



Africans in Bondage

Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade

Essays in Honor of Philip D. Curtin on the Occasion of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of African Studies at the University of Wisconsin

Edited by Paul E. Lovejoy

Published by
African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Distributed through agreement by the University of Wisconsin Press

CHAPTER 9

SLAVE TRADE, "LEGITIMATE" TRADE, AND IMPERIALISM REVISITED: THE CONTROL OF WEALTH IN THE BIGHTS OF BENIN AND BIAFRA

Patrick Manning*

The nineteenth-century transformation of the Bights of Benin and Biafra, set in motion by British abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, is classically seen as having consisted of two stages: the first as an economic change from the slave trade to "legitimate" trade, and the second as a political change from African independence to European colonial rule. Virtually all authors, whatever their different interpretations of the transformation, emphasize the intricacy of the political and economic narrative and the central importance of slavery and the slave trade in the developments of the time (cf. Johnston 1900; Geary 1927). The adventures of this era feature the life stories of many fascinating individuals: King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny, who gained power by signing an anti-slave-trade treaty with the British; King Ghezo of Danhomé, who considered signing such a treaty, but ended up continuing with slave exports; Francisco Felix de Souza, the great slave-trading merchant and ally of Ghezo, Jaja, who rose from the status of slave in Bonny to become the founder of the trading state of Opobo; Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the Yoruba slave trained in Sierra Leone who became Anglican Bishop of the Niger; British officials John H. Glover and Harry Hamilton Johnston, both aggressive imperial agents; and such leading European merchants as Victor Régis and John Holt. The transformation is further depicted in such successful novels as Bruce Chatwin's The Viceroy of Ouidah, Elechi Amadi's The Great Ponds, and Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart.

*For useful commentary which led to substantial revision of an earlier draft, I wish to thank Richard Roberts, Christopher Udry, and especially Paul Lovejoy.

Only partly concealed beneath the apparently inherent interest of the heroic men's tales lies an issue with which the chroniclers have wrestled in fascination but which has resisted resolution: the nature of the link between political and economic factors in the nineteenth-century Bights. Were the political factors dominant, as K. O. Dike (1954) suggested? Were the economic factors determinant, as A. G. Hopkins (1968, 1973) has argued? Did Europeans hold the initiative in political and economic affairs, or was it the Africans? How precisely did slavery and the slave trade figure in coastal affairs?

This study reconsiders the nineteenth-century transformation of the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and presents a reformulation of the links between political and economic factors. It is an attempt to draw on the evidence presented by Dike, Hopkins, and other scholars to resolve some of the interpretive contradictions among them. In this analysis I make use of a revised and elaborated framework which, by formalizing analyses often left implicit by previous authors, ends up revising certain of their conclusions. The framework gives particular attention to the control of wealth, in addition to the production of such wealth, and it analyzes the control of wealth in two aspects: the appropriation of wealth by various individuals and social strata, and the disposition of wealth by those who had appropriated it.

Agency and Structure in West Coast Historiography

The pioneers of Nigerian history, K. O. Dike (1954) and Saburi Biobaku (1957), brought the African protagonists of the nineteenth-century transformation to center stage. They sought to refute the Eurocentric focus of their predecessors - British historians of the colonial era such as Allan McPhee (1926) and W. Keith Hancock (1942) - who saw the transformation in terms of the percolation of European interest and enlightened policy. In the eyes of McPhee and Hancock, the Europeans had combined the advantages of trade in legitimate goods with the pressure of British consuls and warships, and had caused African merchants and statesmen to switch from trading in slaves to exporting palm oil. Later on, the restrictive practices of Africans in commerce, clashing with the European devotion to free trade and open markets, had caused the Europeans to assert colonial dominion over the Bights at the end of the nineteenth century. These discussions of nineteenth-century events by McPhee and Hancock were concise and intended mainly to prepare the ground for their main agenda, colonial economic development. Overall, however, they emphasized the role of agency - purposeful actions, in this case those of Europeans on the African coast - as the key factor in bringing about this transformation.

Dike and Biobaku focused entirely on the nineteenth century, and in their hands the precolonial history of the Bights emerged as a set of contests of will, in which European and African protagonists pitted their energies against each other. Dike's book in particular set the canon for a whole series of "trade and politics" studies which focused on the diplomacy of commerce, and in which the levels of commercial activity are seen as being set by political authorities (and particularly African authorities) through their ability to shut off or to encourage commerce (Ikime 1968; Akinjogbin 1967; Newbury 1961; Daaku 1970). These studies, while fundamental in establishing the validity of African history, preserved the emphasis on the centrality of human agency. They tended to convey the assumption that political decisions set the flow of West African wealth: the volume of palm oil or the number of slaves marketed were determined, so it seemed, by the policies of African political leaders.

With the development of interdisciplinary approaches to African history, and because of influences from the fields of anthropology and economics in particular, subsequent investigators of the transformation in the Bights came to see societal structures, rather than human agency, as the key factors causing change. The most influential such study was that of Hopkins (1968), in which he argued that economic factors were the cause of British colonial expansion from Lagos into Western Nigeria (see also Hopkins 1973). Rather than focus simply on international trade, he emphasized the importance of warlords, who rose in the course of the Yoruba wars which followed the collapse of the Oyo Empire in about 1830, and who settled numerous slaves on plantations producing palm oil for export. The central issue was the "crisis of adaptation which the military regimes faced in the era of legitimate commerce" (Hopkins 1968:591). What brought about the British conquest of the region was, in his view, the conflict between British merchants and Yoruba warlords over the share of the declining profits of trade in the 1880s, an era when palm oil prices were collapsing as part of the world-wide decline in agricultural prices.

A.J.H. Latham (1973) proposed an analogous interpretation for Calabar. Latham documented the rise of the palm oil trade as a response to demand, and showed the resultant transformation of Efik society. He gave particular emphasis to the development of factional disputes in the palm-oil era, and argued that British consular authority was drawn into the region as a result of these disputes, until it became supreme in 1891. As he concludes, "annexation was the result of the polygon of forces operating internally and externally at Calabar. These forces were economic, or the by-product of economic forces" (Latham 1973:148; see also 1986).

Thus, according to the economic historians' revisions of the political historians' interpretation, the narratives of the Pepples, Jaja and the Egba rulers might have made for exciting stories, but the economic structures of production and commerce determined the transformation of the Bights. The wills and actions of European and African protagonists, while still important, were factors best seen as functioning within these structural constraints.

Another group of writers gave a different sort of structuralist response to the Dike-Biobaku focus on agency, choosing to emphasize the influence of social rather than economic structures (Jones 1963; Alagoa 1971a, 1971b; Austen 1970). As with the economic historians, these writers revised Dike and Biobaku by placing the free will of African leaders into a web of powerful forces. But the work of Jones and Alagoa for the Bight of Biafra and of Austen on the Bight of Benin emphasized the continuity resulting from the relative inertia of social structures which were closed off to external influences, in contrast to Latham and Hopkins, who emphasized the changes resulting from the dynamism of economic structures which responded readily to outside forces.

In a comparative study of the transformation of the Bights, the present author (Manning 1969) tested a version of the Dike-Biobaku approach (i.e., "West African coastal states . . . maintained the slave trade as long as possible and switched to trade in palm oil as a source of revenue when further exports of slaves became impossible") against a version of the Hopkins-Latham approach (i.e., "The end of the slave trade and the beginning of the palm oil trade were determined less by reasons of state than by accounting of profit and loss"), and found for the latter on the basis of commercial and political evidence. Assuming a need to make a dichotomous choice between agency and structure as the cause of the coastal transformation, structure was the appropriate choice. But this resolution of the issue could not resolve the contrast of the continuity emphasized by social structuralism and the change suggested by economic structuralism. Nor could it purge from the analyst's mind the possibility that agency and structure might be bound up in each other systematically, and that an approach combining the two might provide a more detailed and more satisfying explanation of the nineteenth-century transformation of the Bights. Thus we turn to a reconsideration of the issue.

The Origins of Wealth: Production and Commerce

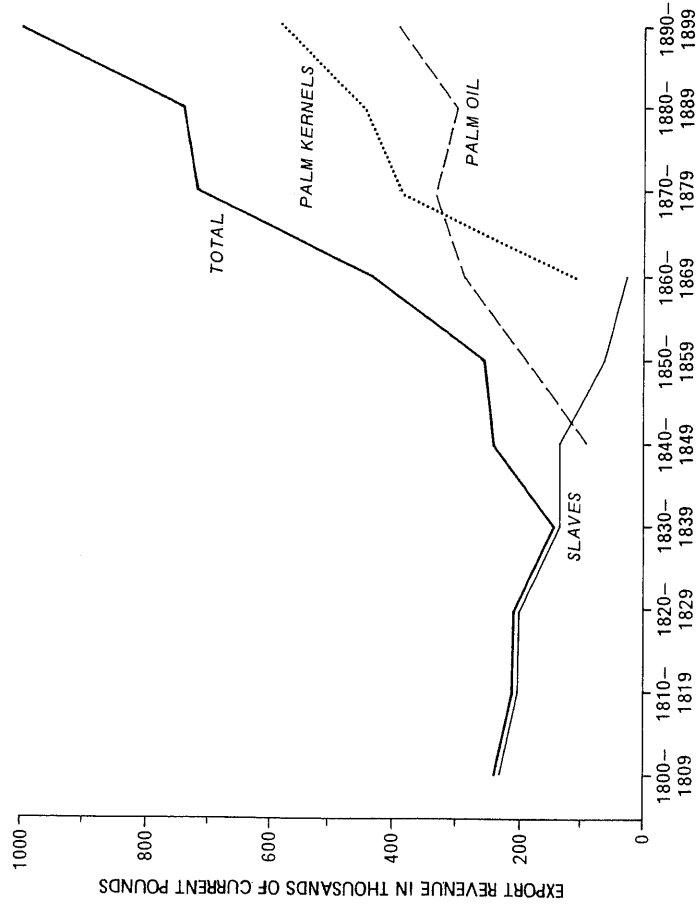
The nineteenth-century economy and society of the Bights has come to be known in ever-greater detail, and the new evidence facilitates our task of reconsidering the region's

transformation. Recent studies of economic history, in accord with the research agenda of their time, have devoted considerable attention to amassing data on patterns of production. But as this qualitative information is not easily summarized, we must turn to quantitative measures of the economy in order to make a concise presentation. And for a quantitative picture of economic structure, one must rely on commerce: the accompanying graphs of the value of slave and palm product exports provide an index of changes in the regional economic structures.¹

These figures show a period when slave exports were predominant, a period of mixed exports, and a period of concentration on palm product trade. Export income rose from a relatively modest level of £250,000 in the Bight of Benin and £300,000 in the Bight of Biafra at the beginning of the century to a remarkable £1,000,000 for each of the Bights in the 1890s (Figures 9.1 and 9.2). Despite continued high numbers of slave exports in the early decades of the century, the actual value of slave exports dropped in both areas; the decline was most dramatic in the Bight of Biafra, falling to virtually nothing by the end of the 1830s. In the Bight of Benin, by contrast, the decline in the value of slave exports was more gradual and continued through the decade of the 1860s. Palm products more than took up the slack in the value of the export trade, becoming significant in the Bight of Biafra by 1830 and in the Bight of Benin in the 1840s. Thereafter the expansion in trade was closely associated with the volume of palm product exports - palm oil before 1860 and both oil and kernels after 1860. The 1880s were a period of stagnation in both Bights, as prices fell during the first great world depression in agricultural commodities.

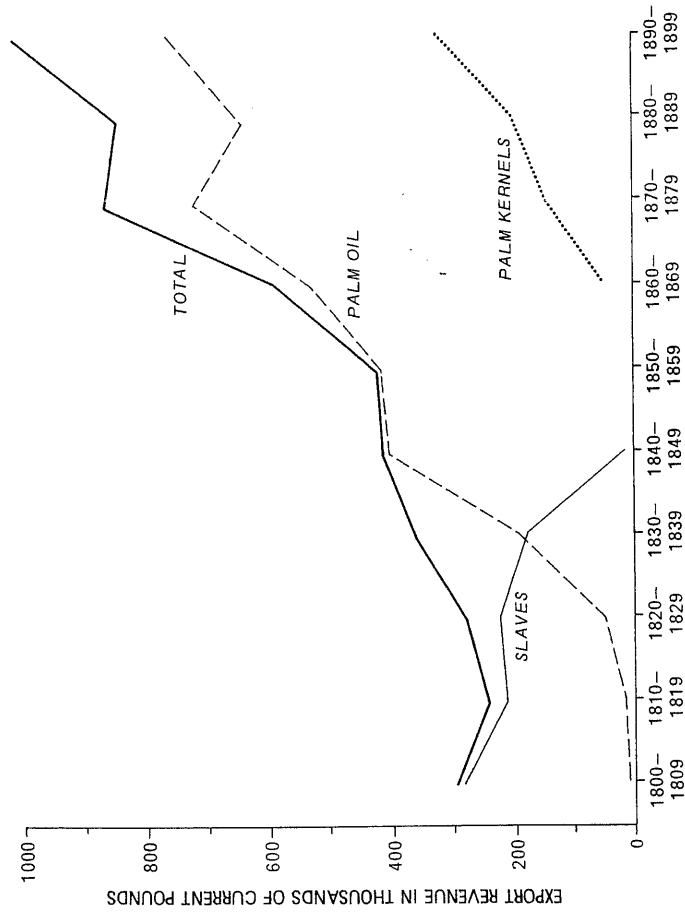
At a more detailed level, several interesting contrasts between the two regions emerge. In total revenue, the Bight of Biafra generally led the Bight of Benin throughout the nineteenth century until the 1890s, when the Bights were virtually the same. The Bight of Biafra experienced stagnation in the value of exports from c. 1800 to the 1820s, probably even suffering a modest decline during the second decade of the century, but thereafter revenue grew remarkably fast on the whole. A decade of modest growth occurred in the 1850s, and a temporary set back occurred in the 1880s, but from 1800 to the 1890s the value of exports rose 330 percent. The Bight of Benin, by contrast, suffered a period of gradual decline from c. 1800 to 1840, recovered only to the level of 1800 by 1850, and only took off after 1860. Hence the shift from a reliance on slave exports to palm products occurred much later in the Bight of Benin than in the Bight of Biafra, but the growth of the Bight of Benin export trade was very dramatic in the last four decades of the century, increasing 500 percent.

Figure 9.1 EXPORT REVENUE IN THE BIGHT OF BENIN,
NINETEENTH CENTURY



Cartographic Office, York University

Figure 9.2 EXPORT REVENUE IN THE BIGHT OF BIAFRA,
NINETEENTH CENTURY



Cartographic Office, York University

In palm oil exports, the Bight of Biafra began earlier than the Bight of Benin, expanded at a very rapid rate of over 10 percent per year in the 1830s and 1840s, and expanded at a slower rate of 1.3 percent for the rest of the century. The value of palm oil exports exceeded (or at least tied) that of slave exports in the Bight of Biafra in the 1830s; such was not the case in the Bight of Benin until the 1850s. The reason for the early expansion of Bight of Biafra palm oil exports is almost certainly that this region was the lowest-cost producer, since it benefitted from very dense and luxuriant oil palm forests and a network of cheap, waterborne transport, though Latham (1986) has noted other factors predisposing this region to early palm oil trade. As European demand for palm oil grew, higher prices and more determined purchasers drew the Bight of Benin and other areas into the market: palm oil exports from the Bight of Benin expanded at a rapid annual rate of nearly 6 percent from the 1840s through the 1860s, and at a slower rate of 2.8 percent thereafter. In fact, early Bight of Benin exports of palm oil may have been somewhat greater than shown in Figure 9.1 because of exports to Brazil whose volume is not yet known (Verger 1953). The volume of palm oil exports from the Bight of Benin never exceeded half that of the Bight of Biafra. Yet total export revenue from the Bight of Benin, which lagged behind that of the Bight of Biafra throughout the century, ultimately surpassed that of its more easterly neighbor.

The reason lay in palm kernels. Palm kernel exports from both regions were negligible until the 1860s, when the new process for manufacturing margarine brought a sharp increase in demand for the light, unsaturated palm kernel oil. With that, palm kernel exports grew rapidly in both regions, at annual rates of roughly 6 percent to the end of the century. But in the Bight of Benin, palm kernels exceeded palm oil as a source of revenue from the 1870s, while in the Bight of Biafra palm kernel exports brought no more than one quarter of export revenue. The single greatest reason for the low ratio of palm oil to palm kernel exports from the Bight of Benin was the higher level of domestic palm oil consumption in the Bight of Benin, as compared with the Bight of Biafra. In addition, the proportionate yield of palm oil to palm kernels seems to have been higher in the Bight of Biafra as a result of the higher humidity and rainfall (Manning 1982).

Each of the three export commodities entailed a contrasting social organization of production. The slave trade required sanction and support by the state, it tended to place wealth into the hands of those already powerful, and its revenues could be gained wherever people were to be found: the slave trade led to an uneven distribution of export revenue. Palm oil production and commerce was susceptible to a degree of consolidation, particularly through the use of slave labor,

though production by smallholders dominated palm oil output. The production and commerce of palm kernels was the least subject of all to consolidation. Palm kernels did not have to be processed and shipped in a timely fashion, as did palm oil, which fetched a lower price if it fermented; and palm kernels were commonly shipped in raffia or jute bags which were easier to move than the three-hundred-gallon puncheons used for palm oil. Palm kernels could thus be separated from the palm nuts by women, children, and the old, who may then have gained a portion of the revenue from their sale.

From a structuralist perspective, and assuming that figures on export commerce are an accurate indicator of the total domestic economy, one may propose an interpretation of the nineteenth century transformation of the Bights based on Figures 9.1 and 9.2. From the 1800s to the 1820s the two regions had roughly constant and nearly equal levels of export revenue: even the Yoruba wars were insufficient to raise Bight of Benin slave export levels above Bight of Biafra levels until the 1840s (Manning 1982; Eltis forthcoming; Law 1982). For the middle three decades of the century the two regions diverged. The Bight of Biafra increased its export earnings in the 1830s and 1840s because the rise in palm oil exports more than compensated for the end of slave exports; the "crisis of adaptation" was thus surmounted with success and with a higher level of export revenue than during the slave-trade years, though export revenue stagnated in the 1850s. For the Bight of Benin, the "crisis of adaptation" was more severe: export revenue declined sharply in the 1830s, while during the next two decades the growth of palm oil exports combined with the continuation of slave exports barely succeeded in bringing export revenue back up to turn-of-the-century levels. Thus, for the Bight of Benin, slave exports lasted some two decades longer, palm oil export growth began some two decades later, and sustained growth in export revenue began two decades later than in the Bight of Biafra. For these reasons we should expect some contrast in the politics of the regions during those decades.

From the 1860s to the 1890s, we again find the two regions synchronized in a pattern of rapidly growing export revenue. For both regions, that growth was halted during the 1880s because of the collapse of palm oil prices. This effect was most severe for the Bight of Biafra because of its relatively high dependence on palm oil exports. The Bight of Benin was less affected because of its larger exports of palm kernels, whose quantities rose faster and whose prices fell to a lesser degree. The more rapid growth rate of Bight of Benin export revenue generally resulted from its larger proportion of palm kernel exports. Bight of Benin export revenue suffered relatively at the beginning of the century, especially in the 1830s, but from that time it grew at an average annual 3.4

percent to the 1890s; Bight of Biafra export revenue grew regularly from the 1820s to the end of the century, but at a lower rate of 1.8 percent (growth rates calculated from Figures 9.1 and 9.2).

The export revenue estimates fit neatly with the interpretations of Hopkins and Latham, in that they show a halt in export growth in the 1880s; they also pinpoint the era of competition between slave trade and palm-oil trade emphasized by Dike and Biobaku for the 1830s and 1840s. This last point confirms Northrup's assertion (1976) that the slave trade and the palm oil trade overlapped for some time in both Bights, though neither this result nor the overall pattern of export revenue necessarily confirms his conclusion that the slave trade promoted economic development.

The above picture of fluctuating export revenue is further confirmed by available figures on currency flows: cowrie shell imports, of which the greatest portion went to the Bight of Benin, declined to a low level in the 1830s and 1840s, and then rose rapidly (Johnson and Hogendorn 1981, 1986; Hopkins 1966). In sum, this relatively detailed picture of the export trade provides a basis for an improved analysis of political and economic transformation in the Bights. It is evident that the marshalling of further detail would extend the predictive power of economic structure in coastal affairs.

It is therefore tempting, in a sense, to dismiss human agency as a causal factor and rely entirely on export commerce as the leading economic sector, the best available index of production, and the determinant of political change. In fact, neither Hopkins nor Latham made such a strong claim. Although their overall conclusions emphasize the economic structure, their presentations include a great deal of information which does not fit rigidly into such an outlook, and which details the role of human agency in the transformation. Their analytical framework deals explicitly with structures, but their analysis of other factors remains implicit. Similarly, Dike and Biobaku argue from relatively explicit premises on the role of political and economic policy in social change and leave implicit their analysis of the role of economic and social structures. So rather than press further the case for the unique determining power of structure, I shall seek out an enlarged framework of analysis, encompassing both structure and agency, and then apply it in an attempt to fit a still larger proportion of the available evidence into clear and chronologically precise patterns.

Control of Wealth as a Framework of Analysis

The present attempt to resolve the dilemma of structure and agency in the politics and economics of the Bights begins by focusing even more heavily on structures, and then moves from that standpoint to incorporate agency. It addresses in specific time frame the issues denoted for precolonial West Africa generally by Law (1978), and it touches on the notion of ideas as a causal factor developed in Berry's twentieth-century analysis (1985). We will consider, in addition to the structures of production and commerce, the distinctions among social strata, and the participation of the various strata in production, appropriation, and disposition of wealth. (The terms production, appropriation, and disposition, while taken from the Marxian lexicon, correspond almost exactly to the Neoclassical terms output, income, and expenditure; the reason for bypassing the Neoclassical terminology here is that the economic analysis is used in explicit combination with an analysis of social structure.) Of these various aspects of the handling of wealth, some will be revealed to lend themselves readily to the exercise of policy options, while in other areas circumstances will tend to force the hands of individual actors. For instance, while West African conditions of productivity and demand put severe constraints on the planting decisions of large landowners, those same landowners had wide latitude in deciding whether to spend their earnings in purchasing new slaves, a political office, or luxury goods. Here, then, we will seek to locate the links between structure and agency, and between economic and political factors. Jaja's policies in Bonny and Opobo succeeded for nearly two decades because they were consistent with (though not exactly determined by) the economic and social conditions of his time; the attempts of Ghezo in Danhomé to bring about changes of similar magnitude failed because his policies were inconsistent with the realities of his situation, but also because he met determined opposition from entrenched interests within and without his kingdom.

By broadening the range of structures considered, we broaden the definition of the social transformation of the nineteenth-century Bights. Changes in items of trade (from slaves to palm products) and in heads of state (from African to European) remain as key elements of the transformation, but these are now joined by changes in systems of production (the rise of slave-labor systems), changes in social structure (the development of a slave class and the rise of a landed interest), and changes in the relative power and wealth of contending social strata (merchant challenge to monarchy, protests by slaves). Not all of these factors were of equal or constant importance, but the result of their inclusion is that the analysis yields a political and economic narrative with a

number of phases in the overall transformation, whereas both the policy-oriented and structuralist approaches tend to imply two or three main steps in the transformation, with the rest of the narrative adding little but detail. The role of slavery in the transformation is both indicative and causative of the link between economics and politics: new institutions of slavery were created and then dismantled during the nineteenth century by purposeful action in response to economic pressures, yet the wills of the slaves and of the slaveowners cannot thereby be discounted.

This is a study of the socio-economic appropriation of wealth and of the socio-political ends to which wealth was put. In this portrayal of the economic side of the West African political drama, the main character types include planters harvesting produce, merchants garnishing commercial profit, princes collecting taxes, and warlords snatching booty. Smaller roles are played by priests and family chiefs, each receiving their appropriate tithes, and master craftsmen collecting manufactures; we may also note the significant divergence in the interests of merchants selling goods from those specializing in slaves (Manning 1985b). In addition to these big men of the Bights there were the masses of peasants, artisans, domestics, and wage workers, along with slaves of many categories.

The appropriation of the fruits of West African labor was complex in its detail, but a simplified social analysis of appropriation captures a significant portion of that complex reality. The producers themselves, first, were able to appropriate much of the wealth they created by retaining the product for their own consumption or by exchanging it for other goods. Merchants large and small, second, were able to appropriate wealth by profiting from the transport and exchange of goods. Princes, third, the more or less legitimately constituted and recognized governmental authorities, appropriated wealth by profiting from taxation of producers and merchants, in return for providing security and justice. Finally warlords - large-scale military powers and small-scale thieves who did not rule but plundered - forcibly appropriated wealth from producers, merchants and princes, with little pretense of providing a quid pro quo.

The disposition of the product of West African labor, while similarly complex in practice, may also be summarized schematically as a set of alternatives open to any group controlling some wealth. The consumption of wealth for subsistence and for reproduction of the population was surely the main avenue of disposition of West African wealth at all times. But in addition, wealth could be invested in a variety of ways: in persons, as through marriage or as in the purchase of slaves; in land, presumably by purchase; in capital and improvements - land clearing by cultivators, boats for fishing

peoples, animals for herders, stocks of goods for merchants. Wealth could further be invested in attempts to gain political control, as through payment of bribes, through support of retainers, or through purchase of arms. Finally, wealth could be disposed of through conspicuous displays for real or imagined prestige, and it could simply be wasted.

The struggle for control of wealth and power took place in each of three arenas - production, appropriation, and disposition of wealth - and involved interactions among them. The productive system was conditioned by a range of economic, ecological, and social factors, so that levels of production can be largely explained in terms of structural imperatives (e.g. prices, levels of rainfall) rather than in terms of human will. Control over appropriation was constrained by limits on the availability of wealth, but the mechanisms of theft, tithing, taxation, coercion, and market pricing were open, within those constraints, to control through policy. The disposition of wealth too was more amenable to human manipulation than its creation, though one's allocation of wealth among various alternative uses was conditioned by their relative profitability. Even in poor regions like the Bights of Benin and Biafra, consumption levels could be determined voluntarily, within limits; individuals and groups could then invest their savings out of consumption into a variety of economic, political and social activities, in pursuit of ends they deemed appropriate to their social station. These might range from purchase of tools to fees for divination ceremonies. Unfortunately, the disposition of wealth is difficult to observe for precolonial West Africa. That is, it is easier to know who siezed slaves or sold palm oil than it is to know how the proceeds from the sale of palm oil or slaves were put to use.

To the degree that the patterns of appropriation and disposition of wealth remained stable over time, the result was the reproduction of the population and of the social and economic structure, and even growth along previous lines. But society changed when the processes of appropriation and disposition of wealth reallocated resources from previous use, even if the underlying patterns of production remained unchanged. Let us now see how this more explicit analytical framework leads to a revised view of nineteenth-century change on the West African coast.

Societal Transformation in the Bights of Benin and Biafra

Paul Lovejoy (1983:170-183, 251-255), in his comprehensive interpretation of slavery in Africa, has given a detailed analysis of slavery and society in the Bights. His study

emphasizes the interaction of the slave trade and the palm oil trade, the growing importance of slavery and slave resistance, and the links between Christianity, anti-slavery, and the imperial conquest. In acknowledging these as key issues, the effort in what follows is to make the detail and the framework more congruent: to tie the overall patterns down to a more specific chronology.

The Efik peoples of Calabar provide clear instances of social and political transformation through the impact of economic forces. Latham (1973) has shown how, during the eighteenth century, the kin-based Efik lineages became, through the incorporation of many slaves into the population, territorial wards where real and fictive kinship were united in geographical units (See also Dike 1954; Nair 1972; Forde 1956; Jones 1963; Alagoa 1971a). At much the same time, the previously dominant water spirit cult, which corresponded to the outlook of a fishing people, was displaced in religious affairs by the Ekpe society, which acted to guarantee payment of debts by its members. Finally a town council, including representatives which were now from wards rather than from lineages, emerged to complete the Efik system of governance. In sum, Efik society adjusted in several ways to the increasing dominance of trade.

In the early nineteenth century a new development took place as a single man, Duke Ephraim (Efiom Edem), managed to become at the same time eyamba (head of the Ekpe society) and obong (head of the town council). This was partly a matter of his individual commercial and political skill, but it was also a function of the new pressures on merchants as slave prices began to decline from their turn-of-the-century peak. Duke Ephraim had become the leading trader in Calabar by 1800, he had obtained both leading offices by 1820, and he held them to his death in 1834. Once having gained unprecedented power, he used it to reinforce his position in the slave trade and to obtain a dominant position in the expanding palm oil trade.

The interaction of policy and market forces in the West African political economy is illustrated neatly by two of Duke Ephraim's acts. First, he concentrated trade in his own hands by undermining the local salt industry. All along the West African coast, as the export trade in palm oil expanded, European merchants began to import salt as a product they could exchange for palm oil. From Calabar to the Volta, European salt imports now came to challenge the position of the coastal salt-manufacturing industry (Manning 1985; Maier 1984). In Calabar, Duke Ephraim not only sped this process along, he also diverted additional profits into his own hands by suppressing the salt industry in the coastal area of Tom Shotts (Latham 1973, 1986). This action enabled him to benefit from the import trade in salt at the expense of the Tom Shotts salt workers. Second, at a time when revenue from slave exports was

declining, he secured additional income through the monopolization of customs duties (comey). By 1828 he had successfully forced all European merchants to pay these duties to him and to him alone.

The outlines of Duke Ephraim's remarkable accumulation of wealth are thus fairly clear. His policy for the disposition of his wealth is known in less detail. He purchased thousands of slaves and settled them in the hinterland region of Akpabuyo to produce foodstuffs. This policy clearly increased the numerical strength of his ward, Duke Town. Whether the foodstuffs were sold on the market is not clear, but slave-produced food did support Ephraim's large operations. One may note, however, the parallel between this choice to settle slaves on land for producing foodstuffs with Northrup's report of the equivalent concentration of Igbo slaves on northerly food-producing lands rather than in southerly oil-palm forests (Northrup 1979). In both cases, the production of foodstuffs was indirectly related to the expansion of the palm oil trade, in the case of northern Igbo country because yams were moved into the palm oil belt and in the case of Calabar because of the savings achieved by merchant firms that had to maintain large numbers of people to transport palm products from the interior.

Yet while Duke Ephraim was able to establish an unprecedented centralization of wealth and power in his hands, he was unable to pass that power on, and only one of his successors was ever to hold his two offices at once. His power was ephemeral both because of local institutional reasons and because of changes in the international economy. The easily-concentrated revenue from the slave trade was not to last forever: the volume and prices of slave sales declined in the 1830s because of declining New World demand and because of British efforts at suppressing the slave trade. In the inevitable disputes over the succession to each of Duke Ephraim's offices, there arose accusations of witchcraft. These accusations could only be resolved, if the parties insisted, by recourse to a poison ordeal. The political stalemate among the leading wards and the widespread use of poison meant that many of the best candidates for leadership died. This reinforced international economic pressures and led not only to a reduction in the amount of wealth generated but to its more widespread dispersal among the Efik.

Duke Ephraim presided over a period of transition at Calabar, during which time Calabar's exports shifted from a reliance solely on slaves to a period of mixed exports. As can be seen in Figure 9.2, the years from 1800-1830 were a time of relative stagnation in the value of total exports for the Bight of Biafra as a whole. Duke Ephraim emerged as the dominant figure, forcing his rivals into subordinate positions, and he was the leader in heralding in the new palm oil trade at the

same time that he established control of the old slave trade. In contrast, the bloody succession to Duke Ephraim after 1834, in which a more fragmented political and commercial leadership emerged, occurred at a time of overall rapid economic growth that was characterized by a boom in palm oil exports and the final collapse of slave exports.

An analogous set of developments took place in the Ijo portion of the Niger Delta, centered on the port of Bonny (Dike 1956; Jones 1963; Alagoa 1971a, 1971b). That port, known for the volume of its slave exports in the late eighteenth century, was ruled by the very powerful and successful King Opubu from 1792-1830. He had circumvented the prohibition on unifying the monarchy and commercial leadership by installing his slave, Madu, as head of his own commercial and familial house, the Anna Pepple house. Opubu's reign thus corresponds rather closely to that of Duke Ephraim. Madu became regent on the death of Opubu, and Madu's son Alali became head of the Anna Pepple house and regent as well on Madu's death in 1833. But as in Calabar, this concentration of wealth and political power was broken up by a combination of economic and institutional factors. William Dappa Pepple, the son and legitimate heir of Opubu, was enthroned as king on reaching his majority in 1835, though effective power remained in the hands of the regent. The decline in slave export volume, the European and African competition in the growing palm-oil market, and the British anti-slavery squadron combined to break the power of the regent. In 1836 the British fleet siezed four Spanish slave ships in Bonny, and Alali was forced to sign a treaty on commerce and judicial jurisdiction with the British. This treaty, in turn, provided a pretext for a return of the British fleet in 1837 and the imposition of a second treaty through which Alali was deposed as regent and William Dappa Pepple assumed full royal powers. The contrast of the new king's economic policy with that of his predecessor is shown by his attempt to abolish "trust", the advancing of goods on credit to Bonny merchants: this would have reduced the wealth of his merchant competitors and have increased the importance of his own wealth obtained from comey - export duties on palm oil. The market was expanding too fast, however, to prevent European merchants from extending trust, and the king's attempt at concentration failed.

For Bonny and Calabar, in sum, the decline of slave exports and the rise of palm oil exports in the 1830s corresponded to a period of contested political power. This period of mixed exports in which total revenue continued to grow slowly still resulted in major structural changes in the Bight of Biafra. The move towards monopoly, apparent under Duke Ephraim and King Opubu, was broken at the moment when palm oil exports took off. As might be expected from Neoclassical

economic theory, such periods of expansion allowed new competitors to enter the market (Hogendorn and Lovejoy 1979).

The commercial and political patterns of the Bight of Benin, up through the 1820s, exhibited remarkable parallels with those to the east. The similarities continued into the 1830s, except for the rise of palm oil exports from the Bight of Biafra; then the two regions diverged more sharply during the two decades to follow. There arose during the first half of the century a merchant at Ouidah who exceeded all his rivals for some three decades, Francisco Felix de Souza (Verger 1968). De Souza, who came to West Africa from Brazil in about 1800, and who built up his slave trade from a base in the Portuguese fort at Ouidah, put much of his fortune into financing the coup d'état of Prince Gankpe in 1818, by which the latter overthrew the incumbent Adandozan and became King Ghezo (1818-1858) of Danhomé. The king and his merchant benefactor remained closely allied: de Souza was appointed chacha, to whom were paid most customs duties and who dominated the export of slaves not only for the kingdom of Danhomé but for adjoining regions of the coast. With the temporary collapse of slave exports in the late 1830s, however, de Souza's obligations for imported goods could not be met, and his fortune and power declined accordingly, though he retained his political position until his death in 1849. The similarities with the Bight of Biafra no longer existed. By the 1830s the Bight of Biafra was shifting to the export of palm oil, and export revenue continued to rise. By contrast, the 1830s were a period of declining export revenue in the Bight of Benin. The demand for palm oil was not yet sufficient to call forth a supply from this region, and continued slave exports, even in large quantities, were not enough to offset declining slave prices. De Souza was caught in a squeeze. His decline and his legacy to future generations are portrayed colorfully by Chatwin (1980).

King Ghezo held on for two more decades because his economic interests lay in the taxes and tribute he received from his subjects and to a lesser degree on the revenue from the trade in slaves and other commodities and from the fruits of slave labor. The first two decades of his rule saw a great expansion of Danhomé's power: he renounced tribute payments to Oyo in the 1820s and initiated a series of military campaigns to the east and north that resulted in the acquisition of new territory and many slaves for export. The consolidation of the Egba state at Abeokuta checked Ghezo's territorial expansion in the 1830s, and Danhomé even lost some of the land it had conquered. The new political reality combined with the impact of the trade contraction of the 1830s, which saw the decline of De Souza, and the king had to consider different policies from those that had led to the political expansion of the Danhomé state (Ross 1967). At this point, King Ghezo turned to the rising demand for palm oil as a possible solution to his

difficulties. Thus, with a slight time lag, King Ghezo found himself in a position similar to that of Duke Ephraim and King Opubu, who had earlier consolidated their positions through extending control over the growing palm oil trade at a time when slave exports were declining in value. The period of mixed exports lasted from the late 1830s through the 1850s in the Bight of Benin, two decades later than it had in the Bight of Biafra.

King Ghezo responded to the conditions of the 1840s and 1850s with a policy which contrasted sharply with the military expansion, tribute levying, and slave trading of the first half of his reign. As the export of palm products assumed growing importance, he attempted to gain control of its proceeds, first by dominating its production through the establishment of slave plantations, and then through control of the marketing of palm oil. Beginning in the 1840s, he established royal plantations on and around the Abomey plateau, worked by slave labor, and he required that all palm oil be sold through royal merchants (Ross 1967; Djivo 1979).

The king turned to another Brazilian immigrant merchant, Domingo Martins, as an ally in changing the direction of the Danhomé economy (Ross 1965; Verger 1968). Martins came to West Africa in the 1830s and by 1846 had settled at Porto-Novo beach, where Ghezo granted him a monopoly of trade in return for a payment for the land. His main source of wealth was palm oil, including the produce of his own extensive plantations, but he also participated in slave exporting when the opportunity arose. In 1854, however, he lost heavily when most of his slave cargoes were seized either in West Africa or in Cuba, and he restricted his activities to palm products thereafter.

Despite Ghezo's efforts to monopolize the palm oil trade and thereby find a substitute for the declining trade in slaves, the policies of the Danhomé monarch and his allies ultimately failed. There were three reasons for this failure. First, the commercial activities of many merchants, especially Brazilians and repatriated Yoruba, were beyond the control of the Danhomé state; second, Danhomé accounted for little more than 10 percent of palm product exports from the Bight of Benin; and third, Ghezo ran into trouble with the entrenched military faction within Danhomé.

While Martins' career serves to emphasize Ghezo's efforts to centralize political and economic power in Danhomé, in contrast with other portions of the coast in the 1840s and 1850s, other aspects of his life reflect the growing competitiveness of his era. Martins was one of several thousand Brazilian immigrants to West Africa, most of whom were freed slaves. The Brazilians became an active commercial community from Agoué in the west to Lagos in the east. At much the same time, Sierra Leonian emigrants, most of them Yoruba or of Yoruba ancestry, also settled in significant numbers in

Badagry, Lagos and Abeokuta (Turner 1975; Kopytoff 1965; Biobaku 1957). Samuel Ajayi Crowther, enslaved as a youth and later to become Bishop of the Niger, was among these settlers: it was in accord with their values and his program of conversion that he portrayed domestic slavery as humane (Agiri 1981). Such an attitude reflects the willingness of these repatriates to use slave labor in developing their commercial interests.

The political discontinuity among the Yoruba of the nineteenth century contrasts with the relative stability among their western Aja neighbors, but the battles over control of wealth still had their analogs. Exports of Yoruba slaves grew dramatically during the wars from the 1820s through the 1840s and led to great short-term profits for some warlords and merchants (Law 1977; Ajayi and Smith 1971). Madame Tinubu, the most famous slave merchant of the time on the coast between Lagos and Porto-Novo, amassed a substantial fortune and a great deal of political influence. Various described as the niece or the "close friend" of Akitoye, king of Lagos from 1841-1845, her success reaffirms the importance of connections between the state and slave commerce (Smith 1979). New groups of small-scale merchants, Brazilian and Sierra Leonian, arrived in Lagos at the time of the expansion of "trust" and commercial competition. Most dramatically, however, the dominance of large African merchants in Lagos was broken as the British seized control of the port in 1851 (Biobaku 1957; Newbury 1961; Kopytoff 1965). Madame Tinubu, however, settled in Abeokuta, and later became known as a great patriot for her purchases of arms in the Ijaye war; she was introduced to the visiting Martin Delany as a "princess" (Delany 1861).

In the Yoruba hinterland, the growth of the palm oil trade in the 1840s and 1850s encouraged the settling of large numbers of slaves under the control of warlords now transforming themselves into proprietors of great estates. These are the figures on whom Hopkins (1968, 1973) focused in explaining the tensions among African producers and merchants, on the one hand, and European merchants, on the other hand, which provoked the British conquest of the area. But the focus here on control of wealth encourages us to break down Hopkins' "warlord" group into more specific interest groups. Biobaku (1957:99) argues that in Ibadan, because of the endless fighting from the days of its formation, a strong constitution and coherent government had emerged, while in Abeokuta the contending interests of missionaries, merchants, and owners of land and slaves were more evident. The case of Danhomé shows perhaps more clearly than in the Yoruba case the distinct interests of monarchy, landowner, merchant, and peasant.

Ghezo was willing, under the conditions of an expanding palm oil trade that he and his allies tried to dominate, to consider a treaty with the British to abolish the slave trade in return for full recognition. But this policy shift led the

king into conflict with entrenched economic interests: the military and much of the state hierarchy relied on booty from war as a major source of wealth and were reluctant to give up either war with the Egba or slave exports. On the other hand the merchants and producers of palm oil, led by such Ouidah families as Adjovi and Quénium with whom Ghezo carried on his trade, were competitors in that they hoped to benefit even more from unrestricted trade (Forbes 1851; Manning 1982). They could easily look beyond the frontiers of Danhomé to see how the palm oil trade flourished there without state restrictions. Peasant producers inside and outside of Danhomé, meanwhile, accounted for most of the growth in exports of palm products.

One important episode in the continuing policy conflict occurred in 1851 when the British blockaded the entire coast between Agoué and Lagos in an attempt to halt the slave trade. Ghezo had already been forced to recognize the failure of his effort to monopolize the palm oil trade, but he used the pressure of the British blockade to convince the opposing party in Abomey that it was necessary to end slave exports and to renounce war against the Egba in order to reach agreement with the British. The British, however, raised the blockade in July of 1852 without acknowledging that Danhomé had terminated the slave trade, thus denying Ghezo the backing he sought. Then a slave revolt in 1855 undercut any remaining support for Ghezo's policy: Yoruba slaves of the interior plantations planned a great uprising, in association with some Brazilians, to coincide with an Egba attack. The revolt was nipped in the bud, but it ended any great enthusiasm for concentrating large numbers of slaves. From that time on, the royal sector of the palm product market was a significant but never dominant portion of the total. Thus, while Coquery-Vidrovitch (1971) is correct to emphasize the royal effort to achieve monopolistic control of palm oil exports, her analysis should not be construed as demonstrating that palm oil exports from the kingdom were dominantly under royal control (Ross 1967; Law 1977; Manning 1982).

At the same time, the slave revolt provided fuel for the arguments of the war party. Ghezo died in 1858. David Ross (1967) argues that he was murdered by his son, who became king Glele (1858-1889), and who had for some years been leader of the palace faction favoring war with the Egba. The futility of a forward military policy was demonstrated in 1864, when an unsuccessful attack on Abeokuta took place.

The Danhomean slave uprising was no isolated occurrence, but rather one of several such movements by slaves in the 1850s. The earliest of these occurred in the western Niger Delta, where slaves rose to prevent the selection of an Itsekiri monarch and dominated the capital between 1848-1851 (Ikime 1968: 8). Among the Yoruba, slaves began to run away from their masters in significant numbers by the end of the

decade (Agiri 1981; Oroge 1975). There was also considerable unrest among slaves at Calabar and in the eastern Niger Delta - cases to be considered in greater detail below. In general, the spread of discontent among the slave population reflected, on the one hand, increasing oppression of slaves as they came to be held in larger numbers and as their work was focused more systematically on agricultural rather than domestic work, and, on the other hand, increasing social mobility for slaves as the period of social and economic competition created opportunities for individual and even group advancement. These revolts in both the Bights of Benin and Biafra occurred in the 1850s, at a time when the growth in export revenue was temporarily stalled. Hard times probably led masters to demand more work from their slaves, thereby promoting discord which in turn was reinforced by the spread of anti-slavery sentiments through Christian missions (Lovejoy 1983).

In Calabar the many hinterland slaves of Duke ward took to mass demonstrations at moments of political crises, notably in 1850-1852, 1858 and 1861. Dike (1954) called these slave revolts, but Latham (1973) has treated them as reform movements, with the apparent aim of at once maintaining the power of Duke ward and improving their own position within it, especially by ending human sacrifice. The latter interpretation seems better documented, but both are consistent with actions by slaves to share the benefits of a period of competitive expansion in commerce and a relatively open political system.

As in Calabar, a more dispersed system of wealth and power held sway in Bonny during the middle decades of the century. The growth in palm oil exports was financed by an expansion of the "trust" or "credit" system set up in the days of the slave trade. As steamships entered the West African trade in the 1850s, the old sailing merchants entrusted large amounts of imported goods to their African colleagues in an attempt to retain their share of purchases (Dike 1954). Much of this "trust" was lost to the European merchants, but in the course of this competitive period many slaves rose to positions of commercial influence in the Bight of Biafra, at the same time when similar circumstances were bringing Sierra Leonian and Brazilian traders to prominence in the Bight of Benin.

During the 1860s and 1870s, two conflicting trends became apparent in the control of wealth in the Bights of Benin and Biafra. On the one hand, those African merchants who were able to convert their own commercial expansion into the political arena began to emerge in very strong positions. On the other hand, the development of the palm kernel trade in the 1860s tended to favor small producers and thereby undermine the relative importance of large-scale production of palm products. The volume of the kernel trade rose more rapidly than the volume of palm oil, and kernel prices also tended to climb faster in relation to oil. The expansion was so great in the

period 1860-1880, however, that both small and large producers benefitted.

The most outstanding example of a successful African merchant was the former slave Jaja, who in 1863 became head of the Anna Pepple house in Bonny, following the death of the ex-regent Alali. Up to this moment, the rise of Jaja may be taken as emblematic of the mid-century social mobility of slaves. In the same period Oko Jumbo, another ex-slave, was the leading figure in the Manilla Pepple house. But in later years, during which Jaja maintained his leadership through a period of declining prices, his prominence reflected instead an attempted consolidation of power by monarchy: in 1869 he resolved the conflict between the two leading Bonny houses, which threatened civil war, by moving to Opobo and setting up a new trading state there. Relying on his control of transport routes at a crucial bottleneck, this merchant prince established his economic hegemony in the region (Geary 1927; Gertzel 1962). An important new element for the interpretation of Jaja's achievement is the recent discovery that Jaja himself was of an aristocratic Igbo lineage in Amaigbo and was kidnapped at the age of about fourteen. He had become king of Opobo by the time he regained contact with his family and so did not return to his ancestral home, but one may ask whether his rise to prominence might have been reinforced by his early socialization (Ofonagoro 1978). These conditions favored the consolidation of commercial enterprise, and they also favored the reassertion of monarchical power to regulate trade. Jaja was able to do both at once. He had established the regional supremacy of Opobo by 1872, and in 1881 he became king of Qua Ibo as well. He indeed carried on the tradition of King Opubu (Dike 1954).

A similar move towards economic and political centralization took place at Calabar, where the struggle centered on the rivalry between the landed interest of Duke ward and the commercial interest of Eyamba ward. Duke Ward achieved a brief consolidation of its power, similar to that of Duke Ephraim before 1834, when in 1880 Prince Duke was selected to hold both the offices of *obong* and *eyamba* (Latham 1973).

While the history of the Igbo peoples is becoming known in increasing detail, it remains difficult to tie developments in their homeland to a specific chronology. Thus Northrup (1978, 1979) has documented the nineteenth-century expansion of slavery in some Igbo regions; Ekejiuba (1972a, 1972b) has analyzed Aro trade in slaves and palm products (mainly at the end of the nineteenth century); and Oriji (1977) has argued in contrast to Northrup (1978) that, among the Ngwa Igbo, leading figures concentrated the benefits of palm oil into their own hands through the Okonko secret society in the early days of the trade. Later on, and after the Ngwa began to sell their produce at Opobo, Oriji pictures Ngwa political and economic

life as having become more democratic. But it will take further research to resolve this issue, as with the controversy between Isichei (1976) and Northrup (1978) over the relative benefits of the slave trade and the palm oil trade. The trauma of enslavement and its links to economy and society stand out, meanwhile, in *The Great Ponds* (Amadi 1969).

The political and economic narratives are known in more detail for interior areas of the Bight of Benin. In Abeokuta, the potential conflicts among merchant, landowner and monarchy were resolved through formation of the Egba United Board of Management (EUBM) under the Sierra Leonian George W. Johnson, beginning in 1865. To the east, however, the supremacy of Ibadan went largely unchallenged from the end of the Ijaye war in 1862 until the outbreak of war again in 1877; to the west, Danhomê continued its policy of war and expansion from the accession of Glele in 1858, and with increasing success in the early 1880s.

The economic crisis of the 1880s was dramatically reflected in the political arena of the Bights of Benin and Biafra. As Hopkins has shown, the sharp drop in prices for palm products created a situation in which European and African rivalries could not be contained. The consequence was the intervention of British and French colonial forces in the Bights which ultimately resulted in the establishment of colonial rule. The British enclave at Lagos, established in 1851 and confirmed in 1861, did not lead to further territorial acquisition in the 1860s and 1870s, and the 1862 French protectorate of Porto-Novo was soon allowed to lapse. But in the 1880s the British and French launched - or perhaps were drawn into - a forward policy, and this time there would be no hiatus in the move inland.

The sharp decline in palm product prices beginning in 1885 clearly created new conditions. Profitability in trade declined on all sides, a phenomenon only partly masked by the continued increase in the volume of palm oil and palm kernel exports. As the Yoruba political leaders tried to increase their tax revenues, and as Yoruba merchants sought to improve prices by acting in combination, so also did the European merchants call for British intervention to prevent both merchants and monarchs from increasing their share of the meager profits available (Hopkins 1968). The actual British seizure of power in the Yoruba hinterland did not take place until 1893. But one may seek to confirm Hopkins' reasoning by looking to Opobo and noting that it was in 1887, immediately following the price collapse, that Consul Johnston siezed Jaja and exiled him. And at Calabar, Eyamba ward finally mounted a successful challenge to Duke ward. Eyamba ward, led by Prince James Eyamba, a Christian, campaigned for British support and then for British annexation of Calabar. The first treaty of

protection was signed in 1884, and actual British administration began in 1891 (Latham 1973).

Hopkins has portrayed the wars among the Yoruba states as examples of Schumpeterian atavism: that is, warlords based on old relations of production entered war to get more land and slaves to participate in legitimate trade, but in so doing undermined the very conditions for such trade. This analysis downplays distinctions among Africans in the 1880s, however, and it thus underemphasizes an important element of internal dissension among Africans facing the advancing Europeans. In general terms, there was an important difference between monarchical interests, whose wealth came primarily from collection of taxes and tribute, and commercial (or landed and commercial) interests, whose wealth came primarily through sale of goods on local and world markets (Agiri 1981). The latter group was restricted, taxed, and at times expropriated by the former; it gradually became alienated and sought a new order based on the free-trade ideology espoused by the Europeans at the coast (Wilks 1975; Manning 1985b). This was the approach of Eyamba ward in Calabar in appealing for British protection. In Abeokuta the EUBM represented an attempt to reform government and achieve a pro-merchant environment without accepting European rule. The reaffirmation of the French protectorate over Porto-Novo in 1883, while partly out of fear of absorption by Danhomé, also corresponded to a victory by the pro-merchant party in domestic politics.

Even Danhomé, the most recalcitrant state of the coast in its relations with Europeans, reflected this tension. The war and peace parties struggled for dominance in the capital, though the war party never lost its hegemony (Ross 1966, 1967; Yoder 1974). But the landed and commercial interests centered in Ouidah became alienated from the state in the 1880s. Chacha Julio F. de Souza, in his capacity as governor of Ouidah, brought in Portuguese missionaries in 1884, and in 1885 he signed treaties with the governor of São Tomé placing Danhomé under the protection of Portugal. The gambit was ill-fated, however, and de Souza paid for his adventurousness with his life. King Glele, learning of the treaty and apparently seeing little advantage in a Portuguese tie, imprisoned the chacha in 1887 (Verger 1968). The war party was to have its last hurrah in its skirmishes with the French army in 1890 and in its glorious immolation at the hands of the French in 1892-1893.

Politics and Economics in the Transformation of the Bights

In this application of a control-of-wealth framework to a well known historical problem, the focus has remained, as in previous studies of this issue, on merchants, heads of state,

and international trade. This is partly inherent in the historical realities of the Bights, but further research would permit the framework to be tested by providing more information on peasants, priests, slaves, and soldiers, by considering gender and age, and by showing how these and other groups disposed of such wealth as they obtained.³ But even this provisional application of the framework yields some new interpretive results.

In the first third of the nineteenth century the Atlantic slave trade favored powerful monarchs and wealthy slave merchants. The middle third of the century, when the palm oil trade expanded most rapidly and came to be dominant, was a period of free-swinging competition and unusual social mobility. The mobility was downward as well as upward, for large numbers of slaves were assigned agricultural production or transport duties in this period. Domestic production of foodstuffs increased as a concomitant of expanding production of exports; much of this too was by slave labor. From the 1860s to the 1880s, as the growth of palm oil exports slowed, there came a time in which political and economic power were consolidated; during this same period, however, the growth in palm kernel exports provided new income, particularly for independent peasants, and perhaps for women and the aged.

These changing economic and social structures and interests were not sufficient to determine a government's policy, nor could a politically-motivated decision be simply translated into commercial change. The links of economics and politics passed through the social structure, which itself changed with time: these included cyclical adjustments in social power which paralleled business cycles, and long-run social transformations. The cyclical changes created open competition and opportunities for mobility in times of economic expansion and transformation; by contrast they led to consolidation, strengthening of hierarchy and occasional dramatic confrontation in times of economic contraction. Individuals were able to take advantage of structural opportunities in each of these situations. Over the course of the century, meanwhile, merchant interests grew steadily in wealth and power. Landowning and slave-owning interests grew as well. A whole new slave class was formed in this period: rather than female slaves being dispersed individually in masters, families as before, now males and females were settled on separate land as slave families. The landed and slave-owning interests gained power partly at the expense of the peasantry, but they also grew at the expense of monarchy. The relative power of monarchs and merchants fluctuated in the course of the events of the century, so that monarchs could appear fierce up to the very end, but the merchants gradually gained enough power to challenge the monarchs. For those who made fortunes from the exploitation of slave labor, the growing possibility of the abolition

of slavery made them seek to redefine their identity as landowners. The monarchs, pressed by merchants from within and by European merchants and officials from without, could respond only by raising taxes and by strengthening their military forces and their political prerogatives. Merchants and, increasingly, landowners found the monarchical regimes to be oppressive and sought alliances with the Europeans. These conflicts helped clear the way for the European seizure of power at the end of the century, and in some cases even invited it. It is appropriate, from this perspective, that Chinua Achebe's classic novel of the era of colonial conquest, *Things Fall Apart*, should focus not on the confrontation between Europeans and Africans, but on the conflicts in values and social policies among contending fractions in a set of Igbo villages.

In one sense the European conquest of the Bights is the end of this story. In another sense it is not, as is suggested by events in Opobo. H. H. Johnston abducted Jaja in 1887 because he had refused to allow European merchants access to his interior markets (Jaja had induced one firm, Miller Bros., to break with the others and trade on his conditions). Even after the seizure of Jaja, the chiefs of Opobo refused to provide access to their markets until the British bombarded the town in 1889. Then, when the European merchants finally penetrated inland to Akwete and other markets, they found that the producers would not sell to them. In 1893 they had to agree to resume buying at Opobo (Gertzelt 1959). Thus pre-colonial trade and politics became colonial trade and politics.

The continuity is equally explicit in one case from the Bight of Benin. Padonou Quénou, head of the most powerful family in Ouidah and a trading chief for the king of Danhomé, allowed his son, Joseph Tovalou Quénou, to move into exile at Porto-Novo in the 1880s. With the French invasion of Danhomé in 1892, Joseph Tovalou Quénou assumed control of the family's resources, supplied the French forces, and won a position of leadership within the French colonial state, thus preserving the family's interests (Manning 1982).

The similarities in the nineteenth-century developments of the Bights are a reflection of the similar economic pressures they experienced. Some of the differences among areas of the coast may have resulted from social structures, such as the contrast between the ward system of government in Calabar and the centralized monarchy of Danhomé. Yet in each period, events in the region can be clearly identified as resulting from the wills and actions of historical figures: the monopoly power of Domingo Martins in a competitive era, Jaja's creation of a new state, Ghezo's *coup d'état*; or, by contrast, the passive attitude of King Akitoye as the British took Lagos.

NOTES

1. Sources for Figure 9.1: Manning 1982, 1986; Eltis 1977. Sources for Figure 9.2: Manning 1982, 1986; Latham 1973; Eltis 1977; Northrup 1978. The geographic extent of the Bight of Benin is taken, for these purposes, to include the coast of the Republic of Benin and of Nigeria to the Forcados River; the Bight of Biafra is taken as the coast from the Forcados to Calabar. The Bight of Benin is thus a somewhat longer extent of coast.
2. Slaves from the Bight of Benin are assumed to have been exported roughly half from the coast of modern Nigeria and half from the coast of modern Benin Republic. During the nineteenth century some 80 percent of these slaves were of Yoruba ethnicity, some 15 percent were of Aja ethnicity, and most of the rest were Hausa and Nupe (Manning 1982: 334-35).
3. For an analysis of the control of wealth focusing on gender, see Martin 1984; for elements of such an analysis focusing on the poor, see Iliffe 1984.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Achebe, Chinua 1958. *Things Fall Apart*. New York.
- Agiri, B. 1981. "Slavery in Yoruba Society in the 19th Century," in P. E. Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, 123-148. Beverly Hills.
- Ajayi, J.F.A. and Smith, Robert 1971. *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge.
- Akinjogbin, I.A. 1967. *Dahomey and its Neighbours 1708-1818*. Cambridge.
- Alagoa, E. J. 1971a. "The Development of Institutions in the States of the Eastern Niger Delta," *Journal of African History*, 12, 2: 269-79.
- 1971b. "Nineteenth Century Revolutions in the Eastern Delta States and Calabar," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5, 4: 565-74.
- Amadi, E. 1969. *The Great Ponds*. London.
- Austen, R. A. 1970. "The Abolition of the Overseas Slave Trade: A Distorted Theme in West African History," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5, 2: 257-274.
- Berry, S. S. 1985. *Fathers Work for their Sons*. Berkeley.
- Biobaku, S. I. 1957. *The Egba and their Neighbours, 1842-1872*. Oxford.
- Chatwin, Bruce 1980. *The Viceroy of Ouidah*. New York.

- Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. 1971. "De la traite des esclaves à l'exportation de l'huile de palmiste au Dahomey: XIX^e siècle," in Claude Meillassoux, ed., The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa, 107-123. London.
- Daaku, K. Y. 1970. Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720. Oxford.
- Delany, M. R. 1861. Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party. New York.
- Dike, K. O. 1954. Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885. Oxford.
- Ekejiuba, F. I. 1972a. "The Aro System of Trade in the Nineteenth Century," Ikenga, 1, 1: 11-26.
- _____. 1972b. "The Aro System of Trade in the Nineteenth Century: Part II." Ikenga, 1, 2: 10-21.
- Eltis, D. 1977. "The Export of Slaves from Africa, 1821-1843," Journal of Economic History, 37, 2: 409-433.
- _____. forthcoming. Economic Growth and Coercion: The Ending of the Atlantic Slave Trade. New York.
- Forbes, F. E. 1851. Dahomey and the Dahomans. London, 2 vols.
- Forde, C. D., ed. 1956. Efik Traders of Old Calabar. London.
- Geary, W.N.M. 1927. Nigeria Under British Rule. London.
- Gertz, C. 1959. John Holt: A British Merchant in West Africa in the Era of Imperialism. Ph.D. thesis, unpublished, Oxford.
- _____. 1962. "Relations between African and European Traders in the Nigher Delta, 1880-1896," Journal of African History, 3: 361-366.
- Glele, M.A. 1974. Le Danxome, du pouvoir aja a la nation fon. Paris.
- Hancock, W K. 1942. Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, 1918-1939. London. Vol 2, part 2.
- Hogendorn, J. S., and Gemery, H. A. 1981. "Abolition and its Impact on Monies Imported to West Africa," in D. Eltis and J. Walvin, eds., The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 99-115. Madison.
- Hogendorn, J. S. and Johnson, M. 1982. "A New Money Supply Series for West Africa in the Era of the Slave Trade: The Import of the Cowrie Shell from Europe," Slavery and Abolition, 3, 2: 153-162.
- _____. 1986. "The Cowrie Trade to West Africa from the Maldives in the Nineteenth Century," in G. Liesegang, H. Pasch and A. Jones, eds., Figuring African Trade. Berlin.
- Hogendorn, J. S. and Lovejoy, Paul E. 1979. "Slave Marketing in West Africa," in Henry A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 213-235. New York.

- Hopkins, A. G. 1966. "The Currency Revolution in South-West Nigeria in the Late Nineteenth Century," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 3: 471-483.
- _____. 1968. "Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1890-92," Economic History Review, 21, 3: 580-606.
- _____. 1973. An Economic History of West Africa. London.
- Ikime, O. 1968. Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta. London.
- Iliffe, J. 1984. "Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Yorubaland," Journal of African History, 25, 1: 43-57.
- Isichei, E. 1976. A History of the Igbo People. London.
- Johnston, H. H. 1900. The Colonization of Africa by Alien Races. London.
- Jones, G. I. 1963. The Trading States of the Oil Rivers. London.
- Klein, M. A. 1971. "Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Legitimate Commerce in Late Nineteenth-Century Africa," Etudes d'Historire africaine, 2: 5-28.
- Kopytoff, J. H. 1965. A Preface to Modern Nigeria: The Sierra Leonians in Yoruba, 1830-1890. Madison.
- Latham, A.J.H. 1973. Old Calabar, 1600-1891. Oxford.
- _____. 1986. "Palm Produce from Calabar, 1812-1887, with a Note on the Formation of Palm Oil Prices to 1914," in G. Liesegang, H. Pasch, and A. Jones, eds., Figuring African Trade, 265-296. Berlin.
- Law, R.C.C. 1977a. The Oyo Empire, c. 1600-c. 1836. Oxford.
- _____. 1977b. "Royal Monopoly and Private Enterprise in the Atlantic Trade: The Case of Dahomey," Journal of African History, 17, 4: 555-577.
- _____. 1978. "Slaves, Trade and Taxes: The Material Basis of Political Power in Precolonial West Africa," Research in Economic Anthropology, 1: 37-52.
- _____. 1982. "Making Sense of a Traditional Narrative: Political Disintegration in the Kingdom of Oyo," Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 22, nos. 87-88: 387-401.
- _____. 1983. "Trade and Politics behind the Slave Coast: the Lagoon Traffic and the Rise of Lagos, 1500-1800," Journal of African History, 24, 3: 321-348.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. 1983. Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa. Cambridge.
- Lovejoy, Paul E., and J. S. Hogendorn 1979. "Slave Marketing in West Africa," in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economics History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 213-235. New York.
- Manning, Patrick 1969. "Slaves, Palm Oil, and Political Power on the West African Coast," African Historical Studies, 2, 2: 279-288.
- _____. 1982. Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960. Cambridge.

- 1985a. "Merchants, Porters, and Canoemen in the Bight of Benin," in C. Coquery-Vidrovitch and P. E. Lovejoy, eds., The Workers of African Trade, 51-74. Beverly Hills.
- 1985b. "Religion and Factionalism in the Asante Hinterland: The Non-Peasant Politics of a Peasant Society," Peasant Studies, 12, 2: 137-149.
- Martin, Susan 1984. "Gender and Innovation: Farming, Cooking and Palm Processing in Ngwa Region, South-Eastern Nigeria, 1900-1930," Journal of African History, 25, 4: 411-427.
- McPhee, Allan 1926. The Economic Revolution in British West Africa. London.
- Nair, Kannan 1972. Politics and Society in Southeastern Nigeria, 1841-1906. London.
- Newbury, C. W. 1961. The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers. Oxford.
- Northrup, D. 1976. "The Compatibility of the Slave and Palm Oil Trades in the Bight of Biafra," Journal of African History, 17, 3: 353-364.
1978. Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria. Oxford.
1979. "Nineteenth-century Patterns of Slavery and Economic Growth in South-Eastern Nigeria," International Journal of African Historical Studies, 12, 2: 1-15.
1981. "The Ideological Context of Slavery in South-eastern Nigeria in the 19th Century," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., The Ideology of Slavery in Africa, 101-122. Beverley Hills.
- Ofonagoro, W. I. 1978. "Notes on the Ancestry of Mbanaso Okwaraozurumba otherwise known as King Jaja of Opobo, 1821-1891," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 9, 3: 145-156.
- Orij, J. N. 1982. "A Re-Assessment of the Organization and Benefits of the Slave and Palm Produce Trade Amongst the Ngwa-Igbo," Canadian Journal of African Studies, 16, 3: 523-548.
- Oroge, E. A. 1975. "The Fugitive Slave Crisis of 1859: A Factor in the Growth of Anti-British Feelings among the Yoruba," Odu, 12: 40-53.
- Ross, D. A. 1966. "The career of Domingo Martinez in the Bight of Benin," Journal of African History, 6, 1: 79-90.
1967. The Autonomous Kingdom of Dahomey, 1818-94. Ph.D. thesis, unpublished, University of London.
- Smith, R. S. 1979. The Lagos Consulate 1851-1861. Berkeley.
- Verger, P. 1953. "Influence du Brésil au golfe du Bénin," in T. Monod, ed., Les Afro-américains, 11-101. Dakar.
1968. Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le golfe du Bénin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du 17^e et 18^e siècles. The Hague.

- Yoder, J. C. 1974. "Fly and Elephant Parties: Political Polarization in Dahomey, 1840-70," Journal of African History, 15, 3: 417-32.