

A comparative history of commercial transition in three West African slave trading economies, 1630 to 1860

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This research was conducted under the auspices of the Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)

A COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF COMMERCIAL TRANSITION IN THREE WEST AFRICAN SLAVE TRADING ECONOMIES, 1630 - 1860

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Thesis

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of doctor

at Wageningen University

by the authority of the Rector Magnificus,

Prof. Dr A.P.J. Mol,

in the presence of the

Thesis Committee appointed by the Academic Board

to be defended in public

on Wednesday 6 September 2017

at 1.30 p.m. in the Aula.

Angus E. Dalrymple-Smith

A comparative history of commercial transition in three West African slave trading economies, 1630 – 1860,

281 pages.

PhD thesis, Wageningen University, Wageningen, the Netherlands (2017)

With references, with summary in English

DOI: 10.18174/418497

ISBN: 978-94-6343-619-9

Acknowledgments

My thanks firstly go to Ewout, for not only getting me through this process but also giving the chance to do so. To Elise and Matthias who waded through innumerable drafts and always provided useful advice that kept me moving in the right direction. This thesis would not have been completed without you all.

Throughout the process my colleagues at Wageningen have made these past four years a very enjoyable experience. Kostadis, Michiel and Butter have been there from the start and provided, as needed, advice, feedback, alcohol and humour. Joining them along the way, Babymouse, Kleonikki, Dacil, Jop, Dani, Pim and Harm all helped me keep sane and progressing. Also, a huge thank you to Carry and Sandra for keeping my professional life organised and for their lovely company.

I would also like to thank everyone at Stellenbosch for hosting me during my stay and making it both an enjoyable and productive experience. In particular, Johan, Christie, Jeanne and Abel and the rest of the Economics Department and Jan for his continuing friendship.

A special thanks to Robin Law for generously giving so much of his invaluable expertise over three very enjoyable days in a Stirling Pub.

My friends and family have provided continuous support. In particular, my wonderful parents, Penny and Peter and my lovely step parents, Joke and Egbert for unfailing help with the children. Evie and Morris have grown up with this project and I hope that one day that will be able to read it and understand why it was so important to me.

Finally, and most importantly, this is book dedicated to Mirjam, for everything.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In 1807, the British parliament passed a Bill ending its participation in the transatlantic slave trade. The abolition movement responsible for this legislation went on to have a profound influence on Britain's foreign policy, ultimately leading to the end of this trade by the 1860s. In West Africa, regional exports gradually evolved from being dominated by captives destined for New World plantations, to commodities such as palm oil for European and North American industrial and consumer markets. This process became known in later literature as the 'commercial transition' and has become one of the key themes in West African historiography (Law 1995b, p1). However, there are two aspects of this process that have so far not been adequately addressed. Firstly, no one has questioned why, from a comparative perspective, there was a marked variation in the speed and nature of the commercial transition across the region. Secondly, few studies have actively analysed the long-term roots of the process and, in particular, the development of the 'non-slave' export economies of the region in the centuries before 1807. This thesis addresses two main questions. Part 1 of this study asks what were the long-term patterns of the non-slave trade in West Africa's three most important slave exporting regions, and how did these influence the nature of the commercial transition in the nineteenth century? Part 2 explores what, from a comparative perspective, were the most important pan-regional variables determining the very different reactions to abolition and the commercial transition?

This study will argue that the nature of the nineteenth century commercial transition was a continuation of earlier patterns of trade, meaning that only a long-term regional analysis can adequately explain why and how different areas moved from the export of captives to commodities. These regional variations can be explained by five key factors: 1) the nature and duration of long-term trade relations; 2) the identity of the principal European trade partner; 3) certain aspects of the ecology of the different regions; 4) the regional political contexts; and 5) the development of institutions that either encouraged or discouraged elite participation in non-slave exports. This is the first study, to the best of my knowledge, that has used a long term, comparative analysis to explore West Africa's trade over the long eighteenth century in relation to the nineteenth century commercial transition. I believe, therefore, that it provides a unique perspective and generates fresh insights into the political and economic development of three important regions and their relationship to a changing Atlantic world.

1.2. ABOLITION AND THE COMMERCIAL TRANSITION IN WEST AFRICA

In 1842, the author of a British Parliamentary Report on West Africa and the state of the slave trade¹ stated that: “...a trade in produce has been gradually growing up and gaining upon the Slave Trade in proportion as the enterprise of the British merchant pushes on the one and the vigilance of the British cruiser checks and cripples the other...” The report was written 35 years after the passing of the ‘Abolition Bill’ by parliament in 1807, which outlawed participation in the transatlantic slave trade for British merchants. This trade had begun in the late fifteenth century by the Portuguese, who required labour for their expanding Atlantic and American empires. By the late eighteenth century it had reached its apogee in West Africa² with thousands of captives embarked annually onto European and American vessels and sent to labour in the plantations and mines of the New World. At first, Britain was the only major slave trading nation to cease their involvement in the traffic of African captives to the Americas.³ They were eventually joined, often unwillingly, by the French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese/Brazilians following a long diplomatic and military campaign which finally halted the traffic by the 1860s.

The 1807 Bill was the result of a sustained campaign by what became known as the abolitionist movement. This had begun in the eighteenth century and was a product of a changing intellectual and religious climate. Writers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau argued that slavery was in principal contrary to human nature,⁴ and Adam Smith argued in the ‘Wealth of Nations’ (1776) that wage labour was more economically productive to society than coerced labour. In fact, Klein (2010, p190) has argued that it was this, rather than humanitarian concerns for the African victims of the trade, that drove the movement: “*The anti-slave-trade campaign was based fundamentally on a belief in free labour as one of the most crucial underpinnings of modern society and the institution that guaranteed mankind’s progress out of its medieval past.*” However, the campaign did have a profoundly moral side, especially for dissenting Protestant movements, such as the Quakers and Methodists who were among the first to actively campaign for the trade to end (Jennings 2013).

¹ Parliamentary Papers 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.--Report and evidence. Dr Madden’s Report p XX.

² The trade in the West Central region of Africa, what is now Congo Brazzaville and Angola, was to expand into the nineteenth century. See below section 1.3.

³ Denmark had abolished its own trade in 1802, although its merchants were never a major carrier of slaves. The French had temporarily ceased their involvement after 1794 in the wake of the revolution and Haitian rebellions but resumed trading in 1803. The United States did officially prohibit its citizens from engaging in the transatlantic slave trade, but this prohibition was easily circumvented, especially given anti-British sentiment (Thomas 1999, pp523,545–48, Brooks 1970, p115).

⁴In the “Spirit of the Laws” (1748), Montesquieu writes that “*The state of slavery is in its own nature bad. It is neither useful to the master nor to the slave.*” (Book 15, Chapter 1). However, in the same Chapter he goes on to argue that “*It is impossible for us to suppose these creatures (Africans) to be men...*” In the opening Chapter of “The Social Contract” (1762), Rousseau begins by stating “*Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains*” arguing that society should not constrain the freedoms of its citizens.

The extent to which abolition was a moral or an economically rational decision has been fiercely debated. Some historians, most famously Eric Williams (1944), have argued that plantation slavery in the Americas was already in decline and therefore British withdrawal from the transatlantic slave trade represented nothing more than the abandonment of a failing sector of the economy. Others, most notably Drescher (2004, 2010), Eltis (2005) and Davis (2006) have instead made the case that the slave plantations of the New World were flourishing at the beginning of the nineteenth century and remained an economically dynamic model of production until the institution of slavery itself was outlawed. When seen in this light, the Bill of 1807 would have been contrary to the economic interests of Great Britain, although realistically it is unlikely that its merchants or traders suffered much as a consequence of the decision (Inikori 2009, p171, Klein 2010, p190).

In the eyes of abolitionists, the shift towards commodity exports was a fundamental component in the strategy to undermine the slave trade and bring ‘civilisation to Africa’. Campaigners against the slave trade in the 1790s, such as Thomas Clarkson (1789, pp8-9) and the former slave Olaudah Equiano (1794, p357), were already arguing that promoting alternative forms of commerce was the most effective means by which export slavery might be undermined. This was to become dogma amongst abolitionists in the nineteenth century (Law 2013, p4), most famously articulated by David Livingston’s linking of ‘Commerce, Christianity and Civilisation’.⁵ It was for this reason that the trade in commodities came to be known as ‘legitimate commerce’, being perceived as a means of weaning Africans away from export slavery and towards the kinds of productive activities viewed as morally acceptable by Europeans (Buxton 1840, p264).⁶

Among historians of West Africa, the impact of this change from slave to commodity exports has been a key debate since the 1950s (Law 1995b, pp1-3). Dike’s (1956) study of the Bight of Biafra argues that, as the region started to produce more palm oil and export fewer people, the power of the traditional ruling elite was undermined, leading to increasing levels of social disruption. This reasoning was later developed and extended by Hopkins (1973) who argued the ending of transatlantic slavery created a severe economic shock which weakened elites by removing their main source of income. This ‘crisis of adaption’⁷ fuelled conflict and instability, eventually creating conditions of vulnerability which enabled the partition of West Africa by European powers in the 1880s and 1890s. However, this crisis also marked the beginning of what he argued was the ‘modern economic history’ of the continent, dominated

⁵ ‘...by guiding our missionary labours so as to benefit our own country, we shall thereby more effectually and permanently benefit the heathen....We ought to encourage the Africans to cultivate for our markets, as the most effectual means, next to the Gospel, of their elevation.’ Livingston (1858, p720)

⁶ The term is objectionable on many levels; Law (1995, p26) argues that it is both Eurocentric and obscures the fact that Africans had always exported non-slave products. Furthermore, all of the commodities exported during the nineteenth-century were at least partly produced by some form of coerced labour. The expansion of ‘legitimate commerce’ thus led to a huge increase in slave ownership within Africa (Lovejoy 2011, p161).

⁷ The term was used in a 1968 article about the endemic warfare in Yorubaland in the later nineteenth century. Hopkins argued that the rise of palm oil exports led to a severe crisis for elites who had previously based their power and wealth on raiding and slave exports. This in turn led to social disruption, violence and increasingly frequent interventions by Britain which ultimately led to colonisation (Hopkins 1968)

by small scale producers rather than elites. Hopkins' thesis has attracted both support and criticism. Lovejoy (2011, p184) has argued that the development of 'legitimate commerce' led to West African societies establishing, not a more modern economy, but instead a slave mode of production.⁸ This process was to separate Africa from the dominant capitalist economies in the rest of the Atlantic, which had largely abandoned slavery by the end of the nineteenth century.

Eltis (1987) and Eltis & Jennings (1988) have argued that external trade, with some exceptions, had very little impact on the majority of the inhabitants of West Africa and therefore only modestly affected long-term development. However, this argument does not apply to the areas from which most slaves were exported – Biafra, the Gold Coast / Asante, Dahomey and Yorubaland (Eltis & Jennings 1988, p958).⁹ These were areas of relatively high population density containing, according to recent estimates, around 15 million people (Frankema & Jerven 2014). In these areas the Atlantic trade had a substantial impact on many coastal societies, but less so on the savannah states of the interior. A more substantive criticism of Hopkins comes from studies which, like Manning, (1990, p142) argue that "*The merchants, warlords, and monarchs who dominated the capture of slaves also dominated the exploitation of slaves within the continent*". This was also argued by Latham (1973) for the Biafran port of Old Calabar and later applied more generally by Austen (1990, pp101-02). In addition, Austin (2013, p259) has argued that Hopkins' analysis underestimated the extent to which the elites from the period of the slave trade maintained their wealth and power during the era of 'legitimate commerce'.

However, these studies fail to account for the fact that the impact of abolition and the commercial transition varied considerably across both the time and space of West Africa (Law 1995b, p5, Law et al. 2013, p23). Figures 1.1a., 1.1.b. and 1.1.c. show the number of slaves exported from West Africa's most important regions of embarkation. On the Gold Coast, the sale of captives fell to negligible levels immediately after 1807. In the Bight of Biafra, there was also a post-abolition recovery but this was followed by a steady decline from the late 1820s, and by the 1840s the export of captives had more or less ceased. Lastly, in the Bight of Benin, there was a similar dramatic fall in slave exports but only after 1815, after which time exports recovered and continued up to the 1850s. The patterns of commodity trading were also strikingly different. On the Gold Coast, the nineteenth century saw an increase both in gold and palm oil exports (Garrard 1980, p163, Lynn 1997, p39). The Bight of Biafra became the biggest exporter of palm oil in the first half of the nineteenth century,

⁸ This is when "...the social and economic structure of a particular society included an integrated system of enslavement, slave trade and the domestic use of slaves....", in contrast to societies with a "lineage or domestic mode of production", where slaves exist either as a marginal feature or an institution but where the social and political systems are based on ethnicity and kinship. Lovejoy 2011 (pp10-12).

⁹ They might in addition have included the Senegambian region, which although a minor region with regards to slave exports was heavily involved in commodity trading throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries (Searing 2003). Sierra Leone, as the base of British abolition efforts and the destination of a resettlement programme for thousands of Africans captured in other regions was also profoundly impacted by contacts with the Atlantic (Wyse 1989).

exporting significant quantities by at least the 1820s (Lynn 1997, p19). By contrast, exports of commodities from the Bight of Benin were virtually non-existent until the 1840s (Manning 1982, p52).

There are two main reasons for this gap in the literature. Firstly, much of the work cited above on the impact of abolition and the rise of ‘legitimate commerce’ within Africa fails to analyse the commercial transition in the context of the long historical development of Africa’s non-slave trade.¹⁰ This is in part because the transatlantic slave trade dominated commercial exchange with the Atlantic during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More importantly, its scale and the horrors it inflicted upon millions of captives have since come to occupy an extremely powerful place in the collective memories of Europeans, Americans and Africans (Thomas 1999, pp10-11, Hilton 2010, Klein 2010, pp xv-xix). Accordingly, most research has focussed on the trade in people with very few studies on the development and relative importance of other forms of commercial exchange, and how these influenced the nature and speed of the commercial transition. The focus on the trade in people has had the additional effect of making British abolition efforts against transatlantic slavery deemed to be the most important driver of West African economic and political change. Other studies of West Africa and the slave trade have recently concluded that to explain inter-regional differences, scholars must give far greater weight to factors that were endogenous to the region, rather than limiting their search to the decisions and actions of Europeans.¹¹ This study will apply this reasoning to the commercial transition. Secondly, most of the studies on this period of West African history generally target single case study regions.¹² The resultant literature has focussed on explaining how factors specific to individual areas influenced patterns of historical change.

¹⁰ This was noted by the editors of a recent volume on the commercial transition (Law et al. 2013, pp8–10) and investigated by two contributors to the same volume (Eltis 2013, Austin 2013a).

¹¹ For example, the debates on the high levels of mortality experienced by both slaves and crew during the middle passage (Hogerzeil & Richardson 2007, Klein & Engerman 1997, Eltis 1989, 1984) and the impact of African resistance (Behrendt et al. 2001, Richardson 2001).

¹² These include, but are by no means limited to; Bight of Benin: Manning 1982, Reid 1986, Law 1991, Bay 1998, Law 2004, Mann 2007, Monroe 2012, Norman 2012; Gold Coast: Reynolds 1974, Wilks 1975, Wilson 1991, DeCorse 1992, Wilks 1993, McCaskie 2003, Perbi 2004, Austin 2005, Shumway 2014, Sparks 2014, Biafra: Latham 1973, Northrup 1978, Martin 1988, Dike & Ekejiuba 1990, Lovejoy and Richardson 2004, Nwokeji 2010. Two edited volumes on the commercial transition, Law (1995) and Law et al. (2013) also, with some exceptions, look at individual regions / states in isolation and do not use a comparative perspective. In addition there have been studies on specific commodities such as gold - Garrard 1980, kola - Abaka 2005, Lovejoy 1980 and palm oil - Lynn 1997.

Figure 1.1.a. Numbers of slaves exported from the Gold Coast, 1740 – 1840

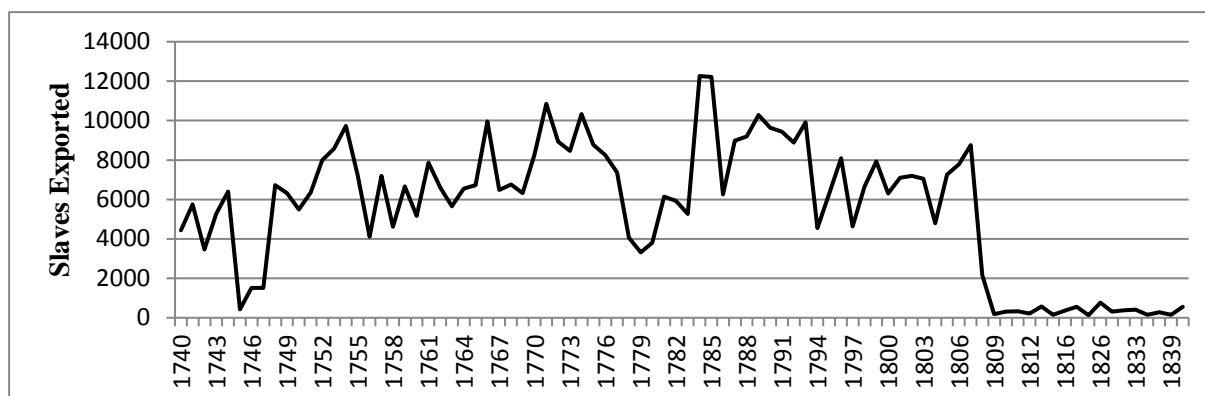


Figure 1.1.b. Bight of Biafra, 1740 – 1840

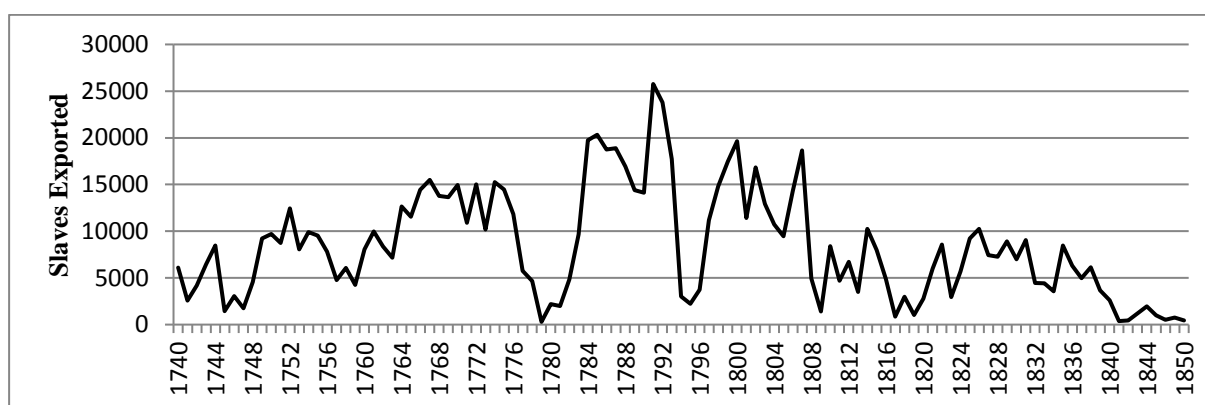
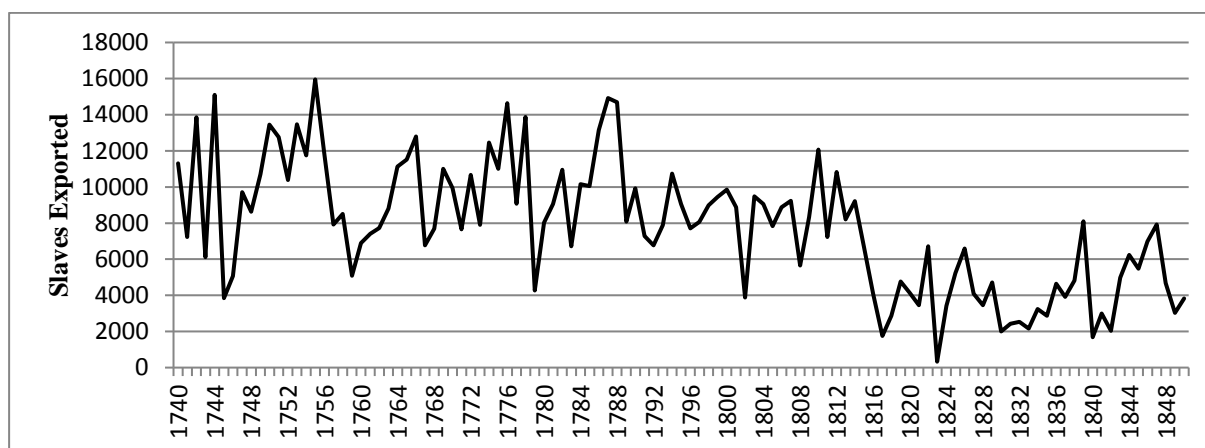


Figure 1.1.c. Bight of Benin, 1740 – 1840



Source: slavevoyages.org¹³

¹³ All the data in this thesis comes from the version of the database at www.slavevoyages.org, downloaded on 01/06/2016

1.3. METHOD AND APPROACH: A COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The central question of this thesis is what determined the different responses of African societies to the changing political and economic conditions in the early nineteenth century Atlantic economy. To explore this question, this thesis will focus on the three most important slave trading regions within West Africa which, according to the transatlantic slave trade database, accounted for around 80% of all embarkations from the seventeenth to the nineteenth Centuries; the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra. These trading zones were used by European traders from at least the early eighteenth century as a way of referencing different parts of the coast (see Map 1.1).¹⁴ Within these regions, the bulk of slaves came from just a few ports with sophisticated trading networks connecting Europe and the Americas to internal suppliers of captives (Eltis et al. 1999, Klein 2010, pp106-7).

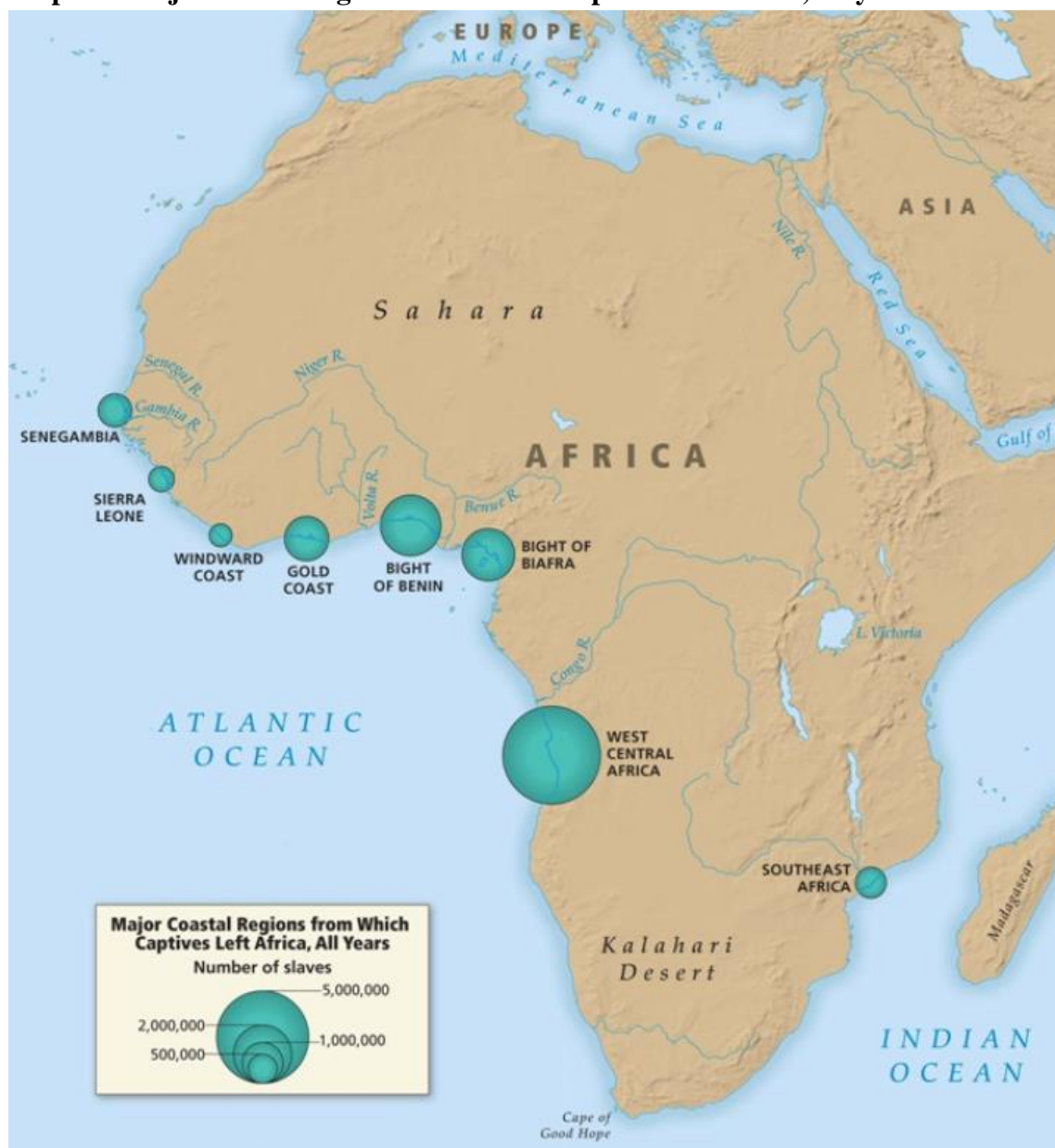
The Gold Coast roughly corresponded to modern day Ghana and ended at the Volta river (see Map 1.2). The three ports of Elmina, Cape Coast Castle and Anomabo, located in territory controlled by the Fante, handled the majority of slave embarkations in the eighteenth century. From the 1740s both slaves and gold came almost exclusively from the Asante empire, which had become the dominant power in the region and will be the focus of the first case study. The Bight of Biafra extended from Cape Formosa to Cape Lopez in Gabon (Map 1.2), but the almost all of the trade, both in captives and commodities, was conducted through the ports of Bonny, Old Calabar and Elem Kalabari which were supplied from the interior Igbo and Ibibio regions (see Chapter 6). These areas, and the trading network that connected this interior region with the coast, will be the focus of the second case study. The Bight of Benin began at the Volta river and continued to Cape Formosa in modern day south east Nigeria (Map 1.2). In the 1720s the main areas through which slaves were traded and the most important port, Whydah, were conquered by the Dahomean empire. As this region then essentially controlled the supply and marketing of the majority of the region's captives until the early nineteenth century, it will be subject of the final case study.

The temporal scope of this research covers the period from roughly the middle of the seventeenth century. This covers the period from when north European nations, in particular Britain, the Netherlands and France, began to expand their American possessions, demanding ever increasing numbers of coerced labourers to work the plantations of the new world (Eltis 2000, pp61-62, Klein 2010, pp31-33) and continues until 1860 when the transatlantic slave trade ended. The thesis deals with West Africa, which in this context refers to the area from modern day Senegal to Cape Lopez in Gabon. Further south, the region known in the slave trade database as West Central Africa, covered two other slave trading zones. Firstly, the Loango coast, which stretched to the river Congo and Angola (Da Silva & Sommerdyk 2010, pp80-84) and secondly Angola. Portuguese / Brazilian merchants had a near monopoly on the

¹⁴ The map is taken from the "Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce Vol II, 1774, 4th ed." by the economist Malachy Postlethwayt (p945). He was a vocal supporter of slavery, an advocate of the Royal Africa Company and was strongly in favour of expanding trade and British influence within Africa (Brown 2010, pp88-89). The image in Map 2 is taken from <https://archive.org/stream/universaldiction02post#page/n943/mode/2up>, p945, accessed 17/11/2016

slave trade in Angola and, while north European merchants were dominant in Loango in the eighteenth century, they were entirely displaced by the Portuguese after abolition (Lovejoy 2011, p53). As my archival and primary data is entirely from British, French and Dutch sources, and because the structure and business of the slave trade in West Central Africa was very different (Lovejoy 2011, pp73-77), this region is largely outside the scope of this study.

Map 1.1. Major coastal regions from which captives left Africa, all years



Source: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/intro-maps> (accessed 16/01/2017)

In order to understand the varying long term patterns of commodity trading in West Africa from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, two new time-series datasets were constructed, and are introduced in Chapters 3 and 4. The first provides the most accurate estimate to date of the quantities of food taken from Europe and bought in different regions of the West African coast by slave traders for the middle passage. The second is an updated and improved dataset of British customs records detailing both imports from and exports to

Africa, as well as providing specific quantities, nominal prices and regional variations in the composition of exports and imports. In addition, Chapter 2 provides qualitative data from both archival and published sources from Britain, the Netherlands and France on shipping patterns and commercial exchange in Africa. By combining these time-series data with the information in the slave trade database, I have tried to arrive at a deeper understanding of the regional variety in patterns of commodity trade which developed alongside the slave trade.

Having established these long-term patterns of commodity trade, I move in part 2 to the comparative study of the three case study regions, using the patterns identified in part 1. The current literature on the commercial transition has highlighted some factors that influenced both economic and political changes in West Africa. To investigate reasons for the extent of the variation in both the long-term patterns of trade and the timing of the commercial transition in the three case study regions, it was first necessary to identify shared common variables, and differentiating factors. On the basis of this investigation, I created an explanatory model was created and that I used as a guiding framework to structure the case-study analyses in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 (see Figure 1.3).

Map 1.2. Enlarged section from Postlethwayt's 1755 map showing the three case study regions, boundaries marked



Source: see footnote 13

1.4. MAIN ARGUMENT

The first part of the thesis argues that the nature of the commercial transition in the different case study regions in the nineteenth century was a continuation of existing long term patterns of trade. In the Bight of Biafra, the transatlantic slave trade stimulated substantial growth in both commercial agriculture, for the provisioning of ships for the middle passage, and commodity production for slave merchants in the period before abolition. The subsequent rise of the palm oil industry can therefore be regarded as the continuation of an existing trend, including the market institutions that were developed to facilitate the commodity export sector. Over the long term, non-slave products dominated output from the Gold Coast region except for a relatively short period in the eighteenth century. Exports of captives were already falling from the 1780s, so the abrupt ending of transatlantic slavery in 1807, and subsequent increase in gold production and forest products should be interpreted as a reversion to the earlier, and long established form of trade. Finally, the area of the Bight of Benin that came to be controlled by the kingdom of Dahomey focused exclusively on slave exports. In contrast to the other two regions, there was no response to the demand for slave ship provisions, nor to increasing demand for other export commodities during the eighteenth century. The relatively late transition to commodity exports should thus be seen in the context of the region's long history of specialisation in slave trading.

Having established the stylised facts of these regional patterns of trade, the second part of the thesis presents a new interpretation of the commercial transition. In the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra particular institutions developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to manage trade, control and monopolise violence and extend the power of certain elite groups. These institutions allowed powerful families and individuals to profit (both financially and socially) at least as much from using slaves in the internal economy to produce export commodities, as they could from selling captives into transatlantic slavery. In the Gold Coast, elite status was highly dependent on the production and possession of gold. Demand for gold guaranteed a strong domestic market for coerced labour, which could effectively compete with export of captives to the Americas. In the Bight of Biafra, trade with the Atlantic world provided the wealth that underpinned the power of powerful groups, families and individuals across the region. However, there were no ideological or economic barriers to trading in commodities as opposed to slaves. This meant that when demand for African commodities in European markets began to rise at the end of the eighteenth century, households could respond by using their free and coerced labour to increase production of other commodities, due to the support of groups who could trade and market these goods to foreign merchants.

By contrast, the Dahomean state developed in a late seventeenth and eighteenth century context where a militarised, slave raiding institutional model enabled the monarchy, with the support of elite families and lineage groups, to monopolise wealth and power. The transfer of large amounts of labour to other forms of economic activities, such as palm oil production, directly threatened this power. It was only under extreme pressure in the late 1840s, due to the increasingly effective abolition efforts of the British, the rise of regional competitors and military setbacks, that it became worthwhile for elites to invest in the development of a

commodity export sector. The following section will set out which factors were relevant, and which were not, in the development of institutions that were either accommodating to the commercial transition or which encouraged a focus on the export of captives.

1.5. EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK

Shared factors that cannot explain regional variation in the commercial transition

There are two factors that were common across all major slave exporting areas in West Africa and, as such, cannot provide a satisfactory explanation for the varying ways in which African societies responded post-1807 to abolition. First, the efforts undertaken by the British to prevent other nations from continuing the slave trade. Second, changes in either the African supply of slaves, or the demand for slaves from New World plantation owners. After first substantiating these claims, the chapter will continue with an overview of explanatory factors that account for the observed variation.

British slave trade patrols

The decision by the British parliament to withdraw from the transatlantic slave trade, and to dedicate a good deal of military and diplomatic effort to abolishing the traffic in coerced labour to the Americas, ultimately led to the end of the trade by the 1860s (Klein 2010, pp188-211). However, abolition efforts in the period up to the 1830s, although not entirely unimportant, did not have a decisive impact on the commercial transition in the three case study areas. The particular case of the Gold Coast will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 5, but for now I will provide a broad overview of the military and diplomatic efforts of British attempts to halt transatlantic slavery before the late 1830s to underpin the claim that if African merchant elites had wanted to continue the export of slaves, they had ample opportunities to do so.

Table 1.1 shows the areas where the British concentrated the activity of their anti-slave patrols during the first 30 years of the abolition era. Until the 1820s the vast majority of ships captured were in the Sierra Leone region of Africa, and the Caribbean, where the British had permanent settlements and harbours. The patrols then switched their focus to the Bights of Benin and Biafra, the centres of most of the slave trading in West Africa during this period. Defying the fact that the squadron was based in Freetown, the Gallinhas region down the coast was able to develop a new, thriving market in slaves, mainly to Cuba (Jones 1983). In the period when the navy began to concentrate its efforts in the 'Bights' there was a resurgence in slave numbers from this region, probably driven by more competitive prices of captives compared to other major slave markets further down the coast in Angola (*Appendix 1.1, 1.2*). There were three principal reasons for the lack of effectiveness in British abolition

efforts: a lack of financial commitment to upscale navy patrols, anti-British hostility and the illegality of boarding foreign vessels or attacking African territory without due cause.

Table 1.1 Ships captured and condemned by the Royal Navy 1808 – 1839 by region of capture

	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	Sierra Leone	Gold Coast	West Central Africa	Atlantic	Caribbean
1808 – 1815	9	15	48	2	2	2	38
1816 – 1820	7	4	25	3	0	1	2
1821 – 1825	11	35	8	4	0	0	2
1826 – 1830	34	44	15	2	0	1	22
1831 – 1835	6	33	4	1	0	2	16
1836 – 1839	28	48	33	10	9	1	25

Source: TNA - FO315 (data from Grindal 2016, pp761-83)

The British government was initially unwilling to support its enthusiastic anti-slavery rhetoric with any significant expenditure on a military force capable of deterring slave traders. Until the establishment of an official anti-slavery patrol in 1818 under Sir James Yeo, the navy relied on an ad hoc squadron of vessels based around Sierra Leone (Wills 2012). Even then the patrol consisted of only 6 ships covering some 2,000 miles of coast and, although this figure was to rise it was never sufficient to seriously deter slavers.¹⁵ Furthermore, many of the vessels in the patrol in its earlier days tended to be older vessels, which could often be outrun by slave ships (Brooks 1970, p111). Anti-British sentiment also hampered the cause, especially in France and America. After the war of 1812, the United States, despite being on paper an ally of Britain in the fight against the slave trade, made no serious efforts to limit the involvement of their nations. Even when slavers were caught they were rarely punished in American courts (Brooks 1970, p115).

Perhaps the biggest difficulty was establishing an acceptable legal framework for stopping and searching foreign vessels without risking an international incident (Ryan 2011). Boarding the vessel of another nation constituted a violation of sovereignty and was therefore a legitimate reason to declare war. This was something Britain was anxious to avoid after the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris in 1814, which finally brought peace to the continent after the Napoleonic Wars. In practice this meant that it was relatively easy for ships to evade

¹⁵ The number remained under ten during the 1820s, and began to increase in the 1830s and by 1848 there were 27 naval ships. However even this was far from enough as admitted by a naval officer during the 1842 parliamentary enquiry into West Africa. When asked “*Is it your opinion that the trade could effectually and permanently put down by ships of war?*” he replied “*No, I do not think it could; it would take all our navy to do it, I should think, to watch the coast*”, Clegg to enquiry, paras 1599 – 1604. While the French and the Americans were later to join in this effort their anti-slave patrols seem to have had even less impact (Brooks 1970).

being captured by simply flying the flags of nations, such as the United States, whose vessels were off-limits to the British (Brooks 1970, p62). Law (2010) supports this, noting that boarding vessels was often contrary to international law. In addition, he notes that international maritime law also recognised that each sovereign nation controlled the 3 miles of water from their shores (essentially a cannon shot). British ships following slavers into the lagoons and rivers of Africa were therefore violating this widely accepted principle.¹⁶ This legal argument was used by Africans to protest against British actions, such as the destruction of slave barricoons at Gallinahs by a British officer in 1840. A review of these actions by a parliamentary committee endorsed the opinion of the local rulers and the commander was later sued by a Spanish trader for damages suffered by the destruction of his property. The eventual outcome of the case was to declare that British captains could not be held personally liable for their actions, which gave them an effective *carte blanche* to engage in military action in Africa, but this was not until 1848 (Law 2010, p155).

At the same time, reasons for the falling number of slave embarkations from West Africa may also have included the impact of trading south of the equator becoming a more attractive prospect for slave merchants. Eltis (2009) argues that abolition mainly affected the trade which sailed around the Northern Atlantic Gyre¹⁷ which was dominated by North European trading nations. The bilateral trade between the Americas and Africa, which used the Southern Atlantic Gyre, was largely unaffected and grew considerably during the first few decades of the nineteenth century. During the initial negotiations with Spain and Portugal on the subject of the slave trade, Britain agreed that the slave trade south of the equator would be excluded from their abolition efforts. In addition, this region had remained unaffected by the conflicts in the second half of the eighteenth century in the north Atlantic and local slave supplies were more reliable. As West Central Africa had been the largest supplier of captives until the 1750s, the shift southwards could also be seen as a resumption of a more established long term pattern of trading that had briefly been interrupted by the rise of West African export slavery (Eltis 2009, p128).

The slave trade patrols did eventually become more successful in the 1830s and this was, in the analysis of both Eltis (2009) and Law (2010), mainly the result of the British defying international law in the name of their humanitarian goals. The Equipment Act of 1839 authorised the British navy to seize vessels of other nations if they were simply equipped for the slave trade, without carrying any slaves (Thomas 1999, p658). Spain agreed to this measure in 1835 but the Brazilian parliament refused, leading the British to unilaterally impose this law in 1839 until Brazil reluctantly agreed to accept it in 1842 (Law 2004, p157, Martinez 2011, p92). The Royal Navy was also prepared to violate African territorial sovereignty, bombarding Whydah in 1841 (Law 2004, p190) and Lagos in 1851 (Mann 2007, p84). They expanded the remit of the patrol to Brazilian and Cuban waters in the 1850s and 1860s, which meant that slaves could no longer be imported in sufficient numbers for the

¹⁶ Opposition to the character of British anti-slavery policy was also to be found in Britain. The Duke of Wellington publicly opposed the 1839 equipment act had a 'criminal character' (Thomas 1999, p658)

¹⁷ A system of ocean currents that rotate clockwise around the Atlantic north of the equator

trade to be profitable (Reid 1986, p 282, Law 2004, p191, Klein 2010, p196). In the long term these efforts not only enforced the ending of the transatlantic slave trade but also set a precedent which put Africa outside of the norms of international law and laid the legal foundations for the justification of colonialism (Law 2010).

In summary, in both the Gold Coast and Biafra the commercial transition was well under way before abolition efforts began to have a meaningful impact. In the case study chapters I will be argued that certain aspects of British abolition policy are important for understanding the *timing* of the move away from export slavery, but they cannot explain the ultimate *causes* of different inter-regional transitions in export composition.

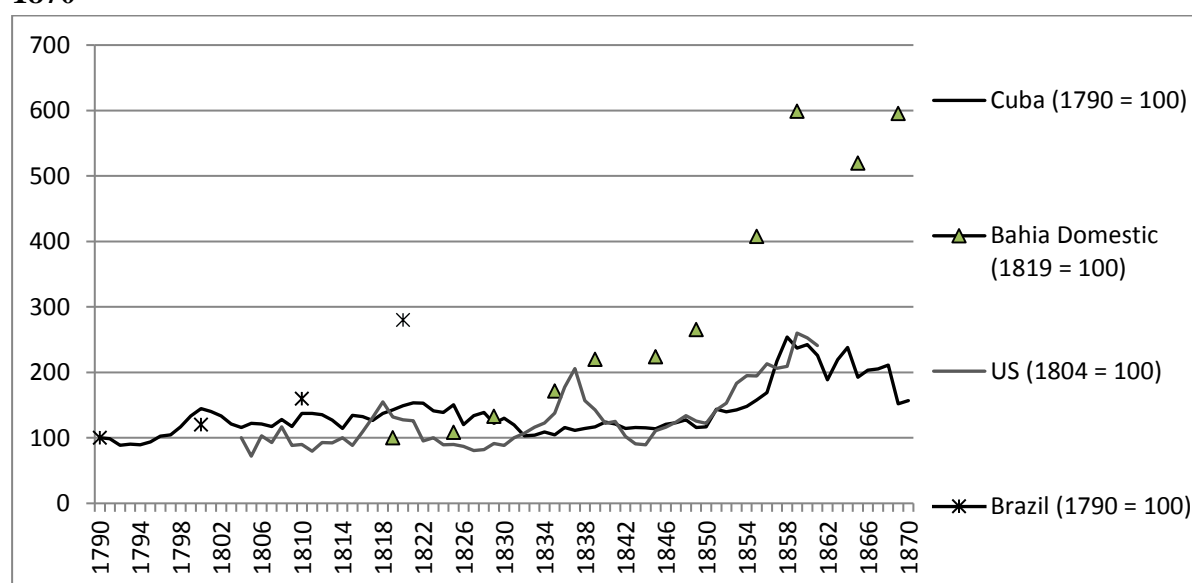
Changing demand for, or changing supply of, African slaves

Changes in the demand for or supply of African slaves are also unlikely to explain the intra-regional variation in patterns of the commercial transition. Austin (2013, p249) suggests that, in some areas of West Africa, the supply of slaves came under strain towards the end of the eighteenth century because those bearing the brunt of slave raiding had learnt to defend themselves more effectively. This forced raiders to seek new sources of slaves at ever increasing distances from the coast which increased costs, forced up slave export prices and led to fewer slaves reaching embarkation ports (Klein 2001). Other literature has effectively argued that the violence attending the slave trade led to depopulation, which further restricted supply (Inikori 2011, p669, Nunn 2008, p142, Manning 1990, p171). However, the expansion of 'legitimate commerce' saw a corresponding rise in domestic slavery, since coerced labour was a prerequisite for any increase in West African commodity production (Austin 2008a, 2008b, 2009, Lovejoy 2011, p161). If slaves were simply transferred from one to another form of economic activity, a possible supply shortage cannot have been a leading cause of the retreat from slave exporting. Moreover, regarding the domestic African economy, studies by Austin (2005, pp43,130–133) and Lovejoy & Richardson (1995a & b) indicate that the internal market for slaves was fairly integrated. Their data is based on a limited number of observations from the interior regions and the coast, but it nonetheless reveals a significant degree of price convergence. So even if sources of supply would have dried up in some areas, the internal West African trade in slaves created a situation in which those who wanted to sell slaves to European vessels, would have opportunities to find supplies from elsewhere.

As for demand, some sources suggest that planters in the Americas had a preference for slaves from the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast rather than from the Bight of Biafra (Eltis 2000, pp186–87). Ultimately, however, the priorities for slave traders were speed of embarkation and reliability of credit arrangements, enabling supply of the greatest numbers of captives as quickly and cheaply as possible (Eltis et al. 2007, p1339). When merchants in the Bight of Biafra, and particularly the port of Bonny, began efficiently embarking large numbers of captives, planters were happy to buy Biafran slaves (Lovejoy & Richardson 2004, p364, Nwokeji 2010, pp22,42). In other words, as long as demand remained high, local traders continued to have an opportunity to sell.

Demand for coerced labour from Atlantic and African markets remained high and evenly spread. Within the Americas, recent scholarship has generally supported the argument of Drescher (2004, 2010) that the plantation system was growing in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁸ The value of coerced labour continued to grow in all parts of the Americas, thus ensuring that there were still considerable profits to be made from the transportation of slaves across the Atlantic (Figure 1.2). This was a consequence of the fact that, with the exception of some non-sugar producing states in the United States and the island of Barbados, no slave importing region was able to achieve a fully self-sustaining slave population (Tadman 2000, Curtin 1972, p60). This ensured that there was always, until at least the 1850s, a demand for slave imports from Africa. Thus, the variegated commercial transitions cannot be adequately explained by differences in internal market prices for slaves.

Figure 1.2. Price indices of the average costs for slaves in Brazil, Cuba and the US 1790 - 1870



Sources: Bergard (1995), Miller (1986), Historical Statistics of the United States Table Bb209 – 214, de Queirós Mattoso, Klein & Engerman (1986)

Factors that may explain regional variation in the commercial transition

This thesis argues that the following five factors did have an impact upon the different paths of commercial transition in the three regions it explores. The first factor relates to **certain aspects of region-specific ecologies**. All regions were able to produce commodities for export to Atlantic markets. The Asante either directly or indirectly controlled the areas where gold was produced and transported to the coast. In addition, the Asante exercised a near monopoly on kola nuts. These were a kind of stimulant, which was not considered *haram* among the Islamic states of the savannah. Nonetheless, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a series of jihads created a new, strongly Islamist empire which consumed increasing quantities of kola and whose only source for this product was in

¹⁸ See for example Davis (2006) who argues that plantation system of the American south was run according to principles of mass production which would become standard working practices in the twentieth century.

territories held by the Asante (see Chapter 5). The Bight of Biafra was particularly well endowed with both oil palms and riverine trade systems necessary to transport oil to the coast (Lynn 1997, pp61-62). In the Bight of Benin, despite the absence of palm oil exports in the period under study, the region was endowed with an ecology suitable for oil palms (see Chapter 7).

The eastern side of the Bight of Benin, partly controlled by Dahomey, was also suitable for palm oil production (Bold 1822, p62). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the focus of Dahomey's trade shifted eastwards towards the towns of Cotonou and Godomey. From this area, palm oil could be transported directly to these towns by rivers from the interior (Law 2004, pp228-30). After 1850, the production of palm oil and, from the 1860s, of palm kernels, increased rapidly. Manning (1982, p52) estimates that by the 1880s, around 5,000 tons of oil and about 7,600 tons of palm kernels were being produced yearly for ocean-bound exports from Dahomean territories.¹⁹ Thus, this region's lasting focus on the slave trade was not because there were ecological constraints to the production of tropical forest commodities for export markets.

However, some aspects of each region's ecology were important due to their influence over the other factors outlined below. In the case of the Asante, the presence of gold within their territories was crucial to state and societal development. Within the Bight of Benin two unique geographical features were significant. Firstly, a break in the rainforest belt, which contained more savannah-like conditions, also known as the 'Benin Gap' (Law 1991, p19); secondly, a system of interconnecting lagoons at the coast. These had important consequences for the regional political situation. In the Bight of Biafra, ecology also played an important role. The poor quality of the soil meant the coastal populations had always been dependent on importing foodstuffs from further inland in exchange for fish and salt (see Chapter 6). This commerce was important as it formed the basis of the trade in slave ship provisions during the eighteenth century and in palm oil during the nineteenth century.

The second factor is **the duration and nature of external trade relations**. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the types of products exported and the nationality of the main trading partner remained fairly consistent in each region. Therefore, earlier developments in trade with the Atlantic strongly influenced the nature of the commercial transition. The presence of gold was of central importance for the Gold Coast region and the Asante. In fact, the first Europeans to go to West Africa in the fifteenth century went in search of gold (Shumway 2014, p25, 51). For the first two centuries of contact with the Atlantic world, this region's trade output was dominated by gold which in turn had a powerful influence on the development of institutions and elite attitudes to external trade.

¹⁹ To put this into context, according to the British customs' records, exports of palm oil from the Bight of Biafra did not regularly exceed 5,000 tons until the 1820s. In 1855 the port of Calabar was exporting around 4,000 tons of oil, the Cameroons 2,110 tons and Brass 2280 tons. Only the ports of Bonny and Elem Kalabari exported more (Lynn 1997, p21).

By contrast, in the Bight of Benin external trade expanded rapidly from the 1660s and, as already established, only slaves were traded to Europeans. Embarkations from the region were usually well under 1,000 a year in the 1640s but over 10,000 people a year were regularly being taken from the region by the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Gold Coast did not begin exporting so many captives until the 1750s.²⁰ This had a decisive impact on the development of the Dahomean state and, more importantly, on the development of an elite culture based on militarism, which was profoundly suspicious of other types of external trade. In the Bight of Biafra, the export of slaves only became significant from the 1740s onwards, although captives had been embarked there since the sixteenth century. In both the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin external trade was a crucial factor in the development of centralised states in the late seventeenth century. The relatively late expansion of external trade in Biafra meant that the region remained characterised by far smaller, decentralised political entities, often no bigger than villages. Trade was coordinated by a trading network under the control of the Aro people that allowed the region to export significant quantities of both captives and commodities. In this environment, power and wealth were entirely dependent on trade, not on military success or the maintenance of states.

Related to the previous factor was **the nationality of each region's main trade partners**. Slave merchants along the Bight of Benin sold far more captives to the Portuguese and French than they did to the British, while slave merchants in the Gold Coast and Biafra did most of their business with ships from Bristol, Liverpool and London. As will be shown in Chapters 3 and 4, the British tended to buy far more commodities and food provisions in West Africa than other European traders. The extent to which national European trade preferences influenced regional trade specialization in Africa in the eighteenth century is unclear and ecology may have been central in determining the former's preferences as well, but the *identity* of the trade partner was important in explaining the nature of local commercial transitions.

Next, there is the **regional political context**. The Asante and Dahomean states were both militarily powerful, expansive empires under a centralised authority supported by powerful elite families and lineage groups. Furthermore, these states had their origins in the mid- to late seventeenth century and established military superiority over their neighbours by the adoption and effective use of firearms. By the 1740s, the Asante had defeated all major rivals and achieved political and economic regional hegemony. However, Dahomey was never able to secure such a position, which was mainly due to regional ecological barriers to military control. The dryer conditions of the Benin gap allowed the cavalry-based armies of Oyo to threaten Dahomean territories until the 1800s, while the coastal lagoon system permitted the establishment of rival slave trading centres. These threats, in turn, strengthened the military ideology of the ruling elites, and this ideology also affected the types of trade they were willing to engage in. In the Bight of Biafra the lack of centralised states meant that there were no substantial territories to either defend or attack, thus eliminating the need for powerful elite

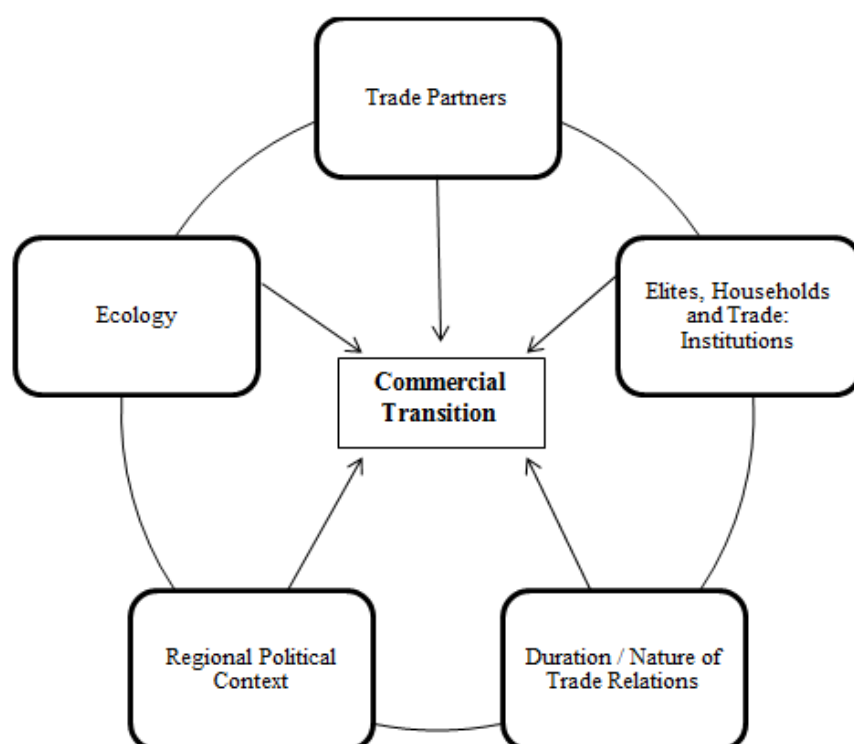
²⁰ www.slavevoyages.org

individuals or families to maintain permanent military forces, or to base their power or legitimacy on military success.

Finally, there was the **attitude of the different regional elites to household participation in trade**. As will be argued in the case study chapters, the main unit of production for all major export commodities were households, supported by coerced labour. However, transporting and marketing goods to Atlantic traders required complex trade networks, the ability to provide and guarantee credit and to establish relationships of trust with foreign traders. This was beyond the capacity of individual households and required the support of more powerful individuals or groups who had previously managed the sale and marketing of slaves. In the case of Asante and Dahomey external trade was managed by the state and aristocratic elites, while in the Bight of Biafra it was the Aro network working with coastal trading organisations and influential individuals in the interior. The literature indicates that in Asante and Biafra the aforementioned groups were prepared to engage in both the slave and commodity trades (McCaskie 2003, p42; Wilks 1993, p127; Nwokeji 2010, pp183-85). In Dahomey, the monarchy, the elite families and lineage groups were, for the reasons outlined above, profoundly distrustful of all types of trade as a means of securing wealth (Law 1991, p344).

The model in Figure 1.3 provides the framework for the analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. This model illustrates my main argument, namely that the interrelated factors determining the initial patterns of trade with the Atlantic world that evolved over the eighteenth century, and sometimes even earlier, continued to influence the nineteenth century commercial transitions, and that the exogenous shock of abolition in 1807 accelerated this transition, but did not put it in motion.

Figure 1.3. Explanatory model for region-specific commercial transitions



1.6 DATA AND SOURCES

In his overview of currently available datasets Manning (2012) notes that there had been no new statistics on trade with Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries since the publication of the Johnson et al.'s (1990) limited dataset on the British customs records from 1699 to 1808. Moreover, there have also been very few quantitative studies of regional economic development in pre-colonial West Africa since Curtin's (1973, 1975) study of Senegambia, and Inikori's (2002) work on Africa's contribution to Britain's industrial revolution.²¹ The data collected for this research may thus be considered as a contribution to what remains a rather underdeveloped field of empirically grounded research.

The main sources used in this thesis are derived from archives in the United Kingdom, The Netherlands and France. In the national archives in London, I explored two main sources. Firstly, the customs records, which detail goods arriving from and leaving for Africa in British ships and form the basis of the dataset detailed in Chapter 4. Secondly, the T70 series, which include the records of the Royal Africa Company (RAC).²² Research on the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was greatly aided by the four volume transcription

²¹ A notable exception would be the work of Rönnbäck on economic change along the Gold Coast in the eighteenth century. See in particular Rönnbäck (2014, 2015)

²² The RAC continued operating until 1752 when the business was officially wound up by an act of parliament and its assets transferred to the Africa Company of Merchants (Pettigrew 2013, p176).

of RAC letters by Law (1997) and the records of the private merchant Henry Morice from the 1720s. After the 1750s, the T70 series includes the accounts, reports and letters from the government-subsidized forts on the African coast, although this information is largely confined to the Gold Coast region. I also found a number of other useful sources in the National Archives. These included the accounts of the Bristol merchant James Rogers (C107 series), and some new accounts of individual slaving voyages. In addition, there were the government Blue Books and reports and accounts from British officials as they began to establish and extend imperial power on the coast.

Another important source of information from the United Kingdom was the private accounts and letters of slave merchants held at the Maritime Archives and Public Library in Liverpool. The most important of these were those of William Davenport (D/DAV series) and Thomas Leyland (DX series), but they also included the log books of other slave trading ships. At the Bristol Library I had access to the Bristol presentments which listed all the ships leaving that port along with their cargoes from 1789. Finally, the Parliamentary archives held at the House of Commons in London provided additional macro-level data on the trade and commerce of Great Britain. They also included several important reports and commissions which examined the slave trade, the British presence in Africa and the progress of abolition and ‘legitimate commerce’.

In the Netherlands, the records of the *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie* (MCC), held in Middelburg, provided a very rich source of information. The most important documents were the accounts of the voyages to Africa for both slaves and commodities which were particularly useful for the level of detail recorded. This included exactly where goods and captives were bought, as well as prices in Africa. The archives also hold records of sales of goods in Europe as well as letters and instructions to captains. In France, the archives of the Loire Atlantique in Nantes have the account books for various important French merchants in the second half of the eighteenth century, providing important insights into the different ways the transatlantic slave trade operated.

There are a number of important accounts written at the time. Firstly, there are books written by those who had first-hand experience of either trade in slaves or commodities. They came from diverse backgrounds, working as captains (Phillips 1693, Barbot 1732, Newton 1765, Crow 1830), surgeons (Dapper 1676, Atkins 1735, Falconbridge 1788), surveyors (Smith 1745) or residents on the coast (Bosman 1705, Meredith 1812, Monrad 1822). Their motivations seem to have largely been to share or perhaps monetize their experiences in an exotic location. One source which has not yet been used extensively by historians is that of Parfitt (1796), a commodity trader hired in the 1790s to explore non-slave commercial opportunities in West Africa.²³ Those working as captains during the era of the commodity trade such as Adams (1822) and Bold (1823) seem to have been looking to sell their

²³ British Library, Add Mss 12131, ‘Mr Parfitts information on Trade between Sierra Leone and Cape Lopez w. Islands St Thomas etc.’ and ‘Extract of a Diary Kept by E.L. Parfitt on the Board the Sierra Leone Company’s Ship *Calypso*’, Papers Relating to Sierra Leone, ff. 174 – 320. See Schwarz 2007, p262 for biographical details.

experience in Africa to the new breed of traders working in a post abolition world. In either case, their observations rarely go beyond the coastal ports and are most reliable when they talk of trade, rather than the societies and peoples of West Africa.²⁴

The eighteenth century saw two important histories of the kingdom of Dahomey by Norris (1789) and Dalzel (1793), although the purpose of the latter was predominantly an anti-abolitionist tract seeking to prove that African states were far too savage to ever be persuaded to give up the slave trade. There are also contemporary accounts by people within the abolition movement, which aimed to highlight the ugly realities of slave trading for African captives and crew members involved in slave voyages. However, as many were written by men with no direct experience of Africa such as Clarkson (1788) or Buxton (1840), they are more useful as sources for the experiences of British participants in the slave trade. The exceptions are the accounts by Falconbridge (1788), a ship's surgeon, and Equiano (1794) a freed slave who was probably captured from the region around the Bight of Biafra.²⁵

In the nineteenth century, greater European involvement in the interior of Africa led to more in-depth studies of the states of societies trading with the Europeans. Some of these accounts were due to the missions sent by the British government to the states of Asante (Bowdich 1819, Dupuis 1834), and Dahomey (Forbes 1851) to discuss the ending of the slave trade. Others were written by a new generation of British officials posted to manage colonial possessions as opposed to trading stations (Cruikshank 1853, Burton 1864), explorers (Lander 1832, Laird & Oldfield 1837) and missionaries (Waddell 1863).

1.7. ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is divided into two parts. Chapter 2 introduces the first part with a broad overview of regional patterns of trade. In this chapter, I look at evidence from three different trading organisations working from around 1700 to the 1760s. This chapter argues that recognised regional patterns of commodity trading were already established in the eighteenth century and that these continued into the era of abolition. However, the data presented is limited as it doesn't quantitatively examine either commercial agricultural output or the period in the decades before abolition. These will be subject of the following two chapters.

Chapter 3 examines regional patterns and European demand for slave ship provisioning in the long eighteenth century, and explores the extent to which the eighteenth century intensification of the trans-Atlantic slave trade boosted commercial agriculture in the coastal

²⁴ See Law (1982) for an analysis of the problems of using Barbot and Dantzig (1974) on Bosman for some discussion of the reliability / validity of using these sources

²⁵ Recently Carretta (2005) has suggested that Equiano may in fact have been born in America. This provoked a somewhat acrimonious debate (see Lovejoy 2006, Carretta 2007, Lovejoy 2007), although it seems that the balance of opinion is that Equiano's account was based on his own experiences of being kidnapped from Igboland and brought to the coast (Byrd 2006, Sweet 2009)

areas of West Africa. Together with Ewout Frankema, I have analysed the provisioning strategies of 187 British, French, Dutch and Danish slave voyages conducted between 1681 and 1807, and call for a major downward adjustment of available estimates of the slave trade induced demand impulse. During the eighteenth century, an increasing share of the foodstuffs required to feed African slaves was taken on board in Europe instead of West Africa. I explain this trend as resulting from the falling relative costs of European provisions and the increasing risks in the late eighteenth century trade, putting a premium on faster embarkation times. However, there was also considerable variation in provisioning strategies among slave trading nations and, more importantly, across main regions of slave embarkation. Traders in the Bight of Biafra, and to a lesser extent the Gold Coast, provided considerable quantities of commercially produced foodstuffs, and in these areas the expansion of the slave trade did provide a boost to commercial agriculture. By contrast, in the Bight of Benin ships tended to bring the greater bulk of their food with them from Europe and/or stocked up with provisions from other areas along the coast.

Having examined exports of foodstuffs, Chapter 4 turns to other kinds of export commodities, notably palm oil, ivory, gums and sylvan products such as dyewoods. Using a newly constructed dataset on the quantities and prices of African commodities over the long eighteenth century, this chapter quantifies the changing nature of the non-slave trade with West Africa in the era before the abolition of the British transatlantic slave trade. Together with Jop Woltjer, I have found that previous estimates of both the volume and value of the commodity trade are underestimates which fail to account for regional variations in output. Our data shows instead that from the 1770s there was a significant expansion in what would later be called 'legitimate commerce'. This growth was centred around the Bight of Biafra and the vast majority of these goods were purchased by slave ships, not the specialist bi-lateral traders who had dominated the trade earlier in the century. I argue that slave merchants were motivated by both rising prices in European markets and by the relative stability of prices on the African coast. Furthermore, both European and African merchants in some areas of the Bight of Biafra faced increasing levels of risk and competition in the latter decades of the eighteenth century. This may have prompted some of them to diversify their portfolios of goods through investment in the commodities trade to better manage these risks.

The data in part 1 clearly shows that there were distinct long-term regional patterns of trade. In the Bight of Biafra, the slave trade provided a substantial stimulus to the development of other types of exports. In the Gold Coast, the slave and commodity trades seem to have been compatible until the 1780s, but both types of export were in decline in the two decades before abolition. In the area of the Bight of Benin controlled by Dahomey, the exports were captives destined for slavery in the Americas. This suggests firstly that participation in either the slave or commodity trades was a result of internal decisions, not on the efforts of abolitionists. Secondly, it shows that transatlantic slavery did not necessarily crowd out other forms of market activity. The following Chapters will examine, using the model developed earlier, the factors motivating the elites and households in the case study regions to either respond to, or ignore, the market for non-slave exports.

The first case study, of the Gold Coast region and more specifically the Asante empire, shows that the export of people was a relatively short interruption to a pattern of trade dominated by

the application of coerced labour to the production of commodities and, more specifically, gold. Institutional developments made gold the most important marker of status and wealth within the region and more specifically Asante. This in turn meant that there was always a strong internal market for slaves as factors of production. A near monopoly of regional output through control of goldfields and lack of external threats meant the Asante state was far less dependent on slave exports to acquire crucial European imports. It also led to the Asante developing strong links to northern savannah markets, affording them the opportunity to rapidly develop an alternative export commodity, kola, to service the new Islamic states of the interior at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Crucially, both elites and households stood to gain from the end of transatlantic slavery, which explains why the withdrawal of the region's biggest buyer of slaves in 1807 was sufficient to effectively end the export of slaves.

In Biafra, the wealth and power of elite institutions, both in the interior and at the coast, was always dependent on trade, and not on the maintenance of more centralised states or the broadcast of military power. This was probably in large part due to the relatively late expansion of export slavery in the region, which meant that networks developed that did not require centralised states or large scale raiding to handle large numbers of captives. These networks always handled both slaves and commodities and, as with Asante elites, were not materially disadvantaged by the commercial transition. Households could harness the coerced labour that would otherwise have been exported to gain access to goods that enhanced their living standards. Consequently, when British abolition efforts finally became effective in the late 1830s, it was in the context of an already highly developed and expanded commodity export economy and was therefore sufficient to end the export of slaves.

By contrast in Dahomey there were strong, path dependent reasons why a commodity export sector did not develop until transatlantic slavery was effectively over. Firstly, its institutional development was heavily influenced by a late seventeenth century regional political context, in which slave exports formed the basis of wealth and power. This encouraged the development of a highly-militarised state, which enhanced the wealth and power of elites. It was also a necessary development, given the inability of any one polity to gain any kind of regional hegemony, meaning the state was always threatened, either militarily or economically, by other regional powers. The high labour demands of both the military and a more powerful elite meant that labour was always directed towards the goals of elites and not households. In that event, the development of a significant export commodity sector was only possible in the 1840s in the context of more effective British abolition efforts and domestic military setbacks.

CHAPTER 2

REGIONAL PATTERNS OF TRADE IN THE MAJOR WEST AFRICAN SLAVE EXPORTING REGIONS OVER THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

“...the bowels and surface of Africa, abound in valuable and useful returns...”
Olaudah Equiano (1794 p357)

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Part 1 of this thesis will quantitatively examine the patterns of the commodity trade in the three case study regions and to reveal how they interacted with transatlantic slavery in the century before abolition. The current literature on West African trade in the century before abolition has focused almost entirely on the commerce in captives. There has been very little quantitative analysis of the development of the trade in commodities and commercial agriculture and how this interacted with transatlantic slavery. This contrasts with studies of earlier periods, when commodities played a far bigger role in the trade between Africa and the Atlantic. Non-slave products, especially gold and ivory, initially attracted Spanish and Portuguese traders to the region (Lovejoy 2011, p36, Thornton 1998, p26). The initial rise in demand for coerced labour for the Iberian empires of the Americas from the 15th to early seventeenth Centuries was largely met by the West Central African region (Lovejoy 2011, p47). Until North European nations began to acquire sugar producing Caribbean Islands in the 1630s, they generally focused their trading efforts on the acquisition of commodities.

Even after by states such as England and the Dutch Republic began to expand their plantation economies, commodities were still an important part of their overall trade with Africa. Supporting earlier work by Van den Boogaart (1992), Den Heijer's (1997) research into Dutch West India Company (WIC) accounts shows that between 1674 and 1740, 64% of the goods dispatched to Africa for trade were intended for non-slave commodities. Of these, ivory and gold made up by far the largest percentage (86.6% gold, 10.3% ivory) in terms of value, but other products were still bought in large quantities.²⁶ Even though the British were buying ever more slaves from the 1650s, it wasn't until the last decades of the seventeenth century that their value passed that of commodities (Eltis 1994). However, after the 1680s there was a huge expansion in the transatlantic slave trade and by the beginning of the eighteenth century captive labour had become West Africa's most important export. This has led many scholars to devote insufficient attention to the growth and development of other African exports (Eltis 2013, pp31-32). Part 1 of this thesis will show that this neglect has meant that important long term patterns have been ignored, and these patterns are crucial for understanding the nature of

²⁶ For example, while only consisting of 0.54% of the value of goods the WIC still imported 1,323,548 pounds of Pepper against 2,955,533 pounds of Ivory (Den Heijer 1997)

the commercial transition in the nineteenth century. Some have argued that the export of captives undermined and crowded out other forms of commercial exchange (Inikori 2007, 2011, Rodney 1972). By contrast, the following chapters will show that export slavery, in some areas, greatly stimulated trade in other products.

During the period under study, the different regions of West Africa generally exported the same kinds of commodities, even if the relative quantities changed over time. Along all parts of the coast, slave ships could buy food to feed themselves and their cargoes of captives in advance of the middle passage. Eltis (2013) suggests the scale of this trade in provisions was not exceeded by 'legitimate commerce' until the 1850s. The extent and regional variations of this trade will be examined in Chapter 3. In addition, some agricultural products were bought with the intention of selling back in Europe. Pepper had been purchased since the sixteenth century but from the 1770s palm oil, which had previously only been bought to provision slave ships, became increasingly sought after for its industrial applications in Europe. Many regions also exported sylvan products from the tropical rainforests (the most important being dyewoods²⁷, hardwoods and beeswax) and ivory. Most of the region's gold came from the Gold Coast but some was also available along the windward coast in modern day Cote d'Ivoire. Finally, gum Senegal was purchased in large quantities from the Senegambian region in the east. There have been no attempts to quantify the scale of this trade since the publication of Johnson et al. (1990)'s dataset on the British custom's records in the eighteenth century. The growth and development in the trade in these products will be the subject of Chapter 4.

This chapter will first provide a broad overview of West African patterns of trade from the fifteenth to the eighteenth Centuries. It will then continue with the beginning of my quantitative study of the patterns of trade with an examination of data on commodity trading in the earlier eighteenth century. I will argue that the expansion of slavery in the Bight of Biafra did not crowd out other forms of commerce. On the Gold Coast the early eighteenth century saw continued engagement in commodity exports while the slave trade expanded. However, by the 1780s, both slave and commodity exports seem to have begun to decline. In the Dahomean controlled area of the Bight of Benin, there is no evidence of slavery crowding out other forms of commerce, as captives were always the only item of trade.

²⁷ In particular, camwood from around Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast and redwood from the Bights of Benin and Biafra. See Chapter 4 for more details.

2.2. TRADE WITH THE ATLANTIC WORLD

Figure 2.1.a. Number of slaves embarked from the Gold Coast sixteenth to nineteenth centuries

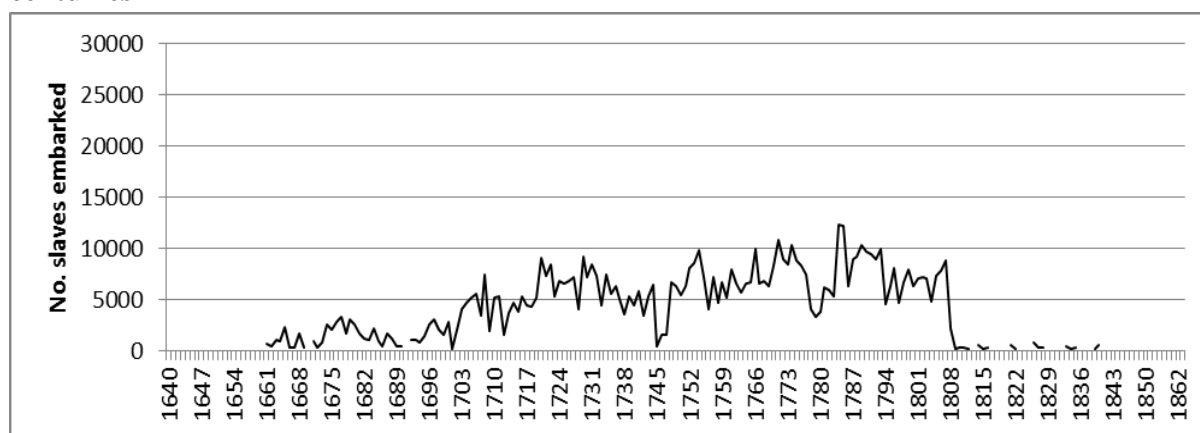


Figure 2.1.b. Number of slaves embarked from the Bight of Biafra sixteenth to nineteenth centuries

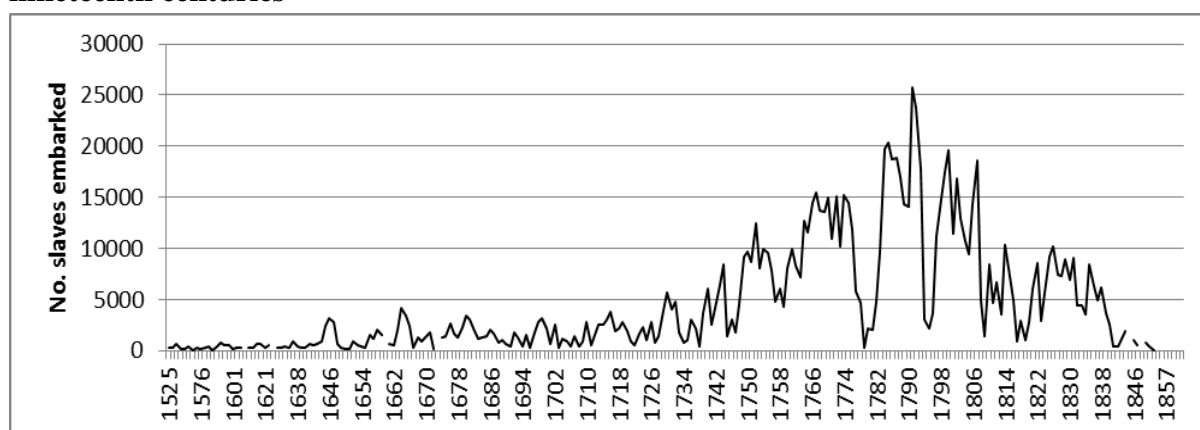
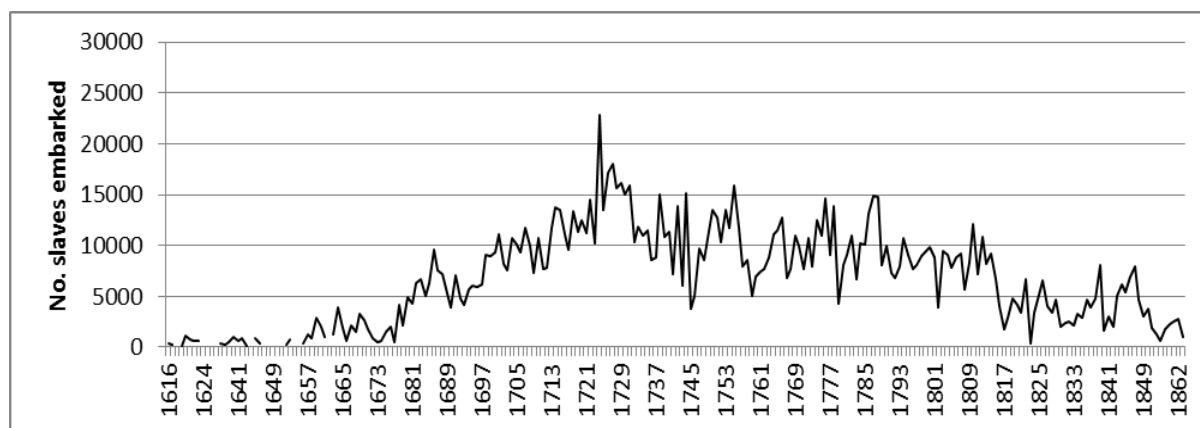


Figure 2.1.c. Number of slaves embarked from the Bight of Benin sixteenth to nineteenth centuries



Source: slavevoyages.org

The Gold Coast

As noted above, gold and to a lesser extent ivory, were the most important exports from this region until the early eighteenth century. From this point until the 1780s, the trend was for exports of captives to rise, although in common with all regions there was a good deal of variation from year to year.²⁸ As noted by Austin (2013) all the case study regions saw a decline in the numbers of captives exported from the mid-1780s. However, in the case of the Gold Coast it was also mirrored by a fall in the output of non-slave products, particularly gold. Parfitt (1796) noted that ships trading around the English, Dutch and Danish forts on the Gold Coast (Cape Coast / Anomabo, Elmina & Accra respectively), could find “*Gold at all of them, Ivory at some of them in particular Accra...*” However, it seems that in practise, little gold was acquired with the intention of importing it back to the UK, but rather as currency for trade within West Africa. From the 1750s the price of gold on the coast began to rise substantially and from the 1770s the region turned into a net importer of the precious metal (Johnson 1966, Metcalf 1987).

Along the Gold Coast barterers were always converted into a trading currency called the ounce, which was in theory the equivalent to the value of an ounce of gold. This was a means by which complex assortments of goods from different points of origin could be valued in relation to the price of slaves (Richardson 1979, pp137-38). In the first half of the eighteenth century the price of an actual ounce of gold to a trade ounce had doubled from 1:1 to 1:2. Johnson (1966) quotes a British trader in 1777 complaining that it was necessary to buy gold in other parts of Africa at more than the prime cost of his goods so as to trade at Annamabo. In his analysis of the accounts of one British trader, Metcalf (1987) notes that by 1776 93.6% of his barterers for slaves included gold and that this constituted around 25% of the total cost. In 1791, the Captain of the British ship, the *Jupiter*, was trading around Cape Coast Castle on behalf of the Bristol merchant James Rogers.²⁹ In his first letter he assures his employer that he will be able to fill the holds of another of his ships, the *Dragon*, with slaves and ivory. To fill up his own ship with a complement of captives he needed to get hold of gold without which he couldn't make his purchases. In order to do this he sold a quantity of ivory to the Governor of Cape Coast Castle in exchange for gold dust which he could then use to purchase slaves.³⁰

This shortage of gold supports the estimates by Garrard (1980, pp127-70) who uses various accounts and observations of traders and foreign visitors to Akan territories to create baseline

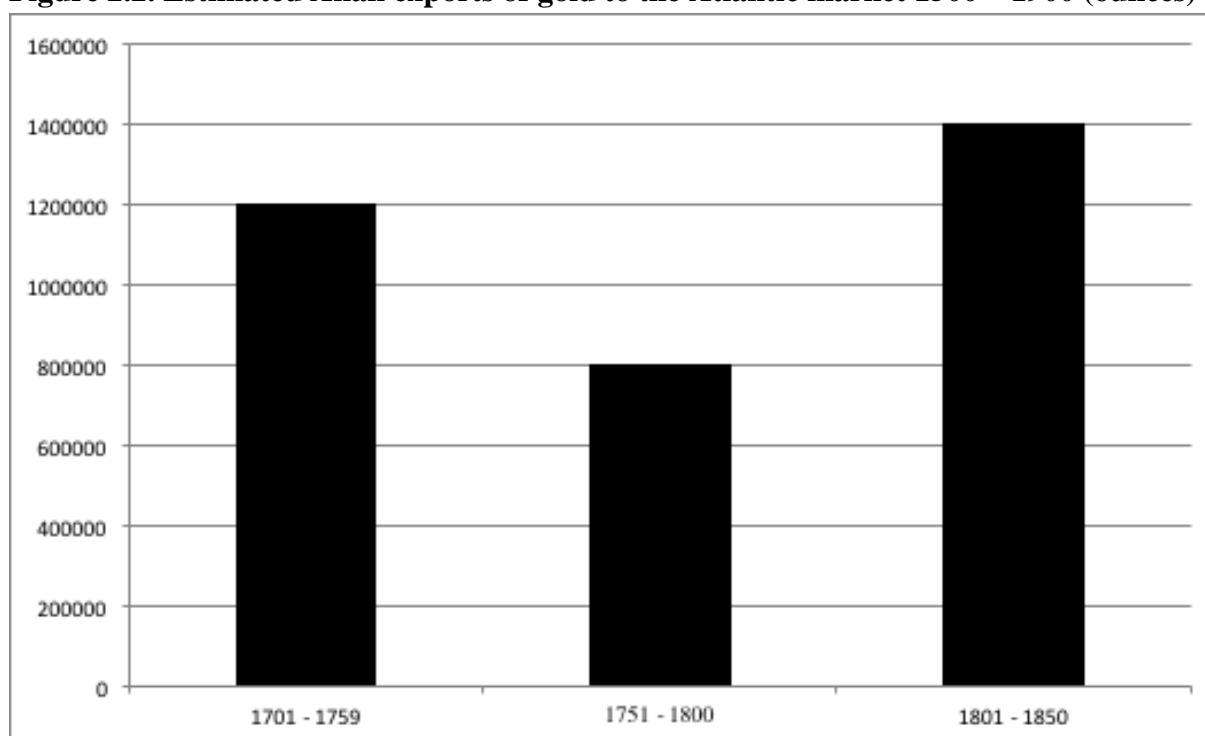
²⁸ These fluctuations were a result of numerous factors, but warfare across the Atlantic played a big role. In particular; War of Spanish Succession (1702 – 1713), War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718 – 1720), War of Jenkins' Ear (1739 – 1742), War of the Austrian Succession (1742 – 1748), French and Indian War / Seven Years War (1754 – 1763), American Revolutionary War / Fourth Anglo Dutch War (1775 – 1784), French Revolutionary / Napoleonic Wars (1793 – 1815), the Haitian revolution (1791 – 1804)

²⁹ Rogers was a Bristol merchant and an important source for the period. The survival of so much of his correspondence is due to the fact that he went bankrupt in 1794 and his estate / assets were seized by the courts. For a full account of his career see Morgan (2003)

³⁰ TNA C107/11 Capt. Smith to Rogers from the *Jupiter* – 27th February, 17th April, 24th July 1791

estimates (Figure 2.2).³¹ As exports of gold rose substantially in the nineteenth century (see Chapter 5) the decline from 1750s was unlikely to have been the result of scarcity but instead reflected a deliberate decision to restrict the quantities sent to the coast. Thus, from the end of the eighteenth century, the Atlantic export sector of the region's economy was shrinking.

Figure 2.2. Estimated Akan exports of gold to the Atlantic market 1500 – 1900 (ounces)



Garrard (1980, p169)

The Bight of Biafra

Even though slaves had been exported from this region since the sixteenth century, their numbers did not significantly expand until the 1740s. From this point they rapidly grew until by the 1790s the Biafran ports of Bonny, Elem Kalabari and Calabar had become the most important slave embarkation points in Africa. However, this growth did not come at the expense of commodity exports. Parfitt notes that at Calabar, “...*palm oil is very plentiful. Ships carry very large quantities home of late from place – It is in general bought for salt, one measure or crew of salt for one of palm oil.*” (p52) Further down the coast, the Cameroons river is a place where there was “....*a great quantity of ivory to be purchased...*” (p54) and in Gabon traders could buy Redwood, Ebony and Wax (p67). Parfitt advised traders to firstly pick up redwood, wax and ebony in Gabon and then proceed to Calabar for oil.

³¹ These estimates are then tested against archaeological evidence and studies of gold production in the Asante to provide rough, and according to the author, conservative figures, which are referenced by Austin (2005, p46).

How this operated in practice can be seen through an analysis of the letters written to James Rogers by his captains trading in the region.³² In 1788, Capt. Richard Rogers of the Pearl who had already been some months at Old Calabar wrote to James Rogers that he expected to “*dispatch Capt. Kennedy in July with 260 prime slaves & 1 ½ ton of ivory, 28 punch. palm oil & 5 to 6 tons Red Wood*”³³. He would then follow after with “*...250 slaves, 1 ½ ton ivory, 20 punch palm oil and 7 ton redwood*”³⁴. The same ship was performing similar duties 2 years later with a Capt. Garnett writing that, “*We have done everything in our power to assist your Pearl.....We have on board 103 punch 97 butts of your Pearl’s purchase & only 8 tons of wood our purchase & 5 ½ tons of ivory.*”³⁵

The commodity trade at Biafra’s main slaving port Bonny seems to have been less developed in the pre-abolition period and only really began to seriously expand in the 1820s (see Chapter 6). Nonetheless, it seems that a market was developing, although perhaps on a smaller scale than at Old Calabar. In 1802 Capt. Kneal of the Liverpool ship Lottery was instructed to go to Bonny and barter his cargo for “*...290 negroes, besides which we expect you will be able to procure a quantity of Palm Oil...*”³⁶ The next year, Capt. Ceasar Lawson was told to “*...barter at Bonny for prime Negroes, Ivory and Palm Oil....*”. He was provided further instruction “*...procure some Palm Oil on reasonable terms which is likely to bear a great price here, we therefore wish you to purchase as much as you can with any of the cargo you may have....*”³⁷

Thus, in the Bight of Biafra, commodity trading and the slave trade seem to have been complementary, rather than antagonistic. The quantitative evidence that will be presented in Chapters 3 and 4 will show that non-slave markets in the region were stimulated by the expansion in number of captives sold to Atlantic slave traders.

The Bight of Benin

Slave exports from this region began to expand earlier, and with far greater intensity, than in the other two regions. Over the course of the eighteenth century over a million captives were embarked from its ports compared to around 700,000 from the Bight of Biafra and about 630,000 from the Gold Coast. Over a third of embarkations were from just one port, Whydah, which had been conquered by the Dahomeans in the 1720s (see Chapter 6). While merchants from the other case study regions were engaging in other forms of trade, only one rather doubtful qualitative source gives any indication that this area was engaging in any other major business but slavery. Norris (1789, p147), an anti-abolition writer who wrote a history of

³² Rogers was primarily a slave trader but like many of contemporaries was supplementing his main business with purchases of wood, oil, ivory and wax (see Chapter 4 for more details).

³³ C107/11 Richard Rogers Ship Pearl to Rogers April 1788

³⁴ C107/11 Richard Rogers Ship Pearl to Rogers 17 June 1788

³⁵ C107/11 Capt. Garnett to Rogers 1791

³⁶ LRO 387 MD 42 Leyland to Capt. Charles Kneal 21 May 1802

³⁷ LRO 387 MD 43 Leyland to Capt. Caesar Lawson 18 July 1803

Dahomey, stated that “large quantities” of palm oil were being exported from the kingdom to Great Britain, but I can find no other source that supports this claim. Furthermore, all studies of the region agree that slaves were the only significant export (Akinjogbin 1967, Manning 1982, Law 1991, 2004).

Parfitt does say that ships looking to trade in Gabon were advised to stop at either Lagos or Whydah to buy what he refers to as “Jebboe Cloths”, which presumably refer to cloth from the Ijebu region of southern Yorubaland near Lagos (Adams 1823, p96). Apparently, these made useful articles of trade when bartering for ivory, beeswax, redwood or ebony around the Cameroon River and Gabon. In addition, Adams (1823, p97) suggests there was some demand for this cloth in Brazil where it was “....*held in much estimation by the black population;....not only on account of its durability, but because it is manufactured in a country which gave many of them, or their parents, birth.*” Bold (1823) notes that “*..vessels intending to trade to the Southward (i.e. South of Bight of Benin) should here lay a stock of Jaboo cloths, which are there greatly esteemed.*” However, he was referring to cloth from the kingdom of Benin, not Dahomey. In addition, this was clearly not a key item of trade as when he provides a list of trade goods suitable for the Cameroon market he does not mention cloth from the Bight of Benin (p84). Norris (1789) and Dalzell (1794) both wrote extensive histories and descriptions of Dahomey which included numerous references to its production of cloth, yet neither ever mention that it was important as an item of export.³⁸ It is probably then safe to assume that while some quantities of local cloth were bought by European traders, this was not a major item of trade.

The datasets in the rest of part 1 will all confirm that at no point did the region that came to be controlled by the Dahomeans ever engage in non-slave exports to the Atlantic.

2.3. TRADE IN AFRICA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Both internal and regional trade will be discussed in greater detail in the case study chapters, but it is worth noting here that there were both similarities and significant differences between the three regions with regard to their involvement in trade within West Africa. In all three areas there was always a trade between the coast and the interior in salt and fish due to the relative paucity of natural sources of protein and salt in the forest regions.³⁹ Likewise salt, mined or extracted from brine lakes, and cattle/meat were traded south from the savannah. Within the region around the Bight of Biafra, fish and salt from the coast and salt from Urburu Lake on the savannah were traded for yams, iron and brass in the forest zone, as well

³⁸ Dalzell (1793) gives descriptions of local cloth (ppvliiv,122) and also mentions how it was sometimes distributed as a reward (pp137,147,190). Norris (1789) likewise provides descriptions of the cloth worn by Dahomean (pp87,146) but again makes no mention of it being exported

³⁹ Protein sources were few due to the presence of the tse-tse fly which limited the number of animals that could survive (Alsan 2015) and salt could only be obtained through pot-ash which was a far inferior product to imports from the coast or the savannah (Lovejoy 1986, p1)

as slaves (Northrup 1978, p73, Lovejoy 1985, p686). Along the Bight of Benin a trade in fish and salt from the coast to the interior was noted from the seventeenth century and likely increased in tandem with the expansion of the slave trade which had a “*multiplier effect upon trade even in purely indigenous commodities...*” Law (1989, pp220-21). There was also a thriving trade along the coastal lagoons and rivers between the slave and gold coasts and which eventually allowed goods to be traded with the Oyo empire in what is today south west Nigeria. Trade goods from the Gold Coast could be exchanged for high quality Yoruba cloth or jewellery and again it is likely that European trade did stimulate this commerce (Law 1989a, pp213,214, Law 2004, p28). Along the Gold Coast fishing and salt production were one of the key (non-agricultural) industries (Shumway 2014, p27) and was noted as an important item of trade with their northern neighbours (Bowdich 1819, p334).⁴⁰

However, long-distance trade was very different. The Akan region in what is today southern Ghana, had a long history of commercial exchange with the interior savannah markets in Hausaland and Borno. Gold, salt and kola nuts⁴¹ were exchanged for manufactured goods such as textiles, leather, ironware (Lovejoy 2004, p15, 156, 176 & Lovejoy 1985, p683). The Dahomeans seem to have developed regular trade links with other African polities, at least by the nineteenth century. The explorer Clapperton reported meeting traders working for the Dahomean king at the town of Kiama in Borgu, which sat on the trade routes between both Dahomey and Asante to Hausaland. They reportedly exchanged European trade goods for around 200 slaves in the area and boasted that the “*....it is from Dahomey that the people of these countries receive all their rum and European articles.*” (Clapperton 1829, pp83,84,123, Law 1989b, p58).⁴² However, all of this trade was dependent on transatlantic commerce, and there is no evidence that the Dahomeans, unlike the Asante, were engaging in the exchange of commodities / products which they had themselves produced. Long-distance trade between the regions around the Bight of Biafra and Hausaland never seemed to have developed, perhaps as suggested by Nwokeji (2010, pp167-168) due to political instability in the areas separating the forest regions from the north. This instability may have discouraged Hausa merchants from investing in the trade for products such as kola, especially when they were available via the Asante (see Chapter 5).

⁴⁰ In the nineteenth century Wilks (1975, p68) notes that the Asante allowed their coastal vassals to pay their tribute in salt.

⁴¹ Kola nuts will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 5. They were small fruits that contained considerable quantities of caffeine and were an important export as they were a stimulant that was not explicitly forbidden in the Koran and therefore of great value in the wealthy Muslim kingdoms in Hausaland and Borno.

⁴² While Clapperton was prepared to accept this statement, it cannot have been true given the rising importance of the port of Lagos at the time (Mann 2007, p40) and the fact that slaves from Yorubaland had been traded for European goods via such ports as Porto Novo throughout the eighteenth century (Law 1989b, pp55–56)

2.4. THE COMMODITY TRADE IN THE EARLIER EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The qualitative and secondary data presented so far suggests certain patterns of trade were already well established in the eighteenth century. We now turn to the first quantitative data on the commodity trade, for the period from around 1700 to the 1760s. It will exclude commercial agriculture for the provisioning of slave ships, which will be covered in the next chapter. The data comes from three sources. Firstly, the records of the British Royal Africa Company, which had been granted a royal monopoly over the trade with Africa in the 1670s. In the first three decades of the eighteenth century it gradually lost out to privately backed enterprises but was still an important carrier of both slaves and commodities (Hair & Law 1998, p259, 260). Secondly, data from private traders, operating out of Bristol, which was the largest slave trading port in England at the time (Richardson 1987, Vol II, pvii). Finally, I examine of the archives of the Dutch Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC), which became the Republic's largest carrier of slaves after the Netherlands West India Company lost its monopoly in the 1720s (Postma 1990, p133).

The Royal Africa Company sent out two types of ship to Africa; one for slaves and the other for commodities (Tables 2.1 & 2.2). What is striking is that while the Bight of Benin took in 30% of their slaving ships, only 7% of commodity vessels sailed there. By far the most important regions for non-slave items were Senegambia and the Gold Coast, where the British also kept the majority of the trading forts.

Table 2.1. Royal Africa Company commodity ships by destination 1679 - 1752

	1679 - 1689	1690 - 1699	1700 - 1709	1710 - 1719	1720 - 1731	1732 - 1752	Total	% Total
Senegambia	8	9	4	3	12	25	61	40
Sierra Leone	8	0	2	7	12	1	30	20
Gold Coast	0	0	3	5	26	11	45	30
Bight of Benin	0	0	0	0	9	1	10	7
Bight of Biafra	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Central Africa	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	3

Source: Database of commodity vessels to Africa: Eltis (2013)

Table 2.2. Royal Africa Company slave ships by destination 1679 - 1752

	1679 - 1689	1690 - 1699	1700 - 1709	1710 - 1719	1720 - 1731	1732 - 1752	Total	% Total
Senegambia	40	12	13	1	14	0	80	15
Sierra Leone	9	7	4	0	3	0	23	4
Gold Coast	22	11	49	21	18	0	121	23
Bight of Benin	90	22	29	7	11	0	159	30
Bight of Biafra	66	7	2	0	0	0	75	14
West Central Africa	42	11	6	0	6	0	65	12

Source: slavevoyages.org

In terms of exactly what was bought we can turn to the invoice books of the Royal Africa Company.⁴³ These are a series of accounts of all the goods that were returned for sale in their vessels from 1721 to 1741 (see Table 2.3). By value, gold and ivory from the Gold Coast were by far the most significant items of trade.⁴⁴ The Bight of Benin also exported ivory, which almost certainly came from the Volta regions around the western Slave Coast or from the Kingdom of Benin, and not from the area around Whydah (Strickrodt 2015, p115, Den Heijer 1997, p134, Johnson & Feinberg 1982, p437). Gold was a significant item of trade along the Bight of Benin, and especially at Whydah, until around the 1760s although it was

⁴³ It should be noted that the RAC's patterns of trade were probably exceptional during this period. The directors of the RAC were actively following a policy of increasing their investment in 'articles of home return' (i.e. commodities) to compensate for their inability to actively compete with independent traders after they lost their legal monopoly on slaves in 1698 (Law 2013, p129).

⁴⁴ Over the period the total value of commodities per region was: Gold Coast £84,030, Senegambia £28,588, Bight of Benin £17,529, Sierra Leone £10,169

brought from Brazil by Portuguese vessels to be either re-exported to other European nations or exchanged for slaves (Law 1990b, p 107 – 12, Den Heijer 1997, p134).

Table 2.3 Value of Commodities (£) bought by RAC ships by region of trade 1721 – 1741 and number of observations (Obs) in the sources

	Beeswax	Gold	Gum	Hides	Ivory	Mallaguetta	Palm Oil	Wood
Region	Value (obs)	Value (obs)	Value (Obs)	Value (Obs)	Value (Obs)	Value (Obs)	Value (Obs)	Value (Obs)
Bight of Benin		15,372 (7)			2,146 (12)			11 (1)
Gold Coast	1,271 (9)	61,696 (16)	23 (4)		17,336 (47)	1,379 (5)	354 (9)	1,970 (10)
Senegambia	17,051 (17)	433 (3)	1,882 (9)	15 (5)	9,168 (34)	1 (1)	23 (1)	15 (3)
Sierra Leone	2,580 (3)	2 (1)			2,827 (8)		11 (1)	4,750 (5)
Total Value	20,902	77,503	1,905	15	31,477	1,380	388	6,746

Source: TNA T70/957, T70/958, T70/959, T70/960

We now turn to the records of private traders. The data in Table 2.4 is taken from Richardson (1986, 1987) and shows 63 slave ships from the port of Bristol 1720 to 1734. The figures in brackets in the second column indicate the total number of ships sent from Bristol during the period. This sample shows ships which recorded bringing back African commodities, although none mentioned gold. The sample does not indicate exactly where the commodities were bought, only where the majority of slaves were purchased. This means that it is very possible that ships bringing back wood from the Gold Coast had first purchased it in Sierra Leone or the Windward coast (where dyewoods were more common).

Whilst limited, the sample does at least indicate that voyages to most regions bought a range of commodities in addition to slaves. The single ship shown going to the Bight of Benin followed the same strategy as RAC vessels in only purchasing ivory. By contrast, traders were picking up a far greater range of products in the Bight of Biafra and the Gold Coast. Richardson (1986 Vol 1, p xvi) has noted that of the 594 vessels which left Bristol for Africa from 1698 to 1729 only 20 were specialist commodity ships but “...most Bristol slave ships returned home from the New World with some African products, and the quantities involved were sometime large.” Dyewoods, bought from the Cross River region around Calabar, the Loango coast and Sierra Leone, were particularly important for the textile industry in South West England (Behrendt et al. 2010 pp84-85). While Bristol merchants bought less ivory than the RAC, it was still an important product and most was traded through the ports of Bonny and Calabar (Behrendt et al. 2010, p83).

Table 2.4 Average quantities of commodities purchased / Bristol ship by region (1720 – 1734)

Region	Number of voyages: sample (total)	Average Dyewood lbs	Average Guinea Grains lbs	Average Ivory lbs	Average Gum Seneca lbs	Average Bees Wax lbs
Bight of Benin	1 (3)			3,528		
Bight of Biafra	33 (89)	5,741	5,683	3,177		672
Gold Coast	9 (48)	6,669	1,661	4,629	1,512	
Senegambia	9 (10)	2,242	364			1,004
West Central	12 (24)	23,494	10,000	3,024		2,129

Source: Richardson (1986, 1987)

Next, we address the records of the *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie* (MCC). These have some weaknesses for the purposes of this study, as the company's main regions of slave trading were the Windward Coast and the Loango coast of West Central Africa (Vos 2009, Sommerdyk 2015). However, their ships did trade in all the areas relevant to this study and most importantly their records detail exactly where they traded. Up until the 1750s the MCC was still sending specialist commodity ships to Africa, called 'Retour schepen'. I have taken a sample of 7 of these ships from the 1730s to the 1750s, which included details of exactly which products were bought in different parts of Africa.⁴⁵ The ships began trading around the Windward coast, in particular Cape Lahou, and then moved down to the Gold Coast and onto Popo on the Bight of Benin. In these areas they bought gold and ivory, before proceeding to the area around modern day Gabon / Cameroon to buy beeswax, redwood and more ivory. There are no records of any 'retour schepen' stopping at Whydah. The company's slave ships also followed this regional pattern. Table 2.5 records the average quantity of commodities bought by MCC slave ships based on a sample of 51 voyages between 1742 and 1803. This was overwhelmingly dominated by ivory from the Windward and Gold Coasts. None of the slave ships that bought slaves from the Bight of Benin also bought commodities.

⁴⁵ Africaanse Galey MCC 173, Guinese Galey MCC 500, Groot Prooijen MCC 483, Prins Willem de Vijfde MCC 964, Philadelphia MCC 893, Vrouw Johanne Cores MCC 1204, Mercurius MCC 754

Table 2.5. Average quantities (lbs/ounces) of commodities bought by MCC slave ships by region and number of observations (obs) 1742-1803

	Ebony	Gold	Malaguetta	Redwood	Wax	Ivory
Region	Lbs (obs)	Ounces (obs)	Lbs (obs)	Lbs (obs)	Lbs (obs)	Lbs (obs)
Gabon / Cameroons	33,200 (1)	104 (2)	300 (1)	1,800 (1)	6,144 (4)	4,862 (9)
Gold Coast		76 (12)			7,000 (1)	2,482 (22)
Windward Coast						1,066 (66)

Source: MCC *Negotieboeken*

The MCC records indicate that purchases of wood, ivory and beeswax were not from ports in the Bight of Biafra, but from further down the coast around modern day Gabon and the Cameroon. However, Behrendt et al. (2010, p86) show that local merchants in the Cross River region around Calabar were opening up trading relations with the Cameroon grasslands and also to palm oil producers, so as to meet rising demand from Britain for pepper, redwood, oils and ivory from the 1760s. They estimate that on average from 1750 to 1808 ships from Bonny carried around 36 pieces of ivory while those from Old Calabar around 220 (Behrendt et al., p94). The 'waste books' of the slave trader William Davenport from Liverpool shows that he was selling an average of 737 gallons of palm oil a year between 1767 and 1780 which he had bought from traders at Old Calabar, as well as quantities of mallagueta pepper, ivory and dyewoods.⁴⁶

2.5. CONCLUSION

Qualitative and secondary sources together with quantitative data from the earlier eighteenth century all reliably suggest that there were well established regional patterns of trade in the eighteenth century. The Gold Coast engaged in both slave and commodity trading until 1880s, when both sectors began to decline. In the Bight of Biafra both types of exports operated side by side, but the data presented so far does not give any indication of the scale or value of the non-slave trade. However, there is no evidence that the area of the Bight of Benin controlled by Dahomey traded in commodities bought for sale in Europe.

⁴⁶ LRO D/Dav Waste Book. The waste book was a ledger which recorded sales (Radburn 2009, p9). The latter products were probably bought both at Calabar and from the Cameroons (Radburn 2009, pp42–79).

CHAPTER 3

REGIONAL PATTERNS AND EUROPEAN DEMAND FOR SLAVE SHIP PROVISIONING IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: DID THE SLAVE TRADE PROVIDE A BOOST TO WEST AFRICAN COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE? ⁴⁷

“The most common cheapest, and most commodious diet is with vegetables, horse beans, rice and indian corn....One or other is boiled on board at constant times, twice a day into a Dab-a-Dab (sometimes with meat in it) and have an overseer with a cat-o-nine tails to force it upon those that are sullen and refuse.”

John Atkins ‘A Voyage to Guinea, Brazil and the West Indies’ (1737), p171

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the provisioning strategies followed by the slaving ships of different European nations and the varying responses from West African regions. Historians have recently begun to explore the potential effects of the slave trade on the development of commercial agriculture in Atlantic Africa (Law et al. 2013). The introduction of New World crops, such as maize and manioc, enlarged the cultivation choice-set of African farmers and became important to the organisation of the slave trade, in similar ways as African food crops (e.g. black rice) may have underpinned the organisation and expansion of New World plantation economies (Carney 2001, Carney and Rosomoff 2011, see Eltis et al. 2007 for a critical review). Large numbers of captives needed to be fed during their journey to the coast, their stay at the coast before embarkation, their time on board before departure and during the ocean crossing. Captains taking in insufficient stocks put their cargo at higher risks of starvation and disease.⁴⁸

The provisioning strategies of slave traders have remained understudied though. The literature generally assumes that the lion’s share of food provisions required for slave voyages was produced in West Africa and sold by local farmers or middlemen to the slave ships. Based on

⁴⁷ This chapter is based on an article co-written with Ewout Frankema (European Review of Economic History, forthcoming 2017)

⁴⁸ Miller (1979, pp95-102) and Newson (2007, pp72,85) argue that the poor diets of slaves from the Angolan port of Luanda, both during their stay at the coast as well as during the ocean crossing, raised mortality rates in comparison with other regions of embarkation.

this assumption, David Eltis has argued that the increasing intensity of the eighteenth century slave trade must have boosted West African food exports. In a first attempt to estimate the magnitude of the slave trade induced demand impulse, he reached the provisional conclusion that food exports approached a total annual value of one million British pounds (current prices) during the late eighteenth century, which exceeded the total value of West Africa's commodity exports to Britain up to the mid-nineteenth century (Eltis 2013).

Studying the Gold Coast, Klas Rönnbäck has argued that the demand for provisions by slave ships was too insignificant to generate any direct positive linkages for commercial agricultural development. Reasoning from a set of baseline assumptions regarding the size of the urban population in the seventeenth and eighteenth Centuries, and the derived demand for marketable foodstuffs from the non-farming population, he estimated that slave ships and slave forts may have added ca. 27% to urban demand at the peak of the trade, and contributed ca. 3-4% to total agricultural production in the coastal regions (Rönnbäck 2015, p166). Rönnbäck, somewhat surprisingly, qualifies this contribution as 'rather marginal' (2015, p172). More importantly, however, Rönnbäck, like Eltis, fails to bring any new data to the table which might scrutinize his main assumptions, including the idea that slave traders bought their provisions exclusively at the Gold Coast.

This chapter has two aims. First, to estimate the comparative magnitude of the demand impulse to West African commercial agriculture, using primary sources on food sales from company account books, retrieved from a much larger and more diverse sample of slave voyages than hitherto has been compiled. This new dataset allows for deeper insights into the eighteenth century development of provisioning strategies, which appear not as straightforward as many scholars have hitherto assumed. Second, to gain a deeper understanding of the commercialisation of agriculture in different parts of West Africa, by exploiting the temporal and spatial variation in slave ship provisioning.

This chapter uses primary sources on *actual provisions* taken on board in European ports of departure and along the West African coast from 187 British, Dutch, French and Danish slave journeys conducted between 1681 and 1807. The dataset includes voyages by private merchants and chartered companies, such as the British *Royal African Company* (RAC) and the Dutch *West-Indische Compagnie* (WIC). In addition, I analyse the instructions captains received for the provisioning of crews and slaves, as well as ships' logs and chartered company correspondence shedding light on the provisioning logistics. Journeys undertaken from the New World are excluded (e.g. Brazil, Cuba, US), as the current dearth of primary sources on this area of the trade warrants a separate study.

This study yields two major conclusions. First, a growing proportion of the required calories and proteins for slaves were taken on board in European port cities over the course of the eighteenth century. I argue that this change in provisioning strategies was driven by declining relative prices of European provisions to slave purchasing prices, in combination with the increasing business risks faced by slave traders. Both the falling relative provisioning prices, and the rising share of European provisions, generate revised estimates of the slave-trade induced demand-impulse which are about 70 to 80% lower than those of Eltis. Since the

economic weight of late eighteenth century food exports was *considerably smaller* than previously assumed, I argue that the commercial transition from slave to commodity exports in the first half of the nineteenth century must have involved rather *modest losses* of food exports, and cannot have deepened the rupture of Atlantic Africa's international trade to any great degree.

Second, I document substantial differences in the provisioning strategies of British, as compared to continental, slavers are documented and, most importantly for this thesis, clear regional differences. British traders relied extensively on African provisions, although they too were stocking up on food in increasing quantities in Liverpool and Bristol during the eighteenth century. These different provisioning strategies, of British versus continental traders, are due to the different positions the British held at the West African coast – especially the large range of fortified trading stations - as well as the more developed food markets in regions where British slavers conducted most of their trade; the Bight of Biafra and to a lesser extent the Gold Coast. In the Bight of Biafra, the provisioning trade was substantial enough to stimulate commercial agriculture. In addition, the data indicates that the Bight of Benin at no time engaged in a substantial provisioning trade. Agricultural commercialisation was thus a localized response to increasing slave trade induced demand for foodstuffs. On a broader plain, the eighteenth century expansion of the slave trade had just a modest impact on commercial agricultural development along the Atlantic African coast.

3.2 DID THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE BOOST WEST AFRICAN COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE?

The provisions slave ships took in from European ports typically included a few staples, principally wheat (often in the form of biscuits), beans, peas, rice and barley. For crew members, luxury items were added such as salted meat, stock-fish, butter, bread, cheese, suet, sweet oil, beer, wine and spirits. Provisioning of slaves and sailors on the slave ships was usually strictly segregated.⁴⁹ Moreover, throughout the eighteenth century special supply ships brought fairly large quantities of European provisions to the forts at the African coast, either to complement or replace consumption of local foodstuffs by European staff. In Africa, captains picked up foodstuffs common to the regions where they traded; rice from the Upper Guinea and Windward coasts, maize, millet or sorghum from the Gold Coast, yams from

⁴⁹ For four MCC ships, surviving accounts of the daily quantities of food used show separate diets for sailors and captives, presumably also to emphasize social or racial hierarchy. These accounts were retrieved from the 'Consumptieboeken', which were separate to the 'Negotieboeken' which detailed purchases of food at the coast, from: Brandenburg 4e reis ZA: MCC290, Geertuda en Christina 4e reis ZA: MCC 420, Nieuwe Hoop 3e reis ZA: MCC 835, Zeemercure 1e reis ZA: MCC 835. For example, the consumption accounts of the *Nieuwe Hoop* from 1766 – 1768 report that the crew consumed bread, meat, bacon, blue & grey peas, salt fish, rice, sweet and rape oil, while slaves were given horse beans, barley, yams and African beans called *gobbegobsen*. French and Danish ships are also recorded as stocking separate food supplies for their personnel, who also ate at different times than slaves. Interestingly, my British sources do not speak to such a strict separation of slave and crew provisions, in particular regarding the consumption of staple foods.

Biafra and Gabon and manioc from the Congo and Angola. Plantains, coconuts, limes, oranges and other fresh provisions supplemented these staple foods. West African palm oil served as an important source of unsaturated fat in slave diets (Harms 2008, pp112-19, Mandelblatt 2009, pp411-12, Klein 2010, pp94-96). Fresh water and firewood was also sourced from Africa in great quantities. As a rule, slaves were fed a kind of gruel comprised of whatever combination of the above had been bought, seasoned with salt and mallagueta pepper. Small portions of salted meat, stock-fish and tobacco were occasionally handed out to slaves, but most of this was reserved for crew members.

According to David Eltis, slave provisions constituted by far the biggest export market for commodities in the coastal areas of West Africa during the long eighteenth century. Before 1650, sugar exports from São Tomé accounted for almost all of the cultivated crops exported, but the volumes of cash-crops traded in the eighteenth century paled in comparison to West Africa's nineteenth century export boom (Eltis 2013, pp35-36, Frankema et al. 2015). Eltis made a first attempt to estimate the total value of West African food exports. Even though he acknowledges that his estimates are crude, and invites colleagues to improve upon them (2013, p45), his prime conclusion is nonetheless important: if annual food exports did indeed rise up to one million British Pounds in the late eighteenth century, and exceeded the average annual value of West African commodity exports to Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century, the abolition of the slave trade must have prompted a significant loss of non-slave export revenue and may have seriously distorted food markets, following an era of rapid growth up to 1807.

Eltis' estimates are based on two core assumptions. First, that most of the required provisions were sourced from Africa, and that European provisions constituted a negligible share, somewhere in the order of 1 to 2%, of the purchasing price of slaves (2013, p38). Second, following Curtin's (1973, pp168-9) classic study on the Senegambian slave trade, that slave maintenance costs constituted a fixed 25% of their exchange value throughout the eighteenth century. Both assumptions, combined with an annual time-series of slave purchasing prices, thus allowed Eltis to estimate the average annual value of African-sourced provisions in the Atlantic slave trade during 1681-1807. *Appendix 3.1* 1 shows his estimates and explains his calculation procedure in greater detail.

The assumption that the lion's share of food provisions for the middle passage was produced by African farmers is repeated over and over again in the slave trade literature, but this has never been subjected to empirical verification.⁵⁰ The analysis of surviving account books of slave trade merchants indicates that, in the course of the eighteenth century, nearly half of all calories and proteins required to keep slaves alive on board European slave vessels – note that voyages from the New World are excluded - were sourced from European ports of departure.

⁵⁰ This assumption informed the estimates of Eltis (2013), Klein and Engerman (1979) and Rönnbäck (2015) and is also put forth in other key studies such as Carney and Rosomoff (2011, p47) and Mandelblatt (2008, pp411, 421). In his study of the Danish slave trade on the Gold Coast Hernaes (1998, p337) even claimed that it was impossible to bring sufficient food supplies from Europe and that the 'millie trade' (maize) must therefore have given a major impulse to the local Gold Coast economy.

The slave trade may thus have stimulated commercial agriculture in the hinterland of some European port cities (e.g. Bristol, Liverpool, Nantes, Middelburg), as much as it stimulated commercial agriculture in West African regions of slave embarkation. This implication casts a different light on the relative magnitude of the slave trade induced demand for West African food exports, and raises new questions concerning the provisioning strategies of slave traders.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the 25% food share of slave purchasing prices is not the only figure one can select for this exercise. Curtin argued that the total costs of maintaining a slave was about half its market value per year. Obviously, food was a key component of those costs, but also a highly variable one depending on local harvest conditions, food prices and the time spent in captivity before embarkation.⁵¹ Curtin stressed that during extensive waiting periods slaves were often put to work to contribute to their own maintenance (1973, p170). The insecurity about average time spent ‘in store’, the added value of slave labour and the market prices of slave food, all turn the 25% estimate into a somewhat arbitrary choice. In an essay on the French slave trade Klein and Engerman (1979) state that “*the bulk of foodstuffs consumed by Africans in the crossing were purchased on the African coast, with rice and yams serving as the staples of the diet. The costs for these foods and for the water represented less than 5% of the total costs of outfitting the vessels and therefore offered little financial restraint on adding extra food.*” (p270). Although Klein and Engerman focus on the maintenance costs during a slave’s time on board the ship, they do not attach much weight to food provisions within total outfitting costs.⁵² It should be noted though that Klein and Engerman’s estimate is based on just a single observation, a voyage of a French slaving vessel, *La Reine de France*, which appears in the dataset along with 27 other French slave voyages. The resultant analysis suggests that, although the 25% estimate appears valid for the period up to the 1740s, this is far too high for the period 1750-1808, when the trade grew to its peak.

Rönnbäck (2015) has made the valid point that any measurement of effective slave trade related demand should be assessed against the *existing size* of domestic African food markets. Without bringing in any new data, but by adopting some baseline assumptions, he estimated the demand effect at the Gold Coast may have ranged between 3-4% of total agricultural production and 27% of total urban demand (2015, p166). However, in a sensitivity analysis of

⁵¹ Curtin (1973) estimated the costs of feeding slaves around Saint Louis in Senegambia. He showed that prices of millet (the main staple) in the 1750s varied depending on rains and other harvest circumstances, from £2.60/ton in a good year to £19.50/ton in a very severe year. Curtin settled on an average of £6.80/ton. By asking how much millet a slave might need to live, he suggested a figure of £2.74 per year of millet, excluding costs for housing, clothing, guards and additional foodstuffs. As an average slave would sell for between £10 to £12, this implied that slave-owners had to pay maintenance costs between a quarter (in a very good year) to a half (in an average year) to four fifths (in a very bad year) of the eventual selling price. In Gajaaga, a kingdom on the upper Senegal, slaves could only be delivered once a year in the annual high season. This meant that slaves brought to this market had a price “*on a sliding scale, rising by 80% from a low point after the departure of the annual fleet to the high point just as the last boats prepared to sail at the end of the next high season.*” (1973, pp169-70).

⁵² The term ‘outfitting costs’ refers to the total expenses incurred to prepare a slave ship for the journey, including the exchange commodities required to purchase slaves, the provisions of crew members, ship maintenance costs and also the food rations reserved for slaves during their time on board the vessel.

the main parameters, he reaches intervals from a 9 to 80% contribution to urban demand in the final quarter of the eighteenth century (2015, p178). This indicates the pressing need for more precise estimates based on *new empirical evidence*. Before proceeding to offer such evidence, I ought to make a final remark: whatever demand impulse the slave trade may have given to *commercial* agriculture in the coastal areas of West Africa, must have come at the expense of production in the raided areas. As most of the captives had been engaged in agriculture prior to capture, the Atlantic slave trade caused a relocation of food production, promoting the development of food markets in the areas of embarkation, but curbing both production and consumer demand in raided coastal or inland areas.

3.3 SOURCES AND METHOD

I compiled a sample of 187 merchant accounts of slave voyages conducted by trade companies from four European nations between 1681 and 1807. Data on British slave voyages came from the account books of the RAC, which detail the cargoes bought in England and, in the 1720s, the provisions bought in Africa.⁵³ For the earlier period, (1680 to 1699) I use correspondence from the British forts on the West Coast of Africa, compiled by Robin Law (1997). Additionally, there are the records of five ships owned by a private trader, Humphrey Morice, who was involved in the trade in the 1720s.⁵⁴ These ships bought most of their slaves along the Gold Coast and in the Bight of Benin. For the post-1740 period there are two main sources: the papers of the Liverpool merchant, William Davenport, who sent around 20 vessels to Africa from the 1760s to the 1780s and specialised his commercial operations in the Biafra region;⁵⁵ and the Bristol Presentments, a weekly register of shipping from the port of Bristol which began in 1789 recording the cargoes and arrival and departure dates of 40 slaving vessels.⁵⁶ The latter concentrates on ships going to Biafra and the Cameroons, but like the Davenport papers also includes ships trading in other regions. The downside to these records is that they do not detail what provisions were bought in Africa, and I will take up this issue further later in this chapter.

For data on French voyages I rely on the private trading accounts of French slave merchants based in Nantes.⁵⁷ These sources offer quantities and values of food provisions taken on board at the start of the slave journey, but do not provide information on the provisions bought elsewhere in Europe or Africa. There is also Rinchon (1964)'s study of the voyages of one particular slaving captain, Van Alstein, who sailed on the Bight of Benin and the West-Central African coast (Congo and Angola). This source provides full details of both food purchases in Europe and Africa and also gives some African food prices. For the Danish trade

⁵³ The principal source is the T70 series at The National Archives, London

⁵⁴ From the M7 series at the Bank of England, London

⁵⁵ The records are held at the Liverpool Record Office and Keele University and were accessed through www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk.

⁵⁶ From the archives of Bristol Central Library.

⁵⁷ From the Archives Départementales de Loire Atlantique.

I use the work by Svalesen (2000). It provides detailed information of only two voyages conducted by one ship, but does contain detailed instructions from the Royal Chartered Danish Guinea Company on provisioning logistics, and their orders on daily slave rations (2000, p112), which applied to all the ships the company sent out.

For the Dutch trade the archives of the Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC) are the most important sources.⁵⁸ These records detail exactly what provisions were bought in Europe, what was bought in Africa, and in many cases exactly where. In addition, they provide prices of Dutch (Province of Zeeland) provisions and some scattered food price observations at the African coast. Most of the trade along the coast was conducted by barter, but the MCC converted all of the trade goods into either guilders or Flemish pounds, allowing for comparison of prices of individual items, which can be used for wider estimations of spending by other slave ships. Another advantage of this source is that the MCC traded regularly in all areas of Africa, with the exception of the Bight of Biafra.⁵⁹ I use the Appendix of Leo Balai's (2011) *Het Slavenchip Leusden* for the provisioning of three WIC ships in the 1720s, which includes detailed information on the instructions for ships' captains from the company.

Table 3.1 summarizes the 'national' coverage of the sample. I make a distinction between the era when chartered companies and private traders were both active (1681-1740), and the later era of private trade (1741-1807).⁶⁰ The sample covers over 1% of all British, French and Dutch voyages and about 0.7% of Danish voyages in the private trade era. For 36 of the 187 voyages there is information on the total intake of foodstuffs in both Europe and Africa (see Table 3.2). In 129 cases the European provisions are fully specified, while the African provisions are not. In 12 cases there is full information on African provisions, but not on European provisions.

⁵⁸ From the Zeeuws Archief Middelburg.

⁵⁹ When trade in the Biafra region reached its apogee the MCC was entering a period of crisis, suffering from rising insecurity in the Atlantic world and especially the 4th Anglo-Dutch war.

⁶⁰ Until the early eighteenth century, most of the slave trade was a jealously guarded government monopoly. In Great Britain, the Royal Africa Company (RAC) and in the Netherlands the West-Indische Compagnie (WIC) were the sole permitted traders. The French government experimented with a series of chartered companies. Slaves to the Spanish empire could only be handled through the *asiento* contract. These companies were unable to prevent interlopers and smugglers from carrying slaves, partly due to fact that they couldn't meet the demand of their markets, but also because they operated notoriously inefficient business models (Thomas 1999, Klein 2010, Den Heijer 1994). By the 1730s most nations, with the exception of Spain, had abandoned the concept of chartered companies and left the trade to the private sector.

Table 3.1. Sample of slave ship voyages by nationality (flag), 1681-1807

	1681-1810	1681-1740			1741-1807		
	Share of total trade	Company era			Private trade era		
	%	Number of voyages	sample	%	Number of voyages	sample	%
Great Britain	47	3,840	34	0.88	7,384	84	1.14
France	14	873	1	0.12	2,557	27	1.13
Netherlands	5	544	2	0.75	705	37	5.53
Denmark	2	88	0	0	296	2	0.68
Spain/Uruguay	0	7	0	0	70	0	0
Portugal/Brazil	24	1,975	0	0	3,924	0	0
British America/US	8	185	0	0	1,781	0	0
Totals	100	7,512	37	0.49	16,717	150	0.90

Source: Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD); for my sample see text and *Appendix 3.2a*.

While the coverage of British, French and Dutch voyages is good, the absence of similar coverage for voyages conducted from Portugal, Spain, Brazil and British America/US is a major limitation. Portuguese and Brazilian ships sailed mainly on West Central Africa (WCA hereafter), a region which played a major role in the eighteenth-century expansion of the trade, supplying roughly one-third of the number of slaves that crossed the Atlantic between 1681 and 1807. Although there is ample *qualitative* evidence that slave ships departing from Brazil were stocking up on large quantities of manioc flour in home ports such as Rio de Janeiro, it has proven impossible to retrieve quantitative estimates of the proportions of home-sourced versus Africa-sourced provisions.⁶¹ This study excludes the southern part of present-day Angola, the focal area of the Portuguese and Brazilian ships, but it does include the Northern part of the West Central African coastline, where trade was dominated by European vessels.⁶² I will consider the implications of this omission as I go along. A summary of the dataset is presented in *Appendices 3.2a and 3.2b*.⁶³

⁶¹ See for slave provisions from Brazil, Miller (1997, pp351-57); Curto (2004, pp132-33) and Newson (2007, p85).

⁶² da Silva and Sommerdyk (2010) have argued for separating the West Central African Coast into a Northern region, referred to as the Loango coast, including Cabinda, Congo North, Congo River, Kilongo, Loango, Malembo, Mayumba, Mpinda and Rio Zaire, and a southern region in modern-day Angola concentrated around the ports of Luanda and Benguela. The Southern area was entirely dominated by Portuguese and Brazilian

Although a coverage of around only 1% of the voyages made by British, French, Dutch and Danish slavers may seem small, nonetheless it is distinguishable as the first dataset able to serve as a starting point for a more systematic empirical investigation of food provisioning strategies by European slavers. I approach the data in two steps. First, I use the sample of 36 ‘full data’ voyages to distinguish European from African provisions, and separate out provisions for crew members and fort personnel. Sailors and fort personnel were mainly fed on European provisions, which were separately recorded from ‘Negro Provisions’ in the account books of the slave trading companies. Next, I express all foodstuffs in metric weights (kilos), and convert all food types (rice, barley, corn, yams, beans etc.) into their caloric value (Kcal) and protein content (grams), using FAO nutrition tables.⁶⁴ *Appendix 3.3* lists the metric and nutritional conversion rates.

Table 3.2 presents preliminary results based on the sample of 36 voyages. It demonstrates that the share of European provisions is, in many cases, far too high to verify Eltis’ hypothesis that these constituted a negligible share of total food provisions.⁶⁵ Only the British ships observed operating during the company era sourced the lion’s share of their provisions (96%) from West Africa. For other nations and periods the shares of provisions sourced from Africa and Europe are very different. Unfortunately, the ‘full data’ sample has a rather weak coverage, so it is important to be cautious when drawing further conclusions at this stage. Without any observations of British voyages in the 1741-1808 era, it remains unclear for instance, whether the different shares carried by British and continental vessels are due to different national provisioning strategies, or because of more generic changes during the eighteenth century.

traders, whereas the North was mainly visited by Northern European vessels. The trade in the North was organised by small merchant networks in contrast to the much more centralised, state-run trade in the South.

⁶³ The complete dataset, including source references, will be presented in an online Appendix Table at the African Economic History Network website (www.aehnetwork.org).

⁶⁴ http://www.fao.org/docrep/w0073e/w0073e08.htm#P14552_1185427

⁶⁵ Note that Eltis suggests that non-African provisions are about 1 to 2% of slave purchasing costs. If total provisions constitute 25% of slave purchasing costs, the European share is 4 to 8% of total provisions.

Table 3.2: Average share of provisions from Europe and Africa in 36 'full data' voyages

		1681-1740		1741-1807		
	Obs.	Company era		Obs.	Private trade era	
		% Europe	% Africa		% Europe	% Africa
Great Britain	18	4	96	0	..	..
France	1	91	9	4	68	32
Netherlands	0	..	..	11	53	47
Denmark	0	..	..	2	76	24
Totals	19			17		

Source: see Table 3.1 and *Appendix 3.2b*

Therefore, the second step is to use the information on total caloric intake of these 36 'full data' ships to derive a benchmark estimate of 'required' provisions per slave per day. This allows me to deduce of how much of these day-rations was covered by European or African provisions in the larger sample of 151 voyages, in which I observed only one of the two areas of food provisioning. A subsistence diet with 2,000 Kcal and 40 grams of protein per slave per day is assumed. These values are in line with the 'bare-bones subsistence diet' adopted in the comparative living standards literature (Allen 2001, Allen et al. 2011, see for an application to Sub-Saharan Africa Frankema and van Waijenburg 2012) and sufficiently reflect the slave feeding instructions that captains received.⁶⁶ Even though 2,000 Kcal is a bare minimum compared to current WHO recommendations of around 2,500 Kcal for an adult male with a sedentary lifestyle, it suffices to keep people alive without losing muscle power.

I obtain the total number of required day-rations by multiplying the number of slaves embarked from the trans-Atlantic slave trade database (TSTD hereafter) with the average number of days the median slave spent on board. The estimate of required day-rations is not adjusted for slave mortality during the voyage, as captains would most likely have provisioned based on a best-case scenario (i.e. negligible mortality). I also include a security margin as slave ship captains were well schooled in the unpredictability of their voyages (insecure slave supplies, adverse weather conditions, diseases, food rot, privateers and so on).

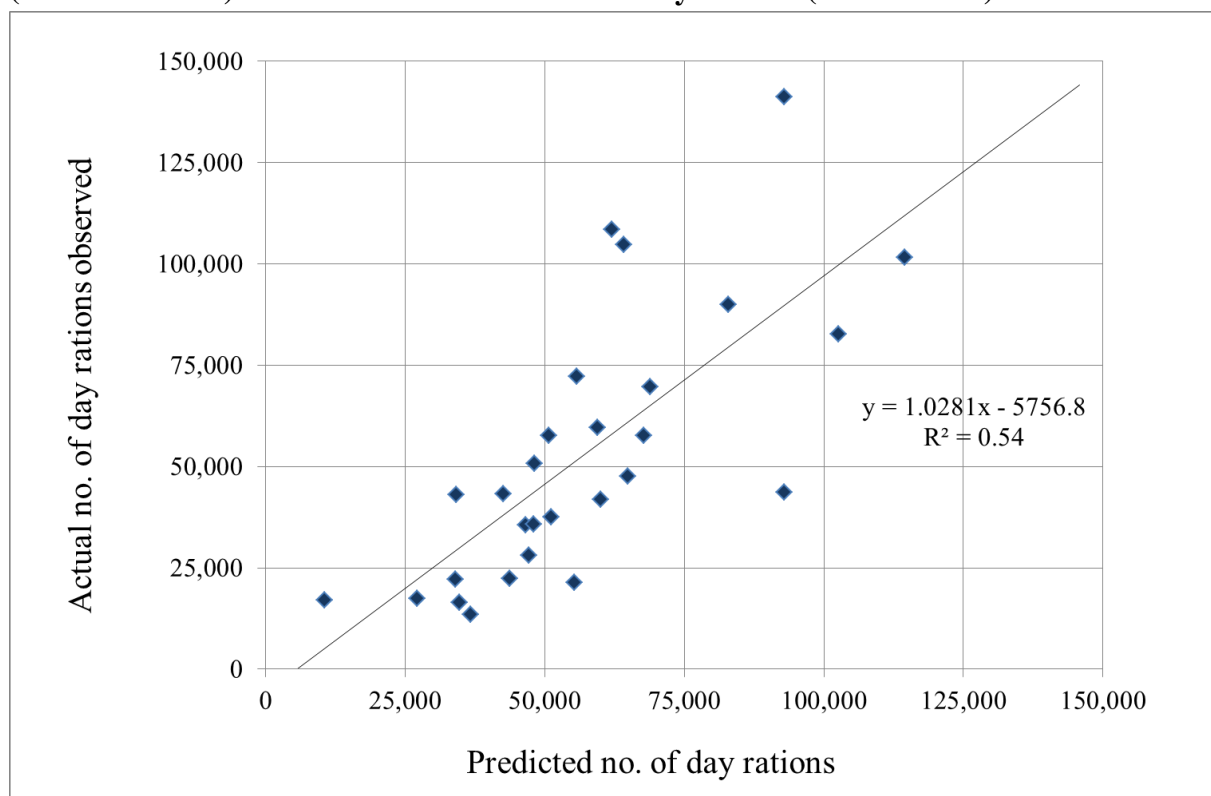
I also account for factors of region and era-specific voyage duration. Embarkation times depended on the concentration of slave supplies, and the fact that middle passage (MP) took longer from some regions than from others. Shorter *expected* voyage lengths would have translated into lower provision requirements. I assume that provisioning strategies were based

⁶⁶ Studies on British navy sailors show they consumed around 4,500 Kcal per day, which seems a large difference, but it needs to be taken into account that slaves were confined for most of the day (Macdonald 2006, 177).

on the average number of days of the MP, plus one standard deviation as a security margin. I further assume a linear slave intake rate. That is, for a slave vessel taking in 300 slaves in 100 days, and I add additional rations for three extra slaves per day. This is a conservative assumption, as slaves tended to be purchased in larger quantities towards the end of the TAC (Hogerzeil and Richardson 2007). I use 20-year interval means and standard deviations of the actual time spent at the coast (TAC), and on the MP, for the seven major West African slave trading regions (Senegambia, Sierra Leone, Windward Coast, Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa). A check of the representativeness of the ‘full data’ sample on voyage duration revealed that in 71% of these cases the observed ship remained within one standard deviation from the mean, with only one notable outlier. All the data on voyage length were taken from the TSTD and are presented in *Appendix 3.4*.

Figure 3.1 tests the accuracy of the estimation method for the ‘full data’ sample, and shows a scatter plot with the predicted number of day-rations on the x-axis, and the observed number of day-rations on the y-axis. The figure confirms my expectation that ships carrying more slaves for longer periods of time carried more supplies. Moreover, the procedure does not seem to systematically under- or overestimate the required number of day-rations. The slope of the regression line ($y = 1.03x$) is close to unity and the correlation is strong ($R^2 = 0.54$). A similar test for protein requirement indicates that the far majority of ships took much more than the 40 grams per day per person than I envisioned, especially in the form of beans and peas, but this is less relevant as calories posed the main constraint to storage space.

Figure 3.1: Scatter plot of required day-rations predicted by my baseline model (horizontal-axis) versus actual observed no. of day-rations (vertical-axis)



Source: See *Appendix 3.2b*.

Note: This sample includes English RAC, Dutch MCC, Danish and French ships as indicated in *Appendix 3.2.a*. Two outliers were removed as they carried exceptional quantities of food from Europe - sufficient to make a double journey, and much more than recorded for any other ship. These traders probably sold part of their stocks to West African trading forts or other slave ships before heading across the Atlantic. This supports one of this chapter's central claims, namely that European provisions played a much larger role in the logistics of the transatlantic slave trade than hitherto has been assumed.

Even though the error margins to both sides of the regression line appear to be evenly distributed, there are quite a few ships carrying much more, or far less, provisions than the baseline model predicts. The likely explanation, supported by archival sources, is that 'overloaded' vessels took additional food supplies to African forts to alleviate local food scarcities.⁶⁷ Ships carrying far less than the model predicts may have taken the risk to sail off without any safety margins.⁶⁸ Serious delays at the coast, or instances of food scarcity, often

⁶⁷ British forts at the coast, while buying provisions locally, also relied heavily on imported foodstuffs from Europe. For example, the Company of the Royal Adventurers to England Trading with Africa, who took over the management of the forts after the dissolution of the RAC, relied on regular deliveries of bread, flour and meat delivered on ships from England: TNA T70/928 – 932. I assume that the Dutch forts also bought food from visiting vessels, and speculated that this accounts for ships such as the *Middelburgs Welvaren* (1755) and *Vliegende Faam* (1757) buying respectively 372% and 263% of required total provisions (see *Appendix 3.2a and 3.2b*).

⁶⁸ In the full data sample of ships, 4 vessels (three RAC ships and 1 private vessel from France) sailed with under 50% of the required Kcals to give their captives a sufficient daily quantity of calories. Sailing with insufficient provisions in order to free up space for more captives was apparently a common strategy on Portuguese /

forced captains to take that course of action (Behrendt 2001, pp190-91). The bottom-line, however, is that the estimation model appears sound enough to be applied to the larger sample of voyages which have incomplete information.

3.4. MAIN RESULTS

The first result is that the demand patterns of different European nations varied considerably. Figure 3.2 presents, for four consecutive periods, the percentage share of required Kcal supplied by European provisions loaded onto British, French, Dutch and Danish slave trade vessels. This figure clearly shows that the French, Dutch and Danish ships took in the major part of the required Kcal in Europe, but that for British slavers the picture is strikingly different. These slavers tended to rely much more on African-sourced provisions, although they too, increased their intake of European provisions throughout the course of the eighteenth century. Such large shares of European provisions cannot be neglected when estimating the magnitude of West African food exports.

There was considerable variation in the quantities of European provisions taken on board. The British RAC ships in the ‘full data’ sample took, on average, only 4% of their required Kcal from England, although one ship, the *Portugal*, did take 36% in 1729. Even though the French and Dutch reliably brought at least around 50%, or considerably more, of their Kcal from Europe, there were also quite a few outliers. For example, the Dutch ship “*Middelburgs Welvaren*” bought a huge quantity of provisions in West Africa, totalling 326% of their caloric requirements, while still bringing substantial quantities of beans and barley from the Dutch Republic. It appears, therefore, that slave traders sometimes shipped food to or within Africa which wasn’t required for the slaves on board. Nonetheless, despite the outliers, the overall trend is clear: over the eighteenth century the trade relied to a greater degree on European sourced provisions.

Why has the contribution of European provisions to the logistics of the transatlantic slave trade been overlooked for so long and by so many experts? The most likely explanation is that the literature has, repetitively, focussed on British slave ship records of the RAC, which are more complete and more readily accessible than most other slave-trade related sources. As noted above, the RAC obtained almost all its provisions from Africa. Indeed, one may easily conclude from written instructions on slave provisioning by the South Sea Company, the successor to the RAC, that food provisions were largely an African affair,

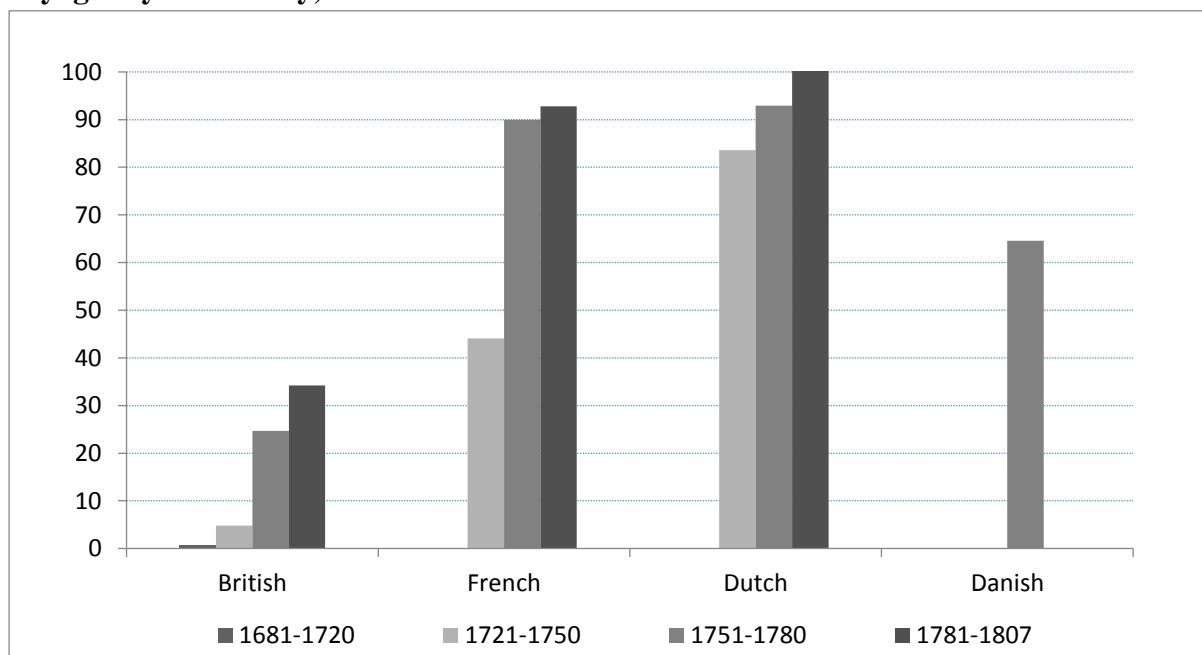
“The following account of a proportion of provisions for 100 Negroes to be taken in at Guinea: 80 chests corn at 5 ackeys per chest is 400 ackeys. 4 bushels of salt at 1 ackey per bushel is 4 ackeys. 20 gallons Palm Oil at 8 tacks per gallon is 13 ackeys 4 tacks. 50 ch

Brazilian vessels (Miller 1997, pp351–55). The impact on captives was described by a British sailor in Suriname in the 1770s who described a newly arrived group of slaves as “...such a set of scarcely animated automaton, such a resurrection of skin and bones, as forcibly reminded me of the last trumpet.” (Stedman 1796, p209).

*Malaguetta at ackeys per is 4 ackeys. The above is according to the present usage of the Royal Africa Company.”*⁶⁹

Nonetheless, whereas in the 1680s and 1690s European provisions constituted a negligible 1 or 2% in RAC voyages, this share, on ships of private British companies, rose to an average of 34% during the apogee of the trade. The literature has also largely ignored the records of the Dutch and the French traders, whose provisioning strategies were fundamentally different.

Figure 3.2. Percentage share of total required Kcal supplied by European provisions, voyages by nationality, 1681-1807



Source: See text and *Appendix 3.2a*, available at www.aehnetwork.org

Secondly, the results provide empirical support to the conclusions of Behrendt (2001, 181-4) and Eltis (2013, 44-5), who have noted that there were considerable regional differences in the type and quantity of provisions sold along different parts of the West African coast. Table 3.3 shows the average amounts of calories piled up at European ports for ships heading off to the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, the Bight of Biafra, and the WCA (North).

⁶⁹ The South Sea Company: minutes of the Court of Directors 1713 (Donnan 1965, p157)

Table 3.3. Average European Kcal taken to regions of embarkation (first column) and percentage shares of European Kcal of total requirements by nationality, 1681-1807

	million Kcal	British	French	Dutch	Danish
Gold Coast	30.27	14%		99%	65%
Bight of Benin	40.46	9%	64%	89%	
Bight of Biafra	48.58	29%	73%	133%	
West Central Africa (North)	111.02	13%	98%	111%	

Source: See text and Appendix 3.2a

The table shows that ships sailing to WCA took, on average, more than double the quantity of calories from Europe. This difference cannot be explained by greater voyage length, since the average time the median slave spent on board was not that much longer than that for the other regions of embarkation (see *Appendix 3.4*). A large part of the gap is explained by the fact that British slavers were much less active at the WCA coast⁷⁰ (TSTD). It would be misleading, however, to conclude from Table 3.3 that British slave ships would procure most of their provisions at the WCA coast (c. 87%). Slave ships did not necessarily buy their provisions at the same place they bought their slaves. The few British ships that traded at WCA probably first visited the British forts at the Gold Coast to stock up before continuing their journey further south, in a similar way as they would do when visiting the Bight of Benin (see below).

Slave captains recognised that they could not rely on local markets for provisions when trading along the Loango coast. Behrendt (2001, p184) suggests this was due to a more unforgiving climate which led to more frequent famines. Sommerdyk (2012, p121 and 137) agrees, but also points out that this trade in slaves involved smaller numbers and slower intake rates, with lower levels of market organization (e.g. merchant networks, credit facilities, etc.) than was common in the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra. Consequently, the region's slave traders may simply not have been able to manage the logistics of supplying sufficient quantities of food. That French and Dutch ships took along almost their entire required provisions from Europe suggests that they were more likely to sail straight on to the WCA coast than were the British. The sub-sample of French slave ships shows that the three ships bound for WCA in the 1760s to 1780s sourced, on average, 99% of the required calories from France, while the three ships sailing to Benin in the same period took a significantly lower 49% from Europe.⁷¹

⁷⁰ During the long eighteenth century, British slavers took only 13% of their slaves from WCA, compared to 42% for the Dutch and 46% for the French (TSTD).

⁷¹ There is also evidence that Brazilian slavers were willing to take the risk to depart with insufficient provisions, rather than paying the inflated prices charged during regular periods of drought (Miller 1979, p102). Carney and Rosomoff (2011, 68) quote a Portuguese governor of Angola who ordered that all ships coming from Brazil should carry sufficient manioc flour to feed their slaves during the return voyage.

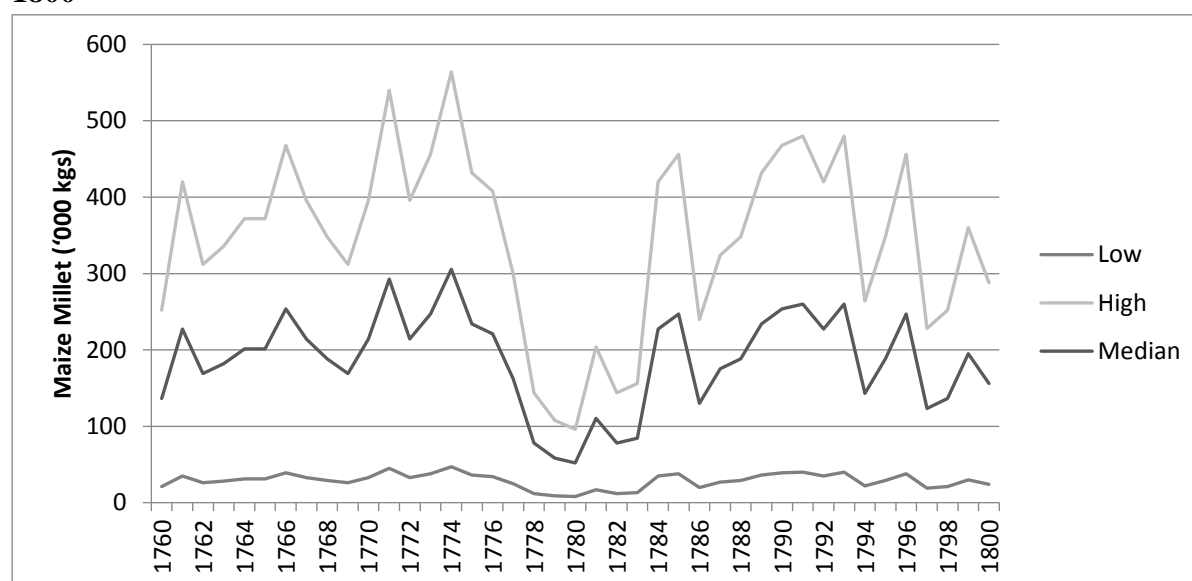
By contrast, the Gold Coast was recognised as an important area for provisioning, especially for ships going onto the Bight of Benin or West Central Africa (Shumway 2014, p54, Sparks 2014, p44). RAC correspondence compiled by Law (1997) shows repeated references to ships needing to ‘corn’ along the Gold Coast before proceeding to Benin (ref. 625, 904, 1349). The Danish ship, *Fredericus Quartas*, was required to stock up on corn at Annamabo before sailing to the Bight of Benin in 1700,⁷² and the slave captain Phillips (1693, pp202,205,209) spent considerable time buying sufficient corn before moving on to Whydah. Accounts of British slaving voyages written in the eighteenth century also make regular mention of the need to stock up on provisions at British forts along the coast (Smith 1745, pp115,126,142,164, Atkins 1735, p74,99).

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Rönnbäck’s (2015, 166) study shows that demand from slave ships may have increased coastal production for the market by around 3% – 4%. I offer my own estimates of the annual quantities of food stuffs that may have been purchased during the apogee of the transatlantic slavery from 1760 to 1807. The sample includes full data for three ships, two Dutch and one English, which provisioned on the Gold Coast during this period.⁷³ The English ship took in the most provisions, which is used as a high estimate, while the Dutch ships took far less, and I use this as a low estimate. I then took the number of ships visiting the Gold Coast during the period multiplied ~~them~~ with these estimates to find a median number (Figure 3.3). Thus, the region might have annually exported between 100,000kgs and 300,000kgs of corn/millet per year, which is a substantial quantity, although far less than was produced in the Bight of Biafra.

⁷² Letter from the Governor Thrane of Christiansborg fort to the Directors of the West India and Guinea Company in 1700 (Justesen and Manley 2005, p95)

⁷³ Prince Willem de Vijfde (1766, Voyage ID 10963, MCC 1005 + 960.3), Vergenoegen (1787 Voyage ID 11056, MCC 1089.1 + 1093), Ranger (1790, Voyage ID83272, Liverpool Record Office 147-zmisc).

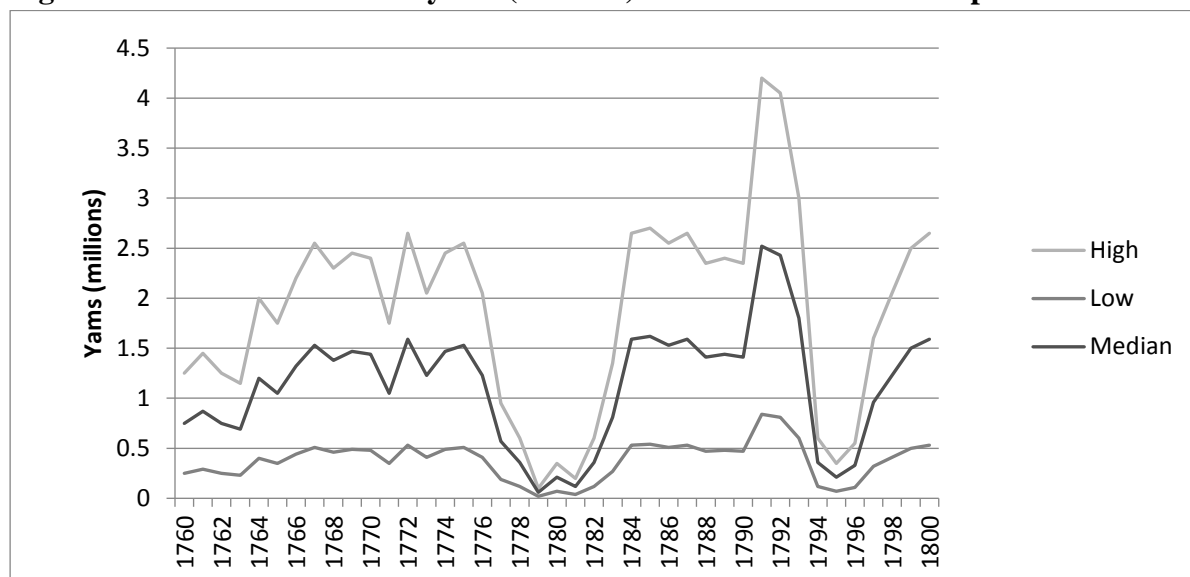
Figure 3.3. Estimated kgs of maize/millet ('000) sold to Gold Coast slave ships 1760 – 1800



Source: slavevoyages.org, see text

In the Bight of Biafra, the exchange of provisions produced by farmers in the interior for use as coastal commodities, such as salt, had been observed since the sixteenth century.⁷⁴ This internal trade was essential, as the coastal regions were unsuitable for large scale agriculture, making them dependent on imports, especially when the population grew during the eighteenth century (Behrendt et al. 2010, 102, Northrup 1978, 174). This exchange was made possible by the many navigable rivers of the Niger Delta, and sophisticated inland trading networks, which will be explored in Chapter 6. For the purposes of this chapter, the key point is that the trade routes which had previously handled the exchange of agricultural produce in earlier periods, were now able to rapidly expand to handle considerable quantities of yams and palm oil for the provisioning of slave ships. The Biafran data is based on estimates by Behrendt (2001, p182) & Behrendt et al. (2010) that British ships were buying between 10,000 and 50,000 yams for the middle passage. Taking this as a high and low estimate, I have multiplied this by the number of ships which the slave trade database indicates as having the Bight of Biafra as their principal region of slave purchasing. The result shows that the region was probably exporting between 1.5 and 2 million yams a year, a far more substantial trade than the Gold Coast.

⁷⁴ This was noted by the explorer Duarte Pacheco Pereira at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Fage 1980, p71) and the Dutch physician and explorer Olfert Dapper in the later seventeenth century (Dapper 1676, pp136-37).

Figure 3.4. Estimated number yams (millions) sold to Biafran slave ships 1760 - 1800

Sources: slavevoyages.org, see text

Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century, when British traders had shifted their focus to this region, we would expect that the transatlantic slave trade might have had an impact on commercial agriculture. Out of a total regional population of around 1 to 1.5 million,⁷⁵ around 14,000 slaves were exported each year in the peak period of 1781-1800 (TSTD). Assuming this trade required 225 day-rations per slave, and that 80% of this was sourced from domestic crops, this would have commanded around 7,000 year-rations of food. In view of the size of the total population, this only required a supply rise of 0.5% to 0.7%. Yet, if just 10% of all staples were produced for the market, slave trade induced demand may have contributed some 5 to 7% to market exchange of foodstuffs.

Table 3.3 also shows that Dutch slave ships piled up massive amounts of food when heading for the Bight of Biafra, but this must have been for a very different reason than scarcity of local food supplies, since food markets at Bonny and Old Calabar did adequately serve the much larger British fleet. The most likely explanation, which will be further elaborated upon in section 7, is that Dutch ships rarely visited the Biafran coast, and therefore lacked the connections with local merchants that the British had established during the second half of the eighteenth century. Stocking up in Europe may thus be interpreted as a precautionary measure against insecure market access in West Africa.

Additionally, the data shows that the Bight of Benin provided no significant quantities of foodstuffs to slave ships beyond fresh provisions while ships were loading (see also Law 2004, p192). To overcome this problem, RAC ships were instructed to take on rice along the Windward coast or 'corn' at the Gold Coast, before heading to ports such as Whydah or Jakin on the 'slave coast' of Benin. This pattern continued into the private trade era, when similar

⁷⁵ Ballpark figures for the early nineteenth century derived from backward extrapolations of the 1952 census, see Inikori and Daget (1988); Nwokeji (2000).

provisioning strategies were adopted by the Dutch slavers of the MCC.⁷⁶ In 1789 a British slave ship surgeon who was familiar with West Central Africa stated that the “....country finds no slaves provisions - we are therefore obliged to carry provisions partly from Europe and (when to be got) partly from the Windward Coast of Africa.”⁷⁷

3.5 CHANGING RELATIVE PRICES AND TRADE RISKS

Why did European slavers purchase more provisions in Europe as time wore on? One of the explanations is that the costs of food from Europe, as a share of total outfitting costs (see for a definition of the term footnote 52), were declining sharply over the course of the eighteenth century, mainly due to a rapid rise in slave prices. Let’s assume for the moment - I get back returning to this in section 7 - that European-sourced provisions were *no cheaper* than African-sourced provisions, meaning the price of a day-ration consisting of 350 grams of barley, 100 grams of horse-beans, 100 grams of rice and 0,01 litre of palm oil gives us an upper benchmark estimate of slave provisioning costs.

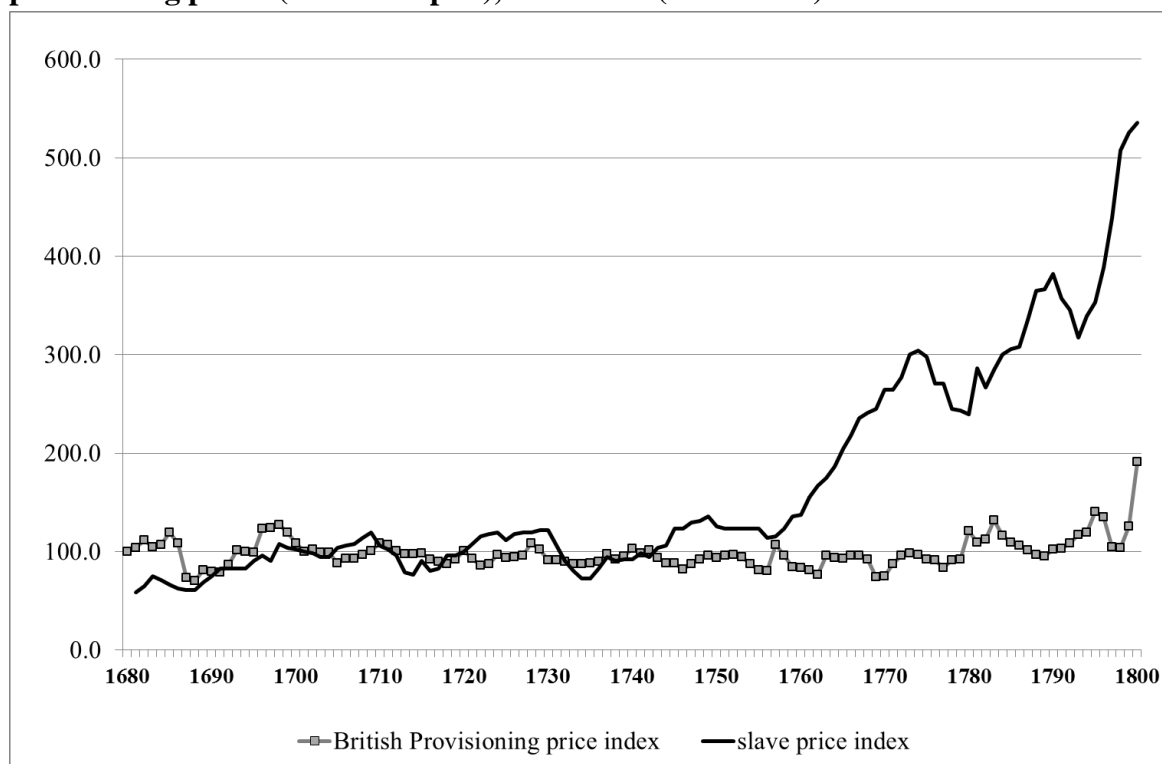
This ration offers just over 2,000 Kcal and about 80 grams of protein. Consistent with Eltis’ assumption that slaves spent on average 4.5 months waiting at or near the coast, and 3 months on board the slave ship, day-rations are taken as 225 per slave.⁷⁸ I take annual British price-series of barley, beans and rice from Clark (2004), with a 30% mark-up. Lacking price-series for palm-oil, I add a fixed average price per gallon based on scattered African price observations. To check the trend in British provisioning prices over the eighteenth century, I also construct a time series for barley, beans and rice on Dutch markets collected by Posthumus (1946). Although the Dutch price series have large gaps, the index-trend shows that Dutch staple food prices kept pace with British food prices (see *Appendix 3.5*). The slave prices are taken from the same source as Eltis (2013), which consists of a series for 1681-1700 from Eltis (2000) linked to a series for 1701-1800 from Richardson (1991), all in current prices.

⁷⁶ Later in the eighteenth century, the MCC records show that no African provisions were ever bought by MCC ships from the Bight of Benin. Instead, food purchases were made along the Windward or Gold Coasts.

⁷⁷ John Knox (1789) “*Minutes of Evidence taken before a committee of the whole house To whom it was referred to consider the circumstances of the slave trade*” p. 93.

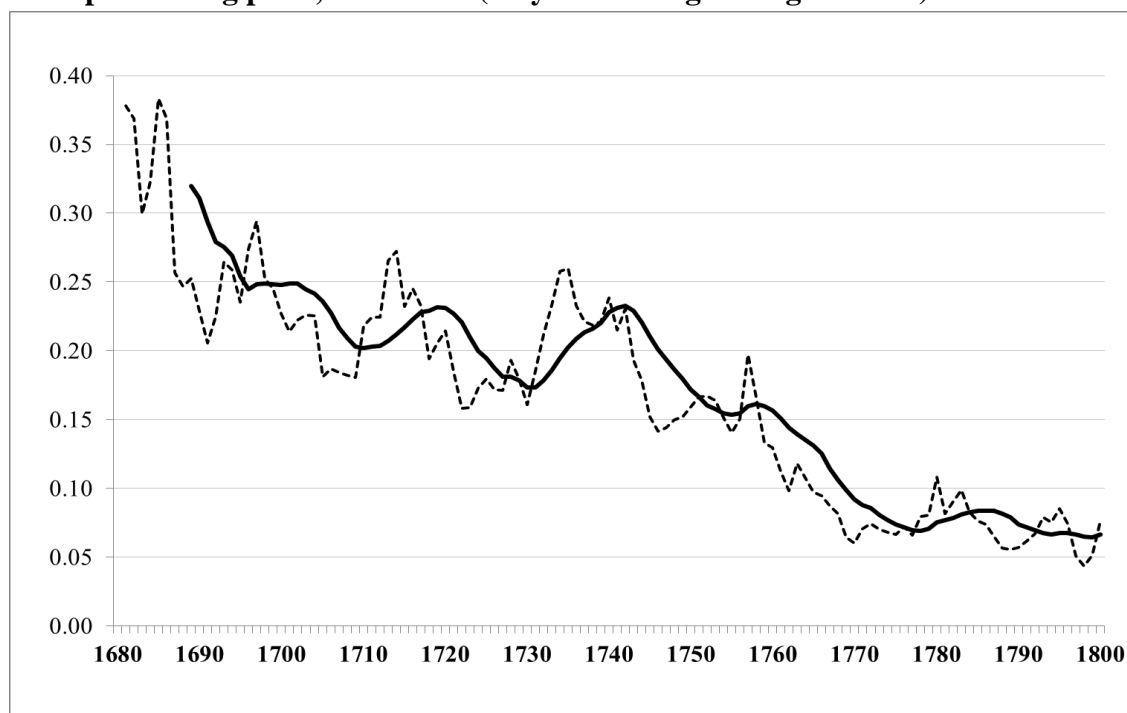
⁷⁸ Conceptually, it seems odd to consider food provisions for slaves waiting at the coast as part of West African food exports, since pre-embarkation maintenance costs will have been factored into the purchasing price of slaves. For reasons of comparability, however, I will maintain the assumption of 225 day-rations required.

Figure 3.5.a. Index-series of slave purchasing prices (African coast) and slave provisioning prices (British staples), 1680-1800 (1701 = 100)



Source: Food price index based on Clark (2006); Slave price index based on Eltis (2005) and Richardson (1991).

Figure 3.5b. Slave provisioning price (225 day-rations) as percentage share of average slave purchasing price, 1680-1800 (10-year moving average in bold)



Source: see figure 3.5a.

Figure 3.5a shows the index-series of slave purchasing prices and slave provisioning prices (1701 = 100), and Figure 3.5b shows the slave provisioning prices (i.e. 225 day rations) as percentage share of slave purchasing prices. Together, these graphs help us understand why European slave traders may have increased their reliance on European provisions. In the mid-1750s slave purchasing prices started to rise from an index level of 114 in 1756, to a mere 535 in 1800. Slave prices experienced a temporary drop in the 1770s and 1790s, but never reverted to pre-1750 levels. Provisioning prices remained much more stable. Although there was a sizeable surge from 1770 to 1800, most of this was a price shock associated with the Napoleonic wars in the 1790s, when the index shot up from 103 in 1798 to 191 in 1800.

The implication of these diverging price developments is that the relative costs of food provisions fell over the course of the eighteenth century, from about 20%-25% of total outfitting costs in the early decades to about 5-10% in the closing decades of the eighteenth century. Hence, if relative food prices had played a role in merchants deciding where to buy provisions (Europe or West Africa), the impact of this choice on the overall profit margin of slave trading companies decreased enormously. Since no accurate information is available on the long-term price trends of African food staples, it is impossible to assess the long-term trend in European and African food price gaps – and an important topic for future research –, but scattered price observations of African rice, corn and yams presented in section 7 suggest that these gaps were not that large.

Given the declining relative cost of provisions, stocking up on food before departure became an increasingly attractive means to reduce voyage time and related business risk. The trans-Atlantic slave trade, while potentially lucrative, was a highly insecure enterprise (Behrendt 2001, Morgan 2007, Haggerty 2009, McDade 2011), and the most successful merchants were those who best managed its risks. Moreover, as the eighteenth century progressed the risks increased due to rising competition among slavers, difficulties in finding the right cargoes to suit rapidly changing African consumer tastes and the need to protect increasingly valuable cargoes of slaves against disease, slave revolts and piracy (Haggerty 2009, pp819-22). Radburn's (2015) study of the role of credit in slave ventures shows that the financial instruments used were more fragile than has previously been considered. The credit crises in the 1770s and 1790s, brought on by intensified Atlantic warfare, placed huge strains on investors (pp665,685-86). These conflicts also made the voyage more dangerous, with the British seeing a 47% increase in the number of ships captured or destroyed in the period from 1760 to 1808, as compared to the previous 40 years.⁷⁹ In Section 7 I will further elaborate on this argument.

⁷⁹ Data from TSTD.

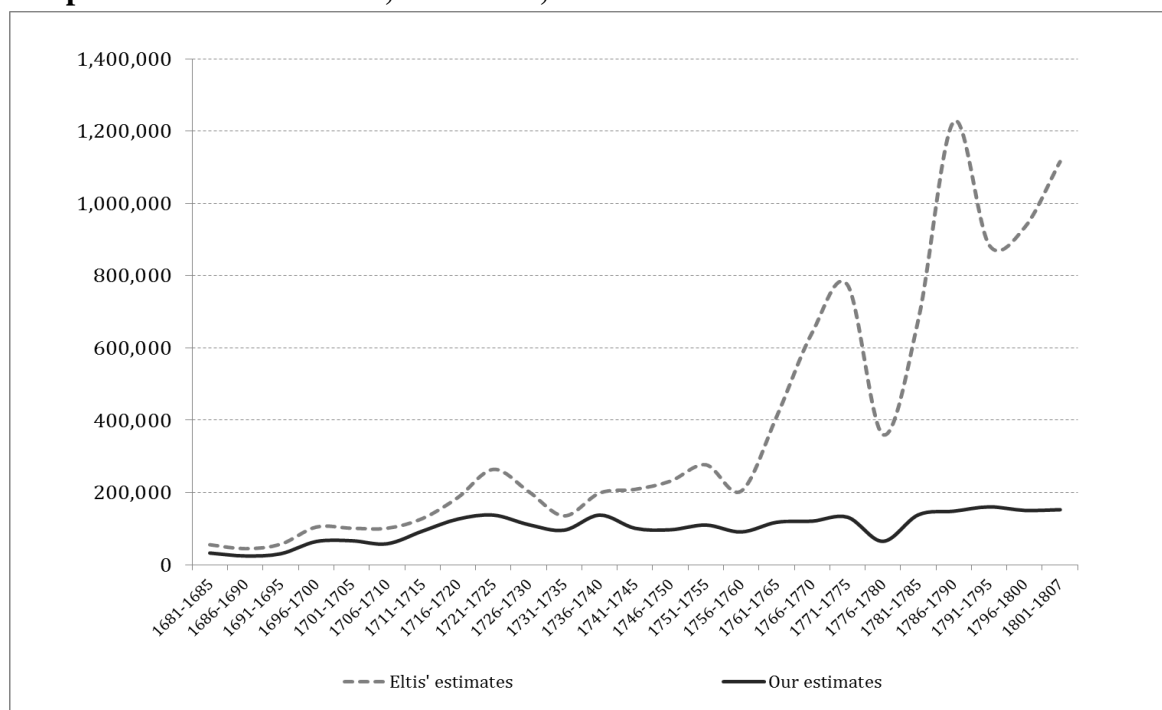
3.6. REVISED ESTIMATES OF WEST AFRICAN FOOD EXPORTS, 1681-1807

It is now time to revise Eltis' estimates. First I take the total number of slaves embarked in the period 1681-1807, according to nationality of the slaver (flag), and insert my estimates of the share of European provisions in total provisioning requirements. This chapters' estimates of the share of European provisions in total provisioning requirements is inserted into the total number of slaves embarked in the period 1681-1807, defined by nationality of the slaver (flag). For British slavers, it is assumed 5% for 1680-1740 and a linear increase to 40% during 1740-1807. For Dutch slavers, the assumption is 80% for the WIC era up to 1740, and 90% for the MCC traders after 1740. For French vessels, I assume 50% up to 1740 and 75% thereafter, and for Danish ships 50% before 1740 and 66% thereafter. Lacking any estimates for the Luso-Brazilian trade, I conservatively assume that ships departing from the New World sourced only 20% of food for the MP from their home ports, putting the revised estimates on the very safe side.

Next, I refine Eltis' assumption of provisioning costs being a fixed 25% share of slave purchasing prices, using the shares reported in Figure 3.5b. In so far as African provisions continued to offer a cheaper alternative, these shares represent an upper-estimate of the relative provisioning prices. This chapter maintain Eltis' assumptions for converting the value of exchange commodities f.o.b. to c.i.f. (multiplying f.o.b. series by 2), and the mark-up of 3% for the consumption of African provisions by slave ship crews.

Figure 3.6 compares the five year-interval estimates of the overall slave-trade induced demand impulse on West African commercial agriculture with the estimates offered by Eltis. The difference is found to be vast. In effect, I estimate that the slave trade induced demand had a monetary value of around £60,000 in the first decades of the eighteenth century, increasing to c. £110,000 per year in the middle decades and c. £150,000 during the heyday-of the trade in the 1780s to 1800s. My estimates for the latter period are about 70 to 80% lower than those offered by Eltis. This difference has two causes. First, the non-African share in slave provisions was too significant to ignore. Second, Eltis' estimates were hugely inflated by assuming a fixed 25% of rapidly rising slave purchasing prices after the mid-1750s. Yet, in the more likely scenario that provisioning prices remained stable, or rose to a much lesser degree, food provisions must have constituted a rapidly shrinking proportion of the total outfitting costs.

Figure 3.6. Estimates of the average annual value of African-sourced provisions compared to Eltis estimates, 1681-1807, in constant British £ of 1700



Sources: Eltis 2013; for my own estimates see text and *Appendix 3.6*.

3.7. WHY DID BRITISH PROVISIONING STRATEGIES DIFFER AND WHAT WERE THE IMPACTS ON DIFFERENT REGIONS?

The question that remains is why British slave traders adopted different provisioning strategies than continental slave traders, and how did this impact on different regions? This final section reviews four possible explanations, which are all in some way connected to the management of business risk: 1) differential access to West African food markets; 2) different price bids of African and European staple foods; 3) different sensitivity to slaves' dietary preferences; and 4) differential techniques to preserve food for ocean-bound journeys.

Beginning with the last two factors, it is generally acknowledged that techniques to prepare and conserve food improved during the eighteenth century, and fitted into a pattern of ongoing 'professionalization' of the slave trade (Leuftink 1991, Behrendt 2001), one result of which was the declining mortality rates on board slave ships (Klein et al. 2001, p100). It is highly implausible, however, that the Dutch and French traders' greater reliance on European provisions could be explained by their having any greater structural knowledge of food conservation techniques than the British.

The argument on dietary preferences of African slaves poses a similar problem. Many sources indicate that European slavers were well informed on the advantages of feeding their captives with African staple foods. Instructions to, and observations by, ships' captains of all nations advised to prepare food with some local ingredients, even if it was just a condiment such as

palm-oil or melegueta pepper.⁸⁰ Traders believed that this reduced sickness and mortality, and that it helped to get Africans slowly used to European food. It cannot entirely be ruled out that British slavers were, on the whole, more sensitive to the dietary preferences of slaves than Dutch or French slavers, but the many documented cases of British slavers using force to feed slaves who refused their food makes this an unlikely interpretation (Rediker 2007, pp263-64 and 284-88).⁸¹

It is far more likely that the Dutch and French had other reasons to rely on European provisions. Were food price differentials sufficiently large to influence provisioning choices? And if so, were these consistent with the different strategies pursued? Figures 6a and 6b present the food price observations gathered from the RAC accounts for the years 1680-1730⁸², complemented by yam prices in Biafra in the 1780s derived from Behrendt et al. (2010), and rice and yam prices from the MCC records.⁸³ Figure 3.7a compares West African rice prices with British domestic prices of rice and wheat flour. Figure 3.7b compares British barley and bean prices with West African corn and yam prices.⁸⁴ All prices have been standardized in pence per 2,000 Kcal using the metrics listed in *Appendix 3.3*.

Figure 3.7a indicates that West African rice prices were considerably lower than European rice prices. Part of this difference may be explained by differences in quality, but with a price gap of 300% the Windward coast obviously offered more value for money. That said, large price differences between Sherbo and Cape Coast Castle show that it also mattered where or when slavers bought foodstuffs in West Africa. It is possible that the price of rice sold to slavers at Cape Castle followed British market prices, and perhaps the rice was even first imported from Europe in order to supply British forts, before being partly resold to British slave ships.

⁸⁰ In their instructions to captains, the directors of the West India Company recommended that all beans be flavoured with “...een weinig sap” and “...wat oly de palm” (quoted in Balai 2011, p250). Likewise the Royal Africa Company stated that its ships were to purchase a proportion of corn, palm oil and malagueta pepper (Donnan II, 164). Later ships of the Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie regularly stocked up on palm oil and pepper, regardless of other provisions they bought. A recipe for soup served aboard French slaving vessels included locally bought corn, pepper and palm oil as well as beans or rice (Mandelblatt 2008, p412).

⁸¹ There is also evidence that African slave raiders used food as a strategy to dislocate their captives from their home environment, by feeding them staples they were not used to. Smallwood (2008) and Byrd (2010) argue that as soon as people were kidnapped, captured or sold a process began to separate them from the social context which had previously defined them as members of a community, and reduced them to commodities (Byrd 2010, 29). Smallwood (2008, pp43-44) argues that the food given to slaves was an important part of this process.

⁸² For the forts, the data comes from Sherbo (Sierra Leone) and Cape Coast Castle (Gold Coast) for 1686, 1687 and 1688. These primarily show purchases of African products in local currencies which are converted into pound sterling. For ships, I have taken information ship accounts in the invoice books of the RAC, which show both quantities and prices of European foodstuffs.

⁸³ Information to derive prices for yams can be found in Behrendt et al. 2010, pp90-91,102,108,135,140,170; Behrendt 2001, p182; Thomas 1999, p418.

⁸⁴ The British annual price series are farm-gate prices from Clark (2006) to which were added a 30% mark-up to adjust for transportation and transaction costs incurred in getting foods from the countryside to the belly of slave vessels in the harbours of Bristol and Liverpool. This 30% mark-up closes the gap between the farm-gate prices and the unit prices reported in the slave ship trading accounts studied here.

Figure 3.7.a. British prices of rice and wheat flour *versus* West African rice prices, pence per 2,000 kcal

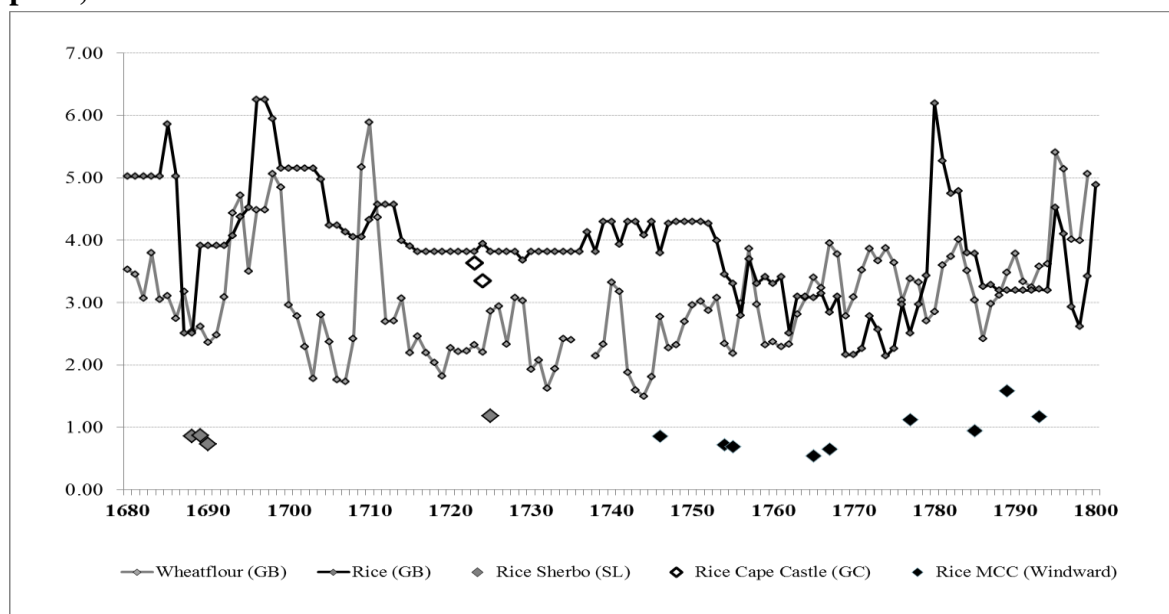
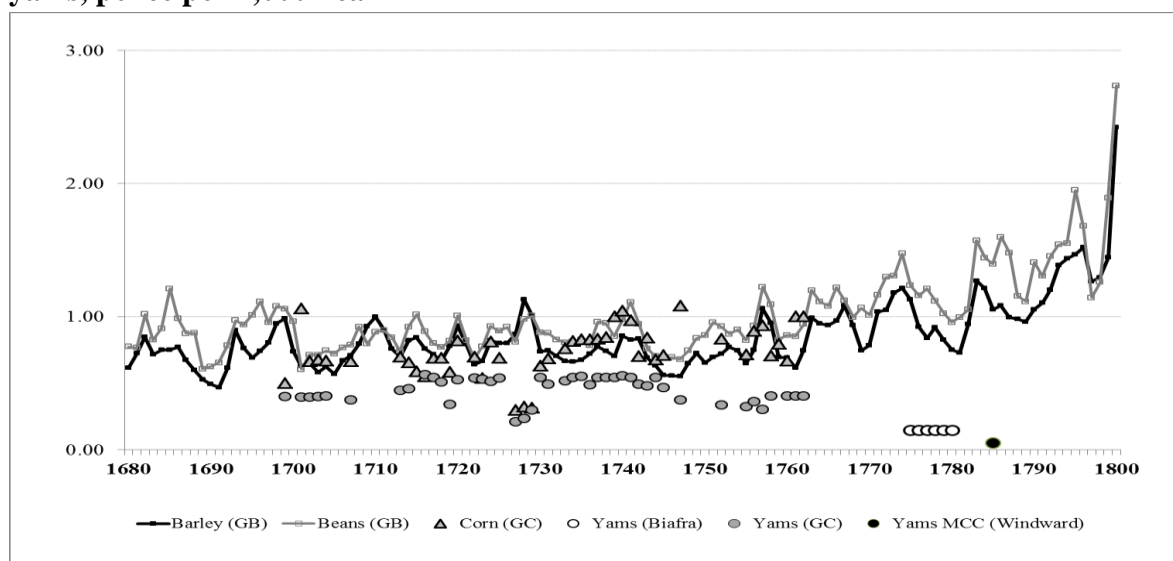


Figure 3.7.b. British prices of barley and beans *versus* West African prices of corn and yams, pence per 2,000 kcal



Sources: GB Data: Clark (2006), MCC Data: Zeuuws Archief, MCC Inventaris, Reizen 1730 – 1790, Yams Biafra: Behrendt et al. 2010, Yams, Palm Oil, Corn (Gold Coast): Ronnback 2014, Rice Sherbo (SL): TNA T70/880, Rice Cape Castle (GC): TNA T70/763; Notes: GB is Great Britain, GC is Gold Coast, SL is Sierra Leone, MCC is Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie.

Figure 3.7b indicates, though, that a West African rice diet was not necessarily cheaper than a diet of European barley and beans. The costs of corn from the Gold Coast were also in the same range. In fact, there seems to have been only one major bargain available in West Africa, namely yams from Biafra, which were much cheaper than any other staple sourced from either Britain or West Africa. Yams were harvested only once a year, which increased pressures on captains to time their voyages accurately, but once obtained, yams could be

successfully stored for long periods of time (Behrendt 2001, p183). Moreover, as noted in section 3.4, the densely-populated regions around the major slaving ports of Bonny and Old Calabar, with their highly efficient trading networks, were able to significantly increase production. Large supplies of yams at low prices may thus have reduced the time spent on the coast, lowering the risk of slave rebellions, diseases or naval attacks and, more generally, raising cost efficiency.

Lovejoy and Richardson (2004, pp378-80) have argued that faster loading times and superior credit arrangements were the main reasons why British slave traders began to favour what was originally considered a 'horrid hole', with its less desirable slaves and higher rates of mortality for both captives and crew.⁸⁵ Ready and cheap access to yams in Biafra may have been another factor supporting this shift. Yet, Biafra only became of central importance to the British trade after the 1750s which Nwokeji (2010, pp49–53) has argued had much to do with the opening up of new markets for slaves in the densely populated central region. Cheap yams may thus explain why British slave ships continued to rely on African provisions to a greater extent than the French or the Dutch - who traded much less in this area - but they cannot explain the already existing differences in provisioning strategies.

Behrendt (2001) has argued that "During peak periods of the slave trade, English food supplies could not meet the requirements of all Guineamen. Merchants thus relied on African provisions, particularly during late summer and fall...." (p181). There is no doubt that the slave trade at its peak required huge quantities of food. If one were to count the crew and slaves aboard ships out of Liverpool as additional mouths to be fed, then they would have added some 5% to 7% to the total population of Lancashire in an era when the city was itself growing rapidly.⁸⁶ Yet, even if British slavers departing from Liverpool and Bristol had difficulties in sourcing food from their immediate hinterlands, it would still have been an option to call in at London, the largest commercial and naval hub of Western Europe, or other European ports for that matter, as was common practice in the purchase of exchange commodities, such as textiles, guns, alcohol, tobacco, iron and copper rods.⁸⁷ French slavers leaving from the port of Nantes sometimes first sailed northwards to the Dutch port of Rotterdam to take in provisions.⁸⁸

The most likely explanation for the differences in provisioning strategy, therefore, cannot be found in the availability of foodstuffs in Europe, but rather in the differential access to West African food markets. British ships could pile up food at various fortified coastal stations in

⁸⁵ Slaves from Biafra were lower valued by buyers in the New World as they were regarded as more disease prone. This is also borne out by analyses of mortality rates during the middle passage with slaves from the Biafra region dying at nearly twice the rate as those from other areas (Klein 2010, Thomas 1999).

⁸⁶ Population estimates from Wrigley (2007).

⁸⁷ Records from the accounts of forts along the coast of Africa show that they were importing trade goods from around the world, including Swedish iron, Indian textiles, Danish guns, Brazilian tobacco and Caribbean rum. TNA T70/928 – 930.

⁸⁸ Based on personal correspondence with Gerhard de Kok. I thank him for sharing this insight. Mandelblatt (2008) notes that while the majority of provisions on French ships were bought in France, they also purchased rice in London and Salt Beef from Ireland (p417).

Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, before taking a leap to the Bight of Benin, where food access was problematic. The Dutch had fewer forts along this part of the coast and with the critical exception of Elmina, these were also playing a less significant role in the slave trade itself. With less dependable supplies along the coast it made sense to stock up in Europe, even if this may not have given the best value for money. MCC ship logs reveal that there were very few places along the coast where they could obtain reliable supplies.⁸⁹ This is not to say that French, Danish or Dutch ships did not buy any West African commodities at all, but they did buy much less of the main staples.

French ships had even fewer permanent establishments along the coast for stopping over. Writing in 1764, the Nantais merchant Joseph Mosneron, stated that the captain of his ship decided to set sail for the Caribbean, despite not having his full complement of slaves because: “*Les provisions de France étaient en grande partie consummées....*” (Pétre-Grenouilleau 1995, p75). Other captains, like Van Alstein, had to sail to the islands of Fernando Po and São Tomé: “*Il n'en est pas de meme de la Cote d'Or ou de Juda; quand on manque de vivres, on peut aller relacher a l'Isle des Princes ou a celles de Saint-Thome et d'Annobon qui n'en sont pas eloignees.*” (Rinchon 1964, p264). Since most French merchants were, unlike the British and Dutch, not specialised in the slave trade, but undertook it as a side activity to bilateral commodity trade with the Caribbean (Michon 2007), there were lower incentives for them to invest in reliable African coastal stations.⁹⁰

The idea that Dutch and French slave traders may have had more diversified portfolios is also important in another respect. Recent research by Gerhard de Kok reveals that landowning elites in the Dutch province of Zeeland invested heavily in the MCC trade.⁹¹ They outfitted ships with supplies from local farms, some of which they owned themselves. Differences in European investor-supplier networks may thus offer an additional explanation as to why Dutch slavers piled up the bulk of their provisions in home ports, such as Middelburg. Future research will need to clarify whether such links were weaker in Bristol and Liverpool, and whether path-dependencies in the commercial organization of the slave trade can account for different logistic approaches.

But even the British, with the advantage of having a string of forts along the West African coast, faced considerable problems with West African supplies at a time when the trade was just a fraction of its eighteenth-century peak. Correspondence from and to RAC officials

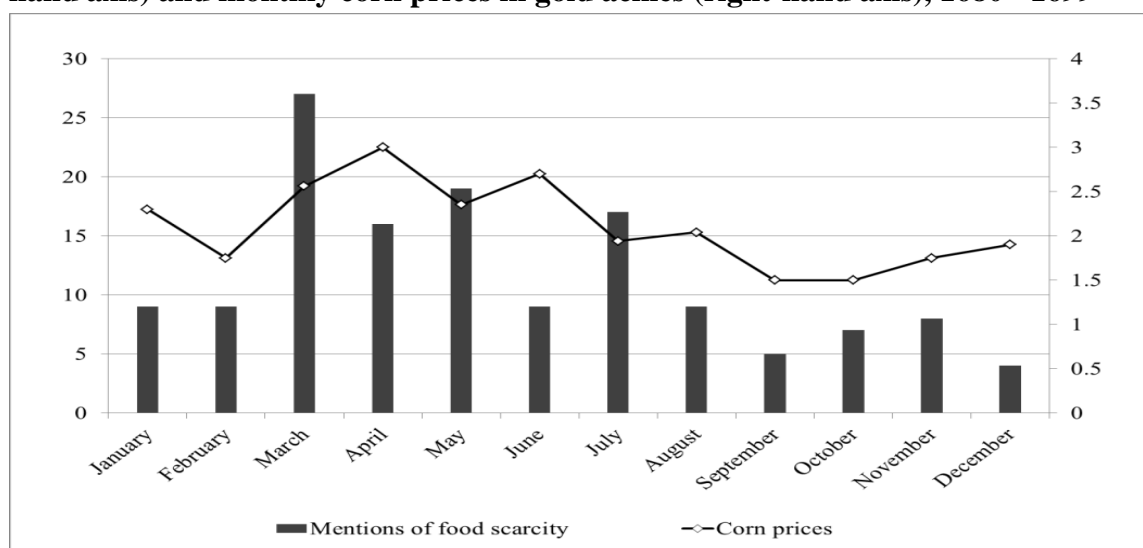
⁸⁹ My database of MCC ships provides 75 observations of specific locations used by ships to purchase provisions. Of these, 27 come from the short stretch of coast from Axim to Elmina on the western side of the Gold Coast, and 34 from the equally small area between Grande Mesurado and Sestra Kru on the Windward Coast. The prominence of the latter area may be due to the fact that it saw less competition from more established traders on other parts of the coast (Vos 2009, p32).

⁹⁰ An analysis of the Chaurand papers in the Nantes archives from 1777 to 1787 (101 J 26, 27, 28) shows that they sent out 27 West India ships to only 11 slave ships. These slave voyages were all concentrated between 1783 and 1787, a period of rapid growth in West Africa and that after 1787 they withdrew from the slave trade to again concentrate on the bilateral trade with St Domingue. A further study of the comparative impacts of specialisation in the British as opposed to the French slave trade would merit further study.

⁹¹ Based on personal communication with Gerhard de Kok.

stationed in the forts along the Gold and Slave Coast in the 1680s and 1690s, reveals that, especially in the months of March to July, there were frequent mentions of food ‘scarcity’ causing trouble to traders (see Figure 3.8). In 1686, Captain Woodfine stated that he was unable to move on to Whydah until he had sufficient corn, and that there was none to be had except at inflated prices⁹². Likewise, Captain Jefferies, in 1692, mentioned he was unable to move on to the Bight of Benin for want of sufficient corn.⁹³ Local forts, which were often suppliers of slaves as well as provisions, were equally affected by insecure food supplies. In 1681 the factor at Accra stated that he was unable to buy more slaves as there was no corn to be had.⁹⁴ Figure 3.8 shows that the average monthly prices of corn coincided with numerous mentions of scarcity. The reasons for failing supplies were not only related to the seasonality of harvests. Local wars and disputes, as experienced by the Egysa fort, near modern day Cape Coast in Ghana⁹⁵, could put a complete ban on food supplies reaching the coastal forts. Such problems were not confined to the Gold Coast or the Bight of Benin. In Senegambia food shortages caused by warfare or drought were also the ‘biggest bottleneck’ in the slave purchasing chain (Searing 2003, p81).

Figure 3.8. Monthly mentions of provisioning problems in RAC correspondence (left-hand axis) and monthly corn prices in gold ackies (right-hand axis), 1680 - 1699



Source: Calculations based on the letters between British forts and slave ships compiled by Law (1997a).

Note: Gold ackies were an African coastal currency unit worth c. 1 British shilling (12 pence).

If the possibility of speedier embarkation was the main reason for the British to shift their trade to the Bight of Biafra, this indicates that they, too, were sensitive to provisioning-induced risks of delay. There is tentative evidence that the demand for African foodstuffs was stretching supplies in the main regions of embarkation. For instance, during the severe contraction of the slave trade in the late 1770s to the early 1780s, caused by the American War of Independence, slave captains from Britain going to the Gold Coast and the Bight of

⁹² Law (1997) Book 2, May 16 1686 Ref 904

⁹³ Law (1997) Book 3, November 13 Ref 10

⁹⁴ Law (1997) Book 1, October 25 1681 Ref 417

⁹⁵ Law (1997) Book 2, March 8 1687 Ref 647

Biafra took far fewer European provisions with them. When the slave trade resurged after the conflict had ended, so did the quantity of European provisions.⁹⁶ Apart from structural shortages, supplies may have become less predictable as slave raids undermined agricultural production and disrupted local trade routes.

The effects of internal wars must have been more severe in some regions than in others. In this respect, it is interesting to see that British slave vessels sailing off to the Windward Coast and the Gold Coast took about 62% of total provisions from their home ports, while vessels sailing to Biafra brought about 34% in the 1790s and 1800s. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, but the difference seems consistent with Nwokeji (2010), who has argued that the demographic impact of slave raiding in Biafra was mild compared to the region around the Bight of Benin, which suffered a serious decline in population (Manning 1982, 30-34). In Biafra fewer slaves were obtained through violent slave raiding and instead far more through the use of judicial punishment (Nwokeji 2010, pp68,76,130,179, Martin 1988, p27, Lovejoy 2011, p82). According to Nwokeji (2001, p626) a more balanced sex ratio and the willingness of people to accept and incorporate outsiders meant that “....*Igboland retained a high population density not because it escaped heavy slaving.....but in spite of it.*”

In summary, British access to African provisions was not only more secure because of a string of forts that could mediate the risk of local food shortages, but also because it shifted its trade to the region where local merchant networks were geared towards ensuring a quick, abundant and secure supply of foodstuffs to slave traders eager to minimize their embarkation times.

⁹⁶ During the period of the American civil war, ships belonging to the Liverpool merchant William Davenport were taking as little as 3% of their provisions from Liverpool. However, by the 1790s ships were taking on average of 30%. This figure did vary according to region and ship captain. The log of the slave ship Ranger (STD ID: 83272, LRO: 387 MD 55), one of the few to itemise the food given to slaves, shows that they were fed around 3700 kcals / day with European beans and rice and around 2000 kcals of corn from the Gold Coast. To put this into perspective, sailors on British ships who were far more physically active were fed around 4800 kcals / day in total (MacDonald 2004, p177).

3.8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have asked to what extent the increasing demand for food provisions by European slave ships may have boosted West African commercial agriculture in the long eighteenth century. Exploring the provisioning strategies of British, French, Dutch and Danish slave ships—has shown that a considerable share of the calories and proteins required to maintain African slaves were supplied from Europe. It has also revealed that the relative costs of European-sourced slave provisions remained relatively stable, while slave purchasing prices quintupled between 1755 and 1807. Hence, the Atlantic slave trade played a smaller role in the development of West African commercial agriculture than previous studies have suggested, and was definitely much smaller than the aggregate value of such West African commodity exports to Britain during the mid-nineteenth century.

Apart from assessing orders of magnitude, my analysis has revealed two interesting patterns of variation in slave ship provisioning strategies. Firstly, British slavers relied to a much larger extent on African food markets than continental slavers. I have hypothesized here that the main reason for this difference is that British slavers enjoyed more secure access to provisions, especially because their string of trading forts on the West African coast reduced the risk of supply failure.

Secondly, I have also observed notable differences in the size of food exports across various regions of slave embarkation. Expanding food exports in West Africa were confined to a few key regions. In the Bight of Biafra, the slave trade stimulated the development of coastal food markets and placed a stepping stone for the nineteenth century commercial transition. In the Gold Coast, the provisioning trade was important but, as will be argued in later chapters, not influential in the commercial transition, which was initially based on other exports from the interior. In those areas where markets for food provisions remained underdeveloped, i.e. WCA and Benin, the commercial transition either failed to accelerate the non-slave sector or development occurred much later. In the next chapter, I will examine the expansion of the trade in commodities that were destined for sale in Europe.

CHAPTER 4

COMMODITIES, PRICES AND RISK: THE CHANGING MARKETS FOR NON-SLAVE PRODUCTS IN PRE-ABOLITION WEST AFRICA⁹⁷

“.....procure some Palm Oil on reasonable terms which is likely to bear a great price here, we therefore wish you to purchase as much as you can with any of the cargo you may have.....”

Instructions from Thomas Leyland, Liverpool Merchant, to the captain of the slave ship Enterprise, 1803⁹⁸

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In the decades prior to the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, those campaigning for an end to the traffic in Africans to the Americas made regular mention of the potential for trade in ‘legitimate commerce’.⁹⁹ They seemed to have shared the assumption with a number of modern scholars, in particular Rodney (1972) and Inikori (2007, 2011) that the transatlantic slave trade had effectively crowded out other forms of commerce, necessitating an active change in the way commerce with Africa was conducted by British merchants. This view has been contradicted, however, by some contributors to a recent volume (Law et al. 2013), who have suggested that this may not have been the case. In their introduction, Law et al. argue that the trade in commodities continued and even grew in absolute, if not relative, terms, throughout the eighteenth century (p10).

Later in the same book Austin (2013) argues that from the 1780s the supply of slaves was generally falling while their prices were rising, suggesting that either supplies of captives were in decline, or there was a competing demand for slave labour in Africa (Whatley 2014). The former argument certainly fits the ‘gun-slave cycle’ thesis, in which rising demand for slaves triggered an increase in violence through slave raiding and warfare. This then led to more effective defences being put in place by those who were being raided, consequently increasing the costs of acquiring slaves needing to be taken from ever increasing distances from the coast (Klein 2001). The demand side thesis is based on work by Searing (2003, pp130-55), who argues that slave exports from the Senegambian region began to compete with local demands for slave labour. These included coastal industries such as salt and fishing, commercial agriculture further inland for export to the drier savannah and desert

⁹⁷ This chapter is based on a working paper written with Pieter Woltjer which can be found at: <https://www.aehnwork.org/working-papers/commodities-prices-and-risk-the-changing-market-for-non-slave-products-in-pre-abolition-in-west-africa/>. The paper is currently under review at the Journal of African History.

⁹⁸ LRO 387 MD 43 Leyland to Capt. Caesar Lawson 18 July 1803

⁹⁹ See, in particular, Equiano (1794, pp356–58), Clarkson (1788, pp8–23)

regions, and the production of gum in the interior. A combination of famine and warfare exacerbated labour shortages, which gradually diminished the pool of potential captives for export. Austin suggests that, in certain parts of West Africa, demand for coerced labour for agriculture, production of finished goods and mining may have begun to compete with the commerce in slave exports. For example, Lynn (1997, pp12-13) notes that palm oil exports were increasing in the regions around the Bight of Biafra from the 1760s. The reduction in the numbers of available slaves for export would therefore have pushed up prices.

However, as Austin (2013, p250) acknowledges, this hypothesis is not based on any firm data, and even Searing's conclusions are, by his own admission, indirect. What is currently lacking in the literature is accurate quantitative data on the non-slave trade with Africa, which can be applied to a regional analysis of trade patterns, in the pre-abolition period. At present, the only quantitative data that exists on the non-slave trade with Africa are the statistics on British trade compiled by Johnson et al. (1990), which are based on the custom ledgers held at the National Archives in London. These ledgers contain the total recorded imports, exports and re-exports at Britain's principal ports from 1699. Even though they may not be the ideal source, as they cannot account for smuggling, clerical errors, tax evasion and the fact that many ships bought and sold goods in other European countries, they do still represent the most complete record of Africa's commodity trade for the eighteenth century (Johnson et al. 1990, p8). Johnson's work was a heroic achievement, involving the inputting of between 30 and 35 thousand items of data onto individual punch cards which were then inputted onto a 1980s computer (Johnson et al. 1990, pp6-8).

Nonetheless, whilst providing a very useful overview of Britain's commodity trade, the data does have notable significant limitations. Firstly, the precise volumes of goods are not recorded, neither are current prices given. Instead, the official value listed in the ledgers is used. This multiplies the volume of goods with an unchanging official price (see below section 2) and provides, as is argued below, a rather inaccurate picture of the actual patterns of trade. The records also do not provide any specific geographical details as the customs records, until the nineteenth century, did not record from which regions commodities were bought (Johnson et al. 1990, p 49). This in itself is not an insurmountable hurdle as most of the commodities produced tended to come from specific regions. For example, it is known gum senegal was almost exclusively bought from Senegambia (Webb 1985). However, Johnson aggregated the products under certain categories, making it hard to know with any certainty where goods originated. For instance, the ledgers list several different types of gums including gun animi, gum Arabic and gum copal, all of which were sourced from different areas.

This chapter seeks to provide a dataset which offers two important improvements on the work of Johnson. Firstly, I provide a far more thorough, if not entirely precise, geographical breakdown of regional patterns of trade. Individual commodities are disaggregated and recorded individually, allowing us to provide a more accurate estimate of where they were

sourced.¹⁰⁰ In addition, it uses new data from Eltis (2013), who records details of over 2,000 voyages undertaken by specialist commodity vessels sailing to Africa to trade for non-slave products between the 1560s and 1807. By combining this with the fresh data herein, the chapter can provide a more geographically precise analysis of the patterns of the non-slave trade, as well as a better understanding of its operation and relationship to the slave trade. Secondly, I present a newly constructed time series of prices for commodities in both Africa and Europe over the eighteenth century. These, combined with the recorded volumes of goods, provide a far more accurate figure for the real value of the commodity trade, and provide a better understanding of how changing markets within the Atlantic world influenced the decisions of both African and European merchants.

This chapter also seeks to contribute to a growing body of literature which seeks to better understand the development of British trade with Africa in the eighteenth century. Behrendt (2001) has argued that patterns of trade were determined by changes in the climatic and agricultural seasons in Europe, Africa and the Americas and, as argued in Chapter 2, better supplies of food in certain regions such as the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra might have also played a role in the growth of slave exports. The nature of credit systems in Africa (Lovejoy and Richardson 2004), and between the Caribbean and Europe (Radburn 2015), may have influenced where slaves were embarked and sold. Other studies have examined the rise of the slave trade in Liverpool, and how investments in human capital¹⁰¹ and risk management strategies allowed this port to assume such a dominant position in the second half of the eighteenth century (McDade 2011, Richardson et al 2007, Haggerty 2009).

One area which has been the subject of relatively little research during the apogee of the West African transatlantic slave trade in the later eighteenth century, is the interaction between the trade in slaves and commodities. Non-slave products, such as ivory, gold and pepper, had been of similar importance as slaves to British merchants until the late seventeenth century (Eltis 1994, Van den Boogaart 1992) and ‘legitimate commerce’ became, at least in theory, the only items of trade with Britain after 1808. However, to date no study has quantitatively examined how the commodity trade developed and how it interacted with the trade in captives in the eighteenth century. This chapter will be the first to provide an analysis of the patterns of Africa’s non-slave exports to Britain in the decades before abolition.

¹⁰⁰ The Johnson et al. (1990) dataset provides very little information about the geographical origin of the goods. This is in part because the customs records do not record where items were bought, but also because goods are aggregated into groups. For example, Camwood, a product which almost exclusively came from Sierra Leone and Barwood/Redwood, which was sourced on the eastern side of African West Coast, are listed together under ‘dyestuffs’. Gums were overwhelmingly purchased in Senegambia (Curtin 1975), while palm oil, aggregated under ‘Oils and Fats’ most likely came almost exclusively from the regions around the Bight of Biafra (Lynn 1997). By entering each product separately, we solve the aggregation issue and this, alongside reference to other sources and literature made it possible to estimate, with reasonable accuracy, where the goods came from. Furthermore, through the use of a new dataset on specialist bilateral ships by Eltis (2013), I am also able to show how the business of commodity trading developed over the eighteenth century.

¹⁰¹ In particular, knowledge of local African markets and the development of relations with merchants with contacts in the interior

The results show that from the late 1770s, there appears to have been a significant shift in the focus and volume of commodity trading. From 1760 to 1808 the volume of non-slave goods traded grew by a factor of four, which is substantially more than official figures indicate. Furthermore, and contrary to what literature suggests (Law et al. 2013, pp9-10), the commodity trade grew faster (in absolute terms) than the trade in slaves for the Americas. Secondly, I show that the geographic focus of the commodity trade changed, from one dominated by products from the western Senegambian region to one where the eastern side of the West African coast became considerably more important. This study's data indicates that until the 1770s the commodity trade with Africa (with the important exception of gold) was largely in the hands of specialist bilateral traders, principally working from London, focusing on Senegambia and particularly the gum trade. However, political and military events in the wider Atlantic region caused this trade to considerably diminish. From this point a far greater share of African commodities were being imported from the regions around the Bight of Biafra on the Eastern side of the coast. Additionally, it is argued that this it was principally slave traders, not specialist commodity merchants, who were responsible for purchasing these products. To my knowledge, this is the first time that this pattern has been both identified and quantitatively analysed.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. Section two sets out the methodological and data contributions to the literature on trade with West Africa in the pre-abolition period. Section 3 presents the main results regarding the changing volume, structure and nature of Britain's commodity trade over the course of the eighteenth century. The chapter then seeks to answer two important questions. Firstly, why was it that demand seemed to be growing for African products? Secondly, why were slave traders - and more specifically those going to the regions around the Bight of Biafra - and not specialist bilateral commodity merchants, so motivated to purchase commodities in such increasing volumes? I argue that British consumers during this period began purchasing increasing quantities of finished manufactures, which required primary products found across West Africa. In addition, commodity traders then seem to have been effectively crowded out of the new market by slave traders attracted to non-slave products.

I suggest three reasons as to why this might have been the case. To begin with, slave traders began to face pressure to reduce crowding on their ships, which may have encouraged them to buy other products to compensate. Secondly, the mark up on commodities was especially favourable. Prices at the coast seemed to have remained relatively stable, largely owed to the fact that, unlike slaves, most commodities bought by Europeans were not particularly valuable in Africa. Furthermore, some merchants may have been using commodities as a means of attracting more business from slave ships and therefore were not motivated to raise prices. However, the value of ivory, palm oil and dyewoods was rising dramatically in Europe, probably due to inflationary pressures caused by warfare and increasing demand. Finally, commodities may have offered slave traders a means of reducing their credit risks, as they could realise their profits much faster on non-slave products.

For this thesis, the most important result is that in the period before abolition demand in the Atlantic region for non-slave goods was already rising. The data shows that, as with the provisioning trade, these goods were coming in increasing quantities from the eastern end of the coast, predominantly the Bight of Biafra.

4.2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The analysis of the flow of commodities between Africa and Europe over the eighteenth century requires a measure of the value of trade that is independent of changes in prices, or changes in the value of the British Pound. The work of Marion Johnson et al (1990) on the English customs records does this through a so-called quantum index, which weights the quantities of commodities traded for each year using fixed, base period prices.¹⁰² These base period prices were built almost exclusively on official prices that were set in the late seventeenth century. This means that all goods imported and exported over the eighteenth and early nineteenth century were assigned a single, ‘official’ price by the customs, which was left unchanged for over a century and a half,¹⁰³ making the value of import and export flows comparable over time. Unfortunately, the official prices turn out to be unrepresentative for the actual prices observed during the later years.

Index-number theory shows that fixing the base-period prices to a single year can cause serious distortions, particularly if this is done over long periods of time. This so-called ‘substitution bias’ is the result of consumers substituting away from goods when they increase in relative price and vice versa (Ehemann 2007, pp256-57). An index that relies on weights from some past period will thus overweight the goods that have decreased in price and underweight those that have undergone price increases, biasing the quantum index in the process. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the average prices observed in the data for four important African commodities over several decades, and compares them to the official prices used to calculate the “official value” of goods used in the Johnson et al. dataset.

¹⁰² Note that such a quantum index does not necessarily measure changes in volume or weight, instead it allows one to compare the ‘real’, total value of a range of goods over time.

¹⁰³ Note that throughout this paper imports will refer to goods entering Britain, exports will refer to goods entering Africa.

Table 4.1. Average import prices vs official prices, 1730s-1810s

	<i>Ivory</i>	<i>Palm oil</i>	<i>Beeswax</i>	<i>Redwood</i>
<i>Decade</i>	(£/cwt)	(£/cwt)	(£/cwt)	(£/ton)
1730s	5.3	2.2	2.8	3.7
1740s	5.8	2.6	2.8	6.2
1750s	7.1	2.8	3.4	2.8
1760s	10.0	3.3	3.3	2.3
1770s	14.9	3.0	3.4	2.1
1780s	15.7	4.1	4.6	2.0
1790s	11.8	4.9	5.4	2.6
1800s	21.9	5.9	6.7	4.5
1810s	23.5	2.8	9.2	5.5
<i>Official</i>	<i>6.00</i>	<i>1.00</i>	<i>4.75</i>	<i>40.00</i>

Sources: Johnson et al. (1990), see Table 4.3 for sources on current prices.

Clearly, the official prices – both in absolute and in relative terms – differed substantially from the observed prices, particularly for the later decades. Most notably for redwood, the official price does not correspond to the average prices observed from the 1730s onwards. What served as the basis for the official prices is not exactly clear, not even for the customs officers recording the trade flows at the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁴ This chapter revisits the English customs records and constructs a quantum index that takes the changing prices into account, thus eliminating, or at least limiting the bias that plagues the official values used by Johnson et al. (1990). In addition, it provides a much more detailed dataset of the commodities traded with Africa, which allows an analysis of the changing patterns of trade, both its composition and its geographical scope.

¹⁰⁴ “*The Estimates in this office by which the goods imported and exported are valued were made about the year 1697 probably by the first appointed officer, for the office was instituted in that year, upon what principle he formed his estimates it is difficult to ascertain at this day*” TNA, CUST 17/12, 1790

Quantum index

To re-estimate the real value, or so-called volume index, of goods traded with Africa it was necessary to augment the ‘official’ quantum index described above in two important respects. First, instead of weighting the various commodities by the official prices of 1697, I rely on nominal prices observed over the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Second, these weights are updated roughly every twenty years, linking the resulting separate indices using a procedure called ‘chaining’. This chain index avoids the problem of out-of-date weights, currently plaguing the available estimates of the volume of African trade.

Equation (1) provides an example of a basic, fixed-weight quantum index. This index captures the change in the volume (Q) of a composite basket of i goods between period 3 and the base period 0; p and q are the price and quantity of each good i respectively.

$$Q^L = \frac{\sum_i p_{0i} q_{3i}}{\sum_i p_{0i} q_{0i}} \quad (1)$$

The fixed-weight volume index is thus the ratio of the total value of goods in period 3 measured at base-periods 0’s prices to the total value of goods in the base period itself. In this Laspeyres index, only prices for period 0 factor into the equation, making it particularly sensitive to the choice of base-period. When there are substantial price changes over time, picking a different base year could significantly alter the results.

Equation (2) addresses this issue by linking a series of separate fixed-weight volume indices in which the base-period is continually changed. This chain index (Q^c) still measures the change in aggregate volume between period 3 and the base period 0. This time, however, it does not rely solely on the base-period prices, it also factors in the prices for the intermittent periods 1 and 2 respectively.

$$Q^c = \left(\frac{\sum_i p_{0i} q_{1i}}{\sum_i p_{0i} q_{0i}} \right) \left(\frac{\sum_i p_{1i} q_{2i}}{\sum_i p_{1i} q_{1i}} \right) \left(\frac{\sum_i p_{2i} q_{3i}}{\sum_i p_{2i} q_{2i}} \right) = \prod_{\tau=1}^3 Q_{\tau}^L \quad (2)$$

The volume index derived from equation (2) is no longer affected by the choice of base-period and will, if prices change over time, provide an answer different from the fixed-weight Laspeyres index in equation (1). A drawback of the chaining method, however, is that it is substantially more data-intensive. Whereas the fixed-weight method requires only a single set of prices, the chained volume index requires a different set of prices for each individual chain. Lacking prices for every year and product in the sample, means that instead of shifting

weights every year, they are shifted every twenty years. The issue of out-dated weights is thus addressed, while not posing too severe constraints on the dataset.

Data

To reconstruct the volume index of West African trade, data on the quantity and prices of both imports originating from Africa, and exports flowing into the region, is used. For the quantities, I rely on the British customs records (CUST) held at the National Archives in London.¹⁰⁵ This source details the exact quantity of commodities traded between Britain and Africa on an annual basis in pounds, gallons, number etc. As opposed to the work of Johnson et al. (1990) I disregard the official prices and do not sum the value of the individual products into aggregate categories. This allows me to assign my own, up-to-date prices to these products, as well as observe the composition of trade in full detail.

The data on the prices of West African commodities is, to my knowledge, the most extensive ever assembled for the eighteenth century. It includes 2,667 observations for the European market prices and 323 observations for prices on the West African coast, from a variety of British and Dutch merchant and government sources (see Table 4.2).¹⁰⁶ In order to get to a unit price for all of the goods and commodities it was necessary to standardise the weights and measures given in the sources.¹⁰⁷ All of the observations were converted into either pounds (weight) or gallons (volume), and relied on Denzel (2010) to convert all currencies to British pounds.¹⁰⁸ For British goods exported to Africa I have relied on the records of both crown protected¹⁰⁹ and private traders¹¹⁰, supplemented by data on prices from secondary sources¹¹¹, providing 1,464 observations for the period (Table 4.3). Lastly, for the prices of slaves in the Americas I have used the time series by Eltis et al. (2005) for the British Caribbean, and the yearly observations in the slave trade database of prices in Jamaica. For the African coast, I rely on data by Lovejoy & Richardson (1995), and data on coastal slave

¹⁰⁵ TNA CUST 3/30-3/80, 17/1-17/30

¹⁰⁶ For each of the price observations the data is converted into a standard unit price of British £/lb, except for palm oil that is measured in British £/gallon and then taken an average price for the year. In years without available observations, the prices were extrapolated based on proxies and an estimation of the movement in the prices of goods. For the proxies I have relied on the dataset by Clark (2006) of the unit prices of goods in Britain. For palm oil, I used oil lamp and soap, the two products often manufactured from palm oil (see Lynn 1997). For African dyewoods, come data uses the series Wood, for Beeswax: Candles and for Malaguetta Pepper: Pepper

¹⁰⁷ In the eighteenth century, there was no standard system of measurement, so for example the weights used to measure goods in the Dutch town of Middleburg were different to those of Amsterdam. In the British sources beeswax could be listed as cakes, lbs or barrels and cloth might be given in yards or by weight.

¹⁰⁸ The complete details of workings and the full datasets are available on request.

¹⁰⁹ The invoice books kept by the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading with Africa who ran the British Forts on the coast from 1768 - 1816. They received regular shipments of trade goods from England which were priced both by their prime unit cost in England and their price in Africa.

¹¹⁰ The account books of 28 Liverpool slave voyages from 1769 to 1808

¹¹¹ Principally the time series of English prices by Clark (2006)

prices collected from the records of the *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie* from 1742 to 1803.¹¹²

Table 4.2. Observations of prices for African commodities, 1737-1816

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>Coast</i>	<i>European Market</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of sample</i>
Beeswax	50	75	125	4.2
Gum	3	8	11	0.4
Ivory	197	2,439	2,636	88.2
Mallaguetta	24	8	32	1.1
Palm Oil	25	48	73	2.4
Redwood / Barwood	19	56	75	2.5
Camwood	1	14	15	0.5
Ebony	4	19	23	0.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>323</i>	<i>2,667</i>	<i>2,990</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Sources: Zeeuws Archief MCC, De Reizen 76 voyages, MCC Venduboecken 1738 - 1740, MCC Factuurboeken van verkochte retournen 1729 – 1736, LRO D/Dav Ivory Book, LRO D/Dav Waste Book, TNA T1/566, TNA T1/594 9 – 12, TNA T70/1583, TNA C107/6/11, Letter book, etc, of Robert Bostock 1779 - 1792 V1&2 LRO 387 MD 54/55, PP 1788 Report on the slave trade, PP 1816 (506) Report from the Select Committee on Papers Relating to the African Forts, Bennet & Brooks (1965), Sheriff (1987), Webb (1985)

¹¹² The full dataset is available on request

Table 4.3. Observations of prices for British trade goods, 1768-1816

<i>Trade Goods</i>	<i>European</i>		<i>Trade Goods</i>	<i>European</i>	
	<i>Market</i>	<i>% of sample</i>		<i>Market</i>	<i>% of sample</i>
Alcohol	96	6.6	Lead	32	2.2
Calico	29	2.0	Linen	108	7.4
Finished Cotton	103	7.0	Military Stores /Guns	116	7.9
Cowries	12	0.8	Pans / Rods	61	4.2
Gunpowder	76	5.2	Pewter	22	1.5
India Fabric	507	35.6	Tobacco	91	6.2
Iron	67	4.6	Woolens	105	7.2
Wrought Iron	39	2.7			

Sources: TNA T70/928/929/930/931/932; LRO D/Dav Ships Accounts: Andromache & Hector 1769 – 1776, Swift, Deadnaught & Dalrymple 1772 – 1777, Lord Cassiles & May 1771 - 1776, Essex and Christopher 1784 – 1788, King George, King of Prussia 1767 - 1779, Preston 1780 - 1784, Quiote 1783 - 1785, Mars and Rover 1768 - 1787; LRO Thomas Leyland Records Account Books, La Convention 387 MD 40, Lottery 1798 – 1799 387 MD41, Lottery 1802 - 1811 387 MD 42, Enterprise 1803 – 1804 387 MD 43, Fortune 387 MD 44, TNA James Rogers Paper Morning Star C107/6

Notes: For certain products, it is difficult to match them exactly to the categories in the Johnson dataset. It is therefore assumed Lead to equate to “Ball & Shot” as it was most commonly used in the creation of ammunition for muskets. Pans and Rods are equated to “Brass & Copper” and Pewter to “Other metals”.

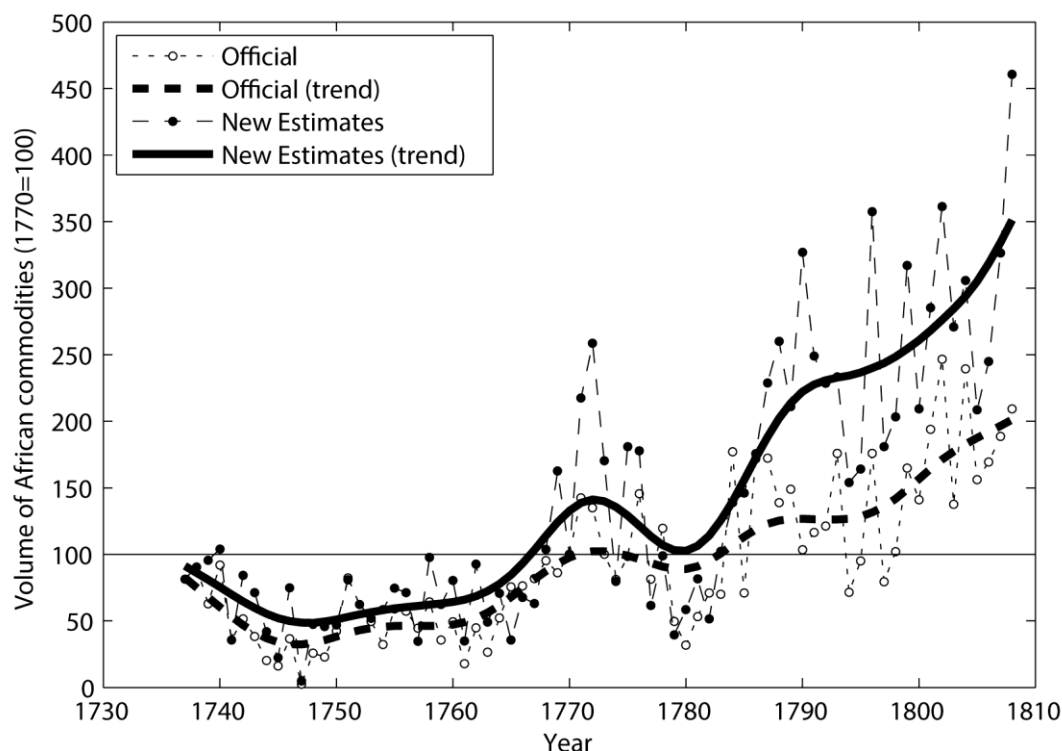
4.3. THE VOLUME AND STRUCTURE OF THE AFRICAN COMMODITY TRADE

Figure 4.1 compares the newly constructed volume index of African commodity imports, based on the quantity and price data discussed above, to the Johnson series based on the official values recorded in the CUST series. The figure shows that, up to the 1780s, the two series move roughly in tandem. After this point the two indices begin to diverge significantly. Given the fact that the data underlying the quantities of African commodity imports is identical for both series, the discrepancy between both originates entirely from the updated set of prices. As previously noted, the official prices used by Johnson et al. are not representative for the primary African commodities, introducing a bias that gets larger over time. The almost four-fold rise in the quantity of commodities bought by British merchants from 1770 onwards is in sharp contrast to their purchases of slaves. In 1770, British ships embarked 41,738 slaves from Africa, which is above the mean of 33,583 for the period until 1808, and not too far below the 49,906 captives taken in 1799 which was the highest year on record.¹¹³ The rise in

¹¹³ Source: slavevoyages.org

the volume of commodity trade was therefore far more substantial than that of the slave trade, which was largely static.

Figure 4.1. Volume of African commodity imports, official versus new estimates

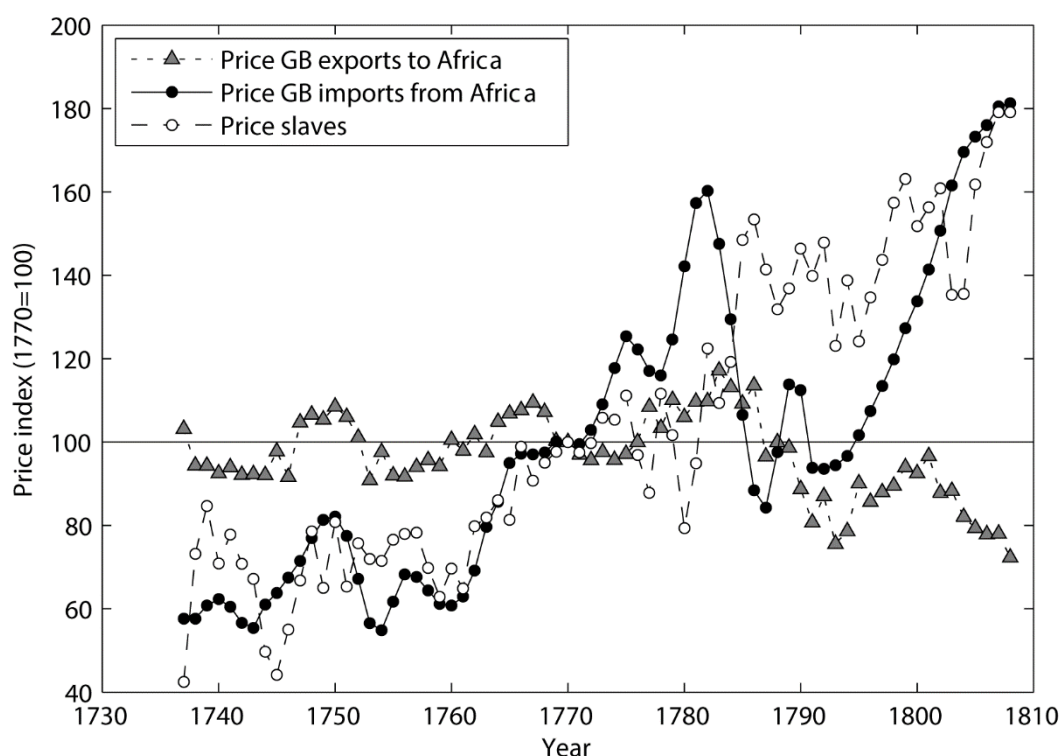


Notes: trend derived using Hodrick-Prescott filter, with a smoothing factor set to 100.

Sources: see text.

In terms of the prices of African commodities in European markets, the pattern until the 1770s was one of relative stability, before steadily rising, from the 1780s onwards. The combined indices of Africa prices shows that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, commodity prices were growing faster and with less volatility than those of slaves (see Figure 4.2). This means that given the falling prices of the goods required to barter for goods on the coast¹¹⁴, by the time of abolition prices for commodities appeared to be more favourable than they were for slaves.

¹¹⁴ I have assumed that commodities and slaves across West Africa are traded for a broadly similar range of goods, and acknowledge that a different assortment of goods was required for some commodities, especially in the Cameroons and at Bonny. However, this assortment tended to be low value items whose price trends mirrored those of the other goods.

Figure 4.2 Price indices British trade with Africa

Sources: see text.

As for the origin and composition of the commodity trade, this data shows that there are two trends in the non-slave trade with Africa that have so far not been expressly noted in the literature. Firstly, there was a rapid growth in commodity trading in the eastern regions around the Bight of Biafra and secondly, it was largely slave traders who were responsible for the overall increase in the volume of the non-slave trade. The rapid expansion of commodity imports opened markets in Africa in areas that were previously focused on selling slaves. The new estimates, based on the revised price data discussed above, reveal that the composition of these commodity imports was quite different from the picture painted by Johnson et al. (1990), who rely on the official figures from the CUST records. Table 4.4 summarizes the findings by Johnson et al. who claim that the most important imports were dyestuffs, followed by gum and then ivory.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ See the contributions in the volume by Johnson (p11), Doorn, Lindblad & Touwen (pp25,28) and Hogendoorn & Gemery (p46)

Table 4.4 Composition of commodity imports from Africa according to official sources, 1737-1808 (% share official value)

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Dyestuffs</i>	<i>Ivory</i>	<i>Gum</i>	<i>Other</i>
1730s	26	6	3	65
1740s	31	11	9	49
1750s	48	8	18	25
1760s	42	10	29	18
1770s	45	7	31	17
1780s	57	16	10	18
1790s	26	16	15	43
1800s	45	10	14	32

Source: TNA CUST 3/30-3/80, 17/1-17/30

Table 4.5, based on the new estimates reveals quite a different picture. First, the value shares of dyestuffs are greatly exaggerated in the official figures because of the upward bias in the official value, particularly for Redwood (see table 4.1). In addition, from ca. 1780 there was a notable expansion in palm oil and to a lesser degree ivory that, as argued in chapter 2, were principally sourced from the eastern side of the West African coast, and in particular the regions around the Bight of Biafra¹¹⁶, which was also the focus of the British slave trade (Lynn 1997).¹¹⁷

Table 4.5. Composition of commodity imports from Africa according to new estimates, 1737-1808 (% share nominal value)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Dyestuffs</i>			<i>Ivory</i>	<i>Gum</i>	<i>Other</i>		
	<i>Redwood</i>	<i>Camwood</i>	<i>Other</i>			<i>Palm oil</i>	<i>Beeswax</i>	<i>Other</i>
1737-39	3	0	4	8	4	0	4	77
1740-49	6	1	3	16	12	0	9	54
1750-59	7	0	1	18	32	0	8	34
1760-69	3	0	0	24	47	0	4	20
1770-79	2	0	0	18	49	1	4	26
1780-89	3	0	0	38	16	7	3	33
1790-99	1	0	2	21	16	10	4	46
1800-08	3	0	0	21	20	16	3	37

Sources: see text.

The CUST records show that between 1770 and 1808 nearly 35,000 tons of dyewoods were imported into Britain from Africa. However, the new data shows that 88 percent of this total was redwood, a product mainly sourced from the port of Calabar or further down the coast in Gabon or the Cameroons, while only 12 percent was Camwood from Sierra Leone or Gambia. Palm oil was probably coming almost exclusively from Calabar (Lynn 1997, p19). Finally,

¹¹⁶ This included the main slaving ports of Bonny, Old Calabar and Elem Kalabari as well as territory that encompasses the modern day countries of Cameroon and Gabon.

¹¹⁷ In the last 30 years of the slave trade 35% of slave ships headed for Biafra, 20% for West Central Africa, 19% for the Gold Coast, 9% to Sierra Leone, 8% to the Windward Coast, 6% to Benin and 5% to Senegambia.

there is also evidence to suggest that during this period, new and lucrative markets for ivory and beeswax were opening up in the Cameroons, where Duala merchants were selling either directly to ships, or to Efik brokers based around Old Calabar (Feinberg & Johnson 1982, Behrendt et al. 2010, pp92-93).¹¹⁸ An analysis of the cargoes of Liverpool vessels trading in the port of Old Calabar by Behrendt et al. (2010, pp97-98) shows that nearly all were buying commodities in addition to slaves. My own analysis of 91 Bristol ships which sailed to Africa between 1790 and 1807 shows that of the 48 vessels that traded in the Bight of Biafra, 65% bought some combination of palm oil, redwood, ivory or beeswax (*Appendix 4.1*). Slave merchants in other areas also followed this trend, with 58% of all voyages to regions outside Biafra taking on board commodities as well as slaves.

As will be discussed in section 4, there were numerous incentives and reasons why slave traders began buying greater quantities of commodities, but the initial catalyst seems to lie in the changing political situation in the Atlantic in the second half of the eighteenth century. In a recent update to the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, all bilateral commodity vessels were removed and assembled into a separate data set.¹¹⁹ This data clearly shows that Britain, and more specifically the port of London, was by far the most significant bilateral trader with Africa, especially after the 1740s (*Appendices 4.2a and 4.2b*). In the first half of the eighteenth century, the ships visited most parts of the coast in fairly even numbers, although the primary destination was to have been the Gold Coast. The situation changed in the 1750s with a relatively rapid expansion of the bilateral trade with the Senegambia (Table 4.6). This is reflected in the customs records which show that during this period imports of gum, which was always Senegambia's most important export product (Webb 1985, p151), increased around 7 times to nearly 350,000 lbs in 1769.¹²⁰ The reasons for this expansion seem to have been largely driven by a combination of politics and the fact that *gum senegal* was a uniquely attractive product. Gum comes from the exudate of some species of acacia tree which were only to be found in the Senegambian region.¹²¹ Gums were important in the production of paint, paper and in the cosmetics industries (Johnson et al. 1990, p48). However, the main use of gum senegal, was as a stabiliser in the dyeing industry and crucially there were no acceptable alternatives, which meant that controlling the source held out the prospect of a

¹¹⁸ For example, the accounts of the Liverpool slave dealer William Davenport show that he was expanding his operations in the Cameroons region in part because of the relative abundance of high quality ivory (Radburn 2009, p56)

¹¹⁹ The data was collected by David Eltis, Steven Behrendt and David Richardson and should be referenced to Eltis (2013). The authors note that some of these might be described as 'doubtfuls', i.e. they might either have been slave traders or commodity vessels. Personal communication with David Eltis 6/6/2014.

¹²⁰ Our data shows that gum imports would only exceed this total during a single year in 1840. The customs records also indicate that beeswax and ivory, both products found in the Senegambian, were also imported in greater numbers during the period when bilateral trading was expanding in the region.

¹²¹ During the period of this study the source for almost all of the gum imported came from around the Senegal river valley (Webb (1985, p 153).

monopoly of a product crucial to one of the continent's most important industries (Johnson et al. 1990, pp28,46, Inikori 2002, p397).¹²²

The British, with the active support of Manchester cotton manufacturers captured Senegambia's principal port, Saint Louis, in 1758 (Berg 2004, p139, Inikori 2002, p398) which coincides with the rapid increase of gum imports. They were able to hold it until it was lost to the French in 1779, during the American Wars of Independence, and bilateral trading to the region abruptly ceased (Table 4.6).¹²³ This also led to a dramatic fall in investment in the specialist commodity trade with Africa. From this point, only the port of Bristol was active in sending a reduced number of non-slave ships to Africa (see *Appendix 4.2b*). These ships did not specialise in a particular region but instead adopted what was known as a 'coasting strategy' which involved sailing along the entire West African coast stopping at a number of different ports to purchase commodities (Lynn 1991, pp363–67, Lynn 1997, p88).¹²⁴

Table 4.6. British commodity vessels' destinations, 1650-1808

	1650- 1700	1700- 1719	1720- 1739	1740- 1759	1760- 1779	1780- 1808
Senegambia	28	9	48	49	268	3
Sierra Leone	12	17	27	9	5	15
Windward Coast	3	0	0	8	6	6
Gold Coast	2	19	50	11	1	14
Bight of Benin	0	0	20	0	4	0
Bight of Biafra	0	0	1	0	3	13
West Central /South East Africa	0	3	9	20	7	1
Unknown	25	128	173	116	102	70
Total	70	176	328	213	396	122

Source: Eltis (2013)

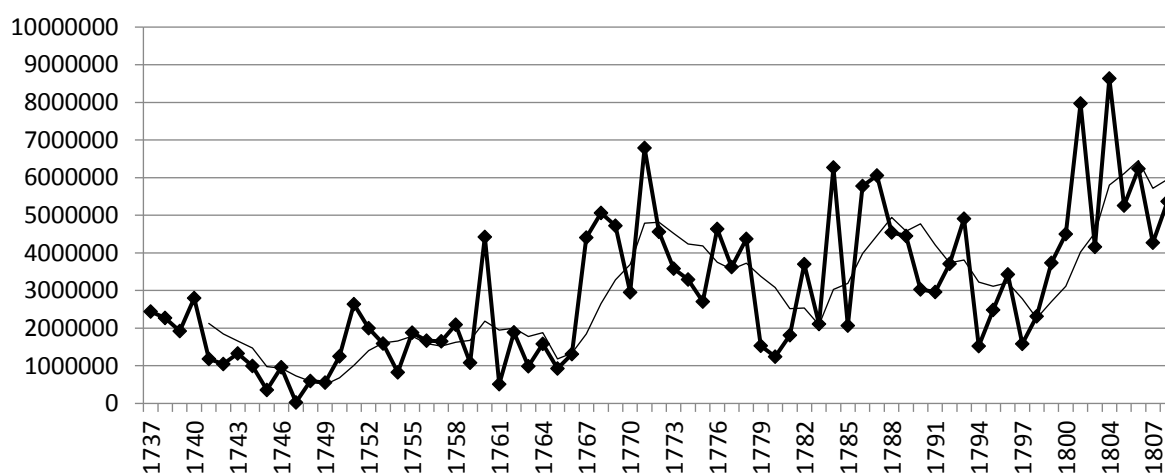
¹²² The value of the trade can also be seen in the importance attached to retaining control of Senegambia during peace talks after the Seven Years War and the American war of Independence. The chief French negotiator in 1763 was told that "*La traite de la gomme est l'objet le plus pressant qui fait cherir aux Anglais la possession du Senegal et qui rend sa restitution d'autant plus instante.*" Britain's representative at negotiations in the 1780s noted that "*The real importance of Senegal arises almost wholly from its gum trade. There was imported in one year about 700 tons, and the average annual imports may be computed at about 400 tons. The price is now £270 - £270 / ton....there is more speculation or rather gaming in this article than in any other.*" Quoted in Inikori (2002, pp399-401).

¹²³ The value of the trade can also be seen in the importance attached to retaining control of Senegambia during peace talks after the Seven Years War and the American war of independence (Inikori 1992, pp399-401).

¹²⁴ The future abolitionist and scribe of 'Amazing Grace' John Newton describes such a voyage (Newton 1765, p83). It was also followed by the commodity ships of the Dutch Middelburgsche Commerce Compagnie who typically traded first along the Windward Coast, then travelled to the Gold Coast and along to the Cameroons and Gabon (see for example, Zeeuws Archief MCC 196, 201 Afrikaanse Galey, 1149, 1168 De Vliegende Faam, 1371, 1379 Zanggodin)

This decline in the bilateral commodity trade with Senegambia coincided with the aforementioned expansion of the overall quantity of the non-slave trade in the regions around the Bight of Biafra. After the end of the American War of Independence, the quantity of commodities imported from Africa recovered to pre-war levels, only to fall again after the outbreak of the French revolutionary wars.¹²⁵ After 1797 there was once more a sustained rise in the amount of commodity imports¹²⁶, and in the years prior to abolition more African commodities were being bought than at any time during the previous century (Figure 4.3). These commodities must have been largely bought and transported on slave ships, given the fact that there were far fewer British bilateral traders operating during this period. From around 1712 until the 1770s, the ratio of slave to commodity ships averaged at around 10:1 for British vessels. From the 1780s this changed significantly; rising to a high of 110:1 in 1798 and averaging at around 50:1 in the three decades before abolition.

Figure 4.3. Total quantity (lbs) of commodities imported into Great Britain



Note: trend is given by the 5-year moving average.

Source: TNA CUST 3/30-3/80, 17/1-17/30.

Surviving accounts from individual slaving voyages certainly indicate that the British captains and merchants were enthusiastic buyers of commodities as well as slaves. Slave merchants regularly instructed their captains, to buy both slaves and commodities. For example, in 1803 the Liverpool slave merchant Thomas Leyland wrote to the captain of his ship the *Enterprise* with instructions for his voyage to Bonny: “...barter at Bonny for prime Negroes, Ivory and Palm Oil.... procure some Palm Oil on reasonable terms which is likely to bear a great price here, we therefore wish you to purchase as much as you can with any of the cargo you may

¹²⁵ This was consistent with the pattern of slave exports which also rose and fell in the outbreak of war and resumption of peace

¹²⁶ Perhaps due to Britain establishing naval dominance over the French which meant its merchant shipping could set forth with greater security (Davis & Engerman 2006). According to the slave trade database, the French captured 48 slave vessels in 1794, compared to only 9 the previous year. From this high point (from a French perspective) the number of ships captured fell to 1 in 1801 (slavevoyages.org).

have.”¹²⁷ The Bristol merchant, James Rogers, was an equally enthusiastic buyer of commodities, with his captains regularly writing back from Africa to inform him of their progress in the purchase of both slaves and non-slave products. For example, Richard Rogers wrote to inform him from Old Calabar in 1788 that he had “.... *on board at present 48 slaves and 12 pawns...likewise have purchased about 300 cwt ivory and 3 ton redwood.*”¹²⁸ There were so many ships trading for commodities at Old Calabar that his ships were on at least one occasion forced to sail down to Gabon, which was also a crowded market.¹²⁹

4.4. EXPLAINING THE CHANGES IN THE COMMODITY TRADE FROM THE 1770S

This section will analyse the patterns and development of the commodity trade in the later eighteenth century, and the interactions between the exports of people and goods from Africa. The literature on the British slave trade in the later eighteenth century suggests that rising numbers of slave embarkations were driven by increased demand, and competition led to changes in how voyages were organised (Behrendt 2001, Richardson et al. 2007, Radburn 2015). I firstly address, the question of why there was such a dramatic uptake in the export of commodities from Africa and secondly, why particularly slave merchants increasingly became engaged in the trade of these goods. In doing so, the aim is to further our understanding of what was motivating slave merchant decision-making at the apogee of the transatlantic slave trade in West Africa.

Rising demand in Europe

The literature on consumption patterns in Britain suggests that items that previously might have been the privilege of the wealthy few, were increasingly consumed by a greater number of households (McKendrick et al. 1985). This consumer revolution was driven, to some extent, by a willingness on the part of households to work harder to be able to afford to buy goods such as furniture, cutlery, decorations, ornaments, which had become markers of success and respectability (DeVries 1994 & 2015). Furthermore, the end of the eighteenth century was a period of rising wages, especially in the growing urban centres of Britain which provided a ready market for status goods (Allen 2007, 2009). Berg (2002, 2004) has also persuasively argued that, especially within Britain and the Netherlands, there was a desire to reproduce the luxuries of Asia using European technology and resources from their colonies and regions of trade.

¹²⁷ LRO 387 MD 43 Leyland to Capt. Caesar Lawson 18 July 1803. Leyland had given a near identical order the year before for his ship Lottery in 1802 (LRO 387 MD 42 Leyland to Capt. Charles Kneal 21 May 1802).

¹²⁸ TNA C107/11 Rogers to Rogers April 1788

¹²⁹ TNA C107/6 Cod to Rogers February 1792

Gum Senegal was one such example, as it allowed printers to mimic the calicoes of Asia. However, after control of the gum trade was lost to the French, British traders found that there was a good deal of demand for the goods found in relative abundance on the eastern side of the coast. The elephants of the Cameroons and the regions around the Bight of Biafra provided the raw materials for the piano keys, billiard balls, knife handles and ivory combs which were becoming increasingly seen as signs of middle class respectability (Johnson 1978, p 548). Liverpool's growing soap industry, as well as the Lancashire wool manufacturing sector, provided a growing market for palm oil (Lynn 1997, p85)¹³⁰ while redwood was in demand both as a dye for the textile industry (Inikori 2002) and for the manufacture of violin bows, knife handles and furniture.¹³¹ Finally, the Bight of Biafra also provided beeswax for candles, and pepper, to satisfy a growing desire for a more varied diet (Pomeranz 2000, p94). This increased demand must go some way to explaining why the volume of commodities was far greater than in the period from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which was studied by Eltis (1994) and van den Boogaard (1992). However, it does not explain why it was slave merchants, rather than specialised bilateral traders, that were largely responsible for the expansion.

The crowding out of the commodity traders

It seems that the expulsion of the British from much of the Senegambian region had a number of important consequences. Firstly, commodity ships faced considerably longer journey times in order to reach the growing markets on the eastern side of the coast. Atlantic trade winds and currents made the bilateral journey between Senegambia and Europe relatively simple. However, to get back from the Bight of Biafra, vessels were obliged to follow the trade winds down to the equator, across the sea to the Caribbean and then finally back to Europe. This meant far higher wage bills and, unlike slave ships, they did not have the advantage of being able to sell a valuable cargo of captives in the Americas. Secondly, trading in the Biafran and Gold Coast regions, the most important embarkation points for British slaves in West Africa, put them in direct competition with large numbers of slave vessels for commodities. This had not been the case in Senegambia, which was a relatively unimportant slave exporting region at that time. In the 1788 report on the slave trade to the British parliament¹³² Captain Dean, described as a "*Commander of a Vessel in the Wood and Ivory trade*" related how his

¹³⁰ Norris (1789, p146) also noted that Palm Oil was used by "British wool-combers" as well as "soap boilers"

¹³¹ Vegetable Substances; Materials of Manufactures. Published under the superintendence of the Society of the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (London: Charles Knight) 1833, p362. Turning and Mechanical Manipulation intended as a work of general reference and practical instruction on the lathe and the various mechanical pursuits followed by amateurs." By Charles Holtzapffel, Vol 1, London, 1843, pp73,76.

¹³² PP Report Of The Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations; Submitting To His Majesty's Consideration The Evidence and Information they have collected in consequence of his Majesty's Order in Council, dated the 11th of February 1788, concerning the present State of the Trade to Africa, and particularly the Trade in Slaves; and concerning the Effects and Consequences of this Trade, as well in Africa and the West Indies, as to the general Commerce of this Kingdom.

business was “... much hurt from the Slave Ships purchasing the said Articles, which the Persons in his Branch of the African Trade go solely to bring home.” In 1792, the captain of another commodity ship, the Triton, complained of having to compete with slave ships in Gabon “.....we find great opposition here, there are no less than 12 sail & 4 of them are for Red Wood....”¹³³

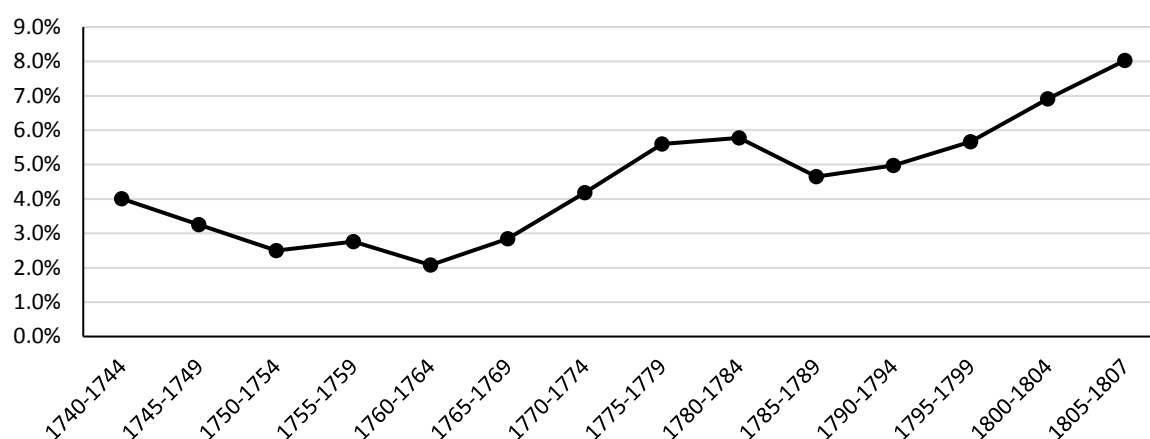
It seems that these factors put a good deal of strain on the potential profit margins of specialist commodity merchants. Sydenham Teaste, a commodity trader from Bristol, told a parliamentary committee in 1788 that “...his House is in the Trade, and therefore goes on with it; but if his Capital was out of it, he would not now go in to it....” due to the low profits he made (p73). This assessment is supported by the fact that by the end of the 1780s he seems to have been the only merchant in his city regularly investing in bilateral voyages to Africa. An analysis of the Bristol Presentments shows that between 1790 and 1796 (the year Teaste seems to have retired) there were 16 merchants who invested in specialist bilateral traders from Bristol. Teaste alone was responsible for around 50% of the voyages and in some years (1795 and 1796) was the only trader. Among other investors during this time the majority only invested in one or two bilateral voyages, the exception being James Rogers who sent 5 commodity vessels in 1791 and 1792. It seems that this branch of trade was attracting little in the way of investment.

The next question is why slave merchants were motivated to buy increasing quantities of non-slave goods. As shown in Chapter 2, slave ships had been buying both slaves and commodities throughout the eighteenth century.¹³⁴ However, the scale of involvement in the non-slave trade was very different from 1770. In terms of current values, the share of commodities in the total trade from Great Britain to Africa experienced a four-fold relative rise from the 1760s to 1807 (Figure 4.4). As illustrated in Figure 4.2, the real value of African commodities increased nearly 7-fold during this period, an exceptional rise. This is puzzling as there was still an enormous demand for slaves driven by a dynamic and expanding American plantation system (Eltis et. al 2005, Drescher 2004, 2010), which would continue to grow well into the nineteenth century (Davis 2006). Not only was demand growing, but studies of the profits of the slave trade have shown that it generated a generous rate of return, although at a higher level of risk, for its investors (Daudin 2004, Inikori 1981, Richardson 1976). The new trade added complexity to the preparation for a voyage, as commodities required a different mix of trade goods than slaves,¹³⁵ and there is evidence that at the time many people were far from positive about the prospects for the development of any trade other than slaves with Africa. The next section will suggest that the changing political and economic climate in the latter part of the eighteenth century created both ‘push and pull’ factors which encouraged slave traders to begin investing in the commodity trade.

¹³³ TNA C107/6 Letter from Prosser to Rogers April 1792

¹³⁴ As one Bristol merchant in 1725 said of ivory ‘...in that commodity there’s no mortality to be fear’d “’. Quoted in Behrendt et al. (2010), p87.

¹³⁵ See Behrendt et al. 2010, p 89 for a discussion of ‘bundle of goods’ required for ivory at Old Calabar and Radburn 2009, p 57 for a comparison of the goods needed for ivory and slaves in the Cameroons.

Figure 4.4. Share of commodities in the total value of British trade from Africa

Source: see text.

Legal pressures

From the 1780s, merchants may also have been under pressure by parliamentary legislation designed to increase the space allotted to slaves (Thomas 1999, p 510, Klein 2010, p151). The Dolben Act was passed in 1788 and stipulated that ships of up to 201 tons could take no more than 1.67 slaves/ton, and vessels of higher tonnage could only take one more slave for every addition tonnage of ship. Those who took more slaves would be required to pay a fine of £30 for every excess captive (Donnan II, 1965 p 583). This was then refined in 1799 to a requirement that each slave should be allotted a minimum of 8 square feet (Garland & Klein 1985, p 249). The trend in the slave/ton ratio does seem to broadly follow in the wake of these legislative acts, and some slave merchants were instructing their captains not to take more slaves than permitted.¹³⁶ However, an analysis of the slave trade database reveals that a reasonable proportion of merchants were prepared to take on more slaves than permitted by legislation.¹³⁷ This would reasonably suggest that more commodities were bought because fewer slaves were purchased.

However, it is not possible to say with confidence whether this was due to the fact that ships were forced to sail with fewer captives, and therefore had more space and money for other purchases, or if they were making an active choice to load up with relatively more commodities at the expense of slaves. For example, in his instructions to the master of his

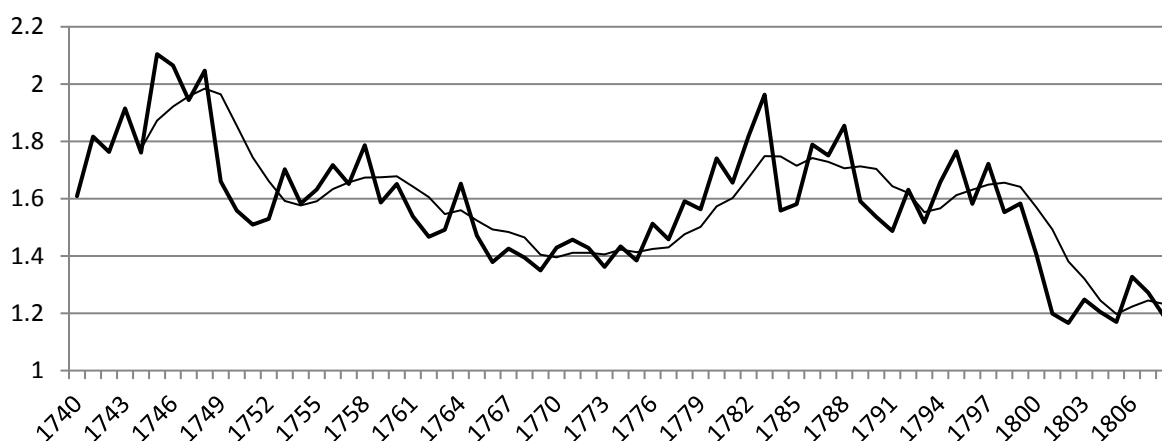
¹³⁶ For example, the Liverpool slave merchant Thomas Leyland told the captain of his ship the *Enterprise* to “.... barter at Bonny for prime Negroes, Ivory and Palm Oil. By law this vessel is allowed to carry 400 negroes and we request that they may all be males if possible to get them.” LRO 387 MD 43 Leyland to Capt. Caesar Lawson 18 July 1803

¹³⁷ For this analysis I took British ships which weighing 201 tons or less from 1789 to 1799 and calculated slaves embarked / reported ton and slaves embarked* / standardised ton. The first calculation gave a sample of 266 vessels and showed that 30% carried more than 1.67 slaves / ton. The second gave a larger sample of 874 ships and showed that 50% carried more than 1.67 slaves / ton.

ship Lottery in 1798 Leyland tells him to sail to Bonny in the Bight of Biafra and purchase “...choice, young and healthy negroes...”¹³⁸ The Captain, John Whittle, was eventually to purchase 502 slaves, which was within the legal limit. However, four years later in 1802 he wrote to another captain on the same ship also going to Bonny, directing him to “...barter for 290 Negroes, besides which we expect you will be able to procure a quantity of Palm Oil....” This time ‘only’ 339 slaves were embarked.¹³⁹

Yet regardless of whatever considerations were motivating slave merchants it is still clear that, in general, commodities were becoming a more attractive product to them. As noted in the introduction, merchants in ports such as Liverpool relied on highly skilled captains with in-depth knowledge of local African markets to manage the highly risky business of slave trading (Richardson et al. 2007, Klein 2010, p100), and therefore would not have invested capital in commodities unless they were sure it would yield a suitable return. In the next section I examine the potential returns on commodities.

Figure 4.5 Average number of slaves / standardised ton on British slave ships 1740 – 1808



Source: Slavevoyages.org.

¹³⁸ LRO 387 MD 41 Leyland to Capt. John Whittle 2 July 1798

¹³⁹ LRO 387 MD 42 Leyland to Capt. Charles Kneal 21 May 1802

Mark-ups and prices

For British merchants, commodities became an especially favourable buy, partly due to the fact that coastal prices for African products remained relatively stable over this period, in contrast to slaves which were becoming ever more expensive at the coast. This feature of the African market has, to this study's knowledge, never been identified. Initial reference is made here to data on ivory, which yielded the greatest number of price observations both in Europe and in Africa. It is a very useful commodity to work with as it was traded from all parts of West Africa and had been a staple product in the portfolios of English merchants since the seventeenth century (Eltis 1994, Feinberg & Johnson 1982). Furthermore, the CUST records show that in 1760 only 50,000 lbs of ivory left Africa, but by the 1790s up to 300,000 lbs were imported yearly (see *Appendix 4.3*). Therefore, if increased demand did lead to price inflation across the region, it would be evident in the prices paid to Africans for this product.

A simple OLS regression was run on the observed prices for ivory in our dataset (Table 4.7). Model (1) includes a dummy for prices observed at the coast and period controls. The regression confirms the overall price rise discussed previously. Prices in 1760-79 and 1780-99 were significantly higher than the reference period: 1740-59. In addition, it shows that prices at the coast, over the entire period were well below the prices paid in European markets. Interacting the coastal dummy with the period dummies in model (2), it can be seen that, from the 1760s onwards, there was a widening gap between the prices paid at the coast and in Europe for ivory. This pattern of relatively stable prices at the coast, when prices in European markets were rising rapidly, was also found in our more limited datasets for other commodities. In addition, the standard deviation for slave prices was far greater than the one for any of the commodities traded for at the time (see *Appendix 4.4*).

Table 4.7 Coastal vs market prices ivory, 1740-1799

	(1) <i>Price Ivory</i>	(2) <i>Price Ivory</i>
Intercept	13.8*** (0.38)	13.0*** (0.39)
1760t79	13.8*** (0.47)	14.8*** (0.47)
1780t99	27.02*** (0.87)	30.2*** (0.90)
Coast	-9.4*** (0.81)	-0.47 (1.27)
Coast_1760t79		-11.7*** (1.70)
Coast_1780t99		-27.9*** (2.65)
<i>N</i>	2641	2641
<i>Adjusted R2</i>	0.38	0.41

Notes: standard error in parentheses; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

I speculate that the relative stability of coastal prices was probably largely due to the fact that most of the major products sold to the Europeans; were not as valuable in Africa as they were in Atlantic markets, and could be produced at a very low opportunity cost in Africa. Palm oil had long been produced by households for their own consumption all along the coast (Lynn 1997, p34) and it is likely that, until the early nineteenth century, the additional quantities exported could easily have been met by existing household labour, without the need for additional investments in technology or slaves. Furthermore, the region that supplied Calabar with its oil in the 1780s and 1790s had also long supplied the town with palm oil for the provisioning of slave ships (Northrup 1976, p363). According to a contemporary source redwood grew “...in great abundance, in the country surrounding Old Calabar...” (Adams 1822, p172), which would have meant the costs of transporting it to ships would have been relatively low.

One other possible reason for the stability of prices is that merchants may have been selling commodities as a means of attracting ships for their main business of slaving, and therefore were less concerned about their profit margins on non-slave products. For example, exports of palm oil seem to have been initially centred around the port of Old Calabar, with lesser quantities coming from the Cameroons and Gabon (Lynn 1997, p19). Behrendt et al (2010, p86) argue that the Efik merchants at Old Calabar were forced to expand their output of non-slave products in response to the growing popularity of their rival ports of Bonny and Elem Kalibari. Calabar was never able to export more than around 5,000 slaves a year (and

frequently far fewer), compared to Bonny which was able to send over 12,000 captives to the Americas in 1792.¹⁴⁰ In addition Bonny offered better credit arrangements, lower transaction costs, and faster boarding times, along with a reputation of supplying higher quality slaves (Lovejoy and Richardson 2004). This meant that Old Calabar needed to develop other exports to attract foreign traders who might otherwise have visited its rivals. This was especially important in the aftermath of the American War of Independence, which had severely disrupted merchant shipping and had had a particularly damaging impact on slave exports from the Bight of Biafra.¹⁴¹

Slaves were still the main business of traders in both Africa and Britain right up until 1807, and there is no evidence to suggest that British merchants were moving away from the export of captives to the Americas. While good returns on commodities may have been an incentive to buy more of them, it is unlikely to have been sufficient in itself. Studies of the slave trade have always noted that it was a risky enterprise and, as noted in the introduction, ports such as Liverpool became successful due to their ability to minimise this risk (Haggerty 2009, McDade 2011). The next section will argue that the growing trade in commodities might have been used as an additional risk reduction strategy.

Changing economic environments

One area that was becoming increasingly problematic was the issue of credit and debt. A recent paper by Radburn (2015) has examined and quantified changes in the credit system, known as bills of exchange, which underwrote the slave trade. In brief, merchants were able to exchange slaves for promissory notes to be redeemed in England. This allowed planters in the West Indies time to recoup their investment before having to pay for slaves, and gave slave traders a more efficient system of payment than exchange for plantation products. This system was probably crucial in the expansion of the trade in the second half of the eighteenth century (Pearson and Richardson 2008, p765). However, uncertainty across the Atlantic market, caused by warfare and planter indebtedness, led to increasingly longer dated bills, meaning that during periods of particular instability slave traders had to wait up to three years before they could cash their bills. This problem seems to have been widely recognised at the time and merchants responded with a variety of strategies.¹⁴² They could pass on their bills of

¹⁴⁰ From 1780 to 1808 an average of 6,934 slaves were exported each year from Bonny compared with 2,435 from Old Calabar

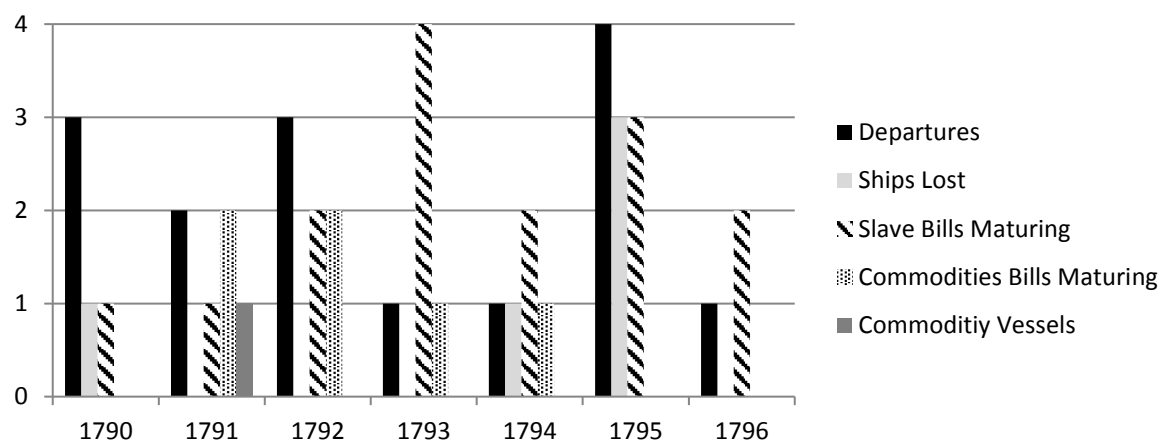
¹⁴¹ By 1780 the ports of Bonny, Old Calabar and Elem Kalabari had seen a 96% fall in slave embarkations since 1775. While numbers were to recover by around 1784, this represented a huge loss of income for the region's merchants.

¹⁴² For example, Thomas Clarkson, in his "Essay on the impolicy of the African slave trade" (1788) wrote that: "*The average time of a voyage is one year. At the expiration of the period, the vessel returns. On inspecting the bills which are bought home, and which have been received for the slaves, it appears that they are not payable on average, till two years after sight. The merchant therefore cannot enjoy the profits of his voyage till three years after he has sent his vessel to the coast. In the interim he is called upon to pay the goods for which he has shipped...*" p28

exchange to other traders in exchange for goods that would stock their next voyages. This involved a discount and meant lower profit margins, but nonetheless ensured the business kept making money. One Liverpool slave merchant, William Davenport, was to do this with around 90 of his bills (Morgan 2005 p746), and it was a common practice for the traders of the Middelburgse Commercie Companie.¹⁴³ Radburn (2015) argues that another policy was for merchants to expand their range of American markets to areas that could offer shorter dated credit.

However, another strategy was to invest in additional types of business that realised cash, or at least shorter dated bills of exchange. Commodities could be exchanged for bills dated between 2 to 4 months¹⁴⁴ allowing traders to realise fast and reliable profits, although at a lower rate of return, which provided a ready source of funds for their principal business of slaving.¹⁴⁵ In the sample of Bristol ships used here, the merchant who invested most heavily in commodities, James Rogers, was, according to one study, under mounting pressure from his creditors in the early 1790s (Morgan 2003). However, even more efficient traders seemed to have felt the need to supplement their slave business with commodities. James Anderson was one such trader who Richardson (1996) found to be the most effective in the city. Figure 4.6 below shows when Anderson was sending ships back to Africa, and when he could expect the remittance for bills of exchange from previous voyages.¹⁴⁶

Figure 4.6. James Anderson, overview of business 1790–1796



Sources: Bristol Presentments, TNA C107/59, (Richardson 1996)

¹⁴³ Sincere thanks are due to Gerhard de Kok at Leiden university for this information about MCC bills of exchange

¹⁴⁴ James Rogers was given bills for between 2 to 4 months for sugar traded in the West Indies (TNA C107/59), while William Davenport exchanged his ivory for 3 month bills in England (Radburn 2009)

¹⁴⁵ One detailed study of the accounts of the Liverpool slave merchant William Davenport argues that commodities were bought because of their short dated bills of exchange (Radburn 2009)

¹⁴⁶ The analysis is based on the assumption that bills for slaves would mature in equal proportions at 24, 30 and 36 months based on correspondence and bills in the James Rogers papers (TNA C107/59), and those for commodities in 3 months based on the same sources and Radburn (2015)

From 1790 to 1792 Anderson outfitted 8 vessels for Africa, lost one and only received remittances from 4 previous voyages. It is within this period that I find his heaviest investment in commodities, with 4 out of his 7 slaving vessels carrying additional produce cargo, and during which he sent out a specialist commodities ship. From 1793 more of his bills for slave voyages matured and he began to move away from commodities to concentrate solely on slaves, which brought a higher return. Even though he was to lose 3 ships to French privateering, he could clearly afford to suffer the losses without the use of alternative incomes. This was not, it seems, his only strategy to handle the increased risks of the period. Like other merchants, he found ways to reduce his journey time (Ronnback & Solar 2015).¹⁴⁷ In 1790 the two ships he outfitted, and which also returned, completed their journey in 13 and 22 months respectively.¹⁴⁸ In 1792 the three ships tightened their running time to 12, 7 and 10 months while by 1794 this had further reduced to 7 and 8 months. Shorter voyages were more profitable for many reasons, but crucially they meant less cash needed for wages, and, more importantly, meant creditors could be paid off more quickly. There were other strategies open to merchants seeking to minimise risk. Both Haggerty (2009) and Behrendt (2007) note that long term investment in human capital meant successful slave merchants could handle complex market conditions in both Europe and Africa. McDade (2011) argues that spreading risk across larger groups of investors was one of the keys to Liverpool's success as a slave port. It would be argued here that commodity purchases were another strategy open to merchants seeking to navigate the hazardous waters of the slave trade in the three decades before abolition.

4.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have examined the changing market for African commodities in the decades before the British abolished their transatlantic slave trade. By constructing a new time series of the quantities and prices of goods imported from Africa in the customs ledgers, the chapter has clearly shown that there was a far more substantial increase in the value of the trade than the previous data implied. Furthermore, I argue that this was driven by slave traders, and was primarily a phenomenon of the Eastern and more specifically Biafran/Cameroonian region of the West African coast, revealing a significant reversal of the pattern of commodity trading until the 1770s. These British traders also seem to have bought relatively fewer slaves while purchasing greater quantities of non-slave products. I therefore hypothesise that this trend was driven by a number of different factors. Firstly, commodity prices were rising in Europe, while prices on the coast remained relatively stable, in marked contrast to the cost of slaves. In addition, the period saw increasing levels of risk, and parliamentary legislation to reduce crowding on ships, which may have further encouraged captains to purchase more commodities as a risk reduction, profit enhancing strategy. The new data suggests that the

¹⁴⁷ Liverpool merchants, who were Britain's most efficient carriers of slaves (2007), had managed to reduce their average journey time by around 15% between 1785 and 1805 (slavevoyages.org)

¹⁴⁸ The Pilgrim and the Hector – Bristol Presentments

African commodity trade in the Bight of Biafra began to expand long before, and independent of, the Abolition Act of 1807, based on strong demand from European markets.

SUMMARY PART 1

The new data in Chapters 2 – 4 shows that the area of the Bight of Benin controlled by the Dahomeans never exported any other ‘product’ in *significant* quantities other than slaves, despite rising demands for commodities. Secondly, the Gold Coast exported a relatively high proportion of provisions, and from the 15th to the late eighteenth century exported large quantities of gold and other products such as ivory. However, from around the 1760s its exports of commodities (largely gold) began to decline. This pattern was followed by falling embarkations of captives from 1780s. Thirdly, in Biafra, local trading elites were, throughout the eighteenth century, always willing to supplement their incomes with non-slave exports of either commodities or provisions, in response to external demand. These long term trade patterns predict the very different timings of the commercial transition in the three case study regions. The Gold Coast almost immediately abandoned export slavery after 1808. In Biafra, slaves were rapidly replaced by palm oil so that by the late 1830s very few captives were leaving the region for the Americas. By contrast, in the Bight of Benin, the Dahomeans remained set on continuing slave exports, only beginning to develop a non-slave export sector in the 1840s, and continuing their involvement in the transatlantic slave trade until the 1860s. To understand these patterns, we now turn to the case study chapters.

CHAPTER 5

THE GOLD COAST; GOLD, WEALTH AND POWER AMONGST THE AKANS

*“Sika ne ɔhene” Gold is King (Asanti proverb)*¹⁴⁹

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, I argued that the abolition efforts of the British navy were not sufficiently effective, before the 1830s, to deter Atlantic traders from buying and transporting West African slaves. However, the literature on the subject has generally taken the view that the British naval patrols and their castles made embarking captives from the Gold Coast particularly difficult, and were therefore the reasons why this region moved so quickly away from the transatlantic slave trade. Eltis (2009) argues that; *“The Gold Coast castles were too exposed and too much a part of a European government presence to be well suited to clandestine slave trading...”* (p728). This view is supported by Lovejoy (2011) *“...the system of trade centred on European trade castles at Cape Coast, Elmina.....made it difficult to smuggle slaves. Some slaves were taken farther west, but Asante was forced to abandon the slave export business.”* (p164). Johnson (1986, p100) writes that *“...on the Gold Coast, abolition of the slave trade was largely effective...”* before the 1820s. Studies of the Asante kingdom by Wilks (1975, p680 – 681) and McCaskie (2003, p26) assume that the abolition of the slave trade cut the region off from the transatlantic slave trade, thereby forcing the state to look for alternative markets for its products. I will instead argue that, by engaging in a more long-term analysis of the patterns of trade in the region, it would be more appropriate to apply the demand side hypothesis modelled on Senegambia, which has been suggested by Austin (2013a). While the withdrawal of the British from the slave trade in 1808 was a significant shock, I will argue that its effect acted more as a catalyst to an already established trend. Essentially, the change from a slave to a commodity export economy was because the application of coerced labour to production had already become more valuable to the region’s elites and households than exporting captives to the Atlantic market.

Furthermore, the chapter will show how the presence of gold was crucial in shaping the region’s states and societies from the fifteenth century, strongly influencing the area’s long-term trade patterns, internal politics and institutional developments. Unlike that of the states in the Bight of Benin, gold ensured that the Akan states were never dependent on the transatlantic *slave* trade as a source of wealth, or as a means of asserting and maintaining the power of elites. External commercial relations were important as the Asante (and other states before them) relied on imports of firearms to maintain their military effectiveness (Thornton

¹⁴⁹ Quoted from Wilks (1993, p127)

1999, pp57–64). However, they could obtain foreign manufactures through sales of gold or ivory, thereby releasing themselves from dependency on exports of captives. As will be argued in Chapter 6, palm oil had a similar impact around the Bight of Biafra. Many recent studies of the region have focused on the changes wrought by either the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century (Shumway 2014, Sparks 2014, Ronnback 2014, Ipsen 2015) or the very significant developments in the nineteenth century (Wilks 1993, Dummet 1998, McCaskie 2003, Austin 2005). There are few examinations which link the earlier seventeenth century history of the region studied by Kea (1982) with the events and developments in the following centuries. This study seeks to demonstrate that initial trade contacts and political developments are crucial for understanding later patterns of trade. I will argue that in this region, the transatlantic slave trade should be seen more as a relatively brief interruption of very different longer term export patterns.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. Initially, I show how, over the *longue durée*, the region's trade output had generally been based on the application of coerced labour to the production of export commodities. Next, I argue that the withdrawal of the British from the slave trade was a significant shock, especially given their dominance of the trade along the Gold Coast. However, the presence of British held forts, and the military campaign waged by the British navy against slaving vessels from other nations, cannot explain the sudden, and near complete stoppage of slave embarkations from the region. Warfare on the coast may have played a role, but continuing demand for coerced labour in the Americas, and the fact that exporting people remained hypothetically more than possible, suggest that other, endogenous factors were of greater importance.

Three factors were particularly crucial. Firstly, the value of the new trade in commodities was at least equal to, and probably exceeded that of the slave trade. Secondly, and in contrast to the Dahomeans (Chapter 7), the Asante faced no significant external enemies or economic competitors from the 1740s until their confrontations with the British in the later 1820s. As a result, there was less need for labour for the military, meaning households were freer to pursue their own economic agendas. Thirdly, political developments meant that most slaves originated in areas to the north of Asante. Their status as outsiders afforded them less opportunity to incorporate themselves into households / lineage groups, giving them fewer of the rights and protections enjoyed by free people or even enslaved Akans (see below for a definition of this term). Consequently, their labour could be more intensively exploited, making them better suited to production than export.

Next, I will show that the presence of gold, and later kola, within the territories of the Asante had to a range of major impacts on institutional development and labour decisions. The Asante state, unlike those in the Bight of Benin, developed within a context where the control and monopoly of gold was the defining characteristic of power and wealth. This provided a strong incentive to increase the production of households, whose members could in turn use greater numbers of coerced labourers to help increase their own wealth. The growth of markets for kola on the savannah provided additional opportunities for both elites and commoners to enrich themselves, and in doing so gain greater social prestige. Both the state

and aristocratic elites were motivated to support this productive activity, as it did not threaten their power, while increasing their wealth.

Area of study

This study will mainly be limited to the Akan speaking territories which lie roughly within the forest, coastal and southern savannah zones stretching from the Volta river in eastern Ghana to south eastern Côte d'Ivoire. The peoples of this region, speak related languages and have several broad cultural and agricultural practises in common as a result of shared historical experience (Chouin & De Corse 2010, p123). However, at a more local level the area also possesses a great diversity of ethnicities, cultures and polities, making it beyond the scope of this wider comparative study to investigate them all. The focus will be on the kingdom of the Asante. Map 5.1 shows the greatest extent of the Asante kingdom in the nineteenth century, although it is important to note that the state only exercised more direct control in the core metropolitan region shown in Map 5.1.¹⁵⁰

Outside this zone, it could broadcast power through its military or diplomatic corps and enforce tribute, but those in the outer provinces enjoyed greater autonomy than those closer to the capital. These areas, which contained both the Asante kingdom and the Fante states of the coast, are the focus of this study as they were responsible for trading the vast majority of the region's America-bound slaves, and therefore were most affected by the shift from export slavery to 'legitimate commerce'. As in the other case study regions, the slave trade was concentrated in just a few ports which possessed the required commercial infrastructure and connections to inland networks to handle the complex credit arrangements required to facilitate exchange between Atlantic and African merchants (Eltis et al. 1999). In this area, the Fante port towns of Anomabo, Cape Coast Castle and Elmina handled around 87% of all embarkations from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

In terms of ecology, the coastal regions occupied by the Fante were characterised by a combination of mangrove, coastal scrub and grassland. Further inland the core areas of the Asante empire consisted mainly of dense forest, except in areas where clearances created regions where agriculture was possible. Further north, the forest gave way to drier savannah areas (Taylor 1952). Crucially for this study, the empire also contained the most of West Africa's gold supplies which had been exported since at least the twelfth century (Dummet 1998, pp29-31, Map 5.2).

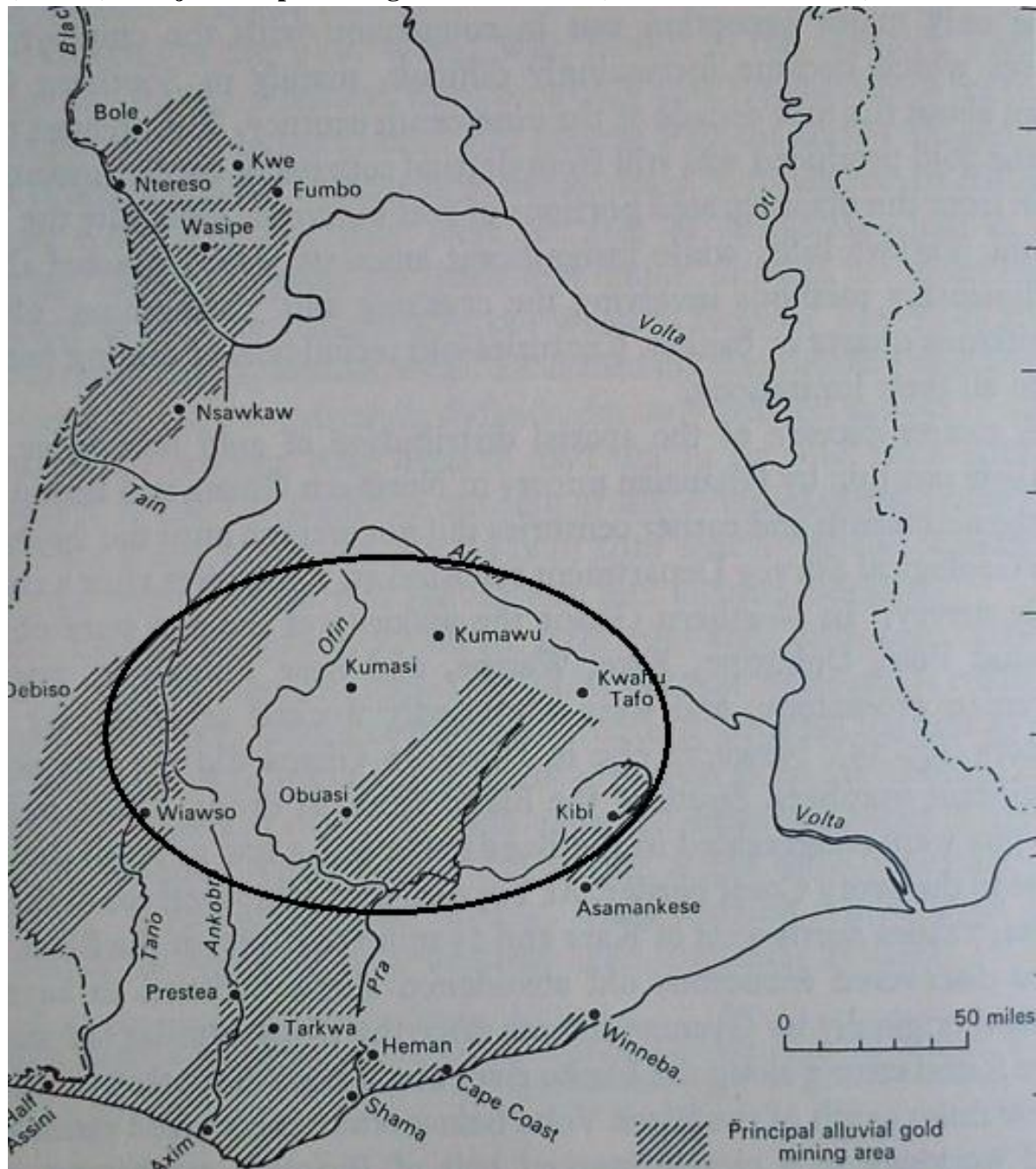
¹⁵⁰ The Asante themselves measured this area in terms of the time taken for a messenger from the capital at Kumasi to leave and return from the frontier which was given at one month. At distances further from this, direct control was considered impractical (Herbst 2000, p49)

Map 5.1. Expansion of the Asante state 1700 - 1807



<http://www.abina.org/resources/maps/>, accessed 30/11/2016

Map 5.2. Principal alluvial gold mining areas: eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (shaded) + major kola producing areas in Asante (inside the black circle)



Source: Dickson (1969), p180, Abaka 2005, p13

5.2. LONG-TERM TRADE CONTACTS

The impact and importance of the early trade between Europeans and the Gold Coast is disputed. In a series of articles Wilks (1978, 1985, 1993), supported by Austin (2008, p611) and Yarak (1996), developed what has become known as the ‘big bang’ theory of Akan state development, namely the rapid change in the forest areas from a largely hunter/gatherer economy to one based on food crop production. Gold had been imported from West Africa to the Mediterranean since around the twelfth century via a Muslim community of traders known as the Wangara. This trans-Saharan trade had probably been the source of most of Europe’s gold during the middle ages. It was gold that first drew Portuguese traders to this region in the 1480s (Thornton 1998, p32), and by the early sixteenth century sources suggest that they were buying between 24,000 and 26,000 oz/year (Wilks 1993, p4). Wilks argues that this was facilitated by a highly sophisticated inland trading system, suggesting that the gold fields in the Akan territories were already being exploited before the arrival of European traders. The Portuguese found themselves in direct competition with Malian merchants able to supply almost all the products demanded by local consumers, such as manufactured cloth and metals. The Portuguese, however, had the capacity to use their ships to supply slaves, principally from the Kingdom of Benin, which greatly encouraged exports of gold (Law 1991, p116). Between 1500 and 1530 Wilks estimates that over 12,000 slaves were imported into the region via their fort at Elmina. These additional labour inputs allowed for large scale clearances, which in turn made agriculture possible within the forest environment.

However, recent archaeological investigations, summarised by Chouin & Decorse (2010), have shown convincing evidence that the forest region had been settled by more complex, agricultural polities since around the ninth century, although many of these settlements were abandoned in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, possibly due to the impacts of the bubonic plague. These findings demonstrate that the expansion of agriculture in the region was not dependent on European intervention. However, the authors do acknowledge that at the time the Portuguese arrived on the Gold Coast, this was an area undergoing a recovery. As such, intensive labour would have been required to at least cut back forest regrowth and begin planting for agriculture, would have benefited from imports of slaves.¹⁵¹ Alternatively, captives could have been put to work in mining to expand the region’s output of gold. In the sixteenth century, North Europeans did not have American empires and therefore had few demands for slaves, while the Portuguese and Spanish were able to acquire most of their captives from West Central Africa (Van den Boogaart 1992). This meant that trade, at least in the Gold Coast, was focused on commodities, which is most clearly and physically demonstrated in the most expensive European investments in the region (until the railways of the twentieth century), the trading forts. The purpose of these forts was to protect the gold and ivory traded on the coast from attacks by pirates from the sea, and other European rivals, and

¹⁵¹ To give some idea of the scale of the labour required, Wilks (1993, pp56-59) estimates that clearing one hectare of virgin forest would have required moving 1,250 tons of moist vegetation, needing 500 days’ labour, given the available technology.

only later were they primarily used to hold captives before embarkation on the middle passage (Lawrence 1963).

The importance of this pattern of trade to this thesis is that the region's early trade contacts with the Atlantic world were based on the *importation* of unfree labour and its application to the production of food, gold and other commodities. Thus, slaves within the region were highly valued for their productive capacities, as well as their potential as commodities for the Atlantic market. This is very like the situation at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the Bight of Biafra (Chapter 6), but in stark contrast to the Bight of Benin where Atlantic trade was entirely based on the *export* of people. Long trading contacts also led to the development of the most urbanised coastal environment in West Africa, which was not a product of transatlantic slave trade, and therefore not dependent on it (Kea 1982, p26, Shumway 2014, pp51,52). Finally, it should also be noted that, while the Atlantic trade became increasingly important to the region, the gold trade continued to the savannah and trans-Saharan markets.¹⁵² As a result, the export economy was never wholly beholden to Europe and the Americas.

It was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that slaves became a more important item of export, especially for the British (Eltis 1994, p249, Shumway 2014, p 25). However, even then gold was still the main attraction for many traders. Den Heijer's (1997) research into Dutch West India Company (WIC) accounts shows that between 1674 and 1740, 64% of the goods dispatched to Africa for trade were intended for non-slave commodities, and of these around 87% were intended for gold.¹⁵³ However, in terms of value, slaves were already generating slightly more income for the WIC in the last decades of the eighteenth century, and were far more valuable than gold and ivory in the period between 1701 and 1730 (Den Heijer 1997, pp129, 136,159). From around the 1730s, slaves became the region's principal export, but this did not last long as slave exports began to decline in the 1780s (Austin 2013a). I will argue in Chapter 7 that declining numbers of captive exports from the Bight of Benin can be largely explained by exogenous shocks, especially the Haitian revolution and the withdrawal of the French, who were then the most important trading nation in that region. However, in the Gold Coast, no such external explanation has been identified in the literature.

The trade with the northern savannah remained an extremely important part of the Asante economy in the eighteenth century. Garrard (1980) estimates that between a third and a half of all gold was flowing to northern markets (Table 5.1). Wilks (1975, p257) suggests that trade in other commodities was also increasing from the 1730s and there are well documented cases of considerable fortunes made by Asante elites involved in the northern trade (McCaskie 2003, p59,60). By at least 1806 Muslim Hausa merchants were established in Kumasi under the protection of the state. They maintained links with a diaspora linking the forests of Asante

¹⁵² Garrard (1980) estimates that in the sixteenth century northern markets probably took more gold than that of the Atlantic. In the seventeenth century, this changed with around 25% going north to the Savannah kingdoms of the interior and 75% to Europeans.

¹⁵³ During this period, the TSTD indicates that Dutch vessels were responsible for around 20% of slaves exported. The WIC was responsible for over 90% of these.

with major urban centres in the interior, such as Kano. From 1800, the government in Kumasi began a policy of channelling all its northern trade through the market town of Salaga, which made it far easier for Asante producers to market their kola and gold to foreign traders (see below).¹⁵⁴ The reasons behind this policy were twofold. On the one hand, the state needed a new trade centre after the destruction of the town of Gbupe by the Asante, which had previously been an important merchant hub (Wilks 1975, p262). On the other hand, declining revenues from slave outputs and / or a desire to diversify the economy away from dependence from on the Atlantic might also have played a role (Wilks 1975, p262, Lovejoy 1982, p254). However, crucially, the decision was taken before the British withdrew from the slave trade, indicating that abolition was not a key driver of economic change. Unlike the Dahomeans and the merchants in Biafra, the Asante already had well established trade networks with alternative markets in Africa. The existing growth in these markets prior to 1808, made it easier for them to rapidly re-orientate themselves away from an Atlantic, slave export economy.

In the nineteenth century, the region's exports were once again dominated by export commodities. The broad story of economic change in Asante during this period is fairly uncontested (Wilks 1975, Austin 1995, McKaskie 2003). Central to this change was the rise of the Sokoto caliphate in the first decade of nineteenth century under the leadership of Usman den Fodio. He was an ethnic Fulani who had been a scholar at the Hausa court of Gobir, but had become disenchanted with what he considered as the decadence of the region's rulers, and had launched a jihad aimed at restoring Islamic purity (Last 1969, Lovejoy 1978). He and his followers were to eventually conquer a vast swathe of territory roughly analogous to the northern regions of today's Nigeria. For the Asante, this created a new, rich economic zone that could effectively compete with Atlantic markets as both a market for, and supplier of, goods. It was the kola nut, or rather a specific variety *cola nitidia*, that was probably the most important commodity in the trade with the north. This nut is a powerful stimulant¹⁵⁵ and is not specifically mentioned in the koran as being *haram*. As a result, its consumption was generally tolerated in Muslim regions (Sharrett 1995, p21). In an atmosphere of Islamic revival, demand for kola nuts soared, which was to greatly benefit the Asante. Their empire encompassed almost all the region's *cola nitidia* trees, giving them a near monopoly on regional output (Abaka 2005, Lovejoy 1980). In exchange they received slaves, leather goods, shea butter and livestock, as well as Hausa cloth which was becoming increasingly sophisticated both in quality and design (Austin 2013b).

With regard to the Atlantic trade, the main export was gold and these exports increased significantly after abolition (Table 5.1). This was almost certainly to ensure that enough European and American trade goods, in particular weapons, ammunition and cloth that were seen as vital to the Asante state and society, continued to be imported (see Section 5.1 for an estimate of the volume and value of these trades). The Gold Coast also had a far more diverse

¹⁵⁴ Salaga was located north east of the capital near crucial fording points of the Volta river and on the caravan routes to the markets of Hausaland (Lovejoy 1982, p254).

¹⁵⁵ Containing both caffeine and theobromine, stimulants found in coffee and cocoa (Lovejoy 1995, p98)

export economy in the nineteenth century than it had during the era of slave exports. In the eighteenth century, there is no evidence that anything other than gold or ivory was exported in any quantity.¹⁵⁶ The CUST records indicate that from the 1820s the region was exporting increasing quantities of ivory, hardwoods (teak and ebony), dyewoods (camwood and barwood) as well as pepper and palm oil.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, the provisioning trade seems to have continued, at least along the eastern side of the coast.¹⁵⁸

Table 5.1. Akan gold exports, 1651 – 1850 (ounces)

	Northern Trade	European Trade	Total
1651 – 1700	500,000	1,500,000	2,000,000
1701 – 1750	400,000	1,200,000	1,600,000
1751 – 1800	400,000	800,000	1,200,000
1801 – 1850	200,000	1,400,000	1,600,000

Source: Garrard (1980, p163)

Examined over the *longue durée*, the Akan region's export economy was only ever briefly focused on the export of people. For at least the first two centuries of external trade contact, and then again from 1808, output from the Gold Coast was dominated by commodities, not slaves. Thus, the early and complete withdrawal of the area from the transatlantic slave trade should be viewed as a reversion to the norm, not an aberration. However, a number of questions remain, in particular regarding the actual impact of British abolition. This will be subject of the next section.

¹⁵⁶ For example, the region did not export either hardwoods or dyewoods, which were both in demand. Richard Miles, a former governor of Cape Coast Castle who worked for the Company of Merchant Venturers from 1765 to 1784 in his evidence to a parliamentary committee in 1789 stated that: "*I never knew a single stick (of woods) of any kind produced on the Gold Coast.*" PP, Minutes of Evidence taken before a committee of the whole house to whom it was referred to consider the circumstances of the slave trade" (1789), p 115

¹⁵⁷ From 1828 to 1840 British ships visiting the Gold Coast imported the following quantities: Hardwoods/Dyewoods: 2535 tons, Foodstuffs (coffee, rice, pepper, maize, coconuts): 423 tons, Palm oil 12, 504 tons, Ivory 7317 cwt, Beeswax 281 cwt, gums (animi/copal) 425 cwt (TNA CUST 4/23-4/35)

¹⁵⁸ Meredith (1811, pp179,180) mentions that maize and other agricultural products are sold east of Winnebah. Bold (1822), discussing the area around Accra notes that the "...whole of the neighboring country (which is extremely fertile) has recently been cultivated to a very considerable extent, and is now become celebrated for the produce of maize, or Indian wheat..." (p59). In 1817, the governor of the fort at Commenda noted that agricultural production had increased due to "...vessels having come to this part of the coast for the cargoes of corn..." TNA T70/1603 State and Condition of Commenda Fort.

5.3. A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE IMPACT OF ABOLITION

The British, for almost all of the eighteenth century, embarked the greatest numbers of captives and had the most substantial physical presence on the Gold Coast. The sudden withdrawal of British ships from the trade in 1808 can explain the *timing* of the ending of slave exports from the region. However, in the eyes of some officials, the presence of the British meant that the Akans were *incapable* of continuing the export of people, thus forcing them to switch to commodity exports. This was argued, for example, in an 1827 report: “*That the number (of slaves) exported from the Gold Coast is small, can be attributed only to the obstacles which the European settlements oppose.....Should this part of the coast be abandoned, all efforts to suppress the slave trade will be vain.*”¹⁵⁹ Yet there is evidence to suggest that had there been sufficient slaves to buy, then traders from the Americas would have stepped in, at least initially. Local merchants such as Samuel Brew were known to have retained contacts with Spanish traders and were accused of continuing to sell slaves (Bowdich 1819 p339). Reynolds (1974, pp39,40) quotes a number of primary sources suggesting that Spanish and Portuguese ships continued to visit the coast, especially around the Dutch fort of Accra.

American vessels were also active during this period and, even though their government had officially outlawed the trade, hostility to the English meant that they were unwilling to enforce their treaties or aid in the abolition campaign. As a result, many US merchants carried on trading with impunity (Brooks 1970). My own analysis of vessels reported arriving at or passing by the main British fort at Cape Coast Castle shows that in the immediate wake of abolition there was an increase in the number of Portuguese and American ships (Figure 5.1). Thereafter this decreased, but sufficient numbers were passing by to pick up slaves, had any been available. For example, in 1812, 8 ships from Portugal/Brazil and 2 from the US passed by Cape Coast. For the period from 1808 to 1820 Portuguese ships to West Africa carried an average of 280 captives, and those from the US 122. Had the ships in 1812 decided to embark slaves somewhere on the Gold Coast region, they could have loaded around 2,480 slaves.

¹⁵⁹ CO267/93 1827 Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry in the State of the Colony of Sierra Leone, Second Part, p25

Figure 5.1. Number of ships reported arriving or passing Cape Coast Castle 1789 - 1791 / 1800 - 1802 / 1810 – 1818 by nationality



Source: TNA: T70/1561 - 1604

The next question is whether these forts could act as an effective military deterrent to determined slave traders, which I would argue they did not. For a start, the British government pursued a policy during this period of reducing both the number of settlements and personnel stationed permanently on the coast, and relinquishing ultimate authority to the governor in Sierra Leone.¹⁶⁰ Even before this policy was enacted, the British forts were far from being an effective military deterrent to slave ships. Crews on slaving voyages tended to be fairly substantial, given the need to control large numbers of unwilling prisoners, and were for this reason also very well armed (Thomas 1999, Rediker 2007, Harms 2008). While slightly smaller than during the apogee of the trade, crews in the era of abolition averaged 25 men per ship.¹⁶¹ With the exception of the major forts at Cape Coast Castle and Anomabo, the British forts were not particularly well manned or armed, and had long been the subject of parliamentary criticism for their generally poor defences and lack of proper maintenance.¹⁶² In 1811, Henry Meredith, an employee of the British company of merchants, published an account of the Gold Coast. He had been present at Cape Coast Castle during the Asante invasion and recounted how the small garrison was only barely able to keep out an assault by Asante forces. Perhaps as a result of his experiences, one of his key aims was to try and convince the British government to invest more money and provide more soldiers for the forts (Meredith 1811, p128). As can be seen from Table 5.2, his concerns were justified as, apart from Cape Coast Castle and Anomabo, the British forts were neither well manned nor sufficiently equipped. At Winnebah, where he was governor, Meredith wrote that “...garrison

¹⁶⁰ An 1817 report recommended that “...the number of those forts and settlements should be diminished by the disposal or abandonment of such as may, upon strict inquiry, appear not be of service in a sufficient degree fully to compensate for their expense” Report from the Committee on African Forts (431).

¹⁶¹ Source: TSTD, crew size 1808 - 1860

¹⁶² One report noted that forts were “...in bad condition and some of them so ruinous as to be in no degree tenable...” and that local officials were abusing their positions to make money at the expense of other merchants. T70/177 Return from the commissioners for the Trade and Plantations to the honourable House of Commons, relating to the General State of the trade with Africa the Condition of the forts and settlements there belonging to the African Company January 1777, p7

of this fort amounts to no more than seven soldiers; a number not capable of defending itself against the natives...”, and noted further that the fort was not even able to employ its guns against the landing area due to the number of houses built between it and the beach.

Even at Cape Coast, he noted that the governor was never able to enforce his authority over the Fante (Meredith 1811, pp99,172,174). Another weakness of the forts was that, at that time, they seemed to have relied entirely on European soldiers.¹⁶³ It has long been known that the West Coast of Africa hosted a range of tropical maladies that, more often than not, proved fatal, or at the very least debilitating, to Europeans, severely limiting their military effectiveness (Curtin 1972, p9, Shumway 2014, p63, Rönnback & Öberg 2016). Sparks’ (2014) history of Anomabo has demonstrated that power rested securely in the hands of local elites, and attempts by overbearing British officials to force events usually led to their humiliation or removal. This fact was acknowledged in an 1816 report which noted that “...as a means of checking the slave trade, our forts on the Gold Coast do not appear to be of any further use than merely to prevent its being carried on within their own walls. Outside of that small range, they either have not, or do not exercise any jurisdiction.”¹⁶⁴

Table 5.2. British personnel and ordnance at Gold Coast forts 1811 & 1816 (excluding Cape Coast Castle and Anomabo)

Fort	No. European Staff (soldiers)		No. Cannon (remarks)		No. Muskets (remarks)	
	1811	1816	1811	1816	1811	1816
Sekondi	4	5 (3)	0	N/A	7	N/A
Commenda	8	10 (8)	28	34	6	6
Dixcove	10	10 (8)	29	31 (‘Gun carriages rotten’)	6 (old)	8 (‘In bad order’)
Appollonia	7	8 (7)	0	N/A	5	N/A
Accra	14	12 (9)	29	29 (‘the cannon indifferent except a few’)	12	12
Tantumquerry	9	9 (8)	17	N/A	10	N/A
Winneba	8	9 (7)	13	13 (‘The Guns are very old’)	12	12
Prampram	2	Closed	0	Closed	0	Closed

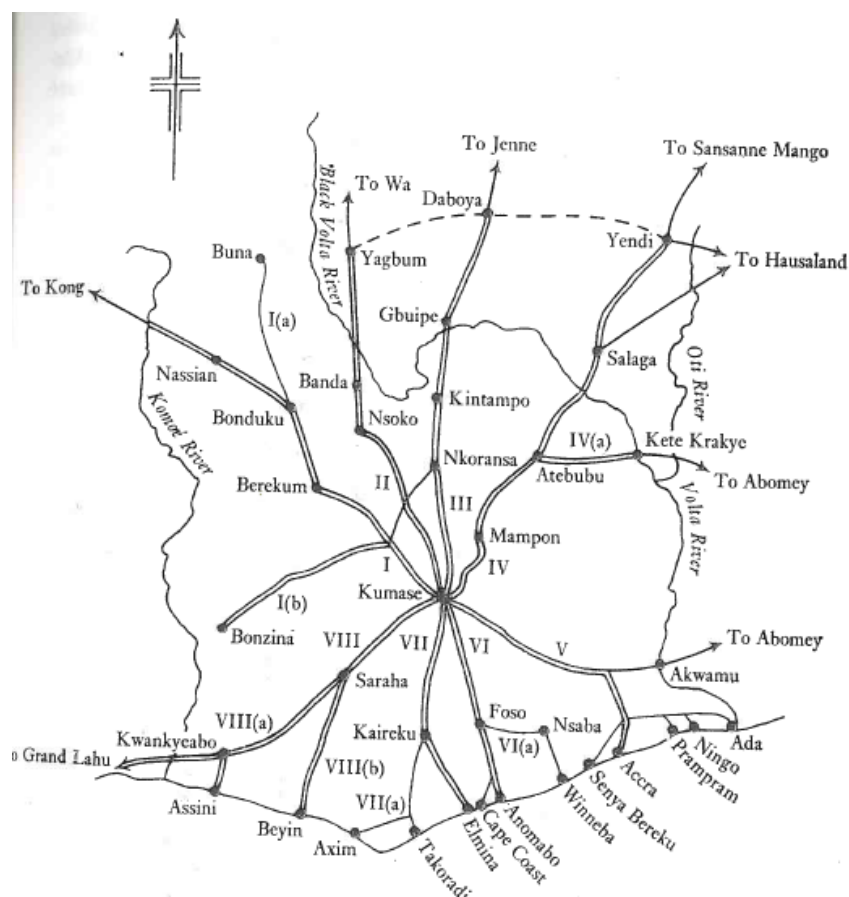
Source: TNA T70/1593, PP: (506) Report from the Select Committee on Papers Relating to the African Forts 1816, pp181-192

¹⁶³ Rönnback (2014) finds no record of Africans being employed in a military capacity. Likewise, in an 1816 report on the Gold Coast forts, which lists both African workers and slaves, there is no mention of non-European soldiers; PP: (506) Report from the Select Committee on Papers Relating to the African Forts 1816, pp182–91

¹⁶⁴ PP: (506) Report from the Select Committee on Papers Relating to the African Forts 1816, p137.

A further complication is that by 1816 the Asante had acquired direct control over routes to the coast, allowing them to easily bypass the small and rather ineffectual forts. One of the key features of the Asante state was its system of roads which headed away from Kumasi like spokes on wheel to the north and south of its territories (see Map 5.3). This allowed it to more effectively project power from the centre, and to better receive tribute from its more distant vassals (Wilks 1975, McCaskie 2003). In the 1740s it had extended road V to the coast as far as Accra, but access to the Atlantic along roads VI and VII were blocked by the Fante coastal coalition. This coalition was a loose alliance of states along the coast, from the Pra River to Accra, based on the kinds of cross-cutting horizontal lines of authority described by McIntosh (1999). These were strengthened by the development of a shared culture, centred on the religious shrine of Nananom Mpow, and language (Shumway 2014, p131). Nonetheless, this union was not entirely stable, and individual states and towns within it were often at war with each other. However, it was able to lessen the negative impacts of the slave trade for the Fante people by providing some measure of protection against enslavement, and was also strong enough to protect the region from the Asante and other regional powers throughout the eighteenth century (McCarthy 1983, p7).

Map 5.3. The great roads of Asante



Source: Wilks (1975) p8

While Elmina had always been closely aligned to the Asante due to the long-standing Dutch alliance with Kumasi¹⁶⁵ (Yarak 1990), road VII still needed to pass through Fante territory. As will be argued below, control of the slave trade was probably not a key foreign policy objective of the Asante state, and warfare in the south was expensive as the Fante controlled walled towns and possessed firearms which required a heavy military commitment to overcome (Klein 2001). It was not until 1806 that the Asante were either provoked or had a sufficient pretext to commit to a large-scale campaign against the Fante. Whatever the ultimate reasons, the proximate cause for war, outlined in a letter by Asantehene to the British envoy Bowdich (1819)¹⁶⁶, was a succession dispute in Assin, a tribute kingdom of the Asante on the borders of the coastal coalition. According to sources, one of the claimants to the throne sought and gained the support of the Fantes, who also murdered Asante messengers / diplomats sent to the coast. A series of invasions followed in 1807, 1811 and 1816 which saw the total defeat of the Fantes and which were marked by an unusually high level of brutality and slaughter.¹⁶⁷

This war may have been an important contributing factor to why the slave trade was to end so abruptly after abolition. Commercial activity, which required that Europeans could entrust large quantities of trade goods to local merchants in the expectation that slaves would be delivered at an agreed future date, would have been severely curtailed with the presence of Asante forces blockading the trade roads. Correspondence from the British forts along the coast make it clear that the conflict was extremely damaging to trade. In 1807 officials mention that Asante raids threatened the British fort and that there was little that they could do to prevent them or protect their Fante allies. The governor of Tantumquerry fort noted that *"...they (the Fante) consider themselves no better situated in regard to the protection of the British than a flock sheep which is dispersed in every direction would have the right to expect from a lamb..."*¹⁶⁸. In 1811, the fighting meant it was impossible to continue any kind of trading, with one official telling his superiors in London that *"...in mentioning trade I may at once declare that it is nearly annihilated at all your forts except Accra and Appollonia...."*.¹⁶⁹ Trade was still badly affected in 1814 when the Governors at Sekondi, Accra and Dixcove forts all noted that trade between the interior and the coast continued to suffer due to the instability and mistrust caused by the conflict.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Yarak (1990) argues that Dutch activity on the coast diminished considerably during the nineteenth century, which was itself closely linked to the decline of the WIC and the rising power of the English. This meant they were always more reliant on the support and goodwill of the Asante (Chapter 2).

¹⁶⁶ Also confirmed by an earlier account by Meredith (1812), the governor of the British fort of Winneba, who witnessed the conflict at first hand

¹⁶⁷ Dupuis (1824), a British diplomat sent to Kumasi to renegotiate a peace settlement with the Asante notes *"...the utter extermination of the Fantes was contemplated, and orders were issued to spare neither the aged nor young children; but both sexes, and all ages were for a time doomed to expire by the sword and the musket, or in the flames of their houses."* p255

¹⁶⁸ TNA T70/1586 Hamilton to Torrance 12th July 1808, see also Torrance to Committee 12th June 1807

¹⁶⁹ T70/1593 White to committee 1st July 1811. See also correspondence on January 1811, 26 March 1811, 26 May 1811 and when he notes that *"In mentioning trade may at once declare that it is nearly annihilated at all your forts except Accra and Appollonia...."*.

¹⁷⁰ T70/1598 19, 22, 27 April 1814

However, while no doubt disruptive in the short term, the result was that the entire Fante coast was then in theory part of the empire of the Asante “...with the reservation of a judicial authority to the company over such towns as stood in the vicinity of any of the castles...” (Dupuis 1824, p263). Thus, by around 1816, the Asante had the potential to control both the supply and sale of slaves along a 200km stretch of coast that had supplied the Americas with around 15% of its coerced labour in the previous century. As noted in Chapter 1, the demand for such labour had not diminished in the nineteenth century. It is also important to note that this window of opportunity was not long open. Despite some losses, a British coalition with various southern powers was able to defeat an Asante army at the battle of Katomonso in 1825. In subsequent peace negotiations, the Asante agreed to give up their right of tribute from the coastal towns and to ensure that lawful, or non-slave, trade would continue, which essentially saw the exchange of Asante to British power over the coast (Wilks 1975, pp182–192). However, in the 18 years before this, had the Asante kings wanted to export substantial numbers of slaves, it would have been possible.

As will be argued in Chapter 7, the Dahomeans were able to devise new ways of exporting slaves from different parts of the Bight of Benin during the 1840s, when the slave patrol was a far more effective operation. They did have an advantage that slaves could be more rapidly transported along the inland lagoons which paralleled the coast (Law 2004, pp192,193). However, the Dahomeans also had more limited routes upon which to march slaves from the interior to the coast. The Asante could simply have taken slaves down road V to western ports such as Pram Pram which had no European presence by 1816. Alternatively, slaves might even have been carried to the Bight of Benin for sale. One obvious place, would have been Little Popo, located in modern day Togo near the Volta river. The Asante had long maintained trade relations with the town and exerted at least some political influence there (Wilks 1975, p 57). In addition, the river had long taken goods, for instance salt, to northern markets such as Salaga (Reynolds 1974, p27) and was to serve as an artery of commerce for palm oil from the Krobo region from the 1820s (Lynn 1997, p39). The town of Salaga was already an established slave market in the early nineteenth century (see below for further discussion) and was situated within a few days journey from the mouth of the Volta. Law (2004, p40) shows that Gold Coast merchants had been taking the sea route to Benin since the mid-seventeenth century to trade for cloth and other goods. Strickrodt (2015, p195) notes that there is some evidence to suggest that small numbers of slaves were being taken by canoe from Accra for sale in Popo. However, there is no evidence to suggest that there was any concerted effort to develop an alternative outlet for coerced labour by the Asante.

To conclude this section, I argue that the gold coast region displayed a long-term preference for commodity exports and neither the British withdrawal, nor the disruptions caused by the Asante-Fante wars, provide a fully satisfactory explanation for why the Asante did not re-engage with transatlantic slave trading after 1808. It seems that to understand *why* the Gold Coast region withdrew so abruptly from the slave trade, as well as explain *when* it happened, it is necessary to examine factors internal to the wider Gold Coast region. The next section

will investigate what factors might have been influencing the Asante at the turn of the nineteenth century.

5.4. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN 1808

The financial cost of abolition

The first factor considered is whether the Asante suffered financially by moving away from slave trade. To calculate this I firstly estimate the combined value, in GB£, of the exports of gold and kola from 1808 to 1850. Secondly, to construct another hypothetical estimate of how much the Asante would have gained had they continued trading in gold and slaves, and not diverted labour towards kola production and mining. Comparing these two totals gives at least a rough approximation of whether or not the Asante were paying any kind of financial price for giving up the export of captives. These calculations are also based on the assumption that the increase in production could be met with the labour available within the kingdom. To test this, I estimate how many extra people would be required to mine gold and grow kola, and compare the findings with what we know about labour capacity. This method is far from ideal and is almost certainly a very pale reflection of reality for a number of reasons.

Firstly, given the limited data, it isn't possible to show changes over time. The final calculation only shows the overall value of trade for the period as a whole. Secondly, all of these goods were bartered for commodities and manufactures of the Americas, Europe or the Savannah. The sterling price of these goods cannot fully reflect their social, political or economic value to the elites and households in Africa (although Sections 6 and 7 will deal with these issues in more detail). However, this was a monetised region and goods were assigned monetary values that can be at least roughly compared to sterling as evidenced by Austin (2015, pp128–34) and Lovejoy and Richardson's (1995) work on slave prices in the African interior. Additionally, there are no equivalent records to the British customs ledgers which itemise the volumes of kola which were produced and sold, as it was only marketed to northern savannah markets. As a result, all of the figures used come from estimates and assumptions based on scattered references in primary sources. To account for this, I calculate low, high and median estimates of kola output from Asante to add to the slightly more reliable figures for gold provided by Garrard (1980).

Finally, the calculation for commodity exports is a rather conservative figure. It does not include the output of other commodities such as palm oil and woods which, as stated in Section 5.3, had become relatively substantial by the 1840s. However, as already mentioned, it is likely that the majority of these goods, and especially palm oil, were coming from the eastern side of the Gold Coast and therefore outside Akan areas. Furthermore, the calculation does not account for the internal trade in slaves. Following abolition, the falling prices of slaves led to a rise in slave ownership along the coast (Adu-Boahen 2010, Manning 1990,

144). These slaves were largely supplied by the Asante who were, by the 1840s, according to contemporary sources, exporting large numbers of captives taken from areas to the north (Cruikshank 1853, Vol 2 p244, McSheffrey, 1983, p353). However, I am not aware of any study on the numbers of those exported and, until the 1820s, the coastal areas (at least in Fante territories) were still devastated by the conflict with Asante and were not in the position to take advantage of opportunities for slave ownership (Sanders 1982, p53).¹⁷¹ For these reasons this trade is excluded from my calculations.

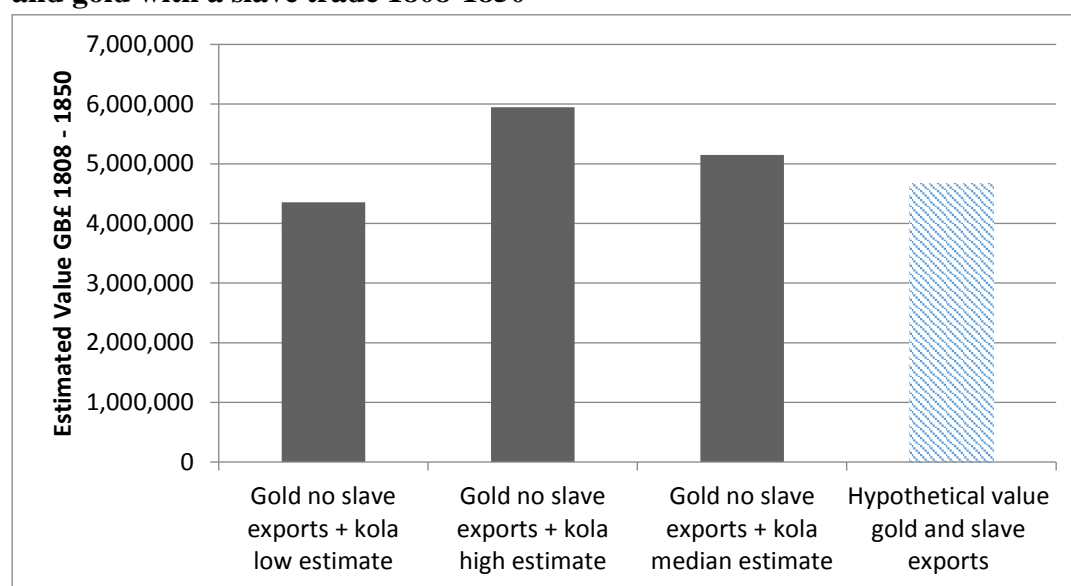
The output of gold from the Asante kingdom is based on the estimates found in Garrard (1980).¹⁷² Gold prices on the coast are taken at £3 12sh / ounce (Wilks, 1975, p418, Garrard 1980, pp258,259) and are assumed to reflect international gold prices by remaining extremely stable during the period under study (Officer & Williamson 2016). There are no accurate figures on the output and production of kola until the colonial era but it is possible to calculate a rough estimate. For full details of the workings and sources see *Appendix 5.1*. The basis for the calculations comes from sources quoted in Lovejoy (1980). One such source suggests that in around 1820 roughly 1,000 donkeys per year were leaving from the Salaga market laden with kola nuts, and another that, in the 1850s, this figure had increased to 6,000 (Lovejoy 1980, p116). I have taken these as base measurements for the low and high estimates of output. Kola nuts were measured in headloads, or *apakan*, each weighing around 80 lbs, and, according to one source, each donkey could carry around 100 lbs or 1.2 headloads (Lovejoy 1980, p116). Prices were measured in headloads and sources quote figures which range from around £0.375 (Wilks 1975, p268) to £2.5 (Bowdich 1819, p333) per load. These have been taken as low and high estimates. If we then multiply the low estimate for the number of donkeys by 1.2 by the low-price estimate, we have a very conservative estimate of value. The high estimate uses the figure of 6,000 donkeys quoted by sources in Lovejoy and headload price of £2.5 from Bowdich.

For the hypothetical value of the slave trade, had the region continued exporting captives after 1808, I have taken the average slaves exported per year from the Gold Coast between 1770 and 1808, and compared this to the average slaves embarked in the Bights of Benin and Biafra between 1809 and 1850. These all average around 4,800 per year, so this figure is taken as an estimate of output. Slave prices I rely on the price data on the coastal value of slaves in Lovejoy and Richardson (1995). It is also the case that the region would have continued to export gold, but that the quantity would probably have been less. As will be argued in Section 7, increases in production required additional inputs of coerced labour, which would have been scarcer if slaves were still being exported. I have therefore taken gold output figures from the second half of the eighteenth century, as they were somewhat lower than those of the next century when more labour was available.

¹⁷¹ The governors of the various forts along the Gold Coast made regular mention of how the war had disrupted trade. See for example TNA, T70/1601 1816 State and Condition of Commenda Fort, 1816 State and Condition of Annamabo Fort, T70/1603 1817 State and Condition of Apollonia Fort, 1818 State and Condition of Accra Fort, 1818 State and Condition of Tantomquerry Fort.

¹⁷² These are also used by Austin (2005)

Figure 5.2. Estimated value (GB£) of the trade in kola, gold + hypothetical slave exports and gold with a slave trade 1808-1850



Sources: see above

The combined value of the hypothetical nineteenth century gold and slave trade from 1808 to 1850 is £4,670,771. The value of the commodity trades is higher on every estimate except when taking the low value for kola (£4,353,750) and even then the difference is not substantial. Furthermore, as will be shown in Chapters 6 and 7, the transatlantic slave trade in West Africa in the nineteenth century was extremely volatile with output impacted by changing prices, the growing effectiveness of the slave trade patrol and regional political events. By contrast, both gold and kola seem to have enjoyed both stable prices and steadily rising demand over the entire period.¹⁷³

The state also benefited directly from the commodity trade. For example, it took steps to ensure that its own kola merchants enjoyed greater advantages than private traders. The government would not allow Asante farmers or traders into the market until its own officials had arrived, and they were also exempted from a toll paid on each load of kola (Lovejoy 1982, p251). These measures, along with the fact that the king owned more slaves and land, probably ensured that the state had a substantial minority share of the trade, and of course also benefitted from the taxes levied on foreign merchants and its own citizens who paid tolls to use the roads to Salaga (Austin 1996, p26). Furthermore, individuals were required by law to send each nugget of gold they found to the capital, where it would be turned into gold dust. A proportion of this was claimed by the state, some by the chief or stool holder of the land, and the rest was given back to the household who originally mined or panned the gold. Furthermore, gold was also liable as a duty on the death of a household head (Wilks 1993 pp148,149, McCaskie 2003, p48). Therefore, increased production led to more wealth flowing

¹⁷³ Lovejoy's (1980, p120) data on the retail price of kola nuts in Savannah markets over the nineteenth century suggests that prices, once one has accounted for inflation, were remarkably stable until the 1890s.

upwards to the king, thus increasing his ability to reward elite supporters and maintain his position as the kingdom's economic top dog (see Section 5.5).

This increase in production, with the land-extensive or Niebeor/Domar conditions of the region, required a more intensive use of coerced labour (Austin 2005 pp166,167, Perbi 2004, pp70-86, Wilks 1993, p96). It must be assumed that if this had meant that elite groups faced shortages of labour to support them and their retainers, or the kingdom did not produce sufficient food for its major urban centres, then the use of slaves in the production of gold and kola would have been opposed (Arhin 1990, pp525,526). However, there is no indication that this was the case in the first half of the nineteenth century. Austin (1995 p164) estimates that one man could mine around 1/62 of an ounce of gold per day. Garrard (1980, p163) suggests that output increased from around 27,000 ounces per year in the later eighteenth century to 35,000 ounces/year in the first half of the nineteenth century. To produce 8,000 extra ounces per year would therefore require between 320,000 to 496,000 extra days worked per dry season.¹⁷⁴ Given an average dry season of around three months from late November to February (Wilks 1993, p56), this meant that an additional 3,500 to 5,500 labourers were required during the ninety-day period.

Kola also needed considerable labour inputs. It was most intensively grown in the clay loam soil and ochrosal forest zone of the central region of the Asante kingdom (see Map 5.2). Kola trees were typically planted alongside yams, cocoyams and cassava in between the 'hills' or mounds built from soil and vegetation which served as beds for their propagation. These mounds offered shade and protection for kola seeds which, when fully grown trees themselves, provided shade and helped prevent soil erosion. Harvesting took place in the dry season, which meant that labour did not need to be diverted from the production of subsistence crops except when previously fallow land needed to be cleared.¹⁷⁵ Abaka (2005) shows that this dry season labour was fairly intensive. The nuts needed to be picked, processed¹⁷⁶ and stored in specially made huts called *apata* which kept out the sunlight. Tree management was a year-round job and involved cutting away the roots and branches of other trees that could act as transmitters of pests or pathogens, and cutting down and removing trees which became sick or infected.

To give some idea of the scale of the new trade we can take the estimates of the number of headloads taken to Salaga. Wilks (1975, p268) quotes sources which say that each headload contained around 2,000 nuts. If we multiply this by the low, high and median estimates we have rough figures for the number of nuts produced. Abaka (2005, p33) quotes colonial reports from the early 20th century as giving an average annual yield of 765 nuts per kola tree. Dividing this figure by the total production figures means that in the first half of the

¹⁷⁴ During the rainy seasons artisanal mining in Asante was impossible and labour was required in food production (Dummett 1998, p51). In the dry season, existing household labour was still necessary for a wide range of agricultural and household tasks (Wilks 1993, pp56-63).

¹⁷⁵ Wilks (1993, p59-61) suggests that forest clearance was necessary around once every three years.

¹⁷⁶ This involved soaking the nuts, washing and draining them, removing bad nuts and then 'curing' them in baskets wrapped in banana leaves (Abaka 2005, pp32,33)

nineteenth century Asante households were tending between 3,137 and 39,216 trees with a median figure of 21,176 trees (full workings see *Appendix 5.2*), representing a significant investment in time and labour.

However, these labour demands could almost certainly have been met by existing labour capacity. The population had probably been growing from the fifteenth century for a number of reasons. Firstly, the ‘Columbian exchange’ with the Americas had introduced a range of new crops such as maize and cassava, which allowed for longer growing seasons and improved the calorific quality of diets (Kiple 1984, pp24,25). Secondly, the early exchange of gold for slaves for purposes of forest clearance expanded the agricultural potential of the forest zone (Austin 2005, p56). Thirdly, the conquests and expansion of the Asante empire in the eighteenth century led to many captives being sold, but also many were retained within the kingdom which swelled the population and increased its productive potential (Bowdich 1819, p323). Finally, the security brought by Asante military conquests (see below), and the law that forbade the selling of free Asantes into slavery (Maier 1990, p122), meant that the transatlantic slave trade did not have the destructive demographic impact that it had in other regions such as the Bight of Benin. The evidence suggests that in the earlier nineteenth century the population of Asante grew and did not contract until the 1860s (see *Appendix 5.3.b.*). Furthermore, over the last twenty years of the slave trade the region was exporting an average of 7,325 captives (TSTD). If these were diverted from the Atlantic, into the domestic, economy there would have been more than enough additional workers to meet the new labour demands for use in kola and gold production.

This evidence suggests that over the first half of the nineteenth century, the region as a whole did not lose out financially by the ending of the transatlantic slave trade. Furthermore, there was sufficient labour to substantially increase production.¹⁷⁷ The next question is why the Asante elites, like those in the Bight of Biafra, were prepared to support the development of an economy based on commodity production. Hopkins’ (1973) analysis of the impact of abolition was that it led to the rise of small scale units of production whose growing wealth came at the expense of elite groups who had previously grown rich from the slave trade. As will be argued in Chapter 7, this analysis can, to an extent, be applied to the Dahomean state, which maintained a slave export model for as long as it was able largely due to the huge economic, military and political benefits enjoyed by its elites as a result of capture and sale of captives. However, in the case of the Asante and, for different reasons the Bight of Biafra, elite groups were prepared to not only tolerate, but actively support, household producers using coerced labour to produce exports instead of selling the slaves to external markets (see Section 5.6). For the Asante state, an important reason was that, unlike Dahomey, it did not face any significant external threats either to its borders or regional economic power from the 1740s. As such, it needed to devote far fewer resources to military activities and the result was a very different attitude towards trade.

¹⁷⁷ Although some groups may have suffered, such as the *caboceers* in the Fante region who had previously controlled the marketing of slaves to Europeans (Sparks 2014).

The Asante and regional hegemony

The forest clearances and population boom in the sixteenth century were instrumental in the development of a number of states that began to compete for control of the region's gold and people. The second half of the seventeenth century saw a military revolution among the various emerging Akan states. The introduction of firearms, paid for with gold and slaves, led to a change in both battlefield tactics and the mass mobilisation of populations (Kea 1982, pp154-64, McCaskie 2007, p10). The new methods in war allowed the Denkyira and the Akwamu to become the region's dominant powers from the 1660s, especially after the former captured most of the region's gold-producing land in around 1690. However, the military revolution soon spread to other areas and the Denkyira were in turn defeated by a Kumasi based coalition in 1701 led by Osei Tutu, and the priest Anokye, seen as the founding figures of the Asante state. By 1742 the Asante had defeated their last serious rivals for power, Akyem (in the region around Accra) and incorporated the kingdom of Akwamu (Wilks 2001 pp118-25). Thereafter, they continued a period of expansion, which both consolidated their power over the region and produced a large flow of captives to be sold to growing numbers of European traders at the coast (Maier 1990).

After their defeat of the Akwamu in the 1740s the Asante did not face any serious military threat to the integrity of their state. Campaigns from this period were about the enforcement of their authority or to exact tribute payments, not to protect their borders from equal or greater powers. This security was perhaps due to the fact that unlike the Dahomeans their territory did not border on savannah territories, home to more powerful militarised states and empires (see Chapter 7). In addition, their territory controlled trade routes to the interior, so they were able to restrict the sales of guns to the states and societies on their northern borders, therefore maintaining an insurmountable advantage in warfare (Wilks 1975, p20).¹⁷⁸ In their southern territories the various kingdoms did possess guns, but lacked centralised political authority. This ensured that, while effective defensively, they lacked the political unity to organise offensive warfare, although they did regularly rebel against central authority.¹⁷⁹

The result was twofold. Firstly, there was less of a need to maintain a highly-militarised state like that of Dahomey, which also meant there were lighter labour demands on their population. There was, for example, no standing army (Maier 1990 p 125, McCaskie 2003, p85), meaning that there were fewer non-productive elements in society who required the labour inputs of producers to feed and support them. Furthermore, this relative security meant fewer costly wars which reduced both the treasury and manpower.¹⁸⁰ In the 80 years from

¹⁷⁸ One possible exception might have been the rebellion in 1798, led by the mainly Muslim states of Gyaman and Kong in support of a deposed king. They had access to cavalry which posed a severe threat to the infantry armies of the Asante, but never able to threaten the core area of the state (Wilks 1975, p254, Dupuis 1821, pp245, 246)

¹⁷⁹ See for example, Dupuis (1821, p244) for the 1781 revolt by Assin, Akim and Aquapin.

¹⁸⁰ Wilks (1975) notes that the disastrous campaign against the British and Fante forces in 1826 involved 40,000 men and cost the treasury around 29,000 oz gold dust and 20,000 oz gold nuggets which was equivalent to around 1 year's national income (p439). Austin (2005) suggests that losing campaigns against the Ewes, the

1740 to 1820, the Asante are recorded as campaigning for 35 years, but also enjoyed 46 years without going to war (Maier 1990, p 130, Table 5.3). Of course, simply because there is no official record of conflict this does not mean there was no military activity. However, as will be argued in Chapter 7, official Dahomean ideology *required* that the king campaign annually. The absence of wars in official Asante chronology indicates at the very least that it was less concerned with warfare from an ideological standpoint. As a result, the state had less pressure to directly manage and control the labour forces of the kingdom, which would be crucial to household labour decisions.

The absence of pressing threats to the kingdom's territorial integrity in the eighteenth century, also allowed for the development of elite coalitions favouring the promotion of trade and wealth above war. Wilks (1975, p481) suggested that in the nineteenth century two very broad 'parties' dominated nineteenth century Asante state policy:

"...those subscribing to mercantilist policies and reading the state as essentially organised for the promotion of trade – the adherents of the peace party – and those subscribing to imperialist policies and regarding the state as essentially organised for the control of territory and the exaction of tribute – the adherents of the war party."

While this interpretation of Asante history has been subject to some criticism as being overly simplistic (Aidoo 1977), others have used the framework as means of analysing the broad coalitions impacting Asante state policy (Austin 1996, p4). Wilks (1975, p678) suggests that the 'peace party' only became more influential after abolition when slave raiding became less profitable. However, as noted in Section 3, the Asante had already begun investing in the northern trade before 1808. State policy was already being influenced by those advocating investments in trade as well as war. In Chapter 7 we will see that no such faction ever emerged among the ruling coalition in Dahomey, and that this was probably largely owing to threats faced by the state from other states such as Oyo, or hostile competitors such as the Popos or Porto Novo along the coast.¹⁸¹ The security enjoyed by Asante elites encouraged the development of alternative policy options to warfare. The politics of the region also had an impact on the origin of the slaves acquired by the Akans and this in turn played a role in determining how they were used.

Fante and the British from 1869 – 1873 led to such heavy losses from casualties and disease that it contributed to a decline in the kingdom's population (p58)

¹⁸¹ There has been at least one interpretation of Dahomean history which suggests that there were, as in Asante, 'Peace and War' parties favouring either commodities or slave trades. Yoder (1974) labelled these the 'Fly and Elephant' parties which, according to his analysis, developed in the 1840s. However, this hypothesis has not been taken up by other scholars.

Outsiders as slaves

During the period of the Asante expansion, the southern area of modern day Ghana provided the rich pool of slaves for capture. However, the associated violence and insecurity also motivated people to organise better means of defence. One example comes from the Krobo people of eastern Ghana, who moved into the defensible mountain areas north of Accra, which kept them safer from raiders (Wilson 1991). The coastal peoples themselves engaged in slave trading, which provided them with guns. They also built walled towns and created self-defence militias, known as *Asafo*, companies which provided a substantial military deterrent (Shumway 2014). As a result, slave raiding and buying by the Asante came to increasingly focus on the territories to their north (Lovejoy 2011, p175, Austin 2005, p 116), although many captives were also bought in the market at Salaga.

The “...stateless or near-stateless peoples on both sides of what is now Ghana/Burkina Faso border..” (Johnson 1986 p346) were much easier targets as the Asante were able to prevent the people of the region acquiring firearms, thus ensuring they possessed an overwhelming military advantage (Wilks 1975, p67). Furthermore, the open savannah terrain made it more difficult to evade capture. Archaeological work in the area suggests that people were being forced to adopt the kinds of offensive measures suggested by the predatory state theory in the nineteenth century (Swanepoel 2009). Maier (1990, p128) estimates that in the late eighteenth century, Asante’s five northern provinces all gave tribute in slaves, estimated at around 1,000 each / year. This figure is to be contrasted with a total of just 500 from all of its five southern provinces.

The ‘foreign’ origins of these slaves is important, as these captives were non-Akans and this made them significantly more valuable as workers. Free Akans were organised around matrilineal clans, the *abusua*, which traced their roots to a common ancestress. Those outside the *abusua* were essentially non-people who could be treated as such until granted some rights of kinship (McCaskie 2003, p96). The authority to grant such rights was in the hands of the state or its local representatives, giving them a powerful tool of coercion to control the large numbers of slaves living amongst free people (McCaskie 2003 p 97). Incorporation depended on many factors but was considerably easier for those who already spoke an Akan language and were accustomed to the local culture.

Those from northern regions were handicapped by their lack of a common language, and were often physically different from their owners with distinctive facial scars that marked them clearly as outsiders (Lovejoy 2011, p169). Within Akan society they were referred to as *ndonko* so as to separate them from Akan slaves and were subject to a good deal of discrimination (Lovejoy 1982, p271). Cruikshank (1852, p244) describes the “*Donko*” as characterised by “...an extraordinary degree of stolidity and brutishness and exhibit a very low type of intellect and breeding.” He goes on to note that, along the coast, northern slaves who arrived as children had a far better chance of quickly assimilating, but an adult was destined to remain as “...a dull, stolid beast of burden all the days of his life...” (p245). In a telling remark, he notes that adult slaves were far more valuable than children, suggesting that their value was a reflection of their immediate labour potential.

As the Akans were absorbing large numbers of people from outside their territories, there were means by which the non-free might eventually gain more rights. This might be through military service as in the case of the *Asafo* companies in the Fante areas, or by slow integration over several generations (Shumway 2014, p150, Perbi 2004, p113) However, it was probably the case that slaves from outside of Akan territories could not generally be expected to quickly assimilate and gain at least some of the rights enjoyed by their owners, which might have made them doubly appealing to those who wished to increase their wealth through production by exploiting unfree labour.

To summarise these sections, the Asante were orientating their economy away from slave to gold and kola exports in the late eighteenth century. The lack of external threats created sufficient stability to encourage certain elites to begin investing in trade instead of war, and the commodity trade was at least as, if not more, valuable than the export of captives. Furthermore, the slaves that were being captured or imported into Akan territories were more suited to production than to export. The next section will examine the impact of gold on the development of Asante state and society, and argue that its centrality in the culture meant that it would always be prioritised over slave exports.

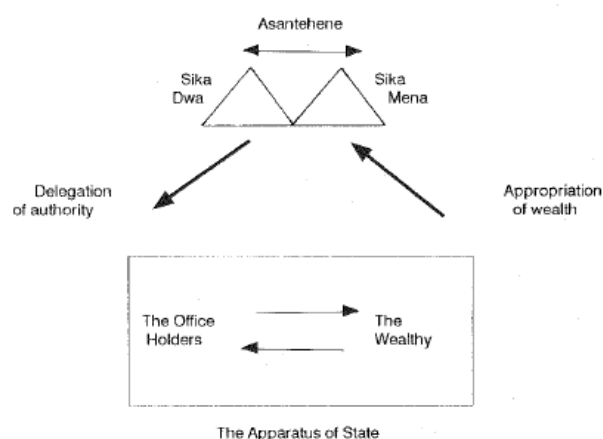
5.5. GOLD AND THE ASANTE STATE

The aim of the Asante state, or more specifically the palace organisation based around the Asantehene or king, was the preservation of its own power and wealth. However, it faced a number of challenges common to many West African ruling groups. Firstly, projecting power in land extensive conditions was costly and difficult (Herbst 2000). Secondly, the state's power was always checked by elites who controlled the lineage groups to whom most of their free subjects owed their primary loyalty. Finally, as already mentioned, the Asante never maintained a permanent standing army (see below for a wider discussion on this point), instead relying on levies of troops from the very lineage groups it sought to control, which meant that it could rarely rely on violence to enforce its rule within the kingdom (Wilks 2003 pp85–88). However, while there were a number of coups or 'destoolments' during the 1780s and 1790s, none of these seriously threatened the cohesion or stability of the ruling coalition over the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries (Aidoo 1977, Wilks 1975, p372, McCaskie 2003, p49). This success was predicated on the maintenance of a hierarchal system of patronage and reward which ultimately depended on control over the production and distribution of gold.

Working with the framework developed by North et al. (2009, p43) the Asante kingdom can be characterised as a basic natural state which had developed a “...*durable and stable organisational structure*..” To remain in control the ruling coalition headed by the Asantehene had to reward the powerful elites for their support and ensure that their privileges, goals and organisations were closely aligned with the state. The system that developed was what Arhin (1990, p525) characterised as a patrimonial state based on a 'regulated ranking system'. This is perhaps best illustrated by a schema developed by Wilks (1993, p145) in Figure 5.3. The

power of the Asantehene was represented by two symbolic artefacts: the *Sika Dwa* or Golden Stool representing his political/judicial supremacy and the *Sika Mena* or Golden Elephant's tail, which again only an Asantehene could carry, symbolising his position at the top of the economic food chain.¹⁸² All wealth within the kingdom flowed upwards towards the king, who could then distribute favours down to the elites. The hierarchy was actively maintained through sumptuary laws and regulations designed to restrict the wealth of other elites through various forms of appropriation (Arhin 1990, p530, McCaskie 2003, p48).

Figure 5.3. Wealth and authority in Asante: a schema



Wilks (1993), p145

However, wealth creation itself was actively encouraged, as long as it did not challenge the authority of the state. There was in Asante the principle of ‘accumulation’: a system in which all strata of society attempted to enrich themselves in order to separate themselves socially and politically from both those of lower social classes and from competitors within their own class through the conspicuous (but regulated) displays of wealth (Wilks 1975, p xlviii, Arhin 1990, McCaskie 2003 p37, Lovejoy 2011, p167). This was officially called *Poatwa* – the exhibition of wealth according to rules set out by the state which ensured that you could not put yourselves too far above your station or rank. Should you do so, this was *ahomaso*, which implied a threat to the social order (Arhin 1990, p532). When a man reached a certain level of wealth he could apply to the Asantehene to wear a certain kind of woven cloth called *nyawcho* or “you have become rich”. A richer man could apply for the honour of carrying a horse tail switch and the very wealthiest would be allowed to carry an elephant tail switch. In essence this system does not differ substantially from that which existed in Dahomey (see Chapter 7) where the king’s authority and the social position of the elites also rested to a large degree on the conspicuous consumption of luxury goods and ostentatious displays of wealth. What set Asante apart was that all wealth was measured by, and usually based on, gold.

The only recognised currency within the Asante kingdom, was gold dust, which had originally been based on Islamic gold coins known as the *mithqal* and *uqiya* (Johnson

¹⁸² Wilks (1993, p147) notes that the Asante went to war against the neighbouring kingdom of Gyaman, because the king there had created his own golden stool, thus symbolically placing himself as equal to the Asantehene.

1968).¹⁸³ The literature agrees that at all levels of Asante society, the most important (although not the only) marker of wealth was the possession of gold, either in the form of currency or ornamentation (Wilks 1975 p xlvi, Garrard 1980 p66, Wilks 1993, p127, Austin 1996, p9, Arhin 1990 pp532, 533, McCaskie 2003, p 38). A key part of official state policy, and one of the means by which an Asantehene maintained his legitimacy, was to ensure that the *Adaka Kese*, or Great Chest, kept at the treasury in Kumasi remained full. This alone required 400,000 oz of gold dust valued at around £1.5 million in the early nineteenth century (Wilks 1975, p 418, 445). Men seeking to advance themselves were given loans in gold dust by more senior elites and were expected to increase this wealth (Arhin 1990, p 529, Wilks 1993, p133). Even commoners needed to acquire gold dust in order to buy more basic but necessary goods from markets such as salt, farm tools and household implements (Arhin 1990, p527).

While the export of captives was extremely important, control of the region's gold was always the core focus of Asante policy over the eighteenth century (McCaskie 2007, p 9, Garrard 1980, p 63, Dummet 1998, pp41,44) as a means of financing warfare, providing an organising principle and justification for further expansion, and later allowing the Asante to receive tribute in slaves from conquered territories.¹⁸⁴ An analysis of the location of major Asante military campaigns from 1740 to 1816 (Table 5.3) shows that there was far more activity in regions with gold deposits. Other political factors played a role but it wasn't until 1806 that they engaged in warfare directly against the Fante states, which marketed the majority of the region's exported slaves (Wilks 1975, pp26,27,145). As suggested in Section 5.4, this war was probably motivated by political considerations, rather than from a desire to control the marketing of the slave trade.

A hesitancy to engage in warfare against southern states or coalitions was likely due to the fact that they were generally well armed and, in the case of the Fante, possessed fortified towns (Shumway 2014, pp144,145). However, these factors did not discourage the Asante from launching repeated attacks against the region of Wassa from 1765 to 1785 in order to gain control of its gold supplies. By contrast, the Dahomean kings, who were far more dependent on the slave trade for their wealth and power, conquered the key slave 'port' of Whydah in the 1720s and expended considerable effort holding it against repeated attacks from other hostile powers until the 1780s (see Chapter 7). This suggests that control of the slave trade, while important, was not a key objective of the Asante state, unlike the gold trade.

¹⁸³ There were two exceptions; in the northern regions and along the coast, cowry shells and barter were also accepted for the purposes of trade, but this was always forbidden in other areas of the empire as it was seen to be a threat to the collection of gold (Cruikshank (1853, Vol 2 pp41–44, Arhin 1990, p 527).

¹⁸⁴ For example, during their 1772 invasion of Dagomba captives who would otherwise have faced slavery were ransomed for gold or greater numbers of slaves. After the Fante wars in 1816 entire villages were founded in under developed regions by captives taken into slavery by victorious generals who thereby increased both their wealth, productive capacity and prestige (Maier 1990 pp122,123).

Table 5.3. Location of major Asante military campaigns 1740–1816

Year	Area	Area(s) of Gold supplies	Trade route to the savannah	Trade route to the Atlantic
1740 – 1741	Gyaman	✓		
1742	Akyem, Accra	✓		✓
1744	Akwamu			
	Bassa, Kete Krakye,		✓	
1745 – 48	Dagomba			
1749	Krepi Akyem	✓		
	Eastern and Central		✓	
1751 – 1752	Gonja, Kpembe			
	Wassa, Twifo,	✓		
	Denkyira, Akyem,			
1753	Abuakwa			
1759	Gyaman	✓		
1763	Bron, Kwawum, Akyem		✓	
1764	Dahomey			✓
	Wassa, Twifo,	✓		
	Denkyira, Akyem,			
1764 – 1765	Abuakwa			
1766 – 1767	Gyaman	✓		
1767	Akyem Abuakwa	✓		
1772	Dagomba	✓		
1772	Akuapem			✓
1773	Akyam Abuakwa	✓		
1773 – 1774	Banda	✓		
1798 – 1799	Gyaman	✓		
1800 - 1801	Gbuipe		✓	
1806 – 1807	Assin; Fante			✓
1809 – 1810	Elmina, Accra			✓
1811 - 1816	Akuapem, Krobo, Ada			✓

Sources: Campaign list from Maier (1990) p130, areas of gold supplies from Dickson (1969), p180, trade routes from Wilks (1975) p8

This had profound implications for the market in slaves within the kingdom. After sufficient land had been cleared in the seventeenth century, a dual market developed that allowed the option to either sell slaves to Atlantic or Saharan traders, or to retain them as producers who could additionally augment the prestige of their owners (McCaskie 2003, p38). There was therefore always an internal demand that competed strongly with an external one. For most of the eighteenth century it seems that the kingdom was able to benefit from both the sale of slaves, and from using their labour to produce gold (Maier 1990, Shumway 2014, p 57). However, the centrality of gold in the social and economic fabric of society meant that slave labour was ultimately more important than their value as commodities, and in the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the rising value of gold discouraged the export of slaves.

McCaskie (2003, p 39) argues that gold only started to become scarce, and therefore more valuable, after abolition, when the kingdom was required to begin relying solely on the export of gold to purchase crucial European goods such as guns and gunpowder. This situation exacerbated other factors identified by Wilks (1993, p129), including the melting down of gold dust for ornaments, and hoarding. McCaskie is supported by Lovejoy (2011, p167) and to a lesser extent by Austin (1995, p101), who note that the glut of slaves in the kingdom post 1808 helped the development of commodity production. However, the evidence indicates that gold was already becoming scarcer in the late eighteenth century. As it did so, demand rose, which encouraged output and diverted slaves from export to production.

From the 1750s the domestic price of gold began to rise and from the 1770s exports contracted (Johnson 1966, Metcalf 1987). Barters were always converted into a trading currency called the ounce, which contained 16 ackies. This was a means by which complex assortments of goods from different points of origin could be valued in relation to the price of slaves. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the price of an actual ounce of gold to a trade ounce had doubled from 1:1 to 1:2. Johnson (1966) quotes a British trader in 1777 complaining that it was necessary to buy gold in other parts of Africa at more than the prime cost of his goods in order to trade at Anomabo. In his analysis of the accounts of one British trader, Metcalf (1987) notes that by 1776 93.6% of his barters for slaves included gold, and that this constituted around $\frac{1}{4}$ the total cost. Both Metcalf and Johnson argue that gold was becoming more valuable and the Asante were therefore starting to hoard their supplies instead of exporting them. The rise in the value of gold, can also explain why fewer slaves were exported in the 1790s and the first 8 years of the nineteenth century, even though the prices for slaves on the coast were higher than they had ever been (Lovejoy and Richardson 1995a). As will be argued in Section 5.7, the increasing value of gold to all sections of society encouraged production, which required greater numbers of slaves.

To conclude, the presence of gold was crucial to the development of both the institutions and trade patterns of the Gold Coast region. It was the basis of wealth and legitimacy for the elites, and the principal form of currency in a monetized economy, and therefore central to the lives of commoners. As it grew scarcer in the eighteenth century, the productive value of slaves would have increased relative to their value as commodities, especially given the rise in demand for kola nuts from the newly zealous Islamic states of the savannah. The next section will examine how this impacted on the labour decisions of both households and elites.

5.6. HOUSEHOLD LABOUR DECISIONS

I have already argued that there were various reasons why elite groups within Asante were willing to actively support the growing commodity trade.¹⁸⁵ However, why were households, who were the main unit of production for both gold and kola (Dummet 1998, 2010, Lovejoy 1980, Abaka 2005), prepared to commit their (free and unfree) labour to the expansion of gold and kola production? This section will argue that, in common with households in the Bight of Biafra, the commodity trade allowed commoners far greater access to the Atlantic and savannah markets. This allowed them the opportunity to purchase goods that enhanced both their wealth and social status.

The Asante state held the right to tax both a portion of every item of gold mined and also take a share of each person's gold in the form of death duties (see Section 5.4). Such appropriations, while probably not onerous (Austin 1996, p20), naturally led to tax evasion and attempts to conceal individuals' true worth (Wilks 1993, p150). However, there were other ways of keeping the states' fingers off your family's wealth. Slaves, unlike gold, were not subject to death duties and therefore once purchased became the perpetual property of the household / lineage (Lovejoy 2011 p167).¹⁸⁶ During the eighteenth century, most slaves were captured in wars or received as tribute, so their distribution was largely in the hands of the court at Kumasi (Maier 1990). Nevertheless, by engaging in the kola trade, commoners could directly purchase slaves from traders at Salaga. Sources from the time note that while kola could be exchanged directly for savannah products such as shea butter or manufactured goods like Kano cloth (Lovejoy 1980, p13), Asante traders were usually only interested in slaves (Lovejoy 1982, p268, Johnson 1986, p346). A further factor was that the Asante followed a matrilineal system which meant that property and titles were inherited, not by a man's own children but by those of his sister or nearest female relative. Furthermore, a man's children always had significant responsibilities towards their maternal relatives that often superseded those of their father's. For men with sufficient wealth, the acquisition of slaves, either as wives or workers, provided dependants loyal to them, who could be fully exploited both for their reproductive and productive potential.

Thus, another way of estimating the value to the economy of the kola trade is to convert the figures on the estimated output of kola into their value in slaves. Bowdich (1819) states that at the time he was in Asante a basket of kola was sufficient to purchase a slave from "the markets of the interior". If this was the case (and of course supposing that they only bought people) then the kola trade would have been worth between 1,200 and 15,000 slaves a year. To put this into perspective, during the last three decades of the slave trade Gold Coast

¹⁸⁵ For example, there were investments in the market town of Salaga, which effectively connected Asante producers with their distant customers in the Sokoto caliphate. The state also maintained roads, and ensured that local producers did not have to suffer competitors by forbidding non-Asante, and especially Muslims, from engaging in either the transportation or production of nuts (Austin 2004).

¹⁸⁶ Bowdich (1819), p254 noted that; "The king is heir to the gold of every subject, from the highest to the lower; the fetish gold and the cloths are generally presented by him to the successor to the stool, *from which the slaves and other property of the deceased are inseparable.*" (my italics)

merchants (whose main supplier of slaves was Asante) bartered a high of 12,200 and a low of 3,300 people in exchange for European goods.

With regard to gold there were a number of other compelling reasons for households to direct their labour towards production. For a start, gold continued to increase in value during the nineteenth century, not least because the culture of conspicuous consumption at all levels of society led to gold dust being melted down and used as ornamentation (Garrard 1980, p112). This, and the practise of hoarding or burying gold to avoid taxes, meant that there was never sufficient gold in circulation to meet the needs of the entire population. Money was therefore very expensive, with loans in the early nineteenth century given 33.33% interest over 42 days (McCaskie 2003, p39, Wilks 1993, p129). However, this was of course also an incentive to acquire as much gold as possible.

Furthermore, gold could also purchase greater social prestige in the form of luxury foreign products, and particularly cloth, that continued to flow into the country from the Atlantic (McCaskie 2003, p50). I have made some very rough estimates of per capita consumption of British products imported into the region from 1827¹⁸⁷ to 1849 (See *Appendix 5.3.a.* which includes sources and method). By far the most important imports are cotton manufactures and cloth, although customers were also demanding significant quantities of glass, earthenware, and both manufactured and unmanufactured metals. These easily exceed the number of guns and gunpowder barrels essential for military campaigning, which suggests that the trade was geared towards luxury consumption and not to provide essential goods for the state.

Wilks (1993, pp155-156) describes how these goods were distributed to the many smaller villages and towns of greater Asante. There were firstly the *adwadifo*, or small private traders, who bought goods in bulk and sold them through salesmen, called *mpaafɔ*, who went from village to village hawking their wares. They could only trade with permission from the state and were required to pay tolls on the main roads through Asante. Then there were the *Akwantufɔ* or official wholesalers, sometimes private, sometimes state, who were permitted to use the great roads free of charge and without interference. The cost of their goods was high, Wilks suggests a 500 to 600% mark-up from the coast. The fall in prices of many trade goods, due to the industrial revolution, was not, according to this analysis, passed on to their customers, with the proceeds instead being accrued as rents by the treasury. Austin (1996) questions this, arguing for a far greater involvement of smaller traders, but in any case, the situation was accepted by most Asantes as demonstrated by the ever-increasing imports of goods throughout the century. Households could buy slaves with kola and then use this additional labour to produce gold. This gold allowed them to increase their social status, either through display or the purchase of prestigious luxury goods. Alternatively, slaves might be used to grow more food, or simply afford more leisure time, thus increasing living standards.

¹⁸⁷ The first year that the British customs records differentiate between regions

5.7. CONCLUSION

Over the *longue durée* the patterns of trade in the Asante and Fante areas of the Gold Coast region were overwhelmingly dominated by commodity exports, in particular gold, produced by a combination of household and unfree labour. It seems that ultimately the event of abolition only hastened an existing trend away from slave exports towards a more intensive use of captive labour for production. There is little evidence to suggest that had the Asante wished to continue selling slaves to American, Spanish or Portuguese traders, the British could have prevented them. Instead, this chapter has argued that the mid-to-late eighteenth century should be seen as an interregnum when slaves briefly supplanted commodities as the most important exports. The region's initial trade contacts with Europe were very different to those of the Bight of Biafra and, more importantly, to the Bight of Benin. The initial expansion of Akan states in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was dependent on the importation of slaves for forest clearance, and then firearms for more effective armies, both of which were paid for by gold. This in turn meant the region's various polities in the seventeenth century were always focused on the control of gold producing areas and the application of labour to mining and extraction. As will be seen later for the Bight of Benin, states instead focused their efforts on the control over the acquisition and marketing of people for export. Within Asante society, the possession and distribution of gold became the most important means by which both elites and common households could demonstrate and improve their social status and how the monarch could tax its subjects and maintain its own position.

Demand for gold in Africa had the additional consequence that the Asante already had well developed trading links with the interior powers of the savannah by the end of the eighteenth century. They were therefore never entirely dependent on the Atlantic markets for their exports, and were fortunate that an Islamic revolution created huge demand for kola around the time of abolition. As the eighteenth century wore on, the evidence suggests that gold became scarcer, possibly due to the export of potential productive labour. It seems that the decline in slave exports in the 1780s, noted by Austin (2013), was because labour was already being diverted to the mines of Asante. The increase in the production of both gold and kola would almost certainly have required far more labour. A rise in commodity output was certainly to the advantage of households and lineage groups, who could profit far more from production than export slavery. For the elites, the absence of military threats meant that wealth creation through trade did not threaten their position or power. Instead, increased output of both gold and kola meant they gained through taxation and other rents.

CHAPTER 6

THE BIGHT OF BIAFRA; THE PURSUIT OF WEALTH BY ALL, AND BY ALL MEANS. FROM EXPORT SLAVERY TO SLAVE PRODUCTION.

“King Peppel (of Bonny) was said to be rich. He had inherited his father’s wealth, reputed great, in Spanish doubloons and dollars, the price of slaves. And by his own palm-oil trade he had accumulated much, which he did not know what to do with.” Recorded in 1846 during a visit to Bonny by Waddell (1863, p273)

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has shown that the Gold Coast region reacted swiftly to the economic shock of Britain’s withdrawal from the slave trade. The Asante effectively halted the export of captives and instead used its slaves in the production of commodities for both African and Atlantic markets. The case of the Biafran region has both similarities and differences. Here, export slavery continued in conjunction with a growing commerce in palm oil for sale mainly in Britain, until the latter effectively eclipsed the former in the 1830s. In common with the Asante, households in Biafra took advantage of the opportunity to engage and benefit from the Atlantic market, but demanded a very different selection of products. Numerous studies have examined the commercial transitions in the region, although most have framed their analysis around the ‘crisis of adaption’ hypothesis set out by Hopkins (1973). The general consensus seems to be that the region’s palm oil and slave trades were relatively compatible and that the elites, who had previously dominated the slave trade, were able to remain in control of the commerce in palm oil, until at least the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁸⁸

Far fewer studies have specifically investigated the pre-abolition roots of palm oil production. Northrup (1976 pp361–64), supported by Dike and Ekejiuba (1990, p255) argues that the region was in “a state of economic preparedness” for the transition from slave to palm oil exporting. This was due to a combination of the networks and markets developed for and by export slavery in the eighteenth century, the region’s ecological suitability and, more specifically, by the fact that inland farmers were already supplying the coast with large

¹⁸⁸ See particularly Northrup (1976), Manning (1986), Korieh (2000), Ejiogu and Njoku (2015) on compatibility of the two trades and the initial retention of power by elites. Ohadike (1998), Martin (1988), Lovejoy (2011, pp177–84), Law (1995, p12,15) on involvement of small producers. Wariboko (1998) on developments in the region’s commercial organisations. Nwokeji (2010, pp178–203) and Dike and Ekejiuba (1990 pp251–60) on the later-nineteenth century, which did see an increase in competition, militarisation and violence.

quantities of foodstuffs for the provisioning of European and American ships. This view has recently found support in the volume by Law et al. (2013, p13), whose Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide quantitative support to the idea that there was a strong and growing pre-abolition export trade in non-slave products in the Bight of Biafra region. The palm oil sector grew rapidly, both before, and after 1808 (Lynn 1997, pp61–63), surpassing nominal value of the slave trade at its 1790s height in the 1850s (Eltis 2013, Nwokeji 2010, p180, Eltis and Jennings 1998, p946). This chapter will argue that commodity exports were becoming more attractive than slaves to the merchants of this region, especially from the 1820s as demand was more stable and the costs of key trading goods were falling. It will also investigate why households, the main unit of production, responded so actively to increased demand for palm oil, as was also the case in Asante. It will also ask why the traders and merchants who had previously profited so handsomely from the slave trade were prepared to transport and market palm oil, while the monarchy and aristocratic elites in Dahomey were unwilling to give up export slavery except under conditions of extreme duress in the 1850s.

I will argue that there are two factors which so far have not been given sufficient attention in the literature of the commercial transition in Biafra. The first is with regards to the region's trade relations with Britain, its principal trading partner for slaves in the eighteenth, and palm oil in the nineteenth century. Lynn (1997, pp83,84) has noted that many of the first British palm oil merchants had previously operated as slave traders and used their existing contacts and networks to enter into the new trade. However, I will argue that the role of the British state, particularly its policy on excise and import duties, may have played a more influential role than previously thought in stimulating investment in the palm oil business.

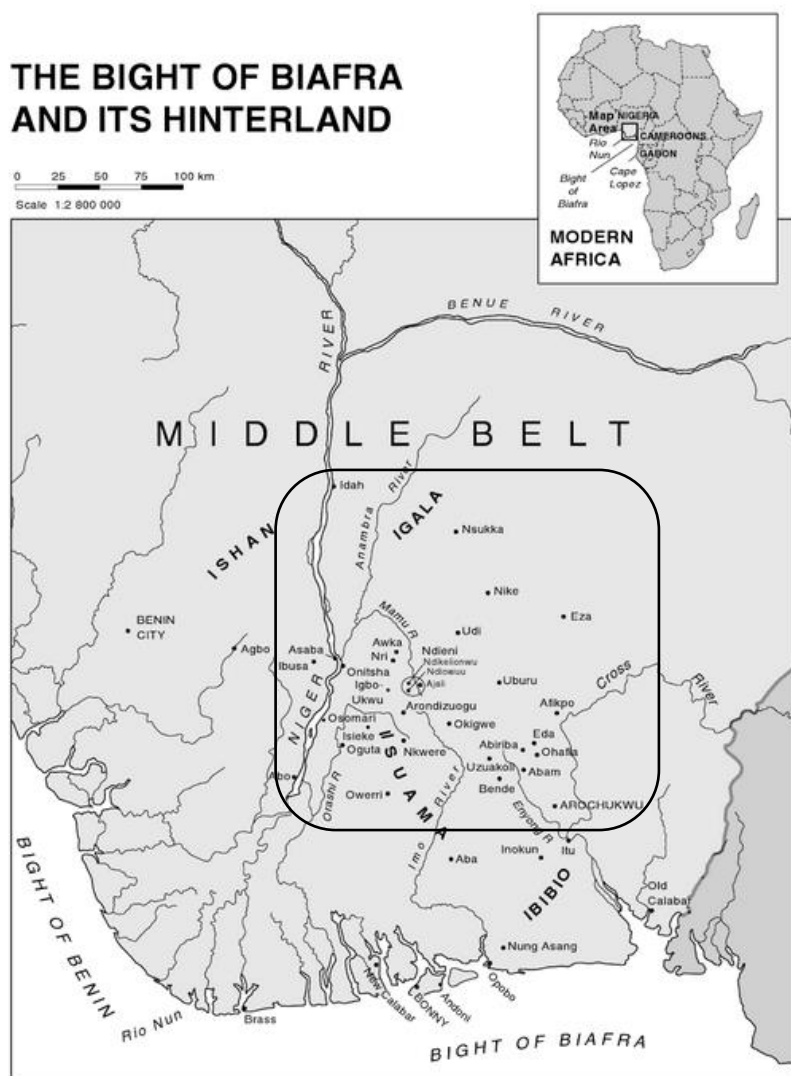
Secondly, long-term political and institutional development in the Bight of Biafra was very different to the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast, which were dominated by large, relatively centralised states. The expansion of export slavery was made possible by the trading network developed by the Aro people, who were to act as the crucial middlemen between the interior and the coast. However, this network was only to realise the full potential of the region's slave exporting capacity from the 1730s. While export slavery had been a feature of the region's economy for several centuries, it did not experience the enormous influx of European manufactures in the seventeenth century that had such an impact on the development of larger political entities on the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin. Instead, a different form of economic and social organisation developed to handle the traffic in people, based on existing trade routes between the coast and the interior. The region was famous for having no 'states', although this did not mean that there was no authority or the ability to organise long distance trade (McIntosh 1999, pp11–13). However, as a result of its later entrance into the big leagues of slave exporters, the Bight of Biafra did not develop large scale, centralised polities with elite hierarchies dependent on external trade for the purchase of luxury goods, or slave raiding, as an organising principal of state power. In the Bight of Biafra, elite status was based largely on wealth creation through trade of all kinds. This chapter will argue that, as in the Asante kingdom, the region's 'big men' benefited at least as much from household involvement in palm oil production as they did from the previous trade in slaves, which was

not the case in Dahomey. They were therefore willing to use their commercial networks and power to facilitate the growth of the palm oil trade.

The layout of the chapter is as follows. Firstly, it provides an overview of the patterns and value of external trade across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It then examines the role of the British state in promoting the palm oil trade, before considering how the region's specific institutional development influenced both internal demand for labour and household production.

Area of Study

Map 6.1. Approximate regions of 'Igboland' + principal ports



Source: Nwokeji (2010), pxi, Kolapo (2004), p124

This chapter focuses on the area which can roughly be defined as east of the Niger River and South of the Benue river and contained three distinct types of terrain (Nwokeji 2010, p183).

Firstly, the low lying coastal regions which had little fertile land and traditionally relied on small scale agriculture, fishing and salt, which could be traded to inland regions that lacked natural sources of both salt and protein. Next, a broad belt of tropical rainforest which could support a much denser population. The indigenous staple crops were yams and the oil palm, which were usefully supplemented by those introduced from other world regions such as cocoyams, bananas and plantains from Asia, as well as tomatoes, cassava, maize and peppers from the Americas.¹⁸⁹ The fertility of the soil of this region was quickly depleted in the rainforest environment so its inhabitants practised either long fallow agriculture, where land-extensive conditions made this possible, or engaged in regular migrations to new areas (Dike and Ekejiuba 1990, pp36–28). These migrations required the clearance of the dense rainforest, helping to scatter palm kernels on fallow or abandoned land. This was to account for the density of wild oil palm trees across the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Northrup 1979, p8, Martin 1988, p22). Further north, the area generally referred to as the middle belt, consisted of more savannah like territory unable to support the population densities of the south due to its more unpredictable rainfall and poorer natural resources.¹⁹⁰

I will refer to the populations living in the central area of the Bight of Biafra as Igbos and the area as Igboland, and the area to the south as Ibibioland (see highlighted area on Map 6.1 above). These terms are not precise and cover a multitude of different, but related, cultures and language groups living under a wide variety of institutional arrangements (see below). They are also controversial terms, as some have argued that they are a European construction stemming from the overgeneralisations of slave traders and colonialists (Byrd 2010, pp20,21). However, others have suggested that the region did possess a degree of cultural unity based on shared history, traditions and language.¹⁹¹ I take the view that, while acknowledging that both identity and borders were fluid concepts in this period, there is sufficient evidence to speak of this area as having a broad ‘Igbo’ or ‘Ibibio’ identity.¹⁹²

6.2. EXTERNAL TRADE

The first account by a European of the Bight of Biafra was written between 1501 and 1508 by the Portuguese explorer Duarte Pacheco Pereira. He noted that a large village, which Fage (1980, p71) suggests was Bonny, was already engaged in significant trade with the interior. Salt produced at the coast was exchanged for yams, cattle and slaves, which were transported from the interior in canoes carrying up to eighty men. The Portuguese were able to participate in this trade through the exchange of ‘copper manillas’ for captives and provisions. It was

¹⁸⁹ Isichei (1976) believes all of these crops might have been introduced by the Portuguese in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (p7).

¹⁹⁰ Nwokeji (2000), quotes one author as saying that the area “...has all the diseases and problems of forest and savannah, but not compensating advantages, except a general absence of population pressure.” (p628).

¹⁹¹ To get an idea of how contentious this debate can be, refer to a series of articles and responses in the journal *Slavery and Abolition*. See Northrup (2000), Chambers (2002), Kolapo (2004).

¹⁹² See Isichei (1976), Dike and Ekejiuba (1990), Ohadike (1994), McIntosh (1999).

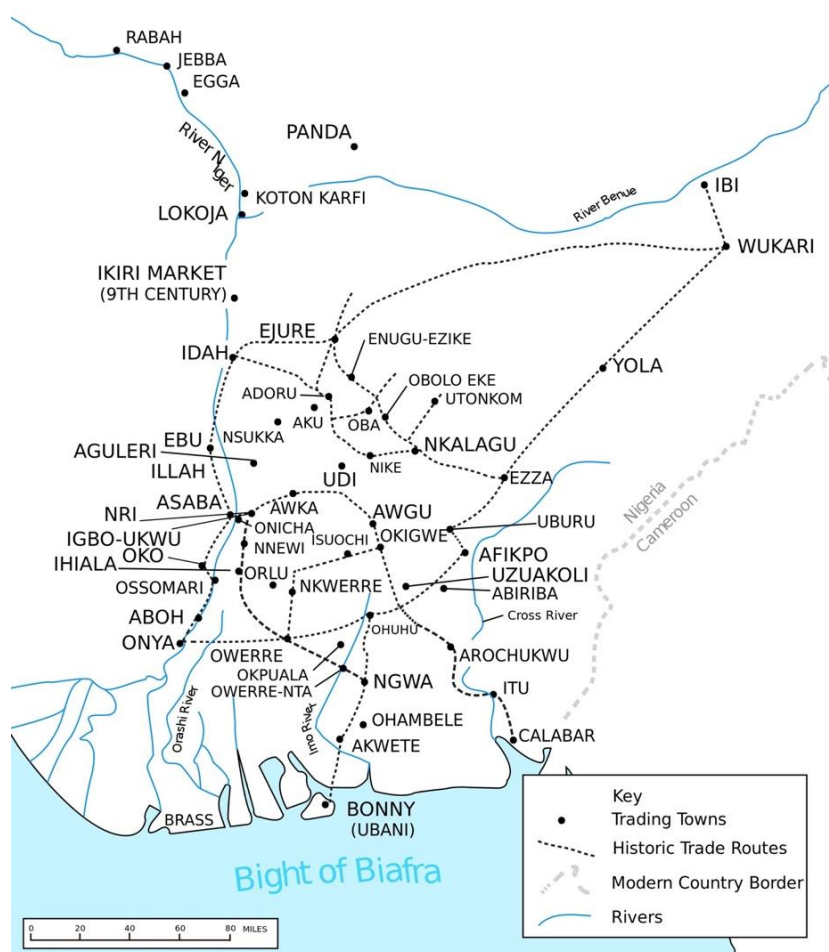
ultimately based on the requirements for salt and fish in the interior, and for agricultural produce on the coast which did not have a suitable ecology for farming. Similar circumstances were observed around 150 years later by the Dutch physician and traveller Olfert Dapper (1676, p136 – 137). He wrote that at Elem Kalabari: “*The blacks bring their slaves for sale on the Calabar river, and take their boats up to our ships, the same traders also deal in food and sell yams, bananas, palm oil, goats and dogs.*”¹⁹³ In addition to slaves and provisions, Dutch merchants could also buy akori (coral beads), ivory and locally made knives. In terms of numbers of slaves exported into the Atlantic, the region averaged around 1,200 per year during the seventeenth century. As noted in Chapter 1, this was very like other regions of West Africa until the 1670s, when slave sales from the Bight of Benin increased rapidly.

In the Bight of Biafra, it wasn't until the Aro trade network expanded into the central and southern regions of Igboland in the 1730s (see below Section 5), that the region became a major exporter of slaves (Lovejoy and Richardson 1999, pp382,383, Nwokeji 2010, p20). Between 1700 and 1720 an average of 1,711 captives were embarked from Biafran ports, compared with an average of 13,388 in the last twenty years of the century. Throughout the period under study, the three ports of Bonny, Old Calabar and Elem Kalabari were responsible for over 90% of slave departures, with Bonny by far the most important at the time of abolition.¹⁹⁴ Lovejoy and Richardson (1999, 2004) argue that Bonny's success lay in more efficient institutions for the regulation of credit with Europeans, and for greater efficiency in terms of provisioning and loading times. While agreeing with this assessment, Nwokeji (2010) and Behrendt et al (2010, p107) argue that it was principally due to Bonny being better positioned on the trade routes from central Igboland, which contained the region's densest concentrations of people and most efficient riverine connections to the coast (Map 6.2). Largely as a result, the Bight of Biafra had become West Africa's most important slave embarkation point by the 1780s.

¹⁹³ This is the author's translation. The original reads: “*De zwarten, die de slaven in reiere Kalbarien in hun kanoos te koop brengen, en daer mede aen boort van onze schepen komen, voeren ook eten voor dezelve mede, dat zy verkopen, als Injames, Bananessen, oil de Palm, Verkens, Bokjes en Hoenderen.*”

¹⁹⁴ Europeans sometimes referred to coastal town of Elem Kalabari as ‘New Calabar’ to distinguish it from ‘Old Calabar’ on the Cross River estuary (Lovejoy & Richardson 1999, p335). This is actually a misnomer as Elem Kalabari is in fact an older settlement (Dike & Ekejiuba 1990, p33), but for the purposes of this thesis I will always refer to it as ‘Old Calabar’

Map 6.2. Trade routes from the interior to the coast in the Bight of Biafra



Source: Chuku 2015, p43

As noted above, all of these ports were in areas unsuited for the cultivation of yams¹⁹⁵, and were always dependent on importing their food from the surrounding regions (Northrup 1979, p6).¹⁹⁶ The existence of established trading networks for food goes a long way to explain why and how the region was able to develop the extensive provisioning trade for slave ships that was outlined in Chapter 3. From the middle of the eighteenth century, Old Calabar began to increase its output of commodities, perhaps in reaction to the growing dominance of Bonny in the slave trade and the impact of the American revolution on merchant shipping in the

¹⁹⁵ Icichei (1976) writes of the central place of the yam in both the diet and culture of the region. She notes that in Biafra, the 'hunger season' did not necessarily indicate that there was no food, but that there were no yams available (p28).

¹⁹⁶ This was known to British traders at the time. For example, one trader, a Mr Penny, related to a Parliamentary Committee on the slave trade in 1788 that : "At Bonny the country produces a few yams etc, but not sufficient for their subsistence. A great quantity of yams are produced at Andomey and Creek, which supply the town of Bonny, and are brought in canoes for the supply of the ships in the trade. At New Calabar the produce is much the same, and the inhabitants are obliged to be supplied with their provisions from the neighbouring countries." (p70)

Atlantic (Behrendt et al. 2010, pp80–97 and *Appendix 6.1*). As shown in Chapter 4, sales of ivory and redwood grew rapidly from the 1760s, which was probably due to the establishment of trade links with Duala merchants who had access to larger herds of elephants, and trees, on the Cameroon grasslands (Behrendt et al. 2010 p92). From the 1770s, palm oil started to be exported from Old Calabar in response to increased European demand, which was initially met by households in the Ibibio region who had also supplied slave traders with yams and other provisions since at least the early eighteenth century.¹⁹⁷

After abolition, palm oil exports increased and, while slave sales did not rise to the levels reached at the end of the eighteenth century, they still recovered due to the return of vessels from Portugal/Brazil, France and Spain/Uruguay. Most importantly, until at least the 1840s, the palm oil and slave trades were largely compatible, as they were transported along Aro trade routes and handled through either the canoe house trading organisations at Bonny (Wariboko 1998, Manning 1986, p224, Lovejoy 2011, p180) or the ‘mercantile oligopoly’ at Old Calabar (Lynn 1997, p61). The region’s geography was a crucial factor in the rapid expansion of the palm oil trade. Not only were palm trees grown in abundance, but oil could be easily transported to the coast along navigable rivers and waterways (Lynn 1997, p37). As already noted, the region had developed an inland to coast trade on the ‘largest canoes in West Africa’ before European contacts (Northrup 1976, p362).¹⁹⁸ During the era of the slave trade the waterways and canoes were a crucial part of the region’s ability to rapidly transport large numbers of captives to the coast (Byrd 2010, p28). In the nineteenth century, this riverine network was crucial to the development of the palm oil trade. Household producers could leave relatively small quantities of oil at bulking depots, which could then be loaded and transported in quantity down to coastal trade towns (Isichei 1976, p95, Northrup 1978, p195, Oriji 1992, p542).

Until the 1820s Old Calabar was the region’s principal exporter of palm oil, but around this time Bonny entered the trade, and by the 1840s it had become by far the most important centre for oil exports.¹⁹⁹ In the interior, the increased production of palm oil, especially in Ibibio and Igbo areas, created an important market for food imports from other regions. Igbo merchant adventurers began creating new settlements in the north eastern middle belt region, where slave villages were established for yam production (Northrup 1979, p10, Manning 1986, p217, Lovejoy 2011, p179). Along the coast, the growth of towns also encouraged more

¹⁹⁷ Northrup (1976, p363) quotes Barbot (1699) as saying that Old Calabar was being supplied with provisions by the kings of Agbisherea, a form of the Efik word for Ibibio. In the 1820s, Bold (1823, p78) says that the people of ‘Egbosherry’ were still among the major suppliers of palm oil.

¹⁹⁸ In the 1670s, the Dutch traveller and physician Dapper (1676, p136) saw “.....zeer grote kanoos daer in twintigh roeiers of scheppers op ieder zijde roeien, en wel zestigh ja tachtich mannen in kunnen gevoert worden...” In the nineteenth century Wariboko (1998, p146) notes that these canoes could carry up to 80 people in addition to large quantities of palm oil.

¹⁹⁹ Lynn (1997, pp20, 21) has made the most extensive study of output from Biafran ports. The earliest reliable statistics he quotes are from the early 1850s. These give Bonny as providing 36.6% and Old Calabar providing 13.9% of all British palm oil imports. Another report from 1855 suggests that, within the Bight of Biafra, Bonny exported around 65% of oil and Old Calabar 16%.

intensive use of slaves in agriculture (Manning 1986, p12) and also for the transportation of palm oil and slaves. By the late 1830s the slave trade began a decline from which it did not recover, so that by the time of the parliamentary report on trade with Africa in 1842 the witnesses were able to state that the era of the slave trade was over.²⁰⁰

The next question is whether this switch entailed significant opportunity costs for those involved with slave exports. In the following section, this will be examined from a purely monetary/financial perspective. In Sections 6 and 7, the wider impacts on labour and production in the region will also be analysed.

6.3. THE VALUE OF THE COMMODITY TRADE AND ‘COMEY’

In her study of the slave trade at Bonny, Hargreaves (1987, pp196–198) suggests that the decline of slave exports was financially harmful, at least to the elites, as palm oil did not bring in as much revenue as captives. By contrast, Northrup (1978, p182) writes that “...the ports of the Bight of Biafra hardly seemed to miss an economic heartbeat...” and made a relatively painless transition into the era of ‘legitimate commerce’. This section compares the nominal value of the slave trade at its height with that of palm oil during the first half of the nineteenth century to test the extent to which the wider region’s economy suffered or thrived. My estimates are based on the average prices of slaves from 1795 to the 1850s on the coast, using data on the number of captives from the TSTD and prices from Lovejoy and Richardson (1995). Admittedly, the set of data on prices and estimated output of palm oil from Bonny and Old Calabar is limited (for sources see Figures 6.2a, 6.2b). The figures for palm oil are conservative as they only include output to Britain, and there is some evidence that other nations, especially the Americans, were also beginning to enter the market.²⁰¹

When comparing the nominal prices of slaves and commodities, it was only in the 1850s that palm oil overtook the late eighteenth century value of slave exports (Figure 6.1.a, 6.1.b), which confirms earlier estimations made by Eltis & Jennings (1988, pp939,946). There are, however, two important aspects to be taken into consideration. Firstly, palm oil was not traded for specie but for an assortment of trade goods.²⁰² As noted in Chapter 4, the price of British trade goods to Africa had been falling since the 1780s. Recent research by Frankema et al. (2015, p37) has shown that terms of trade with Great Britain for those selling palm oil in Africa improved by just under a factor of 4 between 1800 and 1850, and this may be an

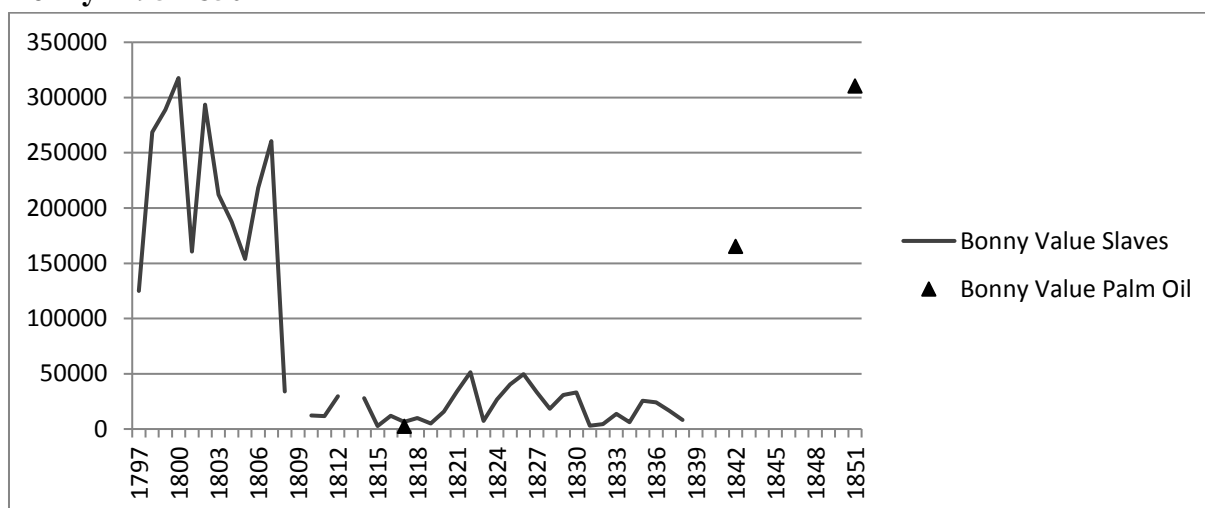
²⁰⁰ 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.--Report and evidence. R. Levinge “*Formally at Bonny I have seen 20 vessels in the river all engaged in the slave trade; now there is not such a thing there.*” 4000, p227/228. Midley “*A great number of the principle slave dealers in the Bonny river.....have given all their energies to palm oil..*” 4121 p233

²⁰¹ In the 1842 report, one merchant interview stated; “*I believe a great deal of it goes to America, but nearly so much as to England*” 2220 Dring, p113. It is possible that French ships may have come as they were starting their involvement in the palm oil trade at Whydah during the 1840s (see Chapter 7).

²⁰² See for example Bold (1823, p81) for the articles of trade commonly used to purchase palm oil

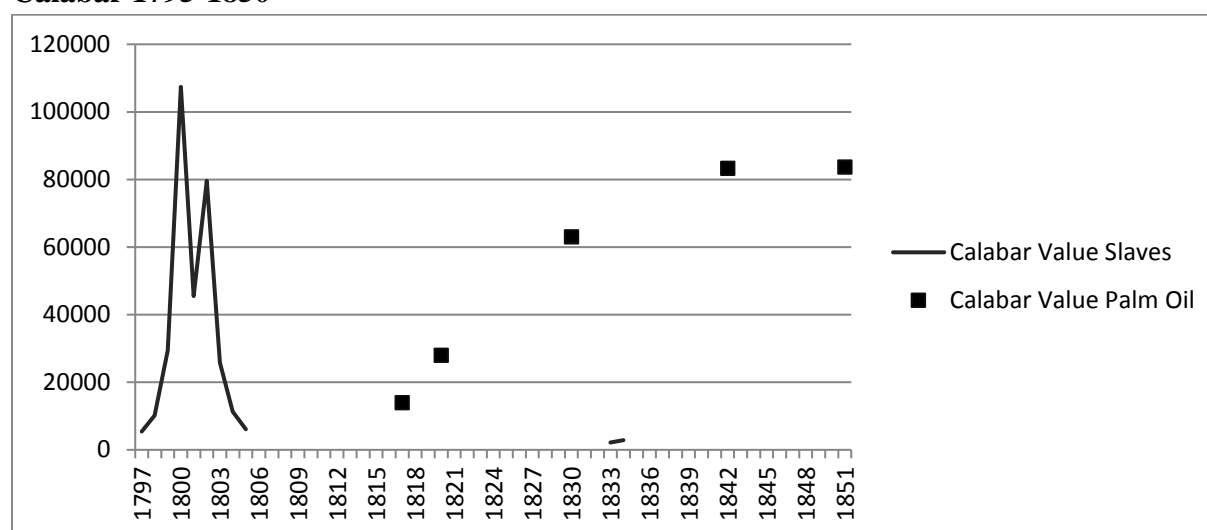
underestimation as it does not take into consideration significant falls in the value of key trade goods such as salt (see Sections 6.4, 6.7). As a result, African traders were receiving significantly more goods for the same nominal value of products traded and therefore, as noted by some at the time, profited more.²⁰³ Secondly, demand for palm oil during the first half of the nineteenth century was subject to considerably less volatility than the trade in slaves. For example, around 15,000 slaves were embarked on ships from the Bight of Biafra in 1774, which fell to 294 in 1779. In 1794, more than 25,000 captives left the area, while just over 2,000 did just one year later. In the nineteenth century, volatility was less, but still significant with differences of up to 5,000 from year to year even before the equipment act of 1839 made British abolition efforts more effective (*Appendix 6.2*). By contrast, demand for palm oil rose steadily, and with few significant fluctuations throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

Figure 6.1.a. Estimated nominal value (GB £) of the slave and commodities trade at Bonny 1795-1850



²⁰³ 1842 Report on the slave trade: Clegg (Supercargo for Tobin and Horsfall) Evidence p92 1649 “*You have stated that the supply of goods from this country to the coast of Africa has greatly increased in your experience; has the tendency of that increased supply in your opinion been to lessen or increase the slave trade? To lessen the slave trade; they scarcely take the trouble of buying slaves in Bonny now, they get so well remunerated by palm oil.*”

Figure 6.1.b. Estimated nominal value (GB £) of the slave and commodities trade at Old Calabar 1795-1850



Sources: Slave Prices at the coast from Lovejoy and Richardson (1995). Slave numbers from TSTD, variables 'Principle Port of Embarkation/Slaves embarked*. Palm oil prices: Old Calabar 1820 Bold (1822), p81, Bonny 1821 Adams (1823), p245, Old Calabar 1821 Adams (1823) p247, 1830 Old Calabar /Bonny Lynn (1992), p80, Bonny 1842 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.--Report and evidence. Clegg Evidence 1652 p92, Old Calabar / Bonny 1855 Latham (1973), p71. Palm Oil quantities: Lynn (1997), pp13-21.

The elites and workers of coastal ports also benefited from various taxes and payments for services which Europeans were obliged to pay in order to trade (these were often referred to as 'customs' or 'comey'). These were in operation throughout the slave and palm oil trades, but there are so far no estimates about the relative value of these payments in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the people of the ports. The only reference to the income gained by coastal elites comes from a letter written by the commander of the anti-slave trade patrol who suggested that King Pepple of Bonny earned £4,000 a year "...arising from the tonnage duty levied upon British merchant vessels trading in the river."²⁰⁴ Other traders and local citizens could also demand 'comey', so to estimate a figure for the port of Bonny as a whole, I have tried to discover how much each ship visiting would have had to pay. There are currently few accurate figures regarding exactly how many palm oil ships were trading and where exactly they went. The 1842 parliamentary report on West African trade states that in 1840, 36 British vessels visited Bonny for palm oil, which I have assumed to have stayed constant in the following two years.²⁰⁵ Adams (1823, p245) states that in the 1820s every ship had to pay £150 'comey' for the right to trade. Lynn (1992, p83) suggests that in the 1830s this may have been as high as £200 or as low as £50. I stay with a figure of £150 for my estimate, as reports at the time suggested the trade was becoming more, not less,

²⁰⁴ Capt Tucker to the Secretary of the Admiralty May 25 1841, 1847-48 [970] Papers relating to engagements entered into by King Pepple and the Chiefs of the Bonny with Her Majesty's naval officers, on the subject of the suppression of the slave trade, p15

²⁰⁵ 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part II.—Appendix, Index and Map, p33.

expensive.²⁰⁶ Lynn (1997, p73) notes that in addition traders had to pay ‘custom’ on each puncheon of palm oil at a rate of 1 bar (equivalent to a British shilling in the 1840s²⁰⁷), as well as a ‘work bar’ for every 20 puncheons loaded. Furthermore, ‘dashes’ or tips were expected around every transaction amounting to around 5sh / puncheon (Lynn 1997, p 73). Lynn (1997, p19) estimates that Bonny was providing between 35% and 50% of Britain’s palm oil in 1840. Using the CUST records, and working with the ‘Bonny Puncheon’ of 240 gallons / $\frac{3}{4}$ ton (Law 1995b, p13), I can estimate roughly how many puncheons were exported from 1840 to 1842, which can be seen in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Nominal value of palm oil customs at Bonny (GB £) 1840–1842

Year	Tons of Palm Oil exported	Puncheons of Palm Oil exported	Custom Bar £	Work Bar £	Dashes £	Comey £	Total Customs Palm Oil £
1840	6,703	8,379	3,491	175	3,491	5,400	12,557
1841	8,438	10,547	4,395	220	4,395	5,400	14,409
1842	8,929	11,161	4,650	233	4,650	5,400	14,933

Sources: see text

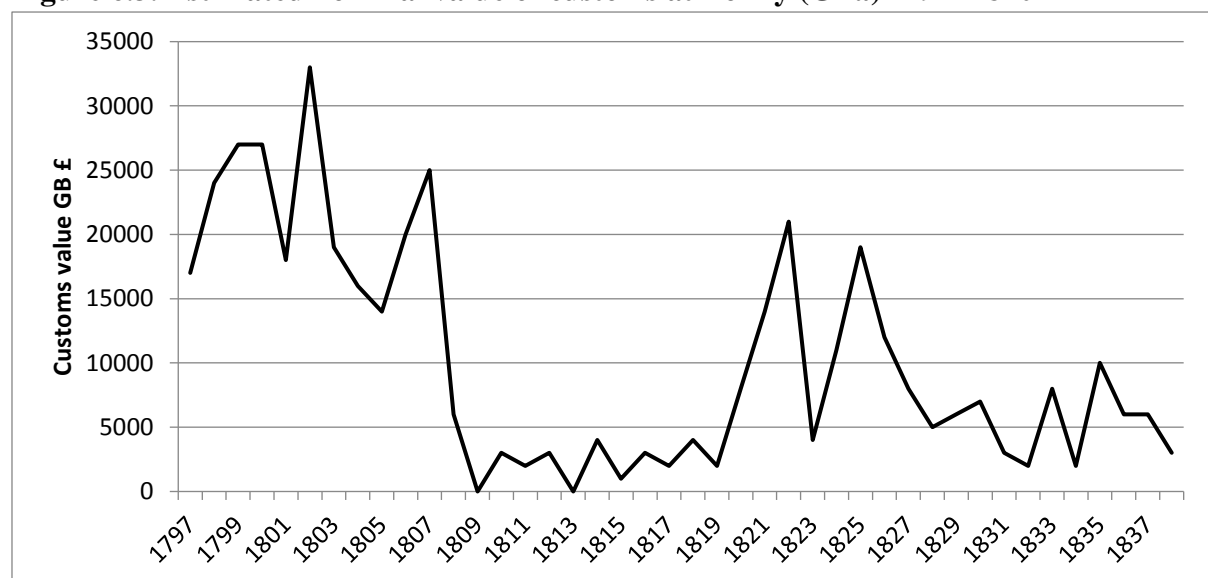
During the apogee of the slave trade the value of customs / comey was likely to have been higher, but probably not significantly so. Behrendt et al. (2010, p67) give a high figure of £1,800 paid by the Bristol merchant James Rogers in the late 1780s at Old Calabar. This however is unlikely to be representative for Bonny, as it was known to charge lower customs (Lovejoy and Richardson 2004, p371), and Rogers himself was known as a rather inefficient trader (Morgan 2003). There are also figures available for two Old Calabar bound ships, the Dobson and Fox in 1769 / 1770, who paid around £900 / ship (Behrendt et al. 2010, p67). I take an estimate of £1000 / ship for comey, dashes etc and, for lack of other data, assume that this remained the same over the period. This meant that the average for the period from 1797 to 1840 was £10,119. If it is to be assumed the amounts paid remained the same after abolition, the average income earned from custom from 1808 to 1830 was £6,304. However, as demonstrated by Figure 6.3, this masked a good deal of variation, with some years generating a lot of income and others very little. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, the customs from slave ships was an additional income to that of palm oil to brokers who traded in both captives and commodities. In this respect, we must assume that the ending of export slavery did financially impact coastal merchants, although this was unlikely to have been

²⁰⁶ 1842 Parliamentary Report on the Slave Trade pt1. Capt T Midgley interviewed: “4110 *There has been a great increase of palm oil and it has got much dearer than it was some years ago, owing to the opposition in the trade a great number of merchants being embarked in it. 4112 The natives have become more aware of its value? – They have*”

²⁰⁷ 1842 Parliamentary Report on the Slave Trade pt1. Clegg evidence p 89 1581

severe, due to the rising demand for palm oil and because income from the non-slave trade had the considerable advantage of being far less volatile.

Figure 6.3. Estimated nominal value of customs at Bonny (GB£) 1797–1840



Sources: TSTD (variable Principle Place of Embarkation/Voyage ID), references above

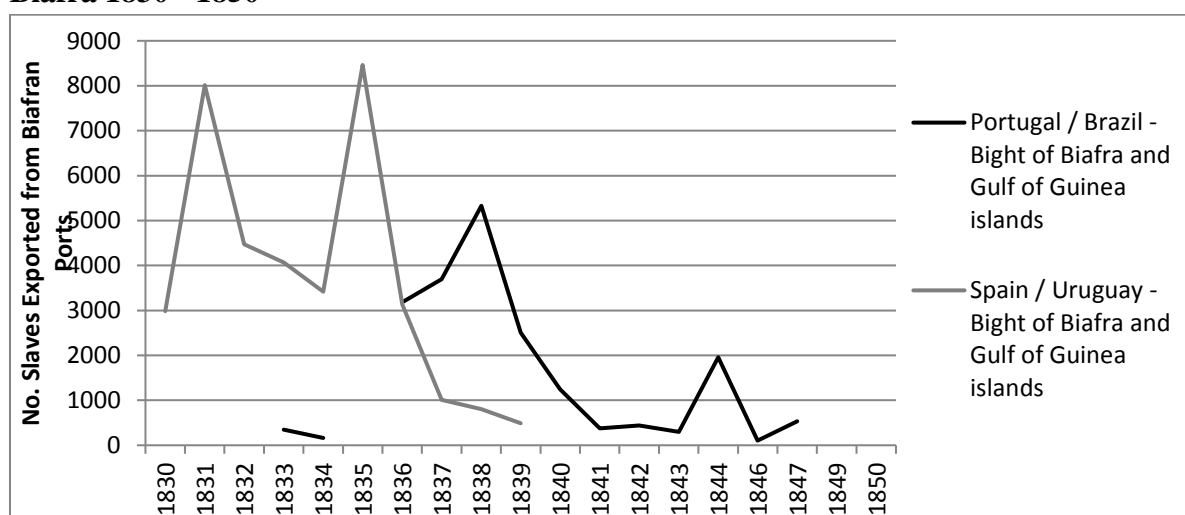
The benefits of palm oil trading were not equally spread across the region. For example, the town of Elem Kalibari, which had previously been a major exporter of slaves, was not able to begin exporting oil in significant quantities until the 1850s due to competition and military aggression from Bonny (Wariboko 2014, pp106,107). However, for Bonny and Old Calabar and for the region as a whole, the costs associated with the region's involvement in palm oil trade over the first half of the nineteenth century were certainly not high from a financial perspective. One reason for this was, as noted above, that demand from Great Britain grew rapidly, and steadily, especially from the 1820s. The next section examines the role of exogenous factors, in particular the role of British foreign and economic policies, on the development of the palm oil trade and the decline of slave exports.

6.4. BRITAIN AND PALM OIL TRADING

In terms of the output of slaves from the region, British abolition efforts had a modest impact for the first 25 years. Post abolition numbers were lower due to the slave trade shifting to the southern Atlantic (Eltis 2009), but recovered in the 1820s as prices in West Africa became more competitive (*Appendix 6.3*). However, the specific *timing* of Biafra's exit from the Atlantic slave trade was at least partly influenced by British anti-slavery policy. The imposition of the 'equipment clauses', a policy which allowed British naval vessels to board and detain ships on the grounds that they contained the necessary equipment for carrying slaves, seems to have had some impact. After Spain reluctantly agreed to submit to this policy for their vessels in 1835, slave numbers fell precipitously (Figure 6.4). The equipment clause was then imposed unilaterally on Portuguese / Brazilian ships in 1839, but slave exports had

already been falling since the previous year. This may have been due to the fact that in 1837, the ruling elite at Bonny had signed a treaty with the British agreeing to the cessation of slave exports.²⁰⁸ This is unlikely to have been because they were unable to export slaves, as numbers of captives on Brazilian ships were rising at the time, and British merchants with some knowledge of Bonny admitted that ultimately there was little that could be done to prevent determined slave ships from taking captives.²⁰⁹ Officers from the slave trade patrol squadron made numerous complaints that the King of Bonny was regularly violating his agreement with the British and exporting slaves through other ports from 1838 to 1842.²¹⁰ However, what is striking is that even though the Bonny elites had the ability to continue their involvement in export slavery, the numbers sold were far less than the previous decade. Thus, while the slave trade patrols almost certainly played some role in reducing slave exports, there must have been other factors at play.

Figure 6.4. Portuguese/Brazilian + Spanish/Uruguayan slave exports from the Bight of Biafra 1830 - 1850



Source: TSTD

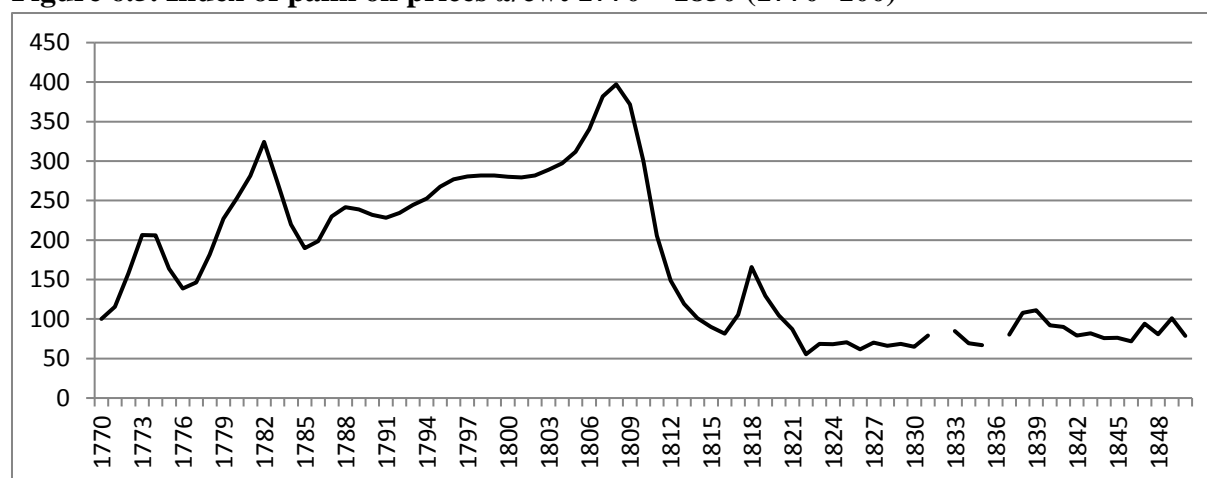
²⁰⁸ PP 1847-48 [1970] Papers relating to engagements entered into by King Pepple and the Chiefs of the Bonny with Her Majesty's naval officers, on the subject of the suppression of the slave trade: April 9th 1837, p1

²⁰⁹ In 1842, John Clegg and Richard Baily, both British merchants who traded at Bonny, told a parliamentary committee that if the chiefs at Bonny wished to resume slave trading then British cruisers would be unable to stop them 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.--Report and evidence.

²¹⁰ One set of parliamentary papers provides the correspondence between naval officers and the British government during the period when the King of Bonny was negotiating a treaty to end his involvement in the slave trade (PP 1847-48 [1970] Papers relating to engagements entered into by King Pepple and the Chiefs of the Bonny with Her Majesty's naval officers on the subject of the suppression of the slave trade). After the agreement was signed there were numerous complaints that he and other traders were still engaged in the export slave trade. For example; Lieutenant Burslem to Commander Tucker September 1840 "...a constant supply of slave are sent by canoes through the creeks to the Rivers Brass and Nun for shipment...". Commander Tucker to the Secretary of the Admiralty February 1841 "...the King has the power to suppress the Slave Trade, but will not it being too lucrative..." Capt. Foote to the Secretary of the Admiralty August 1842 "...the more I see of these Kings and chiefs, the more I am convinced of the utter uselessness of entering into Treaties with them, for they will take all they can grasp from England and only carry on the slave trade to a greater extent with it."

With regard to the development of the non-slave trade in the Bight of Biafra, demand side factors had some role in encouraging supply. During both the American War of Independence and French Revolutionary Wars, the Biafrans saw the most extreme fluctuations in the number of ships visiting their ports, as English merchant shipping was particularly affected by these conflicts (*Appendix 6.1*). Behrendt et al. (2010) argue this was a factor influencing merchants at Old Calabar to diversify their output. However, Bonny, the most important port, did not undergo the commercial transition to palm oil until the early 1820s, so these conflicts were not a decisive factor. More important was the fact that the British were the most significant customers for Biafran slave traders in the eighteenth century. As argued in Chapter 4, slave merchants trading in Biafra were already beginning to buy significant quantities of palm oil and other commodities in addition to slaves after the 1770s. In the post abolition-period many former Liverpool slave traders such as the Aspinall family, John Tobin, Jonas Bold and James Penny became successful oil traders by using their existing networks and contacts at Bonny and Old Calabar (Lynn 1997, p83). More importantly, many of these merchants had previously taken most of their slaves at Bonny and therefore focused their post abolition efforts on this port, thereby helping stimulate supply.²¹¹ However, regardless of whatever advantages they may have enjoyed in this market, unless the economic climate was favourable to their interests there was nothing preventing them from investing in other markets outside of Africa.

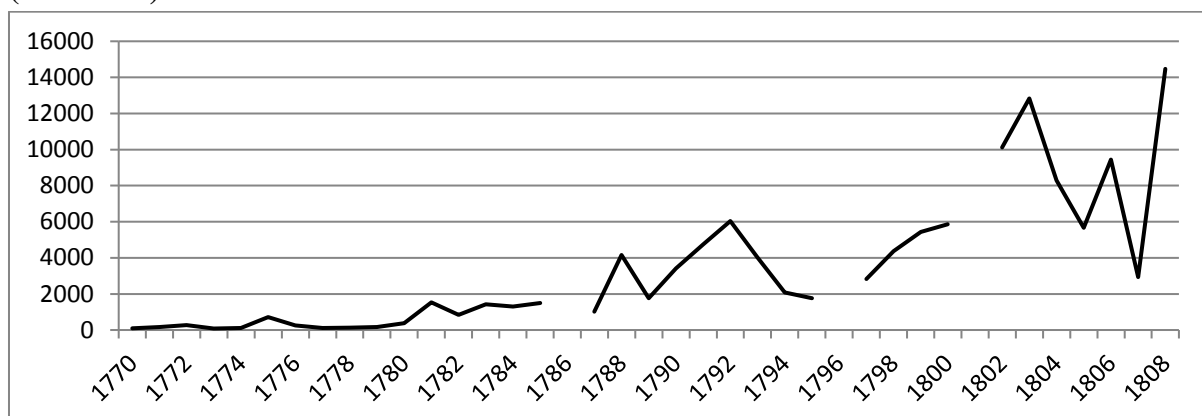
Figure 6.5. Index of palm oil prices £/cwt 1770 – 1850 (1770=100)



Sources: To 1816 see Chapter 4, 1816 – 1850 *Prices Current Liverpool Mercury*

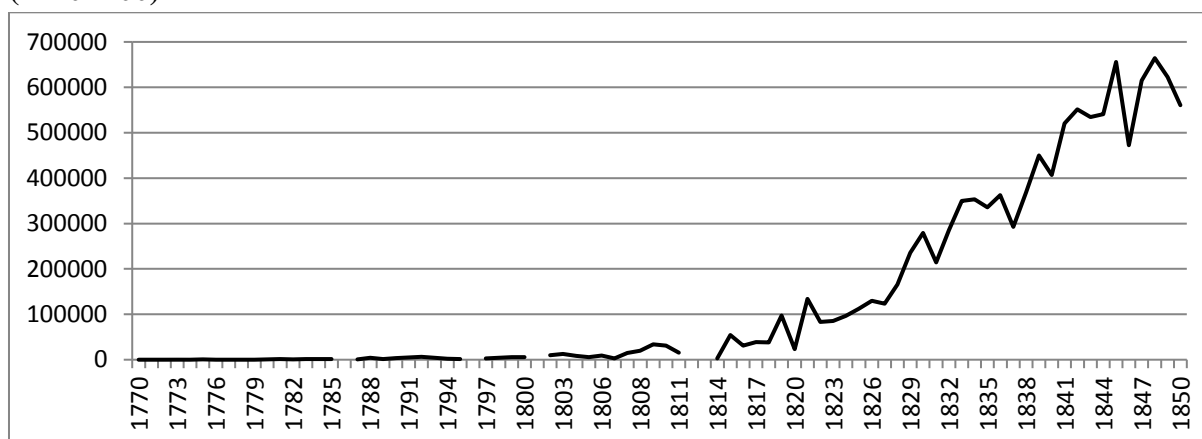
²¹¹ The TSTD indicates that of the important early pioneers of the palm oil trade, George Case, the Aspinall family and John Tobin all focused their pre-abolition slave trading operations on Bonny.

Figure 6.6. Index of the volume palm oil imported into Great Britain 1770–1808 (1770=100)



Sources: TNA CUST 17/1-17/30

Figure 6.7. Index of the volume of palm oil imported into Great Britain 1770–1850 (1770=100)



Source: TNA CUST 17/1-17/30, 4/5-4/45

As can be seen from Figures 6.5 to 6.7, from 1770 to around 1808 increased output was matched by rapidly rising prices. There was then a sharp fall in price, which was briefly interrupted after the end of the Napoleonic wars. However, from the early 1820s prices went through a relatively stable three-decade period characterised by a slow upwards trend. Clearly, rising demand played a role and the stability of prices was also an important consideration, but increased mark-ups, which had been a feature of the palm oil trade from 1770 (see Chapter 4), were no longer a potential motivating factor. Yet there is another possible element in the equation that has so far gone unremarked in the literature. The British government's policies with regards to import and export duties, either deliberately or inadvertently, did much to support the growing British palm oil trade in the first half of the nineteenth century.

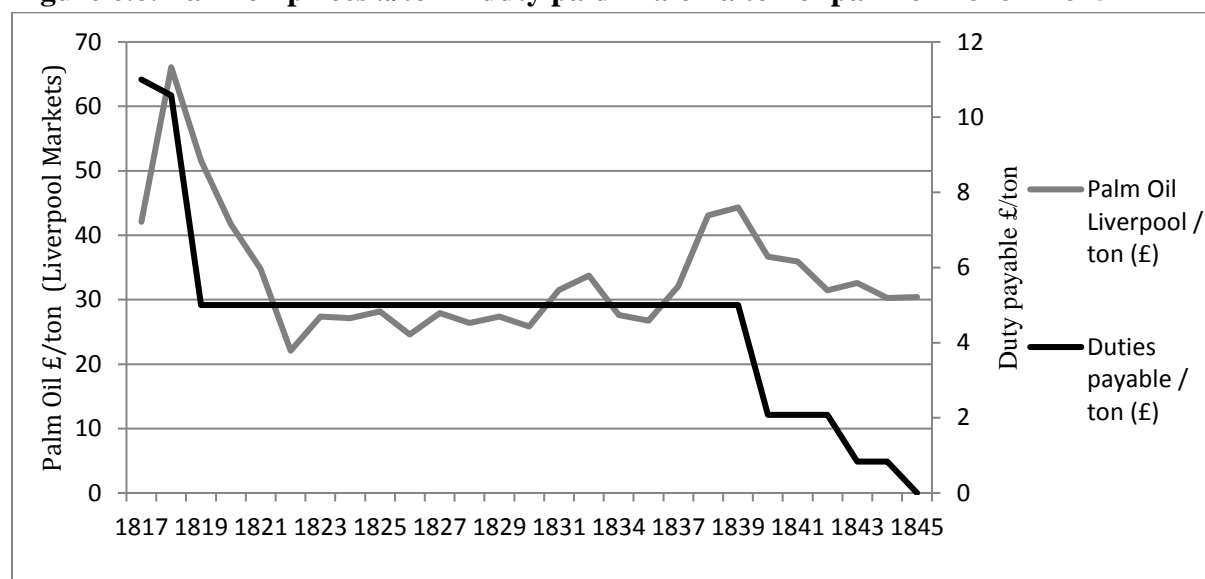
In 1818, a parliamentary committee put forward new duties on African products, which required adjustment after the end of the Napoleonic conflict (Table 6.2). The price and quantity of all major African commodities fell quite substantially in British markets in the period 1814 - 1816 and this led to a fall in the amount of some imported commodities

(Appendix 6.4 and Appendix 6.5). While I have found no direct evidence, it appears that the committee decided to increase or maintain the duty payable on items being imported in smaller quantities, while decreasing that paid on commodities which were bought in greater volumes. This makes sense as duties were charged by weight, so to maintain its income the government needed to charge more for imports that were becoming relatively more scarce. However, for products such as palm oil, which was being imported in greater quantities, they could afford to decrease the duty by an impressive 61% (Table 6.2). Thus, for the Liverpool merchants who had dominated the trade with Biafra since at least the 1760s (Morgan 2007, Lynn 1997, p83), there was a positive circle of increased demand leading to lower duties, which helped to offset the falling prices in British markets after 1818 (Figure 9).

Table 6.2. Parliamentary Papers: Committee for trade: Statement of Proposed Duties on African Imports, 1 December 1818

Articles of African Produce	Duty weight	Present Duty			Proposed duty			% increase / decrease
		£	Sh	d	£	sh	d	
Elephants teeth	cwt	3	19	2	4			+1
Gold Dust		Duty free			Duty free			n/a
Guinea Pepper	lb		1	7		2	6	+58
Gum Senegal	cwt		11	10		12		+1
Hides	Piece			4			6	+50
Beeswax	cwt	3	6	6	3	6	6	0
Camwood	ton	1	18			15		-61
Ebony	load	1		7		15		-27
<i>Palm Oil</i>	<i>cwt</i>		6	4		2	6	-61
Redwood	ton	1	18			15		-61

Source: From Newbury (1965), p84

Figure 6.8. Palm oil prices £/ton + duty paid in £ on a ton of palm oil 1818 – 1845

Sources: Prices: Liverpool Mercury: Prices Current 1817 – 1845, Duties: 1818/1819 Newbury (1965), p84; 1834, 1840 1840 (601) Report from the Select Committee on Import Duties, Forster p129 512 – 519; 1843 Newbury (1965), p84; 1845 Lynn (1997), p97

Duties continued to be reduced after 1839 and this again coincided precisely with a period of falling prices on British markets. There is some evidence that the reduction in duties was directly linked to the wider policy of eradicating the slave trade through the promotion of ‘legitimate commerce’. In an 1840 report on trade duties, the commissioners make the explicit link between the growth of ‘legitimate commerce’, the decline of slavery and the rates of duty imposed on African products. One merchant interviewed was no doubt acting in self-interest when he reported that the reduction in the duty on palm oil was responsible for a rise in quantity purchased by merchants, but it also seems logical that a decrease in transaction costs would be beneficial to traders.²¹² This issue was also raised in the 1842 parliamentary report on the slave trade. The report’s author was clear that promoting ‘legitimate commerce’ was a key strategy designed to stop the Atlantic slave trade,²¹³ and another merchant also urged the

²¹² 1840 (601) Report from the Select Committee on Import Duties; together with the minutes of evidence, an appendix, and index, p 129. Mr Ewart to Mr Forster: “1509 In a moral point of view is not it of great consequence as respects the question of slavery? Undoubtedly, because if ever slavery is to be done away with, you can only do away with it by introducing commerce and cultivation. 1510 The high duty puts a stop to the introduction of commerce in that article? – Clearly so. 1511 Have not the productions of that part of the coast of Africa very much increased when they have been allowed to come in on equitable terms; for instance, palm oil? – Considerably, there are persons still living I believe, who can recollect when the quantity of palm oil introduced into this country annually did not exceed a few tons. Now, I believe, it is from 15,000 to 20,000 tons a year.”

²¹³ 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.--Report and evidence. Mr Aldam to Madden, 9817, p638 “Do you think that the legitimate trade of the Bonny was one great cause of the slave trade being put down there? It had a very great influence there...”

commissioners to lower the duty on goods on the grounds that this was essential in the fight against slavery.²¹⁴

Even more important was the cut in the duty paid on salt, *the* essential trade good for Biafran palm oil (see Section 7) following parliamentary recommendations in 1818.²¹⁵ Largely due to the reduction of duties, the price of salt dropped by over 7 times between 1820 and 1825 (Table 6.3) which further offset the falling price of palm oil in the home market. Whether this support was intentional or not is unclear, but the reduction of duties on salt and palm oil greatly reduced business costs for British merchants.

Table 6.3. Salt exports from Britain to Africa 1780 - 1825

Year	Salt Exports Africa (bushels)	Salt Price / cwt (pence)
1800	66,537	388.506
1805	82,559	466.308
1812	60,452	553.245
1815	64,408	550.449
1820	130,720	540.384
1825	290,932	75.871

Sources: TNA CUST 17/22, 17/27, 9/1, 9/3, 9/8, 9/12, Clark (2006)

External factors were therefore significant. Firstly, there were merchants with relevant human and economic capital who were motivated to expand their palm oil businesses, and who could cater to an expanding British market for African commodities, especially palm oil. These merchants were in turn supported by fairly significant cuts in import and export duties. With the old duties on palm oil and salt, a merchant in 1816 was paying around 7.3% of the selling price of a ton of palm oil in Liverpool to the British treasury for importing oil and exporting salt. By 1825, this figure had reduced to 1.6% of the price of a ton in domestic markets.²¹⁶ Secondly, abolition efforts in the 1830s put some pressure on Biafra's main slave trading centres. However, unlike in Dahomey (Chapter 7), there is little evidence that local merchants sought to develop alternative methods to evade or circumvent the slave trade patrols, even though this would have been more than feasible. For a full explanation, it is therefore necessary to turn to the endogenous factors that were influencing the region's export trade patterns.

²¹⁴ 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.--Report and evidence. Campbell 8879, p561 "*....I think every restriction should if possible be taken away from the legitimate trader, in the way of tax or duty, making him give good security that he would in no way barter with, or introduce any of the usual article for the slave trade, more particularly spirits, gunpowder, arms.*"

²¹⁵ (393) Report from the Select Committee on the Laws Relating to the Salt Duties

²¹⁶ Calculation based on the quantities of salt needed for a ton of palm oil from Bold (1823, p82) and the duties in Table 2. Palm oil prices from Price Current, Liverpool Mercury 1816 and 1825 (see Chapter 4).

6.5. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BIAFRA

Since at least the ninth century, the region was settled by groups with complex political arrangements, practising long distance trade and supported by advanced iron working technology (Isichei 1976, pp7–14). As noted above, the trade in slaves did not become substantial until the mid-eighteenth century. This was for a number of reasons; firstly, local trade networks could not deliver sufficient numbers of slaves. Secondly, European traders and plantation owners in the Caribbean felt that slaves from the Bight of Biafra were more unhealthy and weaker than those from other regions (Nwokeji 2010, pp34–36).²¹⁷ Thirdly, the expanding demands for export slaves from Northern European nations with recently acquired American possessions were being met by other areas, in particular the Bight of Benin and West Central Africa. Moreover, there were no gold deposits to attract commodity traders. Therefore, unlike the two other case study areas, the region did not experience the same degree of trade contact with European nations until relatively later. These contacts were one of the most significant spurs to the development of more centralised states in the Gold Coast and Bight of Benin (see Chapters 5 and 7). By contrast, the Bight of Biafra developed more decentralised political institutions, which shaped its trade relations with the Atlantic world. There were three broad types which are relevant to this thesis. Along the coast, and in particular at Bonny and Old Calabar, towns developed that had a particular focus on trade. In the interior, there were a plethora of village level groups which projected their power over a limited territory. Finally, there was the Aro confederacy, whose pan regional trading network was a necessary component in the transformation of the Bight of Biafra into the most important slave exporting region in West Africa by the 1750s.

The Aro rose to prominence for two reasons. Firstly, their capital at Arochukwu lay close to major regional markets, such as Bende, and was also only 6 hours by canoe to Old Calabar, and 2 days to Bonny and Elem Kalabari (Dike and Ekejiuba 1990, p 44). Even more importantly, Arochukwu was home to one of the region's most important religious centres, the Inbiniukpabi oracle. This functioned as '*highest court of appeal, including for the coastal city-states and communities on the west side of the Niger River*' (Nwokeji 2010, p6), and gave the Aro a unique authority that transcended political and social boundaries (Northrup 1978, Dike and Ekejiuba 1990). Those taken to the oracle and judged guilty were metaphorically 'eaten' and taken by the Aro for sale as slaves. This authority was crucial, as a high proportion of the region's export slaves found themselves in the holds of American bound vessels resulting from judicial proceedings, as opposed to capture through violence (Nwokeji 2010, pp130,179, Martin 1988, p27). Individuals did engage in the kidnapping of others in order to sell them to other traders, but this was a risky strategy as the penalties if they were caught were severe (Nwokeji 2010 p131, Ejiogu and Njoku 2015, p11–15).²¹⁸ Furthermore,

²¹⁷ Recent scholarship has shown that this bias was based on solid evidence as the mortality of captives embarked from the Bight of Biafra was higher than for other West African regions (Eltis 1989, Klein & Engerman 1997, Klein et al. 2001)

²¹⁸ The former slave Olaudah Equiano, whose autobiography was a key testimony for abolitionists (1794), was captured in this way, see pp31,32. However, he also notes his village sold "...such among us has had been convicted of kidnapping, or adultery and some other crimes we esteemed heinous." pp12,13

the Aro did employ various Cross River and Aboh Igbo groups as mercenaries who they used both to gain additional captives and enforce their authority (Nwokeji 2010 p6,131).²¹⁹ They also occasionally encouraged local communities to attack other villages.²²⁰ However, unlike in the other two case study regions, slave raiding did not contribute significant numbers of slaves, although small scale kidnapping was quite common (Behrendt et al. 2010, p103).

The reason deserves some explanation. In both the Gold Coast and Dahomey the introduction of firearms on a large scale led to significant military revolutions in the seventeenth century, which involved mass deployments of musket wielding soldiers capable of large-scale military campaigns. By the time the Biafran region became an important slave exporting area, a very different set of institutions had developed, which allowed for the efficient ‘production’ of slaves to meet growing American demand without the raids common in the Gold Coast and Dahomey (Nwokeji 2010, p127). Thus, while the Aro did use guns, their mercenaries typically did not, relying instead on more traditional weapons and the element of surprise. Military operations were more successful in the semi-savannah areas of northern Igboland, but further south, the dense forest environment hampered coordination, and raids provoked effective defensive responses (Oriji 1992, p179, 180). In addition, local communities did not generally engage in raids or warfare that ‘produced’ slaves. Furthermore, the region was relatively densely populated (Nwokeji 2001), and the literature has suggested that this encouraged the development of social and legal institutions to manage conflict, further discouraging the use of large scale violence to acquire captives (Dike & Ekejiuba 1990, p162, Anywanwu 1992, Noah & Ekpo 1992, Ohadike 1992,1998). In such circumstances, slave raiding expeditions under the command of powerful elites were not an option. Instead, the region’s captives were acquired through the development of a complex trade network, which relied on effective cooperation between the Aro, local ‘big men’ and the commercial towns at the coast. This meant that the region’s elites developed a very different set of priorities to those in Dahomey.

The Aro established themselves as slave traders in the seventeenth century by developing strong ties with elite groups in Old Calabar, and a trading network that allowed captives to be taken from regional markets to the coast. In the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries they began a pattern of expansion in which groups of Aro would migrate and set up Aro communities in other areas, known as *mmuba* or proliferation (Nwokeji 2010, p2). The first settlements were established around the Arochukwu and then spread eastwards into Ibioland and Central Igboland in the 1720s. Each community was linked back to the capital through their lineage group and was required to regularly return for festivals, to pay tribute and recognise the authority of their lineage heads and the king (Dike & Ekejiuba 1990, pp64–

²¹⁹ These groups had developed a social distinction between *ufiem* (heroes), who had seen battle and brought home heads from a campaign, and *ufo* (cowards) who had not. The latter group were seen as social outcasts until they had brought home heads. The Aro typically took any survivors as slaves (Oriji 1992, p179).

²²⁰ Equiano (1794) noted that such conflicts were more common during times of famine or were encouraged by slave traders. However, the consequences of failure were high for those engaging in such actions “*If he prevails and takes prisoners, he gratifies his avarice by selling them; but if his party is vanquished, and he falls into the hands of the enemy he is put to death...*” (pp15,16).

70, Nwokeji 2010 p96). In the interior and at the coast they forged links with local elites through shared membership of secret societies, such as the Okonko in the Ngwa region (Martin 1988, p27), the Ekong in Ibibio territories (Noah and Ekpo 1992, pp189,190) and the Ekpe at Old Calabar (Behrendt et al. 2010, p31). These societies were common across many regions of Africa, providing horizontal or cross cutting lines of authority to manage disputes and enforce legal punishments (McIntosh 1999, Osafo-Kaako & Robinson 2013). Within Biafra they played an especially important role in the enforcement of contracts, which allowed Europeans to provide goods 'on trust' to coastal merchants, who could in turn rely on their ties to the Aro and interior elites to provide either commodities or slaves (Nwokeji 2010, pp6,78).

The extent to which the Aro represented a pan region 'state' is debated. Northrup (1978) and McIntosh (1999, p11) argue that the Aro created nothing more than a trade network that allowed goods to be traded from the coast to the interior. By contrast, Dike & Ekejiuba (1999, p55) suggest that this organisation had 'state like structures', while Nwokeji (2010, p14) suggests that "*The Aro were the only group in the region that deliberately and consistently established settlements abroad for the purposes of trade that were tied to the homeland through system-wide institutions.*" He argues that while the various Aro settlements had a good deal of autonomy, they nevertheless were willing to submit to the distant authority of the capital to benefit from the prestige of representing the capital, and to deter enemies who were wary of offending the wider community. Another guide to understanding the nature of the Aro is through the work of North et al. (2009). They note that in pre-industrial societies most states did not contain strong institutions, relying instead on coalitions of elites which were, according to the context, passably effective at maintaining power. A 'fragile order state', which corresponds closely to the Aro, can be characterised by "*...simple institutional structures / private elite organizations that can extend to province level....elites that only commit to observe laws to facilitate trade and in the face of external threats....patron-client networks....elites capable of organizing violence against internal threats and to maintain trade.... simple laws that govern the relationships among individuals based on social identity and stipulate a set of rules that patrons can use to make decisions.*" (pp42-43). However, one characterises the Aro, they were highly efficient at managing the flow of people, commodities and trade goods to and from the coast, through their contacts and relationships with village elites and traders at the ports.

Therefore, across the region the most common forms of political organisation contained elites, whose power and prestige did not rest on the maintenance of state structures such as bureaucracies, armies or the enforcement of tribute over dependent territories. The more common form of institutional organisation rarely went above village level. Here, rank and social prestige could be achieved through the purchase of titles in secret societies, and by acquiring wealth through trade (Ohadike 1994, p87). There were some exceptions; on the Niger River at towns like Aboh and Attah there were kings, although their authority seemed to have also largely rested on trade and it was unlikely they could project power much further

than the banks of the Niger.²²¹ Along the coast, while certain families tended to monopolise power, individuals were never able to make their positions hereditary, and success depended on their continued wealth-generating capacities. For example, in the nineteenth century Duke Ephraim of Old Calabar had managed to secure lifelong positions as both head of the Ekpe secret society (*Eyamba*) and the town council (*Obong*), but was unable to pass these positions onto his children (Latham 1973, p115). During the eighteenth century one family or 'trading house', the Pepples, were able to gain an ascendancy over the other elites, but were still only first among equals and needed to rule in cooperation with other houses. In the nineteenth century, the Pepples remained the most powerful house, but no single individual was ever able to gain ascendancy over both trade and politics without provoking determined opposition (Hargreaves 1987, pp174,193–196).

What linked these elites and regions was trade, be it in palm oil or people. Trade was not only beneficial but essential to elite power. However, there are two further important questions to consider. Firstly, did the region have sufficient labour available to both increase its output of palm oil and to continue exporting captives? Secondly, how did the focus on palm oil production impact on the Aro and their slave network?

6.6. THE DEMAND FOR LABOUR AND THE INTERNAL SLAVE TRADE

Martin (1988) has argued that production of palm oil was carried out largely by households through a greater exploitation of female labour. This has been criticised by Korieh (2000) and Lovejoy (2011) who argue that slaves were an essential labour component, even in the more densely populated areas of central Igboland that had largely avoided the negative demographic consequences of the eighteenth century slave trade (Nwokeji 2000). This is an important argument for this thesis as the Aro had built their wealth and influence on the slave trade. If palm oil production in the nineteenth century required more coerced labour, then any fall in slave exports to the Atlantic would have been compensated by rising internal demand. Conversely, if households did contain sufficient labour capacity then the Aro would have suffered a fall in income.

Most of the literature indicates that the expansion of the palm oil trade did require a corresponding increase in the number slaves. Palm oil production was extremely labour-intensive and the task fell disproportionately on females, who also had numerous other tasks including childcare, cooking, cleaning, agriculture and trading (Nwokeji 2010, p182). To get some idea of the scale of the increase it is possible to calculate roughly how many additional days' labour were required. Palm oil during this period was classified as either 'soft' or

²²¹ The explorers Laird and Oldfield (1837) described meeting the Kings of both Attah and Aboh. In the case of Aboh, they note that the king's power came from his controlling the flow of palm oil and provisions on a key point of Niger (pp97,101,103). A more recent study by Nwaubani (1999, pp102–06) agrees that Aboh political economy was based on their ability to act as a market for trading coastal and interior products, and that the king's power was limited to the river and could not be enforced much further inland.

'hard', depending on how much free fatty acid (FFA) it contained. Low levels of FFA meant it was soft and could be used for the manufacture of soap, glycerine and for machine lubrication. Hard oil with higher levels of FFA was used for candles and lower quality soap. The softer the oil the more labour-intensive the production process (Lynn 1997, pp46,47, Maier 2009). Northrup (1976, p361) quotes a study from the 1930s²²², which suggests that semi-hard palm oil required around 250 days' labour to produce a ton. Reid (1986, p348) takes estimates from the (unpublished) Phd dissertation of Patrick Manning to give a figure of 315 days' labour per ton, but does not specify if this is for hard or soft oil. An observation from the first half of the nineteenth century gave a rough estimate that a slave along the Niger could produce a ton of oil in a year.²²³ Lynn (1997, p49) is more specific, giving a figure of 132 days for hard oil and 420 for soft, which roughly corresponds to Maier's (2009 p15) estimation that the production of soft oil required five times as much labour. Since we do not know exactly what proportion of oil was soft or hard, I take a middle figure of 250 days' labour / ton.

Labour was also required to transport oil from villages to bulking centres next to the rivers, from where the oil would be transported to the coast (Martin 1988, p28, Lynn 1997, p48).²²⁴ Ohadike (1998), quoting a text from the 1920s, suggests that "...a carrier could carry a head-load of between 50 and 60 pounds.... between 15 and 25 miles a day."²²⁵ Reid (1986) in a study on Dahomian palm oil suggests 35 lbs of oil (around 4 gallons) in containers weighing around 15 lbs, which seems reasonable as Lynn (1997, p48) suggests that most oil was carried in earthenware containers. Lynn's (1997, p48) own estimations are that that oil may have been carried in multiple journeys with each load between 1 and 5 gallons. For the purposes of this study it will be conservatively assumed that porters took 4 gallons or 35lbs per trip, and that it took around a day to get to and from the bulking centre. Therefore, a day's labour was required for every 4 gallons of palm oil, and 64 days for each ton. In terms of the quantities of palm oil, Lynn (1997, p20) quotes published figures showing that 65% of Great Britain's oil

²²² A. F. B. Bridges, 'Report on Oil Palm Survey in the Ibo, Ibibio and Cross River Area', 1938, appendix VII, MSS. Afr.s. 679, Rhodes House Library, Oxford; Daryll Forde and Richenda Scott, *The Native Economies of Nigeria* (London, 1946), 52.

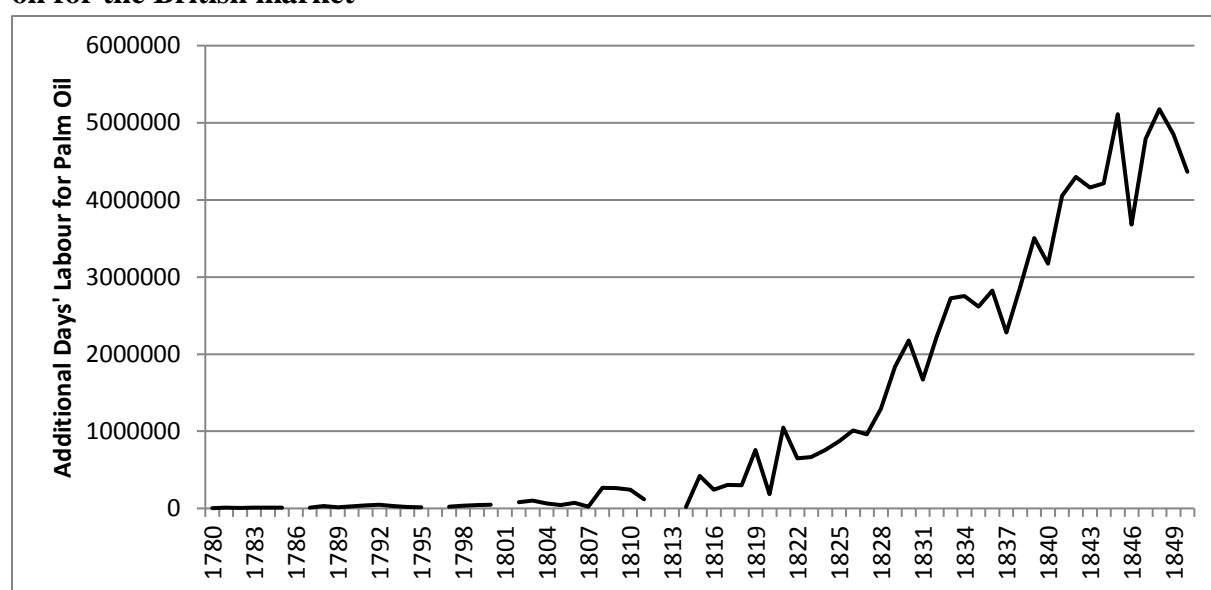
²²³ "An able-bodied slave is at present worth about four pounds' worth of British goods, and when he is shipped he can produce nothing more. But supposing he was kept in his native country, he might be very slight exertion produce one ton of oil per annum, which would be worth eight pounds or purchase double the quantity of British goods." Oldfield & Laird (1837) *Narrative of an expedition into the interior of Africa, by the river Niger*, p 361

²²⁴ This was described by Captain Becroft and his surgeon Mr King in the early 1840s, who described such a centre north of the Calabar on the Cross River. Palm oil was "...disposed of to the Eboes on the opposite side of the river, who at present dispose of it to the native traders from New Calabar and Bonny."

²²⁵ Reference: Alan McPhee *The Economic Revolution in West Africa* (1926 pp54,55). This estimate seems relatively accurate. Studies among the Luo in Eastern Africa have shown that women can carry up to 70% of their bodyweight through headloading. Modern experiments show that both men and women can carry 20% of their bodyweight on their heads, without expending additional energy, so long as they are skilled by learning this from childhood (Heglund et al. 1995). I take an estimation, of 50%. Eltis (1990) estimates that the mean height of Biafrans during this period was 163.7cm. Taking a modern height/weight and, making the reasonable assumption that slaves were generally likely to be on the border between a healthy weight and underweight, this would give a rough weight of 50kgs. This means each person could carry around 25 kilos or 55 lbs / trip.

was coming from Biafran ports in 1851. I take this as a very conservative figure as, in the 1830s, areas such as the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast were not exporting oil in great quantities, nor does it include exports to other countries. Taking these figures, we can estimate that by the 1830s palm oil production for the export trade required at least an additional 2,000,000 days' labour. This was equivalent to the full-time labour of around 5,500 people per year and the figure was to more than double by the 1850s (Figure 6.9). To put this into context, in the twenty years before abolition the Bight of Biafra region exported an average of 13,524 slaves a year. In the twenty years *after* 1807 the annual average was 5,641, which meant that captives who would previously have been exported were instead diverted into a growing internal economy.

Figure 6.9. Additional days' labour in the interior of the Bight of Biafra to produce palm oil for the British market

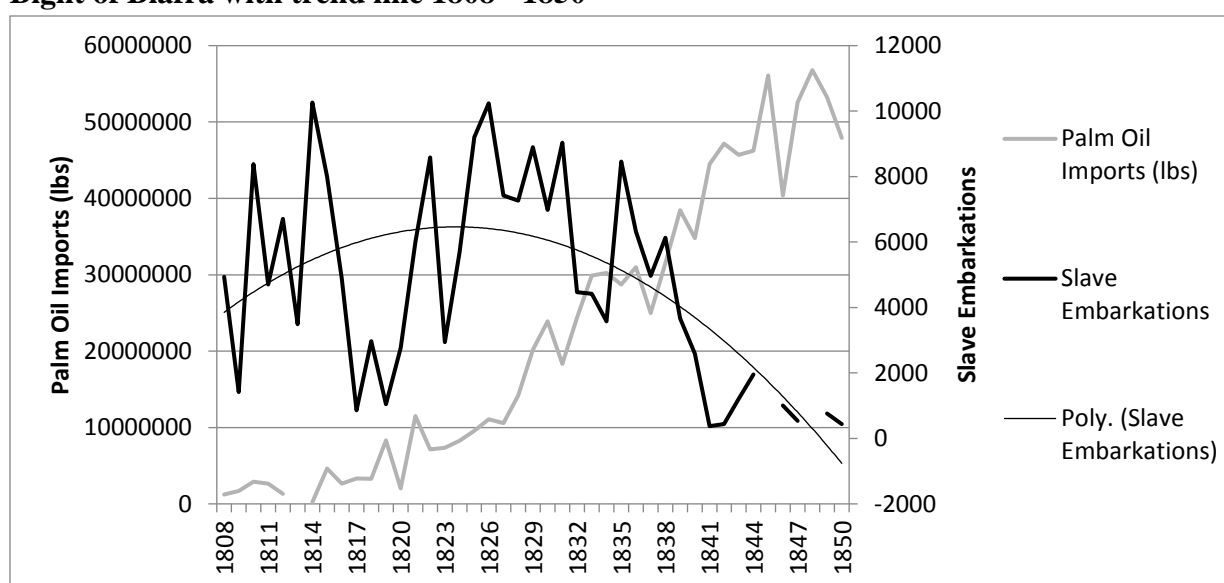


Sources – see text above

The *degree* of slave labour almost certainly varied from region to region. Korieh (2000, p603) suggests that outside of the Ngwa area studied by Martin (1993), many Igbo regions were enthusiastic users of slaves in the production of palm oil. This view is supported by Dike & Ekejuiba (1990, p257) and Ejiogu & Njoko (2015, p257) who argue that slaves were purchased in greater numbers in Igboland throughout the nineteenth century, either to augment household labour in the production of palm oil, or to grow food for areas where household labour was more fully engaged in palm oil production. This latter activity seems to have been especially important for the supply of captives in the internal market. Food shortages were reported in the coastal region in the late 1820s (Northrup 1979, p9) and European travellers were meeting farmers in the Niger delta region with up to 200 slaves, in the 1840s, who were at work growing yams for towns to the south (Ohadike 1992, p191). In Northern Igboland slave villages were set up to provide food for those in the palm belt region, often with direct Aro support and supplies (Northrup 1979, p10, Nwokeji 2010, p183). There was also increasing demand for slaves from households with rising levels of incomes, and

from elites who wanted people for sacrifices at the funerals of wealthy men and women (Dike and Ekejiuba 1990, p256),²²⁶ and for coastal canoe house trading organisations in need of labour to man canoes or headload the oil (Lovejoy 2011, p180). Thus, even areas with denser populations would have required additional coerced labour as argued by Lovejoy (2011, p144), and it should be noted that the falls in slave prices in the early nineteenth century (at least for male slaves) would have made fulfilling this requirement more feasible for a greater number of people (Nwaubani 1999, p101, Lovejoy and Richardson 1995b). In addition, these figures also show that the region could therefore not have continued to simultaneously export slaves and increase its output of palm oil. Indeed, a tipping point was reached around late 1820s when exports of captives to the Atlantic began an irreversible decline (Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10. Palm oil imports (lbs) into Great Britain and slave embarkations from the Bight of Biafra with trend line 1808 - 1850



Source: TSTD, TNA CUST 4/5-4/45

Importantly, the literature strongly suggests that it was the Aro who were providing these slaves, and continued to do so until the British invasion in 1902 (Northrup 1979, p10, Korieh 2000, p599, 608, Dike and Ekejiuba 1990, p235). This is not to say that the nineteenth century was not to cause problems for the Aro. As new producers entered the market, new trade routes opened that began to bypass the Aro (Dike & Ekejiuba 1990, p257, Martin 1988, p28). When Europeans began to establish factories in the 1860s and use steamboats to connect directly to local suppliers, the Aro began to lose control over the middleman trade (Dike & Ekejiuba 1990, p257, Kolapo 2002, pp24,25). In addition, the slump in oil prices and the economic recession of the 1870s was extremely disruptive (Manning 1986, p226, Lynn 1997, p151). However, for the period under study, the Aro's slave trading network was still just as busy transporting the higher value slaves, either for the external or internal markets, as it was palm

²²⁶ For a fuller discussion on the role of human sacrifice across West Africa see Law (1985). For his analysis of the increase in human sacrifice in the Biafran region, and his criticisms of an earlier paper by Isichei (1978, p469), see pages 70 – 72.

oil. The material power and interest of the region's trading elites were therefore not affected by the development of the palm oil industry. The next question is, why were households prepared to invest so much labour into the production of oil (Northrup 1976, p361)?

6.7. HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION OF PALM OIL

This section will argue that non-elite households had a number of powerful incentives to invest their (free and unfree) labour in the production of palm oil. Primarily, the palm oil trade gave them access to the Atlantic market, which had previously been monopolised by elite groups. This meant that a far greater number of people had the opportunity to purchase goods that could improve their standard of living. Importantly, this did not mean that elite households lost out, as they continued to benefit from the commodity trade.

As noted above, the Bight of Biafra was unusual in that the majority of its captives were sent into Atlantic slavery as a result of judicial punishments, as opposed to capture in raids or wars. This was made possible through cooperation between the Aro and local elites (Northrup 1978, pp70-73, Nwokeji 2010, pp134-35). The provisioning trade seems mainly to have operated relatively close to Old Calabar and Bonny and was controlled by local elites running large plantations (Behrendt et al. 2010, p93). Therefore, during the period of the slave trade, participation in long-distance exchange was probably not an option for the majority of people living in the palm oil belt.

Palm oil production led to non-elite households entering the market, which is suggested by changes in trade products brought to the region. One way to illustrate this is to examine the cargoes of different types of merchant ships from the port of Bristol. As noted in Chapter 4, the city was unique in the 1790s for sending both specialist slave and commodity ships to Africa. The Bristol port authorities published a twice-monthly newsletter called the *Bristol Presentments*, which detailed the import and export cargoes of ships entering the ports, in addition to their clearance and arrival dates. An analysis of the average quantity of different types of goods loaded onto commodity and slaving vessels heading to ports in the Bight of Biafra, shows that commodity vessels required a very different selection, which suggests that they were intended for a different group of consumers (see *Appendix 6.5*). The slaving vessels provided the same kinds of cargo that was demanded by elites in other regions, namely a large quantity of cloth, metals, guns, gunpowder and ammunition. By contrast the commodity vessels seem to have carried less expensive foreign cloth, and greater amounts of cheaper British fabric. There is far less metal and almost no gunpowder, weapons or ammunition. The most striking difference is the huge quantity of salt, which became the most important item of trade for palm oil, but was of little importance to the slave trade.²²⁷

²²⁷ In their analysis of trade goods on Biafran slaving vessels in the late 1760s/early 1770s, Behrendt et al. (2010, pp58–68) make no mention of salt. Latham (1973, p73) also notes that it was a product entirely associated with the palm oil trade.

One trader in the 1790s noted that at Old Calabar “*Palm Oil is very plentiful. Ships carry very large quantities home of late from place – It is in general bought for salt, one measure or crew of salt for one of palm oil (p52)*” and advises traders to “...*take care and reserve as much salt as will do your business for palm oil...*”²²⁸. Capt. Thomas Cobb, writing to Bristol merchant James Rogers from Old Calabar in 1792, informs his employer that “*I have discharged all the salt and taken on board nine butts four pipes ninety-one puncheon and three hogsheads of palm oil. It far exceeds your order for oil but the salt would not command redwood nor scarce any one article but oil...*”²²⁹ This situation remained unchanged at Old Calabar until at least the 1820s, when Capt. Edward Bold (1823) noted that every assortment of trade goods used to barter for oil required salt at a ratio of around 4:6 and that “*Salt is a very profitably and commanding article here, therefore you cannot bring too much....*” Adams (1822 p263) writing about the expanding trade for palm oil at Bonny noted that “...*as the palm oil trade increases.....salt, in all probability will become more in demand, vessels trading there take at present about fifty tons each.*” The customs records also show that the expansion of the palm oil trade was accompanied by a corresponding increase in salt exports to Africa (see Table 6.1 above).

This trend continued into the nineteenth century. From 1828 the British customs records begin to provide more accurate geographical information, both for goods going to and coming from Africa. Goods coming from the Gold Coast region were grouped under “Cape Coast Castle and the Gold Coast from Cape Apolonia to the Rio Volta” and it is fairly certain that most of the trade goods going to the region “Coast South of the Volta with the Island of Fernando Po” were destined for Biafra to be exchanged for palm oil.²³⁰ I have taken a sample from 1828 to 1832 to compare the types of products that were being sent to the two different regions. Valued in current prices in British markets, the value of commodities from Biafra (around 84% of which were palm oil) was around 1.75 times greater than those from the Gold Coast (see Appendix 6.6). The differences in the goods that were exchanged for these products is striking (Table 6.4). The Gold Coast region, despite the lower value of its exports, bought relatively more cloth and clothing and had a preference for iron manufactures. Ships going to Biafra catered for both the elites and non-elites. Thus, there are large numbers of iron bars, guns and gunpowder but also more low quality material (‘Slops and Negro Clothing’), as well as half a million pounds of salt, which is absent from trade goods going to the Gold Coast.

²²⁸ British Library, Add Mss 12131, ‘Mr Parfitt’s information on Trade between Sierra Leone and Cape Lopez w. Islands St Thomas etc’ and ‘Extract of a Diary Kept by E.L. Parfitt on the Board of the Sierra Leone Company’s Ship *Calypso*’, Papers Relating to Sierra Leone, ff. 174 – 320, p83

²²⁹ C107/6 Letter from Thomas Cobb, Captain of the Triton, January 19th 1792 Old Calabar.

²³⁰ South of the Volta essentially meant all of Africa from the borders of modern day Ghana to the Cape of Good Hope. However, as noted in Chapter 2, neither the Bight of Benin nor West Central Africa were exporting commodities during this time and therefore had very little trade with Britain. Palm oil dominated exports and the vast majority was bought in Biafra.

Table 6.4. Quantities of goods imported into the ‘Gold Coast’ and ‘Coast South of the Rio Volta’ regions 1828 - 1832

Product	Unit	Gold Coast	Coast South of Rio Volta
Apparel	Pieces	243,628	36,176
Calicoes	Pieces	867,381	1,588,744
Cotton Manufactures	Yards	2,663,696	2,742,946
Woollens Manufactures	Yards	5,243	517
Hats	Pieces	10,780	60,013
Muslins	Pieces	28,316	520
Slops and Negro Clothing	Pieces	28,224	196,896
Brass	lbs	62,374	96,826
Copper	lbs	0	5,040
Iron Bar	Pieces	1,157,248	8,816,640
Iron Wrought	lbs	130,676	20,048
Tin	lbs	8,988	4,256
Glass	Pieces	107,093	183,128
Salt	lbs	0	515,780
Soap	lbs	21,651	121,845
Staves	Pieces	4,730	62,684
Gunpowder	lbs	1,191,867	6,847,205
Guns	Pieces	70,263	195,690

Source: TNA CUST 8/27 – 8/36, 10/19 – 10/23

The differences indicate that the Gold Coast region was far more interested in what might be termed luxury items, which had a role in signalling status and wealth. By contrast in the Bight of Biafra, there were large numbers of customers who were more interested in items that improved more basic standards of living, such as soap for cleanliness, cheap clothes for themselves or perhaps their slaves and of course, salt. The latter item would have had a significant impact on the lives of less privileged households. In his study of salt in Western Sudan, Lovejoy (1986) notes that “*Salt satisfies a physiological need, and it may well be that salt is also man’s earliest addiction.*” (p1). In the rainforest belt of West Africa, this need may have been much higher for two reasons. Firstly, the heat of the tropics means people sweat more, which raises the craving for salt. Secondly, the tse-tse fly, with its debilitating impact on livestock production, meant that people living in this region had far less meat in their diet, which is a natural source of salt. Isichei (1976, p31) and Martin (1988, p28) note that the only alternative in the forest zone was potash (vegetable ash), a far less appealing source of salt than sodium chloride which was beginning to be mass produced cheaply in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century (Lovejoy 1986, p18, Latham 1973, p74). More salt also allowed for the possibility of importing greater quantities of salted preserved meat to supplement the protein-deficient diets of those in the forest. Martin (1992, p28) notes that until the mid-twentieth century farmers in the Ngwa region spent a good deal of their income on salted fish from the coast, Europe or Northern Nigeria and that “*...this scarcity of salt, cloth, meat and fish did not prejudice the survival of Ngwa farmers, but it did provide them with a strong incentive to engage in regional trade.*” Equiano (1794, pp12,13) also suggests

that dried, salted fish was “...esteemed a great rarity...” in Igboland and was an important part of regional trade.²³¹

The general patterns of trade indicate that more households were entering the palm oil market to buy goods that could improve their standards of living. However, this phenomenon did not threaten the power of existing elites who were able to benefit even more than commoner households (Manning 1986, p227, Lynn 1997, p58, Korieh 2000, p599). Village heads often had power over the allocation of communal land, where wild palms were common. In addition, they enjoyed access to greater resources of labour, as they generally had more wives/children and/or slaves. They were also more likely to be members of secret societies, such as the Okonko in the Ngwa region, whose contacts with local Aro merchants afforded easier access to more coerced labour, which in turn allowed them to increase production (Martin 1988, p32). Of course, these conditions were not unique to the Biafran region, but what was different was that, while local village-level elites probably gained more from the new trade, they did not dominate or monopolise it. The demand for goods was therefore not driven by a status conscious elite looking to preserve the existing hierarchy, as was the case in Dahomey and, to a lesser extent, Asante.

These changes were not positive for everyone. By the mid-eighteenth century salt production at the coast, which had long been the basis of the local economy, was crowded out by cheaper foreign imports (Northrup 1978, p213).²³² However, over the nineteenth century foreign imports greatly benefited producers of palm oil. Martin (1992, p29) and Lynn (1997, pp68,69) note that during this period the region saw an increase in cheaper products which, in addition to salt, included Lancashire textiles, tobacco from America and gin from the Netherlands. These became accepted as forms of currency for small scale transactions in the region, thus helping stimulate more market activity. In addition, like Asante, production for the market gave previously poorer households the possibility of acquiring additional labour in the form of slaves (Ohadike 1998, p192). This labour could be used to either gain more wealth or provide more leisure time to free members of the household. For the Aro, it had the additional benefit of bringing many new customers for their principal product (Dike & Ekejiuba 1990, p257). In short, there were plenty of very good reasons why households were motivated to greatly expand their production of palm oil in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

²³¹ There has been some doubt over whether Equiano was actually from Africa. Carretta 2005 has suggested that he was in fact born in Carolina and his African heritage was an invention to help promote the abolitionist cause. However, both Nwokeji (2006) and Lovejoy (2006) have argued strongly against this hypothesis, saying that it is far more likely that Equiano was born and raised in Igboland.

²³² Adams (1823, p139) noted that salt was still being produced in the western half of the Niger Delta and at Bonny and Calabar (pp118,122,139), and members of one of the Niger Expeditions saw that it was still an industry in Brass (Lander & Lander 1832, Vol 3, p237), but after this, sources do not list it as one of the local industries.

6.8. CONCLUSION

Chapters 3 and 4 showed that in the Bight of Biafran region, the transatlantic slave trade did not crowd out other forms of commercial exchange, even after the rapid expansion of exports from the 1740s. Producers in the interior responded to demands for provisions and, from the 1770s, for commodities. This was partly the result of having long established commercial networks between the interior and the coast, which were facilitated by efficient riverine trade routes. Furthermore, the region was particularly well endowed with natural resources, in particular oil palms and tropical hardwoods, for which there was a growing demand in the expanding industrial economies of Europe. However, this chapter has argued that these factors do not by themselves explain the nature and timing of the region's commercial transition.

Just as importantly, institutional development in the area was very different to that of either the Gold Coast or the Bight of Benin. Until the Aro opened the central Igbo region to transatlantic slavery in the early eighteenth century, embarkation numbers had never been high. Without the stimulus of luxury trade goods and military technology, the political competition and military revolutions that marked the other regions did not occur. Instead, systems of elite order developed that were able to monopolise external trade, without strongly hierarchal systems of order based on military power. For the Aro traders, the powerful 'big men' of the interior and the merchant elites at the coast, power and wealth were always ultimately dependent on trade of all kinds. The broadcast of authority, enforcement of tribute or military reputation, all of which were facilitated by slave raids, were never as important. Slaves were generally not acquired through large-scale, organised violence and were always traded alongside commercial agricultural products and commodities.

This institutional setting meant that at the start of the nineteenth century, the region was not, like Dahomey, economically or politically dependent on the transatlantic slave trade. The unilateral and sudden withdrawal of the British was of course an economic shock, but the transition to palm oil was relatively smooth for three key reasons. Firstly, those who had previously grown rich from slave trading did not, in the long run, lose out financially and probably gained. The Aro could continue to sell slaves to a growing internal market, while still controlling the trade routes that handled palm oil. The 'big men' of the interior became the largest producers of oil and the merchants at the coast continued to gain from marketing a new product that was significantly less volatile than slaves. Secondly, commoners, who had previously been largely excluded from trade with the Atlantic, gained access to trade goods that could materially improve their standards of living. Thirdly, the British government helped to incentivise ex-slave traders to invest in palm oil, which ensured that the new market grew steadily over the first half of the nineteenth century.

While the diplomatic and military campaign against transatlantic slavery remained relatively weak, both captives and commodities could continue to be traded side by side, as had been the case in the eighteenth century. However, a combination of increasing labour demands for the production of palm oil and food, combined with the impact of more effective measures against slavers in the 1830s, was sufficient to bring the export of captives to an end. This was

a largely positive choice, where merchants decided to focus on an export sector that had already been growing for more than 60 years. By contrast, the Dahomean monarchy and ruling elite only grudgingly began to support the development of palm oil exports in the late 1830s, and strove to maintain their output of captives for as long as possible. The reasons why are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE BIGHT OF BENIN, DAHOMEY AND THE DOMINANCE OF EXPORT SLAVERY

“It was the slave trade that made him terrible to his enemies, and loved, honoured and respected by his people. How could he give it up?” King Gezo of Dahomey, as reported by the British diplomat, Thomas Cruikshank (1848, p7)

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will tackle the question of why the region of the Bight of Benin that came to be controlled by Dahomey remained focused for so long on the export of captives, in contrast to the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra. The evidence presented in Chapter 2 suggests that an aversion to the non-slave trade characterised this area throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Chapter 3 it has been argued that the region never seriously engaged in the provisioning trade throughout the long eighteenth century. In Chapter 4 it has been shown that Dahomean merchants did not respond to the rising European demand for African commodities in the late eighteenth century. Other studies of the region have also pointed out that the Dahomean elites remained committed to export slavery for longer than other areas of West Africa during the nineteenth century (Thomas 1999, Klein 2010, p65, p695 – 996, Lovejoy 2011, pp 171 – 172). This chapter will show that the slave trade in the Bight of Benin developed earlier, and with far greater intensity, than in either the Bight of Biafra or the Gold Coast. I will argue that this early engagement encouraged the development of more centralised, militarised states with elites, dependent on the slave trade to maintain their political and economic power. In addition, the region’s ecology ensured that states could not easily gain the kind of regional ascendancy enjoyed by the Asante. As a result, even the most powerful state along the coast, Dahomey, was continuously threatened by powerful neighbours until the 1820s, and always faced competitors for slave exports in the region. These conditions reinforced a state ideology based on military power and expansion in order to acquire more captives.

The state of Dahomey thus developed an institutional rigidity which affected the late commercial transition in the nineteenth century. Greater centralisation and powerful elites monopolised much larger shares of the available female and coerced male labour force to serve their economic and political agendas. The kingdom’s armed forces were more professionalised, and mobilised far more regularly, than in the other case study areas, which meant that a greater amount of labour was required to produce food for larger numbers of non-productive people. Furthermore, warfare disrupted agriculture by taking away producers from the land when the military required extra manpower. In addition, the demographic impacts of the slave trade and its attending violence led to a severe demographic decline

across the region. While the kingdom of Dahomey may not have suffered as much as the areas that its armies raided, the fall in population limited the pool of both free and coerced labour available for other forms of economic activities. Therefore, households and lineage groups, which had driven the commercial transition in the other case study regions, had far fewer opportunities here to expand their output of export commodities.

This interpretation goes against the ‘crisis of adaptation’ argument put forward by Hopkins (1973) and supports the broader conclusions of Soumonni (1995) that the gradual abolition of the transatlantic slave trade did not fundamentally undermine the power basis of the Dahomean elites. At the same time, however, this case confirms the intuition of Hopkins’ thesis, namely that a change from a slave export based economy would weaken the foundations of elite authority and provided non-elite households with the opportunity to increase their wealth and influence. I will argue that without elite support, an alternative export sector would not have emerged, and that the elites changed their focus only after the abolition policies of the British effectively shut down the transatlantic slave trade. Finally, I will argue that it seems plausible that the high demands of the state and its army were the reason why the Dahomeans abstained from exports of food provisions to slave ships during the long eighteenth century.

The chapter is organised as follows. It presents an analysis of the long-term trade contacts, beginning in the seventeenth century when the region first became important for slave embarkations, and which supports the analysis of the region’s long-term commitment to slave trading given in Chapters 2 and 4. It then provides an analysis of the comparative value of the palm oil and slave trades, suggesting that the palm oil trade was less valuable to the Dahomean elites than the slave trade. The next section argues that the most important slaving nations in the region, Portugal and France, were not significant buyers of commodities, but that this was not a key variable. Instead it will be argued that the development of a highly stratified military state, and the labour demands of the elites and their armies, were the primary determinant of the continued focus on slave export trading up to the 1840s.

Area of study

Geographically, the Bight of Benin was a 200 mile / 320 km stretch of coast extending from the Cape of St Paul on the Rio Volta in the west to Cape Formosa in the east (Map 7.1).²³³ The area was geographically united through what is known as the Benin Gap, where the rainforest belt is interrupted by a savannah landscape that was more characteristic of West Africa’s interior (Law 1991, p19). Nonetheless, as argued in Chapter 1, the region’s ecology was suitable for oil palms, with the potential to transport them to the coast. The origins of the Dahomean kingdom are unclear, but it was probably initially formed in the early seventeenth century by refugees or settlers who displaced or conquered the original inhabitants of the

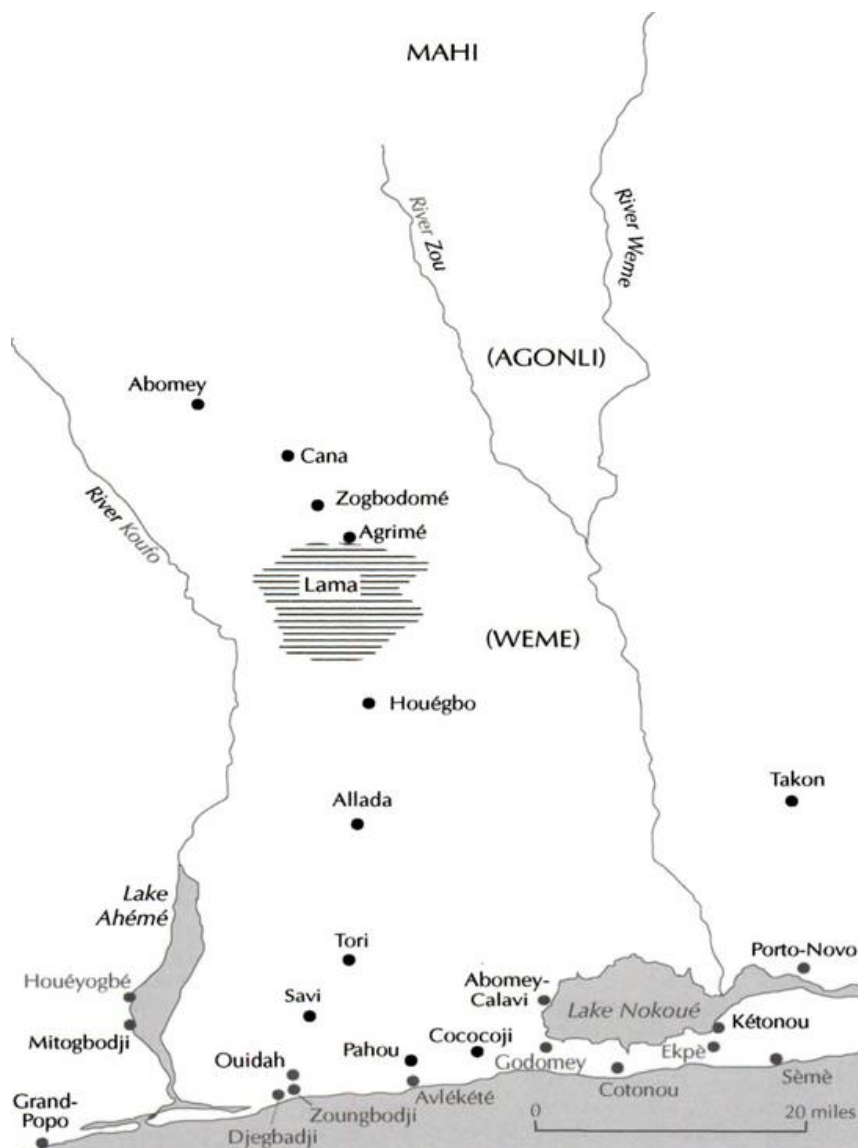
²³³ The region was also referred to as the Slave Coast, which was a term to denote a trading region between the Volta River and the port of Lagos.

Abomey plateau. The plateau was situated around 100 km from the coast, bounded on two sides by the Koufo and the Zou (which became the Weme) rivers. The Dahomean state had initially expanded across the Abomey plateau during the seventeenth century, as a tributary of the more powerful kingdom of Allada. Under one of the first Dahomean kings, Wegbaja (1650–1680), a number of military reforms were carried out, including the adoption of and more effective use of firearms, and a centralization of warfare and justice under the king (Thornton 1999, p82, Reid 1986, p26). This process of political centralisation was continued by subsequent monarchs and the kingdom developed a level of military organisation that was far more potent than any of its southern neighbours (Reid 2012, pp 82, 83). Dahomey became the major inland supplier of slaves to the Alladans and Huedans (Law 1991, p185), and under King Agaja defeated and conquered these two states in the 1720s. The motives for Agaja's expansion have been debated, but there seems to be a consensus that this move was designed to at once protect his own people from slave raiding, while also ensuring that the state could control both the supply and sale of captives to Europeans.²³⁴ Most of the kingdom's slaves and goods were transported along the main road which began at the capital Abomey and went south through Cana and Agrime, the latter town marking the end of the plateau and state's core region of power (Law 2004, p117,120). Travellers were then obliged to pass through the Lama swamp in order to proceed to the coast. The Dahomean state was the pre-eminent political and military power on the coast from the Popos to Seme from the 1720s until the onset of formal French colonial rule in 1892. Its control over both the key coastal port of Whydah, and the interior regions from which most slaves were captured, meant that the state exported the majority of the region's slaves for the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.²³⁵

²³⁴ Akinjogbin (1967) initially proposed the idea that Agaja's intentions had been to secure control of the coast in order to abandon slave trading. Manning (1982), whilst agreeing that this would have been beneficial to the region's long-term development, argues that his intentions were probably more likely to have been to ensure security from raiding for his own people and to gain control over the supply and sales of slaves. This interpretation is supported by Law (1991) and Bay (1998).

²³⁵ Although in the nineteenth century, the port of Lagos was to overtake Whydah as the most important port for the transatlantic slave trade in the Bight of Benin (Mann 2007, pp39,40)

Map 7.1. The kingdom of Dahomey and its immediate neighbours



Source: Law (2004) p51

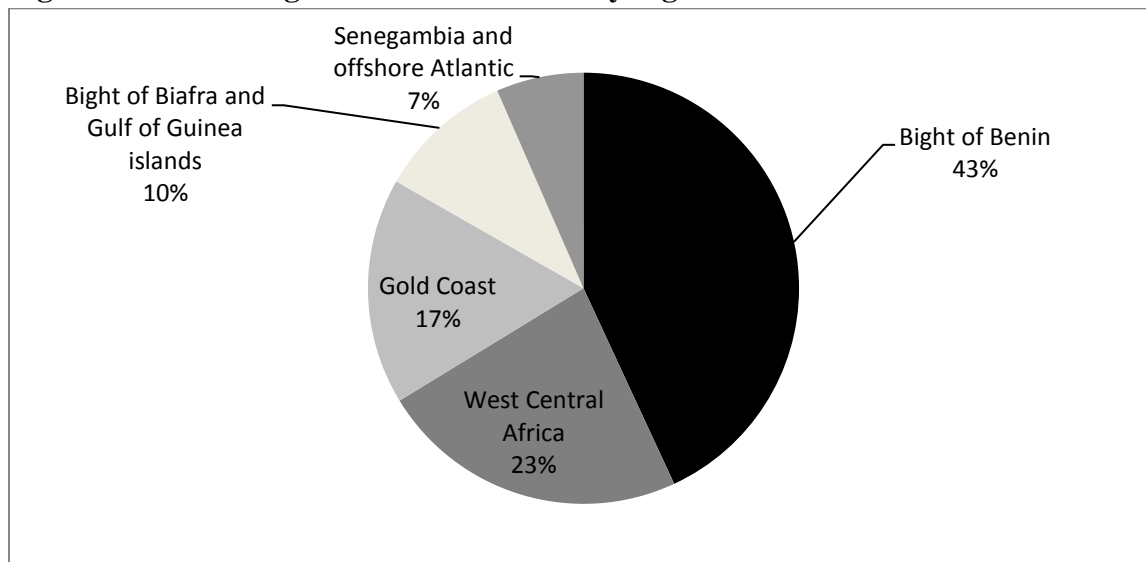
7.2. LONG-TERM TRENDS IN DAHOMEY'S TRADE

The most significant difference between the Bight of Benin and the two other case study regions was that here the slave trade grew to significant proportions far earlier, and dominated the trade in captives in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Figure 7.1).²³⁶ The area had long been known as a source of slaves to Europeans, who had imported slaves from

²³⁶ Slaves from the Bight of Biafra may have been traded earlier than those from areas of the Bight of Benin which Dahomey came to control. There is evidence that the Portuguese were taking slaves from Old Calabar from at least the early seventeenth century, but the numbers were relatively small (Behrendt et al. 2010, p48).

the region into the Gold Coast from the sixteenth century (see Chapter 5). The British, French and Dutch began to demand labour for their growing American possessions in the seventeenth century and, as the Gold Coast was not exporting sufficient numbers of captives, they looked to the Bight of Benin to meet their requirements (Klein 2010, pp77-80).²³⁷ As the region possessed no gold, it came to specialise solely in the export of people, which was to determine the nature of the region's Atlantic trade for the centuries to follow (Law 1991, pp118-22).

Figure 7.1. Percentage of slaves embarked by region 1650 - 1730

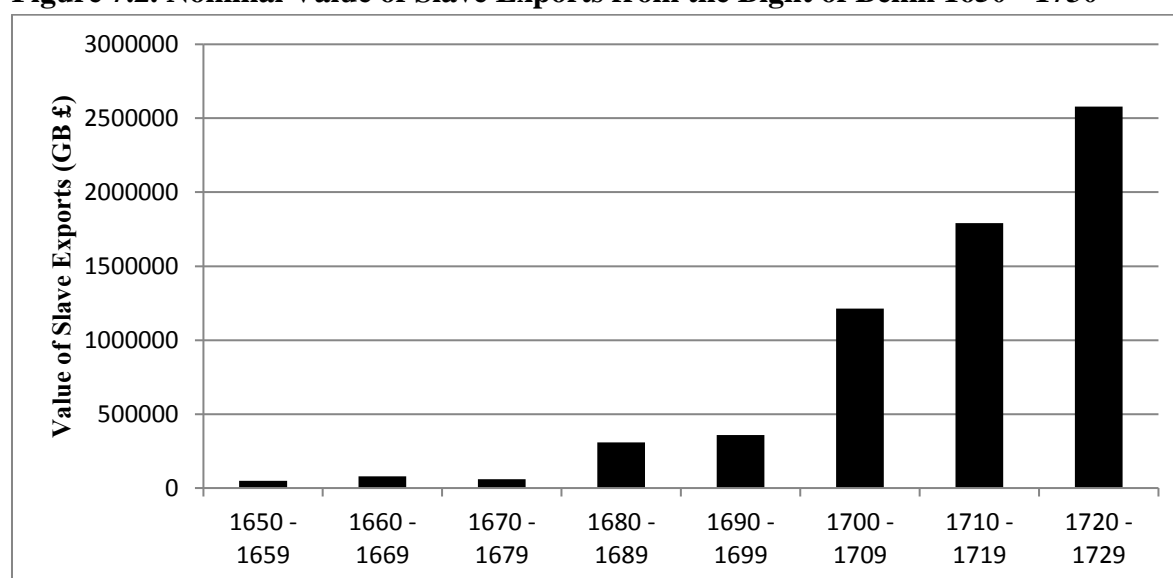


Source: TSTD

This had important consequences for the people living in this region. Firstly, the trade was extremely lucrative, and led to high quantities of valuable European and Indian goods flowing into the region (Figure 7.2).²³⁸ This simultaneously increased competition for control over a new and growing source of income, and stimulated the development of more centralised, militarised states, geared towards capturing, transporting, buying and selling greater numbers of slaves (Norman 2012, p147). Indeed, in the Bight of Benin, the infamous 'guns-for-slaves trade cycle' hypothesis set out by Whatley (2014) came into full bloom.

²³⁷ Sources suggest that the introduction of new crops from the Americas led to strong population growth, which meant that the region had a large pool of people who could be enslaved (Manning 1982, p7, Law 1991, pp59-60).

²³⁸ If these figures are converted into 2005 GB£, then the slave coast saw an increase from around £4 million in the decade from 1650 to nearly £220 million worth of goods imported from 1720 to 1730. Calculated using the currency converter from The National Archives: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/default.asp#mid>. Accessed 7/6/2016

Figure 7.2. Nominal Value of Slave Exports from the Bight of Benin 1650 - 1730

Sources: Slave Prices from Manning (1982, p332), Slave Embarkations from TSTD

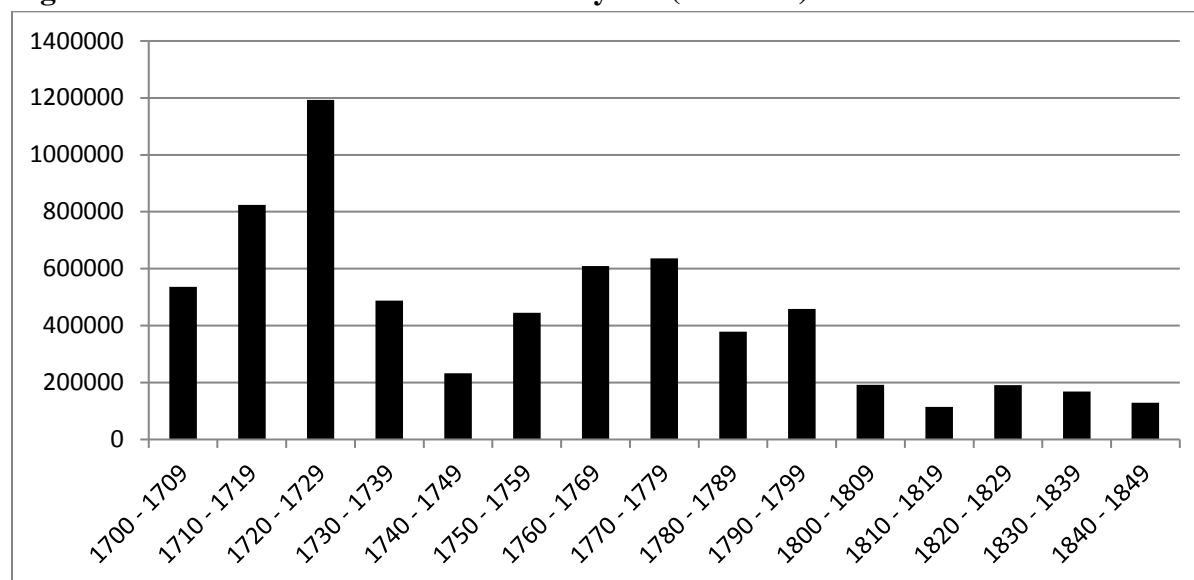
As will be discussed later in the chapter, slave exports became crucial to the political and economic power of the Dahomean state. As a result, the monarchy and elite groups of the kingdom stuck to a slave raiding model, while their counterparts in the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra were diversifying their export economies. The difference is most clearly illustrated in reaction to the changed economic environment in the two decades following abolition. As shown in Figure 7.3, the region had seen declining revenues from transatlantic slave exports for some time due to the loss of the French trade in 1794,²³⁹ and Portuguese/Brazilian traders focusing their attention on Angola and Southeastern Africa (Eltis 2009). Rather than exploring alternatives such as palm oil to compensate for the loss of revenue, the state instead focused its efforts on military campaigns and reviving the slave trade. During the 1820s the king, Gezo, took advantage of the collapse of the Oyo kingdom to increase the extent and frequency of military expeditions to capture slaves and extend the kingdom's power (Reid 1986, p33). Captives from areas such as Mahi and Yorubaland temporarily swelled the kingdom's exports (Law 2004, p160). When British abolition efforts became more effective in the 1830s, the Dahomeans responded by developing more elaborate strategies to avoid the British blockade. These strategies included bringing larger numbers of slaves to the coast and keeping them there for longer periods so that boarding could take place more rapidly²⁴⁰, or by taking slaves to other ports such as Little Popo via the coastal

²³⁹ As a result of the French and Haitian revolutions. Although French slaving ships were to re-enter the trade just a decade later, it was in reduced numbers (TSTD).

²⁴⁰ 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.--Report and evidence. F Swanzy to committee, p37, para 615 "...there is still an importation of slaves from Dahomey into Whydah; there they are kept till they can ship them; perhaps the half of them may be dead before they can be shipped."

lagoons.²⁴¹ Alternatively, Portuguese/Brazilian traders would arrange for two ships to be sent to the coast, one with trade goods and another to transport captives, which limited time at the coast and made it easier to evade the anti-slave patrol (Law 2004, pp158,191-93).

Figure 7.3. Income from Slave Sales at Whydah (British £)



Source: Prices from Manning (1982), slave numbers from TSTD

Even after the virtual collapse of transatlantic slavery in the 1840s, and when the monarchy had finally begun to invest in the production of palm oil (Manning 1982, p17, Law 2004, pp222) there were still many in the ruling coalition who resisted change. Gezo's successor, Glele, supported by powerful elements within the Dahomean elite, attempted to re-orientate the state back towards a slave raiding model, when demand for coerced labour on the sugar plantations of Cuba led to a brief revival in Atlantic slavery (Bergad et al. 1995, p58, Soumonni 1995, p90). To explore why, in contrast to the other case study regions, the Dahomean state remained so committed to the export of captives, I will begin by examining the relative profitability of both the commodity and slave trades.

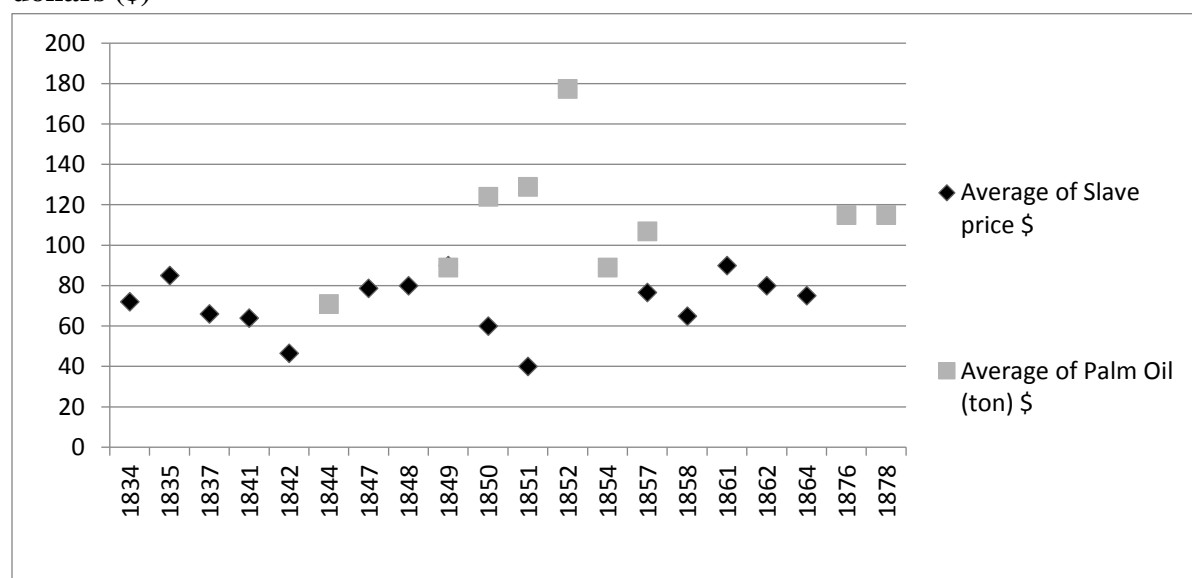
7.3. COMPARATIVE VALUE OF THE SLAVE AND COMMODITY TRADES

For the Dahomean monarchy and its elite supporters, palm oil was far less profitable than slave trading. The price of a ton of palm oil was slightly higher than the cost of a slave (Figure 7.4), but the production costs of the former were clearly much higher. Reid (1986, pp346–50) calculated, very roughly, that one ton of palm oil required around 795 days' labour to produce and transport to the coast from Abomey. This translates into the full-time labour of

²⁴¹ Ibid. Lt Reinald Levinge RN to committee, p227, paras 3996 - 4000 "...it would be of no use blockading Whydah alone, without blockading the coast 20 miles on either side of it. Could you maintain an effectual blockade to that extent? No, I tried and could not do it, because they communicate by signal; if a vessel comes in the offing, they make a long telegraph to her to proceed to sea for some days, or to come upon the coast at Apee on a given day, where their slaves are waiting for them...."

around 10,000 slaves to produce 2,000 tons of oil a year. In 1850 silver dollar (\$) prices, 2,000 tons of palm oil would sell at \$248,000, while selling 10,000 slaves would have brought in \$600,000, along with far greater tax/customs revenues for the monarch.²⁴² There were, in addition, other obstacles to overcome. Whydah was by no means an ideal port for the loading of palm oil as the beach was over 3 km from the town. Once there, the oil needed to be loaded into canoes and transported to ships 2km away through shark infested waters because the currents and waves were too dangerous close to the shore (Law 2004, p 213). Some of these problems were eventually overcome. For example, the town of Cotonou was developed, which allowed oil from the interior to be transported directly to the coast via the Wembe river, thus reducing transport costs. However, this was unlikely to have made a significant difference, to the fact that slaves remained a considerably more profitable trade. In addition, Dahomey soon faced competition from other ports in the Bight of Benin such as Porto Novo, Badagary and Lagos, which were also very suitable for oil exports due to access to interior markets through water transport, and having hinterlands that were ecologically favourable to palms (Mann 2007, pp 118 – 150).

Figure 7.4. Average price per slave and ton of palm oil at Whydah 1834 – 1878, in silver dollars (\$)



Source: Law (2004, pp159,208)

Beyond the fact that slaves could make more money for the king and his elites, there were other reasons why palm oil was not a complement to the Dahomey slave trade in the same way it was for the elite merchants in the Bight of Biafra, or as gold was for the Asante. Firstly, the Dahomean monarchy and its elite supporters were able to control and monitor the

²⁴² Gezo, the king during the 1840s, wrote to Queen Victoria saying "At present my people are a warlike people and unaccustomed to agricultural pursuits. I should not be enabled to keep up my revenue were I at once to stop the slave trade." This view is restated by the British diplomat Cruikshank who wrote in his report on the negotiations with Gezo over the abolition of the slave trade "No other trade was known to his people. Palm oil, it was true, was now engaging the attention of some of them, but it was a slow-method of making money and brought only a small amount of duties into his coffers." Quotes in Reid (1986, pp317,318)

trade in slaves far more effectively than the trade in palm oil. While private merchants collectively sold the majority of the region's slaves, the king was always the single largest seller because of his key role in the military campaigns during which most captives were acquired (see below Section 7.5). All merchants had to pay the king for permission to trade, and their rights could be withdrawn (Bay 1998, pp 104–06, Law 2004, pp 113–18). Alternatively, the state could act as a middleman for trade in captives from other areas such as Yorubaland (Law 1989b). Their movement from the interior was closely monitored and subjected to tolls along the routes from plateau to the coast (Law 2004, p117). This kind of centralised control was much more difficult to achieve for palm oil, which was largely a result of the geography of the kingdom.

While it was possible to produce and transport oil on the Abomey plateau, the area south of Lama swamp had a number of advantages. For a start, water was much scarcer on the plateau. In the capital of Abomey all sources of fresh water lay outside the city. Therefore, acquiring sufficient water was always a much more labour-intensive process, especially outside the rainy season (Reid 1986, p 51). Costs were also lower nearer to the coast, due to shortened transportation times and the fact that palm production was compatible with existing patterns of agriculture. However, the kingdom's southern provinces always saw the Dahomeans as foreign occupiers and so the state's power was much weaker than in its 'core areas' of power on the plateau (Law 2004, p276). Even on the plateau, extending royal power was costly and may have provoked resistance (Monroe 2007, 2012, 2015). Small-scale theft and illegal production, especially from the larger estates, and tax avoidance by the larger Whydan merchants, were common. It was ultimately far more difficult to monitor and control economic activity at the coast due to its distance from the capital and as a result, the monarchy could not control the revenues stemming from palm oil trading as effectively as it could with the slave trade (Law 1992, pp8-9).

There was one further commodity that might also have been better exploited by the Dahomeans. Lovejoy's (1980) study of the kola trade between the Asante and the Muslim savannah markets asks why the states around the Bight of Benin did not export this product until the early twentieth century (pp20, 21). Lovejoy's focus is on Oyo, and he suggests that the restrictions on the movement of Muslim merchants, together with hostilities between them and the southern caliphates of Ilorin and Nupe, may have been responsible. Dahomey also possessed kola trees in its southern regions (Manning 1982, p 60) and there is evidence that merchants from the kingdom were active in northern states such as Borgu for the purpose of purchasing slaves (Law 1989b, p57). Kola trees did not need to be specifically cultivated as they grew naturally, so any production could occur in the context of existing agriculture (Agiri 1972, p 34). This meant that there was the potential for exchanging kola for slaves (as was the case with the Asante at Salaga) during the periods when Dahomey bought captives as well as raiding for them (Law 1989b).

However, with the exception of the small quantities exported to Brazil in the 1860s, there is no evidence that such a trade developed.²⁴³ One unpublished thesis suggests that in the context of Oyo, the kola nuts had some religious significance to the Yoruba who were therefore unwilling to export them to their northern neighbours (Agiri 1972, pp54,55). There is no evidence that this was the case in Dahomey, but other reasons may have been more significant. One such reason was that the type of kola which grew around the Bight of Benin was the genus *c.acuminata*, as opposed to the *c.nitida* cultivated by the Asante, and greatly valued on the savannah (Abaka 2005, pp18,19). Secondly, the instability caused by the conflicts between Oyo and its northern, Muslim neighbours, and the chaos that ensued when the Oyo kingdom fell, disrupted trade to the savannah (Law 1977, pp284–288). However, the explorer Clapperton, in 1829, noted that Dahomean slave merchants were operating on trade routes to Hausaland and therefore could have traded kola with the interior (Clapperton 1829, pp83, 84, 123). During the twentieth century kola nuts, including *nitida*, were traded between south eastern Nigeria and Benin and Hausa provinces to the north (Tachie-Obeng et al. 2001²⁴⁴). The absence of such a trade reinforces the idea that the Dahomean state was, at the very least, not focused on the expansion of other sectors of its economy besides slaves.

While it is clear that the Dahomean elites would likely always to have suffered a fall in revenue had they switched to an export economy based solely on palm oil and perhaps kola nuts, they could yet have developed the kind of dual model of the kind seen in Biafra in the 1820s. It is therefore necessary to look at other factors influencing the rigid attachment to export slavery.

7.4. TRADING PARTNERS

In contrast to the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra, the Portuguese and the French, rather than the British, were the most important customers in the long eighteenth century (Table 7.1). The Portuguese dominance of trade can at least partly be explained by local preferences for Portuguese exchange goods. Bahian merchants were particularly motivated to expand their presence in the region as they exported a certain kind of low grade tobacco soaked in cane spirit that was greatly prized in the Bight of Benin, but essentially unsellable in European markets. Pipe smoking was a symbol of elite status and Ribeiro (2008, p142) has argued that ‘...the large expansion of the Bahian slave trade, and especially the traffic from the Costa da Mina, coincided with the establishment of the traffic in tobacco’. A further advantage for the

²⁴³ After the British occupation of Lagos, the Blue Books indicate that there was export trade of kola nuts to Brazil, possibly for the large numbers of slaves or former slaves from Oyo / Dahomean territories (Agiri 1972, pp58–62). However, this trade was very limited in the 1860s and 1870s, worth only £4,000 in 1871 (the highest figure for the period) compared to nearly £200,000 of exports of palm kernels in the same year. TNA CO151/2 – 11, Blue Books Lagos 1863-1873

²⁴⁴ “COLA NITIDA & COLA ACUMINATA A State of Knowledge Report undertaken for The Central African Regional Program for the Environment”, Tachie-Obeng, E. & Brown, N Brown, Oxford Forestry Institute Department of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford (2001)

Portuguese was that, during the first half of the eighteenth century, they were able to pay with the gold mined in the Minas Gerais mines (Law 1990b, pp106–111). The Dahomeans were eager purchasers of gold, perhaps due to the declining value of cowries, the region's principal currency (Law 1991, pp307–8). While this trade only lasted until the mines were largely exhausted in the 1760s (Bergad 2006, pp xvii, 6), it did give Brazilian/Portuguese traders the status of Dahomey's preferred trading partners. The reasons for the French to prefer trading in the Bight of Benin are less clear, but British dominance in other areas of West Africa may have been a contributing factor.

Table 7.1. Percentage of slave embarkations from the Bight of Benin by nation

Years	Portugal / Brazil	Netherlands	France	Great Britain
1680 – 1720	43	17	11	26
1721 – 1760	61	3	28	8
1761 – 1808	57	0	23	19
1761 – 1791*	49	0	33	17

Source: TSTD. *1791 was the year the French revolutionary government temporarily withdrew from the slave trade

The dominance of France and Brazil/Portugal had two possible consequences. Firstly, I have argued in the first part of this thesis that neither nation was a significant buyer of either provisions or commodities from the case study areas, instead focusing almost exclusively on the purchase of human captives. In Chapters 3 and 4 I showed that demand for provisions and 'legitimate commerce' in the pre-abolition period were largely driven by British traders, especially from the 1770s. A relative lack of demand may have been a reason why the Dahomeans remained so focused on the slave trade to the detriment of developing other types of exports. This was certainly the analysis of one British trader in 1842, who argued that the relative lack of British traders at Whydah was the reason for the weak development of 'legitimate commerce'.²⁴⁵ Secondly, in the post-abolition era, it was probably easier for Brazilian/Portuguese vessels to circumvent British abolition efforts, at least until the 1830s. Slavers leaving Brazil could take legitimate passports to trade in Molembo or Cabinda in West Central Africa, which was in theory a legal slave trading zone until the Equipment Act was passed in 1839 (Thomas 1999, p659). These passports allowed them to stop at Sao Tome and Princes Island to provision themselves, and from there they could easily sail the short distance to Benin where they already had well-established trade contacts (Ribeiro 2008, p139). As a result, Dahomey did not suffer the same kind of shock experienced by the withdrawal of the British from the transatlantic slave trade.

²⁴⁵ 1842 (551) (551-II) Report from the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index. Part I.--Report and evidence. F Swanzy to committee, p45, para 758

Although demand of course influences supply, Lovejoy and Richardson (2007) argue that, ultimately, regional patterns of slave/non-slave exports were driven by what local markets were able or willing to provide.²⁴⁶ As shown in Part 1, the Bight of Benin never supplied a large quantity of provisions or commodities even when, from 1680 to 1730 it was Britain's second most important region of slave embarkation, supplying around a third of its slaves. RAC ships usually stocked up on food at the Gold Coast before sailing on to Arda, Jakin or Whydah. In the mid-eighteenth century, the commodity vessels of the MCC did stop at some ports in the Bight of Benin but never bought more than small quantities of ivory. Furthermore, during the apogee of the transatlantic slave trade in the second half of the eighteenth century, one in five slaves from the Bight of Benin found themselves in ships that sailed from Bristol, London or Liverpool. Throughout the period under study there were therefore relatively large numbers of ships landing in harbors along the Slave Coast which would have been prepared to buy commodity exports or food provisions had these been available. Thus, while the nationality of Dahomey's main trading partners may have had some role to play, it was certainly not a decisive one. Of far greater importance was Dahomey's military culture.

7.5. DAHOMEAN MILITARISM

Dahomey's continued focus on slave exports, against the long-term trend of revenue decline, cannot be fully appreciated without first understanding the institutional lock-in effects of slave-trade based militarism. In Dahomey, the military ethos of the ruling elite was, according to one recent analysis, the most extreme of any in pre-colonial Africa (Reid 2012, p 113). While the Asante were a highly-militarised society, I have argued in Chapter 5 that there were several reasons why alternative 'peace parties' could emerge, and the elite could both tolerate and support the development of commodity exports. In contrast, factors unique to the Bight of Benin prevented the ruling elite from tolerating the development of policies or factions supporting commodity exports. These factors are the region's specific ecological make-up, and path-dependent institutional development, in the context of early specialisation in a centrally coordinated slave trade.

The seventeenth-century roots of the Dahomean military state

The Dahomean state, unlike that of Asante or polities of the Biafran area, developed and expanded in a region in which the Atlantic slave trade played a pivotal role in the economy and society. Law (1991, p267) has argued against early interpretations by Akinjogbin (1967) that the Dahomean state was radically different from its predecessors. Instead he suggests that its policies were based to a great degree on the traditions and ideologies of the seventeenth

²⁴⁶ "In every region the supply of captives for sale to European carriers remained essentially under African control..." Lovejoy and Richardson, 2007, p50

and early eighteenth century slave coast polities that preceded it. Three legacies were of particular importance. Firstly, the slave trade had been growing steadily for nearly 80 years and was providing ever greater quantities of valuable foreign goods (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). In contrast to the Asante, the Dahomean state came to power in a region where slaves were the only commodity exchanged for important imports such as guns and cloth. Even more importantly, they inherited a tradition in which the monarchy benefited most from the trade in people. For example, the kings of Hueda (the territory that included the port of Whydah) had the right to sell their slaves first, at set prices that were usually higher than the market value. Foreign traders were also expected to buy a certain number of slaves from the kings before they could begin trading with other merchants (Law 2004, pp117). If one state was able to defeat its rivals and control both the coast and interior it could monopolise the ‘production’ of slaves, and the associated revenue flows would disproportionately benefit the king.²⁴⁷

Secondly, the ability to control this wealth depended on the development of larger, more effective fighting forces. The first major slave exporting kingdom was that of Allada, which dominated the region in the mid-seventeenth century. However, during the latter half of the century the Hueda Kingdom, situated on the coast with its capital at Savi, became the single most important embarkation point of slaves to the Atlantic market on the West Coast of Africa. Having broken free from its former Alladan rulers in the 1670s, the elites of the kingdom developed a more efficient, centrally controlled and taxed, slave export operation (Law 1991, p51, Norman 2009, p147).²⁴⁸ Competition between Hueda and Allada further enhanced the focus on “...*funneling war captives to the sea and taxing traders moving through their territories...*” (Norman 2012, p147). Conflicts between Hueda, Allada and other powers along the coast also led to a change in the nature of war which was very similar to the military revolutions within the Akan region in the same period. Imported firearms led to a greater professionalisation of warfare. Larger armies needed greater central control to organise, provision and lead. Contemporary sources suggest that the size of Allada’s army in the 1670s was between 40,000 to 50,000, out of a total population of around 200,000, which would suggest that virtually all adult males were called up to fight (Law 1991, pp58, 97). While Law (1991, p235) is cautious in attributing warfare during the period to a desire to simply capture slaves, the possibility of profitably selling your captives certainly made conflict more lucrative than in the past, and also provided the means to keep warfare going. As victory meant gaining a greater share of the slave trade, it heightened the stakes in any conflict (Klein 2010, p119).

Finally, the goods imported from the Atlantic allowed these kings and other influential elites to differentiate themselves from the common herd through conspicuous consumption. It also allowed them to develop and maintain systems of patronage and redistribution to maintain the loyalty of the populace. Archaeological studies from the region controlled by the Hueda kings

²⁴⁷ Bay (1998, p43) states that for Dahomey “...income from the (slave) trade was indisputably a central source of state revenue for at least half the life of the kingdom..”

²⁴⁸ However, it was still the case that the majority of slaves were probably still supplied by Allada, and perhaps ultimately Dahomey (Law 2004, p48).

find that from the late seventeenth century, the monarchy and elites were building large compounds for themselves, and were filling these with imported goods from Atlantic slave merchants (Table 7.2).²⁴⁹

Table 7.2. The number of late seventeenth / early eighteenth century imported artefacts found at the Savi palace site and Huedan countryside / settlement centres

Artefact Comparisons	Imported Smoking Pipe (#)	Metal Objects (#)	Imported Ceramics (#)	Beads (local & imported) (#)	Imported Glass (#)
Savi Palace Excavations	4,879	542	946	1,031	5,661
Countryside /Settlement Centres	372	52	9	30	83

Source: Norman (2009), p404; Palace data from Kelly (1995)

In a tradition apparently inherited from Allada, Huedan kings were required to parade annually and redistribute some of the wealth gained from the Atlantic trade to elites and the general populace. This was seen as perhaps a just recompense for the privileges they enjoyed, which, as argued above, allowed them a far greater share of the profits of the slave trade. However, Norman (2012, p149) suggests that the last three Huedan monarchs came to see this as a burden and began to distance themselves from these ceremonies, which in turn alienated them from their subjects and created internal tensions that could be exploited by their enemies. From 1714 on, the Alladans launched a series of attacks and attempted to redirect the slave trade away from Huedan territory. Neither side achieved anything beyond weakening themselves, which gave the Dahomeans the opportunity to attack and defeat both states in the late 1720s.

To conclude, the Allada and Hueda kingdoms bequeathed Dahomey a model of statehood which rewarded military prowess through a growing transatlantic slave trade. Moreover, this history also contained some clear lessons about what might happen to prospective rulers when they ever ceased to distribute sufficient rewards to their followers, or when they failed as military commanders.

²⁴⁹ Norman (2009 pp408, 409) suggests that the imports that have survived tend to be ‘*concentrated in offering and ritual spaces*’ which suggests that such items were used by elites to gain the favour of various ‘*cosmological actors*’. However, this would also signal to the rest of the population that those giving such generous gifts in such quantities were blessed with divine favour and were therefore worthy of their positions.

Regional politics and the maintenance of militarism

The second major influence on the institutional development of the Dahomean state was the fact that it was never able to achieve the same kind of regional hegemony enjoyed by the Asante, until perhaps the 1820s/1830s, after the collapse of Oyo. As argued in Chapter 5, after the 1740s the Asante faced no significant threat from neighbouring states and also held a near monopoly over their most important export product, gold. By contrast, the Dahomeans always faced threats to both their territorial integrity and their control over their key export, slaves. Both conditions provided a clear incentive to strengthen the formal and informal institutions underpinning the slave trade.

After King Agaja had conquered the states of Allada and Hueda in the 1720s, he was unable to enjoy the relative security enjoyed by the Asantahene, in large part due to the unique ecology of the region. To the north east of Dahomey lay the territories of the Oyo empire. The heartlands of this kingdom lay in the savannah belt of the Dahomean gap and were therefore largely free of the trypanosomiasis carrying tse tse fly (Alsan 2015, p386). This allowed the Oyo to import horses of sufficient size and strength from their northern neighbours and maintain the region's only cavalry based army (Law 1976, p184, Reid 2012, p80). This force was a far superior military tool to the musket wielding infantry forces fielded by the states nearer the coast, and until the nineteenth century the Dahomeans were never able to devise an effective strategy to resist it.²⁵⁰ Oyo firstly invaded after Agaja's victories in 1727, supposedly on behalf of the Huedan kings, and continued to launch attacks until the late 1740s (Law 1991, pp288-95, 318-23). In every case the Dahomeans were forced to retreat into the bush, and let their territories be plundered. However, shortages of provisions and the presence of the tse tse fly, especially during the rainy season, meant that Oyo could never keep its army in the field for long, not least because the horses were extremely expensive to import and maintain (Law 1976, p186, Reid 2012, p80). Around 1748, the Dahomeans had to agree to become a tributary of Oyo and therefore, until the collapse of Oyo in the 1820s, always suffered a significant existential threat to its existence.

Meanwhile on the coast, the Hueda leadership fled westwards where they eventually settled around Lake Aheme and remained a threat to Whydah until defeated in the 1770s (Law 1991, p286). While the Dahomean military had a reputation for both ferocity and effectiveness (Law 1991 p270), geography again played a role in ensuring that its conflicts with these coastal rivals took so long to resolve. Firstly, Dahomey's enemies had the option of calling on assistance from Oyo, which often prevented them from applying sustained military pressure in other conflicts. Secondly, the new towns founded by refugees and members of the royal

²⁵⁰ This had been the case for earlier states as well. Oyo had invaded and defeated Allada in 1698, apparently due to the murder of an ambassador sent by the former power (Law 1991, p237). According to Bosman (1705, p397) "...in a short time mastered half of the King of Ardra's (i.e. Allada) territories, and made such a slaughter amongst his subjects that the number of the dead being innumerable, was commonly expressed by saying they were like the grains of corn in the field."

houses of Allada such as Apa, Badagary, Porto Novo and Epe were on the eastern side of the Slave Coast. They were generally situated around lagoons and waterways, requiring canoe-based warfare, which the Dahomeans never effectively developed as their forces mainly came from the drier Abomey plateau (Smith 1989, p52, Law 1991, p314).²⁵¹ Thornton (1999, p76), sums up this position “...Dahomey....could never control the coast because it lacked an adequate fleet....it was constantly harassed from the north because it could not maintain a cavalry. It is not surprising that Dahomey’s rulers lived so much by war for they were almost incapable of winning any war decisively and were constantly vulnerable.”

There were two main consequences over the long term. Firstly, the threat of invasions meant that the state needed to continue to devote considerable resources to the army and therefore retain the highly-militarised structure it had developed in the seventeenth century. Secondly, it always faced considerable competition in the trade for slaves from other areas of the Slave Coast and from Oyo, who could send slaves through other ports in the east hostile to Dahomey. The state had to maintain a high slave output through raiding and military expeditions otherwise Whydah would lose its position as the region’s main port, and the state would lose crucial revenues and goods.²⁵² It did of course use its military forces to weaken the opposition. For example, after 1770 the port of Badagary, supplied with captives from Oyo, was beginning to export more captives than Whydah, which led to the Dahomeans invading and destroying the town (Ribeiro 2008, p143). However, the Dahomeans were still not free of external threats until after the fall of Oyo in the 1820s.

The Dahomeans did initially benefit by expanding their raiding activities into the previously closed areas of Yorubaland (see Section 7.2).²⁵³ However, the increased violence and instability also created opportunities for the new Yoruba states, in particular Ibadan, Ijaye and Abeokuta, to participate in the transatlantic slave trade. These new states switched from cavalry-based warfare to gun-wielding infantry commanded by warriors whose power, like that of the Dahomean elites, rested on their military prowess and ability to redistribute wealth acquired through slave raiding (Reid 2012, pp7-8). Their main outlet was the port of Lagos which had eclipsed Whydah as the most important slave entrepot by the late 1820s (Mann 2007, pp40-42). Not only did the Dahomeans have to deal with the new competition, they also became involved in a destructive conflict with Abeokuta. This culminated in a disastrous war in 1851 during which most of the Dahomean army was destroyed, and took away their ability to effectively raid for slaves (Reid 1986, pp288-89, Reid 2012, p113). This was ultimately a

²⁵¹ This is mentioned by Norris (1789) who noted that during a campaign against the exiled Huedan king in the 1770s, their enemies were able to escape by fleeing to an island in the coastal lagoons and were safe because “...the Dahomeans had no canoes, and indeed know nothing of the management of them...”

²⁵² This was largely achieved by Agaja’s successor Tegbesu who reversed many of the previously unpopular policies of his predecessor and helped reestablish good relations with Europeans after the wars of Agaja nearly brought trade to a halt (Ribeiro 2008, p143). He also helped strengthen the monarchy’s control over their core territories on the Abomey plateau, secured peace with Oyo and once again established an efficient and increasing flow of slaves to the coast (Bay 1998, p119, Law 1989b).

²⁵³ For the first time, Yoruba, as opposed to Aja, captives made up the majority slaves exported (Manning 1982, p31).

temporary set-back as the army was rebuilt and was to begin slave raiding again within a decade in response to the aforementioned demand from Cuba. However, the revival was short lived after British-led efforts eventually forced the closure of this last American market for slaves in the early 1860s (Klein 2010, pp206–11).

Militarism and elite power

This militaristic culture provided a remarkably effective and stable basis for elite power. There were just 9 kings from 1645 to 1889 who ruled for an average of around 27 years, comparing favourably to the Asante whose rulers stayed on the Golden Stool for an average of 15 years each during the period 1720 to 1884. Bay (1998) sets out in detail how successive kings used both religion and developed a unique role for powerful women to legitimise and cement their rule. However, time in office was ultimately dependent on military prowess, legitimacy in the eyes of the elite military caste, and effectively rewarding supporters through wealth generated by the slave trade (Smith 1989, p53). Successful military campaigns were thus crucial to the monarch and the ruling elites. Royal officials and dependants could be granted land and villages in new territories, which provided them with food and wealth for distribution to support their own dependants (Bay 1998, p103). Captives taken in war were, by Dahomean law, the property of the man who controlled the soldiers. As the king controlled the largest army he could expect the most slaves for sale, sacrifice or capture, but as all his leading officials were also required to contribute soldiers, they too had plenty of motivation to take an active role in the annual campaigns (Reid 1986, p69).²⁵⁴ Common soldiers also benefited as they were paid a certain amount in cowry shells for each head and live captive they brought back to their commanders (Reid 1986, p 70). Thus, the monarch was able to harness the potential for violence of his elites and their dependents and channel it into an economically rewarding pursuit under his control.²⁵⁵

Another institution dependent on the transatlantic slave trade inherited from the Alladans and Huedans was the annual ‘customs’. This was an event at which the ruling coalition of the king

²⁵⁴ A British diplomat estimated that 40% of captives in late 1840s were taken by the king (Parl. Papers Col. Africa Vol. 50., 1849 (399), vol. XXXIV: Mission to the Kings of Ashantee and Dahomey, Report by B. Cruickshank 9/11/1848, quoted in Reid 1986, p70)

²⁵⁵ As King Gezo told the British diplomat Cruickshank in 1848 during negotiations to abolish the slave trade: “*It was the slave trade that made him terrible to his enemies, and loved, honoured and respected by his people. How could he give it up? It had been the ruling principle of action with himself and his subjects from their earliest childhood. Their thoughts, their habits, their discipline, their mode of life had been formed with reference to this all-engrossing occupation; even the very songs with which the mother stilled her crying infant, told of triumph over foes reduced to slavery. Could he, by signing this treaty, change the sentiments of a whole people? It could not be*” (quoted in Law 1992, p10). It should be noted that this statement was made in the context of negotiations about the compensation that would be paid to Gezo by the British government to give up slave exports. Therefore, it is natural that his negotiators would want to emphasise the difficulties of such a request in order to increase the potential pay-off. Nonetheless, it still does reflect the fact that most contemporary and modern literature has argued, that the Dahomean rulers did rely on the revenues accrued from the Atlantic and the ideology of militarism.

and elites could publically display their military might through parades, their devotion to ancestors through the sacrifice of slaves and prisoners of war, and their wealth through conspicuous displays of gift giving to both commoners and elite supporters. Both Law (1991, p277) and Bay (1998, pp66-7, 128) argue that these ceremonies formed the core basis of the legitimacy of the rulers. The king in particular needed to show that he sat firmly at the apex of a pyramid of power and wealth. He needed to prove that he was not only able to distribute more largess and sacrifice greater numbers of people²⁵⁶ than those around him, but that he also exceeded his predecessors in terms of riches and generosity (Law 1997b, pp215-16). Hosting insufficiently impressive customs could be very costly to the monarchy. As already noted, the final Huedan kings may have provoked internal opposition to their rule by their failure to adequately redistribute their profits from the slave trade (Norman 2012, p149). Soumonni (1995, p80, 81) suggests that one of the principal reasons for the deposition of King Gezo's predecessor, Adanzan, in 1818, were his '*irregular and unimpressive Annual Customs*'.

This is to be compared with the Asante kings and elites whose wealth, power and prestige was ultimately based on gold, which required that they supported the application of labour to production. The absence of gold within the Bight of Benin, and the early impact of the transatlantic slave trade, meant that the region's elites developed a very different attitude towards both free and coerced labour, which will be the subject of the next section.

7.6. MILITARISM AND LABOUR

The institutional development of the Dahomean state had a very significant impact on the allocation of labour within the kingdom. Firstly, warfare and the slave trade greatly reduced the population in the region as a whole, thus decreasing the pool of both free and coerced labour. Secondly, the powerful elite could exert a far greater control over scarce female labour and direct it towards its own needs and priorities. Thirdly, military activities and slaving activities took farmers away from their land, while at the same time requiring labour for food production for non-productive soldiers and slaves. This meant that, unlike in the Gold Coast and Biafra, there was far less free or coerced labour available to develop an export commodities trade. In the absence of elite support, such a trade was not feasible.

²⁵⁶ Bay (1998, p 66) notes that "...in a society where wealth was measured in terms of the numbers of dependants under a person's control, human sacrifice signalled the greatest possible expenditure of wealth. It also signalled military power and an implicit threat to Dahomey's neighbours, for those who were sacrificed were captives of war."

Demographic impact

The early intensity of the slave trade had a major demographic impact. At least until the nineteenth century, the majority of slaves, were captured within around 200 km of the coast²⁵⁷ and enslaved by violence²⁵⁸ (Klein 2010, p119, Law 1991, p182). Manning (1982, p32) estimates that from the 1680s to the 1730s the area around the Bight of Benin experienced an annual population loss of around 3%. This resulted in a fall of the population in the entire region from around 511,000 in the mid-1680s to around 280,000 at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It should also be noted that the kingdom of Dahomey was spared the worst excesses of this demographic decline. There was firstly the rule, apparently instituted by the founding king of the dynasty Wegbaja, that no native born Dahomean could be sold outside of the kingdom. While this rule was occasionally broken, such as during the reign of Tegbesu, Dahomeans were far less likely than their neighbours to end up in the holds of European ships (Bay 1998, pp145–46). Secondly, the Dahomeans (and the Alladans and Huedans before them) also retained considerable numbers of slaves to work in the domestic economy (Law 1991, p67). Exact numbers are not available but they probably made up a substantial proportion of the population.²⁵⁹

However, even in Dahomey there was a decline in population (Bay 1998, pp 145–46). As well as regular warfare having a destructive impact on agriculture/food production, many were killed during conflicts which were more or less constant, given the lack of regional hegemony and the material and ideological demands of the elites (Law 1991, p61). For example, Bay (1998, pp58–59) estimates some 5,000 were killed and 10,000 to 11,000 were taken prisoner during the conquest of Whydah by Agaja. Armies risked heavy losses through diseases such as smallpox, and the Dahomeans suffered a number of serious defeats against Oyo and coastal states such as Popo, which saw them lose large numbers of men (Law 1991, p62,319). Warfare was a damaging activity, not only because of the potentially high numbers of casualties, but also because of the premium placed on young adults of both sexes as soldiers and captives.²⁶⁰ They were disproportionally targeted during raids and wars and as a result probably suffered higher rates of mortality, either during combat or due to the harsh

²⁵⁷ Manning (1982, p32), although Law (1991, pp182– 90) suggests that many slaves may have been captured from further afield, especially in Yoruba areas where they were sold in a succession of markets until they reached the coast. However, the evidence is not conclusive, especially so before the nineteenth century. Lovejoy (2011, pp79-80) supports Manning's view that until at least mid-eighteenth century nearly all slaves were coming from Aja areas no more than 200km from slave ports.

²⁵⁸ I.e. slave raiding, taken as captives during war or kidnapped.

²⁵⁹ Norris (1789, p157) notes that “...the bulk of the people are slaves to a few freedman...” Forbes (1851 Vol I, p14) writes that “...of the whole population (of 200,000) not more than 20,000 are free, the remainder slaves.” Both of these are likely exaggerations, based on their belief in the absolute power of the king over his subjects (Norris 1789, p157 and Forbes 1851 Vol I, p37). However, they do probably reflect the fact that there were considerable numbers of non-free people within the kingdom.

²⁶⁰ The so-called ‘Amazon’ regiment of female soldiers became increasingly important during the nineteenth century and may have made up around half of the Dahomean forces who battled French forces at the end of the 1880s (Ross 1971, p156)

conditions during transportation for sale as slaves, thus reducing the general reproductive potential of the population (Bay 1998, p146).

To put this population decline in comparative perspective, the metropolitan region of Asante was around 16,000 km² (Wilks 1975, p80) and probably contained a population of around 350,000 in the mid-nineteenth century (see *Appendix 5.3.b.*) which gives a population density of 21.7 / km². This was hardly crowded, and far lower than the figure for England and Wales of 35 / km² in 1700.²⁶¹ Law (1991, p58) gives a figure of around 200,000 people in the kingdom of Dahomey in the mid-nineteenth century, and also suggests that there were fewer people than two centuries before. During the same period Dahomey had an approximate area of 29,000 km², which gives a far lower population density of 6.9 / km².²⁶² Thus, there was a greatly reduced pool of labour available to produce either surplus food to provision slave ships or develop the kind of dual-commodity/slave export model seen in the Bight of Biafra. However, a relatively light population density was not the only impediment. Elites in Dahomey monopolised both free and coerced labour to a far greater extent than in the other case study areas, and used it in pursuit of their own wealth and power. This denied commoners the opportunity to engage in production for the Atlantic market.

Female labour

Law (1991 p64) notes that sources in the late seventeenth century suggest that both men and women were engaged in agriculture, while a century later only females seem to be working the fields. He suggests this was a result of the development of a “...a warrior ethos which involved a disdain for agriculture, and which might well have discouraged its free males from participation in agricultural work.”. This would have firstly meant there were fewer available sources of labour, in an area experiencing a strong demographic decline. However, this was exacerbated by the fact that elite men in Dahomey were always highly motivated and able to acquire as many wives and female slaves as possible to enhance their wealth and social standing (Law 1991, p67). Agaja was said to have had 2,000 wives in 1724 (Bay 1998, p50), while Bosman (1705, p344), writing about the Huedan kings, suggests they had between four and five thousand, with leading nobles having up to a thousand.²⁶³ Writing in the later eighteenth century, Norris (1789, p99) estimated that the royal wives numbered “...between three and four thousand; his principal men have from one to three or four hundred wives each and people in humbler stations from half a dozen to twenty...” Polygamy was the norm, rather than the exception, in all three case study regions but Law (1991, p65) argues that it was

²⁶¹ Based on a population of 5,290,000 from Floud et al. 1994, 151,013 km² from www.ons.gov.uk, accessed 25/10/2016

²⁶² Based on the size of *département* in the modern country of Benin, compared to the approximate borders of the kingdom in the nineteenth century. Data from <http://www.geohive.com/cntry/benin.aspx>, accessed 8/9/2016, Manning (1982, p60)

²⁶³ Law (1991, p79) suggests that the Dahomean and Huedan kings had from 800 to 3,000 wives, both in their palaces and around the kingdom.

particularly extreme in Dahomey, especially in the way that females were monopolised by the elites. Norris (1789, p99) wrote that the monarchy and aristocracy “...engross the major part of the women...” Writers in the nineteenth century noted that the state had the right to demand a daughter from every family in kingdom, who could be assigned to the female regiment in the army, kept in the palace or “...dashed to the deserving soldiers as wives...” (Skertchly 1874: 454 – 455, Law 2004, p94). This meant that common men had a much reduced chance of finding a wife, which is perhaps best illustrated by the existence of state controlled prostitution. In 1705, Bosman noted that:

“In Fida (Whydah) and the country around it and in all the land of Fida, is a very great plenty of whores and at a cheaper price than on the Gold Coast....these countries being very populous, the slaves vastly numerous and the married women kept up very strict.....’tis customary for some of the most considerable and rich negro ladies, when lying upon their death bed to buy some of these foreign female slaves and make a present of them to the publick..” (p214)²⁶⁴

This tradition carried on into the Dahomean era. Bay (1998 pp148,149), working on data from Law (1991, p54), notes that prostitutes were either provided by the state or endowed to the people by wealthy women, with prices controlled and far below market value.²⁶⁵ This service was provided because elites were denying younger and lower ranked men the ability to find a wife. It also meant that most of the kingdom’s female labour was harnessed and controlled by elite men. Extremely strict rules about adultery for both men and women (Klein 2010 p 122) meant that many women, even in smaller households, would never produce as many children as they were capable of, simply as a result of sharing their husband with so many others.²⁶⁶ The result was a lower birth rate which in turn exacerbated the existing problem of a falling population. It also meant that a great share of the kingdom’s labour force was exploited by elite men and not by common households. This was important, as elites probably had far less motivation than commoners to use the labour available to them in the production of export commodities.

Wives, after all, might have been used in palm oil production, considering that in the other case study areas, this was primarily the women’s responsibility. In general, men only cleared the land and harvested the fruits, although there is evidence that in the second half of the nineteenth century male slaves supplemented female labour when production demands were higher (Law 1995c, p206). Even so, women seem to have been the principal producers. Why

²⁶⁴ While this practise was unusual enough for Bosman to note, it was apparently not unique. To the west of the Fante region on the Gold Coast local citizens could apparently petition the local Caboceroes (i.e. wealthy traders) to provide a certain number of prostitutes who, after a truly bizarre ceremony “...for the remainder of her life obliged to refuse no man the use of her body though he offers never so small a sum...” (pp211, 212)

²⁶⁵ For example, at the end of the seventeenth century, sex cost 3 cowries, and a chicken 96. By 1710 sex had risen to 5 cowries, and chickens to 160. By the 1850s, an ‘official’ prostitute cost 20 cowries while chickens had risen to 280

²⁶⁶ We might further speculate that there may have also been problems with the ‘quality’ of the offspring, if this continues over generations. See Henrich et al. (2012) for some discussion of the downsides of polygamous relationships, albeit in a modern context.

then did elite households not produce more palm oil when there had been a clear demand since the late eighteenth century? For a start, women were heavily involved in agriculture, child rearing and food preparation, which was crucial given the high number of unproductive men involved in military activities (see below) (Bay 1998, p146, 197, Law 1991, p66). In addition, the wives of elite men, especially those of the royal family, were also significant producers of wealth for their husbands. The wives of the Huedan monarch had monopolies over certain market activities such as beer brewing (Norman 2012, p155). Under the Dahomeans, palace wives and slaves controlled the trade in pottery and the stringing of cowry shells (Bay 1998, p210). Women were also heavily involved in the production of goods for local markets such as prepared food and locally dyed cloth (Bay 1998, p212), and seem to have been the principal traders in those markets (Law 2004, p76). Contrary to what Inikori suggests (2007, 2011), there was a strong market for goods within Dahomey (Law 1991, p47). Contemporary sources noted that markets at both Savi, during the time of the Alladans, and Whydah, after the Dahomean conquest, were full of a range of both locally produced goods together with trade items from the Atlantic as well as the African interior (Norman 2012, p148, Law 2004, p82). Such markets were also an important source of revenue for rulers, who claimed taxes on market sales (Law 1991, pp92,93). Thus, directing available labour towards internal production and trade was potentially very lucrative for elite men.

However, slaves might also have been used in palm oil production. While labour had become scarcer for most of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the situation changed in the 1820s with the collapse of the Oyo empire. The consequence was that the territories open to Dahomean raids increased dramatically, especially in the Yoruba areas on their eastern borders. It therefore became possible to both export sufficient numbers of slaves, whilst at the same time retaining more for the production of export crops. As argued in Chapter 5, ‘foreign’ slaves were usually preferred as their labour could be more intensively exploited than slaves who shared a common cultural / linguistic heritage with their masters. The influx of Yoruba slaves into Dahomey led to the development of a clear distinction between *anato* or free commoners and *kannumon* or slaves. The latter category was not fixed and some slaves might have *anato* children or become *anato* themselves. However, some groups of slaves were denied such a possibility and they and their descendants were considered *kannumon* in perpetuity. This was usually the fate of Yoruba slaves (Bay 1998, p 192) and, as such, it seems that they were not afforded the rights of Aja slaves. Thus, male Yoruba slaves were among the first to be used to increase palm oil production, despite their unwillingness to be involved in what was considered ‘female work’ (Bay 1998, p188, 196 - 197). However, although some slaves were used in this way in the 1840s, it was not common practice until the 1850s. There were potential security risks, as slaves imported from outside the Aja areas to work on plantations were likely worked harder than other slaves, and could not be so easily incorporated into local societies. Manning (1982, p54) and Reid (1986, p420) note that there were rumours (which were taken very seriously by the state) of a conspiracy between the Egba confederacy²⁶⁷ and Yoruba slaves on the Abomey plateau in 1855.

²⁶⁷ One of the Oyo successor states and a rival for regional power

However, fears of uprisings did not prevent their use in production throughout the second half of the nineteenth century (Law 1995b), so we must look to additional reasons why the kingdom's labour resources were not channelled earlier into the production of export crops. In the next section, I argue that regular military expeditions were a substantial drain on manpower, which further compounded the relative scarcity of surplus labour for production.

Production for the army

The exact nature of the Dahomean military machine has been debated for many decades. Most literature agrees that the Dahomean military was more effective and more highly trained than other armies in the region (Snelgrave 1734, pp77–79, Dalzel 1795, p47, Forbes 1851 Vol I, pp19, 20, Law 1991, p96).²⁶⁸ However, there is some dispute as to whether there was a full-time standing army, which would have made Dahomey unique amongst the case study regions. Some contemporary sources certainly suggest that this was the case (Dalzel 1795, px, Forbes 1851 Vol. I, p14,15). Forbes (1851 Vol I, p14,15), writing in the late 1840s, states that this consisted of 12,000 full-time soldiers, supported by a further 12,000 troops levied from the provinces and a similar number of auxiliaries, although these numbers are likely to be estimates based on a possible misunderstanding of local languages.²⁶⁹ Some modern scholars (Akinjobin 1967, p38, Smith 1989, p56, Thornton 1999, p91) have argued that there was indeed a full-time professional force of soldiers, numbering around 3,000 and recruited from the 'core' regions on the plateau and stationed around the capital. However, this assessment has been disputed for some time (Argyle 1966, pp81–89). Ross (1971, p148) suggests that while there were 2,000 to 3,000 men stationed around the capital, they did not constitute a standing army and outside of the annual slave hunts were mainly engaged in ceremonial duties. Law (1991, pp270,271) suggests that there was no full-time army as the soldiers apparently also engaged in agriculture, but they were nonetheless much better trained than other soldiers in the region.

While it is not possible to say with any certainty that the state maintained a full-time army, it does seem likely that large numbers of non-productive soldiers were employed for a considerable part of the year, and needed to be supported by the kingdom's agricultural labour force. Moreover, unlike in Asante, kings were obliged to go to war on an annual basis, with these campaigns being tied to the aforementioned 'customs' both before and after fighting

²⁶⁸ This is not to say that it was invincible. Battle tactics remained rudimentary, involving lines of men rushing forward to fire volleys before retreating to reload. Most attacks consisted of raids on less numerous or well-armed foes. While effective in the circumstances of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it wasn't sufficient against the French or Yoruba successor states (Ross 1971, pp154,155, Smith 1989, p87)

²⁶⁹ According to Segurola & Rassinox in the "Dictionnaire Fon-Français" (2000), p. 125, multiples of 4,000, are translated as meaning 'nombre indéfini'. It comes from a unit of cowry currency called a 'cabess' or 'head' which numbers 4,000 cowries. Thus, a force of 24,000 might simply mean "a lot". I would like to thank Robin Law for providing me with this information.

(Forbes 1851 Vol I, p15–19).²⁷⁰ The monarchy retained the right to forcibly enlist young boys to act as a kind of page to more experienced soldiers in order to learn how to fight, which took valuable labour away from farms (Norris, 1795, p48, Thornton 1999, p91). High ranking elites also maintained full-time professional soldiers²⁷¹ and all leading officials were required to levy troops for annual military campaigns (or ‘slave hunts’) (Bay 1998, p105). These were raised from their own lands and might be expected to have at least some military training (Smith 1989, p56). Numbers vary but there are reports of such contingents being anywhere between 3,000 and 20,000 men (Thornton 1999, p92).²⁷² Providing sufficient provisions for these forces would have been exceptionally challenging, and required that elites used the coerced labour at their dispersal to grow food for the army (Smith 1989, p58, Law 1991, p67).

It is possible to estimate the labour inputs required (see Table 7.3). Wilks (1993 pp44–63) has calculated the yields and labour requirements of a typical farm within the Asante region, which produced the staple foods of the forest region, namely plantain, maize, yams, cassava and cocoyams. These, with the addition of beans, are also noted as the principal foodstuffs in Dahomey and Whydah in the eighteenth century.²⁷³ He suggests that a family of five working a single small farm for three years (the length of time the land could be cultivated before it lost fertility) could produce around 12 tons or 14.5 million calories of these staples, which probably made up around 80% of a farmer’s caloric intake. The intensity of labour varied considerably, with some years requiring much more work to clear and prepare fallow land. However, he also suggests that a family would not work as hard as coerced labour, so it will be assumed that two more intensively exploited slaves could do the work. Active soldiers consume more calories than the 2,500/day recommended by the WHO for a sedentary lifestyle (see Chapter 2, p10) and could expect to be better fed than farmers, who Wilks (1993, p59) suggests consumed 1,773 calories / day. I will take an estimate of 3,000 calories a day which meant each soldier would require 3.29 million calories every 3 years. Therefore, one farm or two slaves could provide for 5.5 soldiers, meaning that the monarchy would need to have over 3,403 free, or 1,361 unfree, farmers to keep 3,000 soldiers supplied with staples. However, for each soldier there were also the boys assigned to them, along with any other dependants such as wives and children, and the slaves on farms also needed to eat. Furthermore, the capital Abomey and the second city of Cana had populations of around

²⁷⁰ For an account based on Dahomean traditions, see Abbé Thomas Mouléro, ‘Guézo ou Guédizo Massigbe’, *Études dahoméennes, nouvelle série* 4 (1965), pp51-59, which says of Gezo, ‘Il ne passa aucune année qu’il n’ait fait une guerre annuelle’, and gives a complete list of these ‘guerres annuelles’ (while noting that there were also ‘autres guerres’) (pp52,53). Thanks are due once again to Robin Law for passing on this reference.

²⁷¹ For example, an official at Whydah in the 1740s was noted as having a permanent guard of full time soldiers (Thornton 1999, p93).

²⁷² The state and their representatives could potentially call on all adult males and a large number of females to fight or act as porters (Law 1995c, pp206,207).

²⁷³ Bosman (1705, 389) notes that at Whydah people ate “...oxen, Cows, Goats, Sheep, Hogs (also found on gold coast), turkeys, ducks chickens, lots of wild game birds, corn, millet, beer, sweet potatoes, yams, different types of beans, onions, ginger, lemons, oranges, bananas, tamarind trees, peppers...” “Dalzel (1793, piii introduction) commenting on Dahomey, mentions “...maize, millet, or Guinea-corn of different sorts; a kind of pea or rather kidney beans, called callavances, and also a species of beans, called ground-beans...yams, potatoes of two sorts, the cassava, or manioka, the plantain, and the banana...”

15,000 and 24,000 respectively (Law 2004, pp72,73). While there is no data on the precise numbers of courtiers, artisans and other (agriculturally) non-productive people living there, it can be at least assumed that these towns needed to import a significant amount of food.

The burden of feeding the army on campaign was the responsibility of the war leaders, as the king was only responsible for providing ammunition and powder (Thornton 1999, p93). Ross (1971, p153) suggests that soldiers carried around two weeks' worth of provisions although it would also have been possible to grow food during long sieges. It was also possible to 'live off the land' for short periods as soldiers were accompanied by large numbers of 'auxiliaries' who carried their provisions, as well as hunted, looted or scavenged for them, but there was always an acute risk of running out of food and/or water (Reid 2012, p86). Any food taken along needed to last, be portable and not require cooking. According to Smith (1999, p59) the Dahomeans apparently ate "toasted grains and bean cake" the latter made of beans and maize flour. As these campaigns yielded the captives who formed the basis of the wealth and power of the elites, it is unsurprising that they had little interest in allowing households to become involved in the production of export crops. Feeding the full army of 50,000 soldiers would require 150 million calories of food each day which, going on the above assumptions would have been the equivalent to the 3-year output of around 10 family farms. If we make the rather simplistic assumption that each farm, worked by 5 people or two slaves, produced 4.8 million calories a year, and everything they produced was requisitioned by the army, then it would take the full-time yearly labour of 4,666 free or 1,864 unfree farmers just to keep forces in the field for a month.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ From Wilks' estimation that 14.5 million was produced every three years, thus 4.8 million was produced a year. Thus, dividing the total caloric requirement of 150 million by 4.8 we assume that 31.25 farms were needed. Each farm had 5 workers and there are 30 days in a month, making a total 4,687 people.

Table 7.3. Estimated agricultural labour required to support Dahomean armed forces

1	2	3	4	5	6
Family farm of 5 free / 2 unfree	Calories produced every 3 years (million)	Calories produced per year (million)	Calories consumed by soldiers / day	Calories consumed by 1 soldier every 3 years (millions)	Calories consumed by full-time army of 3,000 men every 3 years (millions)
		Col. 2 / 3		Col. 4*365*3	Col. 5*3
1	14.5	4.8	3,000	3.29	9,870
7	8	9	10	11	12
Number of free / unfree farmers required for the full-time army	Number of soldiers on a major campaign	Full army calorie requirements / day (millions)	Full army calorie requirements for a month	Years taken for one family farm or 2 slaves to produce calorie requirements	Yearly Labour requirement (free / unfree)
Col. 6*5 / 2		Col. 8*3,000	Col.9*30	Col. 11 / Col. 2	Col.12*5 / 2
3,403 / 1,361	50,000	150	4,500	932	4,660 / 1,864

Source: see text

This is of course a very conservative estimate as these farmers needed to keep at least some food for themselves. It also does not factor in the highly disruptive impacts of military activities on agriculture, which meant that farmers may not have been able to produce as much as was possible. The manpower requirements of the army meant that labour might be withdrawn from farms at important times during the year. For example, a Dahomean general, after being temporarily defeated in an engagement with the coastal town of Popo in 1763, took farmers away from their fields during the planting season to reinforce his army (Thornton 1999, p94). Palm oil was particularly affected as the start of annual campaign in February coincided “...with the optimum season for the oil harvest, whose consequent deferral meant that the crop actually realized was inferior both in quantity and quality to its potential...” (Law 1989a, p67). In the second half of the nineteenth century the resumption of slave raiding and military activities by Glele which seriously disrupted the palm oil trade by taking away workers (Law 1997b, pp229).

In Asante and the Bight of Biafra the expansion of the output of commodities depended on households being free to divert their labour into other forms of economic activity, to have access to slaves to supplement or expand their production capacity and to have the willing support of local elites for the transport and marketing of their products. None of these factors were present in Dahomey. The elite monopolised coerced and female labour to enhance their

own wealth or to support the military which formed the core of their power. For example, one visitor in the 1850s was told that “*Industry and agriculture are not encouraged...*” because “*...the king is aware that, if the enjoyment of home, and the luxuries of health and happiness, were once obtained, he would fail in volunteers for the annual slave hunt.*” (Forbes, 1851, Vol 1, p 21).

7.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that there were strong path dependent causes as to why the Dahomean state never shifted to commodity export trade until forced under the extreme conditions of the 1850s. This path had developed in the seventeenth century, when elites were able to capture the ever-rising riches from the transatlantic slave trade and significantly increase their own power through the development of a highly militaristic state. Three factors reinforced and strengthened this development. Firstly, there were environmental reasons. As the region lacked gold deposits, slaves became the only ‘product’ that could be marketed for the guns, cloth and other luxury goods on which their power came to depend, and these were most effectively acquired by mobilising and arming large numbers of professional soldiers and conscripts. The geography of the kingdom also worked against the development of palm oil exports which, from the point of view of the elites on the Abomey plateau, would always be less profitable than slaves. Secondly, the inability to impose any kind of regional hegemony due to the region’s unique geography meant the state was always threatened by credibly powerful enemies who were not only capable of threatening their territorial integrity, but were also serious competitors as slave exporters. This meant maintaining a strong army was a matter of survival as much as a means to acquire wealth. Finally, and perhaps least importantly, there were sufficient numbers of slaving vessels that were only interested in buying captives.

The result was that from the seventeenth to the middle of the nineteenth century it was never in the interests of the elites to stimulate a non-slave export trade. Militarism was demographically costly and the elites had high demands on the remaining females and coerced labour to enhance their status and wealth, as well as needing them to produce food for the army. Taking away labour from these activities would have risked both the security of the state and the wealth of elites. This practical consideration was strengthened by the development of an elite ideology that glorified war and opposed any other trade except in slaves. This was strong enough to survive into the nineteenth century in spite of the general decline of the transatlantic slave trade.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented a new analysis of the commercial transition in West Africa. It has examined from a comparative perspective why the speed and nature of the change from export slavery to 'legitimate commerce' differed to such an extent across West Africa's most important slave trading regions. I have argued that over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries various interrelated factors evolved and shaped the initial patterns of trade between West Africa and the Atlantic world, and continued to determine the exports of different areas after 1807. These factors are ecology, the regional political context, trade partners, the nature and duration of trade relations and the institutional relationship between elite groups and household producers.

This is the first time that a long-term, comparative analysis has been applied to the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra, which together accounted for around eighty percent of all captives embarked in West Africa. Until now the literature on the commercial transition has largely focused on the nineteenth century, with particular attention paid to how those who had previously profited from the slave trade reacted to the economic shock of abolition. In particular, the 'crisis of adaption' hypothesis set out by Hopkins (1969, 1973) has profoundly influenced debates on the topic (Law et al. 1995, 2013). As I argued in the introduction, this has stemmed from the fact that scholars have tended to focus on transatlantic slavery and largely ignore the trade in commodities. This means that we have not had, until now, a full picture of West Africa's commercial relations with the Atlantic world.

The impact of the commercial transition has generally only been analysed through studies of individual regions or states.²⁷⁵ It has therefore not been possible to identify which broader internal or external factors were ultimately most important in determining how and why different areas moved to an export economy based on commodities. This thesis has outlined a new narrative in which the ecology and local political contexts interacted to shape the nature of external trade, which in turn profoundly influenced institutional development. This was key to determining how the states and societies that had dominated export slavery in the eighteenth century reacted to the changing environment of the nineteenth century.

²⁷⁵ See Chapter 1, footnote 10

8.1. LONG-TERM PATTERNS OF TRADE

The quantitative analysis in Part 1 showed that the change from slaves to ‘legitimate commerce’ continued patterns of trade that had been established in the centuries before 1807. In addition, it contributed a number of important new datasets that provide a more complete picture of Africa’s trade with the Atlantic during the eighteenth century (Manning 2012, Jerven et al. 2012). Chapter 2 reviews qualitative sources as well as the trading accounts of the British Royal Africa Company (RAC) and the Dutch Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC). These indicate that over the course of the eighteenth century, European traders always bought commodities in addition to slaves from the Gold Coast and Bight of Biafra regions, while the area that came to be controlled by the Dahomeans dealt almost exclusively in the export of people. It also notes that gold had been traded in the Gold Coast region since the fifteenth century, and that both gold and slave exports began to decline from at least the 1780s.

Chapter 3 shows, contrary to the conclusions of Eltis (2013), that for most areas of West Africa the trade in provisions was not substantial enough to stimulate the development of commercial agriculture. However, in some areas this was an important economic sector. The Gold Coast supplied provisions throughout the eighteenth century. Merchants in the Bight of Biafra sold substantial quantities of yams, pepper and palm oil for the middle passage and I argue that this may have been a factor in its growth as a major slave exporting centre. There was no evidence that traders going to the Bight of Benin ever bought significant quantities of food.

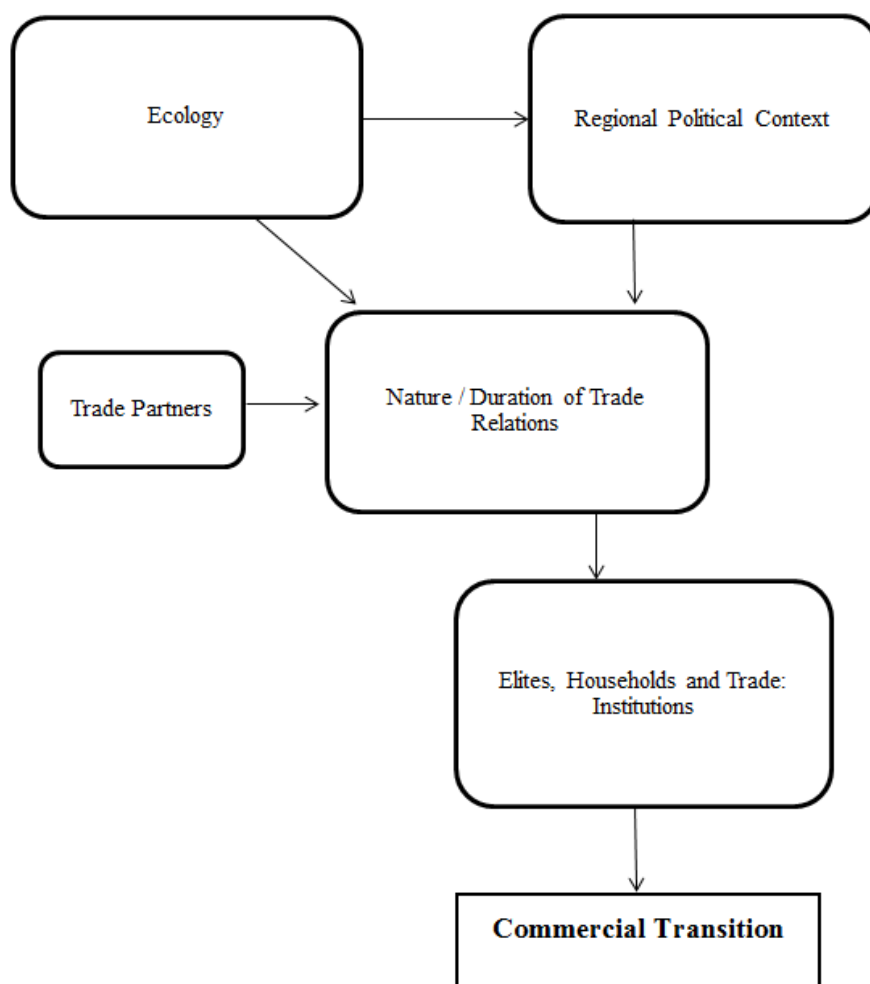
In Chapter 4, I explore the shift in commodity trading from the western to eastern side of the West African coast and explicitly link this to the commercial transition. The chapter shows that there was a huge expansion of commodity exports in the late eighteenth century, bought mainly by slave traders and focused on the Bight of Biafra. Again, the region controlled by Dahomey did not respond to the new demand for palm oil, ivory and sylvan products. This finding is based on a new dataset that provides the most accurate current overview of Western Africa’s commodity trade with Great Britain in the eighteenth century, and provides an important update to the work of Johnson et al. (1990).

After 1807, these long-term patterns of trade continued to influence export behaviour. The Gold Coast quickly abandoned slave exports, increased gold production, and therefore reverted to the system of trade that had dominated external relations for most of the region’s history. The Bight of Biafra gradually expanded its already growing palm oil industry, eventually abandoning export slavery in the late 1830s. By contrast, in the Bight of Benin slavery was the sole export until the late 1830s, when the increasing effectiveness of the slave trade patrol forced the development of alternative exports.

8.2. DIVERGING TRAJECTORIES

In Chapters 5-7, I examine the variables that explain these long-term patterns of export in the three case study regions. In each case the direction of the interaction was similar and is set out in the modified explanatory model (Figure 8.1). The nature and duration of external trade relations were a product of each region's ecology, the regional political context and its external trade partners. In addition, local politics were themselves highly influenced by the very different ecologies of each area. External trade in turn had a profound influence on institutional development and in particular on the attitudes of monarchies, aristocratic elites and wealthy merchants towards household production for the Atlantic and external interior markets. This determined the output of commodities and slaves over the eighteenth century and, more importantly, drove the region-specific commercial transitions in the nineteenth century.

Figure 8.1. Modified explanatory model for region-specific commercial transitions



For the Gold Coast region, the seams of gold within the territories that came to be held by the Asante were key to understanding both long-term trade patterns and the nature of the commercial transition. It was, with the exception of the relatively short eighteenth century

interregnum, the region's most important export for nearly four centuries and led to a 'trajectory of gold'. The struggle over the possession of gold fields was a key factor fuelling political conflict and consolidation in the seventeenth century. Sales of the precious metal also bought the guns that led to a revolution in warfare allowing for mass mobilisation of larger numbers of troops. Eventually these two factors led to the Asante becoming the region's superpower and gaining a monopoly over gold output. In the Bight of Benin, the rapidly increasing demand for captives at the end of the seventeenth century also encouraged political competition and military innovation in the states of Allada, Hueda and Dahomey. However, the presence of the Benin Gap and the coastal lagoons meant that no single state could ever fully monopolise power or external trade. This led to a 'slave raiding trajectory' for the kingdom of Dahomey. The particular ecology of the Bight of Biafra meant that there had always been a sophisticated trade network connecting the coast and interior. This always handled a range of commodities, foodstuffs for the agriculturally unproductive coastal towns and slave provisions in addition to captives. Crucially, it was not until the Aro expanded their network into central Igboland in the early eighteenth century that slave exports could significantly expand. This saw the region experience a 'trajectory of trade'. In all three areas, the major trading partners helped reinforce these trends. The British, who were always more enthusiastic buyers of both provisions and commodities, focused their efforts on the Bight of Biafra and the Gold Coast. By contrast, the French and Portuguese / Brazilians, who were generally only interested in captives, did most of their trading in the Bight of Benin.²⁷⁶

This all led to very different institutional outcomes. In Asante, gold became the most important marker of status and wealth. The quantity an individual possessed was a key determinant of rank for everyone from commoners to the king. As a result, there was always a need for captive labour to mine or pan for gold, or to support free households engaged in these activities. While the transatlantic slave trade generated considerable wealth, the export of captives could never take away so much coerced labour that it threatened gold supplies. It therefore meant that the monarchy and aristocratic elites always had a vested interest in the commodity trade. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Asante economy was already undergoing significant adjustments. Europeans saw declining sales of both gold and slaves, while at the same time the state was already beginning to invest in trade to the markets of the savannah. The withdrawal of the British from the transatlantic slave trade was sufficient to accelerate the process of reversion to more traditional external trade relations based on the export of gold and the expansion of kola sales to the newly formed Sokoto caliphate. This changing economic environment was also favourable to commoners, who by engaging more in production of both kola and gold, gained more access to external markets than was possible during the era dominated by slave exports.

In the Bight of Biafra trade relations led to a very different type of institutional arrangement. With no early expansion of external trade to stimulate the development of states, the region remained characterised by decentralised political entities, with long distance trade organised largely by the Aro. The lack of competing states also meant that trade did not have to generate

²⁷⁶ The French did buy African commodities but almost all of them came from Senegambia

wealth to maintain the hierarchal political orders characteristic of the other case study regions, or to cover the costs of military expenditure. Furthermore, status was not acquired through prowess on the battlefield, and was instead predicated on wealth generated by all kinds of trade. From the 1770s, the increasing demand for palm oil provided opportunities to households to access the Atlantic market for goods that could improve their living standards. Those who had previously grown rich from the transatlantic slave trade were prepared to support the expansion of palm oil, as it in no way undermined their social status or power and furthermore offered a less volatile form of trade.

In the Bight of Benin export slavery generated great wealth and, for the Dahomeans, it stimulated the development of institutions that very effectively maintained the power and prestige of its elites. Regular warfare allowed the monarchy to monopolise the capacity for violence of its elite supporters. The sale of captives meant that all those involved in warfare could profit from the fighting, while also allowing the king to ensure that his share was always greatest. Militarism also provided the spiritual and ideological cohesion to the elite coalition that supported the monarchy, and kept the commoners obedient. However, maintaining this military machine was extremely costly in terms of expenditure and labour. It also demanded continuous success or the monarch risked being overthrown. Mobilising the army for slave raiding was the most effective means of keeping sufficient wealth flowing into the state's coffers and satisfying the demands of a militaristic culture. There was therefore no real incentive for those in power to develop or support any other form of commerce except under the extreme conditions of the 1840s.

8.3. THE REAL IMPACT OF BRITAIN'S ABOLITION CAMPAIGN

This thesis thus sheds a new light on the actual impact of abolition on West Africa's economies. It argues that the military and diplomatic campaign waged primarily by the British had very different impacts depending on the region. It is true that the act of forcibly withdrawing its merchant shipping from transatlantic slave trading was an economic shock, especially in the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra. However, as noted above, this predominantly served to accelerate existing trends. There were always opportunities for African merchants in these areas to sell more slaves, given the relative ineffectiveness of the early slave trade patrol and the hostility towards abolition on the part of other slave trading nations. However, in both areas exports of captives were already in decline, and more coerced labour was being harnessed for production, long before the military campaign became a success. Thus, it was the decision of local rulers and merchants to move away from export slavery, not external pressure, that was responsible for the rise of 'legitimate commerce' in the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra.

Only in the case of Dahomey was the abolition campaign responsible for finally halting slave exports. While of dubious legality, measures including the Equipment Act of 1839, attacking shipping in Brazilian territorial waters and sustained diplomatic bullying, were a necessary precursor to the ending of transatlantic slavery in the region. Without such efforts, the

continued demand for African slaves in Brazil and, from the 1850s in Cuba, would have ensured that the Dahomeans continued to sell captives to the Atlantic market.

8.4. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has shown the value of data driven, comparative studies for pre-colonial West African history. It demonstrates that archival sources still offer considerable potential to provide new insights into the long-term paths of economic development in different regions in Africa. In addition, it shows that the impact of the *non*-slave trade on the economic and political trajectories of different regions has been undervalued in the literature. Only by considering the entirety of West Africa's trade with the Atlantic world can we gain the full picture of its impact on the societies and peoples of the region.

The model of analysis could also be extended to other areas along the West African coast which traded both slaves and later commodities with the Atlantic world. Regions such as the Windward Coast and the Loango Coast of West Central Africa have been the subject of study, but not specifically in relation to the commercial transition, and not in a broader comparative perspective.²⁷⁷ The Angola region, responsible for the largest number of slave embarkations, has largely been studied in isolation. The change from slave to commodity exports has not been investigated in relation to other areas. Furthermore, the nature of trade from Angola was markedly different from the case study regions as it was largely dominated by Portuguese / Brazilian merchants sailing directly between Brazil and Africa. It would be interesting to investigate whether the model developed in the context of West Africa would be suitable in this context, or if it would require significant adjustment and, if so, why. This could reveal much about the impact of different external trading relations on economic and institutional development in Africa. Finally, the model could also be applied to other slave trading regions of the world, in particular Asia, to see the extent to which local reactions to increased demand for slaves from the British, French and Dutch in the same period (Allen, 2015) differed or resembled those in West Africa.

²⁷⁷ See, for example, Jelmer 2009, Hawthorne 2003, da Silva & Sommerdyk 2010, Sommerdyk 2012, 2015, Martin 1972, 1986

SUMMARY

The nineteenth century ‘commercial transition’ from export economies based on slaves to ones dominated by commodities like palm oil has been a central theme in West African history. However, most studies have tended to focus on the impact of the change and assumed that its causes were largely a result of the British decision to abolish their transatlantic slave trade in 1807 and subsequently persuading or forcing other nations to do the same. This thesis makes two principal contributions to this debate. Firstly, it reviews new evidence which shows that the commercial transition in West Africa’s most important slave exporting regions, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Biafra and the Bight of Benin, can be predicted by the patterns of trade established in previous centuries. It then presents a model of analysis which sets out which interrelated factors shaped their export economies and ultimately determined how they responded to the changing political and economic environment of the Atlantic world from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. This study offers an important comparative, long term quantitative perspective on the transition from slave exports to so-called ‘legitimate commerce’.

Chapter 1 shows that the speed and timing of the nineteenth century commercial transition differed considerably across the case study regions. Along the Gold Coast there was a sudden, and effectively total end to transatlantic slave trading after 1807. In the Bight of Biafra slave exports gradually declined until largely ceasing in the 1830s. Lastly in the Bight of Benin export slavery continued until the 1850s. The chapter argues that earlier studies have tended to ignore long term trends and also lack a comparative approach, as many are focused on individual regions. It then suggests a new model of analysis and dismisses two factors as irrelevant; the British slave trade patrol and changing demands for, or changing supply of, African slaves. The chapter argues that regional variations can be explained by five key factors: 1) the nature and duration of long-term trade relations; 2) the identity of the principal European trade partner; 3) certain aspects of the ecology of the different regions; 4) the regional political contexts; and 5) the development of institutions that either encouraged or discouraged elite participation in non-slave exports.

Chapter 2 provides a broad overview of each case study region’s patterns of trade from the fifteenth to the eighteenth Centuries based on secondary and primary qualitative sources. It then reviews quantitative evidence of commodity trading patterns from the earlier eighteenth century from British and Dutch commodity traders and slaving vessels that bought commodities. It argues that the expansion of slavery in the Bight of Biafra did not crowd out other forms of commerce. On the Gold Coast the early eighteenth century saw continued engagement in commodity exports while the slave trade expanded. However, by the 1780s, both slave and commodity exports seem to have begun to decline. In the Dahomean-controlled area of the Bight of Benin, there is no evidence of slavery crowding out other forms of commerce, as captives were always the only item of trade with the Atlantic world.

Chapter 3 investigates the extent to which the 18th century intensification of the trans-Atlantic slave trade boosted commercial agriculture in the coastal areas of West Africa and in particular in the case study regions. It explores the provisioning strategies of 187 British, French, Dutch and Danish slave voyages conducted between 1681 and 1807, and calls for a major downward adjustment of available estimates of the slave trade induced demand impulse. It shows that during the 18th century, an increasing share of the foodstuffs required to feed African slaves were taken on board in Europe instead of West Africa. However, there was considerable variation in provisioning strategies among slave trading nations and across main regions of slave embarkation. The Bight of Benin never significantly engaged in provisioning trade. Traders along the Gold Coast provided relatively large quantities of food to slaving vessels, but in the Bight of Biafra, British demand stimulated a considerable trade in foodstuffs. The chapter explains these trends and variation in terms of the relative (seasonal) security of European versus African food supplies, the falling relative costs of European provisions and the increasing risks in the late 18th century trade, putting a premium on faster embarkation times.

Chapter 4 uses a newly constructed dataset on the quantities and prices of African commodities on the coast and in British markets over the long eighteenth century and provides new insights into the changing nature of Britain's non-slave trade. It improves on previous work by Johnson et al. (1990) and finds that earlier estimates of the volume and value of commodity trade have been underestimates and fail to account for regional changes in output. The data suggests that from the 1770s the focus of Britain's commodity trade shifted from Senegambia to the Bight of Biafra and that in the later eighteenth century non-slave goods were primarily purchased by slave ships, not specialist bi-lateral traders. The chapter argues that these changes were motivated by a number of factors; conflicts between Atlantic powers, the prices of British trade goods and African imports, increasing levels of risk faced by British slave merchants and the fact that traders in the Bight of Biafra were both willing and able to supply desirable commodities.

Part 1 establishes that the Gold Coast had a far long history of commodity trading and seemed to have been moving away from the slave trade at the end of the eighteenth century. The region of the Bight of Benin controlled by Dahomey always focused exclusively on slaves. The Bight of Biafra had a considerable non-slave export economy that was growing at the end of the eighteenth century. Part 2 of the thesis applies the model of analysis to the case study regions.

Chapter 5 argues that that for the Gold Coast and more particularly the Asante empire British abolition policies and the slave forts can explain the *timing* of the end of transatlantic slavery but not *why* it ended. Following the model of analysis, the chapter shows that the presence of gold determined both long term political development and the nature of the region's trade relationship with the Atlantic. In addition, gold became essential as a means of marking status and wealth at all levels of society and for domestic exchange. This meant that slaves were always essential for the production of gold, meaning that there was an important competing domestic market for coerced labour. Over the eighteenth-century gold became scarcer leading to slaves being pulled out of the Atlantic market to focus on production. In addition, well-

developed trade relations with the interior and a rise in demand from the Islamic states in the Sokoto caliphate led to an expansion of kola exports which demanded yet more labour. Most importantly, the chapter argues that both households and elite groups could profit more from commodity than slave exports which explains the rapid move away from the transatlantic slavery and towards the production of commodities.

In Chapter 6 it is argued that in the Bight of Biafra, the slave and commodity trades were not only compatible but complementary. The region's riverine transport networks, long established coastal-interior trade relations and suitability for the growing of yams, palm oil and tropical hardwoods meant that the provisioning and commodity trades could function alongside slave exports. The relatively late opening of central Igboland to the Atlantic slave markets meant that the region did not see the influx of wealth in the seventeenth century that spurred the development of states in the other case study areas. Instead the region followed a different institutional path which saw the development small political entities linked together through the Aro trade network. Elites in the interior and at the coast were reliant on trade for both power and status, but not specifically the slave trade. As a result, abolition was not a serious economic shock as commodities and slaves had always been traded side by side. As in Gold Coast both commoners and elites benefited from commodity trading. Atlantic goods allowed many more people to purchase goods to improve their standards of living, while elites benefitted from the less volatile commodity trade. Furthermore, the British state also perhaps unintentionally supported the development of the palm oil trade through its customs policies. Eventually, this led to palm oil crowding out slave exports through greater demands for domestic labour.

Chapter 7 investigates why the region of the Bight of Benin controlled by Dahomey only ever exported slaves. It shows that this region possessed no gold and had less favourable geography for commodity exports than the Bight of Biafra. The early expansion of export slavery in the seventeenth century spurred the development of states and elites who were entirely dependent on slave exports to maintain their wealth and power. It led to the development of a militaristic culture and institutions based on large scale slave raiding that were highly effective as a means of controlling and harnessing elite violence, generating wealth and defending the state from powerful external threats and economic competition. The demands of the army and elites took much of the kingdom's potential labour away from households. In addition, constant warfare led to a serious demographic decline across the region further reducing the amount of available labour. The chapter argues that it was never in the interests of elites to switch to an alternative economic system and there was, until the 1850s, always sufficient external demand. In the end abolition efforts were a necessary condition to ending the slave trade.

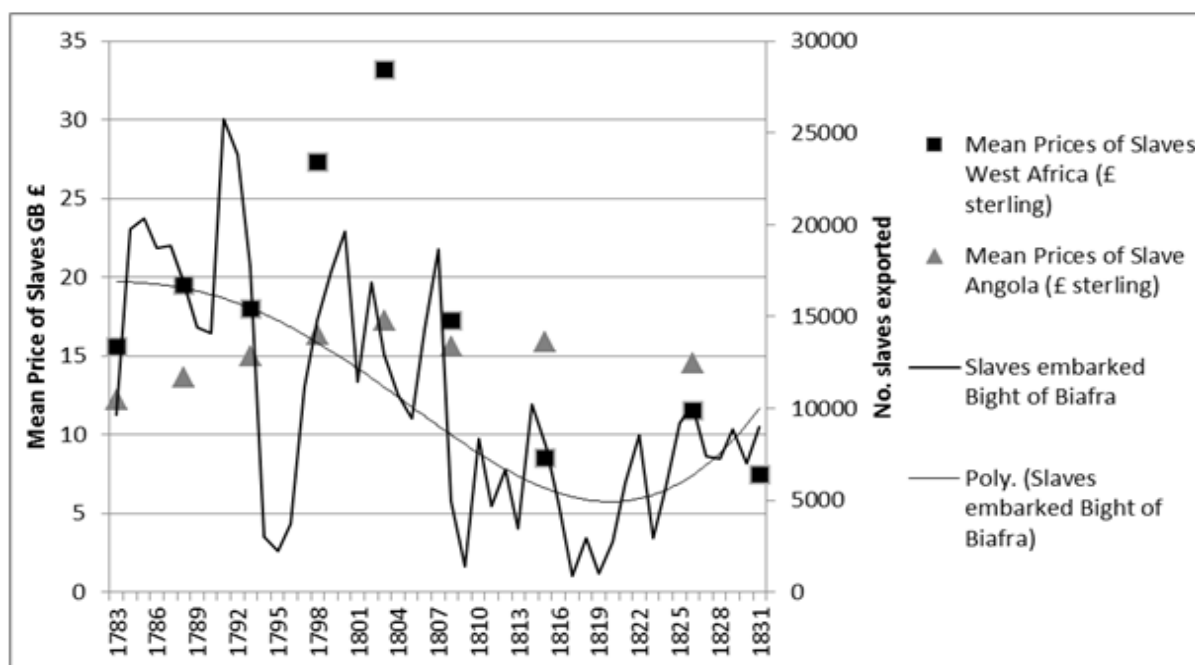
Chapter 8 concludes with a summary of the main contributions of thesis; the importance of long term patterns of trade in determining nineteenth century commercial transition and a modified model of analysis to explain the diverging trajectories of the different case study regions. It also argues that the impact of Britain's abolition campaign should be reassessed. In the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra it was not an important factor in ending transatlantic

slavery, while in the Bight of Benin it was. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

APPENDICES

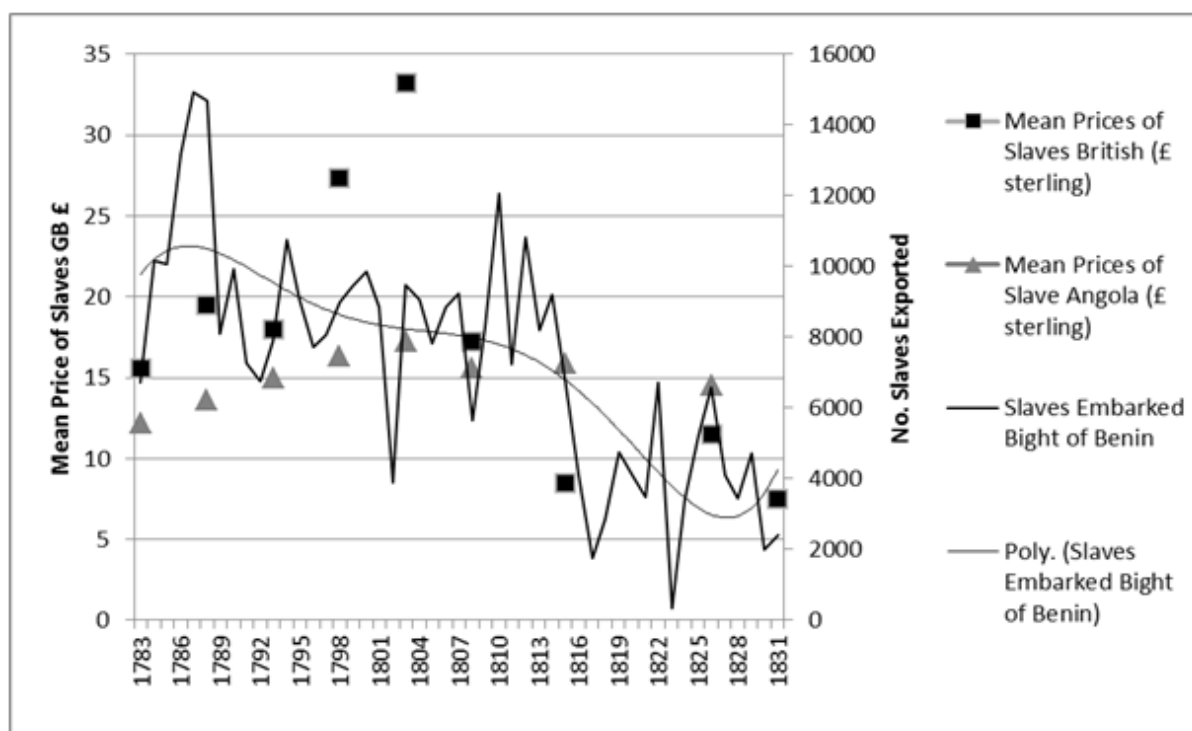
CHAPTER 1

Appendix 1.1. Slave Exports from the Bight of Biafra and trendline + mean price (GB£) of slaves in West Africa and Angola 1798 – 1826



Sources: slavevoyages.org, Lovejoy and Richardson (1995)

Appendix 1.2. Slave Exports from the Bight of Benin and trendline + mean price (GB£) of slaves in West Africa and Angola 1798 – 1826



Sources: slavevoyages.org, Lovejoy and Richardson (1995)

CHAPTER 3

Appendix 3.1. Eltis' estimates of the five-year average annual value of African-sourced provisions in the Atlantic slave trade, 1681-1807 (all estimates in GB£ 1700)

	Average annual value of slaves purchased (fob Europe/Americas)	Average annual value of African-sourced provisions (fob Europe/Americas)	Average annual value of African-sourced provisions (cif Africa)	Average annual value of African-sourced provisions for slave ship crews	Average annual value of African-sourced provisions (total)
	1	2	3	4	5
1681-1685	107,587	26,897	53,794	1,614	55,407
1686-1690	86,610	21,653	43,305	1,299	44,604
1691-1695	110,731	27,683	55,366	1,661	57,026
1696-1700	202,723	50,681	101,362	3,041	104,402
1701-1705	196,478	49,120	98,239	2,947	101,186
1706-1710	196,241	49,060	98,121	2,944	101,064
1711-1715	248,689	62,172	124,345	3,730	128,075
1716-1720	361,423	90,356	180,712	5,421	186,133
1721-1725	512,750	128,188	256,375	7,691	264,066
1726-1730	392,838	98,210	196,419	5,893	202,312
1731-1735	262,800	65,700	131,400	3,942	135,342
1736-1740	385,436	96,359	192,718	5,782	198,500
1741-1745	405,049	101,262	202,525	6,076	208,600
1746-1750	449,280	112,320	224,640	6,739	231,379
1751-1755	537,147	134,287	268,574	8,057	276,631
1756-1760	396,019	99,005	198,010	5,940	203,950
1761-1765	796,786	199,197	398,393	11,952	410,345
1766-1770	1,246,728	311,682	623,364	18,701	642,065
1771-1775	1,503,464	375,866	751,732	22,552	774,284
1776-1780	698,969	174,742	349,485	10,485	359,969
1781-1785	1,317,247	329,312	658,624	19,759	678,382
1786-1790	2,381,871	595,468	1,190,936	35,728	1,226,664
1791-1795	1,717,428	429,357	858,714	25,761	884,475
1796-1800	1,812,184	453,046	906,092	27,183	933,275
1801-1807	2,165,957	541,489	1,082,979	32,489	1,115,468
1681-1807	762,158	186,494	372,989	11,190	384,179

Source: Eltis (2013) Table 1.2, p. 39; Column 1 is taken from Table 1.1, p. 33.

Note: By taking 25% of slave purchasing prices for 1681-1807 and multiplying these with slave export volumes (column 1) from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (Eltis and Richardson 2010), Eltis expressed the average annual value of West African food exports in European exchange goods f.o.b. (column 2)²⁷⁸. These were then multiplied by two to account for the costs of freight and insurance (c.i.f.) in the transportation of European exchange commodities to the regions of slave purchase (column 3). Adding a share of 3% to account for African-sourced provisions for slave ship crews (column 4), his final estimates (column 5) indeed suggest a total annual average demand impulse of close to one million British Pounds.

²⁷⁸ Slave prices series for 1681-1699 were derived from Eltis (2000, 296) and for 1700-1807 from Richardson (1991, 52-56).

Appendix 3.2.a. Summary statistics of the sample of 187 voyages

No	voyage no. TSTD	Name Vessel	Year Arrived	Nation	No. of slaves embarked	Main provisions	Total kcal taken on board in Europe (millions)	Main African provisions	Total kcal taken on board in Africa (millions)	Major Region of Slave Embarkation	Average no. of days on board at African Coast (TAC)	Average no. of days on board during Middle Passage (MP) + 1 st. dev.	No. daily rations required	% share European provisions of total required (kcal)
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	35161	Cron Printz Christian	1755	DK	125	Beans, Stockfish	27.14	Millet, Palm Oil	7.72	Gold Coast	134	150	27,125	50.0
2	35181	Fredensborg	1768	DK	265	Beans, Barley	76.29	Millet, Palm Oil	25.25	Gold Coast	130	117	48,230	79.1
3	33330	Diligent	1732	FR	256	Beans	50.80	Corn, Cassava	5.25	Bight of Benin	113	128	47,232	53.8
4	30484	Reine de France	1744	FR	404	Beans, Rice	63.91	Corn, Yams, Cassava	23.37	Bight of Benin	152	154	92,920	34.4
5	30754	Thélémaque	1764	FR	365	Beans, Rice	76.67	Corn, Yams, Cassava	7.23	West Central Africa North	163	83	60,043	63.8
6	30911	Pompée	1770	FR	390	Beans, Rice	148.01	Corn, Palm Oil, Yams, Cassava	61.63	West Central Africa North	163	83	64,155	115.4
7	32283	Duc de Laval	1775	FR	393	Beans, Rice	152.42	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	163	83	64,649	117.9

8	31639	Pactole	1784	FR	428	Beans, Rice	63.91	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil, Yams, Cassava, Plantains	75.29	Bight of Benin	130	96	68,908	46.4
9	30808	Jeune Reine	1765	FR	169	Beans	40.64	N/D	N/D	Senegambia	90	53	16,562	122.7
10	30864	Saint François	1768	FR	534	Biscuits, Beans	140.56	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	328	109	145,782	48.2
11	30874	Saint Jacques	1769	FR	528	Beans	106.67	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	365	36	115,368	46.2
12	30875	Mars	1768	FR	373	Beans	45.64	N/D	N/D	Other Africa	216	140	92,504	24.7
13	30882	Saint Laurent	1769	FR	473	Biscuits, Beans, Rice	140.56	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	137	70	65,511	107.3
14	30893	Prince Grasse	1769	FR	415	Beans, Rice	115.41	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	208	61	68,475	84.3
15	30926	Saint François	1770	FR	520	Biscuits, Beans	147.94	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	164	60	73,840	100.2
16	30927	Saint Jacques	1770	FR	582	Biscuits, Beans	174.81	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	163	58	81,189	107.7
17	30948	Saint Jean Baptiste	1772	FR	571	Beans, Rice	121.35	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	139	50	68,235	88.9

18	30967	Glaneuse	1772	FR	172	Beans, Rice	36.91	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	60	62	15,824	116.6
19	30970	Nymphe	1772	FR	336	Beans, Rice	50.70	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	137	56	41,832	60.6
20	31000	Saint Jean Baptiste	1774	FR	462	Beans, Rice	124.76	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	93	47	43,197	144.4
21	31009	Nymphe	1775	FR	460	Biscuits, Beans, Rice	154.05	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	267	57	87,630	87.9
22	31026	Saint Jean Baptiste	1776	FR	435	Beans, Rice	121.26	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	87	59	44,588	136.0
23	31180	Madame	1787	FR	643	Beans, Rice	210.03	N/D	N/D	Southeast Africa and Indian Ocean islands	134	102	108,667	96.6
24	31184	Fine	1787	FR	198	Beans, Rice	51.13	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	207	59	32,175	79.5
25	31188	Bailli de Suffren	1787	FR	569	Beans, Rice	107.72	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	174	53	79,660	67.6
26	31189	Passepartout	1787	FR	14	Beans, Rice	4.21	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	139	58	1,785	117.8
27	31209	Jeanne Thérèse	1788	FR	258	Beans, Rice	80.25	N/D	N/D	Bight of Benin	164	198	72,240	55.5

28	31220	Aimable Aline	1787	FR	516	Biscuits, Beans, Rice	121.20	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	97	57	54,438	111.3
29	31224	Louis	1788	FR	274	Beans, Rice	107.49	N/D	N/D	Bight of Benin	126	88	41,374	129.9
30	31279	Bailli de Suffren	1790	FR	440	Beans, Rice	115.25	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	199	56	68,420	84.2
31	9917	Charles	1681	GB	288		N/D	Corn	113.08	Bight of Benin	73	117	44,208	N/D
32	9870	Merchant Bonadventure	1683	GB	448		N/D	Corn	160.83	Bight of Benin	73	117	68,768	N/D
33	15074	Mary	1683	GB	507	Beans	0.61	Corn	179.49	Gold Coast	107	110	82,895	0.4
34	20112	Saint George	1683	GB	550		N/D	Corn	251.29	Bight of Benin	73	117	84,425	N/D
35	9669	Jefferie	1685	GB	310	Beans	0.33	Corn	114.88	Gold Coast	107	110	50,685	0.3
36	9668	Good Hope	1685	GB	376	Beans	0.58	Corn	118.47	West Central Africa North	78	119	59,408	0.5
37	9684	Sarah Bonadventure	1686	GB	404		N/D	Corn	179.85	Bight of Benin	73	117	62,014	N/D
38	9702	Kendall	1694	GB	600		N/D	Corn	187.39	Bight of Benin	73	117	92,100	N/D

39	9714	Hannibal	1694	GB	700	Beans	2.90	Corn	200.32	Gold Coast	107	110	114,450	1.3
40	9701	Katherine	1694	GB	600		N/D	Corn	252.37	Bight of Benin	73	117	92,100	N/D
41	9726	Fauconberg (a) Falconberg	1696	GB	605	Beans	2.54	Corn	280.01	Bight of Benin	73	117	92,868	1.4
42	75599	Hannibal	1721	GB	273		N/D	Rice	2.56	Gold Coast	117	112	46,547	N/D
43	76371	Sherborough Gally	1721	GB	231		N/D	Rice, Palm Oil	22.57	Sierra Leone	137	75	33,149	N/D
44	75956	Otter	1721	GB	209	Beans	0.73	Corn	32.31	Senegambia	132	100	34,694	1.0
45	75330	Dispatch	1721	GB	110		N/D	Corn, Palm Oil	49.55	Gold Coast	117	112	18,755	N/D
46	76147	Sarah Gally	1721	GB	250	Beans	1.45	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil	85.09	Gold Coast	117	112	42,625	1.7
47	76399	Henry	1722	GB	367	Beans	1.86	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil	113.27	Bight of Benin	113	128	67,712	1.4
48	76405	Judith	1722	GB	107	Beans	0.51	N/D		Senegambia	132	100	17,762	1.4
49	76960	King Solomon	1722	GB	300	Beans	2.18	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil	N/D	Gold Coast	117	112	51,150	2.1

50	76435	Sarah Gally	1723	GB	273	Beans	0.91	Corn, Palm Oil, Yams	70.01	Gold Coast	117	112	46,547	1.0
51	75181	Bladen Frigate	1723	GB	250	Beans	3.39	N/D	N/D	Bight of Benin	113	128	46,125	3.7
52	76192	Squirrell	1723	GB	121	Beans	3.81	N/D	N/D	Bight of Benin	113	128	22,325	8.5
53	76693	Lady Rachel	1723	GB	221	Beans	2.18	Corn, Rice	24.92	Senegambia	132	100	36,686	3.0
54	75286	Clarendon	1723	GB	69	Beans	0.63	Corn, Rice	33.56	West Central Africa North	139	83	10,523	3.0
55	76542	Diligence	1723	GB	200		N/D	Corn, Palm Oil	58.37	Gold Coast	117	112	34,100	N/D
56	76176	Sloper	1723	GB	282	Beans	2.54	Corn, Palm Oil	69.05	Gold Coast	117	112	48,081	2.6
57	75181	Bladen Frigate	1723	GB	250		N/D	Corn	179.49	Bight of Benin	113	128	46,125	N/D
58	76965	Dove	1723	GB	237	Beans	0.85	Corn, Rice	43.96	Bight of Benin	113	128	43,727	1.0
59	76348	Whidah Frigate	1724	GB	300	Beans	6.77	Corn	35.90	Bight of Benin	113	128	55,350	6.1
60	76695	Cape Coast Frigate	1724	GB	205	Beans	2.12	Corn	42.36	Senegambia	132	100	34,030	3.1
61	75258	Chandos	1724	GB	556	Beans	3.63	Corn, Palm	161.73	Bight of Benin	113	128	102,582	1.8

								Oil						
62	76095	Royal African Packet	1724	GB	645		N/D	Corn, Palm Oil	184.20	Gold Coast	117	112	109,973	N/D
63	76617	Portugal	1729	GB	327	Beans	40.64	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil, Yams	103.72	Gold Coast	117	112	55,754	36.4
64	90937	Plumper	1763	GB	304	Beans, Stockfish	8.70	N/D	N/D	Windward Coast	232	103	66,576	6.5
65	91213	William	1765	GB	77	Beans, Rice	19.89	N/D	N/D	Senegambia	90	94	10,703	92.9
66	92315	Sisters	1766	GB	280	Beans, Pease	20.33	N/D	N/D	Bight of Benin	155	103	50,540	20.1
67	91219	Dalrymple	1767	GB	383	Beans, Rice	24.36	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	69,132	17.6
68	91427	Neptune	1768	GB	169	Beans, Rice	9.91	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	30,505	16.2
69	91577	Little Britain	1769	GB	148	Beans, Rice	14.54	N/D	N/D	Windward Coast	232	103	32,412	22.4
70	91428	Plumper	1769	GB	326	Beans, Barley, Rice	33.50	N/D	N/D	Bight of Benin	155	103	58,843	28.5

71	91553	Fox	1769	GB	180		N/D	Yams	3669.87	Bight of Biafra	155	103	32,490	N/D
72	91594	Andromache	1770	GB	162	Rice, Beans, Stockfish	8.49	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	29,241	14.5
73	91221	Dalrymple	1770	GB	342	Rice, Beans, Stockfish	33.60	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	61,731	27.2
74	91573	Hector	1770	GB	260	Rice, Beans, Stockfish	30.48	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	46,930	32.5
75	91409	King of Prussia	1770	GB	164	Rice, Peas, Beans, Stockfish	16.68	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	29,602	28.2
76	91653	Swift	1770	GB	167	Beans, Rice, Stockfish, Pease	22.02	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	30,144	36.5
77	91545	Dobson	1770	GB	355		N/D	Yams	3669.87	Bight of Biafra	155	103	64,078	N/D
78	91595	Andromache	1771	GB	190	Rice, Beans, Stockfish	11.98	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	34,295	17.5
79	91743	May	1771	GB	176	Rice	15.78	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	31,768	24.8

80	91430	Plumper	1771	GB	348	Beans, Barley, Stockfish	20.50	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	62,814	16.3
81	91643	True Blue	1771	GB	365	Beans, Barley, Rice	19.69	N/D	N/D	Bight of Benin	155	103	65,883	14.9
82	91752	Dalrymple	1772	GB	243	Rice, Beans, Stockfish	28.82	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	43,862	32.8
83	91574	Hector	1772	GB	250	Rice, Beans, Stockfish	26.78	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	45,125	29.7
84	91410	King of Prussia	1772	GB	239	Rice, Peas, Beans, Stockfish	18.49	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	43,140	21.4
85	91979	Andromache	1774	GB	210	Rice, Beans, Stockfish	16.05	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	37,905	21.2
86	91813	Badger	1774	GB	243	Rice, Peas	15.24	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	43,862	17.4
87	91814	Badger	1775	GB	238	Peas, Beans, Rice	19.14	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	42,959	22.3
88	91575	Hector	1775	GB	141	Rice, Beans, Stockfish	27.49	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	25,451	54.0

89	92536	Badger	1777	GB	421	Peas, Beans, Stockfish	25.69	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	75,991	16.9
90	91576	Hector	1777	GB	236	Rice, Stockfish, Peas	20.22	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	42,598	23.7
91	91794	Swift	1777	GB	211	Beans, Stockfish, Pease	7.01	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	38,086	9.2
92	83174	Preston	1780	GB	210	Stockfish, Pease	1.72	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	37,905	2.3
93	83175	Preston	1782	GB	221	Beans, Pease	0.81	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	33,040	1.2
94	83176	Preston	1784	GB	302	Barley, Rice, Pease	1.80	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	45,149	2.0
95	17983	Alert	1789	GB	276	Beans, Rice	12.28	N/D	N/D	Gold Coast	147	95	46,506	13.2
96	80687	Brothers	1789	GB	455		N/D	Yams	146.03	Bight of Biafra	103	98	68,023	N/D
97	18057	Thomas	1790	GB	359	Beans	10.16	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	53,671	9.5
98	18068	Eliza	1790	GB	291	Beans	16.93	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	43,505	19.5

99	18080	Prince	1790	GB	396	Beans, Rice	14.68	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	59,202	12.4
100	18088	Wasp	1790	GB	249	Beans, Rice	19.70	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	37,226	26.5
101	18071	Hector	1791	GB	764	Beans	33.86	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	114,218	14.8
102	18112	Pilgrim	1791	GB	381	Beans, Rice	25.74	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	56,960	22.6
103	18077	Mermaid	1791	GB	140	Beans, Rice	35.68	N/D	N/D	Gold Coast	147	95	23,590	75.6
104	18082	Royal Charlotte	1791	GB	140	Beans	14.90	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	20,930	35.6
105	18060	Albion	1791	GB	262	Beans	2.12	N/D	N/D	Sierra Leone	192	57	40,086	2.6
106	18092	Brothers	1791	GB	279	Beans, Rice	78.76	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	41,711	94.4
107	18083	Royal Charlotte	1791	GB	336	Rice	8.81	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	50,232	8.8
108	18062	Alfred	1791	GB	316	Beans, Rice	16.49	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	47,242	17.5
109	18103	James	1791	GB	176	Beans, Rice	25.57	N/D	N/D	Windward Coast	211	68	30,536	41.9

110	18075	King George	1791	GB	369	Beans, Rice	10.93	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	55,166	9.9
111	18097	Eliza	1791	GB	291	Beans, Rice	57.47	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	43,505	66.0
112	18096	Daniel	1791	GB	146	Beans, Rice	8.47	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	21,827	19.4
113	18117	Rodney	1791	GB	371	Beans, Rice	34.51	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	55,465	31.1
114	18120	Sarah	1791	GB	231	Beans, Rice	24.96	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	34,535	36.1
115	18078	Pearl	1791	GB	372	Beans, Rice	N/D	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	55,614	N/D
116	18115	Recovery	1791	GB	304	Beans, Rice	49.10	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	45,448	54.0
117	18158	Pilgrim	1792	GB	412	Beans, Rice	19.70	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	61,594	16.0
118	18142	General Orde	1792	GB	240	Beans	135.46	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	35,880	188.8
119	18101	Hester	1792	GB	243	Beans, Rice	33.31	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	36,329	45.8
120	18104	Lion	1792	GB	328	Beans	1.27	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	49,036	1.3

121	18131	Alfred	1792	GB	326	Beans, Rice	23.95	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	48,737	24.6
122	18113	Prince	1792	GB	359	Rice	17.62	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	53,671	16.4
123	18152	Mermaid	1792	GB	159	Beans, Rice	10.08	N/D	N/D	Senegambia	79	71	17,570	28.7
124	18153	Morning Star	1792	GB	56	Beans, Rice	9.62	N/D	N/D	Sierra Leone	192	57	8,568	56.1
125	18122	Swift	1792	GB	380	Beans, Rice	1.06	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	56,810	0.9
126	18138	Fame	1792	GB	200	Beans, Rice	79.99	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	29,900	133.8
127	18124	Trelawney	1792	GB	333	Beans, Rice	6.60	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	49,784	6.6
128	18113	Prince	1792	GB	359	Beans, Rice	18.63	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	53,671	17.4
129	18126	Wasp	1792	GB	235	Beans, Rice	16.93	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	35,133	24.1
130	18144	Hector	1793	GB	596	Beans	50.80	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	89,102	28.5
131	18140	Favourite	1793	GB	156	Beans, Rice	26.48	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	23,322	56.8

132	18182	Langrishe	1793	GB	416	Beans, Rice	21.51	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	62,192	17.3
133	18186	Royal Charlotte	1793	GB	210		74.50	N/D	N/D	Windward Coast	211	68	36,435	102.2
134	18130	Albion	1793	GB	239	Beans	1.18	N/D	N/D	Sierra Leone	192	57	36,567	1.6
135	18177	Catherine	1793	GB	345	Beans, Rice	41.21	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	51,578	39.9
136	18156	Nassau	1793	GB	190	Beans, Rice	17.54	N/D	N/D	Sierra Leone	192	57	29,070	30.2
137	18163	Roman Emperor	1793	GB	382	Rice	34.51	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	57,109	30.2
138	18146	Jupiter	1793	GB	400	Beans, Rice	27.95	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	59,800	23.4
139	18157	Pearl	1793	GB	400	Beans, Rice	34.51	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	59,800	28.9
140	18159	Prince	1793	GB	311	Beans, Rice	37.32	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	98	46,495	40.1
141	18214	Pilgrim	1796	GB	404	Beans	16.93	N/D	N/D	Sierra Leone	192	57	61,812	13.7
142	18259	Swift	1803	GB	389	Beans	37.25	N/D	N/D	Gold Coast	147	95	65,547	28.4

143	18267	Alert	1806	GB	277	Beans, Rice	27.72	N/D	N/D	Sierra Leone	192	57	42,381	32.7
144	82379	Lottery	1798	GB	460	Beans, Rice	48.40	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	157	95,910	25.2
145	82382	Lottery	1802	GB	305	Beans, Rice	32.39	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	193	74,573	21.7
146	81302	Enterprize	1804	GB	412	Beans, Rice	44.96	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	103	173	92,494	24.3
147	81497	Fortune	1805	GB	343	Beans, Rice	75.95	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	139	240	106,159	35.8
148	10212	Leusden	1721	NL	446	Beans, Barley	196.86	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	139	83	68,015	144.7
149	10213	Leusden	1722	NL	461	Beans, Barley	150.90	N/D	N/D	Bight of Benin	113	128	85,055	88.7
150	?	Francis	1723	GB	200	Beans	2.54	Corn, Palm Oil	83.71	Gold Coast	117	112	34,100	3.7
151	10976	Raadhuis van Middelburg	1742	NL	272	Beans, Barley	61.47	N/D	N/D	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	152	154	62,560	49.1
152	10626	Groot Prooijen	1748	NL	328	Beans, Barley	78.68	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	179	65	50,676	77.6

153	10620	Granadier	1749	NL	270	Beans, Barley	114.74	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	179	65	41,715	137.5
154	10957	Prins Willem de Vijfde	1754	NL	232	Beans, Barley	87.75	N/D	N/D	Gold Coast	134	150	50,344	87.2
155	10869	Middelburgs Welvaren	1754	NL	270	Beans, Barley	90.95	Corn, Rice	126.20	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	152	154	62,100	73.2
156	10870	Middelburgs Welvaren	1755	NL	289	Beans, Barley	48.25	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil, Yam	337.61	Windward Coast	172	93	51,731	46.6
157	10527	Drie Gezusters	1756	NL	234	Beans, Barley	91.95	N/D	N/D	Gold Coast	134	150	50,778	90.5
158	10958	Prins Willem de Vijfde	1756	NL	348	Beans, Barley	123.76	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	179	65	53,766	115.1
159	11114	Vrouw Johanna Cores	1757	NL	282	Beans, Barley	89.95	Rice	5.07	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	152	154	64,860	69.3
160	11088	Vliegende Faam	1757	NL	281	Beans, Barley	67.37	Corn, Millet	273.81	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	152	154	64,630	52.1
161	10528	Drie Gezusters	1758	NL	405	Beans, Barley	97.12	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	179	65	62,573	77.6

162	10959	Prins Willem de Vijfde	1758	NL	465	Beans, Barley	98.35	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	179	65	71,843	68.4
163	10965	Prins Willem de Vijfde	1758	NL	377	Beans, Barley	123.76	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	179	65	58,247	106.2
164	11116	Vrouw Johanna Cores	1761	NL	381	Beans, Barley	81.96	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	168	83	63,627	64.4
165	10906	Nieuwe Hoop	1765	NL	351	Beans, Barley	115.56	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	168	83	58,617	98.6
166	10963	Prins Willem de Vijfde	1766	NL	238	Beans, Barley	84.78	Corn	3.59	Gold Coast	130	117	43,316	97.9
167	10907	Nieuwe Hoop	1767	NL	329	Beans, Barley	100.70	Rice, Palm Oil	5.82	Gold Coast	130	117	59,878	84.1
168	10544	Enigheid	1767	NL	315	Beans, Barley	111.47	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	168	83	52,605	105.9
169	11119	Vrouw Johanna Cores	1768	NL	249	Beans, Barley	102.50	N/D	N/D	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	191	132	56,648	90.5
170	11178	Zanggodin	1770	NL	67	Beans, Barley	36.31	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	12,094	150.1
171	11125	Watergeus	1774	NL	375	Beans, Barley	179.90	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	168	83	62,625	143.6

172	11134	Welmenende	1774	NL	203	Beans, Barley	59.27	N/D	N/D	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	191	132	46,183	64.2
173	10787	Jonge Willem	1775	NL	163	Beans, Barley	71.66	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	29,422	121.8
174	11085	Vis	1775	NL	238	Beans, Barley	103.40	N/D	N/D	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	191	132	54,145	95.5
175	10590	Geertruida en Christina	1775	NL	335	Beans, Barley	109.10	Millet	40.04	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	191	132	76,213	71.6
176	11180	Zanggodin	1775	NL	127	Beans, Barley	58.61	N/D	N/D	Bight of Biafra	155	103	22,924	127.8
177	10591	Geertruida en Christina	1777	NL	303	Beans, Barley	103.90	N/D	N/D	Gold Coast	130	117	55,146	94.2
178	11126	Watergeus	1777	NL	325	Beans, Barley	179.90	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	168	83	54,275	165.7
179	11210	Zorg	1778	NL	246	Beans, Barley	76.86	Rice	5.07	Gold Coast	130	117	44,772	85.8
180	10666	Haast U Langzaam	1780	NL	373	Beans, Barley	101.30	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil	31.71	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	191	132	84,858	59.7

181	10913	Nieuwe Hoop	1785	NL	215	Beans, Barley	101.30	N/D	N/D	Gold Coast	147	95	36,228	139.8
182	11056	Vergenoegen	1787	NL	386	Beans, Barley	108.75	Corn, Rice	18.64	Gold Coast	147	95	65,041	83.6
183	11182	Zeemercuur	1789	NL	270	Beans, Barley	118.54	Rice, Palm Oil, Yams	33.30	Gold Coast	147	95	45,495	130.3
184	11057	Vergenoegen	1790	NL	266	Beans, Barley	131.14	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	168	83	44,422	147.6
185	10463	Brandenburg	1792	NL	226	Beans, Barley	110.34	N/D	N/D	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	130	96	36,386	151.6
186	11183	Zeemercuur	1793	NL	174	Beans, Barley	119.80	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil, Yams	17.80	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	130	96	28,014	213.8
187	11058	Vergenoegen	1795	NL	367	Beans, Barley	131.14	N/D	N/D	West Central Africa North	168	83	61,289	107.0

Source: see text

Appendix 3.2.b. Summary statistics of 36 'full data' voyages

No	voyage no. TSTD	Name Vessel	Year Arrive	Nation	No. of slaves embarked	Main European provisions	Total kcal taken on board in Europe (millions)	Main African provisions	Total kcal taken on board in Africa (millions)	Major Region of Slave Embarkation	% total provisions from Europe	% total provisions from Africa
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	35161	Cron Printz Christian	1755	DK	125	Beans, Stockfish	27.14	Millet, Palm Oil	7.72	Gold Coast	77.9	22.1
2	35181	Fredensborg	1768	DK	265	Beans, Barley	76.29	Millet, Palm Oil	25.25	Gold Coast	75.1	24.9
3	33330	Diligent	1732	FR	256	Beans	50.8	Corn, Cassava	5.25	Bight of Benin	90.6	9.4
4	30484	Reine de France	1744	FR	404	Beans, Rice	63.91	Corn, Yams, Cassava	23.37	Bight of Benin	73.2	26.8
5	30754	Thélémaque	1764	FR	365	Beans, Rice	76.67	Corn, Yams, Cassava	7.23	West Central Africa North	91.4	8.6
6	30911	Pompée	1770	FR	390	Beans, Rice	148.01	Corn, Palm Oil, Yams, Cassava	61.63	West Central Africa North	70.6	29.4
8	31639	Pactole	1784	FR	428	Beans, Rice	63.91	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil, Yams, Cassava, Plantains	75.29	Bight of Benin	45.9	54.1

34	15074	Mary	1683	GB	507	Beans	0.61	Corn	179.49	Gold Coast	0.3	99.7
36	9669	Jefferie	1685	GB	310	Beans	0.33	Corn	114.88	Gold Coast	0.3	99.7
37	9668	Good Hope	1685	GB	376	Beans	0.58	Corn	118.47	West Central Africa North	0.5	99.5
40	9714	Hannibal	1694	GB	700	Beans	2.9	Corn	200.32	Gold Coast	1.4	98.6
42	9726	Fauconberg (a) Falconberg	1696	GB	605	Beans	2.54	Corn	280.01	Bight of Benin	0.9	99.1
45	75956	Otter	1721	GB	209	Beans	0.73	Corn	32.31	Senegambia	2.2	97.8
47	76147	Sarah Gally	1721	GB	250	Beans	1.45	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil	85.09	Gold Coast	1.7	98.3
48	76399	Henry	1722	GB	367	Beans	1.86	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil	113.27	Bight of Benin	1.6	98.4
51	76435	Sarah Gally	1723	GB	273	Beans	0.91	Corn, Palm Oil, Yams	70.01	Gold Coast	1.3	98.7
54	76693	Lady Rachel	1723	GB	221	Beans	2.18	Corn, Rice	24.92	Senegambia	8.0	92.0
55	75286	Clarendon	1723	GB	69	Beans	0.63	Corn, Rice	33.56	West Central Africa North	1.8	98.2

57	76176	Sloper	1723	GB	282	Beans	2.54	Corn, Palm Oil	69.05	Gold Coast	3.5	96.5
59	76965	Dove	1723	GB	237	Beans	0.85	Corn, Rice	43.96	Bight of Benin	1.9	98.1
60	76348	Whidah Frigate	1724	GB	300	Beans	6.77	Corn	35.9	Bight of Benin	15.9	84.1
61	76695	Cape Coast Frigate	1724	GB	205	Beans	2.12	Corn	42.36	Senegambia	4.8	95.2
62	75258	Chandos	1724	GB	556	Beans	3.63	Corn, Palm Oil	161.73	Bight of Benin	2.2	97.8
64	76617	Portugal	1729	GB	327	Beans	40.64	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil, Yams	103.72	Gold Coast	28.2	71.8
149	?	Francis	1723	GB	200	Beans	2.54	Corn, Palm Oil	83.71	Gold Coast	2.9	97.1
157	10869	Middelburgs Welvaren	1754	NL	270	Beans, Barley	90.95	Corn, Rice	126.2	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	41.9	58.1
158	10870	Middelburgs Welvaren	1755	NL	289	Beans, Barley	48.25	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil, Yam	337.61	Windward Coast	12.5	87.5
161	11114	Vrouw Johanna Cores	1757	NL	282	Beans, Barley	89.95	Rice	5.07	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	94.7	5.3
162	11088	Vliegende Faam	1757	NL	281	Beans, Barley	67.37	Corn, Millet	273.81	Windward + Ivory + Gold +	19.7	80.3

										Benin		
168	10963	Prins Willem de Vijfde	1766	NL	238	Beans, Barley	84.78	Corn	3.59	Gold Coast	95.9	4.1
169	10907	Nieuwe Hoop	1767	NL	329	Beans, Barley	100.7	Rice, Palm Oil	5.82	Gold Coast	94.5	5.5
177	10590	Geertruida en Christina	1775	NL	335	Beans, Barley	109.1	Millet	40.04	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	73.2	26.8
181	11210	Zorg	1778	NL	246	Beans, Barley	76.86	Rice	5.07	Gold Coast	93.8	6.2
182	10666	Haast U Langzaam	1780	NL	373	Beans, Barley	101.3	Corn, Rice, Palm Oil	31.71	Windward + Ivory + Gold + Benin	76.2	23.8
184	11056	Vergenoegen	1787	NL	386	Beans, Barley	108.75	Corn, Rice	18.64	Gold Coast	85.4	14.6
185	11182	Zeemercuur	1789	NL	270	Beans, Barley	118.54	Rice, Palm Oil, Yams	33.3	Gold Coast	78.1	21.9

Source: See text

Appendix 3.3. Weights, measures and nutritional contents

Food type	Quantity Measure	Kg	Kcal / kg	Protein / kg
Barley	Lb (Br)	0.45	3500	82
Barly	Lb (Middleberg)	0.47	3500	82
Barley	Sack	60.00	3500	82
Barley	Litre	6.20	3500	82
Barley	Last (Muddle,Schepel)	2000.00	3500	82
Beef flesh	Hogshead (Hhd)	228.82	1150	220
Bread White	Hundred Weight (cwt)	50.85	3410	77
Cassava flour	Bushel	0.00	3440	16
Cassava flour	Alquiers	14.00	3440	16
Corn Ears/Cobs	Piece	0.00	2450	20
Fish, dried, salted	Lbs (Br)	0.45	2250	470
Kidney beans, dry	Quarter	12.71	3330	236
Kidney beans, dry	Bushel	0.00	3330	236
Kidney beans, dry	Ton	1016.96	3330	236
Kidney beans, dry	Sack	60.00	3330	236
Kidney beans, dry	Last (Muddle,Schepel)	2133.80	3330	236
Maize flour, whole	Lb (Br)	0.45	3530	93
Maize flour, whole	English Chest	101.70	3530	93
Maize flour, whole	Dutch Chest	104.83	3530	93
Maize flour, whole	Stekan	1.77	3530	93
Millet, bulrush	Stekan	1.77	3410	104
Millet, bulrush	Chest	104.83	3410	104
Palm oil	Litres	1.00	8840	0
Palm Oil	Gallon	3.50	8840	0
Palm Oil	Aume	0.00	8840	0
Palm Oil	Anker	0.00	8850	10
Pigeon peas, dry	Lb (Br)	0.45	3430	217
Rice Polished	Lb (Br)	0.45	3610	65
Rice Polished	Lb (Middleberg)	0.47	3610	65
Rice Polished	Alquiers	14.00	3610	65
Rice Polished	Barrels	81.72	3620	75
Wheat, whole	Hundred Weight (cwt)	50.85	3230	126
Wheat, whole	Hundred Weight (cwt)	50.85	3230	126
Yam	Piece	7.50	1180	15
Plantain	Piece	0.30	1350	12

Appendix 3.4. Average time spent on board a slave vessel per region of embarkation, 1681-1807, 20-year time intervals

	Senegambia TAC				Senegambia MP				Senegambia Total Mean
<i>Decades</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>TAC + MP</i>
1680 - 1700	91	80	41	13	42	36	19	31	133
1701 - 1720	60	61	24	12	47	43	15	28	106
1721 - 1740	132	104	83	69	52	42	48	70	184
1741 - 1760	116	83	85	80	47	43	20	65	163
1761 - 1780	90	62	81	58	53	42	41	71	143
1781 - 1800	79	63	55	91	45	38	26	117	124
	Sierra Leone TAC				Sierra Leone MP				Sierra Leone Total Mean
<i>Decades</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>TAC + MP</i>
1680 - 1799	160	155	65	4	56	48	21	10	216
1701 - 1720	49	49	33	2	65	56	26	4	114
1721 - 1740	137	117	30	3	56	56	19	5	193
1741 - 1760	186	141	133	17	60	52	24	15	246
1760 - 1780	244	227	168	15	55	54	18	25	298
1781 - 1800	192	168	116	54	44	43	13	76	235
	Windward Coast TAC				Windward Coast MP				Windward Coast Total Mean
<i>Decades</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>TAC + MP</i>
1680 - 1700	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
1701 - 1720	29	29	23	2	60	59	17	4	88
1721 - 1740	55	55	8	2	80	80	34	2	135
1741 - 1760	172	173	55	23	70	61	23	22	242
1761 - 1780	232	204	95	20	74	62	29	21	306
1781 - 1800	211	161	142	38	52	50	16	46	263

	Gold Coast TAC				Gold Coast MP				Gold Coast Total Mean
Decades	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>TAC + MP</i>
1680 - 1700	107	95	76	8	78	73	22	15	184
1701 - 1720	133	87	154	63	68	63	20	119	201
1721 - 1740	117	105	85	110	82	75	30	90	199
1741 - 1760	134	120	91	86	94	85	56	104	229
1761 - 1780	130	111	76	156	84	77	33	151	214
1781 - 1800	147	124	109	204	68	63	27	240	215
	Bight of Benin TAC				Bight of Benin MP				Bight of Benin Total Mean
Decades	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>TAC + MP</i>
1680 - 1700	73	53	61	41	91	87	26	70	164
1701 - 1720	96	85	85	137	85	76	39	175	182
1721 - 1740	113	99	58	184	97	94	31	196	210
1741 - 1760	152	137	74	120	117	112	37	126	269
1761 - 1780	191	177	88	168	100	99	32	149	291
1781 - 1800	130	117	72	96	64	52	32	244	194
	Bight of Biafra TAC				Bight of Biafra MP				Bight of Biafra Total Mean
Decades	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>TAC + MP</i>
1680 - 1700	ND	ND	ND	ND	93	85	28	16	ND
1701 - 1720	ND	ND	ND	ND	91	83	32	23	ND
1721 - 1740	72	72	0	1	127	94	80	3	199
1741 - 1760	118	128	63	17	86	82	24	19	203
1761 - 1780	155	127	114	42	78	78	25	57	234
1781 - 1800	103	91	76	195	66	60	32	243	169

	West Central Africa TAC				West Central Africa MP				West Central Africa Total Mean
Decades	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>TAC + MP</i>
1680 - 1700	78	56	58	5	84	83	35	6	162
1701 - 1720	115	137	55	17	58	59	17	17	174
1721 - 1740	139	131	82	103	58	51	25	81	197
1741 - 1760	179	152	109	240	49	49	16	85	228
1761 - 1780	163	156	90	401	58	56	25	259	222
1781 - 1800	139	133	71	361	53	50	17	488	192

Source: slavevoyages.org

Appendix 3.5. Price index of staple food basket (barley, beans, rice) on English and Dutch markets, 1681-1800 (1701 = 100)

year	Britain	NL	year	Britain	NL	year	Britain	NL
1681	103.9		1721	93.1		1761	81.2	
1682	111.5		1722	85.4	75.2	1762	76.6	
1683	104.2		1723	87.4		1763	96.1	
1684	106.6		1724	96.7		1764	93.6	
1685	119.5		1725	93.9		1765	92.4	
1686	108.2	86.4	1726	94.3		1766	96.1	
1687	73.0		1727	95.8		1767	96.1	
1688	70.1	86.2	1728	108.1	85.1	1768	91.9	
1689	81.1	94.9	1729	101.9		1769	73.7	
1690	79.8		1730	91.3		1770	74.7	
1691	79.1		1731	91.6	73.0	1771	87.6	
1692	86.5	112.0	1732	89.4		1772	95.8	
1693	101.7		1733	87.6		1773	98.6	
1694	99.6		1734	87.5		1774	96.7	
1695	99.2		1735	88.1		1775	92.3	
1696	122.9		1736	89.5		1776	91.5	112.4
1697	123.9		1737	97.4		1777	83.1	104.0
1698	127.2		1738	92.1	83.2	1778	91.0	111.6
1699	119.1		1739	95.4	82.9	1779	91.8	133.0
1700	108.2		1740	102.8		1780	120.9	129.6
1701	100.0	100.0	1741	98.5		1781	109.5	137.8
1702	101.9		1742	101.5		1782	112.5	124.8
1703	99.3		1743	93.8		1783	131.6	
1704	99.1		1744	88.4		1784	116.0	139.2
1705	87.9	103.5	1745	87.9		1785	109.0	119.5
1706	92.5		1746	81.8		1786	105.9	
1707	92.9		1747	87.2		1787	101.4	122.3
1708	96.9		1748	92.1		1788	96.5	116.3
1709	100.9		1749	96.1		1789	95.3	114.8
1710	108.0		1750	93.3		1790	102.1	
1711	107.0		1751	96.2		1791	103.1	
1712	100.8		1752	96.4		1792	108.5	
1713	97.3		1753	94.6		1793	117.0	
1714	97.3		1754	87.5		1794	119.1	
1715	98.0		1755	81.0		1795	140.3	
1716	92.2		1756	80.0		1796	134.6	
1717	89.5		1757	106.6		1797	104.7	
1718	87.2	100.2	1758	96.0		1798	103.4	
1719	92.4		1759	84.1		1799	125.7	
1720	100.3		1760	83.1	104.1	1800	191.3	

Source: see text

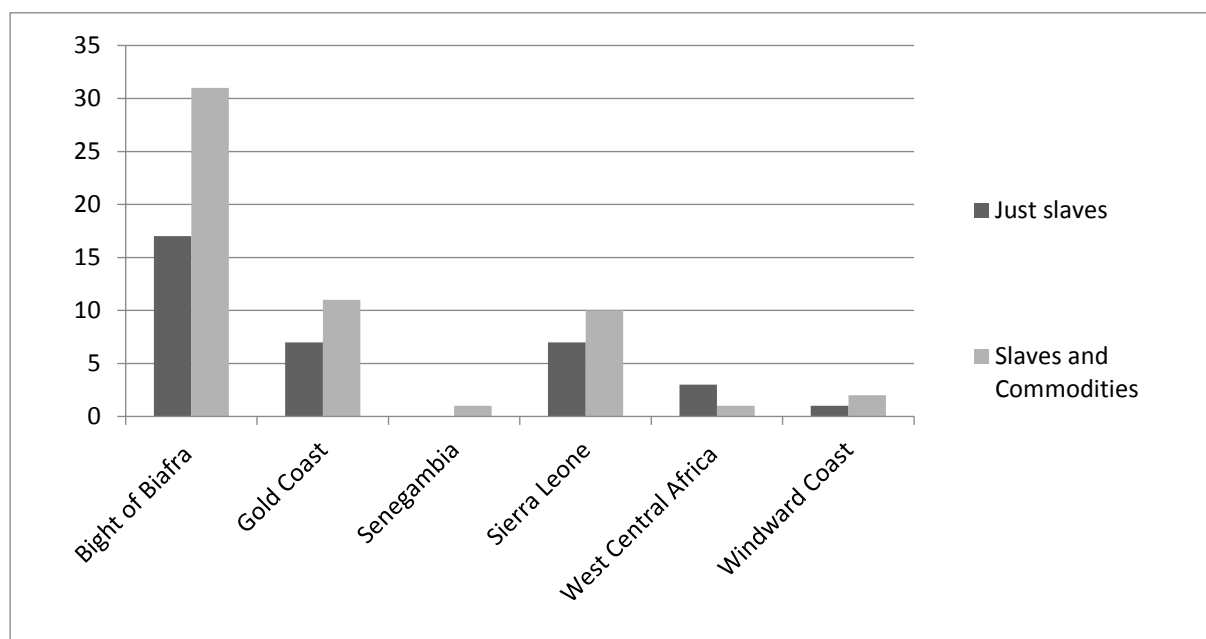
Appendix 3.6. Estimates of the five-year average annual value of African-sourced provisions in the Atlantic slave trade, 1681-1807 (all estimates in constant British Pound sterling of 1700, new world provisions at 20%)

	Average annual value of slaves purchased (fob Europe/Americas)	Average annual value of slave provisions (fob Europe/Americas)	Average annual value of African-sourced slave provisions (fob Europe/Americas)	Average annual value of African-sourced provisions (c.i.f) (OUR ESTIMATES)	Average annual value of African- sourced provisions (ELTIS)
	1	2	3	4	5
1681-1685	107,587	21,517	16,000	32,480	55,407
1686-1690	86,610	17,322	12,043	24,447	44,604
1691-1695	110,731	22,146	15,097	30,647	57,026
1696-1700	202,723	40,545	31,710	64,371	104,402
1701-1705	196,478	41,986	32,789	66,562	101,186
1706-1710	196,241	37,383	28,665	58,191	101,064
1711-1715	248,689	59,579	45,936	93,250	128,075
1716-1720	361,423	78,978	62,297	126,464	186,133
1721-1725	512,750	87,627	67,742	137,516	264,066
1726-1730	392,838	68,864	54,658	110,955	202,312
1731-1735	262,800	60,350	47,170	95,754	135,342
1736-1740	385,436	87,318	67,764	137,561	198,500
1741-1745	405,049	78,565	49,726	100,943	208,600
1746-1750	449,280	67,117	47,714	96,859	231,379
1751-1755	537,147	84,801	54,153	109,930	276,631
1756-1760	396,019	61,509	44,798	90,940	203,950
1761-1765	796,786	84,934	57,943	117,624	410,345
1766-1770	1,246,728	96,768	59,459	120,702	642,065
1771-1775	1,503,464	105,134	64,839	131,622	774,284
1776-1780	698,969	56,824	31,983	64,926	359,969
1781-1785	1,317,247	113,308	68,133	138,310	678,382
1786-1790	2,381,871	146,573	73,085	148,363	1,226,664
1791-1795	1,717,428	126,445	78,975	160,319	884,475
1796-1800	1,812,184	107,428	74,118	150,459	933,275
1801-1807	2,165,957	108,298	75,091	152,435	1,115,468
1681-1807	762,158	76,318	51,832	105,220	421,430

Source: see text

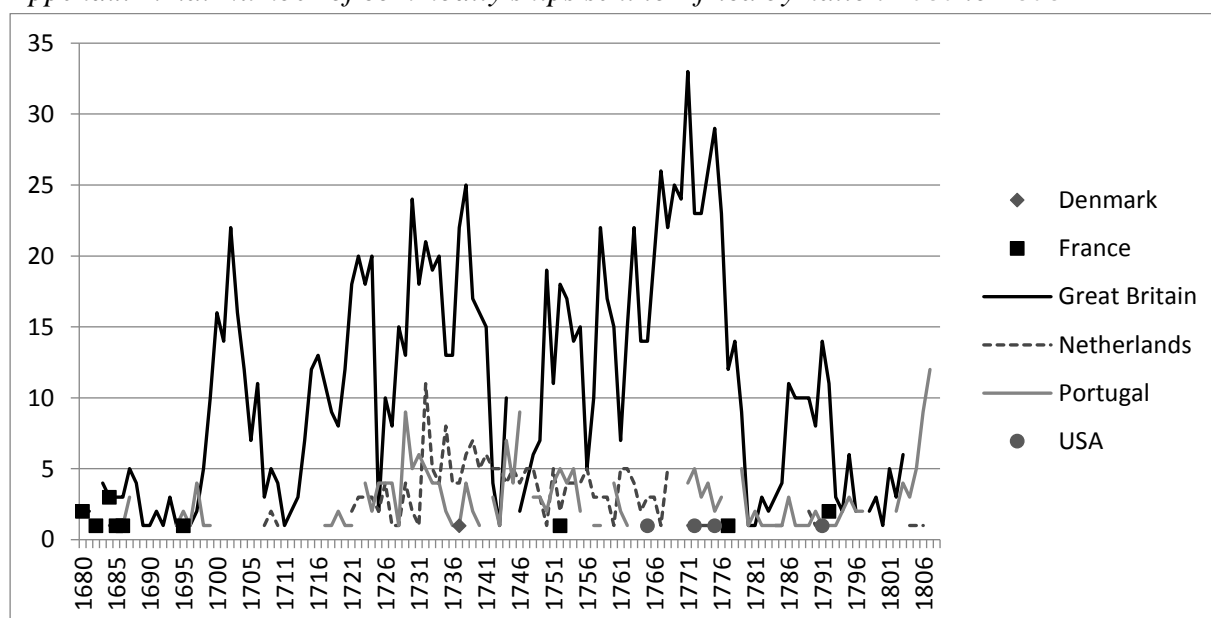
CHAPTER 4

Appendix 4.1. Bristol slaving vessels carrying just slaves or slaves and commodities 1790 – 1807 by main region of slave embarkation



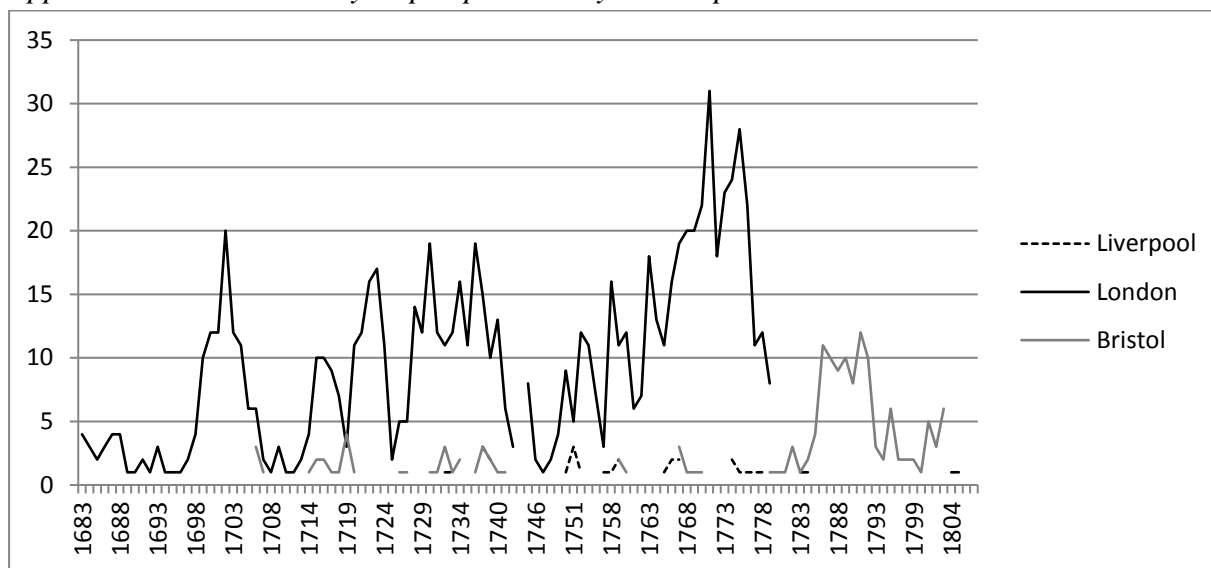
Source: Bristol Presentments 1790 – 1807

Appendix 4.2.a. Number of commodity ships sent to Africa by nation 1680 to 1808



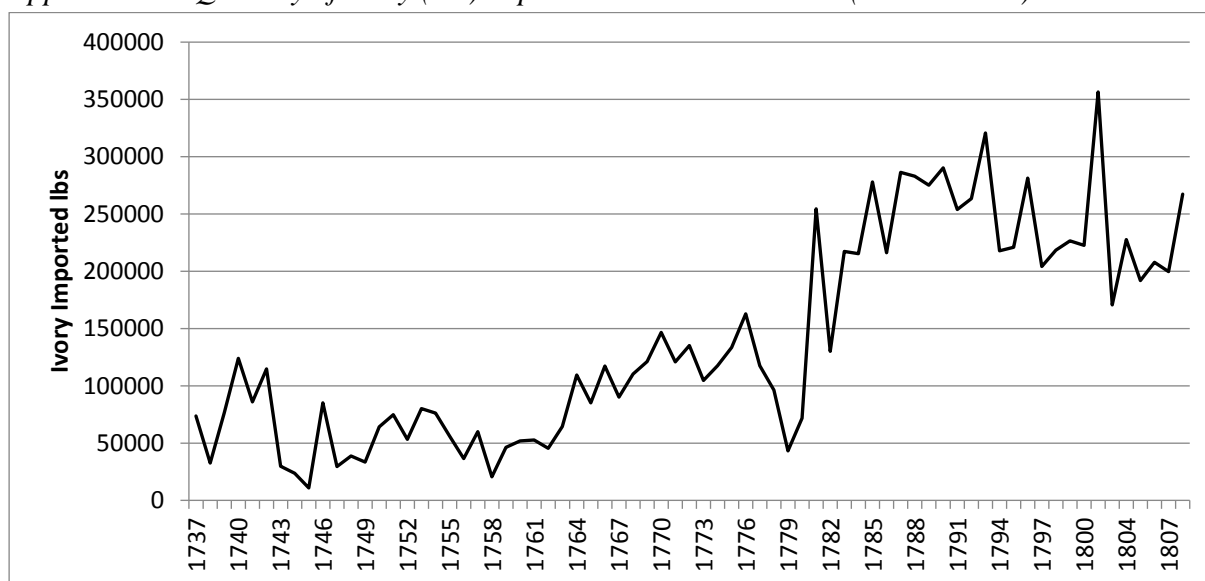
Source: Eltis (2013)

Appendix 4.2.b. Commodity ship departures by British port



Source: Eltis (2013)

Appendix 4.3. Quantity of ivory (lbs) imported into Great Britain (1737 – 1808)



Source: CUST (see text)

Appendix 4.4. Descriptive statistics coastal prices of commodities 1740 - 1793

	<i>Beeswax</i>	<i>Camwood</i>	<i>Ebony</i>	<i>Gum</i>	<i>Malluguetta</i>	<i>Palm Oil</i>	<i>Redwood</i>
Mean	5.45	0.28	0.11	4.63	1.69	7.08	0.07
Median	5.87	0.28	0.11	4.02	1.63	6.87	0.05
Standard Deviation	1.12	0.04	0.01	2.44	0.69	3.38	0.09
Minimum	2.72	0.25	0.10	2.50	0.45	0.88	0.02
Maximum	7.32	0.30	0.12	8.00	2.83	13.75	0.35
Sample Size	22	2	2	4	14	10	13

Source: see text

	<i>MCC ships 1742 - 1803</i>	<i>Lovejoy Richardson 1784 – 1808</i>	<i>Average and Commodities (1995) 1742 - 1793</i>
Mean	12.26	22.51	2.76
Median	11.26	19.50	2.69
Standard Deviation	4.49	6.63	1.11
Minimum	5.32	15.60	0.99
Maximum	24.22	33.20	4.67
Sample Size	29	26	67

Source: see text, Lovejoy & Richardson (1995)

CHAPTER 5

Appendix 5.1. Estimates of the value of the kola trade at Salaga in the nineteenth century

Estimated value of the Kola trade at Salaga GB £				
Low Estimate No. donkeys / year 1820s (Lovejoy p 115)	High Estimate Number of donkeys 1850s (Source Lovejoy p116)	Number of Kola nuts / apakan or headload (sources Wilks p 268)	Weight of 1 apakan lbs (Source Abaka p33, Austin p129)	Weight of kola carried / donkey lbs (Lovejoy 1980, p116)
1	2	3	4	5
1000	6000	2000	80	100
No. nuts carried / donkey = 1.2 apakan *2000	No. headloads exported each year Low estimate (Donkeys in 1820 * 1.2 or the headload each donkey could carry)	No. headloads exported each year High Estimate (Donkeys in 1850 * 1.2 or the headload each donkey could carry)	Value of Kola trade at Salaga GB £ Low Estimate Wilks (1975) £0.375 / headload * Col.7)	Value of Kola trade at Salaga GB £ High Estimate Bowdich (1819) £2.5 / headload * Col 8
6	7	8	9	10
2400	1200	15000	450	37500
Kola Price				
Source	Observation	Year	Price GB £ / headload	
Bowdich (1819) p333	800 nuts	1819		
Bowdich (1819) p333	2000 nuts	1819	2,5	
Wilks (1975) p268	1 headload	1820s - 1890s	0,375	
Austin (2005) p131	3 loads Kola	Pre 1874	0,60	
Austin (2005) p131	5.8 loads kola	Pre 1874	0,60	
Austin (2005) p131	4.5 loads kola	Pre 1874	0,25	
Austin (2005) p131	5 loads kola	Pre 1874	0,50	

Appendix 5.2. Estimated number of kola trees in Asante in the first half of the nineteenth century

No. Headloads Low estimate	No. Headloads High Estimate	No. Headloads Median Estimate	Number of Kola nuts / apakan or headload (Source Wilks p 268)
1	2	3	4
1200	15000	8100	2000
Kola nuts produced Low estimate Col 1 * Col 4	Kola nuts produced High estimate Col 2 * Col 4	Kola nuts produced Median estimate Col 2 * Col 4	Av Yield / Tree 1916/1917 (Abaka p33)
5	6	7	8
2400000	30000000	16200000	765
No. of Kola Trees in Asante Low Estimate Col 5/Col 8	No. Kola Trees in Asante High Estimate Col 6/ Col 8	No. Kola Trees in Asante Median Estimate Col 7 / Col 8	
8	9	10	
3137	39216	21176	

Source: see text

Appendix 5.3.a. Estimated per capita consumption of British imported goods into the Gold Coast region

	Clothes (lbs)	Glass (lbs)	Metal Manufactures (lbs)	Soap (lbs)	Metals (lbs)	Cotton Manufactures (yards)	Earthenware (pieces)	Gunpowder (barrels)	Woollen Manufactures (pieces)	Guns (pieces)
Grand Total: 1827 - 1849	7,355,688	1,484,678	1,248,807	782,724	19,606,829	86,514,756	2,177,872	7,733,948	68,787	276,308
Per capita consumption, population Ghana 1850: 1,981,047 (Jervan & Frankema 2014)	4	1	1	0	10	44	1	4	0	0
Per Capita consumption, population Metropolitan Asante 1860: 350,000 (Austin 2005, p59)	21	4	4	2	56	247	6	22	0	1
Per capita consumption, population Southern + Metropolitan Asante 1860: 800,000 (Austin 2005, p50, Wilks 1975, p243)	9	2	2	1	25	108	3	10	0	0

Source: Imports: TNA CUST

Appendix 5.3.b. Sources on Asante population

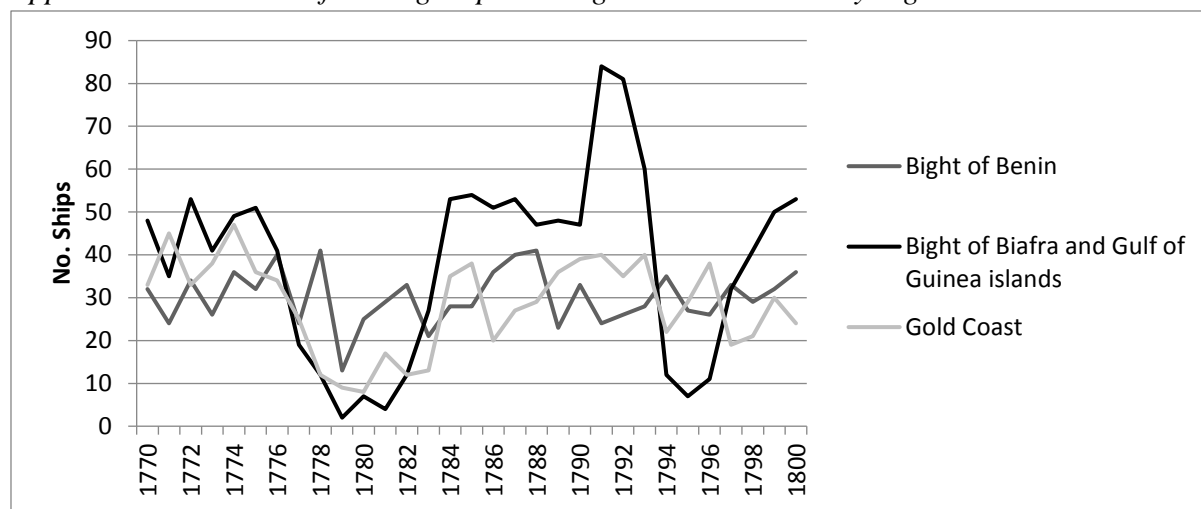
Sources on the population of the region in the nineteenth century are far from reliable, although this is the case for all pre-colonial Africa with the possible exception of the Cape Colony. Wilks (1975, pp87–95,126,127,243) based his estimates for the metropolitan, southern and northern provinces of the Asante empire in the nineteenth century on number of men each district was required to muster for army campaigns and 20th century census figures. These were criticised by both Johnson (1978) and Austin (2005) as being far too high. In his review of the available evidence and research Austin (2005, p59) concludes the first census in 1911 was almost certainly not accurate:

“We can assume that the real figure for 1911 was higher than the recorded one, meaning that there were probably between 300,000 and 350,000 people within the colonial borders of Asante, and more riskily that the real number for 1860 would have been similar to that for 1817 and probably quite close to the 1911 level.”

The metropolitan region of the Asante empire contained some of the gold producing areas and it is likely that much of the production and consumption of export commodities occurred there. However, many of the gold fields were also located in the southern provinces and it was here that other export commodities, especially palm oil was also produced (see maps 3 and 4), so the populations of these regions should be taken into account for per capita consumption. I have taken three figures to provide high, median and low estimates. Jerven and Frankema (2014) have calculated a figure for the area of what is today Ghana, which therefore assumes that all the provinces of the empire were engaged in export and consumption of Atlantic goods. The median figure combines Austin’s estimate of the population of the metropolitan region with Wilks’ figure for the southern region which is also based on observations by European officials. For the low figure, I only use Austin’s number for the central area. These figures naturally assume that consumption was spread evenly across the population, which is of course in reality unlikely to have been the case. The intention is primarily to illustrate the relative importance of different imports to the region’s consumers.

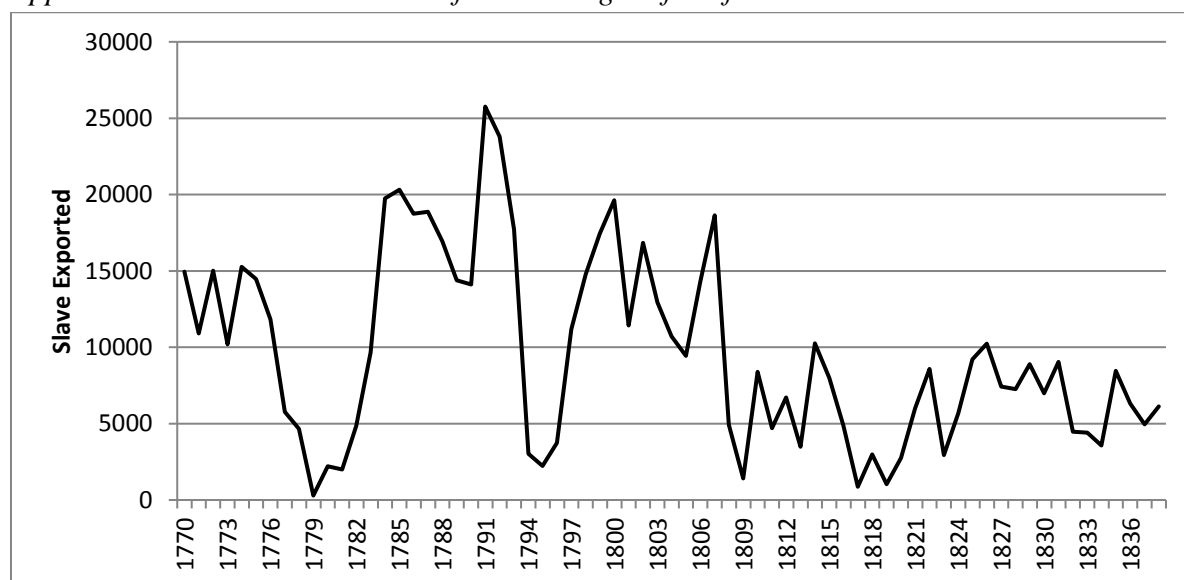
CHAPTER 6

Appendix 6.1. Number of slaving ships visiting the three case study regions 1770 – 1800



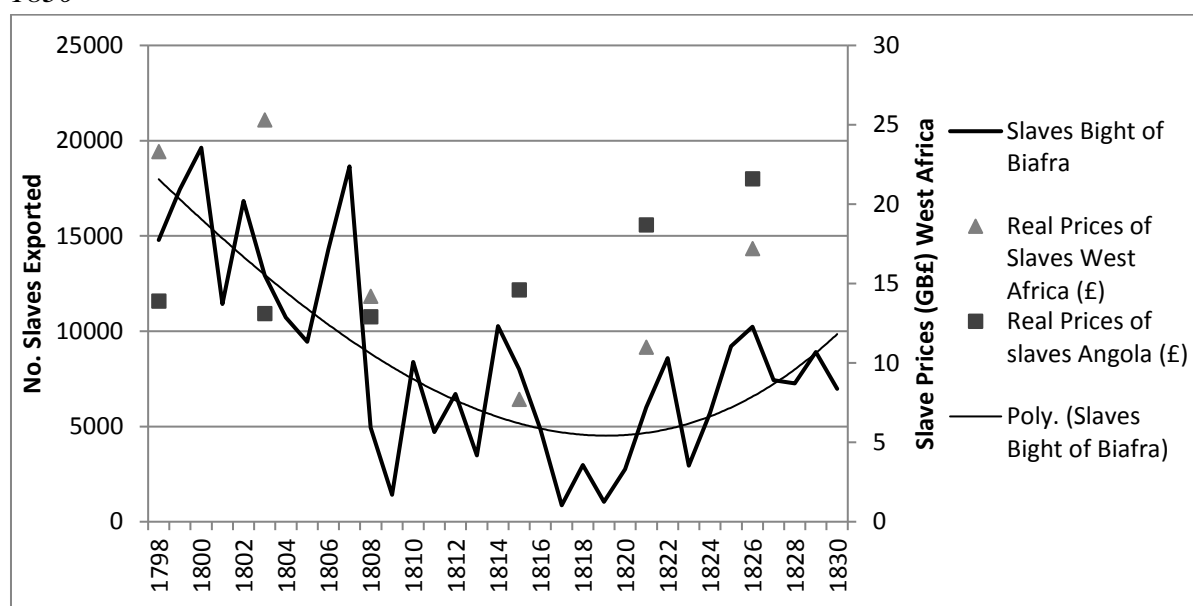
Source: slavevoyages.org

Appendix 6.2. Slave embarkations from the Bight of Biafra 1770 – 1838



Source: slavevoyages.org

Appendix 6.3. Slave exports Bight of Biafra + Slave prices West Africa and Angola 1798 - 1830



Source: slavevoyages.org, Lovejoy & Richardson 1995a

Appendix 6.4. Percentage fall in the value of the principle African commodities imported into Britain between 1814 and 1816

Beeswax	Camwood	Ebony	Gum Senegal	Hides	Ivory	Palm Oil	Pepper	Redwood
-67%	-40%	-70%	-83%	-71%	-27%	-38%	-79%	-67%

Source: Parliamentary Papers 1816 (506) Report from the Select Committee on Papers Relating to the African Forts

Appendix 6.5 Index of the quantity of goods imported into Great Britain from Africa (1811=100)

Year	Beeswax	Camwood	Ebony	Gum Senegal	Hides	Ivory	Palm Oil	Pepper	Redwood
1811	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1812	93	99	138	16	83	46	49		144
1814	81	89	63	59	318	53	8	47	143
1815	6	116	228	67	320	65	175	198	191
1816	1	42	164	61	64	46	101	194	140
1817	12	15	201	37	52	34	126	136	136
1818	8	89	169	35	165	50	124	42	84
1819	48	99	63	6	0	54	314	47	53
1820	34	90	0	0.1	236	56	76	39	2

Source: CUST

Appendix 6.6. Average quantity of trade goods on Bristol ships trading in the Bight of Biafra 1790 – 1791

Cloths and Clothing (puncheons)

Year	Slave Commodity	/ Linen	British Cotton	India Goods
1790	Slave	3.6	8.6	18
1790	Commodity		6	0.125
1791	Slave	25	1	13
1791	Commodity	0	0	13

Wrought and Unwrought Metals

Year	Slave Commodity	/ Iron Bars	Lead Bars	Wrought Iron Chests	Copper Brass manufactures Chests	/ Iron Pots Brass Pans
1790	Slave	1791	487	48	47.5	637
1790	Commodity	160	0	31	0	0
1791	Slave	911	294	35	19	994
1791	Commodity	140	0	28	40	50

Weapons and Ammunition

Year	Slave Commodity	/ Kegs Gunpowder	Bags Lead and Shot	Chests Muskets	Casks Gunflints
1790	Slave	1,194	167	11	11
1790	Commodity	0	0	0	0
1791	Slave	9237	37	3.5	5.5
1791	Commodity	100	0	0	3

Other

Year	Slave Commodity	/ Chest Bugle	Punch Spirits	Salt
1790	Slave	3	45	482
1790	Commodity	0	2	9306
1791	Slave	3	40.5	334
1791	Commodity	4	37	4380

Source: Bristol Presentments

Appendix 6.7. Value (GB £) of commodities from the two case study regions 1828 – 1832

	Beeswax	Camwood	Ebony	Palm Oil	Pepper	Redwood	Ivory	Gold	Total
Coast South of the Rio Volta with the Island of Fernando Po	2126	1767	1844	1143628	150	134966	82447	0	1366929
Cape Coast Castle and the Gold Coast from Cape Apolonia to the Rio Volta	420	1003	45113	87313	9455	14	39185	593880	776384

Sources: CUST, Liverpool Mercury Prices Current. Ivory price from Parliamentary Papers 1816 (506) Report from the Select Committee on Papers Relating to the African Forts

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Angus Dalrymple-Smith
Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)
Completed Training and Supervision Plan



Name of the learning activity	Department/Institute	Year	ECTS*
A) Project related competences			
Seminar: My project in a nutshell	N.W. Posthumus Institute	2013	2
Seminar: Work in progress	N.W. Posthumus Institute	2013	6
Research Design Course	N.W. Posthumus Institute	2014	8
Individual Assessment	N.W. Posthumus Institute	2014	1
Ester Advanced Seminar	N.W. Posthumus Institute	2015	4
"Commodities, Prices and Risk: The changing markets for non-slave products in pre- abolition West Africa"	PhD Conference (Wageningen), Member of the organising committee, N.W. Posthumus Institute	2016	1
B) General research related competences			
Introduction course	WASS	2013	1
Research Proposal	WUR	2013	4
"Continuity and Change on the West African Coast: The Relationship between the Trade in Slaves and Commodities in the 18 th century"	Conference: "Re/framing Slavery, Contemporary Child Labor & Rights, and Abolition and Emancipation across Time and Space", Accra, Ghana	2014	1
"Slave Ship Provisioning in the long 18 th century: A Boost to West African Agriculture?"	Workshop on Longitudinal Data in African History, Stellenbosch XVIII th World Economic History Congress, Kyoto	2015	1
Panel Organizer "Quantifying Transitions: Africa from the 17 th to the 20 th Century" "The end of transatlantic slavery, 'legitimate commerce' and the rise of colonialism: African terms of trade 1699 to 1900"	European Social Science History Conference, Valencia	2016	2
C) Career related competences/personal development			
GIS Introduction Course	GeoDesk WUR	2013	2
Visiting scholar / teacher Stellenbosch University	Stellenbosch University, South Africa	2016	6
Teacher / Course coordinator IIOS course RHI-10506 (in Dutch, included taking Dutch lessons)	Wageningen University, the Netherlands	2013 – 2016	2
Lecturer Demography course SCH-21306	Wageningen University, the Netherlands	2017	1
Total			42

*One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load

Funding

This research was funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research for the project “Is Poverty Destiny? Exploring Long Term Changes in African Living Standards in Global Perspective” (NWO VIDI Grant no. 016.124.307).

Cover images

Gezicht op de Westafrikaanse kust van Elmina tot Mouri en aanzicht van kasteel St. George te Elmina (Prospect of the Coast from El Mina to Mowri and Prospect of St. Georges Castle at El Mina). Cf. Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag, inv. nr. 693 C 5 dl III, to. p. 497 en 693 C 5 dl III, to. p. 461 en 61 B 25, na p. 156. Rechtsonder: *Vol. 2. plate 61. p. 589*. Linksonder: *No. 69*. Downloaded from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AMH-8175-KB_View_of_the_West_African_coast_from_Elmina_to_Mouri_and_a_view_of_the_castle_of_St._George_at_Elmina.jpg Accessed 10th July 2017

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