

Willing Migrants
Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848-1960
FRANÇOIS MANCHUELLE

El Dorado in West Africa
The Gold-Mining Frontier, African Labor, and Colonial Capitalism in the Gold Coast, 1875-1900
RAYMOND E. DUMETT

Nkrumah & the Chiefs
The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951-60
RICHARD RATHBONE

Ghanaian Popular Fiction
'Thrilling Discoveries in Conjugal Life' & Other Tales
STEPHANIE NEWELL

Paths of Accommodation
Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920
DAVID ROBINSON

West African Challenge to Empire
Culture and History in the Volta-Bani Anticolonial War
MAHIR SAÛL AND PATRICK ROYER

Between the Sea & the Lagoon
An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c. 1850 to Recent Times
EMMANUEL AKYEAMPONG

'Civil Disorder is the Disease of Ibadan'
Chieftaincy and Civic Culture in a Yoruba City
RUTH WATSON

Smugglers, Secessionists, and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier
The Lie of the Borderlands since 1914
PAUL NUGENT

Eurafricans in Western Africa
Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century
GEORGE E. BROOKS

Lineages of State Fragility
Rural Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau
JOSHUA B. FORREST

Fighting the Slave Trade
West African Strategies
SYLVIANE A. DIOUF

'Kola is God's Gift'
Agricultural Production, Export Initiatives & the Kola Industry in Asante & the Gold Coast, c. 1820-1950
EDMUND ABAKA

*Slavery and Reform in West Africa**
Toward Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Senegal and the Gold Coast
TREVOR R. GETZ

*Ouidah**
The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port,' 1727-1892
ROBIN LAW
*forthcoming

Fighting the Slave Trade

West African Strategies

SYLVIANE A. DIOUF, EDITOR

Ohio University Press
ATHENS
James Currey
OXFORD

1332
.F54
2003

Ohio University Press
Scott Quadrangle
Athens, Ohio 45701

James Currey Ltd
73 Botley Road
Oxford OX2 0BS

© 2003 by Sylviane A. Diouf
First published 2003

First published in United Kingdom 2004

Ohio University Press books are printed on acid-free paper

12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 5 4 3 2 1

Published in the United States of America by
Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio 45701

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Chapter 12, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade," by David Richardson, appears by permission of the *William and Mary Quarterly*.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fighting the slave trade : West African strategies / Sylviane A. Diouf, editor.

p. cm. — (Western African studies)

Papers presented at a conference held Feb. 2001 at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8214-1516-6 (alk. paper) — ISBN 0-8214-1517-4 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Slave trade—Africa, West—History—Congresses. I. Diouf, Sylviane A. (Sylviane Anna), 1952– II. Series.

HT1332.F54 2003

380.1'44'0966—dc21

2003056308

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Fighting the slave trade : West African strategies. — (Western African studies)

1. Slave trade — Africa, West — History 2. Africa, West — History

1. Diouf, Sylviane A. (Sylviane Anna), 1952–

380.1'44'0966

ISBN 0-85255-447-8 (James Currey paper)

ISBN 0-85255-448-6 (James Currey cloth)

Strümpell, Kurt, and Lieutenant von Briesen. 1980. *Peuples et états du Fombina et de l'Adamaoua (Nord Cameroun)*. Trans. from the German by Eldridge Mohammadou. Garma: ISH.

Taimou, Adjii. 1994. "Les Kotoko des abords sud du Lac Tchad: Origines, migrations, et implantation." *Mémoire de DIPES, Université de Yaoundé*.

Contents

Preface

vii

Introduction

ix

Sylviane A. Diouf

PART I

DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

1. Lacustrine Villages in South Benin as Refuges from the Slave Trade 3
Elisée Soumonni
2. Slave-Raiding and Defensive Systems South of Lake Chad from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century 15
Thierno Mouctar Bah
3. The Myth of Inevitability and Invincibility: Resistance to Slavers and the Slave Trade in Central Africa, 1850–1910 31
Dennis D. Cordell
4. The Impact of the Slave Trade on Cayor and Baol: Mutations in Habitat and Land Occupancy 50
Adama Guèye
5. Defensive Strategies: Wasulu, Masina, and the Slave Trade 62
Martin A. Klein

CHAPTER 3

maoua (Nord Cameroun). Trans. from the German by Eldridge Mohammadou. Garma: ISH.

Taimou, Adjil. 1994. "Les Kotoko des abords sud du Lac Tchad: Origines, migrations, et implantation." Mémoire de DIPES, Université de Yaoundé.

Tilho, Jean. 1910–14. *Documents scientifiques de la Mission Tilho*. 4 vols. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.

Tremaux, P. 1862. *Le Soudan*. Paris: Hachette.

Urvoy, Yves. 1936. *Histoire des populations du Soudan Central (Colonie du Niger)*. Paris: Larose.

———. 1949. *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*. Paris: Larose.

Vincent, Jeanne Françoise. 1972. "Sur les traces du Major Denham: Le Nord Cameroun il y a cent cinquante ans, Mandara, Kirdi, et Peul." *Cahiers d'études africaines*.

Vincent, Jeanne Françoise, Daniel Dory, and Raymond Verdier. 1995. *La construction religieuse du territoire*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Vossart, Jean. 1952. "Histoire du sultanat du Mandara, Province de l'empire du Bornou." *Etudes camerounaises*, no. 35–36.

Zeltner, Jean-Claude. 1980. *Pages d'histoire du Kanem, pays tchadien*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

———. 1987. *La traite des esclaves entre les pays du Tchad et la Méditerranée au dix-neuvième siècle*. Ndjamena.

CHAPTER 3

The Myth of Inevitability and Invincibility

Resistance to Slavers and the Slave Trade in Central Africa, 1850–1910

Dennis D. Cordell

ALTHOUGH MYTHOLOGIES SURROUNDING slave raids and the slave trade in Africa would have it that slavers were all but invincible, enjoying superiority in numbers and technology, the reality for both the Atlantic and Muslim commerce was often otherwise.¹ African men and women employed a variety of strategies to resist attacks of slave raiders and later sale by slave merchants. Oral testimonies collected in north-central Africa in the 1970s, as well as travel literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and early French colonial records, afford glimpses into the ways that peoples such as the Sara in today's southern Chad, and the Banda and Manza in today's Central African Republic (CAR) resisted the attacks of raiders: from the kingdoms of Bagirmi and Wadai in the Chad basin to the north in the 1870s, from the Khartoumers and their successors from the Nile basin to the east around the same time, and later in the century from bands of brigands associated with warlord Rabih Fadl-Allah and his client Muhammad al-Sanusi in the region itself. Indeed al-Sanusi became "sultan" of Dar al-Kuti, one of the last major slave-exporting states in north-central

Africa—before the tragic resurgence of slave raiding and slave trading in the area in the late twentieth century (Rone 1995; Weber 1999).

This essay explores the varieties and strategies of resistance to Muslim slave raiding and the Muslim slave trade in north-central Africa. Ranging from physical resistance that was perhaps more effective than the stereotypes of raiding usually suggest, to the adoption of new building styles, settlement patterns, and crops, and to strategies of hiding and flight, the peoples of this part of Africa attempted to protect themselves, their families, and their neighbors from the twin scourges of slave raiders and slave traders. These efforts were by no means always successful, but neither were they uniformly ineffective. Before examining the ways that individuals and groups resisted the depredations of raiders, however, it is necessary to contextualize and historicize the evolution of the slaving frontiers in this part of Africa.

THE EXPANSION OF MUSLIM SLAVING FRONTIERS IN NORTH-CENTRAL AFRICA

The broad chronology and geography of shifting Muslim slaving frontiers in north-central Africa are by now reasonably well known (Burnham 1980; Cordell 1979, 1983, 1985a,b, 1988; Dampierre 1967, 1983; Santandrea 1964, 1981; Sikainga 1991). Like the Judeo-Christian traditions, which preceded and coexisted with it, the Islamic *sunna*, or tradition, has not historically condemned either slavery or the slave trade (see Marmon 1999; Lewis 1990; Gordon 1987). Strictly speaking, however, Muslims were admonished against taking other Muslims into slavery. Moreover, Muslim slave owners were called upon to encourage their slaves to convert to Islam, grant them freedom in their wills, and consider the children of slaves who converted to Islam as free individuals. While such advice was by no means always heeded, it promoted both the removal of slave raiding to the limits of the Islamic world and an endlessly renewed demand for captives. With the initially rapid and subsequently steady expansion of Dar al-Islam (the land of Islam), then, the slaving frontiers shifted farther and farther away from the heartlands of Islam in the Middle East and North Africa—to Islamic border regions in the Mediterranean and southeast and central Europe, Central and South and Southeast Asia, and Africa south of the Sahara.

By the eleventh century, for example, the Muslim geographer al-Idrisi reported slave raiding in the Fazzan, in today's southern Libya—the borderland between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb (the land of war) (in Levtzion and Hopkins 2000, 119). From there the Islamic frontier moved on to regions still farther

south: Kanem, on the northern borders of Lake Chad, in the late eleventh or early twelfth centuries and again to the south to Borno² in the fourteenth (Nachtigal 1987, 142n3, 146; Levtzion and Hopkins, 428n8). In time, the ruling class of Borno proclaimed itself part of the Muslim world, and, with that, Borno slaving parties marauded in the lands along the middle Shari River, in today's southern Chad. Within north-central Africa, the state of Bagirmi arose by the sixteenth century and declared itself within the bounds of the Islamic world several centuries later (Nachtigal 1987, 398). Slavers from Bagirmi targeted regions to the southeast, the lands of the peoples whom today we call the Sara (Reyna 1990). By the seventeenth century the ostensibly Muslim state of Wadai grew up to the northeast of Bagirmi, in eastern Chad (Nachtigal 1971, 206–7, 207n1). The rulers of Wadai, too, cast in their lot with Dar al-Islam, and Wadaian raiders sought slaves in the southern hinterland among the Sara, but also among the Banda and the Manza. By the early nineteenth century, the state was well positioned at the southern terminus of a new trans-Saharan caravan route, an itinerary that fostered the export of increased numbers of slaves toward the Islamic heartlands (Cordell 1977). To the east, the kingdom of Darfur arose in the western region of today's Sudan. Darfur also lay at the southern end of a caravan route, Darb al-Arba'in, or Forty-Day Road, which became an important itinerary for exporting slaves (O'Fahey and Spaulding 1974; O'Fahey 1982; Barth 1965, 121). Borno, Bagirmi, Wadai, and Darfur, then, all competed for and carved out raiding zones to the south—in north-central Africa.

The expansion of Muslim slave raiding and slave trading in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also reflects another process—the expansion of the European world economy and European military technology into the Middle East and then indirectly, via Muslim intermediaries, up the valley of the Nile and south-west into north-central Africa. The focus here is on the Nile valley and the slave raiders and slave traders known as the Khartoumers and their successors. In a manner that paralleled the process described in the preceding paragraphs for the Chad basin west of today's Sudan and east of Lake Chad, the Islamic frontier moved up the Nile valley into the northeastern borderlands of north-central Africa. To be sure, local societies, both Muslim and non-Muslim, as well as the states that arose in the region, were different, but the process was somewhat similar.³

With Napoleon's invasion and occupation of Egypt in 1798 and the ensuing penetration of British political and economic influence in the Middle Eastern heartlands in the first half of the nineteenth century, the expansion of Dar al-Islam became intimately intertwined with the expansion of the European world economy and European military power. Regimes in the Islamic heartlands, and most notably

that of Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt (1805–48), resorted to tactics of defensive mod-

outlet for expanding exports of slaves. Hence the zariba system was reborn in the

that of Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt (1805–48), resorted to tactics of defensive modernization, importing European advisors, weapons, and forms of bureaucratic organization—initially to protect themselves from the growing European threat. They also soon mobilized these borrowings in an effort to dominate adjacent regions without direct access to European technology and organization. For Egypt, this led to designs on the upper Nile valley, as the government deployed imported European technology, advisors, and know-how to extend the Egyptian sphere of influence to the south. The Egyptians founded their “colonial capital” of Khartoum at the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile in 1824 (Bjørkelo 1989, 37).

By mid-century, slave raiders and slave merchants associated with Egyptian expansion launched ventures into southern and southwestern Sudan. They forged trade routes and founded fortified, armed camps, or *zaribas* (Arabic), along them. In so doing, they integrated these regions into the expanding Muslim economy adjacent to the Nile. Known as the Khartoumers because the Egyptian colonial capital on the Nile was a critical node in their commercial networks, these merchants employed armed bands to protect their centers and caravans. In this region, where people were the most valuable resource to be had, the Khartoumers and their mercenaries raided some local peoples for captives and enticed others to join in their enterprise, either out of a desire for gain or in an effort to protect themselves from the raiders. By the 1870s the German traveler Georg Schweinfurth (1874, 2:410–32) reported *zaribas* every twenty or thirty miles in Bahr al-Ghazal and farther south, in Azande territories.

Around this time, and propelled by British efforts to abolish the slave trade in the Nile Valley, the “*zariba* system,” as Stefano Santandrea terms it, spilled over the divide separating the Nile basin from the Ubangi River basin to the west. In some cases, it was the Khartoumers themselves or their associates who exported the system beyond the borders of Sudan (Santandrea 1964). One of the most (in)famous was Rabih b. Fadl-Allah, a lieutenant of Rahma al-Zubayr, the most notorious Khartoumer of them all (Cordell 1986, n.d.). By 1876, Rabih had set up camp in today's eastern CAR (Dampierre 1983). At first Rabih maintained ties with the Khartoumer network based in the Nile Valley, whence he imported weapons and trade goods and towards which he exported captives. However, British pressure disrupted slave exports by way of the Nile Valley and via Darb al-Arba'in from Darfur in the latter part of the century. Rabih eventually redirected his attention toward the states of Bagirmi and Wadai to the north in an effort to tie his commercial operations into the existing slave-raiding and slave-trading networks that extended north into the Chad basin. Here the route from Bagirmi and Wadai to Libya remained free of European harassment—a perfect

outlet for expanding exports of slaves. Hence the *zariba* system was reborn in the lands of the Sara, Banda, and Manza of north-central Africa.

Although a foreign seed, the *zariba* system found fertile soil in the region among local traders and raiders who hitched their fortunes to veteran Khartoumers such as Rabih. Foremost among these was Muhammad al-Sanusi, a Runga petty potentate in the northern part of today's CAR who became a client of Rabih. The outlines of al-Sanusi's career—along with the devastation he visited upon the area—are now known (Cordell 1985a). He used support from Rabih to establish himself, then made several bids for independence, finally succeeding once his patron had left the region for Bagirmi and Borno, where he was killed in 1900 in an encounter with the French at Kusseri in today's northern Cameroon. Al-Sanusi founded a permanent capital at Ndele in 1896 and set in motion an expanding spiral of violence that engulfed several tens of thousands of square miles by the time of his assassination by the French in 1911, leaving the northern CAR the very sparsely populated land that it is today. Al-Sanusi's resettlement of captives and refugees at Ndele created the largest city in north-central Africa by the time of the French conquest; so much so that early maps of the region identify it as the only substantial urban center between the Congo River and the central Sahara. Later cartographers copied their predecessors, so that Ndele remains prominently visible on today's maps of the area even though al-Sanusi's erstwhile capital of thirty thousand is today but a village of several thousand people.

Both contemporary observers and historians of the expansion of the Muslim slave trade in this part of Africa—including myself—have tended to emphasize the destruction wrought by slave raiders and the draining impact of the slave trade. All it takes is a glance at a population map of the region with its vast empty quarters and widely scattered settlements to understand that this tale of demographic disaster is not a figment of a too fertile imagination or simply a crusade to emphasize the horrors of slave raiding, slavery, and the slave trade (Pantobe 1984, 27). However, the historical sources that document this process also include numerous examples of the ways that local peoples defended themselves—from Muslim raiders from the north and east, as well as from locally born and raised brigands like al-Sanusi.

SLAVE RAIDING, MORTALITY, AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RESISTANCE

Brought together, these tales of resistance make it clear that the Sara, Banda, Manza, and their neighbors were not simply tilting at windmills. Often successful

and effective, in so far as they undermined the ability of the marauders to impose their will with complete impunity, some of these exploits were remembered with pride three-quarters of a century later. Taken together, they call into question the narratives of inevitability and invincibility promulgated by the raiders and traders themselves in efforts to weaken resistance, reported by the French to justify colonial conquest and their subsequent oxymoronic wars of pacification, and reproduced in oral accounts collected in the later twentieth century.

For example, near contemporary observers such as Al-Hajj Abdu, advisor to al-Sanusi, told French traveler Auguste Chevalier in 1903 that Rabih "ate the entire country, . . . where he passed he took all" (Chevalier 1907, 226). And Modat, the French resident in Ndele at the time of al-Sanusi's assassination in 1911, wrote that a popular cradle song went something like "*Rabi jo, razassa dugo*" ("Rabih came, bullets rained down") (1912, 226). Informants in Dar al-Kuti in the 1970s told stories they had heard all their lives about Rabih and his raiders: "When they headed down the way and came upon a tree, they ran right over it and it disappeared; they were as numerous as swarming termites"; or, "When they crossed a stream, so much water splashed on the banks that the water level plummeted" (Oral Account 22.3; OA21.4). Similar stories were told in the 1970s about al-Sanusi: that he was the "first sultan" in the area, meaning that his likes had not been seen before; that he was frightfully cruel, filling caves around Ndele with the skulls of clients and captives who displeased him; that he alone was responsible for the demographic desert of today's north-central Africa (Cordell 1985a).

While there is no doubt that slave raiding and the slave trade had a devastating impact on all aspects of life in north-central Africa, data at hand intimate at the same time that the story may be more complex—and the devastation somewhat less one-sided—than suggested by these tropes of total war. For example, the slavers' tactics did not convey total confidence and disdain for the capacity of non-Muslims to protect themselves. Both local and European accounts of slave raiding in Dar al-Kuti and the southern Chad basin for the period report that the raiders frequently resorted to surprise, attacking at daybreak just after the *fajr* (morning prayer) with guns blazing to frighten their targets (OA21.4; Julien 1929, 55–56; "Le saharien" 1908, 285; ANT). (And given that the most common firearm in this part of Africa in the late nineteenth century was the flintlock, which required considerable time to reload, the raiders' guns probably "blazed" only once.) Other usual tactics embodied subterfuge. Brigands first approached villages openly, giving people ample opportunity to flee into the brush. The raiders then withdrew, leading their would-be captives

to return to their villages, thinking that the danger had passed. The marauders then returned surreptitiously, attacking and quickly subduing the settlement (Decorse 1906, 174).

Beyond these descriptions, there are also examples of raiding gone awry. For example, the Manza defeated al-Sanusi's banners outright in 1892 or 1893 (Veigat 1937, 28; Gaud 1911, 95–96; Kalck 1970, 2:449–50). The Sara Ngama inflicted substantial casualties on another raiding party in 1896—although the expedition still returned with substantial numbers of prisoners. During a *ghazzia* against the Banda Linda five years later, the Banda attacked al-Sanusi's men, forcing many of them to throw themselves in the nearby Ouaka River, where they drowned (OA22.1; OA23.1; Julien 1925, 142–43; 1928, 65–66; 1929, 49–56, 80). Mortality rates among raiders during the handful of *ghazzias* for which we have data confirm the ability of "victims" to turn the tables on their attackers. Accompanying al-Sanusi's men on an expedition in Sara country in June 1903, Chevalier (1907, 281–82) recorded that the sultan's force lost fifteen men in one attack on a village of about 120 people; in another *ghazzia* against a village of similar size, the raiders lost two men. To be sure, casualties among the raided were substantial, and, more often than not, their villages were burned. Moreover, it is also the case that the more advanced repeating rifles that appeared in the region after 1900 led to more lethal raids (Cordell 1988, 153). Nonetheless, large numbers of people managed to flee—presumably to return once the Muslim raiders went on their way.

REFUGE AND RELOCATION: KAGAS, CAVERNS, AND FORTIFIED VILLAGES

If active resistance to raiding of the sort described above was probably somewhat out of the ordinary, a more usual way of "fighting back" was simply to abandon the terrain in the face of a more powerful foe. Since the objective of the raiders was to take captives, refuge and relocation were effective forms of resistance. Most *ghazzias* took place in the dry season, when rank-and-file raiders were not tied down by the demands of agriculture and when travel was easier. Moreover, raiding expeditions did not return each year to the same locales.⁴ Therefore, if people hid for a few days or weeks, or a month or two, the raiders tended to move on, not to return for the remainder of the season.

The wooded savanna of north-central Africa lent itself to this strategy. Although largely open, rainfall was greater than farther north in the Sahel, giving rise to numerous rivers and streams and promoting the growth of extensive

Brigands first approached villages of the region and fled into the brush. The raiders then withdrew, leading their would-be captives

stretches of dense brush and light forest. The peculiar geology of north-central Africa also facilitated refuge. From the northern part of today's CAR to southern Kordofan, in central Sudan, the vast plains are punctuated by enormous, almost surreal, outcroppings of rock riddled with caves and crevasses and are not easily accessible on foot, much less on horseback (Escayrac 1851, 371; Courtet 1907; Bruel 1935, 38, 54). Erosion produced these formations, as more porous surrounding laterite soil was washed away, leaving islands of denser rock. The languages of all peoples in the region include terms for these specific formations. Many individual outcroppings had their own proper names. Known as *kaga* among the Banda and *mbia* among the Azande farther southeast, some of these massive protrusions had their own sources of water (Bruel 1935, 202).

Believed to harbor spirits as well as provide physical protection, the *kaga* were prime destinations for people seeking to escape slave raiders. Slave-raiding forces that wreaked havoc in the region—from those of Muhammad 'Ali of Egypt, which marauded in Kordofan in the mid-nineteenth century, to the banners of al-Sanusi, which wreaked havoc farther west half a century later, to Fulani forces still farther west, in today's northern Cameroon—laid siege to these refuges (Escayrac 1851, 371; Bruel 1935, 202). At times, the outcroppings also served as bases for attack. *Kaga Kazembe* is a case in point. Rabih laid siege unsuccessfully against a Manza force lodged at *Kazembe* around 1885. An attack by al-Sanusi's men in 1892 or 1893 led to an outright Manza victory. And in both 1894 and 1901, Banda Ngao forces allied with the sultan failed to take the stronghold. Only in 1903 did a French force commanded by Capitaine Toqué force the Manza to abandon *Kaga Kazembe* (Vergiat 1937, 28). The oral traditions of numerous Banda and Manza groups in the region include tales of refuge in one *kaga* or another. Indeed the search for security led al-Sanusi himself to decide to locate his new capital at *Kaga Ndele* in 1896 (Cordell 1985a, 173, 245).

In addition to *kagas*, themselves frequently perforated by caves, the laterite soil also washed away below the surface in places, creating tunnels and caverns that afforded refuge from raiders. The written historical record from the turn of the last century, as well as oral accounts collected in the 1970s, include abundant references to such hideaways and routes of escape. A few years after 1900, for example, the French traveler Prins recorded communities of "troglodytes" in the Bamingui River region, including a community of three families consisting of eight adult men, four young men, five women, and two babies. The small number of women and children was due to the fact that al-Sanusi's forces had surprised them working in their fields and had taken other women and children captive (1909, 17–18). A few years later, and farther east in Kresh country in the eastern

use to numerous rivers and streams and promoting the growth of laterite

Ubangi basin near the Ubangi-Nile divide, the French resident Modat observed that at one time people built their villages and cleared fields adjacent to *Jebel Mela*, a huge rock formation where in times of danger they hid in a labyrinth of tunnels and caves (Modat 1912, 185). Much later, in 1974 and 1975, tales of tunnels and caves continued to circulate among people in the area. Informants told me about and led me to tunnels that connected open areas once occupied by villages to *kagas* many yards away (OA3.2; OA4.1; OA5.2/6.1; OA6.2; OA9.2/10.1; OA13.1; OA15.2/16.1; OA22.1). In these areas the ground resounded with my steps as I walked above subterranean passages. One informant even maintained that a tunnel north of al-Sanusi's capital at *Ndele* led to *Koudou*, twenty-five kilometers to the southwest (OA14.2)!

Beyond seeking refuge in *kagas* and caverns, people in north-central Africa also protected themselves by banding together in larger settlements. Around 1850, most peoples, from the Gbaya in the west to the Manza and Sara in the center, and on to the Banda and Kresh farther east, tended to live in dispersed settlements. They practiced shifting cultivation and resided in scattered small hamlets near their fields. The intensification of slave raiding—in the middle third of the century from Muslim states to the north such as Bagirmi, Wadai, and Darfur, and then later from the Khartoumers from the east—led people to abandon these residential patterns. Early examples of larger villages were found among the Sara, who lived closest to Bagirmi and Wadai, the earliest sponsors of slave raiding in the area. Among the Sara, these larger concentrations of people also promoted a greater centralization of authority (Magnant 1986, 62, 163–66, 182–84, 189–206). This shift toward larger, fortified settlements spread south from the Chad basin and southwest from the Nile regions with the progression of the Muslim slaving frontier.

Larger settlements were the logical outgrowth of more common and more violent raiding. They also reproduced the fortified camps, or *zawiyas*, of the slave raiders themselves. The camp of the Kresh chief Sa'id Baldas in the Ubangi-Nile border region, visited by the Frenchman Prins in 1901, was a prime example of this phenomenon:

We can call the large town that is the capital of the Sultanate of Sa'id Baldas a city; a city enclosed by a circular adobe wall five meters thick at the base and a meter thick at the top, [a wall] five meters high with an open space bordering the circumference on the inside, [a wall] pierced by loopholes and topped off with a frieze of sharpened bamboo stakes. A moat between six and ten meters wide and between five and eight meters deep runs around the

foot of the wall [on the outside]; three gates on the west side are capped with tree trunks seven meters tall that serve as observation towers; gates three meters wide and four meters tall can be hermetically sealed in the blink of an eye by beams always at the ready.

This enclosure, whose equivalent I have only seen at Maïffa in Bagirmi, is nothing other than the headquarters of the sultan, who brought together there, around his own residence, the residences of his major chiefs and sharpshooters, who numbered about 150. It also sheltered at the time of our visit a settled population of two thousand souls, but certain areas of the settlement were deserted that could easily accommodate a population of equivalent size. . . . Total population was between four and five thousand. (Prins 1925, 138–39, 140)

While most of the fortress villages in north-central Africa were not as well fortified, peoples throughout the area abandoned earlier scattered patterns of residence for denser settlements in locales not always chosen for their proximity to ample supplies of water or agricultural land.

NEW CROPS AND A RETURN TO OLD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

Along with refuge, relocation, and new types of settlements—all aimed at resisting Muslim slave raiders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—people returned to older sources of food and adopted newer agricultural practices. Peoples of this region were probably the first to domesticate millets and sorghums, crops known for their high protein content (Stemler, Harlan, and deWet 1975). By the mid-nineteenth century numerous varieties of the plant provided a rich sustenance.

However, the cultivation of sorghums and millets also made people particularly vulnerable to raiders. First, the plants were grown in large cleared fields that made them very visible to passersby and signaled the presence of farmers not too far away. Second, the crop demanded substantial care throughout the growing season, and so it could not be abandoned for very long without jeopardizing the harvest. Third, because the ripened grain develops in dense clusters at the top of the plant, the heads of grain were easily stolen. Finally, the mature crop must be harvested within a narrow window of time or else be lost to birds and rodents or fall over in the fields to rot (Prioul 1981, 93–96; ENA; Prioul n.d.). Continued cultivation of the crop, then, was not particularly well suited for populations besieged by violence.

Local peoples countered the vulnerabilities posed by sorghum cultivation with two strategies. The first can hardly be called resistance, although it served to protect farmers fleeing slavers: they simply stopped growing sorghum and relied more completely on hunting and gathering, earlier practices that had become only supplements to farming after the spread of sorghum. Examples of this behavior are numerous in the historical record of the period, but Prins, once again, offers a salient description. During his sojourn in and around Saïd Baldas's capital, he visited the Banda village of Joungorou (or Yango Hourou.) The settlement lay very near a dense gallery forest and could only be reached by crawling through tunnels in the dense surrounding brambles. There were no visible paths nearby to give away the presence of a village. Moreover, the people had no fields because they feared that these signs of habitation would also betray them. They survived by hunting, gathering wild honey, and trading dried meat from hunting for grain with the people of the neighboring village of Mouvou (Prins 1925, 157).

The other strategy was more active than passive and changed the agricultural history of the region. Beginning with Banda groups in the south and spreading north to the Manza and the Sara, local peoples began cultivating manioc. A root crop of dubious nutritional value, manioc was, nonetheless, suited for times of insecurity. First, it could be planted in small plots and the mature crop was not very tall; hence, manioc patches were easy to conceal. Second, once planted, it required very little care. The root of the plant is the part that is eaten. Hidden below the ground, it is relatively safe from marauders. Neither did the plant have to be harvested within a specified period of time. The yield is substantial, between six and forty tons per hectare, depending on the quality of the soil (Schlippe 1956, 66). Schweinfurth (1874, 1:526–27) described some of these characteristics of the plant in the 1870s, and also noted that the easternmost population to cultivate the crop at the time were the Mangbetu in the northeastern Ubangi basin. Later, Michel Georges (1963, 346), an agricultural economist, confirmed the observations of the German traveler, noting that manioc was commonly planted at the beginning of the second year of a four-year cycle, left in the ground through the third and fourth year, and harvested at the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth year.

In the late nineteenth century manioc cultivation became common. Charles Tisserant (1953, 215–18) suggests that in 1850 the crop was cultivated only in the southwest part of today's CAR, whence it spread north and northeast, reaching the Banda of the Bambari region in the eastern Ubangi basin (and north of the Mangbetu) in 1880. Manza informants reported that in earlier times they ate millet

rot (Prioul 1981, 93–96; ENA; Prioul n.d.). Continued cultivation of the crop, then, was not particularly well suited for populations besieged by violence.

exclusively, and that they borrowed manioc from the Banda. Indeed the importance of millet in Manza ritual—for circumcision and ancestor ceremonies—suggests that it, and not manioc, was the primordial crop among them (Renouf-Stefanik 1978, 50n118). Shortly before 1900, in fact, traveler Félix Chapiseau (1900, 102) reported that the Manza grew both manioc and millet. In 1974, when asked about manioc cultivation in earlier periods, Banda informant Yadri Sali in Ndele replied “*gozo mafi, kalla bes*” (“there was no manioc, only millet”) (OA9.1).

The irony of the tale of the diffusion of manioc is, of course, that the plant was domesticated as a food crop in the Americas (Tisserant 1953, 217). It later spread to Africa with the rise of the Atlantic slave trade and made its way into the African interior by following, in reverse, the itineraries used by slave raiders and slave traders to take their caravans of captives to the coast. In north-central Africa it helped people conceal themselves from Muslim raiders. And they took it with them in what was, in all probability, the most common form of resistance—flight and resettlement in another region.

MIGRATION OR FLIGHT AS RESISTANCE

Of all the types of resistance surveyed in this chapter, migration or permanent relocation was perhaps the most common. While this strategy did not confront slave raiders and slave traders head-on, it hit at the heart of their enterprise by depriving them of people to capture and sell. The historiography of north-central Africa—oral, written, and material—testifies to the frequency with which individuals, families, and villages fled their attackers. Much of this story is told elsewhere, so a summary will suffice here (Cordell 1983, 1:69–70; 1985a, 23–30; Giles-Vernick 1996, 257).

Oral testimonies collected from the peoples of north-central Africa abound in the bibliography below—from Browne (1806) in the late eighteenth century, el-Tounsy (1845, 1851) shortly thereafter, Barth (1965) in the mid-nineteenth century, and Nachtigal (1971, 1987) a generation later, to early French travelers and military men around 1900, the colonial authorities and scholars that arrived with colonial rule, and on to the foreign and African researchers of the independence era. They all recorded tales of flight and migration as people migrated to escape slave raiders. The catalogue is both impressive and overwhelming.

For example, the Binga, the Yulu, and the Kara, who lived south of Darfur in the early twentieth century, reported that they had once lived farther north, but migrated southward to avoid ghazzias from Darfur and later attacks of the

the southwest part of the Banda of the Bambari region in the eastern Ubangi (Mangbetu) in 1880. Manza informants reported that in earlier times they ate millet

Khartoumers (Santandrea 1964, 229–30; Modat 1912, 193). This tale of flight is repeated farther west among the Goula of Lake Mamoun and Lake Iro in today's southeastern Chad. People who remained either retreated into the swamps on the lake margins or paid tribute in slaves to Wadai and Darfur (Modat 1912, 277; Browne 1806, 356; Barth 1965, 2:657; Fresnel 1849, 19). The Sara, too, once lived farther north and migrated south and southwest in the nineteenth century to avoid enslavement. Unfortunately, they moved into the area that would later become al-Sanusi's prime raiding territory (Delafosse 1930).

Farther south, in the region of the Nile-Ubangi divide, the Kresh peoples migrated west in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s to escape Rabih, later to find themselves within the reach of al-Sanusi; so they fled back toward the east around 1900. By the 1970s they were but a memory in the region (Santandrea 1964, 191, 207; Modat 1912, 285). The stories of the Manza and the Banda are similar (Gaud 1911, 97, 107; Julien 1925, 106; Modat 1912, 224–28; Prioul 1981, 16–17; Giles-Vernick 1996). Buffeted by ghazzias from the north, the Banda migrated from south of Darfur to the southwest, where they found themselves within the reach of Rabih and al-Sanusi. They moved farther to the west, where they met the Manza and Gbaya, themselves migrating to the south and the east to avoid Fulani raiding expeditions from the Borno region as well as predators from Bagirmi to the north. As a result, the Banda, already made up of a large number of populations, splintered into still smaller groups and headed south down the valleys of the Ubangi River tributaries to just north of the Ubangi itself. The population density in the region in 1958 tells the tale. The population of the Mobaye district of the southeastern CAR, home to many Banda, averaged 12.1 people per square kilometer; while that of Ubangi-Shari colony as a whole was 1.9 people per square kilometer (Kalck 1970, 1:171–72, 212–13, 244). The north central, eastern, and northeastern parts of the country—prime targets for Muslim slave raiding and slave trading between 1850 and 1920—were all but deserted. They remain so today.

THE MYTH OF INEVITABILITY AND INVINCIBILITY REVISITED

At the end of this tale of violence and resistance, what might be said about the premise proposed at the beginning? Just how effective was resistance to Muslim raiders and ghazzias among the peoples of north-central Africa? To what extent were tales of the inevitability of capture and the invincibility of slave raiders more myth than reality—products of the hyperbole of historical memory and

exaggeration by Europeans preaching the need for a *mission civilisatrice*? In responding to these questions, it is very important to acknowledge, but also not to overemphasize, the effectiveness of resistance. Many people were killed or carried off, and the lives of countless others were disrupted and forever scarred. The first objective, then, must be a more nuanced understanding of both raiding and resistance. A second aim must be to separate the immediate and long-range impacts of slave raiding and slave trading and resistance to both.

As for physical resistance to the raids themselves, the limited anecdotal information presented in this essay underscores the need to cull the historical sources for more descriptions of episodes of slave raiding and slave trading. While specific examples from north-central Africa may be more numerous because slave raiding and the slave trade persisted (and indeed expanded) through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, examples from other regions and earlier eras may be more common than we suspect. In any case, the data presented in the preceding pages, as well as the literature on firearms in Africa more broadly, strongly suggest that until the introduction of repeating rifles in the second half of the nineteenth century, guns were not terribly effective. A review of collected incidents will probably show that local people who chose to stand and fight still paid a terrible price for their decision to resist. At the same time, however, slave raiders were not invincible and the capture of their "victims" was not inevitable. Moreover, resistance by people under attack may have also exacted of their attackers a price substantial enough to affect the way the raiders carried out their labor of violence.

It is also crucial to assess the indirect implications of raiding and resistance. In the case of north-central Africa, for example, many of the forms of resistance led people to leave their homelands either temporarily or permanently. Today's demographic desert, then, is not entirely the result of physical decimation; it is also the product of effective resistance. In addition, strategies of resistance that privileged settling in larger villages also had major consequences for health, reproduction, and survival. Larger, more compact settlements in less accessible locales created threats to the health of their inhabitants—such as the proliferation of disease through contaminated water supplies and the accumulation of waste, both animal and human. The epidemiological implications of larger settlements also demand exploration. Historical records and recollections from this part of the continent include numerous examples of outbreaks of smallpox and other contagious diseases rendered more frequent and virulent by the creation of larger concentrations of population (Cordell, Gregory, and Piché 1992, 39–70; Cordell 1985a; see also Austen and Headrick 1983; Headrick 1994). An assessment

of the impact of raiding and the effectiveness of resistance, then, requires estimations of the numbers of people lost to the former as well as an appreciation of the gains and losses associated with the latter. The task is formidable but possible. It also demonstrates that a real, if not always effective, alternative to submitting to slavers and traders was indeed fighting back.

NOTES

I dedicate this essay to the Muslims and non-Muslims of Ndele and the sous-préfecture of Dar al-Kouti in the Central African Republic, who in 1974 were making a decided effort to live together, despite the history of slave raiding and slave trading that so profoundly divided them three-quarters of a century earlier. I also wish to acknowledge my partner, the late Gary W. Irvin, for his encouragement and balanced advice about juggling the demands of research, teaching, and administration.

1. In this essay I use the expression "Muslim slave trade," to refer to slave raiding and slave trading by slavers on the Islamic frontier in Central Africa who identified themselves as Muslims, and who identified the people they enslaved as nonbelievers (usually *kirdi* or *kafir* in the oral testimonies recorded by visitors to the region at the time). I intentionally do not use the term Islamic, for two reasons. First, I focus attention on the raiders and traders themselves, and on how they distinguished themselves from their captives. Second, I wish to avoid the impression that I am implying that there is something inherent to Islam that sanctions slavery. To do so would be to make an essentialist argument that is inaccurate. While Islamic doctrine has in the past condoned enslaving some categories of non-Muslims, interpretations of proper behavior—and hence definitions of what is Islamic—have changed through time. For elaboration, see Brunschvig 1960; Juynboll 1913; Philips 1985, 66–87, 195–217. The same may be said of Christianity. Although historical convention today refers to the European commerce in captives to the Americas as the Atlantic slave trade, European slavers also often thought of the trade and their activities in religious terms, setting themselves as Christians against their captives, whom they described as non-Christians or "pagans" or "heathen." See Davis 1984, 32–39, 42–44, 51–52, 55–71, 91–93, 107, 112, 146. In that sense, for earlier periods at least, it would make sense to describe the European trade as the Christian slave trade. Throughout the world, in all epochs, slavers employed a variety of psychological means of dehumanizing the people they enslaved, thus justifying their ill treatment of fellow women and men.

2. Borno is the current official Nigerian spelling for this state.

3. For a history of the kingdom of Sinnar, see O'Fahey and Spaulding 1974, 15–104, and, on slave raiding, 56, 80.

4. For lists of raids by Rabih and al-Sanusi between 1879 and 1911, see Cordell 1985a, 54–55 (fig. 1), 105–8 (fig. 4).

A Motley Company: Differing Identities among Euro-Africans in Eighteenth-Century Elmina

NATALIE EVERTS

ALMOST FROM THE first ventures of European nations to their region in the fifteenth century, coastal West Africans welcomed foreign traders. To facilitate commercial relations, in several coastal communities African hosts permitted first the Portuguese and then other Europeans to settle. In such cases, local rulers, traders, or lineage elders could opt for marrying off women of their kin to these strangers thus binding them to their lineages. As a result, children of mixed Euro-African parentage came to form a tiny part of the population of these Atlantic hubs. This happened particularly in polities where local elites allowed Europeans to reside more or less unrestrictedly, as was the case in Upper Guinea as well as in Elmina and other places along the Gold Coast.¹

Some writers seem to give the impression that people of mixed European–African origins on the precolonial Gold Coast represented a distinct category somewhat separate from the indigenous society and more European in character.² I think this does not give us a true picture and in this chapter I want to adjust this image by looking into some individual cases. I hold that this notion applies rather

¹ Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa, Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Wisconsin and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 95–100; Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545–1800* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1980) 200–22; George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press and Oxford: James Currey, 2003) *passim*; Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 96–114.

² See for instance: Daaku, *Trade and Politics*, 96; Christopher R. DeCorse, *An Archaeology of Elmina, Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast, 1482–1900* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 36–7; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 19.

to situations in Upper Guinea, where many Luso-Africans indeed developed their own particular identity and defined themselves as 'Portuguese'.³

This impression also echoes the generalizations made by contemporary authors of travel accounts, notably Willem Bosman, who designated the Euro-Africans of Elmina by the mysterious generic name 'Tapoeyers' in his bestseller *New and Accurate Description of the Guinea Coast* (first published in Dutch in 1703). He tars 'them' all with the same brush as 'malicious', 'villainous' types of 'half-castes', 'despised by the blacks and by the whites', and states that the women 'all act like whores'. We will never know the reason why Bosman, with his close acquaintance of coastal life and having fathered at least one 'mulatto' son himself, described Euro-Africans in such pejorative terms. True enough, upon closer reading it becomes obvious that he simultaneously modifies this stereotype, and even differentiates according to gender and people of high and low status. Moreover, he indicates that certain 'mulattoes' were more familiar with African customs than others.⁴ Bosman then actually does hint at the existence of a variation in identities of Euro-Africans. It is necessary to read Bosman's work closely to discern such nuances, and be able to see through the stereotypes he peppered his prose with to appeal to his metropolitan audience. Likewise, it is essential to dig deep into the preserved archival sources and by reconstructing individual cases get a more complete picture of the relative positions and roles of these Euro-Africans.

An added benefit of this approach of research at the micro-level might be mentioned. It allows us to steer clear of overplaying the role of brokers and middlemen—African and Euro-African alike—who operated as key figures in transnational Atlantic networks and trade, at the cost of overlooking the diverse other social categories in the coastal societies. These men and women, although less visible in the European sources, formed an integral part of the Atlantic communities of West Africa. That is to say, they were rooted in society by strong kinship affiliations while at the same time being culturally influenced by features of overseas ideas, values, or styles. Their mixed identities were

³ For the development and characteristics of the fluid concept of 'Portuguese' identity see Peter Mark, *'Portuguese' Style and Luso-African Identity, Pre-Colonial Senegambia, Sixteenth–Nineteenth Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 1–13; José Da Silva Horta, 'Evidence for a Luso-African Identity in "Portuguese" Accounts on Guinea of Cabo Verde (Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries)', *History in Africa* 27 (2000): 99–130.

⁴ Willem Bosman, *Nauwkeurige Beschrijving van de Guinese Goud-, Tand- en Slavekust* (Amsterdam: J. Verheide, 1737), I, 53, 132–4; II, 6. William Smith copied this paragraph from Bosman, *A New Voyage to Guinea* (London: Frank Cass, 1967 [1744]), 213. An attempt to trace the obscure etymology of the term 'Tapoeyers' will be made in my forthcoming dissertation: "'Different Colours', Mixed Marriages between Akan Women and European Traders and the Position of their Euro-African Children in Elmina (1637–1817)'.

as emblematic of the social worlds of Atlantic trading communities of the era as were the Euro-Africans themselves. In this chapter they come to the fore when I discuss motives—of lineage heads or individual lineage members—for marrying a European.

Intercultural community

The search for material benefits lay at the root of interpersonal relationships that occurred between Africans and Europeans along the Guinea Coast during the centuries of the transatlantic slave trade, yet their local encounters also generated a wealth of social customs to facilitate mutual relations. Each side did not necessarily need to have a thorough understanding of the other, but a *modus vivendi* which enabled cooperation to the mutual benefit of both parties was established. A decisive factor in the intensity of such social patterns was the degree of permanence of the European presence in a certain coastal community.⁵

Elmina on the Gold Coast provides an example of an intense relationship. Portuguese traders, and subsequently (from 1637 and thereafter) employees in Dutch West India Company (WIC) service originating from various European countries, resided at Castle São Jorge da Mina for almost 400 years. People here were bound together in a variety of social relations, including intimate ties. To overcome basic cultural differences between the small stranger community and their African hosts and thus make living together easier, regulations that were considered to be binding on everyone were drawn up at the castle. In these documents, tested agreements and procedures, some already developed in the Portuguese period, had been laid down to assist in solving, or the timely precluding of, all sorts of potential conflicts between Europeans and Africans. These so-called *pennen* and *contracten* were regularly renewed and ratified by the WIC governor and his councillors who swore on the Bible, and by the Elmina leadership who swore an oath on their ancestors.⁶

⁵ In 'Social Outcomes of Trade Relations: Encounters between Africans and Europeans in the Hubs of the Slave Trade on the Guinea Coast', in Wim Klooster (ed.), *Migration, Trade, and Slavery in an Expanding World: Essays in Honor of Pieter Emmer* (Leiden and Boston: Brill 2009), 141–62, I argue that one can distinguish between four types of intercultural communities, every one of them engendered by the specific features of the trade that was conducted: from risky ad hoc relations of the shipping trade, to Europeans cultivating contacts with certain merchants, but without being allowed to reside on shore, to more advanced relations when Europeans were tolerated to temporarily reside in an African community at the sufferance of a local ruler. In the fourth, most profound type, when Europeans were welcomed to settle in a community, something of a shared cultural climate could develop.

⁶ *Pennen*: possibly from Portuguese *penna*: quill-feather, missive, to write.

The contents were publicly proclaimed to the population of the *Edina oman* (Elmina state) in *Kust Portugees* (Coastal Portuguese), the lingua franca that lasted till well into the nineteenth century. Among these were regulations governing African marriage, or *calisaren* in Dutch.⁷

Although fragments of sources have been preserved from the seventeenth century and earlier, most materials that contain information on the diverse social world of Elmina are in eighteenth-century Dutch collections, particularly the Archives of the Dutch Settlements on the Guinea Coast and the Second West India Company.⁸ If we take a close look at these sources we learn that European men entered into more or less formal relations with Akan-speaking women and that rules pertaining to these *calisaar* marriages fit into Akan customary law.

The Euro-African children born from these marriages were the embodiment of the intercultural intertwinement that existed in Elmina. Depending on various factors, such as the status of their indigenous mother or the concern shown towards them by a European father, they occupied a range of different positions in both the indigenous and in the small European parts of the settlement.

Matrilineal dominance versus patrilineal associations

Since Akan kinship patterns principally follow the matrilineal line, children were considered to belong to the exogamous *abusua* or matrilineal family of their mothers. If she was of free descent, her children were recognized as free members of her *abusua*. If she was born a slave her children were also regarded as being of subordinate status.⁹ Similar patterns existed in those societies in the Rivers of Guinea region which were also predominantly matrilineal in character, as George Brooks has demonstrated.¹⁰

⁷ Everts, 'Social Outcomes', 159. *Calisaren*: a word used in common parlance derived from Portuguese *casar*: to marry.

⁸ For an excellent introduction to Dutch sources on West Africa, see Michel R. Doortmont and Jinna Smit, *Sources for the Mutual History of Ghana and the Netherlands, an Annotated Guide to the Dutch Archives relating to Ghana and West Africa in the Nationaal Archief, 1593-1960s* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

⁹ Bosman, *Nauwkeurige Beschrijving*, I, 190-1. In his monograph on Elmina, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast during the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 1989), 88-92, Harvey M. Feinberg did touch on the fact that the matrilineal character of the kinship system absorbed Euro-Africans into their mothers' lineages.

¹⁰ In *Eurafricans*, xxi-xxii, Brooks distinguishes between stratified, predominately patrilineal societies and more segmented, matrilineal societies. In the former, children of mixed alliances did not have

The rules of matrilineal descent were never applied in an absolute way and adoption of individuals of subordinate descent or strangers with potential was always possible. A different recruiting mechanism was also in operation in the other basic institution of the southern Akan polities, the *asafo* company (from Akan *asa*: war and *fo*: people)—grouping the fighting men of the wards of a town—which also functioned as a religious society and grew in influence in the eighteenth century, especially during the troubled times of the Asante–Fante conflicts. Akan boys were recruited by their father's *asafo*. Traditionally, their fathers were in charge of their upbringing and they lived in their father's house in his ward before reaching adulthood. Although there was a possibility some could be adopted into the *asafo* of a maternal uncle, as a rule Euro-African boys had to do without the patrilineal affiliation to these prestigious power associations.¹¹

In what follows, I explore first why and how Elmina lineage elders, male and female alike, held on to their claim on Euro-African children. In the final section of this chapter I demonstrate that the dearth of patrilineal ties encouraged a certain minority of Euro-Africans to initiate their own 'company', which might be considered a somewhat divergent development towards a more distinct Euro-African identity.

Kinship considerations and mixed marriages

Individuals belonged to the *abusua* (pl. *mbusua*), the exogamous lineage, with corporate responsibilities, of their maternal kin. Different writers mention different numbers of extant *mbusua*. It seems that some *mbusua* disappeared in the course of time or were absorbed by others, an indication of continuous changes that occurred within Elmina's social world. An *abusua* was segmented into numerous household groupings. Women could rise to some prominence, but notwithstanding the matrilineal character, a senior male member was chosen as leader of the collective: the *abusua mpanyin*. He was assisted by a council of elders: the *mpanyinfo*. A household (*fie*), was headed by a *fie mpanyin*, male or female.¹²

the possibilities to integrate as easily into the lineages of their African mothers, as those in the latter.

¹¹ In the eighteenth-century sources the *asafo* were known as 'kwartieren' (Dutch: quarters or wards). Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans*, 104–8.

¹² J. Sylvanus Wartenberg, *Sao Jorge D'Elmina: Premier West African European Settlement: Its Traditions and Customs* (Ilfracombe: Arthur H. Stockwell, n.d.), 81–2; A. van der Eb, 'Inboorlingenrecht van de Kust van Guinea 1851', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 88, Afk. I en II (1931): 294; James Boyd Christensen, *Double Descent among the Fanti* (New Haven: Human

Marriage was regarded as an alliance between lineages. Partners became associated with one another because an agreement existed within their respective groups that the union was beneficial to either lineage.¹³ The more living members, the more powerful an *abusua* was considered to be. Children, especially girls, symbolized the continuity of the lineage, and *mpanyimfo* preferred girls to be given in marriage to promising partners. In Elmina they could choose either an African from another *abusua* or a European connected to the castle community. Akan women who married Europeans acquired possessions on behalf of their kin, had access to import goods, and enjoyed some protection from their stranger partners against the dangers to which individuals were subjected during the times of the slave trade. Most important for our story is that children of white fathers were considered to belong to their mothers' lineages, either as free members, or of subordinate status if she had been born a slave.

We can catch a glimpse of the effect such a marriage could have on a household from a source from the early Dutch period. The entry of 22 May 1660 in the daily journal of Elmina castle, makes mention of a dispute between a wealthy Elmina lady and an old woman, who is referred to as 'Anthoniba's mother'. We learn that the lady, who happens to be a wife of one of the *grandes* (headmen) of the neighbouring state Commenda, claimed a slave, a piece of imported East India textile for a *paan*,¹⁴ and some beads from the old mother, daughter Anthoniba, and her children. The lady, who had lived in Commenda for a number of years, had learned that the old woman and her offspring had become quite well to do during her absence, and that recently over twenty slaves had been added to their household. When they failed to satisfy her claim, the lady lodged a complaint with the castle authorities. She told them she was entitled to a 'recognition' for the 'goodwill' rendered to Anthoniba's mother in the past, she being 'her mistress' and consequently mistress of her children and grandchildren too. They all should be grateful to her for the fact that she had once 'ordered' Anthoniba's mother to marry the 'white man'. All that they had 'gained from him', they actually owed to her. It had annoyed her that they had not shown her the least bit of gratitude. The more so because the old mother, as well as Anthoniba herself, were no longer

Relations Area Files, 1954), 19-29. John Mensah Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968 [1897]), 33-9.

¹³ Marital alliances were also sought between lineages of different states to consolidate relations. See for instance Ivor Wilks, *Akwamu 1640-1750, A Study of the Rise and Fall of a West African Empire*, Trondheim Studies in History African Series No. 5 (Trondheim, Department of History, NTNU, 2001 [vol. 35]): 133, 138.

¹⁴ Portuguese: *pano*, cloth: the usual wrapper West African women wear around the waist.

performing any duties for her, such as fetching water and firewood, or working in her garden, like they used to do. She therefore threatened that if they would not comply with her demand, she would order her retinue to *panjaren* (get hold of) the slave and goods she was entitled to from the household of Anthoniba's mother.¹⁵

We learn that eventually the Dutch governor, on the advice of the Elmina *grandes*, sent a messenger to Anthoniba's mother and her kinfolk to urge them to satisfy the complainant right away. This implies that the lady's claim was recognized to be in accordance with customary law, and that she was entitled to a share in the profit because Anthoniba's mother and her offspring were part of her segment of an *abusua*.¹⁶

This example tells us that a free lineage member had married off a woman, who belonged to her household in a subordinate position, to a European partner (whose identity remains obscure). Apparently this match had been quite beneficial not only to the woman herself, but it had contributed to some degree of upward mobility of her direct descendants as well. In this sense they were representative of what Ghanaian historian Kwame Daaku has called the new class (consisting of both Africans and Euro-Africans) of the coastal towns who knew how to benefit from the opportunities Atlantic trade offered them, and who gradually would surpass the old hereditary elites.¹⁷

Anthoniba herself might have been born from the marriage of her mother and the European, but the sources do not tell.¹⁸ She might well have had other

¹⁵ *Panjaren* from Portuguese: *penhorar*, to seize as a pledge or security.

¹⁶ N[ational] A[rchives], The Hague, Netherlands Possessions on the Coast of Guinea (NBKG) 81, Journal of Sint George d'Elmina and correspondence with the outer forts (May–June 1660), fols 51–3, 65.

¹⁷ In his *Trade and Politics*, 96–143, Daaku notices: 'the emergence of a new group of people—the mulattoes' side by side with an upcoming 'new class' of Gold Coast people, who benefited from the opportunities Euro-African trade offered them. At the same time he questions the importance of Euro-Africans in the Gold Coast trade, comparing their role to that of Euro-African traders in Senegambia. Daaku bases this idea on W. Rodney, '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* 7:3 (1966): 439, who saw 'the emergence of powerful mulatto slave-trading chiefs' in the eighteenth century, such as the Anglo-African Caulkers and 'levelands operating on the islands off the Serra Leon littoral. In tracing the processes of change on the Gold Coast, Ray Kea explores how merchant-broker 'groups' rose to power in coastal urban centres. He considers intercultural trade to be a vital 'generator of change', since some of the most influential men accumulated their wealth by it. He gives some examples of these *abirempon* without distinguishing between Africans or Euro-Africans: Ray Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 206–47, 313–20.

¹⁸ Anthoniba's name might be an indication that she was of mixed African–Portuguese parentage; but the termination that is added to indicate the female version of a name is not

siblings of Euro-African origin, or children of mixed descent herself, but this remains uncertain too. Whether the household was comprised of Euro-Africans or not, they were driven by the same motive as other (segments of) lineages in Elmina like them: to strengthen themselves by seizing opportunities to accumulate property and people. Marriage was a proven method to further this aim.

Women and girls of subordinate status within lineages could be married off to Europeans, but girls of free status too could be somewhat pushed by their kinfolk to accept a European groom. This happened to Euro-African girl Elisabeth, a daughter of a late German sergeant, in the 1790s. Her mother Accusuwa and her grandmother Acoea (both being traders in import goods) wished her to marry a Dutch WIC official who held the lucrative position of warehouse master. When Elisabeth proved to be unwilling, her mother warned her not to be too choosy but to mind her reputation: 'Better marry this one, if you refuse him no white man ever wants to marry you again.'¹⁹ Elisabeth had to give in the moment her maternal grandmother had accepted the bride wealth her husband-to-be had delivered at her family house in town. Shortly afterwards her mother and grandmother ordered her brother, like so many Euro-African boys a soldier in WIC service at the castle, to escort his sister into the castle to her husband's quarters. From another source, dated some years later, we learn more about the identity of mother Accusuwa, who at that time was herself married to another Dutch military man. She is described as being of an important family from the Fante polity Annomabu. For also women of important families from nearby polities came to Elmina or were sent by senior relatives, apparently to exploit the opportunities the place offered them to establish a new branch of their lineage there.²⁰

Within Elmina, certain practices developed to benefit from alliances with European partners. By verbal testament, Akan men could bequeath their wives and children personal property, a practice contrary to the transfer of communal property via the maternal line. In a similar way, partners and children of European men could inherit slaves, gold, commodities, or real estate.

From the eighteenth century onwards we see *mpanyimfo* grant plots of land belonging to the collective to certain female *abusua* members who were married to Dutch officials. European men had houses built on their wives' family ground, founded their coastal family, and when they died or went home they left their house, household effects, domestic slaves, and trade goods to

¹⁹ NA, NBKG 327, Register of original papers, circular letters, public deeds, Elmina (July–November 1794).

²⁰ NA, West India Committee (1795–1800), Records of criminal procedures 98 (December 1797).

their wives and children. In this way, they contributed to strengthening their wives' extended families.²¹

Even though segments of *abusua* were keen to benefit from their alliances with Europeans, they actively attempted—as we will see below—to bar such modern influences as Western rights of succession which would undermine their own system. But first—to make clear that the picture of Euro-Africans as a distinct group is, in the case of Elmina at least, false—we will explore the three basic mechanisms that operated to define the position of children of mixed descent and their incorporation into the society at large.

Positions of Euro-African children related to the status of the mother

To be able to discern the relative places Euro-African children occupied within coastal society, we first have to look at the positions their mothers held in the social order. There were three possibilities: she could either be a free Akan mother, being a member of an *abusua*; an Akan woman of slave descent who belonged to an *abusua* in a subservient position; or a slave woman of stranger origins without any *abusua* at all. Secondly, it is necessary to briefly explore what influence fathers could exert on their Euro-African children.

I start with a formal *calisaar* marriage between a European and a free woman from an *abusua*. What could occur may be seen from the following example. In 1760, a commander of a WIC outpost complained in a letter to the Dutch governor in Elmina that the black woman Paraba had appropriated the belongings of his deceased African wife, on behalf of her *abusua*. Moreover, Paraba had told the commander that she wanted to take care of his Euro-African son and that she would administer the boy's mother's inheritance for him. The WIC authorities decided in Paraba's favour. Although the commander must have been familiar with local customs, his understanding of them was defective. He claimed that according to customary rules his son was the sole heir to his mother's legacy and he was not wrong about that. What he failed to see, however, was that the child's existence was bound up with that of his mother's *abusua*. Though individuals could own private property, at the same time senior members (like the woman Paraba in this case) guarded the collective interest of a lineage and saw to it that the joint property would not fall apart. Traditionally, a father was in charge of his son's upbringing and a boy lived in

²¹ Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws*, 60–1; M. R. Doortmont and N. C. Everts, 'Vrouwen, familie en eigendom op de Goudkust (Ghana). De verwevenheid van Afrikaanse en Europese systemen van erfrecht in Elmina, 1760–1860', in C. van Eijl (ed.), *Geld en Goed. Jaarboek voor Vrouwen-geschiedenis*, 17 (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1997), 114–30.

his father's house before reaching adulthood, yet he also remained part of his mother's *abusua* all his life. With the death of his African wife the European was directly confronted with the joint interest of her kin as seen from their cultural perspective.

The commander was confronted with his own impotence in the African world. As an individual he was defeated by the collective of the *abusua* of his African spouse and he was therefore not able to live up to the pattern of paterfamilias that became a European father. What probably did not help in this case is that the commander had run up debts, and consequently one could doubt that he would be able to provide for his son. If not, he would not be of much use anymore to the *abusua*. His son anyhow did not come off that badly: he was to grow up a free member of an *abusua*, so he would enjoy all the possibilities that the collective would offer him.²²

If a father wished his child to have an education according to his own Christian standards, and if he was able to overcome the resistance of the mother and her relatives, then sending a child to Europe was the only option. But, because most fathers lacked the financial means, that opportunity was only reserved for a few. For the others the only thing left to do was to leave some slaves and gold to their children upon their death. Often a father instructed the executors of his will to take care that his African in-laws did not have access to his inheritance, but only his partner and children. The attempts of the executors must often have been in vain though.²³

For the Euro-African child and its position in society consequences could be very different if its mother was of slave descent, even if she was connected to an Akan lineage. In that case her children would also be claimed by the *abusua*, but they were destined to live in a subservient position. The available sources give the impression that many Euro-African boys of such a humble status served as WIC soldiers. By 1750 the WIC garrison consisted almost entirely of Euro-African soldiers, who held a remarkably low social status in town. This is not to say that boys of free status did not serve in the WIC garrison too, for example the case of Elisabeth's brother described above. Though it is likely that they did not have to hand over (a substantial part of) their wages earned in WIC service to senior lineage members, as boys of slave status had to.

²² NA, NBKG 121, Correspondence with the outer forts, Letter J.P. Huijdecoper to N. Heinsius, Elmina, 7 June 1760; Letter Heinsius to Huijdecoper, Butri, 23 June 1760. For this particular case see also N. C. Everts, 'Cherchez la Femme: Gender-Related Issues in Eighteenth-Century Elmina', *Itinerario* 20/1 (1996): 45-57.

²³ Attempts to establish a school at Elmina castle during the eighteenth century all failed. Examples of such wills can be found in NA, NBKG 335-336, Copies of last wills (1762-1790), *passim*.

A wealthy European father nevertheless could make a difference to children of slave status as the following case shows. In June 1805, a few days before leaving the coast, Dutch governor Isaac de Roever had his will drawn up at the castle. He left a house to his Euro-African wife, freeborn Efua Anna, and bequeathed the sum of 10,000 Dutch guilders (about 5,000 euros today) to a child named Petronella, daughter of the 'black maid' Amba. The will is followed by three deeds. In the first one, Efua Anna herself declared that she had sold her woman slave Amba together with her 'mulatto child' to De Roever. The second deed is a letter of freedom for Amba as well as for her daughter Petronella, in which it is also stated that neither Efua Anna nor any of her lineage ever again can claim ownership over Amba and her daughter. This, it must be stressed, is not the same as precluding the claims of kinship: hereafter Amba and her daughter came to be considered as free members of Efua Anna's *abusua*. In the third and final deed De Roever declared that if Efua Anna died before Amba, the house, besides all the slaves he had presented to Efua Anna in the past, would become Amba's property. In a last clause he declared that Efua Anna had to accept that Amba and her daughter Petronella continued to live with her in her house.²⁴

From a missive sent a year later by Euro-African free trader Jan Nieser, who informed his friend De Roever about Elmina's novelties, we learn that: 'all is well with your Efua & Amba, and the little one'. The three of them were living together harmoniously.²⁵ In this way Amba could stay with her daughter, Efua Anna's *abusua* was assured of continuity and wealth, while Petronella could grow up a free Akan woman within the protective sphere of Efua's *abusua*. This case serves also as an example of the fluid operation of the kinship system and how adoption was used for the benefit of the collective.

Often, when a European bought a slave woman and manumitted her children, he failed to take clever precautions as De Roever did, which meant that the woman and children found themselves cut off from their *abusua*. They then risked having to lead an isolated existence in Akan society.

This dangerous state of affairs was inevitable in the case of children born out of relationships between a European man and a slave woman who did not belong to any *abusua* to start with. In Akan culture a man who could afford it could buy an *odonko* slave woman (foreign-born with no affiliations to Akan lineages) and have children with her. Some men preferred to do just that, because this was the only way a father could enjoy undisputed rights over his children. After his death his children would belong to his *abusua*.

²⁴ NA, NBKG 338, Secretarial notarial protocol 1804-1809 (June 1805).

²⁵ NA, NBKG 113, Papers Merchant Jan Nieser, 1134, Accra (12 June 1806).

A European, however, had no *abusua*. In the case of his death, therefore, his wife and children belonged to nobody at all. This was considered a highly precarious situation in Akan society. The fact that in the 1730s a fund was instituted at Elmina castle for orphans as well as for the so-called poor mulattoes, to prevent them having to go begging in the streets, probably must be seen in this light.²⁶ From the daily journals it becomes clear that mothers who belonged to the *odonko* category turned to the Dutch to offer their sons to be enlisted as soldiers. Other humble jobs at the castle were also sought: girls could become washing and cooking women. Boys could work as valets in the service of WIC employees. Better prospects were there for those who were engaged as agents in private trade activities for a white man, or as *makelaars* (brokers) in WIC service, though those jobs were normally reserved for 'boys from prominent Elmina families'. This proved to be a good training for a few Euro-Africans who eventually became independent traders. Learning how to operate in two cultures proved to be a great asset.²⁷

As we have seen, the accepted practice in Elmina society was that *mpanyimfo* (leaders of the *mbusua* or just of households) encouraged female kin to enter into marital alliances with Europeans. Such marriages were subject to the regulations of customary law, and these were also prevalent in matters of succession. If a European or Euro-African father tried to change the rules, that is, if he for instance wished to leave full control over his estate and house exclusively to his children, as would have been normal in Europe, this would simply not be accepted by the children's *abusua*.

One of the few Christian Protestant citizens of Elmina, Euro-African big man, Jacob van Dijk, had his will recorded at the castle in 1760. He appointed his son Pieter, who was eighteen at the time, as his sole heir. The day after his father died, Pieter established himself in the house his father had left him. That night a violent mob forced an entry into the house and seized all household slaves, while Pieter barely managed to escape to the castle. Later on it turned out that a wealthy woman from town had sent her dependants to carry out the attack; presumably, she was a powerful member of the *abusua* of Van Dijk senior.²⁸

²⁶ NA, Archive of the Second West India Company (Second WIC) 487, fol. 257–63, Letters and Papers to the Amsterdam Chamber, Copy orphan book (3 February 1729); Second WIC 502, Resolution (20 November 1734).

²⁷ NA, Archive Grand Pensionary, L. P. van de Spiegel, 147, Letter D. C. Wesselman, Amsterdam (2 January 1791), not foliated.

²⁸ NA, NBKG 298, Register of original papers, 208; Second WIC 505, Resolution (18 September 1761).

The reason why the lineage elders were so intent on suppressing influences from the outside world might be sought in the fact that the kinship system was firmly rooted in Akan religious principles. Onyankonpon, the withdrawn supreme being, creator or first ancestor, was the source of existence. In everyday life, people experienced the presence of ancestor spirits (*asamanfo*). The Akan concept of death implied that a spirit of a deceased person joined its ancestors, but continued to be associated with its living kin in a positive way. This eternal connection inspired lineage solidarity and was symbolized by the preserved carved wooden stools, once used by founders of lineages or outstanding ancestors, while some influential descendants served as stool holders. People performed specific rituals to call upon *asamanfo* to reside in a stool to invoke prosperity for a lineage.²⁹

The conclusion so far seems to be that Euro-Africans cannot be considered a unified category because the differences among them were so many. It was in fact the rules of matrilineal descent in Akan society that led to the differentiation among them, since the integration of Euro-Africans into Akan society was performed on Akan terms. However, in the last part of this chapter, we will see that another development in an opposite direction can also be noted from the end of the eighteenth century onwards.

Creation of a company

The *asafo* company, which consisted of the fighting men of a ward of a town, was, like the *abusua*, an elementary institution of the coastal Akan. Tradition dictated that an Akan boy was recruited by his father's *asafo*. During a boy's adolescence he lived with his father in his father's family house and consequently in his ward. From an early age a boy received a military training together with the other *mancevos* (the youngsters of his age group) and learned how to hold his ground in the defence of his ward, the most important duty of an *asafo*.³⁰

Throughout his life a man remained connected to his *asafo*, which also served as a religious society. Upon death the *asafo* company performed certain funeral customs for the deceased member, such as the crucial ritual of seeing off the spirit on its way to the spirit world. After the body was carried around to detect if anyone might have caused an untimely death by using witchcraft, the spirit was addressed directly by a senior member to ascertain if it was ready

²⁹ I. Chukwukere, 'A Coffin for "The Loved One": The Structure of Fante Death Rituals', *Current Anthropology* 22/1 (1981): 62-3; Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 98.

³⁰ *Mancevo*: from Portuguese *mancebo*, young man.

for departure to *asamando* (the afterworld), or whether there was something keeping it from leaving. This was followed by a final salute, by drumming and firing shots from imported guns, which was meant to announce the *asamanfo* that a spirit was on its way to *asamando*. People believed that spirits that had not been parted from their living kin, that is, sent off in the proper way, could not reach the happy state of becoming *asamanfo*, and they feared that these spirits remained lingering, causing mischief among their living descendants.¹¹

What about our Euro-Africans, who had European fathers and consequently lacked an *asafo* to perform the final ritual for them? Although some Euro-African boys appear to have been adopted into an *asafo* of a maternal uncle or another powerful male member of his *abusua*, it remains true that most of them had to do without membership of these prestigious communal associations.

Early in 1782, however, a tiny company of Euro-Africans is mentioned in the Dutch documents for the first time. It was during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. The seven *asafo* of Elmina were all mobilized to help fight off an invasion army of the British and their allies, the joint *asafo* from the neighbouring town of Cape Coast. At this critical moment in Elmina history a mere twenty Euro-Africans manned the castle's guns under heavy enemy fire, while at the same time being bombarded by a British man-of-war. Immediately after the attack had been repelled, the Dutch WIC governor publicly praised what he called: 'some Tapoeyer volunteers, living right near the castle, who had manly helped to defend the town'.¹² He asked them what they preferred to receive as a reward for their brave effort: a sum in gold or the institution of a particular funeral ceremony. That ceremony would assure:

That from now on, when a male Tapoeyer of free status, not being enlisted as a soldier in the WIC garrison, will die, and his dead body will be carried around according to the custom of this country before burial, that the flag on top of the castle will be flown at half-mast in his honour and the guns will fire a salute of three shots.¹³

The governor registered their unanimous response:

They replied that they were extremely happy with the latter and that they accepted that honour with gratitude, as if they had been presented with a hundred 'bendas' of gold [about 4,000 euros].¹⁴

¹¹ T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 306–7.

¹² NA, Second WIC 499 fol. 1310–11, Letters and Papers to the Amsterdam Chamber; Missive Governor P. Volkmar (May 1782).

¹³ NA, Second WIC 511, Resolution (22 February 1782).

¹⁴ Ibid.

The volunteers added one request to this, namely that the WIC would also present each of them with a coffin. Somewhat miserly, the governor agreed to this, but 'only when the WIC was supplied with sufficient planks'.³⁵

The fact that this small group of freeborn Euro-African citizens of Elmina had fought at the castle implies that these men indeed had no obligations towards any of the seven *asafu*, each of which had defended a certain ward of the town during the attack. They had volunteered for service at the castle, which suggests that with regard to military responsibilities they felt themselves to be associated with the WIC. The governor, when he praised their contribution, said that they were living in Elmina town somewhere near to the castle, where apparently they had established something like their own ward by then.

The most significant indication of a shared identity among our little group of Euro-Africans, however, is their preference of the funeral ceremony that was offered them by the institution, that is the WIC, to which their fathers had belonged, over a gift in gold. This looks like a ritual innovation, rooted in Akan ideology, that could serve to remedy their atypical position in Elmina society. According to the Akan custom, children had to provide a coffin (in the eighteenth century this was still mostly a shroud) for their deceased fathers, yet the 'Tapoeyers' achieved the fact that their fathers' institution would provide them with coffins.³⁶

In April 1782, immediately after this episode, members of the 'Corps Free Tapoeyers' went on patrol to Commenda, where the British were expected to land again. They served for five weeks in a row, alongside the seven regular *asafu*, for which they received remuneration of their expenses from the WIC. Upon departure from Elmina the 'officers' had requested the governor to provide them with a number of small handguns for a few 'small children', who joined them on the expedition. Apparently, they took to training their sons in military matters right from the start.³⁷

In January 1784, when a naval vessel brought the news from Europe that peace negotiations between the Dutch and British had opened in Paris, the members of our small company asked the naval captain to deliver an open letter addressed to the stadtholder prince, William V, the States General of the Dutch Republic, and the WIC directors, in which they expressed their loyalty to the Dutch cause. In the case of a new attack on Elmina they would again

³⁵ Ibid. The 'free Tapoeyer' Harmen Cobben was the first to be buried with the new honorary ceremony: NA, NBKG 157, Journal (19 July 1783).

³⁶ I. Chukwukere, A Coffin, 61.

³⁷ NA, Second WIC 990 Letters and papers to Zeeland Chamber, Correspondence Commenda (27 March 1782).

be ready to sacrifice their lives for its defence. In his commentary with regard to this, the WIC general described them as 'Tapoeyer Kwartier' (quarter or ward); they themselves signed as: 'We, the joint natives, free citizens and mulattoes of Elmina town'.³⁸ In later years they were often referred to as 'kwartier number ten', that of the 'vrij burgers' (free citizens), denoting the free Euro-African inhabitants who happened not to be in WIC service. It should be stressed that only a limited number of all Euro-Africans belonged to this company. Initial membership was restricted to those freeborn men who had distinguished themselves in the war and who were descended from a European forefather in the male line.

Most of the men who were part of this company from the beginning were sons or grandsons of WIC servants, who earned a living as independent entrepreneurs—as traders, tailors, or wigmakers for instance. In the sources they often appear by a patronymic, like Claas Frans, alias Frans Limejuice. Frans, who owned a plantation growing limes which he sold to Dutch slavers, could command a retinue of two hundred slaves.³⁹ Although none of these men had enjoyed a European education, some of them had learned to write. Pieter Barends, their first ensign (commander), is a case in point. In his younger days he had made at least one transatlantic voyage to Suriname on the slaver *Vrijheid* as *bomba* (overseer of the slaves). Later, he had functioned as 'principal servant', a kind of personal broker of a Dutch governor.⁴⁰ Dirk Hobroek, one of the other members of the company during the first years, was a son of the 'freeborn negress' Adja and a senior merchant who had been fired from WIC service and forced to return to the Dutch Republic, but who still left a considerable bequest to his son. In 1786, Hobroek succeeded Barends as ensign.⁴¹

The 'gentlemen' of the 'Tapoeyer Kwartier' came into action once more around 1810 as gunners when Elmina, the long-term ally of the Asante, was besieged by a combination of Fante forces. By that time, however, their company was already evolving into an association of a class of wealthy merchants who designated themselves by the term *Vrijburgers* (free citizens) and who dwelled in large two-storey stone houses in the town. Typical of this development is that their ensign received the civil title of *Burgemeester* (lord mayor).

³⁸ NA, NWIC 936 fol. 2146, 2287–8, Letters and papers to Zeeland Chamber, Missive P. Volkmar and missive Corps Tapoeyers, Elmina (31 January 1784).

³⁹ NA, Committee for the Colonial Affairs 94, fol. 346, Missive J. de Veer, 18 November 1791; NBKG 342 fol. 110, Journal, 10 March 1804.

⁴⁰ NA Second WIC 111 fol. 64, Letters and papers to Amsterdam Chamber, Muster-roll (31 October 1736); Second WIC 491 fol. 534, Letters and papers to Amsterdam Chamber, Interrogatory (22 April 1760).

⁴¹ NA, NBKG 300 fol. 71, Protocol (25 April 1766); NBKG 319 fol. 106, Protocol (14 July 1786).

or head of a community).⁴² To the Akan they were known as *Akrampafo*, Vulture people, after the vulture, the symbol of Onyankonpon, as Creator; he who had created himself.⁴³

Though it is obvious that these Euro-Africans had come to form a separate group in Elmina society, we must beware of drawing too far-reaching conclusions. These men were only a fraction, though prominent, of the total Euro-African population which as a whole continued to be fragmented by the pull of the *abusua* system. This was the reason why the Elmina Euro-Africans did not develop a clear common identity comparable to that of some inter-cultural Atlantic communities of the Upper Guinea stretch of coastline in the period under study.

Over there, the *Lançados*, Portuguese immigrant traders of the Cabo Verde archipelago, who moved across to the mainland in search of better economic opportunities, cast their lot among the peoples of the Petite Côte and the Rivers of Guinea. Although their Luso-African descendants, the *filhos da terra*, were deeply embedded into African lineages by ties of kinship, they continued to define themselves, and were defined by their environment, as 'Portuguese' over the generations. Essential to their sense of shared identity was that this was applied on African terms. The people of their environment not only regarded Luso-Africans as 'Portuguese' but also extended this category to everyone in their service, or associated with them.⁴⁴ Still, the situations in Upper Guinea as well as on the Gold Coast appear to illustrate that it was the kinship structure that determined how patterns of identity and belonging developed in the trading settlements of Atlantic Africa.

⁴² NA, Ministry of Colonial Affairs 3954, Journal (9 June 1810).

⁴³ Personal communication from panyin Nana Kofi Essouen II, Elmina (27 March 1990); Eva L.R. Meyerowitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 83. For an early reference of the term *Akrampafo* in the sources see NBK 349, Pen and Contract, Elmina (15 October 1816).

⁴⁴ Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 200-4.

5



Slavery & Slave Trade in West Africa 1450-1930

PATRICK MANNING

Slavery and slave trade, 1450-1650

In 1450, approximately 20 to 25 million persons lived in relative stability in West Africa. This population, while divided into numerous ethnic, linguistic and political communities, was at the same time interconnected with ties of trade, migration and religious affiliation. For thousands of years, West African populations had developed their societies in the overlapping zones of forest, savanna and desert edge; and among their many social institutions and structures existed some that could be called 'slavery', in that war captives, pawns and other dependants were held in subservience by individuals, families and states. While historians have little direct evidence for these early antecedents of West African slavery, it is clear that the small scale of slavery in West Africa contrasted with the far more developed systems of slavery in the regions of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Middle East. Holding people in captivity could succeed only if the captors had substantial resources and substantial incentives to carry out this oppression. Slavery could expand only if connected to significant demand for captive labor — brought about by the ability of a monarchy to extract servile labor, or by the existence of markets for slave-produced goods, or through purchasers who would carry captives a distance to where these conditions could be obtained.

In 1450 all three of these conditions arose along the Sahara fringe. The declining kingdom of Mali and the rising kingdom of Bornu gathered, exploited and exported captives, as is documented in Arabic language records. For the rest of West Africa, slavery became a major

factor only after 1550, when trans-Atlantic encounters brought collapse of Amerindian populations and a resulting demand for African labor.

Europeans voyaging to the West African littoral found that they were able to seize and purchase captives, and gradually increased the number of their purchases. An estimated 600 persons per year were taken from the West African coast between 1450 and 1500, and this number grew steadily for three centuries. By 1650 the European purchases of enslaved West Africans had risen to about 4,000 per year, a number more than six times greater than maritime slave exports in 1500, and which equaled the number of captives sent from West Africa across the Sahara in 1650.¹ By 1780 the number of trans-Atlantic slave exports from West Africa had multiplied by another factor of more than ten, to 50,000 per year. (In the same period, slave exports across the Sahara rose from about 2,800 per year in the late fifteenth century to about 7,000 per year in the late eighteenth century.) These figures indicate that, to explain the expansion of slavery and slave trade in West Africa, one must concentrate on studying the interactions between Europeans and West Africans, far more than on the earlier patterns of life among West Africans alone.

For the period from 1450 to 1650, we shall focus on the beginnings of the processes that could later deliver many more slaves in trade across the Atlantic. These initial patterns of trade and exploitation, replicated and reinforced over the following four centuries, ultimately brought dramatic and unfortunate changes to the population and society of West Africa.

Well-informed West Africans in 1450 knew about the Mediterranean Sea and the Europeans living to the north of it. But it was different to have Europeans on African shores in advanced ships, opening new routes of communication. The Europeans had known, similarly, of the trade across the Sahara: this exchange in West African captives, linked to trade in gold, salt, and cowries, had been in existence for centuries. The majority of West African captives went through Mali to Morocco as domestics and to desert stations as laborers in oasis agriculture and salt mines. A smaller number crossed the desert from Borno and the

Central Sudan to Fezzan and then to the Eastern Mediterranean. European visitors to West Africa sought to undercut the trans-Saharan trade, and to some degree they succeeded. But in other ways the trans-Saharan trade expanded along with that of the Atlantic.

In the days before Columbus, the Portuguese focused their attention on four areas of the West African coast — Senegambia, Upper Guinea, Gold Coast, and Benin — and these remained the principal points for West African contact with the Atlantic until 1650. The first Portuguese slave trade was the transportation of captives to Portugal as well as to the Atlantic islands — the Azores, Madeira and, later, the Cape Verde islands.² This trade, lasting from 1450 until it contracted sharply by 1550, brought West African slaves into the production process of wheat in Portugal and the islands. Slaves from the Upper Guinea coast were most numerous in Cape Verde; slaves from Senegambia were most numerous in Portugal.

Between the Senegal and Gambia rivers, Portuguese merchant purchased gold brought from the mining areas in Bambuk and Bure and purchased slaves, mostly Wolof-speaking. The wealth brought by slave sales enriched local and provincial leaders, but undermined the monarchy of the Jolof kingdom, which by 1500 had broken up into smaller kingdoms, each seeking to benefit from the growing Atlantic trade. The Portuguese, unable to establish a firm base on the mainland, established a base in the Cape Verde islands. From there, merchant-led voyages to the Upper Guinea coast in particular, to purchase captives who had been seized in the region's expanding slave trade. The Portuguese did establish a firm base on the Gold Coast, with the construction of Elmina castle in 1480–82, which served as a centre for gold trade for several centuries, drawing gold for export from the Akan hinterland and further afield. Portuguese mariners set up commercial ties with the kingdom of Benin, buying slaves and beads to sell for gold at Elmina, and buying pepper to send to Portugal.

In the years following 1500, enslavement of peoples in West Africa began to expand in several ways.³ Portuguese merchants returned from

¹ On the volume of slave exports before 1650, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Ivana Elbl, 'The Volume of the Early Atlantic Slave Trade, 1450–1521', *Journal of African History* 38 (1997), pp. 31–75; and Ralph A. Austen, 'The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade: A Tentative Census', in Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn (eds), *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), pp. 23–76. See also Nehemia Levizion and J. F. P. Hopkins (eds) trans. J. F. P. Hopkins *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

² On Portuguese slave trade to 1550, see Elbl, 'The Volume of the Early Atlantic Slave Trade'; Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, trans. Ayi Kwei Armah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); John William Blake (ed.) *Europeans in West Africa 1450–1560*, vol. 1 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1942); and A. F. C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans 1485–1897* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

³ On expansion of the slave economy, see Jan S. Hogendorn and Marion Johnson, *The Shell Money of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Manuel Lobo Cabrera, *La Esclavitud en las Canarias Orientales en el Siglo XVI (Negros, Moros y Moriscos)*, (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, 1982.); and J. P. Olivier de

the Indian Ocean with cowries, and sold them in West Africa; Spain built up a substantial system of enslaved labor in the sixteenth century on the Canary Islands, with slaves purchased from the Portuguese; and Morocco too expanded its production of sugar. At the desert edge, the rising empire of Songhai (more than its predecessor and neighbor Mali) relied on slavery and slave trade as a pillar of its economy. Ottoman demand for slaves may have also encouraged more trans-Saharan slave trade through Libya. The total of all these exports from West Africa reached about 6,500 persons per year in 1500.

Only after 1550 did West African captives travel in large numbers to the Americas. Small numbers of Africans participated in the early voyages of discovery and conquest, and an early effort at creating a sugar plantation on Hispaniola in the 1520s relied upon African slave labor. Spanish and Portuguese conquest of mainland territories in the Americas took decades, and the conquerors sought first to obtain laborers by enslaving local Amerindian populations. After 1550, however, it became clear that the Amerindian population was declining because of disease, and both the Spanish and Portuguese turned to African slave labor. The Spanish, ill-equipped to collect slaves directly, awarded a contract known as the *asiento* to merchants of other nations: Portuguese merchants dominated these *asiento* contracts from 1580 to 1660. Three main centers of slave population in the Americas grew up in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The first two were Peru and Mexico, which acquired captives from West Africa. Slave populations were concentrated mainly in the urban centres of Lima in Peru, as well as Mexico City and Vera Cruz in Mexico. Urban slaves served especially as artisans and as domestics; rural slaves worked as field labourers, artisans, and as miners. As Bowser and Palmer have shown, these slaves came especially from Senegambia, Upper Guinea, and the Bight of Benin.⁴ They were brought to the Americas via the Portuguese *asiento*.

For the third center of African population in the Americas, Brazil, the slaves came from Central Africa rather than West Africa. From 1480 Portuguese merchants had taken slaves from Kongo to the island of São Thomé, and made it the main center of sugar production in the sixteenth century. Thereafter, sugar production in Brazil began to grow,

Sardan, 'Captifs ruraux et esclaves impériaux du Songhay', in Claude Meillassoux (ed.) *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1975), pp. 99-134.

⁴ On American slavery 1550-1650, see Frederick Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524-1650* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1973); and Colin W. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570-1650* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

and by 1600 had exceeded that of São Thomé. Slaves from Kongo and then from Angola went mainly to the plantation settlements of Brazil's northeast coast, especially in Bahia and Pernambuco. A few captives from West Africa went to Brazil.

We should not exaggerate the impact of slavery and slave trade in the era up to 1650. Some of the important changes of that time resulted not from slavery in particular but more generally from new connections in maritime and land-based trade. These included expansions in West African exports of gold, pepper and gum Arabic, as well as imports of such commodities as cowries, metals and textiles. There was also expanded trade between West African ports.

But slave trade did grow, and the initial lineaments of the West African system of slavery and slave trade were in place by 1650. The quantity of captives exported from West Africa almost tripled from 1450 to 1650, and most of the increase came from regions bordering the Atlantic. The expansion of enslavement generated improved techniques for seizing captives: armed raids, kidnapping and judicial enslavement. Individual regions underwent cycles of expansion and contraction in slave trade. In the peak export years, men came to be in short supply, and populations declined. Walter Rodney has argued, for the Upper Guinea region, that the first century of contact with the Portuguese resulted in an expansion of slavery where it had not previously been prevalent, and John Thornton has shown, for the same region, the social change brought about by the shortage of men. The developments up to 1650 in Senegambia, Upper Guinea, Songhai, Gold Coast and Benin served to foreshadow the elements of the larger system that was later to emerge.⁵ The local and episodic impact of enslavement had yet to become broad and general, but the writing was on the wall.

Slaves from West Africa also became involved on a large scale in sugar cultivation beginning in about 1650, as the global economy entered a period of growth. Since 1500, many regions of the world had been put in contact by maritime transport. The initial connections, however, had brought more devastation than fortunes — cycles of war and disease, plus the difficulty of making new acquaintances, meant that the early days of the world economy were difficult. For West Africa, as for the world, global connections grew, but local societies did not prosper.

With time, however, commercial and political systems began to fit

⁵ For slave trade from West Africa 1550-1650, see Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); and Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*.

more closely with global realities. From the 1570s, the silver mines of Mexico and Peru had begun to provide coins that circulated throughout the world. A growing system of global trade now encompassed Africa and its labor. For instance, Europeans used Mexican silver to purchase textiles in India and cowries in the Maldives. These commodities, after passing through Europe, went to West Africa in exchange for slaves; some of the slaves became mine workers in the Americas.

Hints of changing times that would draw West Africans into the sugar-and-slavery nexus came from new military and commercial ventures. The Dutch, seeking to develop their own commercial power and to break free from Spain, launched expeditions all over the world from 1580, and by 1650 had established themselves as the greatest commercial power in Europe. The Sa'dian dynasty in Morocco, seeking also to build up commercial and military strength in opposition to the Iberian powers, defeated Portugal in 1578 and destroyed Songhai in 1591. While sugar production declined in seventeenth-century Morocco, the import of slaves from the Niger and Senegal valleys expanded. These and other changes opened up the era in which slave trade dominated the Atlantic economy, when West Africa paid the price for that economic growth.

Sugar and slavery, 1650-1800

Senegambia, the Bight of Benin, and the Gold Coast were the first regions to feel the impact of expanding slave trade in the mid-seventeenth century. Dutch, English and French merchants came to West Africa as part of a trend towards world-wide commercial expansion. In the early seventeenth century these northern European adventurers each seized West Indian islands and North American territories (as well as ports in the Indian Ocean) and from mid-century they searched for West African slaves to work on the Caribbean sugar plantations. The Dutch East Indies Company (VOC), founded in 1602, focused its efforts on the Indian Ocean.⁶ The West Indies Company (WIC), founded in 1621, took as its objective the conquest of Brazil from the Portuguese and the expansion of a slave colony supplied from Angola, although that venture had failed by 1650. Once expelled from Brazil, the Dutch retreated to islands they had seized in the Caribbean, especially Curaçao, and became merchants rather than planters. In 1663 the Dutch WIC, replacing Portuguese shippers, gained the *asiento* contract for

⁶ On Dutch slave trade from 1650, see Johannes Menne Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade 1600-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

supplying slaves from West Africa to Mexico and Peru through the Caribbean. Dutch seizure of Elmina castle in 1637 gave them control over gold exports, and strengthened their base in West Africa.

In Senegambia, the expansion in volume of slave exports soon ran into problems.⁷ The Dutch had established a fort on the island of Gorée from 1621, French merchants had established a base on the island of Saint-Louis in the mouth of the Senegal (where they built a fort in 1659), and Afro-Portuguese merchants from the Cape Verde island had also purchased Senegambian slaves. The numbers of slave purchases increased, but opposition to slave trade arose, especially among Moorish north of the Senegal River. In the war of the marabouts, which lasted from 1657 to 1679, Islamic leaders gained wide popular support in their attempt to halt the enslavement of Muslims and create a theocratic state. The effort failed after initial success, as French aid to the embattled Wolof kings enabled them to regain their thrones and continue slave exports. Yet Senegambia, while its slave exports expanded, was not able to satisfy the demand for slaves in the Caribbean. In part, this was because Senegambia and the upper Niger valley also sent slaves to Morocco during the seventeenth century. In Morocco, the large free and slave population of Africans was organized into the royal military force. Alawite sultan Mawlay Isma'il (son of the previous sultan and a concubine enslaved in West Africa), began his fifty-year reign in 1672 by impressing all black men into his army. This corps, known as the 'Abid, grew to a reported 150,000 by the 1720s and maintained the strength of the monarchy.

In the Bight of Benin, in contrast to Senegambia, Atlantic slave exports grew rapidly.⁸ The kingdom of Ardra, composed of Gbe-speaking people in what is today the Benin Republic, was a polity that experienced the growing linkages of the global economy. In the late sixteenth century, Ardra opened ties with Portuguese merchants from São Thomé, who purchased slaves for work on the island and for

⁷ For slavery and slaves from 1650 to 1800 in Senegambia, the Niger Valley, and Morocco, see Barry, *Senegambia*; Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*, and supplement (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); James Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Richard L. Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves: The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); and Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁸ On the Bight of Benin, 1650-1800, see Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550-1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

dispatch to Brazil. By the mid-seventeenth century this region encountered, in addition, a trickle of Dutch, English, and French merchants, and a pair of Spanish priests who wrote a catechism in the Gbe language that came to be widely used in Spanish America. In this densely populated area, the kings and merchants of Ardra and the surrounding states were willing to sell slaves to Europeans. Dutch merchants set up lodges for the purchase of slaves in Savi, Ardra, and Grand Popo, and delivered them to the Caribbean – to the Spanish through the *asiento*, and to Dutch, English and French buyers on Caribbean islands. The English Royal African Company, founded in 1672, took up trade in slaves to supply the expanding English colonies of the Caribbean and North America. Both Dutch and English merchants imported substantial quantities of cowries as money for the purchase of slaves, and contributed to the expansion of the region's money supply.

Also imported to West Africa were firearms and gunpowder, and military forces in the region became reliant on musketry and cannon. Slave trade and gun trade reinforced one another as warfare and slave exports both grew in the Bight of Benin. Savi and Ardra positioned themselves against each other in the slave trade, and each set up rituals in which Europeans provided gifts to open trade and became allies of the states in regional wars.

Parallel processes developed at much the same time on the Gold Coast, though the number of slave exports was somewhat smaller.⁹ The rise of the kingdom of Akwamu, which spread from the interior of the Volta valley to seize the coastal Ga kingdom in 1680 and then areas to its east, brought sales of slaves to the Danes at Accra and to the Dutch along the coast of modern Togo. Ga refugees fled eastwards along the coast to settle in Little Popo, and there the rise of military leaders such as Poli Bebe launched a series of wars among neighboring Gbe-speaking peoples that continued to the 1730s. From the 1690s, slave exports from the region reached 5,000–6,000 per year – a rate of loss sufficient to bring about population decline in the region – but the wars and the slave trade continued.

These events in the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast at the end of the seventeenth century brought about the largest impact of slave trade on West Africa to that date. Warfare expanded, population declined

⁹ On the Gold Coast, including its overlap with Bight of Benin, 1650–1800, see Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); and Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

across a substantial coastal belt, monarchy and elite families became heavily dependent on revenue from slave exports, government transformed, residential patterns changed, and the holding as well as the selling of slaves expanded. The most clearly documented aspect of these changes was the sharp increase in the selling price of slaves to European merchants, which rose by a factor of from three to six from the 1690s to the 1720s. During this era of conflict and transition, the gold trade continued, but slave exports grew as prices rose. For a while, the Gold Coast imported gold (from the newly opened mines of Ibo as well as exporting it. Prices for slaves were so high that slaves were sold for cash, much as the cowries which came to the Bight of Benin. Perhaps more socially significant, but more difficult to document, was the holding of numerous women in slavery throughout the region to meet the expanding requirements for their labor, especially as men were in short supply. In a pattern that was to be repeated up and down the coast, the Bight of Benin, after decades of heavy involvement in the trade, found itself with declining numbers of slaves to deliver, and prices that became so high as to be uncompetitive.

In response to these changes, two powerful states arose, conquering much of the region. The great expansions of Asante (1701–7) and Dahomey (1724–7) were in large part a response to the crisis created by the expanded slave trade. But if the two states were similar in their expansion, they differed sharply in their subsequent histories. In the Asante confederation defeated Denkyera and soon gained control of most of the Akan-speaking area. Asante control of this region reduced slave raiding within its realm, but maintained the capture of slaves from its periphery. As a result, the population of the Gold Coast as a whole declined for much of the eighteenth century. To the north, the impact of the slave trade was to be more severe. The kingdom of Dahomey, which expanded as an efficient machine for warfare and enslavement, conquered Ardra in 1724 and Savi in 1727, and was poised for a regional dominance parallel to that of Asante. But repeated cavalry invasions from Oyo, combined with long-term resistance from Savi and Grand Popo, left the coastal Bight of Benin to experience perpetual warfare accompanied by enslavement and population decline into the 1780s. The Akwamu kingdom, located between Asante and Dahomey, was destroyed in 1730 by a coalition of its enemies and its rebellious subjects.

As the Atlantic slave trade from West Africa expanded in the eighteenth century, the balance among European merchants changed.

¹⁰ For data on the English, French and Dutch slave trades, see David Eltis, Stephen Be...

Merchants from Brazil arrived in the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin, so that by the 1720s a substantial export of slaves from the Bight of Benin to Brazil had opened up, continuing to 1850. By the early eighteenth century, the English were able to establish primacy over the Dutch in many areas of commerce. The English colonies in the West Indies expanded their sugar output, and English merchants in India gained access to the cottons that were so important for the purchase of slaves. (Despite all their wars against each other, the Dutch and English also co-operated widely in Europe in organizing African voyages.) English success in acquiring slaves won for them the *asiento* in 1713, after which the English delivered slaves to the Spanish for the rest of the eighteenth century.

With the sharp increase in slave prices in the early eighteenth century, region after region expanded its slave exports: in chronological order, the Niger Valley, the Bight of Biafra, and Upper Guinea. In the Niger Valley, a band of marauding warriors under the leadership of Mamari Kulibali developed by 1712 into the leaders of the Bambara kingdom of Segu, and their captives went to Senegal as well as across the desert. The Wolof and Bambara slaves from Senegal became important in settling the new French colony of Louisiana.

The Bight of Biafra entered the export of slaves on a large scale in the early eighteenth century.¹¹ The system of collecting slaves that evolved there was sharply different from that of the Gold Coast or Bight of Benin; rather than large-scale war, it focused on individual kidnappings and seizure of individuals through court proceedings. The Ijo port of Bonny and the Efik port of Calabar became the main entrepôts. The Aro clan among the Ibo, relying on its dominance of the widely respected oracle at Arochuku, built up a network for channeling captives of kidnappings and judicial procedures to the ports of Bonny and Calabar. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Bight of Biafra too was experiencing population decline. For Upper Guinea, slave exports remained at a low level in the early eighteenth century, expanding modestly as both Portuguese and French merchants collected cargoes. After 1750, exports rose to a peak of over 15,000 captives per year, and initiated a fifty-year period of regional population decline.¹²

Resistance to enslavement now became more general and easier to

document. Some groups organized themselves to fight off attacks, with the Mahi populations caught between Dahomey and Oyo. Others moved to hills or swamps to escape raids: the Dogon moved up the escarpments east of the middle Niger and the Dasha moved to the hills north of Dahomey, while the Weme and Holli escaped Dahomey by moving to swampy regions. Settlements of escaped slaves are documented for Senegambia, and captives on board ships crossing the Atlantic rebelled with regularity.

For West Africa in general, the number of captives sent across the Atlantic increased steadily, from about 4,000 per year in 1650 to about 50,000 per year in 1800. During this time the trade in slaves across the Sahara from West Africa remained roughly constant at about 8,000 per year.¹³ The overall patterns were that population declined, in general, in West Africa from 1730, and the decline continued well into the nineteenth century. Enough women were lost for the remaining population to be unable to replace them or their children. In addition, the loss of many more men than women left West Africa with a substantial shortage of men. Of the women who remained, many were in slavery. The result was the development of a new social system in which women were held in slavery within families. This system reinforced multiple marriage, concubinage, and sent women to work in areas beyond those that had earlier been their occupations. The women who went overseas in slavery were overwhelmingly from the coastal regions of West Africa. In ethnicity and language, they were Wolof, Kisi, Mandingo, Akan, Gbe-speaking, and Ibo-speaking. The men, in contrast, came from these groups and from all other groups such as Bambara, Gur-speaking, Hausa and Songhai.

In sum, slavery expanded to create a global system of forced labor.¹⁴ The European trading powers grew in influence on the African coast and especially in their American colonies. The volume of Atlantic commerce grew, and that growth included the expansion in African exports and in the quantity of the money supply (in cowries and other commodities). But the loss of population and the social disruption of enslavement caused an economic shrinkage for West Africa. Slavery brought growth to the Atlantic economy as a whole, but not to West Africa.

David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein (eds), *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹¹ On the Bight of Biafra, 1650-1800, see David Northrup, *Trade without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

¹² On Upper Guinea, 1650-1800, see Rodney, *History of the Upper Guinea Coast*.

¹³ For regional volumes of slave exports, 1650-1800, see Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

¹⁴ On social change, 1650-1800, see Manning, *Slavery and African Life*; and David Geggus, 'Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records', *Journal of African History* 30 (1989), pp. 23-44.

Slavery & Slave Trade in West Africa

Yet when the slave trade is explored region by region within West Africa, a far more complex pattern comes to light. Some regions exported almost no slaves in the seventeenth century; for each region there was a period of rapid expansion in slave exports, usually followed by a decline in slave exports in a cycle of about 40 years, though in some cases exports continued at a high level. The effects on West African regions varied greatly: sometimes there were expansions of great states, sometimes there was social and political devastation; sometimes a large number of slaves was exported without apparent transformation of the region.

The Atlantic system of slavery, as it reached its peak in the late eighteenth century, began to reveal significant weaknesses. The anti-slavery movement began the moment enslavement began, in the minds of those enslaved, and was revealed in acts of rebellion in the barracoons, on board ship and on slave plantations. Among writers in Europe and the Americas, anti-slavery began during the eighteenth century. The movement rose to a crescendo at the end of the century with the abolition of slavery in several American territories, and with an active anti-slavery movement in Europe and North America. More than anything, however, the uprising of slaves in Haiti and their assertion of freedom and, eventually, independence, created an anti-slavery movement that led ultimately to the emancipation of almost all those held in slavery.

Slavery and anti-slavery, 1800-1900

In the course of the nineteenth century, slavery and slave trade in West Africa were at once challenged, reaffirmed, and transformed. By the end of the century, the capture and export of slaves had been greatly curtailed, but the number of West Africans living in slave status was larger than at the opening of the century. Along with its expansion, the system of enslavement was transformed from reliance on female slaves held within households to the development of systems of slave villages, with links to production for markets in Africa and overseas.

Throughout the world, the complexity of slavery in the nineteenth century matched that in West Africa.¹⁵ For British, American and eventually French territories in the Americas, slave resistance and the anti-slavery movement brought a decline in slave imports from West Africa. But imports to Cuba expanded and those to Brazil continued.

¹⁵ David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

Patrick Manning

Trans-Saharan demand for slaves also expanded. Slave exports from Central Africa expanded in the early nineteenth century; from the 1820s, slave exports from Central Africa (and also from East Africa) exceeded those from West Africa, though the number of people enslaved within Central Africa never reached that of West Africa. The Haitian revolution of 1791-1804 launched the most memorable signal to threaten the system of slavery. In those tumultuous events, slaves overthrew the system of their oppression and joined with free people of color to defeat numerous invaders and establish an independent nation. Yet emancipation and abolition, though now announced as inevitable, were to be slow in reaching their completion throughout the world.

In West Africa, at the moment when the Haitian revolution was unfolding, another revolution exploded in the Central Sudan, linked in part to the issue of slavery. This revolution promised for a while to reduce enslavement but ended up expanding it.¹⁶ The jihad pronounced by Usman dan Fodio, which overthrew one after another of the Hausa kingdoms and replaced them with the expanding Sokoto Caliphate, began with a critique of the enslavement of Muslims by Muslim raiders. It ended up with the establishment of a powerful regime that enslaved few Muslims but many others. In the wars of the Caliphate, combatants on both sides were captured and sold, so that the number of Muslim among captives sent to the Americas rose sharply at the end of the eighteenth century.

Before the launching of these holy wars, the empire of Oyo to the south had embarked on an active program of slave raiding in the 1780s, and this brought the expansion in the number of Yoruba, Nupe, and Igala captives sent to the Americas. The wars of Oyo became connected with those of the Hausa and Fulani to the north, and further expanded the exports of captives from the region. Ultimately, Oyo collapsed in 1830, and in the abandonment of its capital and the dispersal of its factions, civil wars developed among the Yoruba peoples, resulting in still more exports of slaves. In sum, the era from 1780 to 1850 brought a great expansion of slavery throughout modern Nigeria, and expansion in exports of slaves of Yoruba, Hausa and other ethnicities of the region. The exception was Eastern Nigeria where, for the Ibo slaves sent out from Efik and Ijo ports, slave exports came virtually to an end in the 1830s.

The British and American governments declared the Atlantic slave trade to be illegal as of 1808, and the British gradually began enforcing

¹⁶ For slavery and slave trade in the Sokoto Caliphate, the Oyo Empire and its successors 1800-1900, see H. A. S. Johnston, *The Fulani Empire of Sokoto* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600-c.1836* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

the abolition of the slave trade on other European powers and on African states and merchants. Anti-slave trade measures were effective almost immediately for British and American vessels, but did not become effective for vessels of other nations until about 1820. The British anti-slavery fleet was established and, especially at the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars, began to take effect in cutting back slave exports. As a result, a new sort of settlement developed on the West African coast, in which liberated slaves built communities under the protection of the navies of the great powers. Freetown in Sierra Leone was the earliest and most substantial such community, but others grew up on the island of Fernando Po, at Monrovia in Liberia, and at Libreville in Gabon; emancipated Brazilians settled along the Bight of Benin without external protection. British anti-slavery treaties with African states became effective in the Gold Coast in the 1820s, in the Bight of Biafra in the 1830s, and in other areas after 1850.

The era from the 1830s to the 1880s brought a complex mix of expansion and contraction in slavery. In the United States, slavery expanded, even without the import of many new captives, as cotton production replaced the earlier emphasis on tobacco. Similarly in Brazil, the expansion of coffee production in São Paulo led to the migration of a million slaves from sugar fields in Bahia to coffee plantations. While sugar production declined in Brazil, slave production of sugar expanded dramatically in Cuba, with the import of thousands of African slaves up to 1850. For the mainland territories that gained independence from Spain, slavery was abolished in stages — by 1828 in Mexico, but not until the 1850s in Venezuela or Peru. In the British territories, slavery was formally limited in 1832, but the slaves were forced to work in indenture until their liberation in 1838. Slavery expanded rapidly in Egypt under Muhammad Ali, but the parallel expansion of slavery in North Africa was halted after France, newly converted to anti-slavery in 1848, restricted the slave trade in Algeria and then, in Tunisia. For both West Africa and Central Africa, the export of slaves to the Americas had virtually ended by 1850, and with that change almost all ties between Africa and the Americas were interrupted for a century.

Quantities of West African slave exports declined in the 1790s but remained steady from then to the 1830s, with about 30,000 captives sent across the Atlantic and with trans-Saharan exports rising to over 10,000 per year. Thereafter the Atlantic trade dropped almost to zero after 1850, while the Saharan trade continued at nearly 10,000 per year until late in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ (Central African exports of

captives across the Atlantic, meanwhile, reached a plateau at about 30,000 per year from 1800 to 1850.)

The global combination of abolitionism, industrialization, and an expanding trade brought a wave of transformation in West African slavery.¹⁸ Sugar was no longer produced by slave labor, and other crops entered the market in Africa as well as overseas. Coffee, cotton, palm oil and peanuts became major export crops, each relying on slave labor. New markets arose for African products, within and beyond the continent. From the 1830s, prices of slaves along the West African coast began to fall, as purchases by Europeans decreased. At mid-century when the export of slaves across the Atlantic had almost ceased, prices of slaves had declined by roughly 50 per cent from their peak at the beginning of the century. This brought the purchase of slaves into the realm of possibility for a larger number of Africans, and slave ownership therefore increased. In particular, the male slave population of West Africa rose, as males ceased to be exported to the Americas.

As the nineteenth century continued, a thriving system of slavery and slave trade developed in the West African savanna, especially in the Sokoto Caliphate, but also in the middle Niger and in Borno. Now the system came to depend as much on local as on external demand. Slave labor was used for grain production, for textiles and for leather work. Control of slave women and children became the prerogative of wealthy men throughout the region. Thus a new social system developed, as substantial numbers of males were held in slavery. Slave families also changed. Now slave households developed, and the constructed lineages subordinate to those of the masters.

One measure of the expansion of slavery in West Africa was the wave of slave uprisings in the mid-nineteenth century. Best documented of these was the set of demonstrations of slaves near Calabar c. 1850 who protested against their liability to be executed at the funerals of their owners, and won this and other concessions on their status. Within the next couple of years, the recently captured Yoruba slaves of the King of Dahomey rose in rebellion on the palm-oil plantations of the Abomey plateau. They were put down firmly, but the masters were careful thereafter about collecting such large numbers of slaves in one place.

¹⁷ *the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Manning, *Slavery and African Life*.

¹⁸ For social change 1800–1900, see Manning, *Slavery and African Life*; Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); A. J. H. Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600–1891: The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

¹⁷ For quantities of slave exports 1800–1900, see David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of*

Slavery & Slave Trade in West Africa

As the nineteenth century progressed, the European powers became steadily more aggressive. At mid-century, they controlled small segments of the African coastline, in a modest expansion of the enclaves they had dominated for centuries. Then after 1880 the French, Germans and British claimed larger territories, and by 1900 had sent armies to ensure the submission of almost all of West Africa to the expanded European empires. This sudden expansion of European empire in West Africa brought dramatic changes for the institution of slavery, but it did not bring immediate emancipation for most of those held in subjugation.

The campaign against African slavery, from the 1880s, provided the ideological prop for the European advance. France, which had itself not abolished slavery until 1848, justified its advance up the Senegal River during the 1860s and 1870s as being, in part, to abolish slavery. Yet as the wars with Al-Hajj 'Umar and later with Samori Touré became problematic, the French regimes turned to holding captured slaves in bondage rather than liberating them. As late as 1905, the French regime held thousands of men, women, and children in captivity along the middle Niger and required them to grow grain for the French army and administration.

Aftermath: slavery under colonial rule

European regimes in West Africa gave high priority to halting the slave trade, but low priority to emancipating the slaves. The French conquerors of Senegambia and Dahomey announced that slavery was abolished, but made no systematic effort to enforce the announcements. In these and other areas, the arrival of European-led armies enabled slaves to escape and attempt to make their way home. The new administrations gained a monopoly of armed force, and thus rapidly ended most new acts of enslavement. The colonial regimes stopped short, however, of formally declaring the emancipation of all slaves, and made almost no attempt to free the slaves or to guide them to their homes or to places of safety.

As a detailed report from colonial Dahomey made clear, it was far more difficult for enslaved women to take their freedom than for men. Many of the women had children by their masters or other free men, and the children belonged by law to the men — a law that the colonial regimes declined to alter. Women could take their freedom only by abandoning their children, and commonly refused to do so. Instead, these women and the men who chose to remain with their masters

Patrick Manning

sought to renegotiate terms. In some cases they were able to gain control of land; in other cases they became subordinate lineages within the master's lineage.

In addition, the colonial regimes turned to justifying slavery in West Africa. In a striking change of attitude, the imperial agents of the European powers changed their approach to slavery once they had gained power. Even E. D. Morel, later known for his courageous criticism of King Leopold's violent regime in Congo, underwent sudden change from his 1895 condemnation of slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate to his 1900 justification of slavery as a natural and benign institution in African society.

Slavery did indeed undergo major reform with the colonial conquest.¹⁹ The establishment of European rule meant that it was virtually impossible to conduct raids to enslave new captives. For those already enslaved, however, their captivity was recognized as legal, as they could still be bought and sold. Slave owners, unable to obtain large numbers of new captives, turned to better treatment of adult male slaves and especially of women and children. Thus 'slavery without slave trade', whether in the Americas or Africa, urged owners to treat their slaves more generously, as they could no longer be replaced with a cheap captive. African slavery in the post-slave-raiding days of the twentieth century therefore became comparable to that in the Americas after the abolition of the slave trade: that is, it was similar to antebellum US slavery from 1808 to 1865, to slavery in British territories from 1810 to 1838, to French territories from the 1820s to 1848, and to Cuba and Brazil from 1850 to the 1880s.

For each West African territory, the laws leading to the end of slavery differed. In several territories, laws approved in the first decade of the twentieth century specified that all children born after a certain date would be free — or would be free once they reached their majority. Sierra Leone — with its capital in Freetown, the haven of freed slaves — nonetheless did not adopt an ordinance ending slavery throughout the colony until 1928. In Northern Nigeria, the slave population remained at the level of perhaps 3 million persons even in the mid-1920s. There were no holidays or emancipation proclamations

¹⁹For slavery in colonial Africa, see Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death: Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts (eds), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Martin A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Claire C. Roberts and Martin A. Klein (eds), *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

celebrate the return of slaves to citizenship, only a slow and individual accumulation of the rights and privileges of ordinary life.

It was under these circumstances of life in the early colonial period, the era from 1900 to 1930, that European ethnologists and colonial officials wrote up their descriptions of West African society and slavery. This was at a time when the violence of precolonial slave raids had been halted by the might of colonial armies, and when slaves, though not yet freed, nonetheless had begun to make demands for fair treatment. Linking their current observations to a belief that African societies were static and unchanging, these authors wrote that slaves were treated benignly as subordinate members of the master's family, and that they had almost enough advantages in their situation to balance the disadvantages of enslavement. These descriptions, usually written in the form of a social balance sheet, provided the data from which later analysts of African slavery developed their interpretations.

Slavery has left a complex residue in West Africa today. A historical approach to slavery in West Africa — recognizing its early origins but tracing its expansion and transformation through the impact of external demand for servile labor — helps explain the complexity. Following the impact of market demand, another sort of external force, the power of imperial armies and administration, halted the expansion of slavery and initiated its decline. Yet the colonial regimes were more devoted to social hierarchy than to social equality, and prevented the full elimination of slavery. With independence, the new republics of West Africa inherited the inequalities of slavery along with the inequalities of colonialism.

Recommended Reading

- Barry, Boubacar (1998) *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, trans. Ayi Kwei Armah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Eltis, David (1987) *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Law, Robin (1991) *The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550-1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Lovejoy, Paul E. (2000) *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Lovejoy, Paul E. and Jan S. Hogendorn (1993) *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Manning, Patrick (1990) *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Meillassoux, Claude (1991) *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Women, Iron and Gold*, trans. Alide Dasnois (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Miers, Suzanne and Richard Roberts (eds) (1988) *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press).