

Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

Philip R. Misevich

Date

On the Frontier of “Freedom:” Abolition and the Transformation of Atlantic Commerce
in Southern Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1860s

By

Philip R. Misevich
Doctor of Philosophy

History

David Eltis, Ph.D.
Advisor

Edna Bay, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Clifton Crais, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Kristin Mann, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Accepted:

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Date

On the Frontier of “Freedom:” Abolition and the Transformation of Atlantic Commerce
in Southern Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1860s

By

Philip R. Misevich
B.A., St. John’s University, 2002

Advisor: David Eltis, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in History
2009

Abstract

On the Frontier of “Freedom:” Abolition and the Transformation of Atlantic Commerce
in Southern Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1860s

By Philip R. Misevich

This study examines the impact of transformations in Atlantic commerce on Africans living in southern Sierra Leone between 1790 and 1861. Extant studies of 19th century Africa have outlined a linear progression from the suppression of the slave trade to the rise of “legitimate commerce,” leading ultimately to Africa’s colonization. My dissertation argues that in their effort to suppress the Sierra Leone slave trade, British officials were forced to intervene in the political affairs of Freetown’s interior, opening new spaces for slaves to challenge their owners and negotiate new rights for themselves. In Sierra Leone, the relationship between the suppression of the slave trade, colonialism and slavery was time and again re-forged based on actions taken by slaves, masters and colonists in the first half of the century.

The study begins with an analysis of changes in the coastal organization of slave exports in the 19th century and their effect on the African interior. The establishment of Freetown - a settlement that became Britain’s first African colony and a point from which the British attempted to suppress the slave trade – brought drastic changes to the operation of the Sierra Leone slave trade. Slave dealers moved away from the Sierra Leone River, where Freetown was based, and operated from new settlements in southern Sierra Leone. The rise of Gallinas and Sherbro as slave ports put new pressures on societies in their immediate hinterland, from which a majority of the region’s captives came.

Southern Sierra Leone's external slave trade developed together with a dynamic market for slaves in the African interior in the 19th century. The Atlantic slave trade stimulated demand for agricultural commodities produced in southern Sierra Leone. Sherbro farmers also supplied Freetown with hundreds of tons of rice each year. When the Atlantic slave trade ended, southern Sierra Leone's internal slave trade evolved to meet domestic needs. From the 1830s through the 1860s, Islamic slave dealers began transporting thousands of captives from the Gallinas and Sherbro to work on peanut plantations north of Freetown. As a result, southern Sierra Leone slaves became an important part of fueling the industrial revolution.

On the Frontier of “Freedom:” Abolition and the Transformation of Atlantic Commerce
in Southern Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1860s

By

Philip R. Misevich
B.A., St. John’s University, 2002

Advisor: David Eltis, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
History
2009

Acknowledgements

As someone who researches and travels to Africa, I can not recall how often I have heard the expression, “it takes a village to raise a child” in one form or another. Indeed, every African community I have entered seems to approach parenting as a collective endeavor, not limited to the efforts of a nuclear family but rather as a process in which networks of extended kin are integrally involved. This same idea can be applied to writing a dissertation. In my six years at Emory, I have benefitted from the skills, patience and understanding of my mentors, family and friends. As with children who mature, the results of this project represent a combination of these diverse influences. It is with the utmost pleasure that I take this opportunity to thank some of the people who helped me along the way.

I entered the history program as a particularly enthusiastic but unpolished student. My promotion to candidacy thus reflected the degree to which my graduate coursework strengthened my grasp of several historical fields. This process would hardly have been possible without the teaching skills of Edna Bay, Clifton Crais, David Eltis, Kristin Mann, Bianca Premo, Jim Roark, and Trish van der Spuy. Although I never enrolled in any of their courses, I also benefitted from discussions with Jeff Lesser and Pamela Scully.

In my time at Emory, I have learned the value of any and all institutional support that comes from beyond my own department. This is particularly important for those of us who require considerable financial assistance to conduct research abroad. Whenever I was in need, I could always count on the Graduate School and the Institute for African Studies for their help. I am particularly thankful for the sage wisdom and remarkably

calm demeanor of Virginia Shadron. No matter how much VA had on her plate, she always met me with words of encouragement. I am also grateful for Geri Thomas of the Graduate School, who managed to make the complex reimbursement procedures for a Fulbright-Hays grant seem clear. Finally, Liz McBride, the Africanist bibliographer at Emory, played a vital role in bulking up Emory's Sierra Leone collection. I always enjoyed her company.

The Institute for African Studies was a source of intellectual inspiration throughout my academic career at Emory. This was in part due to its exceptional directors, Yvan Bamps and Cheryl Treacy-Lenda. With each IAS event, I was reminded to think beyond the confines of my own research. It was through the Institute that I also made many good friends. Thanks to Andrea Arrington, Martha Carey, Alicia Decker, Tiffany Gleason, Jane Hooper, Kenneth Maes, Charles Ngugi, Jeremy Pool, Jed Stevenson and Thabiti Willis. They were important in making me an "Africanist," rather than a historian who specializes in Africa.

I had the great benefit of passing through the history program with a wonderful and engaging group of graduate students. Among the many people from whom I profited, I want to thank Alex Boruki, Erica Bruchko, Leo Marques, Fabricio Prado Mike Thompson, Jorge Troisi-Melean and Rik ven Welie. Katherine Fidler and I endured the rigors of the job market together; somehow we both managed to survive (and with great jobs!). It is a testament to our friendship that we approached the job search in a spirit of cooperation and not competition. I am confident that she will thrive in New Orleans. More than anyone else, I must thank Daniel Domingues da Silva for his

friendship and insight into the issues that we both study. He and Livia made my life in Atlanta far more enjoyable than it would have been without them.

My final year at Emory was supported by a Dissertation Completion Fellowship through the Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry. I was warned that graduate students compete fiercely for this fellowship; having received it, I now know why they do. The CHI provided an intellectual environment unlike anything I could have imagined. Given the guidance that the directors and fellows there provided, it would have been virtually impossible *not* to complete my dissertation this year. I wish to thank Colette Barlow, David Caplan, Paul Courtright, Amy Erbil, Hazel Gold, Eric Goldstein, Gina Helfrich, Sherlotti Jackson, Michele Reid, Rivka Swenson and Garth Tissol. Two individuals from the CHI deserve particular recognition. Martine Brownley and Keith Anthony provided me with exceptional insight into the challenges and rewards of an academic career in the Humanities. Their advice was a vital part of my professional development and I am a better person because of it.

My debts to institutions and individuals across the Atlantic are numerous. My Gambian friends first confirmed my love for Africa, which led to my decision to enroll in a graduate program. In my three visits to Sierra Leone, I was kindly received by Tazieff Koroma. MTK opened his house to me and shared his unparalleled grasp of Sierra Leonean languages and cultures, for which I can not properly express my appreciation. I also wish to thank Abu Koroma, who is truly as remarkable as everyone claims. I am fortunate to have met Abu, and I proud to call him a friend. Chris, Jita and Albert Moore also facilitated my adjustment to living and working in an unfamiliar place. In England, I benefited from conversations with a number of individuals whom I met at The National

Archives and the British Library. My extended trip to Sierra Leone and England between 2006 and 2007 would not have been possible without a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad, which the United States Department of Education generously offered.

I have been lucky to befriend a number of scholars from outside of Emory over the past decade. Their knowledge and encouragement has been an important part of my own intellectual development. Thanks in particular to Adam Jones, Paul Lovejoy, Joseph Miller, Ugo Nwokeji, and David Richardson. I own an even greater debt to the three generations of Sierra Leone historians who reminded me of the significance of my work. The eldest member of my academic lineage, Christopher Fyfe, did not make it to see the conclusion of this project. I was lucky to have had the opportunity to sit and talk with him months before he passed. Joseph Opala, who christened himself my academic “grandfather,” is one of the most passionate people I have met. His grasp of Bunce Island’s history is second-to-none, and I have benefitted tremendously from it.

I owe more to Konrad Tuchscherer than I can ever explain. As an undergrad, I wandered into Konrad’s class as an engineering student and left as a starry-eyed aspiring historian of Africa. He has an unrivaled ability to inspire me. Although Konrad and I have long since become friends, I still value his mentoring skills. He is a truly gifted academic and a special person.

Entering the Emory history program, I put an incredible burden on my advisors to guide me through the worlds of African and Atlantic history. That each of them remained patient with my incompetence in their fields is a testament to their devotion to their crafts. Clifton Crais reminded me that there is more than one way to interpret data

and pushed me to think boldly about my work. Eddy Bay provided constructive feedback on each dissertation chapter. I appreciate her friendship and interest in my research. I gave Kristin Mann the unenviable task of keeping my work solidly grounded in African history, even though she was not my primary advisor. Official titles aside, Kristin has been an integral part of my growth as a historian of Africa. She pushed me hard, but always with my best interest in mind. The shape of this dissertation and my evolution as an Africanist reflects her influence as much as anyone's.

David Eltis, my primary advisor, is the most remarkable scholar I have ever met. I am in awe of the depth and breadth of his knowledge. No matter where in the world he was or what he was doing, David managed to respond to my emails and comment on my research as if it was his only responsibility. It is hard to express how much his guidance has meant to me over these many years. Even at my most anxious moments, he managed to show me the bright side of things. I will consider myself a success if I can contribute a fraction of what David has to academics and non-academics interested in Africa and the diaspora. I am incredibly humbled by his accomplishments and I hope to one day make him proud.

I am blessed to have a family that has been so supportive over the past six years. As the only child to leave Long Island, it would be easy to imagine my parents discouraging me from living such a seemingly unstable lifestyle. Thankfully, they did not. My mom, dad, Montessa and Rich all pushed me to follow my dreams in their own way. Entering this Ph.D. program is a reflection of the spirit that my parents instilled in me to dream big; completing it is a testament to the work ethic I learned from being around them. I do not think my parents will ever understand the specifics of my research,

but I hope they realize how much their love has meant for my ability to conduct it. Being their child means the world to me.

I could not ask for more special brothers and sisters. No matter how far away I am, they make me feel closely connected to home. During my time at Emory, Janine, Suzanne and Gregory each had children. Watching them raise their families has been a constant reminder of what is really important in life (it has also made writing a dissertation seem comparatively easy). They have all inspired me in different ways. I only hope I can do the same for Richard, my younger brother, whose special bond I cherish.

Finally, I must express my deepest and most heartfelt love and appreciation for Kelly. When I began writing this project, I had a poorly-concealed crush on Kelly; days after I complete it I will become her husband. Our engagement and upcoming wedding has enabled me to be happy through even the most stressful twists and turns in my academic life. Kelly, it is to you whom I owe the completion of this dissertation. May we continue to enrich and challenge each other to get the most out of life. Thank you so, so much.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Southern Sierra Leone and the Atlantic World from the 15 th through the mid-19 th Centuries	22
Chapter 2. The Origins of Captives Leaving Southern Sierra Leone in the 19 th Century	67
Chapter 3. Feeding Freedom, Feeding the Slave Trade: Southern Sierra Leone and the Provisions Trade, 1787-1856	97
Chapter 4. Diasporic Transformations: Islam, Adaptation and Innovation in Sierra Leone's Slaving Networks in the Early Period of the Commercial Transition, 1840s to 1860s	163
Chapter 5. Freetown and "Freedom?" Colonialism and Slavery in Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1861	204
Conclusion	244
Appendix	250
Bibliography	254

Maps

1.1, Sierra Leone in the 19 th Century	<i>Page, 25</i>
1.2, Atlantic Ports in Sierra Leone, 17 th -19 th Centuries	59
2.1, Ethno-linguistic Groups in Sierra Leone	82
4.1, The Canoe-Based Slave Trade from Southern Sierra Leone	181

Tables

1.1, Estimated Slave Exports from Africa and Sierra Leone, 1625-1866	<i>Page, 50</i>
1.2, Slave Exports from Sierra Leone by National Carrier, 1751-1866	55
1.3, Estimated Slave Exports from Southern Sierra Leone, 1750-1866	62
2.1, Southern Sierra Leone Slave Vessels Tried in Mixed Court, 1819-1845	78
2.2 Linguistic Identifications of Sierra Leone Recaptives from Freetown and Havana Registers, 1819-1844	81
2.3 Groupings of Average Distances between Regions of Enslavement and Embarkation Points, 1819-1844	86
2.4 Linguistic Identifications of Southern Sierra Leone Recaptives from Freetown and Havana Registers by Grouping of Years	89
2.5 Groupings of Average Distances between Regions of Enslavement and Embarkation Points by Groupings of Years	90
3.1, Number of Sierra Leone Company Voyages by Year of Departure	115
3.2, Places of Trade for Vessels North of Freetown, 1792-1801	117
3.3, Places of Trade for Vessels South of Freetown, 1792-1801	118
3.4, Freetown Population Data, 1792-1827	145
3.5, Annual Rice Consumption in Freetown, 1792-1818	147
3.6, Annual Rice Consumption in Freetown, 1818-1827	148
3.7, Export of Rice from Sherbro to Freetown, 1792-1827	149
3.8, Southern Sierra Leone Slave Exports, 1807-1856	153
3.9, Rice Exports for the Southern Sierra Leone Slave Trade, 1807-1856	154
3.10, Rice Carried on Slave Vessels, 1684-1790	155
3.11, Rice Carried on Slave Vessels from Southern Sierra Leone, 1807-1856	159
3.12, Combined Supply of Sherbro Rice for Freetown and Slave Trade, 1807-1827	161
5.1, Fugitive Slaves Entering Freetown by Ethnicity and Gender, 1858-61	232

Introduction

This project explores the relationship between the slave trade, agricultural production and nascent colonialism in Africa. For centuries, the slave trade integrated the societies of Africa, Europe and the Americas and first enticed the West to establish sustained communities along the continent's littoral. Yet just as merchants opened centers for slave embarkation in Sherbro and Gallinas (southern Sierra Leone) around 1800, a complex series of events led Britain on a campaign to abolish the Atlantic slave trade and to assume control over Freetown, its first African colony and the hub of the suppression movement on the continent.¹ Over the first six decades of the 19th century, the inhabitants of southern Sierra Leone were thus caught between two contrasting ideological and commercial forces that collided along their shore, and which were to have a profound impact on their lives.

By the 1860s, the British anti-slave trade campaign had triumphed, but this did not end the enslavement of Africans on the continent. While slaves were no longer made to endure the traumas of the Middle Passage, changes in the economies of the Atlantic world meant that slaves at times faced plantation-like conditions in Africa itself, where they were held in larger numbers.² At the root of this transformation was Europe's

¹ The literature on the British antislavery campaign is extensive. For several important examples, see Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans, Green, 1949); Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2006). For a study that approaches similar issues, on which this introduction is modeled, see Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

² Walter Rodney first made this point in the 1960s. See his "African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast, 1580-1650," *Journal of African History*, 6, 3 (1965), 307-322. The

growing demand for West African “legitimate commerce,” which was used in the manufacture of soap and to lubricate industrial machinery. Indeed, it was in the context of European competition for such commodities that Britain, France, Portugal and to a lesser extent other Western nations began expanding their control over African territory beyond the littoral.³ On the frontier of Britain’s first African colony, southern Sierra Leone was swept up in the colonization movement before many other parts of the continent: the British annexed parts of the Sherbro in 1861 and extended their authority into the interior in the decades that followed.⁴

Between the 1460s, when Europeans first arrived off the Sierra Leone coast, and 1861 when parts of the Sherbro were colonized, the inhabitants of southern Sierra Leone were increasingly affected by changes in the Atlantic world. At the same time, their actions helped to shape Africa’s dynamic relationship with Europe. During these four centuries, the Sherbro and Gallinas evolved from sites on the fringes of major foreign and domestic commercial networks to centers for the production and trade of Atlantic commerce, exporting more slaves in the post-1807 era than any area west of the Bight of Benin and supplying thousands of tons of rice to sustain Freetown’s settlers.⁵ In the first half of the 19th century, southern Sierra Leone was thus central to the evolution of the slave trade and British colonialism. The region’s role in these industries had its origin in the abolition campaign.

issue was more broadly argued in Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2000).

³ See, for example, Michael Crowder, *Colonial West Africa* (London: F. Cass, 1978), chapter 2; Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapter 8.

⁴ The most comprehensive work on Sierra Leone in the 19th century remains Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). For southern Sierra Leone in colonial era, see Arthur Abraham, *Mende Government and Politics under Colonial Rule: A Historical Study of Political Change in Sierra Leone, 1890-1937* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1978).

⁵ David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (online at www.slavevoyages.org).

This study examines the lives of peoples and communities that were drawn into the Atlantic slave trade in the era of abolition. It is a work of African history, but it tells a story of one region's integration into commercial and ideological systems that crossed the Atlantic. Rooted in an exploration of the enslavement and trade of human beings, the story inevitably invokes feelings of sadness, sorrow and, to most citizens of the modern era, anger and disbelief. But as enslaved people always knew, and as scholars of the slave trade have more recently demonstrated, such sentiments tell only part of the story. Even in the face of the extreme pressures that Europeans placed on African slave supplies, Africa and its inhabitants played a vital role in shaping the contours of Atlantic trade.⁶ Moreover, in the case of southern Sierra Leone, the trade in slaves was one (albeit important) part of a diverse exchange of goods between Africans and Europeans, which from the African end also included ivory, timber, gold and perhaps most importantly provisions. While it is undeniable that many thousands suffered from the growth of the slave trade, some southern Sierra Leoneans exploited opportunities opened by the Atlantic encounter to enrich their communities and provide security for their families.

Transformations in "Atlantic commerce" are at the heart of this analysis. As James Searing noted in his study of the Lower Senegal, scholars of the slave trade have primarily focused on slaves and other commodities that left the continent.⁷ As a result, they have tended to assume that the trade had a lesser impact on regions that exported fewer numbers of captives. Yet even for parts of the coast from which the volume of the

⁶ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd Edition, 1998). In an earlier essay, Patrick Manning usefully divides the literature on the slave trade into works that emphasize external forces in developing African history against those which stress internal factors. The point, of course, should be to examine how these forces interacted with each other. See Patrick Manning, "Contours of Slavery and Social Change in Africa," *American Historical Review*, 88 (1983), 835-857.

⁷ James F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), x.

slave trade was comparatively minor, its effect on local communities could be substantial. As with the Senegambia, southern Sierra Leone's slave trade was supported by an explosive growth in the production and trade of foodstuffs, which were needed to feed slaves while they were held on the coast and in transit across the Atlantic. Following Searing, this project uses external trade as a window onto commercial change in Africa itself, exploring the relationship between abolition, slaving and local agricultural production and trade. It examines the impact that new markets for slaves and produce had on the regions that supplied these commodities. Finally, the study seeks to understand how Sierra Leone's slave trade was affected by the establishment and growth of Freetown, and to assess the impact of the colony's antislavery agenda on slaves and owners living in its southeastern hinterland.

Argument

The British campaign against the slave trade fundamentally changed Sierra Leone's relationship with the Atlantic world. As the slave trade entered its final phase in the 19th century, the Sierra Leone estuary was transformed into Britain's main base against illegal slaving activity. The combined pressures from the British navy and the land-based Freetown settlement brought major changes to the organization of the slave trade along the Sierra Leone coast. To avoid detection from naval cruisers, slave dealers moved their operations into the swampy creeks in southern Sierra Leone, which were harder for the vessels to patrol. As a result, Sherbro and Gallinas were drawn directly into the export trade, becoming major centers for slave embarkation after 1807. The growing slave trade bound these emerging ports tightly to the Cuban sugar industry and

infused the ports with Spanish people and cultural influences. Over the first sixty years of the 19th century, a diaspora of Spanish slave dealers settled on the Sherbro and Gallinas coast, bringing new trade goods which they circulated throughout southern Sierra Leone.

Changes in the coastal organization of slave exports transformed the relationship between southern Sierra Leone and its hinterland. While the pre-1807 transatlantic trade drew slaves from a catchment area that stretched deep into the Upper Guinea interior, a drop in slave prices in the 19th century resulted in a contraction of the slaving frontier, concentrating the areas from which slaves came to regions nearer to the littoral. As the volume of the Gallinas and Sherbro trade increased in the 1820s, the slave trade continued to feed primarily on peoples within about 60 miles of the coast. The first half of the 19th century thus saw southern Sierra Leone's slaving ports put increasing pressure on the peoples living on their northeastern frontier.

For southern Sierra Leoneans who remained on the continent, the abolition period opened large new markets for the agricultural goods that they produced. Both the slave trade and colonialism concentrated people along the Sierra Leone littoral in numbers previously unmatched. Freetown's population reached an estimated 15,000 individuals by the early 1820s. Slave factories, though not as large as the British colony, often held thousands of captives in barracoons while they awaited shipment. Once they were boarded onto a transatlantic vessel, slaves also required provisions for the voyage across the Atlantic. Few scholars have appreciated the magnitude of the provisions trade needed to feed so many individuals. In Sierra Leone, rice was the food of choice, and given the poor soils of Freetown and the Gallinas, the crop was imported primarily from the fertile

lands of the Sherbro. Indeed, by the 1820s, Sherbro planters and merchants were supplying more than 1,000 tons of rice each year to these external markets alone. For southern Sierra Leone, the slave trade and the growth of Freetown thus stimulated agricultural production and led to the development of new relationships between communities along the coast and in the interior.

When Atlantic slave exports ended in the mid-1800s, the dispersal of southern Sierra Leone slaves underwent a massive transformation. With the onset of the industrial revolution in Europe, African slave owners put their laborers to work on local plantations where they produced vegetable oils needed to support western industrial development. As part of this shift, a new slave market emerged in northern Sierra Leone and in Portuguese Guinea, where labor was needed to develop groundnut plantations. Islamic merchants met the new demand by penetrating southern Sierra Leone's slave markets and pioneering a new slaving route that brought captives north by canoe. Originally avoiding Freetown to ensure that British officials would not interfere with their activities, emboldened slave traders later found a market for slaves within the colony, where children were purchased as domestic laborers and wives. An analysis of changes in the domestic slave trade suggests that internal African diasporas were as vital as their transatlantic counterpart in developing transnational industries at a time of dramatic transformation in global economies.

Although slaves were the ultimate victims of the transformations described above, they were far from passive historical figures. Indeed, Sierra Leone's slaves were central players in shaping British abolitionist discourse and agendas. I argue that slaves actively took advantage of shifts in moral opinion about the Atlantic slave trade. Promises of

“freedom” led many to escape from their owners and seek protection in the British colony of Freetown. Over the 19th century, a small but steady migration of fugitive slaves thus transformed Africa’s colonial landscape. Others used the threat of flight to negotiate improved conditions for themselves and their families, resisting the harsher conditions that changes in Atlantic world commerce imposed. In one dramatic case, a group of plantation laborers even used antislavery rhetoric as inspiration to spearhead a revolt. For southern Sierra Leoneans, the abolition era was one in which slaves, slave owners and slave dealers challenged the rights and responsibilities that owners claimed over their dependents. This situation was made particularly complex by the growth of a British colonial state.

Significance of the Project

This project addresses several themes that have been at the heart of scholarship on Africa, the slave trade and the Atlantic world in the past four decades. It assesses local, regional and transatlantic factors that contributed to the growth and decline of the slave trade in a particular regional/historical setting, and it investigates the organization of the trade along the coast and in the African interior. The project also explores the relationship between the slave trade and agricultural production and examines how communities reorganized the internal slave trade as they transitioned from Atlantic slaving to the cultivation of peanuts and palm products. Finally, by exploring transformations in Atlantic commerce on the outskirts of Britain’s first West African colony, the study advances knowledge about the relationship between one of Africa’s

most noteworthy Atlantic ports (and, later, colonies) and its hinterland and seeks to reframe the debate concerning the link between slavery and colonialism.

Over the past four decades, scholars have developed a vastly improved understanding of the magnitude of the Atlantic slave trade and its effect on specific regions and ports in Europe, Africa and the Americas. The online release of *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, which includes details on the trading activities of nearly 35,000 separate slave vessels, represents the most recent attempt to document the largest coerced migration in human history. In addition to contributing new data on the volume of the slave trade, the *Voyages* project provides a considerable amount of information about the age and gender of the captives who were embarked on transatlantic slavers. One significant point that has emerged from this material is that the operation of the transatlantic trade varied widely from one region to another. As a result, historians of Africa have been challenged to explore local factors that help explain regional differences in the structure and composition of slave exports.⁸

Despite such advances, however, we still have an imperfect understanding of the relationship between the slave trade and economic, social and political change in Africa. This project seeks to investigate several areas of inquiry that will ultimately provide a new picture of the process by which Africa was integrated into the Atlantic world, and it

⁸ Scholarly estimates of the volume of the slave trade began with Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). Since then, a number of scholars have updated Curtin's findings. The most important of these works have been Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," *Journal of African History*, 23, 4 (1982), 473-501; David Eltis et al., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and the updated online version, *Voyages*. The implications of regional differences in the sex ratios of captives supplied to Atlantic vessels have been explored in David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Was the Slave Trade Really Dominated by Men?," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23 (1992), 237-257; David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864," *Economic History Review*, 46 (1993), 308-323; G. Ugo Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58, 1 (January, 2001), 47-68

raises questions about the impact this process had on southern Sierra Leoneans. Why, for example, did the Sherbro and Gallinas rise to prominence as slave ports in the 19th century? How did the growth of these slave ports affect the origins of captives who were caught up in the transatlantic trade? And finally, what impact did the slave trade have on the communities and societies in which it took hold?

The impact of the slave trade on Africa has been hotly debated since as far back as the era of abolition. Following the lead of some abolitionists, many modern scholars have argued that the slave trade was the root cause of African political and economic underdevelopment. According to these individuals, the trade stripped the continent of its most productive laborers, increased inequality and social oppression within societies and brought major disruptions to African demographic stability. The slave trade also expedited political centralization, which often resulted in increased warfare and enslavement. The structure of the trade, they continue, was inherently unequal. In return for their human cargo, African merchants received second-hand European manufactured goods or destructive and addictive luxury items such as tobacco and alcohol.⁹

⁹ The literature on this topic is vast. For an early summary, see Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Impact of the Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), 365-394. For broad studies that emphasize the negative consequences of the slave trade on Africa, see Walter 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 (1966), 431-43; Joseph E. Inikori, ed., *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (New York: Africana Pub. Co., 1982); Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Lovejoy, *Transformations*; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981). Local and regional studies are too numerous to list, but see Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Edward A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Pattern of International Trade in East Central Africa to the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); and Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), for examples. The most detailed study of the demographic effects of the slave trade is John K. Thornton, "The Slave Trade in Eighteenth Century Angola: Effects on Demographic Structures," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 14, 3 (1980), 417-427.

A contrasting school of thought contends that the slave trade formed one part of what were very complex and dynamic local and regional African economies, in which Atlantic imports and exports were as a whole comparatively insignificant. While such scholars show an appreciation for the atrocious conditions that slaves themselves were forced to endure, they argue that Africans and Europeans traded as equal partners and that the terms of trade often favored the former group. Moreover, several researchers have suggested that while the slave trade may have preyed on and victimized some societies, it also strengthened and unified others. At the continental level, therefore, the transatlantic trade brought positive developments along with negative ones. Or, put another way, the operation of the slave trade underscored African “agency” in developing the Atlantic world; it did not cause the continent’s underdevelopment.¹⁰

The point, however, should not be to identify the “gainers and losers” in the Atlantic slave trade as a whole,¹¹ but rather to examine how particular regions and communities met the challenges posed by their participation in Atlantic commerce, as well as how they exploited its opportunities. Such an approach reconceptualizes the stark contrasts that scholars have drawn in their approaches to the impact of the slave trade on Africa. For example, Walter Hawthorne has demonstrated that among the Balanta in Guinea Bissau, trade with Europeans provided the region with access to cheaper iron,

¹⁰ The most forcefully and coherently argued of these views is Thornton, *Africa and Africans*. For an economic treatment that stresses the relative insignificance of the Atlantic trade in African economies, see David Eltis and Lawrence C. Jennings, “Trade between Western Africa and the Atlantic World in the Pre-Colonial Era,” *American Historical Review*, 93, 4 (1988), 936-959. See also John Fage, “Slaves and Society in Western Africa,” *Journal of African History*, 21 (1980), 289-310; and his “African Societies and the Atlantic Slave Trade,” *Past and Present*, 125 (1989), 97-115; and Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa; Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975). I am aware of the problems involved in “giving” agency to historical actors, but the concept of “African agency” still prevails in studies of the slave trade. For a wonderful essay that problematizes agency, see Walter Johnson, “On Agency,” *Journal of Social History*, 37, 1 (2003), 113-124.

¹¹ The expression comes from the introduction in Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992).

which they used to improve tools for rice cultivation and strengthen weapons for warfare. For the Balanta, Atlantic commerce was thus a quite literal double-edged sword, supporting an agricultural revolution and at the same time facilitating the group's ability to conduct slave raids.¹²

This project focuses primarily on the economic effects of southern Sierra Leone's participation in the slave trade. My research suggests that, as with Guinea Bissau and the Lower Senegal, the trade created new opportunities for the production and sale of agricultural commodities even as it drained the region of thousands of inhabitants. Unlike in the other two contexts, however, southern Sierra Leone's commercial transformation developed on the frontier of Freetown, opening multiple markets for rice that was cultivated in the Sherbro and eventually placing the provisions trade at the center of Britain's campaign against the slave trade. Given the overlapping trade in human and non-human commodities, my research explores the way these two industries interacted: who traded provisions? How did the organization of the provisions trade compare with that of the slave trade? In what way did the provisions trade fit with broader British notions of "legitimate" commerce, considering rice produced in the Sherbro facilitated the export of slaves from Gallinas? The answer to such questions informs my treatment of southern Sierra Leone's participation in Atlantic commerce in the era of abolition.

The final question in particular provides an avenue to address another issue that has dominated Africanist scholarship for several decades, namely the impact of Africa's mid-century transition from supplying slaves for the Atlantic world to trading primarily in agricultural commodities. Historians have disagreed about the effects of the so-called

¹² Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003).

“commercial transition” on African societies. Some have argued that the suppression of Atlantic slaving and the growth of the trade in vegetable oils caused a “crisis of adaptation” among African ruling elites. Whereas the collection and marketing of human cargo was dominated by a small group of wealthy individuals, the new commerce opened possibilities for poorer farmers to enrich themselves thorough trade. Others have countered that the same elites who dominated the slave trade maintained control over the commerce in vegetable products. For these scholars, the commercial transition underscores the flexibility of African political structures, which enabled leaders to use abolition as an opportunity to strengthen their authority.¹³

In most cases, these studies have privileged political concerns and have been limited to a relatively small part of West Africa. This project takes a much wider view of commercial change in Upper Guinea, focusing on a large area between the Gallinas and Portuguese Guinea. This region witnessed the commercialization of two different vegetable commodities, with peanuts dominating exports north of Freetown and palm products growing in significance in southern Sierra Leone. Yet production of these goods developed unevenly, beginning with groundnuts in the 1830s and coming to

¹³ The debate over the effects of the commercial transition began with K. Onwuka Dike’s *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956). For a review of the literature, see Robin Law, “The Historiography of the Commercial Transition in 19th Century West Africa,” in Toyin Falola, ed., *African Historiography: Essays in Honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), 91-115. Scholars who argue that the transition transformed African political and social structures include A.G. Hopkins, “Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92,” *Economic History Review*, 21 (1968), 580-606, in which the expression “crisis of adaption” was pioneered; Martin A. Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sine-Saloum, 1847-1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968); *ibid*, “Social and Economic Factors in the Muslim Revolution in Senegambia,” *Journal of African History*, 13 (1972), 419-441. The most forceful alternative argument, which stresses continuity during the commercial transition, comes from Ralph A. Austen, “The Abolition of the Overseas Slave Trade: A Distorted Theme in West African History,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5, 2 (1970), 257-274. In a more localized setting, this view received support from Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Galinhas Country (West Africa), 1730-1890* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1983), 86-88. For the most recent survey of the issue, see Robin Law, ed., *From Slave Trade to ‘Legitimate’ Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

include palm oil and kernels by the 1850s and 60s. For Sierra Leoneans, the mid-19th century was thus a time of multiple transitions, rather than a single, undifferentiated process of expanding agricultural production. My work explores how the uneven growth of “legitimate” commerce in Sierra Leone affected the organization of the domestic slave trade in Upper Guinea. It shows that the peanut boom resulted in a massive new market for coerced labor in the Nunez, Pongo and around Guinea Bissau. In response, Islamic merchants from the peanut-producing regions began penetrating southern Sierra Leone’s slave markets, developing a lateral slaving route that brought captives north by a mixture of sea- and land-based routes. At times, the south-to-north route brought captives into Freetown itself, where nascent urbanization created a growing need for domestic laborers. The picture that emerges from my investigation thus complicates the history of the commercial transition. It shows that Africans did not merely put slaves to work once the Atlantic trade was suppressed. Instead, slave dealers exploited changes in regional labor markets by adapting internal slaving routes to fit local needs.

The final part of this project brings together the various strands of internal and external pressures explored in earlier chapters to provide a new perspective on the relationship between abolition, slavery and colonialism. Studies of colonial policy toward African slavery have long emphasized Europe’s hesitance to confront the institution in the 19th century. Whereas British officials actively suppressed the transatlantic traffic, the delicate nature of slavery itself – and the relative weakness of European settlements in Africa for much of the century – prevented a similar approach to slaveholding. To many scholars who have explored the issue, such an approach underscores one major contradiction of Europe’s so-called “civilizing mission:” on the

one hand, colonists spread rhetoric about “freedom” and free labor without the means to enforce such an ambitious agenda; on the other, the same officials encouraged the export of commodities that were produced by slave labor. Colonists attempted to resolve this contradiction in a number of ways. In some cases, they simply ignored the existence of slavery altogether or distinguished it from the harsher plantation-based institution that prevailed in the Americas. In the Gold Coast, officials turned to reducing the size of their colonial holdings, minimizing the areas in which slavery was considered illegal. In Lagos, the British employed a model that they had developed earlier in India, abolishing the legal status of slavery while doing little to advertize slaves’ new rights.¹⁴ In each of these cases, official policy rested in part on what Kristin Mann has recently called a “smoke and mirrors” act, in which officials were forced to balance between humanitarian principles and colonial realities.¹⁵

While such analyses underscore the complexities that Europeans faced in confronting slavery in Africa, my work attempts to understand the issue from the perspective of slaves who lived outside of Freetown, rather than through the eyes of

¹⁴ The standard work on colonial policy toward slavery is Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988). More recently, see Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1999). Much of the research on colonialism and its relationship to slavery has been focused on the Gold Coast. See, for example, Raymond E. Dumett and Marion Johnson, “Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti, and the Northern Territories,” in Miers and Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, 71-116; Raymond E. Dumett, “Pressure Groups, Bureaucracy and the Decision Making Process: The Case of Slavery, Abolition and Colonial Expansion in the Gold Coast, 1874,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 9 (1981), 193-215; Gerland M. McSheffrey, “Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade, and the Impact of Abolition on the Gold Coast, 1874-1901: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of African History*, 24 (1983), 349-368; and Kwabena Opare-Akurang, “The Administration of the Abolition Laws, African Responses and Post-Proclamation Slavery in the Gold Coast, 1874-1940,” in Miers and Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 149-166. For French West Africa, see Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For a case study focusing on British African colonies outside of the Gold Coast, see Ismail Rashid, “‘Do Dady nor Lef me Make dem Carry me’: Slave Resistance and Emancipation in Sierra Leone, 1894-1928,” in Miers and Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 208-231.

¹⁵ Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 13.

colonists and metropolitan officials. My research highlights the period between 1790 and the 1850s as one of particular uncertainty in colonial policy toward slavery, when slave initiatives had a significant effect on shaping Britain's abolitionist agenda. In particular, my project suggests that slaves exploited the British campaign against the slave trade in an effort to improve their conditions on the continent. In some cases, they achieved this by fleeing into the colony, where they were granted freedom. In others, slaves used the threat of flight to negotiate better treatment from their owners in the interior. In both of these cases, slaves' actions complicated the distinction between foreign and domestic slavery – a distinction that was central to British antislavery policies. While the magnitude of the “fugitive slave” problem in this period was relatively small, its impact on British initiatives was considerable. By the 1850s, the issue became tied to broader concerns about the legal status of Liberated Africans living in Freetown. Moreover, unlike in the Gold Coast, it resulted in Britain's decision to annex large parts of territory adjacent to the colony.

At the broadest level, this project contributes to the explosive growth of literature on the Atlantic world. It joins the group scholars who argue for slave trade studies to begin in the African interior, beyond the ports where slaves were embarked on transatlantic vessels.¹⁶ Indeed, “On the Frontier of ‘Freedom’” is one of the few studies to link transformations on the African coast with the effects they had further inland.

¹⁶ The effect of the slave trade on the African littoral is still imperfectly understood, but it has received more attention than the African interior. For recent studies, see Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*; Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving ‘Port,’ 1727-1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004); Robin Law and Silke Strickrodt, eds., *Ports of the Slave Trade (Bights of Benin and Biafra): Papers from a Conference of the Centre of Commonwealth Studies, University of Stirling, June 1998* (Stirling: Centre for Commonwealth Studies, 1999). For a recent study that charts the enslavement of Africans from the interior, see Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). The need to root the study of the slave trade in the hinterland was emphasized in the Nigerian Hinterland Project, the aims of which are described online at <http://www.yorku.ca/nhp/areas/nhp.htm>.

Finally, the study provides a fresh interpretation of the origins and development of colonialism in Sierra Leone, situating the phenomenon in the broader context of debates over suppression and abolition.

Sources and Research

Research for this project was carried out in three separate countries: the United States, Sierra Leone, and England. In Sierra Leone, my work involved the collection of archival and oral data. Outside of Africa, I analyzed various documentary materials. Each of these sources and settings posed a set of challenges and opportunities. Below, I will briefly summarize the data on which the majority of this project relies.

In Sierra Leone, a large portion of my research was based on materials collected in the Sierra Leone National Archives (SLNA), which are housed in the John F. Kennedy building on the campus of Fourah Bay College. The records at the SLNA are well arranged, thanks in large part to the efforts of Christopher Fyfe and his successor, Albert Moore, who have overseen their preservation in years past. While this repository has a limited amount of material on the first half of the 19th century, the collection's accessibility enabled me to assess all of the pre-1860s documents that were available. This included despatches between Freetown governors and the British Secretaries of State, Police Court records, and letters from the Colonial Secretary Office. The archives also hold two volumes of "Registers of Escaped Slaves," which document fugitive slaves who escaped into Freetown between 1875 and 1893. Finally, the collection includes holdings from the Liberated African Department, not the least important of which are the original Registers of Liberated Africans, on which chapter two is based.

In my effort to identify the ethnic origins of names from the Registers, I was drawn into the wider world of Sierra Leone fieldwork. Much of my time in Freetown was spent working with knowledgeable informants sifting through thousands of African names.¹⁷ However, on several occasions I left the hustle and bustle of African urban life to discuss my project with people living in communities in southern Sierra Leone. This included lengthy excursions to Bo, Shenge, Bonthe (on Sherbro Island), and Pujehun. My experiences with collecting and assessing oral data have been mixed. I have come to concur with Adam Jones, who in his earlier research on the Gallinas indicated that the use of oral traditions is most suitable for localized histories and for assessing political developments over time. In my own work, which focuses primarily on commercial change throughout a broad region, oral data thus contributed less than I had first hoped. However, this is not to deny its significance for other aspects of my work. Indeed, during my interviews and in less formal conversations with Sierra Leoneans, I was exposed to the ways in which individuals, households, and larger communities represent their past. These testimonies also at times helped me to interpret documents written by Europeans through local cultural lenses.¹⁸ In this sense, fieldwork played an invaluable part in shaping my dissertation, even when I have not cited specific interviews in my footnotes.

My archival data was substantially expanded during a six-month stay in England. While there I surveyed documents on Sierra Leone history between the 17th and 19th

¹⁷ See the appendix for a detailed treatment of the methods involved in this procedure.

¹⁸ For the difficulties in assessing oral data in decentralized regions, see Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, preface; *ibid*, “White Roots: Written and Oral Testimony in the ‘First’ Mr Rogers,” *History in Africa*, 10 (1983), 151-162. Walter Hawthorne has written a spirited defense of the use of oral traditions in his *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves*. Several noteworthy works that deal with precolonial Sierra Leone have also addressed the issue of oral data. See Mariane C. Ferme’s wonderful work, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History, and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). I am far less comfortable with Shaw’s effort to trace memories of the slave trade over time.

centuries. Much of this material is held in The National Archives (TNA), in Kew Gardens. Indeed, the size of TNA's Sierra Leone collection provided a daunting challenge. It includes early records of the Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading to Africa and its successors, which are arranged under the T70 series. This series documents British commercial activities in Africa and includes correspondence with factors who lived on York Island in the Sherbro and with individuals in the Sierra Leone estuary. More importantly, TNA holds a full series of Sierra Leone colonial correspondence (CO267), consisting of 702 volumes and spanning the full period of British colonial occupation.¹⁹ Finally, my work has benefitted from the FO84 series, which gathers all British correspondence on the slave trade. Although it covers many other parts of West Africa, the FO84 series provides a substantial amount of detail on the slave trade in the Sherbro and Gallinas.

Although I did not travel to archival repositories in the United States, I did make extensive use of microfilmed collections at Emory University and elsewhere. Most importantly, I have examined the records of the American Missionary Association, which maintained a station in the Sherbro from the 1840s. Additionally, I have benefitted from the *Government Publications Relating to Sierra Leone, 1808-1861*, from which I collected statistical information on trade that has been taken from Sierra Leone's annual Blue Books (also in TNA, CO272).

¹⁹ Although this series includes some records of precolonial West Africa in its early volumes, the vast majority of the collection is focused on the period after 1807.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter one explores the growing relationship between southern Sierra Leone and the Atlantic world. In this chapter I assess changing patterns of Atlantic commerce and their effects on the broad Sierra Leone region. During the four centuries that followed the arrival of Portuguese merchants along the Sierra Leone coast, the Gallinas and Sherbro were transformed from ports on the outskirts of major commercial routes to thriving centers for the production and sale of slaves and provisions. The chapter highlights the abolition of the British slave trade as the primary reason for this transformation. After 1807, slave dealers were forced to abandon the security of large islands in and around the estuary and develop more clandestine methods of embarking slaves. At the same time, abolition removed British slavers from the African coast and tied the southern Sierra Leone trade to the fortunes of the Cuban sugar industry.

Chapter two explores how the growth of the Gallinas and Sherbro as slave ports affected the origins of Africans who ended up on slave vessels. Whereas the pre-1807 slave trade from Sierra Leone tended to draw slaves from a catchment area more than 100 miles beyond the littoral, the captives embarked in 19th-century southern Sierra Leone came more frequently from regions in the Sherbro- and Mende-speaking interior, within about 60 miles of the coast. The primary reason for this shift was the drop in slave prices that followed British abolition. As a result, slave dealers found it less profitable to transport African captives from further inland.

The following two chapters turn to issues of agricultural production and trade in the abolition period. Chapter three explores the competing demands for rice produced in the Sherbro among settlers in Freetown and Gallinas. From its founding, Freetown

depended in large part on provisions supplied from its southern frontier. I look at how the provisions trade to Freetown was organized, and I conclude that it shared many similarities with the slave trade. Freetown's food supply was threatened in the 1820s, when the growing slave trade in the Gallinas pushed Sherbro farmers and headmen to enter commercial relationships with slave dealers to the southeast, who needed to feed large numbers of captives held along the coast. Ultimately, this decision led British naval officers to blockade the route between Sherbro and Gallinas, starving the coastal population and destroying the external slave trade.

Chapter four examines the ways in which new demands for agricultural commodities produced in Upper Guinea affected the internal slave trade between the 1830s and 1860s. During these three decades, the diaspora of enslaved southern Sierra Leoneans underwent a profound transformation. In response to new markets for labor in the peanut-producing areas north of Freetown, slave dealers began transporting captives from the Gallinas and Sherbro to these regions by canoe. This new domestic slave trade continued into the 1850s, when the growth of the palm kernel industry gave a new impetus to local slaveholding and stabilized the price of captives in southern Sierra Leone markets.

The final chapter addresses the impact that Freetown's antislavery agenda had on slaves who lived on its frontier. Although British colonial officials did not directly act to suppress slavery in the hinterland, small numbers of enslaved people fled to the settlement to claim freedom from their owners from the 1790s. I argue that through such actions, slaves pushed the issue of domestic slavery onto Britain's colonial agenda, forcing them at times to intervene in political affairs outside of the settlement. As a

result, slaves were given leverage to negotiate new rights and better treatment from their owners. In the long run, the fugitive slave issue contributed to Britain's decision to annex part of the Sherbro in 1861.

Chapter 1, Southern Sierra Leone and the Atlantic World from the 15th through the mid-19th Centuries

The region known as Upper Guinea, which includes southern Sierra Leone, has a long and complex history with the European nations that were most active in the development of the Atlantic world. Unlike many other parts of the African coast, Upper Guinea attracted commercially-minded Europeans because of its abundance of non-human commodities well before the region supplied captives in significant numbers for transatlantic slavers. However, with the explosive growth in the production of American staple crops in the middle of the 18th century came a demand for coerced labor unmatched in previous eras. In response to this drastic change in the Atlantic economy, slave merchants in Sierra Leone, Europe and the New World intensified their relationships with each other and in some cases forged new ones to facilitate the flow of enslaved men, women and children from Upper Guinea for approximately a century.

This chapter explores southern Sierra Leone's integration into the Atlantic world from the time of European contact through the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. In the nearly four centuries between these two events, southern Sierra Leone was transformed from a relative commercial backwater into the most active center for slave embarkation west of the Bight of Benin. For much of this period, the region's involvement in Atlantic commerce proceeded organically, growing out of longstanding ties between British and Anglo-African merchants and bound closely with the evolution of the Sherbro camwood trade. However, the abolition of the British slave trade and the establishment of Freetown transformed southern Sierra Leone's commercial landscape. Once based on large islands and coastal bulking centers, slave merchants increasingly

used southern Sierra Leone's swampy coastal terrain to circumvent Britain's campaign against the slave trade, drawing on Cuban capital and business networks to considerably expand the region's slave supplies. The history of Afro-European commerce, however, was built on a much earlier foundation of trade and migration between the peoples of Upper Guinea and the Western Sudan. The chapter thus begins with a brief overview of social, political and economic developments in Upper Guinea prior to the commencement of trade with the Europeans.

Southern Sierra Leone in a Regional Perspective

Geographic and Human Landscapes

The landscape of southern Sierra Leone shares many similarities with the more broadly defined region of Africa known in the precolonial era as Upper Guinea, which included most of the littoral between modern-day Senegal and Liberia.¹ With the exception of the "mountains" on the south side of the Sierra Leone estuary, the entire Upper Guinea Coast is flat. Geological activity submerged the land, allowing the Atlantic Ocean to flood it periodically and make river waters brackish for many miles up the region's diverse waterways. The result, as George E. Brooks has noted, is that "there is no coastline as such between the Sine-Saloum estuary and Cape Mount, but rather an irregular succession of drowned river estuaries and marshy lowlands interspersed with innumerable low-lying islands and islets, many barely rising above the surface of the

¹ The definition of Upper Guinea has varied in a number of studies. My own definition is rather consistent with Walter Rodney's, which included the region between The Gambia and Cape Mount. See Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), vii.

sea.”² Beyond the coastal lowlands, Upper Guinea’s interior opens into broader plains, extending between 30 and 80 miles wide, before rising in several areas to plateaus and more mountainous country.

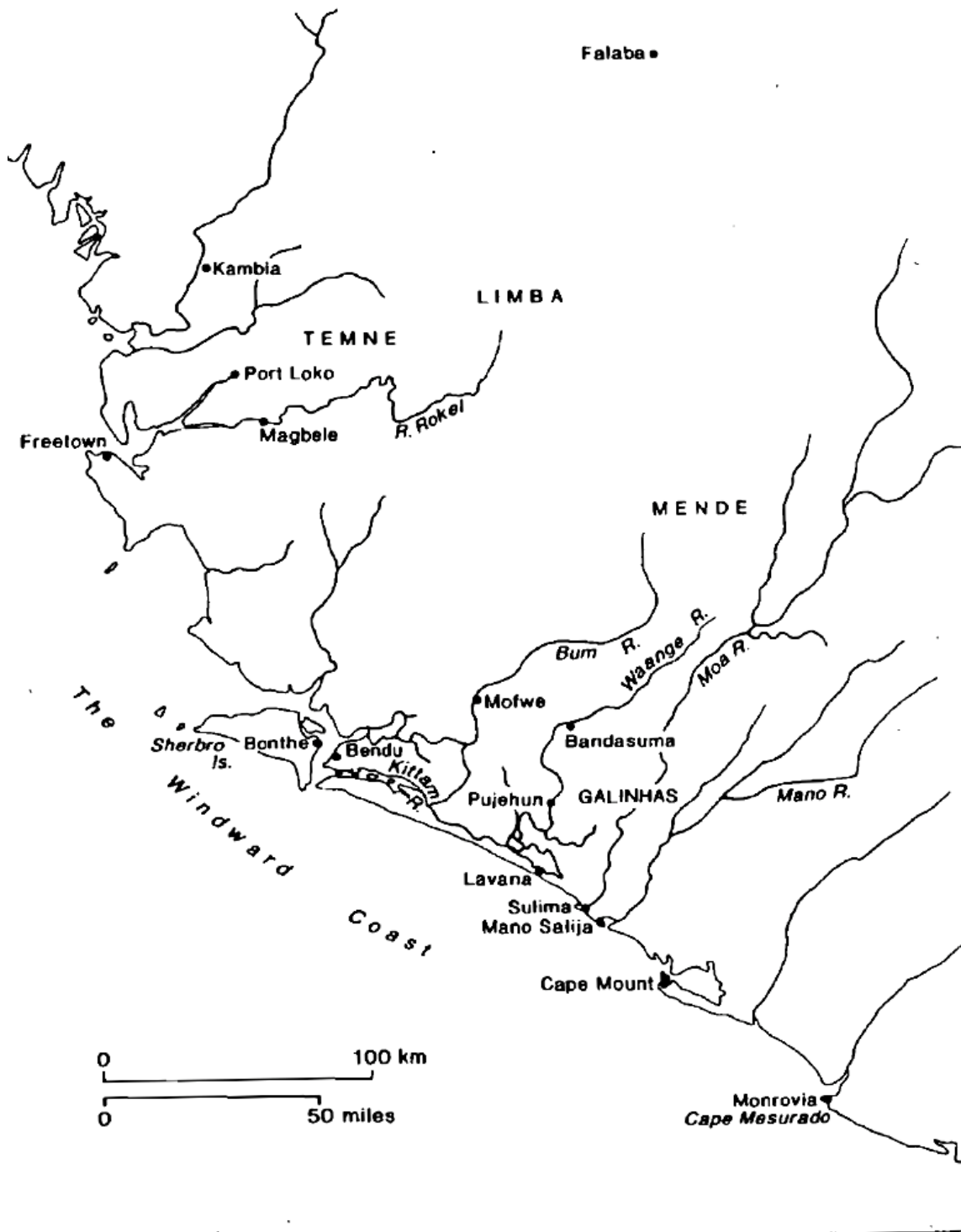
Upper Guinea’s numerous rivers and streams were central to the lives of the region’s inhabitants in the precolonial period. Between The Gambia and Cape Mount, more than two dozen rivers debouch separately into the Atlantic, flowing generally in a westerly or southwesterly direction. Indeed, Europeans often used groups of waterways to distinguish particular parts of Upper Guinea from each other. From their base at Senegal, for example, the French spoke of the “Rivers of the South” in reference to Guinea Bissau, whereas the British at Freetown designated a similar area the “Northern Rivers” region. For centuries, inhabitants of these lands used rivers and streams as highways, on which merchants carried commodities and ideas about foreign peoples and practices. Militaries with more destructive ambitions also exploited the same passages in large dugout canoes.³

As with other parts of Upper Guinea, southern Sierra Leone’s coherence is based on its geographical, cultural and historical features. In the Sherbro estuary, four rivers – the Bagroo (Gbangbar), Jong (Taia), Bum (Sewa) and Kittam (Waanji) – combine to create an outlet to the sea.⁴ Further east, the Kerefe and Mano Rivers form the respective western and eastern boundaries of the Gallinas country, through which the

² George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 21.

³ All studies on regions within Upper Guinea emphasize the significance of rivers, but see, Rodney, *A History*, 2. Not all of the rivers were equally useful for transporting people and goods, but most were navigable by canoe for at least some distance.

⁴ Following Davidson, I am using the Sherbro names for these rivers. The Mende names follow in parentheses. John Davidson, “Trade and Politics in the Sherbro Hinterland, 1849-1890,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin (1969), 2.



Map 1.1, Sierra Leone in the 19th Century⁵

⁵ Taken from Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 45.

larger Moa River also cuts. During the rainy season, which begins in May and lasts as long as seven months, the Kerefe River floods, allowing travelers to reach the Kittam by canoe and at times travel as far as Freetown by using interlocking creeks and streams. Historically, the rains have thus served an integrative purpose, enabling settlements located along the coast and further inland to communicate and trade with one another.⁶

The geographic focus of this project includes the territory between the Sherbro estuary and the Mano River, the eastern boundary of the Gallinas. To a lesser degree, the project deals with lands as far northwest as Freetown and as far east as Cape Mount. Although this chapter explores the growth of trade between Africans and Europeans along the coast, the ones that follow are equally concerned with developments further inland. Since the relationship between the coastal area and the interior with which it communicated changed over time, it is difficult to define a geographic limit for the southern Sierra Leone hinterland. In simplest terms, however, the study is concerned with the Sherbro- and much of the Mende-speaking parts of the interior, reaching at times as far as 100 miles from the sea, but more generally between 50 and 60 miles inland.

The peopling of southern Sierra Leone and the broader region in which it is located developed in the context of a dynamic and longstanding relationship with the states and societies of the Western Sudan. At times, this relationship was based on mutually beneficial trade in which coastal areas supplied salt and fish in exchange for gold, cattle byproducts and other commodities that were available further inland. More commonly, however, the littoral's relatively inhospitable environment attracted populations victimized by warfare and displacement. Indeed, the impact of interior

⁶ Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Galinhas Country (West Africa), 1730-1890* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1983), 4-5.

conflict was severe enough to lead Walter Rodney to conclude that “the peopling of the Upper Guinea Coast was a result of continuous dislocation of population from the interior to the coast,” a process, he continued, that was “largely precipitated by political events in the Sudanese states.”⁷

Before the mid-15th century, several waves of migration between the Western Sudan and coastal Upper Guinea established the ethno-linguistic patterns that Europeans described in later periods. In linguistic terms, the two major language families that dominated Sierra Leone then, as they do today, were the West Atlantic and Mande groups. The former family, which is comprised of a loose classification of numerous linguistic units, has been further subdivided into a smaller configuration of “Mel” languages, including Temne, Bullom, Krim and Gola, but excluding Fula and Limba. Although the chronology of the spread of Mel dialects is unclear, it is widely accepted that communities speaking Mel languages were the first to settle along the Upper Guinea coast. In the Sierra Leone case, Bullom languages dominated the littoral as far north as the Scarcies River and south to around the Gallinas for as long as records are available.⁸

More dramatic shifts in the population occurred in a concentrated period between the 13th and 16th centuries as a result of commercial and political changes in the Sudan.

⁷ Rodney, *A History*, 4-5; C. Wondji, “The States and Cultures of the Upper Guinea Coast,” in B.A. Ogot, ed., *General History of Africa: Africa from the Sixteenth Century to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Heinemann Press, 1992), 368-398. In his study on Senegambia, Boubcar Barry also described the West African coast as a site of population dislocation in the period before and just after European contact. See Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁸ Upper Guinea received a considerable amount of attention from linguists in the 1960s. The division between West Atlantic and Mande was proposed in J.H. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2nd Edition, 1966). See also David Dalby, “The Mel Languages: A Reclassification of Southern ‘West-Atlantic,’” *African Language Studies*, 7 (1965), 171-179; and Yves Person, “Ethnic Movements and Acculturation in Upper Guinea since the Fifteenth Century,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 4, 3 (1971), 669-689. For a more recent survey, see Arthur Abraham, *An Introduction to the Pre-Colonial History of the Mende of Sierra Leone* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), chapter 1.

A massive migration of Susu-speaking peoples began in the 13th century, when defeated Susu communities fled southwest from the conquering Mali Empire. Pushed toward the Futa Jallon highlands in modern Guinea, displaced Susu migrants intermarried with Yalunka speakers, who were settled around the massif. This development appears to have provoked further migrations, particularly among Temne speakers who moved from Futa Jallon southwest toward the Sierra Leone peninsula. Temne migrants ultimately drove a wedge between Bullom groups to the north (who continued to be called Bullom) and those living to the south beyond Sherbro Island (who over time came to be called Sherbro).⁹ In other cases, commercial opportunities inspired migration from further east around the Niger River. In an often-repeated tradition, for example, Kono- and Vai-speakers are said to have moved together from the east in search of salt. When they reached the agriculturally-rich savanna lands, the Kono decided to remain there while the Vai continued on until they reached the coast between the Gallinas and Cape Mount.¹⁰ Yet for the most part these movements predated Sierra Leone's contact with Europeans. By the time the Portuguese arrived along the coast in the 1460s, the region's ethno-linguistic distribution was relatively stable (see Map 2.1).¹¹

The major exceptions to this pattern were the cases of the related Loko and Mende peoples, who only began to appear in documentary records in the early 1700s, following a time of great turbulence in the history of Upper Guinea. This period saw

⁹ Rodney, *A History*, 9-11; Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 29-33. On Yalunka, see Magbaily C. Fyle, *The Solima Yalunka Kingdom: Pre-Colonial Politics, Economics and Society* (Freetown: Nyakon Publishers, 1979).

¹⁰ Rodney, *A History*, 14. The mutual intelligibility of Kono and Vai languages makes it likely that these groups did indeed migrate together. In fact, in the Vai language, the term Kono is roughly translated as "wait here," or "stay here," which gives some support to the broader migration story above, though it makes Vai individuals the primary actors in configuring Upper Guinea's ethno-linguistic pattern rather than Kono speakers. Personal communication with Konrad Tuchscherer, January 27, 2009.

¹¹ P.E.H. Hair, "Ethnolinguistic Continuity on the Guinea Coast," *Journal of African History*, 8 (1967), 247-268.

dramatic transformations in social and political organization between Cape Mount and the Sierra Leone peninsula. During the so-called Mani invasions, which began in the 1540s, the Kingdom of Quoja, located around Cape Mount, was conquered by the Karou. The victorious Karou adopted the language of the local population, Vai, and over the next 15 years they intermarried with women from the defeated Quoja Kingdom. The result was a culturally-fluid population, from which the Mani rulers drew to increase the size and strength of their army. Given that their homeland was located around Cape Mount, Hair has convincingly argued that the Mani group consisted of a core of Vai-speaking military leaders who recruited Bullom soldiers during their campaign.¹²

From a base at Cape Mount, the Mani army divided itself into three parts, one patrolling north along the coast in war canoes and two other groups following in parallel lines inland. The warriors first conquered the territory around Sherbro country and proceeded to attack the “Sapi,” a group speaking related Mel languages. Having penetrated north of the Sierra Leone estuary, the Mani invaders were eventually defeated by a combined force of Susu and Fula militants. In the process, however, the Mani transformed the region’s political landscape, establishing a number of “kingdoms” along the coast between Port Loko and Sherbro Island. However, these polities seemed to have had little effect on social and cultural patterns over time: very little evidence remained of the Mani incursion after the invasions; the political leaders who were appointed to

¹² The Mani invasion was first systematically treated in Walter Rodney, “A Reconsideration of the Mande Invasions of Sierra Leone,” *Journal of African History*, 8, 2 (1967), 219-246. The most recent work on the invasions is Abraham’s *An Introduction*, 18-20; and David Dwyer, “The Mende Problem,” in Koen Bostoen and Jackmy Maniacky, eds., *Studies in African Comparative Linguistics with Special Focus on Bantu and Mande* (Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa), 29-42. On the Vai, see Adam Jones, “Who were the Vai?,” *Journal of African History*, 22, 2 (1981), 159-178; and *ibid*, “The Kquoja Kingdom: A Forest State in Seventeenth Century West Africa,” *Paideuma*, 29 (1983), 23-43. Much of this research is based on Dapper’s “Kquoja Account.” See Olfert Dapper, *Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten* (Amsterdam: J. van Meurs, 1668).

oversee the Mani kingdom appear to have assimilated quickly into the local societies where they were established.¹³

The relationship between the Mani invasions and the appearance of Mende communities in historical records has been debated by scholars over the past four decades. Arthur Abraham has divided the debate into two camps: those who propose a “fusion theory” to explain the expansion of Mende speakers, and those who argue for the independent emergence of Mende socio-cultural formation. In the former case, scholars suggest that the Mende are products of the interaction and disruption caused by warfare during the Mani incursions. As invading Mani warriors mixed with the autochthonous communities they conquered, a new linguistic and cultural grouping emerged that provided the foundation on which Mende society was built. Alternatively, Hair and Abraham propose that the Mende derive from a group called “Hondo,” which was identified in the Mende-speaking heartland as early as the 17th century.¹⁴ While there is insufficient evidence to fully support either argument, the significant point for this project is that by the mid-18th century, when slave exports from Upper Guinea began in earnest, the geographic boundaries of Sierra Leone’s diverse ethno-linguistic communities were well documented and appear to have been relatively stable.

Commercial and Social Patterns

For most of southern Sierra Leone before the mid-15th century, the gathering and production of food dominated the local economy. Fishing undoubtedly supplied most of

¹³ Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 18-19.

¹⁴ P.E.H. Hair, “An Ethnolinguistic Inventory of the Lower Guinea Coast before 1700: Part I,” *African Language Review*, 7 (1968), 56. For the “fusion” argument, see Rodney, “A Reconsideration,” 236-237; Person, “Ethnic Movements,” 685. The division into these two camps is from Abraham, *An Introduction*, 22-25.

the protein that Sherbro and many Mende communities consumed. Hunting and gathering were likely important as well. In some cases, where the environment allowed, poultry and goats were raised, but the prevalence of the deadly tsetse fly limited the introduction of cattle into the heavily wooded lands south of Freetown. Most communities produced agricultural commodities only at subsistence levels, which provided little impetus for the development of regional trade networks.¹⁵

Rice was the staple crop throughout the Sherbro and Gallinas and their hinterlands. Although “wet” or paddy rice cultivation has become prominent in the 20th century, contemporary accounts suggest that in the 19th century and earlier, only the upland variety was produced.¹⁶ Maize and millet were probably also consumed, but they were not considered as desirable as rice. During periods of drought and famine, hungry communities resorted to eating palm “cabbage,” consuming the fronds of oil palms to stave off starvation. Finally, with the opening of the Atlantic, southern Sierra Leoneans added cassava to their diets, which for many (particularly poor and enslaved) people became the primary staple consumed.¹⁷ These starches were mixed with palm oil to

¹⁵ Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 19-20. The prevalence of poultry in southern Sierra Leone is suggested by the very name Gallinas, which the Portuguese coined because of the presence of Guinea fowl throughout the region.

¹⁶ T.J. Alldridge, one of two Traveling Commissioners in Sierra Leone who had extensive knowledge of the Sherbro region suggested that wet rice was cultivated only in the late-19th century and because of the urging of American missionaries using American rice. See T.J. Alldridge, *A Transformed Colony: Sierra Leone as It Was and as It Is; Its Progress, Peoples, Native Customs and Undeveloped Wealth* (London: Seeley & Co., 1910), 347. This was apparently not the case further north in the Scarcies, where wet rice was cultivated from the mid-19th century. See G.M. Roddan, “Cultivation of Swamp Rice in Sierra Leone,” *Tropical Agriculture*, 19 (1942), 84-86. In her stimulating book on rice farming in the region north of Freetown, Edda L. Fields-Black warns that the lack of reference to wet-rice cultivation in European sources does not necessarily imply its absence – a point with which I concur. However, in the absence of more detailed linguistic research in the Sherbro region, I have relied on the accounts of contemporary observers. See Edda L. Fields-Black, *Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Davidson, “Trade and Politics,” 18. On the consumption of palm cabbage, see George Thompson, *An Account of the Missionary Labors, Sufferings, Travels, and Observations, of George Thompson, in Western Africa, At the Mendi Mission* (New York: Second Edition, 1852), 57. See also Alfred W. Crosby, *The*

create a stew or sauce that could be seasoned with peppers and other spices obtained further down the coast.

Little is known of the social organization of southern Sierra Leone communities, but as with most parts of the African littoral in the precolonial period, production was probably organized within households. Given the high ratio of land to labor, men, women and children each proved invaluable in performing tasks relating to the cultivation of food. Although written evidence began only with the arrival of the Portuguese, their early observations suggest that a gendered division of labor prevailed within families. In his early-16th century account of Sierra Leone, for example, Valentim Fernandes noted that “the men have as many wives as they can. And the more wives they have the richer they are, for the women labour, sow and reap, and do all the work. And the men rest.”¹⁸ As this quote suggests and as scholars of Africa have for sometime known, a man’s wealth was judged primarily on the number of dependents under his control. However, Fernandes’ quote only tells part of the story: in addition to wives, powerful men sought to attract other followers, including immigrants, slaves (in Sherbro, *wono*; in Mende, *nduwe*) and individuals in various states of coercion. Although the topic has been a contentious one, it is now generally agreed that slavery did exist in many parts of Upper Guinea before contact with Europeans, though the institution’s significance in local economies is poorly understood.¹⁹

Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492 (Westport: Greenwood Publication Co., 1972), for the broader context of cassava’s establishment in Africa.

¹⁸ Th. Monod, A. Teixeira da Mota et. R. Mauny, eds., *Description de la Côte Occidentale d’Afrique (Sénégal du Cap de Monte, Archipels)* (Bissau, 1951), translated in Christopher Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 28.

¹⁹ Upper Guinea was the focus of Walter Rodney’s famous article that argued against the existence of slavery in Africa before the growth of the Atlantic slave trade. See his “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 (1966), 431-32. Rodney later modified his stance in his contribution entitled “The

Precolonial Mende and Sherbro societies were also arranged by complex and at times seemingly contradictory political and social structures. Neither group was integrated into a large centralized state. Moreover, as several scholars have noted, statements about descent and residency patterns were often contradictory and inconsistent with historical realities. The Mende and Vai, for example, are often said to be patrilineal in descent and virilocal in residence. Sherbro societies, on the other hand, are generally characterized as matrilineal. Yet it is important to remember that statements about lineage organization represent ideals and do not account for the complex dynamics of African social relations. They must therefore be received with caution. As Adam Jones notes,

the very process of recording a ‘family tree’ creates a genealogical model which tends to distort reality, forcing it into a patrilineal or matrilineal mould. Mende and Vai people, like ethnographers, often invent labels to describe the roles of different individuals and social groups, without paying much attention to the variety of interchange which exists in practice or to the complex set of obligations owed by any individual.²⁰

The fundamental unit of Mende and Sherbro society is the household (Mende, *mawe*). The size of households vary: they may be as small as a single family with a few dependent relatives or large enough to accommodate several generations of families and

Guinea Coast,” in *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975-1985), 223-324. Many scholars have since argued for the existence of slavery in the region. For examples including the Mende, Sherbro and Vai, see Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 19; Carol P. MacCormack, “Slaves, Slave Owners, and Slave Dealers: Sherbro Coast and Hinterland,” in Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1997), 271-294; Svend E. Holsoe, “Slavery and Economic Response among the Vai (Liberia and Sierra Leone),” in *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 287-303.

²⁰ Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 11. The standard text on Sherbro ethnography is H.U. Hall, *The Sherbro of Sierra Leone* (Philadelphia: The University Press, University of Pennsylvania, 1938). The matrilineal nature of Sherbro society is a central focus of Linda Rose Day, “Historical Patterns in a Stateless Society: Sherbro Land, 1750-1898,” MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin (1980). On Mende ethnography, see Kenneth Little, *The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African People in Transition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1951). For the Vai, see Svend E. Holsoe, “The Cassava-Leaf People: An Ethnographic Study of the Vai People, with Particular Emphasis on the Tewo Chiefdom,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University (1967).

their extended kin. The eldest male resident generally wielded authority over the household, though as with proclamations about descent this likely represented more of an ideal than a rule. Households (*mawesei*) were grouped together to form a compound (*kuwui*), which included a broader group of kin who were said to descend from the settlement's founders. A senior man or woman oversaw the compound's affairs in combination with other "big men" and "big women," making decisions about land usage and other political and legal issues. Compounds could be further integrated to form a town, which consisted of a single large settlement and its dependent farms and villages. According to Davidson, Mende and Sherbro towns were comprised of as many as 15 *kuwuisia* and could include a population of as many as 3,000, though generally they were much smaller.²¹

The demands of rice production dictated the routines by which farmers in southern Sierra Leone households lived. The greater part of this work was undertaken by individual households and the nature of the labor varied considerably by season. The first phase of rice production began around December, when men first selected a farm site. In recent times, farmers have demonstrated a preference for locations on which mature brush has grown; given the abundance of land in the precolonial period, this was probably both easier and more important then. The field was subsequently "brushed," a very dangerous and labor-intensive endeavor that involved the felling of large trees with an axe and the removal of all other growth from the plot. Farmers left the debris out to dry in the sun and eventually burned it, which increased the fertility of the soil. The rice crop was then sown just before the onset of the rains. Throughout the rainy season, household members were involved in weeding and in keeping birds away from the

²¹ Little, *The Mende*, 96-98; Davidson, "Trade and Politics," 8-9.

germinating grains. Harvesting rounded out the season, beginning around September and lasting several months.

The cycle for Upper Guinea's secondary crops overlapped with that of rice production. Maize was planted with rice but was harvested a month or two earlier. Cassava – a far more durable crop – was left in the ground until it was needed.²² As a whole, agricultural labor in southern Sierra Leone thus placed demands on the local population throughout the year, leaving a short break between the end of the rice harvest and the commencement of the brushing period.

The labor involved in the clearing and cultivation of southern Sierra Leone rice farms was distinctly gendered. In broadest terms, men performed the most dangerous physical tasks while women were involved in the day-to-day maintenance and survival of the farms.²³ Men's labor cycles thus peaked during the brushing period, when they joined together to cut and burn the forest in preparation for planting. At times, the labor needed for this task was greater than a single household could supply. In such cases, elder men exploited communal associations like the *Poros* that enabled households to make claims on younger laborers and assist each other in the cutting of farms. Once the fields were cleared, women and children assumed control over the cultivation process. From the time the rains began until a month or two after they let up, women were involved in the planting, weeding, harvesting, processing and generally the marketing of

²² Kenneth Little, "The Mende Farming Household," *The Sociological Review*, 40, 4 (1948), 37-56. For Sherbro, see Davidson, "Trade and Politics," 18-20.

²³ Carol MacCormack, "Control of Land, Labor and Capital in Rural Southern Sierra Leone," in Edna G. Bay, ed., *Women and Work in Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 35-53.

the rice crop, in the case of any surpluses. Children and elderly men and women were primarily responsible for ridding the fields of birds during the rains.²⁴

Although local agricultural production dominated southern Sierra Leone's economy, inhabitants were by no means isolated from the wider commercial patterns of Upper Guinea before the mid-15th century. Indeed, the region as a whole formed part of two intersecting trade networks that evolved centuries before Europeans began arriving along the coast. In one case, Sierra Leone was the terminus of a route that connected the coast with the Western Sudan, serving as a producer and supplier of salt. In the other, the region between Freetown and the Gallinas was part of a broader coastal commerce in, among other things, kola, which linked the littoral as far north as Senegal and down beyond Cape Mount.

Less is known about the salt trade in southern Sierra Leone than in the area north of Freetown, but it is likely that the two regions obtained salt in similar ways. In the north, salty seawater was collected in shallow ponds during periods of high tide, where it was left to evaporate. Manufacturers collected the remaining thin layer of crust with the mud on which it hardened and then dissolved the mixture in water. The mud was subsequently strained from the solution and the salty water left to dry in large containers. Although it is unlikely that salt manufactured in southern Sierra Leone was traded as far inland as that which was produced in the Senegambia, the Kono/Vai migration story recounted above suggests that supplies of salt – or at the very least knowledge of areas

²⁴ Davidson, "Trade and Politics," 19-20; Little, *The Mende*, 80-82, discusses the labor involved in rice production and describes several institutional arrangements through which households obtained additional labor. See also Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 165-169.

where the mineral was produced – could reach a considerable distance beyond the coast.²⁵

The kola trade, by contrast, was the engine that drove West African coastal commerce throughout much of the precolonial era and was far more important to Upper Guinea than salt. The Sierra Leone region as a whole was probably the most prominent supplier of kola during this period. Indeed, the word kola itself is of Temne origin and was adopted by inhabitants throughout wide parts of West Africa. Collected from trees that grow as high as 65 feet, kola nuts were highly prized for their medicinal properties. When consumed, the caffeine in the nut serves as a stimulant, helping to relieve thirst and hunger. Kola also served social and cultural purposes, playing a central role in marriage ceremonies and other significant events. Between the Sierra Leone estuary and Cape Mount, merchants collected and shipped large supplies of kola north into the Senegambia. As early as the 12th century, significant quantities of kola were reaching as far as the savanna and Sahel.²⁶

When Portuguese navigators arrived along the coast of Sierra Leone in the 1460s, they encountered a region on the fringes of most major commercial routes in West Africa. Even in the case of important commodities like kola, the merchants who carried on this commerce were largely outsiders, entering the region to collect and transport goods to more distant lands to the north and northeast. The growth of transatlantic trade in the centuries after European contact transformed this pattern, increasing southern Sierra Leone's significance in regional and international affairs and drawing new

²⁵ Rodney, *A History*, 18-20.

²⁶ Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 53-54. George E. Brooks, *Kola Trade and State Building: Upper Guinea Coast and Senegambia, 15th – 17th Centuries* (Brookline: African Studies Center, Boston University, 1980). More broadly, see Paul E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade, 1700-1900* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Ltd., 1980).

attention toward the coast. Transatlantic trade also added value to commodities like camwood and ivory that previously had less significance in local economies. Finally, the growth of a Eur-African community had social consequences, in some cases opening new avenues for women and some men to gain access wealth and ultimately providing the foundation for the growth of the Atlantic slave trade from the 18th century.

Africans, Europeans and the Growth of Atlantic Commerce, 15th to 18th Centuries

Southern Sierra Leone's integration into the commercial systems of the Atlantic world developed unevenly between the mid-15th and 19th centuries. During this period, Europeans from at least four different nations became more actively engaged in the region's coastal commerce, with particular states dominating their end of the trade over time. From the 1460s, Portuguese and Luso-Africans were the sole "European" traders in the Sierra Leone region, enjoying a monopoly for nearly a century before encountering noteworthy competition from Dutch, French and finally English voyagers. The nature of coastal trading itself changed over this period. From a minor business that exploited Africa's preexisting commercial systems, trade between Europeans and Africans eventually put heavy demands on new kinds of products, particularly including camwood. Seen as a whole, Sierra Leone's Atlantic commerce up to the early 18th century was primarily driven by the supply of produce, with slave trading limited and of secondary importance.²⁷

²⁷ For estimates of the early West African slave trade, see António de Almeida Mendes, "The Foundations of the System: A Reassessment of the Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in David Eltis and David Richardson, eds., *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 63-94.

Sierra Leone was drawn into Afro-European trade as part of the expansion of Portuguese influence along the African coast in the mid-15th century. The Portuguese colonization of the Cape Verde islands was thus a major turning point in the evolution of Upper Guinea's commercial affairs. Although Lisbon-based officials quickly attempted to restrict non-sanctioned trade between Cape Verde settlers and the African mainland, the clandestine shipment of goods was well established by the last quarter of the 15th century. Cotton fiber and (later) tobacco and *aguardente* – brandy made with sugar cane – were the lynchpins of the trade; they were exchanged primarily for woven cloths (*panos*), which were eventually duplicated on the islands by enslaved African weavers. Salt, though unreported, was probably also a major export to neighboring Senegambia and Upper Guinea.²⁸

The intricacies of the Cape Verde trade are not well known in the early phases of its expansion, but it is clear that a considerable number of people and places were involved. Summarizing what was known of the coastwise commerce in the early-17th century, Dierick Ruiters, a Dutch seafarer, explained that

the trade we call 'coastal' is mostly undertaken, in small ships, pinnances and launches, by Portuguese who live on Santiago Island. First they load these with salt, which they conveniently obtain for nothing on the islands of Maio and Sal and they sail to Serra-Lioa with the salt and trade it for gold, ivory and kola. Then from Serra-Lioa they sail again to Joala and Porto d'Ale [the Petit Côte], where they trade a portion of the kola for cotton cloths. They also sometimes trade ivory obtained in Serra-Lioa for Cape Verde cloths...from there they sail again east to Cacheo where they trade the rest of their kola and their remaining goods for slaves.²⁹

²⁸ Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 146-147. Rodney, *A History*, chapter 3. See also Trevor P. Hall, "The Role of Cape Verde Islanders in Organizing and Operating Maritime Trade between West Africa and Iberian Territories, 1441-1616," Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University (1993). For the broader transatlantic context of Portuguese expansion, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁹ Quoted in Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 157. Almost two decades earlier, Father Balthasar Barreira suggested that cotton textiles, rather than salt, were at the center of Cape Verde's trade with Sierra Leone.

European manufactures – generally metal basins and a range of other goods – would by then have supplemented salt as significant trading commodities.³⁰

But while the so-called “Guinea of Cabo Verde” commercial network continued to link the archipelago with parts of Upper Guinea over the 16th century, the extent to which it involved southern Sierra Leone is unclear. More than likely, the Sherbro and Gallinas represented the outer fringes of direct Portuguese and Luso-African influence. While undoubtedly some regional trade linked the south with the expanding coastwise commerce, direct trade with Sierra Leone seems to have been much more heavily focused on the rivers north of the peninsula. For example, the well-documented voyage of the caravel *Santiago*, which departed from Lisbon in 1526, sailed only as far as the Kolente (Great Scarcies) River, where it spent three months loading rice, ivory and some slaves before moving further north to Cacheu.³¹

Based on such documents, the picture that emerges of the early Atlantic trade with Sierra Leone is one of relative continuity with Upper Guinea’s preexisting commercial systems. Cape Verdean and Portuguese merchants supplied many of the same commodities that circulated within Africa and added only luxury items such as tobacco and alcohol. Kola was a central part of Upper Guinea trade both before and after the archipelago was colonized. Ivory and slaves probably increased in value as a result of the Eur-African trade, but supplies of these goods were relatively limited and therefore they probably had little impact on local societies. The trade did bring some important social

See P.E.H. Hair, “Sources on Early Sierra Leone: (9) Barreira’s ‘Account of the Coast of Guinea,’ 1606,” *Africana Research Bulletin*, 7, 1 (1976), 54-55.

³⁰ In Pereira’s well-known *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, for example, which was written around 1505, the author comments that gold is available in exchange for “brass bracelets and basins of the size barbers use, linen, red cloth, bloodstones, cotton cloths and other articles.” Quoted in Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, 42.

³¹ Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 154-155.

and cultural changes, in particular the establishment of an Anglo-African merchant community, but this issue will be dealt with later in the section.

From its foundation in the Cape Verde commercial nexus, southern Sierra Leone's role in Atlantic trading evolved slowly over the subsequent two centuries. For most European merchants, the region was used primarily as a stopping point for wood, water and provisions during voyages to the more lucrative slave marts further east along the Gold Coast. But even this limited role allowed Europeans to become more knowledgeable about southern Sierra Leone's commercial prospects, leading to periodic increases in the export of local and regional commodities. Whereas the Portuguese had noted that the Gallinas was an insignificant supplier of any goods in the early 1500s, for example, decades later they recorded a small commerce in ivory, pepper and some gold. Sherbro was probably even more economically active at the time. By the first quarter of the 17th century, the coast was considered important enough to merit the establishment of Dutch trading posts at Cape Mount and on the Boom Kittam, in Sherbro.³²

However, it was only once the British commenced trading in southern Sierra Leone that the region began shipping commodities throughout the Atlantic on a regular basis. Although British engagement with the Sierra Leone coast went back to the ravaging exploits of the Hawkins family in the mid-1500s,³³ British merchants only demonstrated a sustained interest in the region's trade during the 17th century. Beginning in 1618, the British founded a series of trading companies, including the "Gynney and

³² The comparatively insignificant role of Sierra Leone is underscored in early records of the Atlantic slave trade, which document a far greater interest in the Gold Coast. See, for example, Adam Jones, ed., *German Sources for West African History, 1599-1669* (Wiesbaden: F. Steinger, 1983); Ibid, *Brandenburg Sources for West African History, 1680-1700* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985). Also see the accounts of William Schouten and Nicolas Villault, printed in Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, 54-56.

³³ Reproduced in volume one of Kenneth Morgan, ed., *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 4 Volumes (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003).

Binney” Company (1618), the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa (1663) and the Royal African Company (1672).³⁴ Still more interested in gold and slave markets to the east, these Chartered Companies nonetheless enabled the British to wrestle control of the limited Sierra Leone trade from European competitors. By the 1660s British agents had established factories at York Island, in the Sherbro, and at Bunce Island, in the Sierra Leone estuary (see Map 1.2). From these settlements they operated an extensive coasting trade, employing nearly two dozen small craft to collect produce for direct shipment to England.³⁵ Factors did at times purchase slaves, but in very small numbers.

British vessels voyaging to southern Sierra Leone in the 17th century were primarily seeking cargos of camwood and to a lesser extent ivory. The latter commodity had long been a staple of Afro-European commerce. Coelho described a regular trade in ivory between Sierra Leone and Cape Verde as early as the 1550s. In his famous account of West Africa written in the late 1600s, Jean Barbot noted that Sierra Leone’s ivory was “better than in any other place in Guinea,” because of its exceptionally white color. While Portuguese merchants were said to spoil the ivory trade around the estuary, this was apparently less of a problem in the Sherbro, where Barbot claimed that more than four tons could be supplied in two month’s time at a reasonable price.³⁶

³⁴ Hilary Jenkinson, “The Records of the English African Companies,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1912), 185-220.

³⁵ K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longman Green and Co., 1957), 214-221; Davidson, “Trade and Politics,” chapter 3. For part of the 1680s, the British also had an agent in the Gallinas, though trade there was significantly less than in Sherbro. See Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 20-22.

³⁶ P.E.H. Hair, Adam Jones, Robin Law, eds., *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1992), 220. For one of the few extant images of a camwood tree, see T.J. Alldridge, *The Sherbro and its Hinterland* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1901), plate facing p. 75.

Camwood was always the staple of British trade in southern Sierra Leone up to the 18th century – it was far more important than ivory. A hard timber used to make red dye, Sherbro camwood was particularly prized for its brightness and durability. In one of the more detailed statements about the quality of the dye it produced, Barbot commented that, “the Cam-wood is a much better sort of red wood for dyers use, than the Brazil, and accounted the best in all Guinea. It will serve seven times over, and the last time is still effectual.”³⁷ From as early as the 1620s, Wood and Company, a London firm, held a monopoly on the Sherbro trade, although they had to enforce it without help from the local ruler. The magnitude of this trade is unknown, but qualitative evidence suggests that Company merchants supplied larger vessels over time. In 1648, for example, a vessel was able to load just twenty two and a half tons of camwood in the Sherbro. Six decades later, a Royal African Company agent supplied as much as 78 tons for a single English merchant. However, this shipment appears to have come just before the Sherbro camwood trade collapsed: by 1718, the same factor obtained just over 22 tons of redwood during the entire season and in the early 1720s the supply of the timber was said to be “quite exhausted.”³⁸

What did African merchants and rulers obtain in exchange for this high-quality redwood? Whereas early trade with Cape Verde-based merchants was rooted in the supply of salt and cloth, the camwood trade was far more complex, demonstrating the evolution of Afro-European trade over some two centuries. Indeed, by the 18th century (and likely well before), Sherbro merchants had obtained a wide knowledge of specific

³⁷ Jean Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea* (London: Henry Lintot and John Osborn, 1746), 106.

³⁸ On Wood and Company, see Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, 59-62. See also, BNA, T70/5, 24 October 1709; BNA, T70/7, 13 April 1721. See also Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 237, where Barbot states that a vessel might obtain 50 tons of camwood over a two-month period.

European commodities, distinguishing chintz from silks and rum from brandy. Without access to the goods that were most highly demanded, British factors were doomed to failure. Underscoring this point, John Ball, a merchant on York Island, explained that “the best goods for trade are large brass kettles from 5-20, there’s no trading without them. The Small kettles they have, only breed a Disturbance, the Natives threatening to throw them in our people’s Faces.”³⁹

In addition to reflecting changes in Afro-British commerce, the organization of the camwood trade also transformed the relationship between the southern Sierra Leone littoral and its hinterland, where the timber grew. The wood was particularly abundant up the Boom River, which was navigable for mid-sized vessels up to the town of Baga, perhaps 60 miles inland. Smaller sloops could travel as far as 200 miles up the river, though few apparently did. The collection and internal shipment of the timber was closely tied to Sierra Leone’s rainfall patterns. During the rainy season, strong downstream currents prevented merchants from traveling up the river. The trip inland was thus generally made near the end of the dry season, between April and May, when the Boom was reduced to less than 10 feet in depth in some areas. During these months, camwood was noted to be plentiful and cheap. Once inland, the wood was collected and shipped downstream around the end of the rainy season, when higher water levels enabled canoes to quickly descend back down toward the coast.⁴⁰

The seasonal pattern of the camwood trade fit neatly into the broader routines of agricultural production in southern Sierra Leone. Available evidence suggests that African men were solely involved in the cutting and shipping of the timber. Men felled

³⁹ BNA, T70/6, 17 October 1715.

⁴⁰ BNA, T70/7, 29 July 1723; Rodney, *A History*, 159-161; Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 236.

the trees in the dry season before they turned their attention to brushing rice farms. When the wood was transported to the coast, male labor was also more readily available, since the tasks involved in rice cultivation had by then passed primarily to women and children. However, this simplified description was in reality far more complex, and the tasks required of wood and rice production did at times clash. When the two industries conflicted, Africans unsurprisingly gave rice the higher priority. Thus in 1726, a leader on the Rokelle River accounted for the poor supply of camwood by explaining that his men were busy on their farms and that they would return to cutting wood after preparing their fields.⁴¹

The impact of the camwood trade on southern Sierra Leone communities is difficult to assess, but as a starting point it is important to note that Africans controlled each step in the production process. John Clark, a York Island factor, noted that “country people” cut the wood, de-barked it and brought it down to the Sherbro factory. The industry thus placed new demands on local labor, including not only the men who prepared and transported the wood but also women, men and slaves who supported the industry in other ways. In fact, during the height of the timber season, it was noted that several makeshift towns were established on the banks of the Boom River, where local inhabitants cooked and performed additional vital tasks. The magnitude of the operation could be significant: in a later reference to the explosive growth of Freetown’s timber trade in the 1820s, one merchant suggested that as many as 2,000 families were directly or indirectly involved in the trade along the banks of the Rokelle River.⁴² Although the

⁴¹ Rodney, *A History*, 160.

⁴² BNA, T70/5, 22 August 1706; Rodney, *A History*, 160; *British Parliamentary Papers, Slave Trade*, Vol. 9 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 6. Although the scope of the camwood trade was much smaller,

earlier Sherbro trade was of a much smaller magnitude, such evidence suggests that considerable numbers of people were involved in the industry in the 17th and early-18th centuries.

In the two and a half centuries after Portuguese voyagers arrived along the Upper Guinea coast, southern Sierra Leone's involvement with the Atlantic world thus underwent a considerable transformation. From a region on the outskirts of the Portuguese/Cape Verde West African network, the Sherbro and to a lesser extent the Gallinas were increasingly drawn into Britain's transatlantic trading sphere. The growth of the camwood trade secured British influence along the coast. Although Portuguese and Dutch mariners knew of the high quality of Sherbro camwood, English traders never faced any significant competition in the trade. While southern Sierra Leone still played a comparatively marginal role in the broader evolution of Afro-European commerce, the establishment of a sustained produce trade between Britain and Upper Guinea set a lasting foundation for the region's increased involvement in British transatlantic trading, which would later include a more significant export of slaves.

One essential element of this foundation was the emergence of a permanent British and (shortly thereafter) Anglo-African merchant community along the southern Sierra Leone littoral. The origins of this community dated back to the establishment of Royal African Company settlements on York Island and elsewhere along the coast. From these factories, Company employees became increasingly involved in the social, cultural and political developments of the region. Many factors married indigenous women, further integrating themselves into local affairs. Wives improved the men's status in a

the figure cited above is nonetheless striking and suggests that a significant number of people helped develop the timber trade.

number of ways: they served as cultural intermediaries, providing valuable knowledge of local trade practices; the couples also had children who over time became dominant commercial middlemen, controlling trade between European captains and the southern Sierra Leone interior.⁴³

Between the 1660s and the mid-18th century, as many as five different Anglo-African families emerged as powerful brokers of trade in southern Sierra Leone: the Caulkers, Clevelandes, Tuckers, Rogers and Cumberbusses. The role that these families played in Atlantic commerce has been extensively described elsewhere, but given their significance in the Sherbro and Gallinas, a brief recounting of the founding of several Afro-Atlantic lineages is necessary. The most powerful of these families was probably the Caulkers, which originated with the arrival of Thomas Corker in the Sherbro in 1684. At some point during this decade, Corker married a woman known in documentary sources as Ya Kumba, or the “Dutchess of Sherbro.” The couple’s sons, Stephen and Robin, carefully maintained ties to British- and African-Atlantic communities. Several Corkers were listed on Company payrolls by the early 1700s and by the middle of the century the Caulkers were making claims to political authority along several parts of the Sherbro littoral.⁴⁴

Other British factors exploited similar paths toward achieving local power and influence, although some were more successful than others. Zachary Rogers, for example, married a woman simply referred to as “the great woman” and together they

⁴³ Scholars of Upper Guinea have carefully documented the role of African women in the development of Eur-African trade. See Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*; *ibid*, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003); Davidson, “Trade and Politics,” chapter 3; Rodney, *A History*, chapter 8; and Linda R. Day, “Afro-British Integration on the Sherbro Coast: 1665-1795,” *Africana Research Bulletin*, 7, 3 (1983), 82-107. For additional case studies, see chapter 4, fn. 10.

⁴⁴ This paragraph and the one that follows is based on Davidson, “Trade and Politics,” 60-61.

built a powerful commercial enterprise in southern Sierra Leone. By 1714, the Rogers family was actively trading in the Gallinas, receiving goods directly from Company officials in England. In the following decade, it was suggested that Rogers had monopolized the camwood trade between the Gallinas and Cape Mount. The trader's descendant further strengthened the family's position by marrying into the powerful Massaquoi family, establishing a political power base around the Gallinas.

The Afro-British social network that these new lineages created proved essential for Sierra Leone's full-scale entry into the Atlantic slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries. Although the Upper Guinea coast had always provided small numbers of slaves to passing vessels, it was only in the middle decades of the 1700s that the region became a significant supplier of slaves, meaning a trade that crossed the 1,000 captives per annum threshold. With strong ties to the British Atlantic world and to the communities in the African interior, southern Sierra Leone's coastal brokers were central players in the region's transition to the slave trade. The final section explores the growth and organization of this trade along the Sierra Leone coast.

The External Slave Trade from Southern Sierra Leone, 18th and 19th Centuries

The foreign slave trade from southern Sierra Leone developed as part of broader socio-cultural and economic transformations in the 19th-century Atlantic world. Indeed, as I will argue later in this section, the growth of Sherbro and Gallinas as major slaving centers was in many ways a direct (if unintended) consequence of the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 and, to a lesser degree, the establishment of Freetown in the Sierra Leone estuary. Yet even before these developments, southern Sierra Leone

merchants maintained close ties to slave dealers in Upper Guinea's other Atlantic-oriented ports. A discussion of the southern Sierra Leone slave trade must therefore begin with a consideration of the broader evolution of the Atlantic economy and the expansion of slaving on the Sierra Leone coast.

The slave trade as a whole peaked in the 18th century, rising in response to planters' demands for coerced labor in the Americas. During this century, sugar production in Jamaica and Saint Domingue reached its height; the mining of precious metals in Brazil spiked; and the cultivation of rice, coffee, and other staple crops in the Americas intensified. Increases in the volume of slave exports from Africa underscore the extensive supplies of labor needed to achieve these transformations. From an estimated 719,500 Africans shipped between 1676 and 1700, the trade increased over each of the following 25-year periods in the 18th century, reaching a height of more than two million captives supplied between 1776 and 1800. The most recent estimates suggest that over the four centuries when the slave trade operated, more than twelve and a half million Africans were embarked on a transatlantic slaver.⁴⁵

Sierra Leone's share of the overall slave trade was comparatively small. Indeed, with the exception of the neighboring Windward Coast, Sierra Leone supplied fewer slaves than any other West African region over the duration of the trade and accounted for perhaps three percent of the whole. Through the 17th century, the region was capable of filling perhaps one or two small vessels per year, amounting to no more than a few

⁴⁵ Slave export estimates are based on the estimates page from David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, online at www.slavevoyages.org. Although the growth of each of these commodities contributed to the explosive increases in slave exports, the evolution of the sugar industry was certainly the most important contributing factor. Indeed, scholars have estimated that some 9 out of every 10 slaves who crossed the Atlantic did so to support sugar production. See the introduction in David Eltis, Frank Lewis and Kenneth Sokoloff, eds., *Slavery and the Development of the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

hundred captives per annum. As Table 1.1 shows, slave departures increased slightly in the first quarter of the 18th century and more than doubled over the subsequent two-and-a-half decades. The major increase came between the 1750s and 70s, when exports climbed to between 3,000 and 5,000 slaves per year – a range that remained consistent for nearly a century before the British suppressed the Sierra Leone trade. During this period, the relative significance of the region’s slave trade also increased, representing between four and five percent of all African exports.

Table 1.1, Estimated Slave Exports from Africa and Sierra Leone, 1625-1866 (Rounded to the Nearest Hundred and with Sierra Leone’s Share of Total Slave Exports in Parenthesis)

Years	African Slave Exports	Sierra Leone Slave Exports
1501-1525	13,400	0
1526-1550	50,800	0
1551-1575	61,000	1,200 (2.0%)
1576-1600	152,400	200 (.1%)
1601-1625	352,800	0
1626-1650	315,000	1,400 (.4%)
1651-1675	488,100	900 (.2%)
1676-1700	719,700	4,600 (.6%)
1701-1725	1,088,900	6,600 (.6%)
1726-1750	1,471,700	16,600 (1.1%)
1751-1775	1,925,300	84,000 (4.4%)
1776-1800	2,008,700	94,700 (4.7%)
1801-1825	1,877,000	89,300 (4.8%)
1826-1850	1,771,000	84,400 (4.8%)
1851-1866	225,600	4,800 (2.1%)
Totals	12,521,400	388,700 (3.1%)

Source: David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*

Prior to the major increase in slave exports in the 1750s, Atlantic merchants used Sierra Leone primarily as a replenishment station, its large harbor providing welcome

relief for captains and crews who had spent weeks at sea. Since well before the explosive growth of the 18th century sugar industry, voyagers exploited the region's natural resources, anchoring in the Sierra Leone estuary to restock supplies of wood and water. Slave ship captains continued this pattern, stopping briefly in the estuary before continuing toward the larger slave markets further down along the coast. At times, these "coasting" voyages did purchase slaves in Sierra Leone, but they tended to do so in very small numbers. Before the 1750s, the Sierra Leone coast as a whole lacked the facilities to bulk and store large numbers of slaves, which was so crucial for the development of a sustained slave export trade.

The voyage of the sloop *Rhode Island* provides one illustration of Sierra Leone's role in the coasting trade of the 18th century. Departing from New York late in 1748, the *Rhode Island* arrived in the Sierra Leone River in January of the following year. Upon entering the estuary, Peter James, the vessel's captain, paid the "King Tom Custom for wood and water," a fee he settled with 13 gallons of rum. Over the subsequent two months, James cruised slowly down the coast, purchasing just 22 slaves between the Sierra Leone River and Cape Mount – a rate of just one slave purchased every three days. The sloop eventually continued on to Cape Coast Castle, where it loaded 70 slaves in a single day, completing a total cargo of 120 captives before re-crossing the Atlantic.⁴⁶

An analysis of the *Rhode Island*'s tradebook, in which the captain recorded his day-to-day transactions, underscores the difficulties of purchasing slaves in regions like Sierra Leone, where bulking facilities did not exist. Indeed, the impression this document

⁴⁶ A Book of Trade for the Sloop *Rhode Island*, Dec. 1748-July 1749, Misc. MSS., B.V. *Rhode Island*, New-York Historical Society. For a detailed analysis of this voyage, see Philip Misevich, "In Pursuit of Human Cargo: Philip Livingston and the Voyage of the Sloop *Rhode Island*," *New York History*, 86, 3 (2005), 185-204.

gives is of a very difficult commercial environment, in which multiple African slave dealers traded just one or two slaves at a time in exchange for a diverse assortment of goods. Put more simply, the region was not ideal for captains looking to load a transatlantic slaver quickly. In one case, for example, James records the purchase of two male slaves in exchange for 80 gallons of rum, 1 barrel of beef, 1 barrel of tar, an assortment of cheese and butter and 20 “bars” of tobacco and sugar, an assortment valued at 121 bars in total.⁴⁷ At Kittam, in the Sherbro, his transactions were even more complex. For a single enslaved girl, James supplied the following items, worth slightly more than 55 bars: two trading guns, two muskets, powder, two kettles, one piece blue baft, three iron bars, one piece blue calico, three beads (unit of measurement unknown), one dozen knives, three brass pans, one bar of tobacco, 300 flints, and three gallons of rum.⁴⁸ Captains like James must have been frustrated by the highly complex negotiations required for purchasing slaves, and the extremely localized demands that Africans made for European goods, particularly considering the small returns. Given the premium voyagers placed on loading times along the disease-ridden coast, the small volume of the Sierra Leone trade through the mid-18th century should not be particularly surprising.

However, in the decade after the *Rhode Island* sailed down the West African coast, Sierra Leone’s role in the Atlantic slave trade underwent a significant transformation. As Table 1.1 demonstrates, the region experienced a fivefold increase in its supply of slaves between the 1750s and 1770s. The factors that contributed to this change are complex, but it is clear that local and transatlantic developments each played a

⁴⁷ Iron bars acted as a modern paper currency does, allowing traders to buy, sell, or evaluate the value of their merchandise. See Fyfe, *A History*, 9; Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 312.

⁴⁸ A Book of Trade, entry for 18 February 1849.

part. Most importantly, and for reasons not yet understood, the 1750s witnessed a general increase in slave-loading times for vessels trading in each of the more active regions of slave embarkation further east. This had the most drastic effect on more marginal European and American merchants, who tended to use smaller vessels and who had limited purchasing power along the African coast. Such merchants were increasingly squeezed out of more competitive slaving regions and they thus turned to Africa's minor slave ports, including Upper Guinea, for their supplies of coerced African labor. This shift helps to explain the significant increase in trade between Sierra Leone and North America in the third quarter of the 18th century. It also accounts for the relatively small size of slave vessels that were commonly employed in the Sierra Leone trade.⁴⁹

While increased competition provides one part of the explanation for Sierra Leone's growing slave export trade, innovations in coastal supply methods provide another. Indeed, without a more systematic way of delivering slaves, the region would not have been able to meet the spiking demand for African captives. Merchants from private British commercial firms responded to the new pressures on Sierra Leone's slave exports by establishing a number of factories along the littoral, enabling traders to hold captives in larger numbers before they were embarked. North of the peninsula, for example, Miles Barber founded a settlement on Factory Island (the largest of the Iles de Los) in 1754. Within decades, Barber's enterprise included two large barracoons, a wharf to facilitate loading and unloading goods, a warehouse, longboats for trading up

⁴⁹ David Eltis, Philip Morgan, David Richardson, "Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas," *American Historical Review*, 112, 5 (December 2007), 1339-1340. For the increase in slave-loading times, see David Eltis and David Richardson, "Productivity in the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Explorations in Economic History*, 32 (1995), 465-484. On the smaller size of Upper Guinea slavers, see Stephen D. Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles, and Profits: Merchant Decision Making in the British Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 58, 1 (January, 2001), 171-204.

the adjacent rivers and a facility for ship repair.⁵⁰ In the Sierra Leone estuary, the firm “Grant, Oswald and Company” purchased Bunce Island – once a stronghold of the Royal African Company but destroyed in 1728 – which over the second half of the 18th century they transformed into the most prominent port for slave embarkation in Sierra Leone.⁵¹

Islands were thus a central feature of the Sierra Leone slave trade in the second half of the 18th century. As Bruce Mouser notes, they were geographically well suited to exploit commercial opportunities along the coast. The Iles de Los and Bunce Island both offered relatively convenient access to internal sources of slaves and each island had natural resources that gave inhabitants a degree of self-sufficiency for at least part of the year.⁵² Moreover, islands provided a geo-political advantage, keeping Europeans at least partially isolated from political entanglements on the mainland. To maintain this separation, merchants secured the islands with fortified structures, which they armed with canons. While such precautions were not generally affective in repulsing a full-scale European naval attack, they did provide an element of protection against indigenous Africans, with whom British merchants did not always maintain cordial relations.

Not surprisingly, the factors living on these islands were closely connected to the British Atlantic world. As Table 1.2 makes clear, the British dominated the Sierra Leone slave trade for as long as that nation was legally engaged in the trade. Although they faced periodic competition from French and later United States vessels, British merchants transported more than double the combined total of slaves that their two primary

⁵⁰ Bruce L. Mouser, “Iles de Los as Bulking Center in the Slave Trade, 1750-1800,” *Revue Française d’Histoire d’Outre-mer*, 83 (313), 86.

⁵¹ David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 6.

⁵² Mouser, “Iles de Los.”

Table 1.2, Slave Exports from Sierra Leone by National Carrier, 1751-1866 (Rounded to Nearest Hundred)

	Spain/Uruguay	Portugal/Brazil	Great Britain	Netherlands	U.S.A.	France	Denmark	Totals
1751-1760	0	0	12,000	300	2,200	2,900	0	17,400
1761-1770	0	0	30,300	0	3,000	8,400	600	42,300
1771-1780	0	0	33,100	300	900	2,200	0	36,600
1781-1790	0	100	16,000	0	3,200	10,900	1,200	31,400
1791-1800	0	0	27,800	200	20,400	2,800	0	51,100
1801-1810	300	300	17,300	0	23,200	0	1,500	42,600
1811-1820	16,400	400	0	200	1,000	4,600	0	22,600
1821-1830	14,400	800	0	500	900	27,000	0	43,500
1831-1840	39,900	3,900	0	0	0	100	0	43,900
1841-1850	9,500	11,500	0	0	0	0	0	21,000
1851-1866	4,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,800
Totals	85,300	17,000	136,500	1,500	54,800	58,900	3,300	357,200

Source: David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*

competitors did up to 1807. But this statistic conceals a more complex picture of the organization of the Sierra Leone slave trade. Indeed, even within England a regional specialization developed that led specific British ports to trade more frequently with some parts of Sierra Leone rather than others. Thus the Isles de Los tended to be dominated by Liverpool merchants, particularly between the 1770s and 1790s, whereas the Bunce Island trade was controlled by a group of London-based traders.⁵³

Merchants at these two bulking centers also maintained a complex relationship with the African mainland through a series of small outfactories, or “subfactories,” which they used to collect slaves and produce in small quantities for distribution to the islands. Longboats and canoes provided the essential means of shipment and communication between the settlements, allowing traders to spread their business out along the Upper Guinea coast. From Factory Island, Barber’s commercial enterprise reached as far as Cape Mount, where he owned a floating factory. He also operated a land-based settlement at Gallinas and kept a regular commerce with the Sherbro. Bunce Island, though less-well documented, also maintained regular intercourse with merchants up the adjacent rivers. The settlements received visitors as well, attracting African traders who wished to dispose of goods. Over the second half of the 18th century, the Atlantic slave trade thus increasingly integrated the Sierra Leone littoral; through the use of a dispersed group of outfactories, merchants established a fluid relationship between regions as far north as the Rio Pongo and south beyond the Gallinas.⁵⁴

⁵³ Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, chapter 6; Mouser, “Isles de Los,” 84-85; Kenneth Morgan, “British Merchants and the Slave Trade from Sierra Leone, 1750-1807,” presented at Hull University’s Interdisciplinary Conference, “Empire, Slave Trade and Slavery: Rebuilding Civil Society in Sierra Leone. Past and Present,” September 26, 2008

⁵⁴ Mouser, “Isles de Los,” 86-87. Walter Charles, the Royal African Company’s last factor at Bunce Island in the 1720s, recorded many instances when African traders arrived with produce to sell. See TNA,

Slave dealers on these islands and on the mainland also maintained independent commercial relationships with each other, a point that transatlantic traders took advantage of when it served to expedite loading times for their vessels. Although most voyagers preferred to deal with factors at Bunce Island or Iles de Los, several captains traded directly with African and Afro-European merchants. In November of 1787, for example, the ship *Crescent* arrived in Sierra Leone after a month's passage from Bristol. William Roper, the vessel's captain, contracted with William Cleveland on the Banana Islands, delivering a mixed cargo of goods in exchange for an unspecified number of captives. Roper spent several months off the Banana Islands before traveling up to the Iles de Los, where he purchased slaves and other goods from Mr. Bolland. He then proceeded into the Rio Pongo and Nunez, where he met with a number of other merchants. While in the Pongo, Roper continued to receive slaves that William Cleveland sent from the Banana Islands via canoe. At times, Cleveland's agent even delivered goods on Bolland's account, which suggests that the merchants in these two ports maintained a working relationship. Due to their cooperation, Roper was able to load 268 slaves over a span of about four months.⁵⁵

The 18th century slave trade from Sierra Leone thus involved a complex network of people and ports, linking merchants north and south along the littoral and also drawing slave dealers in from the hinterland. Sherbro and Gallinas formed one part of this commercial nexus, tied to Bunce Island and the Iles de Los through its ability to supply produce and slaves in small but consistent numbers. The network was thoroughly British

T70/1465. Although the daily transactions of the island are not available in the 1750s, there is no reason to doubt that merchants continued to arrive on the island at this time.

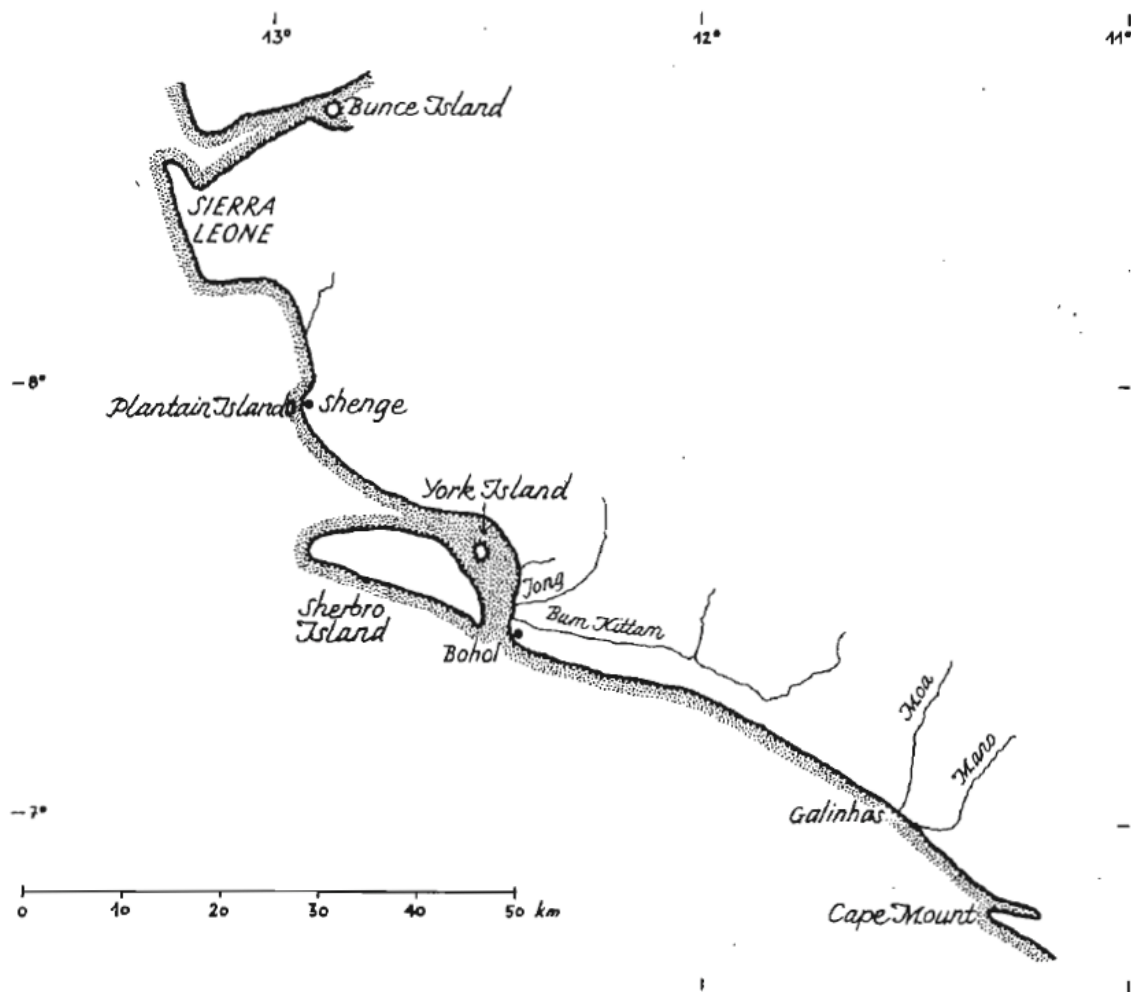
⁵⁵ TNA, HCA16/83/2218. See also ID 18040 in *Voyages*. The four-month estimate is based on the time when Roper embarked his first slaves, in mid-February, and when he departed in June.

in its orientation: vessels flying the British flag purchased slaves from British and Anglo-African dealers and shipped them to colonies in the British Americas.

In the late-18th and early-19th centuries, this pattern was completely overturned when a campaign to end the slave trade became increasingly influential in the British Parliament, resulting in the Slave Trade Act of 1807. With the passage of this Act, British nationals – who had dominated the slave trade through the 18th century – were no longer legally allowed to engage in the transatlantic slave trade. Over subsequent decades, British officials widened the scope of their campaign against the trade, signing treaties with other European nations to prevent the coerced movement of Africans across the Atlantic. To enforce these efforts, Britain sent naval vessels to West Africa, which they used to patrol the coast in search of merchants attempting to circumvent the treaties. Although the Atlantic slave trade continued on for some six decades after the Slave Trade Act, its operation was severely transformed by Britain’s anti-slavery initiatives.⁵⁶

Few African regions were more directly affected by the early abolition movement than Sierra Leone. Even before the passage of the Slave Trade Act, a group of wealthy humanitarians led by Granville Sharp financed the founding of what would later be named Freetown, an antislavery settlement on the south bank of the Sierra Leone

⁵⁶ Britain’s campaign against the slave trade has received extensive treatment. For the broader context in which abolition measures evolved, see Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2006). For the British campaign against the traffic, see David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), chapters 6 and 7. Marika Sherwood has forcefully argued against the idea that Britain’s involvement with the slave trade ended after 1807. Her work raises interesting questions about the idea of “Britishness” and the extent to which scholars can even talk about a single “British” slave trade. Yet in the bigger picture, the fact that the slave trade was suppressed so quickly, and at a considerable cost to the British government, suggests that abolitionism was indeed a remarkable turning point, which economic interests alone cannot explain. See Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).



Map 1.2, Atlantic Ports in Sierra Leone, 17th-19th Centuries

estuary. The settlement confronted a number of difficulties in its infancy including, most importantly, a severe shortage of funding. By the early-1800s, it was facing financial ruin, which ultimately led the British government to assume control over the settlement. In 1808, Freetown thus became Britain's first West African colony. Its significance was further increased in subsequent decades when the British used the colony as their primary base from which to confront the illicit slave traffic: beginning in 1819, Freetown hosted a

Court of Mixed Commission and over some three decades it absorbed tens of thousands of Liberated Africans whom the antislavery squadron freed from the holds of transatlantic vessels.⁵⁷

The combined pressures of Freetown's antislavery influence and the broader movement to suppress the transatlantic traffic had drastic effects on the organization of the Sierra Leone slave trade in the 19th century. The islands that for decades had supported increases in slave exports became major liabilities after 1807. While their fortifications were capable of repulsing merchant vessels, islands were easily destroyed by the more heavily armed British cruisers. In the years following legislation against the British slave trade, Bunce Island and the Iles de Los were thus effectively closed as slaving ports.⁵⁸ Moreover, given the dominance of British vessels in the Sierra Leone traffic, the Slave Trade Act stripped the region's slave dealers of their most frequent customers. Although British merchants and capital continued to circulate in Upper Guinea, no direct slave voyages between England and Sierra Leone occurred after 1809. Slave dealers thus confronted a changing Atlantic world in which they were forced to adopt a more clandestine approach to the supply of African captives and find new buyers for their human cargo.

Under these circumstances, southern Sierra Leone became a much more suitable place for embarking slaves. The region's swampy creeks, shifting sandbars and inland waterways made it relatively easy to conceal shipments of captives from British

⁵⁷ The most comprehensive account of Freetown's history remains Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). For the most recent work on the settlement's earliest inhabitants, see Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008). Freetown's growth and its relationship to southern Sierra Leone are further described in chapters 3 and 5.

⁵⁸ According to the *Voyages* dataset, only a single slave vessel is known to have purchased slaves from Iles de Los after 1810. Bunce Island did not supply any slaves after that year.

cruisers.⁵⁹ From the 1810s, the center of gravity of the Sierra Leone trade thus migrated from offshore islands to inland ports, creating an opportunity for Sherbro and Gallinas to play a much more direct role in the transatlantic traffic. Overall, the new security that shallow creeks in southern Sierra Leone provided against British naval cruisers seems to have made up for any disruption caused by the relocation to the African mainland. Indeed, Table 1.1 suggests that the volume of the Sierra Leone slave trade between 1751 and 1800 was nearly matched by the trade of the subsequent half century. As Table 1.3 demonstrates, southern Sierra Leone played a significant part in maintaining this balance. From a supply of several hundred slaves per year up to 1810, the region's slave trade doubled in the following decade. Exports reached their highpoint in the 1820s, averaging more than 3,600 captives per annum, and nearly maintained this level over the subsequent 10-year period. The 1840s witnessed a decline of nearly two-thirds in the volume of the southern Sierra Leone slave trade and by the 1850s the region had returned to its status as a minor supplier of coerced African labor.

The expansion of the southern Sierra Leone slave trade coincided with a significant restructuring of relationships between African slave ports and American slave societies. Once British colonies in the New World were closed to the Atlantic trade, Brazil and Cuba came to dominate the American end of the slave traffic. The latter was the destination for most captives who were embarked at Gallinas and Sherbro throughout the 19th century. Indeed, according to the *Voyages* dataset, almost seven out of every ten

⁵⁹ The shoals of St. Anne, which form at the entrance to the Sherbro estuary, were exceedingly difficult to navigate. As Barbot warned, "you must avoid entangling yourself with the Shoals of St. Anne. There are dangerous breakers and small islands on which the tides can drive you unless you have a strong wind to resist them, but it is rare to have other than dead calm here." Hair et al., *Barbot on Guinea*, 223.

**Table 1.3, Estimated Slave Exports from Southern Sierra Leone, 1750-1866
(Rounded to Nearest Hundred)**

Years	Estimated Departures
1751-1760	500
1761-1770	3,800
1771-1780	1,700
1781-1790	1,000
1791-1800	1,900
1801-1810	3,800
1811-1820	7,800
1821-1830	36,400
1831-1840	34,300
1841-1850	13,900
1851-1866	3,400
Total	108,500

Source: David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*⁶⁰

captives taken from southern Sierra Leone was landed in Cuba.⁶¹ It was not until the mid-1840s that Spanish slave merchants were challenged by Brazilian traders, but the former colony still continued to import more Africans from southern Sierra Leone during this decade.

Qualitative evidence supports the growing impact of Spanish merchants on the southern Sierra Leone trade. Around 1820, British naval officers began recording a shift in the origins of Sherbro and Gallinas slave dealers. Whereas previous merchants had come from Britain or the United States, a small diaspora of Spanish traders came to control the southern Sierra Leone trade up to the mid-1840s. According to Adam Jones,

⁶⁰ Estimating the volume of the slave trade from particular ports requires several steps. I first used the *Voyages* dataset to record the documented slave trade from southern Sierra Leone ports and then from the broader Sierra Leone region over 10-year periods. I then calculated the ratio of the former to the latter for each decade. The next step was to use the “estimates” page on the *Voyages* dataset to find the total – both documented and undocumented – Sierra Leone export trade for each decade. Finally, I multiplied these totals by the proportion representing the southern Sierra Leone trade for 10-year period.

⁶¹ Not all slaves who were disembarked in Cuba remained there. A considerable traffic from Cuba to Puerto Rico developed during this period, supplementing a smaller direct traffic to the latter island. See Joseph C. Dorsey, *Slave Traffic in the Age of Abolition: Puerto Rico, West Africa, and the Non-Hispanic Caribbean, 1815-1859* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

the Spanish had “a greater impact on Galinhas society than any other non-African nation.” Even those dealers not originally from Cuba were deeply tied to Havana commercial firms. In the later half of the 1840s, a small infusion of Brazilian traders entered into the picture, but a British blockade forced both groups of merchants to remove themselves from the region by the end of the decade.⁶²

Pedro Blanco was the most notorious of the Spanish slave dealers who spent time in the Gallinas. Although Blanco has received extensive attention in scholarly literature, a brief outline of his career highlights the centrality of Cuba and its merchants in the southern Sierra Leone slave trade. After visiting Gallinas on a slaver several times in the early 1820s, Blanco settled there in 1828 as an agent of a Havana commercial firm. In the following decade, Blanco expanded his enterprise, employing his own agent at Cape Mount and eventually at Sherbro. At the same time, the merchant became more deeply entrenched in Cuba’s commercial affairs. He formed a partnership named “Blanco and Carballo,” with a house in Havana and contacts spread throughout the Atlantic. In an oft-quoted phrase, Blanco’s bills were said to be accepted “with as much facility as a bill upon the Lords of the Treasury.” By the time he departed from the Gallinas in the late-1830s, it was said that he amassed a fortune of nearly a million dollars, but this was more

⁶² Among the last well-documented British citizen involved in the Sierra Leone slave trade was John Ouseley Kearney. Kearney departed from Senegal when it was turned over to the French and resided for some time at Kent, in Freetown. By 1817 he was involved in the Gallinas slave trade. He briefly embarked on a slaver to the French Caribbean, having enslaved one of the members of the Cleveland family. He returned to the Gallinas in 1823. That year he was rumored to have been killed when his ship was destroyed off Sugary. On Kearney, see TNA, CO271/1, *Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser*, , Vol. 2, No. 97, 15 April 1820; Ibid, CO271/2, Vol. 5, No. 289, 6 December 1823; Sierra Leone National Archives, Governor’s Despatches to the Secretary of State, Enclosures in MacCarthy to Bathurst, 17 February 1820. For the shift to Spanish merchants, see Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 42-44, especially Table 6, which includes the names of dozens of foreign slave dealers who were active in the Gallinas trade between 1806 and 1849. The Brazilian influx is implied in enclosure 1 in Fanshawe to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 September 1849, in *British Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *BPP*), *Slave Trade*, Vol. 6 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 185-191. However, one British naval officer believed that the slave dealers claiming to be Brazilian were really Spanish merchants who feared being charged under the Spanish Penal Act of 1845. Hook to Fanshawe, 4 December 1849, in *BPP*, *Slave Trade*,

than likely an exaggeration. In either case, Blanco's success did not last; his firm was bankrupt by 1848.⁶³

The Spanish merchant community in southern Sierra Leone brought with it new kinds of foreign goods, which circulated throughout the region in exchange for African captives. In some cases, slaves were purchased with doubloons – gold coins minted in Spain or in the Spanish Americas. More commonly, however, traders paid with a mixture of Cuban tobacco (sometimes rolled in cigars), spirits and various other goods. Federico Alvarez, a Havana-based merchant who supplied such commodities, was an important part of the operation. Alvarez maintained a close relationship with Blanco and Carballo and he regularly shipped goods to their agents in Africa. For example, Alvarez supplied most of the commodities found on the schooner *Amalia*, which departed Havana in October of 1838 and was captured by a naval officer near Freetown in February of the following year.⁶⁴

Under the direction of Spanish merchants and with the backing of Havana firms, the foreign slave trade from southern Sierra Leone continued until just after 1850. Early in this decade, British naval officers finally succeeded in ending the transatlantic trade from Sherbro and Gallinas. That it took more than four decades to do so does not indicate a lack of effort from British officials. Indeed, given the ports' proximity to Freetown, it is likely that the Sherbro and Gallinas were among the most heavily-policed

⁶³ Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 43-44. Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 161. The life of the notorious slave trade Theodore Canot also underscores the relationship between Cuba and southern Sierra Leone in the 19th century. Born of French and Italian parentage, Canot was involved in the slave trade from the Rio Pongo in the 1820s before establishing himself in the Gallinas as an agent of Blanco's. It is possible that more has been published on Canot than any other individual slave dealer in the history of the transatlantic trade. See his *Captain Canot: or, Twenty Years of an African Slaver* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1854); Svend Holsoe, "Theodore Canot at Cape Mount, 1841-47," *Liberian Studies Journal*, 4 (1971-2), 163-183; Adam Jones, "Théophile Conneau at Galinhas and New Sestos, 1836-1841," *History in Africa*, 8 (1981), 89-105; and Bruce Mouser, "Theophilus Conneau: the Saga of a Tale," *History in Africa*, 6 (1979), 97-107.

⁶⁴ BNA, FO84/268, Spanish Commissioners to Palmerston, 12 February 1839.

points of slave embarkation in the 19th century. Nonetheless, it took British patrollers three separate blockades and a number of attacks on inland slave factories before dealers finally abdicated their settlements. The final blow came in 1850, when British officials destroyed Gendema and Jidaro, the two towns most heavily engaged in the slave trade at the Gallinas. With this, the slave trade from southern Sierra Leone underwent a new transformation, the story of which is taken up in chapter 4.⁶⁵

Conclusion

In the four centuries that followed the arrival of Europeans along the Upper Guinea Coast, southern Sierra Leone was transformed from a commercial backwater to the largest center for slave embarkation west of the Bight of Benin. Perhaps ironically, this shift was primarily a consequence of Britain's 19th-century campaign against the transatlantic slave trade. Indeed, prior to the Slave Trade Act in 1807, merchants in the Sherbro and Gallinas supplied considerably more produce than they did African captives. In short, and with another hint of irony, Africans in southern Sierra Leone did precisely what later colonists argued would save the continent from the scourge of slavery. Yet, as historians have come to realize in most parts of Africa, the supply of "legitimate" commerce such as camwood and ivory in no way prohibited the use and trade of slaves. Indeed, from the 1620s through about 1750, Sierra Leone as a whole supplied human and non-human goods, though the latter were always more important.

For the Gallinas and Sherbro, the decisive turn toward the slave trade began in the 1810s and 20s, when Spanish merchants began using the region's inhospitable environment to avoid detection from British cruisers. As a result, the southern Sierra

⁶⁵ Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 81-3.

Leone littoral was directly drawn into the slave traffic, shipping thousands of men, women and children to Cuban sugar plantations each year. This development represented not only a commercial transition, but also a socio-cultural one. Over some four decades, the region witnessed an infusion of Spanish people and goods as it became forcefully integrated into the Iberian Atlantic world. While this chapter has explored changes in Atlantic commerce along the littoral, the impact of southern Sierra Leone's growth as a slaving center was most dramatically experienced in the hinterland, from which most captives were supplied. The following chapter thus turns to an examination of the interior origins of Africans who were caught up in the southern Sierra Leone trade.

Chapter 2, The Origins of Captives Leaving Southern Sierra Leone in the 19th Century

Following the assessment of changes in the coastal slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, this chapter shifts the focus to the Sierra Leone interior and seeks to answer the following question: what impact did the rise and fall of new points of slave embarkation have on the origins of African captives who ended up on Atlantic vessels? As a result of the decline of Bunce Island and the growth of the trade from Sherbro and Gallinas described in chapter 1, the hinterland southeast of Freetown was forcefully drawn into the transatlantic trade. Indeed, based on new evidence from the identification and analysis of thousands of African names, this chapter argues that more than half of the slaves coming from ports in southern Sierra Leone were drawn from the Mende- and Sherbro-speaking parts of Upper Guinea, which were within about 60 miles of the coast. As with other parts of Africa in the 19th century, this suggests that the “slaving frontier” – the internal regions from which the majority of African captives were supplied – tended to recede from deeper in the interior to more concentrated locations nearer to the coast. This pattern of a high ratio of slaves with homelands close to the littoral continued through the middle of the 1840s, shortly after which the British suppressed the supply of slaves from southern Sierra Leone.

Despite more than a half century of scholarly research on the Atlantic slave trade, comparatively little is known about African slaves before they arrived on the coast. Prior to the abolition of the British trade in 1807, the most detailed information comes from the Americas, where documents often give some indication of slave origins.¹ In Africa,

¹ See, for example, B.W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834*, 2 Vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). Despite the fact that Higman’s work focuses on the

scholars studying particular regions have used accounts written by European travelers and oral sources to highlight the African end of the slave trade. Among other details, such records provide commentary on warfare – generally considered the main method of enslavement – which enables scholars to draw conclusions about the catchment areas that fed the transatlantic trade.

Scholars of the 19th century Atlantic world have a wider variety of sources to draw from and as a result they have been able to sketch a clearer picture of slave origins during this period. Many have profited from the careful research of S.W. Koelle, a German linguist who spent five years in Freetown as an employee of the Church Missionary Society (1847-53). While living in the British colony, Koelle gathered vocabularies from more than 160 different languages spoken among the Liberated African population. In an article published in 1964, Philip D. Curtin and Jan Vansina used qualitative information provided by Koelle’s African informants, including their countries of origin and estimates of how many of their fellow countrymen resided in Freetown, to assess the interior sources of the 19th century slave trade. They supplemented these data with an assessment of the 1848 Freetown census, which provides a less nuanced but more accurate demographic survey of the colony’s population. In an article published in the following year, P.E.H. Hair used similar data to construct more complete profiles of 179 of Koelle’s informants based on the brief biographical information that they provided.²

19th century, the registration data he uses provides a significant amount of information on the British slave trade prior to 1808. For a more recent book that makes a forceful argument in support of using data from the American side of the Atlantic, see Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

² Philip D. Curtin and Jan Vansina, “Sources of the 19th Century Atlantic Slave Trade,” *Journal of African History*, 5, 2 (1964), 185-208; P.E.H. Hair, “The Enslavement of Koelle’s Informants,” *Journal of African*

Recently, a project has been launched that moves beyond these sources to provide a much broader foundation for understanding the origins of African slaves in the 19th century. The research is based on a unique set of documents that have long been known to historians but have been severely under-utilized – the Registers for Liberated Africans that were maintained in Freetown, Havana and Rio de Janeiro between 1819 and 1845. This source allows scholars to identify the ethno-linguistic origins of enslaved Africans based on evidence given by liberated slaves themselves. Over more than a quarter of a century, the Havana and Freetown Courts of Mixed Commission processed hundreds of vessels and over 67,000 individual recaptives. In each case, a Liberated African was asked to provide information including name, age, sex and, at times, place of habitation. In many cases, the ethnic or regional basis of a name is recognizable, making it possible to identify broad groupings of peoples on which the slave trade drew. From their identification of recaptive names embarked in the Cameroons, for example, David Eltis and G. Ugo Nwokeji concluded that the provenance of the slave trade was highly concentrated, with just four groups accounting for over half of those carried from the region over a period of more than 15 years.³ This chapter takes a similar approach to identify recaptives embarked in southern Sierra Leone.⁴

Although Appendix A provides a fuller explanation of the methods and assumptions underpinning this research, several cautionary comments are necessary. It is

History, 6, 2 (1965), 193-203. See also P.E.H. Hair, ed., *Polyglotta Africana* (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1963).

³ G. Ugo Nwokeji and David Eltis, “Characteristics of Captives Leaving the Cameroons for the Americas, 1822-1837,” *Journal of African History*, 43, 2 (2002), 198.

⁴ For an preliminary assessment of the Sierra Leone slave trade that treats southern Sierra Leone and the Rio Pongo to the north of Freetown, see Philip Misevich, “The Origins of Slaves Leaving Sierra Leone in the Nineteenth Century,” in David Eltis and David Richardson, eds., *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 155-175. This chapter builds from this argument to provide a more substantial analysis of the trade from southern Sierra Leone.

important to note that while a name might be identified as, for example, Mende among informants, no conclusions are made regarding the way that recaptive would have self-identified in the 19th century. A name represents just one element of a person's identity; other elements are clearly significant too. The complexity of African identities makes it impossible to suggest that a recaptive with a Mende name would have self-identified as a "Mende" person in a previous era. Moreover, given what scholars have learned about the fluidity of ethnicity in precolonial Africa, it is clear that ethnic identification was less important in the early-19th century than it would become in the later colonial period.⁵ The ethno-linguistic continuity of the region does, however, make it possible to draw conclusions regarding the geographic origins of a recaptive with a name identified as Mende. As Paul Hair concluded in a seminal article in 1967,

If we ... compare the ethnolinguistic inventory of [Africa] today with that of the period before 1700, we find a striking continuity. In the particulars compared, the ethnolinguistic units of the Guinea Coast have remained very much the same for three, four, or five centuries ... this continuity is striking because it contrasts with the impression of wholesale disturbance, and hence discontinuity, given in the standard history texts (under such headings as 'Slave Trade' and 'Imperialism') or in the oral traditions (where sagas of unrelenting migration are relieved only by lists of rival units examined *en route*).⁶

⁵ The problems with making definitive claims regarding ethnicity and identity in the diaspora have received increasing attention recently. See David Northrup, "Igbo and Myth Igbo: Culture and Identity in the Atlantic World, 1600-1850," *Slavery and Abolition*, 21, 3 (2000), 1-20; Peter Caron, "'Of a Nation Which the Others do not Understand': Bambara Slaves and African Ethnicity in Colonial Louisiana, 1718-60," *Slavery and Abolition*, 18 (1997), 98-121; and Philip Morgan, "The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments," *Slavery & Abolition*, 18 (1997), 122-145. For a treatment that stresses the fluidity of ethnicity along the Upper Guinea Coast, see Allen M. Howard, "Mande and Fulbe Interaction and Identity in Northwestern Sierra Leone, Late Eighteenth through Early Twentieth Centuries," *Mande Studies*, 1 (1999), 13-39. For a broader theoretical critique of the analytical value of the term "identity," see Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker, "Identity," in Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 59-90.

⁶P.E.H. Hair, "Ethnolinguistic Continuity on the Guinea Coast," *Journal of African History*, 8 (1967), 247. An additional linguistic breakdown that lends further support to the stability of the region's ethno-linguistic distribution can be found in David Dalby's contribution, "Languages," in John Innes Clarke, ed., *Sierra Leone in Maps* (London: University of London Press, 1966), 15.

While the identity of captives in the slave trade remains a central element in understanding the internal dynamics of the African end of the trade and the cultural development of the Atlantic World, it is with this geographic phenomenon that this chapter is mostly concerned.

The potential benefits of the Registers are greatest in smaller areas that were less prominent in the slave trade. As chapter 1 indicated, this was certainly the case for southern Sierra Leone. While the Sherbro and Gallinas at times shipped small numbers of slaves to Bunce Island via canoe in the 18th century, transatlantic slavers only visited the ports in earnest in the early decades of the 1800s. Given the region's late entry into the trade and its relatively minor role in supplying Atlantic vessels, the information provided in the Registers is likely to present a more complete picture of the trade from southern Sierra Leone than it would for more active ports further east. Overall, voyage records exist for the departure of nearly 40,000 Africans from southern Sierra Leone between 1819 and 1844, the period when the Registers were kept. However, total departures were probably closer to 77,000 during this period.⁷ If we use this larger estimate, the sample of names from southern Sierra Leone (5,749) constitutes about 7 percent of the whole. Given that captures occurred off shore, bias is not likely to be a major problem. Put another way, there is little reason to suspect that the sample is unrepresentative of the southern Sierra Leone slave trade as a whole over this quarter century.

⁷ David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*. I used the same method to calculate this estimate as described in chapter 1, fn 59. A total of 38,310 slaves are known to have been embarked between 1819 and 1844 from southern Sierra Leone ports (Banana Islands, Gallinas, the Plantain Islands, Setra Kru and Sherbro). This represents approximately 78 percent of Sierra Leone's total recorded slave trade during this period. According to the estimates page on the *Voyages* dataset, the volume of the total slave trade from Sierra Leone during this period, including documented and undocumented data, is 98,643. My figure of 77,000 slave departures is based on multiplying this larger estimate by .78.

A final point to address is the extent to which the process of enslavement itself might have influenced the names the recaptives provided for Court officials. More specifically, is it possible that slaves exported from the Sierra Leone region during this period were renamed at some point prior to their liberation? Answering this question is particularly tricky because of the lack of evidence concerning slave experiences prior to their disembarkation in the Americas. On the one hand, it is clear that some slaves had their names changed immediately after they were taken captive. In the mid-1850s, for example, a man named Boccari Soonkonokoh asked Momodu Yeli to act as a witness for his purchase of a slave girl. He paid \$16 for a Koronko girl named Phena, whose name he then changed to Seerah. Soonkonokoh was eventually arrested and tried for slaveholding.⁸

Other evidence, however, suggests that names were not changed or that, if they were, liberated slaves immediately returned to using their original name once they escaped from their captors. Records of the individuals carried on board the schooner *Amistad* illustrate this point. The events surrounding the capture of the *Amistad* are well known and need not be reviewed here.⁹ For present purposes it is only relevant to note that the captives on board this vessel were embarked at the Gallinas in southern Sierra

⁸ TNA, CO267/233, Enclosure 7 in Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 July 1853. Si-ra is a multiethnic name and can have a number of different meanings depending on the way it is pronounced. Sa-ra, for example, tends to be used among the Limba. The point, however, is that changing Phena's name in this case was not necessarily an attempt to disguise her Koronko background, since Koronko people often use the name Si-ra. For the context of this transaction, see chapter 5.

⁹ The case of the revolt on board this vessel was popularized in Steven Spielberg's 1997 film, *Amistad*. For a recent Sierra Leonean perspective on the historical and contemporary relevance of the story, see Iyunolu Folayan Osagie, *The Amistad Revolt: Memory, Slavery, and the Politics of Identity in the United States and Sierra Leone* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

Leone in the late-1830s.¹⁰ There is no reason to believe that their collective experiences were markedly different from other slaves taken from this region in the 19th century.

The Africans on board the *Amistad* were held in Connecticut beginning in 1839 and over the subsequent year they were periodically visited by Josiah W. Gibbs, a linguistics professor at Yale University. The information Gibbs collected during these visits was used to sketch a brief biography of 36 *Amistad* captives.¹¹ As a linguist, Gibbs was particularly interested in African names, often providing the meanings attached to the slaves' names and sometimes even the names of their children. It can be assumed that had captives mentioned taking on a new name, their biographies would have included such information. But none of the captives described such an occurrence. Moreover, the amount of time spent as a slave in Africa seems to have had no impact on the possibility of a name being altered. Several captives testified that they had been held in Africa for periods ranging anywhere between two months and ten years before being sent off to Cuba.¹² Some even recalled the ethnicity of their owner. However, in all but a single case, the origins of the names that the individuals provided were consistent with their statements concerning their homelands.¹³ Thus, for example, captives with

¹⁰ It is odd that despite much interest among researchers in the *Amistad* case, no original records of the *Tecora*, the vessel that was said to have transported the captives to Cuba, have been turned up.

¹¹ Printed in John W. Barber, *A History of the Amistad Captives* (New Haven: E.L. & J.W. Barber, 1840; North Stratford: Ayer Company Publishers, 2000), 9-15.

¹² It is impossible to know the lengths that Africans liberated by the mixed courts remained in Africa prior to being taken on board a slave ship. Using evidence that S.W. Koelle gathered from 179 liberated Africans in Freetown around 1850, P.E.H. Hair notes that "few of the informants had spent much time as slaves...twenty-nine had spent periods of years in Africa, mainly as slaves to Africans. The remainder had reached Sierra Leone shortly after enslavement...that is, they were enslaved in their home district and immediately taken down to the coast...and were shortly afterwards captured aboard a slave ship and brought straightway to Freetown." However, these figures include slaves drawn from many different parts of West, West-Central and even Southeast Africa. See P.E.H. Hair, "The Enslavement," 195.

¹³ The exception is Kwong, who was said to be born at Mambui, "a town in the Mendi country." Kwong, however, is identified as a Bullom (Sherbro) name. See Barber, *History of the Amistad Captives*, 11.

recognizably-Mende names also described their births and points of enslavement as occurring in “the Mendi country.”

“Country of Origin”

Throughout the period that the Registers were kept, a separate column in the Havana ledger book recorded the “country of origin” of each recaptive.¹⁴ A total of forty-one different labels were provided by Spanish officials to describe the origins of each of the 1,603 slaves who were embarked at ports in southern Sierra Leone and at Rio Pongo, north of Freetown. The labels used either one- or two-term identifications. Such descriptions must be used with care; it is well known that Europeans possessed a questionable understanding of the African interior.¹⁵ But to discard the information they recorded would ignore the potentially rich insight it can offer into what “country of origin” meant to a European official.

At first glance, the labels used do not appear to be very systematic. Some have ethnic connotations and can be recognized among the groups found in Sierra Leone today. Thus “Quisi” or “Cranco” are easily identified as the modern-day ethnic groups Kissi and Koronko. Others are less obvious, as in the cases of “Ganga” and “Longová.”¹⁶

¹⁴ The Freetown registers briefly included a column recording the origins of recaptives, but this was discontinued after 1822. None of the 3 vessels from Upper Guinea that were tried in the Freetown courts before 1822 embarked captives from Sherbro or Gallinas.

¹⁵ There is a lengthy literature on this topic. See Leroy Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). The potential consequences of Europe’s misunderstanding of African ethnicity have been described in Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ The meaning of the term Ganga, also spelled “Kanga,” has been severely under-researched. It seems clear, however, that it refers not to a specific ethnic group but to a range of interior inhabitants. One modern Cuban dictionary links Ganga to Africans who consumed rice: “El negro o Negra natural de esta comarca Africana, que comprende al *Longoba*, *Mani*, *Quisi*, &c. Es proverbial la afición de los *Gangáes* al arroz tan abundante en su país; y por esto se dice ‘Come arroz como *Gangá*.’” See Esteban Pichardo, *Diccionario Provincial casi Razonado de Vozes y Frases Cubanas* (La Habana, 1985), 275. Longova, alternatively, appears to refer to a more specific group of people in the Mende-speaking territory. Indeed

Labels were also combined in a variety of ways, such as those recaptives called “Mandinga, Temene.” The key to the puzzle posed by such terms lies in a careful analysis of these two-part identifications. Particularly interesting is the prevalence of the label “Mandinga, Mandinga,” given to 81 of the 1603 liberated Africans, or approximately 5 percent of the total. Tempting as it may be to identify these recaptives as Mandingo, an ethnic group found throughout large parts of West Africa, such a presumption must be avoided. Indeed among the men and women for whom this label was given, only a small proportion was found to have identifiably-Mandingo names by my informants. What these recaptives do have in common, however, is that they were all exported from the Rio Pongo (see Map 4.1). This suggests that the identification made by Spanish officials regarding country of origin was based on a slave’s port of embarkation.

Keeping this in mind, the column begins to make more sense. In fact, the officials were remarkably consistent in their recording of recaptive origins, if we consider their conflation of ports with broader ethnic terms. The most common label given in the Havana Registers for recaptives from Upper Guinea was the single term “Mandinga.” This was provided as the country of origin for 474 recaptives which, after removing five names for which no details were provided on origins, represents almost 30 percent of the entire sample. In each of these cases, the “Mandinga” slave was purchased from the Rio Pongo. Furthermore, if we add to this sample those recaptives whose country of origin was described in two parts, and in which the first was “Mandinga” (as, for example, with “Mandinga, Cranco”), the count is increased to no less than 882, all still exported from

Booth, the missionary representing the American Missionary Association, suggests that “Longobar” was the name for the country from which many *Amistad* captives originated. See *AMA*, Microfilm Reel 1, Booth to Tappan, FI-5041, 31 July 1841.

Rio Pongo. Clearly, then, in those cases with two-part descriptions, the first label had a coastal – and not ethnic – significance. Mandinga, in this case, was a way to indicate that a particular recaptive departed from Rio Pongo.

Yet it would be a mistake to assume that a particular label given for the country of origin column was used to describe all slaves from the same port. “Ganga,” the second most frequent origin given, appears 465 times in the Registers. For these captives, the point of embarkation was split almost equally between the Gallinas and Sherbro.

Geographically, however, both of these slave-trading centers were located in the southern part of Sierra Leone, within a short distance of each other. Ganga can thus be said to identify captives who were shipped from one of the ports in southern Sierra Leone. Indeed among all of the 662 slaves coming from these southern ports – including the Gallinas, Sherbro and Cape Mount – 643 (97.1%) were labeled Ganga.¹⁷ Based on this evidence, it seems safe to conclude that in general, the country of origin category in the Havana Registers describes the coastal region from which a captive was exported.

In one way or another, 98 percent of the captives provided with a country of origin in the Registers were labeled as either “Mandinga” or “Ganga.”¹⁸ This still leaves unanswered questions about those cases when the country of origin is given in two parts, with a second term that implies an ethnic identity. For now these questions must remain unresolved. Although, for example, captive names that were labeled “Mandinga, Cono” in the country of origin column were at times identified as Kono names by my informants, the pattern was far from conclusive. What the evidence does suggest,

¹⁷ “Buche” was the country of origin given for the remaining captives in this sample. It should be noted that all 19 slaves identified by this term were embarked at Cape Mount.

¹⁸ This includes any two-part identification beginning with either of these two labels as well as those cases using Ganga and Mandinga singularly.

however, is that Europeans based their notions of African origins on what they knew best – coastal ports. However, given the opportunity, it is unlikely that Africans would have self-identified in the same way. To move beyond European coastal designations, the final section draws implications from the names that Liberated Africans provided. Although these names were not necessarily meant to be linked with a specific part of the interior, they do provide clues to slave origins that were far less mediated by outsiders. It is to an analysis of the names data that the following section thus turns.

Geographic Origins of Recaptives, 1819-1844

The present analysis focuses on 32 vessels that were tried in Freetown and Havana courts between 1819 and 1844 and which took on slaves at southern Sierra Leone ports. Table 2.1 lists information on each captured vessel including its name, the principal place of slave purchase, the number of slaves that were liberated by the courts and the year in which the recaptives were freed. Each of the vessels is further documented in the *Voyages* dataset and the Table thus includes their unique identity numbers. In all, these vessels discharged 5,749 recaptives who survived long enough to have their information recorded in the Registers. In a large majority of the cases, the names are obviously indigenous and remain common in parts of modern-day Sierra Leone and those countries that surround it. By linking the indigenous names of the Liberated Africans as recorded in the Registers with the ethno-linguistic regions in which they were found in the 19th century, I am attempting to estimate the interior origins of Africans caught up in the transatlantic trade during this period.

Table 2.1, Southern Sierra Leone Slave Vessels Tried in Mixed Court, 1819-1845

Ship Name	Voyage ID	Year of Capture	Port of Embarkation	Africans Liberated
Cintra	2317	1819	Gallinas	26
Fabiana	2315	1819	Trade Town	13
NS de las Nieves (a) Volador	2319	1819	Gallinas	121
NS de Regla	2314	1819	Little Bassa	1
Virginie	2728	1819	Sierra Leone	35
Gazetta	2321	1820	Grand Bassa	81
NS de Montserrat	2322	1820	Windward C.	84
Aurora	2758	1822	Gallinas	179
Dichosa Estrella	2332	1822	Grand Bassa	29
La Isabel	2366	1824	Gallinas	49
Clara (a) Clarita	2346	1825	Gallinas	36
Espanola	2333	1825	Gallinas	416
Fingal	558	1826	Cape Mount	58
Gertrudes	2387	1828	Gallinas	155
Josefa (a) Fortuna	770	1829	Gallinas	206
Loreto (a) Corunera	2409	1830	Little Bassa	183
Manzaneras	2407	1830	Gallinas	349
Nueva Isabelita (a) Numero Un	2414	1830	Grand Bassa	140
Maria	2418	1831	Gallinas	501
Primera	2420	1831	Gallinas	310
Segunda Socorro	2435	1833	Gallinas	307
Carlota	1338	1834	Gallinas	272
Gaceta	2491	1836	Sestos	223
Emprendedor	2603	1838	Gallinas	458
Princeza Africana	2580	1838	Sherbro	222
Casualidade	2650	1839	Sherbro	88
Si	2668	1839	Gallinas	358
Violante(a)Mary Cassard	2598	1839	Sherbro	191
Eliza Davidson	2675	1840	Gallinas	2
Jesus Maria	2071	1840	Sherbro	246
Reglano	2681	1840	Sherbro	350
Enganador	3884	1844	Sherbro	348
Total: 32				5,749

Source: David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*

The results of this procedure have been promising. Of the 5,749 names from southern Sierra Leone that were recorded in the Havana and Freetown Registers, some form of identification was possible for 4,135 (72%). In some cases, however, names were identified as common throughout all parts of Sierra Leone. In others, particular names were found to be indistinguishable between several ethnic groups that are concentrated in similar geographic parts of the country. In the latter situation, the groups were combined for analysis.¹⁹ Names that are common to all ethnic groups throughout Sierra Leone were discarded. With these adjustments, a total of 3,337 names from the Registers were identified, representing approximately 58% of the entire Havana and Freetown samples and some four percent of the southern Sierra Leone slave trade as a whole.

The process of identifying more than three thousand names draws heavily on the work of linguists and cultural informants with knowledge of African names and naming practices. As several Africanist linguists have demonstrated, and as chapter 1 briefly outlined, diversity among the languages of Sierra Leone is considerable. Broadly speaking, most of the region's languages have been grouped under the Mande or West Atlantic families, both of which are classified as Niger-Congo languages. The former represents the most widespread family of languages in Sierra Leone and can be divided into Northwestern Mande and Southwestern Mande. Languages classified as

¹⁹ The overlap of names used between Susu and Yalunka peoples makes it impossible to differentiate one from the other. This was also the case with names identified as Kissi, Kono or Koronko, on the one hand, and Mende and Sherbro, on the other. While this makes conclusions regarding ethnic origins difficult, it does not hinder efforts to identify the geographic regions in which the names are used. Susu and Yalunka peoples are heavily concentrated in the northern part of Sierra Leone, occupying a similar geographic region. Kissi, Kono and Koronko peoples are settled in the eastern region of Sierra Leone. Mende- and Sherbro-speaking Sierra Leoneans are concentrated in the southeastern part of Sierra Leone. It is interesting to note that although the Kissi, Kono and Koronko languages are not all closely related to one another, these ethnic groups nonetheless share numerous personal names in modern Sierra Leone.

Northwestern Mande include Susu, Yalunka, Kono, Vai and Koronko. Southwestern Mande languages comprise Mende and Loko. Of course, many Mande languages are spoken outside of Sierra Leone and indeed throughout West Africa.²⁰

Mel languages, a smaller configuration of the broader West Atlantic grouping, can also be subdivided based on their relationships to one another. According to the standard breakdown, Northern Mel languages include Temne, Bullom and Kissi, while Gola is the lone Southern Mel language spoken in Sierra Leone. Bullom has been even further divided, with those dialects spoken south of the Sierra Leone estuary referred to as Sherbro while north of the estuary the name Bullom is kept. Although this linguistic breakdown is useful in providing a broad classification of Sierra Leone's languages, it should be remembered that the relationships between the various spoken languages are not always clear and that even within the Mande or Mel families themselves not all languages are mutually intelligible.²¹

The diversity of this region's languages is underscored by an attempt to linguistically identify the names of African captives from the Registers. A total of 33 different ethno-linguistic combinations were used to identify a list of some 5,700 names. But this overall picture is misleading. After removing from the sample those names that are commonly used throughout all parts of Sierra Leone and combining several regions in which names were found to overlap, the labels applied are considerably fewer. Table 2.2 represents the various designations (after making these modifications) used to identify the

²⁰ This point underscores the need, in this case, to work with regions undefined by colonial boundaries. Claiming that ethno-linguistic units were stable over time is not to suggest that colonial powers took this into account during their occupation of Africa. Though the following statistics are based on a language survey of post-independence Sierra Leone, the wider analysis of the geographic origins of captives exported from Sierra Leone transcends the definition of the modern nation, as demonstrated by Map 2.1.

²¹ Dalby, "Languages." It is important to note that while Dalby claims that the distribution of several Sierra Leone's languages is changing, this is a more recent phenomenon and would not have a significant affect on the linguistic patterns in the early- to mid-19th century.

recaptives who were exported from southern Sierra Leone, including those embarked at the Gallinas, Sherbro and Cape Mount.

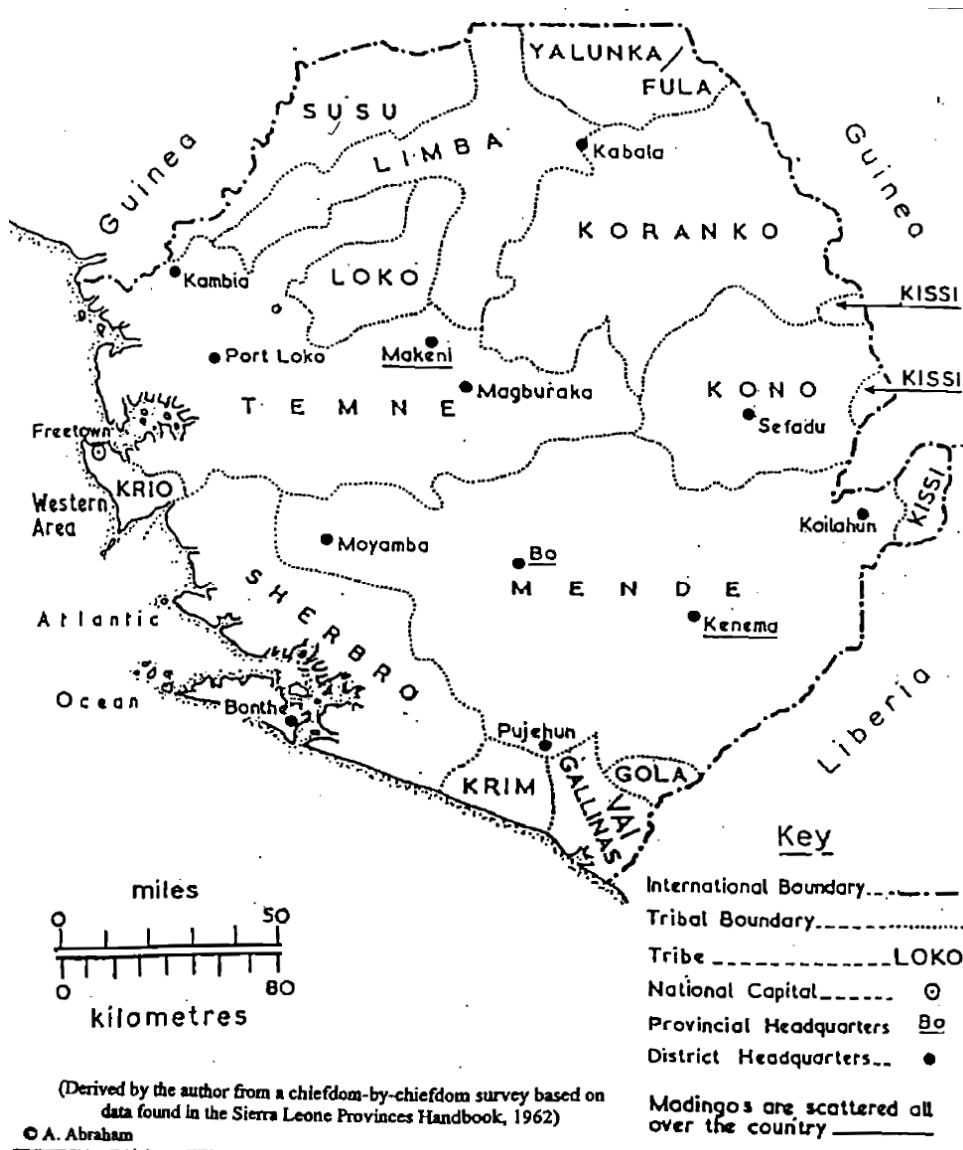
What is immediately clear from the table is the high concentration of recaptive names among a small group of classificatory units. Taken together, 83 percent of these names were identified among the top three designations. Mende and Sherbro names make up more than one out of every two on the list. The remaining names are spread

Table 2.2 Linguistic Identifications of Sierra Leone Recaptives from Freetown and Havana Registers, 1819-1844

Ethno-linguistic Unit	Number of Recaptives	Column Percentage
Mende/Sherbro	1,882	56
Kissi/Kono/Koronko	604	18
Temne	302	9
Limba	129	4
Fula	112	3
Mandingo	99	3
Loko	60	2
Vai	54	2
Outside Sierra Leone	41	1
Susu/Yalunka	31	1
Possibly Islamic	21	1
Total	3,337	100

Source: copies of Havana Registers held in the British National Archives (BNA), FO 313, vols. 56-62; Freetown Registers held in Sierra Leone National Archives and in BNA, FO84 series

among eight additional groupings. For those recaptives originating from outside Sierra Leone, there was a heavy bias in favor of names from modern-day Nigeria: these 41



Map 2.1, Ethno-linguistic Groups in Sierra Leone²²

names were obviously not indigenous to Upper Guinea and most were thought to be

Yoruba by my informants.²³ The relatively minor sample identified as Islamic included

²² This map was originally printed in Arthur Abraham, *An Introduction to the Pre-Colonial History of the Mende of Sierra Leone* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 16.

²³ The Mandingo informant for this project was particularly knowledgeable concerning names that were common outside of Sierra Leone, having spent a considerable period of time living abroad in a number of West African countries.

variations of the names Abraham and Mohamed, which clearly transcend ethno-linguistic boundaries.²⁴

In addition to the concentration of slave names among a limited group of ethno-linguistic units, the overall impression from the data is that the southern Sierra Leone slave trade drew captives heavily from its immediate northern and northeastern frontiers. The combining of Kissi, Kono and Koronko names partially disguises this pattern. Although the distance between Gallinas/Sherbro ports and the Koronoko-speaking heartland of Sierra Leone could be quite considerable (several hundred miles according to Map 2.1), it is likely that the majority of slaves identified by this grouping were taken from Kissi-speaking regions further south.²⁵ Gordon Laing's observations substantiate this point. Passing through Kissi country in the mid-1820s, Laing commented on the deleterious impact of the slave trade in general, noting that

the people of Kissi have no trade except in slaves, which they sell to the people of Sangara for salt, tobacco, and country cloth; and, in such a savage state of wretchedness and barbarism are they, that without the least compunction they will dispose of their relatives, wives, and even children.²⁶

Given the abolitionist sentiment of the period, it is possible that British travelers would have applied such comments to many parts of the African interior, and they often did. However, the presence of liberated Kissi slaves in Freetown was large enough to justify the establishment of a separate Kissi village, made up of "natives of the district of Kissy, lying between Falaba and the sources of the Niger...[who], having been captured from

²⁴ Variants on Abraham include Briama, Brimah and Ibraima. Momodu was also spelled Mamado, Momadu and Mamodu.

²⁵ In contrast to the Koronko heartland, the region of Sierra Leone where Kissi-speakers dominate was just over 150 miles from southern Sierra Leone ports.

²⁶ Alexander Gordon Laing, *Travels in the Timanee, Kooranko and Soolima Countries in Western Africa* (London: John Murray, 1825), 280-281.

slave ships by British men-of-war, it was considered desirable to locate them in one place.”²⁷

The most striking feature of the table is clearly the number of Mende and Sherbro names among Liberated Africans from southern Sierra Leone. The predominance of slaves from these regions is widely supported by contemporary observers. In a detailed interview involving Reverend James Frederick Schön, a missionary who resided at Freetown from 1832 to 1848, Schön recounted a trip he had taken to Shebar, a center of the slave trade on Sherbro Island. While there, the Reverend witnessed a cargo of slaves being sold to one of the principle slaving merchants on the island. Schön claimed that all of the slaves were of the “Cossoo” [Mende] nation. Although he was surprised by the low price paid for the captives, the slave dealer explained that “they were cheap, but that they were Cossoos, and that Cossoos were mere cattle, and more should not be paid for them.”²⁸

The high ratio of Mende captives was also noted by Try Norman, a Yoruba recaptive who was enslaved during a trip to collect a debt from a merchant residing at the Gallinas. Before she could collect her money, Norman was taken prisoner by Prince Manna, the most powerful African slave dealer in the region, on account of a debt Norman’s mistress was said to have incurred. Norman was held in a slave barracoon for three months before being liberated by a British naval officer. In her interview with the

²⁷ J.J. Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone, Western Africa* (London: Cass, 1972), 88.

²⁸ Rev. James Frederick Schön to the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, 11 April 1848, in the *British Parliamentary Papers on the Slave Trade* (hereafter *BPP, Slave Trade*), Vol. 4 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 182.

British committee, she claimed that the slaves with whom she was held at the barracoons in Gallinas were all from the Mende country.²⁹

When the names data is combined with observations by merchants, captives and missionaries in southern Sierra Leone, the high proportion of Mende and Sherbro slaves exported from the Gallinas and adjacent ports is thus undeniable. Once again the *Amistad* case underscores the point. Indeed the ethno-linguistic makeup of the captives embarked at the Gallinas who were captured on board the *Amistad* closely resembles the pattern that emerges in Table 2.2. In their own testimonies, 22 of the vessel's slaves provide some form of self identification, with 14 (64 percent) claiming to have been born in the Mende-speaking interior. The remaining eight hailed from a mixture of other regions, including especially the Temne and Kono countries.³⁰

What accounts for such a high percentage of Mende and Sherbro captives coming from southern Sierra Leone ports? It is highly likely that geography and related transportation costs played a significant part. Sherbro-speaking inhabitants occupied the immediate coastline south of Freetown and Mende was the dominant language slightly further inland, spoken as far as fifty or sixty miles beyond the littoral. It would have been easier and less costly to transport a slave from these two areas to the Gallinas, Sherbro, or Cape Mount – the southern ports – for export than to take the journey hundreds of miles north to the Rio Pongo, the next closest slaving center in Sierra Leone.³¹

²⁹ Try Norman to the Select Committee, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 4, 63.

³⁰ Barber, *History of the Amistad Captives*, 9-15.

³¹ It should be noted that Mende and Sherbro slaves did end up being sold at the Rio Pongo, suggesting that incurring such transport burdens was not out of the question. See Misevich, "Origins of Slaves." The various ports from which Sierra Leone recaptives were exported make this analysis slightly different from the Cameroons slave trade, which embarked slaves from one region. See Nwokeji and Eltis, "Characteristics" for the contrast.

Given the significance of the relationship between the point of enslavement for Africans in the interior and the Atlantic ports where they were sold, Table 2.3 presents the data differently, this time in terms of the distance that recaptives would have traveled to reach their port of embarkation along the coast. This calculation is based on a rough estimate of Liberated African homelands, using the central point of each ethno-linguistic unit that appears in Table 2.2 and Map 2.1.³² It is impossible to know how many recaptives would have started their journey to the coast from the chosen central point; few probably did. Because of the difficulties in making such a calculation with accuracy, I have divided the results into very broad categories – those recaptives whose homelands would likely have been less than 100 miles from the coast and those who would have lived more than 100 miles beyond the littoral.

Table 2.3 Groupings of Average Distances between Regions of Enslavement and Embarkation Points, 1819-1844

Distance	Number of Recaptives	Column Percentage
Less than 100 Miles	2,298	69
More than 100 Miles	1,039	31
Total	3,337	100

Source: same as Table 2.2

The table demonstrates that the majority of southern Sierra Leone slaves came from catchment areas within 100 miles of the littoral. Indeed, one might take this

³² To calculate the distance two methods were employed. First, the political units from Map 1 were used as the center point from which a measurement to the coast was made. To account for those regions in which some languages are particularly widespread – where a distance could vary considerably from one part of a region speaking the language to another – the calculation was then double-checked with the linguistic distribution found in Dalby, “Languages.”

estimate a step further. It is likely that most recaptives with Mende, Sherbro, Temne and Vai names would have had homelands no further than 50 or 60 miles inland. Combining these three ethno-linguistic terms suggests that 2,238 (67%) of southern Sierra Leone's slaves had homelands located just a few day's journal from the coast. While this would not have made the process of enslavement any more palatable, it would have meant a considerably shorter period of internal transport than in parts of West Africa where the slaving frontier pushed considerably further inland. The case of James Campbell, a liberated Mende slave, can serve as an example of the experiences that many southern Sierra Leone slaves would have undergone during their forced march toward the coast. Campbell was enslaved during a war in the interior and taken to a barracoon by a native chief, a trip which took just three days. While he recalled enduring many hardships during the journey, including regular whippings and a chain kept tightly around the neck, his health held up well throughout the experience.³³ This likely reflects the close proximity of the Mende-speaking hinterland to the southern Sierra Leone coast. While similar experiences of enslavement would have been encountered by other Mende slaves, Table 2.3 also shows that this was not the case for all recaptives in the region. For the thirty percent of Africans who were enslaved more than a hundred miles from the coast, the period of forced transport would have lasted significantly longer, resulting in higher rates of mortality and a significantly weakened group of captives awaiting transatlantic shipment.³⁴

³³ James Campbell to the Select Committee, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 4, 78-80.

³⁴ Data on shipboard mortality seems to contradict this point. Between 1819 and 1845, the *Voyages* database includes information on 15 vessels from southern Sierra Leone which reached the New World and for which mortality rates are available. For these voyages, the mortality rate was 15.9%. In contrast, the mortality rate for 3 vessels embarking slaves in the Rio Pongo was just 5.7%. Part of the explanation lies in fluctuations with the data: the standard deviation for southern Sierra Leone voyages is 12.3%, as

The sample of Liberated African names is large enough to assess changes in the composition of slave shipments from southern Sierra Leone over time. Tables 2.4 and 2.5 distribute the data from Table 2.2 over five-year increments (with the exception of the period between 1819 and 1825). The results underscore how little the profile of slaves embarked at the Sherbro and Gallinas changed in the quarter century when the courts were in operation. Despite slight fluctuations in the supply of slaves from particular ethno-linguistic regions, the overall pattern of the slave trade from the southern Sierra Leone interior is one of remarkable continuity. Put in simplest form, for every 10 captives embarked on a slaver between 1819 and 1845, between five and six came from Mende- and Sherbro-speaking regions near the coast; two had homelands in the Kissi, Kono or Koronko parts of the hinterland; and the remaining two or three slaves would have lived in a number of others parts of the Upper Guinea interior. In geographic terms, this meant that the 19th century slave trade fed considerably on a coastal population, if we allow for a rather generous definition of the term “coastal.” Underscoring this point, Table 2.5 shows an increase in the supply of slaves living within 100 miles of the littoral between 1819 and the middle of the 1830s, followed by a slight contraction over the following decade. This pattern is markedly different from what Nwokeji and Eltis found in the Cameroons, where differences in the profile of slave cargos over time were pronounced.³⁵

opposed to just 5.7% for the Rio Pongo. The periodic blockades of the Gallinas and Sherbro may also have contributed to higher mortality rates on slaving voyages.

³⁵ Nwokeji and Eltis, “Characteristics,” 200-202, especially Tables 3 and 4.

Table 2.4 Linguistic Identifications of Southern Sierra Leone Recaptives from Freetown and Havana Registers by Grouping of Years (row percentages in parenthesis)

Ethno-linguistic Unit	1819-25	1826-30	1831-35	1836-40	1841-44
Mende/Sherbro	210 (52.9)	323 (51.9)	476 (62.1)	756 (57.1)	117 (56.0)
Kissi/Kono/Koronko	78 (19.6)	124 (19.9)	124 (16.2)	239 (18.1)	39 (18.6)
Temne	32 (8.1)	62 (10)	65 (8.5)	126 (9.5)	17 (8.1)
Limba	20 (5.0)	22 (3.5)	17 (2.2)	63 (4.8)	7 (3.4)
Fula	18 (4.5)	24 (3.9)	25 (3.3)	37 (2.8)	7 (3.4)
Mandingo	13 (3.3)	17 (2.7)	17 (2.2)	32 (2.5)	3 (1.4)
Loko	8 (2.0)	18 (2.9)	10 (1.3)	16 (1.2)	8 (3.8)
Vai	3 (0.8)	14 (2.3)	9 (1.2)	23 (1.8)	5 (2.4)
Outside Sierra Leone	11 (2.8)	10 (1.6)	10 (1.3)	10 (0.8)	0
Susu/Yalunka	4 (1.0)	2 (0.3)	10 (1.3)	10 (0.8)	5 (2.4)
Islamic	0	6 (1.0)	3 (0.4)	10 (0.8)	1 (0.5)
Totals	397 (11.9)	623 (18.7)	766 (23.1)	1,325 (40.0)	209 (6.3)

Source: same as Table 2.2

Table 2.5 Groupings of Average Distances between Regions of Enslavement and Embarkation Points by Groupings of Years (row percentages in parenthesis)

Distance	1819-25	1826-30	1831-35	1836-40	1841-44
Less than 100 Miles	253 (64)	417 (67)	560 (73)	921 (70)	147 (70)
More than 100 Miles	144 (36)	206 (33)	206 (27)	404 (30)	62 (30)
Total	397	623	766	1,325	209

Source: same as Table 2.2

Origins of Recaptives in the 18th and Early-19th Centuries: Some Considerations

Although this chapter has focused on the second quarter of the 19th century, some brief comments on the pre-1819 sources of the Sierra Leone slave trade are necessary to assess the impact of the suppression movement on the origins of captives caught up in the trade. While data on the homelands of captives embarked on slaving vessels before the establishment of the Mixed Commission Courts are scarce, there is some evidence indicating that the catchment area for slaves in the 18th and early 19th centuries extended considerably further inland than it would in later decades. Indeed, this assessment probably holds for the entire region between Senegambia and the Windward Coast, where the slaving frontier seems to have reached hundreds of miles beyond the littoral.³⁶

Given Britain's dominance of the pre-1808 slave trade in Sierra Leone, records on the origins of Africans embarked in this region come overwhelmingly from British slave traders and from plantations in the British Caribbean. On the African coast, several detailed accounts from the mid-18th century underscore the long supply lines on which

³⁶ See, for example, Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 84-91; Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 78.

the Sierra Leone trade then drew. One comes from John Newton, who took part in three separate slaving ventures around the Banana Islands between 1750 and 1754. Reflecting on his experiences in the trade, Newton noted that the bulk of captives were brought from far away: “I have reason to think that some travel more than a thousand miles, before they reach the sea coast.” In his later testimony on the slave trade, Newton reduced his estimate of slave origins to several hundred miles inland – a far more likely assessment.³⁷

The account of Nicholas Owen is less informative on the origins of Sierra Leone slaves, but Owen’s evidence on commercial networks and warfare in the interior lends some support to Newton’s testimony. After several voyages crisscrossing the Atlantic, Owen settled in the Sherbro with his brother, where the two men operated commercial factories in the middle of the 1750s. Woefully unsuccessful as a slave trader, Owen nonetheless provides several interesting remarks on how the Sierra Leone trade operated at the time. Unlike north of Freetown, where Fula and Mandingo caravans traveled to the coast seeking trade, Owen found that in the Sherbro the coastal Bullom people controlled trade with the interior, traveling upcountry once a year where they gained access to slaves at much cheaper prices. According to Owen, whereas slaves were sold for 45 to 50 bars along the littoral, Bullom middlemen purchased them for just 20 bars inland.

Just how far into the interior the middlemen had to go is unclear, but a subsequent comment on warfare in the hinterland suggests that slaves who reached the coast had traveled considerable distances. Owen first notes the commencement of a battle in February of 1758, when King “Furry Do,” a Muslim Mandingo ruler from “way inland,” began going to war with neighboring leaders. The King’s campaigns were successful

³⁷ For the quote, see Bernard Martin and Martin Spurrell, eds., *The Journal of a Slave Trader (John Newton), 1750-1754* (London: Epworth Press, 1962), 108; his later testimony is found in BNA, BT6/9, Examination of Reverend John Newton, 15 February 1788.

enough to spread fear throughout the region. Within several weeks, “Furry Do” had apparently subdued all of the headmen in the surrounding districts, no doubt enslaving all those who opposed him.³⁸

An additional point in support of a far distant slaving frontier prior to the suppression campaign comes from an Englishman named Harrison, who visited the interior of Cape Mount in the last quarter of the 18th century. Several questions surrounding the veracity of Harrison’s journey have perhaps contributed to scholars’ hesitancy in making use of this account. In 1808, Governor Ludlam relayed the Englishman’s story to the *Sierra Leone Gazette*; the Governor claimed to have heard it an unknown number of years earlier. According to Ludlam, Harrison lived at Cape Mount, where during his youth he traveled some distance inland with a party of slave traders who were returning to their own country after having disposed of slaves along the coast. In separate analyses of Harrison’s account, P.E.H. Hair and Adam Jones suggest that the journey likely took place around 1780 and that the place-names the traveler recalled can be linked with peoples known to have been living in the “Liberian” hinterland at the time. Summarizing Harrison’s trip, Hair argues that he passed through the following ethnolinguistic territories: Gola, Loma, Kissi, Kpelle and possibly Mano and Dyula. Such a route, Hair notes, would have taken him between 150 and 200 miles E.N.E. of Cape Mount. The account thus suggests a catchment area for the Windward Coast slave trade far beyond the coastal regions that dominated in the 19th century.³⁹

³⁸ Eveline Martin, ed., *Journal of a Slave-Dealer: A View of Some Remarkable Acedents in the Life of Nics. Owen on the Coast of Africa and America from the year 1746 to the year 1757* (London: G. Routledge, 1930), 93 & 101.

³⁹ P.E.H. Hair, “An Account of the Liberian Hinterland, c. 1780,” *Sierra Leone Studies*, 16 n.s. (1962), 218-226; Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Galinhas Country (West Africa), 1730-1890* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1983), 34-35.

The most comprehensive data on slave origins in the pre-1808 period comes from the extensive collection of material on slaves in the British Caribbean, in particular the slave registration and compensation records. Beginning in the 1810s, British abolitionists began arguing for the introduction into Parliament of a bill requiring the registration of slaves in particular New World colonies. By completing a census of the entire slave population in the British Caribbean, abolitionists hoped subsequently to be able to identify any illegal arrivals of Africans following the end of the transatlantic trade. In his exceptionally thorough analysis of this material, B.W. Higman includes a number of important data tables and observations on the African origins of slaves residing in several sugar colonies – including St. Kitts, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Barbice and Anguilla – between 1813 and 1819, though all of these slaves would have been carried from the coast before 1808.

It should be noted that using the registration data to identify the origins of slaves is particularly tricky for the region of Africa between the Senegambia and the Windward Coast. In part this is because the registration data does not identify the African ports from which registered slaves were purchased. To get around this, Higman linked ethnic terms appearing in the documents with the regions of Africa where they were most likely to be found. For example, slaves identified as Malinke (Mandingo, etc.), Bambara, Fulbe (Poulan), and Kassanga are all assumed to have been embarked at Senegambia. In contrast, Fulbe (Fula), Temne, Bullom, Kissi, Mende, Susu and Limba slaves were grouped under the Sierra Leone heading. In most cases, these assumptions are reasonable. However, particularly in the case of captives identified as Fula and Mandingo, linking an ethnic term with a region in the African interior is fraught with

potential problems. As a result, disaggregating the Upper Guinea data on slave origins into smaller component regions – Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and the Windward Coast – must be done with care.

Nonetheless, the slave registration data indicate that before the abolition of the British slave trade, the networks supplying captives from Sierra Leone tapped into groups of people who tended to live far beyond the littoral. For each of the Caribbean colonies, for example, captives identified as Malinke, Fulbe, Kissi and Susu are well represented. Slaves labeled Mende and “Bullom” (presumably including Sherbro) do appear, but not nearly in the same proportion as they would later in the century. Finally, although considerable numbers of “Canga/Ganga” slaves were found in St. Kitts, Trinidad and Barbice, the range of ethnic groups that this term covers makes it less useful for identifying the interior origins of African slaves.⁴⁰

Taken together, the data on slave origins suggests that Sierra Leone’s slaving frontier was transformed during Britain’s campaign against the slave trade. While this chapter has privileged local and regional factors to explain changes in the provenance of the slave trade, including the growth of southern Sierra Leone slaving ports and the resulting decline in the cost of transporting Mende and Sherbro captives, a broader transatlantic phenomenon also affected the composition of the region’s human cargo: a general decline in slave prices throughout Africa. In the Sierra Leone case, as elsewhere in Africa, for example, the price that Western slave dealers paid for captives was one central element in determining how far inland the transatlantic trade penetrated. When

⁴⁰ Higman, *Slave Populations*, 442-57. In the case of St. Domingue, David Geggus reaches a rather similar conclusion, but he too combines each of the three Upper Guinea regions. See David Geggus, “Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping Plantation Records,” *Journal of African History*, 30, 1 (1989), 32.

prices were high, African merchants could afford to absorb increased transportation costs. During such times, the slaving frontier thus tended to push further inland. On the other hand, declining slave prices cut into the profits of African slave dealers, providing them with less incentive to drive caravans of captives toward the coast.

This seems to be precisely what occurred in southern Sierra Leone, where the price of slaves fell considerably during the first quarter of the 19th century, as it did elsewhere in Africa.⁴¹ Although series of price data for African slaves are notoriously difficult to collect and assess, Adam Jones demonstrates that between Freetown and the Gallinas, the value of slaves dropped by at least half from 1800 to 1825. Converting slave prices from ships' bars to an estimate of their sterling equivalent, Jones suggests that masters paid as much as £23 for an adult male slave from Sierra Leone in 1808. By 1825, the price had fallen by nearly 75 percent, to just £6 at the Gallinas.⁴² While slave prices after 1825 are scarce, an increase in the enslavement of Africans living within 100 miles of the coast through 1835 (see Table 2.5) suggests that prices did not recover for at least a decade. By the middle of the 1830s, the southern Sierra Leone slaving frontier appears to have been on the verge of a shift back inland, but such a development was interrupted by the suppression of the transatlantic trade in the 1850s.

⁴¹ The most wide-reaching study of prices for slaves in 19th century Africa is still Paul E. Lovejoy's *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd Edition, 2000), Tables 3.5 and 7.3. See also David Eltis, "The Volume, Age/Sex Ratios, and African Impact of the Slave Trade: Some Refinements of Paul Lovejoy's Review of the Literature," *The Journal of African History*, 31, 3 (1990), 490-91, where the issue of slave prices is briefly and clearly described. More recently, Lovejoy and Richardson argued that the decline in slave prices on the coast was temporary, rebounding in the 1820s but never quite returning to pre-19th century figures. See Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "British Abolition and its Impact on Slave Prices at the Atlantic Coast of Africa, 1783-1850," *Journal of Economic History*, 55, 1 (1995), 98-119. Jones' data, however, suggests that for southern Sierra Leone, slave prices did indeed decline throughout the 19th century.

⁴² Jones, *From Slaves*, Table 4, p. 31. To calculate the price of a slave, I multiplied columns three and four in Jones' table.

Conclusion

This analysis of the Registers for Liberated Africans suggests that the majority of southern Sierra Leone's captives came from a relatively concentrated hinterland within 60 miles of the African coast. The region's shallow slaving frontier distinguishes it not only from West Central Africa, where slaves were marched from hundreds of miles beyond the littoral, but also from Sierra Leone's 18th-century trade, which drew Africans from further inland. The contraction of the slave catchment area after the Slave Trade Act underscores the dramatic impact that the abolition of the British slave trade had on the organization of the Sierra Leone trade. In addition to pushing slave dealers into the Gallinas and Sherbro, Britain's naval campaign and the related loss of British Caribbean markets reduced slave prices along the African coast. For dealers in southern Sierra Leone, this development dissuaded them from making lengthy journeys to and from sources of slave supply in the deep interior and ultimately resulted in Mende, Sherbro, Temne and a smaller number of Vai captives bearing the brunt of the impact of transatlantic slaving in post-1807 southern Sierra Leone.

Chapters 1 and 2 have largely privileged external forces in shaping the timing and pace of Sierra Leone's integration into the Atlantic world. Yet this should not imply that such forces alone were responsible for economic, social and political changes in the region. Indeed, internal pressures also interacted with and transformed external ones as southern Sierra Leone communities confronted the challenges posed by the growth of Atlantic commerce. Chapters 3 through 5 thus explore how a variety of communities and individuals exploited new opportunities that emerged as a result of the slave trade, abolition and colonialism in 19th century Sierra Leone.

Chapter 3, Feeding Freedom, Feeding the Slave Trade: Southern Sierra Leone and the Provisions Trade, 1787-1856

The 19th century brought several major changes to Sierra Leone's commercial life: on the one hand, a small antislavery settlement established at Freetown in 1787 developed into a burgeoning urban center with some 30,000 inhabitants by the 1830s. On the other, British efforts to suppress the Atlantic slave trade led to the growth of new centers of slave embarkation along the Sierra Leone coast, concentrating populations of slaves and slave dealers in regions once considered to be relative commercial backwaters. The resulting growth of coastal towns required a substantial increase in the production and trade of agricultural commodities to sustain the region's new inhabitants. Caught between the infant British Colony and the Gallinas, the inhabitants of the Sherbro region responded actively to new demands for produce coming from their northern and southeastern neighbors. As this chapter will show, Sherbro's supply of rice in the first half of the 19th century was central to the survival and growth of both slave and free settlements, making it a central player in the clashes between pro- and anti-slavery initiatives that increasingly engulfed West Africa during this period.

In the early 1800s, Freetown's needs proved to be especially dire. Aiming to demonstrate the superiority of agricultural commerce over slave trading, the city's founders were shocked to find that the ground on which they formed a settlement was poorly suited for large-scale production of basic commodities. The Sierra Leone Company, which financed and helped administer Freetown from abroad, began sending vessels laden with European commodities which at least enabled settlers to purchase provisions from headmen in surrounding villages, but the expansion of trade they

anticipated never materialized. Moreover, the next few decades brought a substantial increase in population pressure once the settlement was absorbed into the British Empire and used to settle a sizeable population of Liberated Africans. To combat the extensive costs of providing for the population, British administrators developed a hands off approach, first reducing the rations they provided newly-freed slaves and eventually abolishing the rations system altogether. Instead, the recaptives were moved to inland villages, which officials supervised to a far lesser degree. As John Peterson explains, the resulting administrative void “was filled by the settlers and Liberated Africans who were able to establish effective control of the political, economic, and social dimensions of their society.”¹ From the late-1820s, the Liberated African population was thus largely responsible for increases in local production of foodstuffs and trade with the interior.

As Freetown’s settlers gradually came to feed themselves, Sherbro headmen focused on supplying rice and other commodities to the growing number of slave vessels sailing toward the Gallinas to embark their human cargos. In addition, the Gallinas, once an active producer of rice itself, came to depend on the Sherbro to feed the captive populations swelling the barracoons along its coast. Many of the largest Gallinas slave dealers contracted with specific Sherbro headmen to supply food for their factories and for the vessels with which they contracted to supply slaves. In a desperate attempt to break up this intricate commercial network, the British struck at the heart of the system by blockading the paths between Sherbro and Gallinas in the late 1840s. The measure had a profound impact on the slave trade; reports soon emerged of the entire region

¹ John Peterson, *Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone, 1787-1870* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 13.

starving from a lack of food supply and by 1850 the Gallinas headmen announced the expulsion of the remaining Cuban and Brazilian traders from their lands.

The competing demands for Sherbro produce led to an extraordinary growth in the supply of foodstuffs from the region in the first half of the 19th century. The final section assesses the magnitude of the Sherbro rice trade in this period. Using figures on rice consumption in Freetown, observations from Sierra Leone inhabitants, and records on the purchase of provisions for slave vessels, I estimate the Sherbro role in feeding the slave trade and Freetown. At its height in the 1820s, this included an export of nearly 1,300 tons of rice per annum which, according to one estimate, equaled the rice supplied to slave traders in the entire Sierra Leone region less than half a century earlier.²

The Sierra Leone Company and the Provisioning of Early Freetown, 1787-1807³

The Establishment of Commercial Factories North and South of Freetown

The history of Freetown's establishment is well known and need not be rehearsed in great depth. In 1787, an attempt to found the "Province of Freedom" at Granville Town on the south bank of the Sierra Leone estuary ended in disaster, with a third of the inhabitants dying from exposure to unfamiliar diseases and most of the survivors abandoning the settlement to seek livelihoods elsewhere. In 1790, the few remaining inhabitants were drawn into a conflict between their Temne landlord and an American slave trader which led to the total destruction of the original settlement. The town was reestablished in 1791 under the control of the Sierra Leone Company, its population

² Walter Rodney, "Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djalón in the 18th Century," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4, 2 (June 1968), 283

³ This section has been published in the Winter, 2008 volume of the *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*.

expanding considerably early in the following year with the arrival of a group of free blacks from Nova Scotia. Excitement was in the air. The new settlers arrived singing a hymn of prayer: “The day of Jubilee is come; Return ye ransomed sinners home.”⁴

The air of jubilation was not to last long. It quickly became clear that the location of the new “Freetown” was far from ideal for agricultural purposes. A report on the state of the settlement in 1794 found that “the land adjoining to the settlement has proved by no means so good as every account received before the inception of the Company had led them to expect.” The overall assessment of Freetown’s geographic merits, however, was positive enough to keep the settlement from being relocated:

the site of Freetown is unquestionably the best that can be found, in respect to the salubrity of the air, the goodness of the water, and the convenience of the landing-place; it can hardly fail therefore to continue the chief place of trade, though other parts at a moderate distance, particularly those on the opposite side of the river, will be found the most favorable to cultivation.⁵

With this sentiment in mind, an experimental plantation was established on the Bullom Shore, on the opposite side of the Sierra Leone estuary, under the supervision of James

⁴ Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 37.

⁵ *Substance of the Report Delivered by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, to the General Court of Proprietors, on Thursday, March 27th, 1794* (Philadelphia: Printed by Thomas Dorson, 1795), 15. It is interesting to note the striking contrast between this more realistic *Report* and the overwhelmingly optimistic one delivered in 1791. Much of the early optimism seems to have come from the faith placed in John Matthews’ account of Sierra Leone from his visits there in the 1780s. The 1791 *Report* draws from Matthews, as does a lengthy document on Sierra Leone’s overall commercial prospects written by Thomas Clarkson around the same time. For the latter, see the British Library, Add. MS. 12131, f. 1, “Letter Addressed to the Chairman of the Sierra Leone Company by the Rev. Mr. Thomas Clarkson.” Given the disparity between Matthews’ observations on the fertility of the soil in the region and the experiences of the early settlers, the disappointment evident in the 1794 *Report* is not surprising. See also John Matthews, *A Voyage to the river Sierra-Leone* (London: Printed for B. White and Son, 1788).

Watt, a former planter in Dominica. However, the site proved equally unproductive and by 1796 it was virtually abandoned.⁶

Poor results in early agricultural endeavors led Freetown officials to rely even more heavily on trade to supply the settlement with provisions. But establishing meaningful commercial relationships with local leaders proved no small task. Recognizing the potentially dangerous implications of Freetown's establishment within a region heavily engaged in the Atlantic slave trade, slave dealers settled in the region mounted a campaign to win the support of African rulers by spreading malicious stories about the new settlers' intentions. Many headmen were warned that Freetown officials intended to expand their territorial holdings at the expense of the leaders.⁷ Intent on countering the biases built up against them, a number of Freetown's most influential men determined to hold face-to-face meetings with the headmen of several strategic locations. Such efforts, it was hoped, would provide them a chance to explain the benefits which they assumed Freetown would bring to the region and ultimately might lead to an increase in the small trickle of African produce that was supplied to the settlement.

The prospects of opening up trade with the surrounding territories improved through the endeavors of Zachary Macaulay, who in July of 1793 traveled from Freetown south along the coast to the Banana, Plantain and Sherbro Islands. At Sherbro he met with William Ado, the headman at Jenkins Town on the northeast end of the island, with whom he entered into an agreement to increase trade between the two settlements. In a

⁶ The plantation on the Bullom Shore was actually the third and longest lasting effort at establishing large-scale commercial agriculture in this early period. The Company sent out three planters to oversee their own farms. One was abandoned following the first rainy season, when the overseer returned to the West Indies. A cotton plantation was also established near Freetown but its supervisor left for England, causing the grounds to be divided and used at a smaller scale. *Substance of the Report by the Court of Directors*, 46-48.

⁷ A point, in the end, on which they were correct, though those spreading such rumors at the time had no way of knowing this.

classic demonstration of the landlord and stranger relationship that regulated interaction between outsiders and their hosts in this region,⁸ Ado promised to protect any Freetown merchant settling in his town – an essential point given the limited British presence on the coast and the hostility of many of the slave traders. A small factory was established under the agreement, including a house “in the manner of native houses, a rice house, a yard or inclosure for camwood, and a fowl house.”⁹ Early the following year a mission was sent inland to the Fula Country, leading to a meeting between two Sierra Leone Company officials and the King of Timbo which resulted in additional promises to bring trade from the hinterland down to Freetown. To facilitate their interactions with Timbo and attract additional traders in the region, a Company factory was opened at “Tookey Kerren,” later called Freeport, twelve leagues up the Rio Pongo. Despite powerful resistance from slave dealers north of Freetown, the factory seemed to hold promise: a sample of 668 pounds of ivory was sent down in July of 1795 with seemingly limitless potential for the future.¹⁰

Yet little was to come of the factory on the Rio Pongo during its seven-year existence. Perhaps most significantly, this establishment was built at a time when the hinterland northeast of Freetown was going through a series of disruptive upheavals which had a detrimental effect on the supply of commodities. Although Freetown merchants trading outside the settlement’s boundaries were warned against their

⁸ R.V. Dorjahn and Christopher Fyfe, “Landlord and Stranger: Change in Tenancy Relations in Sierra Leone,” *Journal of African History*, 3, 3 (1962), 391-397.

⁹ Suzanne Schwartz, ed., *Zachary Macaulay and the Development of the Sierra Leone Company, 1793-1794* (Leipzig: Institut für Afrikanistik, Universität Leipzig, 2000), Part I, 27.

¹⁰ The operations of slave dealers of American-African descent have been thoroughly described in Bruce Mouser, “Trade, Coasters and Conflict in the Rio Pongo from 1790 to 1808,” *Journal of African History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1973), 45-64. Records on the founding of Tookey Kerren are found in The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Kew Gardens, CO268/5, Dawes and Mitchell to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 13 July 1795.

involvement in the internal affairs of their landlords, they were nonetheless at the mercy of those people who carried their trade goods to and from the interior. While supply conditions were unstable for all of the Sierra Leone Company's factories, they were particularly unpredictable for Freeport, which drew merchants from a much deeper hinterland that was subject to many more unpredictable forces with the potential to influence trading activity. By February of 1796, less than a year after Freeport was put in operation, the path to Futa Jallon was reported to have already been closed for "some time," though Thomas Cooper, the Company's factor there, reassured the Company that it was recently reopened and trade would increase.¹¹

Cooper's subsequent correspondence underscores the unstable nature of the factory in the Rio Pongo. For nearly six months following his letter reporting the opening of the path to the interior, Cooper rarely had anything positive to report. It seems clear that the opening of the path did not last long and that even when it was open, the British factory conducted minimal trade. The cause, according to Cooper, was a civil war in Timbo, which led to the Fula King, "Alimami Sadoo," being put to death and a series of domestic struggles which continued following the King's violent removal from power.¹² Under such circumstances it is hardly surprising that trade from Timbo was unsteady at best.

Freeport continued its strained existence for another five years, never realizing the benefits the Company hoped it would bring. Ultimately, the failure of this trading establishment demonstrates the overall weakness of Freetown's influence outside of the settlement itself, as Freeport struggled to attract indigenous merchants away from the

¹¹ TNA, CO268/5, Dawes to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 6 February 1796

¹² TNA, CO268/5, Zachary Macaulay to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 30 July 1796.

more powerful slave traders. As Cooper lamented in early 1796, “I am afraid it will be some time before I shall be able to draw the trade to this river, as all the Foulahs are inclined...to go to Carcundy Path.”¹³ Moreover, during those few times when Freeport showed glimmers of hope, slave dealers on the coast did everything in their power to prevent its continued success. The most important step they took came in April of 1796, when a number of slave traders banded together to implement a policy refusing to purchase slaves from any Fula caravan that had visited Freeport to trade in non-slave commodities.¹⁴ Summing up after an investment of several years with little to show for it, the Company officials lamented that “the same obstacles that had prevented trade to the Freeport factory continue. Troubles in the Foulah country continue to prevent free intercourse with those more inland whence the ivory is chiefly brought to the Foulah market, and the same rooted enmity of slave traders to the company continues to thwart its views.”¹⁵ By 1802, the Company finally abandoned the factory – an implicit admission of defeat at the hands of the slave traders in the northern hinterland.

In contrast to their commercial arrangements north of Freetown, the Company relied on a number of smaller factories at various points to the south, ranging from the Camaranca River just outside the settlement to Cape Mesurado and beyond. Following the agreement between Macaulay and William Ado in 1793, it was reported that James Rooway was intending to settle on the Banana Islands under William Cleveland, a powerful headman with considerable influence throughout the mainland adjacent this

¹³ TNA, CO270/3, 3 February 1796.

¹⁴ TNA, CO270/4, 8 July 1796. For the hardships that coastal slave traders imposed on the Freeport factory, see Mouser, “Traders, Coasters and Conflict.”

¹⁵ TNA, CO268/5, Macaulay and Gray to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 5 June 1798. For an overview of the struggles between the slave traders and Freetown merchants in this period, see Mouser, “Trade, Coasters and Conflict,” esp. 58-59.

island. On the Camaranca River, where a regular supply of rice was obtainable, a factory was established in May of 1793. Later, in 1795, John Gray and James Watt entered into negotiations with Furry Cannabas, a Muslim Mandinka headman on this river, to establish an additional factory, which was opened the following year under the supervision of Mr. Farel. Further to the leeward,¹⁶ two more traders, Mr. Graham and Mr. Ray, once established as merchants on the Banana Islands, had moved their factories to Mesurado, where the American colony of Liberia would later be settled.¹⁷ The practice of spreading trade along many parts of the coast south and east of Freetown appears to have brought more benefits to the British settlement, and taken as a whole Freetown's commercial relationship with the region to its southeast was considerably more advantageous throughout most of the 1790s than that of its northern hinterland.

Two related factors were predominantly responsible for the success of the early trade between Freetown and its southeastern frontier. The extremely localized nature of political power in this region meant that Company merchants had a variety of local leaders with whom they could enter into relationships, creating a wider region of supply for the British factors along the coast. Perhaps ironically, the very power of the Fula state at Futa Jallon, which influenced Freetown officials to pursue commercial links so

¹⁶ In Africa, the Windward Coast was defined in relation to the Gold Coast, the main British trading establishment on the continent. The boundaries of the region defined as the Windward Coast were not always precise and indeed changed significantly between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This essay uses the terms windward and leeward in a broader and less specific way, with Freetown as the focal point. Windward, in this case, refers to regions north of Freetown along the coast and leeward to regions south or, more appropriately, southeast. The terms are only capitalized when they refer to a specific stretch of the African coast. For the changing definition of the Windward Coast, see Adam Jones and Marion Johnson, "Slaves from the Windward Coast," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1980), 17-34.

¹⁷ Gray and Watt each kept a journal during their mission to Furry Cannabas in the Camaranca, both of which are held in the British Library, Add. MS. 12131, f. 81, "Mr. Gray's Journal to Furry Cannaba's, Feb 1795;" and f. 122, "Mr. Watt's Journal to Furry Cannaba's between the 31 Jan and 11 Feb 1795." See TNA, CO268/5, Dawes to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 6 February 1796 for the establishment of factories south of Freetown. TNA, CO270/2, 27 May 1793, contains correspondence on the first factory in the Camaranca under Chambard.

diligently in the northeast, led to the downfall of their Freeport factory once domestic struggles discouraged caravans from traveling to the coast. South of Freetown, there was no inland equivalent to the Fula Empire which regulated trade between the interior and the coast. Even when wars erupted in the south, as they did intermittently throughout the 1790s, there was no single path to blockade.

Moreover, unlike in the Rio Pongo, where established slave dealers were extraordinarily powerful and worked as a coherent unit to oppose Freetown interests, headmen south of Freetown appeared to recognize the potential for British merchants to increase their own prestige against often hostile neighbors. Given the comparative weakness of Freetown's inhabitants in the region, this point was essential in allowing the newcomers to wield a bit more commercial influence inland. Commenting on the growing trade between Freetown and the Sherbro, Zachary Macaulay observed that "Our rapid progress in the Sherbro seems to have been considerably owing to the hatred entertained against the name of Cleveland, on account of the miseries occasioned by the late Cleveland."¹⁸

Southern Sierra Leone's contested political arena thus encouraged some local leaders to use Freetown as a new commercial opportunity, furthering the leaders' own interests and those of their dependents. Even when negotiations to establish factories to the leeward of Freetown failed with one headman, it was often the case that another welcomed the idea of a British factor settling in a nearby territory. And although Freetown officials did not intend to be manipulated in such a manner, their dependence on the interior for food supplies left them little room to dictate the political policies of the headmen with whom they traded.

¹⁸ Schwartz, *Zachary Macaulay and the Sierra Leone Company*, 52.

The Organization of the Sierra Leone Company Produce Trade

One of the most striking features to emerge from recent research on the transatlantic slave trade has been the degree of specialization involved in the trade: particular European ports had unique links with specific African coastal regions where slaves were supplied; captains of slaving vessels conducted business with trusted slave traders settled along the coast, often building commercial relationships that spanned many years. Given the nature of the trade in which such merchants were involved – and the potential profits and losses of slaving voyages – this is hardly surprising. One important question to ask therefore is whether the trade in non-slave commodities shared this same degree of specificity.

While lack of data makes the answer to this question difficult for many parts of Africa prior to the mid-nineteenth century, when the trade in so-called “legitimate” commodities began replacing the export of slaves along parts of the coast, sufficient data exists for Freetown to draw many conclusions about the nature of the produce trade as far back as the 1790s. Beginning in 1792, the Sierra Leone Company began sending out vessels to purchase various goods to ports north and south of the settlement. The details provided for each voyage vary in quality. Some include little more than a vessel name and an intended trade destination while others are known in great detail through surviving journals kept during the voyage. Taken as a whole, the data are strong enough to address many of the issues that have been taken up by scholars concerned with the slave trade.¹⁹

¹⁹ Several sources recorded the departure and return of Company vessels during this period. The most reliable was the Minutes of Council found in TNA, CO270. Nearly all of the voyages from these records also appeared in TNA, CO268/5 or in Zachary Macaulay’s journals, kept during the time he spent in Sierra Leone. On occasion, a voyage is also mentioned in a separate account by one of Freetown’s inhabitants. Several were noted by Adam Afzelius, found in Peter Kup, ed, Adam Afzelius, *Sierra Leone Journal, 1795-1796* (Uppsala: Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia, XXVII, 1967). These voyages were entered into a

From the new evidence, it is safe to say that just as with the slave trade, a highly-specialized organization underpinned the produce trade carried on in Sierra Leone Company vessels, though clearly to a lesser magnitude. This is perhaps to be expected. Unlike the transatlantic slave trade, which connected all parts of the Atlantic world and many parts of the Pacific, the range of coast along which the Sierra Leone Company trade operated was limited to the territory between the Gambia in the north and Gabon in the southeast. Nonetheless, even within this limited commercial sphere, the extent to which indigenous inhabitants dictated the organization and operation of Freetown's trade is noteworthy. Cargos were carefully sorted based on buyer preferences, which differed from one port to the next and might unexpectedly change within the same port. Failure to account for such preferences was one quick way to guarantee an unprofitable voyage. Captains of the Company vessels, who were most often entrusted with supervising day-to-day trade, were sent to the parts of the coast which they knew best and when a knowledgeable captain was unavailable, merchants or Sierra Leone Company officials were sent along to oversee the voyage.

In the diverse rivers and creeks that penetrated the African coast between Gambia and Gabon, one vital step in commencing a trading voyage was choosing a suitable vessel. In 1791, the Sierra Leone Company owned only three: the *Lapwing*, of 35 tons burthen, the *Amy*, of 190 tons, and the much larger *Harpy*, at 380 tons. Within three years, the Company increased its commercial fleet to more than ten vessels, mostly smaller cutters and sloops used to collect produce from the adjoining rivers. The *Harpy* and the *Amy* were typically used as store ships after the Company's largest vessel, the

dataset (hereafter referred to as the *Freetown Trade Dataset*, or *FTD*), from which the conclusions above are primarily drawn.

York, of 850 tons burthen, was destroyed by a fire in 1793 – a considerable blow to the young settlement resulting in a loss of £4,000.²⁰ A near-fatal strike against the Company fleet came in September of 1794, when a group of French privateers attacked and destroyed most of Freetown’s infrastructure. In the chaos that followed the assault, nearly three quarters of the Sierra Leone Company vessels were either taken within the Sierra Leone estuary or destroyed as the French fleet proceeded down the coast.²¹ However, the Company rebounded over time and between 1795 and 1801, at least ten separate vessels were employed carrying produce back to the settlement.²²

In general, captains sailed specific routes in command of the same vessel, which they relinquished only under pressing circumstances. Alexander Macaulay, one of the more active masters for the Sierra Leone Company, led four separate voyages in 1796 alone, three in the brig *Beginning*. He was transferred to the sloop *Ocean* for a single voyage, only when his experience with trade along the Leeward Coast was needed.²³ William Davis, master of the *James and William* cutter, was prized for his knowledge of the trade along the Windward and Gold Coasts. When Davis was unavailable, Captain Estill, “who has acquired sufficient knowledge of the gold and ackey trade,” was employed in voyages to the Gold Coast. Captains who were capable of trading across a number of regions were most valued. The longest trip the Company vessels undertook was a coasting voyage between Sierra Leone and Gabon, which lasted some six months

²⁰ Sierra Leone Company, *Substance of the report of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court, held at London on Wednesday the 19th of October, 1791* (London: Printed by James Phillips, 1791), 45-46; *Substance of the Report Delivered...on Thursday, March 24th, 1794*, 42. For one account of the destruction of the *York*, see Schwartz, *Zachary Macaulay and the Sierra Leone Company*, 27.

²¹ For one of the many existing accounts of the French attack, see TNA, CO270/3, 28 September 1794.

²² *FTD*, 1795-1801.

²³ TNA, CO268/5, Macaulay to the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, 7 October 1796; TNA, CO270/4, 4 September 1796.

and passed along the Windward, Grain, Gold and Slave Coasts, all with their own unique set of customs and merchandize preferences. A number of voyages were sent out on this route between 1796 and in 1797, each one carefully planned, though none met with much success. The first two trips were in the Company vessel *Calypso*, both under Captain Cole. Following Cole's second departure, in 1797, the Brig *Eliza* was dispatched on the same route after receiving a favorable report on trading conditions from the *Calypso*, which was still proceeding along the coast. In the end, neither of these vessels would return home, however, as they were both taken by French privateers.²⁴

Upon selecting the appropriate captain and vessel, the next and most important step was to load a suitable cargo, which varied depending on where the vessel was headed. The sorting of a cargo depended in part on knowing which articles were regularly in demand in a particular region and also on more specific information provided by factors along the coast, who communicated such details with Company officials in Freetown. Little evidence exists on the specifics of the Freetown trade to the Gambia, the northernmost point in the Company's commercial network. In the Rio Pongo, closer to Freetown, the Freeport factor maintained regular contact with Company merchants in the settlement. However, Cooper's letters provide surprisingly few specifics on valued commodities in the Pongo region. One article commonly mentioned is salt. Indeed, the great scarcity of salt reported in April of 1797 led Cooper to conclude that the old suppliers had found a new route. Cloth, one of the most widely exchanged products

²⁴ On William Davis' voyage in the *James and William*, see TNA, CO270/2, 22 June 1793. For Captain Estill, see *ibid*, 21 August 1793. A journal of the first voyage of the *Calypso* can be found at the British Library, Add. MS. 12131, f. 272, "Mr. Parfitt's Diary on Board the *Calypso*, W. Cole, from the River Sierra Leone to the River Gaboon & Back, Commencing 17 June and Ending 29 Dec 1796." The subsequent voyage can be found in TNA, CO268/5, Macaulay to Cole, 2 December 1797. The capture of the vessels was recorded in *ibid*, 9 June 1797 and 22 October 1797.

throughout Africa, was not surprisingly also an article of much value in the Pongo.

According to Cooper, the cloth that found the best market was “blue baft...with satin stripe and chintz.”²⁵

Journeys to the leeward tended to be of a much longer duration and organizing such a voyage involved many risky calculations and assumptions about the demands of African merchants. The complexity of the trade along the coast to the leeward is underscored by a remarkable document recorded by Mr. Parfitt, the Sierra Leone Commercial Agent during part of the 1790s, concerning the trading patterns between Freetown and Cape Lopez. Some general comments suggest that a number of commodities circulated widely in the region, with rum and tobacco most important. American rum found a ready market along the coast from Sierra Leone and especially along the Gold Coast from at least the mid-eighteenth century. By the turn of this century it is no longer surprising to find that “the natives are partial to it, they prefer it to French brandy or Jamaica rum.”²⁶ Tobacco was increasingly important in the commercial exchanges leeward of Freetown during this period too, and unlike along the Bight of Benin, where roll tobacco from Bahia was distinctly preferred to other forms,²⁷ here it was “good, long, broad leaf” tobacco that commanded the trade.

²⁵ TNA, CO270/4, 7 April 1797.

²⁶ On the significance of American rum along the gold coast see Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 106-118. For its role in the Freetown trade, along with that of tobacco, see British Library, ADD. MS. 12131, f. 174, “Mr. Parfitts Information on Trade between Sierra Leone and Cape Lopez.” This valuable document was important not only for the Sierra Leone Company trade but also for other merchants who traded in this region. Captain Samuel Swan, an American merchant who was familiar with this part of Africa, appears to have circulated this exact document some ten to fifteen years later, possibly taking credit for it as his own. Swan’s “Memoranda on the African Trade” is reprinted in full in George E. Brooks, *Yankee Traders, Old Coasters and African Middlemen: A History of American Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (Brookline: Boston University Press, 1970), Appendix J.

²⁷ The unique relationship between the Bight of Benin and Bahia, in Brazil, was highlighted in Pierre Verger, *Trade Relations between the Bight of Benin and Bahia from the 17th to 19th Century* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1976).

Yet it was when dealing with articles of lesser significance that local preferences were exposed in all of their complexities. Particular patterns of cloth that sold on one part of the coast might be considered worthless in an adjacent region. On the other hand, introducing new styles might lead to added profits. As Parfitt found, "I think if the Pongas or Nunez, blue and high cloths, were cut into their length and sewn together they would be liked, I had not a good opportunity to try them, they must be sewed which might be done by sailors on board." The value of particular patterns and sizes of beads and beadwork also varied by region: the inhabitants along the Kru Coast were especially fond of "small blue pipe bead bare $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch diameter and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long," while as many as seven other color and pattern schemes are found to suit other parts of the coast. In many cases, in order to obtain such a wide variety of specific goods, captains had to purchase them during the early part of a voyage with the intention of selling them later. It was said that "from Little or Grand Sesters round Cape Palmas you can sometimes buy a string containing 10 beads about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. long for a trifling thing which you can sell at Cape Lahou and to Leeward." Or, "at St. Andrews they are fond of some of the Gold Coast goods, if you have them on board, and their trade will answer, do not spoil it by retaining them, if you can possibly spare them."²⁸

The highly specific demands for goods along the coast often frustrated the Sierra Leone Company traders, who relied for the most part on the Directors of the Company to supply them with goods. The Directors were slow in sending out trade articles and when they did the Company merchants rarely found the needed assortment for all parts of the coast. Upon the arrival of one British vessel, Macaulay commented that "the trade goods

²⁸ ADD. MS. 12131, "Parfitt's Information on Trade."

which came out in the *Naimbanna* are calculated only for the Gambia.”²⁹ When a particularly valuable commodity was neglected, the Company tried to barter for it with other vessels and merchants in the region, often turning to John Tilley, a slave dealer and agent on Bunce Island, in the Sierra Leone estuary. On one such occasion it was lamented that “it appears the Court of Directors have omitted to include iron bars in the trade cargo now sent out on the *Eliza* and such an article being necessary to complete an assortment for the Grain Coast, Parfitt has written to Tilley to know if he can spare some.”³⁰

For their part, the Sierra Leone Company sought a small number of commodities that were widely available along most parts of the coast where they traded. Their interests can be roughly divided into two groups: edible goods and luxury goods. The first category, though of lesser value financially, was of more direct importance to Freetown’s settlers. As mentioned, rice was the staple crop, but it was supplemented by yams, fowl, coconut, cattle, plantains, palm oil and no doubt more. Luxury items included ivory, camwood, gold dust, coffee, wax, gum copal, ebony and horses. Particular parts of the coast were better known for supplying some goods rather than others. Most vessels sent to the north were dispatched to the Gambia or the Freeport factory, vessels returning from the latter place generally carrying cargoes of ivory and rice. Larger vessels were sent to the Gambia, where they were supplied with wax and cattle, along with smaller quantities of ivory.³¹ Stock was also available from the Portuguese merchants in Bissau, who traded with Freetown from the early 1790s.³² Another lasting

²⁹ Ibid, 3 August 1793.

³⁰ TNA, CO270/3, 9 December 1795

³¹ TNA, CO270/2, 18 June 1793.

³² Ibid, 3 August 1793.

connection was established with Aspinall, a slave trader with over twenty years of experience in Africa who was stationed at Robot, on the Great Scarcies, and who also supplied the settlement with rice.³³ It is thus clear that the Sierra Leone Company was forced to extend its interactions beyond its own Company factories. In doing so, Freetown merchants sought to forge commercial relationships with African and European traders who they felt were as trustworthy as their own factors.

Returning to the coast leeward of Freetown, it is striking to note the number of places at which Company vessels traded and the articles that each port was known to supply. The headmen of the Banana Islands and the Sherbro supplied as much rice as any other merchants on the coast and Sherbro was also well known for supplying a superior quality of camwood.³⁴ Further along the coast, the trade diversified to include pepper and ivory along the Grain and Ivory Coasts, and gold as one reached the forts along the Gold Coast. At Old Calabar palm oil was available “in great plenty” and in the Cameroons ivory again dominated the trade. Finally, vessels at Gabon could load a diverse assortment of goods including redwood, gum copal and black ebony, which was apparently unique to this last location. As a whole, Parfitt lists a staggering sixty different points between Cape Mount and Cape Lopez where different kinds of trade might be conducted.³⁵

³³ Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 54. The Aspinalls were among the largest Liverpool-based slave traders of this era. They financed slave trading voyages to almost every part of the African coast. See Davie Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (updated online edition, forthcoming).

³⁴ See chapter 1, 42-43.

³⁵ ADD. MS. 12131, “Parfitt’s Information on Trade.”

The Volume and Distribution of the Sierra Leone Company Trade

Between 1792 and 1801, the Sierra Leone Company dispatched at least sixty seven vessels to collect produce along different points of the African coast.³⁶ Table 3.1 shows the number of voyages departing from Freetown each year between 1792 and 1801. It is clear that the Sierra Leone Company's enthusiasm for managing a commercial fleet declined as quickly as it emerged. Nine out of every ten voyages departed during the first five years the Company trade operated and more than fifty percent of the

Table 3.1, Number of Sierra Leone Company Voyages by Year of Departure

Year of Departure	Frequency	Percent
1792	5	7.5
1793	36	53.7
1794	6	8.9
1795	4	6.0
1796	9	13.4
1797	2	3.0
1798	1	1.5
1799	1	1.5
1800	2	3.0
1801	1	1.5
Totals	67	100

Source: *Freetown Trade Database*, constructed by author³⁷

³⁶ Each of these voyages has been entered into a database with a unique identity number and details from more than forty additional fields. Some voyages are exceptionally well documented whereas others receive only a passing reference. More than fifty percent of the voyages in the dataset were recorded from more than one source, and several were mentioned in as many as four. For each of the voyages, the name of the vessel is known along with the year in which the voyage began or returned. In all but three cases, the port or ports of intended trade is provided. Based on this last piece of data I have added an additional field to indicate whether, broadly speaking, the voyage was dispatched to the north of Freetown or to the south and east. Data on the cargos purchased by Company vessels is rather less specific. Although in a small number of cases, the returns of a particular voyage are available, providing a list of all of the commodities purchased, their weights and prices, such detailed evidence was rare and instead a vessel might be described as carrying "a load" of ivory or "a good deal" of camwood.

³⁷ The data for Tables 1-3 comes from the *FTD*.

voyages left Freetown in a single year. Following the relatively explosive growth of the coastal produce trade in 1793, a gradual decline follows in each subsequent year with the exception of 1796, when vessel departures more than doubled from the previous year. The drop in vessel departures from thirty six in 1793 to just one sixth that amount in the following year should not be surprising: the loss of most of the Company vessels at the hands of the French certainly explains a large part of the drastic reduction in the seaborne produce trade. However, closer analysis of the data shows that this event does not by itself account for the change. The French attack on Freetown occurred late in September, at which time only a couple of vessels had been sent out to trade. By that point in the previous year, at least fifteen voyages had been dispatched.

As a whole, there does not appear to have been much of a preference for the time of the year when such voyages were sent. Data for the month of departure is available for forty vessels, or about sixty percent of the voyages. What is most striking is how evenly dispersed the voyages were: half left Freetown in the first six months of the year and half in the remaining six months.³⁸ This consistency remains at a monthly basis as well. Between three and five vessels departed for eight of the twelve months of the year. No vessels departed in either April or June and November, the busiest month for dispatching vessels, saw six sail from Freetown during the decade under examination. Moreover, it appears that trade location did not influence the time of the year when a produce vessel set out. Taking the top three most frequented ports of trade for Company vessels and analyzing each destination separately reveals equally scattered patterns.

³⁸ ADD. MS. 12131, "Parfitt's Information on Trade."

Detail on the locations along the coast where Company vessels traded is strong.³⁹

The evidence for voyages to the northern regions is especially reliable as vessels following this route were likely to trade in a single location and bring their merchandize directly back to Freetown. The most active supply regions in the Company trade north of

Table 3.2, Places of Trade for Vessels North of Freetown, 1792-1801

Trade Location	Frequency	Percent
Gambia River	5	20.8
Freeport	4	16.7
Rio Nunez	4	16.7
Scarcies	3	12.5
Bissau	3	12.5
Iles de Los	2	8.3
Bullom Shore	1	4.2
Quiaport	1	4.2
Bulama	1	4.2
Totals	24	100

Source: Same as Table 3.1

Freetown – defined as those locations where at least three vessels conducted trade during the decade – were the Gambia, the Rio Nunez, the Scarcies, Bissau and of course Freeport. Of the latter factory, it is surprising to note that despite the heavy investment in this location, Freeport does not stand out as exceptionally busy against the other northern factories.

Fewer conclusions can be drawn about the regions where Company vessels traded along coast to the southeast of Freetown for two related reasons: the designations used by

³⁹ It should be noted that the data was largely generated in Freetown itself and therefore the locations where vessels were sent might not have been where they actually ended up trading. About half of the voyages in the dataset contain details on both their intended port of trade and the actual port of trade. The two match in all available cases with the exception of those given a less specific destination such as the Windward Coast. The assumption is that the remaining fifty percent, for which an intended trade destination is the only available geographic detail, also took their intended paths.

officials noting the departure of trading vessels to the leeward was less precise and most leeward vessels stopped at numerous places along the coast. Indeed broad designations such as Windward Coast, Grain Coast and Leeward Coast might include any number of trading destinations, as the lengthy list constructed by the Company's Commercial Agent demonstrates. Vessels sailing along this route followed a coasting pattern established by

Table 3.3, Places of Trade for Vessels South of Freetown, 1792-1801

Trade Location	Frequency	Percent
Sherbro	8	20
Windward Coast	7	17.5
Camaranca	6	15
Grain Coast	6	15
Gabon	3	7.5
Banana Islands	2	5
Leeward Coast	2	5
Gold Coast	2	5
Turtle Islands	1	2.5
Cape Mount	1	2.5
Cape Mesurado	1	2.5
St. Thomas Island	1	2.5
Totals	40	100

Source: Same as Table 3.1

slave traders from at least the mid-eighteenth century, where slavers touched along the Upper Guinea Coast and proceeded down to the forts of the Gold Coast, where the majority of slaves were purchased.⁴⁰ It is therefore likely that at least some of the trade locations specified in Table 3.3, particularly those closest to Freetown, represent one of a number of places where produce was purchased during a voyage. On the other hand, a

⁴⁰ A Book of Trade for the Sloop *Rhode Island*, Dec. 1748-July 1749, Misc. MSS., B.V. *Rhode Island*, New-York Historical Society.

number of leeward voyages contain sufficient data to demonstrate that some did indeed collect goods from a single location before returning directly back home.

Either way, it is immediately clear that the territory on the southern frontier of the Sierra Leone settlement was central to the commercial life of early Freetown.⁴¹ A total of seventeen produce traders are known to have been dispatched to the Camaranca, Sherbro, Banana Islands and Turtle Island, all within seventy miles of Freetown. Vessels listed as going to the Windward Coast would certainly have at least stopped at one of these locations and some of these may well have spent most of their time trading in this region. It is equally likely that vessels sent out to destinations further to the leeward would also have put in at one of these places, even if for no other reason than to get information about the state of trade further along the coast.⁴² Adjacent to this territory, the Grain Coast, which includes modern Liberia and most of the Ivory Coast, was for some time known for its cheap supplies of rice and it is not surprising to find that Sierra Leone Company vessels tried to capitalize on this with frequent visits.

⁴¹ This conclusion runs counter to the overwhelming emphasis on Freetown's relations with the northeastern hinterland in the existing literature. On the latter, see Allen Howard, "The Role of Freetown in the Commercial Life of Sierra Leone," in Christopher Fyfe and Eldred Jones, eds., *Freetown: A Symposium* (Freetown: University of Sierra Leone Press, 1968); E. Adeleye Ijagbemi, "The Freetown Colony and the Development of Legitimate Commerce in the Adjoining Territories," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5, 2 (June 1970), 243-256; Bruce Mouser, "Trade, Coasters and Conflict;" Allan M. Howard, "The Relevance of Spatial Analysis for African Economic History: The Sierra Leone-Guinea System," *Journal of African History*, 17, 3 (1976), 365-388; Winston McGowan, "The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade between Sierra Leone and its Hinterland," *Journal of African History*, 31, 1 (1990), 25-41; George Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), chapter 10. One of the few exceptions which focuses on the south of Freetown is John Davidson, "Trade and Politics in the Sherbro Hinterland, 1849-1890," Ph.D Dissertation, University of Wisconsin (1969), chapter 4. Patrick S. Caulker's, "Legitimate Commerce and Statecraft: A Study of the Hinterland Adjacent to Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (June 1981), 379-419, is also focused on the south but is concerned with the large-scale export of African produce beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, ignoring the earlier trade in non-slave commodities.

⁴² There are several examples of slave-trading vessels stopping at Sherbro to gather information on the state of the trade further to the leeward. See, for example, TNA, CO267/68, Planta to Horton, 19 July 1825, enclosures on the French slaver the *Deux Soeurs*. A similar strategy would likely be used by captains of non-slaving vessels and there is no reason to doubt that such a practice was followed for some time before the 1820s.

Given the noted emphasis in the literature on the commercial significance of Freetown's northern hinterland, it is surprising to find that as a whole more than three out of every five vessels dispatched for produce under Company control were sent south along the coast. In fact, it was only in 1801 that the region north of Freetown received more Company vessels than the area leeward of the settlement and this was a year in which only a single vessel put out to sea. Even in 1793, the most active year for the Company produce trade along the coast, four more voyages were sent to the leeward than to the north of Freetown. Although it is important to remember that such figures provide only the seaborne portion of the Sierra Leone Company trade and take no account of the produce that made its way to the Colony overland, the evidence nonetheless highlights the significance that the leeward region and especially the territory between the Camaranca and Sherbro Island played in the provisioning of early Freetown.

Transformations in Agricultural Commerce in Southern Sierra Leone, 1807-1850

Freetown's financial footing under the Sierra Leone Company was never sound. Administrative costs alone averaged over £7,000 a year by the early 19th century. Beginning in 1800, the British government began providing subsidies to ease Company expenses. By the end of 1807, the Company had already received nearly £100,000, though this amounted to only half of what its members' paid from their own pockets. The situation was clearly untenable and Company officials thus began negotiations for the potential transfer of the settlement to the Crown. After some debate in Parliament the

Sierra Leone Transfer Act was confirmed in August, 1807. Beginning in January of the following year, Freetown became Britain's first West African Colony.⁴³

A number of works have extensively described the fate of Freetown's settler population in the wake of their absorption into the British Empire. James Walker describes the period from 1808 to 1815 as one during which confidence was restored among the Nova Scotian settlers, followed by a period of "position and prosperity" from 1815-1827. John Peterson charts a steady movement toward settler "independence," in which "Liberated Africans...were able to establish effective control of the political, economic, and social dimensions of their society."⁴⁴ These works counter a much older historiography dating back to the mid-19th century which saw the Sierra Leone "project" as a failure due mainly to its exorbitant cost to the Company and to the Crown.⁴⁵

Together with Christopher Fyfe's monumental *History of Sierra Leone*, the revised interpretation sketches a narrative in which dynamics internal to the colony provide the major impetus for change, driven in particular by black settlers though within a framework determined by colonial administrators. In the commercial realm, Freetown's settlers became the dominant merchants within the broader Sierra Leone region. They integrated Freetown with its hinterland through the expansion of what is best described as a trade diaspora, settling within the surrounding territories and

⁴³ James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Longman & Dalhousie Press, 1976), 246-247 and 257-258.

⁴⁴ Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, 13. See also Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, chapters 12-13.

⁴⁵ See, for example, F. Harrison Rankin, *The White Man's Grave: A Visit to Sierra Leone in 1834*, 2 Vols. (London: R. Bentley, 1836). The debate over Freetown's prospects was polarized from the start and it often involved colonial administrators who were forced to justify their actions. In a December edition of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, James McQueen published a number of pamphlets against the Colony leading to an equally spirited defense from Kenneth Macaulay, who briefly governed the settlement and resided there for many years. See his *The Colony of Sierra Leone Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Mr. MacQueen of Glasgow* (London: Cass, 1968, first edition, 1827).

facilitating the expansion of colonial trade.⁴⁶ Perhaps ironically, by highlighting the “agency” of Freetown’s black inhabitants in the economic, political and social realms, these scholars have implicitly implicated them in the consolidation of the colonial project. Put another way, if the settlers were largely responsible for the development of the colony in the early 19th century, the path they chose was rather in line with the interests of British administrators.

Given Freetown’s relatively weak bargaining position in Sierra Leone’s commercial life described above, the development of such a powerful community of traders from within the colony would seem to represent a radical break with the period of early settlement or at the very least a drastic change in settler fortune. However, while sources make it clear that Freetown’s settlers played an increasingly active role in trade over the 19th century, settler impact in the interior varied by time and place. Indeed, when viewed from the perspective of leaders in southern Sierra Leone, Freetown appears far less influential in the affairs of the region. In many respects, interior headmen must have felt toward the new town what they did about any other group of strangers, seeing a prospect to use and exploit the newcomers in some cases while still approaching them with caution in others.

A regional perspective suggests a new approach to commercial change in 19th century Sierra Leone. New insights emerge from internal and external factors that contributed to the expansion of trade over a period of some five decades. This period

⁴⁶ On trade diasporas, see originally Abner Cohen, “Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas,” in Meillassoux and Ford, eds., *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 266-281. Philip Curtin popularized the concept in his *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). More recently, see G. Ugo Nwokeji’s “The Biafran Frontier: Trade, Slaves and Aro Society, 1750-1905,” Ph.D Dissertation (University of Toronto, 1999), chapter 3.

witnessed major changes resulting in part from British administrative policies and the increasingly dynamic role that settlers played in the affairs of the hinterland, but more importantly from broader developments in the economy of southern Sierra Leone. Focusing on developments inside and outside Freetown demonstrates the colony's marginal position relative to other settlements, which commanded the attention of Sherbro traders through much of the first half of the 19th century.⁴⁷

Changes in Freetown Food Supply

Several noteworthy developments occurred within Freetown in the first half of the 19th century that brought important changes to the Sierra Leone region as a whole. Of primary significance was a steady growth in Freetown's population. In 1807, around the time of Britain's takeover of the settlement, its population was estimated at 1,871 people. As a result of the takeover, a Vice Admiralty Court enforcing British maritime and prize law was established in Freetown, through which a small stream of liberated slaves were brought into the Colony. By 1819, when a Mixed Commission Court was established under a series of anti-slave trade treaties that Britain signed with other Atlantic powers, the Colony had expanded to nearly 10,000 inhabitants. The settlement's most dramatic growth, however, came in the years after the Mixed Court began operating. By the early 1830s, the population was thought to surpass 31,000 inhabitants. In a region where the

⁴⁷ For a similar method which explores social and economic change on the outskirts of a developing urban center, see Charles Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (New York: Longman, 1982). Arguing for the relative weakness of the Sierra Leone Colony in the region's affairs, as I do here, is in contrast to many noteworthy Sierra Leonean scholars. See especially E.A. Ijagbemi, "The Freetown Colony and the Development of 'Legitimate' Commerce;" or, for a broader argument, see his dissertation, "A History of the Temne in the Nineteenth Century," Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 1968).

majority of villages were relatively small scale, numbering from anywhere between an estimated 1,000 and 10,000, Freetown represented a truly urban environment.⁴⁸

Population growth exacerbated many of the problems the Sierra Leone Company previously faced, most importantly the issue of how to feed so many people. Successive Governors employed a variety of policies in an effort to control this potentially explosive issue.⁴⁹ Thomas Ludlam, who governed the colony at the time of the transfer, used an apprenticeship system to manage Africans freed by the Vice Admiralty Court. For a fee of \$20, freed slaves were handed over to colonists and to government officials who were charged with their upkeep. His outspoken successor, Thomas Thompson, felt this system was but a thinly veiled type of slavery and although he did not abolish apprenticeships, Thompson chose to set most apprentices free and provide them with land to clear and with employment. To address the pressing issue of food supply, the inhabitants were given smaller plots for immediate cultivation from which they were expected to feed themselves.

However, the growth of the liberated slave population made the apprenticeship system difficult to sustain. Under Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Maxwell, the strongest Liberated Africans – about one third of new arrivals – were thus enrolled in the Royal

⁴⁸ Population statistics are notoriously unreliable for the entire period but can at the very least be checked against records of slaves arriving from condemned slavers. Annual population data, often repeated from year to year until new censuses were undertaken, are recorded in the general Sierra Leone Colonial Office correspondence (CO267) and also in the annual Blue Book series (CO272), both found in the British National Archives. This data has been extensively cataloged for Sierra Leone and all other parts of the British Empire in Robert Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire*, Vol. 1, West Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1948). It is worth noting the tension Freetown introduces into the very concept of pre- and postcolonial in African studies. The Colony predates traditional ideas concerning the chronology of African colonization by some three quarters of a century. Scholars seem unsure whether to characterize Freetown, with its large urban character, as a precolonial city or not. For a recent example that briefly notes this tension see the introduction in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa's Urban Past* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000).

⁴⁹ The following few paragraphs are based on Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 275-277. For an interesting and early examination of administrative policy from the perspective of a Liberated African, see A.B.C. Sibthorpe, *The History of Sierra Leone* (New York: Humanities Press, 1971, 1st edition, 1868).

African Corps or the navy. Smaller numbers continued to be apprenticed. But in the most drastic departure from previous policy, Maxwell founded a small village, Hog Brook, in April of 1809, located some 5 miles from Freetown, on which he settled about half of the Africans liberated by the Vice Admiralty Court. This seemingly unimportant settlement foreshadowed a drastic change in Freetown's organization and administration that was to last through the entire colonial era.

Originally frowned upon by many inside the settlement and even by some British officials abroad who feared that, left outside the administration's direct gaze, the Liberated African population would "retrograde in the woods into a state of nature and barbariousness,"⁵⁰ successive governors relied on the expansion of the village-settlement scheme over the next half century. Its most enthusiastic supporter, Charles MacCarthy, who governed the Colony for the better part of a decade beginning in 1814, felt the villages had a "civilizing" effect on their inhabitants, providing an orderly space where the settlers learned to be industrious and were provided with Christian instruction. Prior to 1815, the government had officially recognized just three villages: Leicester, founded in 1809; Wilberforce (1810); and Regent (1812). Building on this foundation, MacCarthy devoted the better part of five years to strengthening the rural districts and increasing their numbers. By the end of the decade, he had added ten villages, most of which included a majority population of Liberated Africans and a supervisor provided by the Church Missionary Society.⁵¹

⁵⁰ TNA, CO267/71, Turner to Bathurst, 25 January 1826. Though the comment was made after villages were accepted as a part of the colony's settlement plan, it nonetheless reflects the concern some administrators had with loosening their control over the settlers.

⁵¹ Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, chapter 6; Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 277-278; Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, 93-96.

Food production was at the heart of the village settlement scheme. MacCarthy believed that by opening districts outside the city, Liberated Africans would come to embrace agriculture, providing sustenance for themselves and for the less agriculturally-productive Freetown inhabitants. Better soil quality in many of the villages, he hoped, would improve the population's productive capacity.⁵² The government also promoted cooperation among the various groups of Liberated Africans living in the rural districts by encouraging them to settle among inhabitants of ethnically and linguistically similar backgrounds. Increasingly, settlements with names such as Kissy Town, Congo Town and Kossoh Town – each reflecting an ethnolinguistic grouping found in different parts of West Africa – began to dot the Colonial landscape.⁵³

In more concrete terms, colonial policies directly reduced the Government's role in supplying provisions. From as early as the time when the maroons were brought into the settlement, at least some of the population received government rations.⁵⁴ This continued once Liberated Africans started arriving in 1808, for whom six months of provisions were allowed, consisting of rice, salt and palm oil. Governor Maxwell noted

⁵² It should be noted that there is a slight tension in Governor despatches regarding the productivity of particular villages. In 1825, Governor Hamilton reports that a number of Liberated Africans were leaving some of the Mountain Districts for more productive land around Freetown. In the same correspondence he also notes that the mountain villages are now supplying enough food to feed themselves and supply the Freetown market. See TNA, CO267, enclosure in Hamilton to Bathurst, 31 January 1825.

⁵³ Whether these designations reflected the actual ethnic makeup of a town is debatable. According to J.J. Crooks, who wrote one of the earliest general histories of the colony, Kissy Town did indeed have its origins in the growth of freed slaves coming from the interior of Sierra Leone where Kissy-speaking inhabitants lived. During the time of Governor Maxwell's administration, he notes that "several hundreds of this tribe having been captured from slave ships by British men-of-war, it was considered desirable to locate them in one place." See J. J. Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone* (London: Cass, 1972, 1st edition, 1903), 88. More recently, David Northrup argued that while early towns may have been founded based on ethnic identities, a broader "African" conception came to dominate the villages. David Northrup, "Becoming African: Identity Formation among the Liberated Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone," *Slavery & Abolition*, 27, 1 (April, 2006), 12. When viewed from the perspective of British policy, the significant point is that administrators attempted to foster communal cooperation in the villages; the self-identification of inhabitants is of less significance for the argument here.

⁵⁴ Captain Hollowell to the Select Committee on the Settlements of Sierra Leone and Fernando Po, Appendix F, Query XII, in *British Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *BPP*), *Colonies: Africa*, Vol. 1 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 79.

in 1811 that 360 Liberated Africans were receiving rice through the Government and by the end of MacCarthy's term it was estimated that more than two-thirds of Liberated Africans were being fed on the government's account. MacCarthy's death, however, signaled a switch toward a more economically-sustainable policy in which the government steadily reduced its support for new settlers. Governor Turner, who was sent with explicit instructions to cut expenses, slashed the number of Liberated Africans who were eligible for rations in half, down to about 2,000. The final blow came with Governor Campbell, who reformed the system entirely, instead choosing to provide a payment of three pence per day over six months for men. Women were paid for a maximum of just three months or until they were married.⁵⁵

Many of these changes appear to have had their desired effect. Cash payments reduced government spending, increased the circulation of currency within the colony, and improved Liberated African purchasing power. Liberated Africans in the rural districts steadily expanded agricultural production, meeting their own needs and at times cultivating surpluses for Freetown. Indeed, district superintendents praised many of the rural settlers for their agricultural prowess, even while reports at times bemoaned the subsistence levels at which settlers produced. In 1825, it was stated that the Colony had for the first time cultivated sufficient produce to feed itself.⁵⁶

From Freetown's establishment under the Sierra Leone Company until the mid-1820s, the trade in agricultural provisions underwent several drastic changes in

⁵⁵ On general policy changes see Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, 58, 94 and 151-155. Turner's reduction in provisions is noted in TNA, CO267/71, Turner to Bathurst, 25 January 1826. Governor Campbell felt the rations policy was "decidedly bad," leading superintendents "engaged in fraud and occupied constantly in purchasing and distributing cassada, which took up much of their time." TNA, CO267/81, Campbell to Bathurst, 15 January 1827. His statement suggests a potential change in food supply from rice to the considerably cheaper cassava though this probably reflects a short-term drop in the supply of rice, which was noted in the previous year. See TNA, FO84/38, Commissioners to Canning, 10 April 1825.

⁵⁶ TNA, FO84/38, Commissioners to Canning, 10 April 1825.

organization. As its debts increased, the Sierra Leone Company stopped sending vessels to Freetown to supply the settlement with trade goods. Company-sponsored voyages along the coast, which climbed to as many as 36 in 1793, ceased entirely after 1801. With the larger-scale sea-based trade in produce at an end, the Liberated African population increasingly pursued trade between Freetown and its hinterland. Many settlers pooled funds and invested in canoes, which they sent into neighboring rivers in search of new trade opportunities.⁵⁷

Despite the significant change in Freetown's commercial organization, the trade in produce to Freetown continued on a foundation first established in the Company period. Sherbro's prominent role in Freetown's commercial life was ensured by settlers' preference for rice; poor soil quality continued to limit settler production of this grain within colonial boundaries. While figures are harder to quantify in the post-Company era, one Freetown merchant underscored the significance of Freetown's southern hinterland in 1820, noting that "the rice upon which our liberated negroes subsist – the palm oil which gives a relish to that simple food – the mats upon which they sleep, are derived principally from the Sherbro."⁵⁸

How did Liberated Africans come to play such an important role in the produce trade during this period? Traditional accounts of Liberated Africans' commercial prowess have focused in particular on the economic and cultural advantages that Liberated Africans gained from their ties to the British. Such interpretations are broadly consistent with a wider trend in Africanist and diasporic historiography that emphasizes a

⁵⁷ Council to the Select Committees on Petitions of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company and the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and on the State of the Settlements and Forts on the Coast of Africa, Appendix F, Query XI, in *British Parliamentary Papers, Colonies: Africa*, Vol. 1 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 90.

⁵⁸ TNA, CO271/1, *Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser*, 25 August 1820.

fusion of “African” and “European” cultural traits among coastal merchant communities, creating what has variously been called a Eurafrican, Atlantic, or creolized identity.⁵⁹ In the Sierra Leone case, however, far more emphasis has been placed on the European elements of the cultural equation. Whether through their access to British goods, education or religious practices, Liberated Africans used their unique relationship as “King’s Boys” (or, more appropriately, “King’s People”) to spread their influence in the interior, backed by the might of the British military.

This picture has emerged due in part to a disproportionate focus on the mid-19th century, when the Colony was over half a century old and when British military power began emerging as a decisive factor in regional power struggles. E. Francis White, for example, has explored the dynamic role that Liberated African women – particularly Yoruba settlers, from southeastern Nigeria – played in trade with the Sierra Leone interior.⁶⁰ From the 1830s, women traders settled in rural districts began undertaking a

⁵⁹ The literature on this topic is extensive. For the Upper Guinea region, see George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); and more recently his *Eurafricans in Western Africa*. For West Central Africa, see Linda Heywood, “Portuguese into African: The Eighteenth-Century Central African Background to Atlantic Creole Cultures,” in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, Linda Heywood, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Linda Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Much of this work builds on earlier arguments made by Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: the First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998). For examples specific to Sierra Leone, see E. Frances White, “Creole Women Traders in the Nineteenth Century,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 14, 4 (1981), 626-642; and Linda Rose Day, “Afro-British Integration on the Sherbro Coast, 1665-1795,” *Africana Research Bulletin*, 12, 3 (1983), 82-107.

⁶⁰ White, “Creole Women Traders.” And more broadly, see E. Frances White, *Sierra Leone’s Settler Women Traders: Women on the Afro-European Frontier* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987). White’s research is an exception to those that stress the European cultural character of Liberated Africans. But while she underscores the significance of Liberated Africans’ backgrounds, she probably overemphasizes its role in creating a powerful group of Yoruba women traders. For White, this group emerged primarily due to Yoruba women’s sense of independence, which they carried from their homelands. But other institutional factors opened paths for these women as well, which were the product of decades of British policy and Liberated African initiative in pursuing commercial endeavors within and outside of the Colony. While this does not reduce the role of Yoruba women, it does challenge simplistic notions of independence.

small-scale trade in produce into Freetown. Over time, they moved outside the Colony's boundaries and traded with merchants and headmen in the interior, reaching their most influential point in the 1870s before gradually losing influence over the next few decades.

However, in the early period of Britain's administration, the development of trade with the interior depended as much on establishing lasting commercial relations and gaining the trust of interior leaders, which required knowledge of the cultures and peoples of the interior. While not much is known about the specific African origins of Freetown's early recaptive groups, qualitative evidence suggests that when it was possible, liberated slaves pursued trade with their original homelands. Through their familiarity with local customs and commercial practices, Freetown's traders completed a commercial circuit that ensured their own financial gain and the survival of the Colony while at the same time enabling them to reconnect with family and friends.

The nature of British suppression efforts facilitated this process. Prior to the use of the Court of Mixed Commission, British antislavery activity was extremely limited along the African coast. With few vessels at their disposal and limited power to search or seize slave traders under the flags of other nations, many of the early seizures occurred near Sierra Leone. Indeed, of the slightly more than 13,000 slaves landed at Freetown in the decade after the Vice Admiralty Court began operating, nearly a third were embarked somewhere along the Upper Guinea Coast and more than 1,000 were purchased from slaving ports in Sherbro or Gallinas in southern Sierra Leone.⁶¹ The mandate of the British antislavery fleet between 1808 and 1818 thus ensured the presence of settlers at least somewhat familiar with the Sierra Leone region.

⁶¹ David Eltis et al., *Voyages*.

One of the best documented cases of a settler reconnecting with his place of birth is that of John Kizzell. The son of prominent Sherbro political leaders, Kizzell was enslaved around the age of 12 and transported to the Americas. He was said to have remembered his own childhood well and continued to speak the Sherbro language following his forced transport. Returning to Freetown in the 1790s, Kizzell tried his hand as a farmer before turning to trade. With two other settlers, he borrowed £5 which was used to build a craft sufficient to carry 12 tons of cargo. From the mid-1790s, Kizzell actively traded with the Sherbro country, where he established a factory at Camplar trading for rice and bullocks, which he carried back to Freetown. In 1811 he was elected president of the first cooperative trading society in the Colony, The Friendly Society of Sierra Leone, which enabled settlers to grow or buy produce and market it abroad.⁶²

Kizzell did not limit himself to opportunities within the Colony. Following the establishment of the American Colonization Society in 1816, two United States delegates sailed to West Africa in search of a suitable location for a settlement. In Freetown, they befriended Kizzell, who recommended that the men establish themselves in his homeland. The party traveled down to Sherbro Island, where Kizzell introduced them to local headmen including King Sherbro, said to be Kizzell's father. Although the plan never materialized, the events of the period demonstrate that Kizzell gained wealth and fame in Freetown and in Sherbro country due to his commercial endeavors. Indeed, recognizing his influence in the Sherbro country, Governor Ludlam even trusted Kizzell to negotiate a peace settlement with the region's leaders in 1805 on behalf of the British

⁶² Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 113. See also Mary Louise Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists after the American Revolution* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1999), 184-185.

government when warfare threatened the Sherbro trade.⁶³ Such responsibility underscores the significant role that Liberated Africans played in the affairs of the interior and suggests that particular African linguistic and cultural elements were central to the extension of settler political and commercial interests.

The origins of the Liberated African population may also help explain a second change in the provisions trade beginning in the 1820s. While no import statistics are available following the British takeover of the Colony, the impression among village supervisors was that rice became less central to Liberated Africans' diets over time, even if more rice likely made its way into the colony.⁶⁴ This change was in part due to external factors which will be described below. However, another significant reason for this shift was the increased proportion of liberated slaves who hailed from outside of regions where rice formed the staple grain. Accounting for as many as one in three between 1808 and 1818, Liberated Africans who grew up consuming this grain as their primary food dropped steadily in favor of those from yam-consuming regions from the Bight of Biafra. For the 1820s, freed slaves originating outside of Upper Guinea outnumbered those from within by nearly ten to one.⁶⁵

⁶³ A wonderful sketch of Kizzell meeting with King Sherbro, his father, is found in H.C. Knight, *Africa Redeemed; or, the Means of Her Relief Illustrated by the Growth and Prospects of Liberia* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1851), plate opposite p. 32. For Kizzell's account of the Sherbro wars and his role in settling them, see the *Sixth Annual Report of the Directors of the African Institution, Read on 25 March 1812* (London: Printed by Ellerton and Henderson, 1812), 145-153.

⁶⁴ Section 3 provides statistics on Freetown rice imports and argues that they decreased in the 1820s. However, given the difficulty in collecting accurate data of this kind of trade, it is indeed possible that rice imports did increase over time.

⁶⁵ Eltis et al., *Voyages*. The proportion of Upper Guinea's inhabitants who ate rice as their primary food is unknown, but is probably very high. Millet and maize were also cultivated and at times preferred. Rice has received a growing share of attention in studies of the Atlantic slave trade in Africa and the Americas. See, for example, Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). For an alternative view, see David Eltis, Philip Morgan and David Richardson, "Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas," *American Historical Review*, 112, 5 (Dec. 2007), 1329-1358. On millet,

Village superintendent reports confirm the gradual shift from rice to other kinds of provisions in the Colony. At times such changes were made because of the difficulty of growing rice in the Colony rather than specific changes in settler preferences. In the early 19th century, Captain Hallowell, who was sent to inquire into the state of the settlement, reported that “our colonists have preferred the cultivation of cassada, yams &c. to that of rice and Indian corn, though a proportion of both the latter has been generally planted.”⁶⁶ By the second half of the 1820s, the superintendents began specifically linking food preferences with the origins of the population. One report noted that “at Wellington some rice is grown, but with many natives being Aku, they often prefer maize.”⁶⁷ While Liberated Africans thus turned to new crops to satisfy their preferences and to suit local agricultural conditions, transformations in Atlantic commerce in the Sherbro region led merchants to turn away from the Colony to more lucrative produce markets fueling the slave trade.

Sherbro and the Supply of Provisions for the Slave Trade

The decade when Freetown’s settlers began growing their own provisions corresponded with the period when Sherbro leaders took an increasing interest in the Atlantic slave trade. While changes in transatlantic trade in the 19th century turned Sherbro into a port supplying slaves for French, American and Spanish vessels, the more

see especially James F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁶⁶ Captain Hallowell to the Select Committee, Appendix F, Query VII, in *BPP, Colonies: Africa*, Vol. 1, 72.

⁶⁷ TNA, CO267/91, Sierra Leone Commissioners of Enquiry: Report and Appendix A. The reference to maize is slightly puzzling but may simply note a contrast to earlier rice preferences among the population. Another British official residing in Freetown around the same time describes his experiences Liberated Africans as follows: “Liberated Africans generally have little gardens around their cottages, about 50 feet by 70, for plantains and yams...they produce small quantities for the market.” Mr. George Clack to the Select Committee,” in *BPP, Colonies: Africa*, Vol. 1, 38.

significant transformation came in the form of a spike in demand for rice produced in the region. As an American missionary noted in the 1840s, “a slave trader will not buy slaves when he has no means of feeding them.”⁶⁸ From the 1820s, Sherbro’s produce traders became the feeders of the slave trade, supplying rice for slaves held in barracoons and for slave vessels carrying captives across the Atlantic.

Sherbro’s role in providing provisions for passing vessels was not an entirely new one. From the late-17th century, when the British Royal African Company first opened a factory in the region to trade for camwood, factors noted the abundance of rice that local merchants supplied. By the 1720s, when wood stocks were declining and officials began debating abandoning the factory, it was argued that Sherbro’s rice supply was important enough to maintain a presence there.⁶⁹ In addition to supplying British establishments in Sierra Leone, produce traders also sold rice to transatlantic traders. John Newton, the famed slave trader turned abolitionist, spent several years engaged in the slave trade south of Freetown. Records of his voyages in the 1750s carefully document the purchase of rice between the Banana Islands and the Sherbro and his testimony to the House of Commons provides further evidence on the rice trade.⁷⁰

However, as southern Sierra Leone ports became more actively involved in the slave trade in the 19th century, the demands placed on local agricultural exports skyrocketed. Increased numbers of vessels competed with each other to gain access to

⁶⁸ Amistad Research Center, American Missionary Association Manuscripts [hereafter AMA], Sierra Leone, Microfilm Reel 2, Raymond to Macdonald, Lieutenant Gov. of SL, Jan. 8, 1846. For the Senegambia region, James Searing’s pioneering study demonstrates the demands that the slave trade placed on local agricultural production. See his *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce*.

⁶⁹ TNA, T70/7, Abstracts, Plunkett, 18 Sept. 1721, ff. 28-29.

⁷⁰ See Newton’s testimony in the *Abridgement of the Minutes of Evidence Taken before a Committee of the Whole House, to Whom it was Referred to Consider of the Slave Trade* (1789), 56. See also Bernard Martin and Mark Spurrell, *Journal of a Slave Trader (John Newton), 1750-1754* (London: Epworth Press, 1962), 47.

produce in a limited number of ports along the coast. Slave dealers settled in the Gallinas entered into agreements with headmen from neighboring settlements to provide rice for the vessels for which they provided slaves. Jose Alvarez, a notorious slave merchant at Gallinas, sent vessels to a French associate named Lemaignere who was settled at Sherbro. In 1840, Lemaignere provided 60 tons of rice for the vessel *Eliza Davidson*. Lemaignere was also thought to have connections with the house of Blanco and Carballo of Havana, which financed many of the vessels sent from that island to the Gallinas. Siaka, the king of the Gallinas throughout much of the first half of the 19th century, sent his vessels to Sam Fish of Sugary, near Cape Mount, in the late 1820s but by the 1840s he was relying exclusively on rice from Sherbro. Theodore Canot, who has arguably received as much attention as any merchant settled on the African coast in the entire era of the slave trade, dispatched vessels to a number of settlements along the Windward Coast for provisions, including Sherbro.⁷¹

In addition, rice was used to feed slaves in transit and those awaiting embarkation in coastal barracoons. During several raids on prominent slave factories in the rivers supplying the Gallinas dealers, British captains found extensive stores of rice to feed the captives awaiting shipment. At a small factory called “Dindo,” Robert Quin discovered 8 tons of rice in one outhouse, used for domestic consumption.⁷² James Campbell, a Mende slave who was later freed by the British, provided a number of details about his diet during the period of enslavement in the interior and confinement on the coast.

⁷¹ For Lemaignere, sometimes called Louis, see TNA, FO84/309, Lewis to Palmerston, 9 November 1840. Siaka’s link with Sugary is noted in TNA, CO267/101, Arabic to Ricketts, 14 December 1829. In 1840, Siaka himself writes of the Sherbro region and adjacent Plantain Islands, “our whole subsistence of rice comes from these ports.” See TNA, CO267/160, enclosure in Doherty to Russell, 7 December 1840. For Canot, see TNA, FO84/267, Commissioners to Palmerston, 13 May 1839.

⁷² See enclosure 8 in Appendix No. 7, Hotham to Secretary of the Admiralty, 13 Feb. 1849, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 5, 164.

Captured by a native chief in the Mende-speaking interior, Campbell was chained around the neck and marched toward the coast with many other prisoners. He was fed a small portion of dried rice during the journey. At one point, Campbell remembered being beaten for taking too long to fetch wood for cooking the rice. Upon reaching the Gallinas coast, he was confined to a barracoon for about a month, where he was given “plenty” of rice and water. While Campbell recalled that many died from sickness, he himself stayed healthy.⁷³

Indeed, as merchants involved in the slave trade well knew, the trade in provisions was central to the functioning of the slave trade. Rarely was this clearer than in times when food supplies dried up. In the later half of the 1840s, the failure of the rice crop wreaked havoc on slaves and slave dealers alike. Unable to feed their slaves, merchants began turning them out onto the beaches to see if they could provide for themselves. In what must have been an extreme famine, one British captain noted with horror that “the beach was strewed with their bones.”⁷⁴ Moreover, the inability to secure provisions could ruin a transatlantic voyage. Unable to purchase rice for a cargo of slaves headed to Cuba, Captain Ponz of the *Feliz* was detained several months off the Pongo River, north of Freetown. In his desperation, the captain unsuccessfully tried purchasing provisions from a British antislavery cruiser. He explained that the crew was then living on cassava and jerked beef. The slaves, who had been ready for embarkation for some two months, could not be landed for lack of provisions. Some were said to be dying of starvation and the crew was in a “mutinous” state.⁷⁵

⁷³ Testimony of James Campbell to the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 4, First Report, 78.

⁷⁴ Testimony of George Mansel to the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, in *ibid*, Second Report, 70.

⁷⁵ TNA, FO84/166, Cole to Macaulay, 5 January 1835.

From the 1820s, two relatively new markets thus actively competed for Sherbro produce. While the previous section detailed several factors that contributed to changes in Freetown's agricultural production and diet, it is also clear that headmen in the Sherbro gradually chose to supply the Gallinas at the expense of Freetown. Lower transportation costs in the trade may provide part of the explanation. Gallinas was closer to the Sherbro and was easily reached by canoe for most of the year. The Bombotene waterway, which ran nearly parallel to the coast, connected the two regions and was extensively used to ferry produce to the Gallinas. While internal streams and creeks made communication between Freetown and Sherbro possible for part of the year, the journey was longer and more arduous.⁷⁶

More importantly, however, merchants and captains dealing in the slave trade consistently outbid Freetown traders to attract the trade from Sherbro. As early as 1802, Governor Ludlam complained that Freetown's rice supplies were suffering because slave ship captains offered higher prices for produce.⁷⁷ The early trickle of complaints turned into a flood as vessels arrived in greater numbers and slaves were held in greater quantities. By the late 1820s, a district superintendant commented that Gallinas slave dealers monopolized the market for Sherbro rice. Recognizing the greater profits that the slave markets provided, Sherbro headmen began restricting the sale of rice to Freetown. According to the Reverend Frederick Schön, who resided in the colony from more than a decade beginning in the early 1830s, "native chiefs prevented their subjects from selling

⁷⁶ See the separate testimonies of Dunlop and Fanshawe to the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 6, 133 and 185. Also Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Galinhas Country (West Africa), 1730-1890* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1983), 5.

⁷⁷ TNA, CO270/8, Enclosed letter from Ludlam to the Council, 17 September 1802.

their rice to any but to the slave traders.”⁷⁸ As a result, many Liberated-African merchants were squeezed out of the market altogether and were forced to trade with the adjacent and less productive Krim country.⁷⁹

Not all Liberated Africans, however, drew such a fine distinction between “legitimate” and slave-related commercial endeavors. The prospect for higher profits led some Liberated Africans to enter the produce trade to the Gallinas. Sierra Leone governors first started commenting on the settler role in the Gallinas trade in 1829. The system was probably first recognized by Liberated African merchants themselves. John Jackson, a settler who claimed to trade in cloth and ivory at Gallinas, explained that some Liberated Africans transported rice from Sherbro to supply the adjacent slave mart. He claimed that two settlers were permanently settled in the Gallinas, working for Pedro Blanco and that he saw many other Freetown residents there.⁸⁰

Having drawn the Sherbro trade away from Freetown, Gallinas slave dealers integrated the region through the appeal of Atlantic commerce. With a steady supply of provisions from Sherbro, the Gallinas dealers were able to support an extensive traffic in slaves. Increasingly, the slave trade came at the expense of any agricultural production at all. When Captain Howland, an American trader, arrived in the Gallinas in 1822, he described a scene familiar to many parts of West Africa in the precolonial and colonial eras: “The men were all idling about, while the women were doing all the labor of farming, cultivating and raising rice, corn, yuca, tarra, Casava, and other vegetables and

⁷⁸ Rev. James Frederick Schön to the Select Committee on the Slave Trade in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 4, First Report, 182. The district superintendent’s comment is found in TNA, CO267/109, enclosure in Findlay to Goderich, 29 June 1831.

⁷⁹ On Liberated Africans being pushed into Krim territory, see enclosure 3 in Commissioners to Canning, 29 April 1823 in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 9, 19.

⁸⁰ TNA, CO267/99, enclosure in Ricketts to Hay, 4 November 1829; TNA, CO267/109, enclosed deposition of John Jackson in Findlay to Goderich, 29 June 1831.

roots, including yams.” Five years later, according to another observer, cassava was the only crop under cultivation due to the ease with which Gallinas leaders obtained Sherbro rice. By the 1840s it was suggested that Gallinas inhabitants neglected agriculture altogether.⁸¹ As Freetown had once depended on the supply of provisions from Sherbro, the growth of Gallinas slave marts ensured an equally important need for agricultural commodities from its neighbor.

The merchants who plied the waterways connecting Sherbro and Gallinas were often blamed for undermining British efforts to suppress the slave trade. Indeed, in some cases, Liberated Africans who had entered the Gallinas trade extended the commercial network into Freetown itself. According to Captain Dunlop, who oversaw British stations along Upper Guinea, such merchants used the Bombotene passageway to avoid entering the open sea. In this way, they “entirely eluded our squadron, and were supplying themselves with goods from our own colony; they were sending large canoes from the down the rivers from the Gallinas, and purchasing their goods at Sierra Leone.”⁸²

As antislavery patrollers became more familiar with the organization of regional commerce, their efforts to suppress the slave trade evolved to include breaking the link between Sherbro and Gallinas. In a sense, British initiatives to deny Gallinas its food supply began in 1840, when a temporary blockade prevented vessels from leaving or entering the region. The impact was profound and immediate. With a clear sense of panic, Siaka penned a letter to Governor Doherty in Freetown complaining that “Since

⁸¹ Captain George Howland’s Voyage to West Africa, 1822-1823, in Norman Bennett and George E. Brooks, *New England Merchants in Africa: A History through Documents, 1802-1865* (Brookline: Boston University Press, 1965), 109; Enclosure 3 in Commissioners to Canning, 29 April 1823 in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 9, 19; TNA, CO267/160, enclosure in Jeremie to Russell, 4 January 1841.

⁸² Dunlop to the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 6, 133.

Her Majesty's Ships of War have blockaded our port all former correspondence with the Sherbro and Plantain Islands has been entirely cut off; and for a proof several of our boats and canoes have been fired upon by Her Majesty's ships of War, and several taken with cargos of rice in them." The rice, he claimed, was removed from the canoes before they were sent back to the slave mart. Finally, he warned, although this was clearly already understood and an intended result of the blockade, "interfering with our canoes in such a way will cause a famine in our country."⁸³

Although the Gallinas slave trade rebounded once the blockade was loosened, naval officers did not forget the lessons they learned during the 1840 blockade. When Captain Dunlop led a more ambitious assault on the region's slave trade in 1848, he made sure to target commerce between Sherbro and Gallinas. After "declaring war" on the Gallinas slave dealers, which facilitated more direct actions against the towns they inhabited, Hotham declared that all vessels carrying goods to Gallinas were subject to seizure. However, the Sierra Leone Governor ruled that he could not prevent Liberated Africans from trading between the colony and the slave marts, even if it supported the trade. Instead, leaders of the suppression campaign went directly to Sherbro headmen, in particular Thomas Stephen Caulker, who commanded entryway into the Boom River leading to Gallinas, requesting that they plunder canoes passing between Freetown and the slave marts (and no doubt making it worth their while to do so). In choosing to comply, the Sherbro chiefs undermined the foundation on which the Gallinas trade was

⁸³ Enclosure 1 in TNA, CO267/160, Doherty to Russell, 7 December 1840.

built. After six weeks, the Gallinas region was again in a state of famine. Although slaves were still readily available along the coast, it became too costly to feed them.⁸⁴

In southern Sierra Leone, provisions provided the lifeblood for the slave trade that emerged in the Gallinas in the first half of the 19th century. That it took British naval officers some 30 years to understand that fully reflects how little early campaigners against the export of slaves knew of developments even slightly beyond the coast. Their swift action in the late-1840s demonstrates that a large-scale export in slaves could not exist without the means to support an enslaved population. Unlike in Senegambia, where Philip Curtin has described that slaves were put to work in agricultural fields when markets proved unfavorable for selling slaves, the Gallinas was so dependant on outside supplies of food by the middle of the century that slaves seemed to have little to do. Deprived of the wealth created by slave exports and unable to purchase provisions for themselves and their dependants, Gallinas headmen lashed out against the foreign slave dealers residing in their land. Underscoring the complex web that suppression spun, the 44 slave traders of Cuban and Brazilian backgrounds were forced to seek protection on British vessels and later in Freetown before returning abroad.⁸⁵

The Impact of the Provisions Trade on Sherbro Rice Exports

Located between a populous new city and a thriving slave mart, Sherbro planters played a central role in sustaining both settlements, to say nothing of the production required to feed themselves and their dependents. Indeed, the scale of produce exports in the first half of the 19th century must have required what amounts to an agricultural

⁸⁴ See letter and enclosure in TNA, CO267/208, Pine to Earl Grey, 6 October 1849; Hotham to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 5 December 1848, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 36, 287.

⁸⁵ Enclosure in TNA, CO267/208, Pine to Earl Grey, 6 October 1849.

revolution during this period. If this was the case, the Sherbro would not be the only part of West Africa that successfully adapted to changes in the demand for food production in the era of the slave trade. Among the Balanta, for example, Walter Hawthorne documents the expansion of paddy rice cultivation in Guinea Bissau from the 15th through the 19th centuries, facilitated by the supply of iron from Atlantic slave traders. In the Senegal River Valley, James Searing has examined the increased demands for millet to feed slaves involved in Atlantic commerce. In fact, the Sherbro shares a number of characteristics with both of these regions. As with the Balanta, Sherbro inhabitants lived in decentralized societies, under headmen who held varying degrees of power and influence. And in common with the Senegambia, Sierra Leone's rising demand for provisions developed in response to large urban societies along the coast.⁸⁶ However, the size of Freetown and the scale of the Gallinas slave trade probably resulted in a more dramatic expansion of agricultural production in the Sherbro than in either of these two regions.

This section explores the impact of competing demands for provisions on Sherbro rice exports. Specifically, I provide a series of estimates of the magnitude of the external trade in produce to Freetown and for the Gallinas slave trade. Such calculations involve a number of problems and assumptions. For example, commercial agents in Freetown did not keep detailed records of the quantity of rice purchased from various sources of supply in the interior. At best colonial merchants and traders provide qualitative evidence on the significance of inland regions in Freetown's commercial life. From the Sherbro perspective, it is not always clear when rice was produced in Sherbro country itself or

⁸⁶ Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003); Searing, *West African Slavery*.

when it was traded down to coastal purchasers from further inland. However, evidence suggests that in the vast majority of cases, the rice that was sent to Freetown and that which supplied slave vessels was cultivated within the Sherbro and its hinterland. One merchant noted that rice traders came from a maximum of three to four days travel inland. Governor Ludlam speculated that “the land behind the Sherbro must be rich from the amount of rice they bring down.” Other observers singled out the Boom, Kittam and Bagroo regions as major producers of rice.⁸⁷

Finally, produce traders do not always specify the type of rice being traded. While this does not have much of an effect on estimates of overall rice production, the varieties of rice found in Sierra Leone have undeniable cultural value to those who consume them. In general, it seems rice cultivated inland, as opposed to that produced in swamplands along the coast, was preferred in Freetown and in slave marts, although both kinds were grown. According to John McCormack, the most well-known Freetown merchant who spent decades in Sierra Leone, “Nearly the whole of the rice grown in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone is on dry ground... dry-ground rice is best and is the principle food consumed by [Freetown] inhabitants.”⁸⁸ It is also clear that at least in Freetown, both red and white varieties of rice were traded.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Evidence of Richard Storey, *Abridgement of the Minutes of Evidence Taken before a Committee of the Whole House, to Whom it was Referred to Consider of the Slave Trade*, Number 4 (1790), 4; *Rulers and Regulations of the African Institution* (London: Printed by William Phillips, 1807), enclosed reprint of a letter from Governor Ludlam, p. 15; *West African Sketches: Compiled from the Reports of Sir G.R. Collier, Sir Charles MacCarthy, and other Official Sources* (London: Printed for LB. Seely and Son, 1824), 144-145; George Thompson, *The Palm Land; or, West Africa Illustrated: Being A History of Missionary Labors and Travels, with Description of Men and Things in Western Africa; Also, a Synopsis of all the Missionary Work on that Continent* (London: Dawsons, 1969, first printed in 1858), 398. The definition of “hinterland” is open to interpretation and depends on the specific issues under consideration. In the Sherbro case, the hinterland generally includes the inland territories where Mende speakers were settled. See John Davidson, *Trade and Politics in the Sherbro Hinterland*.

⁸⁸ John McCormack to the Select Committee on the Settlements of Sierra Leone and Fernando Po, 1 July 1830, in *BPP, Colonies: Africa*, Vol. 1, 67; C.B. Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1794), 36-38. The rice was also cleaned – removed from the husk – before it was sold in

Despite the limitations, there is sufficient evidence to estimate the increase in Sherbro production required to meet external demands. On several occasions, Freetown officials and merchants provided figures on annual rice consumption. For the years when it is unknown, census data can be used to estimate rice imports. For the slave trade, the data is more straightforward and survives in qualitative and quantitative form.

Commercial records of slaving voyages often include the amount of food allotted for a particular number of slaves and the places from which it was purchased. To a more limited degree, statements from captives awaiting shipment at the Gallinas allow for a broad estimate of rice consumed in Gallinas barracoons. Taken together, these data underscore the dramatic expansion of agricultural production required to sustain slave and free settlements in Sierra Leone.

Freetown

The central factor in Freetown's growing demand for food was its expanding population. From 1792, when it first became clear that Sherbro was a prominent supplier of Freetown's rice, until 1827, when rice exports become more difficult to estimate, Freetown's population increased by about sixteen thousand. After the destruction of the original Province of Freedom, some 1,200 people arrived in 1792 consisting mainly of freed slaves from Nova Scotia. Scattered census data shows that the population climbed slowly toward 2,000 until the Vice Admiralty Court began operating. By 1811 the

Freetown or to slave traders. See Macaulay's response to Captain Hallowell, Appendix F, Query XXI, "Reports from the Select Committees on Petitions of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company," in *BPP, Colonies: Africa*, Vol. 1, 90.

⁸⁹ CO267/24, Macaulay to Castlereagh, 8 May 1807; TNA, CO270/12, entry for 13 May 1811. As might be expected, the indigenous inhabitants of Sierra Leone made finer distinctions than just red and white varieties. Near the end of the 19th century, T.J. Alldridge, the first Traveling Commissioner in the region south of Freetown, listed eight different varieties of rice grown in the region. T.J. Alldridge, *The Sherbro and its Hinterland* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 93.

population jumped to around 3,500. When the Mixed Commission Court opened in 1819, Freetown included almost 10,000 inhabitants. The population surpassed 17,500 by 1827 and was thought to top 30,000 by the end of the decade.

Population growth meant more mouths to feed. In August and September of 1793, Zachary Macaulay provided two separate estimates of daily rice consumption in Freetown. In the first instance, he noted that half a ton of rice was consumed each day;

Table 3.4, Freetown Population Data, 1792-1827

Year	Population Estimate
1792	1,150
1802	1,641
1807	1,871
1811	3,500
1814	5,520
1816	9,500
1818	9,565
1820	12,509
1822	15,081
1826	16,510
1827	17,512

Source: Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, 154-156; TNA, CO272 (Blue Book) Series for Sierra Leone⁹⁰

by September, when provisions were less abundant (no doubt due to the time of the year), Macaulay wrote that “3 ½ tons...may with some care serve the colony for ten days.”⁹¹

As we might expect, the wording suggests that in the Company era, food supplies in Freetown varied by the time of the year. In this case, consumption dropped by about 30 percent as the rainy season ended and the rice harvest began.

⁹⁰ See Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, 154-156. Censuses were taken in 1818, 1820 and 1822. Annual Blue Book reports also estimated the population with varying degrees of accuracy. See TNA, CO272 for the Sierra Leone Blue Books.

⁹¹ Suzanne Schwartz, *Zachary Macaulay, 1793-4*, Part I, 46 and 58.

Macaulay's estimate of half a ton of daily rice consumption represents a generous daily food intake among settlers. Although no official population estimate exists for 1793, evidence suggests that it probably did not increase much from the previous year.⁹² If we assume the population remained at 1,150 and imagine a shared portion of produce among each inhabitant, then, according to Macaulay, each individual settler would have consumed nearly a pound of rice per day. Even using the lesser daily estimate of .35 tons provides a total figure of just less than three quarters of a pound.

The next hard estimate of the Colony's rice consumption came more than thirty years later, following the arrival of the new superintendent of the Liberated African Department. In that official's first report on the state of the Liberated Africans, he noted that the consumption of rice in the colony probably exceeded 600 tons annually or approximately 1.64 tons per day.⁹³ With an estimated population of 17,512 in 1827, this would amount to a daily intake of a little more than .2 pounds per person per day. The drastic drop in rice consumption by the second half of the 1820s is nevertheless consistent with changes in settler dietary preferences and loss of supplies to the Gallinas outlined above.

Evidence regarding the consumption of rice in between these two periods comes from qualitative data and is thus more difficult to assess. There is little evidence suggesting a decline in the significance of rice up to the founding of the Court of Mixed Commission in 1819. The only constraints on diets from the 1790s through 1819 would therefore have been limitations in supply. This might result from a poor general harvest, which would have affected the production of rice throughout the Sierra Leone region, or

⁹² Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, 154.

⁹³ Enclosure in TNA, CO267/82, Campbell to Bathurst, 14 July 1827.

more localized problems such as warfare or political strife, which could reduce the trade in rice from specific regions of the interior. Although in general, supply remained consistent during this period, colonial officials commented on acute rice shortages in three different years: in 1803, warfare among Sherbro leaders was said to produce near-famine conditions; shortages were also reported in 1811 and 1824.⁹⁴

Table 3.5, Annual Rice Consumption in Freetown, 1792-1818

Year	Population	Estimated Rice Consumption (tons)
1792	1,150	127-183
1802	1,641	182-259
1807	1,871	207-296
1811	3,500	388-553
1814	5,520	612-872
1816	9,500	1,053-1,502
1818	9,565	1,060-1,512

Source: Calculated from Table 3.4 and Suzanne Schwartz, *Zachary Macaulay, 1793-4*, Part I, 46 and 58⁹⁵

Table 3.5 provides estimates of annual rice consumption in Freetown between 1792 and 1818, when Liberated Africans were sustained primarily by this crop. It assumes a supply consistent with Macaulay's estimates in 1793, ranging from less than three quarters of a pound to just under a pound of rice for each settler per day. The numbers in the final column are likely on the low side, since Macaulay's own estimates were provided during the hungry season, prior to the harvesting of the new rice crop. However, this bias may be offset by fluctuations in general supply over time, which

⁹⁴ TNA, WO1/352, Day to Thornton, 8 July 1803; TNA, CO270/12, entry for 13 May 1811; Sierra Leone Commissioners to Canning, 10 April 1825, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 10, 8.

⁹⁵ According to Macaulay's estimate, settlers consumed between .68 and .97 pounds of rice per day. I have used these two figures to calculate the estimated rice consumption in the final column, multiplying them by the population for years for which census data exists. Total daily rice consumption was then multiplied by 365 to generate annual averages.

would have limited surpluses of rice in the interior and increased import costs for Freetown. To maintain Freetown's food supply at the levels estimated in the early 1790s, produce merchants had to nearly double their purchases to provide for the settlers represented in the three separate population estimates after 1807. For the final estimate in 1818, when agriculture was still constrained by poor Freetown soils, settlers would have relied on the import of as much as 1,500 tons of rice to feed themselves.⁹⁶

Table 3.6 estimates the external supply of rice to Freetown between 1818 and 1827, when external sources of food gradually declined. Although it is impossible to calculate this change with precision, I have assumed a fixed reduction in rice supply of 10

Table 3.6, Annual Rice Consumption in Freetown, 1818-1827

Year	Population	Estimated Annual Rice Consumption (tons)⁹⁷
1818	9,565	1,060-1,512
1820	12,509	1,019
1822	15,081	983
1826	16,510	807
1827	17,512	571

Source: Same as Table 3.4 and see text

percent per settler for each of the four years for which population data exists.⁹⁸ From a highpoint of between a thousand and one and a half thousand tons of rice consumed

⁹⁶ These estimates of rice consumption represent ideal numbers and should not be taken to imply an even distribution of food among all settlers. Although the few available reports on Liberated Africans' diets do not distinguish between different segments of the population, it is likely that most men ate more than women and that adults consumed more than children. Census data does include separate population statistics for male and female settlers but does not distinguish them by age. However, while such data was no doubt important for Freetown, these variables matter less in assessing changes in production in the Sherbro region.

⁹⁷ Estimated annual rice consumption was calculated using methods described in fn. 95 but modified as described in fn. 97.

annually in 1818, the Colony's external rice supply fell to levels approximating 1814 within the next decade.

Since Freetown merchants did not keep hard data on individual rice transactions, the proportion of produce originating from the Sherbro is harder to determine. Two factors would have influenced the availability of Sherbro rice. First, rice shortages in 1803, 1811 and 1824 would have limited the region's role in providing provisions for

Table 3.7, Export of Rice from Sherbro to Freetown, 1792-1827

Year	Estimated Annual Rice Consumption (tons)	Sherbro Supply (tons)⁹⁹
1792	127-183	64 – 92
1802	182-259	91 – 130
1807	207-296	104 – 148
1811	388-553	97 – 138
1814	612-872	306 – 436
1816	1,053-1,502	527 – 751
1818	1,060-1,512	530 – 756
1820	1,019	408
1822	983	393
1826	807	323
1827	571	228

Source: Tables 3.5 and 3.6 and see text

Freetown. Second, from the 1820s, Sherbro planters began turning to the Gallinas as the major produce market. In years when supply conditions were unrestricted, it is likely that

⁹⁸ From Macaulay's low estimate of .68 pounds of rice per settler up to 1818, this means a reduction to .5 for 1820, .4 (1822), .3 (1826), and .2 for 27. This brings the final estimate in line with a consumption of about 600 tons annually for 1827, which was noted by the superintendent of the Liberated African Department.

⁹⁹ To calculate the Sherbro supply to Freetown I reduced the overall supply as described in the text above, p. 147.

the Sherbro provided at least half of the overall rice consumed in the Colony.¹⁰⁰ During times of famine, some Sherbro produce was still traded to Freetown, though I have assumed that supplies were halved to about a quarter of the overall supply. Finally, from the 1820s, as Sherbro headmen began placing restrictions on the Freetown trade, I have assumed that Sherbro rice accounted for about 40 percent of the total supply of produce to the colony.

Table 3.7 allows us to raise a basic but fundamental question: what impact did Freetown's growth have on Sherbro rice exports? The data suggests that over a thirty five-year span, Sherbro planters and merchants produced anywhere between 60 and 750 tons of rice specially to feed Freetown's settler population.¹⁰¹ During this period, it is safe to estimate that somewhere between 8,000 and 9,000 tons of rice made its way from the fields in Sherbro country into settlers' bowls in the colony. However, the stimulus that Freetown provided Sherbro as a new market for produce was less than that which the Gallinas offered once the slave trade came to dominate the region south of Freetown.

The Slave Trade

The growth of the slave trade in 19th century southern Sierra Leone increased the demand for food to provision slaves during their confinement in barracoons and subsequent transport to the Americas. Although Walter Rodney called attention to this

¹⁰⁰ Quantifying the produce trade in this way is difficult because merchants rarely used concrete statistics. Instead they made claims for the unique contribution of a region based on their own experience there. This kind of evidence must be treated with caution. Still, it is probable that a 50 percent estimate is on the cautious side, since the Sherbro was universally known as a major rice supplier even by Freetown's governors, who were not primarily concerned with personal profit in agricultural commerce.

¹⁰¹ It is no wonder that when officials of the American Colonization Society first tried to establish themselves in the Sherbro region in the middle of the 1810s, at the highpoint of Sherbro rice supply, British officials reacted strongly against the idea, fearing the loss of such a significant part of their agricultural base. See TNA, CO271/1, *Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser*, 25 August 1820.

facet of the slave trade some 40 years ago, scholars have given scant attention to the victualling of slaves.¹⁰² In the case of the Gallinas trade, where provisions were almost entirely imported, the demands placed on neighboring agricultural systems were particularly acute. Slaves were fed with regionally-grown produce from the time they were captured until their arrival in the Americas, supplemented by (from the slaves' perspective) less desirable European commodities. While the foods used to feed slaves varied depending especially on slave embarkation points along the coast, captives purchased along the Windward Coast were commonly fed rice.¹⁰³

How did the supply of rice for the slave trade compare to the Freetown trade? The answer depends, of course, on the volume of slave exports in any given year. John Matthews, in his evidence to the Lord's Committee on the slave trade, estimated that between 700 and 1,000 tons of rice was produced annually to feed slaves from the time they arrived in factories along the coast until they reached the Americas. This, he claimed, supported an export of between 3,000 and 3,500 slaves from the entire Sierra Leone region annually. Mathews' slave trade estimate is confirmed by records of slave vessels: according to the slave trade dataset, Sierra Leone exported an annual average of 3,410 slaves between 1785 and 1787, when Matthews resided there.¹⁰⁴ Based on these figures it is possible to derive a simple daily estimate of individual rice consumption among Sierra Leone's captive population. Dividing Matthews' estimate of rice

¹⁰² Walter Rodney, "Jihad and Social Revolution," 282. Searing, *West African Slavery*, is a noteworthy exception.

¹⁰³ Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (London: J. Phillips, 1788), 21.

¹⁰⁴ Rodney claims that Matthews' estimate is low, but Eltis et al., *Voyages*, includes evidence of 10,231 slaves exported over these 3 years.

consumption by annual slave exports suggests that slaves received a supply of about 1.53 pounds of rice per day.¹⁰⁵

Such a generous supply of rice appears surprising at first glance but several considerations must be kept in mind. First, it should not be assumed that slaves actually received this much food. Matthews' estimate was for rice production and would likely have included wastage and food supplied for free people in slave-exporting centers.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, as the remainder of this section will demonstrate, slaves often received more food on slave vessels than we might imagine. And while evidence is extremely limited, at least one Liberated African who was embarked at the Gallinas testified that although he was underfed during the march to the coast, he was given as much dried rice and water as he desired while awaiting embarkation.¹⁰⁷ At the very least, then, Matthews' provides a foundation to estimate the production needed to sustain an increase in the slave exports.

Given the close ties between the slave trade and the produce trade, any estimate of agricultural production must first address changes in the volume of slave exports. Table 3.8 provides 5-year estimates of slave exports from the Gallinas and Sherbro between 1807 and 1856. In this period, more than 150 slaving vessels embarked nearly 100,000 slaves at the two ports. As chapter 1 noted, slave exports from the region increased

¹⁰⁵ There are a number of steps to this calculation. I have used the midpoint of Matthews' rice production estimate, or 850 tons of rice produced per year. I then converted this figure to pounds (1,904,000) and divided by 365 to get a daily consumption estimate of 5,216 pounds of rice consumed per day. The final step involves dividing this number by the annual slave export figure of 3,410 to get a figure of daily rice consumption per slave of 1.53.

¹⁰⁶ Of his 1750-51 slaving voyage in Sierra Leone, John Newton noted that "I reckon in the whole I bought 18,600 lb [of rice] of which, clear of expense and waste, I have 17,556." The difference was mainly due to slave consumption which, though unrecorded, would have been considerable. Newton had been on the African coast for about 7 months and had in the end embarked 156 slaves. However, the fact that he made note of wastage suggests it was a factor. See Martin and Spurrell, *Journal of a Slave Trader*, 49.

¹⁰⁷ Testimony of James Campbell to the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 4, 78.

slightly up to about 1820, when they began in earnest. From the 1820s through 1850, exports tended to fluctuate between 3,000 and 4,000 per annum.

Table 3.8, Southern Sierra Leone Slave Exports, 1807-1856 (Rounded to Nearest Hundred)

Years	Totals
1807-1810	800
1811-1815	1,300
1816-1820	6,500
1821-1825	21,200
1826-1830	14,700
1831-1835	8,400
1836-1840	26,300
1841-1845	4,000
1846-1850	10,200
1851-1855	2,500
1856	1,200
Totals	97,100

Source: David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*¹⁰⁸

Is it possible to estimate the produce needed to sustain the southern Sierra Leone slave trade? We can begin by returning to Matthews' estimate of 1.53 pounds of rice provided per slave per day.¹⁰⁹ Multiplying this number by annual slave exports provides an estimate for daily rice consumption among all slaves intended for Atlantic export. By once again multiplying the result by 365, we arrive at an annual estimate of rice production used to sustain the southern Sierra Leone slave trade. Table 3.9 shows the results of these calculations in 5-year and annual estimates. From a low point of just 50

¹⁰⁸ Estimates are from Eltis et al., *Voyages*. To estimate the slave trade, I followed the same method outlined for Table 1.3, p. 40.

¹⁰⁹ There is no reason to assume that overall rice produced per slave changed between the 1780s and the 19th century. I have therefore assumed that slaves were maintained at a level similar to when Matthews' resided in Sierra Leone. Moreover, while agricultural supply would have depended on many of the constraints outlined in the section on Freetown trade, I have assumed that in the long run, production would have been sufficient to provide for most slaves.

Table 3.9, Rice Exports for the Southern Sierra Leone Slave Trade, 1807-1856

Year	Southern Sierra Leone Slave Exports	Rice Exports to Sustain Slave Trade (tons)	Annual Average of Rice Exports (tons)	Annual Sherbro Share of Rice Exports (tons)¹¹⁰
1807-1810	800	199	50	38
1811-1815	1,300	324	65	49
1816-1820	6,500	1,621	324	243
1821-1825	21,200	5,285	1,057	898
1826-1830	14,700	3,665	733	623
1831-1835	8,400	2,094	419	419
1836-1840	26,300	6,557	1,311	1,311
1841-1845	4,000	997	199	199
1846-1850	10,200	2,543	509	509
1851-1855	2,500	623	125	125
1856	1,200	299	299	299
Totals	97,100	11,032		

Source: Same as Table 3.8¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ The Sherbro region would have provided nearly all of the rice used to feed slaves exported from southern Sierra Leone after 1830. Though it may be slightly overstating Sherbro's role, I have assumed all the rice listed in the Annual Production column was from this region. For the 1820s, I have multiplied the total production estimate by .85 to account for rice supplies along the Windward Coast, east of Gallinas. From 1807 to 1820, Gallinas itself produced some rice. I have thus assumed that 75 percent of annual production figures were supplied from Sherbro.

¹¹¹ The Southern Sierra Leone Slave Export column is taken from Table 3.8. The text on p. 57 explains the methods used to derive the figures on overall rice exports in columns 3 and 4.

tons of rice needed between 1807 and 1810, the demand for provisions grew substantially over the next two decades. Between 1821 and 1840, in order to meet the daily estimate that Matthews' provided, planters in the region would have needed to produce anywhere between about 400 and 1,300 tons of rice in support of the slave trade. At its height in the second half of the 1830s, the Gallinas would have imported more than 1,300 tons of produce to feed departing slaves. It is therefore not surprising that Freetown officials began complaining about reduced supplies of Sherbro rice during this period.

Evidence on rice purchased and consumed on transatlantic vessels provides a separate check on the data presented in the Table above. Table 3.10 provides data on seven separate vessels purchasing slaves between Senegambia and Sierra Leone from the late-17th through the late-18th centuries. In each case, the amount of rice purchased for

Table 3.10, Rice Carried on Slave Vessels, 1684-1790

Vessel Name	Year	Total Slaves Purchased	Total Rice Purchased for Voyage (tons)	Rice/Slave (tons/pounds)
Charles	1684	70	2.1	.03 / 67.2
Speedwell	1688	233	8.3	.036 / 80.64
Little Berkley Castle	1688	150	4	.027 / 60.48
Sherborough Galley	1721	231	6	.026 / 58.24
Rhode Island	1749	120	3.8	.032 / 71.68
Duke of Argyle	1751	156	7.8	.05 / 112
Crescent	1790	268	12	.045 / 100.8

Source: Calculated from TNA, T70/941, p. 47; TNA, T70/943, p. 35; TNA, T70/944, p. 9; T70/957, p. 147; *A Book of Trade*, MSS., B.V. *Rhode Island*, N-YHS; Martin and Spurrell, eds., *Journal of a Slave Trader*; TNA, HCA16/83/2218¹¹²

¹¹² Each of these vessels is included in Eltis et al., *Voyages*. I have included the unique identity number of each vessel in brackets followed by the sources where total rice purchases can be found: *Charles* [9880], TNA, T70/941, p. 47; *Speedwell* [9835], TNA, T70/943, p. 35; *Little Berkeley Castle* [9814], TNA, T70/944, p. 9; *Sherborough Galley* [76371], T70/957, p. 147; *Rhode Island* [24944], *A Book of Trade*,

the voyage is recorded along with the number of slaves embarked. The final column shows the amount of rice carried per slave for each voyage. This should not be read to imply that slaves actually received this much food. The column represents an ideal number, assuming that slaves were fed all the provisions that were available. However, slave ship captains would certainly have put aside provisions for extraordinary circumstances, such as an unusually long passage. Moreover, for several cases, it is unclear how much of the rice purchased was consumed during the period of slave purchase along the African coast. Especially before the abolition of the slave trade, slaves embarked along the Windward Coast might be subjected to lengthy stays along the coast, as captains traveled from one port to another to fill their cargos. Depending on how many slaves were embarked early in the voyage, a considerable portion of the rice purchased for each vessel may have been consumed prior to the Middle Passage.

A more accurate assessment is available for those vessels for which a provisions manifest survives. The ship *Crescent* provides the most compelling example because of the meticulous documentation of provisions purchases and because the voyage occurred shortly before the expansion of the southern Sierra Leone slave trade in the 19th century. Arriving on the coast in November of 1789, the *Crescent* passed back and forth between the Banana Islands and the Iles de Los making arrangements for the purchase of slaves. In March, the vessel received its first supplies of rice and also its first few slaves. William Roper, the ship's captain, continued to purchase slaves and provisions from then until June, when the vessel departed for Jamaica. By the time the *Crescent* began its

MSS., B.V. *Rhode Island*, N-YHS; *Duke of Argyle* [90350], Martin and Spurrell, eds., *Journal of a Slave Trader*; *Crescent* [18040], TNA, HCA16/83/2218. Many thanks to David Eltis for providing the data on some of these vessels.

passage across the Atlantic, the slaves on board had already consumed over 300 “crews” of rice, leaving 26,554 pounds of food for the remainder of the voyage.

While the consumption of rice during the period of purchase on the coast is difficult to calculate, several direct estimates of rice usage during the Middle Passage exist. For the *Crescent*, the records indicate that the amount slaves were fed varied throughout the course of the crossing. In the first week of the voyage to the Americas, slaves were provided with 224 pounds of rice and an equal portion of beans on one day and just 112 pounds of each on the following day. This serving gradually increased as the vessel neared Dominica, its first port of call across the Atlantic. By the end of the month, between 300 and 360 pounds were being expended each day. Once in the Caribbean, slaves were provided a rather steady supply of 324 pounds of rice each day though without a supplementary supply of beans.

Using data from the *Crescent* and several other slavers, it is possible to come to a general consensus about slaves’ daily rice consumption on the average slave vessel. With 270 slaves embarked the daily rice allowance for each slave would have varied between .41 and .83 pounds per day in the early part of the crossing and, as they approached the New World, as much as 1.14 and 1.37. Generally speaking, it is likely that most captains aimed to feed their slaves somewhere between .8 and 1 pound of rice per day on the Middle Passage. Samuel Bacon, one of the American Colonization Society representatives who explored the Sherbro region in 1820, noted that he recently purchased the schooner *Augusta*, a 104-ton vessel that was meant to carry a cargo of 100

slaves. According to Bacon, slaves were fed one pint of rice per day, which, assuming the rice was uncooked, would weigh approximately .8 pounds.¹¹³

It is now possible to estimate the overall rice supply for vessels involved in the transatlantic trade. Between 1807 and 1856, the slave trade from southern Sierra Leone was heavily concentrated to Cuba. Of the nearly 100,000 slaves exported during this period, as many as 70 percent were destined for that island.¹¹⁴ Data on slave shipments from Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast suggest that passages from Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast to Cuba lasted an average of 43 days and in one case as long as 70. If we assume that most captains anticipated a crossing of around 60 days (on the safe side), this would require between 48 and 60 pounds of rice for each slave crossing the Atlantic. Moreover, captains would surely have allowed for considerably more food than only that which was consumed on the average voyage. Assuming such voyages carried about 1/3rd more food than required, this would mean a portion of between 64 and 80 pounds of rice carried for each slave on board.¹¹⁵

Table 3.11 provides a general estimate of rice purchased to provision slaves during the Middle Passage. When compared to Table 3.9, it is clear that using Matthews' estimates on rice produced for the slave trade provides a much higher annual figure than relying on statistics from individual purchases on slave vessels. Indeed for the 5-year period beginning in 1821, the difference between the two estimates is approximately

¹¹³ *American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, Vol. 5, 16th Congress, 2nd Session, Publication No. 346, "Suppression of the Slave Trade -- Conference of Foreign Governments on the Subject. Communicated to the House of Representatives, February 9, 1821," Enclosure No. 2, Rev. Samuel Bacon to the Sec. of the Navy, March 21, 1820, 94.

¹¹⁴ Eltis et al., *Voyages*. The 70 percent estimate assumes that those vessels captured by the British navy were bound for Cuba.

¹¹⁵ This ratio falls well within the range of five of the seven vessels listed in Table 3.10.

Table 3.11, Rice Carried on Slave Vessels from Southern Sierra Leone, 1807-1856

Year	Southern Sierra Leone Slave Exports	Rice Production to Sustain Slave Trade (tons)	Annual Rice Production (tons)	Annual Sherbro Share of Production¹¹⁶
1807-1810	800	23-29	6-7	5
1811-1815	1,300	37-46	7-9	5-7
1816-1820	6,500	186-232	37-46	28-35
1821-1825	21,200	606-757	121-151	103-128
1826-1830	14,700	420-525	84-105	71-89
1831-1835	8,400	240-300	48-60	48-60
1836-1840	26,300	751-939	150-188	150-188
1841-1845	4,000	114-143	23-29	23-29
1846-1850	10,200	291-364	58-73	58-73
1851-1855	2,500	71-89	14-18	14-18
1856	1,200	34-43	34-43	34-43
Totals	97,100	2,773-3,467		

Source: Tables 3.8 and 3.9

¹¹⁶ For this column I have used the same assumptions as above in Table 3.9. See fn. 22. The data for each of the other columns comes from earlier Tables.

4,500 tons. However, these figures are not as skewed as they first appear. As chapter 1 explained, British efforts to suppress the slave trade drastically altered the way slave dealing was organized. Whereas earlier voyages to the Sierra Leone region often confined captives on slave vessels for extended periods of time, the fear of capture prevented captains from embarking slaves until they were prepared to depart the coast altogether.

This unique feature of the 19th century slave trade had two important results for the supply of provisions: on the one hand, very little rice would have been needed prior to the Atlantic crossing. But more importantly, delays in embarking slaves put a much heavier burden on coastal slave depots, where slave dealers were forced to take responsibility for feeding a massive population of enslaved Africans who awaited shipment. From the 1820s on, Gallinas barracoons could easily have held 2,000 slaves and the Sherbro itself might have accommodated another 1,000. If we assume that the enslaved population in this region consumed rice at a rate similar to upper limits at Freetown, this could mean an additional 450 to 500 tons of rice eaten each year, bringing estimates at least partially closer to those provided in Table 3.9.¹¹⁷

We can conclude by taking a look at the overall trade in Sherbro rice to Freetown and to slave traders. Table 3.12 shows the two estimates side-by-side and combines the figures to estimate the magnitude of the Sherbro provisions trade over a twenty year period. Based on this data, it seems that Freetown competed rather well with its slave-trading neighbor when it came to rice purchases into the early 1820s. However, with the

¹¹⁷ Without any data on daily consumption patterns in slave barracoons, it is not possible to do much better than this. Slaves awaiting shipment were surely the first to be affected by food shortages and thus a more sophisticated analysis of their diets would have to account for changes in food supply. The general point, however, is that in the 19th century, coastal slave dealers took the full burden of feeding the enslaved.

dramatic increase in the rice trade to the Gallinas in the first half of the 1820s, Freetown's share of total Sherbro rice trade fell considerably. Freetown merchants and officials were quite right to fear the growing influence of slave dealers on the trade in Sherbro agriculture..

Table 3.12, Combined Supply of Sherbro Rice for Freetown and Slave Trade, 1807-1827

Year	Supply of Rice for Slave Trade	Supply of Rice for Freetown	Total Rice Traded
1807	38	104 – 148	142-186
1811	49	97 – 138	146-187
1814	49	306 – 436	355-485
1816	243	527 – 751	770-994
1818	243	530 – 756	773-999
1820	243	408	651
1822	898	393	1,291
1826	623	323	946
1827	623	228	851

Source: Tables 3.7 and 3.9

As a whole, Sherbro planters provided a staggering amount of produce over the course of the 19th century. To put it in perspective, we might recall that when John Matthews estimated an annual trade of 700-1,000 tons of rice to support the slave trade in the 1780s, he was referring to the entire Sierra Leone region, likely from as far north as the Rio Pongo and Nunez in the north to the Gallinas in the southeast. Between 1816 and 1827, the Sherbro region alone matched this level of export consistently and indeed traded just under 1,300 tons of rice alone in 1822.

Conclusion

This chapter has placed food supply at the heart of the slave trade, colonialism and nascent urbanization in 19th century Sierra Leone. Indeed, the dynamic growth of the slave trade described in chapter 1 would hardly have been possible without a large trade in comestibles; the humanitarian project that became Freetown would also have faltered. In both of these cases, growing populations along the coast created new trade opportunities for Sherbro headmen. That Sherbro leaders exploited such opportunities should not be surprising. However, by quantifying the rice trade, I have attempted to provide a clearer picture of the specific demands that the slave trade and colonialism placed on local societies that fed these industries. The magnitude of the 19th-century produce trade – reaching around 1,300 tons a year at its height – also suggests that Sherbro leaders successfully mobilized a considerable amount of labor power even as local peoples were increasingly drawn into the slave trade.

The evolution of the Sherbro rice trade also has implications for the study of early colonialism in Africa. Indeed, by focusing on the organization of the trade, this chapter has demonstrated that southern Sierra Leone merchants were still in a position of relative strength when trading with Company and colony officials. Put in another way, in the first few decades of the 19th century, Freetown was far more dependent on interior traders than vice versa. African traders were able to specify precisely the colors, sizes and quantities of European goods they desired in exchange for their produce. Company merchants had little choice but to comply with localized demands for such goods. The structure of the rice trade appears to have turned in Freetown's favor steadily from the 1820s, when new crops came to gain favor among Liberated African settlers.

Chapter 4, Diasporic Transformations: Islam, Adaptation and Innovation in Sierra Leone's Slaving Networks in the Early Period of the Commercial Transition, 1840s to 1860s

The middle of the 19th century witnessed a series of dramatic changes to global economies that were to have a profound impact on most parts of West Africa. In this period, the British successfully suppressed the transatlantic supply of slaves from southern Sierra Leone, and European and African merchants began to invest more intensively in the production of non-human commodities. Historians of Africa have debated the impact of the so-called commercial transition for more than five decades.¹ But a disproportionate focus on the consequences of 19th-century transformations in African economies has at times obscured the processes by which they were achieved.

This chapter explores Sierra Leone's early adaptation to the commercial transition, focusing specifically on the ways in which merchants reorganized slaving networks in response to changes in regional demands for labor. In southern Sierra Leone, slave owners did not merely put enslaved Africans to work locally once Atlantic markets closed. Instead, Islamic merchants carried slaves from southern Sierra Leone to plantations in the Melakori, Nunez, Pongo and Portuguese Guinea as the early expansion of the groundnut trade in the Northern Rivers region led to transformations in the internal African slave trade. From the late-1840s, the diaspora of Africans in Sierra Leone was thus reoriented from a predominantly east/west to a north/south diaspora. The new canoe-based slave trade peaked in the 1850s and slowed dramatically in the following

¹ The modern debate over the impact of the commercial transition began with K. Onwuka Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956). For a review of the literature, see Robin Law, "The Historiography of the Commercial Transition in 19th Century West Africa," in Toyin Falola, ed., *African Historiography: Essays in Honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), 91-115.

decade, when expanding demands for palm products increased the local value of slaves in the Sherbro and Gallinas.

The transformation in African labor supply was undertaken in response to emerging markets for African agricultural products in Europe. Over the 19th century, the industrial revolution increased the need for a variety of vegetable oils and fats, which were used in the manufacture of soap and candles as well as to lubricate industrial machinery. In West Africa, oil from palm products and groundnuts proved to be particularly valuable. Yet the collection of these commodities and the extraction of their oils was a labor-intensive endeavor. Indeed, by the 1840s, several leading suppliers of slaves for Atlantic vessels began employing captives on local peanut plantations to increase groundnut yields. However, owners in the northern region continually struggled to gain control over adequate supplies of labor even after the abolition of the Atlantic trade, when the population of slaves in Africa increased.

With limited access to local slaves, owners in the Northern Rivers turned to southern Sierra Leone, where the suppression of transatlantic slaving created a supply of laborers far beyond what the region's economy supported. Building on lateral commercial networks that linked Senegambia and Upper Guinea for centuries, Islamic merchants began packing captives in large canoes and sailing them north along the coast. Unsure about how to confront the new slaving system, British officials were forced to expand the scope of their campaign against the slave trade. Between the 1840s and 1860s, colonial authorities took increasing measures against the trade, capturing "native canoes" and prosecuting them in the Vice Admiralty Court. In response, slave merchants

adapted the routes by which they transported slaves, using a mixture of land and sea paths to avoid detection from British officials.

How was the new slave trade organized locally, and what impact did it have on southern Sierra Leone? The magnitude of the trade meant that slave owners were cushioned from the immediate consequences of falling Atlantic exports. However, participation in the trade also came with costs. Local headmen became increasingly dependent on Muslim merchants for the supply of foreign commodities and accepted credit on terms they could not easily repay. For slaves, the new trade was particularly vicious in its targeting of children, who were the primary victims of the new slave system.

Transformations in West African Regional Economies: Southern Sierra Leone and the Expansion of the Groundnut and Palm Produce Trades, 1830s to 1860s

Inhabitants of the Sherbro and its hinterland experienced the commercial transition in a unique way. Caught between the groundnut-producing lands of Senegambia and the major palm zones of Lower Guinea, southern Sierra Leoneans witnessed growth in the trade of two major agricultural commodities on their frontier. Yet production of these staples developed unevenly, beginning with the commercialization of peanuts in the 1830s and coming to include palm oil and kernel exports by the 1850s and 60s. For southern Sierra Leoneans, the mid-19th century was thus a time of multiple transitions, rather than a single, undifferentiated process of expanding agricultural production. The following section provides a brief overview of changes in West African export economies in the middle decades of the 1800s.

The Peanut Revolution in Senegambia

Groundnuts have a lengthy history in West Africa. First brought by the Portuguese from Brazil in the 16th century, local farmers gave the legume little attention over the next 250 years. During this period, peanuts were one of many local crops that Africans planted in the region and their primary use was to prevent starvation when rice and millet harvests failed. Indeed, prior to the middle of the 19th century, horses probably consumed greater quantities of peanuts than people did. Wealthy Africans believed that feeding the top of the nut to their mounts made horses stronger and more durable.²

The spark that transformed the value of West African groundnuts in global markets came from the West, where industrialization and changes in ideas about hygiene increased the demand for oils and fats for local manufactures. In particular, the first third of the 19th century was a time when Europeans became more aware of the relationship between personal hygiene and good general health. One result was a spike in the demand for soap. Although palm products provided the essential oils for soaps used in Britain, French consumers found its yellow color unappealing and preferred the blue marble soap created with peanut oils. A further interest in West African groundnuts came from the United States, where the nuts were used for human consumption.³

From the 1830s, international demands for African peanuts intersected, resulting in an unprecedented growth of Senegambian groundnut exports. The commercialization

² The following paragraphs are based on Donald R. Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 151-155.

³ George E. Brooks, "Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialization of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830-70," *Journal of African History*, 16, 1 (1975), 29-54, surveys the international factors contributing to new demands for West African peanuts and provides a regional perspective on the West African peanut supply. For a more localized approach to Portuguese Guinea, see also Joye L. Bowman, "'Legitimate Commerce' and Peanut Production in Portuguese Guinea, 1840s to 1880s," *Journal of African History*, 28, 1 (1987), 87-106. For a broader study of trade between the United States and West Africa, see George E. Brooks, *Yankee Traders, Old Coasters & African Middlemen: A History of American Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (Brookline: Boston University Press, 1970).

of the crop was first made possible through credit supplied by Forster and Smith, a London-based commercial firm that traded in palm oil, rice and various other African commodities. But despite early British investments, Americans quickly rose to dominate the trade between 1837 and 1841, when some three quarters of Gambian peanuts ended up selling in New York and New England. An American tariff in 1842 temporarily slowed the Senegambian groundnut trade, but France quickly filled the gap, cornering the market for West African peanuts in subsequent decades.

Data on peanut exports by African region is incomplete, but George E. Brooks has outlined its expansion throughout Senegambia in some detail. In the Gambia, exports increased for most of the 1840s, slowing only in 1849 because of the French revolution in the previous year. The crop rebounded by 1851, when exports reached more than 11,000 tons – nearly triple the amount of 1849. Though not to the same degree, Senegalese ports north and south of Gambia expanded their peanut exports over the same period. In Rufisque and the Petite-Cote, the peanut trade reached 3,000 tons by the early 1850s and at Cayor and the Senegal River, some 3,000,000 kilos of groundnuts were being shipped by the late 1804s.⁴

More important from the southern Sierra Leone perspective was Portuguese Guinea's entry into the groundnut trade. Although export statistics are less precise there than for portions of Senegambia under British and French control, it is clear that the trade from the Portuguese-administered region began rising in the 1840s. By 1846, Bolama became a center of peanut production and within another few years a number of large plantations were operating in and around this area. According to Adolphe Demay, a

⁴ Brooks, "Peanuts and Colonialism," Table I and pp. 34-46.

French merchant residing at Bissau, peanut exports had reached 320,000 “bushels” by 1853 and topped 400,000 a decade later.⁵

A similar trajectory emerged in northern Sierra Leone, where a small number of peanuts were exported in 1837 followed by a steady expansion into the 1840s. Brooks suggests that the trade spread through the agency of Eurafrican traders who migrated from the Gambia and settled along the rivers north of Freetown. Charles Heddle, for example, operated an enterprise at Bathurst in 1835, before opening factories on the Melakori and Scarcies Rivers. Heddle’s success, along with that of several other leading traders, drew increased attention to the region and attracted several new firms from Goree and St. Louis in Senegal.

In other cases, however, British merchants provided the impetus for the expansion of the peanut trade. One of the primary British traders was Nathaniel Isaacs, who purchased Matacong Island in 1844 and engaged with a commercial network that linked the Melakori trade with surrounding rivers. Fyfe notes that by 1850, Isaacs was loading 16 vessels a year, mostly with peanuts. R.A.K. Oldfield, another English merchant, operated a screw press in Freetown in the early 1840s, which was used to extract peanut oil. The industry was limited, however, by tariffs on foreign oils in France, the main market for such products.⁶

The organization of labor to sustain the groundnut trade was remarkably consistent throughout the Senegambia. In the Gambia and Senegal, production relied on

⁵ Ibid, 47; Bowman, “Legitimate Commerce,” 90. It is curious that in his mid-19th century account of West African commerce, Francisco Travassos Valdez has little to say about groundnut cultivation in Upper Guinea and Senegambia. See his *Six Years of a Traveller’s Life in Western Africa* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861).

⁶ Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 239-240 and 258; BNA, CO267/242, Kennedy to Grey, 16 September 1854 and enclosures.

the seasonal migration of free laborers, in particular from among the Serahuli-speaking inhabitants of the interior. These so-called “strange farmers” traveled from as far inland as modern-day Mali to coastal plantations, where they took up residence under a local leader and engaged in the cultivation and sale of peanuts, before returning home with the profits. Similar to other commercial relationships in West Africa, the understanding between coastal hosts and their clients was underpinned by a series of reciprocal obligations. The landlord was expected to provide a safe dwelling, food and land for the stranger to farm and in return he received a specified amount of weekly labor and a share of the overall harvest. In 1853, Governor MacDonnell estimated that about one third of the peanuts exported from the Gambia were grown by migrant laborers.⁷

Further south, in Portuguese Guinea, peanut production also depended on a mix of free-migrant and slave labor. In this region, Joye Bowman suggests migrant laborers made up two-thirds of the work force on *feitorias*, or local peanut plantations.⁸ Such a system was necessary because planters were unable to convince local Biafada and Fula inhabitants to work for them. Instead they enticed Manjaco men from the Costa de Baixo, who provided the essential labor on plantations in the region. Manjaco migrants were also known to travel as far as Gambia and Senegal, however, at times limiting their availability in the Northern Rivers.

In the Melakori, Nunez and Pongo, on the other hand, slaves appear to have provided a higher proportion of the labor on groundnut plantations. Indeed, as was the

⁷ On “strange farming,” see Ken Swindell, “Family Farms and Migrant Labour: The Strange Farmers of the Gambia,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 12, 1 (1978), 3-17; Ibid, “Serawoollies, Tilibunkas and Strange Farmers: The Development of Migrant Groundnut Farming along the Gambia River, 1848-1895,” *Journal of African History*, 21, 1 (1980), 93-104; Brooks, “Peanuts and Colonialism,” 43; Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place*, 153-154.

⁸ Bowman, “Legitimate Commerce,” 96. See also Philip J. Havik, *Silences and Soundbites: The Gendered Dynamics of Trade and Brokerage in the Pre-Colonial Guinea Bissau Region* (Münster: Lit, 2004), chapter 4.

case with rice production in Sherbro, the cultivation of peanuts proved compatible with the Atlantic slave trade for as long as the two systems operated simultaneously. During the rainy season, slaves worked on peanut plantations and once the dry season arrived, the harvest was sold along with the men and women who produced it.⁹

Given that about half of Senegambian groundnuts were produced with coerced labor, the peanut trade tended to be controlled by men and women who had access to large numbers of slaves. In Portuguese Guinea, for example, Caetano Nozolini, a slave dealer operating at Bissau, also came to own the largest agricultural plantations. His exploits have been well documented, together with those of his wife, Mae Aurelia, who was perhaps the most well-known of the *nharas*¹⁰ of Guinea Bissau. Together they developed plantations on Bolama Island in the 1830s; their commercial operations extended as far as the Pongo River. Also in the Pongo, the Faber and Lightburn families, which had long been involved in the supply of slaves from this river, began turning to

⁹ The compatibility of the slave and produce traders has been underscored in chapter 2. For the Bight of Benin, this point was most directly made by David Northrup, "The Compatibility of the Slave and Palm Oil Trades in the Bight of Benin," *Journal of African History*, 17, 3 (1976), 353-364. See also the introduction in Robin Law, ed., *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). George Brooks has more recently described the relationship between the slave trade and agricultural production as symbiotic, with specific reference to Northern Sierra Leone, in George E. Brooks, "Samuel Hodges, Jr., and the Symbiosis of Slave and 'Legitimate' Trades, 1810s-1820s," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 41, 1 (2008), 101-116. In a forthcoming conference entitled "Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in pre-Colonial 'Guinea of Cape Verde,'" Brooks will specifically address the use of Atlantic-bound captives on peanut plantations in the Bissau region. Personal communication with George E. Brooks, 16 October 2008.

¹⁰ Known variously as *nhara*, *signares* and *senoras* by Portuguese, French and British observers respectively, these terms refer to African and Eurafian women of wealth and influence who often acted as intermediaries between European and African traders. Many had European husbands. See George E. Brooks, "The *Signares* of Saint-Louis and Goree: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth-Century Senegal," in Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds., *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 19-44. The gendered dynamics of coastal trade in Guinea Bissau is a central theme in Havik, *Silences and Soundbites*, especially chapters 3-6.

agricultural production. William Faber commenced operations in Sangha and Lisso, assuming the position of headman in the former town upon his father's death in 1851.¹¹

By the middle of the 1840s, much of the region between Senegal and Freetown had been affected by the peanut trade. France's seemingly insatiable demand for the legume opened new opportunities for many Africans, including elites, migrant laborers and even, at times, slaves. Yet the early prospects of peanut exports were undoubtedly met with some skepticism among slave owners and free laborers. Although much of the research on the groundnut boom has highlighted the remarkable response of migrant laborers to new commercial opportunities, a careful analysis of data from the 1840s and 50s suggests that local sources of free and coerced labor fell far short of meeting the region's demands. Indeed, slave dealers were forced to travel several hundred miles – as far south as Sherbro and Gallinas – to secure new sources of slaves to develop the northern peanut industry. But before turning to an analysis of the new internal slave trade, a brief examination of the rise of palm product exports is necessary.

Palm Oil and Kernel Trading in Southern Sierra Leone

Unlike with groundnuts, the palm tree was a central part of many West Africans' lives prior to the arrival of Europeans. In the 17th century, John Barbot commented that “besides its serving to season their meat, fish, etc., and to burn in their lamps to light them at night, it is an excellent ointment against rheumatick pains, winds and colds in the

¹¹ On Mae Aurelia Correia, see George E. Brooks, “A *Nhara* of the Guinea Bissau Region: Mãe Aurélia Correia,” in Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1983), 295-319. Caetano's use of slaves on groundnut plantations was the subject of numerous despatches to Freetown's governors from the 1840s. For an example, see the Sierra Leone Commissioners to Palmerstone, 31 December 1848, in the *British Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *BPP*), *Slave Trade*, Vol. 36 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 4. For the Nunez and Pongo regions, see Bruce L. Mouser, “Women Slavers of Guinea-Conakry,” in *ibid.*, 320-339.

limbs, or other like diseases.” But for many of the same reasons described above, the middle of the 19th century breathed new life into this commodity, as it came to replace slaves as the most important article of commerce between British and African merchants. Over a 40-year period beginning in 1807, British palm oil imports increased from 2,233 cwt. to an average of 426,087 cwt. per annum. By 1895, when the oil trade reached its height, Africa was supplying some 1,262,000 cwt. of oil to Britain.¹²

In a detailed survey of the West African palm oil trade, Martin Lynn has identified remarkable similarities in the export of slaves and palm oil by African region. In each case, trade was more or less dominated by a single part of the African coast, with regions of secondary importance entering to supplement the main areas of export. From the 1810s, the palm trade was centered on the Bight of Biafra, followed by the entrance of the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast over the next two decades. In the 1840s, the Windward Coast and, to a lesser degree, ports south of the Cameroons began supplying palm produce in modest quantities.¹³

The commercialization of palm produce in southern Sierra Leone, the major supplier along the Windward Coast, was facilitated by capital investments from European trading houses. In some cases, the same merchants who capitalized the groundnut industry north of Freetown became active in the palm produce trade some years later.

¹² The quote and export statistics are from Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-3.

¹³ The similarities between slave and oil trading also extended to British ports. Liverpool, which dominated the slave trade, was also the center of the trade in palm produce, accounting for 96% of British imports. By 1855, Liverpool witnesses a relative decline in significance, with Bristol and London sharing nearly 30 percent of oil imports equally. See Table 1.8 in Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, 27. This suggests that Stephen D. Behrendt’s concept of “human capital” fueling the British slave trade can be fruitfully applied to produce trading. Behrendt argues that Liverpool’s dominance of the slave trade developed in part because of the availability of skilled sailors who had extensive knowledge of Africa. See Stephen D. Behrendt, “Human Capital in the British Slave Trade,” in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles, eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 66-97.

Charles Heddle, for example, began exporting palm products in 1846. In 1850, he sent an agent, Nathaniel Nathan, to Bonthe in the Sherbro, who became the first European trader to open a factory in the region. Later in the decade, J.M. Harris, who would come to play a central role in the Gallinas trade in later decades, began operating at Yelbana Island. In time French and German factories began operating in southern Sierra Leone as well.¹⁴

The establishment of factories provided new opportunities for Africa's small-scale producers to enter the produce trade. Before they were opened, African traders were responsible for transporting the oil directly to Freetown. The time and cost of such a journey was often prohibitive, though some continued to make the trip even after factories began operating. For commercial agents, factories made it possible to keep a ready supply of European goods on hand to repay merchants arriving with oil. From the 1850s, a growing number of Sherbro middlemen thus entered the oil trade, bringing produce supplies at unprecedented levels. By the late-1850s, the British Consul estimated that the palm oil trade had reached more than £35,000.

But the significance of the southern Sierra Leone oil trade should not be overstated. Indeed, in a transatlantic sense, the region played a relatively marginal role in Afro-European commercial affairs in the 19th century. Despite a noteworthy increase in the volume of Sierra Leone palm oil exports in the 1830s and 40s, during which the trade grew in value from just over £5,000 to nearly £30,000, the region never competed with the scale of oil trading in more productive zones to the east. Including supplies of palm produce from as far north as the Gambia River and as far south as Cape Mesurado, Upper

¹⁴ This paragraph and the one that follows it are based on John Davidson, "Trade and Politics in the Sherbro Hinterland, 1849-1890," Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1969, p. 96-7.

Guinea accounted for less than five percent of the entire British oil supply for each year between 1827 and 1845, and generally their contribution was between one and two percent of the total.¹⁵

The comparatively minor growth of the palm produce trade in Sierra Leone has presented a puzzle to historians of 19th century West Africa. On the surface, all of the elements were in place for the expansion of the trade. Palm trees were widely distributed in Sierra Leone, particularly in the southern Sierra Leone hinterland; local knowledge about the collection and extraction of the oil was widespread; and navigable waterways crisscrossed the most productive palm lands in the interior, providing convenient modes of transportation to the coast. Given the knowledge and accessibility of palm production, what accounts for Sierra Leone's limited export of the crop?

The answer seems to lie in the nature of the palm fruit that grew in Sierra Leone and in the quality of the oil the region produced. Compared to oil palms in the Bight of Biafra, the fruit from Sierra Leone trees had a much smaller pericarp, resulting in small yields of oil per palm. Moreover, Sierra Leone supplied "hard" oil, which was more limited in use than the "soft" oil produced at Lagos and in the Bight of Biafra.¹⁶ Why producers chose to supply hard oil is uncertain. Susan Martin has argued that the availability of labor was the central determinant in choosing which kind of oil to produce. Indeed, soft oil required three times the amount of labor input to extract than that of the hard variety. However, the fact that slaves were widely available in southern Sierra

¹⁵ Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, Tables 1.3 and 1.7, pp. 18, 25.

¹⁶ The hardness of the oil is a result of the method in which it is produced. The duration of fermentation is the important aspect of determining the oil's quality. A longer fermentation period reduces the frequency with which the fruit needs to be pounded and boiled and hence minimizes labor requirements for production. The result, however, is a harder oil, which fetched lower prices in British markets. See *ibid*, 46-47. See also M.T. Dawe and F.J. Martin, "The Oil Palm Industry and its Problems in Sierra Leone," in *Proceedings of the First West African Agricultural Conference* (Unknown Publisher, Lagos, 1927), 7-8.

Leone in the 1840s suggests that the size of the palm's pericarp was the more essential factor in restricting the region's oil exports.¹⁷

Alternatively, Sierra Leone led the way in the development of palm kernel exports in West Africa, which increased in significance over the second half of the 19th century. Following a fall in global prices for oil in the 1850s, African merchants found a substitute in the palm kernel. Kernels were produced in a three-step process: first, the pericarp was removed from the fruit, revealing an inner nut; when cracked, the nut produced a smaller kernel. By crushing the kernel, an alternative type of oil was released, which was colorless in nature and shared the properties of coconut oil. Palm kernel oil was primarily used to create higher-quality soap in the mid-19th century, though later it would become an essential ingredient in the manufacture of margarine.

Palm kernels were exported from an early date in Sierra Leone, but failed to reach significant levels for nearly 15 years after they were first shipped. In 1846, Charles Heddle became Sierra Leone's pioneering palm kernel exporter, when he traded £48 worth of the nut. Kernel exports remained trivial for the remainder of the decade and for much of the 1850s. But by 1861, when Britain annexed parts of Sherbro, the value of this trade surpassed £30,000, far beyond most other parts of West Africa. From that year, palm kernels became the most significant commodity exported from Sierra Leone. Part of the reason for the growth of the kernel trade was the integration of Gallinas commercial networks into Sherbro trading houses. From his factory on the Moa River, for example, John Harris, a merchant of Anglo-Jewish heritage, tapped large supplies of palm produce from the Gola country. For much of the second half of the 19th century,

¹⁷ For labor requirements in the production of hard and soft palm oil, see O.T. Faulkner and C.J. Lewin, "Native Methods of Preparing Palm Oil, II," in *Second Annual Bulletin of the Agricultural Department, Nigeria* (1923), 3-22, quoted in Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change*, 49.

Harris attracted a large volume of trade along the Gallinas coast, where he maintained factories between Sherbro and Cape Mount. By 1867, half of the trade reaching Sherbro came from the Gallinas hinterland further east.¹⁸

Similar to the groundnut trade in the north, labor for the palm produce trade comprised a mixture of free and coerced workers. In the Mende-speaking interior, where the largest concentration of palm trees was located, oil plantations were known to employ considerable numbers of slaves. Farmers with smaller-scale industries also used slaves to collect and transport palm produce. But along the coast, the shipping industry also provided paid work for men and children. Coastal agents hired boys and girls for a shilling per day to “tut the banga,” or carry palm kernels between the store and the wharf. A single agent hired as many as 50-60 children in this line of work. Men worked in the factories as laborers, measurers, boatmen and canoemen.¹⁹

The growth of the peanut and palm produce trades thus increased the demand for labor throughout Upper Guinea at a time when the Atlantic slave trade was on the wane. For southern Sierra Leoneans, however, the most significant aspect of the transition period was the uneven growth of the two industries. The early emergence of groundnut trading in Senegambia put new stresses on local labor supplies, which rarely met planters’ needs. In the Sherbro and Gallinas, slave owners faced the opposite scenario. There, the end of the slave trade glutted the market with cheap slaves who, prior to the late 1850s when

¹⁸ Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Galinhas Country (West Africa), 1730-1890* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1983), 104-106.

¹⁹ Paul Lovejoy describes the use of slaves in the palm produce trade along the Windward Coast in his *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd Edition, 2000), 162-163. On the use of children in the industry, see T.J. Alldridge, *The Sherbro and its Hinterland* (London: McMillan, 1901), 14.

palm kernels emerged as a valuable export, had limited use in the local economy. In response to these labor-supply differentials, slave dealers intensified the lateral movement of slaves between southern and northern Sierra Leone. The result was a new internal diaspora of enslaved Africans from the Sherbro to regions north of Sierra Leone.

The Internal Slave Trade from Southern to Northern Upper Guinea

The new internal slave trade that developed in the wake of the transatlantic trade's suppression represented one of the many unintended consequences of Britain's intervention in Afro-European affairs. For the British, the suppression of the slave trade was meant to be the first step in a broader "civilizing" mission, a process which included introducing Christianity and inculcating in Africans the value of free labor.²⁰ In southern Sierra Leone, however, free labor – a problematic concept in most historical and cultural contexts but particularly so in precolonial Africa – was very slow to take root. Instead, slave dealers proved remarkably flexible in adapting to the changing demands for labor that developed as a result of the commercial transition. Indeed, underscoring this point with a remarkably keen eye for comparison, D.K. Flickinger, an American missionary representing the United Brethren in Christ, noted that

the Soosoos, who occupy the country North of Sierra Leone, are the great slave traders, and slave owners; they often stint their slaves in food, and work them very hard on their ground-nut plantations. The country South-east of Sierra Leone for many miles on the coast, is to them what Virginia is to the sugar-growing States of this confederacy, viz., the slave-growing region.²¹

²⁰ See most recently Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), chapter 3.

²¹ D.K. Flickinger, *Off Hand Sketches of Men and Things in Western Africa* (Dayton: Published by the Order of the Trustees of the United Brethren Printing Establishment, 1857), 100.

How did the new domestic slave trade compare with the transatlantic trade that once flourished in southern Sierra Leone? How did the British confront the new slaving networks that developed in support of “legitimate commerce?” It is to questions of the organization of the internal slave trade that this chapter now turns.

The Operation and Organization of the “Susu” Canoe Trade

The transport of enslaved Africans on lateral routes along the coast and in the interior of Upper Guinea was not an entirely new phenomenon. As several scholars have documented, the movement of people and goods along north-south corridors preceded the arrival of Europeans and continued throughout the era of the Atlantic slave trade. On these commercial pathways, African merchants carried kola, ivory, slaves and more than likely a variety of agricultural and textile products. The volume of slaves transported via these paths could be considerable. Allen Howard has estimated that perhaps forty percent of enslaved Africans embarked along the Upper Guinea Coast had been moved laterally, amounting to at least a thousand annually.²²

²² On pre-contact commercial routes in the region, see George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); *ibid*, *Kola Trade and State-Building: Upper Guinea Coast and Senegambia, 15th-17th Centuries* (Brookline: African Studies Center, Boston University, 1980). On the lateral movement of slaves, see most recently Allen M. Howard, “Nineteenth-Century Coastal Slave Trading and the British Abolition Campaign in Sierra Leone,” *Slavery and Abolition*, 27, 1 (April, 2006), 23-49. Howard’s does not provide evidence for his calculation on lateral slave movements, though it is unlikely that a sufficient amount of data exists to move beyond guesswork. For a sample of contemporary observations on the movement of slaves from southern to northern Sierra Leone before the mid-19th century, see BNA, CO271/2, *Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser*, 3, 174, 29 September 1821; BNA, CO323/148, Reffell to Campbell, 22 December 1826 and subenclosures; BNA, CO267/110, Findlay to Hay, 11 November 1831. It should be noted that the movement of slaves between different points of embarkation was not unique to Upper Guinea. Philip Curtin notes that in Senegambia, slave dealers chose ports that offered the highest prices, moving fluidly between British and French centers of slave embarkation. See Philip Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).

Yet the 19th century brought new meaning to the lateral slaving routes that crossed Upper Guinea. In addition to using internal paths to move kola and other trade goods, slave dealers expanded and adapted north-south slaving networks during the century to avoid confrontation with British officials engaged in the campaign against the slave trade. This action was a natural response to the blockade of many of the most active centers of slave embarkation in Sierra Leone; it allowed African merchants to transport their captives to ports under less scrutiny, selling slaves locally in smaller lots during the journey. In many ways, the movement of slaves along lateral corridors in the 19th century thus worked like the transatlantic coasting trade of the previous century, but in this case it put additional transportation burdens on African slave dealers rather than European captains.

The suppression of the Atlantic slave trade and the growth of agricultural exports further stimulated the movement of slaves along lateral paths. In southern Sierra Leone, the loss of American slave markets resulted in the swelling of coastal slave populations. Prior to the growth of the palm industry, slaves had limited productive value in the region. Moreover, as chapter two argued, southern Sierra Leone's relatively shallow slaving frontier meant that many captives were held within 50 to 100 miles of their homelands, making flight a tangible risk. In addition to these "push" factors, the burgeoning market for labor on groundnut fields north of Freetown pulled slave dealers toward peanut plantations, where they could easily dispose of their captives. Ultimately, these factors combined to make slaves from southern Sierra Leone a vital part of the development of the peanut industry in many parts of Upper Guinea. From the mid-19th century, enslaved Africans from south of Freetown were transported along the coast by

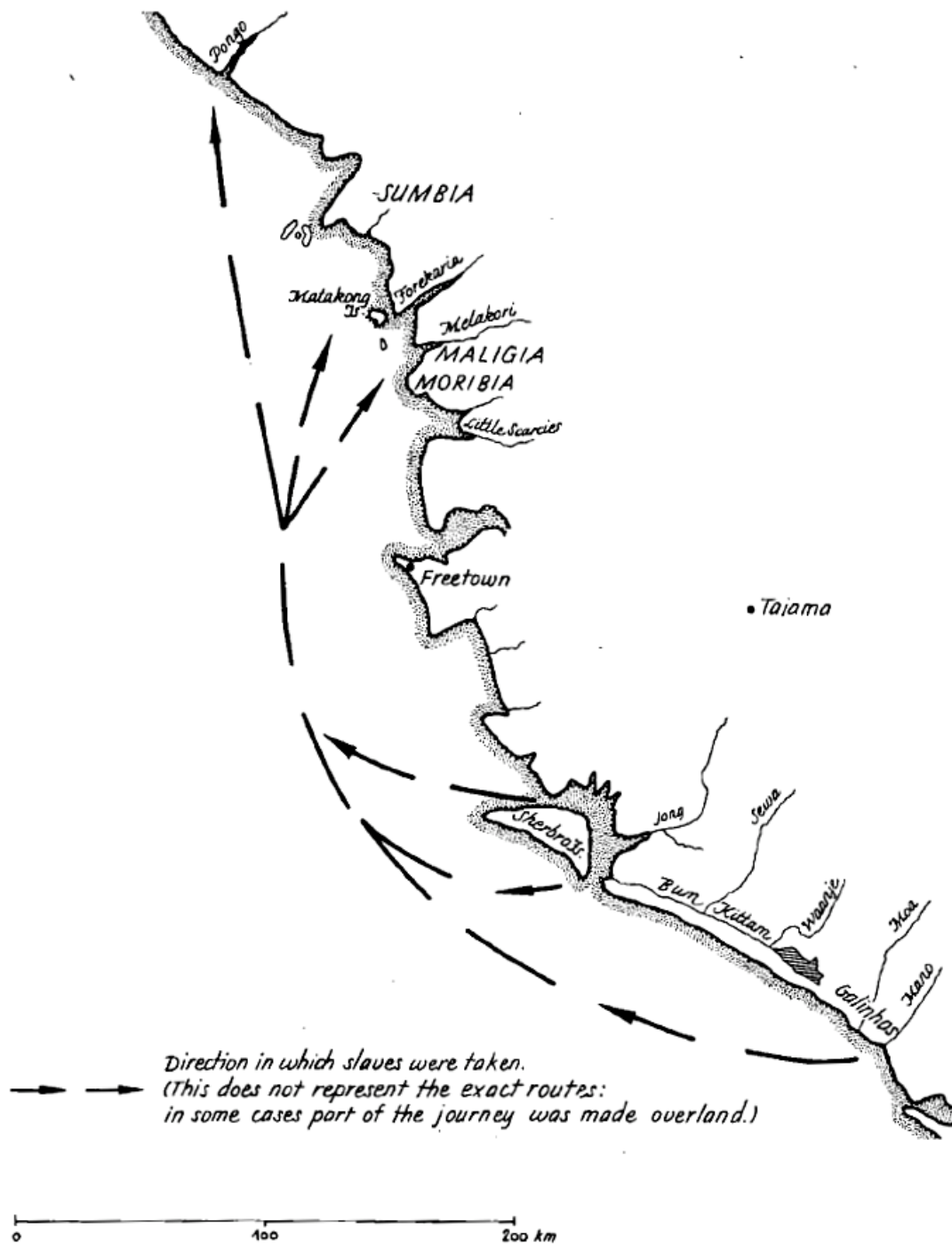
canoe in increasing numbers to points on the Sierra Leone River, the Great Scarcies, the Nunez, Pongo and Portuguese Guinea.²³

Although the covert nature of the canoe-based slave trade from southern Sierra Leone makes calculating its volume particularly difficult, a general outline of the trade's expansion is possible. From the 1840s, a small stream of captives was sent to Kolente to support the emerging groundnut industry. In 1847, the first hint of the volume of the canoe slave trade appeared, when J.S. Palmer, the Assistant Manager of the Western District, seized three vessels with more than 100 slaves on board. Through this action, Palmer set a precedent for other colony officials to attempt to breakup the network linking southern Sierra Leone with the groundnut plantations. By the late 1850s, the British were seizing between six and ten slave canoes per year, with anywhere between ten and 55 slaves on board each one. These records alone suggest the shipment of as many as 500 slaves from southern Sierra Leone per year by the 1850s. The trade appears to have reached its height around 1860, though slaves continued to be taken along the coastal corridor throughout much of the second half of the 19th century.²⁴

Such records, however, record only those cases where the shipment of slaves was prevented and do not provide evidence for the volume of the trade that escaped through Britain's suppression nets. Given the difficulty of the terrain through which slave dealers passed, which included a mixture of water- and land-based passageways, it is likely that the vast majority of southern Sierra Leone captives were transported without detection. Observations from merchants and colony officials on the ground in southern Sierra Leone

²³ Howard, "Nineteenth-Century Coastal Slave Trading," 30.

²⁴ For Palmer's intervention in 1847, see *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 36, enclosure in No. 134, pp. 152-153. I have entered details on nearly 40 slave canoes captured by the British between 1847 and 1865 into a dataset, on which the estimates for this paragraph are based.



Map 4.1, The Canoe-Based Slave Trade from Southern Sierra Leone

provide some sense of the magnitude of the entire trade. According to Nathaniel Nathan, a commercial agent in the Sherbro, 8 “Soosoo canoes” departed from the region over a span of only two days in the summer of 1852, carrying about 400 slaves in total. For 1854, a report was circulated suggesting that 60 canoes, each capable of carrying 40 slaves, entered the Boom, Jong and Kittam Rivers in the Sherbro. Over a 12-month period, this suggests a volume of nearly two-and-a-half thousand slaves being taken from southern Sierra Leone.²⁵ Such an estimate would likely have represented the high point of the trade, however, and it can be assumed that an average of between 1,000 and 2,000 slaves were transported to groundnut plantations each year throughout the 1850s.

The merchants responsible for organizing the internal shipment of slaves represented a number of different ethno-linguistic backgrounds, but they were often identified as Fula, Mandingo or, most commonly, Susu.²⁶ The impact of the expanding influence that these groups had on southern Sierra Leone will be explored below, but from a shipping standpoint, the important point to underscore is their dominance of the coastal trade in slaves. In part, such dominance grew naturally from the groups’ long-standing control of trade in Upper Guinea. But it is also clear that Susu and Mandingo merchants adapted to specific changes in 19th-century slave trading by moving into southern Sierra Leone’s largest slave markets. In the 1840s, Susu traders penetrated

²⁵ On the 1852 estimate, see SLNA, Colonial Secretary Office Depatches, 1850-1869, Nathan to Colonial Secretary, 21 July 1852. For the larger estimate in 1854, see Consul Hanson to the Earl of Clarendon, 31 December 1854, in *BPP, Colonies: Africa*, Vol. 41, 77-78.

²⁶ Debates over the meaning of these ethno-linguistic terms have been waged for decades. With specific reference to the Susu and others, see Howard, “Nineteenth Century Coastal Slave Trading,” 32; Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 83; Davidson, “Trade and Politics,” 81-82. For broader discussions concerning the complexity of identity in Upper Guinea, see Allen M. Howard, “Mande and Fulbe Interaction and Identity in Northwestern Sierra Leone, Late Eighteenth through Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Mande Studies*, 1 (1999), 13-39; and David Northrup, “Becoming Africa: Identity Formation among Liberated Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone,” *Slavery and Abolition*, 27, 1 (April, 2006), 1-21.

Krim country and by the following decade they formed settlements in the Boom, Jong and Bagru, in Sherbro country. By the later part of the 1850s, Susu canoes were being filled with slaves from as far southeast as the Gallinas.²⁷

If cornering the major slave markets represented the first step toward Susu/Mandingo domination of the slave trade in the mid-19th century, mastering shipping techniques was a close second. Indeed, among the most remarkable and horrific aspects of the internal slave trade was the employment of large “Soo-Soo” and “Mandingo” slave canoes to transport large numbers of captives into northern Sierra Leone. According to George Thompson, an American missionary stationed in Sherbro country, the canoes

are made from a large tree dug out, then spread open and timbered as a boat, and a ‘raising’ put on the top, of from one to two feet high. They are from thirty to sixty feet long, from four to eight feet ‘beam’ (across the top), and from three to five feet deep, and will carry from fifty to one hundred men. They have from one to three masts and sails accordingly; and from four to ten long oars, with which to row when they can not sail.²⁸

From the slaves’ perspective, it would be interesting to consider whether the experience of forced transport on canoes differed much from vessels making a transatlantic crossing. According to a number of American missionaries settled in southern Sierra Leone, conditions on slave canoes were far worse. For example, slaves being shipped by Susu canoes were forced into the bottom of the vessel, packed below the planks on which their owners stood. As with an Atlantic slaver, violence and isolation were used to manage the groups of human cargo. As Thompson noted,

long pieces of bamboo are lashed on over them, to keep them from getting up or rising against the masters – a very uncomfortable situation! And then they are

²⁷ Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels*, 83-85.

²⁸ George Thompson, *The Palm Land; or West Africa, Illustrated: Being a History of Missionary Labors and Travels, with Descriptions of Men and things in Western Africa; also a Synopsis of all the Missionary Work on that Continent* (London: Dawson of Pall Mall, 2nd Edition, 1969), 186-187.

half starved, and often very sea-sick, as many of them were never on salt water before; and often they are cruelly beaten with a whip made of *chain*, instead of cord – a horrid instrument of cruelty.²⁹

Slave dealers also stocked canoes with arms to prevent resistance from the captives held below. Along with guns and cutlasses, Susu merchants were especially fond of using poisoned arrows to maintain order. Although Thompson suggests the arrows were primarily used to defend against assaults from British naval officers, it is more likely that slaves were the projectiles' primary targets. Indeed, so dear was this weapon that when the missionary attempted to purchase a bow and a quiver of fifty arrows, the merchant replied, "I can not sell it, sir. We can not walk the sea without this."³⁰

It seems clear that the slaves who were packed into canoe holds were the same men, women and children who would have been embarked on transatlantic slavers had they still operated in the region. From an ethno-linguistic perspective, qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests that captives taken to the groundnut fields were primarily drawn from Mende- and Sherbro-speaking populations in southern Sierra Leone. For example, an investigation into the involvement of Nathaniel Isaacs in the slave trade revealed that the majority of his slaves identified themselves as "Kossoh" or from Sherbro country. Bangah, one such case, illustrates a wider trend among many of the Northern Rivers laborers. Taken from the Kossoh country by a Susu slave dealer as a

²⁹ This quote and the one that follows are also from Thompson, *The Palm Land*, 187. Flickinger, the missionary mentioned above, draws explicit parallels between the transatlantic slaver and the African canoes used to transport slaves along the coast. In an equally-haunting account of the domestic traffic, Flickinger mentions that "twenty to forty [slaves] are packed into one canoe, put into the closest possible space as a matter of course. In this condition they often get sick, but they are not cared for, any more than a sick hog would be of the same value." Lambasting his fellow Americans for acting so similar to less-civilized Africans, Flickinger concludes with the remark, "how similar to the treatment of some slaves in this country, and by *white* men." See Flickinger, *Off-Hand Sketches*, 100-101.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

teen, Bangah was sold in the Quiah country to Moodoo Sarhie, another Susu man from Fouricariah. She was next delivered to Mr. Parkinson, a colony-man who worked for Isaacs. After several years, Bangah was given to Isaacs himself, a man for whom she labored for several years without pay. Having spent much of her childhood and teen years with a number of owners, Bangah was liberated by Freetown officials at the age of 22.³¹

Captured as a child, Bangah's experiences reveal a broader pattern of youth enslavement in the 19th century. While the age of slaves embarked on vessels throughout West Africa decreased during the campaign against the slave trade, the canoe slave trade was particularly vicious in its targeting of children. For each of the captured canoes in which the age of liberated slaves is available, more than half of their cargos consisted of children.³² Summarizing his extensive knowledge of the coastal slave trade, Governor Kennedy noted that it was "principally confined to children, the vast majority being female, between the ages of 7 and 15. They are usually purchased in countries south of the Colony and conveyed to the Susu and Soombia countries to the north, where they find a ready sale among the Mandingo and Mahomedan chiefs."³³

What accounts for the increased trade in children slaves in this era? In the case of the canoe trade, multiple factors seemed to make young captives an attractive investment. On the supply side, children were often easier to obtain during wars and raids, though this

³¹ BNA, CO267/242, Kennedy to Grey, 16 September 1854 and enclosures.

³² The issue of youth slaves is taken up in a different context in the following chapter. It should be noted that "children" is a fluid category which would have been defined differently by Africans and Europeans. In the British case, children seem to have been defined based on height, with 4 feet 4 inches being the dividing line. Such a rigid definition raises its own set of problems. For the most recent research on the role of children in the slave trade and slave systems, see the special issue of *Slavery & Abolition* entitled "Children in European Systems of Slavery," Vol. 27, 2 (Aug, 2006). For the problem of defining children, see Audra Diptee's essay in this issue entitled, "African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century," pp. 183-196.

³³ BNA, CO267/231, Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 13 March 1853.

was not unique to the suppression period.³⁴ On the demand side, young people were highly valued because they were considered more likely to be incorporated into new kin groups and least likely to violently resist their enslavement. But an equally important factor was the ease with which dealers could transport younger captives. Armed primarily with poisoned arrows, it is unlikely that Susu slave traders would have been able to prevent an uprising supported by 40 adult men. Moreover, children were more easily concealed from British officials who intervened to prevent this traffic. One officer noted that slave dealers at times hid captives under bags of rice and other “legitimate” cargo.³⁵

The forced transport of African children was particularly troubling for some British officials and the canoe trade thus raised a series of complex questions about Britain’s projection for Africa’s future development. Most importantly, it challenged the clear distinction between slave trading and agricultural production, a central tenant of British colonial philosophy.³⁶ More than any other tangible evidence, the canoe trade demonstrated not just the compatibility between the slave trade and “legitimate” commerce, but rather the absolute dependence that one trade had on the other. By the middle of the 19th century, many officials came to realize that suppressing the domestic traffic in slaves would have disastrous consequences for the production of agricultural staples. An analysis of Britain’s confrontation with the canoe trade thus exposes several fundamental tensions in Britain’s colonial policy in West Africa.

³⁴ On the enslavement of children and women, see, for example, G. Ugo Nwokeji, “African Conceptions of Gender in the Slave Traffic,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58, 1 (2001), 47-68.

³⁵ Leatham to Commodore Wilmot, 30 December 1863, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 49, 108.

³⁶ Britain’s agenda in transforming African economies and societies is most famously laid out in Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton’s *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (London: John Murray, 1840).

British and African Confrontations over the Suppression of the Canoe-Based Slave Trade

Broadly speaking, the British offered two opinions concerning the canoe-based slave trade: for many naval officers engaged in the suppression of the transatlantic trade, the domestic transport of slaves toward peanut plantations was something to celebrate – a demonstration of Africa’s progression toward an intensified focus on the production of agricultural staples. According to one report from Bissau, such a transformation of slaving networks marked a “novel and interesting era in the history of the abolition of Slave Trade, because it clearly proves that a highly important change has taken place in the very locality (Bissao) where an extensive Slave Trade has flourished for more than a hundred years; but where now, many thousands of natives are daily employed in cultivating ground-nuts for shipping.”³⁷

Missionaries and a number of other colonial officials offered a contrary perspective, highlighting the inhumane nature of the canoe trade and devising schemes to intervene and disrupt the new traffic. For American missionaries like D.K. Flickinger and George Thompson, there was little difference between Atlantic slave vessels and their smaller native-made counterparts. These individuals bemoaned the uneven approach that British officials took toward ending the internal slave trade. Yet the motives behind this opinion were not always entirely humanitarian in nature. Indeed some British officials and subjects saw in the Susu canoe traffic an opportunity to enhance their own influence, capturing vessels in search of profit and respectability.

At the intersection of these perspectives was Augustus J. Hanson, a man of mixed Fanti and European descent. Hanson’s career in Africa put him at the center of debates over the southern Sierra Leone slave traffic in the 1850s. Having been driven from the

³⁷ Sierra Leone Commissioners to Palmerston, 31 December 1848, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 36, 4.

consulate in Monrovia after insulting President Roberts, Hanson was appointed the first British consul at Sherbro in 1853. The government's faith in his abilities seemed limited from the start of his tenure, however, as evidenced by the subsequent appointment of Governor Kennedy as Consul General, giving the Governor ultimate authority over Hanson.³⁸

From the beginning, Hanson's responsibilities were ambiguously defined, leading ultimately to conflicting interpretations over exactly what he was expected to do as Sherbro consul.³⁹ The position was presumably opened in part to act as a check against the slave trade, though Hanson's means to affect this goal were limited to sending written observations to the government and occasionally requesting the presence of a naval officer. For a brief period in 1854, Kennedy gave Hanson the authority to seize vessels found transporting slaves, confirming the precedent established under the Manager of the Western District in 1848. The consul acted immediately and decisively: in August of that year, Hanson captured two Susu canoes, shooting one of the slave dealers in the process.⁴⁰

The response toward Hanson's interventionist approach underscores the tensions in Britain's campaign against the slave trade and illuminates contradictions in British ideas about colonial development. For authorities in Freetown, Hanson's maverick actions were considered a liability. Holding the government responsible for the consul's actions, Susu leaders threatened to commit acts of violence against British and Liberated

³⁸ Davidson, "Trade and Politics," 129-130; Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 274; BNA, CO267/249, Hill to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 November 1855. Hanson's correspondence as Sherbro Consul can be found in BNA, FO2. For the tension between Hanson and the Governor, see BNA, FO2/11, Foreign Office to Kennedy, 29 August 1854.

³⁹ Hanson himself pushed hard to obtain the position as Sherbro Consul. In March of 1853, three months before he was appointed, Hanson sketched a memorandum describing the benefits that opening a Consul there would bring. See his "Memorandum Respecting the Sherbro," 29 March 1853, in BNA, FO2/8.

⁴⁰ BNA, CO267/246, Dougan to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 April 1855

African merchants traveling outside of the colony.⁴¹ In response, Kennedy immediately curtailed Hanson's power to intervene against the canoe trade in the future.

On the other hand, the consul's actions reinforced the idea that colony inhabitants could act individually to stop the domestic slave traffic. The seizure of canoes thus continued, generally through the agency of District Managers or other local officials and particularly when such vessels approached or entered British waters. But in some cases, suppression efforts snowballed beyond the government's control. Indeed, on one occasion a colony inhabitant named Mamadoo Thomson seized a canoe with 44 slaves some 14 miles outside of Freetown's borders.⁴²

However, many officials understood that by forcibly suppressing the internal slave trade, Britain was also disrupting the production of groundnuts, on which Britain's hopes for transforming African economies were hitched. For those opposed to direct intervention in the canoe trade, one natural response was to characterize the traffic as part of a "benign" system of domestic African slavery, in contrast to its transatlantic counterpart. In a report on the state of the trade in the northern division, Commodore Edmonstone thus noted that the slave trade was no longer carried on north of Freetown, even while recognizing the robust shipment of slaves from Sherbro into the Melakori and Fouricariah.

By defining the internal traffic as part of a system of domestic slavery, the British were able to reach a somewhat contested consensus on how to combat the canoe-based slave trade. Their answer rested on intervening only in cases where slaves were taken

⁴¹ Although issued before Hanson arrived, the threat issued by the King of Sombia Country in 1848 against capturing slave canoes demonstrates the seriousness of the situation. See BNA, CO267/201, Macdonald to Earl Grey, 9 February 1848.

⁴² BNA, CO267/249, Hill to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 November 1855.

within colony territory.⁴³ Responding to this directive from officials in London, Governor Hill confirmed that he “will pay full attention to your instructions regarding the policy of interfering with the domestic slavery existing in the adjacent country...[and] I shall also be cautious as to seizing canoes carrying slaves excepting within British waters.”⁴⁴ Yet Hill himself was disappointed by the directive and he thus concluded the letter by noting his regret that the traffic should be allowed to continue.

Unhappy with the newly-imposed limitations, a number of officials took to arguing that slaves transported from southern Sierra Leone were intended not only for work on groundnut plantations, but also for sale to transatlantic slavers, breaking the neat distinction between the domestic and foreign slave trades. Governor Hill was among the chief proponents of this line of reasoning and he was supported by several merchants settled in the Northern Rivers region. It is possible that Hill’s assessment was at least partially true. At least one transatlantic slaver, the American schooner *Catherine*, was captured in the Pongo in 1856, though it is clear the majority of slaves were by this time being put to work locally.⁴⁵

Britain’s unsteady policies toward the canoe-based slave trade continued through the 1850s, but some clarity was reached early in the following decade when the British annexed parts of Sherbro and Quiah countries. By adding additional territory to the colony, the British reduced the coastal regions through which Susu slave dealers could pass without facing prosecution. The result was an immediate increase in the capture of

⁴³ Chapter 5 addresses the issue of colonial boundaries and their implications for British policies toward slavery.

⁴⁴ BNA, CO267/248, Hill to Bart, 27 October 1855.

⁴⁵ On the *Catherine*, see *Voyages*, ID number 4971. For contrasting positions on the supply of southern Sierra Leone slave for the Atlantic market in the Pongo see BNA, CO267/248, Hill to Bart, 27 October 1855; and Commodore Edmonstone to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 7 May 1861 in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 47, 83.

slave vessels in Sherbro itself – the source of the canoe traffic – and their subsequent condemnation in the Vice Admiralty Court. In the first month of 1863 alone, the manager of Kent seized 5 canoes in the Sherbro River. Such a heightened risk of capture seriously curtailed the trade in the 1860s and forced merchants to adapt to the new political circumstances in which they operated.⁴⁶

Although this section has focused primarily on British actions against the canoe trade, it should be noted that slave dealers and interior leaders had their own ideas about the legality of the internal slave trade and several reports detail African responses to Britain's attempt to suppress the canoe traffic. At times, such responses included direct threats against the colonial government. For example, immediately following the first seizure of slave canoes in 1848, the king of Sombia country sent a deputation of chiefs and headmen to Freetown with a letter demanding the return of the captured canoes and slaves, which he claimed as his property. When he was refused, the king turned hostile, threatening to retaliate against colony merchants, though he subsequently took a more conciliatory tone.⁴⁷

More commonly, Africans with an interest in continuing the trade turned to a mixture of diplomacy and innovation in the use of slaving networks. In 1854, the chiefs of Wonkafong sent a letter to Governor Kennedy requesting permission to renew the slave traffic from the Sherbro to northern Sierra Leone. Their letter included a formal plan to continue the trade for seven years, which would allow their groundnut yields to increase considerably. In return, the chiefs promised that they would unite and keep the

⁴⁶ In testimony to the Committee to Consider the State of West African Settlements in 1865, Colonel Ord noted specifically linked the annexation policies to the need to suppress the internal slave trade. See BNA, CO267/286, Evidence of Colonel Ord, 27 March 1865, question 481. Davidson notes in general that the “increase in British activity” around Sherbro reduced the canoe trade. See his “Politics and Trade,” 82.

⁴⁷ BNA, CO267/207, Pine to Earl Grey, 2 May 1849

path between Futa Jallon and Freetown open, bringing considerable and uninterrupted trade into the colony. The governor refused, however, and urged the chiefs to confine themselves to the production of peanuts with the labor force they had.⁴⁸

For Susu slave traders, the risks involved in transporting southern Sierra Leone slaves through newly-claimed British waters were generally higher than the potential rewards. Although some continued to make voyages by canoe along the coast, others adapted and transformed slaving routes leading into the northern region to avoid detection. According to Davidson, their most common response was to develop land-based routes that curved around the British colony, moving far beyond the reach of most officials. The busiest of these paths went from the Bagroo to Rotifunk, where a large group of Fula merchants were settled, and from there slaves were peddled north into the groundnut-producing lands. In other cases, slaves were transported directly from Tiama in the Mende country to the Rokelle River and adjacent lands. From the mid-1860s, the water-borne leg of the trade was thus virtually abolished, though as Allen Howard has noted, slave merchants continued to use internal corridors to transport slaves through Upper Guinea for most of the 19th century.⁴⁹

Islam, Debt and Enslavement: The Impact of the Canoe Trade on Southern Sierra Leone

Among the most important effects of the transformations in the internal slave trade in southern Sierra Leone was the establishment of several new and powerful Islamic commercial centers in the region. From perhaps as early as the 1840s and certainly by the following decade, Muslim merchants had settled in key positions along the Boom, in particular at Sumbwea, a large town which commanded the trade of the Big Boom

⁴⁸ BNA, CO267/220, Dougan to Grey, 23 December 1854

⁴⁹ Davidson, "Trade and Politics," 82; Howard, Nineteenth-Century Coastal Slave Trading."

River.⁵⁰ From these settlements, Muslim merchants exerted influence among local leaders by distributing trade goods to fuel the supply of captives to plantations in the Northern Rivers region. The merchants thus opened new avenues for southern Sierra Leoneans to gain access to desirable foreign commodities. But the relationship worked both ways. As with the case of the British at Freetown, local authorities attempted to use the merchants to enhance their own political influence, resulting in struggles for power among leaders throughout the region.

Islam was not new to southern Sierra Leone by the middle of the 19th century. It is likely that Muslim merchants were present centuries earlier, though the region south of Freetown was never a significant center of Islamic influence. Muslims were at this time valued primarily as long-distance traders and for their ability to make amulets, which were believed to protect people during combat and bring good fortune to those for whom they were provided. By the mid-18th century, Islamic practitioners were beginning to exert a greater influence along the southern Sierra Leone littoral. Nicholas Owen, a European merchant who with his brother opened factories in the Sherbro, noted in 1758 that King Furry Do, a Muslim Mandingo from the interior, was bringing an army from the interior to engage in war with the non-Islamic leaders of the coast. Nevertheless, southern Sierra Leone was peripheral to the West African Islamic world before the 19th century and the religion was spread primarily by itinerant traders who operated within existing social structures by attaching themselves to local hosts.⁵¹

⁵⁰ On Sumbwea, see George Thompson, *An Account of the Missionary Labors, Sufferings, Travels, and Observations, of George Thompson, in Western Africa, At the Mendi Mission* (New York: Second Edition, 1852), 211.

⁵¹ On the expansion of Islam in Sierra Leone as a whole, see Allen M. Howard, "Trade and Islam in Sierra Leone, 18th -20th Centuries," in Alusine Jalloh and David E. Skinner, eds., *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1997), 21-63. David E. Skinner has written extensively on Islam in the

The growth of the canoe slave trade fundamentally changed the nature of Islam's influence in southern Sierra Leone. By the middle decades of the 1800s, Susu and Mandingo merchants began establishing more permanent settlements in the region, increasing the size and strength of the Muslim presence. British and American observers agreed that this development was explicitly linked to the canoe-based slave trade along the Sierra Leone coast. According to Reverend Brooks of the American Missionary Association, Susu traders had opened permanent factories at Sumbwea and Momando by 1854. Consul Hanson took it a step further, warning that the Susu were preparing to conquer the entire country from these stations. With his usual penchant for dramatic prose, Hanson noted that the

wily Mohammedans, who have been able to see a little bit further into the future than the Chiefs of those clans, have been biding their time – when those unwise neighbours shall have effectually broken each other's power – to step in and overrule them all... One thing is certain: their population is on the rise and they maintain a good understanding with each other, and always act in concert.⁵²

Unlike with previous Muslim traders who tended to serve individual headman, the new Islamic settlements represented a clear threat to many of the established authorities in southern Sierra Leone. For much of the 1840s and 1850s, tensions between the groups erupted into warfare and periodic raids as each party attempted to gain influence in regional affairs. In the early stages, such struggles were extremely localized, confined to

region north and east of Freetown. See his "Islam and Education in the Colony and Hinterland of Sierra Leone (1750-1914)," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 10 (1976), 499-520; and "Mande Settlement and the Development of Islamic Institutions in Sierra Leone," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 11 (1978), 32-62. On the role of Islam in the colony, see Gibril Cole, "Embracing Islam and African Traditions in a British Colony: The Muslim Krio of Sierra Leone, 1787-1910," Ph.D. Dissertation, UCLA, 2000. On King Furry Do, see Eveline Martin, ed., *Journal of a Slave Dealer: A View of Some Remarkable Accidents in the Life of Nics. Owen on the Coast of Africa and American from the Year 1746 to the Year 1757* (London: G. Routledge, 1930), 95-100. Owen comments that the Mandingo Muslims have no place of residence locally, but that they wander among the coastal Bullom as priests.

⁵² BNA, FO2/11, Hanson to the Secretary of State for the Foreign Affairs, 31 December 1854; American Missionary Association Archives, Microfilm Reel 4, Brooks to Whipple, FI-6909-6910.

conflicts between particular big men and small groups of merchants. Thus in 1846, Canreybah Caulker, a powerful headmen in the Sherbro, captured and chained a number of Susu slave dealers attempting to make off from the Plantains. It is unknown whether this incident stemmed from a commercial disagreement between Caulker and the imprisoned merchants or if it represented a broader example of local resistance to growing Susu influence.⁵³

A decade later, the relationship between the Susu and many of their neighbors had severely deteriorated. As Islamic commercial settlements increased in size and influence, they attracted new followers, acting as a magnet for men and women throughout Upper Guinea. The towns' growth created new struggles over the use of land and labor. In the Kittam Country, for example, local inhabitants rebelled against a Susu initiative to establish new groundnut plantations. Southern Sierra Leoneans complained that planting peanuts reduced the quality of the soil, resulting in lower yields during the rice harvest. The conflict came to a head in November of 1854, when Susu militants pillaged several important towns near Mo Bwavi, burning their rice farms and presumably enslaving the inhabitants.⁵⁴

But not all local authorities resisted against the growing Susu influence in southern Sierra Leone. For some, the changing political map opened new opportunities to enhance their own positions. This was particularly true for those individuals and settlements that were tied to the slave trade. Reverend Brooks, for example, noted that during the war mentioned above, the Susu were supported by the leaders of Gallinas and

⁵³ BNA, CO267/193, Macdonald to Gladstone, 14 July 1846. The enclosure to this despatch suggests that Caulker was "determined to expel [the Susu] from the Sherbro Country," but the meaning behind this statement is rather ambiguous.

⁵⁴ AMA Archives, Microfilm Reel 4, Brooks to Whipple, 14 November 1854, FI-6910.

Bompey, a powerful town that was known for supplying mercenaries who fought in the region's wars.⁵⁵ The alliance was a logical one: for the Susu, a close relationship with Bompey ensured a steady supply of captives while limiting the merchants' involvement in the actual process of enslavement;⁵⁶ on the other hand, Islamic slave dealers allowed towns like Bompey to continue prospering from the trade in African captives after the suppression of the transatlantic trade.

The organization of the Susu trade in southern Sierra Leone tended to reinforce the merchants' alliances with military towns like Bompey, on whom the Susu relied for the production of slaves. From their base at Sumbwea, the Susu drew in powerful leaders through the lure of luxury goods. Trust and credit were the linchpins of the relationship. According to the American missionary George Thompson, the Susu "passed along in their large canoes, with a variety of goods – guns, powder, tobacco, cloths, &c. – and trusted the various chiefs with from one to ten slave money, for which they promised to return the slaves to the Soo-Soos."⁵⁷ Although many leaders sought access to these commodities, the Susu preferred to lend goods to men and women from powerful towns, whom they felt were more likely to repay their debts.⁵⁸

How did Susu merchants gain access to foreign commodities at the scale required to trade thousands of slaves per year? According to several observers, Freetown played a central part in this process. Thompson suggests that Susu canoes were filled primarily with items from the colony's stores. In some cases, colonial merchants had a

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ For an alternative approach that highlights the tensions between merchants and warriors, see the influential work by Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁵⁷ The quote is from George Thompson and it appears in a letter he submitted to *The National Era*, Vol. 9, No. 425, p. 29

⁵⁸ Ibid. The favorable treatment of Bompey is implied in Thompson's statement that "the Boompeh chiefs flocked [to Sumbwea] and took money, (goods,) promising to return the slaves."

considerable stake in the continuation of the internal slave trade. Reverend Brooks went so far as to suggest that Freetown traders were the principle barriers to the suppression of the canoe trade and that they were in part responsible for the disturbed state of the region. Following the interventionist policies of Consul Hanson, he explained that “the interests of certain commercial houses in the colony were about to be disturbed so a cry of bloody murder and distraction of lawful trade, etc., was raised. The same houses used certain chiefs as tools to work their own ends, filling their heads with war [and] setting them to plunder factories.”⁵⁹

The flow of Atlantic commodities between Freetown, Islamic merchants and southern Sierra Leone headmen forged a chain of debt that was ultimately paid in human cargo. In West Central Africa, Joseph C. Miller suggests that the circulation of such goods reinforced relationships of dependency between and within African households. For Miller, however, the meaning behind those relationships was primarily symbolic, allowing lenders to make abstract claims to labor over their debtors in the future, if the need should arise. In the southern Sierra Leone case, the impact and manifestation of debt was much more tangible and immediate. Susu merchants lent commodities with the understanding that they would be repaid with slaves as quickly as possible. For borrowers, this often meant turning to warfare or slave raiding to settle their debts.⁶⁰

Slaves were the ultimate victims of this system; for southern Sierra Leone’s captives, the suppression of the transatlantic trade thus brought little improvement to their lives. Those bound to the peanut plantations faced a series of traumatic hardships,

⁵⁹ American Missionary Association Archives, Microfilm Reel 5, Brooks to Whipple, Fl-7061, 22 June 1855; Thompson, *The Palm Land*, 186.

⁶⁰ Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988)

including separation from their families, a difficult passage to their future homes and a life of coerced labor. Prior to this, many slaves had to endure a period of confinement in stockaded Susu villages, where they were held before being embarked on a canoe. Reverend Brooks provided a rare glimpse of the atrocious conditions inside one of these towns. On his return from a funeral for a European merchant, Brooks stopped at Momando, a Susu slaving village second in importance only to Sumbwea. He was clearly shocked by what he witnessed. According to the missionary, deaths were frequent among the detained slaves. He estimated that there were about 100 being held at the time, consisting primarily of children between six and 15 years old. In a hauntingly-descriptive passage, Brooks notes that “most of them are but little better than walking skeletons, skin dry, whiteish or ‘ashy,’ wrinkled and glassy, resembling scales.”⁶¹

The presence of so many children among the enslaved population at Momando is consistent with the young age of captives liberated from Susu canoes and, more broadly, supports the general trend toward growing numbers of enslaved youth being embarked on vessels in the 19th century Atlantic. But while a number of scholars have identified this pattern, few have explored the local factors that contributed to such steady supplies of slave children. To put the question plainly, did the ratio of children on slave vessels increase in the 19th century because of supply or demand factors?

Although this chapter cannot fully address the issue, one part of the answer seems to emerge from an analysis of local warfare in southern Sierra Leone. Small-scale wars were commonplace in 19th century Upper Guinea as a whole. The central place of warrior culture in the region, particularly among some groups of Mende people, has been

⁶¹ American Missionary Association Archives, Microfilm Reel 4, Brooks to Whipple, Fl-6909-10, 14 November 1854.

extensively described. One manifestation of the prevalence of violence was the growth of war towns. These towns were primarily constructed for defensive purposes; they were surrounded by between one and three circular stockades, behind which the town's people lived. Given its significance in much of the region, one Sierra Leonean scholar has even suggested that warfare is embedded in the culture of Mende men.⁶²

The construction of war towns reflected the reality of southern Sierra Leone warfare. In this region, as in many others, Africans rarely engaged in lengthy open-field campaigns. Instead, success in war was based on speed and deception. Small bands of mercenaries generally surveyed town barricades for some time before planning an attack. Once a plan was formed, the warriors pushed forward at a lightening pace, attempting to break through the fortifications. The aim was to create fear and confusion; warriors attacked noisily and always at night. In this context, guns were valued not for their ability to kill individuals, but rather for the fact that they added to the general chaos.⁶³

For the purpose of this chapter, the important point about southern Sierra Leone warfare is that it tended to result in the enslavement of higher ratios of women and children. During most military campaigns, success or failure depended on whether a town's barricades held. If the fortifications were destroyed, the invaders almost certainly won; the town's inhabitants rarely put up a fight. Instead they tended to flee, leaving

⁶² Arthur Abraham, *Mende Government and Politics under Colonial Rule: A Historical Study of Political Change in Sierra Leone, 1890-1937* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1978), 8. On war towns, see especially D.J. Siddle, "War Towns in Sierra Leone: A Study in Social Change," *Africa*, 38, 1 (1968), 47-56. Arthur Abraham has contributed a number of essays on the structure and logic of Mende warfare, but in particular see his *Topics in Sierra Leone History: A Counter-Colonial Interpretation* (Freetown: Leone Publishers, 1976). For a broader approach to African warfare, see John Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800* (London: University College London Press, 1999).

⁶³ There is a substantial literature of the impact of guns on African societies in the precolonial era. For an assessment of the trade in guns, see J.E. Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa, 1750-1807: A Quantitative Analysis," *Journal of African History*, 18, 3 (1977), 339-368; W.A. Richards, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, 21, 1 (1980), 43-59. These essays follow in the wake of a series of contributions on the impact of the gun trade on Africa, published in two separate issues of the *Journal of African History*. See Vol. 12, Nos. 2 & 4 (1971).

those less capable of escaping – women and children, the sick and the lame – behind. It was therefore not uncommon to hear reports that large numbers of children were captured in these kinds of campaigns.⁶⁴

At times, however, the process of enslavement was much less methodical. Some young slaves simply suffered the misfortune of being caught alone or in a smaller, defenseless group by a stronger party. Such was the case for Chow Boam, a boy who was enslaved in 1857. Boam, the son of a Kittam chief, was captured while fishing alone in a canoe. According to the boy's own testimony, he was approached by a larger vessel manned by a group of Susu men. The men at first expressed an interest in purchasing Boam's fish, but as he gathered the catch they seized him suddenly and forced him on board their canoe. Boam was held in captivity for three days, at which point a British naval officer began pursuing the vessel. At the sight of the officers, the Susu men attempted to flee, but they were captured and taken with the liberated slaves to Freetown.⁶⁵

By the 1860s, the context of the internal slave trade from southern Sierra Leone had changed drastically. Although the lateral trade continued, a number of local, regional and international factors combined to transform the way slaves were used and transported in Upper Guinea. In addition to Britain's increased intervention in the trade after they annexed parts of Sherbro in 1861, the internal slave trade changed as a result of new

⁶⁴ For links between the nature of warfare and the gender and age structure of the trade in two different regions, see Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender;" and Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003).

⁶⁵ "A Recent Incident of the Slave Trade," *Church Missionary Gleaner*, Vol. 7, No 1, N.S. (Jan, 1857): 112-113

demands for labor in southern Sierra Leone. By the time of annexation, owners in the region had increasingly put slaves to use in the collection of palm kernels and the extraction of kernel oil. The spiking demand for slaves in local industries was reflected in the prices at which they were purchased. Although hard data on slave prices are not widely available, qualitative evidence suggests a significant increase in the cost of slaves in the 1860s. Before this decade, the value of young slaves was trivial. In a letter from 1854, Reverend Brooks reports that “the very low price at which slaves are sold shows that the trade would be blotted out of existence in a few years...a boy or girl of 12 to 16 years of age is sold among the people of the country for 12 bushels of salt worth no more than £1.16 or for the same quantity of rice worth about the same price, [or] for 12 bars of tobacco and one cutlass.”⁶⁶

By 1862, large parts of southern Sierra Leone were reported to have increased their production of agricultural commodities. In his assessment of Upper Guinea’s legitimate trade, Commander Wildman found a “large and increasing trade in Sherbro, Boom-Kittam, and produce enough in Gallinas viz. palm oil, nuts, cotton, wax, etc., to supply many factories.” As a result of the growth in agricultural products, the price of slaves had reportedly risen to between \$30 and \$40.⁶⁷

Three years later, the expansion of local industries in southern Sierra Leone appears to have made slaves more valuable locally than the price their owners were offered by regional slave merchants. In 1865, the British published a report on the Committee to Consider the State of West African Settlements. John Harris, a prosperous

⁶⁶ American Missionary Association Archives, Microfilm Reel 4, Brooks to Whipple, Fl-6834. In a letter from the following year, Brooks remarks that a man slave was sold for 40 bars of tobacco. See *ibid*, Microfilm Reel 5, Fl-7061, 22 June 1855.

⁶⁷ “Extract from the Journal of Commander Wildman, of His Majesty’s *Philomel*,” in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 49, 105.

merchant who traded in the Gallinas and Sherbro, provided extensive details about the region's commercial prospects for this report. According to Harris, the suppression of the transatlantic slave trade nearly ruined the Gallinas headmen, who had no outlet for their captives. But the expanding prospect for agricultural commerce had reestablished slaves' values, by allowing owners to put them to work producing palm produce and rice. In contrast with the prices that European slave dealers previously offered, Harris suggested that in only two months, slaves who worked locally in Gallinas made more for their owners than their value in regional markets.⁶⁸

Conclusion

The uneven transition from the slave trade to the production of agricultural commodities in southern Sierra Leone dramatically transformed local slave systems. A spiking demand for labor north of Freetown sent the region's merchants and owners in search of new sources of slave supply, which they found in the overstocked markets of southern Sierra Leone. As a result, a massive traffic in coerced laborers developed between these two regions, organized by Susu merchants who navigated the waterways along the Sierra Leone coast through the use of large canoes. The trade challenged the British dichotomy between slave trading and legitimate commerce and forced officials to reconsider their campaign against the slave trade.

An examination of this trade reveals the extensive impact it had on politics and society in southern Sierra Leone. Slave dealers from north of Freetown flocked to the region's slave markets, establishing a lasting commercial and religious presence along the

⁶⁸ See BNA, CO267/286, for the Report. Harris's contrast between local and transatlantic slave values is found in question number 5015.

Boom River. With access to luxury commodities from Freetown, merchants distributed the goods to southern Sierra Leone leaders, creating relationships of dependency and ensuring steady supplies of slave labor. This chain of indebtedness was transformed only in the mid-1860s, when new demands for palm kernels enabled local leaders to put slaves to work locally in the production of palm kernels.

Chapter 5, Freetown and “Freedom?” Colonialism and Slavery in Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1861¹

The issue of slavery confronted Freetown officials from the time the settlement was first established under the Sierra Leone Company. In a region immersed in slave commerce, Freetown emerged as a site where slaves, masters and colonists negotiated ideas about slavery, colonialism and rights-in-people. In contrast the late-19th century, when European administrators elsewhere had more clearly defined models for dealing with abolition and its potential consequences in different settings, the foundation for Freetown’s policies toward slavery was first set by Company officials in the 1790s, when the Atlantic slave trade was close to its peak. Indeed, in Britain’s effort to stamp out the export trade in African slaves, colonists were drawn into engaging with slavery both inside and outside of Freetown. Slaves themselves often forced the issue, sensing that the British suppression movement offered them new opportunities to resist the worst aspects of their treatment and at times even challenge their status. In the Sierra Leone case, the relationship between the suppression of the slave trade, colonialism and slavery was thus time and again re-forged based on actions taken by slaves, owners and colonial governors in the first six decades of the 19th century.

The conflicting pressures that officials faced when dealing with African slavery and the resulting colonial (in)activity against the institution has been well detailed.² This

¹ Sections of this essay were presented at a conference entitled “Empire, Slave Trade and Slavery: Rebuilding Civil Society in Sierra Leone,” on September 26, 2008. I want to thank participants for their many useful comments.

² See especially the introduction in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988). The tightrope that officials walked in satisfying various transatlantic lobbies is a central theme in John Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa with Particular Reference to the Sierra Leone Protectorate, 1896-1927* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1975). More recently, see Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London: Frank

chapter refocuses the debate from official policies and legislation on slavery to an analysis of the ways that slaves exploited British opposition to the slave trade to push the slave question onto the colonial agenda. In the first half of the 19th century, this generally included escaping to the colony during transport to the coast or from barracoons while awaiting shipment. However, an uprising on Bunce Island, a neighboring settlement with a long and intimate involvement in the slave trade, broadened the debate over the changing relationship between masters and slaves and more generally the position of slavery in the early colonial era. Believing that British opposition to the slave trade would prevent owners from disciplining slaves, a group of plantation laborers briefly rebelled and took the island in 1809 before being captured and executed.

More important for colonial officials was their concern over the circulation of young slaves into and out of Freetown. In the 1830s and again in the 1850s, administrators uncovered evidence of widespread slave use and slave dealing around the colony by both Liberated Africans and alien Islamic merchants. In the early 1850s, Governor Kennedy began catching and prosecuting these slave dealers. However, his efforts raised questions about whether Liberated Africans were considered British subjects, since their status was not clearly defined. Moreover, the proceedings called into question the government's ability to prosecute individuals who committed crimes outside of Freetown. In acting against slave dealing and slave holding, colonists were thus faced with questions about the boundaries of the state itself and the identities of those living within it. In part to address some of these tensions, the government turned to a policy of annexation, adding considerable portions of Sherbro country to the colony in the early

Cass, 1999); and Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2007), chapter 5.

1860s. While such actions did not resolve the related issues of slavery and the slave trade in the colony, they foreshadowed changes in official policy that would come to dominate the last quarter of the 19th century.

Slavery and the Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1790s to 1850s

Fugitive Slaves

Located in the midst of an active slave using and exporting region, Freetown officials faced an immediate dilemma regarding the status of interior slaves who entered the colony. Recognizing their status as slaves was against British policy and at odds with the objectives of the new settlement. But by freeing slaves who arrived in Freetown, officials would isolate themselves from the headmen among whom they settled and who supplied the colony with provisions. This tension, and a hint at the way it would be resolved, was recognized in the initial instructions from the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, which explained that officials were “not to deliver up any persons who are slaves and [the Directors] wish no slavery to exist in the colony. But your own prudence must dictate on the spot the time, and the mode of asserting these principles, in perfect consistency with the safety of our colony.”³ Under these guidelines, Company directors maintained the humanitarian aspect of their settlement while leaving officials on the ground to work out the finer details of how to put these directives into action.

When Freetown was transferred to the Crown, proclamations from government officials at home were much clearer in their opposition to slavery within the colony.

Under the Sierra Leone Company Transfer Act of 1807, it was declared illegal for

³ “Orders and Regulations from the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the Superintendent and Council for the Settlement,” Sierra Leone National Archives (hereafter SLNA). See also Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 54.

inhabitants to buy, sell or assist in the dealing of slaves in Freetown.⁴ However, the Act had a number of important shortcomings. For example, it left undefined the meaning of the term “inhabitant” and it was also unclear whether those subject to the new law could be punished if they were caught dealing in slaves outside of the settlement. Though concerns were not raised at the time, the unresolved questions over the scope and meaning of the Transfer Act would periodically reemerge over the 19th century, causing headaches among officials at home and turmoil between governors, merchants, slaves and headmen in Sierra Leone.

More important than the legislation against slavery was, of course, the ways that Sierra Leone governors interpreted and enforced the law.⁵ Particularly in the first few decades after Freetown was founded, when administrative infrastructure was relatively underdeveloped and Government policy depended more on individuals’ personalities and inclinations, differences emerged in the enthusiasm with which Freetown’s policy makers approached slavery. Under Zachary Macaulay, who governed Freetown during part of the 1790s, opposition to slavery in the settlement was unwavering. Despite protests from a number of interior headmen who complained that their slaves were escaping into Freetown and seeking British protection, Macaulay refused to return the fugitives.⁶ In contrast, under Governor Columbine, policy toward slaves who absconded to the colony was briefly reversed. In an 1811 Sessional Paper, Columbine proclaimed that “the Government of Sierra Leone disclaims any such attempt to interfere with the ancient

⁴ TNA, BT6/70. The Transfer Act is also reprinted in C.W. Newbury, *British Policy Toward West Africa; Select Documents, 1786-1874* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 477-479.

⁵ The tension between colonies and metropolises and its impact on the development of empires has reemerged as a theme in colonial studies over the past decade. See, for example, the introduction and most of the chapters in Frederick Cooper and Anne Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁶ For example, TNA, CO270/3, 13 September 1794.

customs of Africa; and therefore any such people running away illegally from their masters and taking refuge in Sierra Leone, will be given up when properly claimed, and the right of the Master made out to the satisfaction of the Government.”⁷ Within two months, however, Columbine reversed his position and reaffirmed the government’s intentions to harbor slaves who sought British protection.⁸

By forcing British officials to define their policies toward the status of fugitives crossing into Freetown, Sierra Leone’s slaves thrust slavery onto the colonial agenda from the end of the 18th century. Although the issue was fundamentally about the application of British laws within the colony, the decisions that governors made in response to absconding slaves had repercussions that extended far beyond the settlement. By taking advantage of British protection against their owners, slaves drew colonial officials into conflicts with their former masters and changed the context in which owners were able to enforce claims over their dependents.⁹ Moreover, despite the official claim that their policies toward slavery only applied within Freetown, the migration of slaves from the interior muddied the dichotomy between internal and external affairs, on which colonial laws were built.

The complexity of the fugitive slave issue is underscored by the case of Pa For, one of nine slaves who escaped to Freetown in the summer of 1798. Pa For was rightfully owned by Mr. Cleveland, a southern Sierra Leone headman, who was at war with King Firama. A neighboring leader named King Tom tried to take advantage of the

⁷ TNA, CO270/12, 26 February 1811.

⁸ Ibid, 29 April 1811. Columbine noted that the earlier proclamation was misconstrued but does not provide a specific reason for the change in policy. It is likely, however, that his previous statement was considered dangerously close to accepting slavery within British territory.

⁹ A point more generally made in Miers and Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*, 6, but for later in the century.

insecurity that the conflict generated, giving notice that he would receive any slaves who voluntarily gave themselves up and that they would be received as friends, not captives. Pa For thus put himself and his wife and family under King Tom's protection and under his new owner he was treated kindly and given land. However, King Tom's actions upset a number of other regional authorities who had a stake in the outcome of the war. During a visit to Robaga, one such leader, Signor Domingo, confronted King Tom and argued that many of King Tom's slaves rightfully belonged to King Firama. Fearing for his fate under a new owner, Pa For escaped and made his way into Freetown.¹⁰

The resulting disagreement over this case included three separate claims over individuals from the interior and, as Zachary Macaulay would find out, involved him intimately in the politics of the hinterland. Each party used the affair to assert his influence over the others. King Tom lambasted King Firama, "who had sent these palavers to [Macaulay] without first apprising him."¹¹ Banna, Firama's deputy, replied that he had been sent to demand the return of Pa For and the others, not to "talk palaver." For Macaulay, the case provided a chance to demonstrate Freetown's neutrality, and so he refused to give the slaves up to either party. Macaulay's decision caused Firama to visit the settlement in person, where the headman tried a new tactic. Firama claimed that, according country law, it was not permissible to take a man's property for nothing in return. Macaulay, however, turned the tables on the leader, citing an old man named Robin Rasey who several years ago explained that according to the country laws on this matter, any slave who fled to a new owner became that person's property.¹²

¹⁰ CO270/4, 16 July 1798.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² CO270/4, 9 August 1798. Macaulay often used statements from elderly inhabitants to bolster his arguments about country law. In this case he also cited conversations with Mr. Aspinall, a merchant in the

A deeper analysis of the above case suggests that despite their efforts, the British were unable to separate the suppression of the Atlantic slave trade from slavery itself – from the slave perspective, the phenomena were often overlapping. Indeed more often than not, slaves who escaped to Freetown did so upon the threat of being sold. Pa For, for example, was briefly owned as a domestic slave and fled only on hearing rumors implying that if he was sold to King Firama, he would ultimately be traded to an Atlantic slaver. In another case, a slave named Corri escaped from the Bullom Shore into the colony in 1827, where he sought British protection. Corri was initially a slave of Robanna, a chief in the Rokelle region, from whom he ran away to Yongroo, the resident town of King George. Corri lived there unmolested until King George's death in 1826. The relative stability that Corri enjoyed under his former owner disappeared with the leader's death. He was thereafter constantly threatened with resale by Pa Smart, a relative of George who lived near Yongroo. After one such threat, Corri took his wife and three children and escaped with nine others to an island in the Rokelle River. Pa Smart pursued the group and recovered Corri's wife, children and eight of the other fugitives. Corri himself avoided detection and floated into Freetown on a cork, where he was received by Government officials.¹³

In addition to using Freetown to avoid being sold, slaves also took advantage of growing commercial networks leading into the colony to seek protection during trade excursions. It has been thoroughly demonstrated that from the middle of the 19th century,

Scarcies, and Mr. Richards of Bunce Island, who both confirmed his position on fugitive slaves. Macaulay also appealed to King Firama's practical side, asking whether, in the reverse case, if a group of Temne slaves from Firama's settlement escaped to Freetown, should they be returned to Mr. Cleveland, a Sherbro man? Fyfe alludes to Macaulay's use of country law against Sierra Leone's headmen. See Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 54.

¹³ TNA, CO267/81, Reffell to Campbell, 23 February 1827.

slaves throughout Africa were used to carry agricultural products from the interior to the coast.¹⁴ Although less evidence is available on the organization of the trade in agricultural goods in the first half of the century, it is clear that slaves were also used as porters during that period. From the 1790s, southern Sierra Leone headmen used slaves to man canoes headed into Freetown.¹⁵ As the colony's commercial significance grew within the region, the volume of the canoe trade increased, which brought additional slave porters into British territory. Once slaves crossed into the colony, they could exploit opportunities to seek refuge among the Liberated African population or even challenge the relationship with their masters directly with assistance from British officials.

On such incident occurred in 1801, when John Cleveland, a Sherbro native, entered the colony on a trading mission with a slave named Banna. Banna belonged to Mr. Andow, a slave factor at Cape Mesurado, who arranged the excursion. After completing their business, Banna refused to return with Cleveland and expressed his desire to remain in Freetown. Cleveland appealed for Banna's return, but to no avail: colony officials explained that slavery was not recognized within Freetown and that they would allow Banna himself to choose his fate, ensuring his safety if he decided to remain in the colony.¹⁶ In deciding to stay, Banna strengthened the impression among interior slaves that Freetown was a site where struggles between masters and slaves might play

¹⁴ This point is generally made in literature on the commercial transition, when African exports to the Atlantic world switched from slaves to so-called legitimate commerce. See most recently Robin Law, *From Slave Trade to "Legitimate" Commerce: the Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). On the changing position of slaves in 19th century Africa, see Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). An increased use of slaves as porters was also noted in Freetown around the middle of the century. See Milan Kalous, *Cannibals and Tongo Players of Sierra Leone* (Trentham: Wright & Carman Ltd., 1974), 3.

¹⁵ See chapter 2.

¹⁶ TNA, CO270/6, 11 September 1801.

out in slaves' favor. For those slaves who heard about the case, Banna likely inspired them to consider breaking ties with their owners should the opportunity present itself.

While the evidence is necessarily scanty, one case demonstrates the impact that the action of a few slaves could have on a master's control over his laborers. In a memorial to the colonial Governor issued in 1820, Samuel Samo expressed his concerns over Freetown's policy toward fugitive slaves. As a merchant with a long history of involvement in Upper Guinea's commercial affairs, Samo had an intimate knowledge of slavery in the region. In 1797, he settled in the Pongo where he opened a factory and engaged in the slave trade. By 1811, he had removed to the Iles de Los, where he received a large land grant from local chiefs and purchased 100 slaves to clear the ground for cultivation. From the Iles de Los, Samo became actively involved in trade with Americans and Europeans. His increasing wealth drew the attention of Liberated Africans from Freetown, who began trading with his settlement. According to Samo, the new relationship that developed between his slaves and Sierra Leonean traders opened opportunities for several captives to escape to British territory where they received certificates of freedom, preventing them from being reclaimed. He further noted that these deserters kept in contact with his remaining slaves, encouraging them to flee. Charles MacCarthy, then the Governor of Sierra Leone, had little sympathy for the merchant. Rather than condemn the Liberated Africans for their role in the affair, MacCarthy recommended that Samo indenture his remaining slaves to prevent future absconding.¹⁷

¹⁷ Samo's memorial appears in TNA, CO267/52, Individuals, Samo to Bathurst, "The Memorial of Samuel Samo, of Factory Island, One of the Iles de Los – on the Western Coast of Arica – Merchant;" MacCarthy's reply is in TNA, CO267/51, MacCarthy to Henry Eonlburn, 30 September 1820.

Although slave owners had reason to be concerned over the fugitive slave issue, they were not without their own recourse in responding to the loss of their slaves. The boldest owners pursued slaves inside colonial boundaries, but this risked retribution from a militarily-superior British force. When a family of slaves who belonged to Chief Wemba escaped to Freetown, the chief first lodged a complaint with the settlement but, according to colony officials, he failed to prove his case. Wemba therefore turned to force, sending 20 armed men to recover the family. The party broke into the fugitive family's house in Granville Town and carried them off at night. Perhaps recognizing the danger of such a precedent, a group of Freetown inhabitants set off after Wemba's men, catching and disarming them before they escaped from the settlement. The chief was initially fined \$100 for the incursion into British territory, but later negotiated a reduced payment of about \$30.¹⁸

Most chiefs tried hard to avoid direct confrontation with the British government and instead resorted to more subtle methods to prevent the escape of their slaves. In several cases, British settlers reported that interior headmen positioned patrols just outside of the colony to capture slaves in mid-flight. In early 1827, Colonel Denham informed Governor Campbell of an "imprudent mulatto fellow," probably from one of the Tuckers' settlements, who had established himself in the region just south of Kent, in Freetown. Denham reported the man was placed there as a spy, passing on information about colonial developments, "as well as to entrap any domestics fleeing from the Sherbro headmen to the settlement to claim freedom."¹⁹

¹⁸ *Substance of the Report, Delivered, by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, to the General Court of Proprietors, on Thursday the 29th March, 1798* (London: Printed by James Phillips & Son, 1798), 32.

¹⁹ TNA, CO267/81, Campbell to Hay, March (N.D.), 1827.

While it is thus clear that, in general, the growth of Freetown provided slaves with new opportunities to escape from their masters, it is also apparent that local, regional and international developments had an effect on when and why slaves chose to flee. In his work on colonial Mombasa, Frederick Cooper highlights the significance of transitional moments as catalysts for historical affairs.²⁰ Such turning points were also important in the development of slave flight in Sierra Leone, which did not increase in a linear path but rather changed pace depending on political occurrences in Freetown and in its hinterland. At the local level, as the slave Corri's case demonstrates, the death of an owner was often a traumatic experience for his or her slaves, who faced the prospect of being sold and separated from family members or other slaves with whom they might have formed a bond. Warfare also undermined the relative security of slave life and increased the likelihood of running away. Regionally, slaves seem to have responded to perceived changes in the security that absconding to Freetown provided. Small numbers of slaves ran away immediately upon the establishment of the settlement and more continued to seek protection up to the proclamation of the Transfer Act.²¹ Fugitive slaves again emerged as an important issue around 1820, likely due to the increased influence of Liberated Africans in the hinterland and the worsening conditions that slaves faced as they were pushed to meet the growing demand for agricultural provisions in newly-established markets. Following Samuel Samo's complaint, however, the colonial

²⁰ Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), preface.

²¹ Estimations of the fugitive slave population are difficult before the 1850s. No official statistics were kept. It is likely that somewhere between 10 and 25 slaves arrived at the Colony seeking British protection each year over the first few decades of the 19th century. In 1840, Governor Doherty noted that 41 slaves had sought refuge in Freetown over the previous three years: 22 men, 11 women and 8 children. See TNA, CO267/159, Doherty to Russell, 22 April 1840.

government raised the issue with less frequency, suggesting that fewer slaves absconded in the 1820s.

After cooling for nearly a decade, the concern over fugitive slaves reemerged in the 1830s, this time fueled by the decisions of a succession of Freetown governors to intervene in wars in the interior. Following years of hostility between powerful families in the Rokon region, Governor Findlay secured a treaty of friendship with the parties. In the treaty, colonial officials used a new approach in trying to settle the fugitive slave question, agreeing to return runaway “domestics” – one of the first times this distinction appeared in an official document. Although the treaty was approved at the time, when a similar one was proposed in 1836 by Governor Campbell to end feuds among chiefs in Magbele, British officials at home refused to ratify it, objecting to the clause binding Freetown to return runaways. As Charles Glenelg, the Secretary of State noted, “the convention is obviously formed with the intention of allowing masters of fugitive slaves to claim them as domestics and as the Municipal Law of England can allow of no such compromise between freedom and slavery, there is no alternative but to expunge the whole of the...article.”²²

From the chiefs’ perspective, the British reversal on the decision to return fugitive slaves represented a major blow and led most of them to view the settlement with renewed suspicion. Moreover, it raised the possibility that the chiefs would retaliate against Liberated Africans traveling through their territory. Governor Doherty, who succeeded Campbell, voiced concern that the Magbele treaty “indiscreetly revived and agitated” the fugitive slave issue and recommended that future agreements exclude

²² TNA, CO267/140, enclosure in Campbell to Bart, 21 November 1837. For the context of the Magbele and Rokon conflicts and subsequent British intervention, see Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 185-186 and 206.

clauses on runaways altogether. The damage, however, seemed to have been done. In 1840, reportedly fueled by anger over the loss of their slaves, inhabitants of the Quiah country were thought to have joined with parties from the Bullom Shore to plan an attack on the colony. Although a subsequent investigation revealed that the conflict had much more diverse origins, it is interesting to note that officials immediately assumed it was rooted in concerns over slavery.²³ By this point in the 19th century, control over slaves seems to have emerged as the central tension in Freetown's relationship with the headmen of the interior.

Bunce Island Revolt

For those slaves who remained with their masters, the British suppression effort represented an opportunity to test the rights that masters claimed over them. Although the diverse ways in which African slaves understood and employed shifts in moral standards about the Atlantic slave trade to their own advantage remains to be explored,²⁴ one dramatic occurrence in the first decade of the 19th century demonstrates that slaves in Sierra Leone were well aware of the suppression movement's potential to improve their lives. Drawing their own implications about the consequences of the ending of the slave

²³ TNA, CO267/159, Doherty to Russell, 22 April 1840; *Ibid*, Doherty to Russell, 29 July 1840.

²⁴ In the only major work dedicated to African strategies against the slave trade, no contributions specifically address the impact of the suppression movement on African resistance to the slave trade. See Sylviane A. Diouf, *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003). A number of rebellions did take place among slaves in the Sierra Leone hinterland in the 19th century, though their causes are complex. On these, see Bruce Mouser, "Rebellion, Marronage and Jihad: Strategies and Resistance to Slavery on the Sierra Leone Coast, c. 1783-1796," *Journal of African History*, 48, 1 (March, 2007), 27-44; Ismail Rashid, "Escape, Revolt and Marronage in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Sierra Leone Hinterland," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 34, 3 (2000), 656-683; Bronislaw Nowak, "The Slave Rebellion in Sierra Leone in 1785-1796," *Hemispheres*, 3, 3 (1986), 151-169. The literature on the origins of abolition is lengthy but see most recently, Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), which argues against the idea that the abolitionist movement was rooted simply in changing moral attitudes toward slavery.

trade, a group of plantation slaves rose up and took control of Bunce Island, in the Sierra Leone estuary, for a week before the rebellion was suppressed and the ringleaders executed.

Bunce Island had been involved in supplying slaves for transatlantic vessels from the mid-1660s, when the Gambia Adventurers sublet the island from the Company of Royal Adventurers, a chartered British merchant company. From 1672, when the settlement was taken over by the Royal African Company, it maintained its position as the British headquarters for Sierra Leone trade. After a dispute between Walter Charles, the Island's new British governor, and an Afro-Portuguese settler, the settlement was burned down in 1728 and subsequently abandoned by the Company.²⁵ Still, even in private hands, Bunce Island remained the most prominent point of slave embarkation in the Sierra Leone region throughout the 18th century.²⁶

In the first few decades after Freetown's establishment, Sierra Leone's headmen feared that the new settlement would interfere with the slaving networks that had for some time connected Bunce Island with the mainland. Colony officials tried to ease their fears by reasserting the principle of non-interference in the affairs of the interior. Governor Thompson assured the chiefs that "it was certainly open to the natives to bring down traffic of any kind which they might wish, with the single exception of bringing slaves actually into the British settlements."²⁷ As a personal favor, the governor only

²⁵ Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 4-5; For a first-hand account of Bunce's destruction, see TNA, T70/1465, which includes Walter Charles' diary and minutes of transactions up to the point of the attack.

²⁶ See chapter 1. On the 18th century slave trade from Bunce Island, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 6.

²⁷ TNA, CO267/27, Thornton to Castlereagh, 4 February 1810.

requested that chiefs keep slave vessels docked off Leopard's Island, well out of colonial jurisdiction.²⁸

As in the cases involving fugitives entering Freetown, however, the slaves living on Bunce Island drew an inevitable link between the suppression of the transatlantic trade and improvements in the relationship between slaves and masters. Several slaves concluded that the end of the Atlantic slave trade would rob masters of their most potent controlling weapon – sale to New World-bound vessels. Without this crucial tool, they reasoned, owners would be unable to maintain their positions of authority.²⁹ For the few of Bunce's slaves who articulated this idea, the suppression of the slave trade represented a moment when the entire slave system might be overturned. With this in mind, a group of slaves rose up and tried to exploit the cracks they perceived to have formed in their owners' control over them.

The rebellion began on the 13th of October, 1809, when, according to the island's superintendent, Samuel Walker, the settlement's slaves began behaving in a "riotous manner." That morning they freed one of the Island's slaves who had been previously confined as a punishment for a misdemeanor. The following day, Walker gathered his slaves and tried to identify the culprit. While standing in line, the group rose up and refused to obey any orders, quickly turning hostile and overtaking the island. Walker fled in fear and he immediately sent to Freetown for assistance, appealing to its inhabitants' common British bonds and to their interest in preventing regional instability. Despite the contrasting ideological foundations of the two settlements, Freetown officials agreed to help, noting that "it is the duty of the government of this colony to render every possible

²⁸ Ibid. He made this request to avoid accusations of supporting the slave trade from agents of the Sierra Leone Company whom, he claimed, considered him their enemy.

²⁹ TNA, CO267/27, Thornton to Castlereagh, 4 February 1810.

assistance at all times to any British settlement upon the coast, and particularly to one whose interests are so closely connected by local circumstances with the welfare of this Colony as are those of the Settlement of Bance Island.”³⁰ On the 16th of October, just three days after the movement started, Thompson sent a military force to subdue the rebels. Several days later, a court martial was assembled in Freetown, which convicted 14 individuals for their involvement in the affair. Banna and Morrey, who led the rebellion, were sentenced to death; the less active participants were removed to the Gold Coast.³¹

The Bunce Island revolt demonstrates the difficulty in distinguishing between the slave trade and slavery itself. Certainly for those on Bunce Island who risked death to challenge their masters’ authority, intervention in one sphere had important consequences for the other. Recounting the incident to the Colonial Office, Thornton explained that the revolt had arisen “from the persuasion of the inhabitants that as the abolition of the slave trade had deprived the superintendent of the island of the power of punishing acts of insubordination by selling the offender, there remained no method of enforcing subordination.”³² Freetown’s response to the Bunce Island rebellion is an equally telling moment for understanding Britain’s colonial objectives in the early-19th century. By providing assistance to Samuel Walker, the British forcibly reasserted the dichotomy between the Atlantic slave trade and African slavery.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The majority of documents on the Bunce Island revolt are in TNA, CO270/11, 14 October 1809 and its enclosures. See also TNA, CO267/28, Walker to Thompson, 4 November 1809. The revolt is briefly noted in Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 108.

³² TNA, CO267/27, Thornton to Castlereagh, 4 February 1810.

Slave dealing, Subjectivity and Colonialism, 1830s to 1861

Kidnapping, Slave Dealing and Slaveholding

Few things illustrate the complexity of Britain's confrontation with slavery better than the fact that slaves continued to circulate within the colony and its outskirts throughout the 19th century. As part of the transformation of the internal slave trade described in the previous chapter, in which southern Sierra Leone slaves were transported to the peanut-producing regions north of Freetown, merchants at times entered the colony with young slaves to sell.³³ On other occasions, Liberated African children were kidnapped and added to the growing number of people forcibly driven toward groundnut plantations. As with fugitive slaves, the transport of enslaved children across colonial boundaries forced Freetown officials to intervene in internal affairs. Their actions also provided slaves with new opportunities to leave their owners and seek British protection.

Although the use and trade of slaves in Freetown was not systematic in the first few decades of the 19th century, they did periodically emerge as problems. On two different occasions, George Nicol, a European carpenter once employed by the Company, was questioned about his role in purchasing slaves. Nicol confirmed that he did buy at least three children, but that in each case he had actually saved them from being embarked on a transatlantic vessel. Several years later, Nicol was again on the defensive for related charges, after he asked a merchant at Robanna to purchase a 7-year old girl

³³ See Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 163-189, for the enslavement of children around Lagos. Victims of the internal and external slave trade appear to have gotten younger throughout Africa in the 19th century. Though causes for this are not well understood, a special edition of *Slavery & Abolition* entitled "Children in European Systems of Slavery" provides several new perspectives. See Volume 27, 2 (2006).

from Pedro Naimbanna, the town's headman.³⁴ As these two examples imply, however, the scope and scale of the Freetown slave trade was limited during this period.

In 1830, Chief Justice Jeffcott provided the first evidence of widespread slave dealing around Freetown. After examining several years of population data, he found a large difference between the number of Liberated Africans imported into the colony and those who were counted in censuses, even when accounting for a birth-to-death ratio of 7 to 1.³⁵ Despite the variety of causes that might have helped explain these discrepancies, Jeffcott immediately looked to kidnapping and enslavement, concluding that “the slave trade is either directly carried on, altho’ of course not openly and ostensibly, or that it is aided and abetted in this Colony.”³⁶ His bold proclamation caused major concerns in Freetown and abroad. The Secretary of State formed a board of enquiry to investigate the claims and it concluded that Liberated Africans were indeed held in considerable numbers in the interior.³⁷ Colonial officials were shocked at the extent of the trade and they began actively pursuing individuals involved in colonial slaving. Over a 3-week period between January and February, 26 indictments for slave dealing were handed down.³⁸

³⁴ TNA, CO267/24, 29 August 1808 and 14 September 1808. See also *[Review of] the Trials of the Slave Traders, Samuel Samo, Joseph Peters, and William Tufft: Tried in April and June 1812, before the Hon. Robert Thorpe, L.L.D...: with two letters on the slave trade/from a gentleman resident at Sierra Leone, to an advocate for the abolition in London* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1813).

³⁵ Jeffcott later admitted to miscalculating this ratio, it was still found that nearly 3,000 Liberated Africans were unaccounted for once a more accurate one was used. TNA, CO267/109, Findlay to Goderich, 29 June 1831 and enclosures.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ The investigation also noted that Sherbro and Mende slaves, whose homelands were nearer to the Colony, returned home in small numbers, accounting for some of the difference in population figures. One witness testified that as many as 500 Liberated Africans were enslaved in the Mandingo country alone. Another believed that 250 had been sent to the Pongo and Gallinas regions over the previous three years. See enclosure 3 in TNA, CO267/109, Findlay to Goderich, 29 June 1831.

³⁸ TNA, CO267/105, Murray to Findlay, 15 May 1830.

In pursuing suspected slave dealers who were accused of kidnapping Liberated Africans, Freetown officials were also forced to confront headmen in the interior, to whom the victims were sold. When Governor Findlay received a report that 5 Liberated African boys had been forcibly removed to the Lower Boom River in the Sherbro region, he dispatched a representative to demand their return. The story of these individuals underscores the complications that Freetown officials faced in navigating Sierra Leone's internal slaving networks. The boys were first sold to Kony Tom, nephew of James Tucker, the chief of the Lower Boom. Kony Tom then transferred them to a French slave trader named Sabatier, who resided at Yealla, one of Tucker's towns on the Boom. However, during a recent war, nearly all of Tucker's towns were destroyed, forcing the leader to flee to Kittam. In the confusion, Sabatier made for the Gallinas to sell some of his slaves to Siaka, King of the Gallinas, but he was intercepted by Mahmadoo Seacy, one of Cleveland's head warmen, who took the party captive. Seacy sold the Liberated Africans to a party of Susu slave traders, who took them further inland. In the end, however, Cleveland was able to track the captives down, and he released them to officials on York Island.³⁹

British excursions to the interior to recover kidnapped Liberated Africans provided the region's slaves with new opportunities to seek protection from their masters. Some hinterland slaves simply lied about their origins. Given the rather confused records of Freetown's population, it was not especially difficult for any slave to claim a Liberated African identity. Often, the only way an official determined whether a slave would be

³⁹ Enclosure 1 in CO267/103, Findlay to Hay, 17 July 1830. It is interesting to note that unlike in other British colonies later in the century, Freetown officials seemed to pursue slave dealers with vigor. For the inactivity of colonial regimes against slave dealing, see Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 179-180. More broadly, see Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

granted protection was if they spoke English. For example, when the condemned slave schooner *Enganador* arrived in Freetown in 1840, Governor Fergusson confirmed that three liberated slaves “who spoke the broken English of Sierra Leone with great fluency” were found on board.⁴⁰

Given the lengthy history of Britain’s commercial relations with the Sierra Leone coast, however, it is inconceivable that Liberated Africans were the only English speakers.⁴¹ Indeed, southern Sierra Leone’s headmen often conducted business with Freetown merchants in English themselves or through the use of English translators. By using linguistic grounds to define Liberated Africans, colony officials allowed any English-speaking slaves to submit claims for British protection. As a result, Freetown representatives who were sent to investigate the kidnapping of a small group of Liberated Africans often arrived to find a larger number of slaves who claimed colony origins. With few guidelines, officials were given wide latitude to determine who and who not to “liberate.”

Governor Doherty recognized the problems with this method of identifying Liberated Africans during one investigation in 1840. In that year, a report from Mr. Kennedy, an official in the Havana court of mixed commission, suggested that Liberated Africans were frequently found on condemned vessels in Cuba. Kennedy mentioned in particular the case of Daniel Speck, an English-speaking captive found on a slave ship that was captured earlier in the year. Although Speck’s colonial origins were not in question, Doherty nevertheless argued that kidnapping was far less common than

⁴⁰ TNA, CO267/187, Fergusson to Stanley, 15 February 1845. On the *Enganador*, see ID 3884 in the *Voyages* database.

⁴¹ Linda Rose Day, “Afro-British Integration on the Sherbro Coast, 1665-1795,” *Africana Research Bulletin*, 12, 3 (1983), 82-107.

Kennedy claimed. Using language as a benchmark to identify Liberated African origins was a large part of the problem. Knowledge of English, Doherty insisted, could just as easily come from a temporary residence in the colony or from simply living in Freetown's vicinity.⁴²

Despite Doherty's skepticism, it is clear that Liberated Africans were at times subjected to re-enslavement, particularly when they traveled outside of the colony. During the investigations that followed the condemnation of the *Enganador*, several slaves claimed to have been from Freetown. According to their testimony, these Liberated African subjects had been seized and sold while engaged in trading ventures in the hinterland. Tom Peters, one of the victims, noted in his deposition that he was a Sherbro man who was brought to the colony on a condemned slave vessel when he was young. After his first liberation, Peters was sent to school at York under Superintendent Pratt. Pratt wished to bring Peters to England but Peters refused and fled to Kissy, where he worked for Mahamadoo, an Aku man, as captain of his canoe. On one excursion up the Bompey River to Tiama, in Mende country, Mahamadoo sold Peters to Sanasee, Tiama's headman, to settle a debt. From there Peters was sold to the Boom country, where he spent three months as a slave under Tayack before being taken to the Luiz, a Spanish slave dealer who operated in the Gallinas.⁴³

Colony officials were further outraged when the three liberated individuals provided evidence of additional atrocities committed against Elizabeth Eastman, a female recaptive who worked for Luiz as a washerwoman in southern Sierra Leone. During their detention in a barracoon at Seabar, Eastman recognized the three men from the colony.

⁴² TNA, CO267/260, Doherty to Russell, 18 October 1840.

⁴³ TNA, CO267/187, Fergusson to Stanley, 15 February 1845 and enclosures.

She took pity on them, bringing extra food and water. Luiz, however, found out about the arrangement. Fearing that she intended to free the captives, Luiz beat her severely in front of the men and then shackled her.⁴⁴

In response to these graphic depositions, Fergusson sent Commodore Jones to meet Harry Tucker at Seabar, where Eastman was abducted. While Jones was unable to obtain immediate redress for the incident, the chiefs of Sherbro and Gallinas agreed to meet and settle the affair. In June – 4 months after Eastman’s mistreatment was first reported – the chiefs concluded their gathering, levying a fine valued at 10 slaves against Harry Tucker.⁴⁵ Tucker paid half the fine in goods to Sycummah, the King of Jong country, but settled the remainder with five enslaved children. The offering put the Freetown governor in an uncomfortable bind: on the one hand, the colony could not accept payment in slaves but on the other, rejecting them meant returning the children to slavery. Governor Fergusson determined to accept the mixed payment and liberate the children.⁴⁶

In addition to slave dealing and the kidnapping of Liberated Africans, Freetown officials faced the growing problem of slave use in the colony. The extent of slavery within Freetown emerged in the 1850s under Governor Kennedy, but slaves were likely used in the settlement much earlier. The secrecy of the trade was undermined only when Kennedy received assistance from Momodu Yeli, a Muslim Mandinka from Jolof

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Slaves, in this case, were a unit of value similar to the “bar” trade in Upper Guinea. By levying a fine in slaves, it did not necessarily mean it was paid with the transfer of human beings but rather that the value of the fine was determined against the cost of a slave. On the bar trade, see Philip Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa; Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 312; and Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 9. John Grace provides a similar example of a slave as a unit of currency in *Domestic Slavery*, 13.

⁴⁶ TNA, CO267/187, Fergusson to Stanley, 15 February 1845; and enclosure in *ibid*, Fergusson to Stanley, 16 June 1845.

country, who began testifying against several well-known slave dealers in 1852 in return for a small reward. Yeli's support for the administration, however, came at great personal cost. In a letter of commendation to British officials at home, Kennedy warned that the informant "will never again be able to go beyond the precincts of the colony without danger and his personal safety is questionable even within it."⁴⁷

Yeli's testimony reveals an intricate slaving network which supported the circulation of slaves around the colony. The majority of incoming captives were supplied through the same route that connected southern Sierra Leone with the groundnut plantations to the north. During this lengthy journey, smaller numbers of enslaved Africans were rerouted into Freetown, separated from the others who were driven further along. The organization of this trade revolved in part around the age of its victims. Young slaves were in great demand in Freetown, where they were put to work within households as domestic laborers. Because of their youth, child slaves were easily hidden from view and were also more likely to be absorbed into existing family units over time.⁴⁸

In many cases, however, enslaved children did not become permanent members of Freetown households but rather were sold back out of the settlement as they grew older. Given the demand for labor in the interior, slave owners in the colony could easily dispose of their maturing slaves, and they frequently did so in exchange for cattle

⁴⁷ Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 270-272, briefly mentions Yeli's role in undermining the colony's slave trade. For additional detail, see TNA, CO267/229, Kennedy to Parkington, 23 December 1852. For the quote, see Kennedy to Parkington, 6 January 1853, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 90 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 343.

⁴⁸ On the organization of the trade and its relationship to the broader transformation of the internal slave trade, see TNA, CO267/231, Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 14 March 1853. For a similar treatment of Lagos's concerns toward the use of slave children, see Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 163-178.

supplied from the interior.⁴⁹ The organization of this trade ensured a continuous cycle of alienation for the victims whom it affected, who rarely had time to acculturate into their hosts' households.⁵⁰ For their part, Freetown's slave owners were primarily concerned with the impact that an extensive stay in the colony would have on the rights that slaves claimed, fearing that over time slaves would gain a sense of British customs, leading them to challenge their masters' authority. In one case, a young slave who had been in the colony for 10 years was unexpectedly sold to Susu slave dealers from Mabelly and carried by canoe to Medina. "He would have kept me," the boy later explained, "had I not known so much English fashion," which the owner felt would cause the boy to run.⁵¹

The various "worlds" through which young slaves circulated is underscored by the case of Koota, who testified against her owners in 1853.⁵² During a war in the Mende country southeast of Freetown, Koota was sold to a Susu slave dealer who brought her to Wonkafong, where she was held in slavery for several years. Around 1850, Koota was again sold to Peter Wilson, a Liberated African, who brought her into Freetown where she worked as a domestic for Wilson's wife. After two years, Koota, then between 14 and 15 years old, was removed to Romatangoh, on the Bullom Shore, with a small group of enslaved children, where she was eventually freed with Momodu Yeli's help.⁵³

⁴⁹ TNA, CO267/229, Kennedy to Pakington, 23 December 1852; TNA, CO267/234, Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 9 December 1853.

⁵⁰ The impact of such constant movement must have been similar to the "institutionalization of marginality" described by Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff. See the introduction in Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977).

⁵¹ Enclosure 3 in Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 15 March 1853, in *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 90, 351-352.

⁵² The idea that the slave trade spanned a number of "worlds" comes from Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

⁵³ See enclosures in TNA, CO267/233, Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 July 1853.

Koota's experiences highlight the centrality of gender in the internal slave trade of 19th century Sierra Leone. Slavery scholars have long recognized the high demand for female slaves in Africa, but they have disagreed over its cause. In their seminal collection of essays on African slavery, Miers and Kopytoff emphasize African women's reproductive roles, suggesting that slaves' primary significance was in their ability to increase the size of households. Around the same time, a generally Marxist approach to issues concerning African slavery led by Claude Meillassoux and others detailed the significant role that women played in producing agricultural commodities. More recent works have synthesized these two views, recognizing women's productive and reproductive capacities in their discussion of African slave systems and noting that slavery varied in Africa depending on time and place.⁵⁴

In Freetown, young female slaves were sought after as domestic laborers, wives and dependents. However, given the secretive context in which the colony's slave trade operated, it is often difficult to distinguish owners' motivations for investing in slaves. In some cases, settlers appear to have purchased girls as wives, with whom they presumably intended to have children. Other times, however, owners redefined their slaves as wives to avoid punishment from Freetown officials. In the mid-1850s, for example, Boccari Soonkonokoh asked Momodu Yeli to act as a witness for his purchase of a slave girl. He

⁵⁴ Local and regional studies addressing the relationship between slavery and gender in Africa are numerous. The broadest works include Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in Africa*; Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991); Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Martin Klein, "The Study of Slavery in Africa: A Review Article," *Journal of African History*, 19, 4 (1978), 599-609. Frederick Cooper accurately describes the timelessness in many of these early approaches, which attempted to define an essential "African" form of slavery. See his essay, "The Problem of Slavery in African Studies," *Journal of African History*, 20, 1 (1979), 103-125. For the most recent specifically gendered approach to slavery in Africa, see Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph C. Miller, eds., *Women and Slavery*, Volume 1 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), especially Paul E. Lovejoy's chapter, "Internal Markets or an Atlantic-Sahara Divide? How Women Fit into the Slave Trade of West Africa."

paid \$16 for Phena, a Koronko girl, whose name he changed to Seerah. He kept her in the house for some time but upon hearing that he was accused of slaveholding, Soonkonokoh had his first wife remove the girl from the colony. His plan did not work; he was quickly arrested and tried for slaveholding. In his defense, Soonkonokoh first testified that he bought the girl not as a slave but only to help carry water. Later, he added that he found Phena while in Kono country, where he “fell in love with her and redeemed her for a wife.” A witness to the case confirmed that Soonkonokoh had paid kola to the girl’s previous master in the interior for her release. Even Phena herself seemed unsure of her status within the household - when asked directly she noted that she was never called a slave.⁵⁵

The ambiguity in defining what constituted slavery left considerable leverage for Freetown’s governors to choose when to intervene in cases of slave dealing and slaveholding. From a legal perspective, the situation should have been clear. In 1843, legislation was passed which made it an offense for British subjects to own or trade slaves anywhere in the world. But as with other parts of Africa under British control, colonial administrators seemed either unaware of the magnitude of slavery within their possessions or unwilling to deal with the consequences of suppressing it. It was not until the 1850s that Freetown officials began a protracted campaign to confront slavery within their settlement.

Governor Kennedy spearheaded the mid-century movement against slaveholding, kidnapping and slave dealing in the British settlement. From the outset, Kennedy took an active stance against the movement of children throughout Freetown. During his first year as Governor, he rescued 268 children – 138 male and 130 female – including both

⁵⁵ TNA, CO267/233, Enclosure 7 in Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 July 1853.

those who were carried into the colony and some who were removed from it. His intervention uncovered a slaving network much larger than officials had anticipated. To combat the distribution of young slaves in the region, Kennedy passed a series of measures to restrict access to girls and boys and to monitor their movements within the colony. In December of 1853, he passed the “Ordinance for the better protection of Alien Children within the Colony of Sierra Leone,” which required the registration of any person under the age of 21 who entered the colony within 24 hours of their arrival. Two years later, this ordinance was amended to include a provision requiring all incoming children to attend school for four hours a day and stating that such children could not be removed without the government’s permission.⁵⁶

In passing ordinances for the registration of alien children, Kennedy intervened in a contentious issue over which settlers, administrators and inhabitants of the interior vehemently disagreed. At the heart of the matter was how to define slavery. Some settlers argued that the children who arrived were part of extended family networks from the interior and that the adults who received incoming children played an important role in raising them. In a memorial circulated in 1854 and signed by “citizens of Freetown,” a group of settlers took a bolder approach, dismissing the notion of child slavery altogether. Kennedy’s investigations, they felt, only demonstrated that “free African children of free African parents residing in the neighboring territories are placed, in accordance with long usage, under the guardianship of their friends or connections for education and training in

⁵⁶ TNA, CO879/1, African, XXVI, Memoranda on the British Settlements on the West Coast of Africa,” 15-16, summarizes the context of the ordinances. For the individual passage of each one, see TNA, CO267/234, Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 9 December 1853; and TNA, CO267/249, Hill to Labouchere, 18 December 1855. Similar ordinances were passed in Lagos, but not until 1877. See Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 182-183.

useful occupations.”⁵⁷ Perhaps in a final effort to frighten the governor from intervention, the memorialists warned that by rescuing suspected slaves who entered Freetown, the government risked scaring away merchants and disrupting the flow of goods into the colony.

In the context of increased surveillance over the movements of Freetown’s inhabitants, the Governor also began keeping a register of fugitive slaves who escaped to Freetown. For each absconding slave, an entry was made that included name, sex, age, ethnicity and other relevant data. Until 1858, the register was not regularly maintained. Beginning that year, however, annual reports were submitted to the colonial office in which the registers were copied. Although these likely represented a small fraction of the total numbers of slaves who escaped to the colony, their numbers still indicate a slow increase in the volume of slave flight over the decade. From just 35 recorded slaves entering the settlement in 1858, the number of runaways increased to a high of 117 the following year. Between 1858 and 1861, when colonial officials began annexing additional territory in the interior, a total of 288 fugitive slaves were recorded.⁵⁸

The data suggest that during this period, slave flight was limited to those captives living within close range of the colony. Given the risks that fugitive slaves took in traveling through relatively unknown territory, this is hardly surprising. Table 5.1 demonstrates that more than four out of every ten registered fugitive slaves came from the adjacent Temne-speaking territory, in which Freetown itself was settled. The

⁵⁷ TNA, CO267/239, Kennedy to the Duke of Newcastle, 10 February 1854.

⁵⁸ I have entered each record into a dataset covering the period between 1858 and 1894. The annual lists for the period between 1858 and 1861 can be found in TNA, CO267/261, Hill to Sytton Bart, 13 July 1858; CO267/264, Fitzjames to the Duke of Newcastle, 19 August 1859; CO267/267, Fitzjames to the Duke of Newcastle, 27 August 1860; and CO267/271, Hill to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 July 1861.

Table 5.1, Fugitive Slaves Entering Freetown by Ethnicity and Gender, 1858-61

Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total
Temne	61	63	124
Mende	50	16	66
Sherbro	20	7	27
Susu	8	6	14
Koronko	8	4	12
Colony Born	3	9	12
Loko	5	6	11
Outside Sierra Leone	6	2	8
Limba	1	2	3
Kono	2	0	2
Toma	1	1	2
Fula	1	0	1
Vai	1	0	1
Totals⁵⁹	167	116	283

Source: Register of Escaped Slaves Database; see fn. 57 for original citations

remaining fugitives were predominantly Mende and Sherbro with a small group of Koronko, Vai, Kono and others. Through the remainder of the century, however, slaves appear to have come in larger numbers from the Mende-speaking interior. Although a full analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is interesting to note that over time, the frontier from which slaves escaped in their flight to Freetown appears to have extended further inland.

By the middle of the 19th century, the question of how to confront slavery in Freetown and its hinterland commanded attention at the highest levels of the colonial administration. Freetown's governors began to understand and accept what slaves from the interior had been making clear all along – that slavery could not be isolated from the slave trade and, equally important, that migration between the colony and its interior

⁵⁹ I have not included five cases in which an arriving slave's gender was not specified

made British policies toward slavery particularly difficult to apply. The latter issue was especially problematic as the interventionist governors of the 1850s began pursuing those responsible for the movement of slaves across colonial boundaries.

Slave Dealing and Defining the Colonial Subject

In the wake of the British government's outrage over the extent of slave trading within colonial territory, Freetown governors began a more active attempt to suppress the traffic in young slaves. Those who were caught or suspected of slave dealing were tried by a Grand Jury. In two sessions in early 1853, 17 individuals were convicted. However, from Kennedy's perspective, the juries were unreliable. Often jurors had personal or commercial relationships with those who were brought under trial. Aku jurors were particularly reluctant to rule against suspected criminals of the same ethnic background. Still determined to crush the Freetown slave trade, Kennedy passed an Ordinance abolishing Grand Juries and restricted petty jurors by a property qualification. The Ordinance was not well received among settlers. A group of more than 550 sent a petition in protest to the Secretary of State, which was rejected.⁶⁰

Often, however, slave dealers operated outside of the colony, entering covertly to sell or purchase small groups of young girls and boys. Many Liberated Africans were themselves implicated in the operation along with Muslim merchants from adjacent lands.⁶¹ Although cases where slave dealers were caught inside colonial territory went

⁶⁰ Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 271.

⁶¹ See chapter 4 for the relationship between Islam and the slave trade in Freetown and its hinterland. Colonial governors generally identified slave dealers as Susu or Mandingo. Whether the slave dealers would have given themselves these labels is open to debate. The significant point here is that they identified with Islam. For the Islamic connotations of the term Manding, which includes the ethnic group Mandingo, see Sylviane Anna Diouf, "Devils or Sorcerers, Muslims or Studs: Manding in the Americas,"

directly to trial, officials were less clear about their jurisdiction in the interior. The problem stemmed from disagreements over the legal status of Liberated Africans. According to several leading legal practitioners, since Liberated Africans were never officially declared to be colonial subjects, Freetown authorities had no right to pursue them outside of the settlement. Without guidance from the British officials at home on the issue, Freetown's government feared that the pursuit of slave dealers would reach a dead end.⁶²

With this in mind, successive governors sent a flurry of despatches to officials at home requesting an immediate clarification of the legal status of Liberated Africans. The resulting correspondence exposed significant differences of opinion over how to approach the issue. For administrators in Sierra Leone, the situation was dire. Governor Macdonald suggested it was necessary for an Act of Imperial Parliament to confirm Liberated Africans as British subjects. The Secretary of State, however, dragged his feet, replying that local legislation was sufficient. Given the magnitude of the Liberated African population, Macdonald felt more decisive action was required. Moreover, many recaptives actively exploited the legal loophole. In a pointed letter to Earl Grey summarizing the problem, Macdonald noted that "We should either allow [Liberated Africans] to be amenable to country law (which in our treaties is strictly prohibited) or we should make them amenable to our own law...Liberated Africans currently claim British citizenship when it suits their interests and disown this right when it would render punishment."⁶³

in Paul E. Lovejoy and David V. Trotman, eds., *Trans-Atlantic Dimension of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (New York: Continuum, 2003), chapter 7.

⁶² *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 90, Macdonald to Earl Grey, 10 August 1851 and reply, 331.

⁶³ *Ibid*, Macdonald to Earl Grey, 27 November 1851, 332-3.

Concern over the legal status of Liberated Africans was not limited to Sierra Leone. In the late-1830s, a wave of recaptives emigrated to Nigeria, where they established themselves as traders and missionaries. Decades later, around the same time when Freetown administrators were anxiously awaiting advice from the Colonial Office on the Liberated African question, officials in Lagos sought clarification on the legal status of Sierra Leone emigrants arriving in Nigeria. The situation was particularly confused for the earliest arrivals, many of whom were born in the Lagos hinterland, had lived some time in Freetown after their liberation and then returned. Although the Treaty of Cession signed in 1861 declared all the city's inhabitants "the *Queen's* subjects," this was distinct from granting them the status of British subjects. In 1865, Sir John Glover, Lieutenant-Governor of Lagos, took decisive action, determining to treat any non-"British" born inhabitant as British subject while in the city, but remove this status if they left.⁶⁴

Ultimately, confronting the problem of slavery raised fundamental questions about Britain's colonial project and forced officials at home and abroad to rethink the nature of the colonial state. Despite their intention to live in relative isolation from the people and developments of the interior, pursuing slave traders required a degree of intervention that inevitably enhanced Freetown's position in regional affairs. It also made governors increasingly aware of the need to clarify the relationship between colonial settlers and interior settlements. Still, the Colonial Office balked at any requests to acknowledge these needs in writing. The tension continued to play out over the status of Liberated Africans. Rather than passing an Imperial Act to clarify their legal

⁶⁴ Jean Herskovits Kopytoff, *A Preface to Modern Nigeria: the "Sierra Leonians" in Yoruba, 1830-1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 204-205.

status, as Governor Macdonald sought, the Secretary of State continued to seek solutions in local legislation. Treaties might be more carefully worded, to include “British subjects or Liberated Africans,” for example. But this, he added, required that any old treaties with interior chiefs be renegotiated.⁶⁵

In the end, however, colony officials successfully argued that a concise definition of Freetown’s inhabitants was the only way to suppress the colonial slave trade. In August of 1853, an Imperial Act was passed that made all Liberated Africans British subjects.⁶⁶ The Act made it possible to take more extensive actions against settlement dwellers who engaged in the slave trade. The legislation, however, raised new concerns. While it allowed Freetown’s officials to pursue suspected slave traders beyond the British border, the Imperial Act did not provide guidelines on how to negotiate with the headmen in whose territory the suspects resided. Instead, British governors used the momentum created by the Act to pursue a policy of annexation, adding new territory to expand the legal and commercial boundaries in which British rules applied.

Slavery, The Slave Trade and Colonial Expansion

The second half of the 19th century witnessed an increase in European competition for African agricultural products unlike any previous period in the history of Afro-European affairs. One consequence of this development was a new emphasis on European claims over land in Africa. The willingness of Europeans to increase their African landholdings, however, came slowly and at times only begrudgingly. Indeed, throughout the first forty or fifty years of the 19th century, officials more commonly

⁶⁵ *BPP, Slave Trade*, Vol. 90, Macdonald to Pakington, 14 June 1852, 340.

⁶⁶ J.J. Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone, West Africa* (London: Dublin, Browne and Nolan, 1903), 189.

emphasized the need to minimize their presence in Africa. In the British case, years of financial investments in their African possessions did little to enhance their profitability. Administrators still faced growing budget deficits and a deadly disease environment that proved fatal for as many as half of new arrivals.⁶⁷

Moreover, the widespread use of slave labor in the interior meant that colonial expansion would require a direct confrontation with slavery and slaveholders. For much of the 19th century, the intimate relationship between colonization and slavery tended therefore to limit Europe's desire to take control of any possessions beyond those that they already held. Scholars of the Gold Coast have extensively detailed this issue. For many years, British forts along the Gold Coast were administered by councils of merchants, who permitted slaveholding and the return of fugitive slaves. In 1843, the British government took over responsibility for the settlements. To minimize their impact on commercial relations and prevent discord among interior slave owners, Britain restricted its sovereignty to the coastal forts and their immediate surroundings, classifying the remaining territory a protectorate. Although slavery was outlawed within the Gold Coast colony, officials did not disrupt slaveholding or trading in the protected zones.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Philip D. Curtin, "Epidemiology and the Slave Trade," *Political Science Quarterly*, 82, 2 (June, 1968), 190-216. In the Freetown case, naval officers also complained that the settlement was too far removed from the major sources of slave supply in the Bight of Benin and Biafra. This often resulted in high rates of mortality during voyages returning captured vessels to Freetown for trial in the court of mixed commission. A brief effort to transfer the courts and suppression apparatus to Fernando Po ultimately failed. See Robert T. Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leone Campaign, 1826-1834," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 6, 2 (1973), 249-264; David Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade: The Case of the Bight of Biafra," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 9, 1 (Summer, 1978), 47-64.

⁶⁸ Raymond E. Dummett and Marion Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti, and the Northern Territories," in Miers and Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa*, 73-75; Grace, *Domestic Slavery*, 25-29; Raymond E. Dummett, "Pressure Groups, Bureaucracy and the Decision Making Process: The Case of Slavery, Abolition and Colonial Expansion in the Gold Coast, 1874," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 9 (1981), 193-215; Gerald M. McSheffrey, "Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade, and the Impact of Abolition on the Gold Coast, 1874-

By the time the British government assumed control over the Gold Coast settlements in the 1840s, the transatlantic slave trade from the region was largely extirpated. This enabled the British to frame discussions about colonial expansion in terms of interference with domestic slaveholding without having to worry about the suppression of the external slave trade. As this chapter has demonstrated, however, Freetown's growth occurred in the context of an overlapping expansion of slave trading and local slave use. For some colonial officials in Sierra Leone, the most logical way to abolish the Atlantic slave trade was by assuming control over larger parts of West Africa. This was particularly true in southern Sierra Leone, which was annexed briefly in the 1820s but which maintained an ambiguous position in Britain's empire in the subsequent decades.

Colonial expansion in southern Sierra Leone began in 1825, under Governor Turner. A fierce Scottish veteran of the Peninsular War, Turner took a maverick approach to his responsibilities as governor. He was particularly concerned with his duty to suppress the Atlantic slave trade. For Turner, the solution was simple – take control over the coast where slaves were exported. In a number of despatches to the Colonial Office, Turner proposed a plan that included annexing the entire coast from Goree to Cape Mount. He was equally desirous to intervene in the wars responsible for supplying slaves. In this context, the governor sailed to the Sherbro to mediate a long-standing dispute between the Caulker and Cleveland families which involved warriors from throughout the region. As part of his solution, Turner proposed a treaty that required a number of coastal chiefs to give up the slave trade and cede the land between the

1901: A Reappraisal," *Journal of African History*, 24 (1983), 352-354; John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000).

Camaranka River and the town of Camalay in the Lower Kittam, to which they agreed. The following year, a number of rival chiefs led by James Tucker refused to abandon the slave trade. In response, Turner led a military expedition, blockading the coast between Seabar and Cape Mount.⁶⁹

Turner's actions were not well received in London. Although the governor died shortly after his Sherbro expedition, Bathurst explained to his successor that he would not agree to "anything which might be construed into a desire of territorial aggrandizement,"⁷⁰ and so he revoked Turner's treaties of annexation. Denied this option, subsequent governors turned to a mixture of treaties of friendship, a system of distributing stipends and, on occasion, military means to enforce their authority over the Sherbro. Over time, these methods of intervention became increasingly demanding in the stipulations they included. In 1849, a number of Sherbro chiefs signed a treaty that among other things required them to submit disputes to the colonial government for arbitration, whose decisions could not be challenged. In return the governor promised to protect the signatories and provide a stipend of 400 bars per year.

It is unclear, however, whether Sherbro headmen would have distinguished between the various relationships that the treaties defined. As a rule, few African leaders willingly sold the rights to their land. In a region where warfare and enslavement dominated the political landscape, treaties with Britain were valued for the protection they provided against rivals. Thus despite the government's overturning of Turner's treaty, many Sherbro chiefs continued to apply for British military support. Ultimately,

⁶⁹ John Davidson, "Trade and Politics in the Sherbro Hinterland, 1849-1890," Ph.D Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969, 123.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 159.

this suggests that Sherbro chiefs had a very different conception of “colonization” in which control over land was not the central issue.

Indeed it was in the context of these different interpretations of colonial expansion that the British officially laid claim to parts of southern Sierra Leone. By the late 1850s, a number of French firms had established themselves at Bonthe to trade in palm products. After a dispute with Thomas Stephen Caulker, the French sent in a man-of-war, the *Grondeur*, to Bendu, which ordered Caulker to remove the fortifications surrounding his town and demanded that he sign a treaty protecting French trade. In 1858, the French returned and burned Caulker’s settlement at Bendu. In the wake of this conflict, Caulker appealed to Governor Hill in Freetown for help, offering to cede Bendu in return. He warned that the French hoped to seize this town and other parts of the Bagroo, from which timber was abundantly supplied. Hill wasted no time in dispatching a naval force to the region and ordered the acting Consul to hoist a British flag at Bendu. Later in the year, Hill formalized the cession of Bendu and Cha, adjacent to the Shebar straits, and a number of other parts of Sherbro.

The annexation of these regions was subsequently contested by groups of powerful headmen, led by William Tucker of Gbapp. They argued that the signatories to the treaty had no legitimate claims to the land they offered. According to the contesting chiefs, they had no objection putting themselves under British protection, but they were unwilling to give up their sovereignty. With little sympathy from the governor, the chiefs’ protests grew more menacing. Their threats against British-controlled Bendu never materialized, however, and the Colonial Office approved the measure.

In signing new treaties of annexation in the Sherbro, Governor Hill added hundreds of square miles of territory and thousands of new Sherbro and Mende subjects. More importantly, he reintroduced the colony's right to use annexation as a response to specific commercial circumstances – a policy dating back to Turner's expedition to the Sherbro. Indeed, Turner's annexation treaty featured centrally in subsequent debates over colonial boundaries. In the 1860s, a border dispute arose between officials in Freetown and Liberia which lasted nearly two decades. A Boundary Commission was established to work out the dispute, but before it met, Governor Rowe surprisingly decided to revive the 1825 treaty, asserting rights over trade in strategic parts of Turner's Peninsula and at the mouth of the Boom. The Colonial Office confirmed the move in 1881 and approved subsequent measures to expand British colonial holdings in the following two years. By 1883, Sierra Leone had thus established control over the coast between Freetown and Liberia and set in motion the process for fixing permanent colonial boundaries in Upper Guinea.

The impact that these measures had on slavery in southern Sierra Leone was complex. From the British perspective, having suppressed the transatlantic trade by the 1860s, they could now approach the issue of domestic slavery as one in which they did not need to directly intervene. In support of a non-interventionist turn, reports on slavery from the 1860s thus tended to underscore the benign nature of the institution. In a despatch to the Earl of Carnarvon summarizing the position of slaves in the Sherbro, Governor Kortright explained that "it is of a very mild form...I can scarcely accept that the people of Sherbro are unaware that it is in their power to break the chain at any time should they choose to. I believe in a majority of cases their position is voluntary. I

request permission to adopt the course taken at the Gold Coast, to let it be known by proclamation that all men are free in British territory and that it is not in the power of any one to retain their services against their will.”⁷¹ As they did elsewhere in Africa at this point, the British put little effort into publicizing the new rights that slaves in the region gained upon the expansion of the colonial settlement.

On the other hand, not all slaves needed advising on how to use changes in control over African land to their benefit. Some began fleeing to British officials stationed in Sherbro to claim their freedom, as they had done early by escaping to Freetown. In other cases, slaves submitted complaints of mistreatment to officers in British Sherbro and requested them to intervene in disputes with their masters. While this did not equate to the kind of massive migration of slaves in French West Africa a quarter century later, it does suggest that slaves continued to exploit British antislavery sentiments to challenge their bonds and redefine their relationships with their masters in a changing colonial context.

Conclusion

Although European officials distinguished between the suppression of the slave trade and confronting the institution of slavery itself, some enslaved Africans drew no such distinction. Indeed, in the first half of the 19th century, small groups of captives living in Freetown’s hinterland exploited Britain’s campaign against the Atlantic traffic to challenge the authority of their owners. In some cases, as with the revolt on Bunce Island in 1809, such confrontations turned violent. But more commonly slaves used flight or the threat of escape to negotiate new rights for themselves and their families.

⁷¹ TNA, CO879/8, African Number 82, Part I, Kortright to the Earl of Carnarvon, 28 June 1875.

That some Africans used British abolitionist rhetoric to justify their actions suggests that the campaign against the slave trade had meaning for those who faced the threat of enslavement.

Although comparatively few slaves took such initiatives, the actions of those who did had a significant impact on the evolution of colonialism in Sierra Leone. They forced British officials in Freetown to clarify their positions on slavery well before more widespread policies were enacted in Lagos and along the Gold Coast. More importantly, the questions surrounding slavery and slave dealing in and around Freetown pushed officials to debate the status of Liberated Africans in the British Empire, ultimately leading to the passage in 1853 of an Imperial Act making them British subjects. Ultimately, this chapter suggests that slaves played a central role in shaping British policy toward African slavery and colonization.

Conclusion

Southern Sierra Leone was at the heart of several noteworthy transformations in the 19th-century Atlantic world. Over the first six decades of the 1800s, the region's inhabitants witnessed changes in the structure and organization of the Atlantic slave trade and its eventual decline, rising demands for new agricultural commodities in Africa and abroad, and the emergence of Britain's first African colony on their frontier. This project has used Atlantic commerce as a means to study the evolution of these transformations. Through an analysis of the production and trade of human and non-human commodities, I have highlighted the first half of the 19th century as a turning point in Europe's relationship with Africa. It was in this period that Europeans and Africans fully confronted the shift in moral perceptions of slavery and the slave trade from which the abolition movement emerged, and worked out its implications for Africa and the Atlantic world. This confrontation ultimately led Britain and other European powers to pursue more ambitious colonial policies in Africa, opening the path toward formal colonial rule later in the century.

Sierra Leone offers a unique setting to explore the relationship between the slave trade, abolition and colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa. Freetown's origins in the 18th century antislavery movement, along with several other distinctive features, distinguish this colony from others that emerged in later decades. Indeed, Sierra Leoneans were the first inhabitants of West Africa to confront a European colonial settlement in their midst. In this sense, Freetown's establishment and growth represented a radical break from the African past. Given its peculiar origins, scholars have tended to treat Freetown in

isolation from the broader region in which it was founded. This project has attempted to overturn this historiographical trend by exploring commercial change on Freetown's southern frontier.¹ As a result, the project has a number of broad implications for the study of the slave trade and colonialism in Africa.

First, regarding the slave trade, the southern Sierra Leone case underscores the need to situate Atlantic slaving in the context of broader population displacement throughout West Africa. Although recent research has demonstrated that African peoples and cultures crisscrossed the Atlantic world in the precolonial era,² we still know very little about the movement of enslaved Africans within the continent before the late 1800s. As chapter four demonstrated, American plantations were not the only places to which slaves were sent in the era of the transatlantic trade. For more than three decades (and likely much longer), Sierra Leone's internal and external slave trades overlapped, and in both cases slaves were drawn from a relatively limited catchment area in the Sherbro- and Mende-speaking parts of Upper Guinea. From this slaving epicenter, captives were dispersed in multiple directions: thousands ended up in the holds of transatlantic vessels; slightly smaller numbers of slaves were destined for peanut plantations north of the Sierra Leone estuary; and ironically, many young captives were transported into Freetown itself, where enslaved children of both sexes were needed to perform domestic tasks and where Liberated African men sought girls in particular as wives. Finally, as chapter three implies, headmen held slaves in the Sherbro and Gallinas itself in considerable numbers

¹ Throughout this project I have used the concept of frontier in a relatively limited geographical sense. For a socio-cultural analysis of the African frontier, in which scholars have located it as a site for the reproduction of "tradition," see Igor Kopytoff, ed., *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

² See, for example, Kristin Mann, "Shifting Paradigms in the Study of the African Diaspora and of Atlantic History and Culture," in Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay, eds., *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 3-21.

to support increases in rice production. By examining these diverse internal and external slave markets and the commercial routes that supplied them, this project provides a new window onto the internal African slave trade that allows a far more complete assessment of the impact of the slave trade on African societies.³

Second, food supplies were central to the functioning of the slave trade and colonialism. As human commodities, slaves required nourishment at each stage of their journey, from their forced march to the coast through their arrival in the New World. European colonial capitals also depended on an uninterrupted trade in provisions. Both cases therefore underscore the need to assess the impact of 19th-century population concentrations along the African littoral on internal food production and trade. Such issues were certainly not unique to Sierra Leone or indeed to Africa. James Searing has documented the relationship between the Senegambian slave and grain trades, which increased together in the first half of the 18th century; he also argues that the slave trade declined in the subsequent half century as a result of spiking demands for slave labor in the Senegal River Valley, where the grain was produced. Across the Atlantic, Susan M. Socolow has painted a similar commercial picture for Buenos Aires, which depended on wheat supplies from the coastal zones of San Isidro and Matanza, adjacent to this Spanish urban center.⁴ Although research on rural-urban relations has tended to focus on

³ For decades, historians of Africa have distinguished three primary slave markets for African captives: the Atlantic market, which supplied the Americas; the trans-Saharan market, which supplied the Muslim world north of the desert; and the “domestic” market, which caused slaves to be held within sub-Saharan Africa. The latter of these three was probably the most complex and it is also the least well understood. This project is one of the few that has explored the systematic movement of coerced labor within Africa.

⁴ James F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Susan M. Socolow, “Buenos Aires: Atlantic Port and Hinterland in the Eighteenth Century,” in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 240-261. See also Philip D. Curtin’s preface in this volume, in which he provides a broad comparative framework for understanding town-hinterland relationships over time.

migration toward large towns, I have argued that rural dynamics underpinned urban growth in precolonial Africa.

Finally, this study shows that the colonial frontier was a site where slaves, slave owners and colonial officials negotiated the rights and responsibilities that men, women and children claimed over one another. In the first half of the 19th century, the actions taken by slaves and slave owners were central factors in determining the future of the British colonial state in Sierra Leone. At times, dependents expressed their dissatisfaction by fleeing owners or patrons in search of better conditions elsewhere. More commonly, however, enslaved men and women used the threat of flight to gain new rights from their owners. The tensions resulting from slave actions in southern Sierra Leone placed owners and British officials at odds throughout the 19th century. As the previous chapter argued, these tensions spilled over into broader concerns, including British claims over territory adjacent to Freetown and the political status of Africans in the British Empire. The southern Sierra Leone case suggests that British colonial policy was not merely a negotiation between metropolitan officials and “men-on-the-spot,” but rather a process that reflected tensions that developed on the colony’s outskirts. Viewing these tensions from beyond the colonial borders offers a new framework for the study of colonialism in Africa.

As is often the case with scholarly research, this project does not answer all of the significant questions that it raises. Further work will allow me to examine two significant issues – namely changes in slavery and slaveholding over time and processes of political change in southern Sierra Leone. With respect to slavery, I have suggested that southern Sierra Leone headmen achieved increases in rice production through the use of slave

labor. If this was the case, then the dramatic growth of rice production in the Sherbro that began in the 1810s and 1820s would have required either an unprecedented degree of enslavement in this region or a harsher production regime. A combination of these two options likely occurred, which raises a separate set of questions that I will explore in the future. For example, how did gender affect local slaveholding, and how did local gender dynamics impact agricultural production in southern Sierra Leone? How did labor demands in southern Sierra Leone influence the Atlantic and regional slave trades that drew slaves from this region? And finally, how did domestic and foreign ideologies of slavery interact with each other in the first half of the 19th century, and what were the implications for enslaved Africans? While the evidence I have suggests that slavery itself increased in the early 1800s, my next step is to historicize this issue and explore its implications for Sierra Leone and Upper Guinea.

Finally, questions remain about the relationship between commercial and political change in 19th century southern Sierra Leone. Joseph Miller has argued that foreign goods provided West Central African leaders with new ways to cement relationships of dependency in Angola. In her study of Lagos, Kristin Mann has calculated the income that the external slave trade generated for the town's ruling oligarchy and explored how rulers invested this wealth.⁵ Similar issues may be raised for southern Sierra Leone: how much did leaders earn from slave exports? What did headmen do with the European manufactured goods that they imported? Were more external goods being used in the 19th century than in previous periods and, if so, by whom? By addressing these questions and others, the project that grows out of this dissertation will assess the relationship

⁵ Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, Table 2.1, p. 61; Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

between foreign trade and African political power. More importantly, it will provide a picture of the relative importance of Atlantic commerce in southern Sierra Leone societies.⁶ Such issues remain essential parts of assessing Africa's relationship with the Atlantic world in the precolonial era which, in southern Sierra Leone's case, was dramatically forged in the era of abolition.

⁶ Scholars of Africa and the Atlantic world have debated the significance of Atlantic trade in African economies for decades. Much of the research stems from Philip D. Curtin's work on Senegambia, in which he provides a far more nuanced view of African economies than previous researchers allowed. See his *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975). See also Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), esp. chapter 2. For disagreements over the relative significance of external goods in African economies, see David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); David Eltis and Lawrence C. Jennings, "Trade between West Africa and the Atlantic World in the Pre-Colonial Era," *American Historical Review*, 93, 4 (1988), 936-959; Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Impact of the Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of African History*, 30, 3 (1989), 365-394.

Appendix: A Note on the Registers for Liberated Africans and the Methods Used to Identify Recaptives

The Registers for Liberated Africans were produced following the abolition of the slave trade by the British in 1807. To prevent further shipments of slaves from crossing the Atlantic, the British signed treaties with the governments of those nations most active in the trade. One result of the treaties was the establishment of courts of mixed commissions.¹ Eventually numbering eight in total, these courts were employed to adjudicate cases concerning vessels suspected of taking captives illegally on board. Each case was presided over by two officials, one British and the other of the nation from which the captured slave-trader originated. In many cases, the vessels detained by the British anti-slavery squadron had full slave cargoes still on board and in such cases the African captives were “liberated,” ultimately getting absorbed into the colony where the court was established. The court had no authority to punish captains of captured slavers.

Prior to their liberation, the Africans were asked to provide information about themselves which was recorded in ledger books by colonial officials.² Each page of the book was divided into seven columns and each recaptive was given one line on the page. The details recorded by the officials included a unique identity number, name, sex (man, woman, girl, boy), age, height, and a description of distinct body markings. In the case of

¹ For the operational aspect of the courts, see Leslie M. Bethell, “The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of African History*, 7, 1 (1966), 79-93.

² The original Sierra Leone Registers are held at Fourah Bay College, in the Sierra Leone Government Archives (SLGA). A copy can be found in the FO84 series of the British Public Records Office (PRO). The Havana Registers are in FO313, vols. 56-62.

the Sierra Leone and Havana courts, where the large majority of vessels were tried,³ an additional column for 'County of Origin' was included, although the Sierra Leone officials eventually discontinued this practice. In addition, the Registers clearly indicate that this information was given through an African translator who was previously freed by the courts, and who came from the same region as the slaves on board the vessel under adjudication, thus partially mitigating the normally severe problems associated with the language barriers that existed between European officials and African captives.

Depending on the court in which a vessel was tried, either Spanish (Havana) or English (Freetown) colonial officials were responsible for entering details into the Registers. In both cases, it is clear that they had much difficulty transcribing recaptives' names. Most commonly the names were written as approximations based on conventions for writing Spanish or English. But while the inability of colonial officials to spell what must have been quite unfamiliar names is evident, the association of names in the Registers with those found in contemporary Sierra Leone is nonetheless apparent. To facilitate their identification, this study worked backwards from the way in which the records were generated. For those names that were transcribed using Spanish spelling conventions, I sought assistance from a native Cuban, who pronounced each name into a tape recorder. For names recorded by British officials, I worked with individuals in Sierra Leone to estimate a name's pronunciation. Each name was played for a group of informants in Sierra Leone, who attempted to identify the name itself and, when possible,

³ The Courts presided over more than 600 cases in total. At times ships captured with slaves on board were acquitted. At the Sierra Leone Court, 29 of the 485 vessels under adjudication were cleared of charges. For the Havana Court, 7 out of 48 were released.

the geographic region in which it has historically been used.⁴ When disagreements between consultants occurred, the informants discussed with each other their reasoning for the identification they suggested, attempting to come to an agreement. In cases where they were unable to reconcile their differences, the name was discarded from the final analysis. These identifications were also checked against the available scholarly literature on naming practices among the various ethnic groups in the region.⁵

The results of this procedure were encouraging. Of the 5,749 names recorded in the registers, my informants reached an agreement on 72 percent of the cases. At times, however, they concluded that names were not at all ethnically distinct, or that they were shared among some ethno-linguistic groups and not others. When names were found to be common among all ethnic groups, they were discarded from my analysis. Some names that were shared by several ethno-linguistic groups were combined, when geographic, historical and linguistic factors supported such a combination. Thus, the longstanding incursion of Mende-names into the Sherbro-speaking part of the coast resulted in a large degree of overlap between the groups' naming practices. Given that both Mende and Sherbro speakers are concentrated in the southern part of Sierra Leone, I combined these groups into a single category. With this and several additional

⁴ The informants included a representative from Susu, Yalunka, Koronko, Mandingo and Temne ethnic groups, and a Mende linguistic from Njala University College, the University of Sierra Leone. The author extends his gratitude to all of the informants, particularly to Taziff Koroma, for assistance with this project. The author's debt to Oscar Grandío Moráquez for recording the pronunciation of each recaptive name is also gratefully acknowledged.

⁵ There is an overall paucity of research on naming practices among Africans in Upper Guinea. Numerous short entries appear beginning in the late-1910s in the journal *Sierra Leone Studies* recording a handful of names used by a particular ethnic group in Sierra Leone. This continued with the publication of the *Sierra Leone Language Review*, with the added benefit of more rigorous analysis by contributors. For one example, see Gordon Innes, "A Note on Mende and Kono Personal Names," *Sierra Leone Language Review*, Vol. 5 (1966), pp. 34-38.

adjustments, my informants reached conclusions about the origins of 3,337 names, or about 58 percent of the entire southern Sierra Leone sample.

Although an agreement rate of 72 percent is considerably less than what Eltis and Nwokeji achieved for the Cameroons data, it nonetheless suggests a general consensus that most recaptives who were embarked at Gallinas and Sherbro came from the Sierra Leone hinterland. Had I been able to do fieldwork in neighboring Liberia and Guinea, I would likely have been able to identify additional names. Finally, as I noted in chapter 2, it is important to distinguish between ethnicity and geography when identifying a captive's name. Although names are often used as ethnic markers in Sierra Leone today, my own concern was to identify the regions where particular names were most likely used in the 19th century. Given the region's ethno-linguistic continuity, I have thus assumed that a captive with an identifiable-Mende name would have come from the part of Sierra Leone where Mende was the dominant language. This should not be taken to mean that Mende speakers did not travel beyond their "borders." Nor am I suggesting that names did not at times circulate beyond the ethno-linguistic regions in which they prevailed. However, I believe these points represent only minor problems and a small minority of cases. Even a margin of error as high as 10 percent for identifying names would not change the overall thrust of my conclusions and would represent a significant advance in understanding more about those individuals who were most affected by the transatlantic slave trade.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Manuscripts

Amistad Research Center

American Missionary Association Manuscripts, Sierra Leone, Microfilm reels 1-11

British Library

Letter Addressed to the Chairman of the Sierra Leone Company by the Rev. Mr. Thomas Clarkson, Folio 1, add. mss. 12131

Mr. Gray's Journal, Folio 81, add. mss. 12131

Mr. Hermitage's Journal, Folio 43, add. mss. 12131

Mr. Parfitt's Diary on Board the *Calypso*, Folio 272, add. mss. 12131

Mr. Parfitt's Information on Trade between Sierra Leone and Cape Lopez, Folio 174, add. mss. 12131

Mr. Strands' Journal, Folio 65, add. mss. 12131

Mr. Watt's Journal, Folio 122, add. mss. 12131

British National Archives

Board of Trade Correspondence

BT6/70

Colonial Office Correspondence:

CO267/1-409 (select materials)

CO268/1, 5, 10

CO270/2-6, 8-9, 11-12, 16-17, 19

CO271/1-2

CO272/1-47 (select materials)

CO323/148

CO325/37

CO388/28, 43

CO879/1, 8-9, 14-15, 17-18, 20, 24-25, 49

Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa Records

T70/1, 5-7, 1465

Foreign Office Correspondence:

FO2/1, 8, 11, 13, 17, 21, 24, 28, 33, 38-39, 42

FO47/1, 3, 7-9, 13, 15

FO63/351, 442, 456, 471
 FO84/7-497 (select materials)
 FO403/6

High Court of Admiralty Records
 HCA16/83/2218

House of Commons, Sessional Papers
 ZHC/1/82

War Office Correspondence
 WO1/352
 WO32/7643

New-York Historical Society

A Book of Trade for the Sloop *Rhode Island*, Dec. 1748-July 1749, Misc. MSS., B.V.
Rhode Island, New-York Historical Society

Sierra Leone National Archives

“Orders and Regulations from the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the
 Superintendent and Council for the Settlement,” Sierra Leone National Archives

Registers of Escaped Slaves

Published

*Abridgement of the Minutes of Evidence Taken before a Committee of the Whole House,
 to Whom it was Referred to Consider of the Slave Trade* (Great Britain, House of
 Parliament, printed in 1789)

*Abridgement of the Minutes of Evidence Taken before a Committee of the Whole House,
 to Whom it was Referred to Consider of the Slave Trade*, Number 4 (Great
 Britain, House of Parliament, printed in 1790)

T.J. Alldridge, *The Sherbro and its Hinterland* (London: Macmillan, 1901)

---, *A Transformed Colony: Sierra Leone as It Was and as It Is; Its Progress, Peoples,
 Native Customs and Undeveloped Wealth* (London: Seeley & Co., 1910)

American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol. 5, 16th Congress, 2nd Session,
 Publication No. 346, “Suppression of the Slave Trade -- Conference of Foreign
 Governments on the Subject. Communicated to the House of Representatives,
 February 9, 1821”

John W. Barber, *A History of the Amistad Captives* (New Haven: E.L. & J.W. Barber,
 1840; North Stratford: Ayer Company Publishers, 2000)

Jean Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea* (London: Henry
 Lintot and John Osborn, 1746)

Norman Bennett and George E. Brooks, *New England Merchants in Africa: A History
 through Documents, 1802-1865* (Brookline: Boston University Press, 1965)

- British Parliamentary Papers, Colonies: Africa* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968)
- British Parliamentary Papers, Slave Trade* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968)
- Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy* (London: John Murray, 1840)
- Theodore Canot, *Captain Canot: or, Twenty Years of an African Slaver* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1854)
- Olfert Dapper, *Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten* (Amsterdam: J. van Meurs, 1668)
- Davie Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (www.slavevoyages.org)
- Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (London: J. Phillips, 1788)
- D.K. Flickinger, *Off Hand Sketches of Men and Things in Western Africa* (Dayton: Published by the Order of the Trustees of the United Brethren Printing Establishment, 1857)
- Christopher Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964)
- P.E.H. Hair, ed., *Polyglotta Africana* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1963)
- P.E.H. Hair, Adam Jones, Robin Law, eds., *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1992)
- Adam Jones, ed., *Brandenburg Sources for West African History, 1680-1700* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985)
- , *German Sources for West African History, 1599-1669* (Wiesbaden: F. Steinger, 1983)
- Milan Kalous, *Cannibals and Tongo Players of Sierra Leone* (Trentham: Wright & Carman Ltd., 1974)
- H.C. Knight, *Africa Redeemed; or, the Means of Her Relief Illustrated by the Growth and Prospects of Liberia* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1851)
- Peter Kup, ed., *Sierra Leone Journal, 1795-1796* (Uppsala: Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia, XXVII, 1967)
- Alexander Gordon Laing, *Travels in the Timanee, Kooranko and Soolima Countries in Western Africa* (London: John Murray, 1825)
- Kenneth Macaulay, *The Colony of Sierra Leone Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Mr. MacQueen of Glasgow* (London: Cass, 1968, first edition, 1827)
- Bernard Martin and Mark Spurrell, eds., *Journal of a Slave Trader (John Newton), 1750-1754* (London: Epworth Press, 1962)
- Eveline Martin, ed., *Journal of a Slave Dealer: A View of Some Remarkable Acedents in the Life of Nics. Owen on the Coast of Africa and American from the Year 1746 to the Year 1757* (London: G. Routledge, 1930)
- John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone* (London: Printed for B. White and Son, 1788)
- Th. Monod, A. Teixeira da Mota et. R. Mauny, eds., *Description de la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique (Sénégal du Cap de Monte, Archipels)* (Bissau, 1951)
- Kenneth Morgan, ed., *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade, 4 Volumes* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003)
- C.W. Newbury, ed., *British Policy Toward West Africa; Select Documents, 1786-1874* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965)

- F. Harrison Rankin, *The White Man's Grave: A Visit to Sierra Leone in 1834*, 2 Vols. (London: R. Bentley, 1836)
- [Review of] *the Trials of the Slave Traders, Samuel Samo, Joseph Peters, and William Tufft: Tried in April and June 1812, before the Hon. Robert Thorpe, L.L.D...: with two letters on the slave trade/from a gentleman resident at Sierra Leone, to an advocate for the abolition in London* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1813)
- Rulers and Regulations of the African Institution* (London: Printed by William Phillips, 1807)
- Suzanne Schwartz, ed., *Zachary Macaulay and the Development of the Sierra Leone Company, 1793-1794* (Leipzig: Institut für Afrikanistik, Universität Leipzig, 2000), Part I
- Sixth Annual Report of the Directors of the African Institution, Read on 25 March 1812* (London: Printed by Ellerton and Henderson, 1812)
- Substance of the Report of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court, held at London on Wednesday the 19th of October, 1791* (London: Printed by James Phillips, 1791)
- Substance of the Report, Delivered, by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, to the General Court of Proprietors, on Thursday the 29th March, 1798* (London: Printed by James Phillips & Son, 1798)
- Substance of the Report Delivered by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, to the General Court of Proprietors, on Thursday, March 27th, 1794* (Philadelphia: Printed by Thomas Dorson, 1795)
- George Thompson, *An Account of the Missionary Labors, Sufferings, Travels, and Observations, of George Thompson, in Western Africa, At the Mendi Mission* (New York: Second Edition, 1852)
- , *The Palm Land; or, West Africa Illustrated: Being A History of Missionary Labors and Travels, with Description of Men and Things in Western Africa; Also, a Synopsis of all the Missionary Work on that Continent* (London: Dawsons, 1969, first printed in 1858)
- Francisco Travassos Valdez, *Six Years of a Traveller's Life in Western Africa* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861)
- C.B. Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1794)
- West African Sketches: Compiled from the Reports of Sir G.R. Collier, Sir Charles MacCarthy, and other Official Sources* (London: Printed for LB. Seely and Son, 1824)

Secondary Sources

Published

- Arthur Abraham, *An Introduction to the Pre-Colonial History of the Mende of Sierra Leone* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003)
- , *Mende Government and Politics Under Colonial Rule: A Historical Study of Political Change in Sierra Leone, 1890-1937* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1978)

- , *Topics in Sierra Leone History: A Counter-Colonial Interpretation* (Freetown: Leone Publishers, 1976)
- Edward A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Pattern of International Trade in East Central Africa to the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975)
- David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa's Urban Past* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000)
- Ralph A. Austen, "The Abolition of the Overseas Slave Trade: A Distorted Theme in West African History," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5, 2 (1970), 257-274.
- Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- Stephen D. Behrendt, "Human Capital in the British Slave Trade," in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles, eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 66-97.
- , "Markets, Transaction Cycles, and Profits: Merchant Decision Making in the British Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 58, 1 (January, 2001), 171-204
- Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: the First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998)
- Leslie M. Bethell, "The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, 7, 1 (1966), 79-93.
- Joye L. Bowman, "'Legitimate Commerce' and Peanut Production in Portuguese Guinea, 1840s to 1880s," *Journal of African History*, 28, 1 (1987), 87-106
- 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, 2003)
- , *Kola Trade and State-Building: Upper Guinea Coast and Senegambia, 15th-17th Centuries* (Brookline: African Studies Center, Boston University, 1980)
- , *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993)
- , "A *Nhara* of the Guinea Bissau Region: Mãe Aurélia Correia," in Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1983), 295-319
- , "Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialization of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830-70," *Journal of African History*, 16, 1 (1975), 29-54
- , "Samuel Hodges, Jr., and the Symbiosis of Slave and 'Legitimate' Trades, 1810s-1820s," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 41, 1 (2008), 101-116.
- , "The *Signares* of Saint-Louis and Goree: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth-Century Senegal," in Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds., *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 19-44.
- , *Yankee Traders, Old Coasters and African Middlemen: A History of American Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (Brookline: Boston University Press, 1970)

- Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006)
- Robert T. Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leone Campaign, 1826-1834," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 6, 2 (1973), 249-264
- Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008)
- Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph C. Miller, eds., "Children in European Systems of Bondage," special issue of *Slavery and Abolition*, 27, 2 (August 2006)
- , *Women and Slavery*, Volume 1 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007)
- Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001)
- Peter Caron, "'Of a Nation Which the Others do not Understand': Bambara Slaves and African Ethnicity in Colonial Louisiana, 1718-60," *Slavery and Abolition*, 18 (1997), 98-121
- Patrick S. Caulker, "Legitimate Commerce and Statecraft: A Study of the Hinterland Adjacent to Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone," *Journal of Black Studies*, 11, 4 (June 1981), 379-419
- John Innes Clarke, ed., *Sierra Leone in Maps* (London: University of London Press, 1966)
- Mary Louise Clifford, *From Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists after the American Revolution* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1999)
- Abner Cohen, "Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas," in Claude Meillassoux and Daryll Ford, eds., *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 266-281
- Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987)
- Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker, "Identity," in Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 59-90
- Frederick Cooper and Anne Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)
- Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981)
- J. J. Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone* (London: Cass, 1972, first published in 1903)
- Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport: Greenwood Publication Co., 1972)
- Michael Crowder, *Colonial West Africa* (London: F. Cass, 1978)
- Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).
- , *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984)
- , *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa; Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975)

- , "Epidemiology and the Slave Trade," *Political Science Quarterly*, 82, 2 (June, 1968), 190-216
- , *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- Philip D. Curtin and Jan Vansina, "Sources of the 19th Century Atlantic Slave Trade," *Journal of African History*, 5, 2 (1964), 185-208.
- David Dalby, "The Mel Languages: A Reclassification of Southern 'West-Atlantic,'" *African Language Studies*, 7 (1965), 171-179
- K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longman Green and Co., 1957)
- David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975)
- M.T. Dawe and F.J. Martin, "The Oil Palm Industry and its Problems in Sierra Leone," in, *Proceedings of the First West African Agricultural Conference* (Unknown Publisher, Lagos, 1927), 7-8.
- Linda Rose Day, "Afro-British Integration on the Sherbro Coast, 1665-1795," *Africana Research Bulletin*, 12, 3 (1983), 82-107
- K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956)
- Sylviane Anna Diouf, "Devils or Sorcerers, Muslims or Studs: Manding in the Americas," in Paul E. Lovejoy and David V. Trotman, eds., *Trans-Atlantic Dimension of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 139-157
- , ed., *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003)
- Audra Diptee, "African Children in the British Slave Trade during the Late Eighteenth Century," *Slavery & Abolition*, 27, 2 (Aug, 2006), 183-196
- R.V. Dorjahn and Christopher Fyfe, "Landlord and Stranger: Change in Tenancy Relations in Sierra Leone," *Journal of African History*, 3, 3 (1962), 391-397
- Joseph C. Dorsey, *Slave Traffic in the Age of Abolition: Puerto Rico, West Africa, and the Non-Hispanic Caribbean, 1815-1859* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003)
- Raymond E. Dumett, "Pressure Groups, Bureaucracy and the Decision Making Process: The Case of Slavery, Abolition and Colonial Expansion in the Gold Coast, 1874," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 9 (1981), 193-215
- Raymond E. Dumett and Marion Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti, and the Northern Territories," in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 71-116
- David Dwyer, "The Mende Problem," in Koen Bostoen and Jackmy Maniacky, eds., *Studies in African Comparative Linguistics with Special Focus on Bantu and Mande* (Tervuren: Royal Museum for Central Africa), 29-42
- David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987)
- , "The Volume, Age/Sex Ratios, and African Impact of the Slave Trade: Some Refinements of Paul Lovejoy's Review of the Literature," *The Journal of African History*, 31, 3 (1990), 485-92

- David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864," *Economic History Review*, 46 (1993), 308-323
- , "Was the Slave Trade Really Dominated by Men?," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23 (1992), 237-257
- David Eltis and Lawrence C. Jennings, "Trade between Western Africa and the Atlantic World in the Pre-Colonial Era," *American Historical Review*, 93, 4 (1988), 936-959
- David Eltis, Frank Lewis and Kenneth Sokoloff, eds., *Slavery and the Development of the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- David Eltis, Philip Morgan and David Richardson, "Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas," *American Historical Review*, 112, 5 (Dec. 2007), 1329-1358
- David Eltis and David Richardson, "Productivity in the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *Explorations in Economic History*, 32 (1995), 465-484
- John Fage, "African Societies and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *Past and Present*, 125 (1989), 97-115
- John Fage, "Slaves and Society in Western Africa," *Journal of African History*, 21 (1980), 289-310
- O.T. Faulkner and C.J. Lewin, "Native Methods of Preparing Palm Oil, II," in *Second Annual Bulletin of the Agricultural Department, Nigeria* (1923), 3-22
- Mariane C. Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History, and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001)
- Edda L. Fields-Black, *Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008)
- Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962)
- Magbaily C. Fyle, *The Solima Yalunka Kingdom: Pre-Colonial Politics, Economics and Society* (Freetown: Nyakon Publishers, 1979)
- John Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa with Particular Reference to the Sierra Leone Protectorate, 1896-1927* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1975)
- J.H. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2nd Edition, 1966)
- P.E.H. Hair, "An Account of the Liberian Hinterland, c. 1780," *Sierra Leone Studies*, 16 n.s. (1962), 218-226
- , "An Ethnolinguistic Inventory of the Lower Guinea Coast before 1700: Part I," *African Language Review*, 7 (1968), 47-73
- , "Sources on Early Sierra Leone: (9) Barreira's 'Account of the Coast of Guinea,' 1606," *Africana Research Bulletin*, 7, 1 (1976), 34-60
- H.U. Hall, *The Sherbro of Sierra Leone* (Philadelphia: The University Press, University of Pennsylvania, 1938)
- David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002)

- Philip J. Havik, *Silences and Soundbites: The Gendered Dynamics of Trade and Brokerage in the Pre-Colonial Guinea Bissau Region* (Münster: Lit, 2004)
- Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003)
- Linda Heywood, "Portuguese into African: The Eighteenth-Century Central African Background to Atlantic Creole Cultures," in Linda Heywood, ed., *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91-115
- Linda Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- Svend E. Holsoe, "Slavery and Economic Response among the Vai (Liberia and Sierra Leone)," in Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 287-303
- , "Theodore Canot at Cape Mount, 1841-47," *Liberian Studies Journal*, 4 (1971-2), 163-183
- A.G. Hopkins, "Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92," *Economic History Review*, 21 (1968), 580-606
- Allen M. Howard, "Mande and Fulbe Interaction and Identity in Northwestern Sierra Leone, Late Eighteenth through Early Twentieth Centuries," *Mande Studies*, 1 (1999), 13-39
- , "Nineteenth-Century Coastal Slave Trading and the British Abolition Campaign in Sierra Leone," *Slavery and Abolition*, 27, 1 (April, 2006), 23-49
- , "The Relevance of Spatial Analysis for African Economic History: The Sierra Leone-Guinea System," *Journal of African History*, 17, 3 (1976), 365-388
- , "The Role of Freetown in the Commercial Life of Sierra Leone," in Christopher Fyfe and Eldred Jones, eds., *Freetown: A Symposium* (Freetown: University of Sierra Leone Press, 1968), 38-64
- , "Trade and Islam in Sierra Leone, 18th -20th Centuries," in Alusine Jalloh and David E. Skinner, eds., *Islam and Trade in Sierra Leone* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1997), 21-63
- E. Adeleye Ijagbemi, "The Freetown Colony and the Development of Legitimate Commerce in the Adjoining Territories," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5, 2 (June 1970), 243-256
- Joseph E. Inikori, ed., *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (New York: Africana Pub. Co., 1982)
- , "The Import of Firearms into West Africa, 1750-1807: A Quantitative Analysis," *Journal of African History*, 18, 3 (1977), 339-368
- Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992)
- Hilary Jenkinson, "The Records of the English African Companies," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1912), 185-220
- Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History*, 37, 1 (2003), 113-124

- Adam Jones, "The Kquoja Kingdom: A Forest State in Seventeenth Century West Africa," *Paideuma*, 29 (1983), 23-43
- , *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Galinhas Country (West Africa), 1730-1890* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1983)
- , "Théophile Conneau at Galinhas and New Sestos, 1836-1841," *History in Africa*, 8 (1981), 89-105
- , "White Roots: Written and Oral Testimony in the 'First' Mr Rogers," *History in Africa*, 10 (1983), 151-162
- , "Who were the Vai?," *Journal of African History*, 22, 2 (1981), 159-178
- Adam Jones and Marion Johnson, "Slaves from the Windward Coast," *The Journal of African History*, 21, 1 (1980), 17-34.
- Martin A. Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sine-Saloum, 1847-1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968)
- , *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- , "Social and Economic Factors in the Muslim Revolution in Senegambia," *Journal of African History*, 13 (1972), 419-441
- Igor Kopytoff, ed., *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987)
- Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977)
- Jean Herskovits Kopytoff, *A Preface to Modern Nigeria: the "Sierra Leonians" in Yoruba, 1830-1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965)
- Robert Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire*, Vol. 1, West Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1948)
- Robin Law, "The Historiography of the Commercial Transition in 19th Century West Africa," in Toyin Falola, ed., *African Historiography: Essays in Honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), 91-115.
- , *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port,' 1727-1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004)
- , *From Slave Trade to "Legitimate" Commerce: the Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Robin Law and Silke Strictrodt, eds., *Ports of the Slave Trade (Bights of Benin and Biafra): Papers from a Conference of the Centre of Commonwealth Studies, University of Stirling, June 1998* (Stirling: Centre for Commonwealth Studies, 1999)
- Kenneth Little, "The Mende Farming Household," *The Sociological Review*, 40, 4 (1948), 37-56.
- , *The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African People in Transition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1951)
- Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans, Green, 1949)
- Paul E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade, 1700-1900* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Ltd., 1980)
- , "The Impact of the Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), 365-394.

- , "Internal Markets or an Atlantic-Sahara Divide? How Women Fit into the Slave Trade of West Africa," in Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph C. Miller, eds., *Women and Slavery*, Volume 1 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 259-279
- , *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd Edition, 2000)
- , "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," *Journal of African History*, 23, 4 (1982), 473-501
- Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- Carol P. MacCormack, "Control of Land, Labor and Capital in Rural Southern Sierra Leone," in Edna G. Bay, ed., *Women and Work in Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 35-53
- , "Slaves, Slave Owners, and Slave Dealers: Sherbro Coast and Hinterland," in Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1997), 271-294
- Kristin Mann, "Shifting Paradigms in the Study of the African Diaspora and of Atlantic History and Culture," in Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay, eds., *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 3-21
- , *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2007)
- Patrick Manning, "Contours of Slavery and Social Change in Africa," *American Historical Review*, 88 (1983), 835-857
- , *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- , *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)
- Susan M. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest: An Economic History of the Ngwa Region, South-Eastern Nigeria, 1800-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
- Winston McGowan, "The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade between Sierra Leone and its Hinterland," *Journal of African History*, 31, 1 (1990), 25-41
- Gerald M. McSheffrey, "Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade, and the Impact of Abolition on the Gold Coast, 1874-1901: A Reappraisal," *Journal of African History*, 24 (1983), 349-368
- Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991)
- António de Almeida Mendes, "The Foundations of the System: A Reassessment of the Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in David Eltis and David Richardson, eds., *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 63-94)
- Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1999)

- Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988)
- Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988)
- Philip Misevich, "In Pursuit of Human Cargo: Philip Livingston and the Voyage of the Sloop *Rhode Island*," *New York History*, 86, 3 (2005), 185-204
- Philip Morgan, "The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments," *Slavery & Abolition*, 18 (1997), 122-145
- Bruce L. Mouser, "Iles de Los as Bulking Center in the Slave Trade, 1750-1800," *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-mer*, 83 (313), 77-90
- , "Rebellion, Marronage and Jihad: Strategies and Resistance to Slavery on the Sierra Leone Coast, c. 1783-1796," *Journal of African History*, 48, 1 (March, 2007), 27-44
- , "Theophilus Conneau: the Saga of a Tale," *History in Africa*, 6 (1979), 97-107
- , "Trade, Coasters and Conflict in the Rio Pongo from 1790 to 1808," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1973), 45-64
- , "Women Slavers of Guinea-Conakry," in Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1983), 320-339.
- David Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade: The Case of the Bight of Biafra," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 9, 1 (Summer, 1978), 47-64
- , "Becoming African: Identity Formation among the Liberated Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone," *Slavery & Abolition*, 27, 1 (April, 2006), 1-21
- , "The Compatibility of the Slave and Palm Oil Trades in the Bight of Benin," *Journal of African History*, 17, 3 (1976), 353-364
- Bronislaw Nowak, "The Slave Rebellion in Sierra Leone in 1785-1796," *Hemispheres*, 3, 3 (1986), 151-169
- G. Ugo Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender in the Slave Traffic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58, 1 (2001), 47-68
- Kwabena Opare-Akurang, "The Administration of the Abolition Laws, African Responses and Post-Proclamation Slavery in the Gold Coast, 1874-1940," in Suzanne Miers and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 149-166.
- John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000)
- Yves Person, "Ethnic Movements and Acculturation in Upper Guinea since the Fifteenth Century," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 4, 3 (1971), 669-689
- John Peterson, *Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone, 1787-1870* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969)
- Ismail Rashid, "'Do Dady nor Lef me Make dem Carry me': Slave Resistance and Emancipation in Sierra Leone, 1894-1928," in Suzanne Miers and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 208-231

- , "Escape, Revolt and Marronage in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Sierra Leone Hinterland," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 34, 3 (2000), 656-683
- W.A. Richards, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, 21, 1 (1980), 43-59
- Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983)
- G.M. Roddan, "Cultivation of Swamp Rice in Sierra Leone," *Tropical Agriculture*, 19 (1942), 84-86
- Walter 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 (1966), 431-32
- , "The Guinea Coast," in *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975-1985), 223-324
- , *History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970)
- , *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981)
- , "Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djalou in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4, 2 (June, 1968), 269-284
- , "A Reconsideration of the Mande Invasions of Sierra Leone," *Journal of African History*, 8, 2 (1967), 219-246
- James F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002)
- Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
- A.B.C. Sibthorpe, *The History of Sierra Leone* (New York: Humanities Press, 1971, first published in 1868)
- D.J. Siddle, "War Towns in Sierra Leone: A Study in Social Change," *Africa*, 38, 1 (1968), 47-56
- David E. Skinner, "Islam and Education in the Colony and Hinterland of Sierra Leone (1750-1914)," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 10 (1976), 499-520
- , "Mande Settlement and the Development of Islamic Institutions in Sierra Leone," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 11 (1978), 32-62
- Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007)
- Susan M. Socolow, "Buenos Aires: Atlantic Port and Hinterland in the Eighteenth Century," in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 240-261
- Ken Swindell, "Family Farms and Migrant Labour: The Strange Farmers of the Gambia," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 12, 1 (1978), 3-17;
- , "Serawoollies, Tilibunkas and Strange Farmers: The Development of Migrant Groundnut Farming along the Gambia River, 1848-1895," *Journal of African History*, 21, 1 (1980), 93-104
- Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972)

- John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd Edition, 1998)
- , "The Slave Trade in Eighteenth Century Angola: Effects on Demographic Structures," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 14, 3 (1980), 417-427.
- , *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800* (London: University College London Press, 1999)
- Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (New York: Longman, 1982)
- Pierre Verger, *Trade Relations between the Bight of Benin and Bahia from the 17th to 19th Century* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1976)
- James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Longman & Dalhousie Press, 1976)
- E. Frances White, "Creole Women Traders in the Nineteenth Century," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 14, 4 (1981), 626-642
- , *Sierra Leone's Settler Women Traders: Women on the Afro-European Frontier* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987)
- C. Wondji, "The States and Cultures of the Upper Guinea Coast," in B.A. Ogot, ed., *General History of Africa: Africa from the Sixteenth Century to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Heinemann Press, 1992), 368-398
- Donald R. Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997)

Unpublished

- Gibril Cole, "Embracing Islam and African Traditions in a British Colony: The Muslim Krio of Sierra Leone, 1787-1910," Ph.D. Dissertation, UCLA, 2000
- John Davidson, "Trade and Politics in the Sherbro Hinterland, 1849-1890," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969
- Linda R. Day, "Historical Patterns in a Stateless Society: Sherbro Land, 1750-1898," MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin (1980)
- Trevor P. Hall, "The Role of Cape Verde Islanders in Organizing and Operating Maritime Trade between West Africa and Iberian Territories, 1441-1616," Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University (1993)
- Svend E. Holsoe, "The Cassava-Leaf People: An Ethnographic Study of the Vai People, with Particular Emphasis on the Tewo Chiefdom," Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University (1967)
- E. Adeleye Ijagbemi, "A History of the Temne in the Nineteenth Century," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1968
- Kenneth Morgan, "British Merchants and the Slave Trade from Sierra Leone, 1750-1807," presented at Hull University's Interdisciplinary Conference, "Empire, Slave Trade and Slavery: Rebuilding Civil Society in Sierra Leone. Past and Present," September 26, 2008
- G. Ugo Nwokeji, "The Biafran Frontier: Trade, Slaves and Aro Society, 1750-1905," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1999