

## University of Southampton Research Repository

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis and, where applicable, any accompanying data are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis and the accompanying data cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content of the thesis and accompanying research data (where applicable) must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holder/s.

When referring to this thesis and any accompanying data, full bibliographic details must be given, e.g.

Thesis: Lior Blum (2019) "Empire Later: England and West Africa, 1553-1631, and the Foundations of English Dominance in the Region in the Late Seventeenth Century ", University of Southampton, Department of History, PhD Thesis, xiv, 230 p.



# **University of Southampton**

Faculty of Humanities

History

## **Empire Later: England and West Africa, 1553-1631, and the Foundations of English Dominance in the Region in the Late Seventeenth Century**

by

**Lior Blum**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2019



University of Southampton

**Abstract**

Faculty of Humanities

History

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Empire Later: England and West Africa, 1553-1631, and the  
Foundations of English Dominance in the Region in the Late  
Seventeenth Century**

Lior Blum

This study examines English activity in West Africa during the years 1553-1631, and explores the ways in which it shaped the history of England's engagement with the region in the later seventeenth century. A scholarly tendency to focus on the history of the Royal African Company (1672-1752), while overlooking the century of activity that preceded it, makes the rise of that organization to prominence during the closing decades of the seventeenth century to seem as an extraordinary and an explained event. This study, however, argues that a strong connection between the two periods does exist, as those early stages of English engagement with West Africa were instrumental in the making of England one of the most prominent powers in the region in the late seventeenth century. It is further argued that, as opposed to North America, the establishment of the English in West Africa during the first decades of engagement was not the result of a co-ordinated, planned effort, but was brought about by individual merchants who pursued narrow commercial interests. Thus, a great deal of contingency was involved in that process of establishment, and it is this feature which makes it unique in the history of England's overseas expansion. Nevertheless, this study shows that English activity in West Africa in 1553-1631 is highly relevant in the wider context of England's global pursuits, as the events which took place in that region at that time serves as a precursor of English activity on the other side of the Atlantic, in North America and the Caribbean.



## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Tables and Images</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Declaration of Authorship</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1. West Africans and Europeans: the Balance of Power	4
2. The Time Frame	7
3. Historiography	10
4. Methodology	22
5. Structure	26
6. Dipping a Toe: England’s Engagement with West Africa prior to the 1550s	28
<b>Chapter One: Ambition without Commitment: Why the English Failed to Gain a Foothold in West Africa during the Years 1553-1572</b>	<b>33</b>
1. The Sources	35
2. The Emergence of the Barbary, West African, and Muscovy Trades	37
3. The Leading Merchants: Wealth, Power and Connections	41
4. English Activity in West Africa during the 1550s: Merchants and Crown Relations	49
5. English Activity in West Africa during the 1560s: Merchants and Crown Relations	55
6. The Other Branch of the West African Trade: Hawkins Slaving Voyages (1562-1568)	61
7. Profitability	65
8. The Demise of the English West African Trade and the Lost Decade (1567-1580)	70
Conclusion	74
<b>Chapter Two: After the Gold Rush – English Re-establishment in West Africa, 1581-1613</b>	<b>77</b>
1. The Sources	79
2. From Al Ksar al Kabir to Cap Vert	81
3. A West-Country Scramble for Africa	87
4. The Charter Party: The Triumph of Middle-Tier Merchants	93
5. West Africa for Beginners: The Petite Côte	97
6. The First Years of Trade (1588-1592)	103

7. The Adventurers' Demise and the Later Years of the Senegambian Trade (1591-1613)	111
Conclusion	117
<b>Chapter Three: Out of the Red: the Establishment of the Camwood Trade and its Unexpected Outcome, 1607-1618</b>	<b>119</b>
1. The Sources	121
2. John Davies' Early Career: a Wartime Privateer	121
3. John Davies and the West African Trade: Peace-Time Pioneer	127
4. The Camwood Trade	133
5. Under the Colonial Radar: the Portuguese and Sierra Leone	139
6. The Rise of Competition: Humphrey Slaney and the Camwood Trade	145
7. Profitability and Operation	153
Conclusion	159
<b>Chapter Four: Misconception and Mismanagement - The Guinea Company, 1618-1631</b>	<b>161</b>
1. The Sources	165
2. The Establishment of the Guinea Company: the Charter Holders and the Charter	167
3. The Gambia Project: A Geographical Wishful Thinking	171
4. The Gambia: the Western Outpost of the Mali Empire	177
5. The Gambia Project, 1618-1621: a Chronicle of Failure Foretold	181
6. On a Collision Course: The Gambia Project and the Camwood Trade (1621-1628)	189
7. Money, Initiative, Vision: Crispe's Takeover of the Guinea Company (1628-1632)	193
Conclusion	201
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>211</b>



## List of Tables and Images

Figure 1 : Recorded English voyages to West Africa, 1553-1568	36
Figure 2: The involvement of the ‘quintet’ and its ‘associates’ in the West African Trade	48
Figure 3: Details of the 1588-1589 Petite Côte voyage	107
Figure 4: Estimated cost of equipping the three Exeter ships of 1589 for ten months (in £ sterling)	107
Figure 5: A map of present-day Sierra Leone, with the locations of the Sierra Leone and Sherbro Rivers	144
Figure 6: Cheap Ward and its vicinity	152
Figure 7: An excerpt from <i>Aphricae Tabula Nova</i> (1570)	172
Figure 8: An excerpt from <i>Africa ex Magna Orbis Terrae Descriptione</i> (1595)	173
Figure 9: Map of West Africa’s medieval goldfields and modern mines	178
Figure 10: The drainage basin of the Gambia	184



## Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship


Printed Name: LIOR BLUM

Title of Thesis: Empire Later: England and West Africa, 1553-1631, and the Foundations of English Dominance in the Region in the Late Seventeenth Century

I declare that this is my thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as a result of my original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for research degree at the University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signature: 

Date: 18 October 2019



## **Acknowledgements**

It is my great pleasure to thank the following individuals who assisted me in the research and the writing process of this thesis. Dr. Christer Petley and Prof. Claire Jowitt, my supervisors, for providing me with constant guidance and support throughout my PhD studies. I am especially indebted to Prof. Jowitt for her meticulous proof reading of my work. Dr. François Soyer, my advisor, for his valuable comments, as well as for helping me translating Portuguese and Spanish texts. Dr. Craig Lambert and Dr. Gary Baker, for teaching me the rudiments of palaeography, thus opening for me the doors of the archives. Mr. Colin Greenstreet and Dr. Richard Blakemore, who facilitated my work with the records of the High Court of Admiralty. The Graduate School office's team – Allison, Danny and Luke, who were always kind and helpful. Finally, I would like to thank my dear wife, Noga Blasberg-Blum, whose love, encouragement and patience made this work possible.



**List of Abbreviations**

<i>APC</i>	<i>Acts of the Privy Council</i>
<i>CSP Col.</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Colonial</i>
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</i>
<i>CSPF</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Foreign</i>
<i>CSPS</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Spain</i>
<i>CSPSS</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Spain (Simancas)</i>
<i>DRG</i>	<i>The Discovery of the River Gambia</i>
<i>EIC</i>	<i>English East India Company</i>
<i>GT</i>	<i>The Golden Trade</i>
<i>HCA</i>	<i>High Court of Admiralty</i>
<i>HP</i>	<i>Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes</i>
<i>K. R.</i>	<i>King's Remembrancer</i>
<i>PN1</i>	<i>The Principal Navigations of the English Nation, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition (1589)</i>
<i>PN2</i>	<i>The Principal Navigations of the English Nation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (1598-1600)</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>The Royal African Company</i>
<i>WIC</i>	<i>West-Indische Compagnie / Dutch West India Company</i>





## Introduction

The years 1550-1630 saw England's overseas expansion process, which began tentatively in the 1480s, taking shape. During this period, the English established new trades, first with Morocco (Barbary), Russia, and West Africa, and later with the Levant and the Far East. From the first decade of the seventeenth century onward, this commercial activity was accompanied by the establishment of colonies in Ireland, on the Atlantic coast of North America, and in the Caribbean. Despite this burst in overseas activity, England's efforts across the globe amounted by the early 1630s to a few small, and fragile, possessions that one could hardly regard as an empire. The modest achievements of the English during these eight decades indicate that the process of establishment was difficult, to say the least.

There was no region where that process was more difficult than in West Africa, which was one of the first regions encountered by the English during that period. While the years 1553-1631 saw the establishment, development and, ultimately, growth of England's West African trade, this process was far from linear and straightforward. After making a promising start in the 1550s and 1560s, during which their commercial pursuits ranged from Sierra Leone to Benin, the English had to cease their engagement with West Africa for the whole of the 1570s due to Portuguese opposition. They eventually returned to the region in the late 1580s, but for the next two decades, their activity was restricted to the Senegalese coast. A breakthrough occurred only in the 1610s with the establishment of the camwood trade of Sierra Leone and the formation of the Guinea Company (1618), the first English joint-stock company in the West African trade, which initiated English trade in the Gambia. Then, just as it seemed that the English West African trade was regaining its momentum, it faltered once again: the Guinea Company's ambitious plan of reaching the gold deposits of the West African interior by sailing up the Gambia River proved to be a total failure, and almost spelt the company's end. By the mid-1620s, it found itself on the brink of bankruptcy, with its monopoly threatened. Nevertheless, the company managed to survive the turbulent 1620s, and in 1631, it was re-chartered. A year later, in 1632, it ventured out of the Upper Guinea Coast, resuming English commercial engagement with the Gold Coast after a hiatus of sixty-seven years.

Despite the faltering character of English activity in West Africa in the years 1553-1631, this period saw the English gaining a foothold in West Africa, as well as preparing the ground for future expansion. This is especially true for the 1610s and 1620s, during which the English created their first sphere of commercial influence in West Africa – Sierra Leone – and laid the foundations for the creation of a future one – the Gambia (this region became a fully blown sphere of English influence in the 1660s). English activity in these two regions during these two decades, it is argued, was crucial in leading the English to re-enter the gold trade of the Gold Coast in 1632. While it took the English forty years to firmly establish themselves in that region, it is likely that they would not have become prominent players in the West African arena in the late seventeenth century had they not returned to the Gold Coast in the early 1630s. Participation in the region's gold trade required the English to erect a fortified trading post, which, in turn, strengthened their position there. When the gold trade gave way to the slave trade in the second half of the seventeenth century, the English had a base that facilitated their pursuit of that trade. Thus, it is further argued here that English activity in the early seventeenth century triggered the development of the English West African trade, and England's rise to prominence in the region, later that century.

The peculiar course taken by English activity in West Africa during the years 1553-1631 and its influence on developments taking place in the late seventeenth century raises three important questions: what were the reasons that made it so peculiar? How, in spite of the instability that characterized their activity in the region, the English managed to secure themselves a foothold there by 1631? What does the peculiarity of this course tell us about the nature of England's process of overseas expansion as a whole?

In order to answer these questions, this study provides a comprehensive and analytical account of the history of English activity in West Africa in the years 1553-1631. In doing so, it seeks to fill a substantial lacuna in scholarship on England's engagement with the region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Scholars tend to overlook this period for two reasons. First, in evaluating the importance of English activity in the region, they usually focus on its contribution to England's economy. As this contribution was

marginal,<sup>1</sup> they often dismiss the period as insignificant. The best example for this scholarly approach is the words of K. G. Davies who, in the introduction to his 1957 study of the Royal African Company (RAC), made the following evaluation of the said trade and its history:

The history of English trade in West Africa before the foundation of the company of Royal Adventurers in 1660 can be recounted briefly. Clearly it was of small proportions. Even at its height, in the eighteenth century, the African trade derived its importance not from its absolute volume but from its connexion with the commerce of the West Indies and America. Until 1630 and 1640 this connexion did not exist. [...] So far as the English were concerned, the African trade was probably roughly on a footing with trade to Morocco, and affords similar interesting and picturesque evidence of the broadening of England's commercial interests.<sup>2</sup>

He then proceeds to describe the first century of English activity in West Africa (1553-1660) in two and a half pages. While Davies wrote in the 1950s, latter generations of scholars did not do much to enhance our understanding of English activity in West Africa during that century.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to this scholarly approach, this study argues that in order to understand the importance of English activity during the years 1553-1631, one should not only look at its contribution to England's economy, but also examine the economic activity of the prominent merchants who controlled the West African trade during those years. While insignificant on the national level, the West African trade was profitable enough for individual merchants. Thus, these merchants had an interest in maintaining a continual English presence in West Africa throughout the period in question. This presence, in turn, helped to establish the English in the region. Nevertheless, one cannot understand the ability of individual merchants to shape the course of England's engagement with West Africa without examining the political setting of the region – the backdrop against which those merchants conducted their activity.

The second reason for this neglect is the tendency of scholars to associate successful processes of overseas expansion with the establishment of colonies and

---

<sup>1</sup> P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', in *Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. 1: The Origins of Empire*, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 241-63 (p. 247).

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, 1957), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of this topic, see the historiography section of this chapter.

plantations. An example for this approach can be found in P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law's chapter-article 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', from the first volume of the *Oxford History of the British Empire*. In referring to the nineteenth century British colonies in West Africa, the authors write as follows:

In any case, it is misleading to treat these establishments in their earlier phase [i.e., during the seventeenth century] as 'colonies'. They were merely trading posts, which did not develop significant agricultural capacity. Although there were some projects of establishing plantations in Guinea, using African slaves locally to produce tropical crops such as indigo and cotton, from the late seventeenth century onwards these were limited and ultimately abortive, and the idea was abandoned by the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

This study, however, argues that the use of the terms 'colonies' and 'plantations' in evaluating the importance of early English activity in West Africa is wrong. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England's commercial engagement with the region did not lead to the creation of colonies or plantations, but it did result in the creation of commercial spheres of influence that would later develop into colonies. Thus, using colonization as a yardstick for evaluating the degree of success of the process of overseas expansion is counterproductive in this case. Instead, one should use the terms 'presence' and 'activity', and examine their contribution to that process. As this study shows, it was the continual presence and activity of the English in West Africa from the late 1580s to the early 1630s that laid the foundations to England's dominance in the region from the late seventeenth century onwards.

### **1. West Africans and Europeans: the Balance of Power**

The fact that the English, like other Europeans, did not manage to establish colonies and plantations in West Africa till the late nineteenth century owes to two factors. The first is the tropical ecology of the region, which creates an ideal environment for disease-bearing mosquitos, such as *Anopheles gambiae* and *Aedes aegypti*, the vectors of malaria and yellow fever, respectively.<sup>5</sup> These insects thrive in warm, humid environments with high

---

<sup>4</sup> Hair and Law, pp. 260-61.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, 'Disease in West African History', in *Themes in West Africa's History*, ed. by Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006) 186-207 (pp. 188-91).

rainfall and relatively constant temperatures, such as characterize most of West Africa, and especially the coastal regions and their immediate hinterlands, where European concentrated most of their activities.<sup>6</sup> Lacking natural immune to these, and other, tropical diseases, Europeans who visited the region before the nineteenth century died in great numbers.<sup>7</sup> Thus, at that point, European activities in West Africa were mainly restricted to trade, with colonization efforts focused on the uninhabited archipelago of Cabo Verde and the island of São Tomé. It was only the development of quinine in the 1820s that finally provided Europeans with decent protection against tropical diseases. With this epidemiological barrier being removed, the possibility of conquering and colonizing sub-Saharan Africa became attainable, and the road to the 'scramble for Africa' of 1881-1914 was paved.<sup>8</sup>

The second factor is the ability of inhabitants of West Africa to oppose European attacks off and on-shore. This factor was evident from the very first Portuguese ventures down the Atlantic coast of sub-Saharan Africa. Their successful slave-raids of the early 1440s, which took place on the shores of present-day Western Sahara and Mauritania, gave the Portuguese the impression that slaves could be as easily captured further south.<sup>9</sup> While Dinis Diaz managed to capture four Africans in the first Portuguese voyage (1445) south of the mouth of the Senegal River<sup>10</sup> – the traditional border between the Sahara and sub-Saharan Africa – the next voyages met with strong resistance that prevented them from landing, let alone seizing slaves.<sup>11</sup> Despite having a clear technical advantage over the inhabitants of West Africa, namely, the use of sophisticated sea-going vessels, firearms

---

<sup>6</sup> Robert W. Snow and Judy A. Omumbo, 'Malaria', in *Disease and Mortality in sub-Saharan Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Richard G. Feachem and Dean T. Jamison (Washington D. C.: World Bank, 2006), 195-213 (pp. 197-98); M. C. Peel et al, 'Updated World Map of the Köppen-Geiger Climate Classification', *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences*, vol. 11 (2007), 1633-44 (p. 1638).

<sup>7</sup> James L. A. Webb, *The long Struggle against Malaria in Tropical Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 16-17.

<sup>8</sup> James L. A. Webb, *Humanity's Burden: a Global History of Malaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 102-10, 124-25.

<sup>9</sup> Bailey W. Diffie and George D. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pp. 76-88.

<sup>10</sup> Gomes Eannes de Zurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. by Charles Raymond Beazley, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 100 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1896), pp. 99-100.

<sup>11</sup> John Thornton, *Africa and the Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 37.

and ordnance, their experiences in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1440s and 1450s made the Portuguese realize that the method of raiding, for slaves as well as for other commodities, was not effective in that region and that it should be replaced by peaceful trade.<sup>12</sup> Though raiding occurred at times during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, trade became the prevailing pattern of engagement not only among the Portuguese but also among their main European competitors – the French, English and the Dutch.

Europeans found it difficult to dominate West Africans not only in the military context but also in the commercial one. As John Thornton has shown, the West Africans were far from being "junior and dependent trading partners."<sup>13</sup> They maintained long-range trade networks long before the coming of the Portuguese, and controlled the stream of goods from the interior to the coast.<sup>14</sup> Having a limited ability to penetrate inland, where the sources of the commodities they wanted – mainly gold, but also ivory, gum and cowhides – were found, Europeans needed the cooperation of West Africans. For this reason, Portugal, and later its European competitors, developed and maintained diplomatic relations with the West African polities with which they engaged commercially to secure and facilitate the trade.<sup>15</sup> Even their forts, those impressive symbols of domination that Europeans erected in West Africa, were built with the permission of local rulers. Thus, during the early modern era, Europeans had to acknowledge the fact that they were not the landlords in that region. It was only in the late nineteenth century, with the achievement of further technological and medical advances, that Europeans gained the upper hand in their interaction with the West Africans.<sup>16</sup>

The history of English activity in West Africa in the years 1550 and 1630 provides numerous examples for this state of affairs. This is particularly true for the years 1553-1568, in which the English made their first steps in the region. The crew members of the

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 19-20.

<sup>15</sup> Thornton, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 42. See also: Christopher Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002), pp. 352-53. Ehret, though, tends to downplay the role played by West Africa's disease environment in curbing European expansion in the region.

second English voyage to the Gold Coast (1554-1555), for instance, found that the local merchants to be "very wary people in their bargaining", who "will not lose one sparke of gold of any value." For this purpose, the English noticed, "they use weights and measures, and are very circumspect in occupying the same."<sup>17</sup> A detailed description of the Africans' bargaining skills is given in the narrative of William Towerson's first voyage to West Africa (1555-1556), showing that the local merchants were equal partners in their trade with the English.<sup>18</sup> There were occasions, however, in which the locals reminded the English that they were only guests in West Africa. In his third slaving voyage (1567-1568), John Hawkins was approached by a local king in the Sierra Leone region, who offered him to join him (the king) in raiding his enemies, and in return to have a share of the slaves taken in the assault. Hawkins helped the king to launch a successful attack that yielded a great number of slaves, only to discover later that his African partner had left the battle scene with most of the captures. When relating to that event in his narrative of his third slaving voyage, Hawkins commented that all Africans were treacherous.<sup>19</sup> He was not the first English merchant, of those visiting West Africa in the 1550s and 1560s, to relate to Africans as "treacherous".<sup>20</sup> These accusations, whether justified or not, serve as an indication for the dependency of the English – and their frustration of it – on their local partners when trading in Africa.

## 2. The Time Frame

The period examined in this work encompasses seventy-eight years, from 1553 to 1631, based on my own division of the history of English activity in West Africa into phases. The main criteria used in defining these phases is the geographical scope of the activity, and its mode of organization; changes in either criteria, or in both, spell the end of one phase and the beginning of another. In what follows, I survey these phases and explain how they are defined.

---

<sup>17</sup> *The Principal Navigations of the English Nation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (PN2), vol. 2, pt. 2, ed. by Richard Hakluyt, (London: By George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1599), p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 3, pp. 521-22.

<sup>20</sup> See the narrative of George Fenner's voyage of 1566-1567: Walter Wren, "The Voyage of M. George Fenner to Guinie...", in PN2, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 59.

While there is evidence for English interest in the West African trade as early as the 1480s, and while some poorly recorded voyages en-route to Brazil were made between 1530 and 1540, it was not until the 1550s that West Africa became a regular destination for English ships.<sup>21</sup> The last section of this chapter discusses the possible connection between these early ventures and English activity in West Africa during the second half of the sixteenth century.

The first phase in the history of English activity in West Africa began in 1553 with the first voyage to the region after a thirteen-year break, and ends in 1572, with the signing of the first draft of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty, which excluded the English from the region. Most of the activity in that phase concentrated in the years 1553-1568, in which there were fifteen recorded voyages. The majority of the voyages made a round trip to the Gold Coast but some, like John Hawkins' slaving ventures, called at Sierra Leone to acquire slaves before proceeding to the Caribbean.<sup>22</sup> As both the Gold Coast gold trade and the trans-Atlantic slave trade were Iberian monopolies, English engagement with these branches of the West African trade met with diplomatic and military opposition, which eventually brought the first phase to its end. The English ceased pursuing the gold trade after 1565 and the slave trade during the early 1570s.<sup>23</sup> During the next fifteen years – roughly, 1572-1587 – there was no direct English engagement with the West African trade.

A second phase started in 1587, with the first voyage of the Senegal Adventurers to the Petite Côte (present-day Senegal), as part of their collaboration with the exiled Portuguese pretender, Dom Antonio. The foundations of that phase, however, were laid in

---

<sup>21</sup> Hair and Law, pp. 243-44.

<sup>22</sup> For a summary of the 1553-1567 voyages (dates, size of fleet, African ports of call), see the table in J. D. Alsop's chapter-article: 'Tudor Merchant Seafarers in the Early Guinea Trade', in *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485-1649*, ed. by Cheryl Fury (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2012), 75-115 (p. 76). A similar table appears in Hair and Alsop's joint study of the wills of the sailors and merchants who participated in those voyages, on which Alsop's chapter-article is based: *English Seamen and Traders in Guinea, 1553–1565: The New Evidence of their Wills* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1992), p. 49. Both works discuss only nine voyages, omitting George Fenner's 1566 voyage. The narrative of this voyage, like those of the other voyages, can be found in both editions of *The Principal Navigations*. See: *PN1*, ed. by Richard Hakluyt (London: By George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1589), pp. 142-50; *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 57-64.

<sup>23</sup> K. R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 110-11.



1580, with the annexation of Portugal to Spain. This event reopened the way for English trade in West Africa, as it transferred the Portuguese possessions in the region into the hands of a kingdom that was hostile to England (and would soon become its enemy), thus making them a fair game for the English. While the Senegal Adventurers was a short-lived organization – it was disbanded in 1593 – its activity helped to establish a regular trade with the Petite Côte, which was to last into the seventeenth century.<sup>24</sup> This phase ended in 1618, with the establishment of the first Guinea Company, to which the Crown granted a monopoly over all English trade with West Africa. Within the second phase, the years 1607-1618 form as a sub-phase. These years saw the entry of John Davies into the West African arena and the establishment of the English camwood trade. This London merchant is one of the most important figures in the history of English activity in West Africa in the seventeenth century, as his commercial activity not only started England's long standing association with Sierra Leone, but also led to the foundation of the Guinea Company in 1618. Thus, while this period is not defined here as a phase in itself (because there is no change in geographical scope or mode of organization), it is important enough to be discussed in a separate chapter.<sup>25</sup>

The third phase in the history of English activity in West Africa, the years 1618-1631, is the last examined in this study. This phase saw the attempts of the Guinea Company to reach the gold fields of the West African interior by sailing up the Gambia River. Though these attempts failed, they were responsible, in the long term, for making the Gambia an English sphere of influence.<sup>26</sup> In the short term, this failure brought the company to the brink of bankruptcy, and forced it to reorganize. In 1631, the Crown granted it a new charter, and a year later, it began establishing itself on the Gold Coast, which soon became its centre of attention. The rest of the seventeenth century saw the English concentrate their efforts on the coastline of the Bight of Guinea, first with the gold trade, and later with the slave trade. Thus, 1631 serves as the endpoint of this study, as it

---

<sup>24</sup> John W. Blake, 'English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629', *Quarto Congresso do Mundo Portugues*, VI, 1 (1940), 313-35 (pp. 320-26).

<sup>25</sup> Hair and Law, p. 251; Blake, 'English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629', pp. 327-29.

<sup>26</sup> For the history of the Guinea Company, see: John W. Blake, 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660', *Proceedings of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society*, III, 1 (1945/46), pp. 14-27. 'The Farm of the Guinea Trade in 1631', *Essays in British and Irish History in Honour of James Eadie Todd*, ed by T. W. Moody et al., (London: F. Muller, 1949), pp. 86-106.

marks a watershed in the history of English activity in West Africa: by returning to the Gold Coast, the English started to pursue the course that would make them one of the major players in the West African during the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup>

This study does not discuss the forty years that passed from the return of the English to the Gold Coast (1632) and the establishment of the RAC (1672), despite their relevance to the process through which the English rose to prominence in West Africa. The reason for this decision is my identification of the years 1553-1631 as the formative period of the English West African trade, in which most of the important developments took place. In this respect, the decisive development in the history of English activity to 1672 was the renewal of English activity on the Gold Coast after a break of sixty-seven years (1565-1632). Thus, the main goal of this study is to analyse the reasons and processes that prepared the ground for that event.

### 3. Historiography

The subject matter of this work corresponds to two different fields of study: the history of English activity in West Africa, and of early stages of England's overseas expansion process. This section examines the present state of both fields, and shows how this work contributes to them.

The history of English activity in West Africa in the years 1553-1631 has never been closely studied. The main reason for that is the relative paucity of available documentation before 1660, especially for the years 1593-1658.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the few studies

---

<sup>27</sup> For the reorganization of the Guinea Company in 1631, see: John W. Blake, 'The Farm of the Guinea Trade in 1631', *Essays in British and Irish History in Honour of James Eadie Todd*, ed by T. W. Moody et al., (London: F. Muller, 1949), pp. 86-106. For a succinct description of the history of the Guinea Company on the Gold Coast, see: Robert Porter, 'The Crispe Family and the African Trade in the Seventeenth Century', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 9, No. 1 (1968), 57-77; for a more elaborate description, see Porter's *European Activity on the Gold Coast, 1620-1667* (Unpublished D.Litt. thesis, University of South Africa, 1975) (chapters III-VII); see also: Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

<sup>28</sup> In December 1657, the English East India Company (EIC) bought from the Guinea Company the remainder of the latter's lease of the English West African trade (until 1665). In contrast to the Guinea Company, the EIC produced an ample documentation of its

dedicated to the history of English activity in West Africa during the seventeenth century tend to focus on the RAC (1672-1752) and its predecessors, the Royal Adventurers (1660-1672).<sup>29</sup> In these studies, the pre-1660 period serves, at best, as an introduction. While it is possible to discuss the development of scholarly writing on that topic, one has to do it within the wider context of scholarly writing on Europe's engagement with West Africa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

One of the earliest discussions of the history of English activity in West Africa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries dates to 1899, with Edward Day Collins' unpublished D.Litt. thesis, *The Royal African Company; the Study of the English Trade to Western Africa under Chartered Companies from 1585 to 1750*. While this economic and legal study focuses on the history of the RAC, it also traces, as its subtitle suggests, the history of regulated English trade to West Africa from the establishment of the Barbary Company (1585) to the demise of the RAC. Thus, it dedicates its two first chapters to the pre-1660 period, with the first discussing the years 1585-1631. While providing a sufficient summary of the developments in the organization of England's West African trade during that period, it does not say much about the trade itself. Nevertheless, its use of

---

activity in West Africa, at least as far as the Gold Coast is concerned. Thus, its activity in that region in the years 1658-1665 is well documented. See: Margaret Makepeace, 'English Traders on the Guinea Coast, 1657-1668: An Analysis of the East India Company Archive', *History in Africa*, 16 (1989), 237-84 (pp. 237-38). Makepeace also published a collection of some 130 documents out of these archives: *Trade on the Guinea Coast, 1657-1666: the Correspondence of the English East India Company*, ed. by Margaret Makepeace (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin, 1991). However, despite Makepeace's efforts in making the primary sources of the EIC's Gold Coast episode more accessible, no study of that period has been made to date.

<sup>29</sup> In fact, there are only three studies that can be considered as proper histories of those companies: the two unpublished D. Litt. theses of Edward Day Collins (1899) and George Frederick Zook (1919), and Davies' *The Royal African Company* (1957). Edward Day Collins, *The Royal African Company; the Study of the English Trade to Western Africa under Chartered Companies from 1585 to 1750*, unpublished D.Litt. thesis, Yale University, 1899; George Frederic Zook, *The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa*, unpublished D.Litt. thesis, Cornell University, 1919. For over fifty years, Davies' work (see note 2) was the only comprehensive study of the RAC. In 2013 it was augmented by Pettigrew's *Freedom's Debt*, which explores the political context of the company's activity. See: William Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

State papers and the registers of the Privy Council in reconstructing the history of English activity in West Africa was pioneering, though it is unclear whether other scholars consulted his work.

The first scholar to pay proper attention to the pre-1660 period was James A. Williamson, the notable historian who studied the English voyages of exploration during the reign of the Tudors. Williamson's work on the English voyages to West Africa was, however, a by-product of his study of the career of Sir John Hawkins, who sought to position England within the trans-Atlantic slave trade during the 1560s. Nevertheless, large sections of his 1927 study of Hawkins deal with that trade: one chapter recounts the history of English trade to West Africa from the early 1550s until 1562, the year in which Hawkins entered that scene, while three other are dedicated to his three slaving voyages to Sierra Leone, en-route to the Caribbean (1562-1563, 1564-1565, 1567-1568).<sup>30</sup> In addition, the opening chapter deals with the career of John's father, William, who pursued the West African trade during the 1530s. Besides that extensive engagement with the history of English activity in West Africa during the 1550s and 1560s, Williamson made other notable contributions for the study of that topic. He was probably the first British historian to point out that the European discovery of West Africa had not received its fair share of scholarly attention (though he himself did not attempt to study it in earnest during the latter stages of his career). At the beginning of the second chapter, he writes as follows:

The discovery of America has received all the consideration it deserves as an event in world history. [...] From our own standpoint it was indeed a great event and as such has been sufficiently recognized. The discovery of West Africa, on the other hand, was a more difficult achievement, deliberately planned and systematically carried out, and quite as important in the story of European advance as the subsequent expansion to the West; and, in the English view of history at least, it has not been accorded anything like his due proportion of regard.<sup>31</sup>

Secondly, Williamson also seems to be the first to use the records of the High Court of Admiralty (HCA) in reconstructing the history of England's engagement with West Africa during the sixteenth century. This was a substantial methodological development, and its influence is evident in the work of the scholar who became the most prominent authority on the pre-1660 period during the following decades – John W. Blake.

---

<sup>30</sup> James A. Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins: the time and the man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

Blake started his career with a study of European activity in West Africa during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, published in 1937 under the title *European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1578*.<sup>32</sup> The work's long subtitle is highly indicative of its character: 'A survey of the first century of white enterprise in West Africa, with special emphasis upon the rivalry of the Great Powers'. Writing in the late 1930s, Blake's study focuses on the 'white' side of the story, casting the 'Great Powers' as the main actors in the drama of the first century of direct contacts between Europeans and West Africans. The Africans, to whom he refers as 'Negroes', are bystanders in this drama, and they usually enter the stage when their military actions have an impact on the progress of European activity in the region.<sup>33</sup> Forty years later, in 1977, Blake openly acknowledged this fault in the preface of the revised edition of that work, titled, *West Africa: Quest for God and Gold, 1454-1578*:

This book, then, when written, naturally reflected many of the assumptions of that imperial age when the tide of European rule in Africa still flowed strongly forward. But abruptly, within the span of not much more than one generation, the tide was reversed, and many of the comfortable premises of colonial rule – and of this book – were exposed.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, Blake's revision of his work was minimal: it included only an addition of a long preface and an even longer appendix, in order to update it in line with new work in the field of African studies. The fact that the original work was left untouched testifies to the quality of Blake's work as an historian, as well as to the scholarly negligence of the topic in question during the four decades that separate between the publication and republication of his monograph.<sup>35</sup>

Naturally, most of that work deals with the Portuguese, who initiated European involvement in the West African trade in the 1440s and assumed a monopoly over it.

---

<sup>32</sup>John W. Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1578* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1969).

<sup>33</sup> The entry for the term 'Negroes' in the index of Blake's book sums up this point very neatly: 'Negroes, 4, 62, 66; Portuguese skirmishes with, 97, 140-42, 176-77, 180; wars among, 97-98, 138-39; attack Axem, 101; burn Accra, 102, 177; besiege S. Jorge, 176'. See: *European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1578*, p. 210.

<sup>34</sup> John. W. Blake, *West Africa: Quest for God and Gold, 1454-1578* (London: Curzon Press, 1977), p. xi.

<sup>35</sup> P. E. H. Hair, 'John W. Blake: a Tribute', *History in Africa*, 16 (1989), 413-14.

England's engagement with the region is discussed in the two last chapters (out of eight), which deal with the years 1553-1578. Nevertheless, as the English were not the only Europeans to challenge the Portuguese monopoly during the sixteenth century and certainly not the first to do so – the French were active in West Africa as early as 1530 – Blake discusses their activity in tandem with that of the French. However, thanks to his meticulousness and use of a wide range of primary sources (State papers, registers of the Privy Council, HCA records, manuscript collections of the British Museum – now in the British Library), this work can still be regarded as the most important study to date of English activity in West Africa during the 1550s and 1560s. He augmented his work on this topic in 1942 with a two-volume collection of primary sources titled *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560*, of which the second is entirely dedicated to the English activity in West Africa up to 1560.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1940s, Blake shifted his focus to the years 1580-1660, to which he dedicated three essays: 'English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629' (1940), 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660' (1946), and 'The Farm of the Guinea Trade' (1949). Though the tone of these essays is still colonial (especially of the first two), and there is no attempt to explore the West African setting and its impact on the nature of English activity in the region, their contribution to the field was considerable. This trilogy established the argument that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century had far-reaching consequences for the future of England's engagement with West Africa, and showed that the methodological challenges posed by the study of the period in question are surmountable. For example, in 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660' Blake identifies the paucity of records left by the Guinea Company as the greatest of these challenges, and as the main cause for the scholarly neglect of the history of that company. Nevertheless, he maintains that it is possible to recover its history:

But, in fact, the impression that English records about the early Stuart companies are fragmentary, if it be widespread, is in some measures incorrect. It is possible, by collation of manuscript records of the high court of admiralty, the chancery court and the court of Star Chamber, with the better-known, though exiguous,

---

<sup>36</sup> *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560*, 2 vols., ed. by John W. Blake, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 86-87 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1942); Hair, 'John W. Blake: a Tribute', p. 413.

printed authorities and the manuscript material among the colonial state papers, to build up a fairly complete history.<sup>37</sup>

Blake himself did not proceed to undertake the task of reconstructing this history, not engaging with this subject after 1950. His last contribution to the field was a paper he read in March 1949 in a conference of the Royal Historical Society (published the following year in the Society's *Transactions*). The paper, titled *The Study of African History*, was a ground-breaking work. Almost 30 years before writing the preface of the 1977 republication of his *European Beginnings*, Blake started to acknowledge the faults of what was, at the time, the traditional approach to African history. In the opening paragraph, he maintains that, 'a case exists for a broader and more integrated approach to the study of African history and for an interpretation of African events from the point of view not merely of the European, but of the Arab, the Indian, and above all the Bantu and the Negro'. Thus, he appeals for 'the study of African history mainly through African eyes and for its own sake.'<sup>38</sup> In the rest of the paper, he discusses the shortcomings of the traditional, Eurocentric approach to African history, and suggests the exploration of certain avenues that can produce studies that are more balanced. He also notes the discrepancy between the boundaries drawn by Europeans during the 'Scramble for Africa' and the political realities of Africa, and the substantial differences between the African and European notions of land ownership. In this way, Blake's paper set a pattern for the study of African history for the following decades.

Scholars soon followed that pattern, and the 1950s saw the first examples of these new African histories.<sup>39</sup> In the context of the history of West Africa in the early modern era, this trend began to be visible from the 1960s onwards. Alexander Peter Kup's *A*

---

<sup>37</sup> 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660', p. 15. Compare this view with that of K. G. Davies who, referring to Blake's 'The Farm of the Guinea Trade', wrote as follows: "The Farm of the Guinea Trade'... shows that material exists for elucidating some of the problems of this early period. *It remains doubtful if the results would be commensurate with the effort.*' [the italics are mine] See: K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longman and Green, 1957), p. 38, n.1.

<sup>38</sup> John W. Blake, 'The Study of African History', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 32 (December 1950), 49-69 (p. 49).

<sup>39</sup> See, for example: J. D. Fage and Jean-Claude Nardin, *An Introduction to the History of West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: an introduction to the economic and political history of Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

*History of Sierra Leone, 1400-1787* (1961) is the first work that pays ample attention to the political and cultural setting of West Africa.<sup>40</sup> While including chapters on African politics and costumes, Kup's work opens with three chapters on the history of European activity in Sierra Leone. These chapters, which bear the titles 'First Reports', 'Early Visitors' and 'Forts and Settlements', indicates that Kup's starting point for the study of the history of Sierra Leone was European, not African.

The emergence of the first generation of African scholars in the 1960s helped to cement that approach. Thus, the Guyanese (of African ancestry) historian Walter Rodney opens his *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (1970) with a chapter titled 'The Land and the People', which is followed by a chapter on geo-political developments in sixteenth-century Upper Guinea, before proceeding to discuss the influence of European contacts on the region's history.<sup>41</sup> This new generation also started to emphasise the idea of African agency within the history of Euro-African interactions. Kwame Yeboa Daaku's *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720* (1970), with its examination of 'African reaction to European trade', as its subtitle reads, is a case in point.<sup>42</sup> However, in spite of the growing popularity of oral sources in the study of African history and the wish to tell the African story through African eyes, both Rodney and Daaku had to base their work on European written sources.<sup>43</sup>

These developments are evident in the work of Paul Hair who, during the closing decades of the twentieth century, came to assume Blake's status as the most prominent authority on the history of England's (and Europe's) engagement with West Africa in the early modern era.<sup>44</sup> Articles such as 'The Use of African Languages in Afro-European

---

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Peter Kup, *A History of Sierra Leone, 1400-1787* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

<sup>41</sup> Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

<sup>42</sup> Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

<sup>43</sup> Toyin Falola, 'West Africa', in *Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. 5 (Historiography)*, ed. by Robin W. Winks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 486-499 (p. 491).

<sup>44</sup> Hair's authoritative status is apparent from the fact that he was chosen to write the West African sections in both the Hakluyt and Purchas handbooks, as well as in volume 1 of the *Oxford History of the British Empire*. See: P. E. H. Hair, 'Morocco, the Saharan Coast, and the Atlantic Islands', and 'Guinea', in *The Hakluyt Handbook*, vol. 1, ed. by D. B. Quinn,



Contacts in Guinea, 1440-1560' (1966) examined the question of communication between Africans and Europeans during the first century of direct contact, while 'Hamlet on an Afro-Portuguese Setting: New Perspectives on Sierra Leone in 1607' (1978) explored the social and cultural setting of 1607 Sierra Leone.<sup>45</sup> However, in spite of his long engagement with the history of English activity in West Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Hair did not produce a comprehensive study of this topic. In addition, he preferred to work with travel narratives, at the expense of other sources – most notably, HCA records. Thus, he neglected an important source of information that could shed more light on topics he studied.

Hair made his most important contributions to the field through his numerous collaborations with other scholars. His work with the Portuguese vice-admiral and maritime historian Avelino Teixeira da Mota in *East of Mina* (1988) provides the Portuguese point of view on William Towerson's second voyage to West Africa (1556-1557), through the translation of four contemporary letters written by the governor of the Elmina fort.<sup>46</sup> His and J. D. Alsop's joint study of the wills of the crewmembers who served on the West African voyages of 1550s and 1560s examines that phase through the prism of social history; both scholars later published separate articles on that period, which followed that socio-economic line of investigation.<sup>47</sup> Another collaboration, this time with

---

Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 144 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1974), pp. 190-207; 'Africa (other than the Mediterranean and the Red Sea Lands) and the Atlantic Islands', in *The Purchas Handbook*, vol. 1, ed. by L. E. Pennington, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 185 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1997), pp. 194-218; P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', in *Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. 1: The Origins of Empire*, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 241-63.

<sup>45</sup> P. E. H. Hair, 'The Use of African Languages in Afro-European Contacts in Guinea, 1440-1560', *Sierra Leone Language Review*, vol. 5 (1966), 5-26; 'Hamlet on an Afro-Portuguese Setting: New Perspectives on Sierra Leone in 1607', *History in Africa*, vol. 5 (1978), 21-42.

<sup>46</sup> P. E. H. Hair and Avelino Teixeira da Mota, *East of Mina: Afro-European Relations on the Gold Coast in the 1550s and 1560s: an Essay with Supporting Documents* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988).

<sup>47</sup> P. E. H. Hair and J. D. Alsop, *English Seamen and Traders in Guinea, 1553-1565: The New Evidence of their Wills* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1992); A shorter version of this study was published by Alsop in 2012. See: J. D. Alsop, 'Tudor Merchant Seafarers in the Early Guinea Trade', in *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485-1649* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 75-115; See also: J. D. Alsop, 'The Career of William Towerson, Guinea Trader', *International Journal of Maritime History*, IV, 2 (December

anthropologist David Gamble, produced an annotated edition of Richard Jobson's *Golden Trade* (1623) – the most important study of this source to date.<sup>48</sup>

As neither Blake and Hair, nor their successors, have produced a significant study of the topic in question, the present work seeks to fill this lacuna. In doing so, it draws on elements found in previous studies. Methodologically, it combines Blake's use of HCA records with Hair's work with travel narratives. In addition, while focusing mainly on English activity, it also explores the political, ethnic and economic settings of the different West African sub-regions in which the English traded in the years 1553-1631.

\*

As opposed to the subject of English activity in West Africa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a few important studies on the early stages of England's overseas expansion project do exist. The first important work in this field is Kenneth Andrews' *Trade, Plunder and Settlement* (1984). When published thirty-five years ago, Andrews' work offered a fresh re-evaluation of the beginnings of the British Empire. While earlier studies of the British Empire – most of them written when there was still an empire – tended to read history back, maintaining that the empire was in formation ever since John Cabot embarked on his first westward voyage, Andrews' work suggests that this was far from being the case. Meticulously tracking the early stages of England's overseas expansion process, from c.1480 to c.1630, he shows that these initial efforts amounted by the endpoint of his study, to a few small, and fragile, possessions across the globe that one could hardly regard as an empire.

While Andrews' arguments are still valid, his work tends to downplay the few achievements made by the English during that period. This tendency can be explained by the fact that his study ends at 1630, before the tide began to turn in favour of an English empire (this happened only in the second half of the seventeenth century). Nevertheless,

---

1992), pp. 45-82; and, P. E. H. Hair, 'The Experience of the Sixteenth-Century English Voyages to Guinea', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 83, no. 1 (February 1997), 3-13.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Jobson, *The Discovery of the River Gambia* (1623), ed. by P. E. H. Hair and David P. Gamble, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 2 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1999).

the balance sheet of England's overseas expansion process at 1630 was not as poor as Andrews portrays it. In fact, one may argue that the contours of what would become the 'first' British Empire had been largely drawn by 1630, with English presence and activity – imperial, colonial, or both – in Ireland, North America and the Caribbean, West Africa, and India.

The next major contribution on that subject is of a different kind. The first volume of *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (1998), dedicated to the 'origins of empire', as its subtitle reads, is a collection of chapter-articles covering a period of two hundred and twenty years, from c.1480 to 1700. While Andrews' study examines the development of England's overseas expansion process in chronological and geographical order, creating a single, coherent narrative, the first volume of the Oxford series organizes its chapter articles according to themes and geography. Half of its chapters are dedicated to English activity in different regions around the globe, while the other half examines the cultural, commercial and political aspects of that activity. This method of organization, along with the fact that each chapter was written by a different scholar, is that it provides the reader with different points of view on England's overseas expansion process. Moreover, these different points of view are at times contradictory, which makes the discussion over that subject far more complex. This is the case of the chapters dealing with the role played by the state in England's overseas expansion project: while John Appleby argues that the Crown and its administration did not sufficiently support that movement, Michael Braddick and G. E. Aylmer make a case for a significant state involvement.<sup>49</sup>

Although the combination of these different points of view does not produce any clear thesis – this is the main drawback of that volume – the work itself does not lack an agenda, as indicated by the common features of its different chapter articles. The volume's focus is on colonization, and thus, nearly half of the chapters are dedicated, in one way or another, to England's engagement with the New World. Moreover, two chapters are dedicated to England's colonization of Ireland – one deals with the years 1580-1640, the

---

<sup>49</sup> John C. Appleby, 'War, Politics, and Colonization, 1558-1625', pp. 55-78; Michael J. Braddick, 'The English Government, War, Trade, and Settlement, 1625-1688', pp. 286-308; G. E. Aylmer, 'Navy, State, Trade, and Empire', pp. 467-81; in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. 1: The Origins of Empire*, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

other with 1650-1700 – equal to the number of chapters dedicated (separately) to England’s engagement with West Africa and Asia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In other words, *The Oxford History of the British Empire* associates the process of overseas expansion with colonization and the establishment of plantations, and less with maritime and commercial dominance. This association, in turn, dictates the volume’s focus on North America, the Caribbean, and Ireland – the regions in which the English had colonies and plantations at the end of the seventeenth century – and the negligence of regions that were not subject to colonization during the seventeenth century, namely, West Africa and, to a great extent, also Asia.<sup>50</sup>

This approach is also present, to an extent, in Louis Roper’s 2017 *Advancing Empire*, the most recent study of the early stages of the British Empire, which examines the growth of England’s overseas expansion between 1613 and 1688. What is interesting in this time frame is not the latter date, which marks, of course, the year of the Glorious Revolution and serves as a terminus for many studies of seventeenth-century England, but the earlier one. The year 1613 was chosen because it marks, according to Roper, ‘a permanent shift in the raison d’être of Anglo-American colonization efforts to the construction of plantations’, with the successful introduction of tobacco to the young colonies of Virginia and Bermuda, and the ‘chartering of Robert Harcourt’s settlement venture for Guiana’.<sup>51</sup> Thus, this study also uses settlement and plantations as a yardstick for evaluating the success of the process of overseas expansion.

---

<sup>50</sup> While both seventeenth-century West Africa and Asia did not see the establishment of English colonies of the American, Caribbean, or the Irish kind, there was a substantial difference between these two regions. Most of the English factories in West Africa were trading posts, and only few of them were fortified (first on the Gold Coast and later on the Gambia as well). In contrast, most of the trading posts in Asia were fortified buildings with garrisons manned by soldiers, to which the EIC leaders referred to as ‘colonies’. Thus, even if English factories in Asia were not fully blown colonies, they shared some features with the English establishments in the New World – something that one cannot say on most of the West African factories. See: Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 19-21.

<sup>51</sup> Louis H. Roper, *Advancing Empire: English Interests and Overseas Expansion, 1613-1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 18.

Nevertheless, Roper's approach towards the subject of empire building is more nuanced than that of the *Oxford History of the British Empire*. To begin with, while the focus in the latter work is on English activity in North America, *Advancing Empire* offers a more balanced examination of the development of England's overseas expansion process during the seventeenth century. It devotes one chapter to each of the three regions in which the English were active during the period in question, namely, Asia, West Africa and North America. The rest of the book's chapters follow a chronologic course, analysing the influence of the major events of the years 1613-1688 – the civil war, the interregnum, the Restoration, the Anglo-Dutch wars and the Glorious Revolution – on England's overseas expansion process.

This balanced discussion of the topic in question emanates from the understanding that in order to discuss Britain's empire building process in the seventeenth century one has to see beyond the terms of 'colonies' and 'plantations', as these are meaningless in the context of English activity in West Africa and Asia. In fact, the term Roper uses in his discussion of that topic is 'interests'. Thus, the book's full title is, *Advancing Empire: English Interests and Overseas Expansion, 1613-1688*, and the titles of the chapters dedicated to English activity in North America, West Africa and Asia are named accordingly 'The Expansion of English Interests: America/Guinea/Asia'. In the same manner, the chapter dedicated to the civil war is named, 'Civil War and English Overseas Interests'. The use of 'interests' instead of 'colonies' or 'plantations' enables Roper to acknowledge the importance of English factories in West Africa and Asia to the process of Britain's empire building, as these establishments represented and maintained English/British interests in these regions.

In addition to this nuanced approach, Roper's work makes another highly important contribution to the field in arguing that the main force behind England's overseas expansion during the seventeenth century was not the state but 'a cohort of aristocrats and merchants'.<sup>52</sup> 'To speak of the seventeenth-century English Empire', writes Roper, 'means to conceive of it, perhaps counterintuitively, as an entity that resulted from territorial and commercial agendas of often competing private individuals and groups'.<sup>53</sup> These

---

<sup>52</sup> Roper, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Roper, p. 3.

arguments dovetail with those of the present study, in suggesting that it was individual merchants, and merchant consortia, which shaped the course and character of English activity in West Africa, rather than the Crown. In fact, this study would further argue that there was no region in which this phenomenon was more discernible than West Africa.

In Roper's chapter on West Africa, however, only one of these two elements is present. While emphasizing the role of individual merchants in the development of the West African trade, the chapter overlooks the importance of the camwood trade, which was established about 1613 (the starting point of Roper's study), and of the Guinea Company's Gambia project, for their contribution to the creation of new English commercial interests in different sub-regions of West Africa. The chapter focuses on the period after 1631, particularly on the growing involvement of the English in the trans-Atlantic slave-trade from the 1640s onwards. This focus can be explained by the work's time frame, of which the years 1613-1631 constitute only a quarter, and by the fact that English entry into the slave-trade was indeed a prominent feature of the period in question. However, the neglect of the 1610s and 1620s leaves aside episodes in the history of English activity in West Africa that would add to Roper's narrative and arguments.

#### **4. Methodology**

There are two main causes for the scholarly neglect of the years 1553-1631: first, the paucity of documentation of English activity in West Africa, especially in regard of the first three decades of the seventeenth century, and second, the nature of the documentation that does exist. Nevertheless, I agree with Blake that the extant material is sufficient for the reconstruction of the history of English activity in West Africa during the period in question.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, thanks to Blake's meticulous work – and, to a lesser extent, to that of Williamson – most of the primary sources for the study of the history of English activity in West Africa during the years 1553-1631 had already been identified by 1949. In what follows, I will make a brief survey of these materials (a more detailed survey is made at the beginning of each chapter), present the main methodological challenges that they pose, and the ways in which these challenges are dealt with in this study.

---

<sup>54</sup> See note 37.

In terms of the quality and size of the extant documentation, the years 1553-1631 can be divided into two uneven parts: the period of 1553-1572, and that of 1587-1631 (the second and the third phases). The first phase of English activity in West Africa is well documented. Many of the voyages made between 1553 and 1572 were recorded, and their narratives were published at least once by 1600, mainly in the two editions of Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations* (*PN*; 1589, 1598-1600). In addition, these ventures left numerous traces in the State Papers, the registers of the Privy Council, and the records of the HCA. Thus, the extant documentation enables to reconstruct the history of that phase without much difficulty.

While English activity during the years 1587-1631 is insufficiently recorded, there are two episodes within that period which produced some considerable documentation. The first of these episodes is the collaboration between the Senegal Adventurers and Dom Antonio during the years 1587-1593. This collaboration produced a large body of documentation, on both the English and the Portuguese sides. Thanks to the efforts of Portuguese archivist Mario Alberto Nunes Costa, the greater part of this body of documentation is available since the 1950s.<sup>55</sup> In addition, these years also saw English expeditions to the kingdom of Benin (1588-1589 and 1590-1591), whose narratives were published in the second edition of the *PN*.<sup>56</sup>

The second episode is that of the first Guinea Company (1618-1631). This period produced the only published account of an English voyage to West Africa – Richard Jobson's *The Golden Trade* (1623), which records the third expedition sent by that company to the Gambia (1620-1621). Except for Jobson's narrative, there are additional sources that help to reconstruct the history of those years. The most important of them are the records of the Chancery, which shed light on the aftermath of the company's financial fiasco. Other sources include HCA records and the registers of the different branches of the English government: the State Papers, the acts of the Privy Council and the journals of the House of Commons.

---

<sup>55</sup> Most of the records relating to the Dom Antonio episode can be found in: Mario Alberto Nunes Costa, 'D. António e o Trato Inglês da Guiné (1587-1593)', *Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa*, vol. 8, no. 32 (1953), pp. 683-797.

<sup>56</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 126-33.

Between the demise of the Senegal Adventurers and the establishment of the Guinea Company lies a period of 24 years (1594-1618), which presents the greatest methodologic challenge for the study of English activity in West Africa during the years 1553-1631. No travel narratives were published in this period, which also left very few traces in the State Papers, the registry of the Privy Council and the records of the Chancery. Our knowledge of the events taking place during those years comes almost exclusively from two sources: the port books and the records of the HCA. The first provides the basic details of voyages made to West Africa: the name of the ship, its tonnage, the name of the master, the date of departure and arrival, the inward cargo and at times, also the names of the merchants who financed the voyage. The second is the more detailed of the two, as it provides an account of certain events that happened in a certain voyage. The records of the HCA, however, have some unique methodological challenges. As this study makes extensive use of these records, it is useful to introduce here both these documents and the institution that produced them.

The HCA was established in London at the beginning of the fifteenth century as England's major institution for punishing crimes perpetrated at sea, or beyond it (i.e. not on home soil), as well as for resolving disputes between individuals who participated in overseas activity, such as ship owners, merchants, and seamen.<sup>57</sup> The different stages of the legal process that took place in that court (depositions, interrogations, sentences etc.) were recorded by scribes, and kept in different books according to the stage that they represented. This procedure creates two methodological challenges: first, in order to study a case in its entirety, one has to find and collect the different parts of that case. This is not a simple task, as different parts of the same procedural stage are not necessarily found at the same place (for instance, different depositions belonging to a single case may be found in different deposition books, according to the date in which they were given), and as there is no index of cases. Second, once the case has been reconstructed, its text has to be transcribed. This becomes a difficult task when it comes to depositions, which are the

---

<sup>57</sup> For the history of the HCA and its operation, see: *Documents Relating to Law and Custom of the Sea*, vol. 1 (A. D. 1205-1648), ed. by Reginald G. Marsden, Publications of the Navy Records Society, vol. 49 (London: Printed for the Navy Records Society, 1915), pp. xiii-xiv; Richard Blakemore, 'West Africa in the British Atlantic: Trade, Violence, and Empire in the 1640s', *Itinerario*, 39 (August 2015), 299-327 (p. 300); See also: Alwyn Ruddock, 'The Earliest Records of the High Court of Admiralty (1515-1558)', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 22 (November 1949), 139-51.



‘heart’ of the case. As Admiralty scribes recorded the different deponents’ words in real time, they had to use shorthand, which makes depositions quite difficult to read. Both these challenges make the preliminary work with HCA records highly time-consuming.

Nevertheless, the work with the records of the HCA can be highly effective at times, especially in the context of the history of English/British engagement with West Africa. For instance, some twenty years ago, the Africanist Robin Law managed to trace the short and tragic history of the Scottish Guinea Company (1634-1639) through a thorough examination of HCA deposition books. More recently (2015), Richard Blakemore managed to reconstruct two ‘West African’ cases from 1640s in their entirety. This achievement enabled him to shed light on the activity of the English in West Africa during a period that is no less obscure than the years 1594-1618.<sup>58</sup>

My work with the records of the HCA in this study takes a different course. I do not make an attempt to reconstruct cases in their entirety, but rather strive to assess as many depositions as possible, especially those which were given in the years 1594-1618, in order to create a substantial body of information on English activity in West Africa. While this body of information might not be enough to fill the gaps in the history of English activity in the region during the years 1553-1631, it should enable me to identify patterns and developments in the course of that activity, and to see how they fit within the bigger historic picture.

Another strategy employed here in order to cope with the challenge set by the paucity of documentation is focusing on the careers of prominent English merchants in the West African trade. As the history of English activity in the region during the period in question – especially in the years 1607-1631 – is, essentially, a story of few individuals who controlled and directed the trade, a study of the lives of these individuals provides a key for understanding the course that history took. The emphasis in such a study is put on the circumstances in which those individuals entered into the West African trade and on the decisions they made in respect of that trade.

---

<sup>58</sup> Robin Law, ‘The First Scottish Guinea Company, 1634–9’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 76 (1997), 185–202; for Blakemore’s study, see the previous note.

## 5. Structure

The present study contains four chapters, each one of them discussing a different phase in the history of English activity in West Africa. In the first three chapters, there is an attempt to assess the profitability of English trade at each phase in order to show the commercial rationale behind the activity of the different merchant consortia or individual merchants who pursued the different branches of the West African trade. There is no discussion of profitability in Chapter Four, as it deals with a phase in which the main trade pursued was the camwood trade, the profitability of which is examined in Chapter Three.

Chapter One examines the first phase of that history (1553-1572), focusing on the reasons which led to the failure of English activity in the region during that period. While that period saw the English pursuing two different branches of the West African trade, the Gold Coast's gold trade and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the chapter mostly deals with the former, as it was the more substantial of the two. The chapter opens with a description of the background for the emergence of the English West African trade in the early 1550s, and a comparison between its conditions and those of the two other English trades that emerged at the same period – the Barbary and Muscovy trades. This comparison serves as a platform for discussing questions of commercial organization – an issue that played a major role in the failure of English activity at that phase. It then proceeds to examine other possible reasons for that failure: the social characteristics of the merchants who controlled the trade at that time, and their relations with the crown.

Chapter Two deals with the renewal of English activity in West Africa in the 1580s, and its development to 1613. The focus of this chapter is on the collaboration between the Portuguese pretender Dom Antonio and the Senegal Adventurers during the years 1587-1593, which was responsible for the renewal of that trade. On the immediate level, this chapter seeks answers for the following two questions: a) was the renewal of the West African trade an English initiative, or a Portuguese one? b) How can one explain the prominence of the West Country merchants in the ranks of the Senegal Adventurers? On a more general level, the chapter explores the geo-political conjuncture that re-opened the way for English participation in the West African trade, as well as the political situation of Senegambia – the region that was under the Adventurers' monopoly – which led the Adventurers to concentrate their efforts on the Petite Côte, while avoiding the Gambia.

Ultimately, this chapter attempts to explain why the Adventurers and their successors, who mostly belonged to the middle tiers of England's mercantile community, succeeded in doing what their more prominent predecessors of the 1550s and the 1560s failed to do: securing the English a foothold in West Africa.

Chapter Three focuses on John Davies' entry into the West African trade, and the establishment of the Sierra Leone camwood trade. It opens with an examination of Davies' early career in an attempt to show that this highly important figure in the history of English activity in West Africa was a middle-tier merchant whose initiative, rather than resources, was responsible for his pioneering activity. It then proceeds to examine the state of the European dyestuff market in the early seventeenth century in order to explain the commercial rationale that led Davies to develop the camwood trade. It also explores the political setting of Sierra Leone, in order to understand how a merchant of Davies' calibre was able to establish himself in the region, and eventually create England's first sphere of influence in West Africa. The last sections of the chapter discuss Humphry Slaney's entry into the camwood trade, the consequent development of rivalry between him and Davies, and the unexpected results of that rivalry: the establishment of the Guinea Company in 1618.

Chapter Four examines the history of the first Guinea Company (1618-1631), and the reasons for the failure of its Gambia project. Separate sections deal with the possible reasons for that failure: the social make-up of company members, their different and conflicting commercial interests, the insufficient information they had on the geography of the West African interior, and the ethnic and political setting of the Gambia. Other sections deal with the company's activity in the Gambia in the years 1618-1628, in an attempt to show that, beside short-term failure, it also yielded some long-term achievements. On a more general level, the chapter attempts to assess the role that the company played in the history of English activity in West Africa, and to provide a more positive view of its legacy.

## 6. Dipping a Toe: England's Engagement with West Africa prior to the 1550s

While the 1550s mark the beginning of the first phase in the history of English activity in West Africa, this decade was not the first to see English participation in the West African trade. The purpose of this section is to discuss the few occasions in which English subjects were involved with the West African trade prior to the 1550s, and examine whether they had any influence on the course and nature of English activity in the region from the 1550s onward. In other words, this section attempts to estimate the extent to which those occasions can serve as a background for the first phase of English activity in West Africa.

The earliest associations of English merchants with the West African trade occurred in the 1480s, some thirty-five years after the Portuguese initiated a regular trade with the Atlantic coast of sub-Saharan Africa. During that decade, three ventures involving English merchants were in preparation, and it is possible that one of them – or an additional voyage – actually sailed to the region. This pioneering English engagement with West Africa, however, was not carried into the 1490s and the first decades of the sixteenth century, and was only resumed in the 1530s. Once again, English engagement with the continent was very limited during that latter decade, and lasted for no more than ten years.<sup>59</sup> Thus, it was only in 1553 that the English started to pursue the West African trade in earnest.

English engagement with the West African trade during the 1480s occurred within two different contexts, one general and the other more specific. The general context was the slow process of development and consolidation of trade with Atlantic Andalusia, beginning in the mid-fourteenth century. This process took a leap forward during the second half of the fifteenth century with the creation of English merchant colonies in Seville and its satellite ports, San Lucar de Barrameda, Cadiz, and Puerto de Santa Maria.<sup>60</sup> The more specific context was the War of Castilian Succession of 1475-1479, during which Castile attempted, using Andalusian seamen and ships, to break into Portugal's newly established gold trade on the Gold Coast.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560*, vol. 2, pp. 295-301.

<sup>60</sup> Wendy R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Latter Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), p. 110, 184.

<sup>61</sup> Anthony R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: from Beginning to 1807*, vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 48.

While the war ended with Castile's acknowledgement of Portugal's monopoly over West Africa, it seems that the Castilian interloping activity of 1475-1479 prompted English merchants to challenge that monopoly. There is evidence that some English merchants organized at least two West African voyages in the years 1480-1482, though nothing is known about the outcome of these ventures. Sources reveal that several English merchants were in Seville before or during November 1480 in search for pilots for a voyage to the Gold Coast,<sup>62</sup> while in February 1481, Edward IV asked Pope Sixtus IV to authorize English voyages to 'any parts of Africa', indicating that one such voyage had already been made.<sup>63</sup> A year and a half later, in the summer of 1482, João II sent an embassy to England in order to 'to confirme the ancient leagues with England' and, more specifically, to ask Edward IV to stop an intended English voyage to West Africa. This expedition was organized by two English merchants resident in Andalusia, named William Fabian and John Tintam, on behalf of the Duke of Medina Sidonia (who ruled that part of Andalusia in which some of the English merchant colonies were located).<sup>64</sup> The English were not the only North Europeans to attempt breaking into the West African trade by collaborating with the Andalusians: at least two Flemish voyages to West Africa were made in the years 1475-1480; in both cases Andalusian pilots were used, and the latter of the two voyages was also made with an Andalusian vessel and crew.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Antonio de la Torre y Luis Suarez Fernandez, *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal durante el reinado de los Reyes Catholicos*, vol. 2 (Valladolid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Patronato Menendez Pelayo, 1958), pp. 98-99; Bailey W. Diffie and George D. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pp. 152-53.

<sup>63</sup> *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 1, 1202-1509*, ed. Rawdon Brown (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1864), p. 141.

<sup>64</sup> PN2, vol. 2 pt. 2, pp. 2-3.

<sup>65</sup> The first of those two voyages was made in 1475. See: Duarte Pacheco Pereira (1506), *Esmeraldo de situ orbis*, ed. by George Kimble, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 79 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1937), pp. 112-13. The second voyage was made in 1479-1480. See: Eustache de la Fosse, *Voyage a la Cote Occidentale D'Afrique en Portugal et en Espagne (1479-80)*, ed. by R. Foulché Delbosc (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1897); John Blake mentions that there is evidence for another Flemish voyage to West Africa before 1479, but he does not reference it. See: John Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1578* (New York: Longmans, 1937), p. 59.

The last instance of English involvement with the West African trade during that decade occurred in 1488, when a rebellious Portuguese count fled to England. Once there, he began preparing, together with certain English ship owners, a trading voyage to West Africa, possibly as a means to raise funds for another round of fighting. When João II heard of that plan, he sent an ambassador to Henry VII with a request to stop the voyage, and the English king consented and arrested the count.<sup>66</sup> With this aborted venture, English involvement with the West African trade ceased for the next four decades, resuming only in 1530. Referring to this long hiatus, K. R. Andrews maintained that nothing ‘about these Guinea projects of the 1480s suggests that English interest in Guinea was anything but weak.’<sup>67</sup> While this assertion seems to be correct, Andrews ignored the fact that England was not the only European nation to withdraw from the region during those years: in fact, all of Portugal’s competitors did the same. The foundation of the fort of São Jorge da Mina on the Gold Coast in 1482,<sup>68</sup> built in response to the interloping attempts of the late 1470s and early 1480s, cemented Portuguese control over the gold trade, which was the most lucrative branch of the West African trade at that time. Portugal further bolstered its position in West Africa through the treaty of Tordesilhas (1494), which represented a Castilian acknowledgment that the region was a Portuguese sphere of influence.<sup>69</sup> Castile’s withdrawal from the West African arena made that region less accessible for Portugal’s north European rivals, as they based their interloping efforts on Castilian aid.

The resumption of English involvement with the West African trade in 1530 occurred in a completely different context. This time it was a French challenge on Portuguese monopolies over the trade with Brazil, as well as with West Africa, which prompted some English merchants to imitate their colleagues from the other side of the English Channel.<sup>70</sup> The only one of them known to trade with both destinations was William Hawkins of Plymouth who, according to Richard Hakluyt, made three voyages to

---

<sup>66</sup> Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1540-1560*, vol. 2, pp. 297-98.

<sup>67</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 58.

<sup>68</sup> John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979), pp. 17-30.

<sup>69</sup> Disney, *A History of Portugal*, vol. 2, pp. 48-49.

<sup>70</sup> Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, p. 107; Malyn Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion, 1400-1668* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 118. For English activity in Brazil circa 1540, see: *PN2*, vol. 3, p. 701; Reginald Marsden, ‘Voyage of the Barbara to Brazil, anno 1540’, *The Naval Miscellany*, vol. 40 (1912), pp. 1-66.

Brazil via West Africa in the years 1530-1540. These voyages, which probably involved the employment of French pilots, called at the Cess River – by then a locality haunted by French merchants for several years<sup>71</sup> – where Hawkins ‘traffiqued with the Negroes, and tooke of them Elephants teeth, and other commodities which that place yeeldeth’, before proceeding to Brazil to buy brazilwood.<sup>72</sup> Judging from the Plymouth custom ledger of 1540, which recorded the outward and inward cargos of Hawkins’ last trans-Atlantic voyages, the West African part of these expeditions seems to be of a lesser commercial importance. In that voyage, which lasted from February to October 1540, Hawkins brought back 92 tonnes of brazilwood, which were valued at £600, and a hundredweight of ivory, amounting to no more than 30s.<sup>73</sup>

In all, English involvement in the West African trade before 1553 had little or no influence on the first phase of English activity in the region. There was certainly no connection between the intended 1480s voyages to the Gold Coast and those of the 1550s, as the gap separating these two periods was too long to create any continuity. William Hawkins’ voyages of the 1530s may have had some influence on the 1560s slaving enterprises of his son John, in the sense that the latter was aware of the possibility of pursuing a triangular trade linking West Africa and South America. If these pioneering ventures have any relevancy for the first phase of English activity in West Africa, it is in indicating the commercial and political trends that would characterize the 1550s and 1560s. In commercial terms, both periods saw an engagement with the Gold Coast and its gold trade, and the pursuit of a trans-Atlantic triangular trade. Politically, the special diplomatic relations between England and Portugal eventually led to English withdrawal from the West African trade for a few decades (in the 1550s and 1560s, military force accompanied diplomacy). In this sense, the political and commercial context within which the English operated in the 1550s and 1560s was not wholly different from that of the years 1480-1550. A change in that state of affairs occurred only in the 1580s, with the annexation of Portugal by Spain, which enabled the English to operate more freely in the region. It was only then that a long-lasting engagement with West Africa could develop.

---

<sup>71</sup> John Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, vol. 2, p. 136.

<sup>72</sup> *PN2*, vol. 3, p. 700. For the possibility of French participation in the Hawkins voyages of the 1530s, see: James A. Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins: the Time and the Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> *TNA*, K. R. Port Books, Plymouth, E122/116/13.





## Chapter One: Ambition without Commitment: Why the English Failed to Gain a Foothold in West Africa during the Years 1553-1572

The first phase of English activity in West Africa began in 1553 and ended in early 1572, with the first draft of an Anglo-Portuguese treaty, which excluded the English from the region (this treaty was eventually ratified in October 1576).<sup>1</sup> During this nineteen-year period, the English concentrated their efforts on the most lucrative branches of the West African trade: the gold trade of the Gold Coast and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It was the opportunity to participate in the former trade, arising in 1553, which was responsible for the renewal of direct commercial contact between England and West Africa, and this trade was the main one to be pursued by the English during the years 1553-1565.<sup>2</sup> English participation in the slave trade began only a decade later, but from 1565, it dominated English activity in the region. In all, fifteen recorded voyages sailed to West Africa in the years 1553-1568,<sup>3</sup> and there is evidence that several others took place in 1568-1572.<sup>4</sup> While an average of a voyage per year may not seem many, the period in question was an unprecedented one in the history of England's engagement with the region – not only in terms of the number of voyages made or prepared, but also in terms of the involvement of both London's mercantile elite and the English Crown in the West African trade. The former initiated, organized, financed and controlled that trade during the whole of the period, while the latter supported the West African enterprise both diplomatically and logistically. Nevertheless, in spite of this involvement, the English failed to gain a foothold in West Africa during the years 1553-1572, and by the latter year, the Portuguese practically expelled them from the region.

The main aim of this chapter is, therefore, to explore the reasons for that failure. The most significant of them, it is argued here, is the incongruity between the pattern of activity that the English chose to pursue during the 1550s and 1560s, and their organizational and financial capabilities. The involvement of London's mercantile elite and

---

<sup>1</sup> John Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1578* (New York: Longmans, 1937), p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', in *Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. I: The Origins of Empire*, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 241-63 (pp. 243-47)

<sup>3</sup> For a list of the fifteen recorded voyages, see below.

<sup>4</sup> Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, pp. 171-72, 188-91.

of the Crown, it is further argued, was crucial in this respect as both parties preferred to focus on the most lucrative branches of the West African trade, which were monopolised at that time by the Portuguese and Spanish respectively. While attempting to challenge these monopolies, however, the English were neither capable of matching Iberian organization (in the case of the merchants), nor willing to use an ample military force in order to assert their position in the region (in the case of the Crown). Thus, this chapter suggests that the way in which the English organized their West African trade during this period, the relationship between merchants and Crown regarding that trade and the Iberian opposition to English expansion, are determining factors in the nation's failure in securing a share of the West African trade.

The chapter begins with a comparison of England's West African trade with the two other English overseas trades established in the early 1550s: the Muscovy and the Barbary trades. This comparison not only helps to provide a historical context for the emergence of the English West African trade, but also shows that the English practiced other, alternative models of commercial organization, at that time. The middle sections of the chapter examine the careers of the leading merchants who controlled the West African trade during the 1550s and 1560s, and their relations with the Crown regarding it. The object of these sections is to portray the financial and political power that that small group of Londoners wielded, as well as the extensive support that they received from the Crown in the 1560s. This is done in order to highlight the question that forms the basis for the discussion in this chapter: why the phase that saw the participation of both London's mercantile elite and the State in the West African trade ended in such an overwhelming failure? The chapter concludes with an analysis of the demise of the West African trade in the late 1560s and the early 1570s, followed by an attempt to assess its profitability.

## 1. The Sources

The first phase of English activity in West Africa is the best documented of the three phases that took place in the years 1553-1631. Narratives of thirteen out of the fifteen recorded West African voyages made during 1553-1568 were included in at least one of the editions of Richard Hakluyt's *PN* (1589, 1598-1600); ten out of the thirteen were included in both. Three of these thirteen narratives had originally been published before Hakluyt began his editorial work: the narratives of the first two West African voyages were included in Richard Eden's translation of Pietro Martire d'Anghiera's *Decades* (1555), thus becoming the first English travel narratives to be published in Tudor England, while the narrative of John Hawkins' fateful voyage of 1567-1568 was published in 1569.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the narratives (in verse) of the two Baker voyages (1562-1564) were also published in the late 1560s.<sup>6</sup> The importance of Hakluyt's work, however, does not only lie in the fact that he published these narratives for the first time, but also in his editorial work. By compiling them and ordering them chronologically in the *PN*, he enabled his readers to get a clear picture of the first phase of English activity in West Africa.

The particulars of the two narratives not published by Hakluyt are known through the State Papers (Lovell) or the records of the HCA (Winter). These two sources also shed light on planned and aborted West African ventures, as well as on other plans in respect of England's engagement with the region, thus enabling to present a wider picture of English activity in West Africa during the period in question.

The following table, based on J. D. Alsop's table in his 'Tudor Merchant Seafarers in the Early Guinea Trade' (2012),<sup>7</sup> provides the basic details of those fifteen voyages.

---

<sup>5</sup> For Richard Eden's translation of d'Anghiera and the narratives of the English voyages, see: *The Decades of the Newe Worlde, or West India*, trans. by Richard Eden (London: William Powell, 1555), ff. 343r.-360v. For Hawkins narrative of his third slaving voyage, see: John Hawkins, *A True Declaration of the Troublesome Voyage of M. John Haukins to the parties of Guynea and the West Indies, in the Years of Our Lord, 1567 and 1568* (London: Printed by Thomas Purfoote to Lucas Harrison, 1569).

<sup>6</sup> P. E. H. Hair, 'Guinea', in *Hakluyt Handbook*, vol. 1, ed. by David Beers Quinn, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 144 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1974), p. 199.

<sup>7</sup> J. D. Alsop, 'Tudor Merchant Seafarers in the Early Guinea Trade', in *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485-1649*, ed. by Cheryl Fury (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2012), 75-115 (p. 76). There are two differences between Alsop's table and mine: first,

**Figure 1: Recorded English Voyages to West Africa, 1553-1568**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Named Vessels</b>	<b>African Destinations</b>	<b>Voyage Name</b>	<b>Source/s</b>
1553-1554	<i>Primrose, Lion, Moon</i>	Cape Verde Islands, River Cess, Gold Coast, Benin	Wyndham	<i>Decades, PN I, PN II</i>
1554-1555	<i>Trinity, John Evangelist, Bartholomew</i>	River Cess, Gold Coast	Lok	<i>Decades, PN I, PN II</i>
1555-1556	<i>Hart, Hind</i>	River Cess, Gold Coast	Towerson I	<i>PN I, PN II</i>
1556-1557	<i>Tiger, Hart</i>	Malagueta Coast, Gold Coast	Towerson II	<i>PN I, PN II</i>
1558	<i>Minion, Tiger, Christopher, Unicorn</i>	Cape Verde Islands, River Cess, Gold Coast.	Towerson III	<i>PN I, PN II</i>
1561-1562	<i>Primrose, Minion, Fleur de Lys, Dragon</i>	Gold Coast	Irlande/Cocke	<i>PN II</i>
1562-1563	<i>Salomon, Swallow, Jonas</i>	Canaries, Sierra Leone	Hawkins I	<i>PN I, PN II</i>
1563	<i>Primrose, Minion</i>	River Cess, Ivory Coast, Gold Coast	Baker I	<i>PN I (in PN II, Baker's version is replaced by Rutter's).</i>
1563-1564	<i>John Baptist, Merlin</i>	Malagueta Coast, Gold Coast	Baker II	<i>PN I</i>

Alsop's includes four categories (dates, vessels' names, African destinations and the voyage name), to which a fifth one is added here (sources). Second, as Alsop's research (together with Paul Hair's) was based on the examination of wills of crewmembers who served in the non-slaving West African voyages of 1553-1565, his table only provides details for nine voyages.

1564-1565	<i>Minion, Merlin, John Baptist</i>	Gold Coast	Carlet	<i>PN II</i>
1564-1565	<i>Jesus of Lubek, Salomon, Tiger, Swallow</i>	Canaries, Cap Vert, Sierra Leone	Hawkins II	<i>PN I, PN II</i>
1565	<i>Mary Fortune</i>	River Cess	Winter	HCA 3/13, 7 Feb. 1569; BL, Royal MS. Collection
1565-1566	<i>Swallow, Powel, Salomon, Pasco</i>	Sierra Leone?	Lovell	State Papers
1566-1567	<i>Castle of Comfort, May Flower, George</i>	Canaries, Cap Vert (Senegal), Cape Verde Islands	Fenner	<i>PN I, PN II</i>
1567-1568	<i>Jesus of Lubek, Minion</i>	Canaries, Sierra Leone	Hawkins III	<i>A True Declaration, PN I, PN II</i>

## 2. The Emergence of the Barbary, West African and Muscovy Trades

On 12 August 1553, a small fleet (two ships and a pinnace) departed from Portsmouth on its way to West Africa, thirteen years after the last recorded English visit to the region. This voyage, which inaugurated England's West African trade, was the last of four momentous voyages taking place in a matter of two years. The first and second of these voyages were made to the Atlantic coast of Morocco in 1551 and 1552, while the third, which departed from London in May 1553, a mere three months before the first West African voyage, sailed to the northeast in search for a passage to Cathay. This ill-fated voyage did not reach the Far East, but it did reach the White Sea and, by an overland journey, Moscow. In the same manner that the August 1553 voyage inaugurated a new

trade, so did the 1551-1552 voyages and that of May 1553, which gave rise to the Barbary and Muscovy trades, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

As Robert Brenner noted over twenty years ago, the expansionist boom of the early 1550s resulted mainly from the need of English merchants to import luxury goods directly from their source and not through intermediaries in Iberia or Antwerp, rather than a need to find new outlets for English cloth after the decline of the Antwerp entrepôt in 1551-1552. Thus, the original object of the Muscovy venture was to access the rich markets of the Far East, while the Barbary trade was established in order to compensate for the deterioration of the Iberian trade during the 1530s and 1540s, and the need to obtain goods (mainly sugar) which had formerly reached England via Iberia.<sup>9</sup> Though having its origins in the Barbary trade, the case of the West African trade seems to be broadly similar in its motives and aims to that of the Muscovy one, as the merchants involved in its establishment targeted the luxury commodities of the region: gold, ivory and spices (Malagueta and Benin pepper). This burst of commercial expansion occurred after an English attempt to break into the Mediterranean and Levant trades, made in the years 1511-1551. These trades also provided the English with luxury goods (spices, sweet wine, Turkish carpets), and the failure to establish a regular contact with the regions that supplied them during most of the sixteenth century may serve as another explanation for the emergence of the West African, Barbary and Muscovy trades in mid-sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Another factor that facilitated England's mercantile expansion of the early 1550s was geo-political developments taking place during the 1530s and 1540s. In this context, the West African trade was more similar to the Barbary than to the Muscovy trade. The search for a northeastern sea route to the Far East emanated from the wish to reach that latter region without passing through the Iberian spheres of influence (around 'Spanish' South America, or 'Portuguese' sub-Saharan Africa), as well as finding new lands that

---

<sup>8</sup> K. R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 64-75 (Muscovy), pp. 101-07 (Barbary and West Africa).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 4-14.

<sup>10</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 96-101. This section of the *PN* covers all recorded English voyages to the Mediterranean made in the years 1511-1551.

could form an English sphere of influence. In contrast, the establishment of both the Barbary and the West African trades resulted from the weakening of Portuguese control in these regions.<sup>11</sup> The rise of the Saadian dynasty in the 1540s led to the expulsion of the Portuguese from most of the Atlantic coast of Morocco, and opened the way for those English merchants who wished to trade with the region.<sup>12</sup> In West Africa, the French had been challenging Portugal's monopoly over the region's trade since the 1530s, combining raids on Portuguese ships with peaceful trade, mainly on the Malagueta Coast.<sup>13</sup> This continuous intrusion into their sphere of influence – the first one made since the late 1480s – indicated that the Portuguese hold in the region was weakening, and presented other European nations with the possibility of claiming a share of the West African trade.

The engagement with different geographical regions and different kinds of polities necessitated different forms of commercial organization. The disaster of the first voyage in search of the northeastern passage – 70 out of the 95 participants in this voyage froze to death during the winter of 1553-1554 – made the English aware of the hazards of the Arctic.<sup>14</sup> It became apparent that in order to maintain a regular trade between England and Russia through the northeastern route ships should be well equipped and voyages well timed. In addition, as trade could be pursued only during the short Arctic summer, there was a need to maintain resident factors in Russia in order to make the process of purchasing and transporting goods from the interior to the White Sea more efficient. These unique features of the Muscovy trade called for a sound and efficient organization. Thus, the Muscovy trade was the first of the three to see the creation of a joint-stock company, the Muscovy Company (also known as the 'Russia Company'), which was established in 1555. The heavy expenses of its operation were born, originally, by 201 members. For the same reasons, it was also the first trade to employ resident factors abroad from its establishment.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>13</sup> Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, pp. 106-07.

<sup>14</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> T. S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russia Company, 1553-1603* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), pp. 21, 29-30; Felicity Jane Stout, *Exploring Russia in Elizabethan Commonwealth: The Muscovy Company and Giles Fletcher, the Elder (1546-1611)*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 18-26.

The logistics of the Barbary trade were rather different. The sea voyage from southern England to the Atlantic coast of Morocco was relatively short and far less dangerous and complicated than that to the White Sea. Thus, the Barbary venture did not necessitate the foundation of a governing organization, and could be pursued by individual merchants. It is possible that the first two Barbary voyages (1551-1552), which had an explorative aspect to them, were organized by a syndicate or syndicates of merchants on a basis of a temporary joint stock (i.e the maintenance of a new joint stock for each individual voyage), but there is no evidence that this was the case. It is known, however, that the voyage of the *Grace of God* to Agadir in 1555 was made by a charter party whose members were trading individually or in partnership, and it is this manner of organization that became common in the following years.<sup>16</sup> Even when the trade was monopolized (1585-1597), the monopolizing body, the Barbary Company, was a regulated company (in which the different members could trade individually under the umbrella of its charter) and not a joint-stock one.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the Barbary trade had one important similarity with the Muscovy trade, as it also involved the installation of resident factors from an early stage (at least as early as 1558).<sup>18</sup>

The organization of the West African trade in the years 1553-1572 was closer in its character to that of the Barbary trading model rather than the Muscovy model, as it was operated first by ad-hoc partnerships, and later by a single syndicate. The challenges of that trade, however, made a case for its monopolization by a joint-stock company. It was a venture fraught with difficulties for English merchants: to begin with, there was the perennial menace of a tropical climate and ecology, which proved deadly for Europeans. For this reason, the West African voyages had to be well timed, especially to destinations along the Gulf of Guinea, in order to avoid the rainy season. Failing to do so could spell disaster, as the participants of the 1553-1554 and 1558 voyages learnt to their cost.<sup>19</sup> In the case of the Gold Coast, mistiming might also mean missing the gold-trade season, which

---

<sup>16</sup> T. S. Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>19</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 12-13 (1553-1554), 51 (1558).



could spell the financial ruin of a venture.<sup>20</sup> Another challenge was the Portuguese dominance in the region, especially on the Gold Coast. This meant that any English presence in the region during the period in question often resulted in armed clashes, which could also lead to financial losses. The possibility of an armed clash required the promoters of these voyages to equip their ships with artillery – a significant addition to the venture’s overall cost.<sup>21</sup>

Despite these challenges, the West African trade was not monopolized during the 1550s and 1560s. Moreover, the expenses of the West African expeditions were not born by a large group of merchants, like that of the Muscovy trade, but by small groups of merchants (partnerships or a syndicate), which financed them on the basis of a temporary joint stock. The voyage of 1558 – the only voyage for which a full list of adventurers exists – was financed by thirty-four individuals in total.<sup>22</sup> As the fleet and manpower employed in this voyage were among the largest used in the West African trade during the 1550s and 1560s, there is no reason to think that the syndicates which promoted the period’s other voyages made were much bigger.<sup>23</sup> The main element that gave the English West African enterprise a sense of continuity and stability was the fact that, in most cases, its syndicates were led by the same people – usually a group of five influential London merchants.

### 3. The Leading Merchants: Wealth, Power and Connections

At the core of the English West African voyages of the 1550s and the 1560s stood five individuals, who were also among the founding members of the Muscovy Company: William Garrard, William Chester, Thomas Lodge, Edward Castelin (also spelt Castlyn or

---

<sup>20</sup> P. E. H. Hair and Avelino Teixeira da Mota, *East of Mina: Afro-European Relations on the Gold Coast in the 1550s and 1560s: an Essay with Supporting Documents* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988), p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> This statement is based on Andrews' estimates, made in his *Elizabethan Privateering* (1964). See: K. R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Spanish War, 1585-1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 49.

According to the numbers provided by Andrews, the value of guns and powder could amount to 20-30% of the overall cost of freighting a privateering ship. While the West Africa voyages made in the years 1553-1568 were not privateering ones, Andrews' estimates do indicate that arming a ship was a costly procedure.

<sup>22</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 104.

<sup>23</sup> Also, ‘Tudor Merchant Seafarers in the Early Guinea Trade’, p. 87.

Castelyn) and Anthony Hickman. These merchants, referred to here as the ‘quintet’, promoted the voyages of 1558, 1561-1562, 1563, 1563-1564 and 1564-1565. Garrard, however, was also involved in the first West African voyage (1553-1554), and Castelin and Hickman in the second one (1554-1555). It is highly possible that some, or all five, also promoted the voyages of 1555-1556 and 1556-1557, though there is no direct evidence that this was the case.<sup>24</sup> In addition, all of them, with the exception of Hickman, promoted John Hawkins’ slaving voyages of the 1560s: Lodge invested in the voyage of 1562-1563, Castelin, Chester and Garrard in that of 1564-1565, with the latter merchant making another investment in the 1567-1568 venture. Between them, these men were responsible for promoting at least ten out of the fifteen voyages made to West Africa during the first phase of English activity in the region (see Figure 2, at the end of this section, for a summary of the details given here).

While there is no evidence that the ‘quintet’ faced any competition from other English merchants over the West African trade, its dominance should not be taken for granted. The ability of such a small group to pursue that risky trade for over a decade while challenging Portugal’s monopoly over the Gold Coast’s gold trade requires an explanation. In order to provide such an explanation, this section examines the careers of these individuals in search for the factors that enabled them to control that trade as a collective. It is argued here that each of these individuals contributed different valuable assets to that partnership – wealth, political power, family ties, and experience with long distance trade, thus creating a whole that was greater than the sum of its parts.

\*

All five ‘quintet’ members belonged to the elite of London’s mercantile community. Some of them, however, also belonged to the city’s political elite. Garrard (a haberdasher), Chester (a draper) and Lodge (a grocer) served as the city’s Lord Mayors in 1555-1556, 1560-1561 and 1562-1563, respectively. Chester was also the mayor of the Calais staple in 1552, and again in 1561 (after its relocation to Bruges, in the wake of

---

<sup>24</sup> James Alsop, ‘The Career of William Towerson, Guinea Trader’, *International Journal of Maritime History*, IV, 2 (December 1992), 45-82 (pp. 53-54).

Calais' conquest by the French in 1558).<sup>25</sup> These three men were prominent cloth exporters, extensively engaged in trade with Antwerp, and it may well be that the decline of that market in 1551-1552 led them to seek new sources of luxury goods. In 1561, they claimed that they had been trading to Atlantic Morocco for twelve or thirteen years, thus suggesting that the establishment of the Barbary trade took place in 1548 or 1549.<sup>26</sup> While there is no other evidence of the connection this early, it is certain that at least two of them were involved in the Barbary trade in the 1550s. Garrard was one of the promoters of the second Barbary voyage (1552), while Lodge was a member of the charter party in the voyage of the *Grace of God* (1555).<sup>27</sup>

Castelin and Hickman, who were trading partners, were younger than Garrard, Chester and Lodge. While not involved in London's politics, these two merchants had some other important assets to contribute to the 'quintet'. Castelin hailed from a prominent merchant family engaged with the Iberian trade.<sup>28</sup> His father, William, used Iberia as a base from which he ventured both into the eastern Atlantic (the Canaries and the Azores) and the Levant, where he developed trading relations with the Aegean islands of Candia (Crete) and Chios.<sup>29</sup> The Castelin family upgraded its social status during the 1550s and 1560s when Elizabeth, Edward's sister, was married to Sir Roger Martyn, the Lord Mayor of London in 1568. Martyn, in turn, married one of his daughters to John Castelin, the brother of Edward and Elizabeth.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> For a summary of the careers of these three aldermen, see: Helen Miller, 'Garrard, Sir William (c.1510–1571)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37441>> [accessed 20 April 2017]; J. D. Alsop, 'Chester, Sir William (c.1509–1595?)', in *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5240>> [accessed 20 April 2017]; Anita McConnell, 'Lodge, Sir Thomas (1509/10–1585)', in *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16922>> [accessed 20 April 2017]

<sup>26</sup> John Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560*, vol. 2, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 86-87 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1942), pp. 302-03.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 347-51.

<sup>28</sup> James McDermott, 'Castelin, Edward (fl. 1554–1578)', *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61534>> [accessed 24 March 2017]

<sup>29</sup> *TNA*, 'Isle of Candia', SP1/236, ff. 359-60.

<sup>30</sup> *The Visitation of London in the Year 1568*, ed. by Joseph Jackson Howard and George John Armitage (London: Harleian Society, 1869), p. 2.

Hickman's life story is one of upward social mobility. He was born to a merchant family that migrated from Oxfordshire to Woodford, Essex, in the fourteenth century.<sup>31</sup> He settled in London and, in 1543, married Rose Lok, the daughter of the London alderman William Lok, and the sister of one of Hickman's trading partners, Thomas Lok – another founding member of the Muscovy Company. During the first half of the 1550s, the partnerships of Hickman and Castelin and that of Hickman and Lok were merged into one triple partnership: all three merchants promoted the West African voyage of 1554-1555, which was led by Thomas' brother, Michael, as well as developing a trade with the Canaries, where they maintained factors.<sup>32</sup> This triple partnership, however, did not last long, as Thomas Lok died in 1556.<sup>33</sup>

Besides the 'quintet', five more individuals also played an important role in the promotion of the West African voyages of the 1550s and 1560s: Sir George Barne, Sir John York, Sir Lionel Duckett, Benjamin Gonson and William Winter. The first two were instrumental in establishing the West African trade during the early 1550s, before the formation of the 'quintet', while the latter two collaborated with them on several occasions during the 1560s. Duckett, one of the wealthiest merchants in London, was active in promoting both the voyages of the 'quintet', and those of William Hawkins.<sup>34</sup> These five individuals are referred to here as 'associates', since they were not as deeply involved with the trade as the 'quintet' members: they promoted less voyages than the latter, and were not included in the contracts made with Elizabeth I in 1561 and 1564 ahead of the 1561-1562, 1562-1563 and 1564-1565 voyages.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Paul Hunnyball, 'Hickman, Walter (1552-1617)', *The History of Parliament*. <[http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/hickman-walter-1552-1617#footnote1\\_qib0fez](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/hickman-walter-1552-1617#footnote1_qib0fez)> [Accessed, 24 March 2017].

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Nicols, 'A Description of the Fortunate Ilands', in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> T. S. Willan, *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953), p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> John C. Appleby, 'Duckett, Sir Lionel (d. 1587)', *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49749>> [accessed 9 May 2017]

<sup>35</sup> For the contract of the 1561-1562 voage, see: SP12/26, ff. 87-95. For that of the 1562-1563 voyage, see: 'The Difference between the Covenants Last Made for the Voiage of Africa, and the Newe', SP12/26, f. 97. For the one of 1564-1565, see: 'A Contract betwixt the Queen and Sir William Garrard and other Merchants', *BL*, Lansdowne Mss, vol.113, item no. 3.

Barne and York, who were among the founding members of the Muscovy Company, promoted the first two West African voyages (1553-1554, 1554-1555). York was also involved in the 1552 Barbary voyage (together with Garrard), and in that of 1555 (the *Grace of God*). Barne (a Haberdasher), born to a London merchant family, was engaged in the Andalusian trade prior to the 1550s, and served as Lord Mayor of London in 1552-1553.<sup>36</sup> York, who hailed from a York merchant family that traded with London and Calais, served as an administrator in the years 1544-1553, holding several offices at the royal mint (first at Southwark and then at the Tower of London).<sup>37</sup> It might be that his work at the mint played some role in the establishment of the West African trade, since in the early 1550s he was involved in several schemes for solving England's shortage of bullion and coin debasement, and paying Edward VI's hefty debts (around £120,000 in 1550).<sup>38</sup> It possible that the import of West African gold into the realm was one of his solutions for these problems, though there is no evidence that this was the case. Thus, Hair's careful contention that the gold brought to England in the two voyages that York promoted (1553-1555) 'may have had some momentary significance for the English Treasury and coinage' seems likely in this context.<sup>39</sup>

Duckett (born c. 1511) was a mercer, who was involved in London politics and in England's overseas trade. He served four times as the Master of the Mercers Company, was an alderman from 1564 till his death in 1587, and Lord Mayor in 1572-1573. He was one of the founding members of the Muscovy Company, for which he served twice as governor (1575 and 1577). He was also a member of the Mines Royal Company (1568) and the Spanish Company (1577), as well as an investor in Martin Frobisher's Northwest

---

<sup>36</sup> *Select Pleas in the Court of Admiralty*, vol. 1, ed. by Reginald G. Marsden (London: Bernard Quartich, 1894), p. 61; Paul Slack, 'Barne, Sir George (c.1500–1558)', rev. *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37157>> [accessed 29 March 2017]

<sup>37</sup> J. G. Elzinga, 'York, Sir John (d. 1569)', in *ODNB*; online edn, Sept 2015 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30233>> [accessed 29 March 2017]

<sup>38</sup> C.E. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), pp. 177-81.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186; Hair and Law, 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', in *Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. I: The Origins of Empire*, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 241-63 (p. 247).

passages. He promoted the West African voyages of 1558 and 1563-1564, and two of Hawkins' slaving voyages (1562-1563 and 1567-1568).<sup>40</sup>

The careers of Winter and Gonson, the youngest of these five men, are almost identical: both were born around 1525 to families which combined trade with service in the English navy. Gonson's father, William, began his career in the navy in the 1510s as a clerk, gradually coming through the ranks until becoming one of its most powerful administrators. While rising to prominence in the navy he was also developing, like William Castelin, a trade with the islands of Candia and Chios during the 1530s. Benjamin began his service in the navy during the last years of his father's life (William died in 1544), soon becoming the navy's treasurer (1548) – a post which he held until his death (1577). Winter hailed from a Bristol merchant family engaged with the Andalusian trade.<sup>41</sup> Much like Gonson, Winter's father introduced him to naval service in the 1540s, and by the end of that decade he became the navy's surveyor, replacing Benjamin Gonson when the latter became treasurer.<sup>42</sup>

While tracing the careers of these ten individuals is easy, estimating their wealth with any accuracy is a difficult task. Nevertheless, some notion of the estates of the richer members of the 'quintet' and 'associates' can be given. Since Barne, Yorke, Garrard, Chester, Lodge and Duckett served as aldermen of the City of London during the mid-sixteenth century, they must have had an estate worth at least £10,000 at the time of their election, as this was one of the criteria which nominees for the court of aldermen had to meet at that time.<sup>43</sup> Duckett was possibly the wealthiest of the six, with an estate that

---

<sup>40</sup> Willan, *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555*, pp. 92-93; Appleby, 'Duckett, Sir Lionel (d. 1587)'.

<sup>41</sup> Evan T. Jones, *The Bristol Shipping Industry in the Sixteenth Century* (University of Bristol: an unpublished PhD dissertation, 1998), p. 195, 241. An online copy is available on the University of Britols's website. See:

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1998phd.htm>

<sup>42</sup> David Loades, 'Winter, Sir William (c.1525–1589)', in *ODNB*; online edn, Oct 2009 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29769>> [accessed 29 March 2017]

<sup>43</sup> Jacob Selwood, *Diversity and Difference in Early Modern London* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 45; in the seventeenth century, the minimum net worth for nominees was raised to £15,000. See: Richard Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community in Seventeenth-Century England', in *The Economic History Review*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Aug. 1970), 220-34 (p. 228).

reputedly well exceeded £20,000.<sup>44</sup> Garrard was also a man of considerable wealth, and most probably the wealthiest of the ‘quintet’ members. One can find an indication of his wealth in the fact that despite losing hefty sums of money in the third Hawkins voyage of 1567-1568, his contemporaries still considered him a rich man at his death three years later, in 1571.<sup>45</sup> In fact, he was able to lend the queen a sum of £1,000 less than a year after the return of Hawkins’ fleet, which means that his estate could sustain the damage done by that voyage (Duckett, who also financed that voyage, lent the queen a sum of £2,000 on the same occasion).<sup>46</sup> Chester and Lodge seem to have ranked below Duckett and Garrard: according to contemporary estimations, the former’s estate was worth between £7,000 and £15,000, while the latter experienced financial difficulties from the early 1560s till the end of his life.<sup>47</sup>

The ‘quintet’ and their five ‘associates’ form a significant group: all ten belonged to London’s mercantile elite – they were either born to prominent mercantile families, or were the first of their families to become prominent merchants – with five of them also serving as the city’s mayors (Barne, Garrard, Chester, Lodge and Duckett). Some of them had, or hailed from families that had, experience with the long distance trade (the Andalusian and the Mediterranean trades) – an element that was crucial for merchants who were involved in the West African trade. The fact that two of the ‘associates’ were naval administrator also helped to promote the syndicate’s interests, enabling them to access the Crown’s ships.

---

<sup>44</sup> Duckett reputedly gave 8,000 marks to each of his four stepdaughters. As mark was ‘money of account’ worth two-thirds of a pound, the sum given to his stepdaughters was over £20,000.

<sup>45</sup> Garrard and his partners are said to have lost nearly £21,000 in the third Hawkins voyage. See: Helen Miller, ‘Garrard (Garrett), Sir William (by 1518-1571), of London and Dorney, Bucks.’, in *The History of Parliament Online: the House of Commons, 1509-1558*; Online Edition <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/garrard-%28garrett%29-sir-william-1518-71>> [accessed 18 March 2019]

<sup>46</sup> John Strype, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (1720), Online Edition <[https://www.dhi.ac.uk/strype/TransformServlet?page=book1\\_283&display=normal](https://www.dhi.ac.uk/strype/TransformServlet?page=book1_283&display=normal)> [accessed 18 March 2019]

<sup>47</sup> Alsop, ‘Chester, Sir William (c.1509–1595?)’; George D. Ramsay, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), pp. 58-59.

The group's position in England's capital could be translated, and oftentimes was translated, into political influence. Nevertheless, in spite of their power, they had failed to establish the West African trade on a firm basis by the end of the 1560s. One can argue, of course, that this small group of merchants, though influential and powerful, could not match the power and organization of its main rival in West Africa – the Portuguese. Though this is true, one should remember that those merchants were still subjects of a powerful kingdom that could help them in their attempt to assert their position in West Africa. To understand why this did not happen, it is necessary to examine the relations between the merchants and the Crown during the 1550s and 1560s, and the strength of the Crown's support in the face of the Portuguese opposition to English expansionism.

**Figure 2: The Involvement of the 'Quintet' and the 'Associates' in the West African Trade**

Name	Voyages ([A] = Aborted)	Connection with the Iberian Trade prior to 1553	Involvement in the Barbary Trade in the 1550s	Promotion of Hawkins Slaving Voyages
<b>The 'Quintet'</b>				
Edward Castelin	1554-1555, 1555[A], 1558, 1561-1562, 1563, 1563-1564, 1564-1565	√		1564-1565
William Chester	1558, 1561-1562, 1563, 1563-1564, 1564-1565		√	1564-1565
William Garrard	1553-1554, 1555[A], 1558, 1561-1562, 1563, 1563-1564, 1564-1565		√	1564-1565, 1567-1568
Anthony Hickman	1554-1555, 1558, 1561-1562, 1563, 1563-1564, 1564-1565			
Thomas Lodge	1558, 1561-1562, 1563, 1563-1564, 1564-1565		√ (1555)	1562-1563
<b>The 'Associates'</b>				



Sir George Barne	1553-1554, 1554-1555	√		
Lionel Duckett	1558, 1563-1564			1562-1563, 1567-1568
Benjamin Gonson	1561-1562, 1563-1564, 1564-1565			1562-1563
William Winter	1553-1554 [?], 1554-1555, 1561-1562, 1563-1564, 1565			1562-1563
Sir John Yorke	1553-1554, 1554-1555		√ (1552, 1555)	

#### 4. English Activity in West Africa during the 1550s: Merchants and Crown Relations

Short as it was, the first phase of English activity in West Africa took place during the reigns of no fewer than three monarchs (four, if including Lady Jane Grey): Edward, Mary and Elizabeth Tudor. Though the first West African voyage departed from England on 12 August 1553, five weeks after Edward VI's death, this expedition was prepared during his lifetime. In addition, the enterprise evolved from the first two Barbary voyages, which were conceived, prepared, and made during the young king's reign. Therefore, an examination of Edward and his councillors' approach to the West African enterprise is relevant to the discussion of the relationship of the merchants in question with the English Crown.

The Edwardian administration was certainly favourable to the West African venture of 1553-1554. To begin with, it granted captain Thomas Wyndham, the leader of the expedition, the right to impress 'shipmasters, mariners, shipwrights, gunners and other persons' for the voyage.<sup>48</sup> More important, however, was its involvement in the case of two renegade Portuguese seamen experienced in the navigation of West Africa, Antonio

<sup>48</sup> Public Record Office, *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward VI*, vol. 5 (1547-1553), (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1926), pp. 199-200.

Pinteado and Francisco Rodrigues, who arrived at England in late 1552. Pinteado, the more prominent of the two, once served as a commander of the King of Portugal's warships, but an incident in which he captured a French ship led to his imprisonment. Having managed to escape from prison, he fled to England, where he became involved with the 1553-1554 voyage.<sup>49</sup> When the Portuguese Crown realised that Pinteado was in England, it attempted to persuade him to return to Portugal. In December 1552, Joao III's brother, Don Luis, wrote Pinteado a letter in which he pardoned the latter and declared that he could return his homeland without fear. The letter reached Pinteado's hands by Portuguese messengers who, according to Wyndham, also detained Rodrigues 'as a captive', with the intention to 'have conveyde him beyond the seas'. On 28 February 1553, the Portuguese agents were imprisoned at Wyndham's request for their attempt to thwart the planned English voyage to West Africa.<sup>50</sup>

With Edward VI's death on 6 July 1553 and the accession of Mary I another obstacle arose for the first Guinea voyage prior to departure. Wyndham's fleet was detained in Portsmouth from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of July by an order of the Privy Council, presumably until the new monarch's attitude towards this venture was determined.<sup>51</sup> Though the voyage eventually sailed to West Africa on 12 August, its detention in late July foreshadowed the disturbances that the English West African trade experienced during Mary's reign. The Queen's marriage to Philip II of Spain in July 1554 meant that English participation in that trade was likely to be perceived by her co-ruler, who had family ties to the Portuguese Crown, as an interloping into one of Portugal's spheres of influence and as a breach of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494).<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spain (CSPS)*, vol. 11 (1553), ed. by Royal Tyller (London: Her Majesties Stationary Office, 1916), p. 14. It is not clear whether those two Portuguese renegades initiated the 1553-1554 voyage, persuading the English merchants to finance it, or were it the latter who planned that venture in advance and took advantage of the arrival of Pinteado and Rodrigues to England. What seems certain, though, is that the project could not have been pursued without the help of these Portuguese seamen. See: Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 106.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*; Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, vol. 2, pp. 311-14.

<sup>51</sup> *APC*, vol. 41 (1552-1554), ed. by John Roche Dasent (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1892), pp. 306-07, 416-17.

<sup>52</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 108; Glyn Redworth, 'Philip [Philip of Spain, Felipe] (1527-1598)', in *ODNB*; online edn. May 2011 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22097>> [accessed 14 January 2019]

The second Guinea voyage, which sailed in October 1554, does not seem to have faced similar problems, but it did spark a Portuguese remonstrance, which led to a change of attitude at the Marian court. In the early summer of 1555, a Portuguese envoy came to England to complain about the voyage, which was perceived as a violation of the Portuguese monopoly in West Africa, and demanded that the English Crown prohibited future voyages. As Philip II was king consort of England, the English Crown accepted the Portuguese claims. On 18 July 1555, the Privy Council sent a letter to the Mayors of London and Bristol, asking them to command their merchants not to trade in West Africa until further notice.<sup>53</sup> This royal request had a limited effect: while managing to abort one voyage to the region in December 1555, it did not prevent three other voyages from sailing there in 1555-1558.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, there is no evidence that any of the merchants promoting those voyages was punished for his involvement, and those who organized the aborted voyage – Edward Castelin and William Gerrard among them – were partly recompensed for the financial damages they sustained.<sup>55</sup>

The events taking place in the months leading to the departure of the 1556-1557 voyage show that while the Marian regime was not pleased with the Guinea voyages, it did not go to great lengths to stop them. On 7 July 1556, the Privy Council required the Lord Treasurer to command ‘all the costumers, comptrollers, searchers, and other their Highnes’ officers of all their Majesties’ ports’ to prevent English ships from sailing to West Africa.<sup>56</sup> During the next nine weeks, the Council issued another four letters with similar requests, managing to detain two of the three ships comprising the 1556-1557 fleet.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, these ships were released after few weeks, and the delayed fleet eventually departed for West Africa in mid-November, instead of early October.<sup>58</sup>

Surprisingly, the Crown’s attitude towards the following voyage (1558), the last made under the Marian regime, was completely different: rather than trying to stop it, it

---

<sup>53</sup> *APC*, vol. 5 (1554-1556), ed. by John Roche Dasent (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1892), p. 162.

<sup>54</sup> As Alsop suggests, there is a good possibility that the aborted voyage of December 1555 and the first Towerson voyage, which departed from England three months earlier, were actually part of the same expedition. See: Alsop, ‘The Career of William Towerson’, p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, vol. 2, p. 355.

<sup>56</sup> *APC*, vol. 5 (1554-1556), p. 305.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 315, 322, 348, 358.

<sup>58</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 36.

actually supported it. The voyage received permission to sail from William Howard, the Lord High Admiral, and the three-ship fleet included two of the queen's vessels ('two of the queen's best ships', according to the Count of Feria, one of Philip II's advisors).<sup>59</sup> Though there is no direct evidence for it, the participation of the queen's ships in this voyage indicates that Mary was probably entitled to a share of the venture's profits. In this sense, the Crown's attitude towards this voyage resembled that of the Elizabethan regime, which was not only supportive of the West African trade, but was actually involved in it at times.

With their diplomatic efforts failing to stop the English from sailing to West Africa, the Portuguese resorted to violence. The English had skirmishes with the Portuguese even before the latter made their complaints to the Crown. While the voyage of 1553-1554 kept away from the fort of Elmina and presumably went on uninterrupted, in 1554-1555 the expedition ran into trouble at the town of Shamma, a few kilometres from the headquarters of the Portuguese. The English were trading there for four days, during which time their activity was noticed by the Portuguese at Elmina, who proceeded to set an ambush. The leader of the African trading party demanded the English should leave a hostage on shore in order for the trade to continue, and the latter complied by handing over young Martin Frobisher, the nephew of Sir John York (who was one of the promoters of that venture). However, once the Africans received Frobisher they refused to continue trading, and then the English were shot at (according to the narrative, the Africans were the ones who shot them, though it is more likely that the Portuguese did it).<sup>60</sup> Frobisher was later carried to Elmina, where he was kept as a prisoner for nine months, before being transported to Lisbon, where he was released.<sup>61</sup> While this was a minor incident (there were no casualties), it does show how the Portuguese could coerce the population in the environs of Elmina to collaborate with them and, therefore indicates the challenges with which the English, as well as all other interlopers, faced on the Gold Coast.

---

<sup>59</sup> *CSPS, Vol. 13 (1554-1558)*, ed. Royall Tyler (London, 1954), pp. 369.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Eden, 'The Second Voyage to Guinea', in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> James McDermott, 'Frobisher, Sir Martin (1535?-1594)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2015  
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10191>> [accessed 11 April 2017]

The three Towerson voyages, made in the years 1555-1558, saw an escalation of violence on the Gold Coast. During the first voyage, a group of Portuguese from Elmina charged on the English, who managed to escape in time. In addition, according to the narrative of that voyage, a Portuguese brigandine followed the English fleet from the shore, warning the population along the coast not to trade with the English.<sup>62</sup> Both parties eventually clashed in early 1557, during the second Towerson voyage. On their way to the Gold Coast, near the Cess River, the English met with a French fleet, and were informed that the Portuguese had sent a squadron of warships to defend Elmina. Therefore, both sides decided to form one fleet and sail together to the Gold Coast and, on 27 January 1557, the Anglo-French fleet clashed with the Portuguese squadron. The English do not seem to have sustained any casualties in this fight, but the Portuguese succeeded in dispersing the combined fleet. Nevertheless, the English were not deterred and continued trading along the Gold Coast during the whole of February, before returning to England.<sup>63</sup>

Another naval combat took place during the third Towerson voyage, again with no casualties. The Portuguese measure which proved to be most effective in thwarting English trade on the Gold Coast was pressurizing the population in the environs of Elmina to refuse to trade with the English in fear of retaliation. This frustrated the English, whose last action before returning home was to burn down the town of Shamma, one of the main trading places on the coast, as a punishment for the locals' uncooperativeness. Frustration also resulted from the high mortality rate experienced in this voyage. This was a direct result of the fleet's late departure from England: it left Plymouth on 30 January 1558, and arrived at the Gold Coast in late March – the beginning of the rainy season in that region.<sup>64</sup> The consequences of this mistiming were immediate and harsh: during April, many of the crewmembers started to fall sick, and a few died, succumbing, most probably, to malaria or

---

<sup>62</sup> William Towerson 'The First Voyage Made by Master William Towerson... to the Coast of Guinea', in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 33-35.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-40.

<sup>64</sup> The Gold Coast has two rainy seasons: a major one that occurs in the months of March-July, and a minor one in September-November. See: Harvey M. Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminas and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast During the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989), p. 7. On the right time to visit the Gold Coast, see the writings of Edward Carstensen, the governor of Christiansborg fort in the years 1842-1850: Edward Carstensen, *Closing the Books: Governor Edward Carstensen on Danish Guinea, 1842-1850*, trans. by Tove Storsveen (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2010), p. 280.

yellow fever.<sup>65</sup> The situation only worsened in the following months, and towards the end of the voyage one of the ships was abandoned on the high seas as it lacked a crew to sail it.<sup>66</sup> In short, the 1558 voyage was the one in which the two main hazards of the West African trade – mistiming and Portuguese presence on the Gold Coast – converged. Had the English not seized a French ship in early April and sacked its cargo of gold (50 pounds), the voyage would have ended in a financial loss.<sup>67</sup> These difficulties may have been responsible for the fact that three years had passed before the ‘quintet’ attempted another West African venture.

The nature of relations between the Crown and the merchants during the 1550s helps to explain the ad-hoc way in which the West African trade was conducted. Overall, the activity of the Marian regime was not too detrimental to that trade: despite stopping one voyage and causing delays to three others, five expeditions sailed to West Africa in the years 1553-1558 – an average of one expedition per year. Nevertheless, Mary’s marriage to Philip II meant that the support received from the Crown was highly limited. In these conditions, it was difficult to make plans for the development of the trade, and to establish it firmly. For instance, according to Towerson, the English were approached during the voyage of 1556-1557 by the king of Abaan (a region east of Elmina), who invited them to erect a fort in his territory.<sup>68</sup> A similar offer had already been made by an unnamed ruler two years earlier, during the voyage of 1554-1555.<sup>69</sup> Though it is difficult to tell how serious these offers were, and whether the English misinterpreted the Africans, it is certain that under the Marian regime, the erection of a fort on the Gold Coast could not be seriously considered, as the merchants could not rely on the support of the Crown. For the same reasons, they could not petition the Crown to grant them a monopoly over the trade. All the merchants could do in those years was to send voyages to West Africa in an ad-hoc manner hoping to reap high profits and evade the aggressive Portuguese response.

---

<sup>65</sup> Alsop, ‘The Career of William Towerson’, pp. 63-66. For the disease environment of West Africa, see: Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: the Health of European Troops in the conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 3-28.

<sup>66</sup> Towerson, ‘The Third and Last Voyage of M. William Towerson to the Coast of Guinie’, in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p.51.

<sup>67</sup> Alsop, ‘The Career of William Towerson’, p. 65.

<sup>68</sup> William Towerson, ‘The Second Voyage Made by Maister William Towerson to the Coast of Guinea’, in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> Towerson, *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 34.

## 5. English Activity in West Africa during the 1560s: Merchants and Crown Relations

The accession of Elizabeth in November 1558 ushered in a new era for the ‘quintet’, whose members first collaborated in the 1558 voyage. During the next six years, these five merchants would develop close working relations with England’s new monarch and increase their engagement with the West African trade. Inheriting an enormous debt of £300,000 on her accession, and having to strengthen her army in light of the developing religious conflict in the continent, Elizabeth was in a dire need for money.<sup>70</sup> The ‘quintet’ and their ‘associates’, with their financial might, could, and did, offer her financial aid. Furthermore, the Queen soon realized that participation in the West African trade has the potential of yielding considerable profits, and thus joined the ‘quintet’ as a partner in some of their 1560s Gold Coast voyages.

The collaboration between the two parties began before the renewal of the Gold Coast voyages in 1561. At that stage, it was financial in its nature. In November 1559, Castelin and Hickman sold £946 worth of artillery and gunpowder for the ‘queen’s use’ (i.e. for the navy’s use). Less than a year later, in August 1560, Garrard, Chester and Lodge, together with Duckett and nine other London merchants, lent the queen £30,000 and were granted a licence to receive 10% upon this loan ‘without incurring the penalties of the statute against usury’.<sup>71</sup>

This financial collaboration soon turned into a commercial partnership in the West African trade. William Scott suggests that this partnership was formed as a substitute for a trading monopoly, since the members of the ‘quintet’ did not enjoy such a privilege at that time.<sup>72</sup> While this suggestion is reasonable, there is no evidence that the ‘quintet’ and their ‘associates’ faced any serious competition at home. A more probable explanation is that

---

<sup>70</sup> Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors: England, 1547-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 120-21, 246; Paul E. J. Hammer, *Elizabeth’s Wars: War, Government and Society in Tudor England, 1544-1604* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 56.

<sup>71</sup> For Castelin and Hickman, see: SP12/17, f. 74; for Garrard, Chester and Lodge and Duckett, see: *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Elizabeth, vol. 1 (1558-1560)*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1939), pp. 353-54.

<sup>72</sup> William Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of the English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), p. 5.

the ‘quintet’ needed the queen in order to successfully contend with the Portuguese on the Gold Coast. The fact that English trade with West Africa ceased for three years between 1558 and 1561 may be due to the difficulties experienced in the 1558 voyage, and the growing presence of Portuguese warships off the Gold Coast. A partnership with the Crown meant that the merchants brought their money, while the queen brought her political backing and, more important, some well-armed navy vessels.

The contract made between the queen and the ‘quintet’ prior to the 1561 voyage demonstrates this point. According to it, Elizabeth promised to lend the merchants two of her ships, fully rigged, armed, manned (including ‘master gunners’) and victualled (the queen actually provided four ships for this voyage), while the latter were required to provide £5,000 worth of merchandize for the outward journey, pay wages and give the monarch a third of the profits.<sup>73</sup> Similar contracts were made prior to the voyages of 1562-1563 and 1564-1565, for which the queen provided two ships and one ship respectively.<sup>74</sup> There is no indication that Elizabeth was involved in the voyage of 1563-1564 – the ships employed in that voyage (the *John Baptist* and the *Merlin*) were not the queen’s, and there is no written evidence which associates her with it – though it is possible that she promoted it in some other way.<sup>75</sup>

Besides ships, Elizabeth also provided the ‘quintet’ with diplomatic backing. The Portuguese probably noticed the preparations for the 1561-1562 voyage, as an emissary was sent to England in April of 1561, requesting her majesty to prevent her subjects from trading ‘to any of the regions conquered by the King of Portugal’, including the Gold Coast.<sup>76</sup> The queen refused to acknowledge Portuguese monopoly in West Africa, claiming she would only prevent her subjects trading with those parts of Africa that are under the direct rule of the king of Portugal.<sup>77</sup> In other words, as far as Elizabeth was concerned, only Elmina and its immediate surroundings were not accessible to the English. She

---

<sup>73</sup> SP12/26, ff. 87-95.

<sup>74</sup> See note 35.

<sup>75</sup> Tom Glasgow Jr., ‘List of Ships in the Royal Navy from 1539 to 1588 – the Navy from its Infancy to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada’, *Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 56 (1970), pp. 299-307.

<sup>76</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign (CSPF)*, vol. 4 (1561-1562), ed. by Joseph Stevenson (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1866), p. 54.

<sup>77</sup> James A. Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins: the Time and the Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 58-59.



reiterated this stand a year later, when another Portuguese emissary came to her with the same request.<sup>78</sup>

With the queen on their side, the members of the ‘quintet’ and their ‘associates’ must have felt that the time was ripe for making England a more substantial player in West Africa. The experience of the 1550s taught them that in order to challenge the Portuguese monopoly on the Gold Coast successfully, they would have to erect a fort in that region.<sup>79</sup> Thus, one of the objects of the 1561-1562 voyage was to look for a suitable place for a fort, and to build it. This is evident from the instructions given to John Lok, Hickman’s brother-in-law and the commander of the expedition, prior to the departure of the fleet in September 1561,<sup>80</sup> and from the report of the Spanish ambassador, who noted that the ships of that fleet carried ‘cut-timber, artillery, munitions, arms, and victuals, for a year in greater quantity than is required for their own use’.<sup>81</sup> However, an accident, followed by bad weather, detained the fleet in England until December 1561 or January 1562, and by that time, Lok had resigned as he thought that a late arrival to West Africa would result in many casualties.<sup>82</sup> Whether Lok’s absence had an impact or not, no fort was established on the Gold Coast during that voyage, or during the following ones.

As the West African voyages promoted by the ‘quintet’ during the 1560s are poorly documented, not much is known of the Portuguese non-diplomatic reaction to the renewal of English presence in West Africa, but it is clear that they kept guarding the Gold Coast as closely as they did during the 1550s. The short narrative of the voyage of 1562-1563, written by William Rutter, Hickman’s factor on that venture, records skirmishes with Portuguese warships, during which the queen’s *Minion* was damaged (though the main reason for that was the explosion of a barrel of gunpowder aboard the ship). He also mentions that the Africans did not dare to trade with the English whenever Portuguese galleys were patrolling near the coast.<sup>83</sup> Rutter does not say much on the interaction

---

<sup>78</sup> *CSPF*, vol. 5 (1562), ed. by Joseph Stevenson (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1867), pp. 78-79.

<sup>79</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 112.

<sup>80</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 52-53.

<sup>81</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Spain (Simancas) (CSPSS)*, vol. 1 (1558-1567), ed. by Martin A. S. Hume (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1892) p. 219.

<sup>82</sup> Hair and Alsop, *English Seamen and Traders in Guinea, 1553-1565*, pp. 30-31; *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 53-54.

<sup>83</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 54-55.

between the English and the Africans, but Robert Baker, who recorded that voyage (as well as the following one) in verse, mentions that the latter attacked them on one occasion, though this act of hostility does not seem to have any relation to the Portuguese presence on the Gold Coast.<sup>84</sup>

The 1564-1565 voyage was a different story. It was disastrous from the beginning: the *Merlin* sank off the Spanish coast after its store of gunpowder exploded, leaving the three-ship fleet which departed from England in October 1564 with only two vessels. The remaining ships, the *Minion* and the *John Baptist*, arrived at the Gold Coast, where at least one of them – the *Minion* – was attacked by Portuguese warships. Moreover, the *Minion*'s captain and thirteen other of its crewmembers were seized by their African trading partners and were handed over to the Portuguese at Elmina, where they were imprisoned.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, that ship made it back to England in July 1565, laden with a rich cargo of gold, but with many of its crewmembers dead or sick.<sup>86</sup> The fate of the *John Baptist* is not known: it is unclear whether it was abandoned during the homeward voyage, as Hair and Alsop suggest, or captured by the Portuguese, as Williamson surmises.<sup>87</sup>

Despite the profits made in this voyage, it was the last one promoted by the 'quintet', and the last English voyage to the Gold Coast until 1632. It may well be that the difficulties experienced in that voyage led the merchants to abandon that trade. Much like the case of the 1558 voyage, which was followed by a break of three years, the 1564-1565 venture saw the convergence of all the challenges posed by the West African trade during the sixteenth century: Portuguese naval supremacy, forced collaboration of the local inhabitants with the Portuguese, and high rates of mortality. In addition, it seems that the 'quintet's' pool of ships had dried up by 1565. Their main ship supplier was the queen, who provided four of the six vessels employed in the four voyages of the 1560s. Nevertheless, it seems that her willingness to risk her ships diminished with every West African voyage: she provided all four ships for the 1561-1562 fleet, two (out of two) for

---

<sup>84</sup> *PNI*, pp. 133-34.

<sup>85</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 56.

<sup>86</sup> *CSPSS*, vol. 1, p. 445, 447.

<sup>87</sup> P. E. H. Hair and James D. Alsop, *English Seamen and Traders in Guinea, 1553-1565*, pp. 44-45; Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins*, p. 58. Alsop, who refuted Williamson hypothesis in 1992, came to support it twelve years later (2004) in his *ODNB* entry for Sir William Chester. See reference in note 25.

the 1563 one, none in 1563-1564 and one (out of three) in 1564-1565. The other two ships employed in those voyages were provided by members of the ‘quintet’ or by their associates (the *Merlin* belonged to Benjamin Gonson, while the *John Baptist* was co-owned by Chester and Garrard), and at least one of them (the *Merlin*) was lost in the 1564-1565 voyage.<sup>88</sup> Thus, it seems that by the end of 1565, the ‘quintet’ had to resort to other, more expensive solutions (i.e. hiring or buying ships) in order to fit out another West African voyage.

If the ‘quintet’ harboured any thoughts of promoting another voyage after that of 1564-1565, they must have received some further discouragement by the case of the *Mary Fortune*, which William and George Winter sent to West Africa in late August 1565.<sup>89</sup> It was the smallest of all the West African voyages made in the 1550s and 1560s: a single ship of 70-80 tonnes, with 29 mariners on board. In contrast to the previous West African voyages, this expedition kept away from the Gold Coast, focusing instead on the Upper Guinea Coast (according to the Winter brothers, their ship was trading between Cap Vert and the River Cess).<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, it was attacked and sunk by two Portuguese warships near the River Cess, with most of its crew carried to Elmina (according to the letters of marque issued by the HCA to the Winters, the crewmembers of the *Mary Fortune* were still imprisoned there in early 1569).<sup>91</sup> Such an attack, made so far from the Gold Coast, showed the English that the Portuguese were not willing to tolerate their presence at any part of West Africa. Despite its disastrous results, the Winter brothers’ decision to send a single ship to the Upper Guinea Coast was not foolhardy, as this region was usually not protected by the Portuguese.<sup>92</sup> With a smaller chance of being attacked, the heavy expenses of operating and arming an additional ship – or ships – could be spared. The fact that their ship was eventually attacked seems to owe more to the timing of the voyage – that is, immediately after the 1564-1565 voyage, in which Portuguese’ opposition reached its zenith – than to its destination. As a whole, the voyage of the *Mary Fortune* can be seen as

---

<sup>88</sup> See note 25.

<sup>89</sup> *CSPSS*, vol. 1, p. 470.

<sup>90</sup> *BL*, Royal MS. 13 B. I, f. 188. This document is also found in print. See: *The Whole Works of Roger Ascham*, vol. 2, ed. by John Allen Giles (London: John Russell Smith, 1864), pp. 135-36.

<sup>91</sup> *Documents Relating to Law and Custom of the Sea*, vol. I, ed. by Reginald G. Marsden, Publications of the Navy Records Society, vol. 49 (London: Printed for the Navy Records Society, 1915), pp. 184-85.

<sup>92</sup> Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, p. 182.

the beginning of a reorientation of English activity in West Africa, from the Gold Coast to the Upper Guinea Coast – a process that was based on the acknowledgment that the English could not compete with the Portuguese on the Gold Coast at this point.<sup>93</sup>

It may well be that this incident led the promoters of the following West African venture to keep an even greater distance from the Gold Coast. The three-ship fleet of the Chichester brothers George and Edward Fenner, which departed from England in December 1566, restricted its commercial activity to Cap Vert and the Cabo Verde archipelago.<sup>94</sup> While this decision spared the Fenners from clashing with Portuguese warships off the West African coast – they eventually clashed with them near the Azores, on the homebound voyage – their crew did suffer some casualties during a fight with the inhabitants of Cap Vert. It is unclear to what extent they traded in West Africa: the commercial transactions described in the narrative are ones that ultimately failed due to what the narrator refers to as the treachery of both the Africans and the Portuguese residents of Cabo Verde.<sup>95</sup> Thus, even if the expedition was profitable, which is doubtful, the narrative does not describe it as a success that would lure others to join the West African trade.<sup>96</sup>

In fact, there is a good possibility that the Fenner voyage was actually conceived as a slaving enterprise, and for this reason was restricted to the Upper Guinea Coast. In October 1566, two months before its departure, two London mercers, Richard Springham and Edward Worsopp, made a contract with the captain of the *George* of Chichester, one of the fleet's ships, according to which that vessel was to go on a voyage to the 'parts of Genea and Nova Spania'.<sup>97</sup> In the same month, the Spanish ambassador, who suspected that this was the object of the expedition, demanded that the queen forbid its promoters

---

<sup>93</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, pp. 111-12.

<sup>94</sup> The 1566 voyage was not the first involvement of the Fenner family with the West African trade. In 1564, Thomas Fenner of Earnley (near Chichester), a relative of George and Edward, embarked on a voyage to the region. He never arrived there, however, as his three-ship fleet was badly damaged after engaging in a battle with a French fleet off the coast of Portugal, and was forced to return home for repairs. See: K. R. Andrews, 'Thomas Fenner and the Guinea Trade, 1564', *the Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 38, 4 (1952), pp. 312-14.

<sup>95</sup> Walter Wren, 'The Voyage of M. George Fenner to Guinie' *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 57-64.

<sup>96</sup> Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins*, pp. 160-61.

<sup>97</sup> *As Gavetas da Torre de Tombo*, VIII, ed. by Antonio da Silva Rego (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1970), pp. 557-59.

from sailing to the Caribbean. She complied, and Fenner (whom the ambassador refers to as George ‘Tenar’) was summoned to the Privy Council and was ordered not to sail there. While the voyage’s narrative is silent about the possibility of crossing the Atlantic, and does not mention a seizure or purchase of slaves on the West African coast, it does describe how the English tried to sell to the crew of a Portuguese ship ‘five Negroes that we had’ for chests of sugar.<sup>98</sup> The presence of these five Africans on board of the English ship is yet another mysterious element of this obscure voyage. Nevertheless, the possibility that Fenner’s voyage was intended to be a slaving expedition fits the trend prevailing in the years 1565-1572, during which the trans-Atlantic slave trade became the dominant branch of England’s West African trade, if not the only one to be pursued.

## **6. The Other Branch of the West African Trade: Hawkins Slaving Voyages, 1562-1568**

Besides the growing aggressiveness of the Portuguese in West Africa, another factor that was responsible for the geographical reorientation of English activity from the Gold Coast to Upper Guinea was the entry of English merchants into the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the early 1560s. The originator of this branch of England’s West African trade was John Hawkins of Plymouth, the son of William Hawkins, who commanded three slaving voyages, and promoted another one, in the years 1562-1568. Much like the pioneers of the early 1550s, Hawkins was introduced to the trans-Atlantic slave trade through his commercial contacts with the Iberian East Atlantic – the Canary Islands in his case. He seems to have entered the Canary trade during the 1550s (along with Castelin and Hickman), as Hakluyt, who published a succinct narrative of Hawkins’ first slaving voyage (1562-1563), mentions that by 1562, the Plymouth man had already made ‘divers voyages to the Iles of the Canaries’ and had established good trading relations with the local merchants. The latter assured him that ‘Negroes were a very good merchandise in Hispaniola, and that store of Negroes might easily be had upon the coast of Guinea’, and he decided to make a trial voyage.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Wren, ‘The Voyage of M. George Fenner to Guinie’, *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 64.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Hakluyt, ‘The First Voyage of... Sir John Hawkins... to the West Indies 1562’, *PN2*, vol. 3, p. 500.

While the phrase ‘the coast of Guinea’ is vague, the narratives of his three slaving voyages show that Hawkins’ trading partners directed him to the Upper Guinea Coast or, more particularly, to the stretch of coast which lies between present day Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone. In 1562, the year in which Hawkins’ first slaving voyage departed from England, this was indeed a region where slaves ‘might easily be had’. The reason for the great supply of slaves there at that time was the event known as the ‘Mane invasions’ – several waves of violent migration of Mande-speaking people from the West African hinterland to the Upper Guinea Coast. This migration started in the 1540s, and by 1560 most of the coastal region of present-day Sierra Leone was conquered by the Mane people. The former lords of that land, the Sapes, were subjugated and many of them were sold to slave traders and transported to the Americas.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the great supply of slaves, the narratives of the Hawkins’ voyages show that his preferred method of acquiring slaves was by raiding, rather than by a commercial exchange. Slave raiding was a dangerous practice, as it was often met with some sort of armed resistance, which resulted in casualties on the captors’ side. It had, however, a very obvious advantage: it enabled the captors to acquire slaves ‘for free’, and, thus, enjoy higher profits when selling them. Slave raiding was also practiced by the Portuguese during the 1440s, at the early stages of their exploration of the West African coast but, in the face of African resistance, it was soon forsaken for a the more ‘peaceful’ method of acquiring slaves by commercial exchange.<sup>101</sup>

Hawkins’ trial voyage left England on October 1562. The fleet called at the Sierra Leone estuary, where Hawkins ‘got into his possession, partly by the sword, and partly by other meanes’, at least 300 hundred slaves, before proceeding to Hispaniola. There he exchanged his slaves for ‘such quantity of merchandize, that he did not onely lade his 3 shippes with hides, ginger, sugars, and some quantity of pearls, but he fraighted two other

---

<sup>100</sup> Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 234-41. For a more elaborate discussion of the Mane invasions, see: Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 39-70.

<sup>101</sup> Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 51-52.

hulkes with hides and other like commodities, which hee sent into Spaine'. It is clear that the practice of slave raiding was responsible for the great profits made in this voyage.<sup>102</sup>

With his trial voyage proving highly successful financially for his investors, a second voyage was prepared in 1564. The profitability of the first voyage now drew new investors, the most prominent of which was the queen, who lent Hawkins one of her biggest ships, the 700-ton *Jesus of Lubeck*. Other newcomers were William Herbert, first Earl of Pembroke, Lord Robert Dudley, first Earl of Leicester, and Lord Edward Clinton, as well as three 'quintet' members – Garrard, Chester and Castelin.<sup>103</sup> Once again, the voyage called at Sierra Leone and acquired slaves by raiding, during which Hawkins lost some of his men, including one of the fleet's captains.<sup>104</sup> Trade in the Caribbean proved again highly successful, and Hawkins returned home with a rich cargo that included, among other things, also 'golde, silver, pearles and other jewels great store.'<sup>105</sup> Guzmán de Silva, the Spanish ambassador to London at the time, valued this cargo at 50,000 ducats (some £16,500),<sup>106</sup> and Hawkins' own profit at 60%, claiming that his success encouraged other English merchants 'to undertake other like voyages'.<sup>107</sup>

Hawkins' success alarmed the Spanish, who made protests to the queen. Their diplomatic effort did not manage to stop the sailing of another slaving voyage in the autumn of 1566, though it did cause Hawkins to stay at home this time, in order to prevent a diplomatic crisis.<sup>108</sup> Much like the case of the Portuguese protests in regard of English trade on the Gold Coast, the queen was not willing to concede to such demands as long as her subjects were still interested to carry on their interloping efforts, and as long as the opposition was not too strong. With the gold trade becoming difficult to pursue, it was the trans-Atlantic slave trade that still offered English investors – the queen and her principal

---

<sup>102</sup> See note 96.

<sup>103</sup> Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins*, pp. 92-94.

<sup>104</sup> John Sparke, 'The Voyage Made by M. John Hawkins Esquire... to the Coast of Guinea, and the Indies of Nova Hispania, Begun in An. Dom. 1564', *PN2*, vol. 3, pp. 503-06.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 521.

<sup>106</sup> According to Ramsay, the conversion ratio of ducats to pounds was 1/3 in favour of the latter. See: George Daniel Ramsay, *The Queen's Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands: The End of the Antwerp Mart*, vol. 2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 64. Thus, 50,000 ducats were worth about £16,500.

<sup>107</sup> *CSPSS*, vol. 1, p. 485, 504.

<sup>108</sup> Williamson, pp. 119-22.

statesmen among them – the opportunity to reap large profits. Thus, in 1567 she was involved with the promotion of another slaving voyage, which departed from England in October of that year under Hawkins' command.<sup>109</sup>

It seems that the success of his two first voyages made the Plymouth man more audacious, but this approach now had disastrous results. Upon the arrival of the fleet to Cap Vert in November, Hawkins went ashore with a force of 150 men and attempted to capture slaves there – something which the Portuguese, more than a hundred years before, had found to be a very dangerous undertaking.<sup>110</sup> The English were met with fierce opposition, sustaining many casualties while capturing only few slaves.<sup>111</sup> This experience led Hawkins to try to buy slaves from the Portuguese traders at Cacheu (modern-day Guinea Bissau), but the latter refused to collaborate with the English. In response, Hawkins decided to attack the settlement, but his men marched into an ambush and were repulsed.<sup>112</sup> Failing to acquire enough slaves, Hawkins toyed with the idea of sailing to the Gold Coast to buy gold. In the end, the English managed to increase the number of their slaves by helping a local Sierra Leone king to attack his neighbours, but not without suffering more casualties.<sup>113</sup> The problems experienced on the Upper Guinea Coast were only a prelude to the fully blown catastrophe which struck the English off the coast of Mexico. Hawkins fleet, which called for repairs at a small island facing the town of Vera Cruz, was attacked by the Spanish force of the castle of San Juan de Ulúa, losing 90 men (30 of them were taken prisoners) in the sea battle that ensued. In the end, Hawkins and his men had to flee from the place, and the English fleet began a torturous homeward voyage, which claimed the lives of more crewmembers. The voyage also proved to be a financial disaster for Hawkins' investors. It was probably this factor, and not the sheer number of casualties, which led Hawkins to cease his engagement with the trans-Atlantic slave trade for a few years.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 129-30.

<sup>110</sup> Bailey Diffie and George Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pp. 82-88.

<sup>111</sup> John Hawkins, 'The Third Troublesome Voyage Made... to the Parts of Guinea, and the West Indies, in the Yeeres 1567 and 1568, by M. John Hawkins', in *PN2*, vol. 3, p. 521.

<sup>112</sup> *Hawkins in Guinea, 1567-1568*, ed. by P. E. H. Hair (Leipzig: Leipzig institut fur Afrikanistik, 2000), pp. 38-54.

<sup>113</sup> Hawkins, 'The Third Troublesome Voyage', *PN2*, vol. 3, p. 522.

<sup>114</sup> *An English Garner: Ingatherings from Our History and Literature*, vol. 5, ed. by Edward Arber (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1909), pp. 115-26; Harry Kelsey,



Despite its horrifying results, the debacle at San Juan de Ulúa did not put an immediate end to English participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In December 1569, less than a year after the return of the remains of Hawkins' fleet to England, the Spanish ambassador reported to his king that, 'six or seven private ships have left for the coast of Guinea, and thence will go to the islands as Hawkins did'.<sup>115</sup> One of those Englishmen who kept pursuing that trade at that time was William Winter, who organized fleets for the trans-Atlantic voyage in 1570 and 1571.<sup>116</sup> Hawkins himself sent three ships to West Africa, probably on a slaving voyage, as late as the autumn of 1572.<sup>117</sup>

## 7. Profitability

What made English participation in the gold trade and the trans-Atlantic slave trade worthwhile, despite the risks involved in attempting to break the Iberian monopolies, were the considerable profits that those trades yielded. Some rough assessments of the profitability of Hawkins' voyages were made in the previous section. This section, however, attempts to estimate the profitability of the English Gold Coast trade. As the financial details of the West African voyages of the 1550s and 1560s were not preserved, the profits made during these ventures are hard to evaluate with accuracy. Thus, an assessment of their profitability is mainly made through evidence found in their narratives accounts, and/or the reports of the Iberian spies (often diplomats) in England. While the reports of the latter tended to be exaggerated, they do give some notion of the commercial success of the 1550s and 1560s ventures. In addition, this section also uses da Mota and Hair's estimates of English gold purchases made during these voyages, given in their 1988 work *East of Mina*.

While the English also bought Malagueta pepper and ivory during the 1553-1565 voyages, the main commodity sought in these ventures, and the real indication for their

---

*Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 101-05.

<sup>115</sup> CSPSS, vol. 2 (1568-1579), ed. by Martin A.S. Hume (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1894), pp. 215.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 254, 294.

<sup>117</sup> Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, p. 189.

success or failure, was gold. Therefore, in order to evaluate the success of these voyages, one has to look at the amounts of gold taken in them. Assuming that most of that gold went to the mint, as Hair does,<sup>118</sup> and bearing in mind that the mint's pricing of near-fine gold was roughly £36 per pound during the years 1551-1601, it is possible to get a clearer notion of the gross profit made in these voyages.<sup>119</sup>

The narratives of the voyages of 1553-1554 and 1554-1555, published by Eden, give the total weight of the gold purchased on the Gold Coast: the first voyage brought home 150 pounds, while that of 1554-1555, the most successful of the West African voyages of the 1550s and 1560s, delivered 400 pounds. For the sake of illustration, if all this gold was sold to the mint, then the gross profits made on gold during these two voyages were £5,400 and £14,400, respectively. As the voyage of 1553-1554 also brought a large amount of Benin pepper, which must have fetched good prices in England, its gross profits were much higher. Despite the fact that this voyage was one of the largest of the Gold Coast expeditions in terms of tonnage (530 tonnes) and crew (140 men), its net profits were still considerable, as it should be remembered that part of the mariners were impressed.

The narratives of the three Towerson voyages (1555-1558) do not include full figures or total quantities, but they do record instances of gold purchases, including the amounts. Adding up the numbers given by Towerson, Hair suggests the following totals: 127 pounds for the voyage of 1555-1556, 69 pounds in 1556-1557, and 116 in 1558.<sup>120</sup> The last figure is made up of 66 pounds bought from the Africans, and 50 pounds taken as a prize from a French ship off the Gold Coast.<sup>121</sup> According to Alsop, all three voyages were profitable, and this claim is especially true in the case of the first one, as it brought home the largest amount of gold of the three, while being the smallest of all the Gold Coast voyages (the ships totalled 120 tonnes at the most, with about forty crewmembers). The second voyage was the least successful of the three in terms of gold, but it was probably its

---

<sup>118</sup> Hair and da Mota, *East of Mina*, p. 33.

<sup>119</sup> Challis, *The Tudor Coinage*, p. 171.

<sup>120</sup> Hair and da Mota, *East of Mina*, p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> The record of the day-to-day purchases made during the 1558 voyage is incomplete, and Hair estimates that the total amount of gold brought back to England was probably 150 pounds. See previous note.

relatively small size (196 tonnes) which enabled it to yield a profit.<sup>122</sup> Alsop maintains that the third voyage, which was the largest of the three (500 tonnes or more), could have produced a financial loss, had not Towerson and his men committed their act of piracy.<sup>123</sup> His assumption that the third voyage was successful after all is supported by a Portuguese source mentioned by Philip II in a letter written to his ambassador in London on 20 January 1559. According to the letter, ‘the English ships [...] had arrived at Portsmouth laden with gold and [Malagueta] pepper, which they have brought from the coast of the Mina, to a greater amount than was covered by their sureties for 1,500 crowns [£375]’.<sup>124</sup>

There is almost no direct evidence for the amounts of gold taken during the voyages of the 1560s. Of the four voyages made to the Gold Coast during that decade, only that of 1562-1563 was amply recorded by William Rutter (Robert Baker’s verse narrative of the 1562-1563 and 1563-1564 voyages does not provide any details of the commercial transactions made). Iberian sources provide some details on the amounts of gold taken during the voyages of 1561-1562 and 1564-1565, while that of 1563-1564 seems to remain a mystery in terms of its gold purchases and its profitability.<sup>125</sup> However, the contracts made between the queen and the ‘quintet’ during the 1560s do give a notion of the value of the cargo on the outward journeys – a detail which is missing for the 1550s voyages. For each of the voyages of 1561-1562, 1563 and 1564-1565 the merchants were required to provide merchandize worth at least £5,000. As Scott mentioned, the simplest way to work with this detail is ‘to regard the £5000 invested in commodities as the whole capital’.<sup>126</sup> Using this figure as a yardstick, it is now possible to assess the profitability of the 1560s voyages more accurately.

The voyage of 1561-1562 was probably the most profitable of the four: according to Portuguese spies, it brought home 300 pounds of gold, which were worth £10,800 according to the pricing of the mint. Deducting from this sum the £5,000, which represent the capital invested in the voyage, leaves a gross profit of £5,800. This figure is markedly smaller than that given by Scott, who estimates that the net profits of that voyage ranged

---

<sup>122</sup> Alsop, ‘The Career of William Towerson’, p. 62; Alsop, ‘Tudor Merchant Seafarers in the Early Guinea Trade’, p. 87.

<sup>123</sup> Alsop, ‘The Career of William Towerson’, p. 65.

<sup>124</sup> CSPSS, vol. 1, p. 24.

<sup>125</sup> Hair and da Mota, *East of Mina*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>126</sup> Scott, *The Constitution and Finance*, p. 5.

from £8,000 to £9,500.<sup>127</sup> Whichever calculation is correct, the 1561-1562 voyage seems to be highly profitable.

Its success is not surprising, as it was made after three years of English absence from the West African arena, and it probably caught the Portuguese off guards. However, they were clearly prepared for the following voyage (1563), as it was probably the least profitable of all the Gold Coast voyages made between 1553 and 1565. In fact, it may well have produced a considerable financial loss. According to William Rutter's narrative (given in a letter addressed to his master, Anthony Hickman), no gold was purchased during that voyage.<sup>128</sup> These details dovetail with Rutter's description of the protective measures used by the Portuguese during that voyage (naval patrols and intimidation of the local population). Another possible indication for the failure of this voyage can be found in the fact that the queen did not lend her ships to the following venture (1563-1564). In the same way, the fact that she did lend one of her ships to the 1564-1565 voyage may indicate that the voyage of 1563-1564 was profitable to an extent. Finally, the 1564-1565 voyage, despite the disasters which befell it, was reported by a Spanish source to bring home gold worth 20,000 crowns (£5,000), which may represent, as Hair estimates, a taking of 150 pounds (£5,400 according to the mint pricing).<sup>129</sup> If this assessment is right, then the cargo of gold managed to pay back the capital invested. Nevertheless, this voyage seems to have yielded a moderate profit, since the homebound cargo, as was the case with the previous Gold coast voyages, also included ivory and Malagueta pepper.

To conclude, there is a good indication that at least seven out of the nine Gold Coast voyages made in the years 1553-1565 were profitable. If the 1563-1564 voyage was indeed profitable, as speculated, then the 1563 expedition was the only one to yield a financial loss. This voyage seems to be the watershed of the English Gold Coast enterprise: coming after six successful attempts (the five voyages of the 1550s and the one of 1561-1562), this was their first substantial failure. The two voyages that followed it may have been profitable but this profit, at least in case of the 1564-1565 expedition, came with a

---

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> William Rutter, 'The Relation of One William Rutter... Touching a Voyage Set out to Guinea in the Yeere 1562', *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 55.

<sup>129</sup> Hair and da Mota, *East of Mina*, p. 31; Challis, *Tudor Coinage*, p. 171.

heavy price: the loss of ships and the imprisonment of crewmembers. At that point, Portuguese opposition made English participation in the gold trade not worthwhile.

What actually made the English Gold Coast ventures of 1553-1565 profitable was the very fact that the English did not maintain a fort in the region. As Hair shows, the amounts of gold purchased by the English in the 1553-1565 Gold Coast voyages were far smaller than those bought by the Portuguese during the same period. According to his calculations, the average amount of gold bought in those voyages was a third of the amount brought by the Portuguese during the same period.<sup>130</sup> Despite having a smaller share of the gold trade, the English still managed to make considerable profits as their expenses were far smaller than those of the Portuguese who, by the 1550s had to maintain not only a fort and a garrison on the Gold Coast, but also a small fleet of warships to stave off English and French interlopers. While the Portuguese succeeded in asserting their position on the Gold Coast by the mid-1560s, their growing military expenditures in the region spelt economic ruin in the long run, especially at a time when the price of gold was falling in Europe as a consequence of the immense amounts of bullion which the Spanish brought back from Central and South America.<sup>131</sup> Although English organization of the Gold Coast enterprise could not match that of the Portuguese, it still enabled its participants to reap considerable profits.

Another indication for the profitability of the Gold Coast voyages can be seen in the case of William Towerson, the man who led three such ventures in the years 1555-1558. As Alsop showed twenty-five years ago, Towerson, who played such an important role in the three voyages of 1555-1558, did not do it as an experienced freeman, but rather as a young apprentice in his early twenties. His master was Miles Mording, a London skinner who was one of the original members of the Muscovy Company. Towerson, who hailed from a Cumberland yeomen family, was bound to Mording in November 1551 for a seven-year term. Thus, he embarked on his first West Africa voyage at the mid-point of his apprenticeship, and returned from his last voyage (October 1558) just before gaining his freedom. During these three voyages, Towerson not only acquired some important

---

<sup>130</sup> Hair and da Mota, *East of Mina*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-30.

mercantile experience, but also amassed some capital that gave him an excellent starting point for his career as a freeman.<sup>132</sup>

While all members of ships' companies could conduct some private trade during voyages, it was the expeditions' commanders who had a greater opportunity to make a profit.<sup>133</sup> As Towerson led three voyages which traded mainly for gold, his profits were certainly substantial for a private trader, especially when bearing in mind that as an apprentice he had almost no expenses. These profits were responsible, as Alsop mentions, for Towerson's rapid rise to prominence after becoming a freeman. In early 1560, some fourteen months after buying his freedom, the young skinner married the daughter of an eminent London merchant (James Hawes, who became an alderman in 1565, and Lord Mayor in 1574), and a year later he was elected to the London Common Council, in which he served for the next two decades.<sup>134</sup> During that time, he kept climbing through the ranks of the Skinners Company (of which he became a master warden in 1580) and the City's mercantile community, with trading interests encompassing Antwerp, the Baltic, the Levant and Spain. The son of a Cumberland yeoman died in 1584 as a prominent London merchant – a transformation made possible by his participation in the Gold Coast voyages of the 1550s.<sup>135</sup>

## **8. The Demise of the English West African Trade, and the Lost Decade (1567-1580)**

In the wake of the violent incidents of 1565 (the imprisonment of the *Minion*'s crew and the sinking of the *Mary Fortune*), there was an escalating crisis in Anglo-Portuguese relations. In 1567, the English Crown, which obviously acted on the behalf of the merchants, sent an embassy to Portugal in search of restitution, but the Portuguese were neither willing to compensate the English, nor to acknowledge their right to trade in West

---

<sup>132</sup> Alsop, 'The Career of William Towerson', pp. 49-51.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70, 78.

<sup>135</sup> John C. Appleby, 'Towerson, William (d. 1584)', in *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27593>> [accessed 2 May 2017]

Africa.<sup>136</sup> In the meantime, Hawkins was fitting ships for his third slaving voyage, with the Portuguese thinking that its real object was to capture Elmina in order to avenge the sinking of the *Mary Fortune*. With the departure of Hawkins' fleet in October, the crisis gained momentum, as the Portuguese were now fitting a ten-ship fleet for defending Elmina, while also arresting English ships in Portugal.<sup>137</sup> These aggressive acts, however, were combined with diplomacy, as a Portuguese ambassador arrived at London in April 1568 and, again, in December of that year. He brought with him a formidable list of complaints about English attacks on Portuguese shipping, and demanded a hefty compensation. Elizabeth refused, reiterating her stand that there is no reason to expel her subjects from West Africa.<sup>138</sup> With diplomacy reaching an impasse, a state of an unofficial warfare ensued, and trade between the two kingdoms ceased.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, negotiations continued, until in January 1572 a draft of a treaty was made, according to which, English subjects were prohibited from sailing 'into the sea and countries of the conquest of the King of Portugal in Ethiopia and India'.<sup>140</sup> This vague phrasing could be – and most probably was – interpreted differently by the Portuguese and the English. The former consistently claimed to have a monopoly over trade with the whole of West Africa, while the latter had an interest to maintain that the term 'seas and countries of the conquest of the King of Portugal' permits them to sail to any West African destination excluding the Gold Coast, Cape Verde and São Tomé, over which Portugal had direct control. Nevertheless, the English seem to have complied with the Portuguese stand from 1572 until the beginning of the 1580s, as there is almost no evidence for English activity in West Africa during this period. The fact that the actual treaty, signed only in 1576, did not include a similar prohibition, may suggest that the English completely withdrew from the West African trade by then.<sup>141</sup> Be it as it may, it is clear that the English Crown was willing to give up the West African trade in return for the renewal of trade and amity with Portugal.

---

<sup>136</sup> Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins*, pp. 162-63.

<sup>137</sup> *CSPF*, vol. 8 (1566-1568), ed. by Allan James Crosby (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1871), p. 456; Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins*, p. 163.

<sup>138</sup> Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins*, pp. 163-64.

<sup>139</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 111.

<sup>140</sup> *CSPF*, vol. 10 (1572-1574), ed. by Allan James Crosby (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1876), p. 1

<sup>141</sup> Blake, *European in West Africa*, p. 189.

Two possible explanations can be offered for the change in the Crown's attitude towards West Africa. The first has to do with the financial problems that troubled the Elizabethan regime during the 1560s and early 1570s. Elizabeth inherited an enormous debt from her predecessors (the £185,000 left by Edward VI in 1553 turned into £300,000 five years later, at Mary's death),<sup>142</sup> which she managed to clear only in 1574. Thus, during the first sixteen years of her reign, Elizabeth and her government had 'to operate within a tight financial straight-jacket', as Paul Hammer put it.<sup>143</sup> When the Crown spent money in the 1560s, therefore, it was in order to secure its more pressing and immediate interests, and these were found at that time close to home, not overseas.<sup>144</sup> In the context of England's West African trade, the economic approach of the Crown in the years 1558-1574 meant that it could not be expected to bear the heavy expenses of maintaining an armed fleet patrolling off the Gold Coast, as well as a well-manned garrison onshore. The breaking out of the Dutch revolt in 1568, which posed new threats on England, made it even less likely that Elizabeth would use the kingdom's resources for such a purpose. Thus, when the English challenge on the Portuguese monopoly in West Africa led to a crisis in the relations of the two kingdoms (1569-1571), Elizabeth was the one who compromised, as she could not afford to back her subject's claim to a share in the West African trade by military means.

The second explanation is related to a change in the nature of English activity in the region, which was taking place during the years of negotiations. Those years saw the intensification of the trend, starting after the Gold Coast voyage of 1564-1565, by which the English concentrated their efforts in the slave trade and, consequently, restricted their activity to the Upper Guinea coast. Thus, it can be said that it was the English merchants who were starting to give up the West African trade, with their queen only confirming this state of affairs legally.

Nevertheless, one last attempt to renew the gold trade was made in 1570. Early in that year, Lionel Duckett proposed to William Cecil a plan to establish a fort on the Gold Coast, in the King of Abaan's territory. Duckett, who represented other, unnamed merchants, asked Cecil to provide his syndicate with two great ships (200 to 300 tonnes)

---

<sup>142</sup> Williams, *The Later Tudors: England, 1547-1603*, pp. 120-21.

<sup>143</sup> Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*, p. 68.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-70.



and to pay the mariners' wages, as well as bearing some other expenses. Cecil's answer to Duckett – if any was made – is unknown and, in any case, no fort was established on the Gold Coast at that time. It is notable that Duckett neither asked Cecil to provide warships for the defence of the fort, nor soldiers to staff it, but only with '40 or 50 condemned men, to remain behind until our next coming'.<sup>145</sup> Duckett probably knew that Cecil would not be willing to provide such support, not only for the expenses involved, but also for the risk of engaging in an open war with Portugal. Without military backing, the English stood no chance in establishing themselves on the Gold Coast in the face of Portuguese aggressiveness.

It is unclear if any of the 'quintet' members or their 'associates' were involved in Duckett's plan. Some of them, like Lodge and Chester, experienced financial difficulties during the 1560s, and by 1570 were no longer capable of investing in such ventures.<sup>146</sup> Others, it seems, had found a substitute for the gold trade by that time. The year 1568 saw the establishment of two separate, yet inter-related, joint-stock companies, which were engaged with the mining and smelting of minerals: the Mines Royal and the Society of Mineral and Battery Work.<sup>147</sup> Duckett and Winter were members of the former, while Garrard – who died in 1571 – and Castelin belonged to the latter. These enterprises seem to have raised expectations of large profits, as the Earls of Pembroke and Leicester, along with William Cecil, were members in both of them.

While England's West African trade was declining in the early 1570s, new overseas ventures emerged. The Caribbean and the Spanish Main became an arena of English piracy during that decade, with Francis Drake, who acquired his experience through his participation in the Hawkins slaving voyages of 1562-1568, leading the way.<sup>148</sup> Drake himself, with his circumnavigation of 1577-1580, initiated English contact with the

---

<sup>145</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic (CSPD), Addenda (1566-1579)*, ed. by Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1871), pp. 246-47.

<sup>146</sup> Lodge became bankrupt towards the end of his mayorship (1563), though he still promoted the voyage of 1564-1565. See: Ramsay, *The City of London in International Politics*, pp. 58-59; Chester lost two ships during mid-1560 – one in the 1564-1565 voyage, and another in the Azores in 1566 – and sustained other financial losses at that period. See note 25.

<sup>147</sup> *Select Charters of Trading Companies. A.D. 1530-1707*, ed. by Cecil T. Carr (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1913), pp. 4-20.

<sup>148</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, pp. 127-34.

Pacific and the Far East, while Frobisher, another veteran of the West African voyages, led three voyages in search for the Northwest Passage during the years 1576-1578. More significantly, however, was the slow return of the English to the Mediterranean, which heralded the establishment of the Levant trade in the early 1580s. While having its own risks (mainly piracy), the Mediterranean and the Levant provided the English with a commercial enterprise which was legal, stable, and no less profitable than the two main branches of the West African trade.<sup>149</sup>

## Conclusion

The years 1553-1572 saw the English – both merchants and the Crown – making their first attempt to establish trade with West Africa. A small group of prominent London merchants led this enterprise, which, during the 1560s, received substantial diplomatic backing from the queen. The latter also traded in partnership with that group, contributing her ships to several voyages.

There is little doubt that both parties were serious in their attempt to claim a share of the West African trade. The merchants planned to erect a fort on the Gold Coast in the early 1560s – a necessary step for gaining a foothold in that region – and, according to a Spanish source, had a ship laden with building material ready to depart for West Africa. The queen, on her part, was willing to create a diplomatic crisis with the Portuguese (1569-1571) in order to support her subjects' right to trade in West Africa. Yet, by the early 1570s, the English were practically expelled from West Africa, not to return there until the late 1580s.

The main reason for that failure was the discrepancy between the aims of the merchants and their mode of operation. The English chose to concentrate their efforts on the most profitable branches of the West African trade – the gold trade of the Gold Coast and the trans-Atlantic slave trade – which also happened to be the riskiest, since the Iberian powers regarded them as their monopolies and, therefore, went to great lengths to protect

---

<sup>149</sup> For the risks and profits of the early Levant trade, see: Alfred C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (London: Frank Cass, 1964), pp. 15-41.

them. The English West African trade of the 1550s and 1560s, however, was not organized in a way that would enable its promoters to deal with those risks efficiently. The might of the Portuguese and Spanish Empires called for the creation of a Muscovy Company type of organization – i.e. a joint-stock company with a large pool of subscribers – that could have born the heavy expenses of sending armed ships to the Gold Coast, as well as erecting and maintaining a fort in that region. Yet, English trade in West Africa during the 1550s and the 1560s was conducted by a small group of merchants and investors, who operated on a basis of a temporary joint-stock. There is no evidence that those individuals who were involved in that trade at that time ever considered the creation of such a company.

Small-scale organization and operation were accompanied by what was, ultimately, an insufficient support from the Crown. While Elizabeth was heavily involved in the West African trade during the 1560s, the financial situation of the Crown prevented her from taking the decisive step that would enable her subjects to gain a foothold on the Gold Coast: namely, sending an armed fleet to the region in order to secure the foundation of a fort, and later also maintain a garrison there. By the late 1560s, the Crown's financial difficulties were augmented by political and military ones, as the breaking of the Spanish-Dutch conflict in 1568, which posed a serious threat on England, meant that Elizabeth could not afford herself to spend money and manpower on military activity outside Europe. The difficult financial and political situation in which the Crown found itself in the 1560s provided another incentive for the creation of a joint-stock company that would organize and control England's West African trade.

Ultimately, the first phase in the history of English activity in West Africa was one of trial and error. While the price paid for their errors was considerable – a fifteen-year absence from the West African scene – the English learned their lesson. When they returned to the region in the late 1580s, they did so with a different approach, which enabled them to establish a sustainable and long-lasting trade.



## Chapter Two: After the Gold Rush – English Re-establishment in West Africa, 1581-1613

The second phase of English activity in West Africa began in earnest in the late 1580s, in the wake of the Portuguese succession crisis of 1578-1583. It was inaugurated by a collaboration between a group of West Country and London merchants, known as the Senegal Adventurers, and the exiled Portuguese pretender, Dom Antonio. The pattern of English activity in this phase was markedly different from that of the first phase. First, the geographical scope of that activity was restricted to Senegambia – and, more specifically, to the Petite Côte and the mouth of the Senegal River. Second, the English pursued the less lucrative branches of the West African trade, mainly as a direct consequence of that geographic restriction. For most of the period, trade was on a small scale, both commercially and geographically, and is generally regarded as not very profitable by scholars.<sup>1</sup> Though activity during the second phase was lacklustre in comparison to that of the first one, it was nevertheless of greater importance, as it secured the English a foothold in West Africa – something that they had failed to achieve in the 1550s and 1560s. It is argued here that the English were successful in the period in question, because they pursued a trade that suited their organizational and financial capabilities, the shortcomings of which had been revealed during the first phase of activity. This change in approach towards the West African trade, it is further argued, occurred with the entry of smaller merchants, especially from the West Country, into that trade.

Scholars have not done much to explain this success. Most of them have tended to overlook the period in question, and those who have looked at it, tended to downplay its importance for the history of England's engagement with West Africa.<sup>2</sup> This chapter, therefore, attempts to fill this lacuna by exploring the processes through which the English established themselves in the region during the years from 1587 to 1613, and identifies the factors that enabled them to do so. It begins with an examination of the geo-political

---

<sup>1</sup> P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 1, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 241-63 (p. 246).

<sup>2</sup> John Blake discussed the period in question at some length, but he did not recognize its importance. See: John W. Blake, 'English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629', *Quarto Congresso do Mundo Portugues*, VI, 1 (1940), 313-35 (pp. 320-26).

circumstances that enabled the English to re-enter the region, namely, the Portuguese succession crisis and English support for Dom Antonio. It then discusses the collaboration between the Portuguese pretender and the Senegal Adventurers, examining the nature of that organization and, for the first time, attempting to assess the profitability of its trade. In exploring the context in which the Adventurers' activities took place, attention is paid to the prominence of the West Country in English trade during the last decades of the sixteenth century, and to the political setting of Senegambia, which led the Senegal Adventurers to focus on that region.

## 1. The Sources

The documentation of English activity during the period in question varies greatly in its volume and quality. The short collaboration (1587-1593) between the Senegal Adventurers and Dom Antonio is one of the best-documented episodes in the history of early English activity in West Africa. It has left its traces in the State Papers, the records of the HCA, the registers of the Privy Council and in the two editions of Hakluyt's *PN*, as well as in the documentation produced by Dom Antonio and his servants. In contrast, the following two decades (1594-1613) are one of the least documented periods in the history of English activity in West Africa. Our knowledge of the events of this period is derived almost exclusively from the records of the HCA, along with some rare entries in the State Papers.<sup>3</sup> This section covers the material that relates to the years 1587-1593.

The bulk of this material was collected by the Portuguese archivist Mario Alberto Nunes Costa and published in 1953, along with an essay that describes this collection, in the *Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa*.<sup>4</sup> Costa's collection includes material found in the Torre de Tombo (Portugal's national archive) and the British Museum (Lansdowne Manuscript collection.), and contains 50 items, written in five languages: English (25 items), Portuguese (19), French (4), Italian (1) and Latin (1).<sup>5</sup> The lion share of these items can be divided into four groups: **a.** the separate correspondence of Dom Antonio and the Senegal Adventurers with prominent administrators in the English government (Lord Burghly and Julius Caesar); **b.** documents produced by the English government in respect of that Anglo-Portuguese collaboration (such as the charter granted by Elizabeth to the Adventurers, and the proceedings of the Privy Council); **c.** material which relates to the commercial aspect of the said collaboration (contracts, deeds, and bonds); **d.** material which relates to the court case of 1592, in which Dom Antonio sued three members of the

---

<sup>3</sup> One reason for the paucity of information in regard of the years 1594-1613 is that the registers of the Privy Council for the years 1602-1613 were burnt in a fire that broke out in Whitehall in January 1619. It may well be that the registers of those years would not have contributed much to our knowledge of the topic in question, but in a situation where sources are scarce, the loss of that part of the *APC* corpus is significant. See: *Acts of the Privy Council of England (APC)*, vol. 33 (1613-1614), ed. by E.G. Atkinson (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1921), pp. v-ix.

<sup>4</sup> Mario Alberto Nunes Costa, 'D. António e o Trato Inglês da Guiné (1587-1593)', *Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa*, vol. viii, no. 32 (1953), pp. 683-797.

<sup>5</sup> The material that Costa collected from the British Museum is now found in the British Library.

Adventurers. Of these four, group **c** is the most important for scholars, as it provides an indication of the volume and value of the trade – an aspect which was poorly documented (if not completely absent) in the second and third phases of the history of English activity in West Africa.<sup>6</sup>

After Costa's collection, the second most important source of primary material is the records of the HCA. These records document the proceedings of the court case of 1592, in which Dom Antonio sued three of the adventurers: Anthony Dassel, William Brayley, and John Doricot. The records which relate to these proceedings are found in case 24/59 (instance and prize courts of 1591-92), and spread over folios 28-51. They contain two answers of Dassel (the main defendant) to the accusations made against him by Dom Antonio (the plaintiff), and the latter's two responses to these answers. In addition, they preserve the interrogatory that was drawn up for the lesser defendants in this case, Brayley and Doricot, along with their answer to that interrogation, and the questions put to four sailors who served on one of Dassel's voyages to West Africa.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> While a highly valuable source of primary material, Costa's collection is not without flaws. Though Costa attempted to list the different items in chronological order, there is some confusion with the ordering of items that relate to the first half of 1588. For example, a draft of the charter which was granted to the adventurers in May 1588 appears after a version of the charter itself (in French), and not before it. In addition, the answer of the Adventurers to a petition submitted to the government by a group of Taunton merchants who wished to be included in the charter is misdated. The answer, which is found in the Lansdowne Manuscripts collection bears the date 28 of February 1588 (N.S.), while Costa, for an obscure reason, dated it to 1589. Thus, instead of being listed as the third item in the collection, it is listed as number fourteen.

Another flaw is the absence of some important documents from the collection. For example, Costa included in his collection items 22-24 from volume 55 of the Lansdowne Manuscripts. For some reason, however, item 21 of that volume, which is the above-mentioned petition of the Taunton merchants, is not included in Costa's collection. The same is true for volume 158 of the Lansdowne Mss. collection, of which only one item (66) out of four consecutive items (66-69) was included in Costa's collection. It is hard to understand, therefore, what made Costa include certain items but not others in his collection. These instances of misdating and selective gleaning undermine in part Costa's attempt to present a clear picture of the events of 1587-1593.

The items in the Lansdowne Mss collection were catalogued in the early nineteenth century. See: *A Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts in the British Museum* (Printed by Command of His Majesty King George III, 1819). Items 21-24 of volume 55 appear on part I, page 104; items 66-69 of volume 158 appear on part II, page 41.

<sup>7</sup> *TNA*, HCA 24/59, ff. 28-51.



Another source of primary material is the second volume of the second edition of Hakluyt's *PN* (1599), which includes two items relating to Dom Antonio and Senegal Adventurers. The first is a copy of the charter granted by Elizabeth to the Senegal Adventurers on May 1588. The second is a narrative of a voyage to West Africa, made in late 1591 by Richard Rainolds and Thomas Dassel on the behalf of the latter's brother, Anthony Dassel. This voyage, which brought about the court case of 1592, was the only voyage of the Senegal Adventurers to be recorded.<sup>8</sup> The second edition of the *PN* also includes the narratives of two English voyages made to Benin in 1588-1589 and 1590-1591, as well as the 1594 correspondence of Anthony Dassel with Laurence Madoc, his factor in Morocco, concerning the gold fields of the West African interior.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. From Al Ksar al Kabir to Cap Vert

Much like during the 1550s, the return of the English to West Africa in the 1580s was facilitated by events that took place in Morocco. On 13 July 1578, Sebastião I, king of Portugal, landed with a 15,000 strong army in the Moroccan port of Tangier. The object of this large-scale military expedition was to re-establish control over those parts of Atlantic Morocco from which the Portuguese were driven during the 1540s by the emerging Sadian dynasty. The opportunity to embark on a new Moroccan campaign arose in 1576, when Muhammad al-Mutawakkil, the sultan of Morocco, was deposed by his uncle, Abd al-Malik, and crossed the Straits to Iberia in search of help. Sebastião was willing to fight for

---

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth I, 'A Patent granted to certain merchants of Exeter, and others of the West parts, and of London, for the trade of the River of Senega and Gambia in Guinea, 1588', in *PN2* vol. 2, pt. 2 (1599), pp. 123-26; Richard Rainolds, 'The Voyage of Richard Rainolds and Thomas Dassel to the rivers of Senega and Gambia adjoining upon Guinea, 1591, with a discourse of the treasons of certain of Dom Antonio's his servants and followers', *ibid*, pp. 188-92.

<sup>9</sup> For the Benin voyages, see: James Walsh, 'A voyage to Benin beyond the Country of Guinea, set forth by Master Bird and Master Newton, Marchants of London... in the year 1588', *ibid*, pp. 126-29; Anthony Ingram, 'The voyage set forth by M. John Newton, and M. John Bird Marchants of London, to the kingdom and Citie of Benin in Africa... in the year 1588...', *ibid.*, pp. 129-30; James Walsh, 'The second voyage to Benin, set forth by M. John Newton, and M. John Bird, Marchants of London in the year 1591...', *ibid*, pp. 130-33. For the correspondence of Dassel and Madoc, see: Laurence Madoc, 'A brief relation concerning the estate of the cities and provinces of Tombuto and Gago...', and, 'Another brief relation concerning the late conquest and the exceeding great riches of the cities and provinces of Tombuto and Gago...', *ibid.*, pp. 192-93.

al-Mutawakkil's cause, and on 4 August 1578, three weeks after landing on Tangier, he marched with his forces towards Abd al-Malik's army, who was awaiting them near the town of Al Ksar al Kabir (known in English as Alcazar), some 50 miles to the south. Falling into a trap set for them by the Moroccans (who were aided by Ottoman forces), the Portuguese army was annihilated after six hours of fighting. Sebastião, among many others, disappeared and it is assumed that he was killed in action.<sup>10</sup>

As the 24-year old king had no issue, his death led to a succession crisis. Sebastião's place was filled for a short time by his ageing and ailing grand-uncle, Cardinal Henrique (also Inquisitor General), who died in January 1580. Henrique was also childless, and he spent his eighteen-month reign organizing a procedure for determining his successor.<sup>11</sup> The leading candidates were all grandchildren of Manuel I of Portugal (1469-1521): Philip II of Spain (through his mother, Isabella, the holy Roman Empress), Catarina, duchess of Braganza (through her father, Duarte), and Antonio, prior of Crato (through his father, Luis).<sup>12</sup> Determining a successor from this shortlist was not an easy task, as all three candidates had drawbacks: Antonio was the most popular of the three, but the fact that he was an illegitimate child disqualified him; Philip was the most powerful, but faced an anti-Castilian sentiment; Catarina, despite being born and raised in Portugal, did not enjoy popular support.<sup>13</sup> Given this difficult situation, it is not surprising that Henrique did not manage to name a successor. With his death, the race for the Portuguese throne became violent. In June 1580, a Castilian army of 20,000 troops crossed the border and marched to Lisbon. On 25 August, it clashed with Antonio's impromptu army in Alcântara, just outside the capital, and won a decisive victory that subordinated Portugal to Spain for the next sixty years. In April 1581, Philip II became Philip I of Portugal, and the

---

<sup>10</sup>A. R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: from Beginning to 1807*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> Disney, *A History of Portugal*, vol. 1, p. 176.

<sup>12</sup> There were six candidates in total. Two of the other three were also grandchildren of Manuel I: Ranuccio Farnes of Parma (through his mother, Maria) and Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy (through his mother, Beatrice). The sixth candidate was Catherine de Medici, who claimed to have remote links to Afonso III, who reigned in Portugal during the thirteenth century. See: Jose Pedro Pavia, 'Bishops and Politics: The Portuguese Episcopacy during the Dynastic Crisis of 1580', *Journal of Portuguese History*, vol. 4, n. 2 (Winter 2006), 1-19 (p.4).

<sup>13</sup> Disney, vol. 1, pp. 192-93.

Iberian Union was formed. A month later, Antonio fled the kingdom, first to France, and then to England.<sup>14</sup>

For the English, the Iberian Union meant that the agreements and understandings that were achieved during the 1570s in regard of West Africa (and elsewhere) became invalid once England's greatest rival at that time annexed Portugal. With the arrival of the Portuguese pretender in England in June 1581 (where he stayed until September of that year), the opportunity to return to West Africa became all the more possible, as he was willing to use Portugal's possessions in the region as a trump card in his attempt to reclaim the throne.<sup>15</sup> Already in May 1581, Joan Rodriguez de Sousa, Dom Antonio's agent in England, was instructed to ask Elizabeth for '4,000 English, armed and victualled for three months, embarked in ships of war, and with so much powder as may seem needed to provide the kingdom'.<sup>16</sup> Dom Antonio needed this aid in order to protect the Azores, the only place in the Portuguese Empire that was still loyal to him at that time, from falling into Philip's hands. In return for such a costly aid, the queen was to receive 'the castle of St. George of Amina on the coast of Africa to hold until the said expenses are paid in such form as her Majesty may prefer'.<sup>17</sup> This grand plan was not realized in the end, as Elizabeth was not willing to go to war with Spain at this point, and the Portuguese pretender left for France in search of support. Nevertheless, it was clear that he was ready to open West Africa for English trade in order to install himself as the king of Portugal.<sup>18</sup>

It is possible that Dom Antonio's short sojourn in England during the summer of 1581 had an effect on the kingdom's merchant community, as there is evidence that two English voyages to West Africa were contemplated – and at least one of them was in preparation – in mid-1582. The first of these voyages is discussed in a letter dated 13 May 1582, written by a merchant named Randall (Randolph) Shaw, then on board of the galleon *Leicester*, a few weeks before it departed on her ill-starred voyage under the command of

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp. 192-96.

<sup>15</sup> Gordon K. McBride, 'Elizabethan Foreign Policy in Microcosm: The Portuguese Pretender, 1580-89', *Albion*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1973), 193-210 (pp. 196-98).

<sup>16</sup> *CSPF*, vol. 15 (1581-1582), ed. by Arthur John Butler (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1907), pp. 164-65.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> McBride, pp. 193-95.

Edward Fenton.<sup>19</sup> It was addressed to Shaw's friend, the Southampton merchant Edward Cotton, whose cousin, a certain Mr. Bingham, was to go on a voyage to Benin. Shaw's letter contains practical information for a voyage of this sort: at what point to go to Benin, what goods should be carried, and the dangers to avoid. Shaw could draw that detailed information from two main sources: first, there was Richard Eden's 1555 translation of Pietro Martire d'Anghiera's *Decades*, which included the narratives of the two English voyages made to West Africa in the years 1553-1555. The first of these two was the only voyage to call at Benin until the 1580s.<sup>20</sup> Second, it is apparent that Shaw knew one of the participants of the 1553-1554 voyage to Benin, who was still alive, as he recommends his addressee to meet him.<sup>21</sup> Whatever the source, the fact that Bingham needed such detailed information at that point may indicate that preparations for a voyage were at a very early stage in May 1582. It is not known if the voyage ever set sail.

The second voyage seems to have been at a more advanced stage. A document written in June of the same year provides an outline of a proposed voyage to 'the Ryver of Cesto upon the coaste of Genoa for graines and oliphantes teethe, and from thence to the

---

<sup>19</sup> A note at the end of the letter indicates that the letter was written 'a board the galleon Leycester by Randall Shawe'. A. F. C. Ryder, who transcribed this letter and published it in the appendices section of his *Benin and the European, 1485-1897*, does not discuss the context in which it was written. He does not refer to that note (which is not found in his transcription), and he does not identify 'E. Cotton' as Edward Cotton. This identification is done by E. G. R. Taylor in her annotated edition of Edward Fenton's journal of his 1582-1583 voyage. See: *The Troublesome Voyage of Captain Edward Fenton, 1582-1583*, ed. by E. G. R. Taylor, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 113 (Cambridge: Published for the Hakluyt Society, 1959), p. xxxi, xxxv. For Ryder's transcription, see: A. F. C. Ryder, *Benin and the European, 1485-1897* (London: Longmans, 1969), pp. 339-43.

Though the letter was written on board the *Leicester*, Fenton's flagship, Shawe was a crew member of the *Edward Bonaventure* during the voyage. Nevertheless, he was considered as one of the high ranking members of the expedition, and often participated in the council meetings. See: *An Elizabethan in 1582: the Diary of Richard Madox, Fellow of All Souls*, ed. by Elizabeth Story Donno, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 147 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1976), pp. 124, 255, 262. Shawe wrote the letter when the fleet anchored at Cowes (Isle of Wight) in wait for favourable winds. It eventually left England on 2 June (departing from Plymouth). See: Taylor, *The Troublesome Voyage*, pp. 83-88.

<sup>20</sup> See chapter one of this work.

<sup>21</sup> Ryder, p. 342. Shaw writes as follows: 'there dwelleth one at Rattless [Ratcliff?] beyond London his name is William Rose, if you could get him to goe, he hath byne upon the coste, and one of the Rivers, you may showe hym I wyshed hym onto you [i.e. 'you can tell him that I sent you']'.

Isle of St. Thome upon the same coaste for sugar'.<sup>22</sup> This one-page document contains a list of the ships participating in the voyage, the number of crewmembers in each ship, and the costs of shipping, maintenance and of the merchandize to be carried to West Africa. The expedition included four ships with an overall tonnage of 600: the *Primrose* (300 tons), the barque *Hastings* (160 tons), the *Hope* (120 tons) and the *Matthew* (a 20-ton pinnace). These ships were to be manned by 150 men, with the total charges of the whole expedition amounting to £7,070. Two more things are mentioned in the document: first, that the fleet should depart in August, and that it is expected to complete the round voyage in ten months; second, it is declared that the voyage is a 'plain merchant voyage, and no prince to be offended by it, unless it be without just cause'.<sup>23</sup> Soon enough, however, the schedule, destinations, and the character of the voyage changed.

Though there is no mention of the promoters or the port from which the voyage is to depart, the correlation between the names of the ships and their tonnage suggests it was Plymouth, their owners' home port. The *Primrose* (sometimes referred to as the *Primrose of London*) and the *Hope* were partly owned by Sir John Hawkins, while Sir Francis Drake owned the *Hastings* and the *Matthew*.<sup>24</sup> Both Hawkins and Drake did not participate in Fenton's expedition, which departed from Plymouth at the beginning of June, so they could certainly lead this West African voyage. What is odd, though, is the discrepancy between the ambitiousness of the plan and the apparent modesty of its explicit objectives. It is unclear why such a large and expensive fleet was needed in order to carry a cargo of Malagueta pepper, ivory and sugar to England. The last of these items could well cover the hefty charges of the voyage, but a voyage of a smaller scale could have yielded much higher profits. A possible explanation for the size of the fleet is that the promoters of the voyage did conceive it as a privateering/piracy venture – a practice to which Drake and Hawkins were no strangers – despite claiming in the letter that its objects are purely mercantile.

---

<sup>22</sup> TNA, SP12/154, f. 48.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.; For Richard Eden's translation of d'Anghiera and the narratives of the English voyages, see: *The Decades of the Newe Worlde, or West India*, trans. by Richard Eden (London: William Powell, 1555), ff. 343r.-360v.

<sup>24</sup> *Sir Francis Drake's West Indian Voyage, 1585-86*, ed. by Mary Keeler, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 148 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1981), pp. 283-88.

Whatever the promoters' intentions were, no voyage sailed to West Africa in August 1582. It appears that the expedition changed its object and some of its destinations during the summer and autumn of 1582 and, indeed, became piratical in character. In November of that year, Bernadino de Mendoza, Philip II's ambassador in England, reported to his king that a fleet of seven ships was ready to sail from Plymouth to São Tomé and the Moluccas, under the command of William Hawkins, John's brother. Among those ships were the *Primrose* and the *Hastings*, and possibly also the *Hope*. According to Mendoza, the intention of the expedition's leaders was 'to plunder what they can get'.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, sometime before the end of the year, a four-ship fleet – including the *Primrose*, the *Hastings* and the *Matthew* – set sail from Plymouth, under the command of William Hawkins. Its destination was Brazil, not São Tomé and the Moluccas, though it eventually changed its course and sailed to hunt prizes in the Caribbean.<sup>26</sup> In the end, it appears that the opportunities offered by West Africa in the early 1580s were not attractive enough for the Hawkins family and Drake.

Both these 1582 schemes show that the return of the English to the West Africa was accompanied by changes in their approach towards the region. As opposed to the 1550s and 1560s, and in spite of Dom Antonio's willingness to concede Elmina, neither of these schemes involved the Gold Coast and its gold trade, which was still well protected and guarded by the Portuguese. The English also avoided the other lucrative branch of the West African trade, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, for the same reasons, though in this case the Spanish were the ones who controlled that trade. This change of approach, however, was not complete, as some aspects of these schemes are reminiscent of the expeditions of the 1550s and 1560s. They involved long voyages to the eastern corner of West Africa in pursuit of spices and foodstuffs (Benin pepper, São Tomé sugar), and the size of the River Cess/São Tomé venture was similar to that of the expeditions of the previous decades. A complete change in approach – a move from large scale to small-scale trade, dictated by a change of destination - occurred only with the initiation of English activity on the Petite Côte in 1587.

---

<sup>25</sup> 'Bernadino de Mendoza to the King', in *CSPSS*, vol. 3, ed. by Martin A. S. Hume (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1896), p. 414.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor (ed.), *The Troublesome Voyage*, pp. liv-lv.

### 3. A West-Country Scramble for Africa

The outbreak of open war between England and Spain in May 1585 hastened an English return to West Africa. It strengthened the relations between the English government and the Portuguese pretender, who was now perceived as an asset in the conflict with Spain. Antonio was invited to come to England, with promises that he would be granted a pension, and that his debts, incurred during five years of exile, would be covered. Thus, he left France (where he had stayed since 1581) and moved to England with his large retinue in September 1585.<sup>27</sup>

Though he was now given some financial support from the English crown, Dom Antonio found it difficult to cover his and his men's expenses. In March 1586, for instance, Mendoza reported to his king that, 'Don Antonio and his people have been very comfortable hitherto, as the Queen caresses and makes much of him, giving him 1,000 or 2,000 crowns at a time'. However this money had been spent by August, when it was reported that the Portuguese pretender was 'needy and in want of money'.<sup>28</sup> Thus, it is clear that Dom Antonio's financial state was highly precarious, and that he was in constant need of funds. The renewed interest of the English in the West African trade offered a solution to his financial plight, and it is this context that explains his collaboration with the Senegal Adventurers.

The circumstances of how this Anglo-Portuguese collaboration was established are obscure. It is known that Dom Antonio had close relations with Drake (for instance, he stayed at Drake's estate in Buckland Abbey upon his arrival to England in September 1585), and it may well be that through this connection he received information about the maritime activity of other West Country men.<sup>29</sup> In 1593, when renouncing their charter, the Senegal Adventurers declared 'the said trade and traffyque of marchanndize was begune and attempted by us upon the perswation and motion of Dom Antonye kinge of Portugall and other Portyngalles resident within this realme'.<sup>30</sup> This declaration accords with the wording of the letters patent granted to the adventurers on 3 May 1588, which stated that

---

<sup>27</sup> *CSPSS*, v. 3, p. 545.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 569, 602.

<sup>29</sup> Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: the Queen's Pirate* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 242.

<sup>30</sup> Nunes Costa, item 48, p. 794.

the grantees ‘have bene perswaded and earnestly moved by certaine Portugals resident within our Dominions, to undertake and set forward a voyage to certaine places on the coast of Guinea’.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the events that took place in the months leading to the granting of the letters patent indicate that the English were not as passive as these declarations may suggest.

During 1587, two separate groups of West Country merchants, one from Exeter, the other from Taunton, made their first attempts to enter the West African trade. By early 1588, the Exeter group was already collaborating with Dom Antonio, and was waiting its charter from the queen. A short memo written by one of Elizabeth’s advisors (possibly Lord Burghley) on 12 February 1588, notes that the Portuguese pretender demanded from the queen that no Englishman would trade in the region between the Senegal and the Gambia rivers without his licence. At the bottom of that memo, a different writer (possibly Dr. Julius Caesar)<sup>32</sup> added the names of four Exeter merchants who were officially chartered by the queen three months later: John Doricot, William Brayley, Gilbert Smith and Nicholas Turner.<sup>33</sup> The Taunton merchants, who knew that the Exeter group was about to be chartered, petitioned Lord Burghley in order to be included in the charter. The Exeter group, wishing to exclude the Taunton group from the charter, made a written response to that petition. It is known that the government considered the inclusion of the Taunton group, since the outline of the charter included the names of the Taunton merchants, alongside those of the Exeter men. Eventually, only the latter group was chartered, together with their trading partners. It may well be that the competition between these two groups for the West African trade led that of Exeter to associate with Dom Antonio, as a means of securing itself a trade monopoly. Alternatively, it is also possible that Dom Antonio was

---

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth I, ‘A Patent Granted to Certaine Marchants of Exeter... for the Trade of the River of Senega and Gambia in Guinea, 1588’, in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 123.

<sup>32</sup> This assessment is based on a comparison of the handwriting at the bottom of the document and that at the bottom of another, similar document – an outline of the queen’s charter to the Senegal Adventurers, titled ‘the content of the grant required’. At the bottom of that outline there is a list of names, titled ‘the names of the merchants that desire this grant’, which is known to be written by Dr. Julius Caesar. For Dom Antonio’s request and the outline of the charter, see: *British Library (BL)*, Lansdowne MSS, vol. 55, item no. 22 (the request) & 23 (the outline).

<sup>33</sup> According to the queen’s charter and the correspondence of the Adventurers with the English government, Nicholas Turner was not a resident of Exeter, but of London. It might be that the writer confused Turner with Nicholas Spicer of Exeter, another member of the Senegal Adventurers.



informed about the plans of the Exeter group concerning West Africa, and used his status to force them to collaborate with him and give him a share of their profits.

Both the petition of the Taunton group, written on 26 February 1588, and the response of the Exeter group, written two days later, shed some light on the events of 1587. In their petition, the Taunton merchants claim that their representatives

about one yeare past dealt with Sir Richard Greynvile and certeinne Portingales that then were with Sir Richard concerning a voyage to be made unto the Coast of Gynney, and concluded with the same Portingales for their direction in that voiage, but after those Portingales departed without holding promise with the merchants, by what practise or meanes they knowe not.<sup>34</sup>

Given that the petition was written in February 1588, the phrase ‘about one yeare past’ means that the Taunton merchants made their first attempt to enter the West African trade sometime during the first half of 1587. By then, Sir Richard Grenville had already returned from his voyage to the Roanoke colony in Virginia (which he found deserted), and was busy preparing the West Country for an expected attack by the Spanish.<sup>35</sup> It is possible that those ‘certeinne Portingales’ who accompanied Grenville at that time were seamen and pilots employed by the English sea captain in that voyage.

The Taunton merchants claimed that in July 1587 they attempted to hire a Portuguese pilot for a voyage to West Africa. Their representatives, it is told, ‘dealt with a Portingale that passed in the voiage to Gynney with the merchants of Exeter for the same voyage, and concluded with that Portingale for the same’.<sup>36</sup> Upon this agreement, the Taunton merchants fitted out a ship, and were ready to sail from Topsham in August. However, according to the petition, the Exeter merchants, who had another voyage underway, asked the vice-admiral of Devon to detain the Taunton ship until their ship left

---

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, item 21.

<sup>35</sup> *Roanoke Voyages, 1584-1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584*, vol. 1, ed. by David B. Quinn, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 104 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955), p. 494; A. L. Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville of the Revenge* (London: Cape, 1949), pp. 247-51.

<sup>36</sup> *BL*, Lansdowne MSS, vol. 55, item 21.

on their voyage. In the meantime, the Portuguese pilot defected to the Exeter fleet, a move that forced the Taunton merchants to abort their voyage.

The petition suggests, then, that the Exeter group had managed to visit West Africa by mid-1587, and possibly made another voyage shortly afterwards, during the summer of the same year. The Exeter merchants' response, however, neither refers to a voyage made by them in the first half of 1587, nor in the summer of that year, though it does refer to the above-mentioned Portuguese pilot, stating that,

The Portingale with whom they [the Taunton merchants] alledged to have delte and conclude withall, was by us the merchanntes of Exeter brought frome the Maderas in December last was Twelve moneth and imediatlie after his comminge into England Wee concluded with the kinge Don Anthonio, and with the said Portingale Pylot, and diverse other Portingales by the said kinges appointment to proceed in the said viage.<sup>37</sup>

According to this statement, the Portuguese pilot came to England only in December 1587 (given that the above-quoted passage was written in February 1588, the phrase 'December last' can only mean December 1587) and, therefore, he could not have led a voyage to West Africa during the first half of 1587. Nevertheless, they do not deny that they had already made a voyage to the region ('since the retorne of our shippes from the coaste of Gynney'), which must have taken place during late 1587, at the very latest. Additional information on the voyage can be found in a letter written by one of Philip's informers in England. Writing on March 1588, this anonymous writer reported that,

A sailor named Francisco Ferreira came hither last year, and took from here some Englishmen in two ships to the River Gambia, near Cape de Verde, and they recently came back with much ivory and skins. These Englishmen had agreed to give to Don Antonio 8,000 cruzados, and, with the permission of the Queen, a patent is granted to them by which for ten years no persons but they shall go from England to that country.<sup>38</sup>

This source confirms that a foreign pilot, most probably a Portuguese, (the surname Ferreira is common both in Portugal and Spain, but it is more likely that the man was

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, item 24.

<sup>38</sup> *CSPSS*, vol. 4, pp. 228-29.

Portuguese) came to England sometime in 1587 and took a group of Englishmen to West Africa. This group was certainly the Exeter one, as the source mentions those Englishmen were about to be granted a patent for West Africa. It also states that the voyage was made to the River Gambia but, as the Senegal Adventurers preferred to concentrate their efforts on the Petite Côte of Senegal during the years of their activity, it seems likely that the voyage was made to the latter destination or, at the very least, called there, if it indeed reached the Gambia.

The report of Philip's informer also makes it clear that the Spanish, whose empire now also encompassed Portugal's possessions in West Africa – were unhappy with the return of the English to the region. Having referred to the agreement between the English merchants and Dom Antonio, the informer adds the following information, accompanied by a recommendation:

Two of their ships will leave here in May for the same place, conducted by the same Portuguese. It would be very easy to have them captured from Cape de Verde Island, which is only 100 leagues from the place. I will in due time advise particulars of the ships.<sup>39</sup>

While the informer's advice was made in respect of the Senegal Adventurers, it seems that the victims of that proposed Spanish/Portuguese ambush were the crew members of a ship sent by the Taunton merchants. In spite of the efforts of their Exeter rivals, the Taunton group managed to send a voyage to Senegambia before the grant of the queen's charter in May 1588. Unfortunately, this voyage was made about the time the informer wrote his letter. Thus, their ships sailed to West Africa at a time when the Spanish/Portuguese authorities in the region were alert and ready for action.

That ill-fated voyage seems to have departed from England in late 1587 or early 1588. The Taunton merchants state in their petition of 26 February 1588 that 'this yeare these merchants of Taunton have already sent in that voyage a shipp, a barque, and a pynnys from Lyme'. Given that the writers of the petition followed Old Style conventions, the phrase 'this yeare' – i.e. 1587 – also encompasses January and February 1588. Though the Exeter merchants insisted in their response that the Taunton fleet was still at Lyme

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Regis in late February, there is concrete evidence that such a fleet did make it to West Africa between that time – or, possibly, earlier – and early May (when the queen’s charter was granted). This evidence is found in a letter, dated the 30 September 1588, which was sent by the lords of the Privy Council to the officers of the port of Weymouth. The letter commands the officers to let the Taunton merchants send a voyage to ‘Genny’, regardless of the charter, in order to release twenty-four of their men who were arrested by the ‘Spaniards’ (these could also have been Portuguese who acknowledged Spanish rule over Portugal), as well as their cargo, which was confiscated.<sup>40</sup>

Two other contemporary sources refer to this voyage, and though their references are somewhat vague, they nevertheless add some important details. The first of these sources is the HCA deposition of Francisco da Costa, one of Dom Antonio’s agents, during the court case of 1592. According to da Costa, the voyage left England in 1587 (most probably during the last quarter of that year), and the port of departure was, indeed, Lyme (‘Lima’), as claimed by the Taunton merchants. Da Costa also adds an important detail: while some of the crewmembers were arrested and put in prison, others were killed. He suggests that occurred because the English did not carry a Portuguese agent with them.<sup>41</sup> Da Costa’s version is supported by the second source: Richard Rainolds’ narrative. According to Rainolds, who dates the voyage to 1588 (‘In our second voyage and second yeere [of the trade]’), forty Englishmen were captured and some were slain by ‘vile treacherous meanes of the Portugals and the king of the Negros consent in Porto d’Alley and Joala’. He associates the voyage neither with Taunton, nor with any other English town. However, he does not give the impression that the voyage was sent by the Adventurers; the use of the word ‘our’ (‘our second voyage and second yeere’) might refer to the English nation as a whole, and not necessarily to the Adventurers (he does not say ‘our men were slain’, but that some Englishmen were slain).<sup>42</sup> Considering these two sources together with the letter of the Privy Council, it can be concluded that the voyage,

---

<sup>40</sup> *APC*, vol. 16 [1588], ed. by John Roche Dasent [London: Her Majesty’s stationary Office, 1897], p. 294.

<sup>41</sup> Nunes Costa, item 34, p. 757: ‘tres naos de Lima que la forao ho ano de 87 sen criado del rei noso sōr que lhe matarão a mais de gente e prenderão algūs e lhe tomarao muita fazenda’. (‘Three ships from Lyme which were in the year 1587 without a servant of the king, our lord, many of the men were killed, others were arrested, and much merchandize was seized’).

<sup>42</sup> Rainolds, pp. 188-92.

whose destination was the Petite Côte, took place in late 1587/early 1588, and that some of the crewmembers were killed while the rest were imprisoned, and their cargo confiscated.

Judging from the extant sources, violent attacks on English merchants trading in Senegambia were uncommon during the 1580s and 1590s. As the bloody event on the Petite Côte took place, most probably, prior to August 1588, it can be attributed to the escalation in Anglo-Spanish hostility in the months leading to the sail of the Great Armada. However, while the Anglo-Spanish war ended only in 1604, there is no record of similar attacks on English merchants in West Africa from 1588 until the signing of the Treaty of London.<sup>43</sup> The main battlefields of that war were on the high seas rather than on land, and West Africa was no exception in this respect.

#### 4. The Charter Party: The Triumph of Middle-Tier Merchants

The merchants who eventually received patent letters from the queen in May 1588 were eight in number. These were William Brayley, John Doricot (also spelt ‘Dorricott’ or ‘Darracott’), Nicholas Spicer and Gilbert Smith from Exeter, Anthony Dassell and Nicholas Turner from London, John Yonge (or Young) from Colyton and Richard Dodderidge of Barnstaple. We do not know much about their careers prior to the establishment of the Senegal Adventurers,<sup>44</sup> but it is clear that none of them belonged to England’s mercantile elite. Dassell seems to have been the most prominent merchant of the eight, being one of the founding members of the Barbary Company (1585) – a fact that can explain his interest in the West African trade – and was also an investor in Drake’s 1587

---

<sup>43</sup> Another rare incident of hostility against English merchants occurred in 1606. In December, Hugh Lee, the English trade consul in Lisbon, reported that there were (presumably in that city) ‘divers English men in prison for trading into Guiney’. See: Lee to Salisbury, 23 December 1606, *TNA*, SP89/3, f. 76. Nothing more is known of this incident, which, while uncommon in the context of West Africa, was one of many manifestations of hostility towards the English mercantile community in Lisbon after the Union of the Crowns. See: Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in the Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 100-02.

<sup>44</sup> Dodderidge is known to have a well-established trade with ‘Biscay’ (i.e. northern Spain) before joining the company. See: Alison Grant, ‘Breaking the Mould: North Devon Maritime Enterprise, 1560-1640’, in *Tudor and Stuart Devon: The Common Estate and Government*, ed. by Todd Gray et al. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992) 119-40 (p. 121); *TNA*, K. R. Port Books, Barnstaple, E190/934/3. In addition, there is evidence that the Spicer family of Exeter participated in the Newfoundland trade during the 1580s. See: *TNA*, K. R. Port Books, Exeter, E190/935/11.

raid on Cadiz.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless Robert Lang, who studied London's mercantile elite of the early seventeenth century, mentions that neither Dassell nor Turner, the other London member of the company, were merchants 'of any prominence'.<sup>46</sup> Yet, it is highly possible that their wealth was still greater than that of their six Devon partners, though some of the latter belonged to the mercantile elite of the West Country. As the average gross estate of London merchants in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was four times higher than that of their Exeter peers,<sup>47</sup> the personal estates of most of the upper-tier West Country merchants were at the same level of London's middle-tier merchants (£1,000-£5,000).<sup>48</sup>

However, one should not underestimate the economic and political power of the six Devon members, as their financial resources and political connections enabled them to receive a monopoly over the Senegambian trade. Two of the six Devon merchants were mayors of their towns: Dodderidge, a wealthy ship owner, served as a mayor of Barnstaple in 1589 (after serving as an alderman in 1583),<sup>49</sup> while Spicer held the same post in Exeter, both in 1592 and 1603. Smith and Brayley served as bailiffs in Exeter in 1585 and 1586, respectively, while Spicer also held this post thrice before becoming a mayor (1575, 1584

---

<sup>45</sup> For Dassell's involvement with the Barbary Company see: 'The Letters Patent... Granted by Her Majestie... for a Trade of Barbarie, in the yeere 1585', in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 114-15; for his involvement with Drake's 1587 raid on Cadiz, see: Robert Leng, *Sir Francis Drake's Memorable Service Done against the Spaniards in 1587*, ed. by Clarence Hopper (Westminster: Printed for the Camden Society, 1863), p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Guy Lang, *The Greater Merchants of London in the Early Seventeenth Century, 1600-1625* (Oxford: unpublished D. Litt. thesis), p. 247.

<sup>47</sup> The average gross personal estate of Exeter merchants in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was about £1,900, while that of their London peers was about £7,800. See: W.G. Hoskins, 'The Elizabethan Merchants of Exeter', in *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neal*, ed. by S.T. Bindoff (London: Athlone Press, 1961), 163-87 (p. 172). A 'gross' estate is the value of the estate including the debts.

<sup>48</sup> Laura Caroline Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 28-29; Richard Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community in Seventeenth-Century England', in *The Economic History Review*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Aug. 1970), 220-34 (p. 231). According to Grassby, the average net estate of Exeter merchants at the period in question ranged from £500 to £1,000, with an annual income of £100. See: *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> David Ibbetson, 'Dodderidge, Sir John (1555-1628)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7745>, accessed 10 June 2016].

and 1586).<sup>50</sup> Yonge was an eminent Colyton merchant who combined overseas trade with the purchase of lands. His economic power is probably best indicated by the career of his son and heir, the politician and diarist Walter Yonge.<sup>51</sup> (The career of Sir John Dodderidge, the son of Richard, serves also as an indication of his father's wealth)<sup>52</sup> Doricot seems to have been the youngest and the least prominent of the eight adventurers. He was the nephew and trading partner of Brayley,<sup>53</sup> but later became Dodderidge's trading partner, whose daughter he married in 1596.<sup>54</sup> His climbing through the social ranks in the late sixteenth century may well owe to his involvement with the Senegambian trade.

The predominance of West Country men in the ranks of the Senegal Adventurers is intriguing. In the 1550s and 1560s, as well as from the 1610s onwards, Londoners dominated the West African trade. As London came to dominate England's foreign trade during Tudor times, the small proportion of Londoners in the Adventurers' ranks may be interpreted as a lack of interest in the West African trade on the part of London's mercantile community. The 1570s and 1580s provided London merchants (as well as other English merchants) with new, lucrative commercial opportunities. The former decade saw the renewal of the English Levant trade, while the deterioration in Anglo-Spanish relations during the latter decade turned privateering into a widespread and profitable business. Not able to pursue the two most profitable branches of the West African trade (gold and slaves), London merchants who looked for opportunities in Atlantic Africa during those decades tended to find them in Barbary, as can be learned from the fact that all of the establishing members of the Barbary Company (1585-1597) were from the capital. Thus, the West African scene was left to the initiative of the provincial ports.

Of the provincial ports, those of the West Country, and especially in Devon, were the most likely to take up that initiative, because of their geographic location, as well as for

---

<sup>50</sup>Alexander Jenkins, *The History and Description of the City of Exeter, and Its Environs, Ancient and Modern, Civil and Ecclesiastical* (Exeter: P. Hedgeland, 1806), pp. 131-32.

<sup>51</sup>George Yerby, 'Yonge, Walter (*bap.* 1579, *d.* 1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30231>, accessed 10 Oct 2016].

<sup>52</sup> See note 49.

<sup>53</sup> There is evidence that Spicer also had business relations with Brayley before the establishment of the Senegal Adventurers. See: *Devon Heritage Centre*, 'Halberton, 10 October 1586', ECA/ED/FC/27.

<sup>54</sup> Grant, 'Breaking the Mould', p. 126.

other reasons. To begin with, in the second half of the sixteenth century Devon was heavily involved in overseas enterprises: Drake (the circumnavigation of 1577-1580, along with numerous privateering voyages), Richard Grenville (the Roanoke colony), Humphrey Gilbert (Newfoundland voyages), and his half-brother Walter Raleigh (the Roanoke colony and the Guiana enterprise) were all natives of that county. A more significant figure in the context of this work is John Hawkins of Plymouth, who operated in West Africa in the 1560s as part of his involvement with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. To these prominent individuals one has to add the numerous local mariners who gained experience with long oceanic voyages during the closing decades of that century, through Devon's growing participation in the Newfoundland fish trade.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the involvement of Devon merchants and mariners in trans-Atlantic enterprises, it seems more plausible that the project of the Senegal Adventurers had his origins in the trade that the Devon ports had developed with France. The port books of Exeter in the years leading to the establishment of the company record numerous voyages to the Atlantic ports of that kingdom, mainly to La Rochelle and Morlaix, but also to Nantes, St. Malo, Le Havre and Rouen.<sup>56</sup> This is important since the French were highly involved in the hide trade during the second half of the sixteenth century. They were importing hides from Senegal since the late 1550s,<sup>57</sup> and from the Spanish Caribbean since the late 1560s.<sup>58</sup> The hide trade of Rouen, which had a major leather industry, was thriving in the 1570s and early 1580s – a few years before the Senegal Adventurers launched their project. Hence, it is possible that through their commercial relations with these ports, the Devon merchants got a notion of the prospects of the hide trade and decided to try to get these commodities directly from their source.

---

<sup>55</sup> Peter Edward Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 15-19; an indication for the growing participation of the Devon ports in the Newfoundland trade can be found, for instance, in the 1582-1583 port books of Exeter and Dartmouth, which recorded the arrival of four local ships from Newfoundland between October 1582 to September 1583. See: *TNA*, K. R. Port Books, Exeter, E190/934/4.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, the port book of Exeter (searcher overseas) of 1582-1583: *TNA*, K. R. Port Books, Exeter, E190/934/4; and that of 1586-1587 (particular of customs accounts): *TNA*, K. R. Port Books, Exeter, E122/46/31.

<sup>57</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 46.

<sup>58</sup> K. R. Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean: Trade and Plunder, 1530-1630* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 181-82.



### 5. West Africa for Beginners: The Petite Côte

The charter of May 1588 secured the members of the Senegal Adventurers a 10-year monopoly over trade on the stretch of coast that runs from the mouth of the Senegal to the mouth of the Gambia, and within these rivers. In practice, the Adventurers, and most of their successors, preferred to concentrate their efforts on the stretch of coast that runs from the Cap Vert peninsula in the north to the Sine-Saloum delta, 100 miles to the south. This stretch of coast is known as the Petite Côte – the ‘little coast’, as opposed to the ‘great coast’ (Grande Côte), which runs from the peninsula northward to the mouth of the Senegal River. Geography provides a partial explanation for the Adventurers’ preference of the former coast. While the Grand Côte was exposed to strong winds coming from the Sahara, and lacked safe roadsteads, the nearby Petite Côte enjoyed the shelter provided by the Cap Vert peninsula, and offered sea-going vessels a variety of coves suitable for anchorage.<sup>59</sup> Because of these differences, most of the local population inhabited the latter coast, thus making it all the more favourable for commercial activity.

Favourable geographic conditions alone were not enough to make the Petite Côte an important hub of international trade in the late sixteenth century, had it lacked a commodity that was in high demand in early modern Europe. In the case of Senegambia, this commodity was cowhides, which, at a time when the diet patterns of Europe’s growing population were changing (there was a decrease in meat consumption), helped the local leather industry to meet the increase in demand for leather products.<sup>60</sup> Climate and ecology played a critical role in making the Petite Côte’s a major outlet for cowhides. The coast’s large hinterland, the Senegambian interior (broadly defined as the vast tract of land surrounded by the Senegal and the Gambia rivers), is a semi-arid region, characterised by an open savannah. The amount of rain that this region receives is high enough for producing grass, thus capable of sustaining livestock, yet low enough to provide an

---

<sup>59</sup> George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>60</sup> As leather is a by-product of the meat industry, its availability depends on diet patterns and preferences. During the early modern era, European diet began to shift from meat to grains and vegetables – a trend that saw leather production in Europe falling off, and the subsequent rise in demand for imported leather. See: Philip Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), p. 220.

environment free of tsetse flies, the vectors of the ‘sleeping sickness’, which is deadly to large domestic animals.<sup>61</sup> This feature made the Senegambian interior more suitable for pastoralism than the other hinterland regions of Atlantic West Africa and, consequently, a major source of cowhides.

Despite its commercial advantages, as well as its geographic location at one of the closest points of sub-Saharan Africa to Western Europe, the first Portuguese voyages to sail beyond the mouth of the Senegal River seemed to ignore the Petite Côte. According to the description of the chronicler Gomes Eanes de Zurara, Nuno Tristão, who was the first to sail south of Cap Vert, did not call there on his way to the unnamed river – possibly the Rio Grande in present-day Guinea Bissau – where he died in 1446.<sup>62</sup> The Venetian merchant Alvise da Cadamosto, who sailed to Senegambia in 1455 under the auspices of Prince Henrique, and again in 1456 as an independent trader, was the first to describe the Petite Côte, though the brevity of his description indicates that he probably did not spend much time there.<sup>63</sup> It was only with the Portuguese settlement of the Cabo Verde archipelago during the 1460s that a regular trade with Senegambia in general, and the Petite Côte in particular, was established. Senegambia became the favoured trading region of Cabo Verdean merchants not only by virtue of the archipelago’s location, but also by the crown’s decision to restrict the islanders’ trade to the region between the Senegal River and Sierra Leone.

Responding to the needs of the Senegambian market, the Cabo Verdean economy was established on horse breeding (cavalry was an important element of Senegambian armies) and the cultivation of cotton, as the islanders wove high-quality cloth that was sold on the mainland. In return, the Africans sold the Cabo Verdeans provisions and, more

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16, 218-19.

<sup>62</sup> ‘And passing by Cape Verde [Cap Vert], he went sixty leagues further on and came unto a river in which it seemed to him that there ought to be some inhabited places.’ See: Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, vol. 2, ed. & trans. by C.R. Beazley & Edgar Prestage, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 100 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1899), p. 253.

<sup>63</sup> *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. & trans. by G. R. Crone, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 80 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society), pp. 54-55.

importantly, slaves for the labour-intensive cotton plantations.<sup>64</sup> Based on slave labour, Cabo Verde's economy proved to be highly profitable: in the second decade of the sixteenth century, it was the West African possession that generated the most profit for the Portuguese crown after Elmina.<sup>65</sup> The profitability of the islands' economy led to their rapid colonisation: by the first decade of the sixteenth century, most of the archipelago was colonised, and some of the islanders began to turn their gaze to the mainland in search for new opportunities. While Cabo Verdeans started to settle on the mainland during the closing decades of the fifteenth century, this trend accelerated at the beginning of the following century. These adventuring Cabo Verdeans were almost exclusively male, some of mixed-blood (the vast majority of the archipelago's population was African), who settled in African villages and often married local women. Their main occupation was trade, which led them to concentrate on the coasts and waterways of Upper Guinea.<sup>66</sup> To the Portuguese authorities they were known as '*lançados*', a contraction of the term '*lançados em terra*' – 'those who have thrown themselves on the mainland', outside the sway of the Portuguese authorities. Their growing numbers were a source of anxiety for the metropole as they posed a threat to its monopoly over the Upper Guinean trade. Being outside the authorities' sphere of influence, the commercial activity of the *lançados* could neither be taxed nor regulated. Moreover, as their ties with the metropole were loose, they had no compunctions about trading with Portugal's European competitors in the West African arena.<sup>67</sup>

The crown censored this trend and tried to curb it by issuing a slew of decrees, but as the Portuguese authorities in Cabo Verde were weak, this legislative effort was unsuccessful.<sup>68</sup> On the mainland, the crown's influence was more limited.<sup>69</sup> The Portuguese never erected a fort on the Senegambian coast and could not control its trade. Given that erecting and maintaining a fort was highly expensive – and as the Portuguese

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 99. For horse-breeding, see: Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa*, p. 221.

<sup>65</sup> Green, p. 111.

<sup>66</sup> Disney, vol. 2, pp. 50-52.

<sup>67</sup> Curtin, pp. 95-96.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> The correspondence of Dom Antonio with his agents reveals that the Cabo Verdean authorities had some influence on the mainland, as some members of the *lançado* community made an attempt to hide their dealings with the English in fear of punishment. See: Nunes Costa, item 30, pp. 750-52.

were very limited in their finances and labour – this practice was mainly kept to locales that were associated with the gold trade. Thus, the Portuguese had several forts and trading posts on the Gold Coast, as well as one on the island of Arguin (present-day Mauritania). In fact, the only Portuguese attempt to erect a fort on the Senegambian coast was also made in the context of the gold trade. In 1488, there was an abortive attempt to build a fort at the mouth of the Senegal River, which was believed to offer the easiest route for reaching Timbuktu.<sup>70</sup> While gold from the interior could be bought on the Petite Côte, its small amounts did not justify a Portuguese fortification of that region.<sup>71</sup>

As the Portuguese Crown feared, its European competitors started to take advantage of its weakness on the Senegambian coast, and on the Petite Côte in particular, during the second half of the sixteenth century. The first to challenge the Portuguese in this region were the French, who made regular visits to that destination during the 1560s. Calling at Cap Vert in 1558 during his third West African voyage, William Towerson mentioned that ‘the Frenchman had a great trade there’.<sup>72</sup> Nine years later, Edward Fenner met a French ship at Cap Vert, and noticed that its crew was ‘very well welcome to the Negroes’. In another occasion, he met an African who ‘spake good French’.<sup>73</sup> This suggests that by the late 1560s, the commercial relations between French merchants and the inhabitants of Cap Vert and its vicinity were well established. This assumption is corroborated by Richard Rainolds who, in regard of the Petite Côte that he visited in 1591, mentions that ‘the Frenchmen of Diepe and New-Haven [La Havre] have traded thither above thirty yeeres’. By that time, the Cabo Verdean merchant André Álvares de Almada, who wrote circa 1594, could already declare that French intervention in the region led his fellow islanders to abandon their trade.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560*, vol. 1, ed. By John W. Blake, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 86 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1942), pp. 85-86.

<sup>71</sup> Curtin, pp. 198-206.

<sup>72</sup> William Towerson, ‘The Third and Last Voyage of M. William Towerson’, in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 46.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>74</sup> Andre Alvarez d’Almada, *Brief Treaties on the Rivers of Guinea, pt. 1* (1594), ed. and trans. by P. E. H. Hair et. al. (Liverpool: Department of History, Liverpool University, 1984), ch. 2, p. 21; this is a makeshift edition, in which each chapter is enumerated separately. Thus, it is necessary to mention the chapter’s number. A copy of that edition can be found in the African studies collection of the University of Wisconsin’s digital

Thus, by the late 1580s, European trade with the Petite Côte was well established and, practically, open to all. It was not a very lucrative trade: the main commodities that were sold there were cowhides, ivory, gum Arabic (used for sizing cloth) and beeswax. Nevertheless, by virtue of the region's proximity to Western Europe, the expenses of a round voyage, which could be completed in four to five months, were relatively low.<sup>75</sup>

It can be assumed that these were two of the main reasons for the restriction of the Adventurers' monopoly to the region. It may well be that both Dom Antonio and the English merchants had no desire to extend the scope of this monopoly. The Portuguese pretender was in a desperate need for money, and probably preferred ventures that involved low risk and modest profits – thus guaranteeing himself a steady income – over ventures that involved higher risk and higher profits, such as the gold trade of the Gold Coast. The members of the Senegal Adventurers belonged to the middle tiers of the English mercantile community and lacked the means to launch such ventures, if they were interested in them in the first place.

Despite the inclusion of the Gambia River in the monopoly, there is no evidence the Adventurers traded there. It may well be that they preferred not to pursue the Gambia trade as it was riskier than that of the Petit Côte. Since the upper section of that river was relatively close to the Bambuhu gold fields (present-day Mali), gold was available along its banks in larger quantities than on the Petite Côte and, thus, the Portuguese protected the Gambia trade more efficiently.<sup>76</sup> Rainolds mentions in his narrative that 'the Frenchmen never use to go into the river of Gambia, which is a river of secret trade and reaches concealed by the Portugals. For long since, one Frenchman entered the river with a small bark which was betrayed, surprised, and taken by two gallies of the Portugals.'<sup>77</sup>

---

library: <<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/AfricanStudies.Almada01>> [accessed 4 March 2019]

<sup>75</sup> In 1605-1606, the Dutch merchant Pieter van den Broeck sailed from Dartmouth to the Petite Côte in four weeks. The return trip from Cap Vert to the Netherlands took him two and a half months (with a possible stopover in the Azores). See: Pieter van der Broecke, *Pieter van den Broecke's journal of voyages to Cape Verde, Guinea and Angola (1605–1612)*, ed. & trans. by J. D. La Fleur, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 5 (London: Hakluyt Society, 2000), p. 26.

<sup>76</sup> Philip Curtin, 'Africa and the Wider Monetary World, 1250-1850', in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, ed. by J.F. Richards (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1983) 231-269 (pp. 247-8).

<sup>77</sup> Rainolds, p. 189.

Moreover, Rainolds indicates that the gold trade of the Gambia was also protected from private Portuguese traders:

Also by the governor[']s order and Renters of Castel de Mina and other places, where golde is, upon the coast of Guinea, they [the private traders] have a place limited how farre they must go to trade within the river of Gambia; and further they may not go upon paine of confiscation of their goods, and losse of life. For that the Renters themselves send at certaine times send their owne barks within the river to such places, where as they have a great store of golde.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

## 6. The First Years of Trade (1588-1592)

While being the first chartered company in the English West African trade, the Senegal Adventurers was by no means a joint-stock company. Free of the need to maintain a joint-stock, the different members were not obliged to launch joint voyages, and could operate separately under the umbrella of the charter. The Exeter port books, however, may suggest that joint voyages were the preferred mode of operation, at least at the beginning. Of the five ships to depart to West Africa from Exeter and its satellite ports between Michaelmas 1588 to Michaelmas 1589, four are registered under ‘William Brayley and company’, and one under Spicer.<sup>79</sup> The term ‘William Brayley and company’ surely referred to Doricot, Brayley’s relative and trading partner, but as Brayley seems to have been the group’s representative in its interactions with Dom Antonio and the crown, this term may also refer to other members of the Senegal Adventurers.<sup>80</sup>

As the charter dealt only with the relations between the Adventurers and the crown in regard of the West African trade, and made no explicit mention of Dom Antonio, the latter had to secure his rights by making a separate contract with the Adventurers. Such a contract was made on 20 May, and it was accompanied by the Adventurers’ obligation to pay the Portuguese pretender a sum of £500 for a licence to trade in West Africa.<sup>81</sup> According to the main provision of the contract, the Adventurers had to pay the Portuguese pretender 5% of the profits made of all goods brought from there. In addition, he was to receive 25% of the profits of every prize taken by the Adventurers during their voyages to the region.<sup>82</sup> In order to prevent the adventurers from deceiving him in respect of the profits, Dom Antonio obliged them to carry one of his agents on every ship that went on a voyage to the region and to let him (or them) make an inventory of all the goods that were

---

<sup>79</sup> *TNA*, K.R. Port Books, Exeter, E190/935/11.

<sup>80</sup> For instance, Brayley paid Dom Antonio and his men their dues on behalf of the other Adventurers on several occasions, and wrote a letter of complaint to the Privy Council when the Adventurers’ monopoly was violated. See: Nunes Costa, items 9-10, pp. 724-25; item 20, pp. 737-38. The entry in the Exeter 1588-1589 port book for the departure of the *Grace of Exeter* on 28 February 1589 may strengthen the assumption that the phrase "William Brayley and company" relates to other members of the Senegal Adventurers, as it names Brayley and a certain John Ellercott as its owners. This may suggest that in cases when Brayley operated without the other company members, the names of his partners were mentioned in the record. See: *TNA*, K. R. Port Books, Exeter, E190/935/11.

<sup>81</sup> Nunes Costa, item 5, pp. 717-18.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 714-15.

brought back to England. The Adventurers had to bear the expenses of the agents' maintenance during the voyage, as well as paying them a hefty sum of £12 10s for their services, and allot some space in their ships for the agents' goods.<sup>83</sup> Though carrying and sustaining Dom Antonio's men on board had some advantages for the Adventurers – the former could serve as guides and interpreters – their presence in the West African voyages ultimately proved to be a source of contention between the two parties. This issue, along with the fact that the commercial arrangements made between Dom Antonio and the Adventurers were not sanctioned by the crown, undermined that Anglo-Portuguese collaboration, and ultimately brought it to an end.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the inherent flaws of the contract, the collaboration between the Adventurers and the Portuguese pretender seems to have worked to the advantage of both parties in the first three years of the partnership. The presence of Dom Antonio's agents aboard their ships probably spared the Adventurers the problems that beset their Taunton rivals. The Adventurers' profits seem to have been satisfactory, since their ships were sent to the Petite Côte on a yearly basis during 1588-1592.<sup>85</sup> Though the Adventurers' balance sheets are not available, some indication of the profitability of their trade can be deduced thanks to the work of documentation made by Dom Antonio's men.

In 1589, Diego Botelho, Dom Antonio's chief agent, made an inventory of the merchandize brought by the first three ships that sailed to the Petite Côte in that year, the prices for which it was sold, and the resulting profits. According to the Exeter port book that covers the period of Michaelmas 1588 to Michaelmas 1589, these three ships were the *Speedwell* of Sidmouth (80 tonnes), the *Elizabeth Rose* of Exeter (70 tonnes), both of which departed at the beginning of October 1588, and the *Little Anthony* of Exeter (18 tonnes), which followed them in late November. The first two ships returned to England some nine months later, on mid-July 1589 (by which time the *Speedwell* had changed its name to the *Revenge*; see Figure 3).<sup>86</sup> There is neither a record of the *Little Anthony*'s arrival at Exeter or its satellite ports in the port book of 1588-1589, nor in the one of 1589-

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 713.

<sup>84</sup> For the contract, see: Ibid., item 4, pp. 711-17.

<sup>85</sup> Blake, 'English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629', p. 322.

<sup>86</sup> TNA, K. R. Port Books, Exeter, E190/935/11; for Botelho's account, see: Nunes Costa, item 16, pp. 733-34.



1590. This may suggest that it entered another port when returning to England, though it could also have been lost at sea, or taken as a prize. Botelho's accounts show that these three ships (or, at the very least, the first two) brought to England 14,699 hides (sold for 3s. and 10d. each), 140 pounds of wax (8d. the pound), 282 pounds of ivory (12d. the pound) and 10 sacks of rice (3d. the pound). For the sale of that merchandize Dom Antonio received a share of £150 5s. 10d. Botelho does not mention the total value of the merchandize sold by the adventurers, but as Dom Antonio was entitled to 5% of that value, the pretender's £150 indicate a total revenue of £3,000.

There is a good indication that this voyage was profitable, since three new voyages departed for West Africa during the fall of 1589, including that of the *Elizabeth Rose*, which left England on 30 September 1589, less than three months after its return.<sup>87</sup> However, calculating the net profit yielded by that voyage is difficult, as many details, such as the costs of victualling and mariners' wages, are unavailable. Nevertheless, some estimations can be made by using table 4 in K. R. Andrews' *Elizabethan Privateering* (1964).<sup>88</sup> The table includes seven categories, which correspond to the ship's burden: number of men, value of ship, value of guns, value of powder, value of victuals, value of other provisions and costs of repairs. As it refers exclusively to men-of-war, some modification is needed when applying this table to merchantmen: categories that pertain to armament (value of guns and powder) can be omitted, while the ratio between the number of men and the burden should be increased.<sup>89</sup> According to Andrews' table, a high ratio of 1.6 to 2 sailors per ton was maintained in men-of-war (30 men for a 50 tonne ship; 50 men for a 100 tonne ship), while a lower ratio was allowed for merchantmen. G. V. Scammell mentions that the ratio of sailors per tonne in the sixteenth century English merchant fleet could range widely from 1:2 to 1:13. In the first Guinea voyage (1553-1554) and the third Towerson voyage (1557-1558), for instance, a ratio of 1:3 was maintained.<sup>90</sup> These

---

<sup>87</sup> TNA, K. R. Port Books, Exeter, E190/935/13. The two other ships are *The Gift of Exeter* (left on 23 September) and the *Phoenix of Dartmouth* (27 October). For the first ship, see: TNA, K. R. Port Books, Exeter, E190/935/12. For the second, see: E190/935/13.

<sup>88</sup> K. R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Spanish War, 1585-1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 49.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>90</sup> G. V. Scammell, 'Manning the English Merchant Service in the Sixteenth Century', *Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 56 (1970), 131-54 (pp. 131-32). For the manning of the first Guinea voyage (1553-1554) and the third Towerson voyage, see: J. D. Alsop, 'Tudor Merchant

voyages, however, were funded by a syndicate of prominent London merchants, who could allow themselves to bear the expenses of employing large crews, which were needed for long and risky voyages. It can be assumed that the West Country members of the Senegal Adventurers could not afford to employ such crews and, in any case, the Petite Côte trade does not seem to require it. Thus, in estimating the costs of equipping the 1589 Exeter fleet, a moderate ratio of 1:5 was chosen. As the total tonnage of those ships is 168, it is assumed that they were manned by 36 men (16 for the 80-tonne *Speedwell/Revenge*, 14 for the 70-tonne *Elizabeth Rose*, and 6 for the 18-tonne *Little Anthony* as, according to table 4, a higher ratio was maintained in smaller ships).

In respect of the other relevant categories of table 4 – that is, value of ship, value of victuals, value of other provisions, and costs of repairs – the present estimation follows Andrews with some minor adjustments. Ship's value is estimated according to a ratio of £3 per tonne, which represents the value of a new ship under 100 tonnes in the period in question. In this case, the highest ratio is used – even if the three ships sent in 1589 were not new – in order to represent the maximum expenses of the adventures on their vessels (this is also the ratio used by Andrews). Victualling is valued at 13s. (£0.65) per person per month. Other provisions (candles and wood, for instance), are valued at 30s a month for every fifty men, which represent a ratio of 7.2d. (£0.03) per person per month. Cost of repairs after a six-month voyage is valued at 10% of the ship's total value, which represents a ratio of 1.66% of that value per month. For the sake of convenience, the present estimation refers to the length of the round voyage made by the *Speedwell/Revenge* and the *Elizabeth Rose* as ten months, rather than nine and a half. Thus, the cost of repairs for a ten-month voyage is valued here at 16.66% (a sixth) of the ship's total value.<sup>91</sup> The following tables provides the basic details of the 1589 fleet, and the estimated costs of its equipping for ten months, based on Andrews' calculations.

---

Seafarers in the Early Guinea Trade', in *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485-1649*, ed. by Cheryl Fury (Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell Press, 2012) 75-115 (p. 87).

<sup>91</sup> Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, pp. 47-48.

**Figure 3: Details of the 1588-1589 Petite Côte Voyage**

ship's name	home port	date of departure	date of arrival
<i>Speedwell/Revenge</i>	Sidmouth	2 October 1588	18 July 1589
<i>Elizabeth Rose</i>	Exeter	8 October 1588	15 July 1589
<i>Little Anthony</i>	Exeter	28 November 1588	unknown

**Figure 4: Estimated Cost of Equipping the Three Exeter Ships of 1589 for Ten Months (in £ sterling)**

ship's name	ship's burden (tonnes)	number of men (1:5)	value of ship (£3 per tonne)	value of victuals, for 10 mos.	value of other provisions, for 10 mos.	cost of repairs	Total Cost of Fitting Out
<i>Speedwell/Revenge</i>	80	16	£240	£104	£4.8	£40	~£389
<i>Elizabeth Rose</i>	70	14	£210	£91	£4.2	£35	~£340
<i>Little Anthony</i>	18	6 (1:3)	£54	£39	£1.8	£9	~£104
total	168	36	£504	£234	£10.8	£84	~£833

To the costs of equipping, one must add the costs of wages. The total wages for 36 men for ten month of service can be estimated at £210. This calculation is based on details gleaned by Scammell, according to whom the monthly wage of an English seaman in the 1570s was 10s.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the majority of their crewmembers was paid 100s, or £5, at the end of the voyage, while the high-ranking members received, possibly, twice as much.<sup>93</sup>

The adventurers were also responsible for the maintenance of Dom Antonio's agents who joined the voyage, as well as for their wages. This cost amounted to £57: £19.5 for maintenance (following Andrews' estimation) and £37.5 for wages (3 men in total, each of whom was paid £12.5). This was a considerable sum in proportion to the total cost

<sup>92</sup> Scammell, 'Manning the English Merchant Service', p. 141.

<sup>93</sup> The sum of £210 is based on the assumption that 30 out of the 36 crewmembers were simple seamen, while the rest were of higher ranking. Thus, 30x£5=£150, and 6x£10=£60.

of the wages and the number of agents involved. It could be all the more disproportionate if the ratio of men per tonne was actually lower than the one used here. When adding Dom Antonio's share of the profits – £150 in this case – one can see that the Portuguese pretender and his men were an economic burden for the Adventurers.

To sum up: the cost of equipping, wages, maintaining Dom Antonio's men, and Dom Antonio's share amounted together to £1,250. After deducting these expenses from a revenue of £3,000, the adventurers were left with £1,750. This last figure, however, does not represent the net profit, as the value of the merchandize taken to West Africa, which is unknown, should be deducted as well. Finally, whatever profit left was to be divided among the different financiers of these voyage, whose number is also unknown (it might have been eight, if the term 'William Brayly and company' does refer to all the members of the Senegal Adventurers).

Estimating the value of the merchandize is a highly difficult task. While it is easy to guess what commodities were carried by the adventurers to the Petite Côte – the usual cargo carried to West Africa by the English included cloth, pewter, iron bars, beads and liquor – the make-up of the outward cargo is unknown. Thus, its value cannot be calculated on the basis of the prices of these commodities at that time. The only way to make a reasonable estimation in this case is by examining West African voyages made in the late-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries where the value of the outward cargos is known, in order to provide a yardstick. One such voyage is the proposed enterprise of June 1582, bound for the Cess River and São Tomé (which ultimately sailed to the Caribbean in late 1582). The value of merchandize of that voyage, as stated in the proposal, was £2,000 (out of a total cost of £7,000).<sup>94</sup> As this voyage was much larger in terms of tonnage than the Petite Côte voyage of 1588-1589 (600 tonnes and 168 tonnes, respectively), one can assume that the cargo carried in the latter voyage was smaller and, consequently, costed less. The third Gambia voyage of the Guinea Company (1620-1621), which is discussed in detail in Chapter Four, is another good example as, consisting of two ships with a combined tonnage of 250, it resembles the Petite Côte voyage of 1588-1589 in terms of its size. According to the heads of the company, the total cost of fitting out those two ships

---

<sup>94</sup> *TNA*, SP12/154, f. 48.

and furnishing them with cargo amounted to £1,920.<sup>95</sup> While the cost of fitting out a ship for a voyage was at least as hefty as the cost of the cargo, if not heftier, let us assume that the cargo of the 1621 voyage accounted, at the most, to about a half of the total, or £950.<sup>96</sup>

Using these two examples as a yardstick, and bearing in mind that the size of the Petite Côte voyage of 1588-1589 was smaller than those of the 1582 and the 1621 voyages, it is suggested that the value of its outward cargo was, most probably, about £1,000. Thus, the net profit of the adventurers after deducting the cost of the cargo was about £750 (£1,750 minus £1,000). If this profit was divided between all eight adventurers, then each of them ended up with, roughly, £100.

This was a modest profit in comparison to that made in the West African voyages of the 1550s and the 1560s. The net profit of the 1561-1562 Gold Coast voyage, for instance, is estimated at £8,000-£9,500 – ten to twelve times higher than that of the 1588-1589 voyage.<sup>97</sup> Even if the actual profit was closer to the more modest estimate made in Chapter One, that of £5,800, it was still seven times higher. Gold, the main commodity bought in the 1561-1562 voyage, is the reason for this overwhelming difference. Nevertheless, a net profit of £100 yielded by a single trading voyage was not a mean feat for sixteenth and seventeenth century merchants of the provincial ports, as this was the average annual income of Exeter merchants at that time.<sup>98</sup>

This was not the only source of income available for the adventurers. Being furnished with letters of reprisal as part of the sea war with Spain, they could increase their profits by reprisal returning, and there is evidence that they often did so. ‘William Brayley and company’ brought a prize of Brazil sugar, Brazilwood and woad (dyestuffs) in October 1588, while Spicer got hold of a cargo of hides, anil (indigo), sarsaparilla and block wood

---

<sup>95</sup> *TNA*, SP14/124, f. 115.

<sup>96</sup> In the 1582-1583 voyage of Edward Fenton, for instance, the cost of merchandise was £2000 out of a total cost of £11,600. See: *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, vol. 2: East Indies, China and Japan (1513-1616)*, ed. by W. Noel Sainsbury (London: Longman, Green and Roberts, 1882), p. 73.

<sup>97</sup> William Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of the English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720, vol. 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), pp. 5-7.

<sup>98</sup> Grassby, ‘The Personal Wealth of the Business Community’, p. 231.

(another name for logwood, a dyewood) a few months later.<sup>99</sup> The *Nicholas* of Nicholas Turner is recorded to take a prize of woad, worth £1,600, in 1590.<sup>100</sup> The most lucrative prize, however, was taken by Dodderidge, whose ship, the *Prudence*, brought back a vessel, ‘taken on the coast of Guinney, having in her 4 chests of gold to the value of 16 thousand pounds, and divers chaynes of gold with civet and other things of great value’.<sup>101</sup> Dassell and Yonge are also known to be involved in privateering voyages during the war with Spain, though it is not known if these enterprises were made under the umbrella of the ‘Senegal’ charter.<sup>102</sup>

The advantages of the Senegambian trade can be clearly seen when examining the short English engagement with the Benin trade, which occurred in the same years. The Benin venture was a risky and complicated undertaking, in which timing was crucial: ships had to arrive at the region during the dry season (December-February), and leave it before the beginning of the wet season, which had a lethal effect on Europeans. What made this undertaking worth the while was the market value of its main commodity – Benin pepper. Hence, it is not surprising to find that the promoters of this venture were two London ship owners – John Bird and John Newton – rather than merchants from the provincial ports. Bird and Newton’s first voyage to Benin, made in 1588-1589, was ill fated. Planning to leave England in late October, it eventually departed in mid-December due to lack of wind. It arrived at Benin in mid-February, towards the beginning of the wet season, and stayed there until mid-April.<sup>103</sup> This timing proved to be disastrous: many of the crewmembers died during the stay in (or offshore) Benin, and the surviving crew had to leave the region before they could lade a sufficient cargo of pepper and ivory. Despite this calamity, Bird and Newton made another attempt in 1590-1591. Once again, the voyage arrived at Benin quite late (early January 1591) and left after the wet season had begun (late March), but

---

<sup>99</sup> Brayley’s prize is recorded in the Exeter port book of 1588-9; See: E190/935/11; for Spicer’s prize, see: Nunes Costa, item 7, pp. 720-22.

<sup>100</sup> Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, p. 256.

<sup>101</sup> ‘The Diary of Philip Wyot, Town Clerk of Barnstaple from 1586 to 1608’, in *Sketches of Literary History of Barnstaple*, ed. by J. R. Chanter (Barnstaple: E. J. Arnold, 1866), p. 96.

<sup>102</sup> Rabb, *Enterprise and Empire*, p. 277 & 410.

<sup>103</sup> James Welsh, ‘A Voyage to Benin... Begunne in the yeere 1588’, in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (1599), pp. 127-28.

this time there were fewer casualties, as it seems, and a large cargo of pepper, ivory and palm-oil was brought back to London.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the relative success of the second voyage, further attempts to trade with Benin were not made in the following decades. The fate of the trade in Benin pepper was sealed ten years after the return of the second voyage, with the establishment of the English East India Company, which brought England more coveted and profitable spices, such as nutmeg and black pepper. As for the rest of the 1590s, it can be assumed that the risks and costs involved in an undertaking such as the Benin pepper trade, demonstrated by the first voyage, were too much of a deterrent, and could not be compensated by the profitability of the Benin pepper trade. Meanwhile, the Senegambian trade, which offered lower profits, but also lower risks and less complications, managed to survive well into the seventeenth century, and enabled the English to establish themselves in West Africa.

### **7. The Adventurers' Demise and the Later Years of the Senegambian Trade (1591-1613)**

After two or three years of peaceful collaboration, conflicts between Dom Antonio and the English merchants arose. It seems that the seeds were sown not only by the conditions of the private contract made on 20 May 1588, but also by the events of the summer of 1589. On 10 July, Dom Antonio returned to England, after the failure of the Drake-Norris expedition to Iberia, which was meant to free Portugal from the Castilian yoke, install Dom Antonio as its king, and demolish the remnants of Philip's Atlantic fleet.<sup>105</sup> The debacle in Lisbon had a double effect on the Portuguese pretender's position in England. For Elizabeth, he was now less of a strategic asset and more of a burden: the unsuccessful English attempt to reinstall him as king of Portugal cost her a fortune, and the chances that she would support another such attempt in the future were slim.<sup>106</sup> In addition, Dom Antonio's debt increased – his debt to his English creditors amounted to £4,000 – as he was not able to pay back the loans that he took in order to finance his part in that expedition. Since the English West African trade was his only stable source of income, he

---

<sup>104</sup> James Welsh, 'The Second Voyage to Benin...', in *PN2*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 132.

<sup>105</sup> *CSPSS*, vol. 4 (1587-1603), ed. by Martin Hume (London: Kraus Reprint, 1971), p. 549; McBride, p. 205.

<sup>106</sup> McBride, pp. 206-07.

decided to use all his profits from this trade in order to pay his debts.<sup>107</sup> Thus, he became even more dependent on that trade, and on his collaboration with the adventurers. By that time, however, his status in England had substantially lessened: in February 1590, Diego Maldonado, another of Philip's informers, reported that the Portuguese pretender 'is very poor, old, and broken, and is living in lodgings taken by the month in the house of a Portuguese woman'. It is doubtful, therefore, if he could command any respect from his partners at that point.<sup>108</sup>

The Adventurers were quick to take advantage of Dom Antonio's weakened position. Some of them started to breach their contract with him as early as 1590, and in 1592 the Portuguese pretender took the matter to the High Court of Admiralty. The main defendants were Brayley (together with Doricot) and Dassell. Brayley was accused of preventing Dom Antonio's agent from taking an inventory of the goods brought from West Africa, for giving the customhouse a false statement of the amount of goods, and for beating another agent.<sup>109</sup> However, it was Dassell who seems to have taken the most advantage of Dom Antonio's vulnerability. According to the latter, Dassell did not pay him his dues from profits made in 1590 and 1591.<sup>110</sup> He also accused him of not carrying his agents in two voyages made in the latter year (the last of these voyages was the one recorded by Rainolds).<sup>111</sup> These accusations indicate that the Adventurers were finding that their collaboration with Dom Antonio and his agents has ceased to work for their advantage. This feeling is clearly expressed by Dassell who, in an answer to Dom Antonio's accusations, stated that,

since our trade thither we have great cause to complayne that we should be anie more tied to such unreasonable covenants, knowing that Guinea is free for all nations to come thither, and the kings of negroes geveth leave to englishmen and all nations elce to trade in ther kingdomes as the frenchmen have had trafficke upon that coaste above thirte yeares, and yet never paide nor paie duties to the kinge of portingalle...<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> *APC*, vol. 18 (1589-1590), ed. by John Roche Dasent (London: Her Majesty's stationary Office, 1899), pp. 264-65.

<sup>108</sup> *CSPSS*, vol. 4, p. 572.

<sup>109</sup> Blake, 'English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629', pp. 323-24.

<sup>110</sup> Nunes Costa, item 37, p. 766.

<sup>111</sup> *TNA*, HCA 24/59, f. 32.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, f. 30.



Dassell's dissatisfaction with the contract was evident not only by his words, but also by his actions, which indicate that he was trying to diminish his dependency on the Portuguese pretender and his men. As the registers of the HCA shows, Dassell's brother, Thomas, who served as his factor, brought with him two young Africans from his 1591-1592 voyage to the Petite Côte. Dom Antonio claimed that the Africans were 'sonnes to the chiefe justice of that contrey', and that Dassell's men brought them to England against their and their king's will.<sup>113</sup> According to the Portuguese pretender, this act was likely to harm the English trade with the Petite Côte and, thus, he demanded that the two be returned to their country.<sup>114</sup> Dassell refuted these accusations, and his cause was supported by Dr. Julius Caesar, the HCA judge, who said that, having examined the two young men, he found that 'they came hether by consent of their frends to see the countrey.'<sup>115</sup> Further support comes from Almada who, describing English activity on the Petite Côte in the early 1590s, wrote as follows:

And now that they [the residents of Portudal] have made friends with the English, some of them have been to England to learn the English language and to see the country, on the orders of the governor of the port of Ale, who is the officer in charge of the king's treasury.<sup>116</sup>

It may well be that Dassell was trying to train these two young men for the role of intermediaries in the Anglo-African trade, on the expense of the Portuguese, to Dom Antonio's great dissatisfaction.

Despite the disrespectful treatment which he and his men received from the Senegal Adventurers, Dom Antonio was still a man of some consequence in England of 1592, at least in respect to the West African trade. On 19 May, while his case was still being examined in the HCA, Elizabeth granted another charter for West African trade that involved the Portuguese pretender. It was granted to a group of six Taunton merchants and one London merchant led by Thomas Gregory and Thomas Pope. Most of them were members of the same group that petitioned for its inclusion in the 1588 charter. The group received a ten-year monopoly over trade in the region that lies between the 'Ryuer of

---

<sup>113</sup> Nunes Costa, item 40, p. 772.

<sup>114</sup> HCA 24/59, ff. 35-36, 51.

<sup>115</sup> Lansdowne MSS. Collection, Vol. 158, f. 69.

<sup>116</sup> Almada, ch. 2, p. 21.

Nunoe' (Nunez River, in the present-day Republic of Guinea) and the 'Ryuer called Magrabumbo' (River Madrabumba, later known as the River Sherbro in present-day Sierra Leone).<sup>117</sup>

As there is no record of the activity of the Taunton group in Sierra Leone, it is unclear if any use of this charter was made and, consequently, if the Portuguese pretender ever earned any money through his engagement with this trade. Nevertheless, that new partnership is another indication that Dom Antonio was losing patience with the Senegal Adventurers. The Adventurers themselves shared this feeling. On 20 August 1593, the eight merchants officially renounced the 1588 charter and gave up their privileges.<sup>118</sup> Dom Antonio left England six months later (February 1594), and moved to France, where he died in 1595.<sup>119</sup>

These events, however, did not spell the end of the English West African trade. To begin with, there is evidence that at least some members of the Senegal Adventurers still pursued the West African trade after 1593. In 1596, for instance, Doricot brought from Cap Vert a rich cargo of 16,000 hides and 400-500 pounds of gold, but his ship, which lost its way due to bad weather, ran aground near Pevensey and was looted by the local people.<sup>120</sup> Others, like Dassell, showed some keen interest in the more lucrative branches of trade. The second edition of Hakluyt's *PN* contains two letters which Dassell received in 1594 from Laurence Madoc, his factor in Morocco (Dassell, it should be remembered, was also a member of the Barbary Company). Dassell asked Madoc to describe to him the present state of the cities of 'Tombutu and Gago' (Timbuktu and Gao, in present-day Mali), in the wake of the Moroccan occupation of the Songhay Empire in 1591.<sup>121</sup> He was interested in the gold trade of the Niger River basin, and Madoc did not fail to satisfy his employer's appetite by describing the large amounts of gold that were brought into Morocco after

---

<sup>117</sup> *TNA*, Patent Rolls, C66/1384, mm.12-14 (m.12).

<sup>118</sup> Nunes Costa, item 48, pp. 793-95.

<sup>119</sup> McBride, pp. 207-08.

<sup>120</sup> *TNA*, HCA 13/32, f. 174v. The gold must have been taken as a prize from a Portuguese ship returning from Elmina, rather than acquired at the Petite Côte, since such large amounts were not available on the Senegambian market.

<sup>121</sup> J. O. Hunwick, 'Songhay, Borno, and Hausaland in the Sixteenth Century', in *History of West Africa*, vol. 1, ed. by J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (London: Longman, 1974), 264-301 (pp. 298-301).

1591.<sup>122</sup> These kind of descriptions played an important role in exposing the English, and especially the kingdom's merchant community, to the rich gold deposits of the West African interior, and ultimately in inciting them to reach them themselves (see Chapters Three and Four).<sup>123</sup>

West African gold may well be the motive behind the suggestion to renew the charter of 1588. A draft made in January 1598, four months before the charter of the Senegal Adventurer's officially expired, shows that the queen was willing to grant a new ten-year monopoly over the Senegambian trade to Charles Howard, the Earl of Nottingham and the Lord High Admiral, and to John Stanhope, the Treasurer of the Chamber.<sup>124</sup> According to the draft, the two courtiers were authorized to export all commodities brought to England from Senegambia, including gold and silver, and it is this arrangement that may explain why figures of the calibre of Howard and Stanhope were interested in what was otherwise a modest trade. In other words, they hoped that their engagement with that trade would grant them an access to the gold of the West African interior.

Whatever their hopes and wishes, there is no concrete evidence that Howard and Stanhope were actually granted a monopoly over the Senegambia trade. While most of the secondary sources take it for granted that these courtiers did receive that monopoly, the patent rolls of 1597-1598 and 1598-1599 do not contain any charter of that sort.<sup>125</sup> If

---

<sup>122</sup> *PN*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 192-93.

<sup>123</sup> Discussing the origin of the Guinea Company's Gambia Project, Richard Jobson claims that those who wish to know the source of the West African gold has to 'talke or discourse with any Marchant of this City of London, who have yearely trade and commerce in Barbary [...] and inquire of them whence the Moor of Barbary hath that rich gold'. See: Richard Jobson, *The Golden Trade* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1623), p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> For Charles Howard, see: James McDermott, 'Howard, Charles, second Baron Howard of Effingham and first earl of Nottingham (1536-1624)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13885>, accessed 28 Nov 2016];

For John Stanhope, see: Michael Hicks, 'Stanhope, John, first Baron Stanhope (c.1540-1621)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26249>, accessed 28 Nov 2016]

<sup>125</sup> See, for example: Hair & Law, 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', p. 246; Blake, 'English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629', p. 326. For the relevant patent rolls, see: *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 40 Elizabeth I (1597-98): C66/1477-1492*, ed. by Carrie L. Smith, List and Index Society, vol. 326-327 (Kew, Surrey: List and Index Society, 2009); *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 41 Elizabeth I (1598-99): C66/1493-1516*,

Howard and Stanhope were granted a monopoly, they must have issued licences to different merchants, as the trade after 1598 seems to be open for all. The scanty evidence that exists in regard of the post-1598 trade suggests that new players entered the scene. Members of the Aldworth family of Bristol (one of the prominent merchant families of that city) entered the trade around the year 1600 – thus maintaining the presence of prominent West Country merchants – along with a growing number of Londoners who made Cap Vert one of their regular destinations.<sup>126</sup> London merchants seem to have been the initiators of a triangular trade between England, Cap Vert and both the Western and Eastern Mediterranean, in which West African commodities were carried and traded in Livorno and the Levant.<sup>127</sup>

The most significant development in the two decades following 1593, however, was the establishment of English trade in the mouth of the Senegal River. This development might have started during the times of the Senegal Adventurers as Almada's description of English activity in the Senegal, written circa 1594, gives the impression that that trade has become well-established by that year.<sup>128</sup> This trade must have increased during the following years, as a Portuguese source written circa 1600 discusses the need to build a fort near the mouth of the river in order to put an end to English and French trade in the region.<sup>129</sup> It seems that English trade in that locality became very profitable during the first decade of the seventeenth century, as in April 1607 Robert Savage, a London merchant active in the Iberian trade, asked the Earl of Salisbury (Robert Cecil) to grant him 'with some others whom you shall think meet the privilege of trade to the river of Senega'.<sup>130</sup> Later events show that his request was declined.

---

ed. by Simon R. Neal and Christine Leighton, List and Index Society, vol. 328-329 (Kew, Surrey: List and Index Society, 2009).

<sup>126</sup> *Documents Illustrating the Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Jean Vanes, Bristol Record Society's Publications, vol. 31 (Kendal, Cumbria: Printed for the Bristol Record Society, 1979), p. 158; TNA, HCA 13/38, ff. 264r.-265r.

<sup>127</sup> Blake, pp. 326-27.

<sup>128</sup> Almada, ch. 2, p. 23.

<sup>129</sup> Jean Boulegue, 'Relacion du port du fleuve Senegal de Joao Barbosa, fait par Joao Baptista Lavanha (vers 1600), *Bulletin de l'institute fondamentale d'Afrique noire*, Serie B, vol. 29 (1967), 496-511 (p. 505).

<sup>130</sup> *Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury, vol. 19: 1607*, ed. by M. S. Giuseppi and D. McN. Lockie (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1965), pp. 98-99.

English trade in the mouth of the Senegal River took a revolutionary step during the first decade of the seventeenth century and once again, Londoners were the driving force behind it. Sometime during that decade, a consortium of London merchants led by the prominent merchant Humphrey Hanford (alderman of London in 1622-1625) and Christopher Lanman entered the Senegambian trade.<sup>131</sup> This was not a small matter, as Hanford was a merchant of the calibre of the members of the ‘quintet’ and the ‘associates’, if not of a greater one. His personal wealth was over £20,000, and it enabled him and his consortium to introduced two novel – and costly – practices into that trade.<sup>132</sup> The first was the establishment of a trading post near the mouth of the river, probably before 1610 (as in 1613 one of their factors referred to it as ‘their usuall house of trade’).<sup>133</sup> The second practice was sending factors far up the river for trading purposes: at least on one occasion, one of the consortium’s factors traded 150 miles upstream.<sup>134</sup> These practices are testimony of the degree to which the England’s West African trade had been established by the early 1610s.

## Conclusion

The English returned to West Africa in the early 1580s after a forced hiatus of a decade. In terms of England’s project of overseas expansion, a lot changed during those ten years. The English returned to the Mediterranean and began to pursue the lucrative Levant trade. They enhanced their engagement with the Caribbean and made new attempts to explore and colonize North America. Finally, Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe opened new opportunities in the Pacific and Indian oceans. Thus, much of the commercial energies that England invested in West Africa during the 1550s and 1560s were channelled into new arenas by the 1580s. The proposed voyage to the Cess River and São Tomé in 1582 exemplifies the changing times: conceived as a West African venture, its focus soon moved to the Moluccas; in the end, it sailed to Brazil and the Caribbean. It is clear that by

---

<sup>131</sup> Alfred P. Bevan, *The Alderman of the City of London Temp. Henry III – 1912* (London: Published by the Corporation of the City of London, 1908), p. 339.

<sup>132</sup> Lang, pp. 286-87.

<sup>133</sup> *TNA*, HCA 13/42, f. 242r. See also: Jean Barbot, *Barbot on Guinea*, vol. 1, ed. by P. E. H. Hair, Adam Jones and Robin Law, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 175 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1992), pp. 57-58.

<sup>134</sup> *TNA*, HCA 13/42, ff. 242v.

1582, English merchants could pursue a variety of overseas trades, most of them more profitable than the West African trade.

With much of England's commercial energy diverted elsewhere, the West African trade of the 1580s was open to smaller merchants. Thus, English activity in West Africa during the closing years of the sixteenth century was dominated by West Country merchants, rather than by Londoners; the fact that the first two monopolies in the history of the English West African trade were granted to groups of merchants from Devon and Somerset is an indication of that dominance. The more important of these two groups was the Devon one (the Senegal Adventurers) which, through its collaboration with Dom Antonio, established English trade with the Petite Côte. Though it is unclear which party initiated this collaboration, it seems that the involvement of the Portuguese pretender and his agents in the return of the English to the West African arena was crucial for its success. They provided guidance and, possibly (judging from the fate of the first Taunton voyage to the Petite Côte), also protection, until the Adventurers learned the ropes of the Senegambian trade.

While this trade was one of small scale and humble profits, it involved low risk and low expenses, especially in comparison to the Gold Coast's gold trade and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as well as the Benin trade. Thus, it was a trade that suited the financial and organizational capabilities of those West Country merchants, and it is this element that explains its survival into the seventeenth century. It was the entry of the wealthier London merchants around the year 1600 that took this trade into the next stage, first with establishing a triangular trade with the Mediterranean, and later with the erection of a trading post at the mouth of the Senegal and the subsequent probing into the interior. These crucial developments, however, would not have been achieved if the English did not secure themselves a foothold in Senegambia. This was the great contribution of the West Country merchants to the history of England's engagement with West Africa during the early modern era.

### **Chapter Three: Out of the Red: the Establishment of the Camwood Trade and its Unexpected Outcome, 1607-1618**

By 1610, English trade in West Africa was well established, though still restricted to the Petite Côte and the lower reaches of the Senegal River. The following decade, however, saw this situation rapidly changing, first with a development of regular trade in the Sierra Leone region around the middle of that decade, and then with attempts to reach the gold fields of the West African interior by sailing up the Gambia River. The latter enterprise was conducted by the Guinea Company, the first joint-stock company in the English West African trade, which was founded in 1618. Thus, in a matter of a few years, English activity in West Africa not only expanded into new territories, but was also reorganized in novel ways. This reorganization, which involved a monopolization of the West African trade, had significant consequences for English activity in the region during the next decades, as seen later in this work.

The story of the Guinea Company is discussed in Chapter Four. In this present chapter, the focus is on the years leading to the establishment of that company and, more particularly, on the development of the camwood trade in Sierra Leone. This is essentially a story of two London merchants, John Davies (d. 1627) and Humphrey Slaney, who started their engagement with the West African trade around 1610. Davies, who had been seeking for commercial opportunities south of Senegambia since 1607, had developed a profitable trade in camwood (a dyewood) in the Sierra Leone estuary by 1614. Slaney, attracted by the profits made by Davies, became his main competitor in the region, establishing a similar trade in the Sherbro River, seventy-five miles to the south. Their rivalry, it is argued here, played a crucial role in the establishment of the Guinea Company.

This argument is not new. John Blake made it back in 1946, claiming that Davies initiated the incorporation of that company in order to secure himself a monopoly over the camwood trade. He also suggested that Slaney's activity was the main threat for Davies' trade.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, two important questions regarding the circumstances leading to the Company's establishment remained unanswered, which are addressed here: first, why it

---

<sup>1</sup>John Blake, 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660', *Proceedings of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society*, III, 1 (1945/1946), 14-27 (pp. 17-20).

was established specifically in 1618? Second, why Davies, who was interested in the camwood trade, promoted the foundation of a company whose main object was to reach the gold-bearing regions of the West African interior – a risky and dubious enterprise in which, as evidence shows, he was not interested? A newly discovered document (C2/JasI/T13/G21),<sup>2</sup> which records a case examined in the Court of Chancery during 1622, and some additional evidence, enables a broader and more convincing explanation for the establishment of the Guinea Company. As this chapter shows, Slaney collaborated with the syndicate of Humphrey Hanford, which established itself at the mouth of the Senegal River during the first decade of the seventeenth century. In 1618, that group made an attempt of its own to reach the gold fields of the interior by sailing up the Senegal River. It is highly possible that Davies feared that Slaney and his partners, who were backed by the East India Company, would eventually petition the crown for a monopoly – a step that would have spelt the ruin of his camwood trade. Therefore, it is argued, he struck first with the foundation of the Guinea Company.

This chapter begins with an examination of the early stages of Davies' career, and his entry into the West African trade; 1607 was chosen as the starting point of the chapter since, based on Davies' own testimony, it was in that year that he began his engagement with the West African trade. It then discusses the establishment of the camwood trade, and the advantages of introducing that dyewood into the English market in the 1610s. The next section explores the history of Portuguese activity in the region from 1460 to 1610, in order to analyse the reasons that enabled Davies and his main rival, Slaney, to establish themselves in the region with relative ease. It then examines the circumstances that led to the establishment of the Guinea Company in 1618: the entry of Slaney into the West African trade, the development of rivalry between him and Davies, and the project in which the former was involved – the attempt to reach Timbuktu by sailing up the Senegal River during 1617-1618. As in the previous two chapters, this chapter ends with an examination of the profitability and the operation of the camwood trade.

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Bill of Complaint' and 'The Ioint and Severall Answers of Sr. Thomas Smythe, Sr. John Wolstonholme, Knights [...] deffendants unto the byll of complaynt of Edward Temple Complainant', *TNA*, C2/JasI/T13/G21.



## 1. The Sources

English activity in West Africa during the years 1607-1618 is not amply documented. This paucity of documentation emanated from the fact that English trade during that period was carried out by individual merchants or by small partnerships, rather than chartered companies. Moreover, the vast majority of the merchants involved in the trade did not belong to the elite of England's mercantile community. This situation meant that interaction between the merchants and the crown was highly limited and, as a result, left very few traces in the State Papers. In addition, individual merchants were less prone to record their own activity and publish narratives of their voyages, as opposed to commercial organizations.

With a lack of travel narratives, the main sources of information for the years 1607-1618 are the port books, the records of the HCA, and the records of the Court of Chancery. The latter are particularly valuable in shedding light on Davies' career, as well as for the early days of the Guinea Company. One of these records, C2/JasI/T13/G21, provides the missing link in the history of the rivalry between Davies and Slaney and, as mentioned above, shows how that rivalry helped to shape the history of English activity in West Africa.

## 2. John Davies' Early Career: a Wartime Privateer

In the discussion of the history of English trade with West Africa in the seventeenth century, the activities of Davies in the first quarter of that century are often used as a point of departure.<sup>3</sup> This is because Davies, according to his own testimony, was associated with the West African trade as early as 1607. However, it is not only a matter of chronology. The pioneering nature of his activities and their impact on the course of the history of England's engagement with West Africa also makes Davies an important figure in this history.

---

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: John W. Blake, 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660'; P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, 'The English in Western Africa to 1700', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 1, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 241-63 (pp. 251-52); K. R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 113.

Despite Davies' pivotal role in the establishment of the English West African trade, his life and career have not been studied closely. The best secondary sources on Davies' West African career remain John Blake's three important articles on the early history of the Guinea Company, written in the 1940s.<sup>4</sup> Though Davies figures prominently in them, these articles discuss subjects that are wider in scope than his career. In addition, as these are three separate articles, most of the information they provide on Davies overlaps. Moreover, Blake does not fully explain Davies' motives in entering the West African trade, or the historical context in which the London merchant was working. This section, therefore, addresses these issues, as well as bringing together for the first time different pieces of information relating to Davies' West African career.

Davies' history is quite obscure, however. The date and place of his birth are unknown, as is most of his mercantile activity before the first decade of the seventeenth century. It is mainly his West African activity, which came to an end with his death in January 1627, which left some traces in the archives.<sup>5</sup> It is known that he was a member of the Haberdashers' Company, and that he lived – at least during the seventeenth century – and died in London, where he resided at or near the Stocks Market (now the site of the Lord Mayor's Mansion House) in the neighbourhood of St. Mary Woolchurch Haw. It is this association with that church, first made by Roslyn Knutson in 1991, which enables historians to trace his life and career from the 1580s onwards.<sup>6</sup>

Davies was probably born in Worcestershire to a yeoman family. This assumption is based on two pieces of evidence. First, in his deposition in the HCA court, made on 12 September 1626, he mentions a certain Humphrey Davies, whom he describes as his

---

<sup>4</sup> See: John W. Blake, 'English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629', *Quarto Congresso do Mundo Portugues*, VI, 1 (1940), pp. 313-35; 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660'; 'The Farm of the Guinea Trade in 1631', *Essays in British and Irish History in Honour of James Eadie Todd*, ed by T. W. Moody et al., (London: F. Muller, 1949), pp. 86-106; Out the three, 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660' offers the most comprehensive discussion of Davies' career.

<sup>5</sup> *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Woolchurch Haw, in the City of London, From their Commencement 1538 to 1760*, ed. by J. M. S. Brooke & A. W. C. Hallen (London: Bowles and Sons, 1886), p. 392.

<sup>6</sup> Roslyn L. Knutson, 'A Caliban in St. Mildred Poultry', in *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions*, ed. by Tetsuo Kishi et al. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 110-26.

kinsman.<sup>7</sup> The registers of the Haberdashers' Company show that Humphrey Davies was an apprentice of John Davies (his seven-year bondage started in September 1620), and that his father was William Davies, a yeoman from Bewdley, Worcestershire.<sup>8</sup> While this is only an assumption, the course of Davies' career suggests that he was a man of humble beginnings. As a freeman, he was not rich enough to marry into one of London's influential families. Though he became a rich man later in his life, he never belonged to the elite of London's mercantile community, becoming a prominent member of his livery company only towards the end of his life.<sup>9</sup>

The early stages of Davies' career are less obscure, since the registers of the Haberdashers' Company enable historians to trace the professional progress of its members. The prevalence of his name in the registers, as well as the fact that his year of birth is unknown, make it difficult to determine which 'John Davies' is the one in question; it is nevertheless possible to identify him with a high degree of confidence. Knutson's work, and the will of the haberdasher John Best, who was most probably his master, make this identification possible, since both associate Davies with the church of St. Mary Woolchurch Haw.

A series of events taking place between 10 February and 2 March 1584 helps to connect Best and Davies to each other, as well as to St. Mary Woolchurch Haw. The first event is the making of Best's will, in which the dying 'citizen and London haberdasher', who probably knew that he was nearing the end of his life ('being at this present sicke and deseased in bodye'), asked to be buried in St. Mary Woolchurch Haw. Among his beneficiaries was his servant 'John Davys' who, like Best's two unmarried daughters, Alice and Mary, received a black mourning gown.<sup>10</sup> The fact that Davies is mentioned with the family suggests that he was not a servant, but an apprentice. This point seems to be

---

<sup>7</sup> 'The Deposition of John Davies' (12 September 1626), *TNA*, HCA 13/106, f. 196r.

<sup>8</sup> 'Worshipful Company of Haberdashers – Register of Apprentice Binding, 1610-1630' (MS 15860), *Guildhall Library (GHL)*, f. 154; this entry provides identification of the John Davies in question, as it reads: 'Humfridus Davies, filius Willi: Davies de Bewdley in com: Wigorn: [i.e., Worcestershire] yoman defunct poss: Johi Davies, haberdasher et de societate mercator: Gynney et Bynney per 7 annos a die dat'.

<sup>9</sup> Davies served as a warden in 1612 and as a master in 1623. See: Ian W. Archer, *The History of the Haberdashers' Company* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore, 1991), pp. 238-39.

<sup>10</sup> 'The Will of John Best, Haberdasher of London', *TNA*, PROB 11/66/397.

verified by the register of the Haberdashers' Company, which records that 'John Davies' gained his freedom from the Haberdasher's Company in 21 February 1584, where he served as an apprentice to one John Best.<sup>11</sup> The John Best who made his will on 10 February died on 24 February, and was buried in St. Mary Woolchurch Haw on the same day.<sup>12</sup> A week later, on 2 March, a John Davies and a Mary Best got married at the same church.<sup>13</sup> While the names 'John Davies', 'John Best' and 'Mary Best' were common, the series of events described above leaves little doubt concerning the couple's identity. This allows the estimation that Davies was born sometime between 1555 and 1560, as apprentices usually became freemen in their mid or late-twenties.

John and Mary's marriage was short-lived, as Mary died on 18 June 1586.<sup>14</sup> According to Percival Boyd's *Index of the Inhabitants of London*, the couple had a daughter named Elizabeth, although the register of St. Mary Woolchurch Haw does not mention a baptism of an Elizabeth Davies in the mid-1580s.<sup>15</sup> Davies soon remarried: on 18 May 1587 he and Margaret Fynn, daughter of a fishmonger named Edmond Fynn, received a marriage licence from the Bishop of London.<sup>16</sup> It does not seem that John and Margaret had children, and this impression is strengthened by the deposition of Davies' long-time business associate, the mercer Isaac Kilburne, who claimed in 1622 that his partner had no children.<sup>17</sup>

Kilburne also lived near St. Mary Woolchurch Haw, and it was probably in the vicinity of the church that the two first met.<sup>18</sup> According to Davies, the men had been

---

<sup>11</sup> 'Worshipful Company of Haberdashers – Register of Freedom Admissions, 1526-1613' (MS 15857), *GHL*, f. 122.

<sup>12</sup> *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes*, p. 376.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>14</sup> See note 12.

<sup>15</sup> Available on *findmypast*:

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbor%2fbil%2fsog29%2f0241&parentid=gbprs%2fbil%2f00163809> [accessed 13.6.2017]

<sup>16</sup> *Allegations for Marriage Licences Issued by the Bishop of London: 1520-1610*, vol. 1, ed. by George J. Armitage, The Publications of the Harleian Society, vol. 25 (London: Harleian Society, 1887), p. 160.

<sup>17</sup> *TNA*, C2/JasI/D10/61.

<sup>18</sup> *findmypast*:

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbor%2fbil%2fsog12%2f0661&parentid=gbprs%2fbil%2f00013509&highlights=%22%22> [accessed 13.6.2017];

acquainted since the early 1590s, though nothing is known of their collaboration during that decade. Davies himself emerges as a ship owner and a promoter of privateering voyages towards the end of the 1590s. He was one of several London merchants who managed the privateering activity of Southampton during the Sea War with Spain (1585-1604).<sup>19</sup> According to K. R. Andrews, Davies was successful in his privateering ventures.<sup>20</sup> This claim is supported by the port books of Southampton, which show that his ships were very active at the turn of the century. His *Ferret* brought two prize ships into the port of Southampton in 1596, and claimed a share in the prize of the *Darling* of Portsmouth in 1598.<sup>21</sup> His main ship, the 200-tonne *Margaret & John*, brought six prize ships into that port during the years 1598-1603.<sup>22</sup> He may have also been the owner of the *Castell*, which brought in two prize ships in 1597.<sup>23</sup>

Davies' privateering activity made him a rich man by the late 1590s. His wealth was not acknowledged yet by his livery company, but there is evidence that he was considered an important man in his parish. The registers of St. Mary Woolchurch Haw show that he served as its churchwarden in 1597-1599.<sup>24</sup> These registers also record the burial of 'a blakmor, belonging to Mr. John Davies' who died in Whitechapel parish in April 1597.<sup>25</sup> As Knutson and Imtiaz Habib have argued, it is impossible to prove beyond doubt that the owner of that nameless African is the John Davies in question, but it is

---

Kilburne baptised and buried his children at St. Mary Woolchurch. Some of them also married in there. For instances of such events, see: *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes*, p. 309 (the baptism of John Kilburne in 1591, and of Elizabeth Kilburne in 1593); p. 349 (marriage of Elizabeth Kilburne in 1610); p. 381 (burials of Jone [June?] and Isaac in 1599).

<sup>19</sup> K. R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Spanish War, 1585-1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 148.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>21</sup> *The Book of Examinations, 1601-1602, with a List of Ships belonging to Southampton in the Years 1570-1603*, ed. by R. C. Anderson (Southampton: Cox & Sharland, 1926), p. 67; Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, p. 266.

<sup>22</sup> *Book of Examinations, 1601-1602*, p. 71.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>24</sup> *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes*, pp. lix, 297; Davies assumed another public office, albeit an ad-hoc one, in September 1609, when he was appointed, together with two other individuals, to inspect the state of the great conduit in Cheapside, and see what repairs it needed. See: Sydney Perks, *The History of the Mansion House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380.

likely.<sup>26</sup> The possibility that John Davies owned an African slave during the late 1590s does not necessarily imply that he was involved with the West African trade at that time. It is more probable that the African man was either bought in England or came into Davies' possession as a consequence of his privateering activity. Nevertheless, the possession of an African slave, if it indeed occurred, may serve as another indication for Davies' eminence in the late 1590s.

When the sea war ended in 1604 Davies, as many of his colleagues, had to give up privateering for peaceful trade. In 1605 he joined the Spanish Company, and was elected to its committee.<sup>27</sup> But the company's activities were brought to an end in January 1606, when it was not granted a monopoly over the Iberian trade.<sup>28</sup> Evidence suggests that it was not long after, in 1607, that Davies began his involvement with the West African trade. It seems no coincidence that Davies' entry into that trade occurred relatively shortly after the demise of the Spanish Company. It is quite possible that this event triggered him to look for new commercial opportunities, and this time in a less competitive market. West Africa was one such place. Though the Petite Côte was quite a busy region in commercial terms, there was an opportunity to break new ground further south. As it turned out, what Davies was after was indeed found south of Senegambia in Sierra Leone.

---

<sup>26</sup> Knutson, 'A Caliban in St. Mildred Poultry', p. 115; Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 93-94.

<sup>27</sup> *The Spanish Company*, ed. by Pauline Croft, Publications of the London Society, vol. 9 (London: London Record Society, 1973), p. 51.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xlvi.

### 3. John Davies and the West African Trade: Peace-Time Pioneer

The assumption that Davies began his involvement with the West African trade in 1607 is based on a letter that the Privy Council sent to the wardens of the Dyers Company in November 1614. Five months earlier, Davies submitted a petition to James I in an attempt to secure himself a monopoly of twenty-one years over his newly-established trade in camwood.<sup>29</sup> The Privy Council, which dealt with such petitions, had to notify the Dyers Company of Davies' request, as its members were the ones to be affected most by a monopoly of this kind. The letter of Privy Council reads:

You shall understand that John Davis, of London, marchant, hath exhibited a petition to his Majestie, wherein he sheweth that haveing, for the space of these seven yeares past and upwards, endeavored to finde out a trade of woode fitt for dying, which groweth upon the coast of Affrica between Gynny and Binny, and now at length hath found out a kinde of woode which upon tryall doth proves to be a woode excellent for dying, and farr exceeding many other sortes of dying woode brought into this realme, aswell [sic] for perfectness of coulour as for lasting and continuance of the same.<sup>30</sup>

While Davies' contention that he entered the West African trade in 1607 may be true, his claim that his involvement with that trade in the years from 1607 to 1614 was wholly dedicated to the search of a marketable dyewood on the coast of West Africa should not be taken at face value. The earliest pieces of evidence associating Davies with the West African trade actually indicate that he attempted to participate in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In April 1609 he received from Charles Howard, the Lord High Admiral, a safe conduct for his ship, the *Resistance*, bound to 'Guinia et Binnia et Brasille' – that is, to West Africa and Brazil – 'for the sake of exercising trade, and not otherwise' ('mercimonii exercendi gratia et non aliter').<sup>31</sup> While the safe conduct does not specify what kind of trade is to be exercised, the chances that a voyage from West Africa to Brazil made in the early seventeenth century did not involve a trade in slaves are slim: at that time, Brazil was the centre of the Atlantic sugar industry and, consequently, African slaves

---

<sup>29</sup> *Heard before the King: Registers of Petitions to James I, 1603-1616*, pt. 2, ed. by R. W. Hoyle, List and Index Society, Special Series, 39 (Kew, Surrey: List and Index Society, 2006), p. 230.

<sup>30</sup> 'A letter to the Wardens of the Diers', in *Acts of the Privy Council of England (APC)*, vol. 33 (1613-1614), ed. by E.G. Atkinson (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1921), p. 633.

<sup>31</sup> *TNA*, HCA 14/39, no. 85.

were in high demand.<sup>32</sup> It is hard to believe that Davies would have sent his ship on a risky voyage – otherwise, a safe conduct would not have been needed – if he had not thought that it could pay off, meaning trading slaves for Brazilian sugar. The need for a safe conduct probably arose from the fact that the Spanish Atlantic world, also encompassing Brazil in the years 1580-1640, was still an unsafe territory for the English in 1609. As the voyage of the *Resistance* occurred shortly before or after the signing of the Treaty of Antwerp, which brought Hispano-Dutch hostilities to a temporary end, there may have been uncertainty with regard to the terms of the treaty and its execution.<sup>33</sup> While the signing of the Treaty of London in 1604 stopped English privateering in the Spanish Atlantic, attacks on Spanish shipping were still carried out by the Dutch, who were also trying to trade with the natives on the Spanish Main – a practice which was considered as interloping by the Spanish. As the Spanish were convinced that the English were helping the Dutch in these activities, English crews caught in the Spanish Atlantic after 1604 were handed to the inquisition.<sup>34</sup> Based on the experience of the English in the Spanish Atlantic during the years 1604-1609, Davies had certainly a reason to fear Spanish hostility.

While it is not known whether the *Resistance* ever set sail, the following years provide more concrete evidence that Davies' early years in the West African trade saw him participate in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In the spring of 1611 his ship, the *Abigail*, bound to West Africa, was seized by two Dutch men-of-war off the coast of Morocco. Its cargo was plundered, and some of its crew members were taken hostages. Looking for compensation for his plundered merchandise, Davies filed a complaint in the High Court of Admiralty. The depositions which were given in the course of the legal procedure that ensued – starting in the summer of 1611 and continuing into 1612 – provide a clear indication that the *Abigail* was on a slaving voyage.

---

<sup>32</sup> Stuart B. Schwartz, 'A Commonwealth within Itself: The Early Brazilian Sugar Industry, 1550-1670' in, *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680*, ed. by Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 163-200 (pp. 187-88).

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 86-87.

<sup>34</sup> Violet Barbour, 'Privateers and Pirates of the West Indies', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1911), 529-66 (p. 535).



The deposition of William Mills (given in September 1611), the master of the *Abigail*, reveals the kind of cargo that was carried in the ship. Along the usual European articles of the West African trade – ‘clothe, iron and kettles’ in this case - Mills also mentions ‘manicles’ (manacles).<sup>35</sup> These items indicate that Davies, at least in that specific voyage, was engaged with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Another indication for the voyage’s object is found in the deposition of Edmund Towers (given on June 1612), Davies’ apprentice, who told the HCA that the *Abigail* was bound ‘for Guiny and the West Indies’.<sup>36</sup> The fact that the destination of the *Abigail* was the West Indies, rather than Brazil, may suggest that the voyage of 1609, if it indeed took place, proved unsuccessful.

These depositions, however, reveal an even more interesting detail about the way in which Davies organised his West African trade at that time. Towers’ deposition shows that he served as Davies’ factor in West Africa prior to the attack of the *Abigail*. He was conducting his master’s trade there, giving him ‘advise to lade and send him [Towers] ... such goodes being best vendibles there [in West Africa]’.<sup>37</sup> Another apprentice, Thomas Glasier (bound for seven years in May 1608),<sup>38</sup> who gave his deposition immediately after Towers, served as Davies’ ‘factor’ in London, buying the goods which Towers asked to be sent to him, and lading them on the *Abigail*.<sup>39</sup> Davies may have been the first English merchant to maintain a factor in West Africa (Towers was certainly there during 1610), though the Hanford-Lanman syndicate, which had a factory in the mouth of the Senegal River in the early 1610s, seems to have set the precedent. Nevertheless, maintaining a factor in the region was certainly a novelty in the context of England’s West African trade, and the fact that Davies had one as early as (at least) 1610 serves as an indication that he was pursuing that trade in earnest from the beginning.

While the depositions of the *Abigail* case do not reveal where Towers was stationed in West Africa, this detail can be inferred from another source. As Knutson discovered in 1991, the registers of the St. Mildred Poultry church, just across the street from St. Mary Woolchurch Haw and Stocks Market, record the baptism of a young African man named

---

<sup>35</sup> ‘The Deposition of William Mills’ (30 September 1611), *TNA*, HCA 1/47, f. 235r.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 291v.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> ‘Worshipful Company of Haberdashers – Register of Apprentice Binding, 1602-1611’ (MS 15860), *GHL*, f. 137.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 291r.-292v.

Dederi Iaquoah, who was under the custody of Davies, in January 1611. The entry in the register reads:

**Dederj Iaquoah** about the age of 20 yeares, the sonne of **Caddi-biah** king of the river of Cestras or Cestus in the countrey of Guinny, who was sent out of his cuntrey by his father in an English Shipp called the Abigail of London, belonging to Mr Iohn Davies of this parish, to be baptised. At the request of the said Mr Davies, and at the desire of the said Dedery, and by allowance of authority was by ye parson of this church the first of January, baptised and named **Iohn**. His sureties were Iohn Davies, haberdasher [,] Isaac Kilburne Mercer, Robert Singleton Churchwarden, Edmund Towers [,] Paul Gurgyeny and Rebecca Hutchens. He shewed his opinion concerning Iesus Christ and his faith in him; he repeated the Lords prayer in English at ye font, and so was baptised and signed with the signe of the Cross.<sup>40</sup>

This entry is most revealing. To begin with, it shows that the first West African destination in which Davies concentrated his commercial efforts was the Cess River, not Sierra Leone. In addition, it shows the length to which Davies was willing to go in order to establish his trade in that locality: bringing to England the son of a local king in order to train him as a middleman in his trade with his region, as Knutson suggests.<sup>41</sup> The fact that Iaquoah was able to express in English ‘his opinion concerning Iesus Christ and his faith in him’ and to repeat the Lord’s Prayer in English shows that he had been living in England for quite some time by the time of his baptism. As evidence shows, he spent about two years in the city. In the summer of 1614, a voyage of the East India Company (EIC) called at the Cess River on its way to the Far East. The crew members met there ‘an Indian [sic] which spoke very good English and had formerly been in England with Mr. Davis at the stocks and is known by the name of John Davis, being as we perceived the king’s son of that place’.<sup>42</sup> Though referring to him as an ‘Indian’ – a term denoting his skin colour, and not his place of origin<sup>43</sup> – it is clear that the man whom the EIC men met in the Cess River was the same Dederi Iaquoah who was baptised and christened on 1 January 1611. The fact that Davies was willing to bear the expenses of maintaining Iaquoah in London for two

---

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in: Knutson, ‘A Caliban in St. Mildred Poultry’, p. 111.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Edward Blitheman to Sir Thomas Smith’, in *Letters Received by the East India Company from Its Servants in The East*, vol. 2 (1613-1615), ed. by William Foster (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1897), 328-33 (p. 329).

<sup>43</sup> Habib, *Black Lives*, p. 239.

years provides another indication that Davies was earnest in his pursuit of the West African trade in general and the trade of the Cess River in particular.<sup>44</sup>

Bringing Africans, especially sons of local rulers, to England in order to train them as middlemen in the Anglo-African trade was not a new practice, of course. It was pursued as early as 1555 when, during the second West African voyage (1554-1555), four inhabitants of the Gold Coast were taken, possibly against their will, to England; some of them later served as interpreters in the 1556-1557 voyage.<sup>45</sup> As shown in Chapter Two, the Dassel brothers brought two young men from the Petite Côte in 1592. The case of Dederi Iaquoah, is the third known instance in which that practice was pursued. What is more interesting, however, is that Iaquoah was not the only African baptised in London in 1611. On 3 February, ‘Walter Anberey, the sonne of Nosser Anberey, borne in the kingdom of Dungala in Africa’ was baptised in All Hallows Church in Tottenham.<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, the entry does not mention who brought Anberey to England. Nevertheless, it is clear that he was seriously engaged with West African trade, as Anberey, a son of a local African ruler, like Iaquoah, was brought to England for diplomatic and training purposes. Two things are striking about Anberey’s baptism: first, the fact that he lived in Tottenham, far from the City of London (about seven miles), the hub of England’s mercantile community; second, his place of origin. Onyeka locates the kingdom of Dungala (Dungal) in the Oio region of present-day Guinea Bissau.<sup>47</sup> This identification is indirectly supported by Brooks, who mentions that ‘the land on the north bank of the Geba River above the confluence of the Corubal River’ was called by its local inhabitants ‘Degola’ or ‘Degoula’ – names which closely resemble ‘Dungala’.<sup>48</sup> It seems that Davies was not alone in his efforts to develop new commercial interest south of the Petite Côte.

---

<sup>44</sup> For an extended discussion of Iaquoah’s story, see: Miranda Kaufmann, *Black Tudors: the Untold Story* (London: Oneworld, 2017), pp. 169-95.

<sup>45</sup> *PN2*, vol. 2, pt.2, pp. 23 (voyage of 1554-1555), 39 (voyage of 1556-1557).

<sup>46</sup> Quoted from: Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 337.

<sup>47</sup> Onyeka, *Blackamoors: Africans in Tudor England, their Presence, Status and Origins* (London [?]: Narrative Eye, 2013), p. 178.

<sup>48</sup> George Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 40-41.

Davies' focus on the Cess River region is noteworthy, though, considering his interest in slaves and dyewood since that region was not known as a centre of slave trading until the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>49</sup> According to Duarte Pacheco Pereira, the Portuguese used to buy slaves a few kilometres south of the Cess River, but at the time of his writing (the first decade of the sixteenth century), this trade had already been abandoned.<sup>50</sup> During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Malagueta pepper and ivory were the main commodities bought there by Europeans. The EIC men who met Dederi Iaquoa in 1614 in the Cess River reported that 'the commodity that it [the region] affords is chiefly elephants' teeth and grain [malagueta pepper]',<sup>51</sup> and this statement was still true some 65 years later, when the Huguenot slave trader Jean Barbot visited the region.<sup>52</sup> Neither sources mention slaves or dyewood, though the latter could be found in present-day Liberia,<sup>53</sup> and was traded there during the nineteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

The entry in the registers of St. Mildred Poultry is the only evidence for Davies' activity in the Cess River. Moreover, the fact that he established a trade in camwood in Sierra Leone by 1614 may well suggest the he forsook the Cess River trade not long after the baptism of Dederi. What made him to give up that trade after pursuing it in such earnest? The *Abigail* incident seems to provide a possible answer to this question. According to the deposition of Captain William Mills, six men were taken hostages by Dutch pirates, and among them 'a youth called Iohn'.<sup>55</sup> There are two reasons to believe that this John was no other than Dederi 'John Davies' Iaquoah. First, in his deposition, Mills names all the hostages taken from his ship. As he was, most probably, the one who recruited those men, he was able to provide the HCA with their full names, their

---

<sup>49</sup> Marion Johnson and Adam Jones, 'Slaves from the Windward Coast', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 21 (1980), 17-34 (pp. 17-18).

<sup>50</sup> Pereira, Duarte Pacheco, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* (1505-1508), trans. by George H. T. Kimble, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 79 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1937), p. 110.

<sup>51</sup> See note 41.

<sup>52</sup> Jean Barbot, 'Letter 29', *Barbot on Guinea*, vol. 1, ed. by P. E. H. Hair, Adam Jones and Robin Law, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 175 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1992), p. 275.

<sup>53</sup> Michael O. Soladoye, 'A Revision of Baphia (Leguminosae-Papilionoideae)', *Kew Bulletin*, vol. 40 (1985), 291-386 (pp. 352-55).

<sup>54</sup> An American observer mentioned in 1858 that the St. John River region, about 45 miles northwest of the Cess River, had an abundance of camwood. See: Rev. Alexander M. Cowan, *Liberia, As I Found It, in 1858* (Frankfort, KY: A. G. Hodges, 1858), p. 145.

<sup>55</sup> See note 35.

occupations (cook, surgeon, boatswain etc.), and their places of residence. The fact that Mills did not give these details in regard of John suggests that he did not know him well, and that the latter was not part of the crew. Second, it is likely that Dederi's baptism occurred towards the end of his stay in London, since he is reported to have a good command over English by that time. Thus, it seems probable that he was sent back to his homeland three months later, when his language skills meant that he was ready to start performing the role of a middleman.

If Dederi was indeed on board of the *Abigail*, and was taken hostage, then his captivity by the Dutch was a serious blow to Davies' efforts to establish trade relations with the kingdom of Caddi-biah. While Dederi eventually returned to his homeland, as the letter of the EIC agents shows, it is unclear when exactly this occurred. Judging from the experience of Lewis Davye, another, seventh hostage unmentioned by Mills' deposition, who made it back to England only in April 1612, returning home could be a long process.<sup>56</sup> As long as Dederi was not back in his homeland, trade between Davies and Caddi-biah could not be pursued effectively – not only because of the lack of a middleman, but also due to a possible reluctance on the king's part to trade with Davies, who was responsible for Dederi's wellbeing. It may well be that the uncertainty about the young African's fate following the *Abigail* incident made Davies to look for new commercial opportunities elsewhere in West Africa. Therefore, Davies' endeavours 'to finde out a trade of woode fitt for dying, which groweth upon the coast of Affrica between Gynny and Binny' did not occur between 1607 and 1614, as the letter of the Privy Council states, but between 1611 or 1612 and 1614.

#### 4. The Camwood Trade

The dyewood that Davies eventually found in the river of Sierra Leone was camwood (*Baphia Nitida*), a small tree that grows along that section of the West African coast (and its hinterland) which runs from Senegal to Gabon. It was commonly known as 'redwood' for the reddish dye extracted from its heartwood, which was used in the dyeing of wool, cotton, and silk.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> 'The Deposition of Lewes Davy' (24 April 1612), *TNA*, HCA 1/47, ff. 279r-280v.

<sup>57</sup> See note 53.

At the time of its introduction to the English market, the main sources of reddish hues (red, crimson, violet) were brazilwood, kermes, and cochineal. The first is an umbrella term for several species of dye-producing plants (trees and shrubs) found in tropical Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, and South America. Medieval Europe was familiar with the South Asian species of brazilwood, obtained in the Near East by the Venetians.<sup>58</sup> The Venetian monopoly over that commodity was challenged by the Portuguese ‘discovery’ of Brazil in 1500, which introduced the South American species (*Caesalpinia echinata*) into Europe. The Portuguese, who named the newly-discovered land after that plant (the name ‘Brazil’ itself has its roots in Arabic),<sup>59</sup> monopolized the trade in *Caesalpinia echinata*, established as early as 1502.<sup>60</sup> Kermes and cochineal were both insect dyes (produced from *Coccus Ilicis* and *Dactylopius Coccus*, respectively). The first was found in the Mediterranean basin, and was used by European dyers before the ‘discovery’ of the New World. The second, found only in Mexico, was introduced into Europe in the sixteenth century (and into England in the 1560s), but it soon overshadowed kermes, due to its superior dyeing properties.<sup>61</sup> Like brazilwood, the trade in cochineal also became a monopoly, in this case a Spanish one.<sup>62</sup> After the 1580 Union of the Crowns, both trades became a Spanish monopoly that made these dyestuffs, along with their market value, attractive for English sea raiders during the sea war.<sup>63</sup>

In order to successfully compete with brazilwood and cochineal in the English market, camwood had to prove to have properties that match, or are superior to, the properties of these dyestuffs. As it appears, Davies’ claim (according to the Privy Council)

---

<sup>58</sup> William F. Leggett, *Ancient and Medieval Dyes* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Chemical Publishing, 1944), pp. 49-51.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>60</sup> Malyn Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion, 1400-1668* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 87.

<sup>61</sup> Raymond L. Lee, ‘American Cochineal in European Commerce, 1526-1625’, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1951), 205-24 (pp. 205-06); Eric Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 167.

<sup>62</sup> Lee, p. 206.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212-14; Cochineal was one of the more expensive red dyes. See: Susan Fairlie, ‘Dyestuffs in the Eighteenth Century’, *The Economic History Review, New Series*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1965), 488-510 (p. 492). Dyestuffs figure prominently in Andrews’ list of prizes taken by English privateers during the years from 1589 to 1591. See: Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, pp. 243-73.

that camwood is a ‘woode excellent for dying, and farr exceeding many other sortes of dying woode brought into this realme, aswell [sic] for perfectness of coulour as for lasting and continuance of the same’ was not without justification. Jean Barbot, who visited Sierra Leone in 1678, corroborated Davies’ assertion, stating that, ‘the Cam-wood is a much better sort of red wood, for dyer’s use, than the *Brazil*, and accounted the best in all *Guinea*’.<sup>64</sup> European dyers in general and English dyers in particular, were of the same opinion, holding camwood in high regard for its colouring power. For this reason, it remained in use well into the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup>

The abstract of Davies’ petition, written by the royal clerks who handled the task of processing the petitions submitted to the Crown, states that he ‘found out a certen kind of woode... which no other hath found before’.<sup>66</sup> While this claim is not completely true, it is not completely false either, as camwood seems to have been relatively unknown at the time in Europe, let alone in England. Though J. R. McCulloch states in his *Dictionary of Commerce* (1832) that it was ‘first brought to Europe from Africa by the Portuguese’,<sup>67</sup> it is not mentioned in the early Portuguese accounts of Sierra Leone.<sup>68</sup> It is not mentioned either in the travel narratives of the few Englishmen who visited Sierra Leone during the sixteenth century.<sup>69</sup> The first references to the prevalence of camwood in Sierra Leone seem to be made in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In his discussion of the region of Sierra Leone in his *Brief Treatise of the Rivers of Guinea*, written circa 1595, the Cape Verdean merchant Andre Alvarez de Almada mentions that,

---

<sup>64</sup> *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. v, pub. by John and Awnsham Churchill (London, 1732), p. 107.

<sup>65</sup> *Plant Resources of Tropical Africa 3: Dyes and Tannins*, ed. by D. Cardon (Wageningen: PROTA Foundation, 2005), p. 34.

<sup>66</sup> *Heard before the King*, p. 230.

<sup>67</sup> J. R. McCulloch, *A Dictionary, Practical, Theoretical, and Historical of Commerce and Commercial Navigation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Longman & Co., 1835), p. 216.

<sup>68</sup> See, for instance, the description of the trade between the local inhabitants and the Portuguese in Duarte Pacheco Pereira’s *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* (1505-1508); Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* (1505-1508), pp. 93-107.

<sup>69</sup> There are two main sixteenth-century English travel narratives that describe Sierra Leone at some length. These are the narratives of John Sparke, who accompanied John Hawkins on his second slaving voyage in 1564-1565, and of Luke Ward, Edward Fenton’s second in command, who visited the region in 1582. For Sparke’s account of the West African coast, including Sierra Leone, see: *PN2*, vol. 3, pp. 503-07; For Ward’s account of Sierra Leone, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 757-60.

In these districts there is Brazil wood, called camo, from which dyes are made; and they [inhabitants of the lands along the Sierra Leone River] say that the dye is so potent that it can be used seven times and the last application is still a strong colour. This tree is found in the River of Bagrabomba [Sherbro River].<sup>70</sup>

Despite the suggestion that camwood has commercial potential, Almada does not indicate that it was commercially exploited by any European nation at the time. An indirect call for such exploitation can be found in the letter of the Portuguese merchant Bartholomeu André, to Felipe III, written in 1606. André, who traded regularly on the Sierra Leone River during the first decade of the seventeenth century, describes in the letter the commercial opportunities available in the region, and informs his monarch that along the coasts there are ‘much redwood for dye’ (‘muito pau vermelho de tinta’).<sup>71</sup> It is doubtful if such a call could have persuaded Felipe III to establish a trade in camwood, as he had very little incentive to do so. The Portuguese Crown (and from 1580, the Spanish/Portuguese Crown) enjoyed a monopoly over the trade of brazilwood since 1515 and had little interest in reducing its prices by introducing a rival commodity into the European marketplace.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, at the beginning of the seventeenth century the crown limited the quantities of brazilwood exported into Portugal in order to keep its prices high.<sup>73</sup>

This situation, however, gave the other European nations active in West Africa at that time (the English, French and the Dutch) an incentive to establish a trade in camwood and challenge Portuguese monopoly on brazilwood. Though the English had a long association with the Sierra Leone region with Hawkins’ slaving voyages of the 1560s and the privateering voyages of the 1580s, they were not necessarily in a better position than the French or Dutch in regard of the establishment of a camwood trade. The French were present in the region in far greater numbers than the English during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, though their main interest seems to have been slaves, since many of their

---

<sup>70</sup> Andre Alvarez d’Almada, *Brief Treatise of the Rivers of Guinea*, pt. 2 (c. 1594) ed. & trans by P. E. H. Hair (Liverpool: Department of History, Liverpool University, 1984), p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in: A. P. Kup, *A History of Sierra Leone, 1400-1787* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 19; The original text is found in: *Relacao Annual des Coisas que Fizeram os Padres de Companiha de Jesus nas Suas Missoes*, tome II, ed. by Fernao Guerreiro (Coimbra: University of Coimbra Press, 1931), pp. 209-12. The reference to redwood/camwood is found on page 211.

<sup>72</sup> Newitt, p. 118.

<sup>73</sup> Shawn Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 96.



voyages to that destination were made en route the Caribbean and South America.<sup>74</sup> In fact, French merchants were already challenging Portugal's monopoly over brazilwood during most of the sixteenth century, starting to visit the Brazil as early as 1503 to trade for that commodity.<sup>75</sup> French engagement with the brazilwood trade was so extensive, that a colony was established in Guanabará Bay (where Rio de Janeiro was later built) in 1555 in an attempt to provide a base from which to establish a more secure foothold. While the colony was wiped out by the Portuguese in the 1560s,<sup>76</sup> French involvement with the brazilwood trade continued.

The Dutch entered the West African arena only in the 1590s, but were quick to develop trade with various destinations along the Atlantic coast of Africa, from the island of Arguim in the north to the Kingdom of Congo in the south.<sup>77</sup> Being latecomers to this colonial scene, they tried to locate vacant niches along that coast, including in Sierra Leone. According to André, the Dutch tried to build a fort at the entrance to the Sierra Leone estuary in 1602, but he thwarted their attempt by threatening the local king that he would cut his trade relations with him if the Dutch were allowed to do so.<sup>78</sup> While this account may well exaggerate Dutch activity, it does indicate that they were active in that region. They were also well aware of the advantages of establishing a trade in new dyewoods: in July 1611, a Dutch ship returned to Amsterdam from the kingdom of Luango (present-day Gabon and the Republic of Congo), bringing with it a cargo of *tacula* (*Pterocarpus Soyauxii*), a red dyewood found in central-western Africa, in order to examine its suitability for commercial exploitation.<sup>79</sup>

The English appear to provide the first non-Portuguese reference to camwood. In the summer of 1607, two of the three ships participating in the third EIC voyage (1607-

---

<sup>74</sup> P. E. H. Hair, 'A Note on French and Spanish Voyages to Sierra Leon, 1550-1585', in *History in Africa*, vol. 18 (1991), 137-41 (pp. 137-39).

<sup>75</sup> Newitt, p. 118.

<sup>76</sup> Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), pp. 84-85. See also: Philip P. Boucher, *France and the American Tropics to 1700: Tropics of Discontent?* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 43-47.

<sup>77</sup> Pieter van der Broecke, *Pieter van den Broecke's journal of voyages to Cape Verde, Guinea and Angola (1605-1612)*, ed. & trans. by J.D. La Fleur, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 5 (London: Hakluyt Society, 2000), pp. 4-5.

<sup>78</sup> Guerreiro, *Relacao Annual*, p. 210.

<sup>79</sup> Van der Broecke, pp. 79-80.

1610) were compelled to call at the Sierra Leone estuary on their outward journey, in order to enable their sailors to recover from scurvy, as well as for repairs. They remained there for a period of thirty-eight days, which gave the crew members some time to explore. One of them, a merchant named William Finch, who recorded his observations of the Sierra Leone estuary in his journal, noted that the local inhabitants ‘have... [a] wood called Cambe, wherewith they dye their Purses and Mats red’, though he did not make any suggestion concerning future commercial exploitation.<sup>80</sup> While Finch died in Baghdad in 1613 before returning to England, and his journal was published only in 1625 (by Samuel Purchas, in an abridged form), it can be assumed that the information about the camwood of Sierra Leone arrived in England with the other crew members, who returned there in May 1610.<sup>81</sup> It is possible that this was the source from which John Davies learned about the existence of a red dyewood in Sierra Leone, if he had not already discovered it by himself at that point.

Davies may not only have been the first Englishman to pursue the camwood trade, but also the first European to do so. His petition to the crown makes it clear that he was trading camwood by 1614, though Father Manuel Alvarez’ *Ethiopia Minor and a Geographical Account of the Province of Sierra Leone*, provides an indication that a European trade in camwood was established a little earlier. Written in 1612-1613, the account of the Portuguese Jesuit, who was part of the mission to the region, mentions that foreign ships were already carrying cargoes of camwood at that date.<sup>82</sup> While the term ‘foreign ships’ does not disclose the flags under which they sailed, it can be assumed that these ships were English, and that they belonged to Davies, as the involvement of other merchants, whether English or from another European country, is not known at that early stage. Nevertheless, the possibility that those ships belonged to non-English merchants does exist, of course, and the vagueness of the term ‘foreign ships’ may suggests that more

---

<sup>80</sup> William Finch, ‘Remembrances Touching Sierra Leona, in August 1607’, in *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, pt. 1, bk. 4, ed. by Samuel Purchas (London: Printed by William Stansby), pp. 415-16.

<sup>81</sup> James Burnley, ‘Finch, William (d. 1613)’, rev. Basil Morgan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9444>> [accessed 6 July 2017]

<sup>82</sup> Manuel Alvarez, ‘Part Two: The Province of Sierra Leone, Ch. 1: the Name, Situation and Bounds of this Province and the Nature of the Land’, in *Ethiopia Minor and A Geographical Account of the Province of Sierra Leone* (c. 1615), (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1990), 1-18 (p. 6).

than one nation was involved. Yet, even if the ships referred to by Alvarez were, indeed, only English, it is clear that Davies and his compatriots soon faced foreign competition. An indication that the Dutch were involved in the trade in the early 1620s is provided by the Cape Verdean merchant Andre Donelha, who wrote in his *Account of Sierra Leone and the Rivers of Guinea of Cape Verde* (1625), that camwood ‘is a cargo of our enemies the Dutch’.<sup>83</sup> As Hair notes, Donelha’s descriptions of Dutch activity in Sierra Leone refers to the years immediately before 1625, which means that Dutch entry into the camwood trade occurred sometime between 1620 and 1625.<sup>84</sup>

Whether Davies was the first European to pursue the camwood trade or not, what is certain is that he managed in a matter of few years to establish himself in the Sierra Leone estuary. What enabled a middling London merchant, who operated alone – i.e. not as a part of a merchant consortium – to gain possession of a profitable trade, in advance of more powerful English merchants, as well as other European nations? Part of the answer to this question is perhaps found in the character of Davies, who knew how to identify opportunities and seize them. Yet another, more important answer, lies in the geopolitics of Sierra Leone itself, and in Portugal’s failure to settle the region and bring it under its direct control.

### 5. Under the Colonial Radar: the Portuguese and Sierra Leone

The main geographical feature of the Sierra Leone region is the rainforest, which formed a natural barrier between the savanna and the coastal region. Though this barrier was not impenetrable, as the Mane invasions show, it generally protected the coastal region from the influence of the hinterland. Thus, Islam took sway in the region only in the mid-eighteenth century. In addition, the rainforest acted, as Alexander Kup mentions, ‘as a place of refuge for those fleeing from the rise and fall of powerful dynasties in the Sudan’. Once these refugees had entered the forest region, he follows, they never went out again, ‘so that Sierra Leone was never the headquarters of any military or religious movement in

---

<sup>83</sup> Andre Donelha, *An Account of Sierra Leone and the Rivers of Guinea of Cape Verde* (1625), ed. and trans. by Avelino Teixeira da Mota and P. E. H. Hair (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações Científicas do Ultramar, 1977), p. 85.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 31, 251-53 (endnote 142).

West Africa'.<sup>85</sup> Penetration inland from the coast was not easy either. The two main gateways to the interior were the Sierra Leone estuary in the north, and the Sherbro estuary to the south. With the many rivers discharging into them, both of these estuaries turn the coastal region into a maze of densely forested islands and peninsulas. This geographical setting led to political decentralization and the creation of many small polities.

Sierra Leone underwent a similar process to that of Senegambia and Guinea Bissau in the wake of the Portuguese 'discovery' of Atlantic Africa, but the effect of that process was much milder than that taking place on the Petite Côte. The Sierra Leone estuary was first reached by the Portuguese in 1461-1462,<sup>86</sup> and in 1472 the region was included in the charter of privileges given to the residents of Santiago Island (Cape Verde).<sup>87</sup> Soon, during the 1480s, some Cape Verdeans began to be engaged with what the Portuguese authorities considered as illegal trade in gold, slaves and ivory.<sup>88</sup> 'Illegal trade' was, most probably, a term referring to the phenomenon of *lancados* (see Chapter Two), whose commercial activity could not be regulated and taxed by the Portuguese authorities. While the profits reaped by the Portuguese from Sierra Leone in the early sixteenth century were far smaller than those derived from Elmina and Cape Verde, they were still considerable enough and, thus, the loss caused by *lancado* activity was substantial. If the 1480s references to 'illegal trade' in that region provide an indication to an emerging *lancado* activity in the region, by the early sixteenth century, this activity became a real problem. In 1508, the Portuguese Crown ordered the sequestration of the goods of all Sierra Leone *lancados*, and nine years later, in 1517, strict limitations were imposed on the trade of Cape Verdeans in the region.<sup>89</sup>

*Lancado* activity could be established in Sierra Leone since the region, like most of the other locales along the West African littoral, was not effectively controlled by the

---

<sup>85</sup> A. P. Kup, 'An Account of the Tribal Distribution of Sierra Leone', *Man*, vol. 60 (Aug. 1960), 116-19 (p. 116).

<sup>86</sup> Peter Russell, *Prince Henry "the Navigator": A Life* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 333.

<sup>87</sup> *Monumenta Missionera Africana: Africa Occidentale*, vol. 1 (1342-1499), ed. by Antonio Brasio, p. 446.

<sup>88</sup> Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 101.

<sup>89</sup> Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 75.

Portuguese. According to Pereira, King João II (reigned in 1481-1495), ordered a fort to be built up the Sierra Leone River, and that he later had it pulled down for ‘certain reasons’.<sup>90</sup> Kup suggests that it was built ‘to defend the Portuguese against French and English competitors who were beginning to find their way to the coast for the first time’.<sup>91</sup> The French<sup>92</sup> and the English, however, ceased whatever engagement they had with West Africa by the late 1480s, and it may well be that this development, along with the expenses of maintaining a fort and a garrison, was why the fort was eventually pulled down. It may also be that the trade of Sierra Leone did not justify the maintenance of a fort. The region did not provide the gold of Elmina (though gold in small quantities was found) or the much sought-after hides of the Petite Côte. The main commodities bought there by the Portuguese were wax, ivory and slaves.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, it did justify defensive naval attacks on French shipping in Sierra Leone in 1566 and 1574, the heyday of foreign (French and English) interloping in the region.<sup>94</sup>

The attack of 1574 was carried out by António Velho Tinoco, the governor of Cape Verde, who was accompanied, among others, by the young Andre Donelha. According to Donelha, Tinoco intended to ask King Sebastião to grant him the captaincy of Sierra Leone but, as both Sebastião and Tinoco were killed in the battle of Alcacer Quibir in 1578, this plan, if it indeed existed, died with them. Nevertheless, the Portuguese kept harbouring plans of settling Sierra Leone.<sup>95</sup> Almada writes that in the early 1580s he ‘was chosen by the people of the island [Santiago] to approach His Majesty [Felipe II] with regard of the settling of the Serra and their transference to it’. A few sentences before, he explains why Sierra Leone should be settled:

This land has much abundance of everything that nothing is lacking in it [...] Once settled, it would come to have greater trade than Brazil, since in Brazil there is only

---

<sup>90</sup> *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, p. 96.

<sup>91</sup> Kup, *A History of Sierra Leone*, p. 62.

<sup>92</sup> Kup seems to refer to the Tournai merchant Eustache de la Fosse, who sailed to West Africa in 1479-80, as ‘French’. See: Eustache de la Fosse, *Voyage à la côte occidentale d’Afrique, en Portugal et en Espagne (1479-1480)*, ed. by Raymond Foulché-Delbosc (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1897).

<sup>93</sup> Green, p. 236 n. 19.

<sup>94</sup> P. E. H. Hair, ‘Abortive Portuguese Settlements of Sierra Leone, 1570-1625’, in *Africa Encountered: European Contacts and Evidence, 1450-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), p. 172.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172-73.

sugar, timber and cotton; in this land there is cotton, and the timber that there is in Brazil [brazilwood, that is, camwood], also ivory, wax, gold, ambergris, and spice. It would be possible to build many sugar-mills: iron and plentiful timber are available to build the mills, and there are slaves to work them.<sup>96</sup>

While this description is exaggerated, the idea of Sierra Leonean abundance was shared by other contemporaries of Almada, and was especially popular among his fellow Cape Verdeans.<sup>97</sup> The lushness of that region sharply contrasted with the aridity of their archipelago, and this contrast grew by the late sixteenth century, as the islands were facing an ecological crisis: their highly limited natural resources were now exhausted after a hundred and twenty years of settlement. Thus, beginning in 1580, the archipelago suffered a series of famines. The scarcity of provisions was also enhanced at that time by raids of Spain's enemies, which took place in the wake of the Union of the Crowns.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the lobbying of the Cape Verdeans, Sierra Leone was neither settled in Almada's days, nor later. Nevertheless, the early seventeenth century saw the Portuguese taking some preliminary steps towards settlement. First, the Jesuits began their activity in the region in late 1605 with the arrival of Father Baltasar Barreira, who stayed there until 1607. Second, the captaincy of Sierra Leone was finally created in 1606, some thirty years after Tinoco's initial attempt to obtain it, and was granted to the nobleman Pedro Alvares Pereira.

Jesuit efforts in Sierra Leone were the more successful. During his time in the region, Barreira baptised two local kings whose territories stretched around the Sierra Leone estuary.<sup>99</sup> Barreira's attempts to extend the mission were frustrated by the deaths of the Jesuit brothers sent to the region (most of them actually died in Cape Verde, before being sent to the mainland). The only one to survive long enough was Father Manuel Alvares, who joined Barreira in 1607 and was soon to take his place, when the latter left for Cape Verde in 1608. Alvares carried on the missionary work, without great success,

---

<sup>96</sup> Almada, pt. 2, pp. 44-45.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example: Manuel Alvarez, Pt. 2, Ch. 1, pp. 4-5; Donelha, p. 81.

<sup>98</sup> Green, pp. 262-63.

<sup>99</sup> Hair, 'Abortive Portuguese Settlements of Sierra Leone, 1570-1625', p. 183.

until his death in 1617. This event put an end to the Portuguese missionary activity in Sierra Leone.<sup>100</sup>

As opposed to the Jesuits, Pereira's plans never made it beyond the drawing board. According to his grant, he was required to build three forts in the region, and to transport 400 settlers there. He was in touch with Barreira, sending him a letter that informed the Jesuit of the grant, and promising him that his work would not be disturbed by it.<sup>101</sup> However, in 1608 Pereira lost the court's favour and, having been accused of corruption, was imprisoned before he managed to send any settlers to Sierra Leone. In late 1608 and early 1609, an attempt to purchase the Sierra Leone grant was made by the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who harboured colonial aspirations at that time, but his death in February of the later year frustrated this plan. Pereira eventually returned to favour, and resumed his efforts to fulfil his grant in the years 1612-1616. These efforts also came to nothing, and the disappointed Pereira eventually relinquished his grant in 1621, a year before his death.<sup>102</sup>

The failure of the Portuguese to bring Sierra Leone under their influence during the first two decades of the seventeenth century meant that the region remained open for the activity of the English, as well as of other European nations. The English were certainly the first to take full advantage of this situation, and though soon followed by the Dutch, the window of opportunity opened for them during the 1610s proved large enough to enable them to establish themselves in the region. Nothing contributed more to this process of establishment than the entry of Davies' compatriots into the camwood trade, which helped to cement English hold in Sierra Leone.

---

<sup>100</sup> P. E. H. Hair, 'The Jesuit Mission to Western Guinea', in *Jesuit Documents on the Guinea of Cape Verde and the Cape Verde Islands, 1585-1617*, ed. by P. E. H. Hair (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1989).

<sup>101</sup> 'Abortive Portuguese Settlements of Sierra Leone, 1570-1625', p. 190.

<sup>102</sup> P. E. H. Hair and Jonathan D. Davies, 'Sierra Leone and the Grand Duke of Tuscany', in *History in Africa*, vol. 20 (1993), 61-69 (p. 61).



**Figure 5:** A map of present-day Sierra Leone, with the locations of the Sierra Leone and Sherbro Rivers. Source: Freeworldmaps.net.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>103</sup> <<https://www.freeworldmaps.net/africa/sierraleone/map.html>> [accessed 8 October 2019]



## 6. The Rise of Competition: Humphrey Slaney and the Camwood Trade

Davies, who was establishing his trade in camwood at the time when Pereira made his second attempt to substantiate the Sierra Leone grant, was obviously one of the main benefactors from the failure of the Portuguese nobleman. However, his new profitable trade – otherwise, he would not have petitioned for a monopoly – soon attracted competition from other English merchants. His main competitor was the fellow haberdasher Humphrey Slaney. Slaney was a real threat to Davies, as he was wealthier and had more connections within London's mercantile community. He was born in Linley, Shropshire, to a family that belonged to the landed gentry. His uncle was Sir Stephen Slaney, who served as the Mayor of London in 1596.<sup>104</sup> Blake claimed that Slaney's year of birth is 1560, but this seems unlikely, since a certain 'Humfry Slany' gained his freedom from the Haberdashers' Company in 1596.<sup>105</sup> Since the name Humphrey Slaney is not common, it is likely that the man who became a freeman in 1596 was the Humphrey Slaney in question and this, in turn, sets his birthdate at around 1570. In 1601, he married Joan Weld, daughter of fellow haberdasher John Weld.<sup>106</sup> Like Davies, he joined the Spanish Company in 1605, and though that company dissolved shortly after, he remained highly involved with the Iberian trade in the following years, to the extent that in 1616 he was regarded as one of the 'auncient merchants of that trade'.<sup>107</sup> In the early 1610s, he and his brother, John, led the London group of the Newfoundland Company, which intended to colonize the region. While the Company ultimately failed, the Slaney brothers' engagement with colonization serves as an indication for their prosperity and entrepreneurial spirit.<sup>108</sup>

Slaney's first recorded association with the West African trade was made in August 1612, when he was granted a warrant by the HCA to capture pirates on an intended voyage

<sup>104</sup> J. Bernard Blake, *A Genealogical and Heraldic of the Landed Gentry of England and Ireland for 1852*, vol. 2 (London: Culborn & Co., 1852), p. 1246.

<sup>105</sup> Blake, 'The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660', p. 20; 'Worshipful Company of Haberdashers – Register of Freedom Admissions, 1526-1613' (MS 15857), *GHL*, f. 139.

<sup>106</sup> *findmypast*:

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbor%2fbil%2fsog27%2f0717&parentid=gbprs%2fbil%2f00149856> [accessed 17.7.2017]

<sup>107</sup> *The Spanish Company*, p. 97; *APC*, vol. 35 (1616-1617), ed. by J.V. Lyle, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1927), p. 105.

<sup>108</sup> David B. Quinn, *Newfoundland, from Fishery to Colony; Northwest Passage Searches* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), pp. 129-31; Gillian T. Cell, 'The Newfoundland Company: A Study of Subscribers to a Colonizing Venture', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 22 (Oct. 1965), 611-25 (pp. 623-25).

to ‘Guinney’. Interestingly, the captain of one of the two ships on that voyage was William Mills – probably the same man who sailed John Davies’ *Abigail* the previous year.<sup>109</sup> The records of the HCA also provide the first definite evidence for his involvement with the camwood trade. In April 1616, less than two years after Davies submitted his petition, two of his ships, the *Humfry* and the *Heart’s Desire*, arrived at the Sierra Leone region. As the records of the HCA refers to the ships’ destination simply as ‘Sierra Leone’, and as Slaney is later known to establish his camwood trade in the Sherbro River, it is highly possible that the *Humfry* and the *Heart’s Desire* sailed into the Sierra Leone estuary – Davies’ commercial base. This, in turn, may well be the reason that some of the camwood collected by Slaney’s crew members was taken forcefully by the captain of another English ship, the *Angel*, which arrived at that place a month later. While it is not known whether the *Angel* was sent by Davies, the reaction of its captain makes this possibility very likely.

The voyage of the *Humfry* and the *Heart’s Desire* seems to be one of the first voyages – if not the first – that Slaney sent to the region in pursuit of the camwood trade, as can be inferred from the ad-hoc manner in which the affair was conducted. According to Philip Fowler, one of the participants of that voyage who was examined by the HCA, the *Heart’s Desire*’s captain,

agree with the King of Sierra Leone for wood to lade his shipp & sente up this examinate and the rest of the shipp[‘]s compannie into the woods; who for the use of their merchants did cut wood by the space of a month, and having cut their wood and paid the king for it, procured it to be brought to the water-side, and all duties whatsoever being discharged for it save only the portage of the negroes who brought it downe.<sup>110</sup>

As can be learnt from this deposition, Slaney did not have a resident factor in Sierra Leone at the time. Therefore, there was a need to get the permission of the local king to cut the wood, and then to send the ships’ crews to perform the task (which took a month to complete). It is quite possible that the incident with the *Angel* persuaded Slaney to install resident factors in Sierra Leone, since he stated in a petition submitted to the Privy Council

---

<sup>109</sup> *Documents Relating to Law and Custom of the Sea*, vol. I (1205-1648), ed. by R. G. Marsden Publications of the Navy Records Society, vol. 49, (London: Printed for the Navy Records Society, 1915-1916), pp. 385-86.

<sup>110</sup> ‘The Deposition of Philip Fowler (16 September 1617)’, *TNA*, HCA 1/48, f. 139v.

in September 1628 that, ‘for these twelve years they had planted and left people in the partes of those Countries’.<sup>111</sup> It is also highly possible that it led him to establish his trade on the Sherbro River estuary, where Davies did not operate.

At that point, Slaney’s activities surely harmed Davies’ trade, but they did not threaten to ruin it. This situation, however, was soon to change. In December 1617, Slaney joined a group of merchants led by Hanford and two prominent EIC men, Sir Thomas Smith and Sir John Wolstenholme, in a voyage to the Senegal River. While Hanford, who had been engaged with the Senegal trade from the early 1610s (if not earlier), sent many voyages to that destination prior to that date, this specific venture was unlike the previous ones. Its main objective was ambitious: to reach the town of Timbuktu by sailing up the Senegal River, and to participate in the gold trade of the West African interior. It is to be remembered (see Chapter Two) that Hanford was the head of a syndicate who established a factory at the mouth of that river, and whose factors were sailing as far as one hundred and fifty miles upstream for trading purposes, so the object of the voyage of question, though highly ambitious, was also strategic.

The story of this voyage is mainly known through a Chancery case that took place in 1622, in which the executor of Edward Brockett, who led the voyage and died on it, sued Hanford, Slaney and the other merchants involved for not paying the dead man’s family his wages.<sup>112</sup> Brockett served as a factor for Hanford’s syndicate at least as early as 1611, so by late 1617 he was experienced with the trade of the Senegal River. According to his executor, Edward Temple, Brockett departed from London on 27 January 1618, and upon arrival at the River Senegal set out with a company into the interior, most probably by sailing upstream. At one point along the way, he was advised by the locals to leave his company behind and travel to Timbuktu alone ‘disguised as a slave’. Temple claimed that Brockett arrived at Timbuktu in the middle of March 1619, stayed and traded there for six weeks, before heading back to the Senegal River. It was during his return trip, ‘about the month of July’ 1619, that he was ‘slayed and dyde’. The defendants confirmed that the object of the voyage was to reach Timbuktu, but denied that Brockett made it to that town and, hence, refused to pay his wages.

---

<sup>111</sup> *APC*, vol. 44 (1628-1629), ed. by R. F. Monger (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1958), pp. 149-50.

<sup>112</sup> *TNA*, C2/JasI/T13/21.

The outcome of this case is not known, but it would not be surprising if Temple lost it. Not only that he was suing prominent London merchants, but his version also raises two important questions which remain unanswered: first, from whom did he learn the details of Brockett's overland journey? Second, if Brockett travelled alone to and from Timbuktu, as Temple claims, how does he know then that his testator actually arrived there? In other words, did Brockett leave written evidence that confirms he achieved that feat? As Temple does not reveal his sources of information, his version should not be taken on trust. However, the question of Brockett's arrival to Timbuktu, though highly intriguing, is not important in the context of this chapter, and this work as a whole. What is important is the fact that Brockett was indeed bound to the West African interior, as confirmed by his employers. This means that the plan of the Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership to access the West African gold trade at its source was conceived sometime in 1617, about a year before the Guinea Company, including Davies, presented to the Crown its own plan of reaching the West African interior for the same purpose. The fact that two similar, and ambitious, plans were conceived in England within a year seems no coincidence. As argued at the beginning of this chapter, the establishment of the Guinea Company was, most probably, Davies' reaction to Slaney's involvement with the Timbuktu venture that, if proving successful, could result in granting a monopoly over the West African trade to the Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership and, consequently, the ruin of his own camwood trade.

This argument rests, among other things, on the assumption that Davies knew about the Timbuktu venture before the establishment of the Guinea Company. While there is no direct evidence that he did, it is clear that the object of the venture was not kept secret, since some of Davies' contemporaries knew of it. The translator John Pory, who served at that time as a diplomatic courier to Italy and the Netherlands, sent on 25 October 1618 a newsletter to Dudley Carleton, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount of Dorchester; then an ambassador to the Netherlands.<sup>113</sup> Among other things, he reported that 'Capt. Brocket gone to Senega, to

---

<sup>113</sup> For information about Pory, see: Charlotte Fell-Smith, 'Pory, John (*bap.* 1572, *d.* 1633)', rev. David R. Ransome, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2013 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22591>> [accessed 17 July 2017]; for Dudley Carlton, see: L. J. Reeve, 'Carleton, Dudley, Viscount Dorchester (1574–1632)', *Oxford*

procure for the Guinea Company a better trade than that of the East Indies' ('Guinea Company' here is a title given by Pory to the Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership, since the original Guinea Company was chartered only a month later).<sup>114</sup> Twelve years later, the soldier, colonial governor and explorer John Smith commented in his *True Travels* (1630) that, 'the unknown Countries of Guine and Binn, this six and twenty years have been frequented with a few English Ships only to Trade, especially the River of Senega, by Captain *Brimstead*, Captain *Brockit*, Mr. *Crump*, and divers others'.<sup>115</sup> Though one cannot be certain whether Smith talks here of the Timbuktu venture or about previous explorations up the Senegal River, it is clear that the pioneering activity of the Hanford-Lanman syndicate was known to members of London's mercantile and maritime community.

There was another way, however, in which Davies could learn about that venture. Hanford, the driving force behind the English activity along the Senegal River, was also a resident of the neighbourhood of St. Mary Woolchurch Haw. He was born there in 1565, and was baptised at that church in 11 March of that year.<sup>116</sup> Like Davies, he also served as a churchwarden of that church, albeit a decade later, in the years 1606-1608.<sup>117</sup> When he died, in late October or early November of 1625, he was buried in one of its vaults.<sup>118</sup>

---

*Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2015 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4670>> [accessed 17 July 2017]

<sup>114</sup> *CSPD: James I, 1611-1618*, ed. by Mary Ann Everett Green (London: Longman & Co., 1858), p. 587.

<sup>115</sup> John Smith, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captain John Smith, into Europe, Asia, Africa and America, from Ann. Dom. 1593 to 1629* (1630), (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), p. 36; 'Captain Brimstead' is Edward Brimstead (or Brimstede). He made a deposition in the course of the 1613 HCA case that involved the Hanford-Lanman syndicate suing one of its factors. Like Brockett, he was one of the chief factors of that syndicate in Senegal. See: 'The Deposition of Edward Brimsted' (7 November 1613), *TNA*, HCA 13/42, ff. 241v-242r (7 November 1613); Mr. *Crump*' is most probably the 'M. Cramp' ('Mr.' and 'M' are abbreviations of 'Master' in this case, not 'Mister') who appears in Richard Jobson's journal of his voyage up the Gambia in 1620-1621. Judging from the reference to Crump/Cramp in Jobson's Journal, he seems to have been a factor of the Guinea Company, maybe even Davies' own man, as, according to the journal, he left Gambia for Sierra Leone prior to the arrival of Jobson and his companions. See: Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, pt. 1, bk. 7, ch. 1 (London: Printed by William Stansby for Henry Fetherstone, 1625), p. 921.

<sup>116</sup> *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes*, p. 300.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. lix.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392; Hanford rose to prominence in the City's politics towards the end of his life: he was knighted in 1622, and served as an alderman in 1622-1625, and as a sheriff in

Another resident of that neighbourhood was Christopher Lanman, Hanford's business associate, who is known to have lived there between 1607 and 1625.<sup>119</sup> Slaney, Davies' great rival, lived not far away, in Ironmonger Lane, in Cheap Ward. Thus, one can assume that Davies could have learned about the activities of Hanford, Lanman and their associates not only through the gossip of London's mercantile community, but also from his neighbourhood (see image 3.2 below). Finally, it is also possible, though speculative, that he had some dealings with those men concerning the West African trade, at one point or another.

Be that as it may, the chartering of the Guinea Company in November 1618 brought the Timbuktu project to an abrupt end. On 15 October, the EIC, who took part in the project, was given notice that the granting of the charter was imminent. At a meeting of the court of committees twelve days later, the members of the would-be Guinea Company were accused of 'reaping the fruits of other mens labours that have so hopefully begunne a trade for Senega', and Wolstenholme and Hanford were summoned by the Lord Chancellor in order to tell him 'how farre some adventurers have proceeded in the voiage to Senega, their losses past, and what is entended [intended], with the dangers formerly menconed [mentioned]'.<sup>120</sup> A month later, they lost the race for a company that also intended to discover a route to Timbuktu, albeit through the Gambia River. In 1620, Davies was granted a monopoly over the Sierra Leone trade from the governors of the Guinea Company, and Slaney was temporarily excluded from the camwood trade.<sup>121</sup>

The latter, however, had a chance to settle that score in 1631, when the re-organized Guinea Company was chartered. The 1631 charter refers to the drama of 1618, and to the damage done to Slaney and his partners, in declaring that among the six members of the new company there were some who,

at the tyme of the graunting of the said letters patents [the 1618 charter], and had ben many yeares before Adventurers into those parts [West Africa], and had people

---

1622-1623. See: *findmypast*:

<<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=gbor%2fknights%2frealm%2f014564>>  
[accessed 17.7.2017]

<sup>119</sup> *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes*, pp. 348, 392.

<sup>120</sup> *The National Library* (BL), E.I.C. Papers, Court Minutes, IOR/B/6, p. 241.

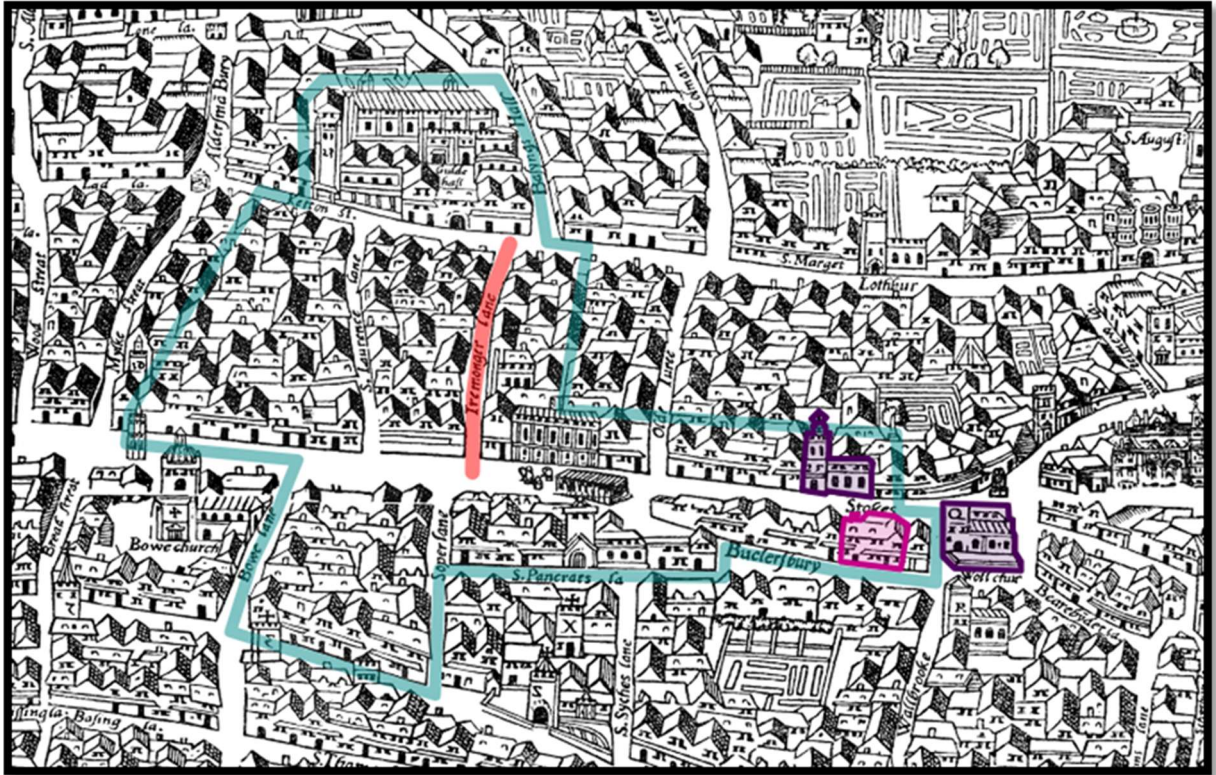
<sup>121</sup> 'The Deposition of Humphrey Slaney' (25 January 1623 [1624]), *TNA*, HCA 13/106, ff. 26v-r.

then in that countrie uppon the discoverie of the Gould mines, which they were forced to surcease [stop/forsake] by reason of the prohibition in the said letters patent contained.<sup>122</sup>

The only individuals of the six members of the 1631 Guinea Company to pursue the West African trade in 1618 were Slaney and his then apprentice, William Cloberry (see Chapter Four). As the wording of the charter associates members of the re-organized company with the employment of people in ‘the discoverie of Gould mines’ in West Africa in 1618, it makes a clear reference to the Timbuktu project of the Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership, while also acknowledging that it was terminated by the charter of 1618. History, it is said, is written by the victors, and Slaney was certainly one in 1631.

---

<sup>122</sup> *TNA*, Patent Rolls, C66/2573, m. 8.



**Figure 6: Cheap Ward and its vicinity.** A detail of the Agas Map (1563), showing Cheap Ward (marked in light blue), St. Mary Woolchurch Haw (violet; outside Cheap Ward), St. Mildred Poultry (violet; within Cheap Ward), the Stocks Market (mauve), and Ironmonger Lane (red). Source: University of Victoria (British Columbia).<sup>123</sup>

<sup>123</sup> The Agas Map, *The Map of Early Modern London*, edited by Janelle Jenstad, University of Victoria, 20 Jun. 2018. < [mapoflondon.uvic.ca/map.htm](http://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/map.htm) > [accessed 13 May 2019].



## 7. Profitability and Operation

Throughout this chapter, there are a few references to the camwood trade as ‘profitable’. This view is shared by Blake, Hair and Andrews, as well as being implied by the fact that Davies petitioned for a twenty-one year monopoly over that trade in 1614.<sup>124</sup> None of these scholars, however, has provided evidence that support this view. Thus, the intention of this section is to make an estimation of the value of the trade, in order to show why Davies and Slaney were willing to fight over it.

As seen in Chapter Two, providing such an estimation is a difficult task, as many important details are missing. The present estimate is even more difficult to make than that of the Senegal trade, because the extant details are taken from different transactions, rather than a single one, as in the case with the Petite Côte voyage of 1589. Nevertheless, some notion of the profitability of the camwood trade can be deduced, as the extant documentation from the 1620s and early 1630s bear some evidence of the price of that commodity and the quantities in which it was imported into England.

The market price of camwood was high during the 1620s and 1630s, as trade was monopolized first by Davies, and later by the Guinea Company itself. The earliest record providing a price for it is an agreement made between Davies and Slaney in December 1622, apparently in an attempt to enforce the former’s monopoly over the English camwood trade that the Guinea Company granted him in 1620. According to the agreement, Davies would buy the whole stock of camwood kept in Slaney’s London store for a price of twenty-nine pounds per tonne.<sup>125</sup> Other, later sources from the 1620s and early 1630s provide similar figures. In September 1631, a factor of the Guinea Company who served in Sierra Leone told an admiralty Judge that camwood was sold in London for a price of twenty-four or twenty-five pounds per tonne.<sup>126</sup> Two months later, upon the re-chartering of the Guinea Company, the Privy Council commissioned Abraham Dawes, the Collector Inwards, and Christopher Metcalfe, the Surveyor-General of the Customs, to prepare a list of the main West African commodities imported into England, along with their prices. The list, submitted in January 1632, is a fairly reliable source, as the details in

<sup>124</sup> Blake, ‘The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660’, p. 19; Hair and Law, ‘The English in Western Africa to 1700’, p. 252; Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 113.

<sup>125</sup> *TNA*, E214/1180.

<sup>126</sup> ‘The Deposition of Thomas Davis’ (16 September 1631), *TNA*, HCA 13/49, f. 470v.

it were taken from ‘some retaylers bookes’, and the prices appearing in it are the ones for which those commodities ‘have bin sould’. According to it, the price of camwood at that time ranged from £26 13s 4d (40 marks) to £28.<sup>127</sup> Considering all these examples together, the price range of camwood during the 1620s and the early 1630s can be set on £24-£29 per tonne.

Evidence of the quantities of camwood imported into England during the period in question is scant, yet enough survives to provide an estimate. John Wood, Slaney’s chief factor, mentions in his HCA deposition of November 1625 that earlier that year he loaded his master’s ship, the *Hearts Desire*, with one hundred and thirty tonnes of camwood, before departing from Sierra Leone (the ship was taken by pirates off the Barbary coast on its way back and, thus, the matter was brought to the HCA).<sup>128</sup> Almost four years later (July 1629), Thomas Howard, another of Slaney’s factors who served in the Sherbro River during 1628, told the HCA judge that he bought for his master one hundred and ten tonnes of camwood during his stay in that place. This store of camwood, however, soon became the property of the London merchant Nicholas Crispe, who took over the Guinea Company and its assets during that year (see Chapter Four), and was loaded on board of his ship, the *Seahorse*. Howard assumed that the quantity of camwood eventually brought back by the *Seahorse* in late 1628 or early 1629 amounted to one hundred and forty tonnes (the additional thirty tonnes of camwood could have been collected by Crispe’s factors themselves, or taken from Slaney’s other Sierra Leone factories).<sup>129</sup> These large camwood shipments can probably be considered as typical to that period. Once factories were built in the Sierra Leone and Sherbro estuaries, large quantities of camwood could be collected and stored throughout the year before being sent to England, thus enabling to cover the expenses of the operation and yield a profit.

Based on the examples given earlier, which set a price range of £24-£29 per tonne for the period in question, it can be concluded that these two shipments were worth £3,000 to £4,000.<sup>130</sup> The total value of the cargoes carried back to England in these two instances

---

<sup>127</sup> *TNA*, PC 2/41.

<sup>128</sup> ‘The Deposition of John Wood’ (15 November 1625), *TNA*, HCA 13/45, f. 42v.

<sup>129</sup> ‘The Deposition of Thomas Howard’ (14 July 1629), *TNA*, HCA, 13/48, ff. 238v.-r.

<sup>130</sup> These figures are based on the following calculations: £24\*130 tonnes (the lowest end of the price range multiplied by the smaller quantity of camwood in order to get the

was obviously higher, since it included other commodities as well. Beside camwood, the *Heart's Desire* also carried, 'ten tonnes of elephants' teeth, three civet cats, aboute fower or five hundred weight of wax, and a certaine quantity of Ambergreese', while the *Seahorse* was loaded with 80 quintals (80 hundredweights or 8 tonnes) of ivory. If the price of ivory, the other main commodity on boards of these two ships, was similar to the one which appears in the Privy Council 1632 list – £8 per a hundredweight – then the cargoes of the *Heart's Desire* and the *Seahorse* would have been worth an additional £800 and £640, respectively. Thus, the true value of each of these two shipments was closer to £4,000-£5,000. This assumption is corroborated by Slaney himself, who petitioned the Duke of Buckingham, the Lord High Admiral, following the loss of his ship in 1625, claiming that the goods it carried were worth £4,000.<sup>131</sup> While claims of this sort usually tend to be exaggerated, it seems accurate in this case, as it falls within the range provided by these calculations.

These figures, however, represent only the gross profit made in those two voyages. In order to estimate the net profit, one also needs to estimate the total expenditure made in order to maintain the trade. In this case, the estimate is done by comparing the operation of the Petite Côte trade (which expenses are estimated in Chapter Two) with that of the camwood trade, based on the details provided by several HCA depositions, as well as by other sources.

In terms of shipping, the expenses of the camwood trade may have been higher than that of the Petite Côte trade. This was not, however, due to the requirements of the camwood trade, but due to the fact that it was pursued by London traders who were richer than their Devon peers, and used to employ larger ships. The best source of information on the size of ships owned and employed by Slaney and Davies in their various trades is a list of 'Warrants for Issuing Letters of Marque' that the HCA delivered in 1628 to certain English merchants whose trade was harmed by piratical activity during England's wars with Spain (1625-1630) and France (1627-1629).<sup>132</sup> The former merchant appears eight

---

minimum sum) and £29\*140 (the upper-most end of the price range multiplied by the bigger quantity in order to get the maximum sum).

<sup>131</sup> *CSPD: Charles I, 1625-1626*, ed. by John Bruce (London: Her Majesties Stationary Office, 1858), p. 251.

<sup>132</sup> *CSPD: Charles I, 1628-1629*, ed. by John Bruce (London: Her Majesties Stationary Office, 1859), pp. 285-309.

times in that list as a sole owner of ships with tonnage ranging from 140 to 250 tonnes (along with three pinnaces of 20, 25 and 40 tonnes), while the latter appears twice, with ships of 120 and 150 tonnes (along with a pinnace of 45 tonnes).

Nevertheless, the HCA records suggest that both merchants usually employed no more than one large ship and one pinnace in the camwood trade. In 1616, when Slaney made his first steps in that trade, he sent a two-ship fleet to Sierra Leone, consisting of the *Heart's Desire* and the *Humfrey*; it is very likely that the latter was a pinnace.<sup>133</sup> There was a good reason to employ a small ship in that particular trade, as it involved sailing far into the estuaries and the rivers adjoining – a task which a pinnace could easily perform. Thus, the pinnace would act as a tender, collecting the wood up the Sierra Leon and Sherbro estuaries, and bring it over to a bigger ship, which would lie off shore. Eight years later, Slaney used a more sophisticated arrangement, leaving a pinnace with men and provisions in Sierra Leone on a regular basis.<sup>134</sup> On-shore factories were built by the late 1620s, as indicated by Thomas Howard's 1629 deposition, with a pinnace sailing to and fro between the two estuaries in order to collect goods.<sup>135</sup>

Not much is known of the way in which Davies conducted his camwood trade, but the extant evidence shows that it was not radically different than Slaney's. In January 1624 Slaney himself told an HCA judge that Davies had 'sett out & employed at his chardge and expence one shipp with agents and factors therein, and noe more as he [Slaney] believeth to trade and traffique in the articulate River of Sereleon'.<sup>136</sup> The list of 'Warrants for Issuing Letters of Marque', as well as other HCA records, suggest that he also used to employ a small fleet consisting of a large ship and a pinnace in that trade.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> In December 1630, Slaney employed a pinnace named the *Humfrey* in the camwood trade. It is highly probable that this is the same vessel mentioned in Fowler's 1617 deposition.

<sup>134</sup> See note 128.

<sup>135</sup> 'The Deposition of Thomas Davis', f. 469r.-470v.

<sup>136</sup> 'The Deposition of Humphrey Slaney' (25 January 1623 [1624]), f. 26r.

<sup>137</sup> On 23 November 1625 Davies was given a warrant for two ships: the 150-tonnes *Bride*, commanded by Samuel Crampton, and the 45-tonnes *John*, on which his relative, Humphrey Davies served as a supercargo. See: *CSPD: Charles I, 1628-1629*, p. 286. Davies' HCA deposition of 12 September 1626 confirms that these ships, under the command of Crampton and Davies, were bound for West Africa. See: 'The deposition of John Davies' (12 September 1626), ff. 196v.-197r.

The employment of resident factors must have raised the total expenses on wages. Though it is not known how much Slaney and Davies paid their factors, it can be assumed that their monthly fees did not exceed £4-£5. This assumption is based on the monthly fees that the Handford-Lanman consortium paid his factors in West Africa. George Jackson, who served as the consortium's agent on a 1611 voyage to Senegal, received £4 per month for his services.<sup>138</sup> Surprisingly, Edward Brocket, who was sent by Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership on an ambitious and dangerous journey to Timbuktu in 1618, was paid only 25 percent more than Jackson – £5 per month.<sup>139</sup> It is hard to believe that Slaney and Davies, whose capital was far smaller than that of Hanford, could afford themselves to pay their factors higher fees. Thus, a factor serving in the Sierra Leone region could have expected, at least during the 1610s and 1620s, a salary of about £50 per annum. Slaney and Davies probably employed one or two factors who earned that much. Their apprentices often served as their factors in the West African trade – a practice that helped them to save money on wages.<sup>140</sup>

The erection and maintenance of on-shore factories incurred more expenses. Nevertheless, these expenses should not have been considerable, as these factories were trading posts rather than forts. They were far smaller, and were staffed by very few people. As opposed to the Gold Coast no garrisons and soldiers were needed in this case. As long as pinnacles were used in the capacity of floating factories, the expenses of on-shore factories were spared. The move from pinnacles to on-shore factories, however, probably made the trade more efficient – greater amounts of camwood could be stored – and increase profits.

The cost of shipping in the camwood trade may have been higher than that of the Petite Côte trade, and the employment of resident factors increased the expenses on wages,

---

<sup>138</sup> 'The Deposition of Christopher Lanman' (22 September 1613), *TNA*, HCA 13/42, f. 226r.

<sup>139</sup> *TNA*, C2/Jas I/T13/21.

<sup>140</sup> John Wood was Slaney's apprentice before becoming his trading partner. See: Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, p. 164. Davies' first resident factor in West Africa was his apprentice Edmond Towers. He was later replaced by another apprentice, Humphrey Davies, who served his master until the latter's death. Apprentices were not paid, or were paid very little, for their services. See: Tim Leunig et al., 'Networks in the Premodern Economy: The Market for London Apprenticeship, 1600-1749', *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 71, no. 2 (June 2011), 413-43 (pp. 417-18).

but that difference in the overall expenditure was compensated by the low cost of the outward cargo. The English did not acquire their camwood by exchanging goods with local merchants, but by giving gifts to local kings who then authorized them to cut down wood. This kind of arrangement was common in Sierra Leone, as in other parts of West Africa.<sup>141</sup> This feature of the camwood trade helped to offset the additional expenses on shipping, factors' wages, and maintenance of factories, thus making the overall expenditure on that trade similar to that of the Petite Côte one, and its profitability presumably greater.

---

<sup>141</sup> John Blake, 'The Study of African History', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 32 (December 1950), 49-69 (pp. 59-60). In January 1621, for instance, the king of Jelicote in the upper section of the Gambia River granted the English (led by Richard Jobson) the right to erect a fort in his territory in return for 'two or three bottles of our best liquor'. See: Richard Jobson, *The Golden Trade* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1623), pp. 98-100.

## Conclusion

The years 1607-1618 were crucial for the history of English activity in West Africa. It was during those years that the English, through the agency of Davies and Slaney, extended their commercial reach to the south of the Petite Côte, with the establishment of the camwood trade of Sierra Leone. The fact that both these middling merchants were able to carve themselves a niche in the region owed much to the weakness of Portuguese authority there, and to their successive failures in settling it. Davies' timing was also important, as he managed to establish himself in the region just before the Dutch, who had been examining the West African littoral for commercial opportunities since the late 1590s, identified the profitability of the camwood trade. Thus, along with Davies' initiative and pioneering spirit, a great deal of luck was involved in that process.

Though Davies was the one who opened up the camwood trade, Slaney's role in the history of English activity in West Africa was no less important. His entry into the camwood trade in the mid-1610s played a crucial role in its establishment, not only by strengthening English presence in Sierra Leone, but also by introducing competition to the nascent trade. This competition, which led to the development of rivalry between Davies and Slaney over the camwood trade, was responsible for the event that proved to be a turning point in the history of English activity in West Africa: the foundation of the Guinea Company in 1618. Slaney's participation in the Timbuktu project of the Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership posed a real threat for Davies' West African activity: the presence of prominent EIC men in that consortium increased its chances of being granted a monopoly over the West African trade, had its venture succeeded. Such a monopoly, in turn, would have led to the expulsion of Davies from the camwood trade, while his rival would have been able to assume full control over it. For this reason Davies, who had failed in achieving a monopoly over the camwood trade in 1614 when approaching the Crown alone, formed in 1618 his own consortium in order to achieve that same monopoly.

Succeeding in his effort, Davies shaped, unintentionally, the course that English activity in West Africa took throughout the rest of the seventeenth century. His creation, the Guinea Company, was the instrument through which the English later established themselves on the Gold Coast, where they became the most prominent European power in the last quarter of that century. The central role that the rivalry between two merchants

over a branch of the West African trade played in shaping the course of English activity in the region emphasizes one of the key elements in its history: English West African trade in the years 1553-1631 was dominated by small number of individuals, who pursued their narrow, and sometimes contradictory, commercial interests. The actions of those individuals, more than anything else, were responsible for English establishment in the region.



## Chapter Four: Misconception and Mismanagement – The Guinea Company, 1618-1631

It could have been expected that the establishment of the Guinea Company in 1618 would usher in a new era in the history of English activity in West Africa. For the first time in that history, the West African trade was monopolized by a joint-stock company, and this commercial reorganization meant that the English could now, with greater resources at their disposal, break new ground in the West African arena and develop a large scale trade. The Guinea Company intended to do exactly that in 1618-1621 with its Gambia project – an attempt to reach the gold markets of the West African interior by sailing up the Gambia River. This attempt, however, proved a commercial disaster, which almost ended the company. It was only after 1631 that a new era truly began, with the reorganization and re-chartering of the struggling Guinea Company that brought the English back to the Gold Coast.

It is no wonder, then, that historiography generally considers the period 1618-1631 as one of failure. K. R. Andrews summarized it neatly by commenting that the history of the company at that time ‘was largely one of unpaid debts and unsettled disputes’.<sup>1</sup> This brief description, however, does not tell the full story of those difficult years: to the danger of bankruptcy, one has to add attacks on the company’s monopoly at home, aborted voyages, and the loss of ships during the Anglo-French war of 1627-1629. Hair and Law are probably the only scholars who see a positive aspect in the company’s activity during 1618-1631, acknowledging that the Gambia project of 1618-1621 did make ‘some contribution to geographical knowledge’.<sup>2</sup> This last comment is a reference to Richard Jobson’s *Golden Trade (GT; 1623)*, which not only recorded the third voyage of the company to the Gambia in 1620-1621, but also provided the most detailed geographic and ethnographic description of the region to date.

---

<sup>1</sup> K. R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> P. E. H Hair & Robin Law, ‘The English in West Africa to 1700’, in *Oxford History of the British Empire, vol I: the Origins of Empire*, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 241-63 (p. 252).

This chapter offers a more nuanced account of the history of the Guinea Company in general, and that of the Gambia project in particular. It argues that the ability of the company to survive the turbulent 1620s was an achievement in itself, as this commercial framework provided merchants with entrepreneurial spirit like Nicholas Crispe with a platform that could be used for developing the West African trade. In addition, the company's Gambia project was not a complete failure, and its contribution was more than filling some gaps in the geographical knowledge of England and Western Europe. By its engagement with the Gambia during the 1620s, though unsuccessful in the short term, the Guinea Company prepared the ground for the development of this region into an English sphere of influence from the 1650s onwards. The *GT*, and especially the abridged version published in Samuel Purchas' *Hakluytus Pothumus (HP; 1625)* were central in this history. Jobson's travel narrative, the most comprehensive text on the Gambia outside Iberia, associated the English with the region, and provided a justification for its appropriation.

Despite the importance of the years 1618-1631 for the history of English activity in West Africa, this chapter focuses on the failure of the Guinea Company to establish a viable trade in the Gambia during that period. This failure merits a closer, more thorough analysis than it has received from scholars, since it highlights the weaknesses of the English mode of operation in West Africa during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In doing so, it helps to explain the unique character of the history of English activity in the region from 1553 to 1631.

The main reason for that failure was the game plan of the Gambia project, which was based on the false geographic assumption that the Gambia River is a branch of the Niger River, and thus, it was possible to sail directly from the Atlantic to Timbuktu and other important gold markets of the West African interior. This misconception was responsible for the heavy losses that the company sustained during its first three years of activity. Not able to reach the gold markets of the interior and trade for gold, which could cover the hefty expenses of the Gambia project, the company found itself on the brink of bankruptcy in the mid-1620s.

Another reason was the makeup of the Guinea Company. Most of the members of the company had no particular interest or experience in the West African trade. Many of them were simply investors, who were lured to join the company by the prospects of

accessing the West African gold trade at source. With no real commitment to the West African trade, these individuals gradually left the company when it proved unprofitable.

Finally, the continual influence of individual merchants on the development of the West African trade, which characterized English activity in the region since 1553, also contributed its share. The rivalry between Davies and Slaney over the camwood trade was carried into the 1620s, and had a negative impact on the Gambia project. The previous chapter argued that Davies played a major role in the establishment of the Guinea Company, aiming to acquire a monopoly over the Sierra Leone camwood trade. This argument is further strengthened by the fact that Davies, as well as Slaney (who later became a member of that company), only had a slight interest in the Gambia project. As a result, the activity of the Guinea Company from 1618 to 1631 was conducted along two separate trajectories: the Gambia project and the camwood trade. Since they were two of the most important figures in the English West African trade, Davies and Slaney's lack of interest in the Gambia project played a major role in its failure.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the makeup of the Guinea Company, while showing how the phrasing of the 1618 charter strengthens the argument that Davies was the driving force behind the company's establishment. It then proceeds to discuss the geographic misconception on which the Gambia project was based, tracing its development from the twelfth to the early seventeenth century. The following section is dedicated to an exploration of the ethnographic and political contexts of the Gambia River region, as well as to the history of European activity there from the 1450s (the first Portuguese contacts) to the 1610s (the entry of the English). It describes the factors that led the Guinea Company to focus its activity on the Gambia, and argues that the region's ethnographical and political setting did not play a major role in the failure of the Gambia project. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to the turbulent history of the 1618 Guinea Company. It begins with a discussion of the first three Gambia voyages (1618-1621) and their disastrous effect on the Guinea Company, as well as their importance for the history of English activity in West Africa. It then proceeds to examine the problematic interaction between the Gambia project and the camwood trade during the 1620s, before discussing Cripse's takeover of the company in 1628, and the reasons that led him to reorganize it three years later.



## 1. The Sources

In general, English activity in West Africa during the years 1618-1631 is amply documented. The main source for the Guinea Company's activity in the Gambia is Jobson's *GT*, the abridged version of his journal of the third voyage, also published by Purchas in 1625, and a petition sent to Charles I c. 1626, to persuade him to support the failing Gambia project.<sup>3</sup> P. E. H. Hair and David Gamble's critical edition of the *GT*, entitled *The Discovery of the River Gambia (DRG)* includes all three.<sup>4</sup> Naturally, most of the information comes from the third voyage up the Gambia, in which Jobson participated. The story of that voyage is told in the *GT* and in the journal. The former also relates briefly the stories of the first and second voyages up the Gambia (1618-1619 and 1619-1620). Finally, the petition mentions an aborted fourth Gambia voyage, taking place in 1624 or 1625.

The *GT*, Jobson's principal publication, includes approximately 55,000 words (in the original edition of 1623, this text spreads over 160 pages). In terms of genre, it is a combination of a travel narrative and geographical and ethnographical description of the river's immediate surroundings. In fact, most of the text is dedicated to these descriptions – invaluable in themselves – rather than narrating the events of the voyage. Moreover, Jobson's narrative of the voyage focuses on its last – and shortest – part: a period of three weeks out of seven months spent on the river. This period was, arguably, the most interesting one of the whole voyage: a small English expedition, led by Jobson (hence, his interest in focusing on this part of the voyage), made its way in canoes up the higher reaches of the river, possibly penetrating further into the Gambian interior than any other European, before the low water levels forced their return. Nevertheless, Jobson's decision to focus on a very small part of the voyage provides little information on the rest of the expedition.

---

<sup>3</sup> Richard Jobson, *The Golden Trade* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1623); for the Journal, see: Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Postumus*, vol. 2, bk. 7 (London: Imprinted for Henry Fetherston, 1625), pp. 921-26; for the petition, see: *BL*, Royal Ms L8 LVIII, 275, ff. 1-5v.

<sup>4</sup> *The Discovery of River Gambia (DRG)* ed. by David Gamble & P. E. H. Hair, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 2 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1999).

This gap is partly filled by the *HP* version of Jobson's journal. This 5,000-word document provides a chronological account of the voyage, from its departure from England in October 1620 until its return in July or August of 1621.<sup>5</sup> As the journal resembles a ship's log, it is possible to reconstruct an itinerary of the voyage. This itinerary, however, is far from complete, as it provides entries for only a quarter of the voyage's duration (50 out of 210 days, roughly). As the original journal did not survive, it is likely that valuable information was lost. Yet, the journal complements nicely the *GT*, providing the book with a chronological skeleton to support its geographic and ethnographic 'flesh'.

The petition to Charles I, Jobson's last preserved piece of writing, is a 4,000-word text abounding with glowing descriptions of the commercial potential of the Gambia region, especially in terms of the amounts of gold. Indeed, Jobson goes as far as claiming that the Gambia region is the biblical Ophir, and dedicates most of the petition to proving his claim. Nevertheless, this document does contribute to our knowledge of the history of the Guinea Company at that time, as Jobson begins his petition by briefly discussing its grim state in the mid-1620s (the time of writing), and revealing the fiasco of the fourth voyage, which was aborted before leaving England.

Jobson is an obscure figure. Almost nothing is known of his life before and after the 1620-1621 voyage of the Guinea Company, and his writings provides no more than clues about his history. Since Hair discusses them at length in the *DRG*, there is no need to do it here.<sup>6</sup> One clue, however, deserves mention here, as it suggests Jobson's attitude to the Gambia project. The *GT* and the journal suggest that Jobson was a factor of one or more of the adventurers.<sup>7</sup> As the title of the *GT* refers to him as a 'gentleman', and as he expresses animosity towards the merchant members of the company, it seems a reasonable assumption that he worked for one of the gentlemen adventurers. This means that Jobson

---

<sup>5</sup> Purchas' abridged version does not include an entry referring to the voyage's arrival at England in the summer of 1621. The last entry provided by Purchas's version refers to a call at Rufisque (in Senegal's Petite Côte) for repairs, at an unknown date in June (the English fleet departed from the mouth of the Gambia in 9 June 1621). See: *DRG*, p. 221.

<sup>6</sup> *DRG*, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> Jobson was certainly not the company's chief factor in the 1620-1621 voyage, as this title was given by Jobson himself to another man who is unnamed in the *GT*. Jobson's journal, however, suggests that that man was Henry Lowe. See: *GT*, p. 40. *HP*, p. 922.

probably represented the ‘gentlemen’s’ interests both on the Gambia and in England, when writing his book and petition.

While Jobson is our best source on the history of the Guinea Company’s activity in the Gambia, he does not provide information on two important issues: the company’s affairs in England and the ongoing rivalry between Davies and Slaney. Fortunately, these issues are amply documented by other sources. The first of these issues is mainly covered by the records of the court of Chancery, where the different members of the company sued one another during the 1620s in the wake of the company’s financial difficulties. These records shed light on the way in which the company was managed (or rather, mismanaged), and on the interaction between its members, enabling a fuller understanding of the reasons for its failure. The second issue is documented by the registers of the Privy Council and the HCA records.

## **2. The Establishment of the Guinea Company: the Charter Holders and the Charter**

The Guinea Company received its charter on 16 November 1618. The group of patentees included 36 individuals, of whom the most notable were Sir Robert Rich (Lord Rich), Sir Robert Mansell, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, Sir Warwick Heale, Sir Allen Appseley, Sir Richard Hawkins, Sir Henry Neville, Sir William St. John, and Sir Thomas Button. Towards the end of the list, which is ordered according to social class, one can also find the name of John Davies, the man who played a decisive role in the establishment of the company.<sup>8</sup>

In social terms, the makeup of the 1618 Guinea Company is unusual. 31 out of the 36 individuals mentioned in the list of patentees are gentlemen (16 knights, 15 esquires), while only five are merchants – a ratio of gentlemen to merchants (6:1) that was uncommon among joint-stock companies. For instance, the Newfoundland Company had 48 original charter-holders – only nine of them gentlemen (a 1:4 ratio of gentlemen to merchants); the Levant Company of 1600 had only 10 gentlemen out of 83 original

---

<sup>8</sup> A full version of the 1618 charter is printed in Carr. See: Cecil T. Carr, ed., *Selected Charters*, pp. 99-106. The list of the charter holders appear in page 99. Thomas Button’s surname is mistakenly spelt ‘Dutton’.

charter-holders (1:7); and the EIC, the most successful English joint-stock company of the early modern era, had only five gentlemen in its original list of charter holders, which included over 200 individuals.<sup>9</sup> In maintaining such a high ratio of gentlemen to merchants the Guinea Company was only second to the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa (1660-1662), which had no merchants at all among its 31 original members.<sup>10</sup> The low percentage of merchants among the company's original cadre was, it is argued here, one of the reasons for its failure.

As shown in the previous chapter, as well as in this one, John Davies was, most probably, the main driving force behind the company's establishment, using it as a means to secure a monopoly over the camwood trade. While the charter of 1618 does not reveal much about the circumstances of establishment, its wording does strengthen this argument.<sup>11</sup> Referring to the reasons for the charter's granting, the preamble suggests:

Whereas diverse of our loving subjects have by their long travel and industry and at their great charges and expenses discovered and found out a trade into certain places in Africa hereafter mentioned where there are diverse commodities and merchandizes necessary for the subjects of our Kingdom and Dominions...<sup>12</sup>

As a result, it might be expected that the list of charter holders included names of individuals known to be previously involved in the West African trade during the previous decades (otherwise, they could not be said to have 'found out' trades in Africa). But the list provides only one such name: John Davies. Moreover, there is no evidence that any of the other charter holders was involved to any degree with that trade before the establishment of the Guinea Company, and if some were, then it must have been to a limited extent.

---

<sup>9</sup> For the Charters of the Newfoundland and the Levant companies, see: Carr, pp. 31-43 (Levant) and pp. 51-62 (Newfoundland). For the charter of the EIC, see: *Charters Relating to the East India Company, from 1600 to 1761*, ed. by John Shaw (Madras: Printed by R. Hill at the Government Press, 1887), pp. 1-15.

<sup>10</sup> For the 1660 charter of the Royal Adventurers, see: Carr, pp. 172-77.

<sup>11</sup> In comparison to other charters, or letters patent, the Guinea Company charter describes the circumstances in which the company in question was established quite vaguely. For instance, the letters patent granted in 1592 to the Taunton group trading to Sierra Leone, tell clearly that 'Thomas Gregorie of Taunton... by his greate travaile and charge hath discovered and founde out certen ryuers and places in Guinea'. See: *TNA*, Patent Rolls, C66/1384, m.12. The fact that John Davies does not receive a similar credit in the charter of 1618 may suggest that he wished to conceal his involvement in the establishment of the Guinea Company.

<sup>12</sup> Carr, p. 99.



An examination of the social makeup of the charter holders helps to explain why most of the original members of the Guinea Company were not previously engaged with the West African trade. As the vast majority of the company's original members were gentlemen, they did not match the profile of the English West African merchant in the years 1588-1618, a time in which the trade was exercised by merchants of the middle ranks of England's commercial community who were not involved in the City's politics (see Chapters Two and Three). In social terms, the most prominent individual in the English West African trade during those three decades was Sir Humphrey Hanford (neither named in the charter, nor joining the Guinea Company at a later stage), who was knighted towards the end of his life, years after his entry into that trade. Unsurprisingly, Hanford was also the only West African merchant at that period who was involved in politics, serving as an alderman of the City of London.

According to Hair, two-thirds of the original members of the Guinea Company 'had, or were to have, interests in other overseas ventures; yet, with a few exceptions, these interests were limited'.<sup>13</sup> As much as these interests can be traced – the commercial careers of most of the 36 members remain obscure – it seems that they mainly focused on the New World. Rich, 'the only great shipowning aristocrat of his time',<sup>14</sup> was one of the founding members of the Bermuda Company in 1614, while also known for his privateering activity in the East and West Indies later in that decade. His involvement with colonization of North America and the Caribbean intensified during the next decades, with stints in the Virginia Company, and then in the Council of New England.<sup>15</sup> Gorges was one of the promoters of the Plymouth Company of Virginia, which made several attempts to plant settlements along the North American coast between 1606 and 1619.<sup>16</sup> Five of the original members of the Guinea Company were also among the grantees of the second charter of Virginia in 1609: Sir Henry Neville (who was also appointed to the council of the Virginia

---

<sup>13</sup> *DRG*, p. 13 n. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Andrews, *Ships, Money and Politics: Seafaring and Naval Enterprise in the Reign of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> Sean Kelsey, 'Rich, Robert, second earl of Warwick (1587-1658)', *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23494>> [accessed 3 May 2018].

<sup>16</sup> Charles E. Hill, 'Gorges, Sir Ferdinando (1568-1647)', *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11098>> [accessed 3 May 2018].

Company), Sir Warwick Heale, Sir William St. John, Sir Robert Mansell (the Vice-Admiral of England), and Sir Thomas Button (another naval officer).<sup>17</sup> The latter also led a small expedition in an attempt to discover a northwest passage to the Pacific in 1612.<sup>18</sup>

The unusual makeup of the 1618 Guinea Company raises the question: why form a company for pursuit of the West African trade when most of its members did not have an experience, as well as a keen interest in that trade? The answer to this question again leads to Davies, who seems to have been the main benefactor of that situation. The sheer number of gentlemen in the company served his interests in two ways: first, that impressive gallery of knights and esquires was needed in order to persuade the king to grant the company a monopoly over the West African trade, and also served as a counterweight for the rivalling Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership, which was backed by the powerful EIC. Second, the fewer company members with experience and interest in the West African trade, the less competition and opposition Davies could expect to meet.

Another element of the 1618 charter serving Davies' interests was the vagueness of its wording, not only in regard of the circumstances of the company's establishment, but also in regard of its aims and main geographical focus. The charter mentions neither the Gambia River as the project's main destination nor gold as the main commodity to be sought. In fact, the toponym 'Gambia' and the word 'gold' do not appear in it. The only source of information on these issues is Jobson, who tells us that the company's main object was reaching the gold markets of the West African interior by sailing up the Gambia.<sup>19</sup> He is also the source which informs us that the company marked the Gambia as the centre of its operations from the very beginning when mentioning that its first voyage departed England in September 1618, two months before the granting of the charter. Nevertheless, the charter does give a sense that the company intends to launch an

---

<sup>17</sup> For the second charter of the Virginia Company, see: James I, 'The Second Charter of the Guinea Company; May 23, 1609', in *The Statutes at Large, Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the year 1619*, vol. I, ed. by William Waller Hening (New York: Printed by R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823), pp. 80-98.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Thrush, 'Button, Sir Thomas (c. 1575-1634)', in *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4235>> [accessed 3 May 2018].

<sup>19</sup> *DRG*, p. 78, 142. At p. 142, after conversing with a local merchant on the gold trade of the West African interior, Jobson writes: 'This his relation made it certaine, that these were the Moores of Barbary, the discovery of whose trade and trafficke, was the ground of this our being so high in the river.'

ambitious project, by wishing that the privileges granted to the charter holders may encourage them ‘not only to proceed in a present trade but to adventure their money and labour for further discovery than hath ever yet been attempted by any in those parts’.<sup>20</sup>

The charter is even vaguer about the sort of goods that the company intends to import from West Africa. It suggests that the company would keep pursuing a trade which was established in the past, while encouraging them to discover new trades. It neither specifies, however, what is the trade that was established prior to the foundation of the company, nor the new trade or trades that it intends to ‘discover’. This vagueness clearly worked to Davies’ advantage, as it enabled him to enjoy a de facto monopoly over the camwood trade, the well-established trade mentioned in the charter, under the umbrella of ‘divers commodities and merchandises’. In this way, it was difficult for his rivals to claim that he monopolizes the trade as the charter does not say that explicitly.

### 3. The Gambia Project: A Geographical Wishful Thinking

The main reason for the failure of the 1618 Guinea Company was, however, the fact that the Gambia project, while audacious in its nature, was based on false geographic concept that made it nearly impossible to pursue. This misconception, which was also the basis for the venture pursued by the Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership in 1617-1618, indicated that the Gambia and the Senegal Rivers were two branches of the Niger. As the Niger flows near the two great gold markets of the West African interior, Timbuktu and Gao, it is possible to sail there all the way from the Atlantic. Jobson expresses this in the first chapter of the *GT*, which is dedicated to the description of the river:

and if it be as in all descriptions that are set out, it is layd downe, that the River of *Senega*, and this River [Gambia] do meete, yet cannot be in any probability, but a few dayes iourney, above the place, and height, we have already beene at, must needes reach to it, and no doubt afterwards, that which affordes two such branches, must containe within himselfe, a faire and promising streame, which may take head from some great and large lake, above, such as is described, to be about *Gago* [Gao], and if any such place should be found, what use or profit might arise, cannot but promise a hopefull expectation.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>21</sup> *GT*, pp. 14-15.

This concept is well represented in maps produced in Europe from the mid-sixteenth until the late eighteenth centuries. See, for example, the following excerpts, taken from two late sixteenth century maps of West Africa, drawn by the most authoritative cartographers of that time: the *Aphricae Tabula Nova* (1570) of the Flemish Cartographer Abraham Ortelius (image 4.1),<sup>22</sup> and Gerard Mercator's *Africa ex Magna Orbis Terrae Descriptione* (1595) (image 4.2).<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 7:** an excerpt from *Aphricae Tabula Nova* (1570). Source: University of Illinois' Digital Collection.

<sup>22</sup> Abraham Ortelius, *Aphricae Tabula Nova* (1570), in UIDC: <https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/2a7fedf0-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-7#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&r=0&xywh=-2161%2C0%2C8320%2C2984> [accessed 11 July 2019]

<sup>23</sup> Gerard Mercator, *Africa ex Magna Orbis Terrae Descriptione* (1595), in UIDC: <https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/2094ba30-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-6#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&r=0&xywh=-2579%2C-1%2C9157%2C3285> [accessed 11 July 2019]



**Figure 8:** an excerpt from *Africa ex Magna Orbis Terrae Descriptione* (1595). Source: University of Illinois' Digital Collection.

The origin of this concept is found in the writings of the twelfth-century Arab geographer Al-Idrisi. Like many of his predecessors, Al-Idrisi drew on the Alexandrian geographer Ptolemy (second century BC), who wrote of a great river found in sub-Saharan Africa (the existence of which was known since the days of Herodotus) that flowed eastwards and discharged into an inland lake. While accepting Ptolemy's idea that that great river, to which he referred as the Nil of the *Bilad as Sudan* (i.e. 'The Nile of the Land of the Black'),<sup>24</sup> was connected to an inland lake, the Arab geographer held an opposite view. According to Al-Idrisi, the lake was not the endpoint but the source of the river,

<sup>24</sup> The first Arab geographer to refer to the great West African river by the name 'Nile' was Al-Bakri, who wrote a work of descriptive geography in 1067. The river to which he attached that name was, most probably, the Senegal, not the Niger. See: Nehemia Levtzion, 'Arab Geographers, the Nile, and the History of Bilad al-Sudan', in *The Nile: Histories, Cultures, Myths*, ed. by Haggai Erlich & Israel Gershoni, (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 2000), (71-78), p. 72.

which flowed westward rather than eastward, and discharged itself into the Atlantic.<sup>25</sup> Based on new geographical information gathered from travellers and traders during the Late Middle Ages, Al-Idrisi's successors developed this theory, describing the Nil of the *Bilad as Sudan* as a long river draining the other great rivers south of the Sahara, and discharging into the Atlantic through two main branches – the Senegal and the Gambia (see image 4.2).<sup>26</sup>

As Al-Idrisi's geographical writings were produced for the Norman kings of Sicily at their court, the concept of the Nil of the *Bilad as Sudan* diffused throughout Latin Christendom. While he was not responsible for the idea that the Nil of the *Bilad as Sudan* was connected to the Senegal and the Gambia, it was nevertheless known in Europe, as fifteenth-century Portuguese sources show. Describing the 1445 voyage of Lançarote de Freitas and Gomes Pires to Cap Vert, the Portuguese chronicler Zurara writes that, noticing the first palm trees on the Atlantic coast, the expedition's participants 'understood right well that they were close to the river of Nile, at the point where it floweth to the western ocean, the which river is there called the Senegal.'<sup>27</sup> A later chronicler, Rui de Pina, confirmed this concept when writing that the Infante Dom Henrique (Prince Henry the Navigator), the mastermind behind the Portuguese exploration of Atlantic Africa, referred to the Senegal River as 'the Nillo, not that which enters the Mar do Levante at Alexandria [i.e. the Mediterranean], but another branch of it which the cosmographers say runs out to the ocean sea.' De Pina, however, added that 'the real truth of this [idea] up to now... is yet to be learned', thus admitting it was unproven at that point.<sup>28</sup>

With the Portuguese arrival to the mouths of the Senegal and the Gambia in the 1440s and 1450s, respectively, the concept of a great West African river that flows into the Atlantic gave rise to the possibility of reaching the gold markets of the West African interior by boat. This possibility was very attractive for Europeans who had gained a better

---

<sup>25</sup> Charles W. J. Withers, 'Mapping the Niger, 1798-1832: Trust, Testimony, and 'Ocular Demonstration' in the Late Enlightenment', *Imago Mundi*, vol. 56, no. 2 (2010), 170-93 (pp. 171-72).

<sup>26</sup> Levtzion, 'Arab Geographers, the Nile, and the History of Bilad al-Sudan', pp. 73-74.

<sup>27</sup> Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *The Chronical of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* (1453), trans. by Charles Raymond Beazley and Edgar Prestage, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 100 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1896), p. 177.

<sup>28</sup> John Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560*, v. 1, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 86 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1942), p. 85.

notion of the rich gold deposits south of the Sahara, as well as a familiarity with the names of Timbuktu and Gao, since the fourteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Genoese merchants attempted to join the trans-Saharan gold trade from the thirteenth century, first by visiting the ports of Atlantic Morocco, which were important outlets for gold, and later by making excursions into the desert.<sup>30</sup> In 1447 the Genoese Antonio Malfante managed to penetrate the Sahara as far as the oasis of Tuat (present-day Algeria), in an attempt to reach the Niger Basin.<sup>31</sup> At that stage, however, there was no point in pursuing that course of action, in light of the recent discoveries made by Portuguese along the Atlantic coast of Africa. As long as the concept of the Nil of the *Bilad as Sudan* was not proven wrong, European merchants, so accustomed to travel by boat, could feel for the first time that they had an advantage over their North African counterparts, with whom they could not compete in crossing the desert.

It was the Portuguese who made the first attempts of using the great rivers of West Africa in order to penetrate the interior. In 1488-1489, according to de Pina, they planned to build a fort at the mouth of the Senegal in order to secure a trade in gold with the interior, as they believed that ‘the said river, penetrating far into the interior, flowed to the city of Tambucutu and by Mombare, where are the richest trades and markets of gold in the world.’<sup>32</sup> This plan was never realized, though. Indeed, it is questionable if the Portuguese had at that time any need to penetrate into the interior for that purpose, as by 1482 they had a fort (Elmina) on the Gold Coast, which secured their lucrative trade in the region’s gold. This may well be the reason why the next recorded Portuguese attempt to

---

<sup>29</sup> For Latin Christendom’s growing knowledge of sub-Saharan Africa during the High Middle Ages, see: Edward Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 87-92; Pekka Masonen, *The Negroland Revisited: Discovery and Invention of the Sudanese Middle Ages* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2000), pp. 63-122; Felipe Fernández-Armesto, ‘Exploration and Discovery’, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 7 (c. 1415-c.1500), ed. by Christopher Allmand (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 175-201 (p. 190).

<sup>30</sup> See: J. K. Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy: the Evolution of the Civil Life, 1000-1350* (London: McMillan Press, 1973), p. 67; in the early fourteenth century, Genoese merchants could be found in the Moroccan town of Sijilmasa, an important stop on the trans-Saharan caravan route. See: *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, John Block Freidman & Kristen Mossler Figg, eds (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 210.

<sup>31</sup> *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. & trans. by G. R. Crone, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 80 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1937), pp. 85-90.

<sup>32</sup> Zurara, p. 177.

reach the interior was not made until 1565, when Diogo Carreira set out on a journey to Jenne and Timbuktu from the mouth of the Senegal River.<sup>33</sup> It is not known if Carreira ever reached the Niger basin.<sup>34</sup> Philip Curtin claims that the Portuguese built a fortified post in the Bambuhu region (south of the confluence of the Senegal and Falémé Rivers) in the middle of the sixteenth century, but provides no reference. If he is right, then it may well be that these two events are connected. In any case, there is no evidence that the Portuguese made another such attempt, either by sailing up the great rivers of West Africa, or by other ways, after 1565.<sup>35</sup>

The belief that the Niger Basin can be reached by sailing up the Senegal, or via one of the other West African rivers that flow into the Atlantic, was still alive in the seventeenth century, as later maps can attest.<sup>36</sup> While the Portuguese did not have many incentives to pursue the highly ambitious and expensive project after establishing themselves firmly on the Gold Coast, some of their competitors were in a different situation. This is mainly true for the English and the French who, as opposed to the Dutch, did not manage to secure a foothold on the Gold Coast during the first three decades of the seventeenth century. Unwilling to challenge Portuguese monopoly (which until 1640 also involved the Spanish) in that region, the only way these nations could claim a substantial stake of the West African gold trade was by reaching the gold markets of the interior. The English were the first to pursue that project, beginning with the Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership of 1617-1618, and then the Guinea Company of 1618-1631 (the French made their first attempts only in the 1680s, after the establishment of the *Compagnie du Sénégal*).<sup>37</sup> While the French, as well as the Hanford-Wolstenholme-Smith partnership, concentrated their efforts on the Senegal River, the Guinea Company decided to focus on the Gambia – an area in which the English had not been active until then.

---

<sup>33</sup> *Trabalhos nauticos dos portugezes nos seculos XVI e XVII, vol. 1, pt. 1*, ed. by Francisco Marques Sousa Viterbo (Lisbon, 1898), p. 324.

<sup>34</sup> Masonen, pp. 118, n. 292.

<sup>35</sup> Philip D. Curtin, 'The Lure of Bambuk Gold', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1973), 623-31 (p. 624).

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Blaeu's map of Africa on 1664: Joan Blaeu, *Africae Nova Descriptio* (Netherlands, 1664), in UIDC: <<https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/2aec1ab0-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-d#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&r=0&xywh=-2200%2C-1%2C8398%2C3013>> [accessed 11 July 2019]

<sup>37</sup> Curtin, 'The Lure of Bambuk Gold', p. 624; Thora G. Stone, 'The Journey of Cornelius Hodges in Senegambia, 1689-90', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 139, no. 153 (Jan. 1924), 89-95 (p. 94).



#### 4. The Gambia: the Western Outpost of the Mali Empire

The purpose of this section is to examine the reasons that led the Guinea Company to focus their activity on the Gambia and to show that, as opposed to the other factors mentioned earlier in this chapter, the conditions of the region were not responsible for the failure of the Gambia project.

The political and ethnographic context of Gambia of the early modern era was shaped by a substantial human migration. That migration, the origin of which was the Mali Empire, took place prior to the fourteenth century, and was led by the Mandinka people, also known as Malinke, who were the ruling group.<sup>38</sup> According to Nehemia Levtzion, whole Mandinka communities, including traders, peasants and warriors, replanted themselves on the banks and immediate interior of the Gambia River.<sup>39</sup> By the mid-fifteenth century, when the Portuguese arrived in West Africa, the Mandinka were the dominant ethnic group in the Gambia.<sup>40</sup>

One significant element that the Mandinka brought with them was the religion of their empire – Islam. By the time the English arrived, Islam was prevalent along the river, though the majority of the local population were probably only Muslim by name, still maintaining many of their polytheistic traditions. Nevertheless, the more orthodox Muslims among the Mandinka played an important role in the region. Forming a distinct social group called the Jaxanke, these Muslims were renowned for their long-distance travels in pursuit of trade and spreading Islam.<sup>41</sup> Their towns functioned as commercial hubs, and the final destination for caravans coming from the interior. In this way, the Jaxanke connected the Gambia with various West African commercial networks.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> *DRG*, pp. 56-57.

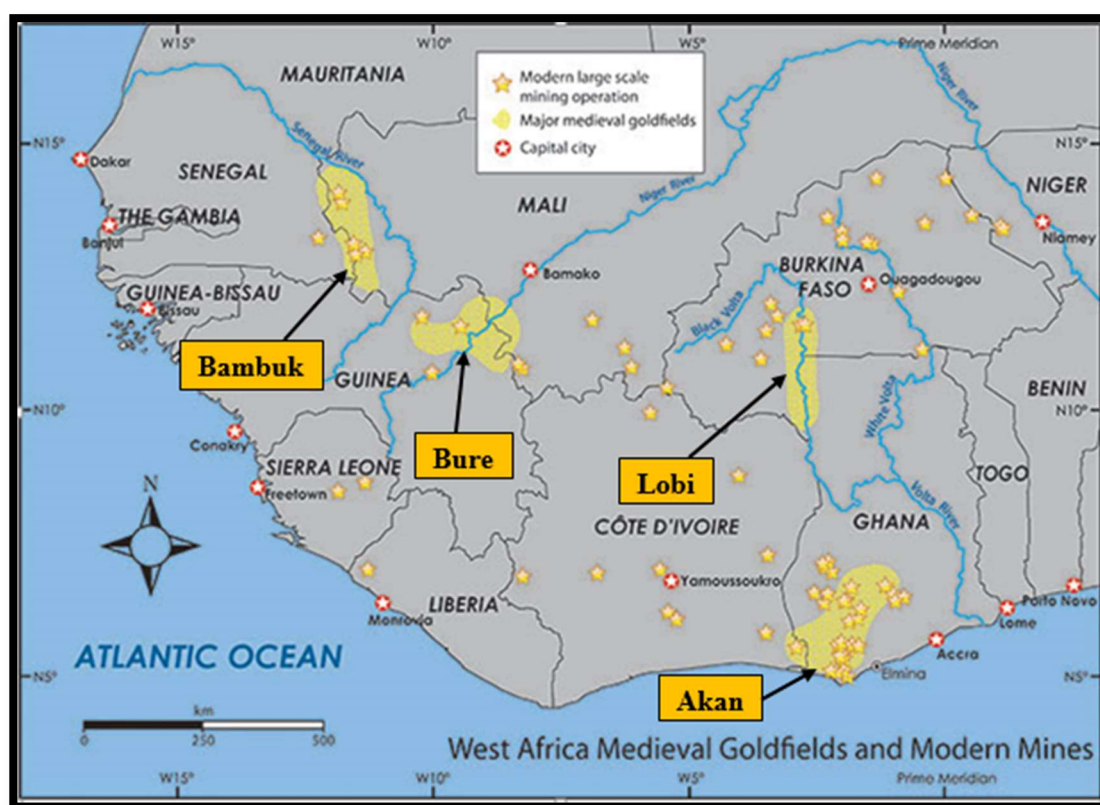
<sup>39</sup> Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> *DRG*, p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>42</sup> Nehemia Levtzion, 'The Western Maghrib and Sudan', in *The Cambridge History of Africa, vol. 3 (c. 1050 – c. 1600)*, ed. by Roland Oliver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 331-462 (p. 452).

One of the commodities that became available on the Gambia through the Jaxanke's commercial activity was gold. It was brought to the river from three of the four main goldfields of West Africa (see image 4.3). These were the Bambuhu, or Bambuk, to the west, between the Senegal River and its tributary, the Falémé River; Bure, to the southwest, on the upper reaches of Niger River; the Gold Coast's hinterland, to the south.<sup>43</sup> The centre of the gold trade was on the middle and upper section of the river, in the territory of the kingdom of Cantor, on the south bank, and of that of Wuli, on the north bank. While the amount of gold available on the Gambia was far smaller than that found on the Gold Coast, the reports of the early Portuguese visitors to the region created a false image of a West African El Dorado.<sup>44</sup>



**Figure 9:** Map of West Africa's Medieval Goldfields and Modern Mines. Source: *Journal of Big History*, Villanova University.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 153.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 152-53.

<sup>45</sup> *Journal of Big History*, Villanova University.

<<https://jhb.journals.villanova.edu/article/view/2243/2028>> [accessed 13 October 2019].

The Portuguese reached the mouth of the Gambia River, or its environs, during the momentous voyages of 1444-1447, but actual exploration took place only a decade later, in the mid-1450s.<sup>46</sup> The fact that gold was traded along the river was already known by that time, as the Genoese merchant Alvise da Cadamosto, who led a Portuguese expedition to Senegambia in 1455 (and another one in 1456), intended to sail up-stream to find a place where gold (or ‘other valuable commodities’) could be bought. Cadamosto and his men, however, were soon forced to turn back after local bowmen attacked their small fleet.<sup>47</sup> It was his successor, Diogo Gomes, who managed in 1456 or 1458 to sail up-stream as far as the kingdom of Cantor, bringing back promising reports about the local gold trade.<sup>48</sup> The next decades saw the establishment of a regular trade in gold with the market towns of the middle section of the river, as well as the exploration of its upper section. According to the Spanish chronicler Luis Marmol, who wrote his treatise on Africa in the early 1570s, the Portuguese has conceived a plan to open the river’s channel near Barakunda, by breaking a great rock which prevented boats from progressing further. The plan was eventually abandoned as too difficult to execute.<sup>49</sup> If Marmol’s report is accurate, then that plan may indicate that the Portuguese were trying to reach the goldfields of the interior by sailing up the Gambia.

The Portuguese – or, more precisely, the Cabo Verdeans – continued the gold trade with the middle section of the Gambia well into the sixteenth century, despite the discovery of the Gold Coast in the early 1470s, before giving it up, according to Almada, around 1586.<sup>50</sup> The decline of official Portuguese trade in the middle and upper sections of the river opened the way for the activity of other European nations, namely the French and

---

<sup>46</sup> Bailey Diffie & George Winus, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pp. 86-87, 89-90, 102.

<sup>47</sup> *The Voyages of Cadamosto*, pp. 56-61.

<sup>48</sup> John Gray, *History of the Gambia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp. 6-7; Crone, pp. xxiv-xxvi; *DRG*, p. 5. For Gomes’ report of the gold trade of Cantor, see: Crone, pp. 93-95.

<sup>49</sup> Luis Caravajal Marmol, *L’Afrique de Marmol, tome 3*, trans. by Nicolas Perrot (Paris: chez Thomas Iolly, 1667), p. 74; Gray claims that the plan was conceived in 1520, but I have not found any other source which confirms this contention. See: Gray, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> Rodney, p. 153; Andre Alvarez d’Almada, *Brief Treatise of the Rivers of Guinea*, pt. 1 (c. 1594) ed. & trans by P. E .H. Hair (Liverpool: Department of History, Liverpool University, 1984), p. 49. Hair maintains that Portuguese withdrawal from the Gambian gold trade was a result of frequent enemy attacks on Cabo Verde - including that of Francis Drake on the Isle of Santiago in late 1585 – as well as of Spanish annexation of Portugal, which led to ‘cut-backs in official trade with Guinea’. See: *DRG*, p. 69.

English.<sup>51</sup> The latter seem to have been the first of the two to take some interest. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the 1588 charter of the Senegal Adventurers allowed them to trade on the Gambia, and their preliminary 1587 voyage to West Africa visited it. However, there is no evidence that any of the adventurers took advantage of that opportunity. The French, for their part, attempted to establish a colony on the Gambia in 1612. However, having arrived during the rainy season, most of their men succumbed to ‘diverse maladies’, and the plan was abandoned.<sup>52</sup>

As in other regions of West Africa, long lasting Portuguese activity in the Gambia gave rise to the formation of a local Afro-Portuguese community, whose members mainly resided in the various trading centres along the river, forming an important commercial network. Despite the inclination of the Afro-Portuguese (*lancados*) to trade with Portugal’s enemies, they could also be quite hostile towards them, as the English discovered in 1619 when some Afro-Portuguese residents of the town of Kasang murdered most of the participants of the first Gambia voyage. This attack led Jobson to regard the Afro-Portuguese community in the Gambia as the greatest threat to the English Gambia project,<sup>53</sup> though his narrative of the 1620-1621 voyage actually depicts friendly interactions. None of the ethnic groups residing along the river seem to have expressed a real hostility to the English (there were a few cases during that voyage when local traders tried to dissuade them from progressing any further in search of the gold markets of the interior, but there was no use of actual violence).<sup>54</sup> While in 1594 Almada described the Mandinka people as ‘very war-like’, mentioning that the residents of the river’s south bank took delight ‘in killing whites and seizing ships’, the English found them, like many other West African peoples, peaceful and hospitable to strangers.<sup>55</sup> The main local factor that obstructed European activity on the river was – as in many other parts of West Africa – the

---

<sup>51</sup> Manuel Alvares, *Ethiopia Minor and a Geographical Account of the Province of Sierra Leone* (c. 1615), ed. & trans. by P. E. H. Hair (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1990), ch. 3, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> *Histoire General des Voyages, tome 12*, ed. by Antoine-Francois Prevost (La Havre: chez Pierr de Hondet, 1755), pp. 292-93.

<sup>53</sup> *GT*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, Jobson’s experience in Setico: *GT*, p. 81.

<sup>55</sup> Almada, pt. 1, pp. 43-44.

climate and European susceptibility to tropical disease, as shown by the story of the French 1612 and the English 1620-1621 expeditions.<sup>56</sup>

### 5. The Gambia Project, 1618-1621: a Chronicle of Failure Foretold

The decision of the Guinea Company to concentrate its activities in a region that had been a terra incognita for the English meant that it embarked on its project like a blind man heading into the woods. The fact that the vast majority of the company's members had no experience with the West African trade did not make matters any better.

The first Gambia voyage, which departed England in September 1618, was a small enterprise, consisting only of one ship, the *Catherine* (120 tonnes). The leader of the expedition was an experienced merchant named George Thompson, who had lived in Morocco for many years, probably serving as an agent for another merchant. Hair suggests that he was chosen for that job due to his command of Arabic, and the commercial contacts he had developed during his time in Morocco, since the English expected to find Moroccan gold traders in the gold markets of the West African interior.<sup>57</sup> According to Jobson, Thompson was instructed by 'the Governour and Company' to enter the Gambia River and sail upstream, first with the ship and then – when the river became too narrow and shallow for navigating an ocean-going vessel – with small boats (shallops), in order to explore the upper sections of the river. Following these orders, Thompson first sailed up to the town of Kasang, in the middle section of the river, where he left the *Catherine* with most of the crew and cargo. From there, he led a small group of men – a mixture of ship's crew and local guides, interpreters and porters – up river. While Thompson was sailing up stream, the *Catherine*'s crewmembers were murdered by a group of Afro-Portuguese from Kasang, and the ship itself was either sunk or stolen. Thompson received this news when he was at the upper section of the river, but chose to keep sailing up river, rather than returning to England. Some of his English companions, however, left the expedition for unknown reasons, and made their way to the Petite Côte by travelling overland. They managed to return to England, probably in mid-1619, and informed the company about the fate of the *Catherine*.

---

<sup>56</sup> The up-river expedition led by Jobson sustained no casualties, but the rest of the crew was less fortunate. See: *DRG*, pp. 26, 197.

<sup>57</sup> *DRG*, p. 17, n. 3.

Having received the news, the adventurers promptly sent the *St. John*, a pinnacle of 50 tonnes, with a new supply of goods, as well as new instructions for Thompson. The company leaders still trusted him at that point, as they left matters to his own discretion: he could return to England with the *St. John* or, if having a reason to believe that he was about to achieve the expedition's aims, to take the goods and stay in the Gambia. Thompson chose to stay, sending the *St. John* back to England with letters for the adventurers, in which he requests them to send him a ship and a pinnacle in the next dry season, believing that he was close to achieving the expedition's goals. He had learnt of an African merchant named Buckor Sano, who lived in a place called Tinda, far up the river, and who used to trade in the gold-bearing regions of the interior. With the advent of the dry season Thompson, now with only two crewmembers, resumed his progress up river, eventually arriving at Tinda around March 1620, only to discover that Sano was away on a business trip.<sup>58</sup> While Thompson was determined to wait for Sano, one of his crew members, who may have lost patience with him, murdered him.<sup>59</sup>

Unaware of Thompson's fate, the adventurers sent another voyage to the Gambia in October 1620. The expedition consisted of a ship (the *Sion*, of 200 tonnes) and a pinnacle (again, the *St. John*) as requested in his letters.<sup>60</sup> This may have been one reason for appointing the inexperienced Jobson, who sailed aboard the *St. John*, as the head of the up-river expedition. He had neither experience in the Barbary trade, nor a command of Arabic. The intention of the heads of the company, as it seems, was that he would join Thompson, rather than replace him. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why they gave Jobson the important task of leading the up-river expedition.

Jobson's fleet reached the mouth of the Gambia on 17 November 1620. The two ships split a week later, with the *St. John* proceeding up-stream until reaching the town of Oranto in mid-December. There, they met two survivors of the first voyage from whom, most probably, they learned of Tinda and Buckor Sano.<sup>61</sup> On 2 January 1621 Jobson and

---

<sup>58</sup> Hair suggests that part of the way to Tinda may have been made overland, due to low water levels. *DRG* p. 54.

<sup>59</sup> The description of the first and second Gambia voyages, as appears in this paragraph, is based on Jobson's summary of the events of 1618-1619. See: *GT*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 187.

nine other of the crewmembers departed from Oranto on their way up-river, first with a shallop, and then with canoes. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, they reached the confluence of the Nieriko and the Gambia rivers, 460 miles up-river,<sup>62</sup> where they had to stop their progress due to low water level. While this point proved to be the terminus of Jobson's voyage, it was within a few miles of their immediate destination of Tinda.<sup>63</sup> The English stayed at that place for two weeks, during which they met Sano and traded with the local people. Sano knew nothing of Timbuktu, but he did tell them fabulous stories of the richness of the land to the east, where houses have roofs made of gold, and promised to take them there. Despite Sano's encouragement, the quickly receding water level (which meant that some of the way back to Oranto would have to be made overland), and the fact that they ran out of goods, forced the English to return to the *St. John*, and then to England.<sup>64</sup> The attempt to reach the gold fields of the interior was left for another voyage.

Despite failing to progress any further than Tinda, the 1620-1621 voyage was an important achievement. Jobson and his men were the only Europeans, apart from the Portuguese, to travel that far into the West African interior by the early seventeenth century. While they did not reach the gold-bearing regions of the interior, they were not too far from them. The confluence of the Gambia and the Nieriko rivers is only 80-90 miles (as the crow flies) away from the Falémé River, the western border of Bambuk, and though the Falémé and the Gambia are not connected, that distance could be traversed by land. Since the terrain between these two rivers is flat and void of any significant geographical obstacles (mountains, wide rivers, bogs), an overland journey was not a very difficult undertaking, as the 1689 journey of Cornelius Hodges shows. An agent of the Royal African Company (RAC), Hodges was given the task of reaching Bambuk through the Gambia in order to examine the gold fields and the slave markets of that region. He travelled with a company of 68 men from Barakunda to the Falémé, a matter of 130-140 miles, in 16 days. Jobson and his men could expect a shorter journey from Tinda, but such an undertaking would have required different preparations in logistical terms: more goods, and probably more men, had to be sent up-river in the first place. In addition, as the 1620-1621 voyage was conceived, much like the 1618 one, as a reconnaissance mission, the English lacked a stable base from which they could operate.

---

<sup>62</sup> *DRG*, p. 55.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 188-90.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 191-95; *GT*, pp. 101-04.



**Figure 10:** The drainage basin of the Gambia. Source: *Wikipedia*.<sup>65</sup> This map shows the relatively short distance from Barakunda (Hodges' starting point) the confluence of the Gambia and the Nieriko rivers (Jobson's terminus) to the Falémé River, the western border of Bambuk.

The English also acquired important commercial information and created potentially valuable commercial connections, especially in the upper section of the river. While Buckor Sano's stories of houses with golden roofs were either exaggerations or misunderstandings (Jobson's company included a local interpreter, whose command of English may have been very basic),<sup>66</sup> the African merchant seems to have been familiar with the gold trade of Bambuk. Establishing commercial connections with him or with

<sup>65</sup> *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gambia\\_River#/media/File:Gambiarivermap.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gambia_River#/media/File:Gambiarivermap.png)> [accessed 13 October 2019].

<sup>66</sup> *DRG*, pp. 141, n.1.



other local merchants could have been very beneficial for the Gambia project. In addition, they brought back home commercially valuable geographical and ethnographical information. This information, which is mainly preserved in Jobson's writings, could have formed the basis for the preparations of the next stages of the Gambia project.

In fact, there is a good indication that when the English resumed their engagement with the Gambia in the early 1650s, after an absence of twenty years, they referred to the *GT* in order to draw information on the region. In December 1651, the members of the third Guinea Company (chartered in 1650) sent a letter with instructions to their factor on the Gambia, asking him, among other things, to 'inquire for some of that country mary-bucks books of the Mahomitants religion' and to send them to England if they are inexpensive.<sup>67</sup> 'Mary-buck' is a corruption of the word 'marabout', a Muslim scholar or religious teacher. As this unique form first appears in the *GT*, later uses of it indicate that the user was familiar with Jobson's work. Jobson noted that marabouts whom he met in his voyage up-river used to carry with them 'great books, all manuscripts of their religion',<sup>68</sup> and it may well be that his description of these sizeable books impressed the letter writers, who perceived it as an exotic item worth having.<sup>69</sup> The form 'mary-back' also appears in an anonymous description of a voyage made up the Gambia River in 1661-1662, attributed to John Vermuyden, who led such a voyage at that time on behalf of the Royal Adventurers.<sup>70</sup> The last seventeenth-century reference to Jobson or his works is made in the letter of Cornelius Hodges (1690), previously mentioned. Hodges mentions Jobson when relating to the distance between James Island (near the mouth of the Gambia River) and Barakunda, claiming that his predecessor badly miscalculated it (Jobson, indeed,

---

<sup>67</sup> 'Rowland Wilson and others members of the Guinea Company to James Pope', in *The Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Portland*, vol. 2 (London: Her Majesties Stationary Office, 1893), p. 29.

<sup>68</sup> *GT*, p. 74.

<sup>69</sup> It is also possible that they asked for these books for an acquaintance who was a collector and had a cabinet of curiosities. This was not an uncommon practice: in 1625 the collector John Tradescant asked Slaney, Crispe, Cloberry and John Wood (Slaney's apprentice) to bring him several exotic items from West Africa, such as the heads of an elephant and a hippo. See: *Calendar of State Papers Colonial (CSP Colonial)* vol. 1 (1574-1660), ed. by W. Noel Sainsbury (London: Longman & Co., 1860) p. 75.

<sup>70</sup> *DRG*, p. 48 n. 1. The narrative of the 1661-1662 voyage is found in: Francis Moore, *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa* (London: Printed by Edward Cave, 1738), Appendix III, pp. 12-17.

exaggerated the distances he covered during his 1620-1621 voyage).<sup>71</sup> These references show that the *GT* helped to keep the Gambia in English consciousness during the nation's twenty-year absence from the region, thus sowing the seeds for its development into an English sphere of influence from the 1660s onwards.

\*

In the summer of 1621, however, the situation looked less promising. The Guinea Company found itself on the brink of bankruptcy in the wake of the 1618-1621 voyages, and the Gambia project stalled. According to an account made by the company after the return of the third voyage (in July or August of 1621), the total cost of the project up to that point – that is, the setting out of three voyages to the Gambia – was £7,067. The third voyage, which brought back a cargo of hides, ivory and wax, was the only one to generate a substantial revenue (£1,386), but even this venture was far from covering the money invested in it (£1,920). The two other voyages were an utter failure in commercial terms: the second voyage (costing £876) made only £80, while the disastrous first voyage (£1856) made no money at all. An additional sum of £2,412, covering mostly wages, was paid at the end of the second and third voyages. Thus, according to the company's calculations, by the summer of 1621, the Gambia project had lost £5,600.<sup>72</sup>

It is clear that the loss of the *Catherine* and its crew in 1619 was a decisive moment which, more than anything else, sealed the fate of the Gambia project. The first voyage, though meant to generate revenues, of course, was primarily a reconnaissance expedition. This was a venture in which the company might expect to lose some money, as the men sent to the Gambia were asked to explore an uncharted territory in order to find out if it was possible to reach the gold-bearing regions of the West African interiors by sailing up that river. Had the first voyage succeeded, the follow-up voyages could have used the information gleaned by Thompson and his men, and been expected to generate substantial revenues by trading their cargos for gold. Since the object of the first voyage was only achieved by the third one, it meant that the company had invested substantial sums in two

---

<sup>71</sup> Stone, 'The Journey of Cornelius Hodges', p. 90.

<sup>72</sup> 'Account of Three Several Voiages Sett Forth for River Gambia', *TNA*, SP14/124, f. 115.

voyages which yielded almost no money. With the additional money paid in wages for its participants (£1,300), the third voyage, while being the best one in commercial terms, lost almost the same amount of money (£1,834 in total) as the first and second voyages (£1856 and £1988 respectively).

Such a heavy financial loss was a decisive blow to any joint-stock company's solvency, but especially to the Guinea Company, where the majority of adventures were mere investors, with little interest in the West African trade. From its beginning, the core of the company was small. According to Blake, 'there is nothing in the records to suggest that more than ten of the thirty-six foundation [sic] members [of the company] displayed a continuous and active interest in its proceedings'.<sup>73</sup> The failure of the Gambia project resulted in lack of enthusiasm among the company members after 1621, which meant that now the core had less investors and, consequently, less capital.

While the false geographic concept on which the Gambia project was based played an important role in its failure, a great deal of mismanagement was also involved. The poor returns of the second and third voyage raise questions about the financial rationale of the project. These voyages were certainly meant to yield a profit, but they were not even close to covering their expenses. The main commodity in their return cargoes was hides, which could be bought in greater numbers in Senegal. Why didn't the company send a small ship to trade for hides in the close-by Petite Côte, while Thompson, and later Jobson, were leading their expeditions up the Gambia? Such an operation might have been more expensive (including one more vessel), but could yield better financial results. While there is evidence that gum Arabic, a commodity produced and sold in Senegal,<sup>74</sup> was brought to England by the company during its early years, there is no indication that its commercial engagement with Senegal was substantial.<sup>75</sup> Thus, without pursuing a trade that could yield a reliable income and balance the losses sustained during the reconnaissance expeditions, the adventurers were practically putting all their eggs in one basket, in hope that their men would reach the gold markets of the interior during these first attempts. More than anything else, the outcome of the first three voyages serves as an indication for the

---

<sup>73</sup> Blake, 'Farm of the Guinea Trade', p. 91-92.

<sup>74</sup> Curtin, *Economic Change*, pp. 215-16.

<sup>75</sup> *APC*, vol. 38 (1621-1623) ed. by J. V. Lyle (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1932) p. 162.

adventurers' lack of experience in the West African trade, and amateurish approach towards the venture in which they invested their money.

## 6. On a Collision Course: The Gambia Project and the Camwood Trade (1621-1628)

While the Guinea Company found itself on the brink of bankruptcy after the third Gambia voyage, it continued to exist during the 1620s. The company made some further attempts to pursue the Gambia project, at least until 1628, though these were met with even less success than the previous ones. The same factors that prevented the company from succeeding in 1618-1621, namely, the geographic misconception on which its activity in the region was based, and the inexperience and incompetence of the members were also responsible for the failure of that project in the years 1621-1631. To these, one should also add the losses sustained and debts incurred in the course of the first three Gambia voyages, which made it difficult for the company to function properly. None of the above factors, however, was as detrimental to the Gambia project as the mere fact that the few members of the company who were experienced with the West African trade were not interested in that speculative venture, but in the more reliable and well-established camwood trade.

The detrimental effect of the camwood trade on the Gambia project is not surprising, as Davies's wish to monopolize the former was the main reason for the establishment of the Guinea Company. Initially, Davies enjoyed, indeed, an unofficial monopoly over the camwood trade with the chartering of the company in November 1618 and the exclusion of Slaney from the West African trade. The financial failure of the first two Gambia voyages soon changed that situation, as it opened the way for Slaney's return to the scene. Having its stock depleted after the second voyage, the company badly needed new investments in order to continue operating, and at this point it would welcome anyone willing to put his money on the project. In this way, Slaney became a shareholder sometime before the departure of third voyage (October 1620), which he helped to organize and, apparently, also to fund.<sup>76</sup> With his rival gaining a foothold in the company, Davies had to react quickly, and he did so by asking its governor for an official monopoly over the camwood trade. The latter consented but, in return, obliged Davies to pay part of a debt owed to Lady Craven, the widow of the former mayor of London William Craven, from whom the struggling company borrowed £1,000 in November 1620.<sup>77</sup> The way by which Davies and Slaney took advantage of the company's financial predicament in order

---

<sup>76</sup> 'The Answer of Sir Allen Appesley, Knyght', *TNA*, C2/Chas I/S94/34.

<sup>77</sup> *TNA*, C2/Chas I/S85/4.

to promote their own commercial interests shows that the Gambia project practically died in late 1620, with the camwood trade regaining its former status as the main venture of the English West African trade.

The shifting balance of power between the Gambia project and the camwood trade harmed the former venture. Davies' formal monopoly over the camwood trade created antagonism towards the company, especially among dyers and clothiers. This antagonism was translated into a series of attacks on the company's monopoly over the West African trade. The first of these attacks was made in March 1622 with a petition submitted to the Privy Council, calling for the regulation of the prices of two West African commodities extensively used in the dying industry, gum Arabic and camwood. Though the petition stated that the price of gum had quadrupled since 1618 while that of camwood had 'only' doubled, it seems that the monopoly over the latter commodity was a greater source of grievance for the petitioners, as Davies is the only member of the company to be mentioned by name in the petition.<sup>78</sup> In May 1624, when the House of Commons examined a similar grievance, Davies' name was again the only one mentioned specifically. Moreover, the company was reproached for using its own monopoly in order to grant him a personal monopoly over the camwood trade.<sup>79</sup>

In addition, the pursuit of the camwood trade after 1621 often came at the expense of the Gambia project. There is evidence that Davies contributed to the project during its early days, as his nephew and apprentice, Humphrey Davies, served as his factor on the voyage of 1620-1621.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, after the failure of the 1618-1621 voyages, his approach seems to have changed. It was not only the losses incurred by that project up to 1621, but also the fact that he had already procured an official monopoly over the camwood trade by then, for which he paid a considerable price. In this situation, he did not have much incentive to support a project in which he was not interested in the first place.

The results of this change in approach can be seen in the fourth Gambia voyage. In late 1624 the company decided to resume the Gambia project after a hiatus of three years.

---

<sup>78</sup> *APC*, vol. 38 (1621-1623), p. 162.

<sup>79</sup> *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol 1. (1547-1629), (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1802), p. 710.

<sup>80</sup> *HP*, p. 922.

A ship of 160-180 tonnes was bought in London and fitted out for that purpose, but it did not sail far. Soon after its departure from London in late 1624 or early 1625 the ship, which proved unseaworthy, had to call at the port Dover for repairs after springing a leak. In his petition to Charles I (1626?), Jobson, who was on board (according to his testimony), attributed the failure of that voyage to ‘the secret practice of the Merchaunts’, who deprived the gentlemen members of ‘such convenient shipping’, forcing them to compromise on a ship that ‘proved rotten, & so ominous to their proceeding, hazarding the lives of us all that were ingaged in her’.<sup>81</sup> What Jobson seems to imply here is that the merchant members – at that point, the most prominent among them was Davies, though Slaney, as a shareholder, may have also been involved in that voyage – were not willing to invest the amount of money necessary for buying an appropriate ship.

Three years later, the camwood traders were again accused of ruining a Gambia voyage. This time, the main culprit was not Davies, who died in January 1627, but Slaney. The voyage, which was agreed upon in a company meeting in March 1627, was intended to depart England in September or October. Yet no ship sailed to the Gambia in the fall of 1627, as some of the members who subscribed for that venture eventually refused to pay their subscriptions. When the matter was taken to the Court of Chancery, the defaulters explained that they did so as the company did not restrict the activity of Slaney and his partners.<sup>82</sup>

Indeed, the problem of Slaney’s unclear position within the company and his extensive trade to West Africa outside the sphere of its activities became acute in the years 1626-1628. Though becoming a shareholder in 1620, Slaney probably chose not to be officially admitted to the company at that time. He became a full member of the company only in 1628, though he did not do it of his free will, but was forced to by the Privy Council. Thus, Slaney seems to act during the years 1620-1628 as part member and part interloper. As long as Davies was alive, it was he, rather than the company, who tried to limit Slaney’s activity.<sup>83</sup> When Davies died – and even slightly before that – the company began to take action against his rival. In November 1626, two months before Davies’

---

<sup>81</sup> *DRG*, p. 200.

<sup>82</sup> ‘The replicacon of Nicholas Crispe and Godfrey Haverchampe esquire’, *TNA*, C2/Chas I/C129/94.

<sup>83</sup> *APC*, vol. 38 (1621-1623), pp. 477-78.

death, Cloberry petitioned the Privy Council ‘to be relieved of an arrest of a shipp and goods bound for Ginny and Binny’.<sup>84</sup> The arrest was made by order of the HCA, upon the request of the members of the Guinea Company, which maintained that Cloberry sent his ship to West Africa ‘contrary to a patente heretofore graunted to them’.<sup>85</sup> This dispute between the company and Slaney and Cloberry continued for nearly two years, until a settlement was reached, with the arbitration of the Privy Council, on 15 October 1628. According to that settlement, Slaney and Cloberry were to ‘be sworne Members of the said Company and submitt to be regulated by the Constitucions and Ordinances of the said Company, excepting nevertheless the tradeing with the said Company in a Joynt Stocke’.<sup>86</sup> Despite being exempted of the need to participate in funding the company’s voyages (that is the meaning of ‘trading with the Company in a Joint Stock’), the two merchants agreed to send their ships to the Gambia River, hitherto excluded from their sphere of activity, in order to support the Gambia project.<sup>87</sup>

In between the abortive voyages of 1624 and 1627 the company, as it turned out, did manage to complete a return voyage to the Gambia. Not much is known of that venture. The correspondence of the naval administrator Sir John Coke shows that the company approached the navy in October 1626, requesting two ships for a voyage to West Africa and, eventually, receiving only one.<sup>88</sup> As a Chancery record confirms that at least one ship sailed to West Africa in 1626, it can be concluded that the voyage began in October or November of that year.<sup>89</sup> The basic details of the voyage are briefly mentioned by the soldier and explorer John Smith in his *True Travels* (1630). Discussing the recent activity of his fellow countrymen in West Africa, Smith writes as follows:

Also the great river of *Gambra* [was visited], by Captain *Jobson*, who is returned there in the Year 1626, with Mr. *William Grent*, and thirteen or fourteen others, to

---

<sup>84</sup> *APC*, vol. 41 (1626), ed. by J. V. Lyle (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1938), p. 385.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *APC*, vol. 44 (1628-1629), ed. by R.F. Monger ((London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1958), p. 196.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-97.

<sup>88</sup> Historical Manuscript Commission, *Twelfth Report: Appendix I* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1890), p. 275.

<sup>89</sup> ‘The Several Answeres of John Hicks’, *TNA*, C2/Chas I/G8/31.



stay in the country, to discover some way to those rich Mines of *Gago* and *Tumbatu*, from whence is supposed the *Moors of Barbary* have their Gold.<sup>90</sup>

Smith's description suggests that the aim of that expedition was to pick up where Jobson, who was involved again, left in 1621: to establish a base near the river – possibly in its upper section – from which further excursions into the interior could be made. While the outcome of this venture is not known, there is nothing in the extant documentation to suggest that it made any major breakthrough. In any case, the abortive voyage of 1627 was the company's last attempt to send an expedition to the Gambia.

The fact that the company kept functioning during the second half of the 1620s, and even made attempts to maintain the Gambia project despite its financial predicament, is owing to a process that took place in the years 1625-1628, by which the original members of the company were replaced by new ones. Of the ten active members mentioned by Blake, only four remained by 1627, with the other six dead or out of the company.<sup>91</sup> At that point, however, the company had already admitted few new members with a keen interest in the West African trade: the most notable of them were the courtier Sir Kenelm Digby and, more importantly, the merchant Nicholas Crispe, who would become its dominant figure in the years 1628-1644.<sup>92</sup> The latter is also the one who would first solve the conflict between the champions of the Gambia project and the camwood traders, and then initiate the reorganization of the Guinea Company.

### **7. Money, Initiative, Vision: Crispe's Takeover of the Guinea Company (1628-1632)**

As the members of the 'quintet' in the 1550s and 1560s, and Hanford, Wolstenholme and Smith in the 1610s, Crispe, the man who played such a pivotal role in the history of the company in the 1630s and 1640s, was also a high-profile merchant who showed a keen interest in the English West African trade. He hailed from a family that had its origin in the landed gentry of Gloucestershire, but which had established itself in London before his

---

<sup>90</sup> John Smith, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captaine John Smith, in Europe, Asia, Affrica, and America, from Anno Domini 1593 to 1629* (London: Printed by J. H., 1630), pp. 36-37.

<sup>91</sup> 'Farm of the Guinea Trade', pp. 91-92, 96.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

birth in 1598. His father was Ellis Crispe (died 1625), an eminent merchant and a member of the Company of Salters, who served as sheriff and alderman of London.<sup>93</sup> Crispe was able to add greatly to his fortune thanks to his ingenuity – for instance, contemporaries credited him with the invention of a new method for making bricks<sup>94</sup> – and to his business acumen. Gaining his freedom from the Salters' Company in 1619, he soon became an important investor in different foreign trades.<sup>95</sup> One of his main commercial interests lay in the East India trade and, as early as 1623 he was appointed to the governing body of the EIC, in which he was a substantial stockholder (like his father). Another important commercial interest was the West African trade. His first association with it seems to be in 1625, though he probably entered that trade a few years before.<sup>96</sup>

There is evidence that he was among the organizers of the 1627 voyage to the Gambia, as he sued the defaulting members for their refusal to pay their shares.<sup>97</sup> The behaviour of his fellow members during the preparations for that voyage, along with his faith in the West African trade, may have induced him to take over the company in 1628 by buying most of its stock. This move enabled him to control and direct the company without having to rely on his colleagues. Crispe's takeover is known through depositions given in the HCA in July 1629 by the factors of Slaney and his partners, who were serving at the Sherbro River, and were asked by Crispe's agents to deliver them the goods stored in their factories.<sup>98</sup> Though not mentioned by contemporary sources, it seems likely that Crispe also took over the factories of the late John Davies in the Sierra Leone estuary, which had been taken by Slaney after his rival's death, as a HCA deposition from September 1631 reveals.<sup>99</sup> A few month later, in October 1628, Crispe forced Slaney and

---

<sup>93</sup> Eveline Cruickshanks, 'Crispe, Sir Nicholas [c.1598-1666], of Hammersmith, Mdx', in *The History of Parliament* (maintained by the Institute of Historical Research). see: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/crisp-sir-nicholas-1598-1666>> [accessed 17.4.2018]

<sup>94</sup> Cruickshanks, *ibid*; Daniel Lysons, *The Environs of London*, vol. II, part I (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1811), p. 261.

<sup>95</sup> See note 93.

<sup>96</sup> *CSP Colonial*, vol. 1 (1574-1660), p. 75.

<sup>97</sup> *TNA*, C2/Chas I/C129/94.

<sup>98</sup> *TNA*, HCA, 13/48 (deposition of Thomas Howard), ff. 238v.-r. See also: Robert Porter, 'The Crispe Family and the African Trade in the Seventeenth Century', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1968), 57-77 (pp. 59-60).

<sup>99</sup> *TNA*, HCA 13/49 (deposition of Thomas Davis), ff. 469r.-470v.

Cloberry to become full members of the Guinea Company and contribute to the Gambia project.

Crispe's takeover did not mean that Slaney and Cloberry lost control completely of the camwood trade. As Howard's deposition reveals, they maintained their interest in that business by becoming Crispe's partners. Another HCA deposition from September 1631 confirms the existence of the partnership, when referring to Slaney's pinnace, the *Humfrey*, as belonging to 'Mr. Humphrey Slaney, Mr. Nicholas Crispe, and Mr. William Cloberry'.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this partnership was forced upon Slaney and Cloberry by Crispe. Working from within the Guinea Company, Crispe managed to make the two give up control over the camwood trade by putting an arrest on their ships, thus threatening to ruin their business. If Slaney and Cloberry wanted to continue in that profitable trade, they had to accept Crispe's conditions. In 1629, they were again in dispute with Crispe, when their attempt to avoid contributing the company's joint stock was blocked, and Crispe eventually forced them to become full members of the re-chartered company of 1631.<sup>101</sup>

The first recorded West African voyage after Crispe's takeover attempted to find a solution to the problems of finance and organization that had prevented the company from functioning properly in the previous years. First, in order to avoid the fiasco of the intended 1627 voyage, when many of the company members refused to pay their subscriptions, Crispe returned to an older method of funding voyages – that of trading in partnership. Thus, the *Benediction*, the admiral of the two-ship fleet that departed England in early 1629, was fitted by three separate groups of adventurers: Crispe and his trading associate Thomas Marsham, Slaney and Cloberry, and the Chamberlaine Family (Abraham Chamberlaine the Elder and his two sons, Abraham and Thomas). Each of these three groups contributed a third of the charges of setting the ships out to sea. While this *ad-hoc* arrangement made the 1629 voyage possible, it also serves as an indication that the Guinea Company of 1618 has ceased to operate as a joint-stock organization.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> *TNA*, HCA 13/49 (deposition of Richard Howe), f. 470v.

<sup>101</sup> 'The Humble Petition of Humphrey Slany and William Cloberry of London', *TNA*, SP16/154, f. 52. A summary of the petition is found in: *Calendar of State Papers Domestic (CSPD)*, Charles I (1629-1631), ed. by John Bruce (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1860), p. 136.

<sup>102</sup> Blake, 'Farm of the Guinea Trade', p. 103.

Second, that voyage also expressed an acknowledgment in the failure of the Gambia project. The main West African destinations of the *Benediction* and the *Anne* (a pinnace), were the mouth of the Senegal River and Cap Vert. While the fleet's captain was instructed to send a pinnace to trade in the Gambia River if there were no French vessels there – the voyage departed England during the last phases of the 1627-1629 Anglo-French war, and the Company members were afraid that their fleet would be attacked – visiting that locality was certainly not the main object of that voyage.<sup>103</sup> The list of goods that the captain was instructed to buy was typical of Senegalese commodities – hides, gum Arabic, ivory and wax, but not gold (it is possible, of course, the English traded for gold in either Senegal or the Gambia, but this was not the main commodity).<sup>104</sup>

One problem, which dogged the Guinea Company from its very beginning – its bad luck – could not be solved. Crispe and his partners feared French hostilities for a good reason. In June 1629 a French man-of-war from Dieppe attacked the English off Senegal, ignoring the fact that peace was concluded between England and France (ending the 1627-1629 war) a few months earlier.<sup>105</sup> The English ships and their cargoes were seized, and many of the mariners were killed. This was not the only attack made by the French on the ships of the Guinea Company in the wake of the war. On Christmas day of 1630, a year and a half after the assault on the *Benediction*, Slaney's pinnace, aptly called the *Humphrey*, which was 'employed to carry goods too & froe in Ginney'<sup>106</sup>, was surprized and taken at the mouth of the Sierra Leone estuary by another (or possibly the same) French man-of-war from Dieppe.<sup>107</sup>

It is likely that the failure of the 1629 voyage led Crispe to make two important decisions in 1631. The first one was to petition the Crown for a new charter, which was granted in June 1631. This was an attempt to remedy past organizational problems: the debts incurred during the 1620s which prevented it from operating efficiently, and the

---

<sup>103</sup> The preparations for that voyage are briefly mentioned in the minutes of the Privy Council's meeting of 15 October 1628, in which the settlement between the Guinea Company and Slaney and Cloberry was made. See: *APC*, vol. 44 (1628-1629), p. 196.

<sup>104</sup> *TNA*, C2/Chas I/C1/34.

<sup>105</sup> *CSP Colonial*, vol. 1 (1574-1660), p. 114; *CSPD, 1628-1629*, pp. 536, 544.

<sup>106</sup> *TNA*, HCA 13/49 (the deposition of Richard Chapman), f. 452r.

<sup>107</sup> *TNA*, HCA 13/49 (the deposition of Richard Howe), f. 470v.

refusal of many members to pay their subscriptions for the 1627 voyage. The partnership formed for the 1629 voyage was an *ad-hoc* arrangement and could not have been maintained for long. There is no doubt that the financial loss sustained from the French attack on the *Benediction* – according to a contemporary source, the goods carried by that ship on that voyage were worth over £8,700<sup>108</sup> – was a heavy blow for each of the six adventurers who financed that venture. Thus, if Crispe and his associates wished to maintain a substantial commercial activity in West Africa (an object that was becoming harder to achieve in light of the intensification of competition between the European players in that arena) the creation of a new joint stock and a reorganization of the company through a new charter were an imperative. A new charter could have enabled them to make a fresh start with new investment.

The second decision was to resume English presence on the Gold Coast after an absence of 65 years, as can be learned from the charter of June 1631. This decision was based on the changing balance of European powers in the West Africa, which took place in the first three decades of the seventeenth century. While the 1629-1630 attacks on the *Benediction* and on the company's shipping in Sierra Leone could still be seen as belated responses to the 1627-1629 war,<sup>109</sup> they nevertheless signified the growing power of the French in Senegambia. The rise of Cardinal de Richelieu to power in the mid-1620s – especially his acquisition of the office of *Grand Maître et Surintendant-général du Commerce* in 1626,<sup>110</sup> gave French overseas activity a boost, and West Africa was no exception. It was in that year that a group of merchants from Rouen founded the first French company involved with the West African trade.<sup>111</sup> With the French mainly focusing on their well-established trade in Senegal, the English now found it more difficult to claim their stake of the Senegalese trade, as the attack on the *Benediction* proved them. Much more alarming was the French attack on the English in Sierra Leone, which showed the latter that their profitable enclave on the West African littoral was no longer secure. The

---

<sup>108</sup> *TNA*, HCA 13/49 (the deposition of Thomas Harrison), f. 470r.

<sup>109</sup> This is how the seventeenth century French Chronicler David Asseline, who wrote a history of the town of Dieppe, described the attack on the *Benediction*. See: David Asseline, *Les Antiquitez et Chroniques de la Ville de Dieppe*, tome II, ed. by Michel Hardy (Dieppe: a Marais, 1874), pp. 236-39.

<sup>110</sup> Geoffrey Treasure, *Richelieu and Mazarin* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 6, 32.

<sup>111</sup> Prosper Cultru, *Les origines de l'Afrique Occidentale: histoire du XVe siècle à 1870* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1910), p. 37.

need to protect the camwood trade was one, important reason to strengthen the Guinea Company by reorganizing it.

The French were not the only European power to reorganize its West African trade in the 1620s. The Dutch West India Company (WIC), which monopolized the Atlantic trade of the United Provinces, was established in 1621-1624.<sup>112</sup> The commercial interests of the Dutch were wider than that of the French, encompassing West Africa's Atlantic littoral from Cap Vert in the north to Angola in the south.<sup>113</sup> Dutch activity in West Africa also threatened England's commercial interests in the region, mainly in the Gambia and Sierra Leone. An early evidence of the WIC's interest in Gambia can be found in an order it gave one of its officers in November 1624: he was instructed to browse through Jobson's *GT*, published in the previous year, and 'note the essentials in Dutch'.<sup>114</sup> However, they seem to have been better established in Sierra Leone, where they had maintained factories from 1630.<sup>115</sup> In 1628, the organization of the Dutch West African trade became more efficient with the allocation of different spheres of influence to the different chambers comprising the WIC. In this way, the Chamber of Stadt and Lande (Groningen and its vicinity) managed the trade of the Gambia, while that of Sierra Leone was under the authority of and the Chamber of Maas.<sup>116</sup> Dutch commercial prowess and efficient organization were real challenges for the struggling Guinea Company, serving as another incentive for reorganization of the English West African trade.

Nevertheless, Dutch activity in West Africa had also opened some opportunities for the English, especially on the Gold Coast. During the first three decades of the seventeenth century, the Dutch managed to establish themselves on the Gold Coast, despite the opposition of the Portuguese. Though failing twice – in 1599 and 1625 – to expel the latter from their headquarters in Elmina, Dutch activity on the Gold Coast showed other European powers that Portuguese dominance was weakening. For the English, who were

---

<sup>112</sup> Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2011), p. 181.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>114</sup> Adam Jones, 'Decompiling Dapper: A Preliminary Search for Evidence', *History in Africa*, vol. 17 (1990), 171-209 (p. 192, n. 17); Algemeen Rijksarchief, O.W.I.C., 1, resolution of the XIX, 9.11.1624.

<sup>115</sup> Ribeiro da Silva, p. 218.

<sup>116</sup> Rodney, *Upper Guinea Coast*, p. 127.

driven to launch a difficult and costly project in order to join the trade in the West African gold, this geopolitical development presented new opportunities. With the prospect of reaching the gold fields of the West African interior by sailing up the Gambia River looking less promising after a decade of failures, it became apparent to Crispe in 1631 that establishing a factory on the Gold Coast could prove an easier way to acquire West African gold. Thus, in a time when England's competitors were reorganizing their trade by incorporating it (i.e. founding companies), and while these competitors were asserting their position in regions where the English were active, Crispe had a good reason to petition for a new charter, and to look for new spheres of activity.

The charter of 25 June 1631 granted the company a monopoly over the West African trade along most of the Atlantic coast of Africa (from Cape Blanco to the Cape of Good Hope) for a term of thirty-one years.<sup>117</sup> Only six patentees enjoyed these generous privileges: Crispe, Slaney, Cloberry, Sir Kenelm Digby, Sir Richard Young, and Sir George Kirke.<sup>118</sup> Judging from the records of the court of Chancery (the main source for the history of the company in the 1620s), the last two individuals were new to the company and to the West African trade. Both seem to have been admitted to the company not long before the granting of the charter in June 1631 (there is evidence that Young was a member of the company prior to June 1631, but the same cannot be said of Kirke).<sup>119</sup> The main reason for the inclusion of Young (a baron) and Kirke (a knight) in the charter, besides their wealth and their ability to invest in the company, was most probably the fact that both men were courtiers who could use their connections and status to promote the interests of the company.<sup>120</sup> This was especially true in the case of Kirke, who served in the Stuart household from an early age, and by 1631 held the post of the groom of the bedchamber.<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> For the charter, see: *TNA*, Patent Rolls, C66/2573, mm. 7-15.

<sup>118</sup> Patent Rolls, C66/2573, m. 10.

<sup>119</sup> For Young's involvement with the company, see: *TNA*, S.P. 16/540, nos. 82, 82 (I), 82 (II).

<sup>120</sup> For Young's involvement with the company, see: *TNA*, S.P. 16/540, nos. 82, 82 (I), 82 (II). For Young's biography, see: Peter Lefevre & Andrew Thrush, 'Young, Richard (c.1580-1651), of Philip Lane, London', in *The History of Parliament* (maintained by the Institute of Historical Research). see:

<<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/young-richard-1580-1651>> [accessed: 29 April 2018]

<sup>121</sup> For Kirke's biography, see: Peter Lefevre, 'Kirke, George (-d. 1675), of Whitehall', in *The History of Parliament* (maintained by the Institute of Historical Research). see:

The same reason seems to explain why Digby, who refused to pay his subscription for the voyage of 1627 and was sued by Crispe as a result, was included in the charter.

Despite its very small size, the makeup of the 1631 company was stronger than that of the 1618 one. While the old company had only one member, Davies, with a real interest in the West African trade, the new one had four (out of six): Crispe, Slaney, and Cloberry were heavily invested in the camwood trade, and Digby had been a member of the company for a few years. This element was important for ensuring the longevity of the reorganized company. Another important element was that, in contrast with the leaders of the 1618 company, Crispe knew how to achieve his goals, and planned the Gold Coast project very carefully, as the preparatory steps he took in 1631 show. Not only that he managed to reorganize the company and procure a new charter, but he also succeeded in mustering two former agents of the WIC – Arent de Groot and Jeremias Nuyts – who served on the Gold Coast, and were to lead the process of establishing the English in that region.<sup>122</sup> These two steps, taken in 1631, enabled the company to launch its Gold Coast project in the following year.<sup>123</sup> The Guinea Company maintained its activity on the Gold Coast until 1657 and, though staying for most of that time in the shadow of the WIC, and ultimately selling its possessions there to the EIC, it nevertheless succeeded in gaining the English a foothold in the region.

---

<<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/kirke-george-1675>> [accessed: 29 April 2018]

<sup>122</sup> Robert Porter, *European Activity on the Gold Coast, 1620-1667* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, unpublished D. Litt Dissertation, 1975), pp. 119-21.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.



## Conclusion

The Gambia project was an audacious and innovative scheme, as well as a very complicated undertaking. It was not necessarily the ethnographic and political setting of the Gambia that made it so complicated but the mere fact that it required the English to penetrate deep into the West African interior. The project necessitated, at its first stage, a reconnaissance of the Gambia River and the West African interior – a task that involved sailing some 450 miles up-stream, first with ships, then canoes, before leaving the river and embarking on an 80-90 mile overland journey to the region of Bambuk. At the second stage, once a safe and short route from the Gambia to Bambuk was found, there was a need to establish factories along the river, in order to maintain such a long-distance trade for years. All this means that such a project, which involves a great degree of uncertainty, had to be carefully planned before being pursued, in terms of both logistics and finances.

Unfortunately, the Guinea Company was ill suited to pursue a project of this kind. Its makeup – the 6:1 ratio of gentlemen to merchants, the fact that most of the members were mere investors, and a general lack of genuine interest in the West African trade – was problematic. Moreover, the only member with experience in that trade, Davies, had little interest in the project, using the company he helped to establish as an instrument for promoting his own interests, namely, securing a monopoly over the camwood trade. To this unpromising starting point, one has to add the fact that the region on which the company concentrated its efforts was an unchartered territory for the English. Yet, as opposed to previous instances in which the English broke new ground in West Africa (the first Gold Coast voyage of 1553-1554; the preliminary voyage of the Senegal Adventurers in 1587), there is no evidence that the crews of the 1618-1621 Gambia voyages included Portuguese (or Cabo Verdean) guides. In other words, the English entered the Gambia with very little knowledge of the region.

It is not surprising, then, that the disaster that struck the first Gambia voyage in 1619 spelt the end of the project. A better-organized company – the EIC immediately comes to mind – might have coped with such a setback successfully, but for an organization mostly made of mere investors, the losses incurred in the first three voyages, as well as the failure in achieving their aims, also meant a loss of interest. It is also not surprising to see that the failure of the 1618-1621 voyages kick-started a process of

reorganization, by which the original members of the company, who were gradually leaving, were replaced by professional merchants with a real interest in the West African trade. This process showed that the West African trade did not lose its appeal after the difficulties it experienced during the early 1620s.

Considering the company's fragile situation in the summer of 1621, its greatest achievement during the next decade was its ability to survive, and even to make further attempts to pursue the Gambia project. This achievement should not be taken for granted, as the camwood merchants in the company's ranks – first Davies, and then Slaney and Cloberry – did not do much to support it and its Gambia project after 1621. Indeed, the 1620s saw the creation of a conflict between the interests of the company and that of the camwood traders, which by 1627 rendered the former dysfunctional. At that point, Crispe used his financial might to take over the company and the camwood trade – a step that most probably saved it from utter ruin. Despite its problems, the company provided Crispe with a platform through which the West African trade could be pursued and, thus, it was worth saving. After reorganizing the company and procuring a new charter, Crispe used that platform in order to shift the English commercial focus from Senegambia and the Sierra Leone trades to the more profitable Gold Coast trade.

The Guinea Company of 1618-1631 had another, long term, achievement. While the Gambia project was a commercial disaster that failed to achieve its immediate goal, it sowed the seeds for England's engagement with the Gambia in the second half of the seventeenth century. A decade of continual interest and activity in the Gambia did not go unnoticed by later English generations. That activity, and its most important product – Jobson's *GT*, which recorded the Gambia project – helped to turn the Gambia into an English sphere of influence from the 1650s onwards. When the third incarnation of the Guinea Company, re-chartered in 1650, attempted to establish itself on the Gambia, the region was no longer a terra incognita for the English.

## Conclusion

In 1632, the English returned to the Gold Coast, after a break of sixty-seven years. This event was highly significant on both concrete and symbolic levels. When the English began sailing regularly to West Africa back in 1553, the Gold Coast was their main destination, and its gold trade their main pursuit. Thus, when Portuguese opposition to their presence on the Gold Coast intensified in the mid-1565, the English reacted not only by withdrawing from the gold trade, but ultimately by withdrawing from the West African trade altogether. It was only in 1587 that the English resumed their commercial engagement with West Africa, slowly establishing themselves in Senegal – as far as possible from the Gold Coast, Portugal's centre of operations in the region. During the next decades, they gradually ventured southward along the coast of Atlantic Africa, but generally kept a safe distance from the Gulf of Guinea. Altogether, forty-five years passed between the return of the English to West Africa in the late 1580s and their renewal of activity on the Gold Coast.

The English returned there in the early 1630s not because they were significantly stronger than they were in the 1560s, but because the hold of the Portuguese on the Gold Coast had been weakening since the early seventeenth century as a result of Dutch activity in the region. In fact, it does not seem that the patentees of the 1631 Guinea Company were in a better situation than the members of the 'quintet' had been in the 1560s. While both groups were very small – the re-chartered Guinea Company had six members, the 'quintet' had five (ten, if taking the 'associates' into consideration) – the 1560s merchants could compensate for their size with the extensive support they received from the Crown. The 1631 Guinea Company did not enjoy such support and, as opposed to the 1550s and the 1560s, had to compete not only with the Portuguese, but also with the Dutch, who established themselves firmly on the Gold Coast by the early 1630s.

Yet, despite the unfavourable situation, the 1631 Guinea Company managed to return to the region and claim itself a share – albeit small – of the gold trade during the next twenty-five years. The change in the Portuguese position on the Gold Coast between the 1560s and the 1630s is not the only explanation for the company's ability to acquire for the English a foothold in the region. If the 1631 Guinea Company had any advantage over the 'quintet', it was in its commercial organization. While the ad-hoc manner in which the

1560s merchant consortium operated offered flexibility and enabled it to cut losses by ending its engagement with the West African trade once Portuguese opposition made its pursuit not worth the while, it did not lay any foundations for a long-lasting commercial activity in the region. In contrast, the framework of a chartered joint-stock company in which the 1630s merchants operated allowed for less flexibility once losses began accumulating, as the patentees of the 1618 Guinea Company discovered to their disappointment, but it did promote a long-lasting activity. Having a share of its stock, and being liable to its debts, the members of the Guinea Company could not terminate their activity within that body so easily, which made it more difficult to dissolve. In addition, since the company enjoyed an official monopoly over the West African trade, it obliged merchants who engaged, or wished to engage with the West African trade, to become its members, if they did not want to be taken to court. The case of Humphrey Slaney, who was compelled to join the company by Nicholas Crispe, is a case in point.

The progress from an ad-hoc operation to a joint-stock company may seem like a natural development, but this was not the case with the English West African trade. In fact, this progress was a deviation from the mode of organization that had dominated that trade since its beginning in 1553. The tendency among the English merchants pursuing the West African trade before 1618, the year that saw the establishment of the Guinea Company, was to operate individually or, at the most, within partnerships and small consortia that provided them with commercial flexibility and freedom. The members of the 'quintet' did not form a joint-stock company during the 1550s and 1560s, though the risky nature of their activity called for such an arrangement. The Senegal Adventurers, the group that monopolized the English Senegambian trade in the years 1588-1593, was a regulated company, which members could operate individually, or within small partnerships, under the umbrella of a royal charter. Not maintaining a joint stock, they had no problem in breaking their association in 1593, five years before the expiry of their monopoly's term, and keep pursuing the trade individually. This tendency is most apparent in the case of the camwood trade, which, during the 1610s and most of the 1620s was in the hands of two rival merchants.

For most of the pre-1618 period, the tendency for individual operation dovetailed with the nature of English activity. The pursuit of the gold and slave trades in the 1550s

and 1560s did require a formation of a joint-stock company, considering the challenges posed by Iberian opposition to English engagement with these two trades. Such an arrangement was also feasible in economic terms, since the high profits offered by the gold and slave trades allowed for a greater number of participants. However, the Petite Côte and the camwood trades, the core of England's mercantile activity in West Africa in the years 1587-1618, did not justify a maintenance of a joint stock, due to their moderate profits and lower operation costs. Even the development of more ambitious projects, such as Humphrey Hanford and Christopher Lanman's factory at the mouth of the Senegal in the early 1610s, did not lead to the creation of a company of that sort. Had Hanford's other project of that decade, namely, the attempt to reach Timbuktu via the Senegal River, succeeded, it could have resulted in the establishment of a joint-stock company. This is, however, only a speculation.

A joint-stock company established as a direct result of the Timbuktu project would not have been a deviation from the course taken by the English West African trade since 1587, but a natural development. During the years from 1587 to 1618, the English gradually established themselves in Senegal, first on the Petite Côte, and then on the mouth of the Senegal River. In the later locale, Hanford and Lanman's merchant consortium established a factory about 1610, from which its agents sailed up-river, making excursions into the Senegalese interior. The information gathered up-river led to the development of an ambitious project, the object of which was to reach Timbuktu by sailing on the Senegal River. Such a sequence of events would make sense, but what eventually happened does not: instead of giving rise to a joint-stock company trading with Timbuktu via the Senegal, it led to the creation of a joint-stock company which attempted to reach that very same destination through the Gambia – a region which had been largely unfamiliar to the English at that point.

The establishment of the 1618 Guinea Company had a considerable impact on the course of the English West African trade. For thirty years, England's commercial activity in West Africa had concentrated in Senegal. While the range of English operations expanded in the mid-1610s with the foundation of the Sierra Leone camwood trade, the Petite Côte and the mouth of the Senegal River still attracted the majority of English

merchants engaged with the West African trade. With its decision to concentrate its efforts on the Gambia, and using its monopoly to prevent the champions of the Senegal trade from pursuing it, the 1618 Guinea Company weakened England's position in Senegal. While the English kept trading with the region after 1618 – the Guinea Company itself made a voyage to the region in 1629 – the focus of English activity in West Africa began shifting southwards.

More significant, however, was the subjection of the West African trade to the control of a monopoly-holding joint-stock company, which had the power to organize and direct the trade. While this power was not used efficiently during its first decade of existence, the situation changed once Nicholas Crispe took over the company in 1628. Having to work within the company in order to legally participate in the English West African trade, Crispe joined its ranks around 1625. A few years after becoming a member, he used his financial might to turn the company into an instrument for promoting his own commercial interests. As these interests lay in the gold trade, the focus of English activity shifted once again in the early 1630s – now from the Gambia to the Gold Coast.

The foundation of the Sierra Leone camwood trade a few years earlier had led to the unexpected development that occurred in 1618 and changed the course of English activity in West Africa. This event was also a natural development of the renewed English West African trade. Having successfully established themselves in Senegal by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the English realized that they could expand their activity to other localities in Upper Guinea without meeting a significant Portuguese opposition. John Davies, the founder of the camwood trade, was among the first English merchants to examine the commercial opportunities available south of Senegambia. He began his engagement with the West African trade during the first decade of the seventeenth century by developing commercial relations in the Cess River region, ultimately abandoning this locality a few years later after discovering camwood in Sierra Leone. From this point, events unfolded quickly. Davies established himself in the Sierra Leone estuary by 1614. In 1616, if not earlier, his first serious competitor over that trade, Slaney, began his commercial engagement with Sierra Leone. Finally, in 1618, Davies, together with another thirty-four individuals, received a monopoly over the West African trade, which, indirectly, also meant a monopoly over the camwood trade.

As shown in Chapters Three and Four, it was the commercial rivalry between Davies and Slaney over the camwood trade that led to that rapid development of the West African trade. The latter's involvement with the Timbuktu project of Hanford and his EIC partners threatened Davies' activity in Sierra Leone, as a successful engagement with the gold trade of the West African interior could potentially provide that consortium with a monopoly over the West African trade. Davies feared, most probably, that such a monopoly would enable Slaney to expel him from the camwood trade. His failure in achieving a monopoly over the camwood trade in 1614 taught him that the Crown favoured partnerships and consortia over individuals in this respect, so he organized a consortium that included some prominent figures who could match the influence of the EIC. In helping to establish the Guinea Company, Davies secured an unofficial monopoly over the camwood trade. Once Slaney got a foothold in the company in 1620, that monopoly became official, having been granted by the company's governor. With the Davies-Slaney rivalry carried into the 1620s, the camwood trade undermined the activity of the Guinea Company, until Crispe forced Slaney and his partners to become full members of that organization, thus ensuring that English activity in West Africa would run in a single course, rather than in two parallel ones.

The facts that a young trade (the camwood trade) managed to undermine a well-established trade (the Senegal trade) within such a short time, and that the rivalry between two merchants managed to change the course of English activity in West Africa, are indicative of the nature of the English West African trade of the years 1587-1631. It was a trade pursued by a small number of merchants, who operated individually or in partnerships, without much intervention from the Crown. With the absence of a central organizing and regulating power, the narrow interests of individual merchants had a greater influence over the course of English activity than the interests of the kingdom did. Thus, while the establishment of the Guinea Company helped one individual (Davies) to expel his greatest rival (Slaney) from the West African trade, it also terminated the Timbuktu project, and brought to an end the activity of the Hanford-Lanman consortium in the mouth of the Senegal River. Moreover, not only did the 1618 charter bar many old hands from the West African trade, it also granted a monopoly over that trade to a group of novices who, except for Davies, had not been commercially engaged with the region up to that point. This step certainly did not serve England's commercial interests, to say the least.

Yet, in spite of their inherent weaknesses, the English managed to establish themselves in West Africa by 1631, and prepare their return to the Gold Coast. They were able to do so because, during the years 1587-1631, they had learned to adjust their mode of operation to their organizational capabilities. The English failed in challenging the Portuguese on the Gold Coast in 1553-1565 because the 'quintet' was not the right organization for the task. It was far too small and short in resources – despite the wealth of its members – for successfully dealing with Portuguese aggression. A large joint-stock company could have fared better in this situation, but such an organization was not established at the time. Alternately, the Crown, which collaborated with the 'quintet' during the early 1560s, could have provided the latter with greater support, especially in the military aspect, but it was not willing to run the risk of an open war with the Portuguese. The mode of operation favoured by those merchants who resumed English activity in West Africa in the late 1580s indicates that they learned the lessons of the years 1553-1565. They concentrated their commercial efforts on the northern periphery of Portugal's sphere of influence, where the control of Portuguese authorities was weaker, and where individual merchants or small partnerships could successfully pursue the local trade without a need for state support. During the first decades of the seventeenth century, they began to carve their own commercial niches along the Atlantic coast of Africa, identifying regions in which no other European nation operated regularly at the time, such as Sierra Leone, in order to avoid competition and conflict. In fact, even their more ambitious projects during that period, the Timbuktu and the Gambia ventures, followed this approach, since the English conceived them as ways of participating in the West African gold trade while avoiding a conflict with the Portuguese. Their return to the Gold Coast in 1632 was also in line with this mode of operation, as it occurred at a time when Portuguese rule in the region was on the wane, and the chance of facing opposition became smaller.

While this approach did not turn England into a significant player in West Africa by 1631, it did prepare the ground for its future ascendance to prominence in the region. Despite losing ground in Senegal after 1618, the years 1614-1631 saw the English establishing their first sphere of influence in West Africa, Sierra Leone, and laying the foundations for the creation of a future one in the Gambia. English activity in West Africa, especially in the 1610s and 1620s, greatly influenced the future of the English in West



Africa, both in the short and long term. In the short term, the reorganization of the Guinea Company in 1631 under the aegis of Crispe enabled the English to resume their activity on the Gold Coast, and ultimately to secure themselves a foothold in the region. When the company ceased its operations there in 1657, it left its successors a crucial infrastructure in the form of a fortified trading post (Fort Cormantin), which cemented English position on the Gold Coast.

The importance of the developments in the pattern of English in West Africa during the years 1553-1631 exceeds their immediate context. The change that occurred in the English mode of operation in the region after 1587, the main characteristics of which were an avoidance of conflict and an identification of vacant commercial niches, was also evident on the other side of the Atlantic. The English managed to establish themselves in North America after the signing of the London Treaty in 1604, which ended the long sea war with Spain, and forced them to look for peaceful modes of operation. Much like the course of English activity in West Africa after 1587, the English active in North America began to concentrate their efforts on the peripheries of the Spanish New World Empire, establishing colonies in Virginia, Guyana, Newfoundland, and on some of the Caribbean islands not settled by the Spanish. This similarity does not necessarily mean that the lessons learned by the English in West Africa during the 1550s and 1560s were in the minds of those individuals who promoted England's activity in North America and the Caribbean after 1604. What it does mean is that English activity in West Africa in the years from 1553 to 1631 served as a precursor for the course that English expansion took in the early seventeenth century. Being among the very first extra-European regions encountered by the English in their process of overseas expansion, West Africa served as a testing ground in which both Crown and merchants measured their strength against other European powers, and eventually had to acknowledge their limitations. This aspect makes English activity in West Africa in 1553-1631 crucial to our understanding of England's overseas expansion process, as it highlights the weaknesses of English organization.

In some respects, West Africa was the weakest link in the chain of England's overseas pursuits. The English found it far easier to trade and colonise at the edges of Spanish power in the Americas. Nonetheless, and as this thesis has shown, the English had established their trading presence in the region by the time they began to develop their lucrative American tobacco and sugar plantations, during the middle of the seventeenth

century. Afterwards, the English would capitalise on their West African bridgeheads and integrate the region into a system of trade, focused in large part on slaves that would transform the histories of England, West Africa and the wider Atlantic region.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Sources:**

#### **English Archives:**

##### **The National Archives (TNA), Kew:**

##### **Court of Chancery:**

Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Pleadings: Series I: Elizabeth I to Charles I.

C66/1384: Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature: Patent Rolls: Part 6 (November 1591-November 1592).

##### **High Court of Admiralty:**

HCA 1: Oyer and Terminer Records: Examinations of Pirates and Other Criminals.

HCA 13: Instance and Prize Courts: Examinations and Answers.

HCA 14: Instance and Prize Courts: Exemplars (Draft) Files

##### **Port Books:**

E122/116/13: Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: the port of Plymouth.

E122/46/31, E190/934/4, E190/935/11, E190/935/12, E190/935/13: Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: the ports of Exeter and Dartmouth.

E190/934/3: Exchequer: King's Remembrancer: the port of Barnstaple.

##### **State Papers:**

SP12: Secretaries of State: State Papers, Domestic: Elizabeth I.

SP14: Secretaries of State: State Papers, Domestic: James I.

SP16: Secretaries of State: State Papers, Domestic: Charles I.

SP 89: Secretaries of State: State Papers, Foreign: Portugal (1577-1780).

**The British Library (BL), London:**

*The Lansdowne Manuscripts Collection*, vols. 55, 158.

I.O.R. B6: *The Court Minutes of the East India Company, 1617-1621*.

**The Guildhall Library (GHL), London:**

Worshipful Company of Haberdashers – Register of Freedom Admissions, 1526-1613’ (MS 15857).

Worshipful Company of Haberdashers – Register of Apprentice Binding, 1602-1611’ (MS 15860)

Worshipful Company of Haberdashers – Register of Apprentice Binding, 1610-1630’ (MS 15860).

**Online Databases:**

Findmypast: <<https://www.findmypast.com>>

**Published Sources:**

- Acts of the Privy Council of England*, 46 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1890-1964).
- As Gavetas da Torre de Tombo*, VIII, ed. by Antonio da Silva Rego (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1970).
- Africanus, Leo, *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, trans. by John Pory (London: printed by John Bishop, 1600).
- Almada, Andre Alvarez d', *Brief Treaties on the Rivers of Guinea, pt. 1* (1594), ed. and trans. by P. E. H. Hair et. al. (Liverpool: Department of History, Liverpool University, 1984).
- Alvares, Manuel *Ethiopia Minor and a Geographical Account of the Province of Sierra Leone* (c. 1615), ed. & trans. by P. E. H. Hair (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1990).
- Anderson, R. C., ed., *The Book of Examinations, 1601-1602, with a List of Ships belonging to Southampton in the Years 1570-1603*, Publications of the Southampton Record Society, 26 (Southampton: Cox & Sharland, 1926).
- Anghiera, Pietro, Martire d', *The Decades of the Newe Worlde, or West India*, trans. by Richard Eden (London: William Powell, 1555).
- Arber, Edward, *An English Garner: Ingatherings from Our History and Literature*, vol. 5, ed. by Edward Arber (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1909).
- Armytage, George J., ed., *Allegations for Marriage Licences Issued by the Bishop of London: 1520-1610*, vol. 1, The Publications of the Harleian Society, vol. 25 (London: Harleian Society, 1887).
- Asseline, David, *Les Antiquitez et Chroniques de la Ville de Dieppe*, tome II, ed. by Michel Hardy (Dieppe: a Marais, 1874).
- Barbot, Jean, *Barbot on Guinea*, vol. 1, ed. by P. E. H. Hair, Adam Jones and Robin Law, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 175 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1992).
- Blaeu, Joan, *Africae Nova Descriptio* (Netherlands, 1664), in University of Illinois' Digital Collection. <<https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/2aec1ab0-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-d#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&r=0&xywh=-2200%2C-1%2C8398%2C3013>> [accessed 11 July 2019]

- Blake, John W. ed., *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560*, 2 vols., Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 86-87 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1942).
- Boulegue, Jean, 'Relacion du port du fleuve Senegal de Joao Barbosa, fait par Joao Baptista Lavanha (vers 1600)', *Bulletin de l'institute fondamentale d'Afrique noire*, Serie B, vol 29 (1967), pp. 496-511.
- Brasio, Antonio, ed., *Monumenta Missionera Africana: Africa Occidentale*, vol. 1 (1342-1499).
- Broecke, Pieter van der, *Pieter van den Broecke's journal of voyages to Cape Verde, Guinea and Angola (1605-1612)*, ed. & trans. by J. D. La Fleur, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 5 (London: Hakluyt Society, 2000).
- Brooke J. M. S., and A. W. C. Hallen, eds., *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Woolchurch Haw, in the City of London, From their Commencement 1538 to 1760* (London: Bowles and Sons, 1886).
- Calendar of State Papers Colonial, vol. 1: America and the West Indies (1574-1660)*, ed. by W. Noel Sainsbury (London: Longman, Green and Roberts, 1860).
- Calendar of State Papers Colonial, vol. 2: East Indies, China and Japan (1513-1616)*, ed. by W. Noel Sainsbury (London: Longman, Green and Roberts, 1882).
- Calendar of State Papers Foreign: Elizabeth*, 23 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1863-1950).
- Carr, Cecil T. ed., *Selected Charters of Trading Companies, A. D. 1530-1707* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1913).
- Carstensen, Edward, *Closing the Books: Governor Edward Carstensen on Danish Guinea, 1842-1850*, trans. by Tove Storsveen (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2010).
- Chanter, John R. ed., *Sketches of Literary History of Barnstaple* (Barnstaple: E. J. Arnold, 1866).
- Churchill, John, and Awnsham, pub., *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 5, (London, 1732).
- Costa, Mario Alberto Nunes, 'D. António e o Trato Inglês da Guiné (1587-1593)', *Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa*, vol. viii, no. 32 (1953), pp. 683-797.
- Cowan, Rev. Alexander M., *Liberia, As I Found It, in 1858* (Frankfort, KY: A.G. Hodges, 1858).
- Croft, Pauline, ed., *The Spanish Company*, Publications of the London Society, vol. 9 (London: London Record Society, 1973).

- Crone, G. R. ed. & trans., *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 80 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1937).
- Donelha, Andre, *An Account of Sierra Leone and the Rivers of Guinea of Cape Verde* (1625), ed. & trans. by Avelino Teixeira da Mota and P. E. H. Hair (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações Científicas do Ultramar, 1977).
- Donno, Elizabeth Story ed., *An Elizabethan in 1582: the Diary of Richard Madox, Fellow of All Souls*, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 147 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1976).
- Fell-Smith, Charlotte, 'Pory, John (bap. 1572, d. 1633)', rev. David R. Ransome, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2013 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22591>> [accessed 17 July 2017].
- Foster, William ed., *Letters Received by the East India Company from Its Servants in The East*, 6 vols. (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1897).
- Giles, John Allen, ed., *The Whole Works of Roger Ascham*, vol. 2, ed. by (London: John Russell Smith, 1864).
- Guerreiro, Fernao., *Relacao Annual des Coisas que Fizeram os Padres de Companiha de Jessus nas Suas Missoes*, 3 vols. (Coimbra: University of Coimbra Press, 1930-1940).
- Hair, P. E. H., ed., *Jesuit Documents on the Guinea of Cape Verde and the Cape Verde Islands, 1585-1617* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1989).
- and James D. Alsop, *English Seamen and Traders in Guinea, 1553–1565: The New Evidence of their Wills* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1992).
- *Hawkins in Guinea, 1567-1568* (Leipzig: Leipzig institut fur Afrikanistik, 2000).
- Hakluyt, Richard ed., *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn. (London: By George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1589); 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 3 vols. (London: By George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1598-1600).
- Historical Manuscript Commission, *Twelfth Report: Appendix I* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1890).
- Howard, Joseph Jackson and George John Armitage, eds., *The Visitation of London in the Year 1568* (London: Harleian Society, 1869).

- Hoyle, R. W., ed., *Heard before the King: Registers of Petitions to James I, 1603-1616*, pt. 2, List and Index Society, Special series, 39 (Kew, Surrey: List and Index Society, 2006).
- Hume, Martin A. S. ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Spain (Simancas)*, vols. 3-4 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1896-1899).
- Jenkins, Alexander, *The History and Description of the City of Exeter, and Its Environs, Ancient and Modern, Civil and Ecclesiastical* (Exeter: P. Hedgeland, 1806).
- Jobson, Richard, *The Golden Trade* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1623).  
 –*The Discovery of the River Gambia* (1623), ed. by P. E. H. Hair and David P. Gamble, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 2 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1999).
- Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. 1, (1547-1629) (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1802).
- Keeler, Mary ed., *Sir Francis Drake's West Indian Voyage, 1585-86*, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 148 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1981).
- Leng, Robert, *Sir Francis Drake's Memorable Service Done against the Spaniards in 1587*, ed. by Clarence Hopper (Westminster: Printed for the Camden Society, 1863).
- Lysons, Daniel, *The Environs of London*, vol. II, part I (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1811).
- Makepeace, Margaret ed., *Trade on the Guinea Coast, 1657-1666: the Correspondence of the English East India Company* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin, 1991).
- Marmol, Luis Caravajal, *L'Afrique de Marmol*, tome 3, trans. by Nicolas Perrot (Paris: chez Thomas Iolly, 1667)
- Marsden, Reginald G. ed., *Documents Relating to Law and Custom of the Sea*, vol. 1 (A.D. 1205-1648), Publications of the Navy Records Society, vol. 49 (London: Printed for the Navy Records Society, 1915).  
 – *Select Pleas in the Court of Admiralty*, vol. 1 (London: Bernard Quartich, 1894).
- McCulloch, J. R., *A Dictionary, Practical, Theoretical, and Historical of Commerce and Commercial Navigation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Longman & Co., 1835).
- Mercator, Gerard, *Africa ex Magna Orbis Terrae Descriptione* (1595), in University of Illinois' Digital Collection. <<https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/2094ba30-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-6#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&r=0&xywh=-2579%2C-1%2C9157%2C3285>> [accessed 11 July 2019]



- Moore, Francis, *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa* (London: Printed by Edward Cave, 1738).
- Neal, Simon R., and Christine Leighton, List and Index Society, vol. 328-329 (Kew, Surrey: List and Index Society, 2009).
- Ortelius, Abraham, *Aphricae Tabula Nova* (1570), in University of Illinois' Digital Collection. <<https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/2a7fedf0-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-7#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&r=0&xywh=-2161%2C0%2C8320%2C2984>> [accessed 11 July 2019]
- Pereira, Duarte Pacheco, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* (1505-1508), trans. by George H. T. Kimble, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 79 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1937).
- Prevost, Antoine-Francois ed., *Histoire General des Voyages, tome 12* (La Havre: chez Pierr de Hondet, 1755).
- Purchas, Samuel ed., *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (London: Printed by William Stansby for Henry Fetherstone, 1625).
- Quinn, David B. ed., *Roanoke Voyages, 1584-1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584*, 2 vols., Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 104-105 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955).
- Shaw, John ed., *Charters Relating to the East India Company, from 1600 to 1761*, (Madras: Printed by R. Hill at the Government Press, 1887).
- Smith, Carrie L., ed., *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 40 Elizabeth I (1597-98): C66/1477-1492*, List and Index Society, vol. 326-327 (Kew, Surrey: List and Index Society, 2009).
- Smith, John, *The True Travels, Adventures and Observations of Captaine Iohn Smith...* (London: Printed by J. H. for Thomas Slater, 1630).
- Taylor, E. G. R. ed., *The Troublesome Voyage of Captain Edward Fenton, 1582-1583*, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 113 (Cambridge: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1959).
- Thornton, John, *Africa and the Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- The Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Portland*, vol. 2 (London: Her Majesties Stationary Office, 1893).

- Vanes, Jean ed., *Documents Illustrating the Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, Bristol Record Society' Publications, vol. 31 (Kendal, Cumbria: Printed for the Bristol Record Society, 1979).
- Viterbo, Francisco Marques Sousa ed., *Trabalhos nauticos dos portugezes nos seculos XVI e XVII, vol. 1, pt. 1* (Lisbon, 1898).
- Zurara, Gomes Eanes de, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, 2 vols., ed. & trans. by C.R. Beazley & Edgar Prestage, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 100 (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1899).

**Secondary Sources:**

- Akyeampong, Emmanuel Kwaku, 'Disease in West African History', in *Themes in West Africa's History*, ed. by Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 186-207.
- Alsop, James D., 'Chester, Sir William (c.1509–1595?)', in *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5240>> [accessed 20 April 2017]  
 – 'The Career of William Towerson, Guinea Trader', *International Journal of Maritime History*, IV, 2 (December 1992), pp. 45-82.  
 – 'Tudor Merchant Seafarers in the Early Guinea Trade', in *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485-1649*, ed. by Cheryl Fury (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 75-115.
- Andrews, K. R., 'Thomas Fenner and the Guinea Trade, 1564', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 38 (1952), pp. 312-14.  
 – *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Spanish War, 1585-1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).  
 – *The Spanish Caribbean: Trade and Plunder, 1530-1630* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978).  
 – *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).  
 – *Ship, Money and Politics: Seafaring and Naval Enterprise in the Reign of Charles I* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- Appleby, John C., 'Duckett, Sir Lionel (d. 1587)', in *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn, Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49749> [accessed 9 May 2017]  
 – 'Towerson, William (d. 1584)', in *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27593>> [accessed 2 May 2017]
- Archer, Ian W., *The History of the Haberdashers' Company* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore, 1991).
- Ashford, Philip, 'The West Somerset Woollen Trade, 1500-1714', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 151 (2008), pp. 165-180.
- Barbour, Violet, 'Privateers and Pirates of the West Indies', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1911), pp. 529-66.

- Bevan, Alfred P., *The Alderman of the City of London Temp. Henry III – 1912* (London: Published by the Corporation of the City of London, 1908).
- Blake, Bernard, *A Genealogical and Heraldic of the Landed Gentry of England and Ireland for 1852*, vol. 2 (London: Culborn & Co., 1852).
- Blake, John W., *European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454-1578: a Survey of the First Century of White Enterprise in West Africa, with Special Emphasis upon the Rivalry of the Great Powers* (London: Longmans, 1937); 2<sup>nd</sup> edn: *West Africa: Quest for God and Gold, 1454-1578* (London: Curzon Press, 1977).
- ‘English Trade with the Portuguese Empire in West Africa, 1581-1629’, *Quarto Congresso do Mundo Portugues*, VI, 1 (1940), pp. 313-35.
- ‘The English Guinea Company, 1618-1660’, *Proceedings of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society*, III, 1 (1945/46), pp. 14-27.
- ‘The Farm of the Guinea Trade in 1631’, *Essays in British and Irish History in Honour of James Eadie Todd*, ed by T. W. Moody et al., (London: F. Muller, 1949), pp. 86-106.
- ‘The Study of African History’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 32 (December 1950), pp. 49-69.
- Blakemore, Richard, ‘West Africa in the British Atlantic: Trade, Violence, and Empire in the 1640s’, *Itinerario*, 39 (August 2015), pp. 299-327.
- Bovill, Edward, *The Golden Trade of the Moors* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).
- Brenner, Robert, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict and London’s Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- Brooks, George E., *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003).
- Burnley, James, ‘Finch, William (d. 1613)’, rev. Basil Morgan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004  
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9444>> [accessed 6 July 2017]
- Cardon, D., ed., *Plant Resources of Tropical Africa 3: Dyes and Tannins*, (Wageningen: PROTA Foundation, 2005).
- Cell, Gillian T., ‘The Newfoundland Company: A Study of Subscribers to a Colonizing Venture’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 22 (Oct. 1965), pp. 611-25.
- Challis, C. E., *The Tudor Coinage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978).

- Childs, Wendy R.: *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978).
- ‘Anglo-Portuguese Trade in the Fifteenth Century’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 2 (1992), pp. 195-219.
- Collins, Edward Day, *The Royal African Company; the Study of the English Trade to Western Africa under Chartered Companies from 1585 to 1750* (unpublished D.Litt. thesis, Yale University, 1899).
- Connell-Smith, Gordon, *The Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English Trade with Spain in the Early Tudor Period* (London: Published for the Royal Empire Society by Longman & Green, 1954).
- ‘English Merchants Trading to the New World In the Early Sixteenth Century’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 23 (1950), pp. 53-67.
  - ‘The Ledger of Thomas Howell’, *The Economic History Review, New Series*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1951), pp. 363-70.
- Cruickshanks, Eveline, ‘Crispe, Sir Nicholas [c.1598-1666], of Hammersmith, Mdx’, in *The History of Parliament* (maintained by the Institute of Historical Research). see: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/crisp-sir-nicholas-1598-1666> [accessed 17.4.2018]
- Cultru, Prosper, *Les Origines de l’Afrique Occidentale: Histoire du Sénégal du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle à 1870* (Paris: Émile Larouse, 1910).
- Curtin, Philip, ‘The Lure of Bambuk Gold’, *The Journal of African History*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1973), pp. 623-31.
- *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).
  - ‘Africa and the Wider Monetary World, 1250-1850’, in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, ed. by J. F. Richards (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1983) pp. 231-69.
- Daaku, Kwame Yeboa *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).
- Dalton, Heather, *Merchants and Explorers: Roger Barlow, Sebastian Cabot and Networks of Atlantic Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- ‘Negotiating Fortune: English Merchants in Early Sixteenth-Century Seville’, in *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World: People, Products and Practices on the*

- Move*, ed. by Caroline A. Williams (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 57-73.
- ‘‘Into speyne to selle for slavys’’: English, Spanish and Genoese Merchant Networks and Their Involvement with the ‘Cost of Gwynea’ Trade before 1550’, in *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Precolonial Western Africa*, ed. by Toby Green (Oxford, U.K., and New York: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 91-123.
- Davies, Kenneth G., *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, 1957).
- Diffie, Bailey & George Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).
- Disney, A. R., *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: from Beginning to 1807*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- Ehret, Christopher, *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002).
- Elzinga, J. G., ‘York, Sir John (d. 1569)’, in *ODNB*; online edn, Sept 2015  
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30233>> [accessed 29 March 2017]
- Fairlie, Susan, ‘Dyestuffs in the Eighteenth Century’, *The Economic History Review, New Series*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1965), pp. 488-510.
- Falola, Toyin, ‘West Africa’, in *Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. 5 (Historiography)*, ed. by Robin W. Winks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 486-499.
- Fernandez-Armesto, Felipe, ‘Exploration and Discovery’, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 7 (c. 1415-c.1500), ed. by Christopher Allmand (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 175-201.
- Freidman, John Block, and Kristen Mossler Figg, eds, *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, (London: Routledge, 2017).
- Glasgow Jr., Tom, ‘List of Ships in the Royal Navy from 1539 to 1588 – the Navy from its Infancy to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada’, *Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 56 (1970), pp. 299-307.
- Gordon, Ramsay D., *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975).
- Grant, Alison, ‘Breaking the Mould: North Devon Maritime Enterprise, 1560-1640’, in *Tudor and Stuart Devon: The Common Estate and Government*, ed. by Todd Gray et al. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992) 119-40.

- Grassby, Richard, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community in Seventeenth-Century England', in *The Economic History Review*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Aug. 1970), pp. 220-34.
- Gray, John, *History of the Gambia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940).
- Green, Toby, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Precolonial Western Africa*, ed. by Toby Green (Oxford, U.K., and New York: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Habib, Imtiaz, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).
- Hair, P. E. H., 'The Use of African Languages in Afro-European Contacts in Guinea, 1440-1560', *Sierra Leone Language Review*, vol. 5 (1966), 5-26.
- 'Protestants as Pirates, Slavers, and Protomissionaries: Sierra Leone 1568 and 1582', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 21 (July 1970), pp. 203-24.
- 'Morocco, the Saharan Coast, and the Atlantic Islands', and 'Guinea', in *The Hakluyt Handbook*, vol. 1, ed. by D.B. Quinn, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 144 (London: the Hakluyt Society, 1974), pp. 190-207.
- 'Hamlet on an Afro-Portuguese Setting: New Perspectives on Sierra Leone in 1607', *History in Africa*, vol. 5 (1978), pp. 21-42.
- and Avelino Teixeira da Mota, *East of Mina: Afro-European Relations on the Gold Coast in the 1550s and 1560s: an Essay with Supporting Documents* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1988).
- 'John W. Blake: a Tribute', *History in Africa*, 16 (1989), pp. 413-14.
- 'Columbus from Guinea to America', *History in Africa*, vol. 17 (1990), pp. 113-29.
- 'A Note on French and Spanish Voyages to Sierra Leon, 1550-1585', in *History in Africa*, vol. 18 (1991), pp. 137-41.
- and Jonathan D. Davies, 'Sierra Leone and the Grand Duke of Tuscany', in *History in Africa*, vol. 20 (1993), pp. 61-69.
- 'Was Columbus First Very Long Voyage a Voyage from Guinea?', *History in Africa*, vol. 22 (1995), pp. 223-37.
- 'Africa (other than the Mediterranean and the Red Sea Lands) and the Atlantic Islands', in *The Purchas Handbook*, vol. 1, ed. by L.E. Pennington, Works issued

- by the Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 185 (London: the Hakluyt Society, 1997), pp. 194-218.
- ‘The Experience of the Sixteenth-Century English Voyages to Guinea’, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 83, no. 1 (February 1997), pp. 3-13.
- *Africa Encountered: European Contacts and Evidence, 1450-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).
- & Robin Law, ‘The English in Western Africa to 1700’, in *Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. I: The Origins of Empire*, ed. by Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 241-63.
- Hammer, Paul E. J., *Elizabeth’s Wars: War, Government and Society in Tudor England, 1544-1604* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)
- Hill, Charles E., ‘Gorges, Sir Ferdinando (1568-1647)’, *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11098>> [accessed 3 May 2018].
- Horta, Jose da Silva, and Peter Mark, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- Hoskins, W. G., ‘The Elizabethan Merchants of Exeter’, in *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neal*, ed. by S.T. Bindoff (London: Athlone Press, 1961), pp. 163-87.
- Hening, William Waller ed., *The Statutes at Large, Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the year 1619*, vol. 1, (New York: Printed by R.& W. & G. Bartow, 1823)
- Hunnyball, Paul, ‘Hickman, Walter (1552-1617)’, *The History of Parliament*. <[http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/hickman-walter-1552-1617#footnote1\\_qib0fez](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/hickman-walter-1552-1617#footnote1_qib0fez)> [Accessed, 24 March 2017]
- Hunwick, John O., ‘Songhay, Borno, and Hausaland in the Sixteenth Century’, in *History of West Africa*, vol. 1, ed. by J.F.A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (London: Longman, 1974), pp. 264-301.
- Hyde, J. K., *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy: the Evolution of the Civil Life, 1000-1350* (London: McMillan Press, 1973).
- Ibbetson, David, ‘Dodderidge, Sir John (1555–1628)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7745>> [accessed 10 June 2016]
- Israel, Jonathan, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,



- 1989).
- Kaufmann, Miranda, *Black Tudors: the Untold Story* (London: Oneworld, 2017).
- Kelsey, Harry, *Sir Francis Drake: the Queen's Pirate* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000).
- *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002).
- Kelsey, Sean, 'Rich, Robert, second earl of Warwick (1587-1658)', *ODNB*, Oxford Press, 2004. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23494>> [accessed 3 May 2018].
- Kerridge, Eric, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).
- Klein, Herbert S., *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- Knutsen, Roslyn L., 'A Caliban in St. Mildred Poultry', in *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions*, ed. by Tetsuo Kishi et al. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), pp. 110-26.
- Kup, Alexander P., *A History of Sierra Leone, 1400-1787* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).
- 'An Account of the Tribal Distribution of Sierra Leone', *Man*, vol. 60 (Aug. 1960), pp. 116-19.
- Johnson, Marion and Adam Jones, 'Slaves from the Windward Coast', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 21 (1980), pp. 17-34.
- 'Decompiling Dapper: A Preliminary Search for Evidence', *History in Africa*, vol. 17 (1990), pp. 171-209.
- Lang, Robert G., *The Greater Merchants of London, 1600-1625* (Oxford University: Unpublished D.Litt. thesis, 1963).
- Law, Robin, "The First Scottish Guinea Company, 1634–9", *Scottish Historical Review*, 76 (1997), pp. 185–202.
- Lee, Raymond L., 'American Cochineal in European Commerce, 1526-1625', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1951), pp. 205-24.
- Lefevre, Peter and Andrew Thrush, 'Young, Richard (c.1580-1651), of Philip Lane, London', in *The History of Parliament* (maintained by the Institute of Historical Research). see: <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/young-richard-1580-1651>> [accessed: 29 April 2018]

- ‘Kirke, George (-d. 1675), of Whitehall’, in *The History of Parliament* (maintained by the Institute of Historical Research). see: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/kirke-george-1675> [accessed: 29 April 2018]
- Leggett, William F., *Ancient and Medieval Dyes* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Chemical Publishing, 1944).
- Leunig, Tim, et al., ‘Networks in the Premodern Economy: The Market for London Apprenticeship, 1600-1749’, *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 71, no. 2 (June 2011), pp. 413-43.
- Levtzion, Nehemia, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (London: Methuen, 1973).
- ‘The Western Maghrib and Sudan’, in *The Cambridge History of Africa, vol. 3 (c. 1050 – c. 1600)*, ed. by Roland Oliver. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 331-462.
- ‘Arab Geographers, the Nile, and the History of Bilad al-Sudan’, in *The Nile: Histories, Cultures, Myths*, ed. by Haggai Erlich & Israel Gershoni, (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 2000), pp. 71-78.
- Loades, David, ‘Winter, Sir William (c.1525–1589)’, in *ODNB*; online edn, Oct 2009 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29769>> [accessed 29 March 2017]
- Lowe, Ben, ‘Throckmorton, Rose (1526–1613)’, *ODNB*; online edn, Oct 2006 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/67979>> [accessed 9 May 2017]
- Makepeace, Margaret, ‘English Traders on the Guinea Coast, 1657-1668: An Analysis of the East India Company Archive’, *History in Africa*, 16 (1989), pp. 237-84.
- Masonen, Pekka, *The Negroland Revisited: Discovery and Invention of the Sudanese Middle Ages* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2000).
- McBride, Gordon K. ‘Elizabethan Foreign Policy in Microcosm: The Portuguese Pretender, 1580-89’, *Albion*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1973), pp. 193-210.
- McConnell, Anita, ‘Lodge, Sir Thomas (1509/10–1585)’, in *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16922>> [accessed 20 April 2017]
- McDermott, James, ‘Castelin, Edward (fl. 1554–1578)’, *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61534>> [accessed 24 March 2017]
- ‘Frobisher, Sir Martin (1535?–1594)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2015 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10191>> [accessed 11 April 2017]
- Metcalf, Alida C., *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600* (Austin:

- University of Texas Press, 2005)
- Miller, Helen, 'Garrard, Sir William (c.1510–1571)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008.  
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37441>> [accessed 20 April 2017]
- Miller, Shawn, *An Environmental History of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- Morgan, Basil, 'Hawkins, Sir John (1532–1595)', in *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12672> [accessed 25 April 2017]
- Newitt, Malyn, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion, 1400-1668* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005).
- Onyeka, *Blackamoors: Africans in Tudor England, their Presence, Status and Origins* (London [?]: Narrative Eye, 2013).
- Pavia, Jose Pedro, 'Bishops and Politics: The Portuguese Episcopacy during the Dynastic Crisis of 1580', *Journal of Portuguese History*, vol. 4, n. 2 (Winter 2006), pp. 1-19.
- Peel, M. C. et al, 'Updated World Map of the Köppen-Geiger Climate Classification', *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences*, vol. 11 (2007), pp. 1633-44.
- Perks, Sydney, *The History of the Mansion House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912).
- Pettigrew, William, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).
- Pope, Peter Edward, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
- Porter, Robert, 'The Crispe Family and the African Trade in the Seventeenth Century', *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1968), pp. 57-77.  
– *European Activity on the Gold Coast, 1620-1667* (Unpublished D.Litt. thesis, University of South Africa, 1975).
- Quinn, David B., 'Simao Fernandes, a Portuguese Pilot in the English Service, circa 1573-1588', *Actas, Congresso Internacional de Historia dos Descobrimentos* (Lisbon, 1961), pp. 449-65.  
– *Newfoundland, from Fishery to Colony; Northwest Passage Searches* (New York: Arno Press, 1979).
- Rabb, Theodore. K. *Enterprise & Empire: Merchant and Gentry Investment in the*

- Expansion of England, 1575-1630* (Harvard, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).
- Ramsay, George Daniel, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975).
- *The Queen's Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands: The End of the Antwerp Mart*, vol. 2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).
- Reeve, L. J., 'Carleton, Dudley, Viscount Dorchester (1574–1632)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2015 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4670>> [accessed 17 July 2017].
- Redworth, Glyn, 'Philip [Philip of Spain, Felipe] (1527-1598)', in *ODNB*; online edn. May 2011 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22097>> [accessed 14 January 2019]
- Rodney, Walter, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).
- Rowse, Alfred L., *Sir Richard Grenville of the Revenge* (London: Cape, 1949).
- Ruddock, Alwyn, 'The Earliest Records of the High Court of Admiralty (1515-1558)', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 22 (November 1949), pp. 139-51.
- Russell, Peter, *Prince Henry "the Navigator": a Life* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2001).
- Ryder, Alan F. C., *Benin and the European, 1485-1897* (London: Longmans, 1969).
- Scammell, Geoffrey V., 'Manning the English Merchant Service in the Sixteenth Century', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 56 (1970), pp. 131-54.
- 'Shipowning in the Economy and Politics of Early Modern England, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1972), pp. 385-407.
- 'The English in the Atlantic Islands, c. 1450-1650', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 72 (1986), pp. 295-317.
- Schwartz, Stuart B, ed., *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
- Scott, William, *The Constitution and Finance of the English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910).
- Selwood, Jacob, *Diversity and Difference in Early Modern London* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).
- Silva, Filipa Ribeiro da, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011).

- Slack, Paul, 'Barne, Sir George (c.1500–1558)', in *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008  
 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37157>> [accessed 29 March 2017]
- Snow, Robert W., and Judy A. Omumbo, 'Malaria', in *Disease and Mortality in sub-Saharan Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Richard G. Feachem and Dean T. Jamison (Washington D. C.: World Bank, 2006), pp. 195-213.
- Soladoye, Michael O., 'A Revision of Baphia (Leguminosae-Papilionoideae)', *Kew Bulletin*, vol. 40 (1985), pp. 291-386.
- Stevenson, Laura Caroline, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- Stone, Thora G., 'The Journey of Cornelius Hodges in Senegambia, 1689-90', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 139, no. 153 (Jan. 1924), pp. 89-95.
- Stout, Felicity, *Exploring Russia in Elizabethan Commonwealth: The Muscovy Company and Giles Fletcher, the Elder (1546-1611)*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).
- Supple, Barry E., *Commercial Crisis and Change in England, 1600-1642: a Study in the Instability of a Mercantile Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).
- Thrush, Andrew, 'Button, Sir Thomas (c. 1575-1634)', in *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4235>> [accessed 3 May 2018].
- Treasure, Geoffrey, *Richelieu and Mazarin* (London: Routledge, 1998).
- Webb, James L. A., *Humanity's Burden: a Global History of Malaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).  
 – *The long Struggle against Malaria in Tropical Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- Willan, Thomas S., *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959).  
 – *The Early History of the Russia Company* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956).  
 – *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953).
- Williams, Penry, *The Later Tudors: England, 1547-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- Williamson, James A., *Sir John Hawkins: the time and the man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927).

- Withers, Charles W. J., 'Mapping the Niger, 1798-1832: Trust, Testimony, and 'Ocular Demonstration' in the Late Enlightenment', *Imago Mundi*, vol. 56, no. 2 (2010), pp. 170-93.
- Wood, Alfred C., *A History of the Levant Company* (London: Frank Cass, 1964).
- Yerby, George, 'Yonge, Walter (bap. 1579, d. 1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008  
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30231>> [accessed 10 Oct 2016]
- Zook, George Frederic, *The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa* (unpublished D.Litt. thesis, Cornell University, 1919).