LEGITIMATE COMMERCE AND STATECRAFT
A Study of the Hinterland Adjacent to Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone

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The purview of this article is basically twofold, and both aspects concern the African and European relationship in nineteenth-century West Africa, with particular reference to the British Crown Colony of Sierra Leone and the autochthonous polities in the adjacent hinterland. The first aspect deals with the British antislave trade activities and the renewed emphasis on the reintroduction of Legitimate Commerce with the peoples in the hinterland near Sierra Leone. The second will try to analyze the kinds of initiatives developed by the autochthones in response to the British overtures of Legitimate Commerce from their enclave in Sierra Leone. This article will concentrate on developments in the southern hinterland.

African and European relations initiated in the pre-nineteenth-century era were forged on the wrong base principally because of the nature of the European motivations which paved the way for such contacts. These motivations were, to

say the least, purely and simply acquisitive.[1] The Portuguese, the foremost European power which initiated and pioneered these direct contacts, had as their primary objective the circumvention of the Arab Muslim economic and commercial monopoly over the trans-Saharan caravan trade routes. The commercial relations that developed between Africa and Europe during this era were dictated by European demands and needs and not by African interests. Thus, from the very beginning, the relationship was lopsided; and it was quite easy for a relationship dictated by and promoted for acquisitive aims, first for gold, and then for ivory, pepper, and other commodities, to degenerate into the trade in human cargoes.

If the nineteenth century could be seen as ushering in a new era of commercial and economic relationship between Africa and Europe—what has been called the *Liberal Jihad* (Wiedner, 1962: 227-242, 159-166)—the essentials of the previous era were carried over; European demands, needs, and priorities were still paramount. Acquisitiveness was still a primary motivating factor on the European side, only this time it was couched in more pious language. Thus, while the slave trade was the result of pre-nineteenth-century era motivations, Europe could not be satisfied with anything less than the partition of the African continent in the nineteenth century.

Humanitarianism in mid-eighteenth-century British society has sometimes been taken as the sole factor responsible for the British antipathy toward the slave trade. This view is, of course, too simplistic an explanation for an otherwise complex interrelationship of forces within British society at that time. Put more bluntly, the slave trade had presided over the birth of a new phenomenon in the economic sphere—*Industrialism*. Industrialism had shattered the old economic, political, and social foundations of British society. Antislavery and humanitarian activism and the ideals that went with them were the "reflections on the ideological plane of changes [which were] taking place in the economic sphere" of British society (Dike, 1956: 11). The old West Indian British plantocracy had lost its

economic and political base. This lost them political support for the slave trade. The new industrial magnates formed alliances with the antislave and humanitarian interests. The sincerity of the antislave trade and humanitarian activists is above reproach; but their success would have come harder without the political support of the industrial magnates. The political pressures of the new alliance produced the 1772 Mansfield Proclamation, which outlawed slavery within the British Isles. In 1807 and 1833, the slave trade and slavery were made illegal in the then British Empire. In 1787, the antislavery and humanitarian activists established the British Crown Colony of Sierra Leone as an *abolitionist state.*

1

Nineteenth-century Sierra Leonean geography and identity are different from those of contemporary Sierra Leone. The area of nineteenth-century Sierra Leone was very small. It was limited to the original territory of cession which the founders of the colony obtained in 1787 and 1788 from Naimbana, the Temne king, with some territorial annexations which were subsequently made. Likewise, Sierra Leonean citizenship and identity were limited to the Creoles, the descendants of the four groups of freed blacks resettled in the area. The four groups were the Black poor, the Nova Scotians, the Maroons, and the Liberated Africans. Autochthonous residents in the Crown Colony area were regarded as foreigners and hence outside the pale of British jurisdiction. In 1887, the colonial administration passed legislation for the establishment of autochthonous political institutions in the colony area.

The hinterland adjacent to nineteenth-century Sierra Leone was not a unified entity politically, culturally, or ethnolinguistically. The area was divided, then as now, amongst some fourteen ethnolinguistic groups: Temne, Mende, Bollom (Sherbro), Mandingo, Susu, Limba, Kono, Yalunka, Loko, Vai

(Gallinal), Kissi, Krim, Kuranko, and Fula. Each ethnolinguistic group has its own distinctive language, political culture, political institutions, and social and cultural institutions.

Though culturally and linguistically homogeneous, the ethnolinguistic group was not then, and is not now, politically integrated. Instead of an integrated political dominion in which political authority was in the hands of one ruler, each ethnolinguistic group was divided into small, independent political entities. An understanding of this ethnolinguistic and political pluralism is necessary in appreciating the revolutionary nature of trade and politics in the hinterland adjacent to nineteenth-century Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, by the nineteenth century, the legitimizing institutions of the political systems of the hinterland were bifurcated, particularly among the Temne political kingdoms. In the Temne kingdoms in the north, the legitimizing process was divided amongst the *Islamic Institution* (a foreign element), *Ragbenle* (the traditional Temne legitimizing institution), and the *Poro* (the Bollom legitimizing institution). The southern hinterland, on the other hand, seemed to have been more fortunate in this respect, because *Belli-Pooe* (the sovereignty of the Poro institution in the Bollom language), was supreme in political, economic, cultural, and social affairs (Fyfe, 1964: 35).

2

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Sierra Leone Administration's foreign policy toward the indigenous kingdoms of the adjacent hinterland was dictated by the two "imperial questions" of the era. The first concerned the slave trade and the most effective method by which this could be extirpated. The second concerned the establishment, extension, and protection of Legitimate Commerce—nonslaving commerce—as a viable alternative to the slave trade. Thus, the two imperial

questions of antislavery and legitimate trade were inseparable. They represented two sides of the same coin.

The initial steps toward the return to non-slave-trading commerce were taken in 1790 in England with the formation of the St. George's Bay (Sierra Leone) Company.[2] The Company received its royal charter in 1791. It was this company that sponsored the resettlement of the Nova Scotians in Sierra Leone. In their report issued in 1791, the directors of the Company referred to the favorable conditions for the establishment of legitimate trade. They noted that "several specimens of native produce, particularly of woods, iron ore, gum copal, pepper, rice, and sugar cane, which afforded the more favorable hopes to the Company," had been collected at Sierra Leone (Newbury, 1965: 100). Continuing, the directors observed further:

> all the most valuable productions of the tropical climates seem to grow spontaneously at Sierra Leone; and . . . nothing but attention and cultivation appear wanting, in order to produce them of every kind, and in sufficient quantities to become articles of trade, and even of great national concern. Besides the prospect of trading to Sierra Leone for the immediate productions of that Country, it appears also, that a coast and river trade, and, through the rivers, an important inland trade, may be easily established by means of small vessels calculated for that purpose: These might deposit at Sierra Leone productions of Africa, brought from other parts. The Coast of Africa, neighbouring to Sierra Leone, is more intersected with rivers navigable for small craft, than other portions of it whatsoever; by circumstances an extensive Commerce might be greatly facilitated [Newbury, 1965: 100].

The primary objective of the diectors of the company in beginning a new trade at Sierra Leone was not only the establishment of a commercial factory, but also the establishment of a plantation colony. The plantation colony would use the African labor force for agricultural production in Africa instead of export into the Americas. The Nova Scotians, who

had acquired considerable plantation experience in the United States during the days of slavery, were chosen as the vanguard of the plantation colony to be established at Sierra Leone.

The Sierra Leone Company, however, went bankrupt in the early 1800s. Sierra Leone was declared a Crown Colony by the British government in 1808, a year after Parliament passed the act outlawing the slave trade. This made the British Crown heir to three kinds of responsibilities: The first, and perhaps the most important for the time, was to make certain that Sierra Leone survived as an abolitionist state; the second was the extirpation of the slave trade from its source; the third was the promotion and protection of Legitimate Trade with the indigenous polities in the adjacent hinterland. The British government responded to these self-imposed responsibilities by stationing a squadron of her navy in West African waters.

The Sierra Leone Company's objective of establishing a plantation system in Sierra Leone did not die with the bankruptcy of that institution. Its cause was taken up by the African Institution. Obviously motivated by national self-interest, the African Institution made its objective the encouragement of cotton-growing in Sierra Leone. Planning on the distribution of cotton seed, a committee report of the African Institution noted in 1808:

> cotton is an article the growth of which in Africa will occasion less competition with our own Colonies than almost any other article of tropical produce which could be named. . . . It is important to be preparing sources from which a supply of cotton may be drawn, should circumstances arise to interrupt our Commercial relations with America, or with the other places which now furnish it. . . . In proportion as the natives of Africa supply us with raw materials, they will be capable of paying for a larger quantity of the manufactured article [Newbury, 1965: 103-104].

While there was agreement in antislave trade and humanitarian circles on the need to extirpate the slave trade and its

substitution by Legitimate Trade, officials in the British Colonial and Foreign Offices were often divided on the methods to be used for the implementation of these imperial policies. On the one hand, there were proponents of direct military intervention in the African polities subsisting on the slave trade; on the other hand, there were opponents of military intervention, suggesting that such action would be contrary under the "law of nations."

By the mid-1860s however, there was a general consensus in the Colonial and Foreign Office circles that the promotion of British trade in West Africa could not

> be accomplished without physical efforts for the protection of tht Trade. It may be true in one sense that Trade ought not to be enforced by Cannon Balls, but on the other hand, Trade cannot flourish without security, and that security may often be unattainable without the Protection of physical force [Newbury, 1965: 120].

The above quote is excerpted from a minute written by Lord Palmerston, the then British Foreign Secretary, a very determined opponent of the slave trade. The minute continued:

> It might be said of an European Country that Trade ought not to be enforced by the Cudgels of a Police or the Sabres & Carbines of a Gendamerie but those Cudgels & Sabres & Carbines are necessary to keep quiet the ill-disposed People whose violence would render Trade insecure and thus prevent its operations. . . . In Africa the Slave Traders African and European endeavour by violence to put a stop, and to drive away Legitimate Commerce in order that it may not interfere with the Slave Trade, and if we wish Commerce to prosper we must employ Force or the threat of Force to keep these Enemies of Legitimate Commerce quiet [Newbury, 1965: 161].

Palmerston wholeheartedly supported military action in the promotion of Legitimate Trade, but he was very careful to point out that such military action might not be used against

European nations, ostensibly because they were "civilized powers" (Newbury, 1965: 120). The motivations to promote, extend, and protect Legitimate Commerce with African states was the growing dependence of European industries on Africa, both as a source of raw materials and as an outlet for cheaply manufactured goods. But Legitimate Commerce with Africa was always put in terms of the slave trade. Thus, the Palmerston minute continued:

> It said that Commerce will put an end to the Slave Trade, but it is equally true that the Slave Trade puts an end to Commerce; and experience tends to show that it is necessary to begin by rooting out the overshadowing weed Slave Trade, before the nourishing Crop of Legitimate Trade can rear its head and flourish to useful purpose [Newbury, 1965: 120].

Thus the promotion of Legitimate Commerce with African states and antislave trade activity were intricately connected, portraying British policy toward West Africa in the nineteenth century. These concerns were primarily responsible for the piecemeal growth of British power in the area during the nineteenth century.

As an abolitionist state established by British humanitarian and antislavery activists, Sierra Leone had always had a special place for British administrators in the nineteenth century. Her status as a Crown Colony made Sierra Leone an integral part of the British Empire. The success of the colony as a haven for freed black slaves was always of primary importance to the administrators. Success in this sense could be interpreted in several ways. First, it was interpreted in terms of the impression of the "British National Character upon the African Constitutions of its wards" (Kopytoff, 1965: 7). This goal of planned social and cultural change was largely achieved as a cooperative venture between church and state—that is, between the colonial administrations and the missionary societies. Second, success was determined in terms of the establishment of Legitimate Commerce with the indigenous polities in the

adjacent hinterland. Third, it was determined in terms of discouraging the heads of indigenous polities from being partners in the slave trade. Finally, success was interpreted in terms of the extension of the British political, economic, cultural, and social sphere of influence.

Hence, because of the aims, objectives, and nature of the British investment in Sierra Leone, colonial administrators of the Crown Colony in the nineteenth century developed a comprehensive foreign policy mechanism for the regulation of Sierra Leone's relations with indigenous polities of the adjacent hinterland. The first of these foreign policy mechanisms was the Treaty System. Generally, four kinds of treaties were signed by the several nineteenth-century administrators of the Colony on behalf of the British Crown: antislave trade treaties, defense treaties, treaties of cession, and commercial or trade treaties. A total of 156 treaties were signed with the heads of polities in the adjacent hinterland between 1787 and 1895. This number is an indication of the importance the administrators attached to the Treaty System as a mechanism for the regulation of relations with the indigenous peoples. "The object contemplated in framing those Treaties [was] to secure to British Traders a free participate not only in the fruits of a new trade, but in the Commercial advantages directly and indirectly to be derived from intercourse" with the polities in the adjacent hinterland (C.O. 267/187, 1845). Goods from those polities would be allowed to enter Sierra Leone duty and customs duty-free. Moreover,

> still more fully to encourage innocent and useful trade among the Timmanees [the Queen of England] consents to pay to the Chief of the Timmanees for himself and the remaining Chiefs, one pound on every one hundred pounds in value of all the goods imported into the Colony of Sierra Leone, which now pays three pounds for every one hundred pounds to the use of the Colony, or such a percentage on the said goods, as would on an average of the last three years produce one thousand pounds a year which sum per cent will not . . . be named [C.O. 267/163, 1840].[3]

The Stipendiary System was the second mechanism used by the Colonial Administration to achieve its foreign policy aims and objectives in the adjacent hinterland.[4] The Stipendiary System was established at a time "when it was considered desirable to conciliate (or to attain an object in view) by means of presents to Native Chiefs" (C.O. 267/229, 1852). These stipends were in essence bribes paid to indigenous rulers by the Colonial Administration to support British policy. In the beginning, the stipends were paid in kind—in "bars" of cotton goods, rum, and tobacco. From the 1870s onwards, the Colonial Administrations started paying the indigenous rulers in pounds sterling. This move was made to tie the polities in the adjacent hinterland permanently, economically and politically, closer to Sierra Leone, as there was no other place for the money to be spent. In many respects, the commercial or trade treaties for the promotion of Legitimate Commerce and the Stipendiary System were similar. The trade treaties usually contained clauses stipulating the amount of stipend each signator received or should receive.

A third foreign policy instrument utilized by the Colonial Administrations in the nineteenth century to open and maintain their vital links with the commercial centers of the adjacent hinterland was the dispatch of "diplomatic missions" to those areas.[5] The objectives of the missions were twofold: first, to divert trade from the French sphere of influence in the north to Sierra Leone, and second, to obtain assurances of the security of the trade routes for traders from Sierra Leone. The signators to treaties at such times in effect became responsible for the security of the routes passing through respective spheres of control (C.O. 267/123, 1836).

The "gunboat policy," military intervention, and outright annexation of territory formed the fourth foreign policy mechanism toward the indigenous polities.[6] While this last series of policy mechanisms was systematically selectively applied at the beginning of the nineteenth century, its utilization gained notoriety as the century progressed. Military and naval expeditions

into the adjacent hinterland reached epidemic proportions in the 1870s and 1880s. It is worthy to note that this was at a time when the peoples in the hinterland had come to realize and appreciate the lucrativeness of Legitimate Commerce. The reasons for this lie in a careful analysis of the successful nature of the indigenous response to the British overtures of Legitimate Trade, and the kinds of initiatives developed to tap it. This aspect will be dealt with in subsequent paragraphs.

From the 1820s to the late 1840s, the gunboat policy and the annexation of territory by cession or by force were undertaken primarily for the extirpation of the slave trade and the creation of a favorable atmosphere for the operation of Legitimate Commerce. One of the earliest expeditions undertaken in the polities in the south was made in 1825, and resulted in the cession by treaty of the Plaintain and Banana Islands, and some area of the Bollom coast. Informing the British government about this expedition and its results, Governor Turner wrote:

> By this Treaty which I hope will meet with Your Lordship's approbation, it will be seen that upwards of 100 miles of Sea Coast is added to this Colony, a circumstance which in this particular case will tend greatly to increase its trade and general prosperity by throwing open and securing the exclusive trade of five large Rivers, navigable a great way into the interior, and known long to have been the most fertile in rice, Camwood, and various products of this Country. As regards the Slave Trade of the district now ceded to us has, for many years back been the theatre of its most active operations in this, or perhaps any other part of Africa [C.O. 267/66, 1825].

The Gallinas, located within this ceded zone, was a particularly active area for the slave trade. Theodore Canot, an Italian who spent most of his lifetime in the area slaving, called the Gallinas the "grand metropolis" for the slave trade. The following dispatch to the British Foreign Secretary in 1830 shows how the slave trade was driving out the produce trade from the hands of

Legitimate Traders by the creation of a monopoly over both kinds of trade by African and European slavers:

> The greater the number of Slavers in those rivers, the greater the demand for rice and palm oil, for the food of the slaves: and as the Slavers purchase ivory, the three staple articles of the produce of those rivers thus becomes monopolized by the illicit Traffickers, and as the Natives will ever give the preference in the sale of those articles of lawful Commerce to parties who purchase their slaves [Fyfe, 1964: 158].

The monopoly by the slavers over both kinds of trade was only broken by naval blockade and naval attack of the Gallinas in 1841, 1849, and 1850. Thus, Legitimate Trade with the southern hinterland became important only after the 1850s.

In 1839, a group of Liberated Africans petitioned Governor Doherty for protection and permission to return to the Bight of Biafra from where they had originally been enslaved. The Governor gave them what they asked for. This marked the beginnings of the demographic expansion of the Sierra Leone Creoles along the West Coast of Africa (Kopytoff, 1965: 24-60). Kopytoff suggests that "there appear to have been at this time (1800-1845) two distinct types of ventures gaining momentum out of Freetown. One of them was initiated by men interested in commerce along the coast. They purchased condemned slavers to trade European goods . . . for palm oil and other products. . . . The other group contained men and women who wished to leave Freetown to settle permanently in the Lagos area" (Kopytoff, 1965: 38ff.).

However, if a majority of Sierra Leoneans turned their energies toward the Bight of Biafra for Legitimate Trade and reasons of kinship, others ventured into the adjacent hinterland to promote trade. As early as the 1830s, Sierra Leoneans, both men and women, started to go first into the northern hinterland and later into the southern hinterland. Sierra Leone was ideally situated, at "the junction of the trades of the two seasons (Rainy and Dry); it is particularly fortunate in having

an uninterrupted trade all year round" (Rosenbusch, 1881: 19). The northern trade was very active during the dry season, while the southern, dependent upon the rivers, was very brisk during the rainy season. Rosenbusch emphasized the Sierra Leonean acumen and prospensity to tap the trade of the two areas once Legitimate Commerce had been well established:

> Such is the native Sierra Leonean propensity for trade that when unable to procure sufficient capital with which they can profitably trade, ten or fifteen of them club together and sub-scribe to a general fund for the use of which they draw lots, one trading with the money in the north during the dry season and returning it at the end of the season for the use of another during the wet season in the south, and so on until all the members have had their turns [Rosenbusch, 1881: 22].

By the mid-1880s, palm oil and palm kernels had become of great national concern to the British industrial economy. Palm oil was in great demand, both as a lubricant for industrial machinery and for the manufacture of soap. Palm oil and palm kernels were obtainable in the southern hinterland where they grew abundantly. In 1850, the last stronghold of the slavers in the area was cleared of the slave trade by the destruction of the Gallinas slave factories. As has already been pointed out, the slavers operating in the area created or established monopolies over both the slave trade and the produce trade. The extirpa-tion of the Gallinas slave trade opened the way for a more fruitful Legitimate Trade. Thus, from the 1850s onwards, European and Sierra Leonean merchants moved in substantial numbers into the hinterland in the south to participate in the trade of the area. In 1861, the Island of Bonthe Sherbro and sections of its immediate vicinity were annexed by Sierra Leone. Bonthe became the headquarters of the several Euro-pean and Creole mercantile establishments. By the 1870s there were five European mercantile houses in the Bonthe Sherbro area (Fyfe, 1962: 400). The Civil Commandant of Bonthe Sher-bro, the enterprising N. Darnel Davis, noted in an 1875 dis-

patch to the Governor at Sierra Leone that "the African population [of Bonthe] includes those enterprising Sierra Leone men who have found the dronish life of the native Country [Sierra Leone] incompatible with progress and prosperity. To these, Sherbro is a kind of Australis" (Fyfe, 1964: 226). The commercial attraction of Bonthe Sherbro and its hinterland to the Sierra Leonean mercantile community was reechoed by the *Sierra Leone Church Times* in the mid-1880s. The paper noted that Sherbro and "its numerous rivers provided sufficient room for all, and its position as regards the interior has rendered it a sort of Commercial EL DORADO to the mercantile world" (British Parliamentary Papers, 1886: 69).

3

What was the nature of the indigenous response to the overtures of Legitimate Trade from the European and Sierra Leonean merchant community? Before discussing this question, it is necessry to point out the net result of Britain's antislavery activity in the area. This problem is directly related to the kinds of responses made and initiatives developed toward the trade in produce.

The antislavery activity did succeed in the creation of an economic and political crisis of major proportions for the polities in the adjacent hinterland. For example, the naval blockade of the Gallinas in 1849 cut off this area from its source of food supply, Bonthe Sherbro. A kind of economic specialization had been developed whereby Bonthe Island became the breadbasket of the Gallinas while the latter concentrated on slaving as a livelihood. The naval blockade also succeeded in cutting off the Gallinas slavers from their economic mainstay by preventing them from selling their slaves to their European customers. Two families that had built their wealth on the slave trade were the Massaquio and Rogers. The economic crisis

created by the blockade was the only thing that forced these two families to sign an antislave trade treaty with the British in 1850 (Fyfe, 1964: 164-165). This treaty cleared the way for the beginning of Legitimate Trade in the Gallinas area.

The pattern of responses to the overtures of Legitimate Commerce made by the indigenous peoples of the southern hinterland were by no means uniform. The thesis might be advanced that the nature of the response toward Legitimate Trade was largely determined by two factors. The first was the distance from Sierra Leone; the second was the extent to which the slave trade had become the mainstay of the economy of a particular area. The Kargboro-Bompeh and Gallinas areas provide typical examples. The former was nearer Sierra Leone, and therefore more immediate and direct pressure could be applied there. Perhaps because of this, Legitimate Trade began there early in the nineteenth century with the timber trade. Because the Gallinas were further down the coast, it took several successive military and naval attacks and blockades before the slavers' monopoly over the produce trade was broken. Here, both kinds of trade were integrated. Once the slavers' factories had been destroyed, the produce trade became very important.

In discussing the kinds of initiatives developed by the indigenous peoples of the southern hinterland toward Legitimate Trade, it is necessary to reemphasize the fact that this area in the nineteenth century was never integrated politically. The hinterland was not only plural in its ethnolinguistic configuration, but also divided into several independent polities. Even when British conquest brought the hinterland under its hegemony, the rulers of the principalities were recognized as were their polities.

Organization was the key factor in the successful participation in Legitimate Trade. The creation of economic and political spheres of influence with wide areas of tributary allegiance became a necessity in order to reap the fruits of the produce trade. As palm produce became king in the southern hinter-

land, old polities extended their areas of political control and many new polities were created. Rivalry and competition in their most ruthless manifestation were unleashed in the movement toward the consolidation and establishment of monopoly over the produce trade with the Colony. These rivalries for the creation of economic and political spheres of influence created major crises in the adjacent hinterland, particularly after the 1870s. The crises in the hinterland were caused by the wars waged by the heads of polities in their attempts to create monopolies over the trade with European and Sierra Leonean merchants. The period from the 1870s onwards was the Era of the Trade Wars in the history of the hinterland.

To the immedite south of Sierra Leone, one of the first major political crises of the nineteenth century was the civil war fought between the Kargboro and Bompeh branches of the Caulker family. Thomas and George Stephen Caulker were amongst the first indigenous rulers to sign treaties with the colonial administrators of Sierra Leone. In 1820 they signed two treaties with the Colonial Administration, ceding sovereignty over the Plantain and Banana Islands. These Islands had been the staging grounds for the slave trade for the adjacent hinterland; they had many slave factories. Signing those treaties and ceding the islands meant giving up the slave trade and stopping the slavers from operating in the area; it also signalled the beginnings of Legitimate Trade with the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone.[7]

The timber trade was begun in the 1830s by Charles Caulker of Bompeh with the European and Sierra Leonean traders. The timber trade itself was initiated in 1816 with the northern interior (British Parliamentary Papers, 1830: 68-69). The exhaustion of the timber from the northern rivers diverted the traders to the south of Sierra Leone. The trade in palm produce became important in Bompeh country by the 1840s. The fruits of Legitimate Trade, the produce trade, and timber trade were all concentrated in Bompeh country. Palm produce and timber had successfully driven out the slave trade, and Bompeh being

oil palm and timber country monopolized the new trade. Bompeh was situated inland at the headwaters of the river bearing its name.

Plantain and Banana Islands, on the other hand, were on the coast. These two areas had thrived on the slave trade. The islands ceased to be economically viable after the turn of the century, and signing of the 1820 treaties with the Sierra Leone Administrations wiped out the islands' economic base and mainstay. The Kargboro Caulkers were cut off from the produce-bearing hinterland and hence from participating in Legitimate Commerce. Thomas Stephen Caulker of Kargboro therefore decided to get a foothold on the palm- and timber-producing area in the hinterland. The result of this move was the Caulker Civil War. The Civil War, like all other wars from the 1840s onwards in the mainland, was an economic and trade war. It duplicated the old rivalries, those with trade wanting to monopolize it, and those without trade fighting to break the monopoly. The most celebrated theatre of the Caulker Civil War was the Battle of Bendu. The battle of and for Bendu on the mainland was the last great desperate attempt by Kargboro to get a foothold on the mainland. This objective they never achieved, thanks to the Mende mercenaries used by Bompeh.[8]

The period beginning with the 1870s was the most revolutionary in political and economic terms in the history of the nineteenth-century hinterland. This was the Era of the Trade Wars in both the northern and southern hinterlands. The Trade Wars in the nineteenth-century hinterland in one respect indicated the success with which the switch was made from the slave trade to the produce trade. They gave testimony to the successful transition made by the indigenous peoples from an economy based primarily on the slave trade to one based wholly on Legitimate Commerce. However, the major drawback to these wars was that they spread chaos and left widespread and wholesale destruction in their train. Fought primarily to create political and economic spheres of control in order to monopolize Legitimate Commerce with European

and Sierra Leonean merchants, the Trade Wars came to prevent the peaceful pursuance of commerce. In preventing the peaceful pursuance of Legitimate Trade, the polities invited military intervention from the Colonial Administration in Sierra Leone. These Trade Wars predicated the nature of the polity and politics in the nineteenth-century Sierra Leone hinterland.

In the Gallinas, the Trade Wars were fought in the 1880s over the right of access to rivers which carried produce to the coastal entrepots. If the Rogers and Massaquio families had monopolized nonproduce trade in earlier times, the Kai Kai and Jah families monopolized Legitimate Trade. Their headquarters, Pujehun, was at the headwaters of the Wanjei, a tributary of the Bum River. They built up their wealth by skillfully organizing the produce trade and making Pujehun the entrepot of the inland trade. These two families, located at the headwaters of the Wanjei River, were pitted against Makaiah, whose territory lay further inland. The Gallinas Trade Wars were thus fought between coastal and interior peoples, like the Caulker Civil Wars of earlier times, for the control of trade and trade routes. In 1885, the Sierra Leone Administration worked out an agreement to end the hostilities between the coastal and interior peoples in the Gallinas. It was in the self-interest of Sierra Leone that these Trade Wars came to an end because of the continued economic dependence of the Colony on the hinterland. The following is an excerpt from the treaty of 1885:

> We promise that the trade routes to Our Country shall be open to all comers; that we will not prevent any of the people residing inland of this from coming down to our towns and carrying their produce to the sea-board, or the traders on the coast . . . from passing up to the interior from the sea-board with their merchandise and returning from there to the sea-board with such produce as they may have collected [British Parliamentary Papers, 1886 (4642): 45-47].

Another area where economic and political rivalry led to trade wars during this era was the Upper and Lower Bum-

Kittam (Fyfe, 1964: 230-233). The administrators at Sierra
Leone were cognizant of the reasons for these wars in the
hinterland. They knew that the wars were not related to the
slave trade. Governor Havelock was one of the administrators
who correctly diagnosed these wars. Writing about the Imperi
area in the Lower Bum, he suggested two reasons for the wars
in the area. "This condition of things is attributed to two
causes: (1) to the competition in trade and political influence of
the Sierra Leone traders . . . and (2) to the machinations and
evil influence of Chief Lahsurri" (British Parliamentary Pap-
ers, 1882 [C.3420]: 3). Lahai Sheriff, mentioned in the above
excerpt, was a Susu who had migrated to the Imperi region,
where he succeeded in creating a political sphere of influence
by the 1880s. In the Upper Bum, the major combatants were
the rival polities of Tikonko and Bumpe. They were fought
over access and control of the town of Mafwe, situated at the
headwaters of the Bum (Fyfe, 1964: 233-236). After paying a
visit to Mattru in 1882, M. Laborde, the Commandant of
Bonthe, reported to Governor Havelock on the nature and
extent of the Trade Wars in the Sherbro and its hinterland:

It will now be best to explain as clearly as possible the divisions
of the war, which are as follows—In the Boom Country the
Bompeh and the Looboo [sic] are the warriors against Gberry
and the Boom Chiefs. In the Kittam it is Momo Kei Kei,
Zorokong, Fahwoondoo, and others VERSUS Chiefs Jab-
berty, Momo Jemmy, Boccary Governor and others. Chief Bey
[sic] Kelleh of Mokelleh is fighting with Bompeh, the Jong river
Chiefs with Gberry. The Small Boom Chiefs, with the excep-
tion of two or three, are with Bompeh. The Imperreh were, with
the exception of one or two Chiefs, in favour of Bompeh. Yet
with all these parties the war can in reality be divided into two
parts, Gberry, Zorokong, Fahwoondoo, and Co., VERSUS
Bompeh, Looboo, Gpowe [sic], Mokelleh and Co. Thus,
although scattered in different parts of Sherbro, it is one and
the same war. Many of the Bompeh boys are fighting in the
Kittam, and no doubt, as is the rule in country warfare, the
Kittam boys are fighting with the Bompeh.

Before closing I deem it my duty to say that my opinion is that
the country would not have continued in this unsettled state for

> so long or the war assumed such large proportions, had not
> merchants and traders given injudicious and uncalled-for
> advice and assistance to the various Chiefs [Fyfe, 1964: 237].

Creole and European traders became partisans instead of
mediators in the Trade Wars, supplying firearms to the com-
batants. This was the simplest means of "cornering" the pro-
duce trade with the heads of polities.

The introduction of firearms into the Trade Wars of the
hinterland by the very people who were supposed to be prom-
oting peaceful Legitimate Trade with the peoples of the areas
changed the whole objective of indigenous warfare. Hitherto,
wars were fought for the extension of tributary power. The
victors were satisfied with receiving tribute, the expression of
political subservience to another ruler. The monopoly of Legit-
imate Trade with Sierra Leone became an added incentive for
political organization.

The Trade Wars of the nineteenth-century hinterland spread
destruction in their path.[9] The victorious were no longer satis-
fied with receiving tributes, but wanted total subjection, and
they had the means with which they could obtain this. The
economic and political rivalries in the nineteenth-century hin-
terland and the lack of respect for human life which they
encouraged cannot be appreciated without mentioning the role
of mercenary "war boys." All the combatants employed mer-
cenaries. Warfare in a sense became a trade, and the mercenar-
ies sold their expertise to the highest bidder. Writing on
the wars, the role of mercenary war boys, and the nature of the
political systems at that time, Governor Havelock commented:

> It is perhaps impossible for a person unacquainted with these
> districts to form any idea of the difficulties of the situation. If
> there were merely rival tribes [sic], the headmen might be
> brought into subjection and quiet be restored. But what does
> exist is a floating population of marauding mercenaries who go
> from one place to another whenever strife can be stirred up and
> plunder obtained. These today with Gbow [sic], tomorrow with

someone else, have no occupation but so-called war, no means
of subsistence but what they can obtain by force. How to reduce
such a band to quiet is a problem that seems impossible to solve
[British Parliamentary Papers, 1883 (C3765): 14].

The major problem faced by combatants who used mercenar-
ies was paying the war boys adequately or paying them at all.
Sometimes the mercenaries pounced upon their employers
(British Parliamentary Papers, 1886 [C. 4840]: 32). Most of the
time the mercenaries lived off the land, pillaging farms as they
passed through. Little wonder, then, that Alldridge could
make the kind of conclusions about the chaotic state of affairs
in the hinterland after traveling there in the 1880s and early
1890s. People abandoned their farms instead of harvesting
their crops. Others refused to farm at all, because they did not
know whether they would live to make the harvests. However,
Alldridge was in error in one major respect in his analysis of the
wars in the Sherbro and its hinterland. That error was in calling
those wars in the adjacent hinterland "slaving wars." They were
trade wars, fought primarily to create economic and political
spheres of influence and control for the better participation in
Legitimate Commerce with Creole and European merchants in
Sierra Leone.

4

Like other areas of West Africa—the Gold Coast and Niger
Delta—the history of the hinterland adjacent to nineteenth-
century Sierra Leone was a revolutionary one. The century was
revolutionary economically, politically, and socially. The
extirpation of the slave trade changed the economic base of the
polities of the hinterland. The growth of Legitimate Commerce
provided a cure for the economic crises created by the abolition
of the slave trade. But the organization of Legitimate Com-
merce, on both the African and the European sides, caused its
own revolution in politics. The revolutionary nature of the

indigenous response to the overture of Legitimate Commerce was manifested in the Trade Wars that engulfed the entire hinterland.

It might be suggested here that the Trade Wars of the nineteenth-century hinterland adjacent to Sierra Leone are tributes to the successful transition the polities there made from a slave-trade-based economy to a produce-trade-based economy. The wars were fought primarily to create economic and political spheres of influence and to monopolize Legitimate Trade with Creole and European alike.

Nineteenth-century Sierra Leone, it must be pointed out, was not a producing area. The Colony was a middleman in the trade between Europe and the polities in the hinterland. By the 1880s, the economy of Sierra Leone had become dependent upon the hinterland. By this time also, the heads of polities in the area had come to realize the lucrative nature of Legitimate Commerce and to engage in wars of death and destruction to monopolize that trade. The Trade Wars prevented the smooth and peaceful flow of goods to and from the hinterland. Because of the economic dependence of Sierra Leone on the interior, the wars in the hinterland invited the political and military intervention of the administrators of the Colony. This intervention came with the British proclamation in 1896 of its right of sovereignty and hence its right to govern the hinterland.

NOTES

1. Rotberg (1965) discusses this aspect of early Portuguese expansion.

2. See Wadstrom (1795) for a treatment of the Sierra Leone Company and its objectives, and different ideas of European colonization in Africa at this time.

3. See also C.O. 267/159 (1840): Doherty to Russell on the use of Treaties. The letters C.O. and F.O. stand for Colonial Office and Foreign Office respectively. These are the original correspondence, minutes, and memorials exchanged between British administrators in Sierra Leone and the Colonial and Foreign Offices.

4. See C.O. 267/229 (1852): Kennedy to Packington on stipends; C.O. 267/300 (1869): Kennedy to Granville on Sherbro stipends; C.O. 267/316 (1872): Knatchbull-

Hughessen minute on stipends; C.O. 267/340 (1880): Rowe to Beach on Chiefs' stipends; and Parliamentary Papers, 1887 (C. 5236): 12.

5. Correspondence relating to this aspect is contained in the following: C.O. 267/53 (1821): Grant to Bathurst; C.O. 267/60 (1824): Hamilton to Bathurst; C.O. 267/166 (1841): Fergusson to Thomson; C.O. 267/300 (1869): Kennedy to Granville; C.O. 267/301 (1869): Kennedy to Granville.

6. Correspondence with regard to this is contained in C.O. 267/49 (1819): Maccarthy to Bathurst; C.O. 267/60 (1824): Hamilton to Bathurst; C.O. 267/66 (1825): Turner to Bathurst; C.O. 267/271 (1861): Hill to Newcastle.

7. T. N. Goddard (1925) has a chronological table of these treaties signed with the indigenous rulers between 1788 and 1895.

8. See Sierra Leone Studies (1920) No. 4, 17-48; (1922) No. 6, 1-30; (1925) No. 7, 1-18. "The Caulker Manuscript," which is contained in these issues, discusses this problem in detail.

9. See Alldridge (1901). He was one of the traveling commissioners appointed by the Colonial Administration in 1889 to go into the adjacent hinterland. He paved the way for the declaration of the Protectorate in the southern hinterland.

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