horrified eyes of the increasing numbers of missionaries and civilian, rather than military, administrators. Thus, as the century came to a close, the governments of the two colonies came under renewed agitation to definitively end the institution of slave trading. Their diverging responses to this pressure would indicate both a departure from and a

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<sup>1</sup> Macdonald, *The Gold Coast*. Ancelle, J. *Les Explorations Au Sénégal*, Paris, 1886.

continuity of the policies of tolerance towards slavery that had exemplified European colonialism in West Africa for the preceding century.

### Why target the slave trade?

The long-distance slave trade into the Senegal and Gold Coast regions was perceived by European observers as a traditional 'custom', existing since "time immemorial".<sup>2</sup> However while early European travellers to the Gold Coast had noted the high proportion of slaves with origins in the interior, a comparable proportion of the region's slaves had been acquired locally. Similarly, in Senegal prior to the Atlantic slave trade the commerce in slaves had generally run south-north rather than from the interior to the coast.<sup>3</sup>

However the long-distance slave trade had shifted radically and definitively in both regions during the era of the Atlantic slave trade. On the Gold Coast, well-positioned states such as those of the Fante and for a period Akwamu had gained power as "the brokers of those of the interior who supply slaves."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, during this period the Senegalese coastal entrepôts trafficked largely in slaves from Gaajaga and other regions in the interior.<sup>5</sup> The abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and the subsequent development of legitimate commerce on the coast had reinforced the demand for slaves from the interior both for use in labour and as domestic slaves.<sup>6</sup>

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In the latter half of the nineteenth century, concurrent with increasing liberalisation in Europe and growing colonial responsibilities in Senegal and the Gold Coast, this trade in slaves from the interior became the object of the fiercest abolitionist outrage which soon carried over to politicians in the metropolises. The accounts of Livingstone and other explorers had made an impression on the public psyche, and outrage over the persistence of the slave trade in East Africa had promoted increased intervention by first Protestant missionaries, and later the Catholic White Fathers. As Miers and Roberts have pointed out, the work of these missionaries was impeded by "wars and raids, the

<sup>2</sup> PRO CO 879/33, *Fairfield Report*, 1874.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 1. Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.31.

<sup>4</sup> PRO T70/36, Smith and Officers to Committee, 15 March 1817, Cape Coast. See also van Dantzig, Albert, "Effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade".

<sup>5</sup> Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*, pp.29-30. Marcson "European-African Interaction in the Precolonial Period", p.19.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapters 3 and 4.

hostility of slavers, and the dilemma posed by fugitive slaves”, and under Cardinal Lavigerie the White Fathers led the crusade to popularise abolitionism in Catholic Europe after 1888.<sup>7</sup>

This abhorrence of the “*trafique odieux*” was not entirely logical, since the commerce in slaves led directly to forms of domestic slavery which were generally accepted by the very same officials.<sup>8</sup> However such an opinion was perhaps informed by the European view of the benign and assimilative nature of indigenous *domestic* slavery, which resulted in the perception of a vast distinction between settled domestic slaves and newly imported slaves. Missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, supported this differentiation<sup>9</sup>, and so it is no surprise that it was gleefully picked up by the officials responsible for making policy in the colonies, who were eager to find excuses for their apathy towards, and support of, domestic slave-holding. Carnarvon labelled the importation of slaves “an outrage and a crime”<sup>10</sup> and when Victor Schoelcher reported to the Senate in 1880 that “caravans freely traverse French territory”, officials in Senegal were quick to react.<sup>11</sup>

For Carnarvon, Strahan, and their officers on the Gold Coast, eradicating the slave trade also represented a logical extension of gradualist policies towards ending slavery. Benjamin Pine had suggested in 1857 that the importation of trade slaves be criminalised while domestic slavery and pawning arrangements be merely regulated.<sup>12</sup> While Carnarvon considered only allowing slaves to slowly purchase their freedom and Strahan suggested only liberating children born after 1875, both remained steady in their support for “the immediate and absolute prohibition of slave dealing in every form.”<sup>13</sup>

For the administrators of Senegal as well, a politically expedient attack on the slave trade seemed a good compromise between the demands of abolitionists and the administration’s reliance on the goodwill of indigenous slave-owners.<sup>14</sup> Their inability to reconcile abolitionist demands with their management of newly-conquered territories in the 1880s and 1890s especially demanded that some kind of sop be thrown to the

<sup>7</sup> Miers and Roberts, “The End of Slavery in Africa”, p.16.

<sup>8</sup> ANS K17, *Rapport Sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905.

<sup>9</sup> ACSE *Missions Catholiques XXI*, 1889, p.588. Jenkins, *BMS Abstracts*, Zimmerman, unaddressed, 26 July 1875, Abokobi.

<sup>10</sup> PP 1875, LII (c.1139), Carnarvon to the Officer Administering the Government of the Gold Coast, August 21, 1875, London.

<sup>11</sup> ANS K25, *L’esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906. See Chapter 8.

<sup>12</sup> PRO CO 879/33, *the Fairfield Report*, 1874.

<sup>13</sup> PP 1875, LII (c.1139), Carnarvon to the Officer Administering the Government of the Gold Coast, August 21, 1875, London; (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 19 September 1874.

<sup>14</sup> What Renault calls “a compromise between trade and public opinion, without appearing to compromise.” Renault, “L’abolition de l’esclavage au Sénégal”, p. 34.

French public. Thus while promising Lat Joor of Kaajor that there would be no general emancipation under French protection in 1882, Minister Rouvier instructed the Governor to inform him that slave trading would be banned.<sup>15</sup> Similar conditions were written into the 1890 Treaty of Protection that was subsequently extended over the bulk of Senegal.<sup>16</sup>

However, the slave trade was an obvious target for the two administrations not only for reasons of perception, but also of convenience. It is apparent, in light of evidence showing that newly acquired slaves were more likely to seek their liberation or leave their masters in both regions, that trade slaves were a more assured source of law enforcement triumphs for colonial administrations desperate to illustrate their commitment to abolition. Slave traders, unlike slave-owners, were often from outside the Colony, and their capture was less likely to alienate indigenous elites than the punishment of neighbours and friends. The slave trade was also, by necessity, conducted along waterways or major paths and large slave convoys may have been an easier catch than individual slaves and slave owners in domestic settings.

With all the political capital to be made out of pursuing slave traders, it is perhaps no wonder that Governors and magistrates conceived of policies to tackle the long-distance trade in people. In the Gold Coast, a serious if under-resourced effort to eradicate this institution began in 1875, whereas in Senegal it was only the re-expansion of the 1880s that ushered in even the most meagre measures against it. In both regions, the period following the Treaty of Brussels in 1890 provided an opportunity to intensify the war on slave trading; but it was one that was not necessarily grasped. However, before we look at the methods of enforcement we must consider the nature of the trade in question in the two regions in the late nineteenth century.

### The slave trade into Senegal

Long-distance commercial networks are rarely static over long periods of time, and the trade in slaves from the interior into Senegal was no exception. While trade routes during the era of the Atlantic slave trade were largely structured to bring slaves from the interior to the coastal entrepôts, and later to the Senegal region generally, events and trends often disrupted the functioning of this distribution network.

The transportation and sale of slaves in the late 1860s is a case in point. For these years we have an unusually revealing record of slave experiences, since

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<sup>15</sup> ANS K17, *Rapport Sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905.

<sup>16</sup> ANS K12, *Treatié Lamothe et Yamar of Oalo*, the Bourba Djolof, Madiou of N'Guick-M'Pal, Magnang of Gandiolais, and the Bour N'Diambour, 15 February 1890.

Commandant Jauréguiberry<sup>17</sup> of Podor kept details of slaves seeking refuge at his post between 1866 and 1868. We should refrain from drawing too many conclusions from these documents, since the French policy of only liberating free-born individuals originating from Kaajor, Waalo, and the Colony mean that Jauréguiberry's records include mostly slaves from those origins.<sup>18</sup> However these files reveal that the late 1860s were a chaotic period. French wars of expansion, conflict between secular and Muslim leaders, and especially the rise of Maba had led to an apparently significant number of free-born Senegalese - Wolof, Sereer, Tukolor, and Fulbe - becoming enslaved. Maba's rebellion had an especially large impact on Jolof, where his advance into the territory in 1865<sup>19</sup> displaced villagers who consequently became vulnerable to capture by both opposing armies and brigands who wandered the area in the wake of his defeat.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, in Kaajor, various *tyeddo* factions still operated despite the assertion of French authority.<sup>21</sup> Partly due to the disruption in planting and harvesting resulting from these conflicts, large parts of northern Senegal experienced a famine during this period which forced individuals to flee their villages, joining the war refugees on the roads.<sup>22</sup> That some of these individuals ended up in Podor indicated that they had been sold or transported from coastal regions into the interior - something of a shift from the normal trade routes.

By the 1880s, however, slave distribution networks into Senegal appear to have largely returned to normal operations. The system within which these networks functioned was largely defined by geography; the Senegal and Gambian rivers continued to be the most efficient means of transportation for slave traders - and slave dealers entered the region by crossing one or the other. On the more important northern route the Senegal River functioned as a long-distance pathway. In the South, the creeks of the Gambian delta and of the nearby Siin-Saalum delta gave slave-dealers a porous border through which to smuggle slaves up and down the coast.

The southern slave route was far less significant than that of the Senegal River. It can be deduced that this was at least partly due to the presence of more efficient

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<sup>17</sup> Later Governor and then *Ministre de la Marine*

<sup>18</sup> ANS 3G124, Commandant de Podor à Pinet-Laprade, 27 April 1868, Podor.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>20</sup> ANS 3G124, Commandant de Podor à Pinet-Laprade, 27 April 1868, Podor. Records of Ndémé N'Dom, Sokna Koudia, Baye N'Diaye, Mengueye N'Diaye, and Mabiqué Couta. ANS 13G148, Commandant de Saldé à Pinet-Laprade, 15 December 1865, Saldé.

<sup>21</sup> ANS 3G124, Commandant de Podor à Pinet-Laprade, 27 April 1868, Podor. Records of Fatima Guey, Sokna Souran, Juga N'Dieu, and Samba N'Diaye.

<sup>22</sup> ANS 3G124, Commandant de Podor à Pinet-Laprade, 27 April 1868, Podor. Records of M'Baye N'Goree and Moussa Diop.

British anti-slave trade patrols at Bathurst and points along the Gambia River. Certainly the Gambian route had been used throughout the eighteenth century<sup>23</sup>, and groundnut plantations in Siin-Saalum should have increased the traditionally lower demand for slaves in these Sereer regions. Additionally, slaves were transported to the Gambia River from markets in Kayes or possibly Mèdine near the source of the Senegal River (and which also served the northerly routes), and these markets continued to function throughout the 1880s and 1890s. That this route diminished in favour of the Senegal River trade points to the effectiveness of increased British enforcement. Additionally, Bernard Moitt has pointed out that slaves originating from south of the Gambia River were during this period perhaps being redirected towards coastal Guinea.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, at least some of the slaves who were purchased in Baol, Siin, and Saalum entered Senegal across the Gambia. In 1893 a slave from Sierra Leone was sold in Thies (Siin), prompting the *administrateur de cercle* to comment rather hypocritically that “I suppose that many of the English [subjects] have no other means of existence other than the commerce in slaves.”<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately we do not know the origin of most of the other slaves who arrived in the district, but we have more information on their captors. There are two records of “Dioulas” bringing convoys into the territory - one of 40 slaves brought into Baol and another of 28 imported to Fundiugne.<sup>26</sup> The designation Dioula, or *juula*, is often somewhat loosely applied but it properly refers to well-organised loosely aligned groups of Manding merchants who with their wide-reaching networks had the resources to transport slaves and other goods over long distances. In this case, they appear to have maintained long-term trading relationships in Siin-Saalum and Baol, especially with the Tukolor and Fulbe villages scattered around this mostly Sereer region.<sup>27</sup>

The more significant Senegal River slave trade worked on somewhat similar lines, but we know much more about the mechanisms by which it operated. Slaves entered this network from an enormous region of the interior, funnelled into interior markets where convoys were formed. One of the main transit points was Banamba, where an enormous market operated, processing slaves brought in from diverse regions, especially the bend of the Niger. Prior to conquest at the hands of Shayk Umar in 1861, Slaves from Segou generally reached Banamba via the market at Nyamina.<sup>28</sup> Following

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<sup>23</sup> Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa*, p.33.

<sup>24</sup> Moitt, “Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal’s Peanut Basin”, p.33.

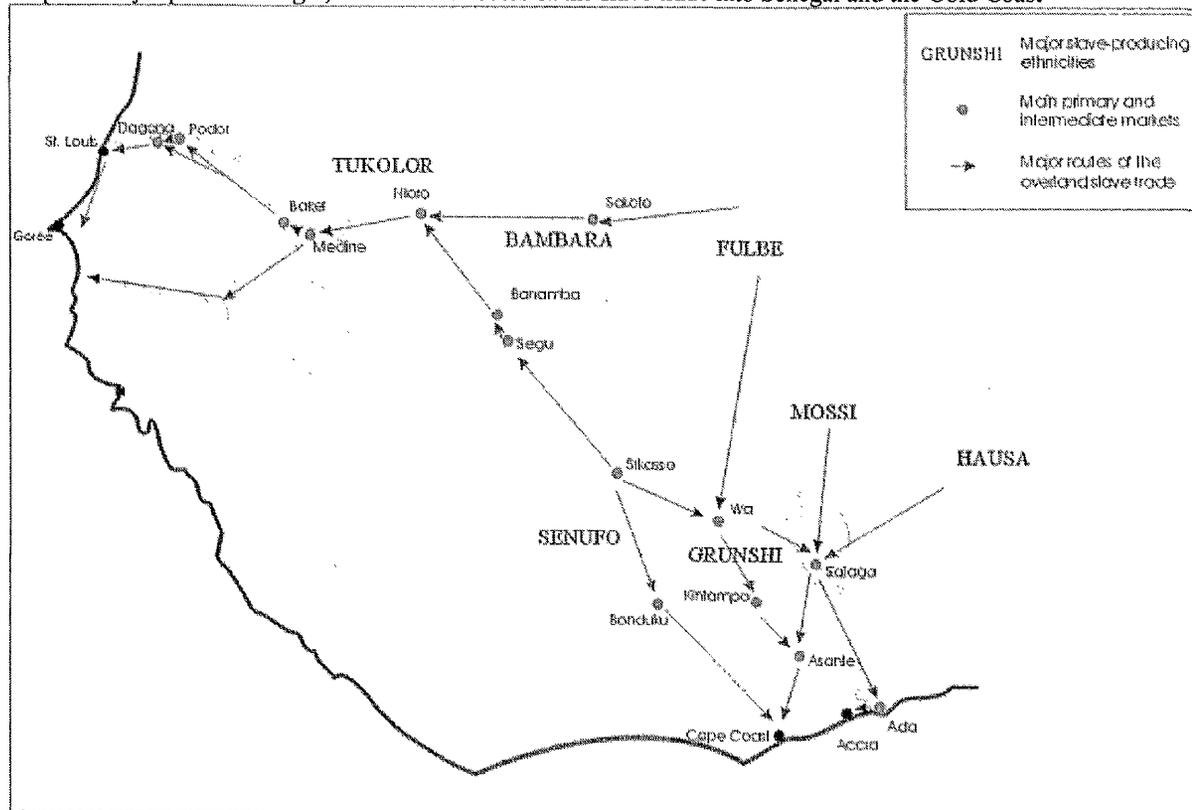
<sup>25</sup> ANS K13, Administrateur de Cercle Sin-Saloum à Directeur des Affaires Politiques, 10 November 1893, Thies.

<sup>26</sup> ANS K13, Javoureux à Monsieur Couchard, avocat, 26 July 1893.

<sup>27</sup> ANS K18, Reponse de l’administrateur de Kaolack, 26 January 1904, Kaolack.

<sup>28</sup> Robinson, David, *The Holy War of Umar Tal. The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Oxford

Map 9.1 Major points of origin, markets and routes of the slave trade into Senegal and the Gold Coast



its conquest, both Umarian Segou and rival Sikasso supplied slaves captured in the wars of Shayk Umar and his heirs and Tieba of Sikasso.<sup>29</sup> Ahmadu's brutal suppression of revolts in 1876 and 1885 provided waves of captives<sup>30</sup>, as did Tieba's wars against the Dogon and Senufo. The 1887-1889 conflict between Tieba and Samori Touré served only to increase the importance of this route.<sup>31</sup>

Slaves from Banamba and the Niger bend met slaves from Sokolo, Sarafere and the intermediate market of Nioto at the Upper Senegal posts of Bakel, Kayes, and Médine. These towns formed the major junction for the slave trade into Senegal until the very end of the century.<sup>32</sup> It was here that merchants from the interior sold their captives to the *juula* traders who would transport them upriver.<sup>33</sup>

The *juula* operating on the Senegal River worked on a similar basis to those

University Press, London, 1985, p.245.

<sup>29</sup> Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin", p.33.

<sup>30</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.231.

<sup>31</sup> Klein, Martin, "Slavery and Emancipation in French West Africa", p.176.

<sup>32</sup> ANS K11, Commandant de Dagana à Brière de l'Isle, no date 1880, Dagana. Gouverneur Soudan à Lamothe, 25 January 1894, Kayes. ANS 15G116, Commandant Médine à Commandant Kayes, 24 August 1898, Médine.

<sup>33</sup> ANS 2D136, 1899, op.cit. in Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin", p.37.

importing slaves into Siin-Saalum. In northern Senegambia they were largely Soninke/Manding and Tukolor traders from Gaajaga<sup>34</sup> who had long-standing links with the *habitant* trade, networks reaching into the interior from the coast.<sup>35</sup> *Juula* traders transported slaves from their entrepôts in Bakel and Médine, where they were quartered with local merchants, to markets along the river, the most important of which were French-garrisoned towns.<sup>36</sup> Podor appears to have been an especially busy market for purchasers in Toro, while Dagana was active at least until the 1882 annexation as the terminal market serving Dimar; trading resumed here after the 1890 declaration of the Protectorate.<sup>37</sup> Governor Roume noted evidence of an active trade being carried on in both towns as late as 1902.<sup>38</sup>

Many slaves, however, made their way into the hands of another set of middlemen - Moors - and were carried downriver to terminal and transitional markets in Waalo and the neighbourhood of St. Louis. Here a number of markets had been set up in the major towns of Waalo to serve the inhabitants of the Delta region as well as *habitants* who purchased slaves for service in St. Louis; and there is evidence that Moorish traders also transported slaves from these markets for yet another journey, this time to the groundnut fields of Kaajor.<sup>39</sup> One of the largest of the Waalo markets was at Merinaghen, which functioned at least up to French annexation in 1882, when the exodus of slave-owners temporarily closed it down.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, French officers noted a number of slaves brought to St. Louis from a market in Leybar in 1882.<sup>41</sup> Similarly the market at Gandiole, just across the river from St. Louis, was active in the early 1880s<sup>42</sup> and Moorish merchants returned in the early 1890s, offering for sale female slaves originating in Bambara, Sangara, and Walala, despite the threat of punishment from colonial authorities.<sup>43</sup> As late as 1904, the administrator responsible for N'Diambour and Gandiolais reported that "slave owners frequently arrive with captives", exchanging them for both money and animals.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp.13, 76.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, pp.76, 231.

<sup>36</sup> ANS K11, Commandant de Dagana à Brière de l'Isle, no date 1880, Dagana.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*. ANS K12, Chef du Service Judiciaire à Canard, 18 March 1882, St. Louis.

<sup>38</sup> ANS K27, Roume à Secrétaire-Generale, 3 December 1903, no place.

<sup>39</sup> Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin", p.34.

<sup>40</sup> ANS 3G124, Commandant de Podor à Pinet-Laprade, 27 April 1868, Podor. Records of Sayor Touré and Fatima Diop. ANSOM Senegal XIV/15c, Vallon à Ministre, 20 March 1882, St. Louis, enclosure 1.

<sup>41</sup> ANS K12, Roume à Secrétaire-Generale, 18 March 1882, St. Louis.

<sup>42</sup> ANS K12, Chef du Service Judiciaire à Canard, 18 March 1882, St. Louis

<sup>43</sup> ANS K13, Rapport de l'Administrateur de Cercle de St. Louis à la Directeur des Affaires Politiques, 20 March 1894, St. Louis.

<sup>44</sup> ANS K18, Reponse de l'administrateur de Louga, 25 January 1904, Louga.

### The slave trade into the Gold Coast

In the early period of Euro-African coastal trade, the Akan and Ga-Adangme coast had been a net importer of slaves - and not only from the north. Ray Kea, in his comprehensive examination of sixteenth and seventeenth century Gold Coast societies, identified four major slave routes revealed by contemporary sources. The Europeans themselves were directly involved in only one of these: Portuguese merchants trading slaves for gold at Elmina.<sup>45</sup> Much more important to Akan states - especially in the western interior - were Manding *juula* traders operating north of the forest zone. Kea has suggested that these merchants operated in conjunction with Malian cavalry raiders, capturing and exporting "thousands of captives" southwards in conjunction with Akan - and especially Twifo - trading networks.<sup>46</sup> Other Mande traders from regions west of the Akan zone, also sent slaves along with cloth and gold to Asante and the western Gold Coast in exchange for guns, gunpowder, and European goods that were less easy to obtain from more limited Euro-African trade arrangements on the Kwakwa coast.<sup>47</sup> Other slaves arrived along coastal routes. Elmina and Axim were important slave markets for canoe-borne traders from the west, while Accra and other eastern coastal districts received slaves from Slave Coast sources such as Great Popo.

The slave-trading network into the Gold Coast in the late nineteenth century, some three hundred years later, represented both a continuation of and a divergence from this system. The coastal routes, for example, appear to have become largely disused by this period, probably because of effective enforcement by British naval patrols and tighter control on the exporting ports. Conversely, routes from the interior appear to have been reinforced by the addition of a powerful Hausa trading network based in Dagomba, which competed with the *juula* in feeding intermediate markets on the Volta River - especially the massive slave bazaar in Salaga. Indeed, by the latter half of the nineteenth century the Volta had become the largest transportation route for slaves into the Gold Coast, and Ada was its major main terminal and intermediate market.<sup>48</sup> Complementing this trade route was the continued commerce in slaves from

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<sup>45</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>46</sup> Kea, *Settlements, Trade and Politics*, p.197-201.

<sup>47</sup> Weiskel, Timothy, *French Colonial Rule and the Baule Peoples: Resistance and Collaboration, 1889-1911*, Clarendon Press, 1980.

<sup>48</sup> BMS D-1.17, J. Muller, 10 June 1865, Christianborg; D-1.13b, J. Heck, 1 November 1862, Odumase. PRO CO 96/120, Freeling to Minister, 30 January 1877, Cape Coast. PRO CO 96/222, Griffith to Minister, 24 February 1892, Accra, enclosure 3, Waldron to Colonial Secretary, 20 October 1891, Ada.

savanna states in the north-west, arguably extending as far as the Niger bend, to markets in Asante, Gyaman, and in the 1870s Adansi, outside British control.

The main source of information regarding these commercial routes - other than reports by colonial officers, merchants, and less frequently the Aborigine's Protection Society - are the transcripts of slavery-related court cases in the SCT files of the National Archives of Ghana. While these are a very rich source of data, they can be quite confusing due mainly to the ignorance of British officials of the interior states of West Africa. Slaves were commonly identified by their primary language, but sometimes they were asked to identify their own origins - frequently towns rather than regions or states. Colonial officials often simply guessed at their origins based on vague directions. Thus many slaves came from Grussi, Grunshie or Ingrussie - a politically fragmented and rather undefined region which appears to represent a territory encompassing the inter-Volta territories of Isala, Balsa, Dagarti, and Lobi but not the slave-exporting town of Wa at its centre.<sup>49</sup> Others slaves were clearly Mossis.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, it is difficult to identify slaves' origins from colonial-era spellings of towns - where, for example, were "Alhandu, Salamah, and Amabua".<sup>51</sup> The traditional predisposition of Europeans to 'ethnic' taxonomies further complicated the matter. As already noted, British officials tended to place all Muslims under the moniker 'Hausa', and accounts of 'Arab' participation in the interior stages of the slave trade often referred to Tuareg traders. Sometimes such misconceptions came from the slave trade, when traders strove to meet European preferences for certain ethnicities (such as the French demand for 'martial' Bambaras to serve in their armies of occupation), or to deceive the buyers that their consignments were from those preferred groups.<sup>52</sup>

It is nevertheless clear that the northern savanna region was the major point of provenance for slaves entering the Gold Coast Protectorate. Large numbers of slaves were transported by caravan, many of them to the intermediate market at Salaga at a navigable point on the Volta River. Fortunately, we have quite a bit of information on the market here, mostly from the reports of British, French, and German travellers and officials, many of which have been compiled and translated by Marion Johnson.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Awah, Accra Divisional Court, 12 January 1884. SCT 17/5/8, Kasanah v. Quissa Pome Cudjo, Accra District Court, 11 July 1889. SCT 5/4/15, Regina v. Dafee, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 10 March 1875.

<sup>50</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Tuitalaboo, Accra District Court, 5 October 1881.

<sup>51</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Timbuctoo, Accra Divisional Court, 5 October 1881.

<sup>52</sup> Rathbone, Richard, "Resistance to Enslavement in West Africa", in Patrick Manning, *Slave Trade 1500-1800; Globalization of Forced Labour*, Variorum, Aldershot, 1996.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, Marion, *Salaga Papers*, Vol. I, Institute of African Studies, Legon, Ghana, no date. Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

Gonja, of which Salaga was the chief town, had been a tributary state of Asante prior to 1874, and the main market for its kola crop. The merchants of Salaga had generally paid tribute to Kumasi in slaves<sup>54</sup>, and the town consequently acted as an important market for slaves originating in the interior and terminating in Asante. The victory of the British and their allies in 1874, however, encouraged the Gonjas to rebel. The former Governor of Lagos, J. H. Glover reported that they simply refused to pay their traditional tribute<sup>55</sup>, but Gouldsbury informed Strahan that they "seized all the Ashantees in their country... and killed every one of them."<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, this action cut Salaga off from the kola trade, so that by 1876 the French trader Bonnat reported that "Salaga [wa]s deserted and partly fallen to ruin"<sup>57</sup>, much of the trade being diverted to the new market of Kintampo established in north-east Asante.<sup>58</sup> As the kola trade to Salaga declined, slave trading became even more important. In 1877 two African pastors, Theophil Opoku and David Asante, visited the market and "found trade at a standstill, excepting the slave trade, which was going on briskly".<sup>59</sup>

Throughout this period, there existed two complementary slave caravan routes to Salaga; one run by 'Hausas' from Dagomba and further east and the other originating from north-west of the Grunshi belt and mainly run by Mossi states.<sup>60</sup> Dagomba merchants appear to have made up a significant proportion of the permanent trading community in Salaga<sup>61</sup> and by the late 1880s their ranks were augmented by Hausas from the region of Bornu who sold slaves and bought "arms, powder and the best horses, to capture new slaves."<sup>62</sup> Mounted raiding parties of Dagombas and Hausas reportedly operated both to the north-east of Gonja and throughout the Grunshi belt, bringing the inhabitants of entire villages to the Salaga market.<sup>63</sup>

However the majority of slaves were reportedly imported from the north-west, and this route was dominated by Mossi merchants.<sup>64</sup> Mossi merchants brought trade

<sup>54</sup> Bowdich, T. Edward, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, London, 1819, pp.171,177,483.

<sup>55</sup> J.H. Glover, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 1874 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>56</sup> PRO CO 96/119, Strahan to Minister, 30 April 1876, enclosure 1, *Report on Gouldsbury's journey into the interior of the Gold Coast*, 27 March 1876, Accra

<sup>57</sup> Bonnat, M.J., *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 June 1876 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>58</sup> More on this later. Lonsdale, R., *Affairs of the Gold Coast*, 1882, in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, p.282.

<sup>59</sup> *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, London, June 1884, Summary of the visits of Asante and Opoku to Salaga, 1877 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson identifies these routes in his own analysis of the documents he collected. Johnson, Marion, "The Slaves of Salagah", *Journal of African History*, 1986 (27), pp. 341-362.

<sup>61</sup> Binger, L.G, *From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea*, Paris, 1892, in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>62</sup> François, C, *Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten*, Berlin, 1888 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>63</sup> Klose, H, *Togo unter deutscher Flagge: Reisebilder und Betrachtungen*, Berlin, 1899 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>64</sup> François, C, *Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten*, Berlin, 1888 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

goods to Salaga on the heads of slaves in enormous caravans led by professional caravaners.<sup>65</sup> The slaves were also subsequently sold, exchanging them for salt, money, and European luxuries.<sup>66</sup> The arrival of two such caravans into Salaga in 1889 was reported by District Commissioner Firminger, who was engaged in recruiting for the Hausa Constabulary. Firminger reported that:

In the case of the Moshi caravan the 'maidugu' or commander had heard news of my arrival... and it was only upon the solemn assurances of non-interference by the Prince of Leppo and Prince Yusufu of Dagomba, that he brought the remainder of his slaves into the slave market of the town.... [A second] caravan... consisted principally of Grushi slaves captured by Gajare, the self styled King of Jabarema, who was then waging a slave war against the inoffensive and helpless Grushi nation to supply the slave markets...<sup>67</sup>

Sources such as this consistently point to the autonomous villages of the Grunshi region as the main point of acquisition for slaves entering the Gold Coast; but intriguingly at least some slaves delivered to Salaga were captured as far away as the bend of the Niger River.<sup>68</sup> It is entirely possible that small numbers of slaves were thus being acquired for sale in both the Gold Coast and Senegal in the same area. After 1886, this trade was largely in the hands of the 'Jabarema' or Zabarima.<sup>69</sup> The Zabarima had originally entered this part of West Africa as mercenaries and traders, participating in Dagomba slave-raiding expeditions. By the late 1880s the Zabarima "had conquered and were probably continuously controlling an area stretching from Ougadougou to Wa" and had solid connections with the merchant community of Salaga.<sup>70</sup> After 1891, the market became even more crowded following Samori Touré's move to a new capital at Bissandugu and his subsequent search for new markets in which to sell slaves for guns.

While Salaga fed the high demand for slaves in the eastern districts of the Protectorate such as Krobo and Akuapem, slaves terminating west of the Pra River generally passed through Asante. Although a minority of these slaves were purchased

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<sup>65</sup> Johnson, "The Slaves of Salaga", pp.347-348.

<sup>66</sup> Klose, H, *Togo unter deutscher Flagge: Reisebilder und Betrachtungen*, Berlin, 1899 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*. Opoku, Theophil, "An African Pastor's preaching journey through the lands of the upper Volta", *Evangelisches Missions - Magazin*, Basel, 1885 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>67</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/88, Firminger to Colonial Office, 30 April 1889, West Kensington.

<sup>68</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/6, Regina v. Aseday, Accra District Court, 5 October 1887. Johnson, however, agrees that by the 1890s "most of the slaves passing through the Salaga market were 'Grunshi'", Johnson, "The Slaves of Salaga", p.347.

<sup>69</sup> Holden, Jeff, "The Zabarima Conquest of North-West Ghana", *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 1965 (8), pp.60-86.

<sup>70</sup> Holden, "The Zabarima Conquest", p.60,62.

by Asante merchants in Salaga<sup>71</sup>, and some came in from Gyaman to the west of Kumasi<sup>72</sup>, the majority came through northern markets such as Kintampo in the present day region of Brong-Ahafo. It is not totally clear who supplied slaves to Kintampo, but we do know that *juula* trading networks based in Kong, Bouna, and Bonduku were involved in the cloth trade to this market after 1887, and the town is as close as Salaga to the Zabarima slave-trading state.<sup>73</sup>

Prior to the 1873-1874 war, Asante had acquired most of its slaves through payments made by tributary states.<sup>74</sup> However the breakdown of Asante power and trading networks after 1874 not only cut off the flow of slaves from tributary regions but also enabled northerners to infiltrate the slave-trading network through Asante. Not only were 'Arabs' and 'Haussas' able to take over the transport of slaves to Asante, they even became involved in the export of slaves from Asante to the Protectorate.<sup>75</sup> Their role in this part of the trade, however, was minor - Asantes appear to have continued to dominate the routes south.<sup>76</sup>

Asante merchants ran the slave export trade as an adjunct to the legitimate trade in goods to coastal towns. Women and children, who were unlikely to run away, were especially useful as carriers of trade goods, after which they were themselves sold.<sup>77</sup> This trade in porters, alongside an increasing number of slave-acquiring trips taken into the interior by coastal peoples themselves, seems to have entirely replaced slave caravans by 1897, when the District Commissioner of Cape Coast alleged that "natives of Cape Coast who want children go up to Gaman... and buy the children.... There is no trade of Natives of the Interior bringing down children or women for the *sole* purpose of selling them".<sup>78</sup> Coastal peoples may have been drawn to markets in the Baule interior by the massive influx of slaves brought into that region by Samori during his retreat from French forces pursuing him from the west. Timothy Weiskel has shown that the Baule did not actively export these slaves, largely preferring to retain them for their own use and allowing potential buyers to come to them. Traders from the Gold Coast engaged in

<sup>71</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/17, Regina v. Ahinaguah, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 14 December 1875.

<sup>72</sup> PRO CO 96/311, Hodgson to Minister, 29 January 1898, Accra, DC Cowie, Cape Coast. NAG SCT 17/5/6, Sgt. Mjr. Davidson v. Qwah Aryar, Accra District Court, 14 January 1887.

<sup>73</sup> Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, p.295. Binger, L.G, *From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea*, Paris, 1892, in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>74</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 5/4/18, Regina v. Appeah Coomah, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 6 April 1876, for example, testimony that 2000-3000 slaves were transported to Asante from Bokum in just one convoy prior to 1873.

<sup>75</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/15, Regina v. Dafee, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 10 March 1875. SCT 5/4/19, Regina v. Kofi Tando, Cape Coast Judicial Assessors Court, 2 December 1876.

<sup>76</sup> i.e. NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Adotay, Accra Divisional Court, 12 November 1881.

<sup>77</sup> PRO CO 96/311, Hodgson to Minister, 29 January 1898, Accra, DC Thompson, Dixcove and Chama.

<sup>78</sup> PRO CO 96/311, Hodgson to Minister, 29 January 1898, Accra, DC Cowie, Cape Coast.

importing gold, palm oil, and cotton from this region probably purchased slaves both to be porters and for their own domestic use.<sup>79</sup>

Evidence showing that inhabitants of coastal towns travelled into the interior to acquire slaves in the last years of the century is not surprising. Slave consumers from the Protectorate, at least from regions near the Volta River, had been purchasing slaves in Salaga for some time. While Hausa traders continued to operate in eastern districts, towards the end of the century slaves were increasingly purchased by individuals indigenous to the Gold Coast or their agents who were sent to acquire slaves in this northern market.

The participation of inhabitants of the Gold Coast in the acquisition and transportation of slaves along the Volta River probably extended back some time. The river was the obvious transport route for slaves, and had become more important after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 as the creeks and lagoons at its mouth were perfect for slave smuggling.<sup>80</sup> Throughout the century, merchants based in Ada continued to play a large role in that trade as well as commerce in salt and kola<sup>81</sup>, and their canoes bearing slaves were infrequently captured on the Volta.<sup>82</sup>

After 1874, inhabitants of the Protectorate who travelled to Salaga to acquire slaves were generally looking for wives<sup>83</sup>, 'children' - usually girls<sup>84</sup>, or less frequently labourers. Often, the expensive trip to Salaga involved the pooling of resources and appointment of an agent, and extra slaves might be purchased to be sold to neighbours for a profit, thus paying for the journey. For example, in the late 1870s a Krobo man named Odouku travelled from Odumase to Salaga to purchase four slaves. One was for his brother-in-law who "sent 20 dollars to pay for the child", two others "lived with his people making palm oil", while the last - a girl - was sold for profit.<sup>85</sup>

The trade carried out by Hausas into the Protectorate was run quite differently. After 1874, as northerners were increasingly recruited into the 'Hausa Constabulary' and otherwise immigrated to the Protectorate, they began to import slaves for their own

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<sup>79</sup> Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule and the Baule Peoples*, pp. 87-89.

<sup>80</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>81</sup> Count Zech, op. cit. in despatch from Martin Gosselin, 8 October 1896, Berlin, in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

Johnson also makes this argument and cites both Firminger's report and Basel Missionary reports from 1881 and 1893. See Johnson, "The Slaves of Salaga", p.353.

<sup>82</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/2, Regina v. Agbochie, Accra Divisional Court, 5 August 1885; SCT SCT 2/5/10, Regina v. Narter, Kudaya, Menty, and Dogati, Accra Divisional Court, 16 July 1894.

<sup>83</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 17/5/12, Regina v. Tarro, Accra District Court, 30 September 1891. NAG SCT 17/5/9, Regina v. Tetteh, Accra District Court, 8 November 1889.

<sup>84</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 17/5/9, Regina v. Byowra, Accra District Court, 24 March 1890.

<sup>85</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Odouku and David, Accra Divisional Court, 9 June 1880. A somewhat similar case is NAG SCT 17/5/9, Regina v. Maikie, Accra District Court, 6 March 1890.

needs similar to the trade carried out by Akan and Ga-Adangme inhabitants of the Protectorate.<sup>86</sup> However by the late 1880s immigrant merchants had used their contacts in the north to develop a more complex and integrated trade network originating in Salaga and ending in Accra. These 'Hausa' merchants are alleged to have conducted "caravans... direct from Salaga to the coast"<sup>87</sup>, although court cases indicate that these were probably no more than small groups of slaves led by two to four traders. As late as 1899, such caravans were reported to be transporting slaves "in secret... down through the [Protectorate]... on hidden paths through the districts occupied by the Europeans."<sup>88</sup>

Although some slaves were sold in towns and villages in the interior and the coast, the largest terminus for these convoys was Salaga Market in Accra, located between Ussher Town and Jamestown. Slave traders brought their captives directly to safehouses in the *Zongo*, or immigrant quarter north of the market, from which slaves could be sold.<sup>89</sup> One account at least suggests that slaves were stored in the house of 'a chief' until their sale<sup>90</sup>, and other accounts suggest that the illicit trade was managed by elite individuals with strong relationships to merchants in the interior. This trade network apparently served much of the illegal demand for slaves in Accra. Most purchasers appear to have been non-northerners<sup>91</sup>, and although we have no quantitative evidence, there is a sense in testimonies given by defendants and slaves alike that this community was the place to which one went to buy slaves.

#### British and French actions against the slave trade prior to 1890

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, European abolitionist public opinion for the first time began to overcome the pragmatic concerns of colonial bureaucrats and administrators. While Carnarvon and Rouvier remained hesitant to attack domestic slavery itself, they were eager to "disparage all who would have [our people] believe that... the local administration tolerates the terrible traffic in slaves."<sup>92</sup>

Initially at least, actions did not follow words. The absence of effective patrols, a direct result of the limited resources of the colonial administrations, crippled any efforts to halt the slave trade. The French, despite their commitment during this period to direct

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<sup>86</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 17/5/12, Regina v. Giwah, Accra District Court, 21 October 1891.

<sup>87</sup> Kling, E, *Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten*, Berlin, 1893. Visit to Salaga, 1892 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>88</sup> Klose, H, *Togo unter deutscher Flagge: Reisebilder und Betrachtungen*, Berlin, 1899 in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>89</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/1, Regina v. Timbuctoo, Accra Divisional Court, 5 October 1881.

<sup>90</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/6, Regina v. Adesay, Accra District Court, 5 October 1887.

<sup>91</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/6, Regina v. Adesay, Accra District Court, 5 October 1887; SCT 17/5/9, Regina v. Coffi Nelsore, Accra District Court, 21 April 1890.

<sup>92</sup> ANS K12, Minister à Canard, 31 January 1882, Paris.

administration, were unable to effectively patrol the Senegal River. Albert Grodet, the first civilian administrator of French Soudan, understood the challenges. "How", he asked, "can a single administrator with one clerk and a few...guards, effectively police a stretch of the [Senegal] river banks measuring 100-150 kilometres when he has no means of rapid transport to patrol the river?"<sup>93</sup> The British, meanwhile, were reluctant to enforce many laws outside of the coastal zones. It was only gradually that customs, licenses, and magisterial jurisdictions were extended into the interior - a process that was still uncompleted before 1890.<sup>94</sup>

The Gold Coast administration's relative emphasis on combating the slave trade during these years is, however, obvious from the court records. While magistrates were not obliged to search out slave-owners or seriously combat pawning, slave dealing was treated as a serious crime by the judicial authorities. One hundred and eight out of 126 slave-related cases heard by District and Divisional courts during this period were for slave dealing<sup>95</sup>, while the much more prevalent crimes of slave holding and pawning were largely ignored.

**TABLE 9.1**

Slave-Related Cases by Charge 1874-1889	
Buying a Slave	3
Misc.	6
Importing a Slave	1
Pawning	4
Receiving a Pawn	3
Slave Dealing	108

*from NAG SCT cases*

This state of affairs is further illustrated by the experiences of the Paramount Chiefs of Akyem Abuakwa and Eastern Wassaw, which suggest that the purchase or sale of slaves was, during the 1880s, considered beyond the pale even for chiefs cooperating with the administration, while owning slaves was not.<sup>96</sup> Administrators understood that the Volta River continued to be the major route for slave-traders, and came up with schemes such as posting soldiers on the river at Kpong.<sup>97</sup> However, such proactive

<sup>93</sup> op.cit. Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin", p.37.

<sup>94</sup> NAG ADM 12/3/2, Griffith to Minister, 14 June 1888, Accra.

<sup>95</sup> District courts opened in Accra in 1882 (NAG SCT 17/5/1), Cape Coast 1887, (NAG SCT 23/5/1), most other districts in 1888 (NAG SCT 2/10/1).

<sup>96</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>97</sup> PRO CO 96/120, Freeling to Minister, 30 January 1877, Cape Coast.

plans did not come to fruition, and District Commissioners' reports in 1890 were quite frank in admitting that the trade in slaves continued, especially in the eastern districts.<sup>98</sup>

The British had geographically consolidated the Gold Coast Protectorate in 1874, only adding the regions of Sefwi and Kwahu in 1888, while events in 1880s Senegal were dominated by the expansion of French authority. The strategic difficulties related to this over-riding concern blunted the Senegal Colony administration's ability to combat the slave trade just as it restricted their ability to end domestic slavery. This phenomenon shows up most clearly in the administration's negotiations with Lat Joor. The *Damel* had withdrawn his support for the crucial St. Louis-Dakar railroad in 1881.<sup>99</sup> French attempts to close the growing rift involved deals in which first Governor Canard and later Governor Servatius were authorised to promise Lat Joor they would make no move to end slavery, but to warn him that the sale of slaves was to be restricted.<sup>100</sup>

In the event, however, the French administration utterly failed to diminish the slave trade into the Protectorate in the 1880s. Limited steps were taken only to restrict the importation of slaves into the Colony itself. The scale of prosecutions for slave-trading was in no way comparable to that in the Gold Coast; but a spasm of judicial conscience following the Senatorial debate of 1880 led to the opening of 15 cases for slave dealing between May 1880 and January 1882, which nevertheless resulted in only two successful prosecutions. The first of these dealt with the capture, by St. Louisian *gendarmes*, of a convoy transporting 12 children onto the island<sup>101</sup>, while the second took place in Leybar outside of St. Louis but still technically within the Colony.<sup>102</sup> Other cases were dismissed because of mitigating circumstances, the political importance or social standing of the defendant, various technicalities which masked the reluctance of the magistrates to impose a significant sentence, or arguments related to the benign nature of specific cases.<sup>103</sup> It is clear from these cases that the administration's commitment to abolishing the importation of slaves even to the Colony was lukewarm, and that very little attempt indeed was made to restrict the trade into the Protectorate.

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<sup>98</sup> PRO CO 96/208, DC McMunn to Colonial Secretary, 5 February 1890, Accra; DC Redwar-Hayes to First Assistant Colonial Secretary, 27 August 1889, Saltpond; DC Cole to Colonial Secretary, 7 August 1889, Ada.

<sup>99</sup> Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.225.

<sup>100</sup> ANS K17, *Rapport sur la Captivité*, Administrateur Poulet, 1905; ANS K12, Ministre à Servatius, 31 March 1883, Paris.

<sup>101</sup> ANS K12, Chef du Service Judiciaire à Canard, 18 March 1882, St. Louis. Case of 1 May 1880.

<sup>102</sup> ANS K12, Chef du Service Judiciaire à Canard, 18 March 1882, St. Louis. Case of 1 November 1881.

<sup>103</sup> ANS K12, Chef du Service Judiciaire à Canard, 18 March 1882, St. Louis.

### Diverging efforts to exterminate the slave trade after 1890

The general failure of both colonial administrations to end the slave trade provoked a response by abolitionists in the metropolises, which was strengthened by international links forged between Archbishop Lavigerie's *Peres Blancs* and British abolitionists.<sup>104</sup> The resulting pressure was one of the causes for the governments of Britain, France and their European neighbours to initiate an international conference at Brussels in 1889-1890. In the event, the conference's declaration was forced to conform to the specific concerns of each colonial power and emerged as a declaration of intent without any international means of regulation.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, Article 7 did internationalise the policy of *sol affranchis*, and Article 17 called for a "rigorous surveillance to be organised by the local authorities" against "*chasseurs d'hommes et de marchants d'esclaves*."<sup>106</sup>

Following the Treaty of Brussels, the Gold Coast administration achieved some limited success in eradicating the long-distance slave trade, while the Governors of Senegal did not. It is necessary to state this here because this divergence is in part a result of the varying levels of pressure which the administrations subsequently received. On the one hand, the Governors of the Gold Coast were almost continually harassed at the turn of the decade. Former District Commissioner Firminger, having returned from the recruiting mission to Salaga mentioned above, subsequently returned to London and wrote a report on the journey for the Colonial Office. Amongst his allegations were revelations, unsurprising to anyone serving in the Gold Coast, that "large numbers of slaves [are] still held in the protectorate" and furthermore that the interior districts of the Protectorate, specifically Akyem, purchased slaves from Salaga. He also suggested that slaves were still to be found even in Accra and spoke of his attempts to liberate a young girl named Aminah, whose master was, to his horror, only fined 10 shillings for his crime.<sup>107</sup> Governor Hodgson didn't even bother to deny the allegations, which were probably completely true. Instead, he initiated a smear campaign claiming that "Mr. Firminger purchased a Foulah slave girl named Fatima from a Moshi slave dealer... when he was in Salagha in 1887, and it appears that she lived with him as a mistress" and furthermore that the girl Aminah was only of interest to Firminger as she was Fatima's 'sister'.<sup>108</sup> The scandal, however, did not pass quickly and Hodgson's

<sup>104</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.96.

<sup>105</sup> An original copy of the treaty is held in ANS K12.

<sup>106</sup> "hunters of men and slave merchants", ANS K25, *L'esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

<sup>107</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/88, Firminger to Colonial Office, 30 April 1889, West Kensington.

<sup>108</sup> NAG ADM 13/3/2, Hodgson to Minister, 17 February 1890, Accra.

successor was forced to further deal with Firminger's allegations.<sup>109</sup>

For Governor Brandford Griffith, however, this was not the only allegation with which he had to deal. In 1890 the Aborigine's Protection Society began a campaign to force the administration to increase its vigilance and enforcement. Claiming that "there are now in the Colony and adjacent British territories a great number of boys and girls, *estimated at 5000 or more*, who are bought and retained as slaves" and that "the practice of procuring these children from Salaga and other districts in the interior... still continues and has of late considerably increased", the APS accused the administration of "apathy and connivance" with the slave trade.<sup>110</sup> These allegations were supported by a surprisingly thorough set of evidence referring to specific cases, dates, and classified documents.

It is quite clear from whom the APS got their data - former Accra District Commissioner MacMunn. A fervent abolitionist, MacMunn had fallen out with his fellow administrators mainly over his unwillingness to cooperate with their pragmatic approach to slavery, but was dismissed for some "[mis]conduct"<sup>111</sup>, the exact nature of which I have been unable to discover. Whether or not MacMunn was guilty of misconduct is unclear, but his attack on domestic slavery and the slave trade had definitely threatened the balanced policies established by successive Governors after 1874. MacMunn had heard an amazing 37 cases of slave dealing and slave holding in the period between 21 October, 1889, and 26 July, 1890.<sup>112</sup> Even more significantly, most of them had resulted in successful prosecutions. This impressive record was the result of an unpopular strategy of dispatching teams of constables 'into the bush' to talk to local residents, often uncovering instances of pawning and domestic slavery.<sup>113</sup> MacMunn was replaced by LM Peregrine, who was indicted alongside Governor Griffith by the APS for their connivance with the slave trade. Griffith and Peregrine attempted to defend themselves based on minor inaccuracies and reinterpretations of specific cases<sup>114</sup>, but it is clear that Secretary of State Knutsford, while willing to defend his officers, was unimpressed by their defence and at one point he chastised them:

I am disposed to think that, except in very special cases, which must be of rare occurrence, children should not be allowed to go back to persons who have

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<sup>109</sup> Brandford Griffith to Minister, 12 February 1890, no place, in Johnson, *Salaga Papers*.

<sup>110</sup> PP LVII, 1890-1891 (c.6354), Aborigine Protection Society, 20 August 1890, no place. My italics.

<sup>111</sup> PRO CO 96/212, Griffith to Knutsford, 26 January 1891, Accra.

<sup>112</sup> NAG SCT 17/5/8 and 17/5/9.

<sup>113</sup> e.g. NAG SCT 17/5/8, Regina v. Adahali, Abblah, Koo & Mamai, Accra District Court, 21 October 1889.

<sup>114</sup> PP LVII, 1890-1891 (c.6354), Reply of Governor Griffith and Peregrine to the Aborigine Protection Society, 26 January 1891.

been proved to have bought them, and that if any such case arises, a special report upon it should be made to the Governor.<sup>115</sup>

In the parlance of the time, this was a biting rebuke, indicative of the exasperation of the metropole with the failure of the administration to end slavery, and it forced a change not in *de jure* policy but in *de facto* enforcement. To some extent this can be tracked through the types of punishments handed down by magistrates.

Before 1890, although the Slave-Dealing Abolition Ordinance had authorised sentences of up to five years<sup>116</sup>, magistrates favoured a combination of a fine - initially between one and three ounces of gold, but later, as the colony's monetary system was normalised, between 2 and 60 pounds sterling - and a short prison term with hard labour.<sup>117</sup> Following the Firminger and APS complaints, however, fines were dropped in favour of stricter and longer jail sentences. In 1894 Rayner handed down the first maximum authorized five year prison sentence to an individual of foreign but indeterminate origin accused of kidnapping and attempting to sell a number of slaves on the Volta River.<sup>118</sup> This punishment, while marking a general trend towards increased penal sentences resulting in an average prison term of 15 months for Slave Dealing, was not matched during the next five years. However the Criminal Code Ordinance of 1892 had in fact introduced the seven year sentence for slave dealing<sup>119</sup>, and as the century ended Chief Justice Brandford Griffith handed down a seven year sentence, for a man accused of slave dealing, kidnapping, and rape.<sup>120</sup>

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, District Commissioners and magistrates, despite an expansion in both the numbers of courts and their authority, and despite a new commitment on their part to punishing slave-dealers, heard only 54 cases of slave-dealing.<sup>121</sup> In part at least, this has to indicate a decrease, although not a termination, in slave trading. Dumett and Johnson have argued that "[t]hrough large-scale and open sale of adult slaves within the protectorate was largely suppressed, the smuggling of small numbers of slaves - particularly women and adolescents - continued at Elmina, Winneba, Accra, and other coastal towns until well into the twentieth

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<sup>115</sup> NAG ADM 1/1/96, Minister to Griffith, 29 January 1892, London.

<sup>116</sup> PP 1874, LII, (c.1139), Strahan to Carnarvon, 28 December 1874, enclosure 1, Gold Coast Slave Dealing Abolition Act, Article 7.

<sup>117</sup> NAG SCT 5/4/15-5/4/19, 1874-1876.

<sup>118</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/10, Regina v. Emmanuel Narter, Gotfred Kudaya, Timothy Menty, and Kulch Dogati, Accra Supreme/Divisional Court, 16 July 1894.

<sup>119</sup> NAG ADM 4/1/16, Ordinance 12 of 1892, Title XXIX, Section 439, 'Slave Dealing'.

<sup>120</sup> NAG SCT 2/5/13, Regina v. Akpebley, Accra Supreme/Divisional Court, 6 July 1899.

<sup>121</sup> plus four cases of pawning incorrectly identified as slave-dealing, NAG SCT.

century.”<sup>122</sup> I would put the emphasis the other way. As early as 1889 the slave trade had been radically reduced in western coastal towns<sup>123</sup>, while British efforts, aided by a German commitment to abolition in neighbouring Togo, appears to have slashed slave-trading numbers even in Ada.<sup>124</sup> Both the Police Commissioner and the District Commissioner in Accra reported that the trade there had also slowed to a trickle.<sup>125</sup> Their sometimes sincere efforts to halt the overland slave trade were further aided by the defeat of both Samori and the Zabarmas as the century came to a close, partially cutting off the supply of slaves.<sup>126</sup> The slave trade was not eradicated, and would not be for some decades, but certainly the risks for slave dealers had been raised and their numbers diminished.

Perhaps with hindsight we can argue that the Gold Coast administration could have done more. However the attack on the slave trade must be compared to the colonial government's laissez-faire attitude towards domestic slavery and to the policies of the administration of Senegal. In direct contrast to both, the attack on the overland slave trade into the Gold Coast represents the first major reversal of policies which had for the entire nineteenth century been largely controlled by the demands of economics and the appeasement of indigenous elites.

If events in the Gold Coast represented the first evidence of the type of aggressive anti-slavery policies the twentieth century promised to bring, the Senegalese administration's approach toward the slave-trade consisted largely of a continuation of nineteenth century policies of pragmatism. The French *chambre des députés* only ratified the Treaty of Brussels on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, 1891 - almost one and a half years after the act had been published. Even then, the French executive refused to approve several articles - although not those dealing with the slave trade.<sup>127</sup> Nor was the issue put before the Senegalese administration until April 1892. Governor Lamothe had been attempting to ignore the implications of the conference, but the Undersecretary of State, Etienne, finally broached the issue<sup>128</sup>, ordering Lamothe:

...to give the administrative and judicial authorities all the instructions... to demolish by the most vigilant policing and the most severe repression the last

<sup>122</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", p.82.

<sup>123</sup> PRO CO 96/208, DC Williams to Colonial Secretary, 19 August 1889, Pram Pram; DC Heron to Colonial Secretary, 2 August 1889, Axim.

<sup>124</sup> PRO CO 96/311, Hodgson to Minister, 29 January 1898, Accra, DC Holmes, Adda.

<sup>125</sup> PRO CO 96/311, Hodgson to Minister, 29 January 1898, Accra, DC Edlin, Accra; Commissioner Kitson, Accra.

<sup>126</sup> Johnson, "The Slaves of Salagah", p.361.

<sup>127</sup> ANS Bulletin Administratif du Sénégal, April 1892 - Décret du Président de la République, 12 February 1891, Paris.

<sup>128</sup> in the absence of a *Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies*

vestiges of the [slave] trade. You are without doubt sufficiently armed in that regard by the legislation already put into motion together with... the general act [of the Treaty of Brussels].<sup>129</sup>

Lamothe considered the implications of these orders, but probably felt that there was insufficient time to properly implement new policies before returning to France for six months of leave. Upon his return, however, he immediately authored a treaty intended to comply with the Brussels acts, which he had signed by pro-French Wolof chiefs from Waalo and Kaajor. In January 1892, the subordinate chiefs of Baol, Siin, and Saalum signed on as well.<sup>130</sup>

Lamothe's treaty was a study in moderation intended for the consumption of the French public. While binding the signatories to end the slave trade within their territories, it confirmed their right and that of their citizens to purchase slaves for personal use outside of the Protectorate.<sup>131</sup> In reality just another in a long series of pragmatic compromises, the convention was presented as a step in slowly weaning indigenous subjects away from their dependence on slaves. In effect, the protection of the right to purchase slaves for 'personal use' meant that merchants could import trade slaves with impunity, and this was clearly a loophole which traders exploited with glee. After having to release a slave dealer who used just such a defence, the Administrator of Saalum complained that "Aday Khane pretends like all merchants that the slaves we seized were purchased for his personal use".<sup>132</sup> *Commandants* of interior *cercles* bemoaned the continued involvement of local notables in the importation of slaves and the existence of slave markets in the directly administered posts of Bakel, Matam, Podor, and Dagana<sup>133</sup>; but at least one Administrator<sup>134</sup> was instructed to ignore the passage of slave caravans into the Protectorate.<sup>134</sup>

Colonial administrators remained unwilling or unable to halt the slave caravans which continued to traverse the Protectorate delivering slaves to camps and villages and royal courts, to the groundnut fields and even to St. Louis itself.<sup>135</sup> After 1890, however, the monarchs of protected states began to attack these caravans with impunity. The *Teen* of Baol appears to have been the first to grasp that the treaty of December 1892/January 1893 not only gave him the right to confiscate the captives of slave traders

<sup>129</sup> ANS 1B196, Sous Secrétaire d'Etat à Lamothe, 13 April 1892, Paris.

<sup>130</sup> ANS K25, *l'Esclavage en AOF*, Deherme, 1906.

<sup>131</sup> ANS K12, *Traité*, 12 December 1892.

<sup>132</sup> ANS K12, Administrateur Thiés à Directeur des Affaires Politiques, 11 July 1893, Thiés.

<sup>133</sup> ANS K13, Administrateur Dagana à Directeur des Affaires Politiques, 21 November 1894, Dagana.

<sup>134</sup> op. cit. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.98.

<sup>135</sup> e.g. ANS K27, Roume à Secrétaire-Generale, 3 December 1903, no place.

who entered his territory, but actually required him to do so. The *Teen* realised slaves thus freed immediately became his clients, and by July 1893 he had seized 149 trade slaves "in virtue of a right that is accorded to him, he says, by the French government."<sup>136</sup> Within months, the *Bur Siin* and other chiefly officeholders were engaged in a race to confiscate as many slaves as possible.<sup>137</sup> Admittedly these 'liberated' captives were generally simply raised to the status of domestic slave by their confiscator, the same status as they would have achieved if they had simply completed their journey. However, the aggressive policies of indigenous rulers and the potential losses for slave-traders may ironically have been a greater deterrent to slave traders than the actions of the colonial administration.

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<sup>136</sup> ANS K13, Javoureux à Monsieur Couchard, avocat, 26 July 1893.

<sup>137</sup> See Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.98.

**Conclusions:**  
**African continuity, adaptation, and transformations**

The conclusions upon which I have arrived in this dissertation are influenced by the work of a number of historians in two recent anthologies on slavery and emancipation in nineteenth and twentieth century Africa. The first, Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts' *The End of Slavery in Africa*, I first read at the very beginning of my research and subsequently heavily influenced the questions I asked.<sup>1</sup> The second, again edited by Suzanne Miers but this time with Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa*, which I have only just completed, ties in neatly with the responses to these questions at which I have arrived.<sup>2</sup> Between them, these two volumes present the recent work of many of the important scholars with which I have engaged in the last nine chapters. Not only do they comprise studies from Miers, Roberts, and Klein, but also both Raymond Dumett and Marion Johnson's chapter on emancipation in the Gold Coast<sup>3</sup> and a reprint of Kwabena Opere-Akurang's recent article from *Slavery and Abolition*.<sup>4</sup> Of further value is the theoretical anthropological work by Igor Kopytoff that concludes *The End of Slavery in Africa*<sup>5</sup>; as well as a number of other studies from across the continent within both books.

The principal themes of these volumes are, respectively, the origins and impact of emancipation and the relationship between African slavery and colonial rule. In taking a comparative approach to this issue, and in focusing on the origins and development of indigenous slavery prior to the nineteenth century, I have concentrated on just two main themes. Primarily, this dissertation is an attempt to explore the centrality of Africans' roles in slavery and emancipation, a place sometimes implicitly denied to them but developed to some degree through the works of Dumett and Johnson, Suzanne Miers, and others in *The End of Slavery in Africa*. Crucial to this undertaking is an evaluation of the relative roles of continuity and transformation in both the creation of nineteenth century slavery and in its reform. Equally important is an appraisal of the abilities and motivations of Africans and Europeans as it contributes to these processes.

The second objective of this dissertation is an assessment of the conditions under which reform, abolition, and emancipation could occur. The impact of European metropolitan initiatives is just the beginning of this story. More important were

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<sup>1</sup> Miers and Roberts, *The End of Slavery in Africa*.

<sup>2</sup> Miers, Suzanne and Martin Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa*, Frank Cass, London, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery".

<sup>4</sup> Opere-Akurang, "The Administration of the Abolition Laws", reprinted

<sup>5</sup> Kopytoff, "The Cultural Context of African Abolition", pp.488-494.

interrelated local factors: prevailing political-economic realities within the colonies and protectorates, the beliefs and circumstances of slaves, the ability of slave owners to resist or subvert reforms, and consequently the attitude of administrators to initiatives imposed upon them. The interplay of these factors took place within a context both colonial and African, and it is this topic which forms the unifying theme of *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa*.

However, this study has been an attempt to advance our understanding of slavery and emancipation in the nineteenth century Gold Coast and Senegal beyond that contained in previous texts. This is enabled by the length and depth of the study, which is more comprehensive than any of the chapters in these two volumes could be. Prior to this dissertation there was no serious scholastic book-length study of emancipation specifically in the Gold Coast or Senegal. Although there were a number of excellent articles and chapters and several texts dealing with either smaller or larger areas, or dealing with slavery in general, the topic of emancipation in these localities had not formed the basis of any full-length study. The greatest strength of this dissertation, however, is that it does not simply attempt a local study of either area, but undertakes an approach that both compares the Gold Coast and Senegal and presents a narrative by covering a significant period of time. Through continual comparison, it brings to the fore themes whose existence and significance would not be evident without contrast.

#### Continuity and transformation of indigenous slavery: 1500-1850

Events preceding large-scale European intervention were fundamental in defining the post-emancipation settlement. The characteristics of pre-contact indigenous societies, the African role in the Atlantic slave trade, and the harnessing of slavery to legitimate commerce provided both a prototype and the context for subsequent resistance to and support for slave reform.

To a large degree, and especially in the interior, pre-contact institutions of slavery survived until or even beyond the late nineteenth century reforms. Fundamentally an expression of indigenous social and political paradigms, indigenous slavery was one aspect of prevailing kinship systems, and consequently was highly assimilative. Moreover, slavery was only one component of dominant socio-political modes of organisation in which political leaders were supported by a wide range of dependants, and land was largely owned by a lineage group or stool. Economically, the production of food was largely based on peasant cultivation and commodities were mostly produced by free or semi-dependant artisans.

The Atlantic slave trade was a catalyst for a limited transformation of African concepts of slavery especially in some coastal polities. Initially, the commercialisation of slavery simply resulted in a diversification in acquisition methods and an expansion of both the brutality and magnitude of the slave trade. However over time it was to have a significant impact on domestic slavery as selected captives were diverted into domestic servitude or the nascent slave production of foodstuffs for provisioning, the supply of burgeoning towns, or more latterly the production of long-distance trade goods. As unfree individuals became more central to social, economic, and political/military roles, slavery was radically transformed in communities such as St. Louis, Gorée, and to some extent Accra, where a waged and politicised slave class emerged as European and African cultures mixed. Such transformations would later have an affect on efforts to end or ameliorate slavery in these regions.

Social and economic changes which were also occurring in Senegal and Gold Coast regions during this period similarly had an impact on slavery reform and emancipation. The development of an urban elite and its close relationship with traditional rulers laid the groundwork for the formation of an effective resistance, as did the increasing reliance of both these classes on slaves for political support. Similarly, the introduction of a non-slave 'legitimate' commodity trade stimulated a slave mode of production, increasing the economic reliance of producers upon slave labour. Local wars, compounded if not caused by the slave trade, elevated the importance of slave soldiers. Moreover, in communities where land was communally owned, slaves remained an important asset and the rigid stratification of some indigenous societies, notably the Wolof, maintained the usefulness of slave dependants as status symbols.

For slaves themselves, traditional characteristics of slavery sustained as well as constrained their strategies. Assimilative domestic slavery gave slaves the hope of gradual manumission but limited their ability to desert or rebel. At the same time the politicisation of some slaves, increasing abuses attendant to the slave trade, denser slave populations, and the intervention of missionaries introduced new strategies for survival, new opportunities to belong, and new reasons to desert masters.

These patterns of change and continuity led to the evolution of a prototype of interaction in coastal regions in which European initiatives were negotiated between slave-owners, European authorities, and to some extent slaves. This system can be seen to have worked in the resolution of three interrelated issues during this period. The first of these was the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. Initially, European powers were unable or unwilling to effectively enforce this prohibition, but as the trade slowly

declined, indigenous elites were threatened with the loss of a very profitable commerce. Thus their initial response was to form an alliance with European and American smugglers to divert the trade to safer regions such as the Gambian and Volta delta regions.

However this response was merely a stopgap measure, and a more sustainable response was found in participation in 'legitimate' commerce. British and French commercial and government officials hoped that the stimulation of such trade would revitalise the commerce of their West African posts, and turned to coastal coffee cultivation and cotton and cash crop plantations in Waalo respectively. However, such arrangements did not meet local requirements. In Waalo an alliance of *habitants* who felt the plantations threatened their trade monopoly, local aristocrats who feared the alienation of their land, and Tranzas opposed to French expansion soon defeated the plantation projects and in preference revitalised the African-controlled gum trade. Similarly on the Gold Coast smallholders and merchants alike chose to concentrate on the highly profitable inland cultivation of oil palms rather than European-sponsored coffee plantations, and under Maclean the administration soon turned to policies designed to support palm oil cultivation, including the negotiation of a peace with Asante guaranteeing the safety of oil palm growing regions.

It was in St. Louis and Gorée, however, that this model of interaction became a true prototype both in terms of the formation of a master-administrator alliance and of individual slave agency which was to characterise the late nineteenth century. The Waalo plantation projects had stimulated a proto-reformist policy, the *regime des engagés à temps*, in which 'liberated' slaves were conditionally freed following a fourteen-year indenture to the administration. The metropole was convinced of the moral correctness of such a policy. However indigenous elites were allowed to participate in the system and, fearing that it threatened the profitable rental of slaves to the government, quickly distorted it to their own needs until it became slavery under another name, with little possibility of definitive manumission. The administration also became a party to such abuses, purchasing slaves in lieu of volunteers for military service and refusing to enforce policies meant to curb abuses for fear of alienating the *habitants* who held a monopoly on the gum trade, the only remaining profitable commerce. However at the same time the *regime des engagés* was also an opportunity for a small number of slaves who, by pretending they were *engagés*, effected their own liberations.

### The master/administrator alliance and patterns of resistance: 1848-1890

Thus by 1848, there existed an understanding between slave owners and local administrators in both Senegal and the Gold Coast to oppose or subvert proposed reforms of indigenous slavery. While metropolitan governments became increasingly abolitionist, they lacked the ability to enforce changes without the enthusiastic cooperation of administrators. Administrators remained unlikely to support such transformations even after regional hegemony had been attained. This study has revealed four major reasons for this reluctance. The technical difficulties of enforcing emancipation over large areas with the limited resources available to the administration was a factor of some importance; as was the intrinsic conservatism of colonial administrators, especially so long as important positions were filled by military personnel. Economically, the potential impact of emancipation, both in regard to slaves leaving their positions in profitable commodity production sectors and the drain on public funds necessary to support vagrant slaves and police emancipation was constantly cited by administrators as a grave danger. In Senegal, such economic concerns culminated in fears of a mass exodus of major portions of the population resultant from the promulgation of even a limited reform to slave owning. This information fits in with that synthesised by Miers and Klein from studies presented in *Slavery and Colonial Rule*.

...short of European manpower and reluctant to spend more than minimal sums on their colonies, [colonial governments] depended largely on slave-holding elites to administer their empires. They were convinced that without slave labour, economic activity would decline dramatically and the colonies would be a drain on metropolitan taxpayers.<sup>6</sup>

However perhaps the most significant element in the administration's support for domestic slavery was the importance of slave owners in the system of indirect administration. Merchants and chiefly officeholders were not only often the largest commercial and agricultural employers of slaves, they also traditionally relied on slaves to fill a number of military and social functions. Furthermore, a great percentage of their wealth was vested in slaves, and even the 1848 indemnity offered by the French to *habitants* could not totally replace the long-term value of their slaves, while the British declined to offer any compensation at all. It is no wonder, therefore, that slave owners

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<sup>6</sup> Miers and Klein, "Introduction", *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, p.4.

remained stalwartly opposed to any attempts to regulate or eliminate their control over their slaves. Their resistance is one area in which little is known and to which this dissertation contributes much.<sup>7</sup>

In the Gold Coast, emancipation had been promulgated with the priorities of slave owners in mind. The two 1874 anti-slavery acts were designed as pragmatic measures meant to inexpensively administer a federation of states in which both political power and economic production remained largely in the hands of indigenous elites. This model of emancipation was designed to limit the impact on these slave owners and thus contain potential resistance. The opposition of elites was somewhat constrained by their political and military reliance on the British authorities, and consequently the response of masters was thus characterised more by a passive support for continued slave holding than by active resistance. Nevertheless, the feared mass desertion of slaves never occurred.

A similar outcome was achieved in Senegal, though through an inverse process. Here, the 1848 emancipation was born of republican idealism rather than imperial pragmatism, and promised to liberate all slaves in French territory and any who touched French soil. This radical programme provoked a coordinated response from an alliance of slave owners: political pressure from *habitants*, trade embargoes by allies, and the threat of military action by traditional opponents. As a result local administrators gradually countermanded, repudiated, or circumvented potentially stringent policies. The climax of this process was the Waalo/Dimar exodus of the 1880s, following which the French government was forced to abandon the policies of direct administration and *assimilation*, thus ending the threat to domestic slavery in Senegal at least for the rest of the nineteenth century.

#### The pivotal role of slaves

Thus it is obvious that reform initiatives imposed from the metropole could not generally compete with empowered slave owners and administrators sympathetic to their position. Yet the relatively strong position of slave owners cannot completely account for this perpetuation of institutions of slavery. In other regions, notably the Caribbean and Americas, nineteenth century emancipation initiatives had resulted in the termination of the slave system despite the socio-economic and political power of slave owners. That this did not occur in West Africa was largely a function of indigenous concepts of slavery and the actions and beliefs of local slaves.

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<sup>7</sup> "In general our knowledge of the fate of slave owners is incomplete", *Ibid.*, p.10.

Slavery, for African slaves, represented not the denial of 'liberty' but exclusion from 'belonging'.<sup>8</sup> The very act of enslavement embodied either forcible separation from the kingroup or semi-voluntary sale by the victim's family, and slaves were often also separated from their kin by geography and social status. The gradual commercialisation of slavery further removed slaves from the kinship system, and those who were transported overseas were subjected to definitive isolation.

For slaves who remained within African societies where kinless individuals had few rights and little security, attachment to their masters' lineage at least enabled them to belong *to* a kingroup, and local institutions of assimilation held out the potential for an eventual position *in* a family. To leave such a situation generally meant forfeiting even these meagre benefits. It is therefore unsurprising that most slaves did not desert their masters even when legal recognition of slavery was withdrawn by administrations. Add to this the near-monopoly by slave owners of land and resources and the lack of administrative support for liberated slaves, and the successive 'failures' of emancipation acts in the Gold Coast and Senegal become less surprising.

However, let me again make the point that indigenous nineteenth century societies were both a continuation and a transformation of pre-contact African institutions. The fact that, following European emancipation ordinances, some slaves were liberated and did desert shows not only that the 'social dependency' of slaves upon their masters was not entirely hegemonic but also that when emancipation was promulgated certain slaves were able to overcome the social and economic obstacles and liberate themselves.

For most slaves, the re-establishment of links with their own family groups represented the ideal situation under which they could have severed their ties to their masters, but this was possible only for a very small minority. Barriers of geography and time separated them from their families. Taking the dangerous and difficult path to little remembered families who might have moved or been wiped out became a less attractive option the more assimilated slaves became, the more distant their origins, and the longer their servitude.

However anti-slavery reforms enabled the families of some slaves to actively liberate their relatives. Such kin-liberations formed a significant proportion of recorded emancipations in the post-1874 Gold Coast as families retrieved individuals they had previously sold into bondage. This phenomenon was largely limited to pawns, who tended to live locally to their families, as opposed to slaves who were largely from the

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<sup>8</sup> Kopytoff, "The Cultural Context of African Abolition", pp.488-494.

interior. The families of female slaves were also sometimes able to force their owners to raise them to the status of free wives. In the case of slaves from Juaben, the stool itself sometimes intervened to liberate its citizens from servitude. Similarly, in Senegal the introduction in the 1890s of formalised procedures for the *repurchase* of slaves allowed some relatives to force slave owners to accept a fee deemed reasonable by the administration. Inhabitants of the directly administered regions of Kaajor and Waalo and of the Colony could also 'kidnap' their freeborn relatives in servitude elsewhere, who upon their return to St. Louis were granted *patents de liberté*.

Most slaves, however, had no such assistance and, if they wished to return to their families, they had to do so on their own initiative. It is no wonder, therefore, that the majority of self-liberations for which we have records involve young males who were more likely to survive the hazardous journey to freedom. In the Gold Coast, newly acquired male slaves from the north were the most inclined to liberate themselves or simply desert and head for 'home'. Likewise, the majority of slaves seeking refuge on the 'free soil' of Senegal Colony after 1880 were also young men.

The inability of most slaves to return home did not, however, dissuade all of them from liberating themselves. The European presence in coastal regions especially had led to the creation of new communities to which one could belong. Missions, of course, were the most prevalent of these. In Senegal, where missionary activity was largely restricted to the coast, the Protestant and Catholic churches competed for new converts, and many refugee slaves sought shelter, positions, or just a day's sustenance within church walls. Basel and Wesleyan missions on the Gold Coast also provided opportunities for former slaves, but in both regions the scale of conversion was relatively small. As an alternative 'family' for ex-slaves, the administration proposed military service. Some slaves did see the constabulary as a potential replacement community and means of employment. Recruiting for the 1873-1874 Asante War, for example, attracted a number of former, current, and refugee slaves. Similarly, the post-war Hausa Constabulary attracted a number of former slaves. However the military was generally an unattractive, difficult, and dangerous option and both the Gold Coast and Senegal administrations were eventually forced to turn to other means of recruitment.

A slave's abilities to find a family or community to which to belong enabled that individual to seek freedom, and such individual emancipations largely characterised both liberations in post-proclamation Gold Coast and the granting of *patents* in Senegal Colony. However while such individual cases of desertion and liberation were quite common, only a very few isolated mass liberations occurred in either region, and it is this

lack of immediate disruptive response which is perceived of as the 'failure' of emancipation.

A number of structural and functional factors which tend to promote a mass slave response have been identified, and these were central to the outcome of slavery reforms in the Gold Coast and Senegal.<sup>9</sup> These transformative stimuli are: fundamental modifications to the nature of local slavery; the absence of a purpose for continued slave owning; the introduction of a strongly abolitionist administration coupled with an expansion of resources; an end to the overland supply of slaves; an end to slave owners' monopoly of resources; and the general acceptance of wage labour over slave labour by both employers and labourers. One of the great advances of this dissertation is the information it reveals in these areas for both the Gold Coast and Senegal and the way in which the strength or weakness of each factor clearly contributed to different outcomes.

The 1848 liberation of slaves in urban Senegal - St. Louis and Gorée - is an example of the impact of the presence of a combination of these factors. Slaves in both cities served under conditions distinct from normative Senegalese slavery. Slaves were highly politicised; their role was largely economic. They were often paid a portion of the wage for which their masters hired them out, and they accepted that as their due. Moreover, just as their masters identified with the metropolitan *bourgeoisie*, slaves identified with the demands of the proletariat. For the administration, law enforcement was simplified by the small size and relatively advanced governmental organisation of the two towns. Consequently the introduction of a radical abolitionist metropolitan government and subsequently a liberal administration provided a catalyst for definitively ending slavery *per se*. Even as mass liberation of the Colony's slaves took place, however, the ability of slave owners to retain control of both employment and housing forced their former slaves to a new and almost equally oppressive form of dependence.

Dissimilar conditions characterised the Gold Coast after 1874. The emphasis on a gradualist programme led to the near-elimination of the overland slave trade and successive administrations adopted gradually more progressive approaches to the practices of *panyarring* and slave dealing, but neither the administration's resources nor its convictions were strong enough to challenge slave holding in the general population. Simultaneously, while British hegemony had largely removed the military function of slaves and restricted their usefulness as tradable assets, both elites and minor masters

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<sup>9</sup> Many of these are based on the excellent introductory chapter to Miers and Roberts, *The End of Slavery in Africa*, pp. 19-27.

still relied upon their slaves for economic and social functions, and slave owners largely continued to control access to land. Suspicion of wage labour and the general unavailability of waged employment also restricted slave opportunities. The result of these circumstances was the promotion of a system of negotiation in which "the existence of the option of emancipation could usually play into the slave's favour as long as the option was not formally recognised."<sup>10</sup> In other words, the dependence of slave owners upon their slaves, coupled with the administration's lack of recognition of slavery, enabled slaves to force certain concessions from their masters which improved their position far more than desertion or liberation would have done. In fact some slaves went so far as to liberate themselves, only to return to their masters and engage themselves as free dependants. However a relatively small number of slaves actually made the full transition to freedom.

Yet a third example of the interplay of these factors can be seen in the failure of the proposed extension of direct administration, and hence emancipation, to the whole of Senegal in the 1880s. French administration in these territories was both tentative and extremely conservative; and local masters relied heavily upon their slaves and strongly resisted any proposed challenge to their slave holding prerogatives. Further impeding reform, French military administrators in the interior did not actively restrict the overland supply of slaves and wage labour was nearly completely unknown. As a result, there was little impetus for emancipation or even negotiation to take place, and only those slaves who could reach French soil had any chance of liberation. The exception that proved the rule was Rufisque. There the emergence of a wage labour market linked to infrastructure construction, the proximity of French authority, and a political-economic transformation based on groundnut cultivation appears to have enabled some sort of negotiations to take place.

On the Gold Coast as well there appears to have been some variation. A few towns such as Kyebi may have experienced a larger-than-usual exodus of slaves and offered land to a small number of refugee slaves, two events which were probably interrelated. This was largely a result of the presence of a large Basel Missionary community, which not only introduced wage labour to the region, but also induced its members to slowly manumit their slaves, somewhat changing the nature of local slavery. Furthermore, the presence of a mission school and highly frequented trade paths helped to break the slave owners' monopoly of means of existence.

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<sup>10</sup> Kopytoff, "The Cultural Context of African Abolition", p.499.

### The consequences of the 'failure' of emancipation

In history, the end of one story is the beginning of another, and the slow death of slavery in twentieth century West Africa was in many ways the result of nineteenth century policy in Senegal and the Gold Coast. This was partly a result of the perpetuation of pragmatic colonial policies. The policies of the French West African Federation (AOF), in place by 1904 with Dakar as its capital, were informed by Senegalese colonial experiences and attitudes. As late as 1950, the administrator responsible for Mauritania would voice the familiar formula that:

The colony was not yet ready for 'mass liberation.' There were no resources for the newly freed, who 'would have nothing to do but turn to theft and vagabondage... The end result would be the ruin of the economy.'<sup>11</sup>

In Senegal, the early twentieth century was largely distinguished by a continuation of administrative opposition to any real metropolitan demands for reform. Even the 1905 Comprehensive Slavery Decree did not end official recognition of slavery, but simply formalised and extended the 1890 treaties that had criminalised enslavement and slave dealing.<sup>12</sup>

However, in French West Africa (AOF) thousands of slaves took the 1905 Decree as a cue and by 1910 the majority of the slave population of the western Soudan had deserted their masters.<sup>13</sup> The response in Senegal was not as radical, but a number of political and economic changes still led to a gradual decline of slavery. The introduction of a stable French administration in the Soudan and the continued 'confiscation' of slave caravans by *chefs de cercles* slowly decreased the supply of slaves into the region, but more importantly the continual expansion of peanut cultivation led to a wage labour economy which gradually replaced slave holding. The expansion of the migrant labour *navetane* system provided a livelihood for refugee slaves not only from Senegal but from neighbouring territories as well. Moreover the formation of the Islamic Mouride brotherhood created new communities to which ex-slaves could attach themselves. The Mourides occupied peripheral arid regions of the interior and offered both fully assimilated status and access to land for former slaves. It was this reversal of political,

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<sup>11</sup> op. cit. in McDougall, E. Ann, "A Topsy-Turvy World: Slaves and Freed Slaves in the Mauritanian Adrar, 1910-1950, in Miers and Roberts, *The End of Slavery in Africa*, p.362.

<sup>12</sup> See Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, pp.131-137.

<sup>13</sup> Roberts, Richard, "The End of Slavery in the French Soudan, 1905-1914", in Miers Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, pp.282-306.

economic, and social realities that enabled slaves to leave. Significantly, few slaves applied for formal liberation, most preferring simply to desert to join the *navetane* migration or Mouride communities.<sup>14</sup> This outcome must be seen as a success for French authorities, whose policy objectives were largely met as former slaves provided labour for both subsistence and groundnut production without causing any major political disruption.

The British administration on the Gold Coast similarly continued to be successful in providing a series of 'soft landings' for emancipation. Following the annexation of Asante after 1901, administrators there faced an even more difficult situation than their compatriots in the Gold Coast in 1874. Not only were they given few resources, and forced to rely upon the region's established chiefly elite, but those chiefs remained largely hostile to British rule, unlike in the coastal regions. Thus while the officers appointed to run Asante were able to affect a reduction in the importation of slaves, these officials strongly resisted the blandishments of even Gold Coast administrators to regulate domestic slavery until 1908. Despite subsequent reforms, domestic slavery remained largely in place until the expansion of cocoa in the 1930s, which enabled both a limited number of self-liberations and a system of negotiations similar to that of the Gold Coast a half-century before.<sup>15</sup>

The formative context for all of these events was the period of negotiation, conflict, and resistance that characterised the attempted reform of slavery in the nineteenth century. This was an era in which slave owners effectively constructed their resistance to large-scale reform, and it was a period in which pragmatic and conservative policies won out over the ideals of abolitionism and patterns of administration-master co-operation were developed. As a result, despite the initial promise of emancipation clubs in St. Louis and Gorée, those liberations that did take place were largely the responses of individuals and the majority of slaves were unable to significantly alter their positions.

The contrasts between British administration on the Gold Coast and French administration in Senegal were largely distinctions of scale and style rather than fundamental differences. In fact, the most interesting facet of this comparison is not the differences between experiences in the two regions, but their similarities. Despite the differing African and European origins of slavery and society in the two regions, emancipation in both was characterised by many of the same general motifs. Perhaps

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<sup>14</sup> Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, pp.198-202.

<sup>15</sup> Dumett and Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery", pp. 95-100.

most significantly, this comparison has shown the central role of Africans in determining the outcome of slave reform. The relevance of European metropolises was largely restricted to proclaiming reforms and providing the impetus for economic transformations. While the metropole created potentialities, administration often actually acted to oppose changes in the institutions of slavery, and were in any event largely incapable of enforcing any reforms they might support. Thus in each stage of the 'failure' of emancipation, the power of masters was reinforced, and only when their hegemony over physical resources and social institutions was broken could slavery definitively end. This termination - whether by gradual negotiation or mass liberation - was enabled by metropolitan initiatives and the introduction of cash cropping or wage labour. However, these factors simply produced an environment in which negotiation or definitive emancipation could take place, it was slaves who determined the configuration that their response would take. Their desires, environment, social belief systems, and personal experiences largely shaped the *transformations* in slavery in the same way that their masters' characterised its *continuity*.

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55 Comments on some ordinances of the Gold Coast Colony with notes on a few decided cases by HW Hayes-Redwar (1909)  
72 ARPS Correspondence File No. 1 (1869-1904)  
217 Gold Coast Times (1880-1882)  
280 Fanti Customary Laws, by JM Sarbah (1896)

*Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Dakar Sénégal*

K 1-18 Esclavage et Captivité (1807-1906)  
M 3-5 Tribunaux Judiciaires (1819-1893)  
P 1 Travaux Publics (1847-1887)  
Q16-17, 25 Affaires Economiques (1822-1894)  
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1A14-25 Actes Officiales (1826-1869)  
2E2-3 Conseils: Gorée (1840-1858)  
3E9-33 Conseil d'administration de Sénégal (1830-1869)  
4E1-4 Conseil général du Sénégal (1840-1894)  
1B6-196 Correspondence: Ministre au Gouverneur (1819-1892)  
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4B15-16,64 Correspondence de Commandant de Gorée (1846-1851, 1877-1882)  
13G23-148 Politique: Gouvernement de de Sénégal (1848-1878)

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D-1.1 - 1.40 Afrika (1829-1884)  
D-1.50-1.56 Goldküste (1889-1891)

