



## **EDO UNIVERSITY IYAMHO**

### **Department of History and International Studies**

#### **HIS 315 Economic History of West Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> And 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries (3 Credits- Compulsory)**

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**General Overview of Lecture:** The course examines the salient themes in the economic history of West Africa. This because the history of any people cannot be fully grasped without the knowledge of how such a people went about in the ordinary business of life, how they went about eking a living and in trying to make the most out of their physical environment. Besides, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are very critical periods in the history of West Africa, as two crucial transitions were made during this period (1) the end of the slave trade (1830s) and the imposition of the so-called legitimate trade and (2) the beginning of formal colonisation (1900s). These two epochal events were to leave lasting impressions and legacies on the peoples of West Africa. To understand the people of West, especially given the developmental challenges they have had to grapple with since independence in the 1960s and in today's world of unceasing globalisation, it is imperative to have a rooted knowledge of the economic history of the people in nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

**Prerequisite:** The students possess basic knowledge of economics, especially as regards production, reasons for production as well as a working understanding of the geography of West Africa.

**Learning Outcomes:** At the end of the course, the students should possess assessable knowledge of the fundamental themes of West African economic history. Students should be able to demonstrate the knowledge of agriculture, trade and markets, transport, extractive industries, the slave trade, sub-Saharan trade, European imperialism and its effects on the economy of West Africa, among others.

#### **Assignment(s) and Grading**

Students will be assessed periodically and a final examination will be taken at the end of the semester. Seminar topics are assigned to every student and are expected to be handed in on the due

date. The grading are as follows: Seminar (Written and presented) -10%; Assignments 5%; Mid-semester Test – 15%; and Final Examination – 70%: Total – 100%.

### **Recommended Textbooks:**

Title: *An Economic History of West Africa*  
Author: A.G. Hopkins,  
Publisher: Longman  
Year: 1973.

Title: *Economic History of West Africa*  
Authors: G.O. Ogunremi and EK. Faluyi (eds.)  
Publisher: Rex Charles  
Year: 1996.

Title: *Economic History of Nigeria*  
Author: R.O. Ekundare,  
Publisher: Methuen and Co.  
Year: 1973

Title: *Economic History of Nigeria 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*  
Author O.N. Njoku  
Publisher: Great AP Express  
Years: 2014.

## **UNIT 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **The Subject Matter of Economic History**

Until the 1970s, economic history was not given any significant attention by Nigerian historians. The historical discipline in the main continued to gravitate around the orbit of political history and inter-group relations. Core economic history was either swept under the carpet or given marginal attention. Nonetheless, economic history is not in any way inferior to political history. In fact, many scholars are given to view the economic past as more informative than the political. What then is meant by the term economic history?

Economic history like the parent discipline, history has not lent itself to a universal definition. There are many definitions are there are many economic historians. D.C. Coleman, for example defines economic history as ‘the study of how people lived most of their lives, how many were born and died, how they earned and spent, worked and played.’ This implies that economic history asks economic questions: about the demand and supply of goods and services, costs of production, levels of income and income inequality, about the distribution of wealth, about trade and markets and ultimately, about the quality of lives led by people in a given time and space. M. Olaniyan conceptualizes economic history as the study of man’s efforts through the centuries to satisfy his material wants. Essentially, therefore, sees it as that which is concerned with finding out how man through the ages has fought with his surroundings to eke a living and how he has economized resources at his disposal to satisfy his fundamental needs for simple food, clothing and shelter. On his own, Ayodeji Olukoju defines economic history as the study of the economic aspects of societies in the past, the history of the economic use of resources – land, labour and capital; or the examination of the past performance of economies. We shall, therefore, define economic history as the branch of the historical discipline that studies the evolution of economic

institutions, production, social relations, distribution and consumption and their consequences on human societies. It deals with agriculture, trade, transport, trade, currency, industries, among others.

The importance of economic history can never be gainsaid. For indeed, it is most often the economic consideration that propels most of the actions of man, all through the ages. Students who go to school do so in anticipation of a better life, manifested in good jobs; the farmer who tills the ground does not do so because he loves the scorching sun but to feed his family and sell the surplus produce; even the pastor who opens a worship center does not do so for people to worship alone, at least, he hopes that the tithes and offerings would be given. There is no falsehood in the assertion that 'in reality, the whole course of human history becomes unintelligible unless we make large allowance for the reaction of economic factors'. Karl Marx, the great exponent of economic determinism argued that the only factors worth considering in history are the economic factors; for according to Marx, 'in them we find the explanation, not merely of the social and political institutions of an epoch, but of its ideology, its arts, literature, philosophy and religion'.

## **Defining West Africa**

The region of West Africa includes the southern portion of the bulge of the continent, which extends westward to the Atlantic Ocean. This region is bisected by the African Transition Zone, which borders the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. The main physical features include the Sahara Desert and the Niger River. The Cameroon Highlands are located on the eastern border between Nigeria and Cameroon. At 4,100 miles long, the Nile River is the longest, while the Congo River is Africa's second longest at 2,922 miles in length. The Niger River is Africa's third-longest river and extends more than 2,600 miles from the Guinea Highlands through Mali, Niger, and Nigeria before reaching the Atlantic Ocean in the Gulf of Guinea. Some geographers include the country of Chad or portions of it within the region of West Africa. In this textbook, Chad is listed with Central Africa. The portions of Chad located north of the African Transition Zone share similar characteristics with North Africa. Off the coast of Mauritania are the Cape Verde Islands, which are united as an independent country associated with Africa. Cape Verde was once a Portuguese colony but received its independence in 1975. Western Sahara has been in conflict with Morocco over independence and is most often associated with the region of North Africa because of the influence of Islam and because of its connection to Morocco. West Africa was home to many powerful empires between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Some of these empires included Songhai, Ghana, Mali and Kanem-Bornu. The economic history of these empires are interesting and have been explored by many economic historians. They also reveal the ingenuity of the people of West Africa, as well as their positive disposition to hard work. However, our main focus in this course is on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **The Environment and the Economy**

Economic activities, no doubt, constitute a crucial part of human endeavour, and man earns his living by working. Throughout the ages, man has struggled to survive in whatever environment he finds himself. Everywhere, the economic activities of a people have been greatly influenced by the physical environment and climate. For example, the kind of food grown and eaten in southern Nigeria differs markedly from those grown and consumed in northern Nigeria. This is primarily conditioned by the environment – while northern Nigeria is in the savannah zone, southern Nigeria is mostly in the rainforest belt. This environmental conditioning affects not only agriculture and food, but also social relations, industries and the general attitude of the people to life and living. Thus, the environment impacts every human society, no matter its level of attainment in science and technology. This is particularly so in the realm of economic activities. However, Professor Onwuka Njoku warns us not to succumb to the theory of environmental determinism; for every

society in turn influences its natural milieu. Advances in science and technology has helped those who have them to dictate to their environment and not the other way round. Underdeveloped and undeveloped societies are only so because their environment still dictate their economic activities. In West Africa, for example, the environment still dictates the planting and harvesting seasons and basically all other forms of agricultural engagements. In North America and Europe, this is not the case, science has helped the people to rise above the dictates of the precarious environment. The economic history of West Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is more less the interplay of the people and the environment. It should be noted that owing to its relatively undeveloped nature, West African societies relied mostly on agriculture and its ancillaries

## **Unit 2. AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture was by far the most pervasive economic engagements of the West African peoples in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as it certainly had been much earlier, still is today and may likely continue to be in the very distant future. Agricultural engagements in West Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries took three broad types. These were: 1. Food crop production; 2. Animal rearing and, 3. Fishing, hunting and gathering.

Agriculture, notes AG Hopkins was the ‘matrix in which all other indigenous economic activity is set’. Everyone was first and primarily a farmer, one did not have to give up farming in order to enter occupations such as craft, manufacturing or trade. The major food staples cultivated by the people were grains such as millet (mainly sorghum), maize, rice and fonio (hungry rice, and roots, chiefly yams, cocoyams and cassava (also known as manioc) and plantains. These crops were grown alongside a variety of legumes, bulbs and cereals.

The environment tended to have determined the crops cultivated by West African peoples, as it still does. Cereals were cultivated chiefly in the savanna while roots were cultivated mostly in the rainforest zones. The major determinant of the crops and the seasons for planting was rainfall. In the savanna, rain is sparse and falls in a period of three to five months. Cereals and annual crops do mainly well in this kind of environment and this explains why these kind of crops were cultivated in the savanna zones of West Africa. In the forest, rainfall is greater and spreads over about seven months of the year. This enables perennials and root crops to be grown. These generalizations should however be qualified; since there are places in the savanna zones where forest crops do well and vice-versa.

The origins of agriculture in West Africa has been the subject of many controversies. Some have fallen to the ditch of the Hamitic Hypothesis. That is that agriculture and the ideas that sustain it diffused to West Africa from Egypt and other parts of Asia. We are, nonetheless, assured by Murdock, Porteres and Wrigley that agriculture began independently in West Africa many millennia before the Common Era. The coming of the Europeans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, however, led to the introduction of many crops that have become almost traditional to West Africa. The most important of these were maize, cassava, groundnuts, tobacco and, later on, cocoa and a variety of fruit like banana. The new crops from Asia and South America were adopted not because they caught the fancy of the people but because they were seen as useful additions to the existing range of foods.

Yam was the most widely cultivated and intensely cultivated crop. Yam was the king of crops. Among many West African peoples, wealth was measured in the number of barns of yam possessed. In Abeokuta, Yorubaland, yam was not only described as the staple food of the population but a “staff of life”. The farming season was fixed but started generally in the dry season months. The months of December-March were used to clear the farmland. Plantings begin with the first rains around April.

The farming tools included machetes, diggers and hoes, were simple implements and made by local blacksmiths. It is true that by the first half of the 18th century all the countries of the world relied on agricultural pursuits for bread winning, towards the end of that century the transformation of human activities from farming endeavours to progressive industrial output had achieved striking

success in Britain and the wind of change subsequently blew over Europe, North America and Japan in the far east. The West African Economy, just like the economies of the other sections of the under-developed world remained agricultural and traditional. This was the situation throughout the 19th century down to the 20<sup>th</sup>. Professor Hopkins has argued that ‘to suppose that the failure to adopt a more complex agricultural technology was a cause of underdevelopment in Africa is to put the plough before ox, and invention before need’.

Animal husbandry was also a significant part of the agricultural engagements of the peoples of West Africa. One of the pillars on which the rural economy of the region was built in the period of our study was livestock, made up of mostly cattle, goats, sheep pigs and poultry. These provided protein in the diet of the people, manure to farmers, and hides and skin for craftsmen. Cattle rearing was an intensely itinerant occupation, not only in West Africa but the whole of the African continent. Two principal reasons had been adduced by Professor Onwuka Njoku as being responsible for the itinerant nature of cattle rearing among Africans. First, grazing the livestock entailed exploitation of an intensive territory for fodder. Second, water and salt biological essentials for human and animal survival, were scarce. For these reasons, and in the case of West Africa, Fulani cattle herders engaged in transhumance which involved them in regular treks from the savanna-Sahel southwards to the forest-savanna areas and vice-versa according to the season. A love-hate syndrome had characterised the itinerant pastoralists and the sedentary farmers. The pastoralists exchanged milk, cheese, butter and animal manure with the sedentary farmers for food crops. But often the animals also destroyed farm crops and exhausted or fouled scarce water. This was a source of intermittent face-off between the itinerant herder and the sedentary farmers. Thus, we see that the problem of the Fulani herdsmen which escalated between 2015 and 2018 did not start without precedence.

Hunting and fishing were more specialized activities than gathering because they required a greater degree of skill. Hunting was especially important in the forest where there were shortage of meat. Hunting was known to be intensified during the dry season when the demand for farm labour was at its lowest and when restricted water supplies made it easier to locate game. Little is known about the origin of hunting in West Africa. What is known is that some communities celebrated bravery and rewarded those who shot daring wild animals. Some other communities also organised annual hunting expeditions. Professional hunters used traps, spears, clubs, and bows and arrows. When guns were introduced to West Africa by the Europeans after the 15<sup>th</sup> century, hunters began to also use guns for hunting. And this increased the efficiency of the hunters and consequently, more meat.

Fishing was practiced along the coast, particularly in Senegal and the Gambia, Lake Chad, and Niger Delta areas in Nigeria. Specialized communities of fishermen arose in these areas. Canoes were the main craft in use, harpoons, nets, traps and lines remained the principal means of catching fish. It is also important to observe that the availability of fish for the coastal fishermen fluctuated with tidal movements of the sea and with the different flood periods of the rivers, so fishermen tended to migrate in search of their cash. Among the riverine Igbo for example, fishermen moved up the River Niger to as far as Igala and Bassa territories in search of their cash. The Fante moved periodically from the Gold Coast west to the Ivory Coast and east to Nigeria. Fishing migration often led to the development of new fishing grounds, and the foundation of new settlements. Lagos was first occupied by fishermen in the sixteenth century. We shall discuss land and labour for agricultural engagements in unit three of the lecture.

## **TRANSPORT**

Broadly, speaking three types of transport systems were practiced in West Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century before the introduction of motorized transport by the Europeans. These primordial forms of transport included: human portage, animal transport. In later sections, we shall discuss transport systems in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when motorized and rail

transport had begun to dominate the transport system in West Africa. For now, we shall concentrate on the forms of transport that predominated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, early 20<sup>th</sup> century and before then.

### **(1) Human Portage**

Human portage simply means "the carriage of goods by man at the same time as he transports himself by walking". Most of the head porters were recruited from nuclear and extended family settings. Majority of heads of families in West Africa were farmers who depended greatly on their wives and children for the movement of agricultural products to and from the farm. Again, a man's production had to be carried to the consumers, and at the peak of harvesting, when immediate removal of crops from the farm to the villages or market places was a matter of urgency. Human porters throughout pre-colonial West Africa made use of local roads or bush-paths that linked neighbouring villages, city states and even kingdoms and empires. Long distance traders recruited the services of slave porters who carried their goods to distant markets. Apart from slave porters, carriers also transported goods through land routes. Professional carriers were free people (mainly strongmen) who sustained their livelihood through carrying goods from one place to the other. Professors Ogunremi and Falola have submitted that scarcity of porters often limited production of fragile products such as pots, because it was easy for porters to slip when the ground was soft and pots to be broken in the wet season; snakes, scorpions, and ants were common on the route; streams had to be forded, flood sections of the route had to be waded through; and bridges or ferries had to be used to cross swift and deep rivers. All these could lead to scarcity of porters. One major problem that characterized the human portage system of transport was the insecure nature of the bush-paths. Bush paths used as trade routes and ordinary routes were not safe. Inter-tribal wars hampered trade on goods and merchandise. Travelers and traders areas constantly needed the assistance of road guides who were mainly warriors (Ogoke, 1981).

### **(ii) Water Transportation**

During the pre-colonial period, West African rivers served as carriers of trade. Professors Ajayi and Alagoa (1980) highlight that river systems probably played much large part as means of communication and carriers of trade and ideas in the past than they do in the present time. Before the coming of highways, railways and airways, rivers provided the only thorough fares for the cheap transportation of large, quantities of commodities over long distances in many parts of Africa. The presence of major rivers like the Niger and Benue as well as other inland water ways, such as streams, rivulets and creeks paved the way for marine transportation. Pre-colonial West African peoples promoted the efficacy of marine transportation through the dredging of rivers, streams and creeks to make them navigable by canoeists. S.A. Olarenwaju opines that European explorers, traders, missionaries and soldiers were attracted to the Nigerian coastal waters because riverine communities engaged themselves seriously in the material development of marine transport. Although some riverine communities had access to the Atlantic coast, the hazards of canoe transportation affected both trade and population movements; they could not venture into the ocean. For instance, canoe transportation remained insecure due to the presence of river animals like crocodile. The canoeists can be ambushed by local creek pirates who intercepted river boats for the purpose of robbing market men and women. The creek pirates were shaved with local knives. On the whole, the waterbodies provided important transport platforms in West Africa and still do.

### **(iii) Animal Transport**

The most effective transport system used in transportation system in the Sahel region of West Africa was animal transport. These animals included the donkey, horses, mules, hinnies, bullocks and camels. Of these, the donkey was the most important. This was because of three inter-related factors. First, the breeding of donkeys was easy and inexpensive and inexpensive. Second, donkeys were cheap to maintain, and third, donkeys had a reputation for being patience and exceptional endurance. One major problem with donkeys, however, was its dislike of water; donkeys hate to cross streams or be wetted by the rain. The trans-Saharan trade relied effectively on the

instrumentality of the camel which unlike other beasts of burden could do without water for up to fifteen days.

## INDUSTRIES

Generally three forms of industrial engagements could be denoted in West Africa in the period of our review. These are: (1) soil-based industries (2) plant-based and animal based industries. An industry could be described as an economic activity that concerns the processing of raw or semi-raw materials into goods in factories or factory-like places.

**Soil-based industries-** are so-described because the raw materials for the industries are obtained from the soil. These included iron working, tin working, salt, and pottery. Of these, iron, gold and salt were the most important, although tin, and silver were also mined in smaller quantities. Knowledge of iron working was known to have reached West Africa many millennia ago. The Nok culture (Jos) smelted iron since 500BC. Iron complements such as hoes, cutlasses, traps and diggers were crucial for agriculture. There was a healthy relationship between farmers and blacksmiths who, in the case of Awka and Nkwerre (in Igboland) itinerated the region and beyond selling their crafts and helping to repair the farming, fishing and hunting equipment of their customers. Of all the soil-based industrial activities, salt was the most important. This is because salt, like water was a biology need of humans and livestock. There were many types of salt these included the table salt (sodium chloride), there were also sodium sulphate, sodium carbonate, potassium phosphate and calcium phosphate. These kinds of salt were put to medicinal and industrial uses, such as promoting fertility in women, and treating dandruff. Besides, salt was also used for industrial purposes such as soap-making and dyeing clothes. Table salt is particularly useful for West Africa since the region is in the tropics where a lot of salt is lost by humans through sweat. Along the coast, salt was obtained by boiling sea water. However, for those in the interior salt was not so easily procured. In Nigeria, there were four principal areas of production of salt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the Niger Delta, the Ohaozara district of Igboland, the Benue River basin and parts of the Borno kingdom.

In many parts of pre-colonial West Africa, salt was accepted a medium of exchange and was accepted in the settlement of bride wealth. It was the chief articles in the trans-Saharan trade and in some places, it exchanged at par with gold. Cassidorus have aptly remarked that “mankind can live without gold, but not without salt”.

**Plant-based industries and Animal-Based Industries** – plant-based industries refer to those industries that depend on plants for their raw materials. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries West Africa, the plant-based industries were those that involved (1) textiles (2) mat and weaving (3) wood working (4) calabash carving.

Animal-based Industries included: leather craft, and ivory craft.

## UNIT 3. TRADITIONAL FACTORS OF PRODUCTION

### Land

The entire productions and distributions in pre-colonial West Africa relied heavily on the available natural and human resources in West Africa. Agriculture and agro-allied productions depend on the quality of land that is available in a particular place. In the south of West Africa where rainfall is heavy and vegetation thick, farming thrived well. In these areas root crops which are capable of supporting large populations flourished. It is, therefore, not a mere coincidence that the south-eastern parts of Nigeria inhabited by the Igbo, the Efik, the Ibibio, among others still have large populations. Likewise, the western parts and northern parts of West Africa have good soil nutrients. Although they have light rainfall and thin vegetation, large centres of high concentration of people can be found in Asanteland and Hausaland. However, the general assumption that African land is so fertile that fruits, root crops and other foodstuffs grow so luxuriantly that the inhabitants did not need to till the ground before harvesting food crops is a

mere assumption because it is false and baseless. This assumption connotes the idea that the African was too lazy to cultivate the land properly so as to deal in systematic farming. The African was neither lazy nor the land so rich as to render cultivation unnecessary. The production of agricultural products was consistent, widespread and systematic in the domestic economy of West Africa.

The other aspect of our discussion on land as a factor of production concerns the land tenure system. In this section, the system in some parts of West Africa is discussed; and this is followed by discussing the argument on whether or not the tenure system inhibited traditional agriculture. It is important to realize that no single system prevailed at any time in the whole of West Africa. Various communities adopted the system most suitable to them, depending on land population ratio and cultural attitudes. However, it would appear that the common pattern was the community ownership of land, not individual ownership.

Among both the Yoruba and the Tiv of modern Nigeria, for example, the land belonged to various lineages or small communities. The members of each lineage did not own specific pieces of land but could use any piece of land as long as it was left fallow and did not contain perennial crops. They could also move about within the communities' land so as to take advantage of the best soils. However, the right of an individual to farm was inalienable. If there was a conflict regarding the use of a particular piece of land the head of the lineage would settle the matter.

The system in Senegambia, however was different. The basic right over land belonged to the man who first cleared it. The land is often cleared by fire; and holding of land in this way is known as *jom jengol*, that is master of land by right of fire. He could farm the land himself or rent it out on his own terms. A second kind of tenure was created by the state. This was superimposed on the first system and was known as *jom leedi*. In this system, the land was held by court favourites, important officials and others who had earned the gratitude of the ruler. Their estates were usually larger than those of the *jom jengol* system. In all cases, changes occurred from time to time. One important factor of change was Islam. For example, in Futa Toro, northern parts of Senegal, Islamic law changed the earlier system by establishing the quality of all male heirs to land inheritance. That system is also found in some parts of Yorubaland. The effect of this was the fragmentation of holdings. This system also encouraged a greater degree of individual exploitation of land. In areas of dense population, this in turn encouraged migration of the heirs whose land was too small to provide for their subsistence. Also in Senegambia, up to the eighteenth century *jomjengel* was the system whereby a larger proportion of the land was owned by the peasants. But at the end of the eighteenth century, during the period of religious warfare, rulers honoured warriors and a lot of people with land.

It now remains to examine the argument of the adequacy or otherwise of the land system to the traditional economy of West Africa. Like other factors of production in pre-colonial West Africa the land law was applied to suit the economy. The law reflected the conditions that governed agricultural tools and the involvement of the traditional labour. The agricultural system called for production on small scales by each producer. Small holdings were therefore enough for effective production. Those who play down the African land tenure system do so mainly because they are used to seeing large plantations. While it is true that large holdings allow for effective use of the plough and modern farming techniques, small holdings, if intensively cultivated, may be equally effective. An example of small holdings that readily comes to mind is in Japan. Owing to scarcity of land, Japanese farmers cannot afford large plantations especially for growing rice. Yet Japanese productions are among the highest per hectare in the world.

Besides, generally in the whole of West Africa, land was plentiful in relation to population. Therefore, the main argument used to discredit African land tenure system — that land had no market value is not crucial. What seemed important was for the farmer to secure a right to cultivate land within a given area. Since the system allowed the farmer to continue using the land for as long as he wanted, usufructuary right, which was more crucial, was established. Where population was dense and the period of fallow short or even non-existent, as in the case with permanent



cultivation, the claims on individual use became stronger. Lastly, it should be emphasized that the land law was never static. Like other forms of West African culture it was dynamic. The rapid and widespread expansion of I production of export crops towards the end of the nineteenth century is indicative of this. In the late nineteenth century there was introduction of cocoa and higher demand for “legitimate” crops in Europe. This large market necessitated large production and of movement of labour for exploitation of more land. The land law was modified to meet such changes. This dynamism of the land tenure system made it suit the changing patterns of the economy.

### **Labour**

Another aspect of resources utilised in the traditional economy of West Africa were the human resources or the labour force. In this section we concern ourselves with just the essential aspects of the labour force. We shall treat the different types of labour, its remuneration, criticisms levelled against it in West Africa and the adequacy or otherwise of the system. The most important labour unit in West Africa was the household which comprised the man, his wife and children and all those who were living with him. This might even include slaves if they were not many and they were close to his. Other forms of labour forces included friendly—organised or age-group type, migrants and slaves. The size of the household labour force depended on the type of occupation engaged in. For example, a farming society needed a larger household labour than a weaving one. In order to expand the household labour, polygamy was often resorted to. More wives meant more children, and that meant more hands on the land. In this case, it can be seen that accumulation of wives was not a wasting asset because they were married not only to have children but also to work. High rate of infant mortality also necessitated having many children so that whatever survived could still form a large labour force.

Although child labour is criticized today as a social evil, it was not seen that way in the eighteenth or even nineteenth century in either Africa or Europe. Writing in 1777, Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, says, “a numerous amily of children, instead of being a burden was a source of opulence and prosperity to the parents.” Child labour was a common feature. Children were particularly useful in West Africa during the peak periods of planting and harvesting.

It is difficult to talk of specialization of job by sex because this varied from society to society. For example, among the Bamenda of Cameroons and the Igbo of Nigeria, women participated in farming. But in many parts of Yorubaland it was mainly men’s job while women dominated the trading sector. Both men and women engaged in weaving in Yorubaland but while men used the horizontal looms women used mainly the vertical ones.

Again, with the introduction of Islam in various parts of West Africa, women’s role somehow changed. Devoted moslems seclude their wives by confining them to the harem. It is often thought that such women waste off economically. However, studies on women in the harem in Hausaland have demonstrated that rather than being a waste they contribute their quotas to the economic development of their areas. In her “Hidden Trade in Hausaland”, Polly Hill clearly shows that the women were very busy in their harems. They were responsible, *inter alia*, for selling their husbands’ grains and other agricultural outputs. It is also known that in Yorubaland the women in the harem occupied themselves making patterns on cloths to be dyed blue or black. For large-scale and even medium-scale productions slave labour was heavily relied upon. It seems quite pertinent here to make a few explanations on slavery and slave trade in West Africa.

Nothing new or different from what Professor Fage has already said is being expressed here.

According to his definition of slavery in the past, a slave was man or woman who was owned by some other person, whose labour was regarded as having economic value, and whose person had a commercial value. This definition fits well into our discussion- of a slave as a factor of production in the pre-colonial era. Even before the trans-atlantic slave trade from the sixteenth to nineteenth century, labour was scarce in West Africa. Large-scale production of agricultural and non-agricultural outputs was impossible in the absence of a concentration of a fairly large labour force. It was difficult, for example, for so much leather works and textiles to be produced in Sokoto or Kano without slave labour in a society that found no direct wage labour.

Unlike the trans-saharan and the trans-atlantic slave trades in which human beings were forcibly moved from one place to another and where they were treated like ordinary commodities, slaves in many parts of West Africa were in some cases riot forced and in many cases not treated differently from the freeborn. For example, in Yorubaland, some people willingly subordinated themselves to those who were known to be strong enough to protect them from the oppression of other powerful people in the society. This, to some extent, looks like feudal system in the medieval Europe. Slave labour force was also made possible by captives from wars. In fact, in many cases the captives or war prisoners formed the bulk of slaves. Although wars were not fought for the sake of captives, but for political, fundamental reasons as revealed by both King Kpengla of Dahomey (1774-89) and King Osei Bonsu of Ashanti (c. 1801-24)<sup>12</sup> or for religious reasons as in the case of Asikia Mohammed Ture of Songhay (1493-1528)<sup>13</sup> or Idris Aloma of Borno (1570-1602)<sup>14</sup> and for other reasons. War captives were, however, an important consequence of the wars. Before the heydays of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, war captives were profitably employed by chiefs and powerful people for all types of pr-oductions and also for distributions. When the slave trade first began some rulers, for example, the rulers of Dahomey and Benin forbade the sale of their males because they valued them for their ability to produce. However, when they realised that they were losing wealth and power they joined their colleagues in the active sales of their captives. It would appear that the argument that "slave economy" had existed in parts of West Africa ever before the trans-atlantic slave trade started cannot be faulted. It had been well-established in the Western and Central Sudan by the fourteenth century and it had spread to the Senegal and Lower Guinea (from Liberia to Cameroon) by the fifteenth century. To describe the economy of this period as "slave economy" is to strongly emphasize the role of slaves in the overall economy. Slave labour became more intensified after the legal abolition of the trans-atlantic slave trade. European countries had by the nineteenth century become well industrialized. African labour was no longer required for production because the factory machineries had taken over. What was needed was the African raw material to feed or lubricate the machines and also Africa as a market for the finished products. It was rightly argued that if slaves were not exported from Africa the Africans would have purchasing powers and constitute a market, however small. It was therefore a sound economic rationale to abolish the slave trade. This was perhaps the basis for the activities of philanthropists and church organisations which campaigned for the abolition of the notorious trade. Slave trade was then abolished and agricultural outputs became more popular.

In order to enhance the "legitimate" trade, slave labour was required on a large scale. The production of palm oil, groundnuts, coffee, cocoa and minerals; and their portorage to large centres of evacuation meant the use of slave labour. To acquire sufficient labour force, internal slave trade replaced external slave trade. In the nineteenth century market places were full of slaves openly sold to large-scale producers. One therefore tends to agree that "commercial slavery and slave trading developed, along with the growth of states, as a form of labour mobilization to meet the needs of a growing system of foreign trade. In which, initially, the demand for slaves as trade goods was relative!; insignificant."

In addition to the household and slave labour forces, there were other ways by which economic activities, were carried out in the pre-colonial West Africa. One of these was the age-group or labour societies which organised reciprocal systems of getting thing; done.<sup>17</sup> Details of the operation varied from society to society. But basically, it was an arrangement known in Yorubaland as *owe* or *am*, by adolescents who had the psychological feeling that a job could be more quickly and perhaps better done if two or three friends joined hands to work as a group. This was applied not only to farmiribut also to many other types of work. It was, indeed the only means by which house were erected. For public works such as path construction or clearing, construction of town wall: and public houses, society labour was relied on. Each lineage was requested contribute a number of workers and all met to do the work within a short time. For example, the Ibadan city walls and even the Mapo Hall in Ibadan were built in this way; Before the monetisation of the economy, labour was not directly paid for daily or monthly. In other words, it can be said

that there was no wage labour as known today. Labour was then indirectly paid for in two ways. First, all forms of labour were remunerated in form of feeding, housing, clothing and protection. If it is appreciated the even today wages are spent on these essentials, one can reasonably conclude that there was a sort of wage labour. So, whether it was household or slave labour in as much as he was fed, housed, clothed and protected the labour was paid for. Second, the slave who constituted a large labour force were bought. Only a few potentates could acquire enough capital to buy many slaves. In this context, the capital outlay on slaves was in sense a payment for the labour rendered. An important point of discussion regarding the labour force of any economy is its productivity. It is difficult to determine or measure the productivity of the labour force in the pre-colonial era. This is because it all depended on the type of the economic sector in which the labour was involved. For example, in farming, labour was very intensive during the preparation for planting and during harvesting. These were peak seasons, when farmers worked from dawn to dusk. But after harvesting especially in the dry season there was a lax period. Casual observers might easily conclude that productivity “was low or that there was a general lethargy and idleness by farmers if they were visited at the lax period. On many occasions, farmers and even non-agricultural workers tended to start their jobs early in the morning so that by the time the sun became biting causing excessive perspiration and eventual fatigue. The main work for the day had come to an end. Usually, workers return to their jobs in the evening when the sun had subsided. What was important is that the workers had to work hard enough to ascertain proper output to meet The Needs Of The Society.

### **Capital**

Unlike the first two factors of production discussed earlier — land and labour — there is much less to discuss in the other two factors of production: capital and entrepreneurship. This is not due to the fact that these two were less important or less effective but because there is much less research done into them. The economists who have no patience to undergo such a research have therefore concluded that Africans lacked the ability to save and invest.<sup>18</sup>

Be that it may, there is no doubt that there were capital investments which enabled other factors of production to function. According to Seidman, capital can be defined as “the mass of raw material, machinery, tools, buildings, and other equipment used in the production process.”<sup>19</sup>

Although in this definition, Seidman is referring to modern capital, the definition holds true for pre-colonial West Africa to an extent. The main difference between the industrial and pre-industrial capital is mainly in the application of machinery. But in both cases raw materials, tools, buildings and other equipment were required for production to take place. As Seidman has further explained, in Africa “the individual farmer’s capital consists of his own tools: a saw and hammer ... or bellows and tongs”.<sup>20</sup> In other words, a weaver’s loom, a transporter’s canoe, a fisherman’s net and canoe, a dyer’s pot, a trader’s porters, a mat-maker’s grasses and potter’s clay were part of his raw materials and tools for production. In some cases the producer had to give something in return for the raw material. Even where it was taken freely, he had to spend his time and energy to procure the raw materials. In the case of iron producers, time would be spent in identifying iron-ore deposits. Firewood had to be got ready in great quantity and furnaces must be set. He would then spend days to get iron from the process. In the process, capitals have been involved — firewood, iron-ore, furnaces and, of course, time expended. Similarly, a canoe-maker had to look for logs of wood to dig out and then use either iron axes to chop out the log or use fire to burn the middle of the log to get a hollow. He had, in this process made use of his capitals.

There were credit institutions which gave out credits to producers to obtain some of their tools. One such credit institution is known in Yorubaland of modern Nigeria as *ESUSU* — a form of credit association. It was often organised by friends, age groups, and kinsman. There was a regulation as to how much each person should contribute and at what interests should the contributions be made. At fixed periods, a subscriber will collect what all had contributed until it was everyone’s turn to collect his share. It is interesting to note that the system which had existed during the pre-colonial era has persisted till now. However, a general criticism levelled against the

*ESUSU* is that the proceeds were more often than not devoted to social purposes such as funerals and marriages. It is also likely that some subscribers spent part of their shares in procuring tools and raw materials for their production.

Another form of credit institution was the commercial capital market. This was purely for economic needs at both local and inter-regional levels.<sup>22</sup> At the local level, traders often took loans from the local financiers at a high interest. This was not as common as the indebtedness of the long-distance traders who operated on larger scales. According to Hopkins who agrees that research is necessary in this regard, the large entrepôts had bankers who invested money on behalf of depositors and operated a system whereby credits could be transferred to third parties; exchange brokers, who also speculated in currency values; and a future market in the main staples of long distance traded. This type of monetary transactions was organised in some parts of Yorubaland by an economic institution known as *Parakoyi*. They ensured that long distance traders were properly settled and that they obeyed market regulations.<sup>24</sup> There were also financial transactions on inter-regional basis in which journeys and trades were financed. A classical example was the case of Clapperton, an explorer in pursuit of the mouth of the River Niger in the 1820s. Clapperton, who travelled from Badagry to Sokoto deposited some money, in form of cowries, with an Arab friend because he could not carry the whole lot to the north. His friend gave him a bill with which to recover the money later in the north; and this arrangement went well without a hitch.<sup>25</sup> Although Clapperton's objective was to avoid carrying the bulky money, his action also went a long way to demonstrate the existing financial arrangements that had been going on before the commercial capital market was properly utilised by the long-distance traders such as the Dyula, a Malinke, Malian muslim group of traders who operated around the Black Volta and the Upper Niger in gold and kola nut trades. Also the *Hausa Fatake*, the Nupe and the Arochukwu long-distance traders enjoyed in one way or the other the capital market to finance their activities by securing credit. Bankers and brokers existed in large trade centres such as Timbuktu, Jenne and Kano.

These bankers and brokers charged very high interest rates which could be as high as 100 per cent. This is partly because repayment took a long time to effect and the risks involved. Security was based, first, on goodwill and personal connections. It was also based on property such as livestock, houses and land with witnesses attesting to the arrangements. Those who were too poor to have collateral could pawn themselves or their children or any close relative as a means of guaranteeing repayment. The pawn left the creditor only after the debt had been settled. During the period of pawning, the debtor or his representative worked for the creditor without payment until the debt was paid the pawn was tolerably well treated like slaves but he could not be sold like a slave. If the original creditor died the pawn was inherited by the creditor's children or relatives.

Another important form of guaranteeing loans was the sanction of rulers. There could be some regulations binding creditors and debtors. Such laid down regulations helped in the recovery of loans. If a debtor found it impossible to pay his debt, he could be sold into slavery or he may take refuge in a remote place. The extent to which capital market existed and the extent to which it was utilised by producers and traders is not known yet. It was probably more widespread both at local and inter-regional levels than we assume. A research into it might reveal the existence or otherwise of capital market in the pre-colonial economy of West Africa.

### **Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship or organisation is a vital factor of production in any economy and at any time. That it is essential in industrial economies is without any doubt. However, whether or not it was important or to what extent it was important in a pre-industrial economy is controversial. This is so because as mentioned earlier, some economists do not accept using economic terminologies used to describe modern or machine economy for simple economies. But, as argued in the case of labour, what seems important is the functional use of the term. In other words, we should look into what an entrepreneur is and see if anyone fitted into the definition in the pre-colonial West Africa. According to Hoselitz: some think of entrepreneurs primarily as innovators, others think of them chiefly as managers of enterprises, others again place major emphasis on their function as

mobilizers and allocators of capital. He further argued that entrepreneurship is not necessarily confined to innovation in the sense that Schumpeter used it. Hoselitz believes that: anyone who is a business-leader, who guides the action of a private productive enterprise and who makes the crucial decisions on the use of productive factors, on their remuneration, on the nature and style of commodities or services to be produced, and on the timing and other aspects of the production and marketing process; is an entrepreneur. It is certain that what entrepreneurship implies is an exercise of leadership aided by maturity of character, a sense of security and willingness to undertake risk. It is also backed by the desire to experiment and to be achievement-oriented. An entrepreneur sets a goal for himself and works towards achieving that goal. He may imitate as long as that imitation is practised in a different situation. Indeed, an imitator of an idea must bring in his own ideas and adapt, otherwise he cannot succeed as an entrepreneur. Judging from the foregoing, one can hardly doubt that entrepreneurship or some sort of organisation existed in West Africa during the pre-colonial era. That productions and distributions were widespread in West Africa during the pre-colonial period is undoubted. As mentioned earlier, other factors of production, viz., land, labour and capital were effectively used to carry out productions. It therefore follows that, entrepreneurship a factor of production existed. Without it, all other factors of production could, in fact, not be used. The question that comes next to one's mind is who the entrepreneurs were. Simply, they were the rulers, chiefs, potentates, war chiefs and other influential men and women who had enough wealth and power to mobilise other factors of production. They had control over land, labour and capital, and took decision over the employment of the factors optimally. Examples of such control was found in many parts of West Africa perhaps before the third century A.D. when the Ghana Empire was probably established. The Ghana Empire engaged in production of gold and in exporting it to North Africa. This trans-saharan trade had probably begun before the empire became large or even before it existed. It is possible that the trade in gold had been going on before the desiccation of the sahara which began in c.3000 B.C. It then follows that since this period some entrepreneurship had existed in the western Sudan. The failure of Moroccans to obtain as much gold as they had anticipated before their Occupation of Songhay was partly due to their inability to organise the mining of gold and execute its trade. This partly demonstrates the importance of the rulers of the Western Sudan as entrepreneurs. It is known, for example, that in the empire of Ghana, the ruler controlled the excavation of gold to avoid over-production, believing, as it were, that the scarcer the product was, the more valuable it was likely to be. Similarly, the Kanuri rulers organised the production of natron, the Kano potentates organised the production of leather works, the Asante rulers provided kolanuts and the Ijebu chiefs organised the production of textiles. Among all the communities we found rulers showing interest directly or indirectly in production. This was so especially in farming in which slaves were employed extensively in large-scale cultivation. Among those who engaged their slaves in farming were the rulers of Benin and Dahomey, Madam Tinubu of Egbaland and Madam Efunsetan of Ibadan. The rulers mentioned initially refused to export their slaves because they were being employed in their cotton plantations. Entrepreneurship also included those who organised distributions of outputs. The, dyula of Western Sudan, for example, took the initiative of collecting gold and later on kolanuts to trade depots in many parts of West Africa. With effective use of labour and capital they enhanced trade in gold. Without this organisation, gold produced would not enter international market. Finally, it is essential to note that the factors of production discussed in this chapter had their own peculiarities in the sense that their application should not be confused with the modern use of the terms. The contention, here, is that land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship existed in the pre-colonial West Africa because without them productions and distributions that took place would be impossible.

### **The Trade in Pre-colonial West Africa**

Modern economic development in West Africa is largely an encounter between two extremes: s

self-sufficient homesteads, the inward looking units of a subsistence economy that have been confronted by a vigorous world-Wide, alien industrial economy. The transition from the former to the latter has been rather traumatic and all-pervading the extent that our understanding of the former has not only been obscured but also largely distorted. The pace of change was most in some hinterland regions and rapid in others. The impact has been most profound. Local indigenous initiative, innovations, creativity', adaptation organization etc., all became geared toward full-fledged market economy.

Foremost among these earlier initiatives were those connected with the growth of trade. The beginnings were slender, yet pervasive. Trade passed through various phases - local trade from village to village within given population and communities.

Later, trade extended over several kilometers and involved several commodities not produced by the local community. Sometimes this trade had connections with the political structure. Some markets were organised and controlled by the local rulers or the state. Some of the highly centralised sates provided security and defence for traders. They sometimes helped to supply means of transport In Benin Kingdom, for example, the sate ensured the upkeep of roads, established safe market places. In the Hausa sates, each state organized a judiciary to settle disputes. It involved the exchange of food stuffs, specialised products from local industries as well as products which came from distant places.

The first phase of West African pre-colonial trade had to do with the subsistence - oriented trade. it remained closely associated with agricultural production and it was subservient to the local kinship system. In this phase, the exchange of goods made virtually no significant impact on the subsistence economy; nor did it generate a wide range of activities divorced from supplying the basic needs of subsistence agriculture. The impulse towards innovation and economic specialisation was

continually suppressed. This was partly as a result of traditional West African societies' respect for tradition and aversion to sudden changes. Only few "exotic" products were assimilated into the category of community-approved ritual items consumed either at naming, wedding, burial and other ceremonial occasions that warranted consumption of local products. These few ones too were gradually accepted and approved first by the elders (among whom the items circulated) and later redistributed to the youths. The objects thus approved for these ceremonial or presented as "gifts" were oftentimes given conventional, social values, which could not be measured against those of the local products. Under such a condition, we cannot talk of a universal monetary value. The significance of the exchange transaction remained intimately dependent on the social status of the parties concerned.

By and large, the subsistence oriented trade freed itself from the kinship shackles and a market-oriented trade began to create a number of far-reaching economic innovations directly dependent on commercial opportunities. The market-oriented trade generated new forms of wealth. A whole range of goods such as fabrics, leather works ivory, cattle, shea-butter, indigo, slaves etc. acquired new economic values which they did not possess in the subsistence economy. Before long, organised markets handling a multiple exchange of goods developed in urban centers such as Benin, Oyo, Kano, Zaria, Kebbi etc.

The market-oriented phase witnessed the introduction and increasing acceptance of both indigenous and imported currencies. This enabled the traders to bring in an increasing number of commodities. Secondly, new means of capital accumulation were formed and a new field of consumer demand for imports was created. Thirdly, new forms of economic specialization became stimulated, determined largely by geographical factors. Above all, the production of export goods, most especially by craftsmen, assumed an unprecedented importance.

Individuals as well as communities began to assume the role of professional merchants. The history of nodal towns such as Kano, Rano, Zaria, Kebbi etc. in the Northern parts of West Africa treated earlier come readily to mind.

One important point to note here however is that this market-oriented, professional trade did not produce an economy integrated by the market principle as most West Africans continued to depend primarily on subsistence Agriculture for their livelihood. The production of vital foodstuffs remained very marginally affected by market demands. The problem of transportation remained formidable until the introduction of motorable roads and later, railway lines which in most cases ran coastward from the production centers.

Quite unlike modern “Western economy”, where market price profoundly affects future production through the re-allocation of resources to alternatives, pre-colonial West African trade economy remained, for a very long time, peripherally affected by market prices. In the first instance, not many gainful alternatives were open to the producers. Secondly, adequate provision had to be made for short-falls arising from social demands, weather vagaries, pest attacks and so on. Furthermore, there were no large-scale storage facilities. Food preservation remained largely at the rudimentary level. Under these inhibiting factors, therefore, trade, for a long time, lay between the self-sufficient subsistence and the fully-fledged market levels. In addition, trade supplemented subsistence needs and therefore co-existed with the developing

### **Some Specific Consequences of the Trade**

So far, we have been primarily concerned with identifying the phases of trade in pre-colonial West Africa. For an understanding of the economic changes brought about by the phases, we shall now consider some of the specific consequences of the trade. Perhaps, the most important consequence of the trade is the creation, maintenance and expansion of the lines of communication. Another one was the creation of a remarkably broad-based

consumer demand for clothing, bracelets, beads and a host of other imported goods, considered as luxury goods.

Another consequence of trade on West Africa's economy during the period is the noticeable improvement in the storage of wealth and before long, a fundamental change in the premium placed on land. Hitherto, land seldomly commanded marketable prices. But as a result of trade, and as the possibilities of investment widened, the function of utilizing the land was no longer left to the wives, and other members of the family. The ruling elites (most especially in the centralised societies) came to realise land as a means of increasing their economic power and influence. By far, the most important economic consequence of the new wealth generated by market-oriented commerce was its unprecedented mobilization and concentration of economic skills, most especially among the artisans. There was a deliberate significant shift of emphasis from human traffic to investment in human investment. This, in most cases, resulted in phenomenal increase in wealth. But because of paucity of opportunities for productive investments, the increase in wealth, more often than not, resulted in an increase in immediate consumption and redistribution to kinsmen and only occasionally used in the construction of more elaborate buildings. It was probably partly because of this practice that the British colonialists concluded that West African farmers who stood to benefit from the surplus that accrued from the reserves of the established Produce Marketing Boards were incapable of utilizing the wealth in productive ventures.

Intensive commercial activities therefore provided the bases for many sophisticated political systems. Future research may help clarify and explain why some traders operated within set political framework and some without. Here, we can only offer a few tentative suggestions. Since precise territorial possession of the trade-routes were essential in a commerce-based economy, the state must be or were often-times, ready or able to defend their positions from either the internal or external aggressor-applying military force when and where necessary. The West African rulers, although they did appreciate mastery of the land as one of the keys to power and wealth, nevertheless they placed greater premium on the possession and control of productive forces - men and women.

As Gray and Birmingham in their discussions on Pre-Colonial African Trade have jointly argued,

the relationship between the African chief and his subject “went through various shades - father and son, householder and retainer, landlord and villain; master and slave, war-lord and captive”. Within this range, the chief (ruler) might on occasions, be persuaded to exchange the services or subjects for material returns. Where he felt that the material returns offered for a subject outweighed what he (the ruler) stood to derive by retaining such a subject (usually warcaptives/ prisoners) he did not hesitate to dispose of such subjects. The desire to increase material wealth and the number of people over whom they ruled often-times resulted in expansionist wars. As the final arbiter in judicial matters, the rulers could (and did) condemn recalcitrants or presumed recalcitrants to be sold into slavery. The end result was the failure of these states to produce sustained economic growth and development. In the long run, West African indigenous entrepreneurs though threatened first by recurrent violence and later by alien competition, did demonstrate high level of initiative and response to frontier opportunities. The exercise

of regnal monopoly rights by some of the notable kings was another formidable domestic problem that the indigenous entrepreneur had to cope with. The challenge of market opportunities though pervasive was no mean problem to the market-oriented trade.

As stated above, trade started among the various West African communities from the most primitive form - barter. And in order to solve the problem of communication, the peoples adopted the “silent barter” that did not require the trading partners facing one another and haggling. Later, as people from different geographical regions became involved, the necessity for local exchange metamorphosed into sub-regional and regional trade that involved long distance. This necessitated the institutionalization of public gatherings where buyers and sellers met at regular intervals to do business. These were the earliest markets. Later, there were the “parent” and the local markets that sprang up at strategic locations which for convenience sake we shall refer to here as “junction zones”. Examples are those that served the savannah and the forest regions, those that serve peoples from different linguistic/ethnic groups et cetera. In the case of Yoruba land for example, there were the Ketu market that served the Dahomean and the Yoruba peoples; the Iperu market that served the Egba and the Ijebu groups; Mamu market located between the Ijebu and the Ibadan. More important coastal markets that served the material needs of both the Europeans and their West African partners include those of Port Novo, Badagri, Ikorodu, Epe, Atijere, Eko (Lagos) Bonny, Calabar etc. These markets initially served as foci of communications rather than as nuclei of settlements. Local as well as exotic currencies were used in the transaction of business. Ethnographic data available (though fragmentary and uneven) show that there were three main currency areas that used the cowrie shells, the manila and the brass rod respectively as currencies.

The cowrie area comprised the South-Western part of West Africa; parts of Hausa land, and part of the South-Eastern West Africa. The manilla was limited to the Eastern delta region, most especially among the Southern Igbo and the Ibibio. The Efik, the Cross-river Igbo, the Ekoi, the Yako, the Mbembe and other ethnic groups around Obubra, Ogoja down to the Cameroon used the brass and the copper rods.

The cowrie shells were obtained from Maldive islands in the Indian Ocean. They were first introduced into the Western Sudan by the Berber Tuareg and the Arab merchants. Later, with the Portuguese exploration and their discovery of the sea route to India and the far East in 1497, ships were used in transporting cowrie shells to West Africa for business transactions. Although there are strong indications that iron and other metal currencies were in circulation in West Africa before the introduction of these currencies, further details about these currencies are yet to be unravelled by ethnographers and historians. For example, researches show that the Idoma and the Mitshi had currency units they referred to as AKIKA and IBIA respectively.

As from 1497 when the Portuguese turned the island of Fernando Po into their out-post, their commercial influence started to be felt in the hinterland, most especially in Benin where the



two types of cowrie shells cypress moneta and annulus because widely used. Other currencies introduced by the Portuguese into Africa include the Maria Theresa Thaler and the clouts - square cloths of different sizes, stamped in Lisbon with the royal arms of Portugal, made of the bark of a

tree native to Africa. These, however did not gain wide

acceptance in West Africa as they did in Angola and other parts of Africa.

The barter period was followed by the period when various items were used as currencies as pointed out under the indigenous trading system. The cowrie currency gained widest acceptance, covering about two-thirds of the area under discussion. This was followed by the manila, the maria-Theresa and bras-rods in the Niger-Delta and the Cross-river basis. Salt and iron rods were of spectacular preference in most West African communities. These currencies remained in circulation in these places for a considerable length of time. Even the Royal Niger Company, used the cowrie shells "and kept their accounts in it".

### **Trade and Market in Traditional Igbo Society**

Among the Igbo, the village represented more than just a topographical setting for habitation. It was essentially:

I. a ritual centre.

II. a political and marketing centre.

III. a local unit, named and based on a patrilineage or segment, whose members claim independent existence.

IV. One of the units comprising a lineage or ancestral descent.

V. a dynamic unit that provided working arrangement for members.

VI. a corporate land-owning and land-administering unit.

VII. a unit that organised social life and social activities.

VIII. a unit that organised and regulated economic life-bush-clearing bush-burning, land cultivation, up to yam-harvesting. In short, the farming calendar.

IX. a unit that regulated inter-group relations.

In addition to the individual village units, there were village groups that shared certain historical and cultural ties in common. These could be found either in compact settlements or separate homesteads. Under the setting; economic/commercial transactions provided the cement for the loose-knit political system.

The market-place played a very significant role in the lives of the various groups and communities. Foremost being a deliberative and legislative forum. Secondly, it was the principal venue for commercial exchange. Thirdly, the market-place provided opportunity for cultural diffusion. For there, different peoples with diverse views and practices met, exchanged ideas, contracted marriage arrangements, exchanged reciprocal gifts and so on.

For the markets to serve these purpose effectively well, they were arranged on every four/eight day basis so that they did not clash. This constituted the week (*izu*). Each *izu* comprised four days: namely the Eke, the Urie (or *Olie* the Afo or Aho and the Nkwo. This arrangement enabled customers from near and far to patronize the market-places.

Apart from the normal four-day market arrangement (except in peripheral Abaliki and Nkwere that had five-day market arrangements) the Igbo also had the big-week (*izu ukwu*), during which the people abstained from farm work, stayed back home, for both relaxation and environmental sanitation, or for the practice of arts and crafts, hobbies, entertainment, ceremonies and festivals.

This day also provided opportunity for visiting friends, relations, in-laws fiance/fiancee etc. Another complement was the village group market which provided opportunity to intensive interaction among members of the group as well as for intergroup

relations. This facilitated exogamous marriage that was much cherished by the Igbo. The functions of the markets were not institutionally defined. Patronage and viability of diverse

quality products dictated which were to be the “Senior” and the “junior” markets like the societies, the markets too remained functionally dynamic- waxing and waning with external and internal trade dictates.

The Igbo made solid arrangements to safeguard the security of the lives and property of customers by citing some “*ukwu*” markets at either the outskirts of the villages, at the border-points, at important river-banks etc. backed up by the Ogbugbandu covenant. Under this arrangement, neighbouring villages provided safe conduct for persons that came to patronize the markets. In this way, both intra-group and inter-group as well as long-distance trades were enhanced.

Goods exchanged hands between the Igbo in the riverine areas as well as those in the hinterland. Goods such as salt, beads, ivory, ornaments, dyes, cloths, cartridge, religious and secular charms etc. exchanged hands. The small market called *obere-ala* served local needs. Over time, however, the Igbo developed what is here referred to as the Awka and the Arochukwu systems of trading.

### **The Awka Trading System**

The Awka commanded much respect among the Igbo traditional societies largely because of their roles as diviners, physicians, priests and above all, for their early take-off and head-start in iron- technology. For providing goods as well as services, their neighbours looked up to the Awka for a number of reasons. As agriculturists and itinerant traders, the Awka gained widespread fame and popularity. They traded in groups (troops) among the Igbo (and beyond) for several weeks and months at a stretch during the dry seasons but returned home early enough to prepare their lands for the next planting season. This long-distance trade further enhanced the prestige of the Awka man, his wares and above all, his divinity: AGBA-ALA.

### **The Aro Trade System**

Like the Awka, the people of Arochukwu also owed their success as traders partly to their position as agents of the EBINOKPABJ god. As from the 15th century when the iniquitous slave trade gained ground, the Aro did set up a co-ordinated trading network “based on trading settlements, trade routes and fairs” among the Igbo. This arrangement triggered off the rise of new market-centers and a reorganisation of the pre-existing village group arrangement that gave way to a regional orientation.

The Aro, established two main trade-routes-one leading from Arochukwu through Awka and as far as Nike, the other went through Afikpo - Uburu to Ezza and Izzi to the North.

The Aro so much effectively controlled these trade-routes that the villages through which the trade-routes traversed became known as Aro colonies. In actual fact, the Aro never established any political domination over these people. What really happened was that the Aro did put the fame of their oracle Ebinokpabi to an economic advantage. The Aro traders while trading settled among the other Igbo sub-groups obtained information from such groups and fed Ebinokpabi priests with such

information whenever the need arose. The resultant effect of this was that the verdict of Ebinokpabi, was, oftentimes, based on detailed facts impartial, and therefore awe-inspiring. The Aro, through the use of mercenaries, established not only trade relations, but also religio-judicial connections that seemed to the unwary observer a sort of political subjugation.

The Aro traded to most parts of Igbo-land and litigants from far and near patronized the Ebinokpabi. The Aro also made use of the Abam whom they armed with guns in ensuring compliance with the verdict of Ebinokpabi. The Aro usually confiscated the party that was pronounced guilty. Some of these victims were either sold into slavery or sacrificed. During the long period of trade, the Aro established no less than a hundred settlements across the length and breadth of Igboland. The most important of these being Aro Ndizuogu, Ajalli, Isuochi, and Okporoenyi. But the fact that the Aro engaged in trade in goods demanded by the privileged class only (slaves, beads, horses, tobacco, spirits, gunpowder and a few other luxury items) it meant that they did not need the market places that displayed agrarian products and other

products needed by the commoners. The slaves transported the wares and catered for the horses. The Aro, through the strings of posts, buying depots and “colonies” established trade network throughout the length and breadth of Igboland. Overtime, as the commodities demanded by the Aro changed. Recourse was made to the open market-places. Consequently, big and small markets Oge-Ukwu and Oge-nta) sprang up among the Nkwerre, and the Awka, the Nkwo-Ndoro market in Oboro (Bende) is a typical example.

As trade expanded in scope, volume and coverage, two groups of traders emerged - the homebased trader (*Ado Ulo*) and the itinerant broad-based trader (*Ado Uzo*). Trade fairs (Agbagwu) were organised on twenty-four day intervals, based at Uzoakoli and Bende. Each fair lasted some four days. This greatly promoted pan-Igbo nationalism and cultural diffusion.

Apart from the galvanizing commercial activities of the Aro, the Igbo in general adopted certain measures that promoted socio-economic activities. For example, the age-sets, maintained law and order in the various communities by seizing suspected criminals and bringing such suspects for trial before the elders. They also imposed heavy fines on the guilty. The younger age-sets executed public works - clearing the surrounding bushes, the bush-paths, the meeting-places, the wells, the market squares and so on. The priests and medicine-men too were not left out of the scheme of things. They exercised great authority through the cults of the earth and ancestors in pronouncing the rejection of recalcitrants’ offerings.

The secret societies acted primarily as policemen, and not as terrorists as was mistakenly represented, and (which they) later degenerated into. The life of the Igbo was not all toil and no respite. Music, folklore, folk-tales, periodic and annual festivals were part of the designs that tightened toil, singing, in most cases served to stimulate the workers apart from providing the basis for social recreation. Music and songs served as veritable social instruments for discouraging anti-social behaviours, social injustice as well as in promoting healthy and productive work culture.

### **Slavery and Slave Trade in Pre-colonial West Africa**

Historical records available show that slave - owning tendency and practice has been a global phenomenon, even before the primitive - communal age that we talked about earlier. It arose primarily out of man’s inordinate desire to satisfy his voracious and insatiable quest for capital, wealth, power and prestige. Slave- owning existed to satisfy the parasitic demands of the slaveowning

class whose goal they wanted to attain by means of rapacious exploitation of the slaves through direct physical compulsion.

It is sad to note that up till the present moment, the urge is still very much in vogue. It exists between and among individuals as well as nations though in more subtle or reformed manner.

In the distant past, a slave was regarded essentially as a thing, rather than a person. He/she could be bought or sold, sacrificed to the gods for tree-crops to produce more fruits or disposed of in any form that suited the owner. It was for this reason that Aristotle (384-322 B.C) wrote: “A slave is an animate tool, and a tool is an inanimate slave”. One thing to highlight here however, is that the treatment of slaves varied from one ethnic group to another.. While some regarded slaves as “lower” members of the society who could (and did in fact) struggle to become free - born and attain any height in the society, others maintained a water - tight societal stratification whereby slaves remained slaves, free - born as free - born and nobles as nobles as we shall see shortly.

As the social division of labour deepened, and as production in agriculture and the handicrafts increased, commodity - money relationship developed accordingly. The propertied class emerged as owners of means of production. One of these properties being slaves. The slave - owners appropriated the produce of the slaves and started to look beyond the local markets for their wares. Later, commodity exchange developed into regular trade - the trans-saharan trade. As trade expanded, and began to cross state borders, it gradually developed into international trade which involved such slave holding states as Egypt, Rome and the Arab World that found

the Sudanese particularly suitable.

Meanwhile, as the trade went on, two sets of property - owners emerged at the local level - the middlemen merchants and the usurers who obtained disproportionate interests on moneys loaned. They completed the dominance by the local traditional rulers and chiefs. The result was phenomenal increase in the greed and avarice of the slave - owners who intensified the exploitation of the slaves. This practice increased material inequality-bringing ore wealth to some and debt bondage and ruin to others. As socialist and Marxists have put it, the conditions of direct, physical coercion and subservient labour with absolutely no material or mural incentive prompted negative attitudes to work and consequently decrease in labour productivity. While the slaves were subjected to arduous manual work, the slave owners settled themselves to the harvest of the slaves' labours. They interested themselves also in politics, arts, philosophy and other intellectual disciplines that would distinguish them from the practical workers. As earlier mentioned it will be grossly misleading to give a blanket description of slavery as an institution among the various West African people. While it was hardly ever established among some, it had records of antiquity among others. On the Whole, West Africa did not characteristically develop a ruling class whose position depended on their distinctiveness as slave holders such as was found in the New World during the slave trade era. Slavery was normally not the basis of societies' productive function. As Walter Rodney, Duncan Rice and other Africanist historians have put it, slaves were hardly ever present as a permanent hereditary caste. The industrious ones did manumit themselves with time, while neighbours made spirited efforts at manumitting the less able ones. In isolated cases, some powerful rulers however kept slaves on permanent basis as one of their claims to power and status within the context of their own societies.

While we are not trying to hide the cruel conditions that existed in West Africa during the period under study, we want to make bold to say that not all claims of the protagonists of the slave trade are correct. For example there is no reason to believe the dreary pastoral scenario of savagery, barbarism and all forms of incivility before the benevolent Europeans' arrival. In fact, as Rice argues:

it is impossible to make a sound analysis of the history of the slave trade without accepting the fact that it depended not only on wicked Western merchants who were prepared to buy their fellow men, but also on African merchants who were prepared to sell them.

There were indeed professional slave raiders and even head-hunters among some of the South eastern ethnic groups. There were individuals who kept large stock of slaves (some castrated) on permanent basis. These were exceptional rather than the general practice. To use each exceptional cases to generalise is according to Rodney "to stand history on its head"

The true situation is that the Arab and later the European slave traders added their sinister influence to the pre-existing cruel situation. We should therefore not be carried away by the alluring arguments of the pro-slavery writers and the preconceived notions about the negro race. For instance, there was the classical assumption that the negro "savages" were in a state of infancy until their fortunate "civilization" by the Arabs and later the Europeans. They argue further that the Negroes are by nature biologically inferior or subhuman beings; and as a result of this "natural" inferiority, slavery became not only appropriate but also advantageous for them !

To these protagonists of slavery and slave trade it (slavery) is the only social system upon which true civilization could flower. To them, industrial society based on free labour was not only corrupt but also weak. They argue that society built on slave labour was necessarily stronger and better monitored.

Unfortunately however, there were Christian protagonists of this obnoxious institution., People like Benjamin Rush, (who was later converted by Anthony Benezet to abolitionist), R. Nesbit, author of *Slavery Not Forbidden by Scriptures*, W.L. Garrison, McGregor Laird, Thomas Carlyle, High Tory and some liberal members of the British parliament. This crop of Christians assumed

that the heathens could be legitimately enslaved, and that it was for their good to be converted and brought under the civilizing influence of Christendom.

The most notorious among these pro-slavery Christians of course was the Reverend James Wilson who in the late nineteenth century referred to slavery as:

that gracious and benevolent system which elevates the heathen cannibal into the contented, civilised, intelligent domestics we see around us. Nay, more into humble faithful and most joyous worshippers of the true and everlasting God. Bless God for such a system. We don't apologise for slavery, we glory in it, and no society shall exist within our borders that disqualifies or stigmatises the slave trade. (*Report of the anti-slavery society* p. 281, reproduced in Jackson, J.G. introduction

to *African Civilisation*, Unversity Books, New York, Hyde Park, NY 11040).

According to Chapman Cohen, the capture of the pagan Negroes by the Christian whites is a fulfilment of the course which God had pronounced on the children of Ham' Cohen C. Christianity, *Slavery And Labour* pp.135-136. There was also the case of a slave ship that landed on West African Coast, captured slaves, then headed for the New world with its human cargo. The captain of the vessel, on checking his record was shocked to find that these hapless Africans had been kidnapped on a Sunday, so the ship returned. Here in West Africa, the captives were turned loose, and then recaptured on a week day, to avoid the sin of the desecration of the Sabbath Day! See again Jackson, J.G. pp.309. A moving account of evils perpetrated by the European Christian slavers on hapless Africans could be found in Dr. W.E.B. Dubois', *The World and Africa*.

Henri Jumod, a prominent Swiss Protestant Missionary also lent his weight by advising the Blacks to resign themselves to fate, as they are a race made by God to serve. According to him, "It would be harmful to them to cover up this evident fact under a pile of sentimental eloquence.., the Negro should accept the position assigned to him by his physical and intellectual faculties" - Cited by J.C. deGraft - Johnson, in *African Glory*, pp. 5 1-52.

Having pondered over the activities of these self-acclaimed European Christian Slavers and colonizers, Mr. Wallace Johnson, wrote a powerful discourse, published in the African Morning Post of May, 1936. The title of the article was: "Has the African a God? In the discourse, Wallace said inter alia:

Personally, I believe the European has a God in whom he believes and whom he is representing in his Churches all over Africa. He believes in the God whose name is Decent. He believes in the God whose law is "Ye strong, you must weaken still further the weak". Ye "civilized" Europeans, you must "civilize" the "barbarous" Africans with machine-guns, Ye Christian Europeans you must Christianize" the "Pagan" Africans with bombs, poison gases etc.

For baring his mind, for daring to condemn the Satanic practices of the British over-lords, Wallace-Johnson was promptly arrested, and after a farcical trial for seditious libel was found guilty and

fined \$250. Wallace-Johnson was finally vindicated by the Privy Council Lord Chancellor, Lord Caldecott. Wallace was discharged on the seditious libel suit, but was adjudged guilty of attack on religion which the court regarded as an attack on the government of the Gold Coast (now Ghana).

A.F.C. Ryder and Obaro Ikime in their close study of the activities of the Christian Missionaries in the Kingdom from the sixteenth to the early Nineteenth century observed that the early Christian Missionaries in Warri and other Itsekiri area, oftentimes depended on slave-labour and even slave-trade for sustenance. Even the two Capuchin priests in the kingdom in 1705, "virtually abandoned their ministrations and were engaged in trade in earthenware cooking pots". Both the Itsekiri and their Christian Missionary hosts indulged in the pursuit of material profits. This, in part, was responsible for the hostile Urhobo-Itsekiri and Edo-Itsekiri relations. The Itsekiri prided themselves in their close association with the white and were just too willing to keep them company, so far as this met their material needs - manufactured goods as well as

fire arms.

Aboh town too, gained importance as a trading centre between the Igala and the Ukwani to the interior and the coastal towns of Bonny, Brass (Nembe) New Calabar and Akassa. The slave trade in these areas, like in all other affected parts of West Africa, left in its trail, all sorts of vices. And as Professor Russel-Wood has rightly observed, No institution or sector of society had been spared, the effects of this wind of destruction ... this mark of Cain on our national heritage”

(The Blackman in Slavery And Freedom in Colonial Brazil, Macmillan, 1982, p.3)

### **Slavery in West Africa: The Supply Sources**

There is no adequate published study of slavery in West Africa, but one thing that is certain is that various forms of bondage and dependence were in practice among some of the societies prior to the sixteenth century. Initially the slave relationship of traditional society was that of a client or dependent. It did not have a charted component. Later, it did. Majority of such slaves were the prisoners of war and in some cases, convicts and debt slaves. They could be (and were indeed) exhibited on the open, and transferred after purchase. Peonage, or a system of near - slave involuntary servitude under which peasants and farm - labourers were dependent on big land - owners was another pool of slaves.

The most wide - spread source of supply was the debt slavery. Oftentimes, it started with a form of financial assistance and ended up in debt bondage. This unfortunately is still being practised by the Developed Nations and the multi-national corporations enjoying foreign monopolies.

The effect of this obnoxious trade is concisely treated in the subsequent pages, but here, we want to mention some vital aspects that have since produced hindering effects. One of these is the antithesis between mental and manual work that has metamorphosed into contempt for physical work on the part of the exploiters. Another is the effect of restructuring of traditional West African Societies, and the changed balance of their relative power. In the Niger Delta, the trade brought about far - reaching changes in the societies. There, success in the Atlantic slave trade brought new classes into the control of the body politic.

Prior to the slave trade era, the Creek towns of Bonny, Nembe of Brass, Kalabari, Okrika and New Calabar had been organised on fishing and salt - panning. By then no other major economic activities were open to them, since they lived in the mangrove swamp with salty waters. The quest by the Europeans led to the construction of war - canoes to seize slaves from the hinter land.

In order to meet the need for crew men to paddle the canoes, the “house - systems” soon developed. Each ‘house’ comprised the “father” or head and dependents of varying degrees of freedom. These coastal towns obtained slaves from the Igbo and the Ijo in the immediate hinterland. Under the new dispensation, consanguinity rather than genealogical relationship became the sole determinant of social ranking in the various city - states.

There were big and small trading “houses”. While big houses (*Opuwari*) could diminish as a result of mismanagement by the house - head, small houses (*Kalawari*) could (and did in fact) develop into big (*Opuwari*) houses. Success in business rather than age or ascription became the yard - stick for

measuring success in society and social ranking. Among the Izon,

there grew the Amanyanabo non-hereditary title-holding arrangement in place of the age-long gerontocratic arrangement that enthroned the eldest man in the city - state (the Amaokosuwei)

The trade however formed the foundation of the rise of new men in the nineteenth century; many of who had several hundreds of slaves forming the core of their labour corps. Men like Idiare, Olomu, Nana-Olomu, Idibofun, all of the Ologbotsere family and San inomi Yonwuren Numa and Numa’s son, Dogho etc. had their houses. Rivalry among these crops of nouveau riche degenerated into mutual hatred and eventually led to the dethronement of Nana by Consul-General Ralph Moor in the 1894 Ebrohimi expedition. Nana was alleged among other

things of engaging in slave trade. The real bone of contention was, in fact, control of trade in the Niger-Delta region. In fact, slaves played key roles in Warri's political - economy during the interregnum period (1848-1936) following the death of Olu Akengbuwa I in 1848. We shall treat this in detail later.

The story of the abolitionists is too well familiar to deserve detailed treatment here. Suffice it to just mention that it was catch - all allegation that was levelled against king Kosoko of Lagos in 1851, King Jaja of Opobo who was exiled in 1887, the Ijebu in 1892, King Koko, the Amanyamabo of Nembe in 1895, Oba Ovonramwen in 1997, Ibanichuka King of Okrika in 1898 and soon.

No matter the angle from which we view it, one thing that stands out clearly is the fact that slavery and slave-trade played no mean roles in the history of West Africa during the three and a half centuries of this inglorious trade and eventually in the British conquest and eventual colonization of West Africa.

Among the Igbo, the Aro sub-group gained respect and acceptability far and wide because of the pronouncements of Ibinukpahi oracle at Arochuku, and its many "priests" resident in many parts of Igboland. The priests served as the "ears" of Ibinukpahi in their places of abode as well as informants that enabled the oracle command so much acceptance as a result of its "detailed understanding and analysis of litigants' surroundings". All litigants found guilty were forfeited to Ibinukpahi as slaves to be disposed of the way the priests deemed fit. As a result, the Aro were able to:

- a. Exercise some trading rights over the Ibibio and other non-Igbo trading city - states in the Niger Delta.
- b. Procure arms and ammunition and
- c. Defy the British economic policy directives for so long.

As pointed out earlier, trade in slaves by then was more or less the business of the kings, the chiefs, the rich and the audacious men and women as well as the merchants. They obtained their commodities from two main sources:

- a. Kings' "decree" to raid offending or even innocent but less powerful neighbouring towns or villages. The kings on several occasions, were enticed by exotic merchandise shown them by the foreign trading partners. On seeing these superior and more beautiful goods, the rulers were tempted into ordering their militia to attack neighbouring unsuspecting villages in the dead of the night, in most cases, the thatched-roofed houses were set on fire and in the midst of the confusion and panic, escaping individuals were whisked away.
- b. Occasional or random pillage, carried out either by individuals, or by groups of audacious dare-devil men, out to satisfy their voracious appetites. They ensnared or trepanned unsuspecting family members, groups or individuals going about their legitimate economic activities. In most cases, they exchanged these fellow country-men for trifles such as guns (muzzle-loaders, breech-loaders or rifles) gun-powder, glass pieces or mirrors, umbrellas or canopies, coral-beads, etc. Some of the slaves were however retained for domestic or farm production needs. Others were employed in producing handicrafts such as pottery flour-grinding, smithery, weaving etc. This category of slaves compared with other slave owning polities that erected monuments such as the Indian and Greek temples, the Roman Theaters, Canals and roads, the Great Chinese Wall, the Pyramids of Egypt, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru. The greatest economic impact of the slave-trade was that it killed work incentive but encouraged unprovoked warfare. It also bred a parasitic consuming slave-owning class.

Not all the slaves were sold out. Some of them were retained as domestic or as farm slaves. One thing that was common is the fact that the ruling elites, such as the kings the chiefs, the notable and the outstanding warriors retained the slaves either as labour force or as a mark of honour and prestige in the society or even as "gift-materials" that were exchanged on ceremonial occasions. Some kings with large harem of harems, castrated their "trusted" slaves to prevent them from going outside the palace confines.

For example, Dr. Barth reported when he visited Yola in the 1840's, that the ruler received 5,000 slaves annually from his immediate lamidats. Dr. Barth also added that Adamawa's sole exports by them were slaves and ivory. The rulers of Yola settled some of the slaves in agricultural or pastoral slave settlements similar to the Igwen in old Benin empire, and Ago-Aduloiti during the nineteenth-century Yoruba wars, the Bayong slave villages among the Bayong, the Ekoi and the Chamba and so on.

Slave-raiders from Bauchi and Muri sold their "catch" to the Bamenda traders, who in turn sold them to the long-distance traders from Baghirmi and Wadai. These traders exchanged their "wares" for guns of various shapes and make - flint - locks or Danish Black guns, and buccaneers the breech-loaders or sniders etc. The rulers oftentimes encouraged the slave suppliers by gun gifts. Some of the slaves were kept as royal retainers, wives, pages, servants, wood-fetchers, wine-tappers, carriers along the long-distance trade routes and in some instances, these trade slaves were buried alive with deceased kings to "minister unto them in the hereafter". Small chiefdoms that were less powerful, but strongly determined to retain sovereignty while maintaining good relations with their powerful overlords, purchased their freedoms by slave- "gifts". Their slave-raiding activities seriously hampered economic developments in all the affected areas. For example, salt-mines in the Upper Cross river valley, especially around Akwana; ironsmelting

and the manufacture of traditional hoes known as akika around Wukari, the Bida bead industries and so on declined drastically.

However, we should not be misguided into believing that slavery was a monopoly of West Africans or Africans alone. No. Slavery, according to Edwin Hoyt, has been the curse of every civilization at one time or another. The ancients enslaved men. The Romans built their empire on slavery. They used slaves to build their roads, attend to farm and domestic chores in Western Europe. Slavery continued well into the Middle Ages.

Quite unlike the Western European tradition that made the slave a piece of property: to be bought, moved anywhere in the world, fed slops and then beaten and worked until he died and the slave owner needed to account to no one, in West Africa the slave was treated more as a junior member of the family than as an animal. And this probably formed part of the thinking of the West African slave traders. Little did they know how their kith and kin sold into slavery were treated. They therefore could not conceive of the evil the white men inflicted upon their victims.

By the fifteenth and the sixteenth Centuries, African (including West African) kingdoms entered a new period in which the tides of rule were changing. The kingdoms were often-times at war with each other; and in these wars they took captives who were eventually turned into slaves. Although they were usually called to labour in the fields of their masters, to build houses for them, or to maintain the roads, West Africans did not consider their slaves as their property. Slave holding was in most cases, restricted to the 'cory rich; and the number of slaves was limited. But later, as the demand for slaves grew, ordinary men broke rulers' monopoly of the trade. The dramatic change was brought about by what early historians described as the discovery of the Americas and also the unsuitability of the people of the Americas (the Indians) for the economic needs of the Spanish conquistadors.

As shown in the course of our discussion, there were several ways that West Africans made slaves. The principal ones were through war or raid, and insolvent debtors who could be sold. Wife seduction, disturbing neighbours' god/goddess or shrine, and other minor offences could land the offender in slavery. Sometimes, wicked and corrupt rulers deliberately sent their wives out to trap lovers who eventually ended up in being enslaved/sold. West Africans became fearful of one another, as treachery became rampant. Sometimes, weaker or unsuspecting slavers too ended up being captured, enslaved and sold at the coast. In 1767, the kings of Old Calabar and New Calabar for example, who had become wealthy through slave trade, treacherously went into mass kidnapping (panyaring). The result was the loss of over 800 citizen



s to the white slavers. West Africans also supplied the foods that sustained the lives of their kith and kin through the long, gonisiflgJoUmeYst0 the Americas. European capitalists too, enticed by the alluring tales from the Arabs about the abundance of gold, copper, tin, red and blue cloths, wax and above all, slaves, intensified efforts at reaching the source directly via the Atlantic. A major breakthrough was made in this venture with the crossing of cape Bojador, which hitherto-had been presumed to mark the end of the flat surface of the earth. From thence, the Portuguese felt their dream of joining forces with the fabled Prester John (living somewhere in the heart of Africa) in fighting the infidels of North Africa, especially the Mooriscos from the front and the rear was near realisation.

In 1441, Captain Anta Goncalves took the first cargo of gold and slaves to Lisbon, Portugal. Thus started the iniquitous trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Portuguese did what they could to monopolise their new "slave-mine" by mounting several voyages to the West African Coast. The most popular of them named Captain Pacheco. He is reputed to have visited Benin four times, reported the existence of a mighty Benin Empire, ruled by an Oba. The Portuguese soon established trade relations with Benin and by 1482, established a slave factory at Gwato (Ughoton). From there, they went further to other parts of the Niger Delta far as Fernando do Po and Sao Thome. The Portuguese went as far as naming one of the Rivers rio dos Escravos (meaning river of the slaves) and describing the Izo (Izo) as semi-cannibals always war!

Trade in slaves predominated. The prices of slaves varied from place to place and from time to time. For example, at Arguin, eighteen slaves sold for one horse around 1455 while twelve slaves were exchanged for one horse in Senegal some fifty years later. In Benin, war prisoners were sold out as slaves to Portuguese at reduced prices.

According to Pacheco, one cost the Portuguese between twelve and fifteen bracelets of or copper. Herbert Heaton in his book titled Economic History of Europe maintains that a woman slave changed hands (was sold) for a gallon of brandy and six beads, while a man slave did sell for eight guns, one wicker-covered bottle, two cases of spirits and twenty eight sheets. Other independent sources also highlight the ridiculous prices of slaves purchased in Africa.

All the sources however agree at the conclusion that the West African ruling elite were just always ready to sell the slaves especially for iron bars for the manufacture of hoe-blades, spear points, cutlasses and above all, fire-arms. The desire for fire arms on the part of the ruling elites made possible, and for a long time sustained the "gun-slave cycle". The West African slave rulers used the Firearms to capture more slaves, and to procure more firearms.

As time went on, only fire-arms could be used to procure slaves. The argument has been on among African historians as to whether the existence of domestic slaves in African societies before the advent of the Europeans made it easier for the Africans to part with the slaves, or that slave trade did or did not originate from domestic slavery. Our concern here is not so much on whether domestic slavery was the origin or the result. What is of significance is that the European slave traders meant harm for Africans. They realised the high level of mutual hostilities that existed among African polities and the willingness on the part of the rulers (because of personal vested interests) to avail themselves of the opportunity of assistance against their political enemies. This in essence further fragmented political power and perpetuated mutual hostilities and the development of weak states.

The weak states were often-times at the mercy of their stronger neighbours who were always ready to prey on them. Thus the slave trade produced far-reaching disruptive effects on West Africans' political and social lives. This was mainly because the slave trade was fed and sustained by frequent raids which were made possible by the introduction of more deadly firearms.

The traditional rulers who were supposed to preserve the social norms of the societies traduced them freely. Life became rather unsafe. West African ruling elites' interests became subordinated to those of their European "friends" rather than their subjects or neighbours. The slave trade led to much social and cultural adaptations and made permanent imprint on the lives of West Africans as discussed below.

## **The Impact of the Trans-Atlantic Slave on West Africans**

Changes were brought about by the trans-Atlantic slave trade not only in the lives of individuals in West Africa but also in the societies themselves. There were profound changes in the laws and the structures of the societies. The change on the old staples of trade-gold, ivory, malaguetta, Benin pepper and other commodities produced in West Africa to slave-trading economy brought about unsettlement effects on social organisation. In a nutshell, the following features stand out prominently in the catalogue of changes brought about by the iniquitous trade:

- a. The ruling class in West Africa became corrupt and practised fraud in the customary courts of law. They changed the nature of the laws that had hitherto protected the people to one used to trap people for sale into slavery. For example, culprits were sold into slavery rather than being made to suffer reparation losses, even for minor offences such as adultery, indebtedness, and so on.
- b. A large slave class was created in West African societies, made up mainly of captives. These slaves were owned by the West African ruling class.
- c. West African ruling class became as ruthless and oppressive as was never seen before, serving the interests of the European trading partners, who were always ready to indulge themselves in exotic tastes, especially the manufactured goods.
- d. A new class of traders gained economic, and sometimes, political power. They were always ready to exploit fellow West Africans in the most cruel manner, to make the greatest profits.
- e. The slave - owning ruling class maintained the obnoxious laws that permitted them to own and keep slaves, several years even after the abolition of the slave trade.
- f. The European slave - purchasers and their West African partners in this crime deliberately encouraged inter-group fighting that claimed the lives of many in addition to those that were captured and sold as slaves.
- g. Many West African polities weakened considerably as a result of the loss of the virile working population.
- h. The in-fighting bred mutual hostilities and economic down turn as both production and marketing were adversely affected. The trade routes were no longer safe.
- i. The episode caused, many West Africans to become slaves in their fatherlands.
- j. The trade geared the efforts of the partakers towards unproductive activities - manhunt, arson, war-mongering, kidnapping etc.
- k. The European slavers built “factories” along the coast. These ‘factories’ were places where European and African goods could be stored, under the control of a European who lived there and conducted trade. For the slave-trade, it was, as Rodney argues, essentially a place where European goods exchanged, for African slaves. They were “barracoons” where African slaves were locked up while awaiting shipment.
- l. The trade bred a class of West Africans that were prepared to sell their fellow men in exchange for European manufactures such as cloth, pots, pans, beads, fire-arms. These were the collaborators who aided and partnered the Europeans in exploiting, plundering and even enslaving Africans.
- m. Brute force displaced civil rule and sense of social security that the steadied societies for ages.
- n. One of the most tragic aspects of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the increasing helplessness of West Africans in the face of economic blackmail. West Africans were reduced to the state of “sell or be sold”. Rulers sold slaves to procure fire-arms. This was partly the genesis of Africans’ inferiority complex.

The list goes on and on. What is important to us here is the fact that today, no one debates whether the trade was right or wrong. All are in agreement that it was a great moral evil. It is for this reason that Africanist historians today find it astonishingly painful to read about

how the ruling West African elite class resisted European attempts at abolishing the obnoxious trade. The reasons advanced for this resistance being that in the first place, the trade had been on for some

three centuries. Secondly, the ruling elite had benefitted from it for that long. Thirdly, it was the only assured source of obtaining European manufactures especially firearms and luxurious items which this class had become attuned to. Fourthly, gold which was the only close substitute could be found in only a few places. Fifthly, that the slavetrade was not forced on West Africans by the Europeans, that Africans sold and the Europeans bought and sixthly, numbers of Africans engaged in the slave-trade at any moment was certainly larger than the number of Europeans. All these are shamefully painful but truthful statements that the African slavers failed to give serious thought to. To ensure effective abolition of the trade, the British abolitionists offered compensation to these habituated slavers, so that Africans could be left alone in Africa, to produce the raw material needs of the European industries (following the industrial Revolution) especially palm- oil needed as lubricants as well as bases for other Industrial products. It was not easy changing from the slave - trade to palm- oil economy, especially in the Niger Delta region which the British merchants had dubbed the “oil Rivers”.

The fight was hard, and a number or die - hard West African slavers had to pay dearly for their resistance of the abolition and penetration into the interior. The revolutionary change from slave - trade to legitimate commerce was-motivated not only by humanitarian consideration as the abolitionists would make the world believe. There were other factors at play some even more fundamental. Economic trend in post-industrial Europe rendered slave labour redundant and consequently the unemployed hands started constituting social problems to Europe. Hence the abolition.

The white and black slavers wanted the trade to continue. For example, the king of Bonny, Africa’s greatest slave market, spoke the minds of others when he declared to Captain Crow in 1807:

We (i.e. the king and Council) think that this trade must go on. That also is the verdict of our Oracle and the priests. They saw that your country, no matter how great, can never stop a trade ordained by God himself.

In the same vein, the Nupe king, Namagwatse, insisted that no one can stop a cat from mousing”, and that so long as the British slavers were prepared to buy so long shall the West African slavers be prepared to sell.

Pro slavery protagonists put tip stiff arguments about the gains inherent (to Africa) of the exercise. They argue inter-alia that although the slave trade era was a period of mixed blessing Africans can still count their blessings. They base the argument on the premise that the epoch afforded Africans the opportunity for more developed commercial system as a result of intense contact with the outside world. They advance this trend of argument by claiming that if there had been no slave trade, there would have been very little or no trade at all. This is spurious and illogical in the sense that universally, slave-trade has not been proved to be the foundation of accelerated development. Their argument that slave trade is better than no trade at all seems therefore self- contradictory and prejudicial. It did not bring about any better preparation for meeting the European impact and the challenge of modernization as they delusively argued.

Constructive and seasoned assessors reckon with the period as one that ushered in painful commercial readjustment to Africans in general, and West Africans in particular. That the slave trade

in practical purposes and extent warped the course of West African progress and development that might have otherwise taken place. Even though the trade presented the ruling class with an opportunity for short-term profit, the profit was at the cost of long-term economic stagnation for the generality. The trade foreclosed the health

alternative of producing goods that foreigners would have come to West Africa to buy. The trade also stifled productive innovation, crippled economic growth and development. Another important thing to note about slavery and slave-trade in West Africa during the period is that the treatment varied from one community to another. Among the Yoruba, for example, slaves were treated with derision and contempt. "They were regarded as mere cartels with no opportunity for upward social mobility". The Niger-Delta peoples treated slaves differently. Slaves were integrated fully into the family system. With the development of trade, the "Housesystem"

replaced the indigenous socio-political and economic setting. The Niger-Delta peoples assumed the role of middle-men, as the region was not particularly suitable for Agriculture, bearing in mind, the level of technological advancement, and the climatic constraints. The Niger-Delta middlemen retained the best of the slaves obtained from the interior in their personal services. Some manned the fleet of canoes indispensable for trade with the interior and others in the farms.

In the Igbo and Efik communities, the sky was the limit for the industrious and enterprising slaves. They were integrated fully into the house system. Under the new setting, relationship was based on common interests and economic expediency rather than on kinship. 'Ulo' and 'ufo k' effectively replaced *Umumu* and *Ekpuk* (extended family relationship). In matters political, village democracy gave way to autocracy, and plutocracy replaced gerontocracy. The prosperous house heads wielded considerable powers over their 'houses' as well as in the village community. Economic trends overturned the traditional social setting. Society became more militant and dynamic. Achievement rather than ascription became the yardstick for measuring social ranking.

The degree of authority exercised by the House-heads varied considerably, depending on the idiosyncrasies of the incumbent. While some were kind and generous, others remained autocratic, wicked and inhumane in their relation with the house members. The enterprising slave could manumit himself, establish his own 'house' and rise to respectable positions in the society. The 'house' system defies precise definition because it varied largely from one community to another. It does not lend itself to generalisation. In most cases, the masses were kept in subjection. Members of the same 'house' related with the house-head as children and every one partook of the honour of the house; and were consequently loyal to the "house".

As pointed out earlier audacious and enterprising slaves rose to the rank of nobility in the city - states. Examples include Jaja, Oko-jumbo, Madu (Maduka) and Alali in Bonny after the death of king Opubu (1792-1830) in Bonny etc. In Bonny, Madu and Alali took over absolute control of affairs from the heir apparent, Anna people who succeeded Opubu (Hano or Anna).

The house-system in the Niger-Delta lacked the broad - based political cement required for long - distance trade. Consequently, it failed to provide the peaceful atmosphere required for commercial transactions. The Aro, through the medium of their oracle-*Ibinukpabi* filled this vacuum by establishing what Dike terms "free cities" at the intersection of the main trade routes. All traders that wished to traffic and exchange safely repaired into these free - cities. The Aro also, through the widely acknowledged and undisputed authority of the *Ibinukpabi*, established "courts" where

individuals and clans in conflict sought justice. With the assistance of hired Abam, Abriba, Ohafia and Edda warriors, the Aro enforced the pronouncements or verdict of *Ibinukpabi*. The fear of only *Ibinukpabi* plus the military services of these mercenaries enabled the Aro not only to establish commercial link and supremacy over extensive areas, but also to "confiscate" those pronounced guilty by *Ibinukpabi*. Majority of these Confiscates were sold into slavery; others sacrificed to *Ibinukpabi* or retained as domestic slaves. The system of obtaining slaves by use of oracular device obtained also in other Igbo communities e.g. the Agbala at Awka, the Igwe at Urnunora (Owerri District), the Onyili-Ora at Nri and the Ogba at Ogbunike. All these were however less than the Aro-chukwu based

Ibinukpabi the Aro sold the slaves at Bonny. This long - established economic tie between Bonny and Igbo heartland continued for most parts of the Nineteenth century. The British misconstrued

the situation to mean political domination, hence the Aro expedition of 1901-1902.

### **Summary**

As a result of the contact with the Arabs and later the Europeans, West Africa witnessed fundamental developments and changes. The foreign trade partners established relations with the ruling hierarchy, exploited ethnic and religious divisions and the incipient class contradictions within West African societies. Profile lure (among the ruling class) led to revival of old rivalries and hostilities. The resultant effect became manifested in the following ways:

- ☐ State Structure and coherence were destroyed by the intensity.
- ☐ The Yoruba political Federalism disintegrated.
- ☐ Insecurity and fear prompted by incessant violence, skirmishes, ambushes, kidnapping by man-hunters gripped many.
- ☐ Escape into inaccessible and inhospitable sites to avert danger became rampant, and constituted barriers to progress later.
- ☐ The ruling class became immune from the perils of the slave trade and forged partnership of exploitation with the European exploiters.
- ☐ The ruling class classified fellow West Africans as “criminals” and had them sold on trumped up or flimsy charges - adultery, stealing, rape and other acts of misdemeanor.
- ☐ Native laws and customs became thoroughly debased and abused by the ruling class.
- ☐ The common peoples of West Africa lost the security of person while the ruling class became over - protected.
- ☐ There was the emergence of the new rich class - the nouveau riche.
- ☐ The West African ruling elites consciously abandoned moral precept in favour of the loot. This resulted in the weakening of the moral fibre of the society.
- ☐ Economic efforts became distracted from productive goals.
- ☐ On the whole, the trade was destructive of African (West African) society because values, individual liberty and life, security and freedom, traditional, social relations and social units were undermined. The economy stagnated and human resources were wasted. The old order was eroded.

The impact of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was so profound that many historians have found it convenient to argue that it was not the maxim-gun that really subjugated the various West African political entities. It was the cowrie - Shells, the manilla, the Maria Theresa, the Spanish and the

Brazilian Dollar and the luxury goods obtained with them which conquered these polities from the inside, well before the maxim-gun was brought in to complete the task, they argued.

But above all, the exercise was destructive of both human resources and cultural heritage, economic and technological growth and development. It bittered ethnic relationships.

In the history of pre-colonial West Africa, as far as it is known to us today, there is one chapter marked by a special note of infamy. This is the chapter on foreigners interest in this part of the world a one of the major suppliers of slaves; and West Africa, like other part of West African sub-continent, became infested with slavers. The first being the Arab muslim merchants/ slavers followed by Christian Europe.

It is a terrible commentary on both that the longest period a slave raiding known to history anywhere in the world was initiated and sustained by the actions of adherents of these two most widely accepted religious faiths. Spain, Portugal, France, Holland and Britain, after the Christian faith had for more than a thousand year been the established as state religion of Western Europe, continued and cherished this hateful inhuman trade. They as well as their Muslim predecessors threw moral ethics aside and obtained as hateful renown as the greatest

centers of slavery and slave trade in which millions of unfortunate Africans were in fact sold into slavery and subjected to indescribable inhuman treatments. It was indeed a period of rapine and wreckage and as mentioned elsewhere on this topic, a “holocaust” that both Mohammed and Christ would definitely have condemned in the strongest terms. It was indeed the most vicious human game one can imagine - if really could be appropriately be described as a game. The vicious w the player. The winners in the games were the so-called Muslini and the Christians; and the loser the Africans. While the winner eyes dangled pleasantly forth for their deadly game, their prey the Africans (West Africans) squeaked at the predators’ cruelty where the latter had to labour and (in some cases) die for the former to live.

Both religious faiths condone slavery as a “minor evil”, and enjoined the slaves to be loyal to their masters. The Arab and Europe - induced slave trade was most inhumane. The slaves that survived the ordeals of the long-distances were very badly fed, herded in barracks, worked in gangs highly regimented with mercenary violence that was virtually inhumane. It was a period of demographic atrophy, unmitigated horror and infamy.

### **Migrations in Pre-colonial West African Societies**

Migration in pre-colonial West African was rampant largely because land was abundant relative to population density and the economy essentially devoted to agriculture. Other factors such as intra and inter communal disagreements and wars, the love of adventure and human needs prompted the major migrations as could be gleaned from traditions of most ethnic groups in West Africa.

In the pre-colonial era, migrations took the following forms:

- a. Regional
- b. Occupational and seasonal
- c. Rural-rural
- d. Rural-urban and
- e. Urban-rural - which was rather rare.

The peoples who migrated had behind their minds several motives some of these include:

- a. Economic “cost” and benefits to groups as well as individuals
- b. Availability or otherwise of the factors of production, especially when we consider geographical disequilibrium in the distribution of the natural resources.
- c. Agricultural potentials of each locality.
- d. Lack of control over natural forces, water-flow for irrigation, fishing, water-ways etc., draught and other weather vagaries.
- e. Rational choice of the migrants
- f. Level of attachment to the primordial base. This had impulsive and sentimental connotations.
- g. Society not yet organised in structured manner, especially before empire formation and administration.
- h. The slave trade scourge
- i. Group adventurous temperament
- j. The dynamism of the rural community and the rights of its members to own and or cultivate the soil.

Going by this long but by no means exhaustive reason, West African economic historians need therefore to take the often repeated hunter-founder versions with extreme care if not skepticism.

### **Implications:**

These early migrations undoubtedly produced far-reaching socio-political and economic consequences on the history of the migrants. For example, the following points could be mentioned among others:

- a. Reduction in growth rate
- b. Cultural diffusion

c. Increase in unequal development

d. Structural societal transformation

From the fore-going, we can deduce that as emigration impoverished one region (especially the area bordering the Sahara desert) so also did it enrich the other (most especially the forest region before the pool introduced by the arrival of the European (traders). In many instances, emigration presented societal economic structures from undergoing radical progressive changes.

The primary concern of the people was group/self-defence and survival in the face of recurrent inter-group feuds/skirmishes/battles/wars. However it was not every time that migration resulted from hostilities. In the “atomistic” stateless West African societies, culture demanded unending factionalisation even though the attachment to the ancestral source was jealously guarded.

### **Major Trends in Nineteenth Century Development**

The Portuguese explorers were the first set of Europeans to visit the coast of what later became known as the Bights of Benin and Biafra. The first group of Portuguese that settled down was led by

Fernando Po and Pero de Centra. This was in 1473 followed by Jan Affonso d'Aveiro's group in 1485. This group went as far as Benin.

In 1553 came the English explorers, led by Captain Windham. This group also went and visited the Oba of Benin. Topmost in the priority list of these Europeans was the Search for gold and spices. Later, the trade in human traffic (slaves) which did in calculable harm to West Africa's working population started first by the Portuguese and later the French and the British. The slave trade became stimulated by the discovery of the Americas and the exploitation of their material potentials. The trade boomed till about the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Britain needed few but self-trained man-power to work in industries.

The journey of John and Richard Lander along the Niger down to the mouth (deltas) in 1830 went a long way in promoting trade with the interior as there were no good road network in West Africa by then. The Liverpool merchants soon took advantage of the new development when in 1841, they indicated their willingness to purchase material resources instead of slaves. In the forefront of these merchants was Macgregor Laird, a Liverpool merchant.

In 1849, the British appointed John Beecroft (a Portuguese) Governor of Fernando Po and also Agent for the Bights of Benin and Biafra. He was charged with the responsibility of regulating the legal trade between the Ports of Benin, Brass, New Calabar and Old Calabar, Bonny, Bimbia and as far as the Coast of the Cameroon.

In discussing the activities of the invaders, we should not lose sight of those of the “natives” with the advent of the Europeans as from the second half of the fifteenth century, major migrations did take place most especially among the Izon, the Itsekiri, the Efik, the Ibibio to mention a few.

The migrations were mostly in response to the growing transatlantic trade. The inhabitants of the coastal region had adapted themselves to the dictates of the environment by taking to fishing, canoe-building, pot-making and salt-making. The small villages were growing into city-states.

The Niger-delta peoples progressively developed into middle-men, whose economic fortunes depended on the amount of trade link they could establish with their neighbours to the interior.

As a result, major trading centres emerged. Prominent among these are: Opobo, (founded 1870), Bonny, Old Calabar, Aboh Akassa, New Calabar, Creek-Town, Twon and so on. Bonny handled over half of total oil trade in the Niger delta. People from Akwete Azumiri, Esene, Imon, Ngwa, Obunku Ohambele Urata and Ndele patronized the famous Bonny market on regular basis. Each city-state evolved a workable system that catered for its needs. There were war-canoes manned by war-canoe chiefs. These chiefs promoted Bonny's economic interests.

Consequently Bonny grew to be the metropole, much sought after by the interior neighbours for favours-working capital, business training and protection from attack. Market laws were made and ruthlessly enforced. One of these was the collection of taxes levied on the white merchants by the city-states “for fostering of trade in the hinterlands of their district” This was the *COMET*.

The Igbo, believed by many to be a prolific race, were by the period under consideration, already beginning to face the problem of land-hunger. In order to reduce the adverse effects, many of them took to job specialisation. The Aro became long-distance traders, the Ada and the Abam “constituted the mercenaries” The Awka specialised in black-smithing iron technology and medicine; the Nkwerre in iron technology, espionage and diplomacy etc. Proficiency resulted in a large reservoir of man-power; but faced with land-hunger and the attendant problems, the Igbo saw the slave- trade as a way of reducing the tension. This explains in part, the reason why the Igbo “supplied the greater part of the slaves shipped to the new land” during the period - as observed by Captain John Adams, Macgregor Laird, Ibaekwu Professor M.J. H

erskovits, professor Kenneth Dike and other scholars that focused attention on the economic history of West Africa.

The Igbo protected their markets in the hinterland from encroachment by the white men by means of inter-clan festivals, blood-covenants, and a sort of “passport” (a short staff) carried about by the Nri-as supplements, to the amount of security provided by the loose political organisation provided by the societies.

### **The Abolition of Slave Trade**

Slavery and slave-trade have been and are still, emotional subjects. Those that benefitted from it justified it and those who did not, condemned it. The abolitionists blamed African participants in the trade and stressed the moral issue involved. The African participants on the other hand blame the ills of the trade on the Europeans, that if the Europeans had not purchased slaves, Africans would not have sold them. “Slavery even in its mildest form had always been a social evil. Nearly all the peoples of the world had at one period or the other indulged in it. Today, while we regard the 16th to 19th centuries slave trade as a colossal crime against humanity, we also want to agree with Webster, Boahen and Idowu that “to apportion blame or praise between Europeans and Africans, or between one nation and another is to deviate from the spirit and purpose of history”.

While many historians consider the abolition of the slave-trade as a practical necessity, others tend to interpret it as a moral issue. The former base their arguments on the premise that the Industrial Revolution in Europe had rendered several hands redundant and the African slaves who were hardest hit were already constituting social problem - hence the need to check or stop totally further importation. The more extreme among this group argued that these unwanted surplus working hands must be repatriated to Africa, where manual labour was still in great need for the production of the raw tropical products needed in the European industries. The latter school of thought saw the issue from purely humanitarian and moral perspectives. They argue inter alia that the abolition was a call to duty to free the slaves and to convert the heathens. The churches and the Anti-slavery societies argued along the lines of atonement and duty - “the chains had to be struck from the Africans’ necks and they (i.e. the Africans) must be converted and civilised. Furthermore they must be traded with. This was the moral situation.

Apologists of this humanitarian obligation derived their outlook and imagination and conviction about Africans almost entirely from the “horrible tales of the “Middle Passage, fables about noble passages degraded by muskets and gin; in fact races, awaiting the Gospels dawn. As Reonald Robinson, John Gallagher, Alice Denny and a host of other writers have vehemently argued, these humanitarians, “ignorant of the realities and intoxicated with the exuberance of



their own generosity, ... considered tropical African issues as problems of ethical behaviour". They carried on their campaign in Government quarters in Downing Street undaunted, even after Wilberforce and the Somerset case fires had sunk low. Christianity civilization and Commerce were to them three inseparable and desirable necessities. But the British Government placed more emphasis on the gains of trade rather than the liabilities of rule. The British Parliament considered deep involvement in the abolition exercise with great reluctance. But again, the Victorians "considered themselves as the leaders of civilization, as pioneers of industry and progress". The British businessmen who were already gathering the harvest of commerce would stop at nothing to get British Parliament interested in the immense profits that awaited their nation once they could penetrate the tropics. The powers of industry and the expansive interest it engendered became increasingly irresistible. The capacity to increase. Britain's wealth and prosperity were also ever present in the minds of the British policy-makers. All these informed the spirit of Victorian expansion. Private commercial interest, national self- righteousness and prestige became complementary not conflicting. While Richard Codben (1804-65) the British manufacturer, economist, merchant and politician and his party members objected to British territorial expansion in this part of the world on the grounds that such exercise of power was inevitably going to interfere with the growth of trade. Henry Palmerston, the British Prime- Minister (1855 - 58 and again 1859 - 65) and his party insisted that the two worked together, and that the expanding economy needed the protection of power. Both Codben, Palmerston and Benjamin Disraeli all looked forward to "... what may be most for the norm and advantage of England and to what offers the fairest prospects of extending her commercial relations and the sphere of her influence". In the words of Disraeli in 1863 "There may be grave questions as to the best mode of obtaining wealth ... but there can be no question ... that the best mode of preserving wealth is power-N.F. Money Penny and G.E. Buckle. Life of Benjamin Disraeli (1910 - 20) p; 335.

Our position here is that irrespective of the party that ruled England and whatever proclamations they might have made, what mattered to them was the British citizens' interests. They deliberately manipulated trade and hegemony to extend Britain's influence. The Abolition issue therefore was dictated more by Britain's commercial and political interests rather than the so-called humanitarian consideration for the African "savages" When it paid Britain to purchase African slaves, they did and when it was no longer profitable so to do, they stopped it under the guise of edging barbarity out of existence after centuries of indulgence! Although Britain took the honour and glory for the abolition, it was Denmark who started the crusade in 1802 when she abolished the slave trade in her possessions. Some five years later, Britain too followed suit after some protracted Parliamentary debates and two celebrated court cases that deserve mentioning here. The Mansfield and the Somerset cases.

The Mansfield case was triggered off in September 1781 by Captain Luke Collingwood who sailed the Zong off the West African coast with a cargo of 440 African slaves, and a crew of seventeen for Jamaica. Halfway across the middle passage, sixty of the slaves and seven members of the crew died of over-crowding and dysentery. Worse still, the ship began to leak badly. Collingwood, fearing that the sickly slaves might not be bought quickly and profitably, selected fifty-four sick and weak slaves and ordered them thrown overboard. A few days later, fifty-two slaves were murdered, a third time, twenty six slaves were handcuffed together and pushed into the sea; while ten more who chose to die, preferred to leap to their deaths. Captain Luke took the two hundred and forty-eight remaining to Jamaica for sale. Thereafter, he left for England where Collingwood and the ship's owners sued for thirty pounds sterling for each of the slaves he had jettisoned as provided for by the Admiralty rules that a ship was entitled to compensation from its Insurance company if "cargo" had to be jettisoned to save the ship or the crew. The Insurance Company refused to pay the claims as ruled by the lower court which upheld that Collingwood was right in regarding the slaves as cargo and appealed the case to the Court of

Exchequer. There, the judge, Mansfield although admitted that the law was clearly on the side of the slave traders, upheld a “higher law” on humanitarian grounds.

The Somerset case was another major development that shamed the slavers. James Somerset, w as a slave bought and taken to England by Charles Stewart, a Virginia planter. By the time Somerset arrived England, the plight of slaves had improved somewhat. James Somerset, taken by the new idea of freedom, ran away from Stewart, he was caught and sent back to Jamaica to be resold. Granville Sharp, a kind-hearted abolitionist heard of the case and secured a *writ of habeas corpus* that prevented the repatriation. Sharp’s legal action was based on the Preformed Law which stated that any slave who stepped on English soil automatically became free. The case was heard and Somerset was set free. Other captured Africans too benefited from this celebrated case.

In 1807, the British Government abolished slave trade and slavery in England, but other European countries persisted. In order to tackle the crime from source, Britain established the British West African Squadron to police the West-African coast. The above is just an outline of the internal struggle that earned the slaves freedom in England and led to the abolition of the slave trade in the colonies and the law abolishing slavery in all British colonies in 1834. These two cases are highlighted to throw a little more light on the developments about the trade beyond the shores of West Africa, but which also affected British policy in West Africa. Now, let us take a brief look at the abolitic of the slave-trade in the Northern protectorate of West Africa.

The first major policy taken by the British colonialists in abolishing the slave-trade and slavery in Northern West Africa was in 1901, when F. Lugard abolished the status of slavery through a proclamation, followed by another proclamation in 1904 that made slave-trading a punishable offence. According to official sources, the aim was “to achieve emancipation without dislocation” or compensation. All children born after 1904 would be free. In his judgement, Lugard said that sudden emancipation would dislocate the whole social fabric, as many liberated men would be thrown into the streets to fend for themselves; and the slave-owners would be ruined and economy held to a standstill. But it was a permissive freedom. It was not vigorously enforced. Some of the emancipated slaves were encouraged to enrol in the West Africa Police Force or in the Army, or in the Public Works Department. British administrators too were encouraged to provide employment for the ex-slaves.

In the Niger-Delta region, the merchants, realising how important the “House-Rule” system, was to trade and business, actively encouraged slavery. On several occasions, they helped slave-owners to recapture slaves who escaped from their owners, despite the hues and cries over the practice of slavery. In 1916 came the slavery ordinance that did not matter more than the paper on which it was written. Slavery still continued under various guises as both parties recognised the economic advantages they were deriving from slave-labour in a situation where by the transport system still

remained largely undeveloped. What was more, there was the racial sentiment, the whites just simply considered Africans as sub-human beings - their Christian faith notwithstanding.

So strong and deep-rooted was this racial feeling among the colonizers that we find it imperative to treat our readers to some of the images that ran wild in their minds. For instance, Sir Richard Burton, a British Knight delighted in making the following censorious remarks: His (i.e. the West-African’s) main idea of life is to do nothing for six days in the week, and to rest on the seventh. To do no work that can possibly be avoided, never to do today what can possibly be put off till tomorrow, and to do as their great grandfathers did and because they did it,

See J.C. Willis, *Agriculture in the Tropics* p.12 for details. On the question of the inferiority of the African, Mark Twain remarked in that dialogue in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Firm* “Anybody hurt?”

“No, killed a nigger”. According to Mcphee, “Administrators and merchants alike endorsed this opinion of West African’s natural and incurable laziness, hence work ethics must be enforced on them and redeem them from their bedevilling sin-laziness. This type of thought pervaded the minds of many a European as discussed under the thirteenth topic.

It is from this view-point alone that we can understand much about the colonial policies even after the abolition of the slave- trade. Even the colonial Education given, had economic considerations - Educated natives are much better consumers than raw savages”. It was the industrial capitalists’ belief also that education would make the African better producers of raw materials through the infusion of increased initiative and enterprise; hence the establishment of Agricultural stations that would diffuse information about the best ways of planting, tending, harvesting and storing crops, about the finest seeds and species, about the most effective way of fighting insects and other crop diseases and so on. The aims of the early Christian Missionaries, however, were at first purely moral and spiritual, not material. Colonial expansion into the interior led to the need for skilled man-power (administrative and technical). With the rise of the Atlantic slave trade, many West Africans lost their historical initiative, their economic autonomy - long before outright conquest and colonization. They became cut off from their pre-slaving predecessors. Their main economic pre-occupation became how to supply slave labour for European economic development. The ruin-spreading-trade destroyed a lot of West Africans’ cultural legacies. As the arteries of cultural transmission got broken or blocked, societies became pulverised.

Traditions were lost, so also vital cultural legacies. For centuries, while the slave-trade raged, farming and handicraft techniques either stagnated or in some cases, declined. West African polities became plagued with stagnation and decay. They were bereft of vitality to generate new thoughts and culture-enhancing actions. In this way, many West African polities and societies drifted into economic and technological inferiority, having been out-stripped in power and prosperity in the 19th century by their European trading partners who according to Chinweizu, “had profited immensely from the very disasters that had crippled Mica”. The commercial and industrial lives of West African communities had suffered atrophy or decline, went into stupor or in some cases, vanished

altogether. Needless to say that standard of living, quality of civilization had virtually sunk to unenviable levels.

The holocaust was hardly over when the British conquerors made the second invasion on West Africa. Britain imposed a colonial rule that resulted in the second round of enslavement, this time around mental enslavement, economic satelization that subordinated West Africa. British colonial rule robbed West Africa of not just political sovereignty; it also involved loss of control over quantity, quality speed and direction of their economy. The little that was left over by the Atlantic slave trade were further undermined. West African pre-industrial agro-economy became further subordinated to British industrial needs mainly unresponsive to West Africans’ needs. Foreign trade dislocated (detrimentally) domestic trade. The latter was no longer domestic-motivated; so also transport and consumption. Profits accruing from West Africans’ labours were being repatriated to England. More and more West African products too had to be exported if only to earn the required foreign-exchanges with which to pay - as we shall later discuss.

### **The Era of Legitimate Commerce**

During the slave trade era, the European merchants made substantial capital investments in form of slaving ships, shore establishment and maintenance, goods were distributed on “trust”, stores and yards called barracoons, were built so also residential buildings along the trading ports and so on. They did not wish to abandon all these for nothing, when suddenly in 1807, Britain denounced and renounced the slave trade as being savage; ungodly and inhuman. The Dutch, the Portuguese, the French and other European slavers continued the business. Most astonishing was the insistence by the West African beneficiaries from the obnoxious trade on

the continuance; or at worst, to continue to meet the demands of both the abolitionists now demanding palm-produce, timber, ivory and goods (other than human beings) and the slavers. This was vividly expressed by Obi Ossai, King of Aboh in 1841 before members of the 1841 Niger Expedition. He said:

Hitherto, we thought it was God's wish that black people should be slaves to the White people. White people first told us we should sell slaves to them, and we sold them; and White people are now telling us not to sell slaves. If white people give up buying Black people will give up selling.

In like manner the Emir of Kotangora, Namagwatse, Gwamachi (meaning destroyer) bared his mind on the issue of slave-trade in the remark often quoted: Can you stop a cat from mousing? When I die, it will be with a slave in my mouth".

West African slave-traders, caught in the medley of economic crosscurrents became bewildered and suspicious. They showed more concern for the business of finding a means of livelihood than for moral judgment. In 1841, when the British abolitionists insisted on King People and his chiefs signing a treaty, abolishing the trade in their domain, they pleaded that a clause permitting them to resume the trade in future should the opportunity come again be inserted.

The British refused to grant the request; and it was for this reason, mainly, that the Anglo-Bonny relations simmered for several years after.

By the 1820's, while some European countries were still carrying on with the slave trade, some Liverpool (British) trading companies had changed over to the legitimate commerce. Topmost among them being J.O. Bold and James Penny; Tobin and Charles Horsefell, Robert Jamieson, and the African Steamship Company.

The massive expansion of the textile industry in Lancashire again enhanced the price of slaves in the new world in the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s. In order to prevent the spill-over effect to the source of slave supply, the British abolitionists had as from the 1820s mounted Preventive Squadron ships to check the activities of the slavers. This made slave trade rather risky and unprofitable. But Bonny continued the slave trade secretly till the 1850s - with the active support of the Spaniards and the French slave-traders and pirates not minding the anti-slave trade station established in Fernando Po. As early as 1827, the effectiveness of the abolitionists was constrained by the fact that the slavers greatly outnumbered the British naval squadrons.

The few that were caught were taken to Freetown, Sierra-Leone for trial at the Court of Mixed Commission. Between 1810 when the West African Squadron was inaugurated and 1832 when her war-ships were increased from four to six, the squadron was unable to cope effectively with the long stretch of coast land between Fernando Po and Sierra-Leone.

Between 1832 and 1841, Britain sustained heavy losses, in men (39 out of 48) in the 1832 expedition and 53 out of 303 during the 1841 expedition) and money. Consequently, many Britons lost "enthusiasm for the hinterland trade" But Macgregor Laird undeterred by the former happenings and the murder of Lander in 1832 by the coastal middlemen at Angiama as an expression of opposition to British penetration to the hinterland for trading, persisted till his death in 1861. Laird strove to establish trade partnership with hinterland West Africans and to eliminate the Niger-delta middle men in the process.

Meanwhile, the abolitionists were not agreed on the best approach to the abolition,. While some advocated the use of force; others canvassed for the use of persuasion and the "signing of the treaty approach. The Niger-delta city-states whose means of livelihood depended largely on the slave trade rejected the abolition.

Faced by the demands of the large trading companies and the abolitionists and armed with the West African squadron, the British Government embarked on forcing her desire on her trading partners in this part of the world. Thus started a new dimension in Anglo-West African relations. The era of the gun-boat diplomacy that paved the way for the eventual British conquest and colonization of West Africa. Let us take a brief look at this.

### **The Era of Trade Wars**

Britain's demands upon the resources of the tropical markets increased tremendously as a result of the intensification of increased capitalism. With the abolition of the slave trade, Britain switched over to seizure of mineral and agricultural resources for her factories. In order to maximise her profits, she reorganised West Africa's agricultural production, mines and markets. West African middlemen were frustrated out of the trading system through intrigue and brute force.

The trade wars took various forms in various places in West Africa. In 1810 for example, the British set out with four ships to patrol the over five thousand kilometer stretch West African coast to enforce the 1807 abolition law. By 1836/37 the British merchants were no longer at ease with the West African traditional rulers who were struggling to retain their polities' territorial integrity. They meddled into the internal affairs by removing all those who refused to take to their dictates. The list of victims is long and cannot be exhausted in a short discussion of this nature. But let us take a few examples as case studies.

### **Bonny**

The death of Opubu, King of Bonny in 1830 provided the British supercargoes and other officials with the much sought opportunity for meddling into the internal affairs of Bonny. Opubu's crown Iwince, William Dappa People, was by then just twenty-eight years old, and effective powers slipped into the hands of an Igbo ex-salve, Chief Maduka, popularly known Ma du, who became the regent. Madu schemed to perpetuate Bonny Kingship in his own hue. He made his son Mali, the next ruler to the neglect and annoyance of the crown prince, William Dappa. This violated Bonny's tradition that only free-born could aspire to the throne. William, of course, refused to recognise Mali, so also other Bonny chiefs loyal to William's cause. In order to earn credibility and recognition, Alali assumed a new name ANNA PEPPLER. But this did not rub out the tradition, neither did it give Alali the desired legitimacy. Worse still, Alali was rather undiplomatic. He imprisoned Lieutenant Tyron and other British delegates who came to transact official business with him in 1836. He thus drew the wrath of the British in addition to his domestic succession problem. Thereafter, the British sided with William Dappa. But Mali had grown wealthy and controlled quite a large number of trading houses in Bonny. He therefore continued to pose real threat to William Dappa, notwithstanding Dappa's ascension to the throne in 1835- the year of the Anglo-Spanish treaty that empowered the British to seize slaving ships in West Africa. Without prior information, the British enforced the Treaty's provision in Bonny and Alali had the British officials involved imprisoned. The West African Naval squadron, established since 1810, reacted swiftly by effecting the release of the British Officials. Another treaty with more coercive clauses was "signed" with William Dappa. Regent Alali was deposed on the grounds that he was "collaborating with the slaving nations of Europe and America".

Like Akitoye in Lagos, Dappa People in Bonny too was just prepared to play second fiddle, if only to wrest real political and economic powers from the regent Alali (also known as ANNA PEPPLER). Like Kosoko, Opubu too, stood for Bonny's independence and free-trade with all nations. And that was the real issue at stake. The British officers were bent on taking over complete control of Bonny. They therefore signed another treaty with Dappa People in 1837 and another in 1838. By these treaties the giving of trusts in any form was abolished and direct trade instituted. It was the flourishing trade in Bonny that actually attracted the British into meddling into the internal politics of the town.

Dappa People's attempt to regain Bonny's independence and sovereignty (lost through the signing of the 1838 and 1848 treaties) was stoutly resisted by Consul Beecroft. Matters also played into the hands of his rival - Alali (Anna People). Dappa People failed to realise how determined the British were in taking over control of the whole area, he alienated not only Alali and his (Alali's) loyalists, but also the emancipated class.

Between 1836 and 1848, Alali had waxed strong, he had absorbed several smaller trading

houses despite Dappa's legislation against it. In May 1852, Dappa was struck by paralysis, he appointed two of his favourites Yanibo and Ishacco "to administer the Government (of Bonny) in his name as Regents" Alali refused to recognise the authorities of the regents. In November 1853, Dappa People recovered from his illness and tried to resume full control of matters in Bonny. In 1854, he was

deposed as he tried to exert his powers as an independent sovereign reducing the powers of the ex-slaves in trade and politics and prohibiting the continued amalgamation of Houses. It was his desire to enforce regnal monopoly rights to "trusts" on trade with the interior that really earned him the hatred of both the supercargoes and West African competitors.

It was Dappa People's impolitic *coup de main* of November 1853 that finally fetched him his throne. Dappa undiplomatically moved to blockade New Calabar even when he was not enjoying the support of his arch-rivals - Alali, the discontented Bonny chiefs and of course, the British super-cargoes and Consul. After a farcical trial at the Court of Equity presided over by Consul Beecroft, Dappa People was convicted, deposed and exiled first to Fernando Po and later the Ascension Island; and finally to London. A puppet - Prince Dappo was installed, similar to happenings in Lagos when Dosumu was made king.

The reasons for Dappa Peoples downfall were many. According to his own version, the people traced the origins of his disagreement with his chiefs to his alliance with Britain in 1837. By this alliance, the chiefs lost considerable advantages through the suppression of the slave trade. They expressed their dissatisfaction at his abolishing half come (customs duties) in favour of British traders, and granting them customers' rights. In another account, Dappa People attributed his deposition to Consul John Beecroft and not Bonny Chiefs, who according to the existing custom reserved no such rights.

The central issues as we had earlier pointed out had to do with the clash of interest/authorities. By 1863 when William Dappa People returned from exile in England (seven years) the volume of trade in Bonny had been estimated at about half a million pound sterling per annum. William Dappa People's fortunes had suffered serious setback. As Dike and other authorities on West Africa's history have correctly observed, the capture of Lagos in 1851 and the exile of King People in 1854 marked the end of the British policy of *laissezfaire* in modern West Africa. To protect legitimate trade and eliminate the slave trade, political penetration and dominance became *sine quanon*. All treaties signed from thence forward had coercive political clauses firmly entrenched to protect the growing British interests.

Meanwhile, within a year of King Dappo's accession to office, ex-regent Mali had assumed great powers in Bonny. All that the British hoped to gain by the deposition of William People was lost. In August 1855, King Dappo died. Alali accused Ishacco and Yanibo of assassinating him. Alali enjoyed the backing of the ex-slave class in Bonny as against Yanibo's and Ishaaco's freeborn citizens. Alali placed embargo on trade in the area. Civil war broke out. Many of the ex-king's people perished in the three - day war that followed. Yanibo and Ishacco escaped to Fernando Po. The People monarchy perished. The significance of the happenings in Bonny will be missed unless viewed as part of a larger pattern. Now, let us examine the activities of the British industrial capitalists in other parts of West Africa.

Similar Treaties were "signed" and ratified in other towns and city-states. In Old Calabar, a treaty was signed in 1841 signed by Eyamba for Duke Town and Eyo for Creek Town. In the case of Bonny, the British colonizers and merchants kept bad faith as they failed to honour the treaty terms, most especially the 10,000 dollar subsidy promised People. This breach led to occasional unrest which culminated in the appointment of Captain John Beecroft, consul in Fernando. Po in 1849, He was to take charge of the Bights of Benin and Biafra as far as Dahomey.

Within two years of his appointment, Beecroft ordered the bombardment of Lagos. In other areas, the cruising system was dropped in favour of blockade

of slaving ships. Soon trade in palm produce boomed and replaced slave trade as the economic mainstay of the city-states. Other commodities that were sought after include ivory, camwood and timber. These exchanged for beads, flints, hard ware, hats, worsted caps, knives cutlasses, cotton goods spirits and other industrial products. The trust system persisted. Recipients were expected to “trade them for interior produce and pay back their European customers the equivalent in oil, ivory, timber etc. This was a devise by the Liverpool merchants to bind their African trading partners to themselves. Huge sums were usually involved. The practice continued down to the 1870’s and generated a lot of rivalry among the recipients-responsible chiefs, principled enterprising individuals, merchant-princes and established House-heads. Currencies used varied from place to place, the copper bar at Old Calabar; the crew and the doubloon in Bimbia (Cameroon) Cowrie shells and manillas were used in direct trading activities. The possession of guns by the coastal people enabled them to retain their middle-man role for a considerable length of time. The cut-throat competition among the recipients of the trusts led to “double-trust” and “oil-chopping” i.e. West African merchants receiving trusts from two or more British merchants and the attendant indiscriminate seizure of oil by the creditors. The British super- cargoes made great profits from West Africans’ ignorance of the real worth of the goods in England.

The founding of the African Steamship Company in England in 1852 enabled many enterprising W

est African merchants to break the export monopoly rights hitherto enjoyed by the British merchants. Macgregor Laird deliberately encouraged African participation in the export trade by refusing the plea of the Liverpool supercargoes to the contrary and by encouraging the home-coming of the ex-slaves. Old Calabar welcomed them, but Bonny showed cold shoulders. The old traders in Old Calabar did not like the new development as the “returnees” gave them real competitive battle They (the old traders) appealed to Laird’s successor-Consul Lynslager - who sided with them. This led to the bombardment of Old Calabar in 1855, under the pretext that the inhabitants persistently indulged in human sacrifice.

The supercargoes also seized the “returnees” oil, and fueled civil crisis between Eyo Honesty of Old Calabar and Duke Ephraim of Duke Town. It was the intervention of the British Government Foreign Officer, Lord Clarendon that really suppressed further harassment and deprivation of the “returnees”. Notwithstanding, the monopolists in 1857 tried to retain their monopoly right by disallowing King Eyo Honesty from exporting the palm-oil for which he had chartered the brig Olinda. Again, it was the timely intervention of Lord Clarendon that saved the situation from degenerating further. As a result of the Olinda episode, the Consul’s power became expanded to cover “magisterial matters”.

In New Calabar, King Amakiri refused the trust system and enforced, same on his subjects too. Here the issue of the Court of Equity seeking to assist in retrieving the debts owed to the British capitalists (in Bonny and other places operating the Trust system) did not arise. King Amakiri continued to enjoy a relatively free hand, while his neighbour - People of Bonny was closely monitored by consul Beecroft. Eventually, in 1854, Counsul Beecroft, acting on the promptings of the supercargoes, had King People deposed essentially because of conflicting commercial interests (with the British merchants) and the exercise of political power and authority detested by Beecroft.

King People was deposed and exiled first to Fernando Po, and later to far away Ascension in the heart of the Atlantic and finally to London. When in 1863 king People was allowed to return to Bonny, he was already a broken and impoverished old man. Evidence available show that King People, like Kosoko in Lagos, was not a slave trading king as at the time of his removal. What happened really was that while the supercargo saw in him a veritable threat to their commercial interests, Consul Beecroft regarded him as an obstacle to the realisation of British colonial interests in this part of the world. The two episodes point to the end of the British policy of laissez faire in what later became known as We

st Africa and the beginning of militant coercive colonial policy, under the guise of philanthropy - elimination of the slave trade and the restoration of legitimate commerce.

Meanwhile, the Niger-Delta city-states had by the 1860s indulged themselves in mutual hostilities, crippling politics and intrigues. Brass and Okrika against New Calabar; New Calabar against Bonny and so on. Within Bonny, the deadly competition between the two rival People "houses" - Dappa William (free born) and Anna (ex-slave), started by Alali the regent discussed earlier on, lingered. It led to the civil war of 1855 which though pacified with the deposition and exile of Dappa William, resurfaced again in 1863 when Jaja was elected head of the Anna People house. Oko Jumbo head of the Dappa People faction challenged Jaja's right. On 13 September 1869, another civil war broke out in Bonny. Oko Jumbo's forces set Jaja's arsenal ablaze Jaja sued for peace. He (after a nine month war) and his loyalists cleverly left Bonny and established a new settlement at a more strategic commercial centre in Andoni land. The economies of both Bonny and Jaja's new town, Opoho, suffered serious reverses.

The British supercargoes became divided into two camps, one favouring Jaja and the other took side with Bonny. The supercargoes supplied the indigenes with war weapons which helped to prolong the war. When hostilities finally ceased, Jaja effectively took over control of trade in the Niger Delta region. He blocked trade with Bonny and suffered a dramatic decline. Even with the establishment of the courts of Equity, not much was achieved in the field of law and order.

The trade link between West Africans in the coastal and forest regions over the years, no doubt, produced noticeable impact on the natives. Among the Igbo and the Efik, for example kinship relationship referred to as Umunna and ekpu (extended family) - respectively gave way to the "house" system. Under the new dispensation, relationship became based "not on kinship any longer, but on common interests and economic necessities as Kenneth Dike has earlier noted. These houses were referred to as ulo and ufok respectively. The house-head was autocratic, not democratic. Administration was semi-military, the house-head exercised all forms of brutality over the slaves, including the power of life and death.

But this is not to say that the system was all darkness and no light. Every enterprising individual enjoyed upward social mobility. Good or outstanding examples being King Jaja of Opobo and Oko Jumbo, the merging house-heads soon displaced the age- long respected gerontocratic culture among the coastal peoples such as the Isoko, the Izon, the Kalabari, the Itsekiri and so on.

The house-heads ensured that law and order prevailed. They also upheld discipline (which was sometimes severe and brutal). All the members of the various houses were expected to demonstrate unflinching loyalty to the "house" and confidence in the House-head. The "house" system was full of vitality and flexibility. It also guaranteed every worker's interest. The "house system" became the unit of government. Each "house" occupied identifiable quarter in the Niger-delta communities. The house-head enjoyed some measure of autonomy even, though the king (which where-ever it existed) regulated inter (and sometimes intra) house relationships. He also directed foreign affairs policies, declared war, "signed" peace pacts, initiated commercial policies and saw to the over-all direction of affairs. "Houses" with liberal enterprising heads grew often-times at the expense of the ones with harsh inhumane or less enterprising heads. The resultant effect was that there were changes in the numerical and financial strength of the "houses". While some declined, others grew and expanded. Consequently, there were big (Opu) and small (kala) "houses" (warre) existing side by side.

The coming of the British traders (and later the colonizers) produced far reaching consequences in the region. The intruders, apart from establishing trade relations with the indigenes, also influenced political trends. Britain acting through her officers, tolerated and strengthened the city-states whose rulers collaborated in promoting and expanding the legitimate commerce. Among these were Lagos, Old Calabar, Opobo and so on. Thus traditional rulers that were



considered headstrong, obstinate and uncompromising, were either dethroned, exiled or killed as was the case with William Dappa People, Kosoko, Koko Nana, Ovonramwen and so on. The trade war was not restricted to the coastal towns only. The reports of the British Missionaries and traders showed the abundance of natural resources in the interior, hence the march to the interior by Macgregor Laird, George Taubman Goldie and a host of other merchant capitalists that ravaged Brass, Akassa, Aboh, Asaba, Onitsha, Idah, Patani, Opobo, Benin, the whole of Yorubaland and beyond.

In the half century following 1830, Britain established and maintained a commercial empire over the Niger Delta states, through the medium of the African Squadron; and from 1849 through the extortions of her consuls aided by the warships. Between 1832 and 1878, several small firms, individual merchants and four big British companies - The West African Company (Manchester); Messrs. Alexander Miller Brothers & Co. (Glasgow); the Central African Trading Company (London); and James Pinnock & Co. (Liverpool) were already pushing their ways into the hinterland. They established trading posts at Akassa, Aboh, Ndo, Odoger, Osamari, Onitsha, Yimaha, Lokoja, Egga and many other posts on the Niger and Benue rivers. Thus, Macgregor Laird's dream of opening up the West African hinterland to British commerce had become fulfilled. As the merchants became irresistibly drawn into the interior trade, it started to dawn on them that they needed protection from the "hostile natives". The British government on her part, recognised that to attain (commercial) success, trade and political frontiers must march hand in hand. Armed gun-boats paraded the Niger water-ways just as "factories" were established. English trading steamers went beyond the Niger Delta middle men and intercepted produce from the interior. This they referred to as "Capping". This was fundamental to the disagreement between the British merchants and King Jaja on the one hand and King Archibong of old Calabar on the other over the Qua Ibo territory.

By 1854 when Consul Beecroft died, the efforts of Macgregor Laird and Surgeon Commander Dr. William Balfour Baikie at establishing a commercial empire in the hinterland had started yielding fruitful results. In 1854 Baikie founded the first British Government post at Lokoja and established trading relations with King Masaba of Bida. Later Lokoja became the head-quarters of the British

interior Consulate and of the trading companies. It was abandoned in 1869 as a result of West Africa's resistance to Britain's violation of their sovereignty and extortionate ploys.

Between 1871 and 1879, Britain sent military expeditions up the Niger basin on regular basis to check the natives. During those years, "war and trade alternated with the seasons" as Dike has shown. In 1879 for example Consul Easton bombarded Onitsha. That same year, Yamaha, another important inland trading station on the Benue was bombarded. Idah and Aboh too were not spared. Several inhabitants were killed and properties destroyed.

### **The Trading Companies and British Conquest of Northern West Africa**

British conquest of West Africa was dictated largely by the interests of the capitalists who owned the trading companies and the realisation that the advantages to be derived from a great increase in trade would indefinitely counterbalance the little expenditure necessary for protecting that trade in its infancy. With this thinking behind the minds of the British policy-makers and with Consul Beecroft a foremost pre-colonialist, and later Macgregor Laird an apostle of inland trade, it did not take long to convince British Government of the need for her Majesty's Government to protect the interests and persons of British citizens on the Niger. Palmerston too, the British Prime Minister (1855) - 1858 and 1859-65) was more or less an advocate of the use of armed ships in dealing with those who obstructed the road to the treasures of the interior.

But the British colonial officers here in West Africa realised that trade enforced by Cannon balls on the ill-disposed people would be rendered insecure by West Africa's violent reaction. The issue on ground called for a demonstration of astute diplomacy. The home Government

was faced with how to meet the need for commercial expansion by the private concerns without committing public funds to aiding private commercial undertakings. This had political implications both at home (in England) and here in West Africa. But Parliament realised that trade could not flourish without security, providing security implied political subjugation of West African polities or communities. But how could this feat be achieved without incurring the wrath of the West African middle-men and the budding capitalists? In spite of the myriads of entangling problems involved, the home Government (at least in principle) approved the policy and Britain pushed the frontiers of trade inland.

By June 1860, the British Parliament legislated that protection be provided for British Trading interest on the Niger. The Foreign Office decided to put an end to the problem of opposition in the Niger Delta. Dr. Baikie established his base at Lokoja. Hostilities from West Africans forced the British to close down the station in 1869. While this was taking place here in West Africa, several eminent Britons formed joint-stock companies to exploit the resources of the Niger river. The most important among them were:

- a. The River Niger Navigation and Trading Company
- b. Company of African Merchants
- c. The Anglo-Africa Company
- d. The African Merchants of Bristol
- e. The Merchants of London and Liverpool trading to the West Coast of Africa
- f. The West-African Company

All the companies requested for subsidy from the home Government.

The Liverpool and the Bristol merchants already controlling the coastal trade in West Africa tried to dissuade the British Government from granting their (new companies) pleas.

The companies were bent on getting rid of the African middlemen. The British Government was intent on using the merchants in achieving her imperial ambition in the Niger river territory.

The emergence of numerous Trading companies interested in exploiting the resources of the Niger marked a contradiction to the recommendation of the 1865 Parliamentary Select Committee that had prescribed drastic reduction in Government financial commitments, gradual withdrawal or retraction from West Africa.

British commercial and political interests in the Niger areas increased with the years. Britain simply adopted the cheap policy of advance by commercial enterprise. Between 1830 and 1878, four British trading companies, were operating along the Niger river and valley namely: The West African Company (Manchester) Alexander Miller Brothers & Co. (Glasgow) The Central African Trading Company (London) James Pinnock & Co. (Liverpool).

The above list, according to sources, does not include the numerous small firms and individual merchants. They established trading posts at Akassa, Aboh, Ndoni, Onitsha, Lokoja, Egga and other posts along the Niger-Benue river banks. The expansion into the interior called for the provision of security of the British citizens who irresistibly got entangled in the politics of their trading partners. Political security and commercial prosperity became co-extensive. And as the British officers realised the economic prospects in West Africa's hinterland, they in 1872, shifted their administrative base from Fernando Po to Lokoja.

The expansion into the interior generated heat between the coastal middle-men on the one hand, and among the British trading companies on the other. This necessitated stationing warships in the vicinity of the various trading posts and of occasional military parades along the Niger also. In 1879, Onitsha and Yamaha were bombarded by H.M.S. Pioneer to cow down the natives. The bombardments of Idah and Aboh were more savage in that "several hundreds were killed and the streets were strewn with corpses" as reported by The Times of London. By the end of the year, George Taubman Goldie had succeeded in amalgamating the various British trading companies in the interior into the United African Company. Hitherto, these companies had engaged in cut-throat competition before Goldie, who Dike describes as "masterful empire builder" and the "leading spirit" of the United African Company (U.A.C.) amalgamated the companies.

The amalgamation did not mark the end of cut-throat competition on the Niger. Goldie had the problem of the two French trading companies - Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Equitoriale (Paris) and Compagnie du Senegal et de la Cote Occidentale d'Afrique (Marseilles) to contend with. Goldie, after a long spirited effort managed to buy out the two at one million pounds sterling (£1,000.00). That achieved, Goldie then proceeded to his main goal-securing political dominion over the Niger basin for Britain.

Goldie did send several reports to the Foreign Office between 1789 and 1885 to convince the British Government about the need to colonise the healthy, but as yet unsettled region, that lie the rich resources of industrial wealth; the most dazzling prize in West Africa. He persisted in the conviction

that pacification must necessarily precede commercial development

in the interior territory being governed by several hundred sovereign states. Reason being that he envisaged that the numerous independent sovereigns were likely to hamper free flow of trade on the Niger and the Benue rivers.

While persuading the home Government of the need to pacify the region, Goldie as the Vice-Chairman of the U.A.C., went ahead signing treaties with the native sovereigns. By 1886, the U.A.C. had signed two-hundred thirty-seven such treaties with the rulers. Gunboats were mounted to parade the Niger and the Benue rivers according to the U.A.C., to monitor/ police the rivers and pacify robber chiefs... who were ever ready to plunder our factories", but ostensibly to prepare the way for the realisation of Goldie's dream.

The achievements of the "masterful empire builder"-Taubman Goldie - became so remarkable that the British crown decided to honour him with the country's Kinghood. Others describe Goldie as "the founder of West Africa". But as Dike and others have shown in their works, the making of modern West Africa was not the work of one man. People like John Beecroft. Dr. Andrew Baikie, Sir John Glover, McGregor Laird had worked assiduously towards the same goal before Goldie. What Goldie did in fact was to build on the foundation laid by his predecessors.

### **The Northward Push**

Until the arrival of the British, Northern West African was economically oriented toward the North and North-East Africa. Woven cloths and leatherworks were exported as far as the Mediterranean, Europe and Asia. To the South, the Atlantic slave trade started by the Portuguese, later joined by other Europeans, especially the French, the Spaniards, the Dutch and the British lasted some three hundred years. Ironically, the British spear-headed the abolition, and substituted it with what they called "legitimate commerce" British penetration into the interior was gradual, and in most cases, unplanned.

It started with the bombardment of Lagos in 1851 and the subsequent annexation in 1861, Lagos island without the adjoining Yorubaland proved unprofitable, the British took advantage of the atrophying internecine wars that had plagued Yorubaland for nearly a century in pacifying the war-torn and wearied Yoruba people. British influence over the Eastern Coast started with the establishment of the consulate at Fernando Po in 1849. The trading companies took advantage of the consulate to establish themselves along the Niger basin and mouth. These areas they called the Oil Rivers Protectorate. This was later to become the Niger Coast Protectorate - 1893.

Sir George Goldie played a prominent role in the British conquest and acquisition of the interior of West Africa. He was the founder of the Royal Niger Company - an amalgam of several competing trading companies. This was in 1885. He claimed to have "signed" treaties with responsible West African authorities, who in most cases were illiterate and ignorant about the purpose and content of the treaties.

Whatever happens, Goldie used these so-called treaties in securing the recognition of British influence over the Niger Basin by the scrambling European powers at the Berlin Conference. The treaties provided the excuse or basis for the aggressive British attack on the Sokoto Caliphate and

what later became known as Northern West Africa. By 1900, Britain declared the area the Protectorate of Northern West Africa.

The two Protectorates were amalgamated in 1914, when Lord Frederick Lugard was appointed the Governor-General. Thus, the political entity called West Africa came into being, covering a land area of about 914,000 square kilometers. Lugard had not completed the conquest of West Africa when in 1900 and again in 1902 and 1916 he published the Native Land Acquisition Proclamation. By this single act, the right to land in West Africa was presumed to have passed on to the British Crown.

### **The Native Land Acquisition Proclamation of 1900 And 1902**

In 1900, the British colonial Administration promulgated the Native Land Acquisition Proclamation which stipulated inter alia that:

a. The land of the Colony and Protectorate West Africa belongs to Her Royal Majesty, the Crown of England.

a. Any non-West African who wished to obtain land for any purpose, must first seek and obtain the consent of the High Commissioner.

Under Sir Perey Grouard, a more comprehensive study of the situation led to the colonial powers looking into the question of leases, revenue, taxation, development of mineral resources etc. In 1910, the Land and Native Rights Proclamation declared the lands of Northern W

est Africa to be native lands, but placed them under the Governor. This was re-enacted in 1916. In spite of the developments, Land in Lagos and some parts of Southern West Africa continued to belong to the natives in defiance of the Colonial Government regulations.

This done, the British Colonial Administrators took over as much land as they considered adequate for “development” For example, in 1904, the British Cotton Growing Association obtained 15,000 acres of land near Ibadan to establish a plantation. The occupiers of the affected land area through their chief stoutly resisted, but were coerced into submission. This act was replicated in several places in West Africa by other Foreign Organizations or bodies. By these Proclamations, the Colonial Administrators alienated West Africans from their (West Africans’) surest and richest source of wealth- LAND. As many West Africans suddenly discovered this, they responded by turning into paid labourers, seeking employment with the new “land - owners” either here in West Africa, or in the Gold Coast (later Ghana) especially with the Railway and the gold mines. Many West Africans started searching for job opportunities in the coastal regions.

### **Brief Overview Of The Situation On The Eve Of British Conquest**

For several centuries, the various peoples of the vast territory that later became known as West Africa engaged themselves in meaningful and gainful productive activities, conditioned largely by Geographical factors. The people utilized some of the abundant natural resources available to them - human as well as natural resources (including among others, the rich soil, the waters, the mineral resources, the atmospheric conditions and so on) to their individual as well as collective advantages. Land was surplus in relation to the population, in most places, it had very little scarcity value, and was consequently *extra-commercium*. Land was held in trust for the communities by the traditional rulers (wherever they were available). These traditional rulers did not directly control usufructuary rights, but ensured equitable distribution and easy access to all members of the community.

In most of the communities, communal welfarism, rather than private individual capital accumulation prevailed. State resources were garnered and re-distributed for the good of all, even though the ruling groups enjoyed larger proportions. The extended family system hampered or promoted economic pursuits under varying conditions.

With a land area covering some 913,000 square kilometers available to less than ten million working population, land remained relatively surplus. It was always available for optimum utiliza

tion, the people utilized it mainly for Agriculture and mining.

### **Mining**

Small-scale mining activities took place in several locations. The most remembered ones being

- a. tin in the Jos plateau - both alluvial and lode deposits. Local mining took the form of panning and smelting

- b. Gold, found around Ile-Ife, Ilesa and Sokoto areas

- c. Iron ore deposits found around Dalla hills (Kano), Kabba, Sokoto, Ajaokuta, Patti and Itape Hills near Lokoja; Awka, Nri, etc.

- d. Salts mined in the region North East of Tiv Northern Borno. Mburu, etc. apart from cooking, salt was also used as currency and for medi-care, for tanning and for curing horse footrot. Several other mineral deposits remained untapped- coal in Udi hills, petroleum in the Niger Delta and the Coastal regions, Columbite, tantile, Wolfram, Silver, lead Aluminium, Manganese, Mica, Phosphate, Diatomite, Kaolin, Tak, Limestone etc.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, “West Africans” indulged in various arts and crafts either to supplement Agriculture or as the major occupation (depending on the locations).

They also engaged themselves in Local trade (intra-as well as intergroup); and later foreign trade - either via the Sahara or the Atlantic.

### **Foreign Trade: (A) The Arabs**

Foreign trade in pre-colonial West Africa accounted for a very negligible proportion of annual income, and only a few people were involved. The first remembered regular foreign commercial contact with West Africa was with North Africa, across the Sahara desert. There were two major routes, the Ghadames - Air - Hausaland and the Fezzan-Kawar-Borno. There were caravans that took between two to twelve months to cross the Sahara. The inhibiting factors being the sand-storms, animal diseases, lack of drinkable water the menace of pirates, endemic civil strife and warfare, and the like.

Articles of trade included Arab dresses, European manufactured goods - silks, glass-beads, mirrors, guns/ammunition, needles etc. that exchanged for West African products, most especially gold, indigo, leather goods, kolanuts, textiles and above all, slaves.

Kano became an active trading centre, especially after the fall of Ghana and later Mali empires, and the resultant effect of merchants’ Eastward migration. Quite a reasonable number of the inhabitants

of Kano, estimated by Clapperton in 1824 at between 30,000 and 40

000 were foreign elements (traders). Several other towns in Hausaland and Borno benefitted from the trans-Saharan trade. Suffice it to mention here that only the ruling elite benefited maximally from the proceeds. As soon as the European nations discovered the alternative searoute to the far-east, the trans-Saharan trade declined giving way to the trans-Atlantic trade route.

### **Foreign Trade:**

#### **(B) The Europeans**

The Arabs, the Berbers, the Tuaregs and other North - African merchants became increasingly extortionate in their re-sale of West- African goods to the Europeans. This in a way, prompted the desire by the European merchantile capitalists to venture the Atlantic as far as the Bights of Benin and Biafra and even beyond. The Portuguese led the way. By 1485, as earlier pointed out, John Afonso d’Aveiro established trade link with Ozolua the Oba of Benin. The Portuguese are said to have introduced tobacco, rice, cassava, ground-nuts, sweet-potatoes, red pepper, guava, sugar-cane, oranges and limes in exchange for local products, especially gold, ivory, grains and SLAVES. They also popularised the manilla and the cowry shells - currencies already introduced by the Arabs. The

Portuguese monopolised the trade with West Africa till 1553 when Captain Windham, broke the monopoly. James Welsh made a follow up, leading British adventurers to Benin on two occasions. The British made strenuous attempts at “opening up” the Niger water ways. This was

completed in 1830 by the Lander brothers. Other Britons followed - Dr. Barth, Baikie; McGregor Laird who went as far inland as Lokoja, founded the African Shipping Company in 1849.

### **The Atlantic Slave Trade**

The Portuguese, as from 1482 started (as earlier discussed) massive exportation of slaves from Africa, having realised how effectively Africans could work in the plantations they established at Sao Tome. The Spaniards, too joined the race, and exported Africans to the new World in the Americas.

By 1663, the British joined the obnoxious trade as The Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa took off African slaves sold between £3 and £8 - depending on age, sex, strength, and vitality of the slave. The impact of the slave trade was deep and far-reaching on West Africa's Economic history. It produced political, social, economic, demographic, military and psychological effects. No one knows the exact number of healthy and working population that West Africa lost in the process. It lasted almost three centuries.

During the period, the European slavers encouraged ethnic and religious division, class contradictions, endless succession of intergroup conflicts, mutual hostilities among West African states/communities. They also whipped up old rivalries. The Yoruba political federation disintegrated. Relations between the Igbo and their neighbours became strained.

The impact on social life was also tremendous. Topmost being life-insecurity, fear of skirmishes, kidnapping, ambushes by professional man-hunters, under the supervision of the ruling elites.

Many people fled their villages and settled in the bushes and obscure, inaccessible and inhospitable settlements. Most of the local ruling elites benefitted and enjoyed the continuation. Local judiciaries

were debased as several "offences" were made to carry heavy penalties, especially sale into slavery. Societies became more rigidly stratified - the numbers of domestic servants without privileges, serfs, and chattel slaves became rampant especially among the Igbo Nike, who kept many in bondage even after the abolition of the trade.

Even religious officials - the witch-doctors were not absolved from the evil practise. Witch suspects were oftentimes sold into slavery. Moral fibre of societies weakened noticeably as many rulers indulged in alcoholism, revelled in other import goods that exchanged for their kith and kin.

Economically, the trade distracted efforts away from agriculture and manufactures. West African rich few developed taste for European goods, and distanced themselves from locally produced goods economy stagnated and human resources were wasted. There was population haemorrhage. Service conditions strengthened and industrial growth became truncated.

Commerce was adversely affected - legitimate commerce was adversely affected.

### **The Age of Imperialism: The British and French Colonial Economy Policy**

In view of its pervasive impact on the history and culture of West Africa through and even beyond the colonial period, there is the need to examine in greater details, the basics or fundamentals of colonialism by studying its definition, its philosophy, its characteristic features, its promptings and justification.

#### **Definitions**

Most authorities on Colonialism or imperialism agree that it has to do with:

- a. The establishment and maintenance for an extended time, of rule over alien people that is separate from and subordinate to the ruling power.
- b. The imposition of alien authoritarian regimes on subordinate societies. Having established the master- servant relationship, the colonizer trains a few of their subjects in bureaucratic management. The superceding authority demands passive acquiescence from the colonized.
- c. Political control of the colonizers.

### **Philosophy: The Strong Dominating the Weak**

## **Characteristic Features**

Immediately after conquest, the colonizer sets about curbing “unruly” nobles through proclamations that are accorded legal recognition. A handful of “loyalists” are appointed to state offices to execute imperial directives and laws. The ad-hoc armies of the colonized are replaced by professional full-time armies. The police is created to “maintain law and order”. The alien rulers promote their cultures, values at the expense and to the abasement of the indigenous cultures. This is notable in the areas of both material and non-material cultures industries,

arts and crafts, language, songs, music, worship, dressing models, consumption and production patterns etc. there is brazen exploitation of both human and other natural resources of the colonies for the advantage of the metropole but to the disadvantage of the satellite. The metropole enjoys the advantage of a more developed and sophisticated military technology than the dependencies which it uses to cow down any real or probable insurgents. The colonizers operate on the premise that the colonies existed for the benefit of the mother country. The mother country relates to the dependencies in a paternal capacity, “giving” little doses of civilization to the satellites so as not to endanger her development. This paternal relationship also assumes the form of racial superiority-the caucasoid playing the master’s role and the colonized undergoing pupilage. Lugard advanced on this theory in treating Anglo-West African (African) situation and postulated the theory of Dual Mandate-seeking the advancement of the dependencies and developing them in the interest of the world at large. British colonialism in West Africa, we might want to note, took the form of Indirect Rule, Self- Government and terminated in Independence for the colony and protectorate of West Africa in a federal or pseudo-federal form.

The colonizers having developed machine culture, has a more powerful economy than the colonized. There is also the imposition of alien laws and judicial systems and the civilization of colonizers “superior” civilization on the colonizer’s inferior culture.

## **Promptings:**

I. Franco-British rivalry extending overseas with the competition for the Nile and the Suez.

II. Diplomatic manoeuvres prompted by the rise of Otto von Bismark which tilted the balance of power in Europe; prompted European countries into seeking allies in Europe.

This took the form of rivalries in Africa. England, Portugal and Italy teamed up against France and Germany. Each sought sources of financing the wars. The colonies thus became extensions of the European struggle.

France, Britain and Germany turned the struggle into one for satisfying the sense of injured national self-esteem-France after the loss of Alsace-Lorraine became most aggressive. This marked the era of imperialism of prestige.

## **Economic Imperialism**

In addition to the fore-going imperialism of prestige, there was also the economic dimension. This led to the search for new markets, especially after the 1880 industrial Revolution that created surplus capital-investment in Britain.

It led to keen competition among the manufacturing companies in Europe. The spill-over effect of this was the extension of protective tariff walls in the U.S.A, Russia, Germany and France. These adversely affected Britain’s economy. She quickly sought for alternative markets and trading outlets to avoid glut at the home market. This was behind Karl Marx’s mind when he stated that the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. He maintains that it “must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere”-Palm, F.C. and Graham, F.E., Europe Since Napoleon, Boston, Ginn and Company, 1934, p.391. This second prompting led to the third-raw materials and investments. The demand for raw tropical products as well as for new markets

increased tremendously after 1880. By then, investments in Britain was, according to Graham, returning some three per cent (3%) interest, whereas in Africa, India, China etc. it could be as much as twenty per cent (20%)

### **European Population Problem**

By mid eighteenth century; the population of Europe was about 140 million. By 1914, it had reached 463 million. Between 1800 and 1900, Britain alone increased from 16 million to 41 million; Germany from 21 to 56 million; Austria- Hungary 23 to 45 million; Italy 18 to 32 million. In the face of all these, emigration overseas became not only desirable, but profitable as well for surplus land, employment opportunities etc. The colonies came handy as answer to these needs.

### **Nationalism**

Germany and Italy, after the National Unification Treaty, wanted to demonstrate their national strength. This was tested in the acquisition of colonies which became regarded as sine qua non for national pride or one of the indices for greatness.

### **Military**

Most European countries acquired colonies for the purpose of having naval bases or as buffer states and reservoirs of large native armies.

### **White Man's Burden**

As discussed under Characteristic Features above.

### **Justification**

The colonizers convinced themselves that it was a period of guardianship, necessary to enable the materially weak nation stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of modern world. This they regarded as benevolent tutelage. To them, it's divine wish that those who cannot help themselves must be helped by those who can, hence the involvement of the Christian missionaries.

### **The British Colonial Economic Policy in West Africa**

Right from the day Britain assumed political and administrative control of affairs in West Africa a

nd the time she granted West Africa a modicum of political independence, Britain vigorously pursued such economic policies that favoured her at the expense of the colonies. During the period, West Africa's economy became fully integrated in to the world capitalist system. In order to ensure that her economic interests were adequately protected in post-independent West Africa, the British colonial agents fostered a ruling elite class and did put in place, several structures and institutions manned by these foster elites, thoroughly groomed in the worldview as postulated by the British colonialists and act accordingly in considering West Africa's economic growth and development. In this way, dominance-dependency relationship was firmly established. The fostered elite sought to develop West Africa's economy by means of western capitalist assistance. Under the structure, West Africa's economy went progressively under the influence and dominance of Britain and the western world.

By then, most of the theories of colonialism, the reasons behind colonialism the mechanisms for the promotion of colonialism had all been tested and perfected. Before delving into specifics let us take a cursory look at some of the theories and see how they applied to West Africa, starting with the Hobsian and Leninist theories. For the sake of emphasis, we shall be revisiting the foregoing theories in greater details.

### **Imperialism: Theories Of**

In order to understand better, the activities of the British imperialist field-workers in West Africa, there is the need to touch briefly on some of the theories of imperialism as advanced by some serious-minded scholars in that field, starting with the first systematically articulated and scientifically researched of them-the Hobsian theory.

### **Hobson's Theory**

According to John Atkinson Hobson imperialism is reckoned to have been the consequence of m



adjustment in the capitalist mode of production that brought about a grossly unfair income distribution pattern among the different social classes that made up the civil society. This brought about under-consumption on the one hand and over-savings on the other. He goes further to argue that in the Long run, excess goods piled up within the economy as well as excess capital. In his words:

Everywhere appear excessive powers of production, excessive, capital in parch, of investment. It is admitted by all businessmen that the growth of the powers of production in their country exceeds the growth in consumption, that more goods can be produced than can be produced than can be sold at a profit, and that more capital exists than can find remunerative investment. It is this condition of affairs that forms the taproot of imperialism.

Source: Hobson, J. *Imperialism: A Study* Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1967 edn. The bottom line of Hobson's argument therefore is that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. Hobson expatiates his position further by stating thus:

As one nation after another enters the machine economy, and adopts advanced industrial methods, it becomes more difficult for its Manufacturers, merchants and financiers to dispose profitably of their economic resources and they are tempted more and more, to use their governments in order to secure for their particular use, some distant undeveloped countries by annexation and protection...

Source: Institute of Social Sciences, Moscow, *Political Economy of Capitalism* Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1985, Chapter II.

The main actors being the manufacturers, the merchants and the financiers, propelling the deployment of state power for the furtherance of their private investments hiding under the umbrella of national interest. These bourgeoisie had to find markets for selling their surplus industrial products, and raw materials had to flow into the colonial metropole (which in this case means their industries).

### **The Marxist-Leninist Theory of Imperialism**

Karl Marx (1818:83) the German founder of modern socialism and communism and Nikolai Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov Lenin (1870-1924) the Russian revolutionary leader and 'initiator of Russian communism

adopted similar methods in their treatment of imperialism. For

this reason, we shall treat both theories together. Both of them advanced on the works of Friedrich Engels *Dialectics of Nature* in arriving at scientific communism. Both regard capitalism as an exploiting system, 'exploiting wage labour; and they both see capitalists as appropriating the fruits of workers' labour. This led to class struggle and uneven development. Marx and Lenin argue that the labour of the wage-worker creates surplus value that is usually over and above the value of his' labour power and is appropriated without payment by the capitalist.

The way this economic relation creates economic crises between the investor (propertied class) and the wage-labourer is extended to explain the disproportionate and uneven development between the industrial (stronger) and the pre-industrial (weaker) polities. Scientific and Technological Revolution gave the stronger nation undue advantage over the Less Developed Countries (LDC) retarded the LDC's progress and increased the economic dependence of the LDCs on the imperialists.

Lenin in his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, discusses this into details. He maintains that imperialism is parasitic and that uneven economic development leads to uneven maturing of the material requisites for socialism in individual countries. The Marxists' approach as enunciated in Karl Marx's *Capital* and in his *Collected Works* on Friedrich Engel explains imperialism essentially in economic, terms. Marxist theoreticians like Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Hilferding etc. talk about five features of Imperialism as comprising.

a. The concentration of the development of production and capital to a stage of creating monopolies.

b. Finance-capital, that comprises the combination of bank capital and industrial capital,

leading to financial oligarchy.

c. Exportation of capital (as distinguished from commodity exportation)

d. The existence of international capitalist monopoly combines, which divide, up the world.

e. Complete territorial division of the world among the greatest capitalist powers for the purpose of profit maximization through mindless, violent exploitation. In other words, imperialism, though an economic phenomenon has socio-political dimensions.

### **The Devil's Theory of Imperialism**

This was propounded by the NYE Committee of the United States' Senate that investigated the influence of Financial and Industrial interests on the U.S. intervention in the First World War.

This Committee report maintains that the class of people that benefit directly from the outbreak of war are the ammunition makers, the financial barons as well as the international bankers in Wall Street. They exert pressure on governments to wage wars and to engage in expansionist and predatory policies. The interpretation here is that militarism is an aspect of imperialism and that war is the mechanism for achieving imperialist goals. In other words, that imperialism is a conspiracy affair.

### **Galtung's Structural Theory of Imperialism**

Galtung views imperialism essentially from the structural perspective and comes to the conclusion that it is a sort of dominance relation between the powerful and the weak nations. I find Galtung's Theory of Imperialism particularly interesting, and as a result I shall delve into it a little more than the preceding ones treated above.

Galtung differs a bit from the Marxist-Leninist and the Devil's

Theory approaches in that John Galtung adopts the structural approach and identifies two mechanisms that bring about imperialistic relations between two nations. These are:

(i) Vertical interaction relations

(ii) Feudal interaction relations.

Galtung however identifies five types of imperialism: These are (i) Economic, (ii) Cultural, (iii) Communication (iv) Political and (v) Military. Now, let us treat Galtung's structural approach, two mechanisms and five types of imperialism a little further.

### **Structural Relationship**

The underlying principle here is that relationships among human collectivities can, over time, precipitate dominance based on a bridge-head, established by a centre (i.e. an industrialized and technologically advanced) nation and a periphery (i.e. an agrarian, primary goods producing) nation. The bridge-head is established by the rich in the centre nation linking them with the rich in the periphery nation or what Galtung decides to call centre of the centre and the centre of the periphery. (cc and cp) for the joint benefit of both of them at the expense or to the detriment of the poor in the C and the P nations or what Galtung calls Periphery of the centre and the Periphery of the Periphery nations.

### **The two Mechanisms**

These involve (i) Vertical and (ii) Feudal interactions. Under the vertical relation, unequal or asymmetric exchange, leading to unequal benefit between the C and the P nations. The C nation derives more and better advantages from the relations than do the P nations. While the C imports raw or primary goods from the P nations, it (the C nation) exports processed industrial goods to the P nations. This type of unequal transaction creates material welfare and power gap (over time) between the C and the P nations. It produces spillover or positive effects in the C nations and spin-off or negative effects in the socio-political and economic lives of the P nations. The C nation becomes wealthier and healthier while the P nation becomes progressively unhealthy and impoverished. It is operated in the most sophisticated manner. The feudal mechanism is employed to maintain and reinforce the inequality by protecting the gains of the C nation at the expense/detriment of the P nations through:

I. Restriction of interaction between the C and the P nations

II. Elimination of interaction among the P nations.  
III. Blockage of multilateral interaction between the P nations and other C nations.  
IV. The C nations monopolize the P nations' interactions with the outside world or in other words, form themselves into windows through which the P nations could look outside. Through this mechanism, the P nations become the exclusive spheres of interests or the satellites of the C nations. The sovereignty and economic freedom of the P nations become circumscribed and they become susceptible to the manipulations and blackmail by the C nations. The P nations'

governments and economic policies become reliant on dictates from the C nations, acting through the Multi-National Corporations or other surrogates.

### **The Five Types:**

These have to do with Economic, Cultural, Communication, Political and Military imperialism.

#### **Economic:**

Under economic type of imperialism, the economy of the P nation (in this wise, West Africa) becomes satelized to that of the C nation (England) to the extent that the economy of P (West Africa) becomes a service-economy to that of C (England). The P nation becomes almost wholly dependent on its C for capital, processed goods, managerial skills as well as technology. And as the proponents have rightly argued "whenever C's economy catches cold, that of P must start sneezing". This did manifest in virtually all the economies of the colonized or imperialised nations at one time or the other.

#### **Cultural:**

It is essentially scientific in nature in that it has to do with the processing of raw data from the P nation in the C nation while the theories derived from the P nation are exported back to the P nation. Thus, the cultural values and material goods of the C nation gain pervasive dominance in the P nations. This is usually more prevalent among the ruling elite of the P nations who, in most cases, are considered as role models in their countries.

#### **Communication**

This, in a way, is similar to the cultural imperialism just explained above; but relates specifically with the transportation and the mass-media sectors. The C nation supplies and (to a very large extent) maintains the communication technology of the P nation. The P nation supplies the raw news items which are "processed" and re-exported to them by the C nation. Thus, you find West Africans depending on the B.B.C. for the "true" and "authentic" version of events happening in West Africa. This, in a way, enables Britain to manipulate the lines of thought (and by implication) the actions of West African policy-makers and rulers.

#### **Political:**

According to Galtung, this has to do with the dominance exercised by the C nations over the P nations in national policy- decision process through the instrumentality of the so-called experts from the C nation.

#### **Military:**

The C nation provides military hardware, military training facilities and logistics for the P nation as explained under the Devil's theory above.

During the colonial period, the periphery nations would transact only through the centre nations. The Pp became impoverished and marginalised. West Africa, like other colonial territories suffered economic, political, military, communication and cultural imperialism. All these made possible not just colonialism but also neo-colonialism and neo-neocolonialism.

Another theory that deserves our attention is that which Clark describes as the "PREBISCH Thesis". Under this arrangement, the working of the international system is constructed in such a way as to condemn the raw-materials producing and exporting nations to perpetual loss of the benefits of production. The peripheries find it extremely difficult retaining the benefits of

increased productivity because of:

- a. The low state of development of labour unions. This means that the workers have little leverage to apply against the foreign companies.
- b. Little spill-over into the local technological environment because the few manufacturing installations that did exist were not tightly linked to West Africa's economy and
- c. West Africa's government has been too weak technologically to extract from the existing industries, enough resources to devote to national development. Several other inhibitions are tied to the three major factors - such as the price structure tailored to suit manufactured goods vis-à-vis the raw materials and the agricultural products whose prices are very elastic and fluctuate wildly. These fluctuations make it extremely difficult for the developing nations to plan adequately for the future. There had always been the link between income levels and consumption patterns and the higher demand for manufactured goods. Taxation had been lopsided, with the result that the rich and the multinational corporations and the Great powers have merely used the developing countries to further their own goals and ambitions. Only infrequently had this situation redounded to the benefit of West Africa. Uncontrolled population growth has greatly corrode investment capability and industrial base and had created several economic problems, such as rapid urbanization, and the problems of food, housing, sanitation, transportation, public security, under-production in the agricultural sector; the inability to preserve even the little that was being produced. Etc.

Now, let us consider some salient points under the British colonial enterprise in West Africa.

### **West Africa and the British Colonial Economic Policy (1900-1960)**

Colonial economy was basically exploitative as could be gleaned from the available extant literature. Lugard's echo of this in his *DUAL MANDATE* is most convincing:

Let it be admitted at the outset that the European brains, capital and energy have not been, and never will be, expended in developing the resources of Africa from motives of pure philanthropy; that Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefits of her own industrial classes and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal and desire of civilised administration to fulfil this dual mandate...As Roman imperialism laid the f

oundations of modern civilization, and led the wild Barbarians of these islands along the path of progress, so in Africa today, we are repaying the debt and bringing to the dark places of the earth, the abode of barbarism and cruelty, the torch of culture and progress, while ministering to the material needs of our own

civilization... I am profoundly convinced that British rule has promoted the happiness and welfare of the primitive races.

As from 1885 when the British Government convinced herself that African colonies could no longer be regarded as "expensive nuisance" but a rightful solution to the Industrial Revolutionary explosion in Europe, she started pursuing her colonial policy vigorously by developing infrastructures such as ports, roads, bridges, culverts, railways, post and telegraphs and so on. These were considered necessary ingredients in meeting her colonial goals backed by the major British trading companies.

The vigorous pursuit which started in form of gun-boat diplomacy in the south degenerated into outright display of brute force in the North as the established Sokoto caliphate was bombarded and pacified. The British colonial agents, under various guises such as civilizing mission, colonial tutelage, the white man's burden; the dual mandate, etc. established an elaborate system of plunder, tyranny and mal-development. Thus, colonialism became synonymous with exploitation for development. The colonizers observed the bounties of natural resources that nature has abundantly endowed West Africa with and soon demonstrated obsessive ambition for plundering them. Their West African counterparts too did not only envy the rapidly increasing wealth of the colonialists, they also desired leading voluptuous life-styles like them (colonizers). They realised that capitalism was the key.

The immediate result, of cause, was that West Africa's economy automatically became capitalist oriented, with all the attendant evils, such as:

- a. Heartless exploitation of the weak;
- a. Great disparity between the rich and the poor
- b. Avoidable poverty in the midst of plenty.
- c. Wastefulness of competition.

There was a revolutionary change in the acquisitive faculties of West Africans. They began to show signs of morbid rush for and aspiration to material acquisition, wealth and opulence - all to the neglect of public interest and good.

As pointed out earlier, in the traditional West African society, every-body was expected to protect and defend the interests of the public because there was the inner conviction that individuals exist because the society exists. Under that dispensation, West Africans displayed actions positively conducive to human happiness and progress because of the conviction that it is only in the midst of a healthy society or nation that individuals could also be healthy, happy and prosperous. The introduction of private enterprise shattered once and for all, this age-long public sentiment. As Nnamdi Azikiwe observed, the colonial economy has created a new social order with or without economic foundation. Profit motive guided and even concentrated wealth in the hands of a few. Extreme individualism prompted by the strong sense of individual achievement tore welfarist societies apart. West African educated elite were made to see glory in intellectual subservience to the colonial world-view and to regard Western acculturation as the only factor of knowledge and enlightenment; the only source of light and inspiration. That westernization was synonymous with material prosperity, spiritual regeneration as well as the conferment of superior wisdom and morality on the beneficiaries. Not only this, West African educated elite were made to understand West Africa's problems and challenges only from the colonial world-view. So thorough-going was the intensity of the colonial tutelage that many West African educated elites believed either in the inevitability or desirability of colonialism. This was the picture Osoba was trying to paint when he asserted inter alia that:

The major factor responsible for the perpetuation and consolidation of West Africa's underdevelopment in the colonial eras is the thoroughness with which the educated elites learnt their colonial lessons.

Most scholars of the colonial economic situation in West Africa still agree that in essence, it was "an elaborate system of plundering, tyranny and dehumanization" under the guise of benevolent tutelage; According to Perham, it was "an expedient device by the colonizers to take the "natives" gradually, step by step, up the steep slope of development and civilization". In order to facilitate the realization of their economic goals and objectives the British colonialists assumed certain postures, taught some philosophies and put in place, certain exploitative machineries.

In the first instance, the colonizers assumed that the "natives" were:

- a. Backward, lawless, steady-state loafers in a lower stage of development.
- b. Feeble intellectually and unable to climb the ladder of progress unaided.
- c. Energetic but unorganised and without economic foundation.
- d. Culturally and economically, a sort of tabula rasa.
- e. A generation of mental midgets.

On the other hand, they also assumed that themselves were fulfilling the dual mandate of saving the "primitive savages" from arrested development in order that they (the colonized) might be useful to themselves on the one hand and that they might be useful to post-industrial Europe on the other.

The British colonizers taught the "natives" that as trustees of development, civilization and culture, they owed the "natives" the sacred duty of benevolent tutelage through colonization. That

as a tabula rasa, the only option left for the “natives” or the “noble savages” was for the whites to bestow on the benighted peoples, law and order, moral norms, work culture and such legacies that would help Africans climb the ladder of civilization, progress and development. In achieving these, they convinced the natives that the colonial rule was a necessary and desirable phase and that economic development in West Africa could only be obtained, sustained and enhanced by adopting the colonially prescribed recipe.

To make the colonial dream a reality, the colonizers did put in place, several structures and institutions manned by the foster elites, thoroughly groomed in the world-view as postulated by the colonialists. Some of the institutions include the schools, the civil service, the public service, the police, the armed forces, the prisons, the judiciary, the infrastructural facilities earlier mentioned and so on. All these ensured a thorough-going exploitation.

It is not surprising to note therefore that the foster elites who benefitted from the system did not resist the British colonial economic designs. Consequently, apart from the 1945 General strike, which has been treated under trade unionism, there were no widespread (nation-wide) industrial unrest.

Peasant revolts such as the 1929 Aba women’s riots, the 1947

Bristol Hotel in Lagos and of course, the Iva valley massacre of 1949 were promptly (and in some cases ruthlessly) suppressed by the colonial West Africa Police, trained foremost to maintain law and order (among “lawless natives”) and to punish suspects rather than prevent crimes.

The educated elites, as Chinweizu, Coleman Ayandale and a host of other scholars on the activities of West African Nationalists argue, became so thoroughly acculturated that most of them became not just de-oriented but turned out to be Europhiliac and Afrophobic as a result of their subservience to the colonizers’ world- view. They colluded with the developed nations to default or defraud the nation. They often-times have reasonable amounts and investments lurked in the developed nations; eager to fly out of the country any time the nation’s peace and progress are threatened. Prominent among these were the politicians of the second Republic.

### **Nationalists and the Post World War II Economic Development: The Case of West Africa**

As from the 1950s, when West African politicians took over most of economic policy-decisions, they embarked on aggressive developmental policies. More attention was devoted to developmental programmes. All these had depleting effects on West Africa’s foreign exchange resources. West African governments failed to expand their revenue bases through various taxes - direct as well as indirect. This diminutive effect soon led West African politicians to adopting several new fiscal policies, including foreign loans. This was facilitated by the establishment of the Central Bank of West Africa in 1959.

Some of the development programmes embarked upon include Petroleum refinery, establishment of paper mill, cement factory, sugar processing factory, rubber manufacture and retreading industries, national printing press, construction of new ports and rehabilitation of existing ones, shipping and marine activities, electricity supply, road construction etc. All these led to external borrowing - for the payment of goods as well as services.

By the late 1960’s West Africa had not only exhausted her foreign exchange reserves she had accumulated foreign debt of well over forty million pounds sterling. Initially, the loans were judiciously utilised, meticulously supervised by the colonial masters and the loaning organizations or bodies. Reminiscences of these can still be found. We want to remind ourselves of one vital historical development that fundamentally affected the huge investments in public enterprise. It was the philosophy of DECOLONIZATION.

During that period, West African citizens were made to develop negative attitudes towards the colonial government and whatever received its blessing (not exercising enough discernment in isolating what is advantageous to West Africa and West Africans in the long run). This later affected government’s role in West Africa’s economic development and the management of

public enterprises. The British colonial government sought to improve West Africa's economic development by improving our main sectors, viz; transport, agriculture, education, and industry.

### **The Building Of Infrastructure**

The British topmost priority in the colonies was how to obtain cheap, qualitative and assured raw materials from their colonies, for their own industries, markets for their manufactured goods, sources of generating capital resources for investing in Britain and strengthening the British pound

sterling against other currencies. They wanted man power reservoir for economic and military purposes. To obtain all these, they had to penetrate deeper into the interior of the colonies through the development of the trade arteries, i.e. infrastructure—roads, ports, water-ways railways, communication system and so on.

By 1946, West Africa had just 1833 kilometers of tarred roads. By 1963 it had increased to almost 20,000 miles. Bridges had been constructed to link the far north with the coast. The Niger Bridge at Onitsha was completed in 1961. The Niger Bridge had spanned some kilometers with the aid of ten millions pound sterling loan from the World Bank. The Niger Dam was commenced.

As all these were going on, West African nationalists noted with very keen interest, the working of the colonial capitalist economy the British had put in the place. With the promulgation of the Lands Transfer Act in 1902; the Native rights Act 1916; the Mineral Acts of 1916 etc., the British had appropriated to themselves the principal sources of capital formation—Land, (including minerals the waterways, fishing rights etc.) very cheap labour (commoditised for the first time) and of course, issuance of import and export trading licences.

With all these put in place, West Africa's economy became a typical colonial economy, characterised by:

- a. predominant control of, and access to capital by an alien economic power.
- b. the control of the economy by a government run by members of the alien power acting on its behalf.
- c. the highest level of business, trade and industry held by the alien dominating community.
- d. direction of the country's export and import trade to suit the interests of the ruling power.
- e. a bias towards commerce and agrarian mode of production as opposed to that of industry
- f. the minimal expansion of technical and scientific skill.
- g. the organisation of production along semi-free labour.
- h. the suppression of guilds or trade unions as a counterweight to exploitation.
- i. the non-involvement of large sections of the population in direct capitalist enterprise.
- j. the colonial master notion about the "lazy native" that must be taught work ethics.

This led to the consideration of capital as being more important than labour and the distribution of wealth.

The nationalists, had by the Post World War II era, started to make their impact felt; but they too had their eyes on the largess of office as soon as the British colonizers departed.

### **Agriculture**

Another important sector that deserves our attention here is the agricultural sector. The Ministries of Agriculture and special bodies established experimental stations to tackle particular problems. Such Research stations include among others the West African (National) Institute for Oil Palm Research, the West African Stored Products Research Institute, the Schools of Agriculture at Samaru, Akure etc. the faculty of Agriculture, University of Ibadan, the Cocoa Research Institute Akure etc.

With all these Research Centers put in place farmers enjoyed extension services, credit

facilities, plantation estates, improved fruits/seeds, modern farming technology. In the Western Region the farm settlement scheme was vigorously pursued as from 1960. It faced several criticisms. By 1964, it

was revised, yet, it did not yield the expected results because of settlers' attitude towards the scheme. Attempts by the Eastern Regional Government to practice the same scheme, but with Farmers who had farming experience also failed.

### **West African Nationalists and Development Strategies**

West African Nationalists, while fighting British colonial rule, still adopted aspects of it which they considered as enlightened colonial policies as the veritable vehicle for transmitting modernity to West Africa. They adopted the capitalist strategy for example. They also gave top priority to international co-operation-foreign aid, investment and trade ties, most especially with the Western capitalist world. They were convinced (or were made by their colonial mentors to believe) that it was only by opening up West Africa to the stimulating effects of foreign capital, technology, manpower and consumer goods that rapid economic growth and development as well as modernization could be achieved. Foreign "partners in development" like the World Bank, the American Agency for International Development, the Chase Manhattan Bank, Unilever, Gulf-Oil, Union Carbide etc. were brought in to help with expert advice sourcing for finance technological know-how etc. Thus, laying the foundation for foreign control over the most dynamic parts of West Africa's economy and dependency on foreign institutions in post-independence years.

The cost was high - a most sophisticated form of modern slavery was designed and imposed on West Africa. Inequalities in all human endeavours started to increase dramatically-disparity of power, wealth and other societal resources. Neglect of the rural areas, (except on very rare occasions where resources are discovered) already started by the colonialists continued apace. The result was high inequality of opportunities for individuals, groups, cities, regions, resources and investments. They also added their own dimension-over politicisation of vital economic programmes. The process focused the greatest attention on the best and least attention on those considered the least. Growth became concentrated in the former and trickled down to the latter - "trickling down" of the benefits of capitalist growth.

The educated elite, who were partakers of the British economic policies and served as junior partners of the juice of employment were quick in showing consideration for their class interests and in collaborating with the colonizers because of material benefits.

Another important area of colonial economy on which volumes can be (and have of course been) written is that of the development of infrastructures, most especially in the areas of transport and communication, the ports and, other public infrastructures, but we feel this is not the place for such a compendious study. What we shall touch on here is the fact these infrastructures in almost all cases, run inland from the coast to the sources of supply of the various raw materials. The telegraphic lines were meant to facilitate prompt information so as to maintain law and order through immediate deployment of soldiers to suppress any reported uprising or rebellion.

The railways were the two and a half inch gauge, more suitable for goods and haulage rather than for the comfort of commuters. What is even more significant, the two lines run parallel from the coast to the interior as far as Nguru and Kaura-Namoda, where bulky goods that require several coaches for haulage were obtained.

In constructing these lines, the British seemed to have had in mind, only the goods and not the producer's welfare and comfort. The sea and air ports at Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Kano, Enugu etc. were also developed foremost to promote external trade, most especially, with Britain. The roads, bridges, culverts constructed by them too bore similarities to the fore-going and complement them in facilitating easy evacuation of West African produce. We stop here meanwhile, realising that it would take a voluminous book (if not several books) to make a meaningful and justifiable write-up on this aspect of West Africa's Econ



