

Thesis
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UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

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**Badagry 1784-1863. The Political and Commercial History of a Pre-Colonial
Lagoonside Community in South West Nigeria**

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Abstract

By tracing the history of Badagry, from its reconstruction after 1784 until its annexation in 1863, it is possible to trace a number of themes which have implications for the history of the whole 'Slave Coast' and beyond. The enormous impact of the environment in shaping this community and indeed its relations with other communities, plays a vital part in any understanding of the Badagry story. As a place of refuge, Badagry's foundation and subsequent history was shaped by a series of immigrant groups and individuals from Africa and Europe. Its position as an Atlantic and lagoonside port enabled this community to emerge as an important commercial and political force in coastal affairs. However, its very attractions also made it a desirable prize for African and European groups. Badagry's internal situation was equally paradoxical. The fragmented, competitive nature of its population resulted in a weakness of political authority, but also a remarkable flexibility which enabled the town to function politically and commercially in the face of intense internal and external pressures. It was ultimately the erosion of this tenuous balance which caused Badagry to fall into civil war.

Conversely, a study of Badagry is vital for any understanding of these influential groups and states. The town's role as host to political refugees such as Adele, an exiled King of Lagos, and commercial refugees, such as the Dutch trader Hendrik Hertogh, had enormous repercussions for the whole area. Badagry's role as an initial point of contact for both the Sierra Leone community and Christianity in Nigeria has, until now, been almost wholly neglected. Furthermore, the port's relations with its latterly more famous neighbours, Lagos, Porto-Novo, Oyo, Dahomey and Abeokuta, sheds further light on the nature of these powers, notably the interdependence of these communities both politically and economically. Badagry's long-standing relationship with Europe and ultimate annexation by Britain is also an area which has been submerged within the Lagos story. But it is evident that the annexation of Badagry in 1863 was a separate development, which provides further evidence on the nature of nineteenth century British imperialism on the West Coast of Africa.

Preface

There are a number of institutions and individuals without whom this thesis would never have been completed. The Department of History, University of Stirling, the Royal Historical Society and the Standard Chartered Bank all provided funds which enabled me to continue my research here and visit West Africa. I should also like to acknowledge the help of the staff at the University libraries at Stirling, Birmingham, the School of Oriental and African Studies and Ibadan, the British Library, the Public Records Office, London, the Nigerian National Archive, Ibadan and the Centre de Documentation, Department d'Histoire et d'Archeologie, Universite Nationale de Benin, all of whom proved to be remarkably efficient, knowledgeable and courteous. I should also like to thank the University of Notre Dame, London Centre and the Institution of Mechanical Incorporated Engineers not only for keeping me gainfully employed but also for providing me with access to the computer facilities which have made my task that much easier.

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Introduction

The town of Badagry lies on the South-West coast of Nigeria, about thirty five miles west of metropolitan Lagos ¹. Badagry is now a small, peripheral town along the road to the border between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. But from its foundation in 1736 until the second half of the nineteenth century it was an important city state which played a vital role in shaping both the commercial and political character of the whole area.

Hitherto, the role of Badagry in the history of the 'Slave Coast' has been largely neglected, and attention has been focused on its latterly more dominant neighbours Lagos and Porto-Novo. But during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Badagry played a crucially important role as an Atlantic port and independent city state in the region. The rise and fall of the town as a trading community sheds light on the nature of the coastal economy, notably in the crucial period of transition from slave to palm oil exports. At the same time, Badagry's complex relations with her coastal and interior neighbours, as well as her European contacts, offers a further insight into the intricate pattern of West African coastal politics. The town itself also provides a fascinating example of a settler community. Created by a succession of immigrant groups, the fragmented nature of the town's structure ultimately challenges the notion that pre-colonial

¹The origin of the name Badagry or Badagri has been explained in a number of ways. Richard Lander during a visit to the town in 1825-27, suggested that the name came from the word 'Badag' meaning woman [R Lander, Records of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, (London, Frank Cass 1967), p. 249]. Revd C A Gollmer of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) suggested in the 1840s however, that the name came from the word 'Adgadgi' meaning 'the roaring of the great gun' [Church Missionary Intelligencer (CMI) August 1849, p. 93]. But Badagry tradition, as recorded by T Ola Avoseh in the 1930s, suggests that the name arose from a man called 'Agbede' who was 'head of the farmers'. The area thus came to be known as 'Agbethegreme' in the Gun language (Gle = 'farm' in Gun) or 'Agbadarigi' (presumably a misspelling / misprinting of the word 'Agbadagiri') in Yoruba . This name was later corrupted to Badagry by European traders [T Ola Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry ,(Lagos, Olu Printing Works 1938), p. 11]. In 1928 the spelling of this name was officially laid down as 'Badagri', in accordance with the rulings of the Royal Geographical Society and the Colonial Office [Nigerian National Archive, Ibadan (NNAI) BADADIV 6/1 District Officers Intelligence Report 1928]. However, the current spelling used in Nigeria is evidently 'Badagry'. It is this spelling that I have adopted.

Badagry can in fact be called a 'state' at all. Why Badagry was unable to maintain its position as an Atlantic port and independent coastal power has not yet been sufficiently established. The neglect of the town's history reflects its present position on the periphery rather than its very central role in the past.

Themes in Badagrian History

The town of Badagry is situated on the South-West Coast of Nigeria, almost halfway between Lagos to the east and Porto-Novo, now in the Republic of Benin, to the West. Like both Lagos and Porto-Novo, Badagry not only enjoys a position close to the seashore, but is also situated on the bank of the inland lagoon. This natural waterway stretches almost three hundred miles parallel with the coast from Cape St Paul to the old Kingdom of Benin, and provides an almost uninterrupted water route which avoids the violence of the sea's surf and is joined along its length by other waterways from the interior.

Badagry was founded in the first half of the eighteenth century when the Dutch trading agent Hendrik Hertogh, finding himself threatened by the King of Dahomey, fled east, from his base at Jakin [Godomey]. First settling at Apa, the King of that place soon gave Hertogh an area of land on which to establish himself in trade. The area, said to be a small farming hamlet until that time, flourished immediately as a commercial centre of both domestic and Atlantic trade, due notably to its advantageous position on the lagoon. The port's commercial success attracted a large number of other refugees, mainly from Whydah, Weme and Wharaba [Jakin]. So rapid was its growth that Badagry quickly came to dominate its parent state of Apa and emerged as an influential force in coastal affairs ². Indeed, Badagry's stormy saga of external relations is the

² It was claimed in 1854 that the 'Alapa' or King of Apa, was still the 'proprietor' of the country [PRO FO84/951 25 May 1854 Revd S Crowther, Abeokuta]. However, the same Alapa was described by Louis Fraser, Vice Consul at Whydah in a letter to Commander Heseltine, as 'an impostor' [PRO FO84/920 27 December 1852 Fraser, Lagos] and in turn by Heseltine as a 'nonentity' [PRO FO84/924

most obvious feature of the town's history. For as it grew in prominence as a commercial centre, so it came to be increasingly in competition with its neighbours who sought to both curb and control the town.

It was Badagry's potential as an Atlantic port which had attracted its initial founders and many later settlers. Badagry was not a significant producer itself of either slaves or more 'legitimate' articles of trade for Atlantic or domestic markets. Evidence would seem to suggest that on the whole the population of Badagry acted as middlemen between the traders of the interior, lagoon and Europe, and the town was dependent upon a vast hinterland for both its Atlantic and domestic trade items. Since Hopkins published his revolutionary work on the economic history of West Africa, subsequent analyses of the coastal situation have frequently been dominated by evaluation of the impact of the Atlantic trade and the change from slave to 'legitimate' commerce ³. A Study of Badagry, essentially a trading community, presents the opportunity for an illuminating case-study in this field. Badagry's history, across both eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, would seem to comprise a series of crises. The period of transition from slaves to palm oil exports on the 'Slave Coast' during the middle years of the nineteenth century would appear to have devastated Badagry as the town collapsed into civil war between 1851 and 1854. But I would suggest that to evaluate these critical years purely in terms of economic crisis is to distort the true picture. Indeed, from a close examination it is clear that despite the town's declining fortunes, Badagry continued, until the 1860s, to adapt surprisingly well to the changing market forces at work on the coast. In the face of civil war and the emergence of Lagos as the dominant port within its sphere, Badagry was able

Report of the Proceedings of an Expedition to Porto Novo...between 28 December 1852 and 7 January 1853]. Indeed it is clear that attempts to bolster and legitimise the supremacy of the Alapa during the early 1850s were contrived to lend credibility to the Anti Slave Trading Treaty between Britain and Badagry 18 March 1852, on which he was a co-signatory with the usurper chief Mewu. See chapter 9, p. 318-319 & Appendix A.

³ A G Hopkins *An Economic History of West Africa*, (London 1973). For an examination of Badagry's commercial organisation, see chapter 2.

to redefine the pattern of its trade due to its lagoonside position. Forced to forsake its role as an Atlantic port, the town reinforced its role as middleman on the trade, both Atlantic and domestic, moving along the lagoon. Ultimately, then, Badagry adapted to changes in the commercial pattern of the coast despite its direct Atlantic role being lost. But the very factors which enabled Badagry to adapt also magnified the pressures on the town.

As an outlet and an inlet for the interior trade routes, notably those through the Egbado country to the north, Badagry was, in the 1780s, second only to Porto-Novo as the port of Oyo, the dominant Yoruba power. Indeed, Badagry's relationship with the Oyo Empire during the latter part of the eighteenth century would seem to suggest the role of vassal ⁴. However, the town's co-existing relationship with the westerly power of Dahomey implies that its status as tributary to Oyo was either more transient, or was actually more ambiguous, for Badagry maintained close links with more than one power, and often with powers in opposition to each other. This dangerous and haphazard balance of alliances was the crux of Badagry's foreign relations, and became even more apparent during the course of the town's nineteenth century affairs.

By the early decades of the new century the town had become the sole coastal outlet for the Egba capital Abeokuta, which had emerged as the dominant Yoruba power in the wake of Oyo collapse. Abeokuta was at odds with Dahomey and Porto-Novo to the west and also with its most convenient port at Lagos, which under the rule of Kosoko, until its bombardment by the British in 1851, proved hostile to Egba needs ⁵. In the mid-1840s when the exiled King of Lagos, Akitoye, was attempting to settle at Badagry, the Egba of Abeokuta played a decisive part in

⁴According to Law, by 1777, Oyo was 'protecting both Porto-Novo and Badagri' against Dahomean aggression [R Law, 'The Gun Communities in the Eighteenth Century', African Studies Association of the USA, St Louis, November 1991, p. 21]. See thesis chapter 5, pp. 152-153.

⁵ PRO FO84/616 3 May 1845 Revd T B Freeman, London. See chapter 8, pp. 260-266.

negotiating this position. According to a missionary source, the Egba overruled any opposition from the Badagry chiefs and claimed that the town was under their control ⁶. However, only the preceding year, Governor Hill of the Gold Coast had noted that Badagry was actually the tributary of Dahomey, arch rival of Abeokuta ⁷.

In this way Badagry was strengthened by the support and commerce of this powerful interior traffic, but was also embroiled in interior affairs. The 1840s was a period of increased Dahomean antagonism due largely to the wealth brought to the coast by the Egba trade route. By 1851, after an unsuccessful attack by Dahomey on Abeokuta itself, the invading army appeared set to attack its port, Badagry, in retaliation for their humiliating defeat, and also clearly as a measure to disrupt Egba trade as much as possible. Furthermore, as Abeokuta's sole opening to the sea, Badagry was sensitive to the needs and wishes of its powerful Egba benefactor. After the outbreak of civil war in Badagry, an Egba force of virtual occupation arrived to 'protect' the town under their ally the Mewu, from attacks by the expelled chiefs and their Lagos and Porto-Novo allies.

The key to these opposing alliances was the uncohesive nature of Badagry's political structure which comprised eight virtually autonomous chieftaincies. These allowed a multiplicity of often conflicting relationships to exist and gave the town the flexibility to survive in the face of stormy coastal opposition.

The lack of a discernible central authority at Badagry was, I would suggest, both the town's weakness and its strength. Lacking political direction or cohesion clearly left it open to factional infighting, the most obvious example being the civil war of the 1850s. However, Badagry's lack of cohesion also led to a certain

⁶ CMSA CA2/085/230 24 December 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

⁷ PRO CO96/4 16 May 1846 Hill, Cape Coast.

flexibility which enabled the town, in the face of the enormous pressures and influences of coastal politics, to weather the storm. As a result of inter-ward competition and also differing loyalties based on origin, the various wards were able to maintain allegiances to different foreign powers. In this way, Badagry was usually able to maintain at least a part of its crucial commercial and political network.

As an example of a political structure, eighteenth and nineteenth century Badagry is of great interest. As a town of refugees the early groups of immigrants established themselves in eight districts or wards corresponding basically with their origins. Thus Ijegba, Posuko, and Ganho wards were made up of those largely from Weme; the populations of Ahoviko, Boeko, Awhanjigo and Asago shared Whydah origins, and those of Wharako ward were on the whole from Wharaba. Each of these wards was headed by its own chief ⁸.

The Akran, chief of Ijegba ward, has been identified as the paramount chief or even King of Badagry, for example by the local historian Chief Avoseh and also by Colin Newbury who has suggested that the Akran was the supreme figure in a council of chiefs ⁹. However, further research suggests that kingship at Badagry was illusory. The ward chieftaincies were autonomous, but the fortunes of particular wards and their chiefs would appear to have risen and waned as their ability to harness manpower and resources fluctuated. Their success or failure in doing so was evidently based on their commercial performance. The divided nature of the town's political structure was both moulded and sustained by its commercial economy. As production at Badagry was limited, so control of trading networks was vital, not only in establishing a successful position in the Atlantic market, but also to ensure the town's very survival by access to domestic

⁸ See Chapter 3, p. p 80-88.

⁹ Avoseh A Short History of Badagry, p. 39; C W Newbury The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, (London 1966), p. 32.

trade. There was clearly intense competition not only between various ward chiefs, who acted as economically as well as politically autonomous figures, but also within the wards themselves. Attempts to balance these internal and external pressures did not always succeed. Indeed in 1784 the town was almost wholly destroyed by the combined forces of Dahomey, Porto-Novo and Lagos, an attack sanctioned by Oyo, in an attempt to curb Badagry's success in Atlantic trade¹⁰.

It is at this point that I have chosen to begin my study. 1784 is a convenient point for purely logistical reasons. A history of Badagry from foundation to cession would exceed the possible scope of a doctoral thesis. Furthermore, the relative inaccessibility of earlier written material, a great deal of which is stored in Paris and the Hague, makes such a study, within present financial constraints, impracticable. 1784 provides a date from which the practical problems of the study are reduced, with much of the written data being available in Britain, but it is also a point from which a comprehensive analysis can be made. What is interesting about 1784 is that whilst Badagry's destruction obviously marked a break in the town's history, it was not ultimately a watershed. The following years certainly were a period of rebuilding for the town, but it was reconstruction in a similar style, whereby familiar patterns were re-established. Badagry was not reborn in the years after 1784 but merely picked itself up and carried on. In this way then, by beginning my study at this point, I do not feel that I am distorting the nature of the town's historiography by making only a cursory examination of earlier events. Furthermore, it is this later period which demonstrates most clearly the town's structure, nature and character, as it was exposed to a series of relatively well documented influences, notably for example, the shift from slave to legitimate trade, the rise and revolution of Lagos and the gradual encroachment of Europe into the coastal societies of West Africa.

¹⁰ See Chapter 5, pp. 163-165.

One of the most striking aspects of Badagry's history is its role as a place of refuge. Although not strategically as secure as it had appeared, Badagry's lagoon position did necessitate special strategies of attack ¹¹. Much of the history of the town then can be seen as a chronicle of arrivals, both in groups and as individuals either fleeing for their own safety or looking for new opportunities in a seemingly more secure environment. Badagry's origins as a commercial centre arose from the arrival of Hendrick Hertogh and other victims of Dahomean aggression in the west. Other groups came to trade or as a result of trade. For example, the Muslim population, mainly formed by the arrival of groups from the interior, largely of Yoruba origin, who came as traders or as slaves and settled or formed close links with Badagry ¹². Another important group of new arrivals in the late 1830s and 1840s were the large numbers of freed slaves. Having been deposited initially at Sierra Leone by the British Anti-Slave Trade Squadron, small groups, mainly of Yoruba origin, became determined to return to their homelands or to find friends and family in the interior. Much to the initial chagrin of their British benefactors a succession of emigrants chartered ships and headed back to the 'Slave Coast'. Finding their most direct route via Lagos blocked, they turned to Badagry, which evidently welcomed the returnees ¹³. Although a large number of these arrivals continued their journeys on into the interior to Abeokuta, for

¹¹ Newbury [The Western Slave Coast... p. 30] notes that Badagry's position was ultimately difficult to defend. However, it would appear from a number of contemporary accounts that Badagry's geographical setting did cause considerable difficulties at least for a number of invaders. For example the Methodist missionary Annear noted in 1844 that a few years previously, the land based Dahomean army had been routed at Idale (about 4 miles east of Badagry) due to their inability to cross the lagoon. [WMMSA 2 June 1844 Revd Annear, Badagry]. It would appear that mercenaries, expert in the methods of canoe warfare, were subsequently used in many assaults on the town. See chapter 3, p. 106 & chapter 9, pp. 294-295.

¹² In 1830 John Lander estimated that there were about one hundred and fifty Muslims assembled at the celebrations for the end of Ramadan [John and Richard Lander, Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger, Vol 1, (London 1832), p. 33]. Also see Chapter 6, pp. 188-191.

¹³ PRO FO84/663 Extract of a Memorial sent to a ship of war and the Governor of Cape Coast Castle by the British residents at Badagri. An enclosure in 7 January 1846 Mr Coates (Secretary of CMS), London.

many their links with Badagry were cemented as they returned to settle and trade at the coast ¹⁴.

But Badagry was not merely shaped by large population movements on the West African coast. It was further influenced by its role as a haven for various powerful individuals. For Badagry saw the arrival of a series of political refugees, who in each case helped to mould the town's internal structure whilst at the same time embroiling it in neighbouring political affairs. The first of these refugees, Zinsu, who later took the name Jiwa, an exile from Porto-Novo, seized control of what remained after the town's destruction in 1784 ¹⁵. Indeed it would appear that this infiltrator was so successfully absorbed into Badagry's political structure that his descendants emerged as a dominant force in one of Badagry's most prominent ruling houses¹⁶. The next influential individual to arrive was Adele. Deposed as King of Lagos in the early 1820s, Adele took shelter at Badagry, until c.1835 when he finally managed to retake his Lagos throne. According to the accounts of Richard Lander, who initially visited Badagry in the period 1825-27 as part of Captain Clapperton's ill-fated expedition to discover the course of the Niger, 'Adoolee' was indeed supreme and in fact 'King' at Badagry during this period¹⁷. Adele was joined at the town by the Mewu, an exiled chief minister from Porto-Novo, who in turn welcomed another deposed King of Lagos, Akitoye, in 1845. It was this Mewu and Akitoye who came to play a crucial role in the increasingly unstable political situation of the town in the 1840s and early

¹⁴ T B Freeman, Journal of Various Visits to the Kingdoms of Ashanti Aku and Dahomi in West Africa. (London, Frank Cass, 1968), p. 201. Also see Chapter 7 pp. 203-204.

¹⁵ Akinjogbin, calling him 'Sessu', claimed that he was in fact a Badagry exile living first at Porto-Novo and then at Abomey from where he attempted to encourage attacks on his home town [Akinjogbin, Dahomey and its Neighbours 1708-1801, (Cambridge, 1967), p. 156]. See chapter 5, pp. 158-164.

¹⁶ Badagry tradition, as recorded by Avoseh, suggests that Akran Jiwa's descendants emerged as the dominant force in Jigbeko House, one of the ruling groups of the Ijegba ward. It is believed that Jigbeko was actually established by Gbafoe, one of the founding fathers of Badagry. A powerful exile from Weme, Gbafoe was Hertogh's trading agent at Badagry. After the Dutchman's death, the agent became head or Akran of the Ijegba section and probably the leading figure in Badagry at the time [Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 15]. Also see Chapter 3, p. 83-84.

¹⁷ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 46.

1850s, which eventually culminated in the eruption of civil war in 1851.

Although initially it was the Mewu who assumed control in the wake of the war, he himself was overthrown three years later as the indigenous chiefs recaptured the town¹⁸.

The civil war period in Badagry was also illustrative of the pervasive influence of a further series of visitors and settlers. Initially as traders and then also as missionaries and government agents, European involvement in Badagry throughout the course of its history was often influential and at times critical. After Dutch influence, personified by Hertogh at Badagry, had waned, Portugal, France and Britain constituted the active European traders on the 'Slave Coast'. The early activities of these European traders at Badagry are uncertain. Records of British slaving ships before 1807 would seem to suggest that the port was not the usual destination of slavers collecting cargoes for the British West Indies and there is little evidence of French activity there¹⁹. Indeed it would appear from the account by Richard Lander, that by the 1820s the majority of European traders resident at Badagry were Portuguese²⁰. The relationship between these resident traders and their English visitor sheds an interesting light on the nature of trading relations as a whole at the crucial point when the sanctions of Britain's anti-slave trading crusade were beginning to bite. From Lander's account, the Portuguese slave dealers were frightened of the traveller's ability to inform his naval compatriots of their presence in the town, but at the same time clearly possessed influence enough in local affairs to level charges of spying which resulted in Lander's trial by ordeal ²¹.

¹⁸ See Chapter 9.

¹⁹ Evidence collected by Gomer Williams [History of the Liverpool Privateers, (Liverpool 1897), pp. 675-677 & 681-685], would seem to suggest that very few or no British ships called at Badagry. That there was some level of French commercial activity at Badagry is indicated by the existence of a French Chief in the town, first noted by the Landers in 1830 [J & R Lander Journal of an Expedition ... Vol 1, pp. 17 & 53-54]. Also see Chapter 2, pp. 56-57.

²⁰ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, p. 240.

²¹ *Ibid* Vol 2, p. 254. See chapter 6, pp. 187-188.

The establishment of a factory at Badagry in 1838 by the Gold Coast trader Thomas Hutton, a member of the influential London trading family of William Hutton, was clearly an indication of Badagry's potential as a centre of 'legitimate' commerce. Within a few years a number of other trading houses had established themselves in the town and ultimately heralded the loosening and final severing of Portuguese ties and the forging of much closer links with Britain. However, the link between Badagry and Britain was not left merely to the inclination of pragmatic traders but was bonded inextricably to the arrival of missionaries in the 1840s.

Badagry's role as the point of arrival of the first Christian missions in what is now Nigeria, has been noted by many historians. The missions followed in the wake of the returning Sierra Leonians, some of whom were already Christians. Representatives of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society first arrived at Badagry in 1842. Furthermore, after the failure of the Niger Expedition of 1841, the Anglicans were eager to find a new route into the African interior. Resolving also to follow the Sierra Leone emigrants, they arrived at Badagry to establish a mission in 1845. The failure of both denominations in their evangelical aims amongst the 'intransigent' people of Badagry has undoubtedly received more attention from contemporary observers and historians than any other feature of the Badagry story ²². It is ultimately this which has led scholars of missionary

²² Although initially optimistic about the mission at Badagry, both Wesleyan and CMS missions became disillusioned with the place. In 1847, CMS catechist William Marsh was complaining that the people 'are dead to anything like God' [CMSA CA2/067/10 28 March 1847 Marsh's Journal, Badagry]. By 1852 Revd Gollmer of the CMS abandoned the mission for Lagos leaving only a token staff. Attempts to revive activities in the later 1850s were equally unproductive. The literary view of Badagry as a desert for Christian spirituality was presented in several published missionary accounts, for example that by Revd Freeman [Journal of Various Visits.....]. However, the most vehement vilification of Badagry came from Miss Tucker in Abeokuta, or Sunrise Within the Tropics, (London 1853). Without visiting the coast, she described the depravity, drunkenness and idol-worship of the Badagry people, in stark contrast with the Yoruba at Abeokuta. More recent writings on West African history, even those examining the history of Christianity such as J F A Ajayi's Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891, (London 1965), have all alluded to the lack of evangelical success at Badagry. Although undoubtedly not adhering to the vehement views of Miss

history then to turn their attention rapidly, just as the missionaries themselves did, towards the interior and Abeokuta. However, I once again this is an example of history selecting more positive examples in hindsight. Just as Badagry warrants attention as an Atlantic port not merely despite, but because of its ultimate failure, it also demands attention in the history of West African Christianity because of its imperviousness to it. An examination of Christianity at Badagry reveals that the stark contrast drawn between the cynical coastal traders and the noble Egba in the interior was the result of missionary tunnel vision and a deliberate attempt to establish Abeokutan credentials by impassioned and fervent men, determined to find a Zion in the wilderness. At the same time the undoubted resistance of the Badagry people towards Christianity was bound up with their diverse origins and the fragmented nature of the state which created a vital and active role for indigenous religious practice and belief.

With the Badagry chieftaincies based so soundly on market forces some difficult questions are raised over the categorization of Badagry as a 'state'. A supra-ward authority to co-ordinate, for example, defence, law and order and inter-ward relations must have been necessary. In his examination of the Delta trading state of Old Calabar, Latham has traced the rise of the politico-religious Ekpe society which crossed ward lines and:

formed a common organisation which made and implemented the law...Not only did it unite them in a common organisation, through which they might meet each other socially, as well as binding them together by the force of friendship, it also provided the machinery to solve disputes which might arise between them²³

With its diverse origin base, the search for a similarly pervasive politico-religious society at Badagry is fruitless. However, the use of religion at least to some extent as a supra-ward authority does seem to have been important and the

Tucker and Co, these later examinations have made surprisingly few attempts to establish the reasons behind the lack of evangelical success at Badagry.

²³ A J H Latham, Old Calabar 1600-1891, (London 1973), p. 40.

position of religious institutions at Badagry poses some interesting questions about the relationship between religious and secular authority in coastal West Africa. A cursory look at the religious practices of the town reveals a spectrum of beliefs as diverse as the origins of the inhabitants. But what is clear from a number of nineteenth-century accounts is the strength of religious feeling and practice in the town. Furthermore, whilst some cults remained exclusive to the groups that brought them and therefore limited in their influence, others, such as the Dangbe cult of Whydah, would appear to have become influential throughout the town²⁴. The role of religious orders in government, although as yet still requiring further investigation, would appear to have been critical. The use of ceremonial oaths to cement a unity of purpose between ward chiefs and the role of religious practices in the administration of justice has been clearly documented ²⁵. The role of religious ceremony and ritual in maintaining a sense of unity and identity amongst this diverse grouping of people was, I would suggest, a possible reason for the rejection of Christianity and also Islam. Badagry was notable for its religious tolerance. There is no evidence of religious persecution comparable with, for example, Abeokuta. However, within this settlement of largely displaced persons, shared religious beliefs and practices, either at ward or town level, were ultimately the only uniting force. Therefore Christianity, which demanded the rejection of existing practices was wholly unacceptable. Islam, which could exist more easily alongside traditional local beliefs, was adopted piecemeal.

The sphere where the Christian missionary presence did have great effect within the town was in the political arena. The very presence of the missions ultimately provoked the removal of most of the foreign slave-traders to Lagos, thus almost completely suppressing direct slave shipments from Badagry beach²⁶. The

²⁴ CMSA CA2/076/42 5 October 1861 Pearse's Journal, Badagry.

²⁵ See Chapter 4.

²⁶ PRO FO84/616 3 May 1845 Freeman, London.

movement was aided by the short-term establishment of the British flag over the town and the garrisoning of a Sergeant of the Gold Coast Corps there as a result of Revd Freeman's initial security worries in 1843²⁷. As the period progressed missionary aims regarding Abeokuta led to an often bitter split between British secular and spiritual aims culminating in various heated accusations of political intrigue on the part of the missionaries²⁸.

However it was continued spiritual frustration with Badagry, in the wake of the civil war, which resulted in the virtual abandonment of the town as a mission station as soon as Lagos was opened to British influence after 1851. Furthermore, as commercial attention similarly shifted to the east, Badagry's role as an Atlantic port declined dramatically. But, it was only at this point that Badagry's role in the commerce of the lagoon was fully realised by the British.

Badagry's external relations were always closely involved with those of its lagoonside neighbours. The relationship between these states was more subtle than merely that of three Atlantic outlets, vying against each other for foreign trade. The existence of the coastal lagoon created a link between the states and towns along its course which ultimately made them largely dependent upon each other for the successful operation of their commercial traffic. It was by lagoon that the slave dealers of the 1800s shifted their 'illegal' booty up and down the length of the coast in an attempt to avoid detection by the British squadron. A clear lagoon was vital for such covert operations. However, it was not merely 'illegal' traffic which required swift passage along the waterways. Articles of 'legitimate' trade, both domestic and Atlantic, were transported by water.

²⁷ PRO CO96/2 16 September 1843 Governor Maclean, Cape Coast.

²⁸ The man at the heart of much of these accusations was more often than not Revd C A Gollmer of the CMS mission. Gollmer's reputation for political intrigue was notorious at both Badagry and later Lagos. Indeed the outbreak of civil war in Badagry was blamed on his political manoeuvring. Gollmer also came into bitter conflict with a number of the British Government agents operating on the coast, most notably, Vice Consul Fraser and then Consul Campbell [PRO FO84/950 1 May 1854 Campbell, Lagos]. See Chapter 9, pp. 330-331.

Badagry's role in this traffic was crucial, not only as the recipient of goods; but also as part of a chain of lagoonside states. For example, it was Badagry under the Mewu whose difficult relations with Porto-Novo in the early 1850s resulted in a blockade of the lagoon between the two towns. This resulted in immense problems for the British merchants trying to establish themselves at the recently opened port of Lagos. It was in an attempt to establish 'good' lagoon relations that Campbell, British Consul at Lagos, became increasingly embroiled in local affairs far beyond the remit of his official instructions. Shuttling along the lagoon between Porto-Novo and Badagry, Campbell discredited the Mewu with allegations of slave-trading ²⁹. He then encouraged the exiled Badagry chiefs to launch an attack on the town ³⁰.

The realisation that affairs along the lagoon were of vital importance at Lagos was reinforced almost ten years later after the annexation of that place by Britain in 1861. The post-civil war period in Badagry has been presented in contemporary accounts as one of decline. Pointed criticisms were made of the inability of the chiefs to reassert their authority over the much depleted town and allegations of a revival in slave-trading and misrule were levelled by the British Consul ³¹. It would appear from a cursory examination of the documentation that the cession of a much weakened and corrupt Badagry was inevitable once Lagos had been taken in the early 1860s, and that the Treaty signed in 1863 was merely the formalisation of a situation which had existed in practice since 1861³². However, the cession of Badagry was a more complicated process than this and provides an interesting case study in early British imperialism on the West African coast. Indeed there is evidence to suggest that Badagry was only annexed to the colony of Lagos when it became clear that the island state required a buffer zone around

²⁹ PRO FO84/920 28 October 1853 Campbell, Lagos.

³⁰ PRO FO84/976 4 October 1855 Campbell, Lagos.

³¹ PRO FO84/1061 20 April 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

³² Newbury The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers, p. 70.

it to ward off the encroachments of the French at Porto-Novo, who were threatening Badagry itself. Furthermore, it became increasingly clear that to operate as a viable commercial concern, Lagos required control of at least a proportion of the lagoon. Thus arguments that Badagry had been part of Lagos' territory for generations were used by Governors Freeman and Glover to justify their rapid spate of land acquisitions to the reluctant Foreign and Colonial Offices in London only once it had become apparent that Lagos could not function alone³³.

It is clear then that Badagry's history, shaped so dramatically by its environment both natural and man-made, has a vital position in any understanding of coastal /lagoon affairs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as shedding new light on the subject of Afro/European relations during that period.

Sources of Badagrian History

Despite the relative profusion of written sources of Badagrian history due to the port's longstanding relationship with Europe there has been a dearth of historical study on the subject. For any examination of the pre-colonial Slave Coast there are a number of definitive secondary accounts. Law's recent study of the Slave Coast from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries and Akinjogbin's study of Dahomey over the course of the eighteenth century are the most useful analyses of the early modern period ³⁴. No examination of the nineteenth century has yet surpassed Newbury's The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers; although localised studies, most notably Biobaku's The Egba and Their Neighbours and Smith's The Lagos Consulate are useful supplementary works ³⁵. Such studies establish an

³³ PRO FO84/1201 10 June 1863 Sir John Hawley Glover (Acting Lieutenant Governor of Lagos), Lagos; PRO CO147/3 10 July 1863, Glover, Lagos.

³⁴ Law, The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550-1750, (Oxford 1991); Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours...

³⁵ Newbury, The Western Slave Coast...; S O Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours (Oxford 1957 repr. Ibadan 1991); Robert S Smith, The Lagos Consulate 1851-1861, (London 1978).

excellent framework from which a basic chronicle of Badagry's history can be constructed ³⁶. In the same way a number of particularly illuminating thematic studies have been made of the coastal area. Most notably of course are Ajayi and Ayandele's works on Christian missions in Nigeria, and Kopytoff's examination of Sierra Leone immigration ³⁷. These studies of the impact of outsiders on their adopted communities have particular relevance for Badagry, not merely as the initial point of contact but, as noted above, as a case study in the immigrant's role in economic, political and social change. But what also clearly emerges from these studies is very much a coastal perspective, which presents the history of Badagry only as it impinges upon the panorama. For a state so influenced by and influential in shaping its environment, this 'coastal perspective' must always be maintained. However, I would argue that without more detailed analysis the view is incomplete.

Sources of comparative history have also proved useful. Hopkins and Matheson on Lagos, and Geay, Pineau-Jamous, Senkomago and Akindele and Aguessy on Porto-Novo provide interesting parallels with my own work³⁸. Further afield, Dike, Latham and Cookey on the Niger Delta, have all raised interesting questions relevant to the Badagry situation ³⁹. The political structure of states so completely based in commercial competition is evidently one area in which

³⁶ It should be noted here however, that in the course of these more general works there has been disagreement over details of Badagry's history. For example, Law [The Slave Coast of West Africa, p. 310] and Akinjogbin [Dahomey and Its Neighbours..., p. 213] give different dates for Badagry's foundation.

³⁷ Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria; E A Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914, (London 1966); Jean H Kopytoff, A Preface to Modern Nigeria: The Sierra Leonians in Yoruba, 1830-1890, (Wisconsin 1965).

³⁸ A G Hopkins, 'An Economic History of Lagos 1880-1914', PhD Thesis London 1964; J D Matheson, 'Lagoon Relations in the Era of Kosoko 1845-1862', PhD Thesis Boston 1974; J Geay, 'Origine, Formation et Histoire Du Royaume de Porto-Novo', Bulletin du Comite D'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Francaise 7/4 1924, pp. 619-634; M J Pineau-Jamous, 'Porto-Novo: Royaute, Localite et Parente', CEA, 104 1986, pp. 547-575; N S Senkomago, 'The Kingdom of Porto-Novo with Special Reference to its External Relations 1872-1908', Phd Thesis Aberdeen 1976; A Akindele and C Aguessy, Contribution a l'etude de l'histoire de l'ancien royaume de Porto-Novo, (Dakar 1953).

³⁹ K O Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, (London 1956); Latham, Old Calabar...; S J S Cookey, King Jaja of the Niger Delta: His Life and Times 1821-1891, (New York 1974).

parallels can be found. However, comparative history demands a firm basis of empirical evidence from which conclusions can be drawn, otherwise there is a danger of too much assumption and speculation. In the Badagry case such firm foundations were lacking and therefore it has been the foremost aim of this thesis to construct a coherent narrative history.

Some historical studies of Badagry have been made. The esteemed local historian Chief Theophilus Olabode Avoseh, Gbesiewu of Badagry, has published a series of local studies of Badagry and its environs, the most of notable being A Short History of Badagry in 1938⁴⁰. A book initially intended for schoolchildren, Avoseh's work is invaluable as a study of the area based largely on local tradition. Although sometimes confusing, particularly in its chronological framework, Avoseh does provide a useful insight into the way in which Badagry's history may be interpreted. For example, the author identifies the Akran, chief of Ijegba Ward, as 'King' of Badagry throughout the town's history. This conclusion is evidently based less on historical evidence than on more recent events and the subsequent emergence of the Akran during the course of the twentieth century as a dominant local political figure in the Yoruba mould⁴¹. However, the historian does evoke the important role of commerce within the power structure of the ward system. Indeed, Avoseh lists the relative power of

⁴⁰ Chief Avoseh, born in 1908 and now living in retirement at Badagry, has been active in the secular and religious life of the town for many years. He has, amongst other roles, acted as teacher, civil servant, local politician, and church official. As an historian Chief Avoseh has published a number of short studies of the Badagry area in both Yoruba and English: A Short History of Badagry, (1938); Iwe li ede Egun Pelu Itumo ni ede Yoruba ati Gesi, (1959 repr 1962 and 1982); Iwe Ikomo Jade, Oruku Awori Ojo, Adura Ojojumo, Ojo ati Osu Ibimo, Ojo Lati Dawole Nkan ati Iwe Eri Ijo Ibi Omo, (1960); A Short History of Epe, (1960); Isin Imale ni Ilu Agbadarigi, (1964) translated as 'Islam in Badagry' by T Falola in 'The Minor Works of T O Avoseh', History in Africa, 19, (1992), pp. 237-262; A Short History of St Thomas's Church, Badagry 1842-1970, (1970 revised edition 1986); Uwe Utan Kukururu Egbe Ajumogbadura, (1973); the Historical Tree of Badagry, (1984); First Storey Building in Nigeria, (1984); The First Christmas Day in Badagry, (1984); Important Historical Places to be Visited in Badagry by the Tourist, (?). In recognition of his contribution to Badagry, Avoseh was given the chieftancy title of Gbewiesu in 1974. See Falola, 'The Minor Works of T O Avoseh'.

⁴¹ After publication of his history in 1938, Avoseh found himself much criticised by the other local chiefs for his support of the Akran's 'traditional' ascendancy. See Falola 'The Minor Works of T O Avoseh', p. 238.

the chiefs with particular reference to their slave-trading success ⁴². Avoseh's influential role in recording Badagry's historiography is evident from the few more recent local publications on the town, which have based their historical analyses on this source ⁴³. In his retirement Chief Avoseh has himself become an informant for other historians and students of history working on that locality. His knowledge, continuing interest and willingness to discuss local issues and history has enabled him to assist the work of these younger scholars.

Furthermore, Chief Avoseh has amassed a private collection of unpublished undergraduate dissertations on the Badagry area. The most interesting of these, when attempting to construct a narrative history, is Charles Okon Akpan's ambitious examination of the 'Economic and Political Effects of Slave Trade and Slavery up to 1914' ⁴⁴. Akpan's study, like Kuti's undergraduate dissertation 'Badagry and Its Neighbours up to 1864', is evidently based firmly on the foundations of Avoseh and the historians of the Slave Coast ⁴⁵. The only two historians to have made studies of Badagry using primary as well as secondary sources are Robin Law and K M Okaro K'Ojwang. As well as his work on the lagoon area as a whole, Law, through his meticulous examination of written sources, has reconstructed the early history of Badagry ⁴⁶. In his forthcoming article, Law has produced the most skillful synthesis so far of eighteenth century

⁴² Unfortunately Avoseh compares the slave-trading chiefs, almost exclusively the Akrans, only with their predecessors rather than the other contemporary ward chiefs. However, one can see, for example, in his description of the seizure of power by the Posu in the latter part of the eighteenth century, which he misleadingly calls the usurpation of the title Akran, that it was in fact the Posu chieftaincy which was dominant during this period [Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, pp. 18-21].

⁴³ See for example Focus on Badagry, Public Information Department, Lagos State Ministry of Information and Culture, (Ikeja 1991); T Ibrahim, Badagry Past and Present Aholu-Menu-Toyi 1 Akran of Badagry Reign of Peace, (Ikeja 1992).

⁴⁴ C O Akpan, 'Economic and Political Effects of Slave Trade and Slavery up to 1914', B A Hons Dissertation Lagos 1985.

⁴⁵ A O Kuti, 'Badagry and Its Neighbours up to 1864', BA Hons Dissertation Ibadan 1970.

⁴⁶ Law has produced a number of articles on the lagoon area as a whole, for example 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons: The Interaction of Maritime and Inland Navigation on the Pre-Colonial Slave Coast', CEA, 114 xxix-2 (1989), pp. 209-237 and 'Trade and Politics Behind the Slave Coast: the Lagoon Traffic and the Rise of Lagos' Journal of African History (JAH) xxiv (1983), pp. 321-348. Latterly Law has concentrated on the early history of Badagry itself, notably in 'The Gun Communities of the eighteenth century' and 'A Lagoonside Port on the Eighteenth Century Slave Coast: The Early History of Badagry' Forthcoming in the Canadian Journal of African Studies.

Badagry, but has also raised a number of issues on which further research is required. It is this which has provided a starting point and framework for my own research. K M Okaro K'Ojwang's unpublished thesis on nineteenth-century Badagry has also proved useful, although his purpose has been very different from my own ⁴⁷. His 'Case Study of African Resistance to British Penetration in South West Nigeria' is a study of 'relations between the people of Badagry and the British during the period 1841 to 1891'. This relationship he characterises as one of rivalry, struggle and 'persistent resistance' over 'fifty years of social, economic and political conflicts'⁴⁸. Okaro K'Ojwang's analysis quite clearly has important parallels with my own research. Most obviously my thesis, which culminates with the annexation of Badagry by the British in 1863, traces the development of the Euro/Badagry relationship over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this way then, Okaro K'Ojwang's work has provided a focus for comparison as indicated during the course of my narrative. However, working very much within the confines of his chosen theme, Okaro K'Ojwang has ultimately weakened his analysis. Despite acknowledging the difficulty of defining the complex Badagry situation in terms of 'collaborators and resisters' to British imperialism, he has ultimately tended to view all events over the course of the nineteenth century in this light. His thesis is also weakened by a number of areas which have been, somewhat surprisingly, neglected. For example, despite being an analysis of Anglo/African relations, he fails to examine the implications of the British 'garrison' at Badagry from 1843-44 ⁴⁹. There is also some difficulty in his definition of Badagry itself which, I would suggest, leads to confusion. Despite briefly distinguishing between Badagry town and the diverse origins and history of the surrounding areas, it would seem that he too quickly submerges this distinction to present an examination of a

⁴⁷ K M Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri 1841-91: A Case Study of African Resistance to British Penetration in South West Nigeria, MPhil Thesis Ibadan 1979.

⁴⁸ Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri...', pp. ii-iii.

⁴⁹ See Chapter 7, pp. 222-232.

'Badagri' in which he includes a number of neighbouring areas for which there is no evidence of any pre-colonial affiliation or loyalty. I would suggest that this is the result of using many early twentieth-century sources which were produced during the process of evolving a definition of the 'Badagry Region' under colonial government ⁵⁰. The uncritical application of these twentieth century sources has also to some extent marred Okaro K'Ojwang's use of local oral information. He has used data from fieldwork conducted over the course of two years, collected largely from local chiefs, most notably in his description of the foundations of the town. The difficulties and dangers as well as the undoubted rewards involved in the use of oral sources have been highlighted by several leading historians ⁵¹. Okaro K'Ojwang has evidently been skillful and painstaking in his collection of material but has been less discerning in his use of this data. Just as he appears to have used early twentieth-century written sources as evidence for earlier periods, so his oral informants have been used as such, rather than as fellow historians. Furthermore, much of his analysis of this oral history would appear to have been influenced by the use of these later written sources ⁵². Therefore much of his representation of, for example, the pre-colonial political structure of Badagry, is constructed from African and British colonial and post-colonial interpretations and reinterpretations, which more often than not were attempting to rationalise and legitimise their contemporary situation. Thus for example, his references to the 'All Town Councils' of pre-colonial Badagry actually reflect more recent developments.

⁵⁰ See Chapter 1, pp. 45-49.

⁵¹ For example J Vansina, Oral Tradition as History, (James Currey, London 1985); D Henige, Oral Historiography, (London, Longman, 1982); J C Miller, (ed), The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History, (Folkestone, Dawson 1980).

⁵² Nigerian National Archive, Ibadan (NNAI) CSO26/4 30030/S1 'A Report on the reorganisation of the Badagri District', R J M Curwen 1937; NNAI CSO26/4 30030S2 'Intelligence Report on the Awori Area Badagri District' R J M Curwen 1937; NNAI CSO26/4 29979 'Intelligence Report on the Central Awori Group in Ikeja and Badagri District of the Colony' 1935.

Yet Okaro K'Ojwang's oral sources remain an admirable, valid and extremely useful undertaking, especially since I myself was unable to pursue this course. Being British-based and finding a surprising profusion of written primary and secondary sources available to me, I decided to base my research on these foundations. With a period of research in West Africa itself being limited by both time and my own skill in the collection of oral data, I concluded that my Nigerian research would involve written data to be supplemented by some oral but more particularly visual sources ⁵³.

In this way then the bulk of my own research has involved the use of written published and unpublished primary sources. Published collections of material relating to eighteenth and nineteenth century West Africa have yielded some important information with relation to the port ⁵⁴. However, due largely to its position, there are relatively large numbers of published and unpublished journals and papers directly associated with the history of Badagry. The most obvious of these are the journals and writings of Richard Lander who, as mentioned above, visited Badagry as servant to Captain Clapperton in the period 1825-27 and again in 1830 with his younger brother John, once again in an attempt to discover the course of the Niger River. Both Landers' journals, although descriptive of relatively short stays in Badagry, and far more informative, for example, on the interior government of Sultan Bello, do provide information on the operation of the slave trade and the domestic market, the dominance of King Adele, several of Badagry's religious cults as well

⁵³ Badagry itself is rich in visual sources of history. As well as seeing the beach and lagoon, it is still possible to visit, for example, the CMS mission house and the first Christian cemetery.

⁵⁴ P F Verger, Trade Relations between the Bight of Benin and Bahia from the Seventeenth Century to the Nineteenth Century, (Ibadan 1976); A Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast 1674-1742 A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague, (Accra 1978); Robin Law, (ed), Further Correspondence of the Royal African Company of England Relating to the 'Slave Coast' 1681-1699 (Wisconsin 1992); Robin Law, Contemporary Source Material for the History of the Old Oyo Empire 1627-1824, (Ibadan 1992).

as a limited insight into the position of the town's foreign affairs during the period ⁵⁵.

Another, very useful account is that published by Revd T B Freeman who arrived in Badagry in 1842 before moving on to Abeokuta as leader of the Wesleyan Methodist mission ⁵⁶. Although dominated understandably by his attempts to establish a mission station, his account provides some useful insights into the various inter-ward and Euro/Badagry relationships as well as a sense of the ever present danger from outside attack with which the town contended. The American Baptist Missionary T J Bowen also visited Badagry in the course of his 'adventures' in West Africa and the published account of his travels offers some interesting information as to the town's economy as well as a somewhat vague sense of the tumultuous events, which threatened to and eventually did erupt during the time of his visit to the area in the early 1850s ⁵⁷.

The advent of missionary activity at Badagry with both Methodist and Anglican missions establishing premises in the town during the 1840s has produced a substantial amount of papers, notably in the form of letters and journals. Furthermore, until the subjugation of Lagos in 1851 Badagry was the point of contact between the 'Yoruba Mission' and the outside world of the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and beyond to London. Therefore, an examination of the Badagry mission papers provides evidence of a much wider scope, with news passing from the interior to the coast and vice versa. Extracts from some of these missionary sources have been published in forms other than personal journals or memoirs. The Church Missionary Society produced a number of periodicals

⁵⁵ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa...; R and J Lander, Journal of an Expedition...; PRO CO2/18 Lander Papers relating to Badagry 1829-31; H Clapperton, Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa. (London 1829); PRO CO2/15, 16 & 17 Clapperton Papers relating to Badagry 1825-26; PRO CO2/15 Captain Pearse papers relating to Badagry.

⁵⁶ Freeman Journal of Various Visits...

⁵⁷ T J Bowen, Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labours in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa from 1849 to 1856. (London, Frank Cass 1968).

such as the Paper, Record, Intelligencer and Gleaner. But one must always bear in mind that these selective accounts are often more illuminating on the 'official mind' of the Church Missionary Society than about affairs on the coast ⁵⁸. The bulk of these papers however remain unpublished and available only in the respective archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society stored at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and the Church Missionary Society now in the Main Library, University of Birmingham.

These missionary accounts, like other contemporary writings, are extremely subjective. However, whilst the descriptive accounts of the earlier visitors such as the Landers were both interpretative and less obviously biased than the often impassioned descriptions of the missionaries, both, again, may document more clearly the subject of European or rather Eurocentric thought and preconceptions than the nature of Badagry itself. It is in conjunction with these accounts that one must attempt to examine Badagry sources ⁵⁹. However, I would also suggest that

⁵⁸ The Church Missionary Paper (CMP), for the use of weekly and monthly contributors arose out of the Quarterly Papers of the CMS and was published from 1849-1851. The Church Missionary Record (CMR), detailing the proceedings of the CMS ran from January 1830 to December 1890. The Church Missionary Intelligencer (CMI), a monthly journal of missionary information was published from May 1849 to December 1864. New series of the Record were published between 1865-1875 and 1876 to 1906 when it became the Church Missionary Review. The Church Missionary Gleaner (CMG), appeared from 1841-1870.

⁵⁹ Primary written sources of eighteenth and nineteenth century African history cannot be limited to Europeans. There were a number of Africans or Anglo/Africans for example, who produced written accounts. Most notable in the Badagry case was the missionary T B Freeman, a man of mixed parentage. Similarly was Thomas Hutton, the Gold Coast trader, whose correspondence with his London-based 'uncle' William is invaluable [PRO FO84 series]. Others of full African parentage were the missionaries William Annear (WMMS) and Samuel Pearse (CMS), who have produced an enormous amount of information on nineteenth century Badagry.

But clearly these individuals must be viewed in their European context. An Englishman by birth, Freeman's writings give little insight into his perception of any personal relationship with either Europe or Africa. The same is true of the Fanti Annear and the Gun Pearse.

Although more often than not these men were 'foreigners' anyway (the Yoruba Samuel Crowther, active at Abeokuta, was a great exception), ultimately their 'Europeanness' set them apart. This would appear to have been the case not merely in their own minds but in those of the local people who evidently saw these new immigrants, along with the Sierra Leone population, as English. 'Europeanness' or 'Britishness' would appear to have been based firmly in commerce and trading connections. Evidently language, dress, education and Christianity were instrumental in setting these groups apart to some extent, but it is important to note that at Badagry for example, non-Christian Sierra Leone immigrants were perceived by themselves and by their hosts as being British.

a distinction should be drawn between two types of Eurocentric sources. The first, like the Landers, can be termed 'observers'. Although clearly playing an important role in the history of British exploration, their bearing upon events in the places they visited was limited; they were subjective but passive observers. However, commentators such as the missionary and merchant residents were not only partial observers of the period, but were clearly deeply involved in the making and moulding of events themselves. If the Landers were attempting to present facts as they saw them, subjective or not, the missionaries, traders and all with vested interests in the area were clearly themselves a motivating force. Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of this at work was the missionary presentation of events leading up to the outbreak of civil war in 1851. From these accounts the struggle emerges as a dispute between slave-trader and legitimate trader. Even a cursory examination of other sources immediately refutes this oversimplified interpretation. However, these clearly defined 'sides' ultimately proved to have been more than a merely inaccurate description of events. For indeed the missionary demarcation of 'sides' had the effect within Badagry of polarising various conflicting factions into two opposing camps. The contemporary missionary account was not merely descriptive but prescriptive. In this way then I would conclude that whilst the actual interpretations of such subjective material should be treated with caution and careful analysis, the potential value of such accounts, actually as part of the 'history' they describe, is enormous.

A further series of such records are those British government papers held at the Public Record Office in London. Badagry's early history receives limited attention from the eighteenth century British coastal presence although there is occasional information to be found in the papers of the Royal African Company (after 1752, the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa), found in the T70 Treasury Series. It is in the nineteenth century with British activity at Sierra Leone (CO967) and

the Gold Coast (CO147) that Badagry receives more attention. However, it was the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 which led to more comprehensive coverage of the situation on the Slave Coast. The FO84 series of papers relating to the Slave Trade has proved to be the most comprehensive source of information regarding the movements of consuls, government agents and naval officers on the coast, as well as providing a fragmented commentary on nineteenth century Badagry. Their sporadic nature is clearly due to the fact that despite the appointment of a Consul for the region in 1849, the Consular district with its base at Fernando Po, reached right along the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Even after the reduction of Lagos and the establishment of a Consul for the Bight of Benin in 1852, affairs at Badagry warranted only periodic attention, usually when events were at crisis point. The slave trade papers are supplemented to a limited extent by the FO2 Series of papers relating to Africa whilst the period from 1861 onwards receives attention in the CO96 series from the newly established Lagos Colony.

British papers collected in London are usefully supplemented by those held in the Nigerian National Archive at the University of Ibadan. As well as holding a number of duplicate documents, the Archive also houses papers relating to the pre-colonial and colonial period not available in Britain. There is for example the local letter book of Campbell, Consul at Lagos during the 1850s (CS08/1/2); and also contained in the Chief Secretary's Office and BADADIV series of Badagry Division papers of the colonial period, a number of unpublished Intelligence Reports and town council minutes. It is these sources which have enabled me to place Badagry in its pre-colonial context and construct a coherent narrative history.

Chapter One

Badagry and its Environment

Badagry's Geographical Setting

Badagry's history has been dominated by its environment both natural and man-made. The town is set on the eastern section of what was known as the 'Slave Coast' of West Africa. This notorious coast, which runs from the River Volta in the west to Lagos in the east has been characterised by several geographical features, each of which has played a part in shaping the history of the whole area¹.

The sea along the coast of the Bight of Benin has a long-standing reputation for its violence. This is due mainly to the presence of a sand-bar and heavy surf along its length, which coupled with strong easterly currents makes landing particularly treacherous. A visitor to the coast in 1853 commented that the surf at Badagry beach was less dangerous than at Whydah; but a naval visitor in the same year reported to the Admiralty that 'Badagry is nearly inaccessible from the sea, the surf being heavier there than at almost any part of the coast'². It would appear that the ability to land safely was governed largely by time of day, time of year, some degree of luck and the skill of the canoe-men³. Indeed the use of Gold Coast canoe-men along the length of this coast was due to the fact that the indigenous populations did not venture onto the surf⁴. The use of canoes was

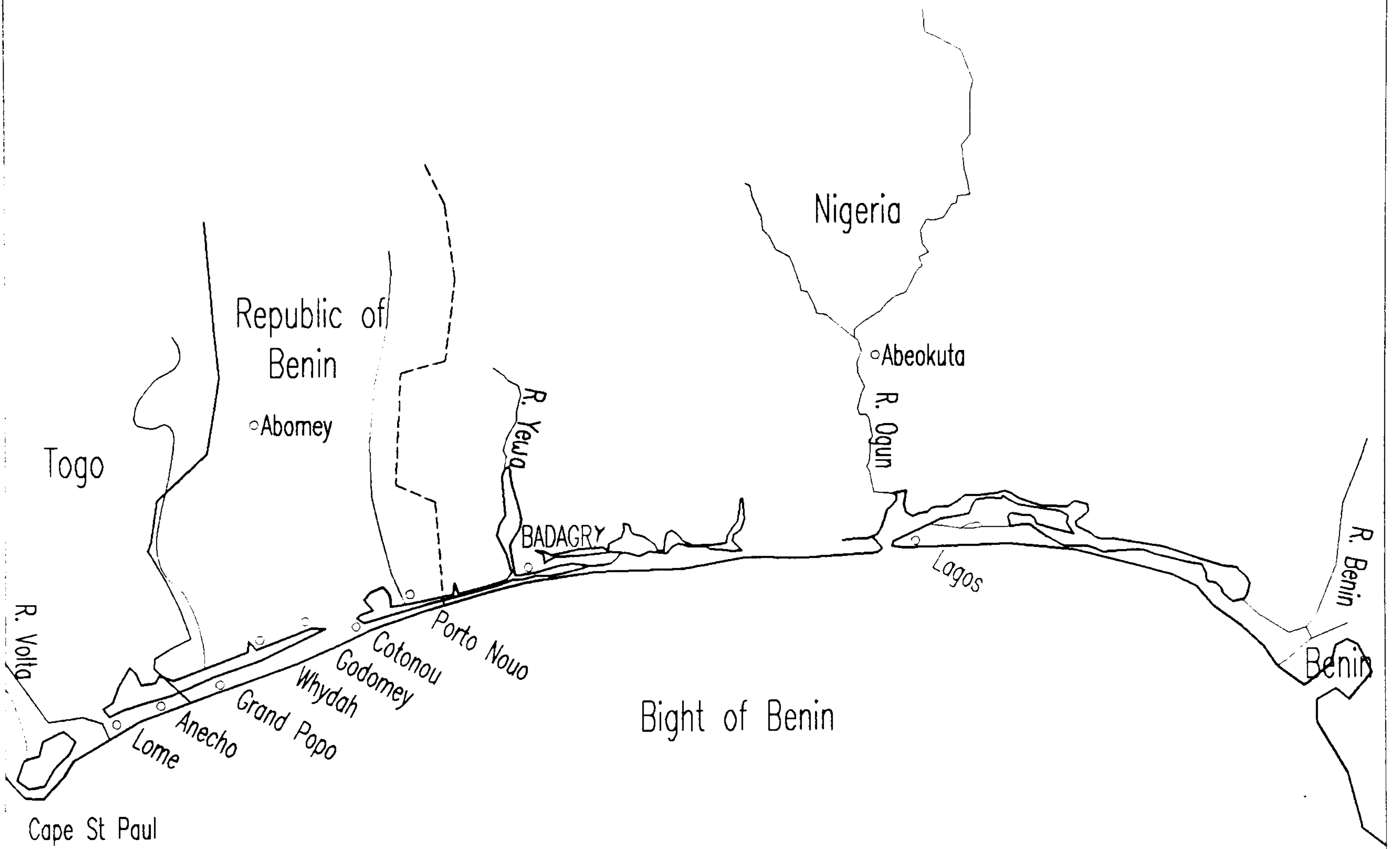
¹ See Figure 1.

² CMI June 1853, p. 130, 'A Visit to the Interior of Africa, Dr Irving; PRO FO84/925 3 March 1853 Commodore Bruce, Whydah enclosed in 14 April 1853 Captain Hamilton (Admiralty), London.

³ In 1842 Revd Freeman noted that conditions for landing on the beach were best during the morning [Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 205]. Two years later Governor Hill at Cape Coast pointed out that for 'four months of the year' the landing at Badagry was 'impracticable'. He illustrated his point by saying that in May of that year an officer of a British sloop had been drowned when his canoe capsized [PRO CO96/4 16 May 1844 Hill, Cape Coast].

⁴ Arthur Wendover, a seventeenth-century source, stated that the people of Badagry's parent state, Apa, did not need to venture onto the sea due to their ability to fish the lagoon [17 July 1682 Wendover, Apa in Law, Further Correspondence..., p. 15]. More recently Robert Smith has pointed out that the population of Apa, were Yoruba and therefore, essentially an interior people, and unused to the sea [Robert S. Smith, Kingdoms of the Yoruba, (James Currey, London, 3rd ed. 1988), p.

figure 1



THE SLAVE COAST OF AFRICA

necessary due to the lack of any safe, natural harbour along the coast. Even the Lagos inlet, during the nineteenth century, had its entrance obstructed by a dangerous sand bar ⁵. Therefore, landing had to be attempted by canoes or surf boats from ships lying half a mile from shore ⁶.

The lack of any suitable harbour along the remarkably straight coastline of what is now the coasts of Togo, the Republic of Benin and South West Nigeria is the result of continued sand deposits. Laid down by the east flowing current, these reshaped the scarred and indented post-glacial coastline by forming a series of offshore bars which ultimately created new land and a much smoother coastline. But the evolution of sand bar into land was not a wholly regular process and some areas were not completely silted up. This resulted in the enclosure of stretches of water and the creation of a series of inshore lagoons running parallel with the coast behind a spit of land ⁷. The lagoons' distance from the sea varies from between one half to ten miles. At Badagry however, according to a number of diverse nineteenth and twentieth century sources, it lies from between one half to one mile away ⁸. The lagoon's width itself was also open to varying

61]. Robin Law has suggested that this might also be applied to the Aja-Ewe peoples, ancestors of the Badagry Gun people, who originated in Tado [Law 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons...', p. 217]. The use of Gold Coast men, expert in the use of sea-going canoes was common right along the Bight of Benin.

⁵ Law has pointed out that although inlets such as Lagos, may have attracted certain Europeans, the treacherous nature of the surf and sand bar across the mouth made them very dangerous indeed. At Lagos itself, Bowdich and Adams have both pointed out that although the English traders entered the channel across the bar, the Portuguese and French preferred to land their goods at the beach and have them portered to the town [Law , 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons...', p.216].

⁶ A War Office report of 1888 noted that Badagry had an open roadstead and anchorage of 8 fathoms about half a mile from shore [PRO FO881/5622X Precis of Information concerning the Colony of Lagos together with notes on the neighbouring territories 1888].

⁷ J C Pugh, 'The Porto Novo - Badagri Sand Ridge Complex', Research Notes No 3 (Department of Geography, University College, Ibadan 1953); J E Webb, The Erosion of Victoria Beach, Its Cause and Cure, (Ibadan 1960).

⁸ In August 1849 Revd Gollmer noted that the land spit at Badagry was not above three quarters of a mile broad [CMI August 1849, pp. 92-93]. This is supported by Bowen's account of the following year [Adventures and Missionary Labours..., p. 93]. However, William Hutton in the 1840s and A B Ellis in the 1880s both noted that the land spit was half a mile broad [PRO FO84/710 19 July 1847 W Hutton, London; A B Ellis, Land of Fetish(London 1883), p. 101]. But according to E H Duckworth in the 1950s this piece of land was a mile wide [E H Duckworth, 'Badagry Its Place in the Pages of the History of Nigeria', Nigeria Magazine, No 38 (1952), p. 145].

estimates. Whilst most sources agree that the waterway as a whole varied from one half to ten miles wide, at Badagry estimates varied from a quarter to three quarters of a mile ⁹. These differing estimates are not the result of rapid and rather irregular land formation and erosion, but rather the result of seasonal variations.

Although the effects of deposition and silting are a continuous process and the coastline is continually evolving, for the purposes of this thesis it is adequate to examine the physical shape of the lagoons, much as they are today. This is a point which has been discussed by Law who has investigated claims that the lagoons shape has been changed during the course of the nineteenth century ¹⁰. It has been alleged for example that whilst the lagoons had been wholly uninterrupted from Cape St Paul to Cape Formosa, the effects of silting during the last century had created interruptions between Ketu Lagoon and Lake Togo in the west and at Jakin. Law suggests however, that such interruptions were the result of seasonal changes causing falls in water level. This would appear to be the most reasonable conclusion as illustrated by a number of nineteenth century sources. For example the Wesleyan missionary Annear, complained at Badagry in 1844 of the unhealthy exhalations that arose from rotting vegetation, revealed as the waters receded in the dry season ¹¹. The wide reaching effects of such seasonal variation are apparent from a description given by Vice-Consul Fraser who, in 1851, described how between Whydah and Arguay, during the dry season, the lagoon was reduced to no more than six inches of water. 'Consequently you must get out, while the canoe is hauled over the shallows' ¹². Less clear are the effects of

⁹ At Badagry, Revd Freeman noted that the lagoon was from a half to three quarters of a mile across [Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 205]. Revd Gollmer during the same period also noted that HM Surveyors had reported the width of the lagoon at Badagry as nearly half a mile wide [CMI August 1849, pp. 92-93] Pugh however, described the lagoon in this area as being only one quarter of a mile in width ['The Porto Novo - Badagri Sand Ridge Complex', p. 8].

¹⁰ Law, 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons', p. 213.

¹¹ WMMSA 2 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹² PRO FO84/886 Fraser's Journal of his arrival at Whydah and mission to Abomey 1851-52.

seasonal changes on outlets from lagoon to sea. There are three permanent outlets now in existence, at the River Volta, at Great Popo and at Lagos. However, there have been references to other connecting waterways which are no longer in existence. Law has cited references to a temporary outlet at Lake Nokue, east of the kingdom of Allada [Porto-Novo] in about 1804, which he suggests again was due to heavy rainfall ¹³. However, the regularity with which such an opening occurred may require it to be looked on as a seasonal outlet rather than a temporary one. For in 1851 Fraser, at Whydah, noted the existence of such an outlet at Porto-Novo ¹⁴.

More importantly for the purposes of this thesis is the suggestion by Pugh that in centuries past there was an opening to the sea opposite the Yewa River, just west of Badagry ¹⁵. Furthermore, according to an Admiralty Chart based on surveys during 1846, there was a further boat channel five and a half miles east of the Yewa, and thus just west of Badagry itself. The existence of this channel, according to Pugh, is substantiated by the examination of sand ridge formations and aerial photographs ¹⁶. Unfortunately, a comprehensive study of the lagoon's course was not made during this period. A survey ordered to examine the lagoon system by the Admiralty in 1847, was dogged by allegations of disorganisation and misfortune and it ultimately ended with the death of Commander Middleton, the officer in charge of the expedition only ten months after it had begun ¹⁷.

¹³ Law, 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons', p. 215.

¹⁴ PRO FO84/886 Fraser's Journal of his arrival at Whydah and mission to Abomey 1851-52.

¹⁵ Pugh, 'The Porto Novo - Badagri Sand Ridge Complex', p. 13.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 6-7.

¹⁷ At the end of 1847 a comprehensive survey of the lagoon area to be undertaken by the British Navy was sanctioned by the Treasury [PRO CO96/12 22 November 1847 Admiralty (ADM), London], or more specifically the lagoon area between Whydah and Badagry [PRO CO96/12 29 November 1847 ADM, London]. Governor Winniett of the Gold Coast doubted that the mission would meet with success. He argued that the naval officer in charge of the survey team was inexperienced and unused to the African climate. Furthermore, he stressed that the detailed examination required to accurately survey the lagoon would be impossible without the, as yet unsought, permission of the King of Dahomey [PRO CO96/13 7 February 1848 Winniett, Cape Coast]. Winniett's ominous warnings came too late. Commander Middleton arrived at Badagry on 24 February 1848 [PRO CO96/14 1 March 1848 Middleton, Badagry in 4 July 1848 ADM, London]. However, hampered by the 'disturbed' state of the country and his own ill health the surveyors were unable to undertake

However, the existence of such a channel as late as the mid-nineteenth century is contrary to all other available information. In 1847 a British trading agent wrote to his employer, after a visit to the coast, describing the possibilities of dragging a canoe over the sand spit at Badagry for trading purposes. No mention was made of a boat channel in the area, either temporary or otherwise, although it should be noted that his visit was made during the dry season¹⁸. Indeed it was during this period, the latter half of the 1840s, when Badagry, as a new centre of missionary activities, became, for a short period, the African focal point of so much European attention. Under so much scrutiny, it would seem extremely bizarre for such a convenient channel not to be used by the missionary arrivals, or, if not usable, even mentioned¹⁹.

The lagoon is fed along its length by a number of rivers running from the interior. As noted above, the River Yewa, meets the lagoon just west of Badagry, whilst the rivers Volta, Weme, Ogun and Benin all provide freshwater inlets along its course. Indeed the mixture of salt and freshwater sources would make an interesting study for the biologist or ecologist. Where the waters are mostly fresh, the banks are abundant with fresh water plants²⁰. But nearer the outlets to the sea, the waters become increasingly salt or brackish, and the usual mangroves are found²¹. Webb has concluded that this mixture of waters, which is exacerbated by seasonal changes in the lagoon level, poses serious problems for the animal ecology of the area. How seriously these 'seasonal salinity fluctuations' affected the plant and animal life along the Badagry section of the

the work necessary. Within a year Middleton was dead and the project abandoned [PRO CO96/15 26 January 1849 Winniett, Cape Coast].

¹⁸ PRO CO96/12 15 June 1847 J W Thompson, London in 25 June 1847 W Hutton, London.

¹⁹ Missionary visitors in the 1840s and 1850s described the land spit as being a 'flat, treeless prairie' [Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours..., p. 96]. They also clearly reported their journeys across this stretch of land rather than through it by canoe [Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 205].

²⁰ Duckworth, 'Badagri its place in the pages of the History of Nigeria', p. 144.

²¹ C A Moloney, 'Notes on Yoruba and the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos', Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, Series 2. 12 (10) October 1890, p. 598.

lagoon and whether, for example the area's indigenous fishing industry was seriously affected by such changes requires further research ²². But it is clear that the history of the whole coastal area has been shaped by the nature of these waterways. Law has noted the role of the physical environment on the whole region stressing the compensatory nature of the navigable lagoons on a coast where the sea was extremely treacherous ²³. For the existence of an inland water route allowed the transport of goods over long distances with relative ease. This is especially important to note in an area with little potential for production of domestic foods and goods. Badagry's situation on the lagoon evidently makes fishing a staple industry and the seashore presents the opportunity of salt production ²⁴. But a number of nineteenth century visitors mistakenly saw the abundance of forest in the area as an indication of huge agricultural potential neglected by the 'lazy and indolent African', a myth which continued well into the twentieth century ²⁵. However, as early as 1850 more perceptive observers such as Bowen could recognise that 'No intelligent farmer could be deceived by the barren sandy soil at Badagry' ²⁶. Furthermore, as Okaro K'Ojwang has pointed out, where there is no sand on the shores of the lagoon the soil is too marshy and muddy to be arable particularly during the rainy season between April and October, whilst the humid climate does not 'support the growth of edible crops' and 'discourages pastoral industry'. It is only further north in the

²² Webb, 'The Porto Novo - Badagry Sand Ridge Complex', pp. 7-8.

²³ Law, 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons', pp. 210-211.

²⁴ See chapter 2, pp. 50-52.

²⁵ In 1830 John Lander stated that at Badagry:

the land is excessively fertile and if the inhabitants could only be induced to lay aside their habitual indolence, and the sluggishness of their characters, and devote a little more attention to the improvement of the soil, the country might soon be brought to an extraordinary pitch of perfection

[R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 46].

²⁶ Bowen, Missionary Travels and Labours, p. 96.

Egbado country that lighter rainfall and less sandy soil provide the conditions for successful arable pastoral farming ²⁷.

But it was not only articles of domestic consumption which required to be moved by water. The operation of the Atlantic trade both in slaves and later in palm oil also relied heavily on this route. Therefore, at a point where the lagoon ran as close to the sea, as at Badagry, there was clearly an ideal situation to develop a crossroads, where Atlantic and interior traders met. In this way then the lagoon system played a major role in enabling those in the Badagry area to overcome limited agricultural productivity, but also to profit from an abundance of commerce. It would appear that it was the commercial attractions combined with the area's defensive possibilities which initially attracted settlement.

The Origins of Badagry

According to the local historian T O Avoseh, the area was initially settled by Yoruba people from the Ife area. He mentions two early groups of Yoruba, who, it is claimed, settled near Badagry but eventually left the area in two movements, to Iworo and then Iyafin ²⁸. These groups would appear to differ from later Yoruba arrivals, who, Avoseh says, came again from Ife, and followed an unsuccessful claimant to that throne. They first settled at a place called Thran [unidentified], but due to a river full of crocodiles and the dangers they posed to their children, the group again moved. This time they settled near an Apará tree, after which they named their settlement. This title was later shortened to Apa ²⁹.

The period in which this migration occurred is difficult to identify. Law, again citing Avoseh, states that Apa was originally of Yoruba origin and that these

²⁷ Okaro K'Ojwang 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagry', pp. 1-5. Also see A Mabogunje 'The Land and People of West Africa' in J F A Ajayi and M Crowder, (eds), History of West Africa, Vol 1, (Longman 1971).

²⁸ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 8.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 9.

people were able to dominate the whole area until Apa itself came under the domination of Allada some time during the seventeenth century ³⁰. But he is unable to date its foundation although he does cite a fifteenth century Portuguese source, which refers to a town roughly corresponding in location with Apa. How long the town had been in existence prior to that period is impossible to tell from the sources available ³¹.

According to Avoseh, there was a further group of settlers on the southern shore, opposite the site of what is now Badagry and further east of Apa, at Gberefu. Avoseh says that no-one knew where these settlers came from and that they themselves could not say, but that they were salt-makers until Portuguese traders advised them that in future salt should be imported ³². The archaeological remains of salt making at Badagry beach have recently been excavated and Apa was identified as an important market for salt during the seventeenth century, although it is unclear whether this salt was being produced at Gberefu ³³.

Another movement of Yoruba migrants is said to have settled in the area over the course of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. According to an Intelligence Report of the 1930s a group of people identified as Awori/Yoruba had pushed westward from the north and east until the mid-eighteenth century³⁴. Okaro K'Ojwang has concluded that these movements were largely the result of pressure from Oyo which, at the height of its powers, was expanding throughout the Egbado heartland ³⁵. But in the early eighteenth century the westward progress of these settlers was checked by the establishment of an enclave of non-Yoruba people. It was these refugees from the Aja, or Ewe

³⁰ Law, 'The Gun Communities in the Eighteenth Century', pp. 3-5.

³¹ Law, 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons', p. 217.

³² Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 8.

³³ See chapter 2, p. 50, footnote 2.

³⁴ NNAI CSO26/4 30030/S1 A Report on the Re-organisation of the Badagri District by R J M Curwen 1937.

³⁵ Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri', pp. 16-19.

speaking areas to the west, who formed a number of settlements in the region. The most prominent of these was Badagry ³⁶.

Along the western part of the Slave Coast, in what is now Togo and the Republic of Benin, the coastal populations between Anlo and Allada [Porto-Novo] were Aja or Ewe speaking peoples ³⁷. It was easterly migrations of these people, as a result of Dahomean aggression, that led to large numbers settling in the Badagry area in the first half of the eighteenth century. It was these migrants inhabiting the area from Grand Popo and Porto-Novo along the coast to Badagry and inland to Weme and Epe who formed a recognisable enclave between the Fon to the west and the Yoruba to the north and east. In the 1890s Governor Moloney of the Gold Coast noted that these people were 'known and commonly referred to in English as Popos and Whemians' but that they were 'known amongst themselves and the Yorubas as Egun'³⁸. More recently the name 'Gun' or 'Gunu'/'Gunu' (literally Gun people) has been used locally ³⁹.

The rise of Dahomean power and aggression during the early eighteenth century, as the inland Kingdom sought to secure its own Atlantic ports, led to the displacement of large numbers of people ⁴⁰. The independent coastal states of Whydah and Allada became the main focus for initial Dahomean aggression and

³⁶ See Figures 2 & 3.

³⁷ Law, 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons', p. 210.

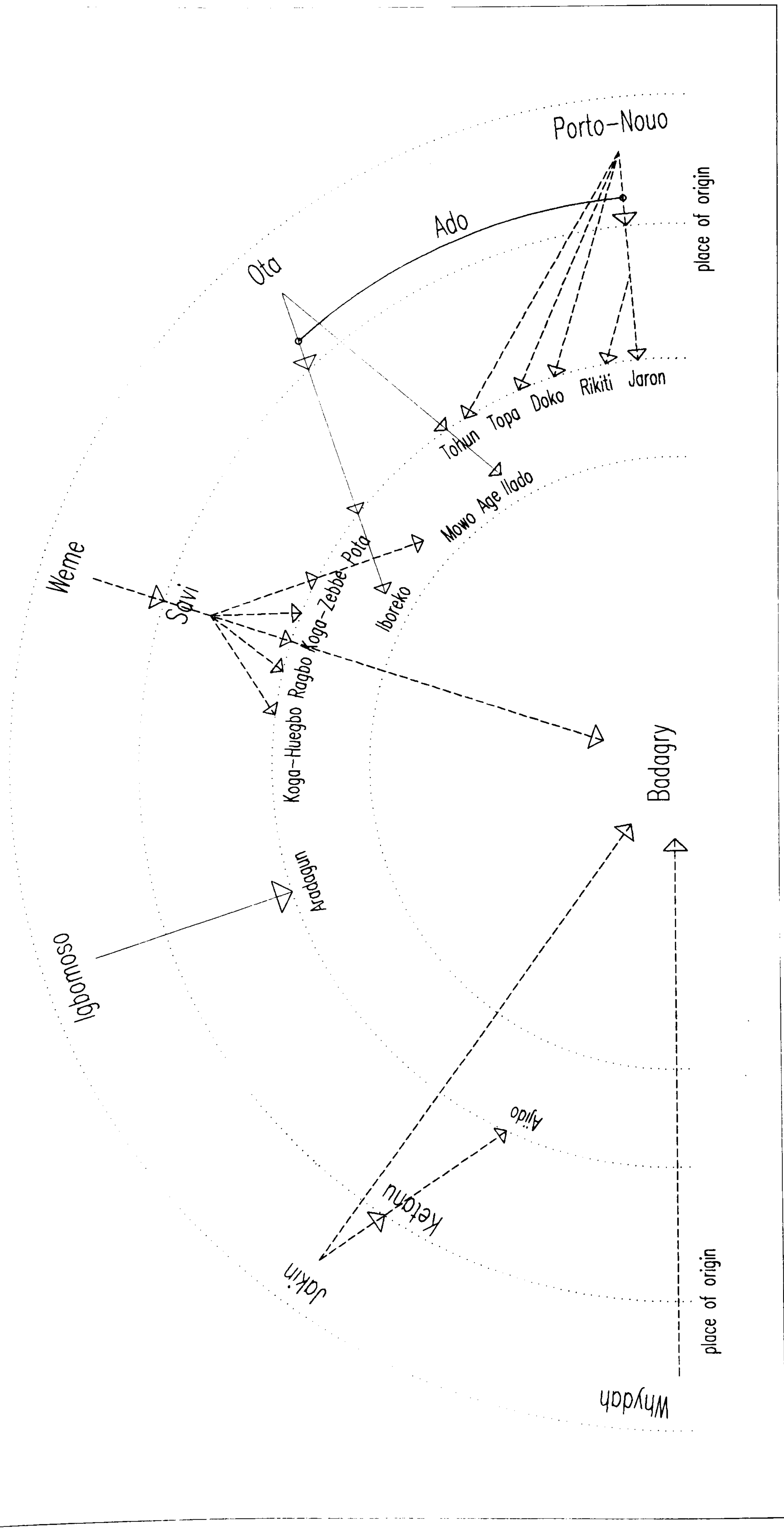
³⁸ Moloney, 'Notes on the Yoruba and the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos', p. 600.

³⁹ Law has produced the earliest reference so far to an 'Igou' people in the 1840s [Law, 'The Gun Communities in the Eighteenth Century', p. 2 citing A d'Avezac-Macaya, 'Notice sur le pays et le peuple des Yebous en Afrique, (Paris 1845). But clearly by this period the usage of the word 'Popo' in English language accounts was prevalent. By the early twentieth century the term Popo had almost disappeared and the British colonial administration were referring to the 'Egun' people and country. It was noted however that the locals called themselves and their language 'Gunu' [NNAI CSO26/4 30030/S1 A Report on the Re-organisation of the Badagri District' R J M Curwen 1937]. It is therefore the term 'Gun' which I shall use to describe this people.

⁴⁰ In his account of the period, which is largely based on the work of Snelgrave, Dalzel says that it was the desire of King Agaja (whom he calls Trudo) to have direct access to the Atlantic slave trade by controlling the port of Whydah [A Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, (new imp, F. Cass & Co, 1967)]. Akinjogbin has subsequently, although not entirely convincingly refuted this. He states that it was only later that Dahomey sought a share in the slave trade [Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours, p. 73-77].

SETTLEMENT IN THE BADAGRY AREA PRE-19TH CENTURY

- Gun Settlement
- - - Awori/Yoruba Settlement



according to a contemporary account the city of Whydah was besieged from 2 March to 9 March 1727, when the Dahomeans seized control and many ruling Whydahs, including the King, were put to flight ⁴¹.

Dahomey, however, was fighting wars on several fronts during this period and aggression was directed also towards Weme. Events and motivations behind this campaign are less clear than for that directed against Whydah. Sometime prior to 1726, King Agaja of Dahomey defeated and killed King Yahaze of Jigbe, west of the Weme River. After that war, some of Yahaze's princes migrated to re-found the kingdom of Weme at Dangbo, east of the river. However, it is likely that refugees from Jigbe also moved further east into the Badagry area ⁴². Further Weme refugees may have fled from Dangbo in later decades. Dalzel says that the Dahomean attacks on Mahi, an interior power to the north, during the 1720s and 1730s, were not successful initially. This caused Agaja to upbraid and kill several of his officers which led to discontent and ultimately revolution among a section of his army. This group, led by Agaja's own son, Zingay, fled to the King of Weme. On Agaja's death c.1740, the succession was disputed by a son of Agaja, possibly Zingay at Weme, but he and his allies were defeated. This confrontation may have produced a further wave of easterly moving refugees ⁴³.

⁴¹ According to the Dutch trader Hendrik Hertogh, now based at Jakin, Dahomey had been threatening Whydah for a long time. He noted that :

on 2nd March this became reality: the Dahomeans came
down to besiege Fida [Whydah] and on 9th March they took
it

[Hertogh 18 March 1727 in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast..., p. 221]. This account is supported by the work of Snelgrave who also places the destruction in March [W Snelgrave, A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade, (new imp. F Cass & Co, 1971), p. 19].

According to the account by William Smith, a surveyor with the Royal Africa Company; the city was overpowered within a few hours and the King was carried away in a hammock [W Smith, A New Voyage to Guinea, (London 1744), p. 190].

⁴² Law, The Slave Coast of West Africa, pp. 265-266.

⁴³ Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, pp. 60 & 67; Akinjogbin, Dahomey and its Neighbours..., p. 91 footnote 4.

The people of Jakin were also known as Wharas [Hula is the local spelling], a group subdivided again into the Whara Jakin and the Whara Ba ⁴⁴. According to Dalzel, despite the efforts of European traders to re-establish a thriving trade at Whydah under the state's new rulers and Agaja's outward willingness to encourage such conditions, the Dahomeans continued to be preoccupied with further conquest ⁴⁵. Jakin had been a port under the control of Allada and had hoped to continue trading under the protection of the Dahomean King. It became clear however, that this was not to be the case and the Jakins became increasingly nervous of their position. Snelgrave recorded that the population prepared for a confrontation by sending their wives and possessions eastward to an island under the protection of the King of Apa ⁴⁶. According to Dalzel, war finally broke out when Jakin decided to throw off the yoke of Dahomean control. But in response to their plotting the Dahomeans attacked by surprise and destroyed Jakin in early 1732. Badagry tradition recounts that the population escaped to the east, the Whara Jakin establishing themselves at Ketonu, on the south-eastern corner of Denham Water, whilst the Whara Ba proceeded further east to Apa, where they were welcomed by King Weze ⁴⁷.

From a number of contemporary sources however, the destruction of Jakin takes on a far more personalized aspect; notably the hatred of the Dahomean King for Hendrik Hertogh. According to Dutch records, Hertogh had arrived in Whydah

⁴⁴ According to Chief Finhento of Badagry in 1887:

The Popo nation was divided into the Whedas and Whras of whom the latter community called Fras, had their own King and their own capital, Whra.

The Whras, again were sub-divided into the Whra Jinkin, so called after their capital, and the Whra Ba...

[PRO CO879/27 statements from the Badagry chiefs made at Lagos on the 22nd and 23rd August 1887 before the Queen's Advocate, Lagos].

⁴⁵ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, p. 54.

⁴⁶ Snelgrave, *A New Account...* p. 82.

⁴⁷ PRO CO879/27 Statements from the Badagry chiefs made at Lagos on 22nd and 23rd August 1887 before the Queen's Advocate, Lagos.

in 1726 to man the Dutch trading factory ⁴⁸. It would appear from the letters of the Director of the Portuguese factory at Ajuda, that Hertogh became the object of Dahomean hostility when he 'provoked wars of the Minas and the Ayos against himself' ⁴⁹. Hertogh's role in such aggression is impossible to substantiate, but whatever his part, Dahomey was attacked by Oyo in 1726, and indeed the capital Abomey was burnt ⁵⁰. What is clear, however, is that Hertogh left Whydah prior to its destruction in March 1727 and established himself at Jakin ⁵¹.

Although initially impressed with the commercial possibilities at Jakin, by as early as May 1727 Hertogh was writing that 'here we live constantly in fear' and by 1728 that 'trade is languishing' ⁵². Whether it was the Dahomean threat which affected trade so adversely or the restrictive Dutch trading practices, of which Hertogh later complained, is unclear. According to Dalzel, it was with the advice and assistance of Hertogh that Jakin sought to throw off Dahomean control, and when Agaja attacked it was with the aim of capturing him ⁵³.

Hertogh escaped further east again. First he went to Lebee [unidentified] and then on to Apa where, according to Snelgrave, he and the King of Jakin were welcomed on account of Apa's aversion to Dahomey ⁵⁴. Furthermore, in a period when trade had been severely weakened by Dahomean aggression, Apa, was.

⁴⁸ Provisional Agreement for approbation, made in the King's lodgings at Sabee by Commies [Factor] H. Hertogh...with the King and Grandes of Fida [Whydah] on 12 November 1726 in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast... pp. 220-221.

⁴⁹ 8 September 1732 Director of Portuguese Factory, Ajuda in Verger, Trade Relations... p. 130.

⁵⁰ Akinjogbin, Dahomey and its Neighbours, pp. 82 & 90.

⁵¹ Hertogh's presence at Jakin at the time of Whydah's destruction is evident from his letters of the period [18 & 23 March 1727, Hertogh, Jakin in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast... p. 221].

⁵² 26 April 1727 & 9 January 1728 Hertogh, Jakin in Ibid, pp. 223 & 231.

⁵³ According to Dalzel, Hertogh:

Stirred up the King of Weemy and other neighbouring princes, to join them, by representing his great design as equally important to them all, promising them, at the same time the necessary supplies of arms and ammunition

[Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 61].

⁵⁴ Snelgrave, A New Account... p 151.

reported to be thriving, sheltered as it was from Dahomey 'by a morass and a river'⁵⁵. The security of Apa as well as its trading prospects must have seemed ideal to Hertogh of whom 'the Dahommese had sworn great oaths never to leave...unprosecuted and unmolested...whenever he may be within their reach'⁵⁶.

Settlement at Badagry

The arrival of Hertogh at Apa and his subsequent removal to the site now called Badagry is noted in local traditions. In Badagry tradition he is known as Freemingo, George, or most commonly Huntokonu and mistakenly given a Brazilian nationality ⁵⁷. But his identity as Hertogh is clear and it is he who has been commonly termed the founder of Badagry ⁵⁸.

Initially it would appear that Hertogh settled at Apa, but at some point in about 1736/7 the King of Apa gave him some land on which to trade. Several accounts note that this land was already a farm or 'gle' [in Gun] belonging to 'Agbada' or 'Agbade', a slave or court messenger of the King of Apa. It was a corruption of this term which gave the new settlement its name ⁵⁹.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 156.

⁵⁶ Minutes of the Elmina Council 30 June 1733 in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast..., p. 186.

⁵⁷ Avoseh says that the trader was a Brazilian slave trader who was known by various names including Freemingo and George but was called Huntokonu by the local people [Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, pp. 12 & 10]. Vice Consul Fraser noted in 1853 that the name 'Oo-toc-co-noo' [Huntokonu] was translated as 'the man that has a ship upon the sea' [PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos]. However, according to Okaro K'Ojwang 'Huntokonu' is the Gun term for 'the sailor laughs' [Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri', p. 10].

Huntokonu can clearly be identified as the Dutch trader Hendrik Hertogh. Indeed, as Law has pointed out, the name 'Freemingo' is clearly a corruption of the Portuguese word 'Flemingo' meaning Dutchman. Law also suggests that Huntokonu may also merely be a deformation of the name Hertogh [Law, '...The Early History of Badagry', p.13].

⁵⁸ Recent local accounts have mistakenly placed the foundation of the town much earlier than the eighteenth century, sometimes as early as the fifteenth century, whilst the arrival of Hertogh is dated around 1600 [Lagos State, Focus on Badagry; Ibrahim, Badagry Past and Present, pp. 12 & 42].

⁵⁹ According to Avoseh the settlement dates back to the seventeenth century:

when the site now known as Badagry Town was
a deep forest Agbade, the founder, built a hut under
the Agia tree for rest and relaxation after farming.

[Avoseh, 'The Historical Tree of Badagry Under Which the Early Missionaries Preached the Gospel of Christ' reproduced in Falola, 'The Minor Works of T O Avoseh', p. 249].

There has also been some dispute over the original position of Hertogh's settlement. According to the nineteenth century accounts of the explorer Clapperton, Vice-Consul Fraser and the missionary Revd Gollmer, the settlement was initially established on the southern bank of the lagoon. Here Hertogh was joined by refugees from Whydah, Weme and Jakin. However the King of Dahomey attacked the settlement and drove the inhabitants across the lagoon to the town's present site ⁶⁰. The existence of this original southern position is questionable. It would appear more likely that evidence of sparse populations on the southern bank of the lagoon, for example at Gberefu, have caused some confusion over the origins of Badagry itself, for there is no evidence of such a Dahomean attack at this time. Interestingly Fraser, who wrote an account of this attack in 1853 claimed that it had occurred about eighty years previously. He was therefore dating the establishment of Badagry proper in the early 1770s. It is possible then that this mythical attack on Badagry and its re-establishment on the north bank of the lagoon has been confused with the very real attack of 1784. The virtual destruction of Badagry in that year may have led to the idea of it being re-founded after this date. But it is clear from accounts such as Dalzel that the situation of the besieged settlement was north of the lagoon, indeed Akinjogbin has suggested that up to 1784 Badagry was in fact some way north of the present town, although there is no evidence to support this ⁶¹.

Despite the failure of the town's defences in 1784 the establishment of a settlement on the north bank of the lagoon would also clearly have offered greater defensive possibilities than one on the southern bank, a factor which must have been uppermost in the 'early settlers' minds. On the southern bank, any dwellings could be easily reached by an army from east or west marching

⁶⁰ PRO CO2/15 Clapperton's Journal 6 December 1825; PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos; CMI August 1849 pp. 93 Gollmer's description of the Badagry station.

⁶¹ Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 179; Akinjogbin, Dahomey and its Neighbours, p. 213.

along the sand spit, whereas, on the north bank, the position was more easily defensible. In the late 1840s Gollmer noted that:

the river Ossa protects the south, a branch of that river [the Yewa] protects the west, and morasses the north and part of the east, so that, from its peculiarity of situation it is rendered almost a natural fortification ⁶²

Indeed at certain seasons in the year, according to another missionary source, Badagry was 'an island during the rains' and that for :

one half of the year, it is impossible for persons coming from more than six miles in any direction, to enter the place without the use of canoes, and even during the other season, the best perhaps is a perfect swamp and contains some water ⁶³

These watery defences would seem to augur well for a settlement that, was threatened by Dahomey, an inland power unused to the techniques of naval warfare. Newbury has argued, however, that Badagry's geographical position was less than secure due to its vulnerability to blockade ⁶⁴. Furthermore it is clear that due to the emergence of competition amongst Badagry's neighbours, more used to maritime conflict, Dahomey was able to secure both 'friendship and assistance' in threatening the town ⁶⁵. However, the fact that Badagry was failed ultimately to defend itself, should not obscure the initial hopes of security.

Badagry Town

The settlement on the north bank of the lagoon grew rapidly into a flourishing town as groups of refugees and traders arrived to take advantage of its situation. Population estimates only began to appear towards the middle of the nineteenth century when, prior to the town's almost complete destruction in 1851, numbers were estimated at between eight and twelve thousand ⁶⁶. Therefore, Badagry at

⁶² CMI August 1849, p. 93 Gollmer's description...

⁶³ WMMSA 24 December 1844 Annear's Journal.

⁶⁴ Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast...*, p. 30.

⁶⁵ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, pp. 166-167.

⁶⁶ Accurate population figures for Badagry are difficult to find. In 1850 Revd Bowen gave a figure of ten thousand [Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours*, pp. 93]. Vice Consul Fraser suggested that during the same period the number could be as high as twelve thousand [PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos], whilst Revd Gollmer, an inhabitant of the town for almost seven years,

this time was a much smaller town than for example the interior Egba city of Abeokuta, which was estimated as having a population of between sixty and one hundred thousand inhabitants during the same period ⁶⁷. It would also appear that Badagry had a smaller population than its nearest lagoonside neighbours. Although the population of Lagos was estimated at just five thousand at the end of the eighteenth century, by the early nineteenth century the figure was put at twenty thousand. Bowen also estimated that the population of Ajasheh [Porto-Novo] was fifteen thousand ⁶⁸.

Descriptions of the town's appearance often seem to contradict one another. Clearly the bamboo palm, growing abundantly in the area, was the main building material used. A missionary visitor in 1851 noted that :

with the exception of those belonging to a few persons of note, and some fetish houses that have mud walls, the whole town is of bamboo construction ⁶⁹.

Another missionary, Charles Gollmer, explained that, due to the sandy nature of the soil, clay or mud suitable for building was rare ⁷⁰. According to the Landers' description of 1830 these bamboo houses were thatched with palm leaves. Some were oblong and some were round and had several rooms, but all were single storey, except one house which, Richard Lander noted on his previous visit, belonged to the King ⁷¹. The practicalities of building in this way became apparent to the first missionaries in the area who learnt that not only could they find no local stone with which to build a mission house, but that they would

suggested the more modest figure of eight thousand [CMI August 1849, p. 93, Gollmer's description...]. Figures prior to the mid-nineteenth century are yet undiscovered.

⁶⁷ Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 93.

⁶⁸ J Adams, Remarks on the Country extending from Cape Palmas to the River Congo, (London 1823), p. 100; G A Robertson, Notes on Africa, (London 1819), p. 287; Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 218.

⁶⁹ CMR October 1851, p. 218, Thomas King (catechist), Badagry.

⁷⁰ CMI August 1849, p. 93, Gollmer's description...

⁷¹ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition, Vol 1, p. 45; R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, p. 236.

have to travel four miles up the lagoon in order to find suitable timber for a wooden frame house ⁷².

In an account published in 1883 A B Ellis stated that:

I should imagine that Badagry is not a healthy place of residence, it is low lying and swampy and sanitary conditions have evidently never been taken into account ⁷³.

This rather unpleasant aspect was also emphasised by the missionary visitor Bowen in 1850 who stressed the swampy and unhealthy nature of the area, exacerbated by the narrow streets and lanes running between the houses ⁷⁴. The sandy nature of these paths clearly caused some inconvenience to missionary workers eager to spread the Word about town as rapidly as possible ⁷⁵. The closely knit nature of the buildings was also featured in the descriptions of other visitors during the nineteenth century ⁷⁶. However, these other travellers frequently present a far more pleasant picture of the town as a whole. The Revd Townsend for example, commented in 1845 that:

The highest spot in Badagry is but a few feet above the common level of the lagoon; but it does not appear that this is a more unhealthy spot than any other on the leeward coast, even those in more elevated and drier situations ⁷⁷

Furthermore, the impression of a bamboo ghetto was dispelled by the Landers' description, which said of the habitations that:

all have excellent yards attached to them, wherein lime trees and others are planted in rows, and it gives one pleasure to look at the cleanliness and taste which prevails in these courts ⁷⁸

⁷² Freeman, Journal of Various Visits... p. 206.

⁷³ Ellis, The Land of Fetish, p. 101.

⁷⁴ Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 94.

⁷⁵ Dr Irving noted in 1854 that 'Progression is not rapid over the sandy streets of Badagry' [PRO FO84/951 30 May 1854 Dr Irving, Abeokuta in 14 August 1854 Lord Chichester (CMS) London].

⁷⁶ In 1847 Revd Gollmer noted that Porto-Novo seemed larger than Badagry but that:
it is, however, difficult to say, the houses not being built close together as at Badagry, but having parcels of unoccupied ground, and many large and beautiful trees interspersed

[CMR October 1847, p. 225, Revd Gollmer, Badagry].

⁷⁷ CMR March 1846, p. 61, Townsend, Badagry.

⁷⁸ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 46.

The more unfavourable descriptions of the town may be attributed to the periods in which they were written. Bowen was writing in 1850, a period when Badagry was on the brink of civil war and when social unrest, political intrigue and the fear of violence may, for a time, have taken precedence over town planning. Avoseh says that after 1914 the town of Badagry, once full of life, went to sleep. Ellis's description of the town in 1883 suggests that this sleep may have begun slightly earlier, perhaps after attentions had focused on Lagos from the 1860s onwards.

The extent to which Badagry's territory extended beyond the bounds of the town itself during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is difficult to ascertain and would appear to have caused some confusion in recent attempts to study its history. The issue is clouded by the fact that territorial control was clearly of a transitory nature. The shifting balance of West African coastal politics resulted in almost continuous changes in territorial authority, as well as co-existing claims and counter-claims over particular areas. The changing relationship between Badagry itself and other coastal states is a case in point. Indeed the town was claimed as tributary, at various points during the period, by Dahomey, Oyo, Abeokuta and Lagos. The limited number and narrow range of sources on this issue highlights the problem, which is further complicated by a number of claims to various areas of land, during the colonial period, which were 'legitimised' with references to 'traditional' land-holdings.

After the decline of Badagry as an Atlantic port in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the area's absorption into the British colony of Lagos, Badagry town became the capital of the 'Badagri' or 'Western' District of that colony. During the 1930s the 'Badagri District' stretched from the boundary with French Dahomey to the Oluge Waters and contained a population of twenty seven and a half thousand. Sixteen thousand of these people were of 'Popo'

[Gun] origin and almost ten and a half thousand of Yoruba ⁷⁹. The 1930s saw a period of almost unprecedented interest in this western region by the colonial authorities who sought to rationalise and reorganise their existing administration of the area. In a series of reports during the 1930s a number of District Officers attempted to establish a system of administration through local institutions. This was made difficult by the inability to find any 'large native organisation of any great age' and recognition of the fact that the region was clearly divided between 'Egun or Popo' in and around the locality of Badagry town and Awori/Yoruba largely to the north east of Iworo ⁸⁰. The difficulties faced by the colonial authorities clearly reflect the disunity of the District. Not only was the region clearly divided along Gun - Awori/Yoruba lines, but also between villages of similar origin. Evidently, 'Badagri District' had no basis in pre-colonial administration.

The extent to which pre-colonial Badagry exerted influence beyond the metropolitan area is difficult to assess although there are evidently a number of areas which were clearly under its sway at some point. Mowo, to the north east of Badagry, was known as a frontier town in 1846 ⁸¹. The missionary Martin in that year described how, situated on the edge of Badagry's encircling morass, Mowo was highly defended against all enemies from the interior by a ten foot barricade of wood with holes through which muskets could be fired. These defences stretched for 'some miles' and met the swamp at both ends ⁸². A year earlier, Revd Annear had described how expected hostilities from the Dahomeans at the Ado encampment were guarded against by sending all available men to Mowo ⁸³. A much later investigation into Badagry's eastern holdings, by the British War

⁷⁹ NNAI BADADIV 6/1 1931 Census of Badagri District.

⁸⁰ CSO26/4 30030/S2 Intelligence Report on Awori Area Badagri District by R J M Curwen 1937. Also see figure 3.

⁸¹ CMSA CA2/085/227 30 January 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

⁸² WMMSA 28 May 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁸³ WMMSA 26 February 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

Office, however, claimed that the town's territory stretched as far east as Oluge Waters 'and a line thence to Okobo' ⁸⁴. This would seem a rather ambitious assessment. Confusion may have arisen when the colonial administration attempted to extend the territory as far east inland as Badagry's influence extended along the coast. From mid-nineteenth century sources it is clear that along the seashore, Badagry chiefs were influential and indeed 'owned' a number of villages stretching at least as far east as Idale ⁸⁵. Furthermore, close contact was maintained with independent Awori/Yoruba settlement at Iworo, at the southern tip of the Oluge Waters. This was a sacred place for the spirit Legba [also called Elegbara and Esu]. Richard Lander witnessed the result of sacrifices to this spirit there in 1826 and mistakenly attributed them solely to the Badagry people ⁸⁶.

Westwards, the issue of land tenure became embroiled in British and French colonial claims. According to the Treaty of Cession in 1863, Badagry territory extended westward along the beach :

to the village of Witcheree [Weshere] on the sea shore, the half of the town of Quameh [Kweme], the Eastern side or shore of the Quameh Creek on the lagoon ⁸⁷

However, in a later document signed by Chief 'Fiotoh' [Finhento] of Badagry and several other chiefs of the town, authority over this territory was disputed. They claimed that in fact this territory had always belonged to Apa, and that confusion had arisen in 1863 because the chiefs had thought they were discussing the 'western limits of the abodes of our people, not of the limits of our territory' ⁸⁸. The Finhento explained that, on arriving in the Badagry area during the

⁸⁴ PRO FO881/5622X Precis of information concerning the Colony of Lagos together with notes on the neighbouring territories 1888.

⁸⁵ CMR October 1846, pp. 229, 12 July 1845 Revd Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁸⁶ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, pp. 251 & 264-265. Also see chapter 4, pp. 114-115.

⁸⁷ PRO FO879/1201 Treaty of Cession of Badagry in 7 July 1863 T Tickel, Badagry. See Appendix C.

⁸⁸ PRO CO879/27 Statements by the Badagry chiefs made at Lagos on 22nd and 23rd August 1887 before the Queen's Advocate, Lagos.

eighteenth century, when the main body of the Whydah and Whra Ba people crossed the lagoon, some stayed at Kweme, Ahoko, Agonrin, Gbele and Weshere, under the authority of Apa. The extent to which Apa itself can, at least during part of the period, be looked on as being under the authority of Badagry is interesting. Although Apa was initially the dominant state, it would appear that Badagry quickly overtook its guardian in both economic and political importance. The decline of Apa as a commercial centre in its own right is amply illustrated by the position of the kingship in the mid-nineteenth century. One of the signatories on Badagry's 1852 Anti Slave Trading Treaty was the Alapa, or King of Apa, who, was called by one contemporary source, the 'guardian of the whole area'⁸⁹. However, this Alapa, had in fact been periodically resident in Badagry itself, from the latter part of the 1840s and his presence, when rarely mentioned, is associated not with any real political authority he had but with occasional attendance at church services ⁹⁰. But, the outbreak of civil war in Badagry during the period 1851-54, and the emergence of a new political authority within the town, backed by this Alapa, led to accusations that this 'King' was an impostor. The real Alapa, it was alleged, was in exile at Porto-Novo ⁹¹. Apa, was perhaps then an issue of dispute between Badagry and Porto-Novo during this period. Although the matter remains unresolved through lack of evidence, it is interesting to note that Apa continued to be a bone of contention between the squabbling British and French agents at Lagos and Porto-Novo during the early 1860s ⁹².

⁸⁹ In his journal Revd Gollmer implied that, on occasion, even the ruling chief Mewu at Badagry deferred to the superiority of the King of Apa. This, however, may, have been a ruse which enabled the Mewu to avoid taking responsibility for certain grievances raised by the missionaries. It was also a way of legitimising his own position in the town; the Mewu had originally come from Porto-Novo and used the political disintegration at Badagry during the early 1850s to seize power for a short period. See Chapter 9 and Appendix A.

⁹⁰ Both the Mewu and the King of Apa would appear to have curried missionary favour by attending the Anglican church in Badagry during their period of 'rule' [CMSA CA2/043/12 7 September 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

⁹¹ PRO FO84/920 27 December 1852 Fraser, Lagos. See chapter 9, pp. 324-325.

⁹² See chapter 11, p. 366.

To the north of the lagoon, the 1863 Treaty of Cession clearly stated that Badagry's territory extended as far west as the Ado or Yewa River ⁹³. However, by the 1880s this assertion was being challenged not only by the British authorities, but also the chiefs of Badagry and indeed those of Ipokia, west of the Ado. Claims that Badagry's territory ended at the Ado, as stated in the 1863 Treaty, were disputed by the Badagry chiefs in 1888 when they claimed that ancestors of Chief Finhento were granted land west of that river for farming purposes by the Kingdom of Ipokia ⁹⁴. The amount of land so given is difficult to quantify. One source claimed that the territory was that which occupied 'the angle formed by the Ado River with the Victoria Lagoon' and consisted of the towns of Vawehgbo, Turu, Geshi, Vawehpeve, Zigi, Lassa, Akere, Gbagodo Weke and possibly Greta and Mawun, only some of which places are now identifiable on the map ⁹⁵. The nature of Badagrian authority within this area, it was claimed, was maintained largely by the goodwill of Ipokia. Governor Moloney stated that although the territory was still considered part of the kingdom of Ipokia, 'it was allowed to be excluded from the jurisdiction exercised by the authorities of Pokra' ⁹⁶. Furthermore, Chief Ganfoji, the Finhento of Badagry, was said to act as chief, mediator in disputes and the controller of immigration to the area ⁹⁷. In 1888, Badagrian claims to authority here were supported by the messengers of the King and elders of Ipokia ⁹⁸. However, the possible motivations behind this declaration are unclear and it may be that this was an attempt by a region dominated by France, to forge closer links with Britain, during a period when Europe was attempting to enforce unnatural boundaries in Africa.

⁹³ It is important to note that the French also claimed the territory of Ipokia west of the Ado as belonging to Porto-Novo [PRO FO84/1201 Treaty of Cession of Badagry in 7 July 1863 Tickel, Badagry].

⁹⁴ PRO CO879/27 19 September 1887 Moloney, Lagos.

⁹⁵ PRO CO879/27 16 August 1887 Commissioner Rowland, Lagos.

⁹⁶ PRO CO879/27 19 September 1887 Moloney, Lagos.

⁹⁷ PRO CO879/27 16 August 1887 Commissioner Rowland, Lagos.

⁹⁸ PRO CO879/27 a declaration by the messengers of sent by the King and elders of Pokra [Ipokia], Lagos.

The extent to which any part of these claims can be substantiated is limited. However the circumstantial nature of some information may aid further research. For example, the chiefs of Badagry asserted that their relationship with Ipokia had been in existence for three generations ⁹⁹. Furthermore, when Captain Clapperton left Badagry for the interior in 1825, he travelled by water, up the Gazie Creek [Ado River] as far as Bawie [Ibawe], where he continued on foot through the area under discussion. It was only after he reached the town of Puka [Ipokia] itself that he learnt that 'we were not now in the king of Badagry's territory' ¹⁰⁰. This may imply that Clapperton's informants were slow reporting a change in territorial authority, or it may perhaps suggest that such a change took place much further north west of Badagry than is now believed.

I would conclude however, that using the evidence available Badagry was ultimately very much a 'city state'. With an economy based firmly on commerce, the population did not require control over extensive agricultural land whilst the lagoon, river and sea maintained a series of natural defensive boundaries. However, these 'borders' were also the key to the town's commercial links. Whatever the exact limits of Badagry's territory during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is clear that the city state was dominated by its ability to take advantage of these water connections, which gave it the potential to become a new commercial focus on the Slave Coast of West Africa.

⁹⁹ PRO CO879/27 Statements of the Badagry chiefs made at Lagos on 22nd and 23rd August 1887 before the Queen's Advocate, Lagos.

¹⁰⁰ Clapperton, Journal of a Second Expedition, p. 4.

Chapter Two

Badagry as an Atlantic Port

The commercial nature of Badagry is evident from any examination of its history. Founded as an Atlantic port in the 1730s, Badagry's existence was based on international commerce, a factor which shaped and moulded the town more than any other, as it sought to establish, maintain and modify its links with the rest of the world. Furthermore, the very establishment of a significant commercial centre, in a coastal area largely devoid of sufficient natural resources, resulted in the emergence of a further layer of local commercial activity in staple products. The separation of international and domestic economies is misleading in the context of Badagry, as both became interdependent. International commerce not only required a solid domestic economy in order to maintain the trading community and also to a lesser extent supply the provision needs of Atlantic ships, crews and in the case of the slave trade; cargoes. It also used the local market to stimulate both demand for foreign items and production of Atlantic trade goods. In the same way the domestic economy was able to expand along the trade routes of Atlantic commerce and supply a greater variety of products to the local market place.

Badagry as a Commercial Centre

Local historian T Ola Avoseh states that the occupations of the original inhabitants of the sea shore area of Badagry were salt-making and trading, but that this was ended by the arrival of traders from Brazil ¹. Recent archaeological excavations in the area have unearthed evidence of such early salt works ².

¹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, pp. 8-9.

² For a brief resume of the archaeological excavations at Ganyingbo beach undertaken by Professor Allsworth-Jones see : B Agbaje-Williams, 'Archeology and Yoruba Studies' in T Falola, (ed), Yoruba Historiography. (Wisconsin-Madison 1991), pp. 5-29. Law has also made an examination of early salt production in the area. Apa, an important salt market, was supplied from an unidentified

These were based on the evaporation of salt water from the lagoon trapped in pots or pits³. The production of salt in coastal areas was not merely for local consumption, but was part of an important commercial network. The value placed on the product was noted in the latter part of the eighteenth century by William Snelgrave who reported that Jakin, as the sea port of Ardrah [Old Allada] paid its tribute in loaves of salt⁴. That this stretch of coast between Porto-Novo and Lagos was a salt-producing area is supported by several sources. Robertson in the later years of the eighteenth century described how salt produced at Porto-Novo was sent into the interior for sale⁵. As late as the 1860s at least some vestiges of salt production remained at Lagos, although competition from imported salt was intense⁶. But it would appear that at Ajido, about ten miles east of Badagry, there was, during the middle years of the nineteenth

source called Jojo. The Apa market in turn supplied Yorubaland to the east [Law, 'Between the Sea and the Lagoons...', pp. 220-222.

³ Revd Gollmer gave a description of the salt works at the neighbouring town of Ajido during the 1840s. He noted that:

There are on a nicely swept sand plain close to the surf several hundred [...] a kind of wicker basket, about 2 1/2 feet in diameter, 3 1/2 feet high above the ground and about 2 feet deep in the ground which are filled with sand about 3 feet distant. There is a pot (containing about from 3-5 gallons) buried up to the neck in the ground into which the salt water, after having passed through the sand in the basket runs, by means of a pipe, or hollow piece of wood - from these pots the strained salt water is conveyed to ponds, under sheds close by. When the ponds are full the oven is kindled and the water sufficiently boiled in small pots containing about 2 gallons. The oven is a circular hole in the ground, about 6 feet in diameter and about 4 feet in depth, over which there are nicely constructed arches built of clay which admit about 10 of those smaller pots, two holes in the centre of the hearth, serve as a chimney. There are other ovens on a larger scale. In order to expedite the business, many people pour salt water on the nicely kept sand, which leaves after being dried up, some salt behind, which is then swept up and put in the baskets

[CMSA CA2/043/98 31 January 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁴ Snelgrave, *A New Account...* p. 20.

⁵ Robertson, *Notes on Africa*, p. 280.

⁶ During the early colonial period at Lagos, Governor Glover noted that many of the Lagos salt manufacturers had been put out of business due to imported salt [PRO CO147/14 18 January 1868 Glover, Lagos in 30 January 1868 Blackall (CO), London].

century, 'an extensive salt manufactory' ⁷. Whether Ajido was the 'Jojo' identified by Law as the supplier to the great salt market at Apa during the seventeenth century is unknown. However, this trade was virtually destroyed by the advent of importations by Europeans ⁸. It would appear that only limited salt production, probably to meet local needs, was continued in the Badagry area during the nineteenth century. In the 1840s Revd Annear noted that there were 'salt pits a short distance up the beach' from Badagry itself ⁹. Furthermore, in the mid-1860s, when attempting to establish a boundary between the British and French territories, it was agreed that the frontier would be indicated by a post between the salt works belonging to 'Gaimbo' [Ganyingbo] and 'Appa' [Apa] ¹⁰. However, it is clear that at least by the early years of the nineteenth century and probably much earlier, the Badagry area was no longer a significant salt-producing or marketing area. But, it was still the local waterways which were the key to its commercial success.

The geographical position of Badagry on the Slave Coast was not ideal for a port. It does not lie within a natural harbour, indeed the easterly nature of the currents in that area have caused erosion of the whole coast into a smooth and thus much exposed line ¹¹. However, the problematic situation of Badagry was, during much of its eighteenth and nineteenth century history, outweighed by more favourable factors. The desire for a port further east than Whydah, at least partially out of range of Dahomey's demanding and often difficult influence, was paramount amongst many groups of traders. These included not only the displaced Whydahs and later Hula people of Jakin, but also Dutch and then Portuguese trading agents working on the coast. As Law has noted, after Hendrik Hertogh's removal to Badagry in the 1730s the port emerged as the principal

⁷ WMMSA 18 May 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁸ Law, 'The Gun Communities in the Eighteenth Century', p. 6.

⁹ WMMSA 14 September 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰ PRO CO147/5 29 December 1864 Glover, Lagos.

¹¹ See chapter 1 pp. 27-28.

centre of European trade east of Whydah. Furthermore, due to its convenient connections with the interior, slaves could be purchased at Badagry more cheaply than they had been at Jakin ¹². The attractions of Lagos, notably its position close to an opening between lagoon and sea and its direct water link with the interior via the Ogun River, went unrecognised until the city itself became more populous during the first half of the nineteenth century.

But Badagry's paramountcy was short-lived. The port soon experienced competition from Ekpe, established by Hertogh himself in 1737, and from Porto-Novo. By 1765 Badagry had been overtaken by trade at the more westerly port. But the drift from Whydah continued and transportation along the lagoon was vital ¹³. In this way Badagry maintained a prominent role in the Atlantic trade, so much so that during the 1770s the French Director on the coast noted that both Porto-Novo and Badagry were the most important ports, because of their links with Oyo in the interior ¹⁴. Ultimately however, Badagry's success as an Atlantic centre provoked hostility from neighbouring states to the extent that in 1784 the town was destroyed by the combined forces of Dahomey and Porto-Novo ¹⁵. Struggling to rebuild, Badagry's fortunes as a slave-trading port had a brief resurgence during the 1820s, but it was as the initial key to British 'legitimate' commerce in the area that Badagry came to the fore during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

Links with the interior, highlighted by Sierra Leonian immigrants eager to find their way to the homelands from which they had been snatched, attracted both British missionaries and traders to the town. Having abolished the slave trade in 1807 both groups of Britons were eager to score both a moral and commercial

¹² Law, '...The Early History of Badagry', p. 24.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

¹⁴ Verger, *Trade Relations...* p. 183.

¹⁵ See chapter 5, pp. 156-158.

victory on the coast through the promotion of more 'legitimate' products, especially palm oil. Displaced by British anti-slave trading attentions at Badagry, Portuguese traders moved further east again, to Lagos. This migration resulted, at least in British eyes, in a distinct divide along the coast between slaving and non-slaving ports. Until the reduction of Lagos and the deposition of Kosoko, the 'slave trading' king of Lagos, in 1851, Badagry remained the focus of legitimate trade and point of contact with the interior along that part of the coast. It was only after Kosoko's expulsion, which firmly established British influence and a 'legitimate' faction at Lagos, that conditions in Badagry became 'impracticable' and the town was virtually abandoned by missionaries and traders alike ¹⁶.

The Slave Trade at Badagry

Despite its ominous title, the 'Slave Coast', notably the area from Whydah to Benin, was not the major source of slaves for the Atlantic trade during the eighteenth century. This area, and most obviously Whydah, had been the major supplier of slaves during the 1690s to 1720s, but its relative importance had declined thereafter. Newbury and Hodder have stated that by 1789 the area furnished only about eleven thousand five hundred slaves annually of the total estimated seventy four thousand for the whole west coast from the Gambia to the Congo ¹⁷. Indeed sources of British supplies clearly indicate a majority being shipped from Angola, Bonny, New and Old Calabar ¹⁸. It was only in the early nineteenth century, after the abolition of the slave trade by Britain and the outbreak of the Yoruba wars that the area became the chief supplier of slaves from the West African coast ¹⁹. In 1845 the Methodist missionary Revd Freeman

¹⁶ PRO CO96/4 16 May 1844 Hill, Cape Coast.

¹⁷ B W Hodder and C W Newbury, 'Some Geographical Changes along the Slave Coast of West Africa', *Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, Vol 52 (March 1961), p. 78.

¹⁸ According to figures compiled between 1796 and 1801; of the five hundred and thirty two ships arriving in the British West Indies from the West Coast of Africa, only two had come from Badagry, two from Lagos and one from Porto-Novo, whilst one hundred and seven had come from Angola, ninety four from Bonny, and twenty one and eighteen from New and Old Calabar respectively [Parliamentary Papers Slave Trade Session 1801-1815, No 61].

¹⁹ Hodder and Newbury 'Some Geographical Changes...', p. 78.

stated that there was no place in Africa where more slaves were transported than the Bight of Benin ²⁰. Indeed far from the efforts of the anti-slave trading squadron proving successful, accounts of the period from missionaries such as Revd Martin and traders such as William Hutton would seem to indicate that the slave trade was actually increasing during this period ²¹.

A belief that the trade in palm oil would ultimately oust the grip of the slave trade was widespread. Vice-Consul Duncan at Whydah optimistically stated that a sure sign of the decreasing slave trade was the number of slave traders who had become engaged in palm oil trading ²². However, the theory proved false. Slave traders did engage in more 'legitimate' trade, but not at the expense, and often to the advantage of their slave trading activities. The two products were not mutually exclusive. Traders would often engage in legitimate commerce in order to gain access to the trade goods required to pursue their slave-trading aims. After initial optimism, the end of the 1850s and early 1860s saw a revival in slave trading along the Bight ²³. The history of slave trading at Badagry however, presents a rather different picture. It was in the eighteenth century, during the period when the Slave Coast was not the prominent exporting area, that Badagry reached the peak of its slave-trading powers. But as the coast became increasingly important for slave exports during the nineteenth century, Badagry's links with the British hindered her progress in the trade.

²⁰ PRO FO84/616 3 May 1845 Freeman, Cape Coast.

²¹ In 1847 Martin pointed to increases in slave trading notably due to the activities of trader Domingo Martinez who had recently established a slave factory at Ajido [WMMSA May 1847 Martin's Journal, Badagry]. William Hutton in the same year noted that the slave trade was not decreasing and complained that it was disrupting the activities of legitimate traders. Hutton gave the example of a force of Dahomean soldiers, reputedly under the instructions of Martinez, who had arrived at Badagry beach and destroyed the goods landed there from an American brig [PRO CO96/11 An undated letter from an unidentified trader at Badagry in 3 September 1847 W Hutton, London].

²² PRO FO2/4 24 August 1849 Duncan (Vice Consul at Whydah), Whydah.

²³ This was supported by both Commander Edmonstone of the Squadron and Governor Freeman of Lagos who indicated that the number of vessels leaving the Bights signalled an increase rather than a decrease in slaves exported from the area. [PRO FO84/1183 7 November 1861 Edmonstone's Report; FO84/1175 1 July 1862 Governor Freeman, Lagos].

During the town's early years, there were high hopes for the commercial possibilities at Badagry. The Dutch agent there in 1738 noted that the opportunities were favourable 'because there were plenty of slaves, and the surrounding countries are friendly towards us' ²⁴. Furthermore, at the end of the eighteenth century Archibald Dalzel was warning that the King of Dahomey had been regarding Badagry along with 'Appe' [Ekpe] with jealousy due to the 'great number of ships which resorted to these ports, while Whydah was almost totally abandoned' ²⁵. Unfortunately sources during the eighteenth century reporting the extent of slave trading at Badagry are limited. Law has collected data to suggest that in 1765 Badagry exported eight hundred slaves in comparison to one thousand two hundred from Porto-Novo, six hundred from Ekpe, four hundred from Lagos, and five thousand from Whydah ²⁶. But without comparable figures from other years this can only indicate that Badagry exported two thirds the number of its main rival, Porto-Novo, in that particular year.

It is interesting to note that, of the 'great number of ships' resorting to Badagry during this period, very few were British. As noted above, British ships concentrated on other areas. But Badagry did reflect that the Bight of Benin was a focus for Dutch and then Portuguese or Brazilian traders. Badagry was in effect founded by the Dutch trader Hendrik Hertogh, who was replaced after his assassination, at least for a short period by his deputy Bronssema ²⁷. As indicated by the allegiances of certain chiefs at Badagry, it is likely that at some point during this period French and British slavers did some business in the town. However, by the end of the eighteenth century and early years of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese/Brazilian traders were the major force, although at what point

²⁴ 28 May 1738 Bronssema, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast... p. 341.

²⁵ Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 166.

²⁶ Law, 'The Gun Communities in the Eighteenth Century', pp. 23-24.

²⁷ 28 May 1738 Bronssema, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast... page 341.

they became the dominant foreign element is unclear. In an example cited by Verger in his examination of the slave trade between Bahia and the West Coast during the early years of the nineteenth century, thirteen ships were said to have left Brazil for Badagry at about the same time, a considerable number indeed ²⁸. The attractions of Badagry to Brazilians during this period is corroborated by the fact that c.1807 the Brazilian Felix De Souza settled in the town after the Portuguese fort at Whydah was abandoned. He returned to Whydah a few years later where he ultimately achieved unparalleled success as a slave trader ²⁹. By the 1820s there were five slave factories established at Badagry belonging to the Portuguese ³⁰.

As Badagry became, from the 1840s until the early 1850s, the focus of British attention along the Bight of Benin as a result of missionary, trader and therefore naval efforts, it is understandable that its role as a prominent slave port was significantly reduced. However, the effects were not immediate. In 1844, Revd Annear noted that 'Slavery is the sole traffic of the town' and that since his arrival in 1842 'the Palm Oil factory here has barely received oil enough to pay its own expenses' ³¹. A year later there was more optimism from fellow missionary Revd Freeman, who felt that at Badagry 'British influence is now more powerfully felt than at any other point along the shores of the Bight' ³². However, as it became increasingly difficult to ship slaves directly, slave-dealers resident in all the towns along the coast, including Badagry, successfully operated a chain of commerce, carried by canoe along the lagoon, out of range and out of sight of the British Squadron. This situation continued until the end of the 1840s when Revd Gollmer admitted in a tract, largely dedicated to the success and

²⁸ Verger, Trade Relations... p. 481.

²⁹ *ibid*, p. 209.

³⁰ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa. Vol 2, p. 250.

³¹ WMMSA 30 October 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

³² PRO FO84/616 3 May 1845 Freeman, Cape Coast.

increase in 'legitimate' commerce, that at Badagry there were no longer any public slave marts and yet:

this does not so much prove the non-existence of the trade as that the transactions are carried on in secret, principally by night, and that the natives study to keep us ignorant of what is going on³³

As late as 1861, in a surely exaggerated report for the African Times the correspondent from Badagry stated that no vessels left Porto-Novo or Badagry 'without a cargo of slaves' ³⁴.

The Rise of the Atlantic Palm Oil Trade

As early as 1825 Captain Clapperton remarked that the inhabitants of Badagry acted as both slave raiders and traders but also as traders in ivory, cloth and palm oil ³⁵. Ryder has also pointed out that during the eighteenth century the Dutch agent at Benin did a fair amount of trade in ivory via the lagoon and Badagry ³⁶. However, he also notes that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Portuguese at San Tome had admitted that the cloths of Benin, Warri, Onim [Lagos], and Badagry were 'an important commodity' but that 'it is not possible to sell a large number of them, and we have no means of exporting the ivory which these places could supply in large quantities' ³⁷. Exports of products such as ivory remained small throughout the nineteenth century. In 1857 only £4220 worth of ivory was exported from the Bight in comparison to £222390 worth of palm oil³⁸.

Increasingly widespread interest in the palm oil trade was the result of British attempts to find an acceptable export to replace slaves. Its suitability for domestic and industrial use, for example cooking and soap-making, coupled with its ready availability, ease of collection and preparation, made it, of all possible products,

³³ CMR August 1849, p. 93 Gollmer's description...

³⁴ PRO FO84/1192 23 May 1861 African Times (Journal of the African Aid Society).

³⁵ PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

³⁶ A F C Ryder, Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897. (London 1966), p. 188.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 234.

³⁸ PRO FO84/1061 2 February 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

the most obvious for large-scale export. Moreover, the development of a cultivable commodity to replace slaves conjured up images of a new agricultural class rising to replace the despotic slave raiding kings of the area. This vision was held very dear by the arriving missionaries. Having found little spiritual encouragement amongst the peoples they encountered, the Christian arrivals became increasingly determined that the way towards successful evangelisation and conversion would ultimately involve changing the very nature and structure of those societies. Palm oil became the key.

The palm oil trade of the nineteenth century initially operated on a small scale on the Bight of Benin. William Hutton, whose company was one of the most prominent palm oil traders on the coast, proudly claimed to have been exporting since 1835, although initially he admitted the trade was very small³⁹. Figures for that year put export from the whole of the west coast of Africa only at about one hundred tons⁴⁰. However, Hutton noted that from the early 1840s the trade grew rapidly and his 'nephew' Thomas had expanded his operations from two factories between Cape St Paul and Lagos to eight or ten⁴¹. by 1846 palm oil exports from the west coast as a whole had increased to between two and a half to three thousand tons⁴². Even traders notorious for their slave dealing activities were said to be doing a roaring trade in oil by 1849. Indeed so successful was the trader Domingo Martinez that a number of other European merchants begged the British Vice Consul at Whydah, to persuade the King of Dahomey to not sell oil to him⁴³.

A palm oil factory had been in operation at Badagry as early as the 1820s. Mr Houtson, one of those engaged in Captain Clapperton's 1825 expedition had

³⁹ PRO FO84/699 25 March 1847 W Hutton, London.

⁴⁰ PRO FO84/710 19 July 1847 W Hutton, London.

⁴¹ PRO FO84/699 7 December 1846 T Hutton, Cape Coast in 25 March 1847 W Hutton, London.

⁴² PRO FO84/710 19 July 1847 W Hutton, London.

⁴³ PRO FO84/775 21 August 1849 Duncan, Whydah.

evidently established a factory there the previous year. But this experiment would appear to have been short-lived. Houtson died on the way back from Oyo and there is every reason to believe that the Badagry factory died with him. Richard Lander's subsequent visits to the town make no mention of a palm oil factory ⁴⁴. But by 1847 William Hutton was able to note that so well placed was Badagry for both 'inland, as well as water communication' that palm oil traders had chosen it six years previously ⁴⁵. One of these unidentified traders may have been Captain Marmon, an agent of Thomas Hutton, who was said to have established a factory there as early as 1838 ⁴⁶. Certainly by 1841 Thomas Hutton's factory was fully operational at Badagry.

A number of European traders and trading companies subsequently settled at Badagry. Between 1848 and 1851, among others, Randolphe Brothers of Accra, the Forster and Smith Company, the Bristol firm of King's, Messrs O'swald of Hamburg and Banner Brothers of Cape Coast were established in the town ⁴⁷. By 1850 it would appear that competition amongst the British traders at Badagry was becoming so intense that antagonism erupted. At the beginning of that year Thomas Hutton was accused of attempting to have all other traders expelled from the town ⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ PRO CO2/15 29 November 1825 Clapperton, off Badagry; R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, page 46.

⁴⁵ PRO FO84/710 19 July 1847 W Hutton, London.

⁴⁶ Parliamentary Papers, Slave Trade 1842, evidence of Capt. H. Seward 10 May 1842.

⁴⁷ It is clear that by 1851 Forster and Smith had an agent operating at Badagry [PRO FO84/860 11 October 1851 Forster and Smith, London]. J Sandeman arrived during that year, and although due to local and personal difficulties he moved to Lagos the following year his establishment remained in the town under a skeleton staff [PRO FO84/891 20 February 1852 Cmdr Heath, off Appi in 19 April 1852, Adm, London] Although Newbury says that Sandeman was acting for the firm Stewart and Douglas [Newbury, The Western Slave Coast... p. 42], from the correspondence between London and the coast it would appear that he was in fact acting for Forster and Smith as Ajayi has suggested [CMSA CA2/082/13 Isaac Smith's Journal (catechist), Badagry; CMSA CA2/043/19 5 July 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; Ajayi, Christian Missions... p. 59].

⁴⁸ Thomas Hutton's attempts to establish a monopoly at Badagry were ultimately unsuccessful. But competition between British merchants remained intense, sometimes erupting into violence throughout the 1850s and 1860s [CMSA CA2/043/5a 1 May 1850 Gollmer, Badagry]. Also see chapter 9, p. 299.

The Operation of Atlantic Trade

In his illuminating study of slavery and the slave trade, Lovejoy draws attention to the irony that whilst commerce required order, slavery demanded chaos. He suggests that this contradiction was resolved 'through a separation of the commercial infrastructure from the institutions of enslavement'⁴⁹. An examination of the Badagry case would certainly seem to suggest that this port sought primarily to maintain the commercial infrastructure required to market slaves and was actively engaged in the process of enslavement only on a limited scale.

There is certainly limited evidence of Badagry acting as a slave-raiding power. Avoseh states that the town was very war like and would raid other countries for slaves⁵⁰. During the 1840s, missionaries Gollmer, Annear, Martin and Smith described in some detail the process of raiding parties leaving Badagry to attack Lagos, Porto-Novo and other neighbouring towns to gather slaves⁵¹. In his description Annear noted that the people, in order to 'cover their guilt' said they were at war with Porto-Novo, 'But the war is nothing more than trifling disturbances got up between the chiefs... for the purpose of stealing men from each other'⁵². The numbers captured in this fashion appear to have varied, with water-borne raiding parties of sometimes eight or ten canoes returning with twelve, thirty, and thirty nine slaves a time⁵³. It is clear is that such parties were under the control of a chief or at least a prominent man from the town. Smith gives the example of Akitoye, a King of Lagos in exile at Badagry during the latter

⁴⁹ P E Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa, (Cambridge 1983), p. 66.

⁵⁰ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p.10.

⁵¹ Parliamentary Papers First report from the Select Committee on Slave Trade, Slave Trade Session 1847-48 No 4 paragraph 8054 4 July 1848 Gollmer's evidence; WMMSA 18 June 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁵² WMMSA 12 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁵³ CMSA CA2/082/12 29 June 1848 Smith's Journal, Badagry; PRO CO96/14 1 March 1848 Middleton, Badagry in 4 July 1848 ADM, London; WMMSA 12 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

1840s, sending parties out slaving⁵⁴. What is interesting is that Akitoye was, understandably, carrying out his raids against the Lagos area and possibly sending his captives to Porto-Novo beach, where the notorious Martinez was reportedly furnishing Badagry warriors with ammunition⁵⁵. During the same period however, other Badagry chiefs were launching raids against Porto-Novo and its satellites and sending their captives to Lagos for shipment⁵⁶. Evidently it would appear that the Badagry inhabitants were equally keen and able to maintain their commercial links with both neighbours.

Throughout the period the town also gained a further supply of slaves from individual kidnappings⁵⁷. There were a number of cases, reported by missionaries, of individuals, often children, disappearing from within the town itself⁵⁸. Although clearly not an uncommon occurrence, the numbers of slaves acquired through slave raiding and kidnapping was not sufficient to maintain Badagry's position as an Atlantic port. Indeed in 1825 Lander recorded that Portuguese and Spanish ships had been waiting near Badagry for slaves, and that the King of 'Jannah' [Ijanna] had sent a slaving party to the Essas [near Engwa] to supply these ships⁵⁹. It is in this way then that Badagry's position as the crossroads of trading routes from both the interior and from along the coast enabled it to flourish⁶⁰.

⁵⁴ CMSA CA2/082/ 12 29 June 1848 Smith's Journal, Badagry.

⁵⁵ Parliamentary Papers First Report from the Select Committee on the Slave Trade, Slave Trade Session 1847-48 No 4 Paragraph 8054 4 July 1848 Gollmer's evidence.

⁵⁶ WMMSA 12 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

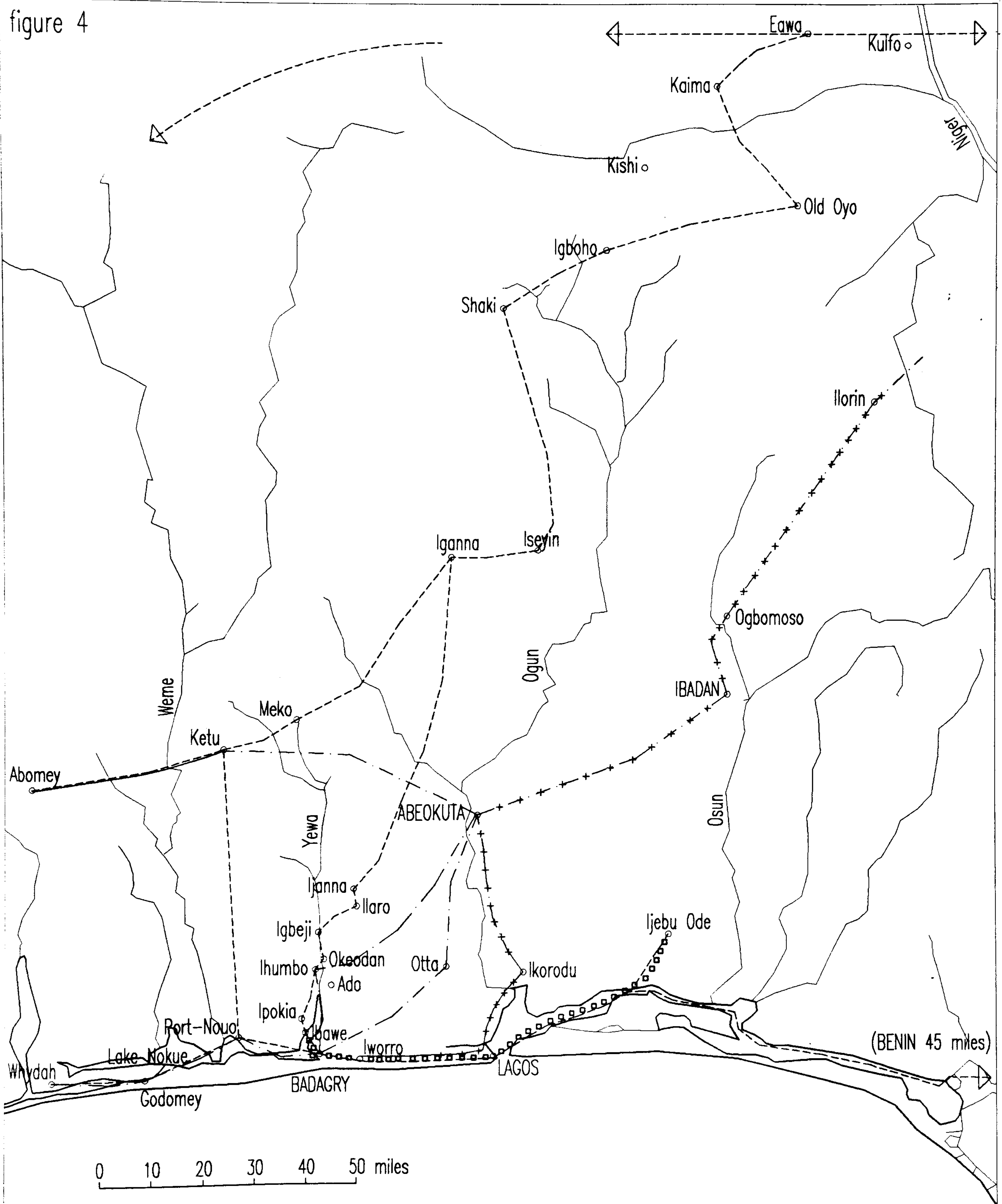
⁵⁷ In 1843 Revd De Graft noted that at Badagry 'the evil practice of kidnapping' was 'still prevalent' [WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry].

⁵⁸ Members of the Sierra Leone population were sometimes victims of kidnapping in Badagry. However, individual members of this group also acted as perpetrators. For example in 1844 Annear described how a Sierra Leone emigrant had been accused of kidnapping a fellow returnee and selling him at Lagos [WMMSA 24 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry].

⁵⁹ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, page 83.

⁶⁰ See Figure 4.

figure 4



MAJOR TRADE ROUTES BETWEEN THE INTERIOR AND THE COAST

- Route used for transportation of goods used in Atlantic commerce pre 1832
- Route used for transportation of goods used in domestic commerce pre 1832
- Route used for transportation of goods used in Atlantic commerce post 1832
- + + + + + Route used for transportation of goods used in domestic commerce post 1832

When Captain Clapperton and Richard Lander journeyed into the interior from Badagry in 1825 they noted that the route they travelled was an old trading road. The route, which linked Oyo, Kano and the Sokoto Caliphate with the coast, was joined along its length by other routes from east and west so that at 'Wowo' [Wawa] roads from Gonja, Dahomey, Ahsanti, Nyfee [Nupe], Hausa and Bornu joined the road to the coast ⁶¹. Folayan in his work on the interior trade routes of the Egbado country, states that these roads linking Badagry with the interior enabled the coastal town to become, during the middle years of the eighteenth century, the prominent slave exporting centre on the coast, a position which was quickly surpassed by Porto-Novo once the Alafin of Oyo had decided to make that place his major outlet ⁶². However, even during the early years of the nineteenth century the roads to Badagry supplied the town with a large number of slaves. Lander noted several slave caravans, each made up of several hundred individuals, making their way to the coast ⁶³. Indeed Captain Pearce, another member of the Clapperton expedition commented that:

Badagry is rising in importance and promises to become in a short time what Ardrah [Porto-Novo] hitherto has been, the outlet to the trade from Oyo ⁶⁴

That such slave caravans may have continued to travel to Badagry during the 1850s is supported by the American Baptist missionary Thomas Bowen who reported meeting with one consisting of 'several hundred men and women' at Imowo [Mowo] on the outskirts of Badagry territory ⁶⁵. Whether these particular slaves were being taken to Badagry for shipment was not specified. But it is important to note that their presence at Mowo, the frontier town of Badagry,

⁶¹ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, page 134.

⁶² K Folayan, 'Trade Routes in Egbado in the Nineteenth Century' in J A Akinjogbin and S O Osoba, (eds), Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History, (Ile Ife, University of Ife Press, 1980), pp. 83-95; 'Egbado to 1832: the Birth of a Dilemma' Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria iv/1 (1967), pp. 15-33. See also p. 53.

⁶³ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, pp. 100-101.

⁶⁴ PRO CO2/15 28 November 1825 Captain Pearce, Badagry.

⁶⁵ Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours...., p. 101.

would undoubtedly have involved that place in the caravan's movement, sheltering, provisioning and possibly taxing.

Slave supplies did not come solely from the interior however. The traveller and member of the 1854 Niger Expedition T J Hutchinson, writing in the 1850s, stated that in the past Badagry had been chiefly supplied from 'Dahomey and Issoo' [Iso]⁶⁶. It would seem likely that these supplies from the west were brought along the lagoon. Dahomean difficulties operating directly out of the newly acquired port of Whydah would have made shipment via easterly ports attractive. The Isso or Iso country, north of Lake Nokue, was the domain of a water based community often used, notably by Porto-Novo, as mercenaries due to their skill in canoe warfare ⁶⁷.

The operation of the palm oil trade at Badagry, like the slave trade was, to a great extent, reliant on importation from elsewhere. The Badagry area was not rich in agriculture, and the oil palm did not flourish to the extent required by substantial Atlantic trade. According to Sandeman in 1852 'three-fourths' of the palm oil that arrived at Badagry market, came from the dominions of Porto-Novo⁶⁸. With the town's long established chains of communication by both land and water, Badagry had great potential as a suitable collection point and indeed took on this role during the early years of the trade.

⁶⁶ T J Hutchinson, Impressions of Western Africa (1858, new imp. F. Cass & Co., 1967) p. 72.

⁶⁷ According to Thomas Tickel, Civil Commandant for the Badagry District until the 1880s, the term Iso was a more generally applied one and referred to a number of lakeside groups with shared origins:

The people of Katanu, or as they are commonly called the Isos, were originally refugees from the mainland, some of whom, for greater security against the aggression of the Dahomians, established themselves on the Denham Waters by building huts on piles, and forming in the course of time the towns of Afoktonu, Awansori, and Gavi; while others settled at Katanue, Agausa, Jeko, Goho, Tori, Yeura, Epe, Chouvi, Potah and at Ajido, where their kings have ever since resided

[PRO CO147/32 Undated letter from Tickel, Badagry in 30 September 1876 Lees (CO), London].

⁶⁸ PRO FO84/887 28 January 1852 Sandeman, Badagry in 19 April 1852 Capt Hamilton, London.

But these routes were not only an important source of supply for the Atlantic trade of Badagry. They also played an important role in the domestic economy of the area. In his description of a caravan of slaves, Lander noted that each member; men, women and children carried a heavy load ⁶⁹. Indeed these caravans were also used as a means of supplying other goods, possibly to the domestic market place. This is supported by the routes that they took and Ikorodu, for example, was seen as both an important centre for transactions in slaves bound for the Atlantic market and domestic articles.

The Domestic Economy

On visiting Badagry in the 1820s Richard Lander stated that the people there provided themselves with all the 'necessaries of life' by fishing and the cultivation of crops such as yam, Indian corn, some citrus fruits, and the keeping of some livestock⁷⁰. However, this picture of virtual self-sufficiency is challenged by a number of other accounts. Badagry's waterside position would seem to indicate that fish was an obvious and important staple. Putting to sea by the indigenous people, whether for transportation or fishing purposes, was unheard of along that part of the coast, but the inshore lagoon afforded a more easily accessible source ⁷¹. There are many references to lagoon fishing along the whole length of the waterway and in the Badagry area. Prior to the town's foundation this was clearly a useful resource. Arthur Wendover who visited the Kingdom of Apa in the seventeenth century, sampled and enjoyed the 'plentiful' fish of the lagoon, which he compared to 'mullitts' and 'sturgeon' ⁷². During the Badagry period, Lander also witnessed fishing practices using both nets, spears and earthen pots baited with palm nut oil⁷³. But more interestingly still Avoseh states that in 1882, when two of the Badagry chiefs expressed an

⁶⁹ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1 p. 70.

⁷⁰ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 36.

⁷¹ See chapter 1 pp. 27-28.

⁷² 17 July 1682 Wendover in Law, Further Correspondence ..., p. 15.

⁷³ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1 p. 45.

interest in farming at Gberefu, on the spit of land between lagoon and sea, other chiefs accounted for their lack of interest in the project by saying that 'they were traditionally fishermen and saw no need for change' ⁷⁴. Another division of labour with regards to fishing is that suggested by Richard Lander during the course of his first visit to Badagry in 1825. He clearly did not share the tastes of Arthur Wendover and commented that although the lagoon was full of fish, they were not in general 'very delicious eating' and that their consumption was 'confined chiefly to the lower orders of the community' a point also made by Governor Moloney of Lagos in the 1890s with regards to oyster collection ⁷⁵. Further evidence is needed to shed light on this apparent division in both labour and consumption. If, as indicated by Avoseh, fishing was the occupation of certain wards, it would seem unlikely that consumption ran along similar lines. Yet, there is no evidence of fish being sold in the Badagry market place. This may possibly indicate that its easy availability made it an unvalued product existing below or outside the local market economy ⁷⁶.

Bowen accounted for the reluctance of the Badagry fisherman by citing the laziness of the people, an argument which was more usually put forward by Europeans to explain the lack of local agriculture ⁷⁷. Early missionary settlers also looked to the commercial ethos of Badagry, pointing specifically to the slave trade, as an explanation of the town's lack of agricultural production. In this way

⁷⁴ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 38.

⁷⁵ R Lander. *Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa*. Vol 2. p. 17; Moloney 'Notes on Yoruba and the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos', p. 609.

⁷⁶ By the early twentieth century it was noted that there were two groups of immigrant fishermen who worked the Badagry lagoon. The first group, described as 'Kitas' [Ketas], inhabited 'numerous settlements' in the area. Initially from the Gold Coast, these people were said to spend the greater part of the year in the Badagry area, only returning home permanently when they were to retire. It is likely that these Gold Coast people were descendants of those employed, at least initially, to operate the sea going canoes required by European merchants. The second group mentioned were seasonal migrants from the 'Ilaje district of the Okitipupa Division', in the far east beyond Lagos. However, no mention is made of these immigrants during the pre-colonial period [NNAI CSO26/4 30030S1 A Report on the Reorganisation of the Badagri District R J M Curwen 1937].

⁷⁷ See Chapter 1, p. 32-33.

then, missionary efforts to introduce both the 'bible and the plough' to the town took the form of a mission garden and local agricultural shows ⁷⁸. Hopkins has dispelled the myth of the 'natural richness of the tropical environment', by noting the low mineral content of forest and savannah regions and the limited agricultural potential of such areas⁷⁹. But I would suggest that the image of Badagry as an almost wholly non-producing area is misleading, and the townspeople were involved, at least to some extent, in agricultural production.

According to local tradition, Badagry was founded on the site of 'Agbethe's farm' which, as recounted by Avoseh, had a history and reputation for cassava and corn production ⁸⁰. It would also appear from Avoseh's account that agriculture continued at Badagry throughout its history. He mentions that in an area of the town known as Athanpoji, the land was tilled by Balogun Apansu, a deserter from the Dahomean army who fled first to Gberefu and then to Badagry where he worked the land alongside the farm of the influential priest Boe ⁸¹. Evidence for the types of crops produced in and around Badagry during this early period is scarce, the earliest accounts coming from Clapperton and Lander in the 1820s. However, from their descriptions it is possible to suggest that some cultivation of yam, cassava, citrus fruits, onions, palm products, beans, and corn was undertaken in the locality of Badagry. At the same time, sweet potatoes and plantain were being grown in the area, that is, near enough for that cultivation to be undertaken by Badagry residents ⁸². Although not specifically located by contemporary observers, such local cultivation may have taken place on outlying farms such as that identified by Bowen in 1851 as Adele's farm, about two to three and a half miles outside the town. This should not be confused with the village described, also by Bowen, as Adele's birthplace which lay beyond Mowo.

⁷⁸ CMI August 1849, p. 93 Gollmer's description...

⁷⁹ Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa, p. 13.

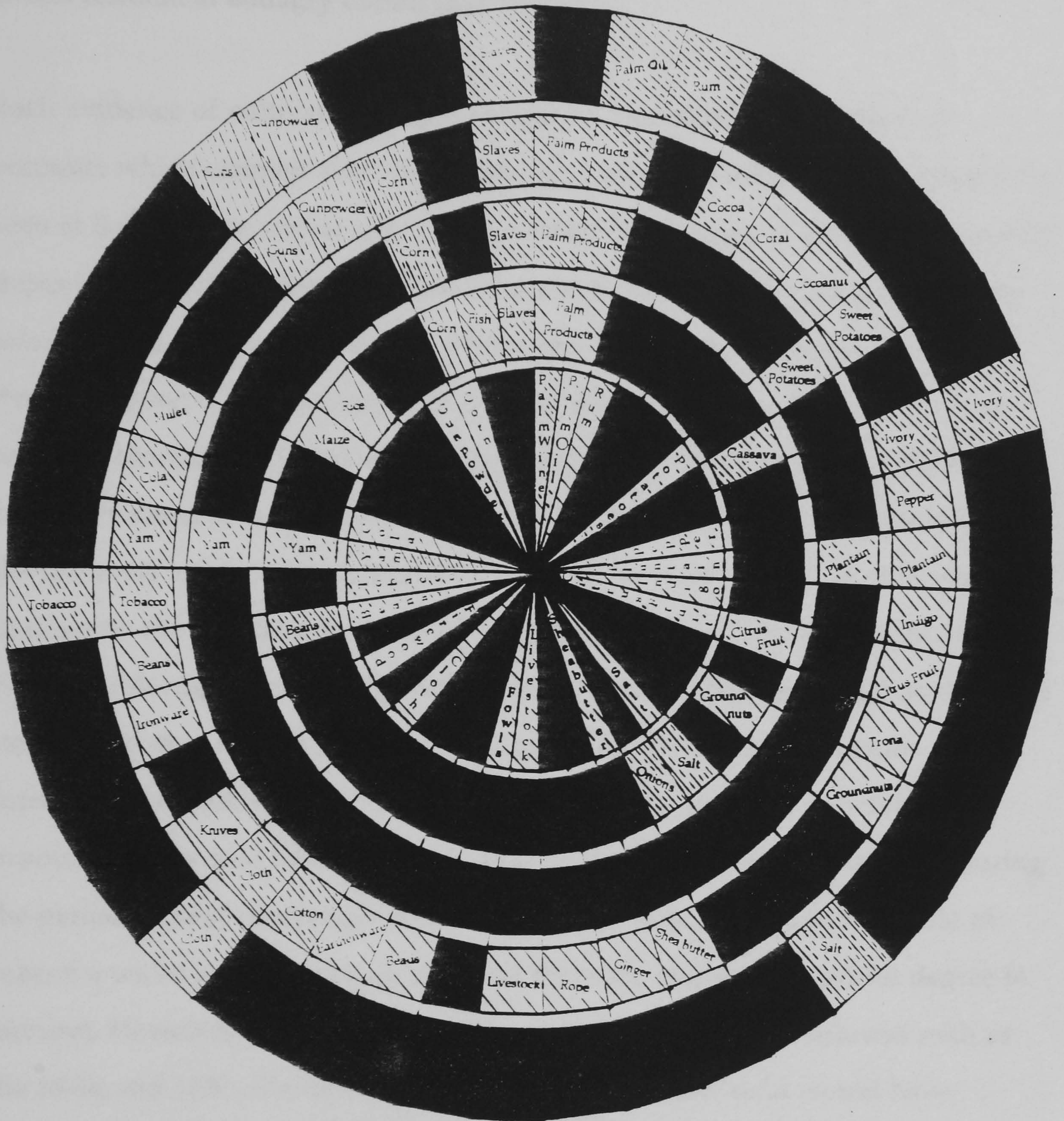
⁸⁰ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 11.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 29.




⁸² See Figure 5.

Production and Trade In and Around Badagry
1825 - 1868

Figure 5



Inner Ring	Appearance at Badagry market
2nd Ring	Production / cultivation at Badagry
3rd Ring	Production / cultivation in Badagry neighbourhood (possibly by Badagry residents)
4th Ring	Production / cultivation / appearance in surrounding area (e.g. Ado, Abeokuta, Okeodan etc)
5th Ring	Supplied by and for Atlantic Trade

 = Pre-missionary evidence
  = Post-missionary evidence
  = both Pre and Post missionary evidence

The farm he mentions had presumably belonged to that exiled King of Lagos whilst resident at Badagry c.1821-1835⁸³.

Such evidence of cultivation would appear to contradict later missionary accounts which claimed alternately that there was 'no vestige of cultivation to be seen at Badagry' on arrival and that as a result 'The people of Badagry are almost depending upon the people of Abbeokuta in everything' and 'considered it an insult to be told to make farms'⁸⁴. These opposing views do appear to suggest that cultivation in the Badagry area may have occurred in cycles, possibly as a result of changing political, economic and demographic conditions. Without further evidence it is possible only to surmise. But one can suggest that during the relatively stable Adele (c.1821-1835) period, for example, Clapperton was able to describe the countryside around Badagry as 'populous and well cultivated'⁸⁵. However, during the following years, local agriculture was neglected as the town struggled with a rising tide of factionalism within its political structure and its increasingly tenuous grip on Atlantic trade. Varying levels of agricultural production may also have been indicative of Badagry's shifting fortunes. During the period of relative strength and prosperity the state may have been able to control a wider area of outlying land and therefore engage to a greater degree in farming. However, during periods of insecurity and relative weakness such as the 1840s and 1850s, Badagry's ability to harness suitable land would have declined. It is also possible that the extent of agriculture around Badagry shifted as a result of the waning Atlantic slave trade. During the earlier period when both ships and slaves required provision, the demand for foodstuffs may have resulted in some attempts at agriculture. However, as a result of the trade's decline, demand went down and efforts were abandoned.

⁸³ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours...*, p. 101.

⁸⁴ CMSA CA2/067/7 3 May 1846 Marsh's Journal, Badagry.

⁸⁵ PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

The evidence should not be wholly distorted by missionary accounts of the mid-nineteenth century which almost completely dismiss local production prior to their arrival. These tend to suggest, through descriptions of their own efforts at agricultural production, that it was this period which saw the beginnings of very limited local cultivation. Revd Gollmer described in 1846 how, on planting a piece of ground near the mission premises, 'Many of the people came to gaze at us and our work, and others have followed our example' ⁸⁶. In this way he suggests a practice which was completely alien to the Badagry people. However, an examination of production over the whole period indicates that this was an exaggeration of the European impact on local agriculture. Of the twenty named articles which appeared in Badagry market during the whole period (including non-agricultural articles), eleven of these; pepper, yam, sweet potatoes, corn (eg Indian corn) , beans (eg calavances), plantain, citrus fruits, firewood, tobacco, palm wine and palm oil were named prior to missionary arrival in 1842. Eleven articles were also identified during the missionary period. These were gunpowder, cloth, rum, salt, livestock, fowls, cola, indigo and shea butter. Yam and corn continued to appear during this period. This does not, therefore, suggest a marked increase in the number of articles available in later years. Furthermore, of the articles named in the post-missionary period, there were in fact fewer agricultural items listed ⁸⁷. From an examination of the Badagry market place, there is little evidence to suggest that the mission acted as a stimulus to local agricultural production. Furthermore, in the few accounts of local cultivation, rice, maize and groundnuts, which seem to have been produced in the area only after 1842, did not appear in the market place, and were possibly grown on too small a scale to become a commercial product. Other crops which were produced locally, some of which appeared in the market place, such as beans, some of

⁸⁶ *CMR* October 1846, p. 233, 27 February 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁸⁷ See Figure 5.

which did not, such as cassava, all seem to have been produced during both periods.

There would appear then to be no significant change in local production patterns between the early nineteenth century and the later post-missionary period. However, what is still more surprising is, taking the period as a whole, the amount of staples which were in fact produced in the locality of Badagry. Of the forty one named items which I have found being used, consumed, produced, or marketed in the area, going as far afield as Abeokuta, twenty appeared at Badagry market. Seven of these (beans, corn, palm wine, palm oil, citrus fruit, salt and yam) were produced in the locality of Badagry. A further two crops (sweet potatoes and plantain) were produced in the neighbourhood, possibly by residents of Badagry. Of the further nine articles, two were produced by the Atlantic trade (tobacco and rum) and six were of unspecified origin. Certainly one and possibly two were Atlantic imports (gunpowder and cloth), a further two (livestock and firewood) were possibly local products and only three or possibly four (pepper, indigo, cola and perhaps cloth) were brought from elsewhere in the interior. Of the items which did not appear in the Badagry market place, five were produced in the locality of the town (cassava, onions, maize, and later rice and groundnuts). There were a further fifteen products (coral, cocoanut, beads, trona, glass, ginger, rope, bowls, knives, iron-ware, cola, millet, cotton, ivory and cocoa) which it would seem were produced outside the Badagry area. Their absence from the Badagry market place could well be a shortcoming of the descriptive evidence rather than indicative of their absence from the town. However, many of these latter items could be termed 'luxury goods' and it is interesting to note the number of staple items produced, at least to some extent, in or around Badagry itself.

Domestic commerce

Local production at Badagry would therefore appear to have been able to supply the town with at least a proportion of its staples. But the extent to which the town was self-sufficient is difficult to ascertain. Revd Gollmer noted in 1847 that the people of Badagry:

prefer getting money, some by lawful, and many by unlawful, trade and plunder, with which they purchase their victuals from their neighbours, which makes them necessarily dependent on them, the inconvenience of which they now and then experience⁸⁸

But clear evidence to suggest the degree to which Badagry relied on alternative outlets for its subsistence as well as for its Atlantic trade goods is lacking. One account does suggest that food was not only more plentiful in the interior town of Abeokuta, but that it was 'perhaps more than four times cheaper than at Badagry'⁸⁹. This then indicates that, even during the pre-civil war period, the coast depended on a more complex supply system than that provisioning the agriculturally based Egba capital. By the early twentieth century it was estimated that four fifths of Badagry's food was purchased from outside the local area ⁹⁰. Although it is difficult to ascertain to what extent pre-colonial Badagry was dependent upon such outside supplies, it is certainly clear that the population did use these alternative outlets which came to form a complex local network of trade and connections with suppliers from far outside the neighbouring areas. Markets such as the one at 'Bawie' [Ibawe], mentioned by Clapperton along the Ado River, were regular marketplaces for the people of Badagry and the neighbouring areas ⁹¹. Richard Lander, describing presumably the same place in 1830, stated that as well as locally produced items the market stocked articles brought from the 'borders of the desert of Zaarha, through the medium of the wandering Arabs' ⁹². According to Kola Folayan, Badagry was dependent on areas

⁸⁸ CMR May 1848, p. 85, 25 May 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁸⁹ CMR March 1846, p. 62, 9 June 1845 Marsh's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁰ NNAI CSO 26/4 30030/S1 A Report of the Reorganisation of the Badagri District R J M Curwen 1937.

⁹¹ Clapperton, Journal of a Second Expedition..., p. 4.

⁹² R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 59.

such as Ipokia and Okeodan to the north west for foodstuff supplies ⁹³. Folayan's conclusions are supported by contemporary evidence. In 1845 Revd Gollmer noted that Badagry people travelled to Ipokia in order to trade ⁹⁴. Furthermore, the importance of Okeodan, thirty miles from Badagry, as a supplier was verified by the Anglican catechist William Marsh, who reported at the end of the 1840s that the destruction of that place by the Dahomeans had not only raised fears for the security of the coastal town, but also for its provision supplies. The fertility of the Okeodan area was, according to Marsh, the result of a 'kind of quagmire' of which the southern part was 'solid ground and fruitful'. Indeed, the inhabitants of Okeodan cultivated this area to such an extent that 'the inhabitants of Badagry were indebted to them for the greater part of our supplies and necessaries' ⁹⁵. However, by the late 1850s, whether due to the temporary interruption of supplies from the Okeodan area or, what is more likely, due to increasingly close commercial links and political ties with the area north east of Badagry, The Egba capital at Abeokuta was now recognised as the major supplier to Badagry, Lagos and other towns along the sea coast ⁹⁶. However, only a couple of months later, Consul Campbell had shifted the emphasis of Badagry's staple supplies west again, this time to Porto-Novo. Indeed Campbell reported that Badagry 'is entirely depended on Porto Novo for its trade, the inhabitants for the necessaries of life' ⁹⁷. It is important to note however, particularly during this later period, the Badagry population was still greatly reduced as a result of the 1851-54 civil war, indeed Campbell estimated the population as being only six hundred ⁹⁸. Therefore, Badagry's complete dependence on Abeokuta and Porto-Novo during this period may not be representative of a continuous trend throughout its history.

⁹³ Folayan, 'Trade Routes in Egbado in the Nineteenth Century', pp. 85-89.

⁹⁴ CMSA CA2/043/96 25 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁵ PRO FO84/777 25 March 1849 Extract from the Journal of William Marsh included in Documents relating to the deputation by the CMS to Palmerston in 1849.

⁹⁶ PRO FO84/1061 6 February 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

⁹⁷ PRO FO84/1061 20 April 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

⁹⁸ PRO FO84/1061 20 April 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

This network of local markets enabled the movement of at least non perishable goods across long distances and was closely linked with those routes used to carry Atlantic trade goods. As Folayan has identified the routes between Badagry and Oyo during the early eighteenth and nineteenth century as important roads to the Atlantic, so were they important for domestic trade. The road travelled by Clapperton and Lander in 1825 for example, was linked by a series of local markets at Bawie [Ibawe], Alowagu, Wowo [Wawa], Coulfo etc, stretching into the Yoruba interior towards Katunga [Old Oyo] and beyond. Such routes were replaced by those from Abeokuta after the decline of the Oyo empire ⁹⁹.

As well as land links with the interior the lagoon provided a further important commercial chain with neighbouring states. Clearly Porto-Novo and Lagos, Badagry's most prominent lagoon neighbours were directly linked. However, the waterway gave rise to contact much further afield. The trader Thomas Hutton travelled from Whydah to Badagry in 1846, firstly to Godomey by hammock and then by lagoon via Porto-Novo, the journey as a whole taking about two nights¹⁰⁰. Ryder has also highlighted a route pursued east by Dutch traders at Benin who sent ivory via the lagoon to Badagry ¹⁰¹. Ryder's conclusion is supported by a letter from Hendrik Hertogh at Badagry only a year or so after its foundation, when he mentions that he had sent two assistants to Agathon [Ughoton], near Benin, via canoe ¹⁰². As this last example would seem to suggest, and as Law has concluded, it was the arrival of Europeans in force which stimulated lagoon traffic during the eighteenth century in the pursuit, initially of slaves ¹⁰³. As noted by Wendover in the seventeenth century, produce for

⁹⁹ See Figure 4.

¹⁰⁰ PRO FO84/699 20 December 1846 T Hutton, Whydah in 25 March 1847 W Hutton, London.

¹⁰¹ Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 188.

¹⁰² 20 April 1738 Hertogh, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast... p. 338.

¹⁰³ Law, 'Trade and Politics Behind the Slave Coast', p. 338.

domestic use was also frequently brought by water into the Badagry area. Indeed he noted that all the goods brought to Apa came by water and:

once in 15 or 20 days you shall see the river full of canoes and like unto the River Thames, some with slaves others with clouts, others with sheep, goats, henns, others with come etc ¹⁰⁴

A description of the lagoon from the 1880s creates a remarkably similar picture of 'numerous canoes...with native produce...paddled or poled along' ¹⁰⁵.

Badagry Market

The medium of currency for all sales at Badagry was the Cowrie shell ¹⁰⁶.

Although Clapperton and others referred to commercial transactions at 'the market place', there was certainly more than one area of sale in the town ¹⁰⁷.

Indeed it was said that almost every street was used as a market place. In 1830 Richard and John Lander noted, on crossing the town, that 'people were found vending a variety of articles at every step of the way' ¹⁰⁸. Richard Lander described Badagry market in 1825 as only 'tolerably supplied', but Thomas Bowen twenty five years later stated that it was 'crowded every evening with

¹⁰⁴ 17 July 1682 Wendover, Apa in Law, Further Correspondence of the Royal Africa Company... p.15.

¹⁰⁵ Ellis, The Land of Fetish, p. 99.

¹⁰⁶ In 1850 Bowen noted that :

silver and gold are not current here, because the merchants on the coast, who import the cowries will take nothing but shells or palm oil for the cloth, guns, tobacco, rum etc, which they sell to the natives. Neither is it possible to pay for provisions and labor in goods of any kind, barter being unknown and cowries demanded for everything.

[Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours..., p. 98]. The low denomination of cowries led to difficulties when attempting to purchase anything but the cheapest of articles. During the 1860s the Lagos Consul's wife Mrs H G Foote stated that when attempting to change a sovereign into the local currency 'I saw a man return, accompanied by two others, each bearing a heavy sack on his shoulder. This was my change' [Mrs H G Foote, Recollections of Central America and the West Coast of Africa, (London 1869), p. 197]. This problem became acute after the 1850s when inflation caused increasing difficulties all along the coast. In 1844 one Head [2000 cowries] was equal to five shillings at Badagry [WMMSA 21 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry]. By 1860 however, two heads [4000 cowries] were said to equal only three shillings in the Lagos area [PRO FO2/35 12 January 1860 Brand, Lagos. For further details about the operation of the cowrie currency see M Johnson 'The Cowrie Currencies of West Africa', 2 parts, IAH XI 2 (1970, pp. 17-49 & XI 3 (1970), pp. 331-353]. But despite these difficulties, it was only after annexation that Governor Glover noted that silver coins were being accepted in the area [PRO CO147/9 7 June 1865 Glover, Lagos].

¹⁰⁷ PRO CO2/15 1 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰⁸ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition, p. 14.

thousands of people including many from interior towns'¹⁰⁹. These rather different images may be accounted for by the regularity with which the market was held. Clapperton noted on the same visit as Lander that on going through the market place when it was not market day, there were few articles on sale ¹¹⁰. Clapperton also noted that the market was supplied only every five days, a routine maintained at least until the late 1840s ¹¹¹. In 1843 Revd De Graft identified Wednesday, Friday and Sunday as market days, but in turn stated that great numbers of people from Abeokuta came to Badagry 'every week' ¹¹². It would certainly appear that during this period the Egba capital was acting as a crucial link between Badagry and the interior, as traders from Abeokuta were in turn supplied by traders from Ijaye, Ibadan, Aggo [Oyo], Ogbomoshe [Ogbomoso], and Illorin [Illorin] at their market every ninth day ¹¹³.

Local traders would seem to have operated freely between markets. In 1846 Revd Gollmer described an Egba man, who was the 'domestic slave of an inhabitant of this town'. It is clear from Gollmer's description that this slave had been able to trade from town to town in 'various articles'. However, the missionary does not make clear whether the man was trading on his own account or on behalf of his master ¹¹⁴. In the previous year, Revd Crowther had noted that a kidnapped woman was redeemed by a fellow trader, who in order to meet the cost had 'requested the favour of another person' ¹¹⁵. This episode certainly implies individual speculation and entrepreneurship on a small scale. That many of these traders were also women is interesting. It would seem likely that within the confines of the local market place, it was usual for women to act as vendors.

¹⁰⁹ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 50; Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 97.

¹¹⁰ PRO CO2/15 1 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹¹ In 1847 Revd Crowther noted that 'Badagry market...is attended by hundreds every five days' [CMR November 1847, p. 243, Crowther's Journal, Badagry].

¹¹² WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

¹¹³ CMR November 1847, p. 243, Crowther's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁴ CMSA CA2/043/98 27 February 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁵ PRO FO84/663 2 June 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

Townsend noted in 1849 at Abeokuta that it was in this way that 'Many women and girls obtain a livelihood' ¹¹⁶. This would also appear to have been the case at Badagry where Crowther noted that in one of the town's smaller market areas he found 'twelve to fifteen women, sitting under their sheds, with their few articles exposed for sale' ¹¹⁷. But if the market place was the preserve of women, the transport of saleable goods across the country involved women, men and children as noted by the Lander brothers in 1830 and by Revd Annear in 1844 ¹¹⁸. Furthermore, Badagry's waterside position evidently gave men an important role in the transport of goods by canoe. Although there were occasional examples of female traders on the West Coast transporting their own goods by water these would appear to be very much the exception ¹¹⁹. It would seem that at least during the latter part of the nineteenth century traders and their goods were transported along the lagoons in shared, presumably hired canoes operated by men ¹²⁰.

Due to its lagoonside position then, Badagry's trading network would rely on the labour of both men and women. There is no indication of a central organisation in the local market, although it seems likely that market practices

¹¹⁶ CMR October 1849 pp. 189-190 Townsend, Abeokuta.

¹¹⁷ CMR March 1846, p. 57 25 May 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁸ The Landers described caravans of people carrying heavy loads to the coast [see p. 66], whilst Revd Annear noted groups of men and women travelling between Badagry and the besieging forces at Ado to supply the army with provisions [WMMSA August 1844 Annear's Journal in 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry].

¹¹⁹ Tenkorang has come across one eighteenth century example of a woman trader known amongst the British traders of Winneba as 'Her Grace the Duchess of Mumford'. The lady was a very successful trader during the latter part of the century and was notable for having 'paddled her own canoe when travelling from town to town' [S Tenkorang, 'British Slave Trading Activities on the Gold Coast and Slave Coasts in the Eighteenth Century ...' p. 54].

¹²⁰ Whitford travelling along the lagoon from the east during the latter half of the nineteenth century noted that:

canoes bound for Lagos deeply laden with palm-oil in jars kernels in bulk covered with mats, bullocks, goats, sheep, corn and various other products from the interior. In addition to cargo they are crowded with passengers, chiefly women traders, who seem to be comfortably reposing on top of the cargo

[J Whitford Trading Life in Western and Central Africa p. 105].

were restricted to some extent by an authority based on religious belief¹²¹. However, the operation of Atlantic trade would appear to have taken place on a different level. Avoseh notes that the early slave market at Badagry was in the Posuko area of the town ¹²². There are however, no contemporary descriptions of a central slave market in operation. It is possible therefore that, as at Abeokuta, the buying and selling of slaves occurred out of the public eye when meetings between interested parties would take place privately. This would also appear to have been the case for the Atlantic palm oil trade. As a non-producing area, oil was brought from the interior and along the lagoon and collected in bulk at Badagry. The ability to engage in both Atlantic trade here, both slave and palm oil, therefore required access to finance and credit, premises and control over labour. In this way then all Atlantic commerce at Badagry demanded wealth and power. As Hopkins has pointed out, these commercial requirements meant that amongst non producing coastal communities, such as Badagry, Atlantic commerce remained in the hands of the social elite even after the transition from slaves to palm oil exports ¹²³.

If Atlantic commerce at Badagry required both wealth and power, it was also a way of acquiring them not only through direct profits but from the collection of tolls and taxes ¹²⁴. It would appear that all loads carried into the town and throughout the territory were subject to some levy. According to the Landers in 1830 turnpikes, taxing individuals with their loads, were 'more common'

¹²¹ See Chapter 4, p. 114-115.

¹²² Avoseh, 'Important Historical Places to be visited by the tourist', p 251.

¹²³ Hopkins has noted that:

As a general proposition it can be said that the traditional unit of trade was less affected by the structural changes brought about by legitimate commerce than was the traditional unit of production

[Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa, p. 145-146]. Similarly, Latham in his examination of the easterly Delta states has concluded that they too:

switched over smoothly from the slave trade to the oil trade, utilizing the trading mechanisms and know how they had built up in the slave trade to export palm oil

[Latham, Old Calabar, p. 89-90.]

¹²⁴ Adams, Remarks on the Country Extending from Cape Palmas to the River Congo, p. 95.

between Badagry and Old Oyo 'as on any road in England'¹²⁵. It would also appear that goods carried along the lagoon or lagoonside were also open to such tolls. Vice-Consul Fraser in the middle years of the nineteenth century complained of being stopped on the lagoon at 'Plar' (a place belonging to the Hula people of Jakin), where payment was demanded before he was allowed to pass ¹²⁶. Furthermore, Dr Irving, a missionary visitor to the area in the 1850s, stated that despite rumours to the contrary, the toll house on Badagry beach had been set up in order to exact duty from all goods being carried along the land spit and that this was a 'very common way by which the revenues of the chiefs are raised' ¹²⁷.

Dr Irving's conclusion that it was the chiefs of Badagry who sought to raise revenue from these duties is a vital clue towards any understanding of the Badagry situation. In states such as Oyo and Dahomey, the ability of the monarch to harness commercial wealth was evidently both a source and product of his power as King. But Badagry the traditional authority of a monarchy was a misnomer. With its diverse origins, Badagry lacked a well established source of authority. Political authority was based not in any traditional power but on an immediate ability to harness and maintain loyalty through the control of wealth. At Badagry therefore, power, both the source and product of wealth, was firmly based in trade. To gain any understanding of Badagry's operation as a commercial centre it is necessary then to make a thorough examination of the town's political structure.

¹²⁵ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition, Vol 1, page 2.

¹²⁶ PRO FO84/886 7 November 1852 Fraser's Journal, Whydah.

¹²⁷ PRO FO84/951 30 May 1854 Irving, Abeokuta in 14 August 1854 Chichester, London.

Chapter Three

Badagry's Political Structure

When attempting an analysis of Badagry's political structure one must firstly establish exactly what is meant by the term 'political structure'. Even a cursory examination of this state reveals that the system of government, as in other pre-colonial West African societies, consisted of several layers of authority. These can be divided broadly into those of secular authority, represented notably by chiefs; and those of religious authority, represented by priests. However, as soon as such a division is made, one is immediately faced with problems, as the boundaries between secular and religious become blurred, and the interdependence of both becomes apparent. This makes such a rigid line of division at best meaningless and at worst a distortion. However, to attempt a detailed analysis of such a complex subject as pre-colonial Badagry's political structure, I have ultimately chosen to make a division and to analyse first the authority of the chiefs and then the authority of the priests. I have chosen to do this firstly because, from a purely organisational point of view, the arrangement of such a quantity of information demands two digestible chapters. However, more importantly, I would suggest that in the Badagry case, as yet, the exact nature of these relationships is still very much an unknown quantity. For example the close relationship between the Alafin of Oyo or the Alake of Abeokuta and the Ogboni Cult, is, without further information, impossible to parallel at Badagry ¹. The use of two chapters should not be seen as a division of the subject matter, but as an analysis of the subject from two different angles.

When attempting to understand these political institutions it is also necessary to recognise their fluidity over time. This is particularly important when one takes

¹ For example see P Morton-Williams, 'The Yoruba Ogboni Cult in Oyo', *Africa* 30 No. 4 (1960), pp. 362-374.

into account the long period under examination. The nature of my research has yielded snapshots of Badagry's political structure over the latter part of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. This therefore results in a photofit picture of the whole. Although this must be used with care, it is at least an indication that such structures were not stable, and were open to change and influence from both internal and external factors. There are also problems in the very nature of the sources. In this case the contemporary written sources were overwhelmingly based on European perceptions. Those very few that were not, were for European consumption and gathered from local informants in order to settle territorial disputes after annexation ². Contemporary European misconceptions and distortions in the field of African historiography has frequently been identified. In the case of Badagry, I would suggest that European failures to understand the systems in existence, led not only to a series of often conflicting accounts but possibly, in the attempt to discern a model they could recognise, a distortion of the system itself in the second half of the nineteenth century ³.

The Chiefs of Badagry

The local historian T O Avoseh has written that during the pre-colonial period the government of Badagry was:

a perfect and unlimited despotism, the Kings exercising absolute power over the lives and belongings of their subjects, as well as the privilege of enacting laws ⁴

Avoseh's words clearly have their source in Richard Lander and his visit to Badagry in 1825 ⁵. Similarly, in 1859 Revd West described visiting Badagry and

² For example PRO CO879/27 Further Correspondence respecting the Territorial Questions in the Neighbourhood of Lagos 20 June 1888 and NNAI CSO 26/4 30030/S1 Report on the Reorganisation of Badagri District by R J M Curwen (1937).

³ The formation and constitution of the Badagry town council during the colonial period is one such institution which has given rise to much confusion. There is no evidence for the existence of such a regular forum during the pre-colonial period.

⁴ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 39.

⁵ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 285.

meeting the 'King' there ⁶. But on more careful examination of the state, the notion of Badagry as an autocracy emerges as a complete misconception. These three examples are carefully chosen as illustrative of important themes running through the history of Badagry's government. Revd West's conclusion was the mistake of a man unacquainted with the area making a judgment from the impression of a days visit, along lines he could easily comprehend. Lander on the other hand was making his judgment at a time when Badagry was in fact under the sway of a man able to assert absolute control. Whether such a figure was an aberration or symptomatic of Badagry's political system will be discussed below. It is merely important to recognise here the possibility of such an occurrence.

Avoseh's assertion is perhaps that which requires most consideration at present. I would suggest that behind it lies the more recent ambitions of a particular group. Avoseh has presented the case for one group's Kingship, and with no-one else present at the hustings he has carried the day. However, Avoseh's representation of a Yoruba-style monarchy is merely one in a series of similar political creations spanning the previous century and a half of both African and European concoction. Despite having little basis in political fact, the notion of a Badagrian 'monarchy' does have several historical precedents ⁷.

A more satisfactory interpretation of Badagry's secular political authority is not the notion of a single despotic leader, but rather of a number of figures functioning alongside one another. In 1830 when Richard Lander returned to Badagry, his dour brother John accompanied him. Although Adele, Richard

⁶ WMMSA 6 June 1859 Revd West, Cape Coast.

⁷ In 1937 local District Officer R J M Curwen concluded that:

The Egun country has for so long been under the commercial or political control of Europeans and the people are of so many such remote origins that it is impossible to give accurate details of ancient government

[NNAI CSO 26/4 30030/S1 A Report on the Reorganisation of the Badagri District by R J M Curwen 1937]. However, difficulties in interpreting Badagry's pre-colonial history are not solely due to the distortions forced by European rule but are also the result of local political aspirations. 'Kingship' at Badagry has historically been of a transitory nature. Although Avoseh received criticism in 1938 for his neglect of the other chieftancies in the town, and his concentration on the Akran, it would appear that he was merely responding to events within Badagry. Due to a variety of factors the Akran, one of eight Badagry chiefs, was able to emerge by the mid twentieth century as the accepted 'King' or 'Oba' of the town. This is a position the current holder of the title retains.

Lander's despot of 1825 was still supreme, this more astute observer claimed that the situation was more complex than a mere despotism. Indeed John Lander noted that:

every one styles himself a great and powerful man...There is hardly any knowing who is monarch here, or even what form of government prevails ⁸

He added that as well as 'King' Adele, 'four fellows assume the title of royalty' ⁹.

The notion of there being more than one political figure in Badagry emerges from other sources recorded before and after the Landers' visit. A Dutch source of the 1730s recorded the presence of three caboceers [trading chiefs] named 'Jingin, Gyngyn and Akra', although it would seem likely that 'Jingin' and 'Gyngyn' were one and the same ¹⁰. In the mid-nineteenth century Governor Maclean at the Gold Coast clearly referred to the 'chiefs' of Badagry ¹¹. Although he did not specify how many, in 1858 a report clearly listed eight Badagry chiefs ¹².

The plurality of Badagry 'chiefs' has its origins in the extreme heterogeneity of the city itself. As noted, Badagry's founders were groups of refugees from Whydah, Weme and Wharaba in the first half of the eighteenth century. As Law has pointed out, although other states along the coast, such as Porto-Novo, were founded by similarly diverse immigrant groups, it was only at Badagry that these differences were maintained¹³. Badagry was then more comparable with Abeokuta, the interior state, which had been established by various different groups of Egba in the early nineteenth century ¹⁴.

⁸ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition.... Vol 1, pp. 45-46.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 45-46.

¹⁰ 14 May 1738 'Ondercommies' [Sub Factor] Chevallier, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast... p. 341.

¹¹ PRO CO96/2 16 September 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast.

¹² PRO FO84/1061 20 April 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

¹³ Law, '...The Early History of Badagry', pp. 2-3.

¹⁴ In 1861 it was noted that the peoples of Abeokuta retained their various 'Institutions, customs and superstitions' [PRO FO84/1155 Capt Jones' "Report on the Constitution and Military Capability of the Abeokutan Army for Carrying on Offensive War" 10 June 1861 in 29 August 1861 Lugard (CO), London.

As at Abeokuta there is ample evidence to suggest that each immigrant group at Badagry settled under the authority of its own chief. Avoseh, whilst emphasising the dominance of a group from Weme Jigbe who established themselves in the area now known as Ijegba, clearly recognises the existence of seven other distinct groups who formed identifiable districts or wards of the town¹⁵. Law in his detailed examination of the early history of Badagry has taken this analysis further and documented, where possible, the emergence of these wards and their chiefs. He notes that from contemporary sources only four such chiefs were identified in the eighteenth century. The chiefs of Ijegba and Ahwanjigo in the 1730s (the Accra and Jingin as above) and the chiefs of Ahoviko and Posuko wards in the 1770s and 1780s respectively. Of the wards not documented before the nineteenth century Law, on the basis of Avoseh's work, states that whilst the chiefs of Asago and Boeko may have been present in the town, although not identified, from the 1730s onwards, Ganho and Wharako Ward were founded later ¹⁶.

Avoseh writes that the "Brazilian trader", who has been identified as Hendrik Hertogh, appointed a Weme prince as his agent. According to Avoseh this prince was already resident at Badagry, but it was Hertogh who established him at Ijegba ward, an area on the far west of the town ¹⁷. Vice-Consul Fraser stated in his very short 'History of Badagry' that in fact this man was a slave-born child of Hertogh, but this is likely to be an exaggeration of their close relationship ¹⁸. It was this agent who became known as the Akran, a version or corrupted form of which was used throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to describe all chiefs of Ijegba Ward. The etymology of the term Akran is unknown. Avoseh,

¹⁵ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 15. Also see Figure 6.

¹⁶ Law, '....The Early History of Badagry', pp. 13-14.

¹⁷ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 15. See Figure 6.

¹⁸ PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos.

figure 6



THE BADAGRY WARDS c.1941

from: Government Survey Map 1941 reproduced in Okaro K'Ojwang (1979) p.15 A

suggests that it was the name of the Prince who first settled in the area ¹⁹.

However, in 1887 it was suggested that the term 'Akanran' was a Fanti word of unknown meaning ²⁰. It is interesting to note that some recent local sources have given the original Akran Fanti rather than Weme origins ²¹.

Vice-Consul Fraser suggested that Hertogh, whom he referred to as Ootoc-co-noo [Huntokonu], had another slave-born child, Jengen ²². This again would appear to be an exaggeration of the close relationship between Hertogh and a close business partner or possibly slave. Avoseh states that Jengen was from a chiefs family of Whydah, and had been given to Hertogh by the King of that place. It is claimed that this man was placed in charge of tobacco stores in an area close to the lagoon and the name 'Jengen' was derived from an instrument used to test this product. The area in which Jengen was placed came to be called Awhanjigo, after the name of a fetish worshipped there although it would seem that more directly the name was brought from the Awhanjigo quarter of Whydah, specifically the French quarter of the town²³.

Vice-Consul Fraser stated that 'Wowoo, Possoo and Ballar' were also contemporaries of Badagry's founder Hertogh ²⁴. Again, this is compatible with Avoseh's account. This 'Wowoo', more commonly called the Wawu, which Fraser mistakenly translated as 'prince', was said to have come also from Whydah. However, according to the Avoseh account there were actually two princes, Kotugbosu and Kuton, both sons of 'King' Heru of Whydah. Having been attacked by the Dahomeans in 1727, these Whydahs fled, but, on their way to take refuge at the new settlement, Heru himself died at Seme, the seaside

¹⁹ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 13.

²⁰ PRO CO879/27 24 August 1887 The Queen's Advocate to the Governor of Lagos.

²¹ Okaro K'Ojwang 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri...', p. 11; Lagos State, *Focus on Badagry*.

²² PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos.

²³ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 25.

²⁴ PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos.

settlement of Porto-Novo ²⁵. However, at least a portion of these Whydah refugees ultimately made their way to Badagry, among them a man who has been called Davi [Davi or Ahovi = prince] ²⁶. According to Avoseh, a succession dispute arose between the two Whydah princes at Badagry ²⁷. As head of state, Hertogh named the younger Kuton as successor to Heru, Avoseh's implication being that he was the more conscientious in performing his filial duty. However, angered by this decision, Kotugbosu murdered Hertogh. The assassination of the Dutchman by a Whydah prince is documented in the correspondence of the Dutch traders along the coast ²⁸. Avoseh goes on to say that after Hertogh's murder civil war ensued and Kotugobosu and Kuton, along with their followers were expelled from the town, the two princes soon after, meeting an untimely death. The account says that it was not until the time of Akran Soba, during the final decade of the eighteenth century, that the followers of these princes were able to return and establish themselves in the east of the city at Ahoviko under chief Sotu Agojo ²⁹. However, placing the chieftancy of Soba and thus the return of the disgraced Whydahs to Badagry in the last decade of the eighteenth century is inconsistent with other evidence ³⁰. Law, for example identifies the prominent figure of 'Davi' in the 1770s as a chief of Ahoviko ³¹. Furthermore, the Badagry chiefs in 1887 cited a further Wawu - Heresu, as appearing between the time of

²⁵ Law has pointed out that the King of Whydah, called Huffon in Whydah traditions, fled west rather than east but died at Guezin in the territory of Great Popo. The eastward-fleeing Heru was not then King of Whydah, but a more junior member of the royal family [Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 27; Law, 'The Gun Communities in the Eighteenth Century', p. 11].

²⁶ *ibid*, p. 11.

²⁷ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 27.

²⁸ 31 July 1738 Bronssema, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast..., p. 337. Also see chapter 5, pp. 145-146.

²⁹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, pp. 27-28.

³⁰ Although it is impossible to date exactly the period of Akran Soba's chieftancy, it is clear from Avoseh's account that Soba took control of Ijegba Ward after Zinsu's decline [Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 18]. Zinsu (later Akran Jiwa) was a Porto-Novon who had been able to seize control of Ijegba after the destruction of the town by the combined forces of Dahomey and Porto-Novo in 1784. There is no indication of how long Jiwa survived after 1784, but it would seem that by the 1790s he had been succeeded by Soba. Avoseh claims that due to poverty and the jealousy towards other members of his Ward, Soba invited the Dahomeans to attack Badagry once again. Soba's treacherous involvement in this attack is questionable, but it is clear that a series of Dahomean assaults did take place between 1791 and 1793. See chapter 5, pp. 165-167.

³¹ Law, '...The Early History of Badagry', p. 15.

the rebellious brothers flight and Avoseh's first Wawu - Sotu Agojo ³². It would seem then that the return of this Whydah group either took place earlier than suggested by Avoseh's account, or that it was not the whole group that left and that a portion remained to establish themselves at Ahoviko after the flight of the princes.

Fraser's identification of another Whydah Chief, 'Ballar', more commonly called Bala, as a contemporary of Hertogh has not been verified by Avoseh but is not contradicted by him. The local historian gives very little information about this ward chief except to say that the first was a King of Whydah Savi called Bala who abdicated his throne and came to Badagry after the death of his son ³³. This group established itself in the middle of the town at Asago between their fellow Whydahs at Ahoviko and Awanjigo ³⁴.

The other chief whom Fraser claims as a contemporary of Hertogh, the Posu, is in fact inconsistent with Avoseh's analysis. The local historian states that the 'Possoo', was a war captain of Weme and came to Badagry as the 'stranger' of the Akran ³⁵. This would seem to place his arrival after the death of Hertogh and the emergence of his agent as Akran. This war captain was placed at Posuko, in an area which stretched to the northern frontier of the town where his role was to be defensive against incursions from the interior ³⁶.

The arrival of the final three chiefs of Badagry occurred later. The founders of Ganho quarter, according to Avoseh arrived during the chieftancy of Akran Yeku, the second of the Akrans, from Weme ³⁷. They were placed on the

³² PRO CO879/27 Statements of the Badagrian chiefs made at Lagos on 22 and 23 August 1887 before the Queen's Advocate.

³³ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 16.

³⁴ See Figure 6.

³⁵ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 30. Also see Figure 7.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 30. Also see Figure 6.

³⁷ Ibid, pp. 30-31. Also see Figure 7.

THE BADAGRY CHIEFS FROM FOUNDATION - 1863							figure 7	
	POSUKO The Possu - Dutch	IJEGBA The Akran - Portuguese	GANHO The Agoloto	ASAGO The Bala	AWHANJIGO The Jengen - French	AHOVIKO The Wawu - English	BOEKO Mobi - English	WHARAKO The Finhento
1736	(C) --- Athigbiri (A) ---	Gbafoe (A) --- Yeku (A) (Yeyinpo) --- Pojeagonwu (A) (Agonhedodo) --- Jiwa (A) (Zinsu/Sessu) ---	Yewuwathan (A) ---	Bala (A) --- Bala (C) ---	Wheno Agbrimakun Ku (A) --- Alapoe (A) ---	Kuton & Kutugbosu (A) --- Nahon (Bii) --- Wademo (Bii) --- Heresa (Bii) ---	Boe (A) --- Apose (A) --- Genwu (A) ---	Finhento Agbo (A) (Bii) --- Finhento Aminu (A) --- Obokuku (Bii) --- Finherto Detchugue (Bii) ---
1784	--- Wrawru (A) ---	Soba Yede (A) --- Zofun (A) --- Soton (A) ---	Su-Dahogan (A) ---	---	Sinto Agara (A) --- Athande (A) ---	Sotu Agojo (A) --- Wawu Zanwhetoru Mesi (A) ---	Dansu (A) --- Podowa (A) (Pardoor) (C) ---	Finhento Aroyon (A) --- (Saruyon) (Bii) --- Aroyuo (Bii) --- Pheowh (F) ---
1793	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1821	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1840's	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1851	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1856	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1860	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1861	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
1863	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
SOURCES	(A) Avoseh (1938)	(B) PRO C0879/27 Further correspondence respecting territorial questions in the neighbourhood of Lagos 30/6/1888 enclosing (i) 16 Aug 1887 Roland, Colonial Secretary (ii) Statements of Badagry Chiefs Aug 1887 (iii) 24 Aug 1887 Oliver Smith, Governor	(C) PRO F084/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos	(D) PRO F084/1115 5 January 1859 Subu Mobi, Badagry	(E) CMR March 1856 p.60	(F) PRO F084/1141 Mercantile Treaty 1861	(G) PRO F084/1201 Treaty of Cession 1863	

lagoonside as warders to guard prisoners and slaves. The name Ganho, according to Avoseh, is a corruption of the terms Ganwhe and Oganhoho [gan = 'iron'], meaning prison and old prison respectively ³⁸. The final chief of this quarter in the 1880s was known as Chief Afope. Although in a late nineteenth century source the name Afope was used as a chieftancy title, according to Avoseh this was a personal name ³⁹. The Chief of Ganho more usually had the title of the Agoloto ⁴⁰.

Likewise the arrival of the founders of the Wharako area of the town was, according to Avoseh, a later phenomenon, during the chieftancy of Akran Pojeagonwo, the third Akran. Avoseh states that this group were placed at Wharako by the Akran, but, this may exaggerate that chief's role in their settlement ⁴¹. This group of later arrivals were from Whara-ba [Jakin], a coastal state destroyed by the Dahomeans during the early 1730s ⁴². The chief of this group was called the Finhento by Avoseh, or 'Fiotoh', 'Pheowh', or 'Pheortoh' in other sources ⁴³. This was explained in 1887 as meaning 'the man who holds the pillars of the world'⁴⁴.

The final district of the town under the control of its own chief was Boeko. Originally however, this district was established by a priest from Whydah, and remained under priestly authority until possibly as late as the 1840s when control of the area was taken over by a secular chieftancy under Podowu or 'Pardoor' ⁴⁵.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 31.

³⁹ PRO CO879/27 24 August 1887 The Queen's Advocate, Lagos.

⁴⁰ See Lagos State Focus on Badagry and NNAI CSO 26/4 30030S1 Report on the Reorganisation of the Badagri District by R J M Curwen 1937.

⁴¹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 31. Also see Figure 7.

⁴² See chapter 1, pp. 38-39.

⁴³ For example PRO CO879/27 24 August 1887 The Queen's Advocate, Lagos; PRO FO84/1141 Mercantile Treaty with Badagry June 1861, see Appendix B; PRO FO84/1201 7 July 1863 Treaty of Cession of Badagri and its territories in 10 July 1863 Glover, Lagos, See Appendix C.

⁴⁴ PRO CO879/27 24 August 1887 The Queen's Advocate, Lagos.

⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that Okaro K'Ojwang says that the original founder of Boeko Ward was one of the attendants of Kotogbosu, a founding prince of Ahoviko [Okaro K'Ojwang' 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri...', p. 12. See Figure 6].

According to Avoseh, Podowu was nicknamed Mobee by the Brazilians at Badagry, and this was continued as a title thereafter ⁴⁶.

The failure of a ninth ward or district to emerge in the town sheds some light on the nature of chieftaincy at Badagry. According to Avoseh a deserter from the Dahomean army, named Apanus and originally from Zinvie, established himself first at Gberefu, on the spit of land opposite Badagry. He then moved to the town itself where he settled at Athanpoji, which was presumably named after the Adankpoji suburb of Abomey. Exactly when this war lord or Balogun arrived is unclear from Avoseh's account. However, the local historian goes on to say that after Apanus's death, areas of his land were put under the control of new arrivals until the outbreak of civil war in the mid-nineteenth century which devastated the section completely. According to Avoseh, this destruction coupled with the lack of its own chief meant that Athanpoji was not considered a quarter in its own right and ultimately 'by common consent' it was absorbed into Boeko Ward ⁴⁷.

Authority and Power

The identification of eight distinct districts or wards at Badagry, each with its own chief, is comparable then with the situation, for example, at Abeokuta. However, at the Egba capital a single figure, the Alake, did emerge as representative of the whole community ⁴⁸. As noted, Avoseh has claimed that the Akran was a similarly dominant figure at Badagry. The supremacy of this chief has been accepted by other historians, at least in theory, although for example both Newbury and Smith have qualified this assertion by suggesting that although nominally the leading chief, the Akran, in reality, held little authority over the

⁴⁶ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 23.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 29.

⁴⁸ Northrup also discusses the process of increased centralisation and the emergence of a series of dominant figures in the more easterly Delta states as a result of the areas rising Atlantic trade [Northrup, Trade Without Rulers Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South Eastern Nigeria (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1978) p. 88.].

other chiefs ⁴⁹.

This claim of the Akran to acknowledged authority has been challenged by Law. He has suggested that in theory all eight chiefs were equal in status, but that power in Badagry fluctuated as a the fortunes, notably economic, of each ward rose and fell. He gives examples during the latter part of the eighteenth century when first the Jengen and then 'Davi' [the Wawu] were clearly dominant forces in the town ⁵⁰. It is interesting to note that in the nineteenth century mention of the Akran in British sources only became marked in the post-annexation period of the 1870s, when a particularly forceful personality in that position threatened to upset the peace of the town over the issue of installing a fellow chief ⁵¹.

To establish the real nature of authority at Badagry it is necessary then to establish exactly how these wards operated, both internally and in relation to each other. A picture of the internal workings of the Badagry wards is extremely difficult to piece together from written sources. Ward sizes are hard to evaluate. Just as the population of Badagry fluctuated from eight to ten thousand at its height to as low as about one thousand after destruction in 1851, so the wards' fortunes must have fluctuated too ⁵². However there is little indication of the proportions of the population who lived in each ward, and whether the overall population was more or less evenly spread throughout, or whether particular wards were much larger than others. Clearly each ward was made up of a number of compounds or houses, each of which had its own head ⁵³. In the case of Ijegba Ward, for example, Avoseh states that the headship of each of six ruling

⁴⁹ Okaro K'Ojwang also adheres to the idea of the dominant Akran, although he explains that despite the eight wards being theoretically equal 'In practice...the other seven chiefs owed limited allegiance to the Akran' [Newbury, The Western Slave Coast....., p. 30; R S Smith, Kingdoms of the Yoruba, p. 72; Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics at Badagry...', p. 29].

⁵⁰ Law, 'The Gun Communities in the Eighteenth Century', pp. 20-21.

⁵¹ PRO CO147/30 24 July 1874 Thomas Tickel (Civil Commandant at Badagry), Badagry.

⁵² See chapter 1, pp. 41-42.

⁵³ In 1850 the missionary Eugene Van Cooten described the three hundred and eight compounds of Badagry, each of which contained about thirty five persons [CMSA CA2/086/4 27 November 1850 Van Cooten, Badagry]

houses was 'hereditary in the same family, but not necessarily from father to son'⁵⁴. It was from these six ruling houses, he continues, that the Akran was chosen 'more or less by rotation'⁵⁵. However, when Avoseh's list of Akrans spanning the period from foundation to publication of his history in 1938 is examined, his system of 'rotation' is difficult to substantiate. Of the six houses, three produced only one Akran. Of the other three, two produced only two Akrans, thus leaving Jigbeko House, with five Akrans, as the most dominant house⁵⁶. It seems more acceptable to conclude then as does Law, that the system of selection was based less on a systematic procedure than on the ability of the various houses to bid for the succession 'on the basis of their wealth and following rather than of hereditary right'⁵⁷.

That ward chief election involved other wards is clearly recorded by Avoseh. He states that the Akran 'always made' the chiefs of Posuko and Ganho, whilst the Chief of Ahoviko installed the Jengen of Awhanjigo and the Chief of Boeko⁵⁸. There is no information about the Bala of Asago. Therefore one can only assume that installation was an internal matter. But the Wharako ward chief, Avoseh states, looked further afield for confirmation and went to Porto- Novo⁵⁹. The extent to which a role in installing a chief conferred any influence over his ward is a question which requires further examination. However, there is the potential implication of a two-tier ward structure. The key, I would suggest can be found in

⁵⁴ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 39.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 15.

⁵⁶ Ijegba Ward currently has three ruling houses. The title of Akran is passed from one house to the most suitable male heir of the next house [Oral interview 26 January 1994 with the Assistant of the Oba [Akran], Ijegba Ward].

⁵⁷ [Law, '....The Early History of Badagri', p. 23]. There are a number of examples of the tenuous and competitive nature of chieftaincy at Badagri. For example in an account from 1860, Consul Foote described the situation in an unidentified, and as yet unidentifiable, ward of Badagri. On the death of a chief, who was called 'Juiza', competition was intense between two aspiring successors. Foote noted that there was a danger of violence erupting over the issue [PRO FO84/1141 28 December 1860 Badagri merchants in 8 January 1861 Foote, Lagos]. What is also interesting about this example is that Foote referred to the involvement of 'chiefs'. The use of the plural would seem to suggest that the election of a ward chief involved, at least in this case, a wider electorate than the individual ward itself.

⁵⁸ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, pp. 31, 26 & 28.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 32.

the origins of the inhabitants. Ijegba's role in the making of both the chiefs of Posuko and Ganho can clearly be tied to their shared Weme origins. Ahoviko ward shared Whydah origins with both Awhanjigo and Boeko, and indeed in 1887 the Wawu was referred to by the title 'Omo Oba Wheda' or head of the Whydas [Omo-Oba = 'prince' in Yoruba] ⁶⁰. The text of the Treaty of Cession also implied such a division by referring to both the Akran and the Wawu as 'Head Chief' ⁶¹. This division therefore leaves Asago and Wharako operating between or on the fringes of these two groupings. However, in a state as competitive as Badagry there was little time or inclination for origin allegiances generations old and although in theory these groupings remained in place, they were adhered to as convenient and ignored when necessary. An indication of this attitude is demonstrated during the 1870s when the Akran attempted to increase his control over Posuko by not only installing the ward chief but also nominating the candidate. This pressure was however, vehemently resisted by the inhabitants of Posuko itself ⁶².

Newbury suggests that ultimately, although the Akran was politically weak, he was 'president' of a court of ward elders, the word 'court' presumably carrying connotations of both monarchy and judiciary ⁶³. This then establishes a formal political forum and point of contact between the wards. As yet however, no evidence has been found to support Newbury's claim that the Akran was at least the nominal head of such a forum in the pre-colonial period. Indeed it would appear that the Badagry ward chiefs acted not only independently but frequently

⁶⁰ PRO CO879/27 24 August 1887 The Queen's Advocate, Lagos.

⁶¹ See Appendix C.

⁶² In this particularly case:

The elder of the Posu family...stated that he had no wish himself to be installed as chief, but considered it only fair that the election of the chief should be left, as usual, to the whole family instead of a nomination being made by the Ankranh [Akran], who had selected a young man of the family who has been, nearly all his life, resident in Porto-Novo

[PRO CO147/30 2 August 1874 Burton (Governor of Lagos), Lagos.

⁶³ Newbury, The Western Slave Coast, p. 30.

in opposition to one another. With little in the way of traditional authority or allegiance to either state or even ward, it would appear then that the basis of chieftancy was ultimately the ability to maintain control over both resources and followers through wealth. As noted previously, the control of wealth at Badagry was based mainly in Atlantic commerce.

The Atlantic slave trade had its roots in violence and warfare, occupations which required the ability to harness manpower. Once gathered the trade needed similarly large outlays in order to secure provisions, guards, holding areas, credit and collateral. In the Badagry case it would appear, not surprisingly, that the ward chiefs were key slave traders within the town and that the trade was organised along ward lines. Each chief's desire to retain control of their own economic interests is clear. In 1844 Annear recounted an episode when a man of Ahoviko had requested his slave to be sold at Posuko. This action had provoked the Wawu of Ahoviko to anger at the loss of his 'privilege' ⁶⁴. But exactly what this 'privilege' entailed and the true nature of the chief's role in commerce requires further examination.

During his visit to Badagry in 1825 Richard Lander noted that any slaves who remained unsold in the town were drowned in the lagoon due to the expense that their maintenance would cause the King. This implies that, at least in the eyes of a visiting European, 'slaves' (all slaves being the implication), were the responsibility of 'the King' ⁶⁵. However, the concept of a trading monopoly under the control of a single figure in the Badagry context is doubtful for various reasons. Firstly, because 'the King' in question, Adele, was dominant in Badagry for a relatively short period (c.1821-1835), and was ultimately an aberration. But it is also deceptive in that, during the course of Richard Lander's time in Badagry and on a subsequent second visit in 1830, it emerged that there were actually

⁶⁴ WMMSA 21 October 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁵ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, pp. 250-251.

others engaged in slave trading activities. In 1830 John Lander noted another ward chief, who although living in retirement was actively engaged in purchasing and reselling slaves to the foreign traders ⁶⁶. A group of resident slave traders, by this period mostly of Portuguese/Brazilian extraction, had evidently formed a close commercial relationship with this ward chief. From other accounts it becomes clear that this 'special relationship' between ward chief and foreign trader was not new to Badagry. Indeed, from an examination of the evidence it emerges that the nature of this relationship is vital for any understanding of pre-colonial Badagry.

As noted, Badagry was not a great slave-raiding state. It was by acting as middlemen, engaged in 'purchasing slaves and reselling them', that economic wealth was generated. Hopkins in his analysis of the operation of the pre-colonial economies of West Africa outlined the role of 'middlemen' in the coastal entrepôts who 'helped to synchronise exchanges between slave gatherers, shippers and employers' ⁶⁷. He states that the trading environment created a necessity for landlords, whose role it was to provide storage, provision and accommodation and brokers who acted as intermediaries, commission agents interpreters, bankers, money lenders and traders. It is in these roles that Badagry was able to excel.

That the Badagry chiefs or Badagrians more generally were acting as both traders and brokers between their Atlantic and interior partners is supported by Captain Adams who visited the area at the end of the eighteenth century. Although he made the distinction that it was the policy of the Lagos people to be 'themselves the traders and not the brokers' he later added that Hausa slaves were brought by Oyo merchants to Porto-Novo where they were sold to traders from both Lagos

⁶⁶ R & J Lander, *Journal of an Expedition...* Vol 1, p. 46.

⁶⁷ Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, p. 106-107.

and Badagry ⁶⁸. The identity of these agents, at least in the nineteenth century, was illustrated by Revd Annear when he noted that 'black traders' from Badagry were operating along the lagoons under the auspices of various ward chiefs ⁶⁹.

It is evident then that the operation of Atlantic slave commerce required control over manpower. Firstly in the capacity of slave raiding parties and more importantly in the Badagry context, as agents, guards, carriers, porters and water rollers⁷⁰. That the ability to harness manpower rested largely with ward chiefs is understandable. It was the ward chiefs who were able to provide the goods and services which the Atlantic and interior traders required to operate successfully. The importance of these commercial relationships was reflected, at least from a European perspective, in the fact that a number of the Badagry wards came to be identified, and certainly to some extent came to identify themselves with their respective European trading partners. For example the Wawu was known as the English Chief, as was Mobi ⁷¹. The Jengen was the French chief, the Akran was

⁶⁸ Capt. J. Adams Remarks on the Country extending from Cape Palmas to the River Congo, (London 1823), p. 96.

⁶⁹ WMMSA 30 October 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁰ Badagry's position required large-scale transportation of trade goods between sea, city and interior. Clapperton reported on arrival on the beach that they were carried in hammocks across the strip of land until they reached the lagoon where 'canoes were ready' to take them across to the town [PRO CO2/15 30 November 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry]. The status of those people involved in the landing and carrying of both goods and people is difficult to determine. At the end of the eighteenth century Dalzel stated that at Badagry those people who inhabited seashore were there for the convenience of the Atlantic ships and acted as porters and water rollers. Furthermore he noted that these persons were 'in the pay of the captains', presumably meaning the ships' captains [Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 179]. This may well have been the case for the visiting Gold Coast canoe crews communicating between ship and shore. But it is necessary to determine whether this was also the case for the indigenous porters and water rollers of Badagry. The concept of an indigenous employed working class would seem to be contradicted by Dalzel himself when he goes on to note that the porters and water rollers 'belonged' to a chief, on this occasion 'prince Davee' [Davi or the Wawu of Ahoviko ward]. However, 'belonged' could allude to both slave and free man within a ward. I would suggest that in this case those inhabitants of Ahoviko were not slaves but merely came under the umbrella of the Wawu's control. Thus they required his sanction to work. The evidence to support this view comes from Clapperton's account of the porters he employed for his journey into the interior. He noted that they required thirty five men at five strings of cowries per day and a further forty two hammockmen at the same cost. The implication here is that each person was paid as an individual. Clapperton added that they would be required to give one hundred ounces trade to Adele for his permission and safe conduct to Ijanna, presumably then an acknowledgment of his ability to mobilise such numbers [PRO CO27/15 30 November 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry].

⁷¹ PRO CO96/2 11 May 1853 Freeman, Cape Coast in 20 May 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast; CMR March 1846 26 May 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry; WMMSA 11 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21

known as the Portuguese Chief, whilst the Posu was at times also referred to as a Portuguese Chief and at others as a Dutch Chief ⁷². Understandably a number of European sources have overemphasised the impact of this phenomenon.

Governor Hill for example in 1844 clearly felt that it was the number of European competitors on the coast who had initially shaped Badagry's ward structure ⁷³.

This conclusion is clearly putting the cart before the horse, however, the extent to which these commercial relationships with European, and possibly also African trading partners, served to maintain the polarisation between the resident groups within Badagry is central in any understanding of the town's operation. In the mid-nineteenth century, when only British traders remained in the town, Revd De Graft noted that the division between English, French, Portuguese and Dutch Towns was 'kept up with zeal which breeds jealousies and animosities among the chiefs sometimes' ⁷⁴. Furthermore, the extent to which these trading partnerships had become engrained into the very fabric of Badagry's political life can be examined most prominently in the case of Ahoviko Ward. As the English ward of the Town, Ahoviko came under close scrutiny from the British missionaries working on the coast. Revd Townsend for example commented of that ward and its chief that:

According to the laws of Badagry ...the English chief has a right to receive Englishmen here; if the other chiefs interfere with this right, they break the established laws of the place ⁷⁵.

The key then was that political power was interdependent with economic success⁷⁶. The individuals able to harness the means to facilitate trade were

October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

⁷² NNAI CSO 5/2 Agreement Between Ghingy [Jengen] Cabacier of Badagry and Thomas Hutton of London for the sale of a plot of land in the centre of Badagry 22 May 1842 (NB. It is interesting to note that during the course of this agreement Mobbe [Mobi] was named as another French chief); PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos; WMMSA 26 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁷³ In a long description of Badagry, Hill noted that:

A British slave factory was established there as also a French and Portuguese, from which the town is still divided into three divisions, each assuming the name of the factory they were under

[PRO CO96/4 14 May 1844 Hill, Cape Coast].

⁷⁴ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft to London.

⁷⁵ PRO FO84/663 20 August 1845 Revd Townsend, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

⁷⁶ In his examination of 'stateless' or 'non-centralised' societies, Horton noted that it was trade

overwhelmingly the ward chiefs. Conversely it would also appear that in order to maintain their positions of political authority, they were in turn required to be economically successful ⁷⁷. In Avoseh's list of Akrans, it is interesting to note that those he reports as being successful and popular were all notable slave traders. For example the seventh Akran Prince Yede, who probably held his chieftancy in the early years of the nineteenth century, is described as having 'a successful slave trade and a good reign' ⁷⁸. On the other hand, Akran Soba, during whose time 'there was no slave trade', was ultimately overthrown as a result of internal tensions within the ward ⁷⁹. That a chieftancy did not guarantee political and economic success is further illustrated by the example of the usurper Zinsu who assumed control of the town after its destruction in 1784 and became 'exceedingly wealthy' ⁸⁰. Ultimately then it was possible to break into Badagrian political life and, in the case of Zinsu, take it over with huge economic backing. The implication is then that once installed at the forefront of Badagrian political life, sustained economic success became of paramount importance. In Badagry, during the era of the slave trade, economic success rested on political power, and in turn political power rested on economic success.

After the decline of the slave trade at Badagry from the early 1840s onwards the town attempted to fashion a role in the newly established and very different palm oil trade. As noted previously, in a largely non-producing area it was still

which was one of the 'root causes' of state formation, leading ultimately to the emergence of leadership through wealth. He concludes that 'non centralised societies:

are mostly found away from the great long-distance trade routes and trade junctions. Indeed this fact... has probably been a condition of their survival in stateless form

[R Horton, 'Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa' in Ajayi and Crowder History of West Africa, Vol 1 (3rd Ed 1985), p. 90]. This would appear to be contradicted by the Badagry case whereby although commerce was the key to leadership, that leadership was ultimately compromised by its commercial base.

⁷⁷ Latham has made the connection between political and economic strength in the case of Old Calabar. He concludes that it was the wards most successful in trade who were able to absorb more retainers and gain more credit from the European trading partners. Thus the ward was able to grow more quickly than the others [Latham, Old Calabar... p. 51].

⁷⁸ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 22.

⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 18-19.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 18.

necessary for Badagry to import its trade goods from the interior. However, whilst supplies to the slave market required both wealth and political influence, palm oil transportation, like that of domestic articles could be undertaken on a much smaller scale and presented possibilities to a wider section of the population trading between local markets. However, Badagry's position on the coast as a collection point for palm oil meant that once again resources were required for speculation, premises and co-ordination on the scale required by the Atlantic traders. Although the palm oil trade may have offered the potential for private enterprise by local individuals operating on a very small scale, notably through production and transportation to collection points. At the coast, the trade remained in the hands of large scale operators. That such Badagrian operators were largely chiefs and the organisation of palm oil collection and trading ran along ward lines is supported by evidence that it was the Wawu, the English chief of Ahoviko who profited most from the new trade. Other chiefs complained about the trade, but their arguments remained ward based. The object of their bitterness was the Wawu rather than any new indigenous class of traders⁸¹. Complaints, however, were also levelled at times against the foreign traders, both European and Sierra Leone who were said to have 'a considerable amount of property' at Badagry⁸². There is also the example of exiled Lagos people engaging in commerce with the support of the European trading factories⁸³.

Much of the contemporary source material concentrates on the 'petty jealousies' which arose from commercial competition. In 1844 for example there were reports of a war breaking out between the people of Ahoviko and Ijegba over the appointment of an Ijegba chief who had such a close relationship with the Portuguese traders at Lagos that Ahoviko's commerce with Britain was

⁸¹ CMSA CA2/085/229 7 September 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

⁸² PRO FO84/860 16 June 1851 Badagry merchants to Capt Foote.

⁸³ PRO FO2/20 31 December 1857 Campbell, Lagos.

threatened with destruction⁸⁴. Accordingly a fight took place in the centre of town with between seven to eight hundred individuals on each side.

Interestingly though, the following day only one death was reported as a result of the conflict and another was to be executed for having 'fought unfairly'. This suggests a confrontation which was more of a show of strength than anything else and which was 'fought' along ceremonial lines.

With ward and chieftaincy fortunes largely dependent on commerce and on the support they could muster, it is understandable then that various wards emerged at different times as more prominent. Gaining an accurate picture of the fluctuating fortunes of each of the Badagry wards is difficult. The fragmentary nature of the sources available makes it hard to discern any pattern. Very rarely are all eight chiefs mentioned. Fraser, for example, in 1853 listed the eight chiefs of Badagry, but included the 'Anlakbar' or King of Apa and also an unidentifiable Chief 'Oo-noo', perhaps therefore relegating the chiefs of Ganho and Wharako, whom he does not name, to being 'minor' chiefs 'the names of whom I have not yet ascertained' ⁸⁵. Furthermore it is very rarely specified in such lists whether the order given is in any way indicative of importance. These limited sources could also clearly distort the nature of a particular ward's success. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Wawu, chief of Ahoviko ward, appeared more frequently in written accounts than any other chief. However, this is only to be expected. As chief of the 'English Town' the majority of English sources clearly focused on him.

However, from a number of accounts it is possible to gain at least some sense of the wards' fluctuating fortunes. Law, using French sources, has identified the

⁸⁴ WMMSA 4 & 5 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁸⁵ Dalzel refers to an individual called 'Onum' at Badagry who was the son of 'Prince Davee'. If Onum was a title rather than a name, taken by the son of the Wawu, this may account for the mysterious Chief 'Oo-noo' [Dalzel The History of Dahomey, p. 182; PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos.

Jengen of Awhanjigo as being recognised as the 'King of Badagri' in the 1770s ⁸⁶. By 1793 the Akran of Ijegba was referred to as the 'principal caboceer' ⁸⁷. Similarly by the middle of the nineteenth century, although the extent of the Wawu's prominence may have been distorted by a predominance of British sources, his period of commercial success in comparison to the other chiefs during this period is apparent. As Campbell noted in 1855 'Blower' [Wawu] 'was the only chief who derived a direct revenue' from the new trade ⁸⁸. However, it was during this period also that several sources also reported that the Akran was a 'headchief', a further indication of the lack of any single authority ⁸⁹. In this way then the ability of a ward chief to dominate was based on the transitory nature of his economic successes and ability to harness the loyalty of his ward. This meritocracy also enabled other successful figures to emerge. Again, due to the vague nature of source material, it is somewhat difficult to distinguish who was who, and whether named figures in written accounts were actually ward chiefs or 'commoners', there are references to a number of figures throughout the period who, it would seem, were not ward chiefs themselves but nevertheless achieved prominence in Badagry society as a result of their success in other spheres. Robertson at the end of the eighteenth century named a man called Agoussa as 'the principal trader at Badaghe' ⁹⁰. It is possible that Agoussa was the 'Agosu' named by Avoseh as one of Akran Jiwa's [Zinsu] sons, who; during the poverty stricken chieftaincy of Akran Soba, achieved immense commercial success, to the point where Soba; 'became envious of the houses of Pojeagonwu and Jiwa' ⁹¹. This then demonstrates the ability of an individual to develop an extremely successful commercial business without being the head of a ward. It could be suggested that Agoussa or Agosu was able to succeed

⁸⁶ Law, 'The Gun Communities in the Eighteenth Century', p. 29, citing Archives Nationale, Paris C 6/26 Dewarel, Whydah 1 October 1776; Gourg, Whydah 31 August 1787.

⁸⁷ PRO T70/1484 10 October 1793 Richard Miles (Royal African Company), Popo.

⁸⁸ PRO FO403/5 28 May 1855 Campbell, Lagos.

⁸⁹ CMSA CA2/043/96 12 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁰ G A Robertson, Notes on Africa (London 1819), p. 286.

⁹¹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 18.

commercially due to his close relationship with a ward chief, for Jiwa was Akran of Ijegba. However, it should be noted that Akran Jiwa himself had been an outsider from Porto-Novo, and therefore his son had little legitimate or traditional right to such a position.

In the nineteenth century there are references to a number of other influential figures who are not reconcilable with the list of recognisable Badagry ward chiefs. Samuel Pearse in 1863 mentioned a prominent man called Masolowo, whilst Ajagbe and Ahamara are also named as principal men during the mid-nineteenth century, with no obvious connection to chiefs of the period ⁹². How much political power these individuals were able to wield is difficult to assess, but it is clear that on occasions they were taking part in meetings with Europeans, not always of a commercial nature, and were of a sufficiently high stature for them to be referred to, on occasion perhaps mistakenly, as 'chiefs' themselves ⁹³.

Influences on the System

The dangerous weaknesses of such a system, with little semblance of a central authority, are evident. Indecision, opposition and competition were clearly major features of the uncohesive nature of Badagry's political structure.

However, such a transient system was ultimately able to absorb changes and take advantage of opportunities far more readily than a more centralised state could ever have done. In the dangerously fluctuating politics of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Slave Coast, Badagry's decentralised structure gave it a flexibility which often allowed it to adapt more readily to these changeable conditions.

⁹²CA2/076/46 28 May 1863 Pearse's Journal, Badagry; CMR October 1846 10 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; CMSA CA2/043/98 27 February 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁹³ During the early twentieth century a similar 'chief' acquired overall prominence at Badagry. Chief Seriki Abasi, a Muslim who had started life as a slave, was able to dominate Badagry 'by his own character and ability...his wealth, and his good standing with the [colonial] Government' [NNAI BADADIV 6/1 District Officers Intelligence Reports 1877-1928].

Badagry's ability to adapt to external forces is clearly one of the major themes of its history, its very foundation being a crucial example. The continuing process of settlement in the town which shaped its internal structure is best demonstrated by an examination of the series of influential individuals who, arriving often as refugees, were able to achieve a position of extreme influence. The first of these was Zinsu, later Akran Jiwa, who although claimed as a son of the first Akran, Gbafoe by Avoseh, was in fact from Porto Novo ⁹⁴. Zinsu was able to seize control of Badagry after its destruction by the combined forces of Dahomey and Porto-Novo in 1784. What is interesting about Zinsu is that his descendants ultimately became a part of the established order of Jigbeko, one of the ruling houses of the Ijegba Ward, with three of the following Akrans emerging from that family ⁹⁵. Other arrivals were of a more transitory nature, but equally influential during the periods of residence. Adele, the 'King of Kings' at Badagry during the 1820s and early 1830s was in exile from his throne at Lagos. Adele's ability to take over the running of the town during the period of his residence, was, according to Lander, the result of admiration for his filial piety ⁹⁶. However, there is evidence that Adele's progress towards domination involved more force of character than the Badagry chiefs' natural subservience to a respected foreign ruler. As Lander himself reports, the chief of Spanish Town (probably the Akran), had been previously the 'sole governor of the country' but since the arrival of Adele 'his authority was wrested from him by a more powerful hand'⁹⁷. The inability of later political exiles, the Mewu, from Porto-Novo and Akitoye, another deposed King of Lagos, to maintain a position of influence suggests individuals of less 'magisterial' splendour and strength than Adele, but also clearly outlines the important role of foreign allegiances and alliances in

⁹⁴ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 15.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁹⁶ Law has concluded that Adele was able to become dominant because the existence of a foreign ruler at Badagry was not without precedent and the town was a place where 'foreign origin was evidently no serious handicap' [R Law, 'The Career of Adele at Lagos and Badagry c.1807-c.1837' in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN)* ix/2, (1978), p. 43. Also see chapter 6, pp. 180-183.

⁹⁷ R & J Lander, *Journal of an Expedition....* Vol 1, p. 13.

Badagry's power structure.

The influence of neighbouring states on the balance of power within Badagry has been crucial throughout its history. Apa, the kingdom from which Badagry's immediate territory was carved, held a short-lived dominance over the port. Although there are indications that by the nineteenth century the Alapa or King of Apa was still, at times, nominally recognised as 'the proprietor of that part of the country', it is clear that in reality, Badagry had overtaken its parent state in both economic and political importance and the Alapa was a political 'nonentity'⁹⁸. Indeed by the 1840s it would appear that the Alapa was himself a periodic resident of Badagry itself, thus, by implication placing the territory of Apa under the auspices of the port ⁹⁹.

More influential in Badagry's political history were the claims of its more prominent neighbours. Notable in British eyes, during the period of coastal annexations in the early 1860s, were the claims of Lagos over Badagry.

Understandably Governor Freeman in 1862, eager to establish Badagry as part of the Lagos Colony, stressed the political links between some of the town's chiefs and the Lagos monarchy. He claimed that during the reign of Adele's predecessor at Lagos, Ologun Kutere, Dahomey had threatened to destroy Badagry but the Lagos King had paid money for the town to be spared and had therefore 'always considered Badagry as their Territory' and on occasions been involved in appointing chiefs ¹⁰⁰. The influence of Lagos over Badagry was also demonstrated by Avoseh who refers to a period of 'cordial relations' between the two powers in the late eighteenth century when 'the Kings of Badagry used to be crowned in Lagos and some chiefs installed there as well' ¹⁰¹. This period of 'cordial

⁹⁸PRO FO84/951 24 May 1854 Crowther, Abeokuta in 14 August 1854 Chichester, London; PRO FO84/925 'Report on the proceedings of a expedition to Porto-Novo between December 1852 and 7 January 1853' by Cmdr Heseltine in 14 April 1853 Hamilton, London.

⁹⁹ CMR March 1847 7 June 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰⁰ PRO CO147/1 9 October 1862 Freeman, Lagos.

¹⁰¹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 33.

relations' is more appropriately seen as one of domination by Lagos in the post destruction period after 1784. But this does not demonstrate an incorporation into the territory of Lagos, as Freeman and then Glover asserted, for even during the very period when British control at Lagos, increased after 1852, Badagry was subject to political influences from the west which were equally strong.

As noted above, at least one of the Badagry chiefs went to Porto-Novo for installation but this was clearly a connection which went further than that of traditional ceremony ¹⁰². In 1845 Revd Annear, recounting a thwarted attempt by Porto-Novo to overrun the town, stated that whilst most of the town rejoiced at their failure there were a number of inhabitants who 'manifested evident symptoms of sorrow' due to they're being at 'one with the enemies in their hearts' ¹⁰³. By the 1860s, when Britain was attempting to assert control from Lagos, a section of Badagry resisted this encroachment by supporting the Porto-Novon claim to the state. Even as late as 1863 Glover recognised that a portion of the town believed themselves, or at least claimed to be under the jurisdiction of Porto-Novo, and that violence was threatening to break out in the western sections of the town over the matter ¹⁰⁴.

However, Badagry was not only subject to influences from east and west along the coast, for there were also interior alliances and loyalties which proved equally strong in some quarters. Although founded as a result of Dahomean aggression and as a potential safe haven from the aggressive policies of that power, Badagry was clearly not a state distant enough to be free from the influence of that powerful interior kingdom. Evidence suggests that for much of its early history, Badagry was caught between the power politics of Dahomey and its interior Yoruba neighbour, Oyo. There has been some debate over the issue of Badagry's tributary status in relation to Oyo. It has been suggested that from quite early in

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁰³ WMMSA 7 September 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰⁴ PRO CO147/4 1 August 1863 Glover to Didelot in 8 August 1863 Glover, Lagos. See chapter 11, p. 367.

its history Badagry was tributary to the Yoruba power. However, Law has argued that although soon after its establishment, Badagry, along with Porto-Novo, became Oyo's main outlet to the Atlantic. It was only in the 1780s, after a period of destruction and upheaval, that Badagry formerly became tributary to Oyo ¹⁰⁵.

However, the powers of the Oyo Empire were waning. Far more lasting was Badagry's relationship with its westerly neighbour Dahomey. Throughout its history, the coastal state was subject to aggression and attack by this power, but clearly the influence of Dahomey ran far deeper. As late as 1843 Governor Maclean saw Badagry as being a part of Dahomey's coastal territory ¹⁰⁶. But by 1848, the King of Dahomey himself was clearly unhappy with the increasing wealth of the coastal nations once under his sway who, with their increasing wealth, 'set my authority at defiance' ¹⁰⁷.

Whilst certain sections of Badagry continued associations with Dahomey - notably Posuko, which was, for example, involved in Dahomean military operations - other sections had found a new patron in the shape of Abeokuta, a city state formed out of the chaos of the Yoruba wars after the demise of Oyo. The strength of this relationship in the 1840s and 1850s, during the period of increasing European interest in the area, firstly in the shape of missionary and then consular activity, has yielded more written accounts of this relationship than any other. The extent to which Badagry was seen to be dominated by the Egba power was demonstrated by Revd Gollmer who claimed in 1848 that 'Badagry is governed in some degree by Abbeokuta' ¹⁰⁸. Using a variety of other sources it is possible to assess this high degree of influence. Even the Posu, who clearly held true allegiances elsewhere, was forced to accept in 1846, when

¹⁰⁵ Law, '....The Early History of Badagry', p. 27. See chapter 5, p. 152-153.

¹⁰⁶ PRO CO96/2 20 May 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast.

¹⁰⁷ PRO CO96/13 Report of 9 November 1848 in 18 November 1848 Cruickshank, Cape Coast.

¹⁰⁸ Parliamentary Papers 'Slave Trade Session 1847-48 No 4 First Report from the Select Committee on Slave Trade' Paragraph 8043 4 July 1848, Gollmer's evidence.

challenged by Shomoye, the Egba representative at Badagry that the Badagry chiefs must do Abeokuta's bidding ¹⁰⁹.

This dominance reached its peak in the early 1850s with the expulsion of the chiefs from Badagry and the usurpation of the Mewu, a refugee from Porto-Novo who relied on the joint support of Abeokuta and the British to maintain his position. When that British support was partially removed, Consul Campbell and the British traders in the area recognising the impracticalities and damaging commercial effects his governorship, Mewu's position crumbled, and with it Egba influence over Badagry's affairs.

In the face of such intense outside pressure, it was Badagry's fragmented political structure which enabled the town to maintain crucial and often conflicting alliances. The most obvious example of this occurred in 1851 during a Dahomean attack on the Egba capital at Abeokuta. According to Annear in the 1840s all the chiefs of Badagry professed to be allies of the Egba, and indeed forces from the Badagry wards were sent to reinforce the Egba troops besieging the town of Ado, a city on the route between Abeokuta and the coast. However, it subsequently emerged that two chiefs, whilst outwardly supporting the Egba cause, were secretly supplying Ado with both provisions and ammunition ¹¹⁰. This covert desire by a section of Badagry to help their 'enemies' was further substantiated in the March 1851 attack on Abeokuta by Dahomey. Indeed whilst a section of Badagry was concerned with forwarding supplies of arms and ammunition to support the Egba capital, it was found later that during the course of the skirmish 'Possu of Badagry had many of his people in the Dahomean army' ¹¹¹.

The ability of Badagry to withstand these successive and sometimes coexisting

¹⁰⁹ CMSA CA2/085/230 24 December 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁰ WMMSA 16 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry. Also see chapter 7, p. 231.

¹¹¹ PRO CO96/24 19 March 1851 Townsend, Abeokuta in 30 March Fanshawe, off River Benin.

external pressures is an indication of the success of its flexible political structure. Indeed it was ultimately only the attempt by an external power to impose a more cohesive political order, in the process removing Badagry's ability to adapt and its competitive edge, which ultimately destroyed its statehood. But despite its fragmented and indeed competitive system Badagry was required, at least at times, to operate institutions or functions of a more coordinated nature.

The ability of a ward to act as an independent military unit, as noted above, clearly had immense repercussions. The Posu, is called by Avoseh 'a war chief' and the term Balogun, meaning war lord in Yoruba, was used to describe his role in 1887¹¹². However, there is no written evidence to identify the Posu as the commander of a city-wide army, indeed there is no evidence of such a fighting force at Badagry. According to Annear the chiefs each had their 'respective colours' and were able to summon bodies of men to make military gains¹¹³. However, Badagry was evidently able to mount concerted military operations, most notably in defending the city from attack. A detailed example of such a defence is given again by Annear in 1845, when in the face of an attack from the west by Porto-Novo and their hired naval allies the Isos, frantic preparations took place in Badagry, with messengers being sent out of town to Ajido and Idale to prepare canoes and send ammunition. Annear reported that the whole town was on the look out and the fighting men went to their stations. Tactics were carefully planned and an ambush laid for the aggressors ¹¹⁴.

¹¹² Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 30; PRO CO879/27 24 August 1887 The Queen's Advocate, Lagos.

¹¹³ WMMSA 12 June 1845 Anear's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁴ Chief Wawu explained the tactics to Revd Annear, saying that:

The back of the lagoon on the opposite side, is lined with people in the jungle from about half a mile above the town, to the same distance below. Those men took their station about an hour since, being all armed and ready for action. The canoes are all distributed at equal distances at the wharfs on this side, and those who are to man them either sitting in them, or lying quietly on the ground beside them, with their instruments of death already charged. Their intended plan of operation is this - the persons in ambush furthest up on the other bank are to remain perfectly silent until the last canoe part of the fleet, it is supposed, will be just in front of the

Other areas which required a level of concerted action were law and order and the settlement of inter-ward disputes. There are a number of examples of Badagry chiefs gathering to resolve disputes and make joint decisions. In 1846 Revd Martin described a gathering of chiefs to discuss a series of attacks on Sierra Leonian immigrants working in the palm oil factory, and a joint decision was taken to punish those guilty ¹¹⁵. Revd Annear, during the 1840s, provided some of the most detailed evidence of 'council meetings' and 'private consultations' between chiefs¹¹⁶. There is also evidence of the Badagry chiefs acting in conjunction with each other to formulate foreign policy. Annear, again in 1845, described how most of the chiefs had travelled to Lagos 'where they are sitting in Council with the respective chiefs of Porto-Novo, Addo and Lagos' ¹¹⁷. Discovering how these collective forums operated is essential to any understanding of the state. From the most striking example of such a gathering given by Revd Annear in 1846 however, it is evident that it was religious belief and ceremony which enabled the disparate Badagry chiefs to operate, at least on occasions, as a community.

town, they are to fire, which is to be the signal for all to commence. The moment the firing thus begins on the other bank, the canoes are to go forth and attack the enemy on the water, and thus meet them on both sides. One particular request which he had to make was, that when the firing commenced and the canoes were engaged in action before our door, I would not allow the large guns in the mission yard to be fired as the shot would go across and kill their people in the bush; nor were our men to fire unless we heard from him, as in the dark we could not distinguish what canoes were approaching us, whether our own or the enemy's

[WMMSA 6 September 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

¹¹⁵ WMMSA 26 June 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

¹¹⁶ WMMSA 5 & 6 September 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁷ WMMSA 1 June 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

Chapter Four

Religious Belief

In his analysis of Christianity in Nigeria in the nineteenth century, Ajayi concludes that one of the major problems which faced the early missionaries was the deep and essential difference between Christianity and the traditional beliefs of the African people ¹. A number of contemporary Christian observers attempted to equate the African philosophy of the Supreme Being with that of the Christian God. But the multitude of minor deities or 'vodun' [in Gun], which encompassed all aspects of the African universe ranging from planets to plants, and acted as intermediaries between God and man, was too easily misinterpreted and misunderstood by the early missionaries, who saw such beliefs as merely idol-worship and ignorance ². However, according to Ajayi, the major problem facing the evangelists in their quest for conversion was that whilst they merely offered 'a catechism...for personal salvation', indigenous beliefs provided moral guidance but also a structure to all aspects of life and death ³. The multi-deity nature of these beliefs, although clearly offering scope for personal tastes, choice, profession and family etc, did not, however, detract from the all-encompassing nature of a spirituality which pervaded every aspect and level of society. Not surprisingly the Christian missionaries, adhering to simplistic rubrics, were confused by the complexity of African beliefs and mistakenly saw them as so many dead superstitions, clung to in ignorance, rather than an active philosophy for life.

Christianity as espoused by the missionaries was a spiritual framework on which to found a 'civilised' Africa, based on the model of Europe. Although ultimately realising that this would necessitate a change in the nature and structure of

¹ Ajayi, Christian Missions... p. 5.

² For an overall analysis of African religious belief and practice see J S Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion (London, Heinemann Educational, 1975).

³ Ajayi, Christian Missions... p. 5.

African societies themselves, the missionaries both underestimated the sheer scale of the task and clearly did not have the resources to facilitate it, resulting most dramatically, for example, in the disastrous Niger Expedition of 1841⁴. African beliefs clearly offered far more than a spiritual framework. They provided both answers and direction for life, encompassing all areas of existence for individuals and state alike. Understandably then, religious belief and practice was often closely linked with the political structure of the state. Indeed 'linked' is too tenuous a word, as religious and political aspects were far from being two separate entities. This duality of roles most obviously resulted in the emergence of groups or societies with a politico/religious function, such as Ogboni at Abeokuta or Ekpe in Calabar. It is therefore not possible to distinguish between spiritual and secular when examining the structure of such a society. To gain an understanding of the community it is necessary to examine the whole. Although the case of Badagry does not lend itself to the concept of wholeness, in a city so riven by economic and political separatism religious practice would appear to have held a vital place in the operation of the community.

Religious Belief and Practice at Badagry

Ajayi has drawn comparisons between Badagry and the more easterly state of Calabar on the Oil Rivers. Both states had their origins in the attractions of the slave trade, and outwardly both shared a potentially fragmented political structure, the eight wards of Badagry being in many ways comparable with the three towns of Calabar. However, in Calabar potential factionalism within the

⁴ The Niger Expedition of 1841 arose from the desire to civilise West Africa by opening the country up to cultivation and commerce. The ideas of Christian evangelists, anti-slave traders and merchants were combined in the publication of T F Buxton's The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy in 1840. Skillful lobbying of the British Government put the first steps of Buxton's plan into operation. A party of missionaries, scientists, commercial and government agents were to travel up river from the coast reporting on the possibilities for missionary and commercial operations in the area, whilst treaties were to be made with local rulers. Furthermore, a party from the Agricultural Society, founded by Buxton, were to acquire land and establish a model farm. However, forty five of the one hundred and fifty European members of the expedition died, the model farm was quickly abandoned and the few treaties made remained unratified [Ajayi, Christian Missions... pp. 12-13; J F Schon & S Crowther Journals of the Expedition of 1841, (London 1842).

town was largely overcome by the emergence of the Ekpe organisation, a supra-town secret society lead by the wealthy freemen of the community which exercised judicial, police, and legislative powers ⁵. Similar in style was the Yoruba Ogboni or Oboni society, most prominent in the powerful Yoruba state of Abeokuta. Ogboni was a cult based on the worship of the Yoruba earth goddess Onile, the secrets of which were kept by oath on pain of death. But the public face of Ogboni in areas such as Abeokuta was demonstrably political ⁶.

There is little indication of a similarly prominent politico/religious organisation such as Ekpe at Badagry. Nor was there - perhaps more surprisingly considering the Yoruba influences and then the proximity of Abeokuta - any development of a political role for Ogboni. Indeed there is little clear evidence for even the existence of Ogboni during the pre-colonial period. Revd Gollmer, after two years residence in Badagry, mentioned the existence of 'Aboni' at a place called Idoggo [Idogo - about nine miles north of Okeodan], but he clearly identified this as a Yoruba town, distinct from the Gun people of Badagry ⁷. It was not until the twentieth century and the rise of the Reformed Ogboni movement that there is

⁵ See Alagoa, 'Nineteenth Century Revolutions in the Eastern Delta States and Calabar', *IHSN*, V/4, (1971) pp. 565-574.

⁶ In Abeokuta, although after 1854 the Alake was the acknowledged figurehead, the trader William McCoskry noted in the early 1860s that:

We have hitherto attributed to him more influence and power than that to which he is entitled. Abeokuta being composed of the refugees from numerous independent towns and territories... it is only for purposes of general interest that the Alake can be looked upon as representing the whole community on all other occasions each town considers itself entitled to do as it would have done in its independent state

[PRO FO84/1141 2 December 1861 McCoskry, Lagos]. According to Biobaku it was members of the secret Ogboni cult who were in effect the real rulers of the town. Acting between the ruler and his subjects they prevented the former from becoming despotic and ensured the proper subordination of the latter [S O Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours*, (London OUP, 1957). In 1861 Consul Foote discussed the practical implications of the role of Ogboni when he described the negotiations of the African Aid Society with the Egba over possible grants of land to African American settlers. Foote noted that the allocation of land at Abeokuta was not the work of the Alake, indeed he stated that:

The Alake cannot legally alienate a foot of ground - it can only be done by the chiefs and elders of the spot chosen and they must submit to the Oboni or Council

[PRO FO84/1141 6/7 April 1861 Foote, Lagos].

⁷ *CMR* October 1847, p. 225, 24 December 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

firm evidence for the existence of the society within Badagry town ⁸.

However, nineteenth century Badagry was seen as a markedly religious place where a large number of cults were in operation. Avoseh stated in 1938 that the Gun gods of Badagry were 'identical with the Yoruba gods' and worshipped in the same way ⁹. Many of the deities had their parallels among both groups, but Avoseh's assertion is clearly an oversimplification. Yoruba deities and cults such as the worship of Shango, god of thunder, Sopona, god of small-pox, and the operation of the Egungun cult were certainly evident at Badagry. However, it is clear that these Yoruba imports were operating alongside their Gun equivalents brought from the west, for example Hevioso, Sakpata and Aisun respectively. Other religious practices co-existing in Badagry were the use of Ifa divination, worship of various water deities such as Hu, Legba the divine trickster and the cult of Dangbe, the royal python brought from Whydah. Other secret societies, such as Zangbeto from Porto-Novo and Oro from Yorubaland also operated within Badagry. With such a variety of practice in the town it is initially difficult to identify religious belief as a cohesive force. However, a close examination of the evidence would suggest that religious practice at Badagry was not only a reflection of its diverse structure but also in part transcended that diversity and provided a framework of shared beliefs. It would also appear from an examination of the evidence that a number of cults did, at various times, achieve a wide following. The belief in Ifa or Fa, a divine mediator between god and man, is one such example. Implicit in the practices of Ifa was the complex system of divination using palm nuts, which gave guidance in all aspects of life. Originally a Yoruba belief, by the early years of the eighteenth century Ifa had also been introduced into Dahomey ¹⁰. Understandably then, from both Yoruba and Gun influences, Ifa divination played a prominent role in the affairs of Badagry.

⁸ Duckworth, 'Badagry: Its place in the Pages of the History of Nigeria', p. 170.

⁹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 52.

¹⁰ Law, The Slave Coast... pp. 106-107.

Indeed there are several accounts of chiefs consulting the 'god of palm-nuts' to determine their course of action although it is important to note that this was not the only way by which it was possible to begin 'calculating an affair of importance' ¹¹.

Gollmer accounts for the popularity of Ifa as being a result of its powers and success¹². However, a still more revealing analysis of its attractions was given to Revd Hinderer who was told by two travellers that Ifa touched every aspect of their lives:

Part of it we eat, part of it we make a fire of, part of it we burn in our lamps, part of it again we build the roofs of our houses with, and the rest we bow down unto, saying 'Help us ! for thou are our helper'¹³

In this way the power of Ifa was bound up with the huge impact that the palm nut had on all aspects of life, and thus its use as a tool of divination was an extension of its vital economic role. The position of the palm nut made its use in spiritual matters understandable and relevant to the populace.

The emergence of such 'relevant' cults and beliefs to a position of prominence can also be traced to other practices at Badagry and is in fact useful in helping to construct a picture of the society's structure. The town's geographical position on the inland waterways of the lagoon system and on the Atlantic coast itself clearly had a considerable impact on the town, and indeed was the very reason for the state's foundation. Not surprisingly then at least some sections of the Badagry population were involved in the worship of water deities. Ellis noted in the latter part of the nineteenth century that the crocodile was sacred at both Badagry

¹¹ It is possible that consultation of Ifa may have been the more usual practice of the Yoruba inhabitants of Badagry. For example in 1846 Revd Gollmer noted in his journal that he had interrupted the chief of Apa consulting Ifa [CMR March 1847, p. 49, 7 June 1846, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry]. On Clapperton's visit twenty years earlier he had also witnessed the divination process, but on this occasion it was clearly a different practice involving two mushroom shaped objects, representations of houses, humans and animal figures along with iron rods and cowries [PRO CO2/15 1 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry].

¹² CMR March 1847, p. 49, 7 June 1846, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹³ CMI November 1851, p. 249, 12 March 1851, Hinderer's Journal, Abeokuta.

and Porto-Novo ¹⁴. Revd Gollmer in the mid 1840s also made reference to Oshun the goddess of the river ¹⁵. However, evidence is scarce and contrasts with the high profile taken by, for example, fishing festivals and sacrifices held on the lagoon at Lagos ¹⁶.

The crocodile [Tokpodun] was said to be the daughter of the sea deity Hu ¹⁷. There is evidence of the veneration of the sea god taking place at Badagry. On landing there in 1825 Richard Lander described the fetish priests standing in the bows of the landing canoes both preying to the water divinity and also giving directions to the crew ¹⁸. However, one should again note that it was not Badagrians who manned the canoes but men brought from the Gold Coast. Another, later, reference to the sea deity at Badagry was given by Revd Gollmer who described an offering of 'a few vegetables, fifteen cowries, not quite a halfpenny - one egg, one yam, a little dog, and a black pigeon' which were thrown into the sea by two men. He also noted that 'A short time ago Mr Marsh also delivered a pigeon, which had been offered in the same manner'.

Unfortunately he concludes by adding that 'I have inquired into the meaning of

¹⁴ It is also interesting to note that the divinity of the crocodile, brought from the old Whydah Kingdom of Savi and which forbade the killing of those reptiles, would appear to have been venerated only amongst certain sections of the Badagry population. During a power struggle between chiefs Jengen and Posu in the latter part of the eighteenth century, Avoseh notes that the former chief of Whydah descent attempted to catch the latter in a special trap laid to catch crocodiles [A B Ellis, The Ewe Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa, (London, 1890), pp. 84-85; Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 19].

¹⁵ Gollmer's reference to this goddess was all too brief for he merely noted that it was she that would not let some of his pupils come to school at that time. Whether he meant that the youngsters were required to perform ceremonies on these days or were needed for fishing he does not say [CMSA CA2/043/96 25 July 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

¹⁶ In Robert Smith's analysis of Lagos he has concluded that life 'centred round the yearly cycle of festivals...especially important in Lagos was the fishing festival dedicated to the goddess of the lagoon' [Smith, The Lagos Consulate..., p. 98]. The importance of the lagoon deity at Lagos is also alluded to by Robertson who noted that 'A vestal female is frequently impaled here, as a sacrifice to improve the navigation of the river and extend their trade'[Robertson, Notes on Africa, p. 293].

¹⁷ Hu was the national deity of the Hula people of Great Popo. But eastward migration spread the cult to Whydah and Allada and also subsequently to the Dahomean kingdom. Law has noted that the cult's importance rose as trade with Europe increased since it was through sacrifice to this deity that the sea could be calmed to make communications with the trading ships easier [Law, The Slave Coast..., pp. 110-111].

¹⁸ R Lander Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, pp. 42-43.

these sacrifices, but have received no satisfactory reply' ¹⁹. Gollmer's inability to provide further information about these offerings is frustrating. However, what is clear is the very private and relatively small-scale nature of the practice. This contrasts sharply with the offerings to Hu at Whydah where, as witnessed by Revd Bernasko, a man was 'thrown into the sea to join the two porters of the sea gate' on behalf of the King, or at Lagos where a human victim was buried alive at the sea shore annually and when the bar was particularly bad ²⁰. In comparison Badagrian offerings to the sea were surprisingly low key. This may be a reflection of Badagrian life, in this case Badagrian economic life. As a town largely of middlemen, the Badagry concern was not so much the processes of shipment, but rather, was dominated by the market place itself. This is not a wholly satisfactory explanation as this was also true of both Whydah and Lagos, however it would account for the important role of Legba at Badagry.

Legba [Elegbara or Esu to the Yoruba] was the divine trickster or devil of Gun belief. The god of personal misfortune he was also the god which 'presides over the market...and to the dumb idol is dedicated every cowry that accidentally drops from the counter' ²¹. The centre of Legba or Elegbara worship was at Iworo, only about 8 miles east of Badagry and under the jurisdiction of an independent chief²². It was at this place that Richard Lander stumbled across the numerous sacrifices made at the fetish tree in 1827 ²³. In the 1860s the missionary Samuel Pearse noted that sacrifices to this deity were sent annually from as far afield as Porto-Novo and Lagos and in former times from Yorubaland and Benin ²⁴. The

¹⁹ CMR October 1847, p. 228, 25 October 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²⁰ PRO FO84/1158 29 November 1860 Bernasko, Whydah in 6 February 1861 Mr Osborn (Secretary of the WMMS), London.

²¹ CMSA CA2/076/42 29 July 1861 Pearse's Journal, Badagry.

²² PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser, Lagos.

²³ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, pp. 266-269.

²⁴ On both visits to Badagry, Lander spoke of the horrors of the Badagry annual customs. But it is important to note that these were in no way comparable with the Dahomean customs. At Abomey the customs were largely an expression and demonstration of monarchical power. The customs at Iworo were not politically partisan. They were ultimately, an expression of the dominance of the market place [CMSA CA2/076/42 29 July 1861 Pearse's Journal, Badagry; R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition.... Vol 1, p. 46].

veneration in which the deity was held amongst the peoples along that part of the coast was extremely high. In 1879 a Colonial Office Report noted that no matter what wars or troubles occurred in that part of the country 'the roads were ever open to the messengers of any powerful chief or king who wishes to consult Elegbara...at Iworro'²⁵. At Badagry, worship of Legba also took place within the town itself year round. Whitford described the abundance of 'devil-houses' in the town and Richard Lander, although he did not name the deity, noted that to avert the wrath of a 'malevolent spirit', sacrifices of dogs and sheep were made along with human beings ²⁶.

Religious practice would then appear to have been shaped, at least in part, by the situation of the town. Popular diversity was similarly reflected. Shango, the Yoruba god of thunder was a clearly identifiable cult. Although its introduction cannot be dated, accounts from early missionary arrivals show that this cult was very active during the 1840s. Its followers both attracted criticism from the missionaries for the licentiousness of their behaviour 'too horrible and shocking to describe and also themselves criticised and even threatened the Christian arrivals ²⁷. But it is evident that Shango was followed only by Yoruba inhabitants of Badagry ²⁸. The parallel god amongst the Gun population, brought from the west, was Hevioso or So. Avoseh claims that this deity was introduced by Avutu, a daughter of Yede, the seventh Akran at Badagry who had gone to Gbeta [unidentified] and was married. On her return she brought with her the Hevioso Fetish, probably then towards the end of the eighteenth century ²⁹.

²⁵ PRO CO879/15 Information respecting the Settlement of Lagos 1879.

²⁶ Whitford, Trading Life, p. 107; R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 271.

²⁷ In 1847 the Methodist missionary Martin was threatened by Shango priests. The ward chiefs hurriedly apologised to their guest. However, it is important to note that this criticism by the Shango priests came at a time of increasing disillusionment with the missionaries and increasing instability at Badagry. The use of religious cults as vehicles for expressing political dissatisfaction requires further research [CMSA CA2/067/19 17 April 1849 Marsh's Journal, Badagry; WMMSA 17 May 1847 Martin, Badagry].

²⁸ CA2/067/19 17 April 1849 Marsh's Journal, Badagry.

²⁹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 22.

The existence of both Shango and Hevioso at Badagry was a reflection of the diverse immigrant groups settling there. Evidently this was the result of a process which continued throughout the course of the town's development. In 1853 Revd Gollmer, on a visit to Badagry after the permanent removal of the CMS mission to Lagos referred to Sopona 'A new sort of Orisha [Yoruba equivalent of 'Vodun'], the god of smallpox...paraded the streets today' ³⁰. His account of Sopona's introduction to Badagry is clearly confused. Gollmer himself calls it 'a most strange importation from Porto-Novo'. However, the small-pox deity of that area was known as Sakpata [also Sapatan] ³¹. It was in Yorubaland that the god was given the name Sopona. Gollmer may have been confusing his own knowledge of the Yoruba small-pox god with the more westerly Sakpata, although his seemingly mystified tone would throw doubt on this. What is also interesting are the possible factors which affected the introduction of the cult. An outbreak or threatened outbreak of small-pox in the town is possible, although tellingly not mentioned by Gollmer. But in June 1853 Badagry was in the throes of political and commercial upheaval after the expulsion of the traditional chiefs and the seizure of control by the Mewu, an exile from Porto-Novo. The introduction of this cult from Porto-Novo may have been an attempt by the new chief to reinforce his political position by introducing a religious aspect to his leadership, a way of attracting and maintaining a following ³². Without further evidence it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions. But the case of Sakpata/Sopona would seem to indicate that the fluctuation of cults at Badagry was the result of both immigration and economic or political needs.

³⁰ CMR June 1854, p. 127, 3 June 1853, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

³¹ Ellis, The Land of Fetish p. 84.

³² It is interesting to note that in Dahomey the cult of Sakpata was a force resisting the despotism of the monarchy [Law, The Slave Coast p. 111]. However, it is unlikely that this was the case at Badagry or that Sakpata was a Porto-Novo inspired resistance movement to the pretender the Mewu.

Politico/Religious societies

The emergence of cults at Badagry was then a result of immigration patterns, along with economic and political needs. Indeed, ultimately a number of cults were able to develop a role which not only reflected the diversity of Badagry but were in many ways able to offset the resulting lack of centralisation. But flexibility remained paramount, and as requirements and situations changed so did the political importance of particular cults. The veneration of heads or 'Aisun', a system of ancestor worship with its roots at Porto-Novo, was also practised at Badagry ³³. Interestingly however, this form of worship would appear to have reached a peak during the period of Adele's residence at Badagry from the early 1820s until 1835, when it played a key role in establishing him as paramount political authority at Badagry.

According to the Landers, upon his deposition at Lagos, Adele, 'with a spirit of filial piety', took with him the skull of his father 'in order that it might not be dishonoured in his absence' ³⁴. Also carrying with him his aged mother, Adele arrived at Badagry where he was welcomed by the people who were so edified by his behaviour that, according to local historian Losi, they appointed him as their paramount chief ³⁵. This explanation of Adele's rapid acceptance as effective monarch of Badagry is simplistic. However, it does provide certain clues as to the possible roots of his authority there. It would appear from a close reading of the Lander account that possibly Adele was able, with the use of his father's head, to establish his credentials as a monarch in exile. Furthermore, as Law has suggested, by transferring this symbol of the monarchy to Badagry, Adele's arrival signified an end to Badagry's period as tributary to Lagos ³⁶. Adele, however, used this symbol not only as a figurehead of the Lagos monarchy in exile, but as a standard for a new Badagrian monarchy. Indeed he was able to

³³ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 55.

³⁴ R & J Lander, *Journal of an Expedition...*, Vol 1, p. 37.

³⁵ J B Losi *History of Lagos* (Lagos, 1914), p. 20.

³⁶ Law 'The Career of Adele....' pp. 43-44.

establish very quickly a supernatural 'tradition' for his ancestor at Badagry. According to Lander's account, which may be exaggerated, the skull of Adele's father was credited with immense spiritual power. Kept in a private sanctuary where it was sprinkled with either animal or human blood, the skull became especially important during periods of crisis. In battle, Lander stated, it would act in the same way as the banner of Mohammed to the Turks and should it be lost then 'the pillars of their monarchy would crumble into dust so that they would no longer be a people' ³⁷. This prediction that the disappearance of Ologun Kutere's skull would signal the end to the Badagrian 'monarchy' was indeed justified. On Adele's return to Lagos, presumably with skull, Badagry once more returned to the fragmentary style of politics that it had previously known. Without the monarchical figure of Adele, the institution of royalty, symbolised by the skull, was meaningless in the Badagry case. As Avoseh suggests, the worship of ancestral heads continued at Badagry after the Adele period ³⁸. Furthermore, the Yoruba practice of ancestor worship, known as Egungun became extremely active in the town although there is no indication that it ever again achieved the political dominance that it had done.

However, there were other religious cults at Badagry, which did achieve a prominence that can actually be seen as bringing a sense of identity or perhaps more accurately identities to the town as a whole which were more suited to the factional nature of Badagry government. The origins of the Dangbe or Royal Python cult were from Whydah, where it was concerned with the regulation of rainfall in the interests of agriculture. But as the national deity of Whydah it was also a guarantor of military success and important in the installation of Kings ³⁹. The large scale removal of Whydahs to Badagry and their foundation of three

³⁷ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, p. 253.

³⁸ In 1887 two months after the death of long time Badagry resident and colonial official Thomas Tickel, his grave was 'violated' and his corpse beheaded. The colonial authorities of the time did not however regard this as a sign of respect or religious practice and a man was subsequently convicted and punished for the 'crime' [NNAI BADADIV 6/1 District Officer's Report 1887].

³⁹ Law, The Slave Coast... p. 112.

wards in the town during the eighteenth century resulted, not surprisingly, in the cults introduction there. Clapperton in 1826 noted that:

a great part of the inhabitants to this day are the descendants of the ancient Whidahs and still preserve their national mark and Institutions such as their worship of the snake ⁴⁰

Dangbe's role as the god of the Whydahs at Badagry had not changed by the 1840s. Annear called it the 'Town god' of Ahoviko Ward, whilst Idale, a village about four miles east of Badagry and the scene of an annual Dangbe festival, belonged to Chief Wawu ⁴¹. Dangbe was a Whydah-based cult, but it would appear that it ultimately came to play an important part in the yearly cycle for Badagry as a whole. Indeed during the middle part of the nineteenth century the snake was termed the 'national god' of Badagry ⁴². According to the missionary Samuel Pearse the Dangbe festival took place annually and 'every soul, free born and slave, young and old, is required to go to Idale' which was 'the seat' of the python. Sacrifices were made whilst 'the remaining part of the day was spent in fearful drinking and all kinds of vices' ⁴³. Revd Crowther also noted how every inhabitant at Badagry went to the festivities, even the Mewu, who seldom left his post at Mowo ⁴⁴. However, it was only the Wawu of Ahoviko who actually had a priest consecrated to this god and took part in the ritual aspects of the annual ceremonies. For while the populace of Badagry was present and received the blessing of Dangbe, an occasion for high spirits and amusement, it was the High Priest and Chief Wawu who ceremonially performed the sacrifice of a bullock away from the public gaze ⁴⁵.

The general celebrations of the whole town at this time would appear to be a similar phenomenon, although on a wider scale, to the general celebrations held

⁴⁰ PRO CO2/15 1 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

⁴¹ WMMSA 9 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry; CMR October 1846, p. 229, 12 July 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁴² CMSA CA2/082/11 23 April 1848 Smith's Journal, Badagry.

⁴³ CMSA CA2/076/42 5 October 1861 Pearse's Journal, Badagry.

⁴⁴ CMSA CA2/031/90 7 April 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry.

⁴⁵ CMR March 1847, pp. 50-53, 10 April 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

at the end of Ramadan as described by the Landers in 1830. All those celebrating alongside the Muslim community were not holders of that faith nor potential converts, yet such a festival offered the opportunity for Badagry as a whole to join together in general celebrations ⁴⁶. However, although occasions such as the Dangbe festival were a time for pure enjoyment and pleasure, there was certainly a more serious aspect underlying the proceedings. For it was one of the rare occasions when the population of Badagry acted as a group and this annual gathering was, if not consciously, an unconscious way of defining themselves as such. It is interesting to note that during the latter 1840s and early 1850s when Badagry was on the verge of collapse the annual festival became much neglected and indeed very few bothered to travel to the celebrations ⁴⁷.

The connection between spirituality and community is also present in perhaps the most important example of Badagrian political unity. One of the only other examples of Badagrians defining themselves as a group with common interests and objectives also took the form of a religious experience. This was the occasion when the chiefs of the town met either once a year or at times of crisis in the presence of their 'fetishes' to take oaths of allegiance. Law has pointed out that such oath taking was commonly made between rulers and their communities but also in areas of political fragmentation. He cites the example given by Norris, of the Mahi, north-east of Dahomey who, divided as they were into numerous small states, 'were able to unite for mutual defence...through the ceremony of drinking vodun' ⁴⁸. The use of a 'fetish' water to seal such an oath was clearly mirrored at the Badagry oath taking ceremony where under the auspices of a priest the ward chiefs swore their loyalty to one another and the town⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 50.

⁴⁷ In May 1847 Gollmer noted that the Dangbe festival was disrupted by rain and that many people did not bother to attend [CMSA CA2/043/103 3 May 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry]. But in April 1851 he noted that poor attendance was the result of 'disharmony' in the town [CMSA CA2/043/111 24 April 1851 Gollmer's Journal Badagry]. See chapter 9, p. 300.

⁴⁸ Law, The Slave Coast... pp. 114-115. Also see P Hazoume, Le Pacte du Sang au Dahomey, (Paris 1938).

⁴⁹ Revd Annear witnessed the ceremony and produced a detailed description of the event in his

According to Law such oaths were taken at Whydah either by Dangbe or by the earth. Similarly at Badagry it would appear that oaths were taken in the name of more than one deity. According to Annear's initial comments 'the gods of this

journal:

This morning a celebrated fetish custom took place in one of the venerated places set apart for this purpose just outside the mission yard. All the chiefs of the town were present. It is their usual practice to meet thus once a year or at any other time when danger threatens the place or any one of the chiefs is suspected to have entered into a conspiracy against the rest. Their object in coming together is to take an oath, in the presence of the Priest and their fetishes, that they have not and will not betray one another, or, if a charge has been brought against them, to maintain their innocence. The gods of this fetish are thunder and snakes, which they say, shall kill them if they swear falsely...

All the chiefs sat on one side of the gate, leading to the idol temple ...Their Head men, and people, sat in groups under the branches of the sacred trees.

In a few moments the priest came out of the temple, bringing with him three human skulls...[?] which the ground around the yard is strewn, and a pile of which stands on each side of the entrance. This venerated personage was a very old man, whose sable skin hung in rolls over his piercing bones; and whose hair, was white as snow ... This striking figure issuing from the temple as he did, laden with the relics of death, had a most unearthly appearance. Having brought the skulls out, he placed them on the ground in the form of an angle, upon these he soon placed a large bundle of gods of various forms, most of them being nothing more than a piece of common wood. Many of them were dyed black, and others were stained with human blood. A small earthen pot filled with water - the poisoned water of their god, was placed on the ground close behind the skulls and a short distance from it, a calabash containing more water, and three... [?] stones, (the first I have seen in Badagri) which were the gods of thunder. Hundreds of their fetishes were brought forth, and unpacked before the gaze of the devoted crowd. The priest now consecrated a piece of ground about 14ft square. This he did by marking it out on the sand first with one and then another, of the fetishes, a piece of stick forked at the end. This being done all the chiefs came forward, and knelt side by side on the front line of the hallowed spot, and the taking of the oaths commenced. The purport of their swearing was just the same in every case - that they had not done anything in secret to injure any other chief; and that they would all unite to defend the town, should danger threaten it, each one at the end of his oath declaring that if he spoke not the truth this fetish should kill him. Possu accused Wawu of having conspired with the white people here to keep away all Portuguese vessels, for whatever purpose they may come. Wawu had to take a special oath that he had not, at the same time licking the bloodstained god, and drinking the poisoned water, which he did blindfold. He afterwards knelt erect and delivered an [?] address to them all, showing them the injustice of the accusation.

[WMMSA 29 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagri].

fetish are thunder and snakes'. Although there is clear evidence to suggest that Shango, the Yoruba god of thunder was worshipped at Badagry there were no Yoruba chiefs of the town. Therefore it would seem more likely that the thunder deity referred to here was that of the Whydah area, Hevioso or So. The snake deity must surely have been Dangbe. However, it would appear that there were other deities also represented at the ceremony. As well as skulls being brought forward from the temple by the priest in charge of the proceedings, he also brought out pieces of wood, some dyed black and some bloodstained, and calabashes of water, some containing stones (identifiable as the sign of Hevioso). In fact Annear noted that 'hundreds of their fetishes were brought forth and unpacked before the gaze of the devoted crowd'. Although it is difficult to positively identify these 'fetishes, it would appear that more than merely thunder and snakes were represented. Annear's identification of only these two may have been the result of the missionary's familiarity with the beliefs of Ahoviko, the 'English' quarter of Badagry. The representation of at least two, and possibly a greater number of fetishes was due to the diversity of the Badagry political situation. The power of oaths might have been negated by the use of a single deity, not venerated by all the Badagry chiefs. Therefore the incorporation of several into the ceremony attempted to bind all the various elements together. The fact that Annear described the Wawu taking his oath whilst 'at the same time licking the bloodstained god, and drinking the poisoned water' may suggest that the chief was obliged to swear by more than one god.

The need for a supra-ward level of communication within Badagry was met at least to some extent then by the development of religious ritual. Therefore the involvement of religious beliefs in the definition of Badagry as a distinct community takes on a very important political role and religious cults were able to maintain some kind of cohesion between the diverse ruling elites. But this political role can also be identified at a lower level whereby the day to day

operation of the state both within and across ward lines was closely connected with the existence of a number of such cults. Whilst binding each other with religious ritual, the Badagry chiefs were able to use similar methods to control their followers.

Religious Belief and the Maintenance of Civil Order

The Policing Function

In a state with little or no central authority the maintenance of law and order was problematic. At Badagry there is evidence to suggest that such problems were, to some extent, overcome by the use of religious beliefs and practices. The most easily identifiable example of this is the operation of the Zangbeto cult which, according to Avoseh, played a vital role in the policing of the town and indeed was 'the only aspect by which the night was guarded' ⁵⁰. In their study of Porto-Novo, Akindele and Aguessy outline this role for Zangbeto in far more detail ⁵¹. According to their account, at the sounding of a trumpet, Zangbeto members would gather in their quarter at night, and at the appearance of Zangbeto himself, represented by a costumed cult member, the group would disperse to various parts of the quarter to guard against thieves and wrongdoers whilst the Zangbeto figure and several other members formed a mobile patrol. The summoning trumpet was also a signal for all other members of the quarter to retire to their homes and all those who failed to heed the trumpet and were unfortunate enough to meet the patrol, were challenged. Those without good reason for ignoring the curfew, who were suspected of wrongdoing, faced physical punishment.

⁵⁰ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, pp. 39-40.

⁵¹ A Akindele & C Aguessy, *Contribution a l'etude de l'histoire de l'ancien royaume de Porto-Novo*, Memoires de l'I.F.A.N. No 25 (Dakar 1953: Repr. Amsterdam 1968). Also see B F Houssou, 'Histoire et Civilisation: Le Zangbeto a Xogbonu (Porto-Novo), des origines a nos jours', Dissertation Universite Nationale de Benin (1985).

Although they do not lay emphasis on it in their description, it would appear from Akindele and Aguessy that the operation of the Zangbeto cult in Porto-Novo was carried out at 'quartier' or ward level. However, they do add that it was encouraged in its protective role by the monarchs of the city ⁵². This then can perhaps shed some light on the cult's operation at Badagry. Although there is no explicit pre-colonial evidence about the cult, and Avoseh goes no further than mentioning it as a protective device, it is interesting to note that, in a description of the lawlessness of Badagry, Revd Annear alluded to the dangers of nocturnal wandering. Indeed he noted that several attacks had been made on people passing through the streets after dark ⁵³. Annear equated this fear and danger with the prevalence of virulent kidnapping and slave dealing by all members of society. However, as well as being 'stolen', he also noted that individuals were in danger of being 'beaten', the punishment meted out to Zangbeto curfew breakers. It is possible that Annear was confusing random kidnapping with the policing role of Zangbeto. It could also be that in Badagry, the punishment for 'offenders' by Zangbeto could involve both beating and enslaving. This account would also seem to imply that if such punishments were operated by Zangbeto, as in Porto-Novo, the cult operated within ward confines. It would appear that one of the main functions of Zangbeto at Badagry was to keep persons of other wards out. Indeed so successful was this aspect that it was noted by Annear that 'people of one part of the town dare not venture into that of the other'. Although, according to the missionary, this fear prevented 'any degree of peace, or security' it is possible firstly that, during a period of inter-ward tension, which the 1840s undoubtedly were, individual ward security was of paramount importance. Furthermore, the operation of Zangbeto as a religious cult outside the direct remit of the chiefs themselves meant that any subsequent ill will may have been directed not against the ward but against the cult. It is notable in Annear's

⁵² Indeed Houssou notes that each quarter might have several groups of Zangbeto, dependent on its size [Houssou, '...Le Zangbeto a Xogbonu...', p. 21].

⁵³ WMMSA 27 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

account for example, that Chief Wawu emphasised that he would not be answerable for any beatings which took place in his ward. In this way then religious practice was both the focus of communal loyalty but also channelled dissatisfaction away from the ward chiefs themselves through the operation of unpopular and potentially antagonistic functions ⁵⁴.

The operation of such functions on a spiritual level undoubtedly gave them a sanctity and legitimacy which they would not have held had they merely been operated by the ward chiefs. Revd Gollmer, recounting the use of a priest from Porto-Novo tracing some thieves, suggested that religious practices were used 'to give authority to the charge, frighten the people and get the matter settled sooner' ⁵⁵. Other similar tools of this process were the Egungun and Oro cults, both of which would appear to have been active at Badagry during the pre-colonial period. Avoseh's reference to Egungun at Badagry is purely bound up with his account of ancestor worship ⁵⁶. He offers no indication as to when the Egungun cult was introduced into Badagry. However, like the worship of 'Aisun' or heads, the cult did have a link with Adele of Lagos. According to Losi, the introduction of the 'Egun' into Lagos, by some of Adele's children, was one of the reasons that he lost popularity amongst the elders of the town because it was 'very unbecoming to the dignity of a king' ⁵⁷. It is possible then or even likely

⁵⁴ During the 1930s the operation of Zangbeto and the ward chiefs had clearly become closely allied. For example the head of Asago ward was also said to be head of the night guard [NNAI BADADIV 6/1 District Officers Intelligence Report 1931]. However, it is impossible to assess without further evidence whether this was the case during the pre-colonial period as the operation of Zangbeto is an excellent example of a local institution 'developed' by the colonial authorities. In 1937 R J M Curwen, the local District Officer, noted that the night guard system had been 'adapted in 1893 by the District Commissioner Major J H Ewart, from a nocturnal secret society' [NNAI CSO 26/4 30030/S1 A Report on the Reorganisation of the Badagri District' R J M Curwen 1937]. According to Curwen this system meant that each quarter provided ten night guards and the quarters, in pairs, had a sixteen day spell of duty. A similarly cooperative system of ward collaboration had been described by the Badagry town council two years earlier [NNAI BADADIV 4/2 Badagry Council Minute Book 1929-1935 Meeting of 5 October 1935]. This system based on close inter-ward cooperation was evidently an adaptation of the original system.

⁵⁵ There is no indication as to whether this Porto-Novon was in any way connected with Zangbeto [CMSA CA2/043/103 29 May 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

⁵⁶ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 55.

⁵⁷ Losi, *History of Lagos*, p. 19.

that on his expulsion from Lagos, Adele's family brought the cult with them to Badagry. Peter Morton-Williams, in his examination of the Oyo roots of Egungun, accounts for the cult's unpopularity as being a result of its ability to undermine the authority of the monarchy, or at least serve as an alternative source of authority in certain areas of government ⁵⁸. However, in the Badagry context this alternative source of authority was a vital option. Morton-Williams explains that within the Yoruba context, the Egungun cult served a number of political functions. Firstly that of social control, through the celebration of particular festivals, which, he suggests, re-defined the normally purely lineage-bound social structures of Yoruba society. As well as overriding kin/lineage boundaries, much as Dangbe would appear to have done ward boundaries at Badagry, Egungun was also a way of projecting the 'discords and tensions inherent in compound life' onto the Egungun figure ⁵⁹. These tensions, requiring social control from the subjugation of women through fear to the more specific identification and punishment of criminals, most notably witches, were dissipated by the mysterious, masked Egungun figure ⁶⁰. The Oro cult acted in a similar way, notably in the process of detecting witches. Heralded, like the Egungun by the 'sound of witchcraft', in this case a 'bull roarer', the Oro figure was appointed by the gods to find out witches. At Badagry in the 1840s Revd Annear described how:

Often I have heard the doleful sound of the instrument which is sounded on his approach, while he has been going his round for this purpose. If he or the chiefs suspect any person of being a witch...he proceeds to his house, generally in the night, and having found him, commands him to grasp the magic and mysterious instrument,

⁵⁸ P Morton-Williams, 'The Egungun Society in South West Yoruba Kingdom', WAISER Conference Proceedings (1954), pp. 90-103. Also see P Morton-Williams, 'Yoruba Responses to the Fear of Death', *Africa*, 30 No 1, (1960), pp. 34-40.

⁵⁹ Morton-Williams, 'The Egungun Society...', p. 101.

⁶⁰ Morton-Williams describes for example how, during the Egungun festival a masked figure would tour the town

accompanied by the voice of many animals and birds, and the 'sound of witchcraft', made with a variety of voice disguisers. It is said also that he can cause the door to fly open and an evil-doer to be carried off by the spirits

[Morton-Williams, 'The Egungun Society...', p. 95.

which this much dreaded personage is alone allowed to possess. Should the accused person seize hold of it fearlessly, and manifest no timidity nor hesitancy, he is free and the Fetishman leaves him. But, on the contrary, should he shrink from the test, and manifest a fearful spirit, he is at once apprehended, and, being delivered up to the Fetish, is soon put to death - often in a mysterious way, that it may be said the 'god' killed him ⁶¹

Oro was therefore involved not only in detection but the judgment and punishment of criminals. But it would seem that there were another set of religious beliefs and practices which also controlled these functions.

The Judicial Function

In 1844 Revd Annear reported that, far from there being a judicial system at Badagry by which criminals were apprehended and tried, the operation of justice was in the hands of the aggrieved who sought, if they could, revenge for the crimes committed against them. He gave the example of a murderer who was spotted, apprehended and executed on the spot. Annear concluded that this practice was very common at Badagry and 'they kill him first, and sit in judgment over the case afterwards' ⁶². This method of personal revenge and retribution was also alluded to by Lander who noted that in cases of adultery the husband was at liberty to do as he pleased with his unfaithful partner and one could easily assume that such personal vengeance may indicate the absence of the 'state' ⁶³. However, it would appear that this was merely one method used to administer a complex system of justice in Badagry, which, once again, was very much bound up with the operation of religious cults.

Lander himself, upon his return to Badagry from the interior in 1827 was forced to undergo a trial by ordeal over the charge of spying levelled at him by the Portuguese inhabitants of the town ⁶⁴. The trial, involving the drinking of poisoned water, was carried out by 'fetish priests', but without further

⁶¹ WMMSA 31 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

⁶² WMMSA 25 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁶³ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 282.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, Vol 2, pp. 254-259.

information it is unclear to what society or cult they belonged. Much later information about this trial from Avoseh states that it took place before the fetish priest at Agbalata in Posuko, where Lander was taken under the guard of the Akran's soldiers ⁶⁵. Trial by ordeal was also clearly used on other occasions to decide guilt and other methods were employed. On Lander's return to Badagry in 1830, it was noted that the French Chief had been accused of attempting to poison Adele. The chief was tried using a large wooden cap which was placed on the head. If the cap shook, the wearer was guilty, if still he was innocent; according to the Lander account 'it is believed the native priests alone are in the secret' ⁶⁶.

Presumably as a result of his own experiences, Lander noted that it was the priests who were 'the sole judges of the people' ⁶⁷. But it is interesting to note in this case that although it was the priests who carried out the trial of the French Chief, it was Adele himself who pardoned the man, indicating an executive role on his part. According to other accounts both priests and chiefs seem to have played their role in the administration of justice. Avoseh not surprisingly has highlighted the role of the Akran, who he says, would sit in judgment on his throne surrounded by his chiefs ⁶⁸. But even Avoseh notes that, as it was an unwritten law, the statutes were recorded in the breasts of the priests ⁶⁹. I would suggest that the administration of justice involved a balance between religious and secular, priests and chiefs. Avoseh's concentration on the role of the Akran is misleading. Without further evidence it is only possible to surmise that criminal judgments were usually carried out at ward level as it would appear were sentences.

⁶⁵ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 34.

⁶⁶ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition..., Vol 1, p. 53.

⁶⁷ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 281.

⁶⁸ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 34.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 39.

Punishment

Once found guilty of a crime, punishment would appear to have become very much a matter for religious ceremony. According to Avoseh, execution was the punishment for robbing a European, seduction of another's wife, and adultery with a sister or first cousin ⁷⁰. However, Lander stated that although murder was punishable by death, a thief could be dealt with in a number of ways; execution was an option but so was imprisonment, slavery or castration ⁷¹.

According to Avoseh it was the Posu who beheaded those sentenced to death ⁷². However, the local historian also notes that it was at the shrine of Ogun, god of iron and war, that the punishment took place ⁷³. I would suggest that the use of Ogun may have been restricted to the Weme sections of Badagry, and other methods were employed by other sections of the town ⁷⁴. Indeed Avoseh himself admits that 'it was the Akran who was in the habit of providing abundant human sacrifices for Ogun' ⁷⁵. Avoseh is the only source who names Ogun. Annear, for example, stated only that the execution of a murderer at which the Wawu was present was to take place at the 'much dreaded place of skulls' ⁷⁶. He described it as a place in the midst of the market place immediately in front of a much venerated fetish house and surrounded by shrubs and a bamboo fence. This is perhaps the same place alluded to by Clapperton almost twenty years before ⁷⁷. According to Annear, the time of execution was announced by the

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 34.

⁷¹ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, p. 260.

⁷² Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 34.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 34.

⁷⁴ That executions were a ward matter is implied by Gollmer, who in 1846 described the public execution of a murderer. According to this account almost one thousand people had gathered for the spectacle but the only chiefs present were the Akran and the Posu along with some 'secondary Headmen and Fetish Priests' [CMSA CA2/043/98 25 March 1946 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

⁷⁵ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 32.

⁷⁶ WMMSA 10 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁷ Clapperton reported that:

Near the market is the place of execution which is a bamboo fence of about thirty feet... surrounding a large tree - there was the body of a criminal stretched up to the fence, his head being taken for fetish... He had been a caboceer of Porto-Novo who they had taken by surprise

[PRO CO2/15 1 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry].

beating of the 'Death Drum' around the town. The prisoner, in chains, was led to the place of execution and dosed with large amounts of rum until out of the fetish house came a huge man with a club who performed the execution ⁷⁸. This example is similar in method to an account given by Revd King at Abeokuta, of an execution by the god 'Polo' who he somewhat confusedly linked with the worship of Orishako, god of the field. However, this does tie in with Morton-Williams description of Orisha Oko being a god of fertility, and Johnson's references to the deity as a hunter who, in old age, became a soothsayer, punishing those accused of witchcraft ⁷⁹.

Witchcraft at Badagry

From the contemporary sources available it is clear that witchcraft accusations and executions were common at Badagry. In 1845 Revd Annear noted that 'witchcraft is universally believed by the natives of this place, hence it forms one of the principal doctrines of their fetish' ⁸⁰. Between April 1860 and February 1861, for example, there were two notable series of witchcraft executions. The first of these involved women, whilst the second involved between eight to twelve persons of both sexes who had been brought from outlying villages ⁸¹.

The dilemma which faced European observers was whether they could categorize such practices as criminal executions or human sacrifice. Consul Brand for example in the early 1860s was unsure whether, under the conditions of the 1852

⁷⁸ WMMSA 10 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁹ CMR February 1862, p. 50 Revd T. King, Abeokuta; P. Morton-Williams, 'An Outline of the Cosmology and Cult Organisation of the Oyo Yoruba', Africa, Vol 34 No 3 (1964), pp. 243-261; S Johnson the History of the Yorubas, (Lagos 1921), p. 37.

⁸⁰ WMMSA 31 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

⁸¹ Okaro K'Ojwang states that those accused of witchcraft were often sent to Porto-Novo for trial. However, there is no contemporary evidence to support this in the pre-colonial period and from the missionary accounts it is clear that both witchfinding, trials and executions took place in Badagry itself. There is one source, mentioned above, which describes the use of a priest from Porto-Novo to detect a thief at Badagry [CMR March 1861, pp. 69-70, 27 April 1860 Maser's Journal, Badagry; PRO FO84/1141 6 February 1861 Pearse, Badagry in 9 February 1861 Foote, Lagos; Okaro K'Ojwang 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri...', pp. 191-192; CMSA CA2/043/103 29 May 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry]. See also p. 125.

Anti Slave Trade Treaty which also forbade human sacrifice, he was able to prohibit the execution of those accused of witchcraft ⁸². The matter remained unresolved and presents an interesting example of European attempts to divide secular and religious practices in a way wholly inappropriate to the African model. Undoubtedly witchcraft accusations did have firm roots in religious belief. Bowen highlighted the fears that were held amongst the population of Badagry over the issue in his account of 1850 whereby he stated that it was a widespread notion that witches would suck the blood of certain people, particularly those inclined to be fat, whilst they slept. Bowen limited his description of the accused to the European and presumably American norms of 'an old hag' ⁸³. However, from more detailed accounts it is clear that as well as the old and infirm there were witches of all ages and even more importantly, both sexes ⁸⁴. The social standing of those accused is also interesting. According to the catechist Marsh it was frequently poor people who were sentenced to death for witchcraft ⁸⁵. This would suggest that it was those with a low social position who were perhaps more prone to the lifestyle associated with a witch and that they were merely more vulnerable to accusation and more expendable. However, from another source only three years later, it is clear that such accusations were not wholly dependent on status. In 1849 Revd Smith described how a woman had voluntarily confessed to witchcraft, and that she was in fact the sister of a chief ⁸⁶. Latham, in his examination of witchcraft accusations and executions in Old Calabar concludes that in the competitive Efik society, such methods were not only used as a form of social control amongst the general population, but as a

⁸² PRO FO84/1115 14 May 1860 Brand, Lagos. See Appendix A.

⁸³ Bowen, *Missionary Adventures...* p. 97.

⁸⁴ In 1845 Annear made clear that the term 'witch' was applied to 'both males and females'. Furthermore in 1861 Pearse, despite protests against the execution of a group accused of witchcraft, who were not identified only as women but merely persons, concluded that:

three of them who are worn out and emaciated by old age will not
escape the inhuman torture

and death, but the middle aged are to be sold into slavery

[WMMSA 31 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry; PRO FO84/1141 6 February 1861 Pearse, Badagry in 9 February 1861 Foote, Lagos].

⁸⁵ CMSA CA2/067/9 25 October 1846 Marsh's Journal, Badagry.

⁸⁶ CMSA CA2/082/14 8 March 1849 Smith's Journal, Badagry.

method by which to weaken the support of political opponents and thus gain positions of authority within the town's ward structure. One example he has given is that of Duke Ward in 1834 when at the death of Great Duke Ephraim, about fifty people were accused of witchcraft. The accusations were made by leaders of a particular faction who were thus able, in the face of a much weakened opposition, to take control of the vacant positions they coveted ⁸⁷. There is little evidence to suggest such manoeuvres at Badagry and that evidence which exists alludes to Badagry's disputes with neighbouring powers. In 1854 it was reported that the sacrifice of captives had been taking place at both Lagos and Badagry out of revenge for political quarrels between the two places ⁸⁸. There is however, little evidence pertaining to internal disputes. Although one must acknowledge that the most detailed accounts of chieftancy disputes and successions took place after Badagry had become part of the Lagos colony; witchcraft accusations were not mentioned or rumoured to have played any part at any stage. Latham states that in Old Calabar, it was the tensions between traditional status and newly created status, through commercial success which resulted in such covert action, whereas at Bonny and New Calabar traditional descent groups had been wholly replaced by the canoe house and this triumph of commerce and competition enabled these states to resolve power struggles through more open rivalry and violence. This therefore implies that Badagry had more in common with the fiercely competitive states of Bonny and New Calabar than with the transitory state of Old Calabar.

However, that witchcraft accusations and executions sometimes held a more limited political function within Badagry is possible. As noted earlier, cults such as Egungun were noted for their witchfinding abilities. The actual executions for witchcraft were also carried out by priests, although there are no actual

⁸⁷ J Latham, 'Witchcraft Accusations and Economic Tension in Calabar', *JAH*, Vol 13 No 2, (1972), pp. 249-260.

⁸⁸ PRO FO84/950 20 December 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

eyewitness accounts. Indeed the nearest to such a description was the CMS missionary Maser's meeting with the executioner armed with 'a club', prior to such an occasion ⁸⁹. Exactly which god or spirit was involved in the execution of witches is unclear. Egungun and Oro were sometimes the witchfinders, and possibly also the executioners. Revd Smith also mentioned 'Shesho or Seso' [possibly Esu] executing witches ⁹⁰. But although administered by cult followers there was evidently a more secular influence within the witchfinding process. Revd Annear noted that it was possible for either the witchfinder or the chiefs to suspect an individual of witchcraft, and in both cases the witchfinder would proceed to the home of the accused where he or she would undergo an ordeal to establish guilt ⁹¹. Maser, who attempted to intervene on one occasion to stop an execution was told by the chief priest of the executing cult that 'he had no power over the prisoner' and that the decision ultimately lay with the 'principal chiefs of the town, who had sent this person to him' ⁹². However, although it was often

⁸⁹ On attempting to prevent an execution for witchcraft Maser went to the place where those accused were held and, he continued:

Whilst we were in the place we saw a man walking about armed with a club, into which was fixed an iron blade in the shape of a haberd. I asked him something, but he seemed as if he was deaf, which is supposed to be done by a spirit, who is said to have taken possession of him. Perhaps in order to harden him against the effects of the cries of his deplorable victims. I never saw such a dreadful place in all the towns of the interior of this country, and I verily believe the Popo or Igun nation does surpass the Yoruba in cruelty

[CMR March 1861, pp. 69-70, 27 April 1860, Maser's Journal, Badagry].

⁹⁰ CMSA CA2/082/14 31 January 1849 Smith's Journal, Badagry.

⁹¹ Annear described vividly how:

If he or the chiefs suspect any person of being a witch...he proceeds to his house, generally in the night, and having found him, commands him to grasp the magic and mysterious instrument, which this much dreaded personage is alone allowed to possess. Should the accused person seize hold of it fearlessly, and manifest no timidity nor hesitancy, he is free and the Fetishman leaves him. But on the contrary, should he shrink from the test, and manifest a fearful spirit, he is at once apprehended, and, being delivered up to the Fetish, is soon put to death - often in a mysterious way that it may be said that the god killed him...The instrument used by the Fetish Priest is nothing more than a rude piece of wood, generally stained black, into this the spirit is supposed to enter, hence all who are guilty of any crime dread next to death itself being brought to the decisive test of touching it

[WMMSA 31 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, London].

⁹² CMR March 1861, pp. 69-70, 27 April 1860 Maser's Journal, Badagry.

a matter for the chiefs who was accused of witchcraft, Revd Gollmer pointed out that the fate of the individual was also in the hands of the priests. Trial by poison on such occasions was normal and as Gollmer noted, the amount of poison contained in the draught was the responsibility of the adjudicating priests⁹³. It would therefore appear that, at least in some contexts, accusations and executions for witchcraft could be used by ward chiefs as a method of social control. Religious practice was evidently an important and powerful political tool.

The Balance of Power

To many foreign observers Badagry was a place notorious for the strength of religious belief. There was a vital role for these beliefs and practices in the political functions of the community. Subsequently it would appear that religious piety was respected as a political attribute. The Mewu, in exile from Porto-Novo from 1835 at Mowo, just outside Badagry, came to be regarded as a worthy character whose advice was sought by the ward chiefs. This chief 'was celebrated for the number and power of his fetishes, and his devotion to the various gods of the country'⁹⁴. Similarly it was the respect given to Adele of Lagos, due to the piety shown to his dead father, which gave him political influence over the town in the 1820s. Revd De Graft interpreted the relationship between religious belief and political authority as being not one of support but rather as one of complete dominance. In 1843 he stated that the chiefs of Badagry were 'immensely burthened' with 'superstitious observances and ceremonies'. Indeed he concluded that:

In fact they bear nominally the name of chiefs for the Fetish priests are the right chiefs, for the whole of the chiefs movements are entirely regulated by the priests and what they wish the chiefs and people to do⁹⁵

⁹³ CMSA CA2/043/96 22 July 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁴ CMSA CA2/085/230 25 November 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁵ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

De Graft's assessment is clearly an exaggeration and oversimplification of the situation. But his general point about the chiefs acting within a framework of religious belief is accurate. As noted, the priests and cults of Badagry acted as both a unifying force and also in a more specific capacity. Their role, notably within the administration of justice, gave them a vital and sometimes independent position within the authority structure. In a number of ways, such as their supportive role, the cults were crucial to the continued functioning of the secular powers. They provided a focus which, if not completely separated from ward loyalties, was on a higher level. This position within the political structure could lead to potential conflict with the secular authorities. In May 1847 for example, the ward chiefs offered profuse apologies when the missionary Martin was verbally abused by the priests of Shango ⁹⁶. More serious were disturbances in the western part of the town during 1870 over land ownership. Although the conflict was quickly resolved between the chiefs and their people, the 'fetish priests' of the area objected to a settlement which reportedly 'deprived them of gains extorted hitherto by fear of the terrors of the Fetish' ⁹⁷. In this way then it would appear that a tenuous balance of authority existed between chiefs and priests, a balance which was evidently open to at least some level of conflict and contention, but which enabled Badagry, with its excessively fragmented structure, to maintain various governmental functions and ultimately operate as a state.

⁹⁶ See p. 115.

⁹⁷ PRO CO147/17 31 January 1870 Glover, Lagos.

Chapter Five

Destruction and Reconstruction 1784 - 1821

Badagry as an Atlantic Port c1736-1784 ¹

After its foundation in c.1736 Badagry flourished rapidly as an important commercial centre on the Slave Coast. This was largely the result, at least initially, of the entrepreneurial skills of Hendrick Hertogh. According to traditions recorded by Avoseh, on Hertogh's arrival in the area, trade at Apa flourished and he was followed to the area 'by several other European slave traders'². Accordingly, on moving his operations to Badagry, an area which belonged to the Kingdom of Apa, and had been used for farming purposes until that point, Hertogh's trade continued to flourish. Indeed Avoseh states that during that time the European traders preferred it to any other place on the coast³.

Hertogh's commercial activities centred round the Ijegba area of the town where he appointed an agent to look after his business whilst he was away. He also based his Gold Coast canoe crews in this area ⁴. However, the Awthanjigo section was also involved at least to some degree, as Hertogh stationed a Whydah prince, Jengen, opposite the beach of Gberefu. His role was 'to receive newcomers', presumably meaning those arriving by water from both the Atlantic and via the lagoon ⁵.

The immediate success of Hertogh in establishing Badagry as a commercial centre is partially explained by the apparent volume of slaves available and the

¹ Robin Law has recently completed work on the early history of Badagry. See Law, '...The Early History of Badagri'.

² Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 10.

³ Ibid, p. 10.

⁴ Ibid, p. 13.

⁵ Ibid, p. 13.

cooperation of the surrounding countries in supplying the port ⁶. It would appear that Badagry was able rapidly to forge an important trading link with the interior, most notably with the Yoruba based at Oyo. Law has noted that the turmoil in the west caused by Dahomey's expansionist policies disrupted the supplies from the interior to the coast, for example to Whydah, and that Hertogh's establishment first at Apa and then Badagry, provided an alternative, more secure outlet. Hertogh himself reported that he could get better slaves at Apa for five ounces [of gold, or rather goods to the value of five ounces of gold, ie about £ 20] than he had been able to at Jakin for six ounces [value about £ 24]. After establishing himself at Badagry, slaves could be bought there in 1738 at three and a half ounces [£ 14] for men and three ounces [£ 12] for women ⁷. Hertogh was not specific in naming his source of slaves, merely stating in 1732 that 'the Negroes of the Interior had now made contact with him' and then in 1733 that 'trade from far deep in the interior' was now coming to Apa ⁸. Law concludes that the source must surely have been Oyo, recorded during the 1760s and 70s as being the main supplier at Badagry and he states that; 'it is likely that this pattern of trade dated back to the 1730s' ⁹. Avoseh in his description of the early commercial organisation of the state also pinpoints this source as the major supplier of slaves for the Atlantic trade, stating that slaves were brought from 'Yoruba and other countries for sale here' ¹⁰. However, Avoseh also highlights a further commercial role for Badagry during this very early period as well as that of middlemen between the Yoruba traders of the interior and the European traders on the coast. In his list of Akrans, Avoseh notes that the Weme 'prince' who became the first Akran of Badagry known as Gbafoe, on arrival in the area, which in his account pre-dates that of Hertogh, became a slave trader 'and used

⁶ See chapter 2, p. 56.

⁷ Law, '....The Early History of Badagry', pp. 21-22.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 21-22.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 21-22.

¹⁰ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 13.

to take slaves to Dahomey for sale' ¹¹. It would seem unlikely that Avoseh is correct in establishing Gbafoe at Badagry prior to Hertogh's arrival. Even so, it does emphasise the area's role in the movement of slaves along the coast, in this case a westerly trade, along the lagoon towards Whydah. It would appear that this coastal trade may have been established very early on as reported, for example by Arthur Wendover in the seventeenth century ¹².

However, it was as a port trading directly with the Atlantic traders that Badagry achieved its initial prominence. As noted above, Avoseh claims that the arrival of the Dutchman attracted a number of other Europeans to the area. Yet there is no mention of these traders in the town during this early period. Indeed, when at Jakin (c.1727-1732) Hertogh had been criticized for failing to get along with the Portuguese traders there, and it is difficult to imagine him welcoming other foreigners to Badagry ¹³. After the murder of Hertogh in 1738 another Dutch agent, Bronssema, was recalled from the factory in the Lagos area (a stopping off point between Badagry and Benin) and installed to run the post. The Lagos factory was seemingly abandoned at this point and the Ughoton factory [Benin] was not reoccupied once it had been vacated. The Dutch West Indian Company was losing interest in the area and although Bronssema was reporting from Badagry in 1740, that post was probably abandoned shortly after ¹⁴.

However, the continuation of slave trading at Badagry after the death of Hertogh and the abandonment of the Dutch factory is attested by Avoseh, who states that Akran Yeku, who succeeded Hertogh's agent to become the second Akran, 'was a great slave trader and very wealthy'. It would certainly appear that he was selling slaves directly to Europeans as, according to Avoseh's recording of tradition, it

¹¹ Ibid, p. 16.

¹² 17 July 1682, Wendover, Apa in Law, Further Correspondence... p. 14.

¹³ 6 January 1731, Hertogh, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast... pp. 251-252.

¹⁴ Law, 'Trade and Politics....', p. 342.

was he who built a prison in the Ganho area of the town where 'He kept all prisoners and from here they were taken across the beach and exported' ¹⁵. Exactly which European powers were involved in that trade during this period is not specified. By the 1780s the powers clearly tapping Badagry's Atlantic commerce were the Portuguese and French. Lionel Abson, Director of Williams Fort the British factory at Whydah, noted the ships and traders of these powers operating out of Badagry ¹⁶. Whether it is safe then to conclude that after the demise of Dutch influence in the area, French and Portuguese traders almost immediately took over the reins during the middle years of the eighteenth century is speculative. However, it is interesting to note that during this period, the Jengen of Awhanjigo and the Akran of Ijegba, respectively known as the French and Portuguese chiefs, due to their virtually exclusive links with these trading partners, seem to have emerged as the prominent political figures within Badagry ¹⁷. There is very little evidence of British slave traders frequenting the port during this period. They were more likely to remain in more familiar areas such as the Gambia, Bonny, Angola and to a lesser extent Whydah. Indeed in 1776 Governor Mill at Cape Coast Castle complained that Badagry had been, up until recently, 'stopped up' to British ships, and that the reprehensible actions of a particular Captain Johnson there had 'now again entirely interdicted us the trade of that place' ¹⁸.

Events beyond the direct Badagry area had huge repercussions for its commercial success. It was the aggressively expansionist policies of Dahomey to the west which had led to the initial foundation of the town, and diverted trade from the interior further east. Trader Archibald Dalzel wrote that the King of Dahomey, Trudo, more usually known as Agaja, and his people 'were equally ignorant of the principles on which trade must be conducted' and their warlike demeanor

¹⁵ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 16.

¹⁶ PRO T70/1545 15 March 1783 Abson, Whydah.

¹⁷ See p. 147-148.

¹⁸ PRO T70/32 7 May 1776 Mill, Cape Coast.

was 'incompatible with the mild and steady spirit of commerce'¹⁹. He later added that the European Agents along the coast were so discontented with Dahomean rule that they wished for the re-establishment of the old Whydah regime despite their exorbitant import duties²⁰. Akinjogbin states that as a result of Dahomey's aggressiveness along the coast during the 1720s, Oyo attacked its wayward tributary and this resulted in the removal of the capital from Abomey to Allada in 1730. This move further disrupted the westerly trade routes, although the 1740s saw a period of restored relations between Dahomey and Oyo, and a consequent resurgence of trade from Whydah²¹. However, as a result of concessions in Dutch Law, in March 1756, whereby trade along the 'Mina' coast was opened to all, ports such as Badagry, Porto-Novo and Lagos were able to take advantage of a new freedom which saw Whydah still very much restricted²². As late as 1781 the Bahia traders were still complaining that, due to Dutch legalities, they could still only trade at certain free ports along the coast such as Badagry and Porto-Novo²³.

During the 1760s and 1770s the trade of Badagry and Porto-Novo received a boost when Oyo, notably under the guidance of Alafin Abiodun in the 1770s, began to expand its own trading role. Rather than selling slaves via Dahomey, Oyo began to seek a direct trade with the coast. As a contemporary French source noted; the Oyo 'hold the key to trade' for it was they who provided the majority of slaves to that part of the coast. Furthermore, they chose to trade at Badagry, Epe and Porto-Novo because 'at present they are permitted to come themselves to trade as far as the sea-side'²⁴. The ability of Oyo traders to come themselves to the coast and trade directly with Europeans held great attractions for them over their more westerly route which took them only as far as 'Beaume Clavier' [Abomey Calavi],

¹⁹ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, pp. 26-27.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 54.

²¹ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours*, p. 102.

²² Verger, *Trade Relations...*, pp. 183-188.

²³ Ibid, p. 26.

²⁴ De Chenevert & Bullet 1774 in Law, *Contemporary Source Material...*, p. 45.

described as 'a neutral place' about sixty miles from Whydah, where they had to sell to Dahomean merchants ²⁵.

The redirection of commerce coincided with a number of problems within Dahomey itself. Slave raiding failures, inefficiency at Whydah, and a series of problems and crises within the Dahomean monarchy severely weakened their trading position ²⁶. As a result of these problems the director of the French fort was able to state in 1777 that not only had there been little trade at Whydah the previous year and that Badagry and Porto Novo were full of ships, but that also the Dahomeans were 'in a state of weakness' and that 'they will be incapable of resistance' to an attack from their neighbours ²⁷. However, it is interesting to note that de Montaguere recognised the important role of this westerly movement of slaves along the coast in the economy of the area. He stated that despite Whydah's problems in procuring slaves directly from the interior there were a sufficient number at Porto-Novo and Badagry for a considerable quantity to be passed along to Whydah, although disputes with the peoples along the road west had disrupted this route. He added however, that after these difficulties had been resolved, 'the captives from Porto Nove and Badagris came in quite large quantities'²⁸.

In this way then the easterly Atlantic ports benefited from the situation of their larger interior neighbours during the middle years of the eighteenth century. But their increasing success and prominence ultimately resulted in tensions of their own as the coastal neighbours began competing for a larger share of trade. Badagry was never able to establish itself as the dominant port in the area due to its equally and often more successful neighbours. In 1737 Hertogh himself

²⁵ Ibid, p. 45.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 45.

²⁷ AN: C. 6/26 6 October 1777 Olliver de Montaguere, Director of the French Fort at Whydah in Law, Contemporary Source Material..., p. 50.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 50.

opened a second port at Ekpe, in order that he might trade with the exiled King of Jakin ²⁹. However, it was the rise of Porto-Novo, founded by the exiled Alladas which proved to be Badagry's major commercial rival during this period. A place called 'Ardres' emerged in about 1750 as a place of European trade and this is probably a reference to Porto-Novo. However, it was in 1758 that the name 'Porto-Novo' was itself first mentioned as being 'recently opened'. It was not until the mid 1760s that Lagos began a limited trade with Europe ³⁰.

Despite Avoseh's description of Badagry as 'the headquarters of the European slave traders' and the dominant coastal power as late as the chieftaincy of Akran Pojeagonwu, who was holder of the title until 1784, the competition between ports ultimately led to Badagry losing its premier position to Porto-Novo after 1765 ³¹. In 1780 the Director of the French Fort at Whydah was able to state that it was at Porto-Novo where 'all the trade is done' because the King of Oyo regarded the country as his own ³². However, the next couple of years brought problems for the 'all-powerful' Oyos from the north, which ultimately affected all its contacts on the coast. According to Lionel Abson the end of 1782 saw a devastating defeat of the Oyo military machine by the Bariba to the north east. Politically the episode was distracting to say the least, and commercially it proved damaging. As Abson noted 'these were the people by whose excursions used to give life and commerce to Porto Novo and Badagree' ³³. He went on to note that at Badagry there were eight ships waiting for supplies of slaves but not a single slave had been purchased for the two months since the defeat. It would appear however, that these drastic problems of supply were to some extent solved by the middle of the next year as Abson himself noted when he stated that there were seven or eight ships, both Portuguese and French waiting off Badagry for delivery

²⁹ Law, '...The Early History of Badagry', p. 22.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 22.

³¹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 17. Also see chapter 2, p. 56.

³² AN C. 6/26 30 December 1730 De Montaguere in Law, Contemporary Source Material..., p. 51.

³³ PRO T70/1545 16 February/September 1783, Abson, Whydah.

of up to six hundred slaves each ³⁴. It is also necessary to note however, that an earlier letter from Abson would seem to indicate that Whydah was not in a position to take too great an advantage of the problems of its more easterly neighbours. Possibly due to problems of supply itself, he complained to Miles that 'you could not have picked a time that could more embarrass me than the present for slaves' ³⁵.

Problems for the eastern ports were compounded during this period by the outbreak of hostilities between Porto-Novo and Badagry in 1781. Presumably as a result of commercial pressures and tensions, although Akinjogbin has offered a more political interpretation, the disruption caused by this war led the French Director at Whydah to observe that its continuation would once again restore the trade of Whydah to its 'ancient splendour' ³⁶. By 1783 then the commercial pressures along the coast had combined to seriously threaten Badagry. Having lost its prominent position on that part of the coast, its struggle to maintain a commercial role led ultimately to guerrilla-style hostilities with its most immediate rival Porto-Novo. However, in threatening the security of its neighbour Badagry ultimately threatened the commercial success of its former powerful patron Oyo, a formidable adversary. Further to the west, the militaristic power of Dahomey was only too keen to take any measures which would secure Whydah's prominence in the Atlantic slave trade.

An examination of Badagry as an Atlantic port during the eighteenth century is therefore full of paradoxes. As a result of its commercial success, the town attracted the jealousy of neighbouring powers. However, it was only as a result of these neighbours' greater successes that Badagry became expendable.

Furthermore, the flexibility and 'free-marketeering' on which the town's

³⁴ PRO T70/1545 15 August 1783 Abson, Whydah.

³⁵ PRO T70/1545 Undated 1782 Abson, Whydah.

³⁶ AN C6/26 24 November 1781 De Montaguere in Law, Contemporary Source Material... pp. 51-52.

successful economy, was based, ultimately led to internal competition so virulent that commercial concerns were put before the preservation of the state itself.

Badagry's Internal Divisions

Badagry's failure to maintain its immense initial successes did not only apply to the commercial sphere. Clearly it is problematic to separate features of the state such as its commercial and political life, as the one obviously has great repercussions for the other. However, to achieve a complete overall picture of the town's history during this period, it is necessary to analyse each factor separately, only then is it possible to build up not only a chronological account of the Badagry, but also a picture of the motivations and causes within that chronology.

The early part of Badagry's history was not only a period when the town achieved economic prominence. The foundation of such a diverse settlement, intent on both security and trade, necessitated its establishment in some form of political unit. However, as noted in the examination of Badagry's political system, 'unit' is not a word which best describes the political structure of that place. Indeed almost from the outset Badagry was riven by political dissent and intrigue which led to a factionalism so severe that when both its security and commerce, its very reasons for being, were threatened and then destroyed in 1784, the town's fragmented political system was not only unable to resist, but was itself in many ways to blame.

What emerges from an examination of Badagry's political history is the fact that there was virtually no development of new political institutions. The enforced establishment of diverse peoples on the site recognisable as the city of Badagry during the 1730s, did not lead to the emergence of a recognisable polity which one can term 'Badagrion'. Instead, as noted earlier, each group maintained its

own identity and at best a strained tolerance of its neighbour. As other immigrants arrived either as individuals or as groups, although often initially taken under the wing of a hosting group, the culture of Badagry would seem to have dictated that ultimately they struggled to assert their own claims in the town, both economic and political. Zinsu, Adele, Mewu, and Akitoye for example were all individuals who sought to carve their own very special niches in the town's structure. Likewise the groups of later immigrants such as the Yorubas and Sierra Leonians obviously formed distinct groups there. Badagry never acted as a melting pot, nor did its disparate pieces ever fit together, and these patterns, established during the early part of its history, remained intact.

At its foundation Badagry was a small community gathered very much under the control of one man, Hendrick Hertogh. Avoseh states that the Dutchman was more than a resident trader and that 'He was really their King though he wore no crown'³⁷. He suggests that Hertogh entered fully into the life of the town and, for example, showed the people how best to administer justice. How accurate was this picture of centralised harmony is difficult to verify and if it indeed existed it lasted only a couple of years until Hertogh's assassination in the first half of 1738. Contemporary accounts of that murder point to 'the son of a black caffacier called Prince' who was identified as being a 'fidase' ie 'of Whydah'³⁸. Tradition, as recorded by Avoseh, identifies this Whydah prince as Kotugbosu, eldest son of the Whydah Prince Heru, who, on fleeing Whydah, as noted earlier, had died at Seme [Porto-Novo beach]³⁹. But clearly a section of his followers had reached Badagry by 1738 along with his sons Kotogbosu and later Kuton, who established themselves in the area which came to be known as Ahoviko⁴⁰. According to Avoseh's account, Hertogh named Kuton, the younger brother, as head of the

³⁷ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 15.

³⁸ The murder of Hertogh by 'four fidase negroes' was reported by Bronssema on 31 July 1738. Further details reported by a French slaver, named one of the assassins as the 'son of a black caffacier' [Van Dantzig, *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast...* p. 337].

³⁹ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 27.

Ahoviko Whydahs, but this angered Kotugbosu who murdered the Dutchman as he returned home one night ⁴¹. The murder of Hertogh not only ended a period of almost monarchical rule, but also demonstrates the factional tensions which were in existence under the surface from the very outset.

Hertogh's assassination, according to Avoseh, resulted in civil war and the expulsion of Kotugbosu, Kuton and all their followers. Tradition states that both princes met untimely deaths shortly after, but their followers and families were able to take refuge elsewhere. Only later in the century were they able to return and re-establish themselves at Ahoviko ⁴². The war which resulted in the princes' expulsion was short-lived and contemporary sources imply that peace was quickly restored. According to Badagry's local historian, at the death of Hertogh, his Agent, the Weme 'prince' resident at Ijegba, 'was unanimously elected by the whole town to be king ⁴³. However, this interpretation of tradition would seem to be more concerned with legitimising the Akran of Ijegba's claim to authority over the town than an accurate analysis of events. From a contemporary account it would appear that the Akran was certainly a prominent figure within the town during this period but the source also makes reference to the Jengen who, according to Avoseh, came to Badagry from Whydah as servant to Hertogh and was made a chief after the Dutchman's death⁴⁴. It is possible that it was both the Jengen's and the Akran's position as servants of Hertogh which allowed them to dominate their respective population groups from Whydah and Weme (the Jengen's position being assured after the expulsion of the Ahoviko Whydahs). As a result then, these chiefs were able to assume a political prominence within the town as a whole. According to one contemporary source however, the caboceers at Badagry, after Hertogh's murder, 'having come

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 27.

⁴² Ibid, p. 27.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 15.

⁴⁴ 14 May 1748 Chevallier, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, p. 341; Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 25. See chapter 3, p. 84.

together, resolved to appoint one of the company servants here present as commander' ⁴⁵. Whether there were other Badagrian chiefs or caboceers involved in the decision making process is unclear. But it was evidently the Jengen and Akran who handed over Hertogh's possessions to his successor under the supervision of 'Captain Blank' a caboceer from Porto-Novo ⁴⁶ The company servant in question was Bronssema, who had previously been based at Lagos. It would seem that he only spent a couple of years at Badagry before the Dutch abandoned their factory leaving the town in the hands of the indigenous chiefs.

It would appear then that initially the Jengen and the Akran were certainly the most prominent indigenous political figures in the town. Avoseh gives the Akran a royal background, but this may merely be a ploy to legitimise his later position ⁴⁷. What would seem more likely is that it was their commercial success which led to political prominence. Avoseh states that after the death of his patron Hertogh, Akran Gbafoe 'carried on a big trade with the outside world' ⁴⁸. But although Avoseh outlines the early history of the Jengen rather too briefly, it is clear that his involvement in the testing of tobacco closely associated him with the commercial life of the town, and offered him great potential after the Dutchman's death ⁴⁹.

Avoseh attempts to establish the supremacy of the Akran in the Badagry political order during this period. He states that after the death of Hertogh, not only was the Chief of Ijegba recognised as monarch, but that the Jengen was his counsellor⁵⁰. This neat picture of the two influential elements in the town co-existing so harmoniously not only contradicts later manifestations of inter - ward

⁴⁵ 28 May 1738 Bronssema, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, p. 340.

⁴⁶ See p. 156.

⁴⁷ See chapter 3. p. 83.

⁴⁸ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 16.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 25.

relations, but also commercial commonsense. It was during this period that the Akran developed a relationship with the Portuguese traders on the coast and the Jengen allied himself with the French. These were the main European powers operating out of Badagry during the mid to late eighteenth century. If both chiefs were acting as agents to their respective partners they were then in competition with one another. Avoseh indirectly supports this picture and indeed presents a convincing case for initial Ijegba supremacy by indicating the immense commercial success that the Akran Gbafoe achieved. Possibly during this chieftaincy the Jengen could not compete. Gbafoe's successor, Akran Yeku of Yeku-Whe House was also a 'great slave trader and very wealthy'⁵¹. Yeku's commercial ambitions seem to have included the establishment of a prison, or slave barracoon at Ganho under the management of a refugee from Weme Whegbo⁵². However, it is interesting that during the mid to late years of the eighteenth century, there were no contemporary references to the Akran, and it would appear to have been the Jengen who assumed the prominent political position within the town. According to contemporary accounts, the Jengen or 'Guinguin', was the dominant figure and was said to govern Badagry during the mid eighteenth century. In a slightly later French account the Jengen is referred to as the King of Badagry⁵³. This prominence continued until 1781 when Akinjogbin names 'Gangan', a misreading of 'Guinguin', as the leader of the Badagry forces in initial hostilities against Porto-Novo. Akinjogbin mistakenly calls Gangan, the Akran of Badagry, whereas he is clearly describing the Jengen⁵⁴.

Accounting for the rise of the Jengen and the apparent political demise of the Akran is not simple. However, a clue may be found in a close examination of the internal politics of Ijegba. Despite the apparent commercial success of the second Akran, Yeku, it is interesting to note that, according to Avoseh, he was the only

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 16.

⁵² Ibid, p. 16.

⁵³ Law, *The Gun Communities...* p. 29.

⁵⁴ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours*, pp. 156 & 165.

Akran to emerge from the Yeku-Whe lineage [Whe = House], after which the house passed into extinction. This does perhaps imply that there may have been an internal crisis which damaged the fortunes of Ijegba as a whole. This theory may be supported by the fact that the only other Ijegba House to produce only one Akran and ultimately fall into extinction was Soba-Whe. This lineage during the 1790s produced the fifth Akran, Soba, who was eventually overthrown as a result of jealousy and internal squabbles⁵⁵. Whatever the condition of the Ijegba fortunes at the end of Yeku's chieftancy, the title of Akran then passed to Pojeagonwu. Even Avoseh has little to say of this figure except that he was 'a slave trader', but not specifically a successful one, and that by the early 1880s he was 'bedridden from illness'⁵⁶. This would however seem to be rather an exaggeration of this Akran's weakened state as Dalzel clearly names the 'Oclah' as one of the generals who fought under the command of 'Davi' [the Wawu] against Dahomey in 1784⁵⁷.

Potential problems within Ijegba and the passing of the title to a potentially much weaker figure may have allowed the Jengens of Awhanjigo to assume a political prominence within Badagry. However, according to at least one contemporary source, the period was still one of political turmoil. De Chenevert & Bullet stated in 1776 that supplies of slaves from Oyo were plentiful and that the Oyo traders were enjoying the advantages of coming to the coast themselves to trade directly with the Europeans, however they feared that 'this arrangement will continue, if the divisions of Badagri do not drive them away'⁵⁸. However, the political struggle within Badagry during this period was not between the Awhanjigo Whydahs and the Ijegba Weme elements of the town, but initially between the Jengen of Awhanjigo and the pretender Zinsu. According to Law and Akinjogbin, throughout the 1770s, Zinsu, a renegade from Porto-Novo, was

⁵⁵ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 16.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 17.

⁵⁷ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, p. 185.

⁵⁸ De Chenevert & Bullet 1776 in Law, *Contemporary Sources...*, p. 49.

attempting to usurp control within Badagry, presumably to take advantage of the town's huge commercial potential. Very little is recorded as to the conduct of his campaign. However, according to Akinjogbin, by 1776 he had been defeated and expelled, at which point he went to Porto-Novo and continued plotting unsuccessfully, this time with Dahomey, to re-open Jakin as a competitor to Badagry⁵⁹.

The Jengen at Badagry however, now faced a more serious crisis and was ultimately deposed in 1782 and deported to Brazil. Akinjogbin claims that the exile of the Jengen was as a direct result of his hostilities with Porto-Novo from 1781 onwards. The disruption of commerce which arose from this dispute, finally led to Alafin Abiodun ordering his capture and expulsion in an attempt to stabilize the situation on the coast⁶⁰. The sanction or indeed direction of Oyo may certainly have been present. However, Dalzel in actual fact implies that it was a far more internalised struggle, which may have combined with the objectives of Oyo to achieve the result. Indeed there is no indication of any force from Oyo or any other external source being sent to carry out the expulsion, and it would therefore seem likely that factions within Badagry were also working to rid the town of the Jengen. Dalzel concluded that during this period the town 'was divided by party, which ... occasioned the expulsion of Genguem their late Prince'⁶¹. Unfortunately the trader does not name the parties which divided the town, and therefore it is only possible to surmise. However, it is interesting to note that after the deportation of the Jengen, the same year saw the command of the Badagry troops being taken by 'Dovi' or 'Dave', again mistakenly called Akran by Akinjogbin, but more correctly the title given to the leader of the Ahoviko Whydahs, named as Sotu Agojo by Avoseh. The local historian states that it was only after the Dahomey War of 1784 that the Ahoviko Whydahs were

⁵⁹ Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours*, p. 165.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 165.

⁶¹ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, p. 182.

able to return to Badagry and settle ⁶². However, there is evidence that a 'Prince Davie' was in fact active in Badagry during the 1770s ⁶³. It is possible to surmise then that the re-introduction of a further Whydah element into the town during the 1770s gave rise to a new layer of internal strife, between Awhanjigo and Ahoviko Whydahs. Possibly with the short term support of Oyo, the Ahoviko Whydahs were able, in 1782, to secure the expulsion of their rival, the Jengen.

Foreign Relations

What emerges from an examination of Badagry's internal politics then is a picture of continual struggle throughout the period between competing factions within the town. However, such tensions were not merely the result of very localised conflicts but were greatly influenced by much wider external factors, most obviously the Atlantic slave trade. The desire for ever increasing trade not only stimulated intense competition within Badagry itself, it also clearly forced the town into a much wider sphere of commerce, involving both neighbouring coastal and interior states, who sought to either curb or control the town's commercial success.

The two most important powers in the area were the Oyo Yoruba to the north east and Dahomey to the north west. During the 1720s and 1730s the young and aggressively militaristic state of Dahomey attempted to force its way onto the international scene by carving out territory on the seashore, notably at Whydah in 1727. In 1730 the much older and still more powerful state of Oyo managed to secure an agreement confirming Dahomey's tributary status, in an attempt to curb its coastal incursions. However, the accord broke down and Oyo was compelled to enforce its will in a number of military operations of its own which in 1730 forced the removal of the Dahomean capital from Abomey to Allada. By 1748 Dahomey's status as tributary was confirmed and the two powers slipped

⁶² Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 27-28.

⁶³ PRO T70/32 7 May 1776, D Mill, Whydah.

into an uneasy alliance which remained in place until 1823 when Dahomey was finally able to throw off Oyo dominance ⁶⁴.

Tension between the two powers remained constant throughout the remainder of the century. Supposedly an alliance based on inequality, the demise of Oyo influence and the increasing, but still struggling power of Dahomey forced both into uncomfortable compromise. As Dalzel shrewdly pointed out, the combination of brawn and brain could be a formidable and dangerous combination ⁶⁵. The interior's relations with the coast were a reflection of this tense but surprisingly effective alliance. Outwardly there would appear to have been little common ground between the two. As noted before Dahomey was keen to concentrate trade at its newly acquired coastal port of Whydah by stifling commerce elsewhere. Its hostility towards its 'greatest enemies' the easterly ports, was obvious and occasionally resulted in military expeditions against them. Some sources have suggested that there was an attack on Badagry as early as the 1730s ⁶⁶. Law, however, disputes this claim but concludes that suggestions of such an attack may have arisen from the very real threat posed by Dahomey ⁶⁷. But, as Newbury points out, the desire to annihilate commercial competition did lead to the elimination of Jakin in 1732 and an attack on Ekpe in 1747 ⁶⁸. Furthermore, in 1763 Porto-Novo beach was attacked and European prisoners taken ⁶⁹. Oyo efforts to curb the excesses of Dahomey in this part of the coast would be understandable and its ability to do so rested largely on damage limitation rather

⁶⁴ R Law & A Asiwaju, 'From the Volta to the Niger c.1600-1800' in Ajayi & Crowder, History of West Africa, Vol 1, (3rd ed, London, 1985) p. 444.

⁶⁵ The trader noted that:

Although Adahoonaou possessed a great share of personal courage, he appears to have been remarkably deficient in every other endowment requisite for the government of a great kingdom. His bravery and enterprising spirit, served only to point him out as the fit engine for accomplishing the wishes of his more politic and formidable neighbour and master, the King of Eyeo.

[Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 206].

⁶⁶ Verger, Trade Relations... p. 147.

⁶⁷ Law, '....The Early History of Badagri', p. 26.

⁶⁸ Newbury, The Western Slave Coast... p. 27.

⁶⁹ PRO T70/1159 3 August 1763 Day Books Williams Fort, Whydah.

than outright opposition. Contrary to Dahomean aims, Oyo, subsequent to the opening of the more easterly ports, had found an affective commercial route which enabled it to by-pass the more restrictive Whydah trade altogether. Law has pointed out that there is no evidence to suggest that Oyo had any authority over that coastal area prior to the 1770s ⁷⁰. However, the attractions of its commercial possibilities ultimately focused its attentions and Verger cites evidence that at least by 1777, both Badagry and Porto-Novo were seen to be under the 'protection' of the Oyos ⁷¹. It would appear then that, despite the conflicting interests of Oyo and Dahomey on the seashore, the deterioration of relations between the coastal states themselves, ultimately offered the interior powers a common interest in the form of Badagry.

Badagry's coastal relations

Early attempts to retain any form of unity between the coastal states was quickly destroyed and rivalries, mainly over commerce arose rapidly after foundation ⁷². According to contemporary Dutch sources, as early as 1738 there were problems between Apa and Badagry when Hertogh himself became involved in a 'major war' ⁷³. This may have been the result of Hertogh's decision to open a rival factory at Ekpe to the west, which provoked his host the King of Apa ⁷⁴. Akinjogbin has also suggested that there were early conflicts between Badagry and Jakin ⁷⁵. However, his evidence for this is confused and it is difficult to accept a chronology which dates attacks on Jakin in 1736 and 1738 when the town had already been destroyed by attacks from Dahomey in 1732 and 1734.

However, during the early period of Badagry's history it was Porto-Novo which

⁷⁰ R Law, The Oyo Empire c.1600-c.1836 A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade (OUP 1977 Repr. Greg Revivals, 1991), p. 176.

⁷¹ Verger, Trade Relations... p. 183.

⁷² Law, The Gun Communities... p. 22.

⁷³ 14 October 1738 J. Meese, Epe & 26 December 1738 Des Bordes, Whydah in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast... pp. 340-341.

⁷⁴ Law, The Gun Communities... p. 22.

⁷⁵ Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours, p. 106.

emerged as its main commercial rival. Founded by Allada refugees in or around 1730 after that town's destruction in 1724, Porto-Novo was soon playing an important role within Badagry itself ⁷⁶. From contemporary Dutch sources, it would appear that after Hertogh's murder in 1738 the King of 'Ardrah' sent an official called 'Captain Blank', who has been identified as the Yevogan or White Men's Chief, to restore order there and install Bronssema, the Dutch agent, as successor ⁷⁷. Ultimately Badagry may have been able to throw off the influence from both Apa and Porto-Novo, possibly through military campaign, by the very end of the 1730s ⁷⁸.

As the coastal states struggled to assert themselves commercially during the latter half of the eighteenth century, so tensions between them heightened. According to Akinjogbin in 1776 an unsuccessful attack was launched on Badagry from Porto-Novo under the command of the pretender Zinsu and by 1781 Badagry and Porto-Novo had declared war ⁷⁹. However, it would appear from contemporary sources that the struggle between Zinsu and the Jengen was an internal conflict preceding the former's expulsion to Porto-Novo ⁸⁰. Akinjogbin suggests that subsequent incursions from Badagry were an attempt at revenge for Zinsu's assault, however, it was in fact commercial competition which ultimately lay behind the war and drew in other coastal ports such as Ekpe and Lagos. The Director of the French fort at Whydah stated that 'a quite considerable war of the peoples of Badagris...against the peoples of Portenauve' had erupted and 'interrupted it [the trade] absolutely' ⁸¹. The commercial interpretation is the more likely as a result of Oyo's concentration of trade at Porto-Novo from the mid 1770s onwards. The director of the French fort at Whydah commented that these hostilities were initially helpful to the trade of Whydah, but warned

⁷⁶ Law, The Gun Communities... p. 15.

⁷⁷ 28 May 1738 Bronssema, Badagry in Van Dantzig, The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, p. 340.

⁷⁸ Law, '...The Early History of Badagry', p. 25.

⁷⁹ Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours, p. 156.

⁸⁰ De Chenevert & Bullet 1776 cited in Law, Contemporary Sources... p. 49.

⁸¹ AN C6/26 24 November 1781 De Montaguere in Law, Contemporary Sources... p. 51.

ominously that this would not be allowed to continue by the Oyo 'who supports the people of Portenauve' ⁸².

Badagry then, in an attempt to assert itself commercially, brought down the disapproval of Oyo. The balance of power between the two coastal states was therefore severely weighted in Porto-Novo's favour from the very beginning. However, during the initial hostilities Badagry did manage to ally itself with Lagos and 'the whole region of Benin' to the east against Porto-Novo and Ekpe. But these alliances were by no means conclusive or secure. Benin, by this period only nominally overlord of Lagos, was merely in a position to offer moral support to the campaign, whilst ultimately the protagonists' allies proved fickle and shifted sides. Ekpe allied itself with Badagry and by 1784 Lagos supported Porto-Novo ⁸³.

Ekpe had evidently chosen to change allegiances at the wrong time. Porto-Novo, in order to protect its interests, allied itself with Dahomey. Dahomey, presumably with the tacit approval of Oyo and seizing the opportunity to serve its own interests, launched an attack against 'Ekpe, Gauza and Kittone' [Agonsa and Ketonou]. However, these attacks were inconclusive as a correspondent from Cape Coast Castle reported that 'peace is again restored there and ...they make their trade as usual' ⁸⁴. Furthermore, these assaults apparently failed to warn Badagry of the dangers of continuing its aggressive policy. In mid 1782 Abson from Whydah described a further attack by Badagry on Porto-Novo beach, presumably under the new leadership of 'Davi' ⁸⁵. The Dahomey/ Porto-Novo alliance went on the offensive, once more and Ekpe was attacked in December 1782. This time the town the town was destroyed and according to Abson, about

⁸² Ibid, p. 51.

⁸³ Law, '...The Early History of Badagri', p. 28.

⁸⁴ PRO T70/33 30 January 1782 J B Weuves, Cape Coast.

⁸⁵ PRO T70/1545 9 July 1782 Abson, Whydah.

two hundred slaves were taken ⁸⁶. The way was now cleared for an attack on the more important enemy, Badagry.

The Destruction of Badagry 1784

In August 1783 Lionel Abson at Whydah reported that 'The Dahoman Army is now before Badagrie assisted by the Porto Novo people and Sessu [Zinsu] so I imagine it will fall'⁸⁷. According to Dalzel the initial attack on Badagry was carried out by only a small number of Dahomean troops who went to Badagry beach where they seized a number of people belonging to 'Prince Davee...employed as porters or water rollers' and possibly also a French Officer ⁸⁸. However, the town itself was not attacked and only two months later Abson himself was reporting further excursions by the Badagrian's onto Porto-Novo beach ⁸⁹.

A second attack was planned. According to Abson, this took place at the end of November or the beginning of December 1783. On 4 December he reported that 'Badagree is destroyed by the Dahomeans 4 days ago and upwards of 1000 slaves taken' ⁹⁰. However, his report was premature and according to the Day Book from Whydah for 11 December, this attack had also proved unsuccessful and the Dahomean troops retired via Whydah ⁹¹. According to Dalzel's account, the Dahomean war chief, the Gau, had attempted a further expedition to the beach, but finding no plunder had tried an assault on the town, crossing the lagoon with the help of the Porto-Novans. But the Badagry people, having gained intelligence of the attack, laid an ambush in the rushes, attacked the approaching Dahomean army, and after a fierce fight in which there were casualties on both

⁸⁶ PRO T70/1545 14 December 1782 Abson, Whydah.

⁸⁷ PRO T70/1545 15 August 1783 Abson, Whydah.

⁸⁸ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomey*, p. 179; PRO T70/1545 20 November 1783 Abson, Whydah.

⁸⁹ PRO T70/1545 18 October 1783 Abson, Whydah.

⁹⁰ PRO T70/1545 4 December 1784 Abson, Whydah.

⁹¹ PRO T70/1162 11 December 1783 Day Book Williams Fort, Whydah.

sides, forced the Dahomey's into retreat ⁹². It was the Porto-Novans who had betrayed Dahomey and indeed Dalzel reported that as a result, Abson subsequently received a letter from 'Dovi's' son 'Onum' containing a warning to the Dahomean King of the treachery of Porto-Novo ⁹³.

Whatever, Onum's aim in warning Dahomey, he did not succeed in either destroying the Dahomey/Porto-Novo alliance or fending off another attack. By mid 1784 a formidable force had been gathered to launch a third assault on Badagry. Akinjogbin states that as well as the forces of Dahomey and Porto-Novo, soldiers from Mahi and Ketu also joined the alliance ⁹⁴. By this time Lagos too had switched allegiances. Akinjogbin states that the port merely agreed to remain neutral, however, according to Dalzel, under the leadership of Ologun Kutere war canoes were sent to aid the aggressors. Law has also emphasised the role of Oyo within the invading army. Citing Dalzel's account, he concludes that Oyo messengers marched with the army and were ultimately 'in effective command' of the huge combined forces and that 'nothing of importance was under taken without their concurrence'⁹⁵.

Supplied by the pretender Zinsu, the combined forces marched on Badagry two months after the end of the Dahomean Annual Customs and effectively besieged the town in the late summer of 1784. Along their course they 'laid waste to the whole country' and took many prisoners. On arrival in the Badagry area the force, so vast that it required four hours to walk from one extremity of the camp to the other, rested for three days. Badagry was effectively cut off. Lagos sent war canoes as far as three miles east of the town and blocked the lagoon, capturing and enslaving any Badagrians who ventured that way ⁹⁶. Virtually surrounded

⁹² Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 180.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 182. Also see chapter 3, p. 98. for a further details about 'Onum'.

⁹⁴ Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours, p. 166.

⁹⁵ Law, The Oyo Empire... pp. 176-178; Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 183.

⁹⁶ Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 183.

by both land and water, the Badagrians attempted to counter attack. According to Dalzel, the encamped enemy, became slack in discipline and furthermore, the Gau had ventured down river to perform some religious rites. Taking their opportunity while they could, the Badagrian forces attacked in three divisions led by 'Davee' of Ahoviko and assisted by his generals 'Possu' [the Posu of Posuko] and 'Oclah' [the Akran of Ijegba]. As a combined military force, the fragmented population of Badagry was surprisingly effective. But although the attack went initially in Badagry's favour, the Gau's deputy, Hwenu, rallied the troops and turned the tables. With the return of the war chief, the Badagrians were routed and the Dahomean army was 'quickly in possession of Davees head' ⁹⁷. The defeat was resounding. Although many Badagry women, children and men, who had been left to guard the town itself, were able to escape eastwards and were harboured by Lagos, the Badagry army was annihilated and 'six thousand heads were sold to the King of Dahomey by his soldiers' ⁹⁸. All prisoners captured were to be sent, by agreement, to Oyo. But tensions arose over other spoils and Alafin Abiodun sent a force south to intercept the Dahomean army. On learning of this, the Dahomean King, Kpengla, ordered his generals to dismiss their Oyo guides and return home a different way. Law concludes, however, that the incident did not cause a lasting breach between Oyo and Dahomey and indeed the Alafin reduced Dahomey's tribute by half in gratitude for their assistance in the campaign ⁹⁹.

Reconstruction 1784-1821

Badagry had suffered a resounding defeat. According to Dalzel's dramatic account, the skulls of the slaughtered were taken back to Dahomey where they were used to decorate the walls of the palace. On finding that they did not have enough to complete their design, the King declined to space them further apart

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 185.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 185.

⁹⁹ Law, The Oyo Empire... pp. 176-178.

and accordingly executed a further one hundred and twenty seven Badagrian prisoners to complete his 'hellish purpose' ¹⁰⁰. But as noted, the annihilation of Badagry was a military defeat. Of those not involved in the campaign, only about two hundred were captured whilst the rest were able to escape down the lagoon to Lagos. Contemporary evidence suggests that the invading army did not remain in the Badagry area for long, but returned home within the month, eager to show off their spoils and receive their rewards ¹⁰¹. The area was left under the control of the Dahomey's ally, Zinsu, who had provisioned the besieging forces. It was under his influence that Badagry began the process of rebuilding.

According to Badagry tradition, as recorded by Avoseh, Zinsu was a Prince of Ijegba Ward, a nephew of the first Akran Gbafoe, who had saved Badagry from destruction by negotiating successfully with his friend, King Ologun Kutere of Lagos, to break up the alliance of powers threatening the town. Having successfully ensured an end to the siege, Zinsu was sent home from Lagos with three canoes loaded with provisions for the starving Badagrians. On his triumphant arrival in the town, the bed-ridden Akran Pojeagonwu expired and Zinsu was proclaimed 'King Akran' and took the name of Jiwa ¹⁰². This interpretation would however, appear to be largely an attempt to legitimise Zinsu's claims to the title of Akran and also the claims of the Akran to an accepted supremacy within the town. Zinsu's early origins are difficult to establish. Dalzel stated that he was not in fact of Badagry origin at all, but came from Porto Novo ¹⁰³. But although the events surrounding his initial arrival at Badagry are unclear, by the second half of the 1770s he had clearly forged an extremely successful political and economic career within that town. In 1776 a man named 'Sessou', clearly identifiable with Zinsu, was being described as 'war

¹⁰⁰ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, p. 190-192.

¹⁰¹ PRO T70/1162 3 January 1785 Day Book Williams Fort.

¹⁰² Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁰³ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, p. 197.

Captain and first merchant in Badagry' ¹⁰⁴. The origins of his military strength are equally unclear. Whether he relied on military support from Porto-Novo or had gathered supporters within Badagry is unrecorded, but it is evident that by the 1770s he was able to instigate a military campaign in an attempt to take complete control of the town. His initial attempts were unsuccessful, as noted earlier, and he had been expelled from Badagry by the Jengen's forces by the end of 1776. After several years of unsuccessful plotting from the safety of Porto-Novo, the war of 1784 was Zinsu's opportunity once again to make his mark. Having played a vital role in provisioning the besieging rather than besieged forces, he was able to take possession of the town, after the withdrawal and presumably with the consent of the invading army.

Zinsu's ability to take effective control of Badagry, notably by assuming the title of Akran, is questionable. There is evidence for example that, far from occupying the position of Akran at Ijegba, he based himself instead at 'Geumeuil' [unidentified], a place on the beach one and a half miles away from Badagry itself¹⁰⁵. Akinjogbin also alludes to a shift away from Badagry proper when he states that on taking over the remnants of the town, Zinsu initially established 'another Badagri' near to the coast until 1787 when he built two new ports, one at Badagry and one at 'Cap Blanc' [unidentified] ¹⁰⁶. Zinsu's success as an entrepreneur has been noted by Avoseh, who claims that as 'Akran' he was 'the greatest slave trader' and 'exceedingly wealthy' ¹⁰⁷. His conclusion however, must be seen in the context that Badagry had been effectively destroyed in 1784 and this must have adversely affected the town's trade. But there is evidence to suggest that commerce did begin a rapid recovery after the devastation of 1784, and British trade ships were setting out for that place in 1785 ¹⁰⁸. By 1788, Badagry

¹⁰⁴ 1 November 1776 Dewarel, Director of the French Fort at Whydah cited in Verger, Trade Relations... p. 184.

¹⁰⁵ Law, '...The Early History of Badagry', p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours, pp. 166-167.

¹⁰⁷ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 18.

¹⁰⁸ PRO T70/1552 30 August 1785 Departures and Arrivals at Cape Coast.

was again regarded, along with Porto-Novo, as the trading partner of Oyo ¹⁰⁹.

Badagry's ability to recover economically during this period may be explained by the development of a conflict between Porto-Novo and Dahomey. Shortly after a successful combined attack on Weme in 1786, the alliance broke up over Porto-Novo's increasing commercial success. Relations between the two powers became increasingly strained until 1787 when a Dahomean military campaign was launched against the coastal state. Akinjogbin has used this example as an illustration of the increasing influence of Dahomey and the waning power of Oyo ¹¹⁰. However, once again it was Oyo that stepped in to suppress Dahomey's aggression, threatening military action itself should the campaign continue, a threat which, according to Dalzel, caused panic in Dahomey ¹¹¹. But even the threat of insecurity at Porto-Novo was enough to make European traders look elsewhere and the Badagrian commercial community was not slow to take up the opportunity ¹¹².

Further research may reveal more clearly the nature of Zinsu's supremacy at Badagry. However, it would appear that ultimately he failed to reconstruct the town securely, on any site, despite increasing commercial success. Indeed he faced, perhaps due to this economic recovery, challenges from both without and within which he could not withstand. A familiar pattern had been re-established.

As a result of problems on the western part of the coast, the continued search for commercial openings led to a rapid rise in the importance of Lagos during the latter part of the eighteenth century ¹¹³. Alongside the tensions between Porto-

¹⁰⁹ AN C6/26 24 January 1788 Gourg, Director of the French Fort at Whydah in Law, Contemporary Sources... p. 59.

¹¹⁰ Akinjogbin, Dahomey and Its Neighbours, p. 167.

¹¹¹ Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 196.

¹¹² Law, '...The Early History of Badagry', p. 31.

¹¹³ According to Law, Lagos only became prominent at the end of the eighteenth century under Ologun Kutere who succeeded to the throne in about 1780. Law suggests that the rapid rise in the Lagos population during this period can be largely accounted for by increases in the number of slaves

Novo and Dahomey, the western ports faced further disruption in their long-standing trading patterns caused by the outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1793, and the temporary abolition of the French slave trade between 1794 and 1802¹¹⁴. As the alliance between Porto-Novo and Dahomey crumbled into antagonism, Badagry, under the guidance of Zinsu, aligned itself with Porto-Novo, at one point, planning, but not ultimately carrying out a joint attack on Whydah, apparently with the support of Benin and Lagos¹¹⁵. However, support from Lagos was short-lived and it switched sides, as Law concludes 'distracting Zinsu's attention towards the east'¹¹⁶.

The local historian of Lagos; Losi, states that the rise of Lagos led to increasingly close links between that state and its neighbour Badagry¹¹⁷. These relations would seem initially to have been largely diplomatic and involved the taking of wives from Badagry and visits from the Lagos King. These links became increasingly close until Losi states that Badagry became both a place of refuge for Lagos Kings and that some 'Kings of Badagry were crowned by the Kings of Lagos'¹¹⁸. Although miscalculating the dates of the period (Losi dates the rise of Lagos as occurring in the earliest years of the eighteenth century), he does provide a valuable summary of the complex relationship between the two communities. His reference to the former as a place of refuge for the Kings of Lagos, alludes to the episode when Prince Akinsemoyin stayed at Badagry during

from the Mahi and Hausa countries in the interior [Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 37].

¹¹⁴ According to Adams:

Lagos only rose in importance as a place of trade when the European war and revolution in France prevented the slave-ships belonging to France carrying on their usual trade at Ardrah; and the latter place derived its consequence from the King of Dahomey monopolizing the trade in slaves in his own dominions; which proving extremely injurious to the interests of both the white and black traders, drove them to the expedient of seeking another market.

[Adams, Remarks... pp. 218-222].

¹¹⁵ Law, '...The Early History of Badagri', pp. 32-33.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 32..

¹¹⁷ Losi, History of Lagos, pp. 13-14.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 13-14.

the reign of his predecessor, prior to the 1760s ¹¹⁹. Badagry's local historian also records the event and states that it established a 'friendly relationship' between the two powers ¹²⁰. Losi's reference to the 'Kings of Badagry' being crowned at Lagos is undoubtedly an indication of the town's tributary status. Indeed although Avoseh maintains that the relationship between the two powers was based on equality and good will, it becomes apparent from an examination of further accounts that as Lagos' commercial and political strength grew in the latter part of the eighteenth century, so ultimately it came to intervene in the affairs of Badagry as an increasingly dominant partner and benefactor, ultimately itself forcing Badagry into tributary status. The path towards increasing dominance was aided and abetted by internal dissent in Badagry during the immediate post-destruction period of the 1780s.

Within Badagry, a bitter power struggle was once again emerging. According to contemporary sources, shortly after Zinsu's establishment in the area, a claimant to the position of Jengen, said to be the son of the previous title holder, was able to return from exile in Brazil. His arrival on the coast in 1788 resulted in a power struggle which threatened the security of the whole area. The Jengen requested the help of both Porto-Novo and Lagos to 'restore himself to the throne of his ancestors'¹²¹. If forthcoming this threatened to alienate Dahomey, which had now renounced its allegiances with both Porto-Novo and Lagos and was growing increasingly antagonistic towards the easterly ports, having attacked Porto-Novo itself in 1787 ¹²².

Whether the newly returned Jengen was successful in his applications to the coastal powers is not mentioned, however another French source states that in 1788 a military assault from Lagos was launched against Zinsu's base at

¹¹⁹ Law, 'Trade and Politics...' p. 344.

¹²⁰ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, pp. 32-33.

¹²¹ 31 August 1786 Gourg, Whydah, in Verger, Trade Relations... p. 188.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 188. See also p. 161.

Guemeuil. Law concludes that this attack may have resulted in the deposition of Zinsu and the establishment of a 'friendly regime in Badagri' since from that point Zinsu disappears from the Badagry scene and Lagos subsequently played an extensive role in Badagrian affairs ¹²³.

The internal political scene of Badagry during the subsequent period is confused. This arises largely from the fact that accounts of the period are limited, and Avoseh is the major resource. It is also a reflection of the confused political character of the period itself. The presumed deposition of Zinsu did not stabilise the internal situation, indeed it would appear potentially to have destabilised it. Unfortunately, due to Avoseh's concentration on Ijegba-based politics, there is no evidence to suggest the role of the recently restored Jengen within the town. However, the local historian does allude to upheaval within the Ijegba Ward which suggests that the reconstruction of the town had done nothing to iron out internal rivalries or tensions. The successor to Zinsu (who is counted as an Akran of Ijegba by Avoseh) was Soba, a poor man who was jealous of the commercial success of other houses within the town. Avoseh implies that Soba's jealousy was directed at others within the Ijegba Section itself. However, his identification of Zinsu's House, which he states was Jigbeko, as well as Pojeagonwu, may be another symptom of Avoseh's wish to legitimise Zinsu as an Akran within the traditional ward structure rather than an accurate reflection of events. As noted above, contemporary evidence would seem to suggest that Zinsu, even at the height of his power was established on the periphery of the town. It is possible and even likely that in the post-Zinsu period, the remnants of his following were accepted into Badagry proper, and clearly elements did forge extremely successful commercial careers ¹²⁴. However, to suggest that they were able to become so quickly and so closely associated with the Jigbeko House is impossible to verify, although it may explain Zinsu's subsequent election in

¹²³ Law, *The Gun Communities...*, p. 25.

¹²⁴ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 18-19.

tradition to the position of Akran.

Whether jealous of other elements solely within Ijegba Ward itself, or a combination of Ijegba and newly arrived 'Geumeuil' elements, Avoseh emphasises the weakness of the fifth Akran. He goes as far as to say that in an attempt to curb his competitors success, the embittered Soba plotted with Dahomey and planned an attack by which 'he should be able to avail himself of the wealth of these two houses and the Dahomeans were welcome to anything they could get' ¹²⁵. It is impossible to ascertain the exact role of this Akran in the subsequent Dahomean campaign against Badagry in 1790. However, Badagry tradition does suggest a decisive role for the Posu in the 'defeat' of the Dahomean army ¹²⁶. At this point, the Akran, his treachery discovered, made a mysterious exit by turning himself into an anthill ¹²⁷. Avoseh's account, although incredible in places, does perhaps suggest that, in the face of Ijegba difficulties, it was the Posu who took the more dominant role amongst the Weme sections of the town. As already noted, the first contemporary mention of the Posu occurs in Dalzel's account of the 1784 siege, when that chief, presumably the first Posu Athigbiri, was wounded ¹²⁸. His son Wrawru succeeded to the title. It was this Posu, according to Avoseh, who successfully defended Badagry against the Dahomean army and as a result of the disappearance of the Akran, usurped the title and took over the palace at Ijegba ¹²⁹. This account of events is however, somewhat distorted, notably in the description of the Posu's defeat of Dahomey. According to contemporary sources, Dahomey was eventually pacified by the intervention of Lagos rather than any military success by the Posu. Furthermore, it is difficult to assess the accuracy of the coup d'etat recounted by Avoseh. Stating that Posu Wrawru took the title of Akran would seem to lend itself once again to

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp. 18-19.

¹²⁶ According to Avoseh, the attack of 1790 was defeated by Posu Wrawru who met the invading army at Apaku field [unidentified] [Ibid, p. 19].

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 19-20.

¹²⁸ Dalzel, The History of Dahomy, p. 185.

¹²⁹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, pp. 19-20.

an Ijegba based version of events, the implication being that the Akran's title was supreme and therefore desirable. However, it may be that in this case Avoseh is essentially accurate. As another Weme leader within Badagry, it is possible that at the disappearance from the political scene (presumably either by death, desertion or merely ineffectiveness) of the Akran himself, the Posu was ultimately able to assert himself as the politically dominant figure within the Weme section of the town, thus essentially usurping the Akran's position.

There is very little evidence from which a clear account of this Dahomean attack on Badagry may be drawn. However, Avoseh's romanticized account of this second attack clearly ignores the role played by Lagos¹³⁰. According to local historian Losi, subsequent to the increasing power of Lagos, both commercial and political, Badagry was under the control of Lagos and the Badagrians would 'not do anything without first obtaining the consent of the Lagos King'¹³¹. This influence was increased in the early 1790s when Badagry once again became the object of Dahomean aggression. According to Losi the King of Lagos bought off the Dahomeys with presents 'because the King of Badagry was his very good friend'¹³². Law and Asiwaju have concluded that by buying off the King of Dahomey, King Ologun Kutere of Lagos sought to make Badagry officially a tributary of Lagos¹³³. It was attempting to enforce this tribute that Lagos destroyed Badagry during the autumn of 1793. According to Miles, an English correspondent, Lagos launched an attack of six hundred canoes on the town and cut Badagry's supply lines into the interior:

The cause is their refusal to continue payment of a tribute for succour afforded them by the caboceer of Lagos when the King of Dahomey's army ravaged their country about three years since¹³⁴

¹³⁰ It is interesting to note that in the Day Books of the Royal African Company, no mention of the 1790 attack is made at Whydah despite the usual practice of the governor of the English Fort giving presents to returning armies.

¹³¹ Losi, *History of Lagos*, p. 15.

¹³² *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.

¹³³ Law & Asiwaju, 'From the Volta to the Niger...', p. 453.

¹³⁴ PRO T70/1484 10 October 1793 Miles, Popo.

Although this report does not give evidence as to the outcome of the confrontation, Robertson later stated that Badagry was in fact destroyed, and it would appear that the town was affirmed as tributary to Lagos until the 1820s¹³⁵. It is also interesting to note that after the Porto-Novo/Dahomean tensions of the late 1780s the 1790s and early 1800s saw once again a revival of Porto-Novian influence over Badagry. Indeed a source cited by Verger from 1805 stated that the King of Porto-Novo was 'master' not only of Porto-Novo, but of Ekpe, Badagry and Lagos as well¹³⁶. Furthermore, in a power struggle which ensued in the early nineteenth century, Porto-Novo was apparently called upon by the exiled Akran Zofun, who had been invested at Porto-Novo, to regain his position within Badagry¹³⁷.

The ravages of the 1790s had a seriously detrimental effect on the economy of Badagry, and the town found great difficulty in recovering. However there is evidence from an English Captain, who may have been reporting on heresay, that as early as 1795 'I am told the place begins to hold up its head again and that slaves are plenty'¹³⁸. It would also appear that at least a number of Portuguese ships were still calling there, a factor which would appear to have played a part in the internal struggles of the much weakened state¹³⁹.

According to Avoseh, Posu Wrawru, hero of the Dahomean campaign found his civil position untenable. 'There being nobody of note among his followers', he was forced to rely on kinsmen from Whydah¹⁴⁰. From exactly where these 'kinsmen' came is unspecified and whether they were related by marriage or blood is unclear, however, Wrawru immediately faced opposition from another section of the Whydah community lead by the Jengen, Sinto Agara III of

¹³⁵ Robertson, Notes on Africa, p. 283.

¹³⁶ Verger, Trade Relations..., p. 283.

¹³⁷ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 22.

¹³⁸ PRO T70/1571 9 August 1795 J Fayrer in Law, '...The Early History of Badagri', p. 36.

¹³⁹ Verger, Trade Relations..., p. 481.

¹⁴⁰ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, pp. 19-20.

Awhanjigo Ward, who even Avoseh calls the 'senior chief' ¹⁴¹. He states that after only seventeen days the Posu was tricked into leaving Badagry altogether by the Jengen, whose initial attempt on Wrawru's life had failed. The deposed Posu, sought help at Porto-Novo, but was unable to secure aid in a counter attack and died, according to Avoseh at Ja [unidentified] 'from anger and disappointment'¹⁴².

The internal politics of Badagry, during the subsequent period are confused. It would appear however, that the fortunes of Awhanjigo Ward took a significant turn for the worse and indeed the position of the Jengen seems to have lapsed from political prominence. Avoseh offers no explanation of this occurrence, but from the information that he does give it would appear that the Jengen's line suffered either a rupture or obscurity towards the end of the eighteenth century. The chieftancy of Sinto Agara III was, he says, 'made during the time of Akran Soba' and he was therefore presumably the son of the Jengen exiled to Brazil who had returned and resumed his place in Badagry after the initial repulse of Zinsu in 1776. It was either this Jengen or his successor Athunde IV who was involved in the expulsion of Posu Wrawru c.1790. However, Avoseh states that it was the following Jengen, Gbede V who signed the Treaty of Cession in 1863. Even if Sinto Agara, Athunde and Gbede were extremely long-lived chiefs, it is likely that the Jengen line was broken or a single figure has been missed. Avoseh admits himself that 'The order of the Jengen is not quite clear and only seven of them are known to history' ¹⁴³. From the lack of any further information it would appear that the considerable power of the Jengen's of Awhanjigo waned during this period and the chieftaincy was pushed into the background of Badagrian political life. The events surrounding this political demise and even the date are difficult to assess, but it is possible that it may have taken place

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 25.

almost immediately after the expulsion of Posu Wrawru. By 1793 a contemporary English source was citing the Akran as the 'principal Caboceer' of Badagry and stating that it was largely as a result of this man, that Lagos had launched its attack that year ¹⁴⁴. It is possible to surmise that the internal power struggle of Badagry had once again been resolved by external factors, notably in this case the ensuing war between France and Britain from 1793 and the abolition of slavery and the Slave trade in France between 1794 and 1802, which may have adversely affected the commercial interests of the French Chief Jengen, to the advantage of the Portuguese Chief Akran.

I would suggest that from the end of middle years of the 1790s until c.1820 the Akrans, as Portuguese chiefs, were therefore able to assume a political prominence within the town, which does not appear to have been challenged by other identifiable wards. This is not to suggest that their position was a secure one. Indeed the 1790s and early nineteenth century were a time of great upheaval within Badagry, with challenges arising from both within Ijegba Ward itself and also from outside the town. The attack launched upon Badagry in 1793 from Lagos temporarily deposed Akran Yede ¹⁴⁵. However, it would seem likely that Yede was able to return to the town some time after this event. Avoseh's assessment that Yede's reign continued with 'a successful slave trade and a good reign', may be an exaggeration, given that even by the early nineteenth century Badagry had not recovered from the ravages of 1793 ¹⁴⁶. However, Yede's return would seem plausible as his unpopular successor Zofun managed to maintain his very insecure hold on the chieftaincy until c 1821. As a result of one, initially successful, deposition attempt, Zofun was able, with the help of Porto Novo, to retake his place at Badagry. However, in the face of concerted opposition it would seem unlikely that Zofun's unpopularity would have enabled him to

¹⁴⁴ PRO T70/1484 10 October 1793 Miles, Popo.

¹⁴⁵ PRO T70/1484 10 October 1793 Miles, Popo.

¹⁴⁶ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 22.

maintain his position for over twenty years, which would be the case had Yede not returned.

Furthermore, the early nineteenth century would appear to have been a period when the traditional chieftancy faced a challenge from a different source.

Robertson in the 1800s named a man called 'Agoussa' as the 'principal trader' at Badagry ¹⁴⁷. This man is not identifiable with any ward chief, however, he is possibly the same man as Agosu, named by Avoseh, as Zinsu's son ¹⁴⁸. As noted above, Avoseh places the Zinsu lineage within the Ijegba Ward, notably as part of Jigbeko House. However I would suggest that this link is likely to be tendentious. Agoussa/Agosu was an example of a 'new man', who, like his father, was able to assert himself within the Badagry structure. It would appear that Agoussa, like his father was determined to make his mark on the political sphere. Law suggests that he was perhaps the same 'Gansa', who was named in Porto-Novo sources as a 'chief' of Badagry, killed in a confrontation in the early nineteenth century. This conflict was probably that by which Zofun was able to reassert his position within Badagry and Law concludes therefore that Agoussa may have been a rival authority to that of the legitimate Akran¹⁴⁹. The post destruction period then would appear not only to reflect but to have reinforced the commercial basis on which power rested within the Badagry political arena.

¹⁴⁷ Robertson, Notes on Africa, p. 286.

¹⁴⁸ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 18.

¹⁴⁹ Law, 'The Gun Communities...', p. 31.

Chapter Six

The Adele Period c.1821-1835

After the devastation at the end of the eighteenth century and the painfully slow process of reconstruction during the early years of the nineteenth century, Badagry was once again forced to take centre stage in the complex web of coastal politics by the arrival in c.1821 of Adele, a King of Lagos in exile. What is striking about the period of Adele's fourteen year residence in Badagry is that, like Zinsu in the 1780s, he was able to take control of the much weakened town. However, unlike this predecessor, Adele was able, as a result of his own abilities and of much wider factors, not only to assert his own position within the state, but also re-establish Badagry as an important economic and political centre within the coastal framework.

The sources for this period in Badagry's history are relatively rich. As well as those accounts based on coastal traditions such as Avoseh, Payne, Losi, Geay, Akindele and Aguessy there are, for the first time, a number of contemporary sources which, if only briefly, focus directly on the state of Badagry itself, rather than its interaction with its more prominent neighbours ¹. The first set of such sources are those provided by the British expedition led by Royal Naval Officer Captain Hugh Clapperton ². The aim of the exercise was for Clapperton to make further contact with the Sokoto Caliphate, the interior power he had visited four years previously after trekking inland from Tripoli with Captain Denham. This second visit, approaching from the south, would investigate the possibilities of establishing a direct trade route between the interior and the Slave Coast ³. A major part of Clapperton's remit included tracing the course of the Niger. The

¹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry; J A O Payne, Table of Principal Events in Yoruba History (Lagos 1893); Losi, History of Lagos, Geay, 'Origine, Formation et Histoire du Royaume de Porto-Novo', Akindele & Aguessy, Contribution L'etude de l'histoire...de Porto-Novo.

² For further details of Clapperton see T Nelson, A Biographical Memoire of the late Dr Oudney (London 1830).

³ PRO CO2/16 30 July 1825 Bathurst (CO), London.

river remained a mystery and various theories and a number of abortive and inconclusive missions were despatched during the early nineteenth century to ascertain its true course. Indeed it was Clapperton's party which identified the final resting place of perhaps the most famous of these travellers Mungo Park.

Clapperton's second expedition of 1825-26 into the interior from the south at Badagry proved disastrous. The original expeditionary force led by Clapperton consisted of another Royal Naval Officer Captain Pearce, surgeons Dr Morrison and Dr Dickson, a British trader Mr Houtson and four servants. These junior members of the party were, Richard Lander, a civilian employed by Clapperton as his personal servant, Mr Dawson a seaman engaged as servant to Dr Morrison, Columbus, a 'mulatto', who was embarked at Whydah to pursue a different route with Dr Dickson via Abomey, and Pasko, a Hausa. Of the original nine it was two of these servants, Richard Lander and Pasko, who survived to re-emerge at Badagry at the end of 1826 ⁴. Furthermore, plans for a direct trading route between Sokoto and the coast proved to be illusory with Sultan Bello holding insufficient influence as well as insufficient interest to make it a reality. But the expedition did provide some very important source material as regards Badagry. Mr Houtson was engaged as one of the party at Whydah. It was this trader, who argued that the expedition should embark from Badagry rather than Benin as they had originally planned. It would appear that not only had Houtson quarrelled with the King of the more easterly power but he had also established a trading post at Badagry the previous year ⁵. Indeed it was Badagry's proven trading links with the interior which finally persuaded Clapperton that it would be prudent to follow this course as he noted that it was the 'constant communication' which existed between Mr Houtson at Badagry and the interior which led him to believe that 'the route by this direction promises fairer

⁴ R Lander, *Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa*, Vol 2, p. 235.

⁵ PRO CO2/17 28 November 1825 Capt Willis (HMS Brazen), off Badagry; CO2/15 29 November 1825 Clapperton, off Badagry.

prospects of success than by any other we could have chosen' ⁶.

Despite only remaining at Badagry briefly on the outward journey, the few letters and journal of Clapperton, both published and unpublished prove useful ⁷.

Captain Pearce and Mr Houtson also provided short written accounts ⁸.

However, by far the most useful piece of evidence is the journal kept by the sole European survivor Richard Lander. In it Lander recounts the expedition in some detail from its departure from Portsmouth and landing at Badagry on 28 November 1825 to his return to the town on 21 November 1826 where he remained for over two months awaiting the arrival of a British ship. Lander's value as a source for an historical study of Badagry is obvious in that, if nothing else, it is the earliest known written account of Badagry by someone who had actually spent time there. Lander was often guilty of over-generalisation, but despite being a relatively uneducated man, or perhaps because of this, he wrote very much as an individual, making observations which were often less clouded with prejudice and less biased towards a particular cause than other observers both before and after him ⁹.

Lander's published and unpublished writings of this period are supplemented by a second visit to Badagry in 1830. Having returned to England and a surprisingly cool reception, Lander remarkably offered his services to the British Government for a second time. They took up his plan to return to Africa, this time along with his younger brother John as an unsalaried partner. The aim was, once again, to ascertain the true course of the Niger. This second journey of 1830-31 was highly successful. The small party, travelling inland once more from Badagry, reached the Niger above Boussa and were able to succeed where Park had failed and

⁶ PRO CO2/15 29 November 1825 Clapperton, off Badagry.

⁷ Clapperton's journal was published in 1829. However, more details of Badagry are contained in his unpublished papers collected in the CO2 African Exploration series at the PRO.

⁸ These are also found in the PRO CO2 and ADM55 series.

⁹ See R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vols 1 & 2 and PRO CO2 series.

travel by water, along the river, to the sea ¹⁰. Using these fascinating sources it is possible to gain a relatively clear picture, at least of Badagry's outward appearance and operation. Under the guidance of Adele the town was once again beginning to show signs of success. This is in sharp contrast to Edward Bold's assertion in 1822 that Badagry was 'a small inconsiderable residence' ¹¹. By 1830 John Lander was describing it as 'wonderfully populous' ¹².

According to Clapperton, Badagry's domestic economy was booming. The surrounding countryside was producing 'corn, calavances, yams, sweet potatoes, plantains, oranges, limes and various other fruits and vegetables' to supply the market every five days ¹³. Furthermore it would appear that Badagry was once again not only sustaining itself by local trading, but was playing an increasing role in the Atlantic economy. After the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade by the British in 1807, the imposition of the Anti-Slave Trade Squadron of the Royal Navy and the gradual criminalisation of slaving by the other trading nations, the nineteenth century saw the gradual shift from slave to more 'legitimate' articles of trade from West Africa. However, as noted by Lovejoy, despite increasing pressures, the early part of the nineteenth century was the period when the Slave Coast overtook the West Central area for slave exports and assumed a new prominence in the now largely illegal trade ¹⁴. Pressures from the Squadron were clearly recognised. Richard Lander noted the highly surreptitious way in which slaving ships operated off the coast, landing their Captain and returning only on a specified date to embark slaves as quickly and quietly as possible ¹⁵. The resident slave traders he met in Badagry in 1826 were clearly unwilling to have their presence made known to the British cruisers ¹⁶. But in the face of such

¹⁰ See R & J Lander, *Journal of an Expedition...*, Vols 1-3.

¹¹ E Bold, *The Merchants and Mariners African Guide*, (London 1822), p. 60.

¹² R & J Lander, *Journal of an Expedition...*, Vol 1, p. 19.

¹³ PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴ Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery...*, p. 55.

¹⁵ R Lander, *Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa*, Vol 2, p. 239.

¹⁶ On his return to Badagry from the interior, when a British naval ship finally appeared in the area, presents were sent to Lander:

opposition, Badagry had been able to reassert itself as a slave trading centre by the 1820s. According to accounts of the Clapperton expedition there were as many as seven or eight resident slave traders in the town during this period ¹⁷. These men were 'almost exclusively' Portuguese, and inhabited a total of five separate slave factories ¹⁸. It is interesting to note that Badagry was also trading in other items. The chief export was slaves, but the Badagrians also offered 'palm oil, ivory and large quantities of cloth'. The latter item was greatly valued along the coast and amongst the slave and mulatto population of Brazil and the English trader Houtson had established a factory at Badagry in 1824, presumably to tap these resources ¹⁹. By the middle of the 1820s Badagry was once again in the ascendant. In a letter of 1825 Clapperton went as far as to state that rising as it was in importance over Porto-Novo, Badagry 'will eventually be the chief outlet of all the exports from the Soudan' ²⁰.

There were several factors which had enabled Badagry to recover its position as an international commercial centre during this period. Lovejoy, in his detailed analysis of the slave trade, states that the expansion of the commerce of the slave coast was largely instigated by political upheaval in the interior. He suggests that the interior wars initiated by Oyo and the rise of Dahomey led to a struggle by the coastal towns for both their survival and to 'control Oyo's trade with the Europeans'. These struggles ultimately led to increased numbers of slaves being available ²¹. Clapperton's account would seem to suggest that Badagry was able to take advantage of the upheaval in the interior to pursue its own ends. In 1825 he noted that the inhabitants of the town, though poor, 'subsist chiefly by war - and

on the condition that I would not make my countrymen acquainted with the fact of any Portuguese being in the town

[Ibid, Vol 2, p. 245].

¹⁷ Ibid, Vol 2, p. 240.

¹⁸ Ibid, Vol 2, p. 245.

¹⁹ PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

²⁰ PRO CO2/15 29 November 1825 Clapperton, off Badagry.

²¹ Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery, p. 55.

the commissions they secure as brokers on the trade of Eyeo with the whites' ²². Although the trade was predominantly slaves, trade from Oyo also included the cloth mentioned above. Oyo then was, until this period, still the dominant political and commercial force. However, the 1820s were a period of imperial decline which escalated, as Oyo collapsed, into warfare and chaos. According to Law's analysis of the situation, weaknesses and disputes at the centre ultimately enabled those on the periphery to assert themselves and the whole of Yorubaland was thrown into devastating conflict, the eclipse of Oyo and substantial population displacement southward ²³. Furthermore, the period that saw the decline of imperial power allowed Dahomey to expand once more. But the westerly power was prevented from asserting itself as wholly predominant by the foundation of other power bases in the Yoruba area. As a result of shifting rebels and refugees, the Yoruba wars produced a series of new political centres at Ilorin, Ibadan, Ijaye and Abeokuta which replaced Oyo in the balance of power between east and west ²⁴. The destruction across Yorubaland over the following years was noted by the missionary Bowen in 1850 ²⁵.

According to Newbury the initial disruption of the interior enabled the coastal states such as Porto-Novo and Badagry to assert themselves and actually begin slave raiding on their own ²⁶. Clapperton's emphasis on warfare at Badagry, would seem to illustrate this point ²⁷. However, Newbury goes on to state that this period of assertiveness was only brief and after 1830 and the foundation of new centres, notably at Abeokuta, communities like Badagry were once again

²² PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

²³ Law, The Oyo Empire... pp. 261-277.

²⁴ Newbury, The Western Slave Coast... pp. 34-48.

²⁵ Bowen reported that by 1850:

of all the places visited by the Landers, only Ishakki, Igboho, Ikishi and a few villages remain. Ijenna (Ijanna) was destroyed a few weeks after my arrival in the country

[Bowen, ...Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 114.

²⁶ Newbury, The Western Slave Coast... p. 35.

²⁷ He noted that although friendly to their allies they were 'ferocious and cruel in war' as well as 'brave and enterprising' especially since Adele had taken command [PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry].

caught between the power politics of dominant interior states. But, it does appear that the coastal town was able to make the commercial transition between centres relatively easily. Folayan in his examination of the role of the Egbado area in the commercial life of the region states that the decline of Oyo saw the rapid establishment of new trade routes between Badagry on the coast and Abeokuta via Ota. This smooth transition was vital for a state which was not only dependent on supplies for its international trade, but also for its domestic market²⁸. But the dangerous fragility of relations between the coast and their interior partners was illustrated by the jealousy and suspicion with which the Clapperton expedition of 1825 and then the Lander expedition of 1830 were viewed²⁹. Furthermore the coastal situation was also under scrutiny as Badagry was still, until the 1820s, a tributary of Lagos and subject to Dahomean influences from Whydah³⁰. Careful diplomacy was required to not only take advantage of the commercial opportunities offered by the collapse of Oyo, but also to survive the struggle over its bones. Badagry found in Adele a leader who was not only a diplomat skillful enough to secure relations with the interior, but was able through his position as ex-King of Lagos to reassert Badagry's independence on the coast and, ultimately, re-establish the town as an Atlantic Port.

Adele's Arrival At Badagry

Lagos had risen under the direction of Ologun Kutere during the latter part of the eighteenth century to a commercial and military prominence which had forced Badagry into tributary status in 1793³¹. According to tradition Ologun Kutere had three sons, the middle son being Adele, born to a Badagry woman, possibly near Mowo³². Despite being the second son, Adele succeeded to the

²⁸ Folayan, 'Trade Routes in Egbado...', p. 82.

²⁹ Rumours about the purposes of the expedition preceded the travellers. For example the King of Ijanna had heard that they were planning to make war on the King of Oyo [R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa... Vol 1, p. 68.

³⁰ Smith, Kingdom's of the Yoruba, p. 82.

³¹ Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 40. See chapter 5, p. 166-167.

³² Ibid, p. 38; Bowen, ...Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 102.

throne of Lagos in or about 1807 or 1811³³. The account of Richard and John Lander states that despite being the favourite of his father, Adele was not King of Lagos during this period, and that he was expelled after quarrelling with his elder brother Osinlokun who held that position³⁴. However this account is contradicted by several sources and Law has concluded that rather than the Landers mistaking the story 'it may reflect an attempt by their informants to put Adele's behaviour in the best possible light'³⁵.

There are several reasons why Adele was able to become King of Lagos in preference to his elder brother Osinlokun. According to Losi's account, based on Lagos tradition, Adele was able to succeed his father as he was the favourite son. It is said that as prince he had taken care of his father's property and impressed him with his skills as a craftsman³⁶. Furthermore, Adele established an important role for himself in the Lagos court, taking on spiritual and political duties by learning the secrets of Ifa divination and arranging the sacrifices for his father, and also acting as interpreter between the King and his visitors. As a result Losi states that Adele was well liked amongst both 'his father's children' and the chiefs of Lagos³⁷. Subsequently at Ologun Kutere's death Adele was made King. According to Houtson, his succession was even made possible by a brother, 'Ajan', who must surely be Osinlokun. According to this account, the scheming elder son agreed to forego the position voluntarily believing that he would 'have the sole direction of affairs, whilst his brother should have all the responsibility'. However, as Houtson noted, 'Ajan' was sorely mistaken and, on taking the throne, Adele 'showed a spirit of independence totally incompatible with Ajan's views'³⁸. According to Losi, during the early years of his reign Adele was

³³ Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 39.

³⁴ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, pp. 48-49.

³⁵ Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 40.

³⁶ Losi, History of Lagos, p. 16.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 17.

³⁸ PRO ADM55/11 Folios 15, 16 & 23-24 'An Account of Adele ex-caboceer of Lagos...by John Houtson Esq'. For this reference I am grateful to J Bruce Lockhart who is currently preparing a biography of Clapperton.

extremely popular and having experience of the court he was able to rule wisely and generously and 'the elders took notice of his good conduct' ³⁹. However, after 'many years', it would appear that Osinlokun, perhaps disappointed in his hopes of a puppet king, revolted by going to Ebute-Iga near Ikorodu to worship his mother's fetish and refused to return to the capital. With the help of the Ijebus, Osinlokun was able to defeat Adele in battle. Although he did not unseat him, it would seem that Adele's popularity within Lagos was also waning and the chiefs were tiring of his rule. Losi states that the reasons behind this increasing unpopularity were that Adele had 'changed his mode of government', had allowed the introduction of the Egungun fetish, which was 'unbecoming to the dignity of a King', and also allowed Islam to be practiced freely. Furthermore it would appear that Adele was humiliated after an abortive attempt to carry the remains of Ologun Kutere to Benin, the traditional resting place of the Lagos Kings. According to tradition, Osinlokun had been behind an attack on the mission carried out by a marauding party of Ijos or Mahins. Although the subsequent conflict between the two brothers led to Osinlokun's temporary removal to Isheri, the combined pressures on Adele's Kingship proved too great and he was deposed. Adele was exiled from Lagos and Osinlokun took the throne⁴⁰.

Finding a satisfactory date for the deposition of Adele, which allows for all the events of his early reign, is difficult. According to Payne, having succeeded to the throne in 1775, Adele was overthrown in 1780 ⁴¹. However, as noted by Law, the local historian has set his chronology of events far too early and the five years of kingship are not supported by Losi's assertion that he reigned for 'many years' ⁴². Adele's expulsion was far likelier to have taken place in about 1821. This is the date given by Gollmer in his 'List of Kings of Lagos'. The assertion by Captain

³⁹ Losi, History of Lagos, p. 17.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 17.

⁴¹ Payne, Table of Principal Events..., p. 2.

⁴² Law, 'The Career of Adele...' p. 42, footnote 54.

Pearce that Adele had been expelled fifteen years prior to 1825 may have resulted from a miscopying of the figure '5' ⁴³.

After his expulsion from Lagos, tradition states that Adele and his followers took refuge at Badagry. According to Losi 'On his arrival there the people welcomed him and ...appointed him their paramount chief' ⁴⁴. The acceptance of Adele as 'paramount chief', even king, of Badagry obviously requires some qualification. However, ultimately his establishment in such a position is not as remarkable as it might at first appear. Firstly the acceptance of an alien ruler was not without precedent in the history of Badagry, Zinsu having been able to take a similar step in the aftermath of the 1784 war. However, from an examination of the evidence it is clear that it required skill, daring and some degree of luck. According to the Landers and later accounts based on local tradition, Adele found acceptance at Badagry due to his 'filial piety' ⁴⁵. As well as bringing his followers and children from Lagos, Adele also brought with him his aged mother and the skull of his father. Both Losi and Payne claim that the people of Badagry were so 'edified by this behaviour, and by these marks of filial piety, that they adopted him for their chief' ⁴⁶. Law has stated that although clearly impressed by this outward show, rather more was involved in Adele's assumption of power than his duty as a son. For example, Adele's mother was said, in local tradition, to have been a Badagry woman. Law has suggested that it would have been possible for Adele to call upon his maternal relatives in his quest for Badagrian support ⁴⁷. The role of relatives through the female line in establishing a commercial and political position has been examined by Sandra Barnes in relation to Lagos. Barnes states that using such relatives as sponsors enabled outsiders to gain a foothold in societies where strangers had little status and this may have applied in the Adele

⁴³ Ibid, p. 42; PRO CO2/15 28 November 1825 Pearce's Journal, off Badagry.

⁴⁴ Losi, *History of Lagos*, p. 20.

⁴⁵ R & J Lander, *Journal of an Expedition...*, Vol 1, p. 49-50.

⁴⁶ Losi, *History of Lagos*, p. 20; Payne, *Table of Principal Events...*, p. 2. Also see chapter 4, pp. 118-119 for an examination of the use of 'heads' skulls and ancestors as a force for political cohesion.

⁴⁷ Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 43.

case ⁴⁸. Furthermore Law adds that the possession of his father's skull may also have been seen in Badagry as a symbol of Adele's position as the legitimate ruler of Lagos, an authority to which the town was subject at this time. Law concludes that the expulsion of Adele and his subsequent removal to Badagry with the skull may have been seen as an opportunity to assert their independence ⁴⁹. This interpretation is supported by the Landers who in their account of Adele's rise to power at Badagry stated that as part of their acceptance of the exiled king the people envisaged a military campaign against Lagos ⁵⁰. It is also notable that, according to this account, soon after his arrival there, a pursuing force from Lagos attacked the town and was beaten off. The Badagrians used this hostile act as an opportunity to declare their independence ⁵¹.

As a way of asserting their position as an independent state the acceptance of Adele into Badagry would have made good political sense. However, the internal political position was not clear-cut and the exiled King did face some opposition. The internal struggles recounted in tradition have focused on the Ijegba and Posuko sections of the town. This is understandable as it was almost exclusively these Portuguese trading partners who were operating out of Badagry during this period and it is likely then that they were the most dominant wards. According to Avoseh, Akran Zofun opposed Adele's settlement in the town. Tradition states that Zofun was an unpopular Akran who had been expelled once before by another claimant to the position, Soton. Only after gaining help from Porto-Novo was Zofun able to retake his chieftaincy at Badagry ⁵². Adele's arrival in the town was opposed by Zofun, but this time he was 'finally driven out with his Posu'. Tradition states that Soton of Ganyinko House took the title of Akran, and

⁴⁸ S Barnes, 'Ritual, Power and Outside Knowledge' Journal of Religion in Africa (JRA) 20/3 (1990) pp. 248-268.

⁴⁹ Law, 'The Career of Adele...' p. 44.

⁵⁰ According to the Landers, Adele was welcomed by the 'principal people of Badagry and told 'lead us on to war, and we will fight against your brother, and either prevail over him or perish' [R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 51].

⁵¹ Ibid, Vol 1, p. 51.

⁵² Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 22. Also see chapter 5 p. 169-170.

Zofun retired to 'Ja' where he died, although it is possible that he was able later to return to Badagry once more and live quietly in retirement ⁵³. Thus Adele's residence at Badagry was the source of some contention amongst certain sectors of Ijegba Ward and also, it would appear within Posuko. However, I would suggest that Adele's arrival was not the initial stimulus to these squabbles, but was merely the means by which they were at least superficially resolved, and that the exile's arrival was used by certain factions to gain the upper hand in an internal struggle. Just as Zofun had previously used help from Porto-Novo to regain his title, so possibly the Soton faction used Adele to help their cause. According to Badagry tradition it was Posu Awhanpa who sent for Adele to come to Badagry. Although Avoseh's reconstruction of events is not entirely clear, it would seem then that Awhanpa sought Adele's help in removing the previous holder of the Posuko chieftaincy, who joined Zofun in exile ⁵⁴. In this way then, Adele's arrival in Badagry resulted in the establishment of other houses over Ijegba and Posuko. The loyalty of these houses to the exiled King continued until 1829 when the Posu was killed in a military campaign against Lagos ⁵⁵.

It would appear then that Adele was able to take advantage of existing internal strife to establish himself as an important force within the Badagry political framework. However, rather than emerging merely as a chief, by 1825 the Clapperton expedition clearly saw him as the King of Badagry ⁵⁶. I would suggest that Adele employed considerable political skill to emerge as the effective ruler of the place in the early 1820s. Apart from his maternal links with the town, Adele reportedly established further similar links by marrying a number of Badagry

⁵³ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 22. See below p. 187.

⁵⁴ According to Avoseh, Posu Awhanpa called Adele from Ado to come to Badagry. As Akran Zofun and 'his Posu' were driven out of Badagry due to Adele's arrival it is likely that Awhanpa allied himself with the pro-Adele faction in order to assert his claims to the title of Posu. Presumably only after Adele's successful establishment and the expulsion of the Zofun faction was Awhanpa able to take the title of Posu. [Ibid, p. 30].

⁵⁵ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, p. 249; R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 9.

⁵⁶ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, pp. 250-251.

women ⁵⁷. However, it was by offering the state the chance of becoming a leading coastal power, through his military and diplomatic skills, that Adele was able to secure his position. Soon after his arrival the exiled king was given the opportunity to prove himself as a military commander. As well as defeating several attempts by Lagos to reconquer Badagry, Adele also went on to play a part in civil unrest within Porto-Novo ⁵⁸. Adele's role in these intrigues led not only to joint Porto-Novan and Dahomean attacks of retaliation, but also to the removal of at least one important Porto-Novan chief, the Mewu or Mehu, to Badagry itself in 1835 ⁵⁹. The dangers of this situation are apparent. However, by 1825 Clapperton was stating that, as a result of his bravery against Dahomey, Porto-Novo and Lagos, Adele had raised the people of Badagry from an insignificant community to a people who were 'respected and feared by the Alladahs [Porto-Novans] and Lagos - and even...regardless of the friendship or enmity of Dahomey himself' ⁶⁰.

Having reasserted Badagry as a military power, it would appear that Adele went on to cultivate vital diplomatic and commercial links with neighbouring states. This once again gave the port an important role in coastal affairs, most notably in the development of trading links between the Atlantic and the African interior. Clapperton himself noted that despite Badagry's reassertion of its military position under Adele, the town remained a tributary to Oyo. Indeed he added that Badagry was likely to replace Porto-Novo as chief port of trade for that kingdom ⁶¹. This implies that Badagry's continued close and amicable links with

⁵⁷ It is Avoseh who mentions Adele's marriages to Badagry women. Unfortunately he gives no further details than to say that there were about ten Badagry wives [Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 33].

⁵⁸ According to Capt Pearce, since his expulsion from Lagos with only a few followers, Adele had been able to gather enough support at Badagry 'to subdue a number of towns depending on Lagos and also to conquer Ardrah [Porto-Novo]', [PRO CO2/15 28 November 1825 Pearce's Journal, off Badagry].

⁵⁹ Pearce actually stated that more than one caboceer left Porto-Novo for Badagry during this period although there is no evidence to support this [PRO CO2/15 28 November 1825 Pearce's Journal, off Badagry]. Also see pp. 192-194.

⁶⁰ PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

⁶¹ PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

Oyo were, at least commercially, the sensible option.

The Adele Period in Badagry

Despite their sharply contradictory accounts of Adele's physical appearance both Clapperton and Lander would seem to agree that by the middle years of the 1820s, he was the prominent figure at Badagry ⁶². Lander called him a 'King', and described how state visits and receptions were carried out with 'all the pomp and barbarous magnificence of African Royalty' ⁶³. His accompanying retinue of one hundred a fifty (excluding musicians !) and his appearance 'gorgeously arrayed' in scarlet and gold with his 'fighting chiefs' walking by portray him as every inch the monarch that he was ⁶⁴.

Lander went on to describe government under Adele as being, like that of "Yariba [Oyo], Nyffe [Nupe] and Houssa [Hausaland]', 'a perfect and unlimited despotism' ⁶⁵. However, the situation was more complex than this. The notion of despotism ignored the influence of other sources of authority, which through the institution of the ward chiefs, was undoubtedly still in existence. In Richard Lander's account of 1825 allusions to the ward chiefs were somewhat indirect. He refers to the 'Badagrian great men' as drinking partners or as part of Adele's retinue, he does not allude to any specific political or commercial role ⁶⁶. Only 'fighting chiefs' were noted during this visit ⁶⁷. One was named as 'Bombanee'[Bombani], a fellow exile from Lagos who was described by Clapperton as 'a drunken barbarian' but one whose influence over the people

⁶² In 1825 Clapperton described Adele as being 'a good-looking man, below the middle size, rather spare, with a prepossessing and intelligent countenance' [PRO CO2/15 1 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry]. Although equally impressed by Adele's regal bearing, Lander, in marked contrast to his master, described a man of forty or forty five years and 'five feet nine inches in height, and rather inclined to corpulencey' ! [R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 50].

⁶³ Ibid, Vol 1, p. 46.

⁶⁴ Ibid, Vol 1, pp. 46-47.

⁶⁵ Ibid, Vol 1, p. 285.

⁶⁶ Ibid, Vol 1, pp. 50-51.

⁶⁷ Ibid, Vol 1, pp. 46-47.

'could lead them to anything' ⁶⁸. The other chiefs were 'Accra' [the Akran] and 'Poser' [the Posu] ⁶⁹. However, during the second visit it emerged that the chiefs of Badagry were also operating on a very important political level within the town.

John Lander noted in his visit of 1830 that besides Adele 'the King of King's', 'four fellows assume the title of royalty' ⁷⁰. He then went on to list the kings of 'Spanish', 'Portuguese', 'English' and 'French' Towns. It seems likely that there was confusion over the identification of the first two wards. I would suggest that the king of 'Spanish Town' was in fact the old Akran of Ijegba, normally called 'Portuguese Town'. Lander later noted he had been the 'sole governor' of the country 'until his authority was wrested from him by a more powerful hand'. This may refer merely to the position of Akran becoming subject to the new king but it is more likely that this was a reference to the chieftaincy dispute at Ijegba and the deposition of Akran Zofun. Although tradition states that Zofun died at 'Ja', it is possible that the old chief had returned to Badagry by 1830 and lived there 'in retirement'. The 'Accra', referred to by the Landers, must have been Adele's politically active ally Soton ⁷¹. Lander added that the old retired chief, made a living from selling slaves to both Spanish and Portuguese traders, so a Portuguese connection was maintained. However, the Portuguese Town named by Lander would seem to be in this case Posuko Ward, which in various other sources was allied with either the Dutch or Portuguese. The final two were obviously Ahoviko and Awhanjigo Wards respectively. The identification of these four ward chieftaincies is consistent with an examination of Badagry's political structure ⁷². Those wards with predominantly Portuguese trading partners, the main commercial force operating out of Badagry during this period,

⁶⁸ PRO CO2/15 2 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁹ See above p. 182.

⁷⁰ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 17.

⁷¹ Ibid, Vol 1, p. 17.

⁷² See chapter 3, p. 82-88.

had been in the ascendant, whilst the 'Davi' or 'Wawu' of Ahoviko and the Jengen of Awhanjigo were still clearly holding political positions within the town structure, if not taking a prominent role in state affairs. From Avoseh's account it would appear that the chiefs of Wharako, Ganho and Boeko were also active during the period ⁷³. No mention was made of these other chieftaincies in contemporary accounts and it would seem likely that they were eclipsed by their more dominant neighbours.

It is clear then that certain ward chieftaincies were in operation under Adele. Clapperton in a brief examination of the government structure stated that 'The town of Badagry is govern'd by its own caboceers - but subject to Addeley' ⁷⁴. The operation of these caboceers as factions was evidently rife within the political life of the town even under the authority of 'the King of Kings' ⁷⁵. It would appear that on civil matters each ward operated much as a pressure or interest group, and gaining as much support within that structure was evidently essential for any undertaking. An illustration of this process was given by the Landers who, on attempting to leave Badagry in 1830, were faced with opposition from a 'party of the populace' ⁷⁶. No indication is given as to the identity of such a party, however, it would seem likely that it involved ward loyalties. To counteract this opposition the Landers were advised to petition various other chiefs and win them over to their cause ⁷⁷. Ultimately permission to embark on their journey was given by Adele. It is difficult to assess whether the various factions at work within the town applied pressure directly to 'the King', or whether Adele merely assessed the more popular cause. But it is clear that the operation of factions

⁷³ From Avoseh's account it would appear that during the time of Adele, Soton was Akran, Awhanpa the Posu until his death in 1829; Wawu-Zanwhoro-Mesi, the Wawu of Ahoviko and possibly Athunde the Jengen of Awhanjigo. The Finhento may have been either Aminu or Tofon whilst the chiefs of Ganho and Boeko are unnamed [Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, pp. 22, 27, 25, 28].

⁷⁴ PRO CO2/15 6 December 1825 Clapperton's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁵ R & J Lander, *Journal of an Expedition...* Vol 1, p. 17.

⁷⁶ Ibid, Vol 1, p. 15.

⁷⁷ Ibid, Vol 1, p. 15.

within Badagry still played a vital role in the operation of the town. Adele did not change the political system from a multi-party basis to a despotism. Adele provided Badagry with a figurehead round which to rally. The cult he developed surrounding the head of his father guaranteed the Badagrians success in their military undertakings and guaranteed him a focal position within the town itself. At the same time, Badagry provided Adele with a vehicle by which he might launch his attempts to retake the throne of Lagos. But ultimately the factional intrigues of the Badagry political system remained unchanged even under the veneer of autocratic government.

Another example of factional influence within Badagry during this period is one that illustrates the potential political role of newer immigrant groups to the community, who, in this case at least, were able to use the fragmented ward structure to suit their own ends. Richard Lander's accusation and trial at Badagry on his return from the interior is one example of such a pressure group in operation. According to both tradition and Lander's own account it was the intrigues of the Portuguese at Badagry which provoked this crisis. These resident traders obviously saw the Englishman's presence in their midst as a threat to both their now 'illegal' trading operations and their role as middlemen between interior and coast. According to Avoseh, the Portuguese traders spread the rumour that Clapperton and Lander were spies who had been sent to study Badagry and its people as part of a British plot to take control of the town ⁷⁸. The rumours spread amongst both the chiefs and Adele who began to shun Lander's presence. Ultimately it was resolved to try the case and the Cornishman was summoned to undertake trial by poison ⁷⁹. The trial itself was carried out by the 'Fetish Priest', according to Avoseh, at Agbalata ⁸⁰. However, although no identifiable chiefs were present, Lander referring only to 'a number of priests and

⁷⁸ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 33.

⁷⁹ Lander provided a detailed account of his trial in his published journal [R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, pp. 254-260.

⁸⁰ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 33.

elders', according to Badagry tradition, the Akran played an important role in the operation of the event, notably guarding the prisoner with five hundred soldiers⁸¹. The involvement of the Akran of Ijegba fits with the pressure for trial originating with the Portuguese inhabitants, although it is possible that Avoseh is, as usual, seeking to establish a prominent role for that chief. However, his description of Lander's survival provides another example of the various factions at work within the town for Avoseh alludes to 'friends' who advised him to take an antidote to the poison ⁸². Lander himself did not mention such advice and noted that he took an emetic on his own initiative. However, both accounts conclude that his miraculous survival was seen as an overwhelming sign of his innocence and Adele and the Badagry chiefs abandoned their 'cold reserve and stiffness and sent Lander presents and provisions, stating that 'the Portuguese were wicked men' ⁸³.

The ability of the Portuguese to use the ward structure for their own political ends is notable, not least in that they were such a small group. The Adele period also saw the arrival of a far larger number of immigrants into the town, which as a result, led to the introduction of Islam. Avoseh dates the arrival of Islam in Badagry to 1821 ⁸⁴. Muslims must have visited the town prior to this period, notably as traders, but it is likely that the arrival of a large number of Muslims, who not only visited, but settled at Badagry, coincided with the Adele period.

The Arrival of Islam at Badagry

The spread of Islam through West Africa at the end of the eighteenth century and in the early years of the nineteenth century has been examined by a number of historians. Suffice to say here that the initial southward movement of

⁸¹ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, p. 256; Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 33.

⁸² Ibid, p. 35.

⁸³ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 2, p. 259.

⁸⁴ Avoseh, 'Islam in Badagry' in Falola, 'The Minor Works...' p. 241.

relatively small groups of Muslims from the north, in search of trade and land, was revolutionised by the rise amongst them of the radical religious leader Uthman Dan Fodio. He sought to purify the practice of existing Muslims and spread the word by Jihad [holy war] throughout the area incorporating Hausaland, Bornu, Nupe, Yorubaland and even threatened, at one stage, Old Oyo itself. This militaristic movement ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate first under the leadership of Dan Fodio and then under that of his son Sultan Bello.

The development of Islam to the north under such violent conditions led not only to an increasing number of Muslims moving southward in search of commerce but also to a large number of slaves. According to Lander, Adele had inherited numbers of Hausa slaves from his father, a proportion of whom were Muslim ⁸⁵. Indeed, as noted above, one of the reasons for Adele's decline into unpopularity at Lagos was his toleration of Islamic worship ⁸⁶. According to Lander, Adele had brought a large number of these 'Hausa Malam' slaves with him to Badagry on his expulsion. However, disruption in the Yoruba interior resulted in a second phase of southward population movements which included large numbers of Yoruba Muslims. Again these movements largely followed the trade routes through the interior, and Avoseh states that Islam was brought to Badagry by a Yoruba Muslim, Ramalana Saibu Ogboalejo who arrived in Badagry from Oyo with his sons and a group of other 'traders and brave men' in 1821 ⁸⁷. It is interesting that Avoseh identifies Ogboalejo as a friend of Adele. Although it is uncertain, it is possible that this friendship may have pre-dated their exile from their respective homes and have developed from commercial contact during Adele's residence at Lagos ⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition..., Vol 1, pp. 38-49.

⁸⁶ See p. 179.

⁸⁷ Avoseh, 'Islam in Badagry', p. 241.

⁸⁸ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 61.

The initial Badagry Muslims consisted of both free traders and slaves. The free Muslims under Ogboalejo, established themselves initially at Ganho Ward and built a mosque there ⁸⁹. However, According to Avoseh, there were other resident Muslims established at Posuko Ward, at least after 1830, who lived in the compound of Posu Agongoro ⁹⁰. The status of these Muslims is a little unclear, although Avoseh implies that they may have been slaves ⁹¹. According to Avoseh's history of Islam at Badagry, the establishment of various Muslim pockets throughout the town characterised its development. This separatism culminated in the 1850s when rival mosques were established in other sections. However despite its 'factional' nature, Islamic influence was firmly established within Badagry from the 1820s onwards ⁹².

The Muslim inhabitants of Badagry had a high profile within the town's social structure from the outset, taking a role not only as traders but also as religious and possibly political figures. The Muslim community as a whole would appear to have been held in high regard within the town structure. This was most notably demonstrated in the celebration of Ramadan as a public holiday ⁹³. However, the role of more learned individuals as teachers amongst the population was viewed differently. Although there were no conversions amongst the Gun inhabitants, Islam clearly came to play an important spiritual role amongst all sections of society. Lander stated that the Mallams scattered throughout the countryside from Badagry to Sokoto made a good living by

⁸⁹ Avoseh, 'Islam in Badagry', p. 241.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 242.

⁹¹ The implication that the Posuko Muslims may have been slaves arises from the statement by Avoseh that as they grew in number they decided to have their own mosque and Imam. A man called Abudulai was elected as Imam but it was only after discussions with Posu Agongoro, successor to Awhanpa, that Abudulai was 'released' and the position of Imam was established at Verekete mosque [Avoseh, 'Islam in Badagry', p. 242].

⁹² The background to these disputes between the Muslim factions at Badagry requires further research. Dispute along ward lines is a possibility but it is clear from the information given by Avoseh that polarisation and factionalism characterised Islam in Badagry during the second half of the nineteenth century, perhaps due to religious differences or along social lines, slaves versus freemen perhaps. [Avoseh, 'Islam in Badagry' pp. 242-243].

⁹³ See chapter 4, p. 120.

writing charms against illness and bad luck ⁹⁴. But despite their success in propagating the religion further into the interior throughout Nupe, further south at Old Oyo, Ijanna and also Badagry, the missionary and teaching role of these Mallams was severely restricted. Lander reported that at Badagry none of these teachers were allowed to openly to profess their religion, on pain of death and that they were viewed with suspicion. Furthermore he noted that none of the Badagry Mallams were allowed to make themselves known to the British party until after he had been acquitted of spying at his trial ⁹⁵. This restrictive policy seems to be in direct contrast however, with the account given by John Lander five years later, when he described the trusted messengers of Adele as being 'Hausa Mallams' ⁹⁶. The difference may lie in the fact that these Mallams were the 'very respectable' messengers of Adele. These messengers were certainly slaves but were reportedly only called on by their master in wartime and supported themselves independently by slave trading with the European dealers. However, these men of 'slave origin' were ultimately loyal to Adele himself. It may be that the travelling Mallams, following the trade routes through Yoruba and to the coast, were suspected of being something worse than the 'corpulent drones' that Lander saw them as.

Foreign Affairs

The arrival of the exiled King at Badagry launched the town into a new phase of aggressive foreign affairs. Lagos' attempts under Osinlokun to reassert control over Badagry and its adopted prince, beginning in about 1822, were thwarted. Indeed Captain Pearce in 1825 reported that Adele had collected around him a sufficient force not only to repel Lagosian aggression but to 'subdue a number of towns depending' on that place ⁹⁷. However, by the time of the Clapperton expedition Adele had still not risked an extensive campaign against Lagos, and

⁹⁴ R Lander, Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa, Vol 1, p. 275.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, Vol 1, pp. 277-280.

⁹⁶ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 37.

⁹⁷ PRO CO2/15 28 November 1825 Pearce's Journal, off Badagry.

Pearce suggested that the exiled King felt insufficiently strong to make an attempt on that place without an ally. Adele may have envisaged the possibility of recruiting British help in this matter. Possibly having noted the bombardment of Lagos by a British ship in 1825, when the Clapperton party arrived in Badagry, Adele sought promises of help in return for his abandonment of the slave trade. Captain Pearce certainly took Adele's propositions seriously. Indeed he noted that:

This chief may be deserving of attention from his friendly disposition towards the English and especially from the specific proposal which he has made through Mr Houtson to the British Government to destroy the slave trade from the borders of Dahomey to the River Benin comprehending Lagos the greatest outlet of slave traffic ⁹⁸

Law has suggested that Adele may have been serious in his promises to give up the trade as the Badagry palm oil trade may have offered a realistic alternative even at this early stage. However, he ultimately feels that Adele was more likely to be telling his British visitors what they wanted to hear ⁹⁹. In any event, Clapperton, though encouraging, was unable to make any promises of British help and the only promise he did make, for the delivery of a field gun, was ultimately broken ¹⁰⁰. Adele was forced to look for allies elsewhere.

Looking westwards, the King was unable to secure an alliance with Porto-Novo, and indeed relations with that state quickly deteriorated into warfare. The final deposition of Akran Zofun over Adele's arrival may have severely damaged relations between those neighbours. As already noted, Zofun had been both re-installed and supported as Akran by Porto-Novo after his original expulsion in the early nineteenth century. Moreover, according to Porto-Novian tradition the

⁹⁸ Pearce's hopes of cooperation between an African king and Britain in the suppression of the slave trade ultimately became the key to British policy on the west coast during the 1840s and 1850s when both Dahomey and Lagos emerged as the focal points of anti-slave trading activity. Adele's optimism over a British alliance has been attributed to a brief attack on Lagos by a British ship earlier in 1825 which, according to Ajayi, was undertaken at Adele's request [PRO CO2/15 28 November 1825 Pearce's Journal, off Badagry; J F Ajayi, 'The British Occupation of Lagos 1851-61', *Nigeria Magazine*, 69 (1961), p. 98].

⁹⁹ Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 49.

¹⁰⁰ PRO CO2/15 18 December 1825 Clapperton, Ijanna.

1820s were a period of civil unrest within the more westerly state. The eleventh King there, De-Tohi, was challenged by a pretender Oussou Gandin. Both were descendants of the founder of Porto-Novo; Agbanlin. De-Tohi was a grandson on his father's side, whilst Oussou Gandin was not only a paternal but also a maternal great-grandson. At the death of Oussou Gandin the challenge was taken over by another grandson Oueze and Oussou Gandin's mother Gouti Attagnon¹⁰¹. Whether Adele from Badagry became embroiled in the affairs of Porto-Novo in an attempt to secure allies against Lagos can only be supposition. However, it is clear that during this period Adele launched a series of attacks on its westerly neighbour. According to Robert Pearce, by 1825 Adele and the Badagrians had conquered Ardrah 'from whence he has transported the chief caboceers with their property to Badagry' ¹⁰². This may have been an exercise to put more resources at the disposal of Adele. However, the result of Adele's assaults on Porto-Novo in the early 1820s was no clear cut victory, and Pearce's conclusions were drawn as a result of Adele's propaganda. Using Porto-Novo tradition it would appear that the civil unrest there did result in the removal of at least one important chief, the Mewu, to Badagry. However, Oueze, more usually De Hueze was able to secure power within Porto-Novo. It would seem then that if Adele from Badagry had co-ordinated attacks on its neighbour, possibly he had allied himself with the losing faction, that of De-Tohi. This king was himself forced out [to an unknown destination] and his primeminster, the Mewu, sought refuge at Badagry ¹⁰³. If this interpretation is largely speculative, it is certainly true that conflict between Badagry and Porto-Novo did not end with the expulsion of the old ruling group, and indeed warfare continued until the beginning of the next decade. Soon after their arrival at Badagry in 1830 the Lander brothers were able to note that 'peace has been established between Porto-

¹⁰¹ Geay, 'Origine, Formation et Histoire...de Porto-Novo', p. 632.

¹⁰² PRO CO2/15 28 November 1825 Pearce's Journal, off Badagry.

¹⁰³ Geay, 'Origine, Formation et Histoire...de Porto-Novo', p. 632.

Novo and Badagry' ¹⁰⁴. Ultimately Pearce's assertion that Porto-Novo had been conquered prior to 1825 was premature to say the least.

However, the Badagry threat to Porto-Novo remained dangerous, and precipitated a surprising new alliance on the coast between the westerly power and its old enemy Dahomey. Losi, recording Lagos tradition, clearly outlines the role which Dahomey played in assaulting Badagry during this period. According to his account the Dahomean army took advantage of the dry season to march on that place, but on reaching the lagoon the water was remarkably high. The invading army, unskilled in the tactics of naval warfare began to cut logs to fill the lagoon so that they might march across. According to Losi, as the operation neared completion it was Adele who used magic to defeat the invading army. Turning himself into a beautiful woman, and crossing the lagoon into the enemies camp he offered the Dahomeans poisoned bread. All those that had eaten died within a single night and the remaining army fled ¹⁰⁵. This fantastic victory over a marauding enemy does appear to have its roots in an attack of the period. The Gold Coast Gazette of 1823 noted that the King of Dahomey, as a result of the increased demand for slaves, had invaded neighbouring states from where palm oil had been supplied. However, the attack was disappointed as the inhabitants were warned of the assault and abandoned their towns and villages¹⁰⁶. It would seem likely that this description alludes to a Dahomean campaign against Badagry and, although clearly less of a conclusive victory than tradition would claim, the failure of Dahomey is confirmed.

In his analysis of lagoon relations, Law suggests that this alliance of Porto-Novo and Dahomey against Badagry may indicate a realignment of the balance of power in the area. He suggests that the reconciliation between these two powers,

¹⁰⁴ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition... Vol 1, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ Losi, History of Lagos, p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Royal Gold Coast Gazette Vol 1 No 12 21 January 1823 in Law, Contemporary Sources... p. 85.

may have been due to recognition by Porto-Novo that Oyo was no longer sufficiently powerful to guarantee its protection. However, he also adds that it is possible the formation of a much stronger alliance between Badagry and Oyo may well have forced Porto-Novo into the arms of its rival ¹⁰⁷. There is no evidence to suggest exactly when the alliance between Oyo and Adele was formed, although, as noted above, by 1825 Adele was certainly paying tribute to that place. The relationship had possibly been established prior to Adele's settlement at Badagry due to personal contacts he may have made with Oyo traders whilst still at Lagos. After his establishment at Badagry, Oyo may have been encouraged to divert their trade through that port hoping initially that it may prove less vulnerable to Dahomean raids. After the reconciliation between Porto-Novo and Dahomey, and the onslaught of aggression between the lagoon states Law concludes that Dahomean involvement may have stimulated a breach with Oyo which ultimately led to Dahomey's successful rebellion against its former patron in 1823 ¹⁰⁸. Badagry's allegiance with Oyo would appear, therefore, to have been based on both commercial requirements and also political ones. As noted, Oyo's break with Porto-Novo once more put Badagry at centre stage of the interior/ Atlantic trade route whilst political allies were what Adele required to regain his throne at Lagos. But in the light of its declining power, Oyo was unable to act as the influential ally that Adele required.

However, in 1829 Adele's quest for the Lagos throne appeared to take a significant turn in his favour without the necessity for an ally. With the death of Osinlokun, Adele was disappointed in his initial hopes of being recalled when the Lagosians instead appointed Osinlokun's son Idewu. But the exiled King took the opportunity, according to Losi through the advice of 'bad people', to launch a military campaign against Lagos ¹⁰⁹. Losi states that Adele was 'utterly

¹⁰⁷ Law, 'The Career of Adele...' p. 45.

¹⁰⁸ Law, '...The Early History of Badagri', p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ Losi, History of Lagos, p. 20.

defeated' and his bravest generals were taken, many of them killed ¹¹⁰. That Adele suffered a humiliating defeat at this time is supported by the account of Richard and John Lander who returning to Badagry in 1830 found Adele depressed and despondent having lost not only his battle but also his faithful generals 'Bombanee and Poser in battle' ¹¹¹. By the time of the Landers' visit Adele had also suffered a illness and a terrible fire at the palace which had destroyed his ammunition store as well as a number of the palace inhabitants ¹¹². What is more, his futile assault on Lagos apparently prompted the government there to act against him once more. Instead of launching a military attack, the Lagos authorities employed subterfuge. According to the Landers, they conspired with the French chief of Badagry, presumably the Jengen, to destroy the ex-King by poison. The Jengen was possibly hoping to restore his chieftaincy to the political prominence of his predecessors but the plot was discovered. The French chief was tried and found guilty, but ultimately pardoned ¹¹³.

With the arrival of the Lander expedition Adele once again appealed for British aid. However, the half-hearted attempts by the Lander brothers to supply material help from Cape Coast Castle, were ultimately seen by Adele for the worthless promises that they were, and their visit ended in a coolness on both sides. It would appear that Adele's fortunes as adopted monarch of Badagry had reached an all time low.

Events in the interior however were moving once more in Adele's favour, or perhaps more realistically in a direction which Adele could use to his advantage. The dissolution into violence of Yorubaland in the 1820s as a result of the decline of Oyo authority, led to the displacement of large numbers of people and a significant population movement southward towards centres such as Ibadan and

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 20.

¹¹¹ R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition, Vol 1, p. 9.

¹¹² Ibid, Vol 1, pp. 9-10.

¹¹³ Ibid, Vol 1, p. 54.

Abeokuta. Initially this may have proved damaging to the coastal states, as it led to disruption of trading routes through the country. Law notes for example that the successful Ijebu army tended to sell its slaves at Lagos, therefore putting Badagry at a distinct disadvantage. However, the establishment of Abeokuta created a new political centre in Yorubaland with which Adele might ally¹¹⁴.

According to Losi, Adele seized on an alliance with the Egbas due to his marriage to Efunremi, an Abeokutan woman of Owu descent ¹¹⁵. Indeed the local historian says that Adele had in fact visited Abeokuta ¹¹⁶. However, Law has suggested that it was the alliance of Lagos with Ijebu and Ibadan, interior rivals of Abeokuta would have been far more crucial in shaping Adele's policy.

Meanwhile, for Abeokuta, an alliance with Badagry meant access to a coastal port and thus to supplies of imported firearms which were becoming increasingly important in the Yoruba wars ¹¹⁷. But Adele was prepared to be a more active ally in the campaigns of the early 1830s and, for example, he aided the Egbas in their attack on Ota. Ota had sided with Lagos, and despite help from both the Ijebus and Ibadan, the Egba, on account of the help given by Adele, were able to conquer them¹¹⁸. Adele also took part in a defensive campaign against the Ijebus at the Owiji River where again, according to Lagos tradition, he helped the Egba on to victory ¹¹⁹. The date of this campaign is not specified in either Payne's or Losi's recording of tradition. Folayan clearly notes the participation of Bombani at Owiji, thus suggesting a date before 1829, however, I would conclude that this reference is misleading and that this campaign against the Ijebu took place in the early 1830s ¹²⁰. Both Payne and Losi also then mention a diplomatic victory for Adele whereby he affected a temporary reconciliation between the Egba and Ijebu,

¹¹⁴ Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 53.

¹¹⁵ Losi, History of Lagos, p. 22.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 21.

¹¹⁷ Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 53.

¹¹⁸ Losi, History of Lagos, pp. 22-23.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 21-22.

¹²⁰ Folayan, 'Egbado to 1832: The Birth of a Dilemma' IHSN, iv/1 (1967), p. 32.

Payne mistakenly stating that the crucial meeting took place at the Ogboni House at Lagos ¹²¹.

By the early years of the 1830s then Adele had clearly re-established his role in the politics of the area as a whole and placed Badagry as the coastal link with the newly established power at Abeokuta. Furthermore, setbacks among the Ijebu/Ibadan allies, notably in their campaign against Ota, 'caused great consternation at Lagos'¹²². Law suggests that defeat at a second siege of Ota c.1834 or 1835, to which Idewu had dispatched his younger brother Kosoko, lost him any support that may have remained, his suicide was ordered by the King of Benin, and Adele was recalled ¹²³. Adele returned to Lagos in 1835 after fourteen years in exile. However, his second reign was short-lived and he died in 1837.

¹²¹ Payne, Table of Principal Events..., p. 2.

¹²² Losi, History of Lagos, pp. 22-23.

¹²³ Law, 'The Career of Adele...', p. 55.

Chapter Seven

The Arrival Of The Sierra Leonian Emigrants And The Wesleyan Methodist Mission 1838-1845

The arrival of the Sierra Leonian Emigrants

The British Crown Colony of Sierra Leone was formed in 1808, from the remnants of an experiment in social engineering ¹. With its basis firmly in the anti-slavery movement, the initial establishment at 'Granville Town' in 1787 of a settlement of British blacks sought idealistically to create a utopian society based on free agricultural labour, whilst at the same time solving the problem of the 'black poor' in Britain ². The first settlement of about three hundred and twenty six inhabitants failed miserably as a result of extreme physical hardship and adverse local political conditions. Its subsequent takeover by The Sierra Leone Company in 1791 led to a second phase of settlement, mainly by Nova Scotian blacks. This group was largely made up of those who had fought for the British during the American War of Independence in return for the promise of land to farm in the British Colony of Nova Scotia. At the end of the war such promises were largely forgotten and it was during a mission of complaint to London that one of their leaders, Thomas Peters, met with a director of the Sierra Leone Company, and was offered land in the African settlement. About one thousand two hundred in number headed there in 1792. This second group of emigrants was beset again by the same harsh conditions, as well as further difficulties created by outside sources. The Company itself, having promised free land to work, insisted on high rents once the settlers had landed. War in Europe not only made supplies sparse and irregular but finally led to the bombardment of

¹ The most comprehensive study of Sierra Leone is still C Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone, (OUP, Oxford, 1962).

² The so called 'black poor' of Britain, a group made up of freed slaves, the unemployed etc were regarded as a serious social problem at the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Numbers were never large although 20-30,000 slaves were freed in London, Liverpool and Bristol [P B Clarke, West Africa and Christianity, (London 1986), p. 31].

Freetown, the settlement's capital, by the French in 1794. Discontent and desperation led to a revolt which was squashed by a joint force of British troops and newly arrived Maroon settlers from Jamaica. The Sierra Leonians' hopes for a new self governing state were ended as the Company took direct control over all its affairs until 1808 when it was turned into a Crown Colony. From this period onwards the small settlement was expanded by groups liberated from slave ships by the British Navy as a result of the Anti-Slave Trade Act of 1807. Clarke estimates that by 1815, six thousand such 'recaptives' had settled amongst the original Nova Scotian and Maroon population of about two thousand ³.

Despite its painful beginnings Sierra Leone remained a focus of idealistic hopes and aspirations. In the early nineteenth century the anti-slavery movement developed hand in hand with a rising spirit of evangelicalism in Europe. For many in Britain, the Colony became the key to visions of free, Europeanised, Christian Africans spreading the Gospel and civilization through commerce amongst their less fortunate brethren along the West Coast. This ideal was proposed most famously, but not solely by Thomas Buxton in his 'African Slave Trade and Its Remedy' in 1839, and ultimately attempted unsuccessfully by the first Niger Expedition of 1841. However, as Kopytoff has pointed out, such government backed grand gestures had already been largely overtaken and preceded by Africans themselves who from 1838 had begun emigrating back towards their homelands ⁴.

Understandably, many of those 'liberated' Africans who had been deposited at Sierra Leone were eager to go home. As a result of the Yoruba Wars and then the activities of the anti-slave trade squadron, many slaves exported and subsequently re-captured had originated from the hinterland of the Slave Coast during the end of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries.

³ Ibid, p. 34.

⁴ Kopytoff, A Preface to Modern Nigeria... pp. 36-38.

Thus it was to this region that many sought to return ⁵. Furthermore, as Ajayi notes, through Sierra Leonians operating as traders right along the coast, links between the new and the old country were firmly re-established ⁶. Initially both church and political authorities at Sierra Leone sought to curb this movement. They feared both that the religious commitment amongst those who were Christians was not strong enough for them to act as suitable pioneers and that the emigration of so many British subjects might incur expensive obligations towards their government. An initial request to HM Government was made by Thomas Will and twenty two other leading Sierra Leone residents in November 1839 'to establish a colony to Badagri...and...to send missionary with us' ⁷. This was met in Whitehall with the reception that 'We cannot send them' but that 'they can go if they wish' ⁸. But the initiative had already been taken and Governor Doherty at Sierra Leone noted that thirty four emigrants had already left ⁹.

Arriving on the coast the Sierra Leonians faced a mixed reception. It was said that those who disembarked at Lagos were ill treated and robbed as they attempted to make their way into the interior ¹⁰. However those that landed at Badagry were

⁵ See chapter 6, pp. 196-197.

⁶ [Ajayi, Christian Missions..., p. 27]. It is important to note that these emigrants were not the first to migrate to the Badagry area from British held territories. When the Landers visited the town in 1830 they met two 'mulattos' there. One was an unnamed man from Sierra Leone who acted as interpreter and advisor to Adele, the other, called Hooper, also an interpreter, was proud of his English parentage and was an ex-soldier from Cape Coast [R & J Lander, Journal of an Expedition..., p. 16]. From an examination of the Cape Coast records it emerges that John Hooper did not in fact have an English father, although his grandfather was indeed a European. His claims to have served for many years as a soldier with the Gold Coast Corps also prove to be false. Although his father, Elias Hooper had a long and distinguished career in the Corps from 1761 until 1798, his son, enlisted at eleven years as a bell boy and promoted to Corporal at seventeen, was ultimately demoted at eighteen and then dismissed from the service the same year. What became of John Hooper between 1798 and 1830, when he met the Lander brothers at Badagry, is unrecorded [PRO T70/1337 Cape Coast Garrison Ledger January-June 1780; T70/1338 Cape Coast Garrison Ledger June-December 1780; T70/1448 List of all living and dead at Cape Cost 1740-46; T70/1454 List of all servants and officers at Cape Coast 1750-69].

⁷ CO265/154 15 November 1839 Petition by Thomas Will, Sierra Leone in 30 November 1839 Doherty, Sierra Leone in Ajayi, Christian Missions..., pp. 27-28.

⁸ CO265/154 Minute by Russell on 30 November 1839 Doherty, Sierra Leone in Ibid, p. 28.

⁹ CO265/154 March 1840 Doherty, Sierra Leone in Ibid, p. 28-29.

¹⁰ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 230.

on the whole given a warm welcome. Abeokuta, the major centre of Egba refugee groups and an ascendant political power, became the focus of emigrant attention as they sought both displaced families and communities and a new beginning in the interior. Kopytoff has suggested that it was the Egbas' good relationship with Badagry, initially established during the Adele period which largely accounts for the Sierra Leonians' good reception in that port. It has also been suggested that the Badagrians were slave dealers and not raiders, and thus less likely to enslave the arrivals who were further endeared to their hosts by the presents that they brought¹¹. I would suggest that it was these factors in combination with the ward organisation at Badagry, which evidently appointed the English Chief as their natural host. It was this organised reception of 'strangers' and the adherence to international loyalties along well understood lines that distinguished the Badagry reaction to the Sierra Leone arrivals so markedly from that which they experienced at Lagos¹².

¹¹ Kopytoff, *Preface to Modern Nigeria...*, p. 46.

¹² According to Benjamin Campbell, Consul for the Bight of Benin from 1850-1859, but active on the west coast of Africa for twenty years before that, the Wawu's reception of the Sierra Leone people was remarkably generous. Due to the siege at Ado and the insecurity of the road into the interior in 1838, the Wawu wrote to Sagbua, head of the Egba war camp at Ado, requesting him to ensure safe passage for the immigrants. But the reply he received was negative in the extreme. According to Campbell, Sagbua stated that the Egba did not wish to see people again 'whom they had once sold out of the country' and that the Badagry chiefs should share them amongst themselves. But according to the Consul:

considering that they had brought with them, what in the eyes of the Badagry chiefs, was considered a large amount of property, this was a most tempting recommendation to Wawu, but, he declined acting on it, the Sierra Leone people had been consigned to his protection by the Governor of that place

Thus the Wawu advised them to wait, while he gave them land in his part of the town to build houses. Some that were impatient left and were captured and mistreated by the Egba. But eventually the prosperity of these new arrivals attracted the Egba and they were allowed to travel inland safely [PRO FO84/976 17 October 1855 Campbell, Lagos]. Campbell's glowing report of the Wawu's behaviour must be understood in the context of Badagrian politics in the mid-1850s. At the outbreak of civil war in 1851, the Wawu and many of his fellow chiefs had been expelled and left Badagry in chaos. eager to open the lagoon for commerce, Campbell needed to re-establish order in the town. He petitioned forcefully for the re-establishment of the Badagry chiefs in the face of equally vehement opposition by missionaries and Egba chiefs. But ultimately it was Campbell, who had the resources at his disposal, and with his encouragement the Wawu and his fellow chiefs retook the town. The storm of criticism levelled at Campbell as a result forced him to justify his actions to the Foreign Office. Campbell's very favourable description of the Wawu's actions in the early 1840s was the result. But aside from Campbell's obvious bias, it is evident that ward reception of 'strangers' was an accepted part of Badagry's divided structure. Okaro K'Ojwang has suggested that this was one of the reasons 'which accounted for the British choice of Badagri as a base from which to penetrate Nigeria in 1841' [Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics at

The numbers involved in the emigration movement are difficult to ascertain exactly, but it is possible to gain a general picture. As noted by Ajayi, the emigrants tended not to be the leaders of Sierra Leone society; and, for example, not one of the twenty three signatories on Thomas Will's original request for a colony made their way to the Slave Coast. Instead the emigrants tended to be individuals, families and small groups who initially chartered ships and made their own way to Badagry. It would appear that groups each numbering between one hundred and fifty and one hundred and eighty landed there during the early part of the 1840s. One for example arrived in November 1842 and another in May 1843¹³. Such groups were evidently still arriving by 1845 in ships often owned by Sierra Leonian entrepreneurs taking advantage of the traffic in both emigrants and goods between the two places¹⁴. In 1842 it was estimated that two to three hundred emigrants had been landed at Badagry during the previous three years and by 1845 this number had been increased to about seven hundred in total¹⁵. Of those landed it is clear that nearly all initially made their way towards Abeokuta¹⁶. However, it would appear that many such emigrants maintained strong links with the coast, for both commercial and security reasons¹⁷. Furthermore, as the road between Abeokuta and the coast was frequently blocked by the continuing war, notably around Ado, movement between the two places was often difficult and some were deterred from making the journey. It was noted in 1843 that of 180 emigrants landed in May of that year fifty still remained on the coast¹⁸. In this way then Badagry was established during the early 1840s as

Badagri...', p. 44]. But this clearly gives the 'British' too proactive a role in what was ultimately a reaction to Sierra Leone emigration.

¹³ WMMSA 14 November 1842 Freeman, Badagry; WMMSA 13 May 1843 De Graft's Journal in 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

¹⁴ WMMSA 30 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁵ Freeman, *Journal of Various Visits...*, p. 230; PRO CO96/8 12 May 1845 FO Draft, London.

¹⁶ WMMSA 3 October 1842 Freeman, Badagry.

¹⁷ In his account of the period, Freeman commented that within a month of his arrival on the coast, many of the Sierra Leone people had gone into the interior, but, he added, this was merely to 'visit their friends' [Freeman, *Journal of Various Visits...*, p. 214].

¹⁸ WMMSA 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

the gateway to the interior, but also itself became host to a further significant immigrant group. By 1845 the Sierra Leone population of Badagry was estimated to be about two hundred, and by 1851 this had increased to five hundred¹⁹.

Badagry in 1838

By the time of the Sierra Leonian arrivals at Badagry, the trading pattern on the West Coast of Africa was undergoing substantial change. As a result of the British search for more 'legitimate' products, despite patchy progress, the value of palm oil imports into Britain from that coast as a whole rose by 67% over the ten years between 1838 and 1847²⁰. Along the Slave Coast, attempts by British traders such as the Hutton Company increased the tonnage exported from only one thousand tons in 1835 to about two and a half to three thousand tons in 1846 from factories established at, among other places, Whydah, Aguey, Popo and Badagry. William Hutton himself stated that eventually the palm oil trade from that area would become as valuable as that from between Benin and the Cameroons²¹.

But however enterprising the 'legitimate' merchants were, such trade had by no means displaced the commerce in slaves by the early 1840s, and the ever vigilant

¹⁹ CMSA CA2/043/95 19 January 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; PRO FO84/863 23 July 1851 Liberated Africans, Badagry in 17 October 1851 Capt Hamilton, London.

²⁰ According to figures collected in 1848, the value of palm oil imported into Britain from the West Coast of Africa between 1838 and 1847 was as follows [PRO FO84/751 'An account of the quantity and value of palm oil imported into the United Kingdom from the West Coast of Africa in the last ten years']:

1838	Value	£281,372
1839	"	£343,449
1840	"	£315,458
1841	"	£397,076
1842	"	£420,171
1843	"	£407,884
1844	"	£414,570
1845	"	£500,833
1846	"	£360,452
1847	"	£469,448

²¹ PRO FO84/710 19 July 1847 W Hutton, London.

Anti-Slave Trade Squadron was clearly struggling to have any effect ²². Although the later 1830s and 1840s saw the founder of the house of De Souza at Whydah decline into old age and debt, the same period saw the establishment of new figures able to respond to the eastward shift of the trade. Most notable of these was Domingo Martinez, a Brazilian taken under the wing of De Souza during the 1830s who defected to Lagos and a more promising employer. On his patron's death a short time later Martinez took over the business himself. After a brief sojourn in Brazil and his re-establishment at Porto-Novo in 1846, Martinez only reached the peak of his commercial and political powers in the final years of the 1840s. Far from finding that his trade in slaves was being replaced by that in more 'legitimate' articles, Martinez, above all others proved the compatibility of the two trades. The combination made him the most prominent slave trader in the Bight of Benin after the death of De Souza in 1850 ²³.

The success of the slave-traders both, African and European, was evident.

According to the Methodist missionary, Thomas Birch Freeman, there was no place along the whole West Coast of Africa where the slave trade was carried on so much as on the Bight of Benin and no part of the Bight met the vigour of the area between Cape St Paul and Lagos ²⁴.

However, Badagry itself was not flourishing. According to Ajayi, the town's Atlantic trade had fallen into 'ruin and decline', resulting in poverty and 'persistent grumbling' about the 'absence of trade' ²⁵. Freeman explained Badagry's lack of Atlantic operations as being the result of British influence, which by 1843 he stated was 'more powerfully felt than at any other point along

²² The expense and limited success of the squadron led to calls for its abolition inside and outside Parliament during the mid to late 1840s. See chapter 8, p. 251-252.

²³ See D A Ross, 'The Career of Domingo Martinez in the Bight of Benin 1833-64', *IAH* 6 (i) (1965), pp. 79-90.

²⁴ WMMSA Freeman on Slavery in the Bight of Benin.

²⁵ Ajayi, *Christian Missions...* p. 34.

the shores of the Bight' ²⁶. He was presumably referring to the additional focus of both missionary and naval attentions from 1842 onwards. But it would appear that such attentions had not basically changed the pattern of Badagrian commerce, and had merely modified it.

There is very little evidence to suggest why Badagry, which in 1825 had five Portuguese factories, should have declined as an Atlantic port in the period prior to increased British attentions from the end of the 1830s. Ajayi suggests that it was the vigilance of the British Squadron. However, this alone would surely not account for a decline which did not affect the port's near neighbours. The return of Adele to Lagos and the resultant resurgence of factionalism within the town as the chiefs attempted to reassert authority may provide some clues. However, the fact that as early as 1830 the Landers did not meet a Portuguese slave-trader there indicates that Badagry's position as an Atlantic Port was at least in decline prior to the departure of Adele. Without further evidence it is possible only to conclude that Badagry was unable to compete with her nearest neighbours, notably Dahomean-dominated Porto-Novo and Lagos, at which places the Atlantic dealers, such as Martinez, were based. It must be assumed that the disruption on the road between Badagry and its sometime patron Abeokuta during this period discouraged the Egba from establishing an important trade in interior war captives along this path. It would appear then that Badagry even before 1842, was acting not as a point of slave embarkation, but as a point of collection and despatch in the lagoon traffic. Freeman noted the importance of the lagoons by which spies in the various towns were able to avoid the attentions of the squadrons and that 'a constant communication is kept up betwixt the parties by means of canoes' ²⁷. According to this source such agents were operational in all towns, where they purchased and shipped slaves by water to more amenable embarkation points, including Badagry. The missionary Annear

²⁶ WMMSA Freeman on Slavery in the Bight of Benin.

²⁷ WMMSA Freeman on Slavery in the Bight of Benin.

in a later episode described how such transactions operated. He stated that a Sierra Leonian kidnapped at Badagry was taken by his captor to the Chiefs Posu and Akran who subsequently sent him to Lagos to be sold to a Portuguese slave-dealer there ²⁸.

Badagry's decline as an Atlantic Slaving port prior to 1842 was not, it would appear, as a result of competition from 'legitimate' trade. The factory belonging to Mr Houtson, established in 1824, had clearly disappeared at his death in 1825²⁹. There was no trace of any further commercial enterprise on Lander's return to Badagry either in 1826 or again in 1830. It would also appear that a Captain Marmon was unsuccessful in his attempt to establish a factory there in 1838 ³⁰. But in 1841 Thomas Hutton established a factory at Badagry which proved far more lasting. Revd Freeman's Journal of his initial impressions of Badagry in the early 1840s portray a busy port. In 1842, for example, four ships arrived between the end of September and the beginning of November, one of which; the 'Oscar', was clearly involved in taking palm oil from the Hutton factory ³¹. According to Governor Hill, Hutton's factory was readily supplied with palm oil³².

There is no evidence to suggest population figures during the 1830s. But it has been estimated that by the mid-1840s Badagry's population was as high as eleven thousand, although it is more likely to have been around the five to six thousand mark estimated by a contemporary source ³³. After the departure of

²⁸ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 207. WMMSA 24 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

²⁹ See chapter 2, pp. 59-60.

³⁰ Okaro K'Ojwang has suggested that Captain Marmon's palm oil trading activities were so successful that the King of Dahomey plotted to have him removed from Badagry [Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 247; Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri...', p. 53].

³¹ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 207.

³² PRO CO96/4 16 May 1844 Hill, Cape Coast.

³³ Espousing the missionary cause by writing without firsthand knowledge of the area, Miss Tucker estimated Badagry's population during this period as 11,000 [Tucker, Abeokuta..., p. 97]. However, resident missionary Charles Gollmer estimated in 1845 that the figure was closer to 5000 or 6000 [CMSA CA2/043/95 28 January 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry]. It is interesting to note here that

Adele, Badagry also evidently maintained its 'number of petty chiefs' who were, according to a source from 1843, 'in a great measure independent of each other'³⁴. The 'petty chiefs' operational in Badagry after the departure of Adele again can only be reconstructed using sources from the early 1840s. However, assuming that the pattern, if not the exact personalities themselves, would have remained constant over approximately seven years, it is possible to gain a general picture of political authority over that period. According to one of the first missionary arrivals at Badagry in 1842 there were by this time 'several towns' in Badagry identified as English, French, Spanish and Portuguese by one source and as English, French, Portuguese and Dutch 'etc' by another of the same period ³⁵.

'Warru' more usually Wawu, was clearly identified in both sources as the Chief of English Town ³⁶. The Wawu of this period is named by Avoseh as Wawu-Zanwhehoru-Mesi ³⁷. Due to his close links with British visitors the Wawu featured prominently in British written accounts of Badagry in the 1840s and 1850s ³⁸. In 1843 he was described by one missionary visitor as being 'a very good sort of man, very friendly and attentive and would do anything for us' ³⁹.

Another personality identified as an English Chief during the 1840s was Mobi of Boeko Ward. According to Avoseh this particular chief, named Podowu, was the first such chief after the ward had changed from priestly control. Intriguingly, Avoseh also states that the title or name Mobi was a nickname given to the chief by Brazilians. This possibly indicates a commercial connection with this group and also suggests that Brazilian merchants, if no longer resident within Badagry

such was the influence of Miss Tucker's work that Gollmer's eldest son and biographer chose to use that lady's figures rather than those of his subject ! [C H V Gollmer, His Life and Missionary Labours, (London, 1889), p. 18].

³⁴ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

³⁵ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., Appendix C; WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

³⁶ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 206; WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry

³⁷ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 28.

³⁸ As 'British' host, it is understandable that the Wawu should appear prominently in British written sources. But this should not automatically imply a political prominence. It would appear, however, that the British presence and commercial potential did give the Wawu an important political role during this period.

³⁹ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

itself, certainly retained close ties with the port ⁴⁰.

Using the account given by Avoseh, the Jengen or French Chief, called 'Jingi' by Freeman, may have been Jengen Athunde ⁴¹. It was he who appeared as the successor to that position after the politically skillful Jengen Sinto Agara had, in the final years of the eighteenth century succeeded in expelling his main political rival the Posu Wrawru ⁴². But it is also possible that the Jengen at this time was his successor Jengen Gbede during whose time, Avoseh states, 'the town was ceded to the British' ⁴³. Both these possibilities suggest unusually long chieftaincies, and it may well be that certain holders of the title have been omitted ⁴⁴.

As during the Landers' visit, the identification of a 'Spanish' chief as distinct from the Portuguese chief is confusing. But a clue to his identity may be that the 'Okhan' or Akran of Ijegba Ward was a prominent chief. Indeed in 1845 he was identified as a 'Headchief of this place' ⁴⁵. In the same year a meeting of all the 'principal chiefs' was described at the house of the 'Portuguese Chief', indicating, I would suggest, that the Akran was indeed the Portuguese chief ⁴⁶. From Avoseh's list it would appear that the Akran in question was Akran Toyi of Jigbeko House who retained his chieftaincy into the 1850s ⁴⁷.

The Dutch Chief during the 1840s has been clearly identified as the Posu of Posuko Ward, although the informant admitted that he had previously mistakenly identified him as a French Chief ⁴⁸. From Avoseh's account it would

⁴⁰ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 28.

⁴¹ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits... p. 207; Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 25.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 19-20.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 28.

⁴⁵ CMSA CA2/043/96 12 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁴⁶ CMSA CA2/085/228 18 May 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

⁴⁷ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 23.

⁴⁸ WMMSA 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

seem likely that the holder of the title was Agongoro who, like the Akran, retained the title into the 1850s. The favourable description of him in the early 1840s as 'a very influential man and a great warrior a man of good judgment and friendly disposition' fits with a similar sketch of the early 1850s⁴⁹. In this later account he was said to be a man of 'majestic aspect', 'acute intellect' and 'good judgment'⁵⁰.

Chief Bala of Asago Ward was also mentioned during this period, although usually indirectly. Avoseh states that the whilst the first holder of that title arrived soon after Hendrick Hertogh in the 1730s, the second was in power during the early 1860s⁵¹. Avoseh may have miscalculated the number of Balas at Badagry, or they may indeed have been a considerable space between the first and second holders of the title, but it would appear that, at least during the early part of the 1840s, this chieftaincy was in operation. There are also references to Banker and Bahler, who were evidently the same person and must be the Bala of Asago. Unfortunately no further information is given about the chief⁵². From the mid to late 1840s there are also an number of references to a Chief Motang⁵³. From a number of missionary sources, this chief evidently played an increasingly important political role by the end of that decade. He was finally identified in 1851 as being the Balla or Bala of Asago⁵⁴.

There are no specific contemporary references to the other ward chiefs in Badagry, notably those of Ganho and Wharako. Indeed there is no contemporary

⁴⁹ WMMSA 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

⁵⁰ CMR October 1851, pp. 218-219, 21 March 1850 Thomas King's Journal, Badagry.

⁵¹ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 26

⁵² Annear referred to 'Banker' [WMMSA 26 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry] and Martin referred to 'Bahler' [WMMSA 26 June 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry]. There are references, also by Annear in the same year, to 'Ogbanga' as one of Badagry's 'chief warriors' [WMMSA 24 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry]. Unless Annear was extremely careless in noted down the names of these men, 'Banker' and 'Ogbanga' must have been two different figures. The latter title may be connected with the Yoruba military title 'Gbonka'.

⁵³ CMSA CA2/043/108 10 August 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁵⁴ CMSA CA2/043/111 28 March 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

mention of Ganho Ward until the 1860s. However, tradition suggests that this chieftaincy was established by an early Akran. According to Avoseh it was the third chief of this ward who held the position during the early 1860s so I would suggest that the position may have been created during a period of Ijegba dominance at the height of Portuguese commercial activity at Badagry in the latter years of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries. In this way then the holder of the title in the 1830s and 1840s may have been only the second chief of Ganho named by Avoseh as Su-Dahogan ⁵⁵. The Finhento of Wharako Ward during this period may have been either Aroyon, who held the title in the 1850s or his predecessor Tofon ⁵⁶. But it would appear that both these chiefs remained in the background of Badagry political life during the 1840s.

There were then at least six prominent ward chiefs active in Badagry by the 1840s, with two others, unidentified by contemporary sources, remaining in the background of political life. However, by this time there were also clearly other important personalities who were very influential in the political and commercial life of the town. Although dating his arrival is impossible without further evidence, it is clear that by the mid 1840s the Chief of Apa or 'Akpa', Hertogh's original patron in the area, was now spending 'the greater part of his time at Badagry' ⁵⁷. Described merely as a small town about three miles west, Apa no longer held any influence over Badagry, and the transferal of its chief into that town, where he had no discernible political role, would indicate the virtual absorption of Apa into Badagry territory.

Another individual immigrant to Badagry who does however appear by the 1840s to have taken on an important role was the Mewu, the exiled 'prime minister' of Porto-Novo. During the upheavals of the latter 1820s and very early

⁵⁵ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 31.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 31-32.

⁵⁷ In June 1846 Gollmer noted that the chief of Apa 'at present resides here' [*CMR* March 1847, p. 49, 7 June 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

1830s this chief had sought refuge at Badagry under Adele ⁵⁸. However, by the 1840s it is clear that this Mewu had established himself at Mowo, a town to the north east of Badagry, where he had usurped the position of the native chief and resided as a figure 'very celebrated for the number and power of his fetishes, and his devotion to the various gods of the country' ⁵⁹. But the Mewu, it would appear, had also taken on more than a symbolic role as a religious sage, for at his base on the frontier he was 'intrusted with the defence of Badagry, against all enemies from the interior' ⁶⁰. There are also a number of references to 'Alassa', Chief of Ilase, who was either a periodic resident, or frequent visitor to Badagry throughout the 1840s ⁶¹. That ward chieftaincy was not the only route to prominence is also supported by evidence that a man called Ajagbi or Ajagbe, was described as 'one of the principal warriors at Badagri' as well as a 'respectable inhabitant' ⁶². Furthermore, 'Ahamara' or Ahamarra' was noted as a 'notorious slave catcher' ⁶³. The internal politics of the ward system also appears to have thrown up at least a couple of other men to prominence. Accordingly one source of the mid-1840s briefly mentions a man called Losoco, who was an unsuccessful claimant to the title of Posu ⁶⁴. Another mentions Honbati, presumably the same figure as the Hunpatin, who is described by Avoseh as a prominent figure in Boeko Ward ⁶⁵.

That such political fragmentation both inside and outside the wards should have been heightened during a period of economic hardship is easily understandable

⁵⁸ See chapter 6, pp. 192-194.

⁵⁹ CMSA CA2/085/230 25 November 1945 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁰ WMMSA 28 May 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁶¹ CMR October 1846, p. 231. 25 November 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry; CMR May 1848, p. 81, 23 May 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; CMR June 1849, p. 124, 11 April 1848 Smith's Journal, Badagry. See also chapter 9, p. 307, footnote 113.

⁶² WMMSA 26 June 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry; CMR October 1846, p. 228., 10 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; CMR December 1848, p. 257, 9/10 December 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁶³ CMSA CA2/043/98 27 February 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; CMR December 1848, p. 257, 9/10 December 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁴ WMMSA 26 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁵ CMR December 1848, p. 257, 9/10 December 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 33.

within a system based largely upon commercial competition. An observer of the period stated that the divisions between chiefs, initially based on the nationalities of past slave traders resident in the town, were, in the early 1840s, 'kept up with a zeal which breeds jealousies and animosities among the chiefs sometimes' ⁶⁶. Not surprisingly then, the arrival of a new immigrant group with commercial connections both to other parts of the coast and to Europe was welcomed by at least certain sections of Badagrian society as an opportunity for improvement, but was viewed by other sections with suspicion.

The Early Sierra Leonian Community at Badagry

As British subjects the Sierra Leonian emigrants were taken under the wing of the 'Wawu', the 'English Chief' of Ahoviko Ward. In this way then, it was recognised by that chief, by the Sierra Leonians themselves and the other ward chiefs that it was the Wawu's duty to defend the interests of these strangers. In return it was evidently envisaged that the Sierra Leonians would bring increased commercial activity to Ahoviko. Avoseh notes that it was James Ferguson, a 'flourishing trader', who initially 'became very intimate with Chief Wawu' ⁶⁷. It is interesting to observe that the missionary Samuel Crowther enthused in early 1846 that on landing at Badagry the first thing the Sierra Leonian people did was inform the chiefs of their 'detestation against the slave trade' ⁶⁸. It is highly probable that this dislike emerged from a desire for self preservation and as a means by which to espouse the cause of a more 'legitimate' commerce in which they themselves sought to take part. It must be noted that the most explicit reference to the operation of the Wawu's role as host and protector occur when the chief neglected this duty, evidently as a result of his disappointment in the low return on his investment ⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

⁶⁷ Avoseh, The History of St Thomas's Badagry, p. 5.

⁶⁸ PRO FO84/663 19 April 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

⁶⁹ PRO FO84/663 19 April 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

As well as stimulating a new line commercial link to Badagry however, the Sierra Leonians also occasioned the arrival of far less tangible but arguably more influential imports: Christianity and 'civilisation'.

The spiritual well-being of the immigrants had occasioned grave concern amongst the churches established at Sierra Leone. The religious beliefs of the Sierra Leonians were mixed. Amongst those who emigrated were some who continued to practice traditional religions and also Muslims, who possibly, amongst other motives, hoped by emigration to escape the Christian ethics of the colony. But amongst them were a number of committed Christians, including James Ferguson. Ferguson, a member of the Methodist Church at Sierra Leone, emerged as a leading figure, as both trader and Christian, amongst the new Badagrian arrivals. Seeking to fulfill the hopes of Thomas Will and Co, who had sought to use a settlement at Badagry to espouse the Christian cause, Ferguson, in association with Chief Wawu, wrote to the leader of the Methodist Community at Sierra Leone in March 1841 requesting a missionary ⁷⁰.

The call for a missionary at Badagry coincided with a peak in evangelical fervour and political manouvering. The failure of the Niger expedition in 1841 forced a reassessment of missionary policy and tactics. Although, as Ajayi notes, it was recognised that the emigrants were not 'the crusaders against the twin evils of idolatory and slavery' which Buxton had envisaged, they did offer an alternative path after the dramatic failures of the official experiment on the Niger ⁷¹. As a result of this, and encouraged by reports of the emigrants' good reception both at Badagry and Abeokuta, Revd Thomas Dove, head of the Methodist Church at Sierra Leone, agreed to the settlers' request. Thomas Birch Freeman, Superintendent of the Methodist Mission at Cape Coast, with Fanti assistants Mr and Mrs William De Graft, were despatched to Badagry. They arrived on 24

⁷⁰ Avoseh, The History of St Thomas's Badagry, p. 5.

⁷¹ Ajayi, Christian Missions..., p. 30.

September 1842 with the intention of making the town an outstation of the Cape Coast Mission ⁷².

The missionary party were warmly received at Badagry by James Ferguson, Captain Parsons, the agent residing at the newly established Hutton factory, and also by Chief Wawu ⁷³. Eager to begin their work, they quickly erected a temporary bamboo chapel and mission house of planks brought from Sierra Leone, costing in total £300 ⁷⁴. Freeman himself noted only that the mission station was established on a 'sizeable piece of land in a healthy part of the town'⁷⁵. But it is interesting to note that although, according to a later description by Miss Tucker, the missionaries established their premises in the English ward of the town, according to William Gollmer, a missionary arrival of 1845, the original Methodist premises were based, like Hutton's factory, in the French section. Gollmer stated that it was only as a result of the Methodist settlement that the land was subsequently transferred under English control ⁷⁶.

The Initial Progress of Christianity at Badagry

Having nowhere to preach, the missionaries began by holding services under an awning⁷⁷. However, by 13 October 1842 a temporary bamboo house had been erected and a service was held three days later attended by 'many of the pagan natives ...who appeared interested and attentive' ⁷⁸. By the middle of November a temporary bamboo chapel had been completed which held up to two hundred and regular services were begun ⁷⁹.

⁷² Ibid, p. 31.

⁷³ WMMSA 11 October 1842 De Graft, Badagry.

⁷⁴ Ajayi, Christian Missions..., p. 31.

⁷⁵ WMMSA 3 October 1842 Freeman, Badagry.

⁷⁶ The reason for Hutton's establishment in Awhanjigo was clearly to give his factory easy access to both lagoon and sea. The WMMS may also have desired such access [CMSA CA2/043/95 6 February 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; NNAI CSO5/2 Agreement Between Ghingy Cabacier of Badagry and Thomas Hutton of London for the Sale of a Plot of Land in the Centre of Badagry, Badagry, May 22 1842].

⁷⁷ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 207.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 209.

⁷⁹ WMMSA 14 November 1842 Freeman, Badagry.

Reminiscences about the Badagry mission and later accounts have tended to present a pessimistic view from its very inception. According to Miss Tucker Badagry was 'anything but a pleasant or promising station' ⁸⁰. Even Revd Freeman in the introduction to his published journal stated that

friends of Africa...declared that, should the attempt be attended with success, they should regard that success as furnishing proof that there is nothing too difficult for missionary enterprise to achieve ⁸¹

Badagry was described as a place of superstition, cruelty, and slave-trading, populated by a corrupt and drunken population. However, these accounts were coloured by later disappointments. From Freeman's own writings of the early period and the letters and journals of his missionary assistant William De Graft, it would appear that the mission began optimistically. De Graft described his work as 'delightful' and Freeman reported that, due to the friendly reception they received, they were able to make 'an encouraging commencement of their work' ⁸².

On finding that the majority of Sierra Leone emigrants had continued on into the interior towards Abeokuta, Freeman followed in December 1842, after receiving a cordial invitation to do so by the Egba King Sodeke ⁸³. Travelling via Mowo and the Abeokuta military encampment at Ado, the visit played a vital role in shaping missionary policy ⁸⁴. He remained at Abeokuta only eight days but was impressed by Sodeke's evident hospitality and apparent interest in Christianity ⁸⁵. It was at this early stage that Abeokuta began to emerge as the focus of missionary efforts. Freeman noted in his journal that just as commercial

⁸⁰ Tucker, Abeokuta... p. 98.

⁸¹ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits... p. 198.

⁸² WMMSA 11 October 1842 De Graft, Badagry; Freeman, Journal of Various Visits... p. 200.

⁸³ Soon after the missionaries arrival on the coast Sodeke sent a messenger to meet them with the present of a pony, saddle, bridle and an invitation to visit him [Ibid, p. 209].

⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 215-217.

⁸⁵ Kopytoff, Preface to Modern Nigeria... p. 49.

intercourse was already established with the interior via Badagry, so it would be by this route that they would spread the Word ⁸⁶. Freeman returned to the coast for Christmas then left on 29 December for Whydah, from where he was eventually able to make a journey on to Abomey ⁸⁷. Freeman had feared that the intervention of Dahomey might have interrupted the mission at Badagry. But, having reassured the Dahomean King over reports that in a fort rather than a chapel was being built there, he was impressed by the King's request for a mission at Whydah and his apparent willingness to abandon the slave trade ⁸⁸.

At Badagry, the mission under the care of De Graft began tentatively. Initial indigenous interest in the services of the church gave rise to large and 'attentive' congregations ⁸⁹. These sometimes included the Gun chiefs Wawu, Akran and Jengen, along with some of the Muslim inhabitants of the town ⁹⁰. But interest quickly dwindled. By early 1843 De Graft was forced to admit that despite the maintenance of numbers at about forty or fifty, the congregation was principally made up of Sierra Leonians and also some Egba people, who visited the town every week from Abeokuta to attend the market ⁹¹. By the middle of that year Methodist Society membership had increased from an initial twenty among the emigrants to forty-five. This included ten new converts to Christianity from amongst the Sierra Leonians, two Fantis and two elderly Muslim immigrants from the interior whom De Graft named Simeon and Anna⁹². There were no Gun converts or members. De Graft stated that the only progress amongst these people was that, whereas initially they had been

⁸⁶ Freeman, Journal of Various Visits..., p. 201.

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 201 & 213.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 201.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 210.

⁹⁰ The chiefs, it would appear, attended church only on particular occasions, for example the first service and also the day before Freeman departed for the interior. Muslim visitors, probably from the interior, also attended sporadically, presumably due to their periodic commercial connections with the town [Ibid, pp. 207, 214 & 212].

⁹¹ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

⁹² WMMSA 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

suspicious, those that came, now came confidently into the chapel ⁹³. However, the divided nature of Badagry's political structure was clearly causing problems. The Wawu, from whom the mission had received 'unwavering kindness and support', continued to maintain a secular interest in their presence ⁹⁴. He sent ten boys, including his son, to the mission school, established in January 1843 ⁹⁵. But, according to De Graft, by that time the Wawu was the missionaries' 'only friend' amongst the Badagry chiefs ⁹⁶.

The suspicion with which the mission was viewed was clearly associated with its 'Englishness'. This gave it a very difficult position within the town. De Graft stated that, in reply to his request for children for his school, the Portuguese chief refused, saying that his people would only be educated in Portuguese, in a Portuguese school. The missionary added also that, perhaps for similar reasons, the Dutch Chief would not send children to the school either. He lamented that in this way his work was then confined 'to a very small portion of the town indeed'. Noting that nationality was the root problem, De Graft simplistically and ominously suggested that the solution may be to 'concentrate them all into one body of British subjects'⁹⁷.

The second half of 1843 saw improvements, at least in the progress of the mission school. By July of that year the original thirteen children had been increased to forty or fifty boys and girls. This number now included six children belonging to the Posu, who had recently had a change of heart ⁹⁸. De Graft stated at this point that now, as well as having the Wawu and Posu on their side, the French chief was also supportive of their cause and that such connections

⁹³ WMMSA 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

⁹⁴ WMMSA Early 1843 Freeman, Cape Coast.

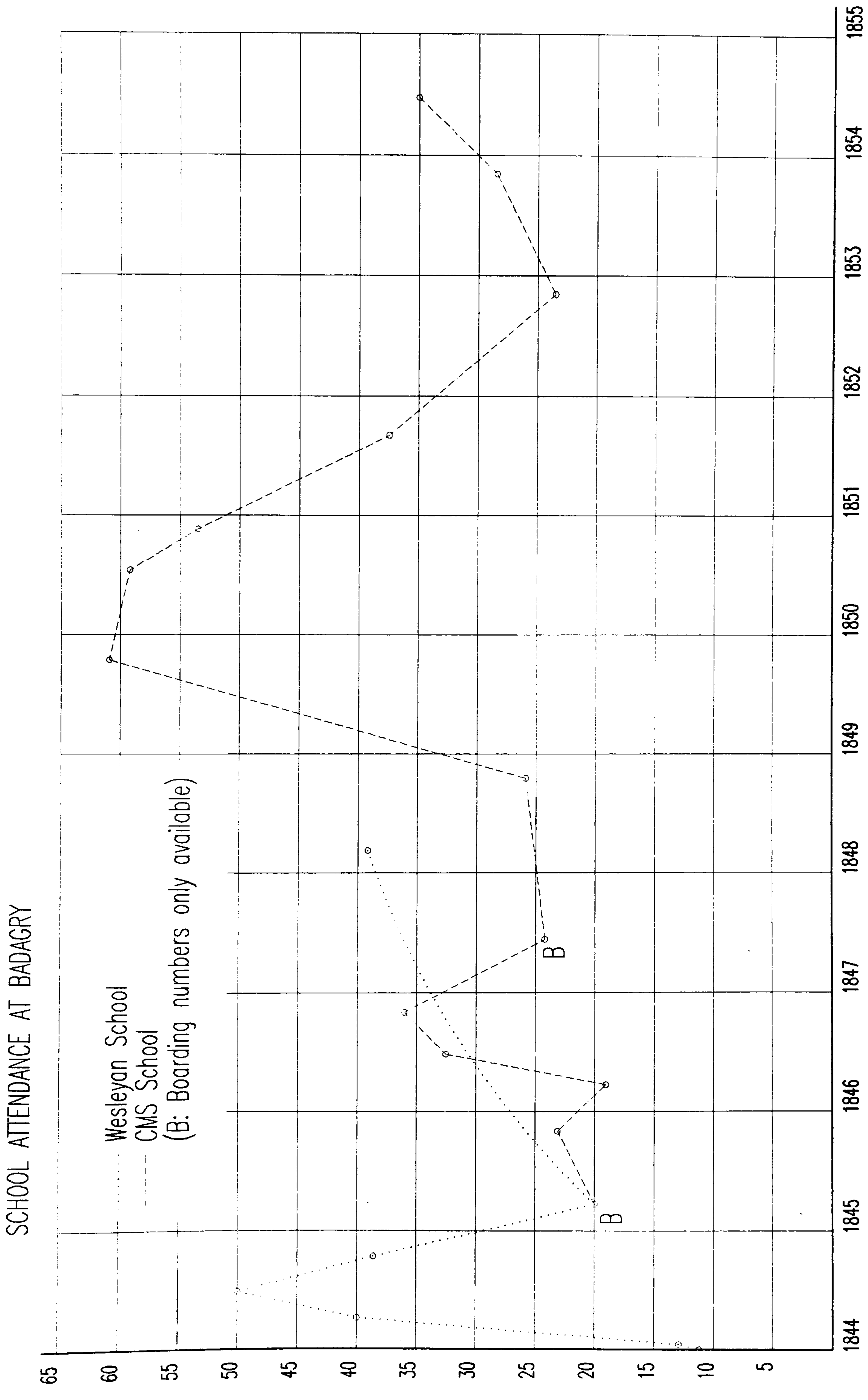
⁹⁵ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

⁹⁶ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

⁹⁷ WMMSA 21 March 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

⁹⁸ WMMSA 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry. See Figure 8.

figure 8



increased his hopes of reaching the 'Popo' people ⁹⁹. However, his suggested imperialistic solution to Gun indifference and suspicion almost became a reality. In the late summer of 1843, at the request of Revd Freeman and with the compliance of Governor Maclean at Cape Coast Castle, Badagry was placed under the British flag. Freeman's aims were wider than those of De Graft. He had emerged from his travels in the coastal hinterland having identified Abeokuta as the most promising focus for missionary activity. The movement of the Sierra Leonian emigrants into the interior was the key measure by which he saw the spread of Christianity and the suppression of the slave trade being achieved ¹⁰⁰. However he evidently also recognised the dangers posed to the Egba link with the missionaries by insecurity and jealousy on the coast. Furthermore the Badagry mission faced a further threat from Lagos. According to Freeman, there was open opposition from the Lagos people to the establishment of legitimate traders and a mission. In early 1843 he wrote that not only was it the Lagos people who had misinformed the Dahomean King that the British were building a fort, but also that the continuous threat to the Hutton factory and the mission station meant that a close watch was kept on the lagoon in case Lagos should launch an attack on its neighbour ¹⁰¹. Freeman concluded that it was only the establishment of Badagry under British influence that would secure the link between that part of the coast and the interior ¹⁰².

Ajayi has suggested that, having visited both Abeokuta and Dahomey, Freeman would have welcomed either power taking over effective rule at Badagry, in order to preserve the security of the mission¹⁰³. But it would appear from contemporary sources that neither power was able or willing to provide the satisfactory intervention that the missionary required. Freeman was evidently

⁹⁹ WMMSA 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry.

¹⁰⁰ WMMSA Freeman on Slavery in the Bight of Benin.

¹⁰¹ WMMSA Early 1843 Freeman, Cape Coast.

¹⁰² WMMSA Freeman on Slavery in the Bight of Benin.

¹⁰³ Ajayi, Christian Missions... p. 35.

optimistic about the Egbas' receptiveness towards the Sierra Leone emigrants, but he also envisaged the relationship between Badagry and Abeokuta as a possible weakness in the process. At the same time as noting the 'friendly' relations between the two places he also recognised that this friendship was 'by no means free from jealousy'. He concluded that it was the 'bringing of the two parties into friendly relations with England' which would 'remove that jealousy and throw open a wider field for the introduction of Christianity and consequent civilization'. Freeman then went on to expose the dangers of the situation when he noted that to secure such a link required a careful balance of policy between the states which might otherwise lead to 'serious misunderstandings and perhaps wars betwixt them' ¹⁰⁴. The suggestion that Abeokuta might not have been in a position to secure direct control over Badagry or was at least unwilling to do so without further pressure and support from an outside source, may have much to do with the continued difficulties the Egba faced in maintaining its ties with the coast. The Egbado country, notably around Ota, had proved obstructive in the quest for a route to the sea, and the attempt to maintain direct control over areas even further south would, at this stage, have been undesirable. Much more satisfactory was the maintenance of links through commercial and diplomatic influences which not only gave the Egba a coastal port without actual military intervention, but also in return, gave them added manpower in their campaign in the Egbado country ¹⁰⁵.

Badagry's relationship with Dahomey was also that of a nominal tributary, but in reality was less mutually advantageous. Contemporary sources evidently saw the coastal state as being under the protection of Dahomey at this stage, however, the King of Dahomey, having been reassured that British intentions were peacefu.,

¹⁰⁴ WMMSA Freeman on Slavery in the Bight of Benin.

¹⁰⁵ In July 1848 De Graft noted that the Posu had only recently returned from the Ado encampment where he had been helping the Egba siege. De Graft added that he was returning merely to deal with some public business and would probably soon go back to the encampment [WMMSA 10 July 1843 De Graft, Badagry].

was understandably more concerned with the commercial situation at Whydah¹⁰⁶. Telling Freeman exactly what he wished to hear, the King not only granted the fullest assurance of his protection for the Christian mission at Badagry, but expressed an anxious wish that a missionary station and school be established at Whydah. He also appeared ready to abandon the slave trade in return for monetary concessions and guarantees of 'legitimate' commerce¹⁰⁷. In this mood of optimism Captain Foote of the Royal Navy drew up two treaties to be signed by the King on Freeman's proposed return to Abomey¹⁰⁸.

Freeman's obvious continued concern over the situation at Badagry, despite his optimism over Abeokuta and Dahomey, was matched by the anti-slaving and territorial ambitions of Governor Maclean at Cape Coast Castle. On being petitioned by letter, Maclean immediately saw that 'advantage should be taken of the present favourable disposition evinced by the King of Dahomey', from whose territories, he stated, more slaves had been exported in the previous thirty years than from any other similar stretch of coast¹⁰⁹. In May 1843 he wrote to the Colonial Office suggesting that the British fort at Whydah should be re-occupied and that Popo and Lagos be established as outposts. By these measures Maclean was convinced that 'we should...speedily effect the entire suppression of the slave trade along the Dahomey coast'. He concluded that if he was not so soon to be withdrawn from his post he should 're-hoist the British flag at Whydah, and Badagry, which I could do at a very trifling expense'¹¹⁰. Having expressed his support for such a scheme Maclean was confronted with Freeman himself who had just returned from Badagry, Abeokuta and Dahomey. The missionary pressed for action. Becoming even more enamoured with the project, Maclean took the initiative and, in August 1843, ordered that a Sergeant be sent to Badagry

¹⁰⁶ PRO CO96/2 20 May 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast.

¹⁰⁷ PRO CO96/2 20 May 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast.

¹⁰⁸ WMMSA Freeman on Slavery in the Bight of Benin.

¹⁰⁹ PRO CO96/2 20 May 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast.

¹¹⁰ PRO CO96/2 20 May 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast.

to raise the British flag over the town in return for a 'few presents' to the Badagry chiefs ¹¹¹. The onerous duties of this single member of the Gold Coast Corps were that, without interfering in the 'affairs of the natives' he was to 'prevent all attempts at the exportation of slaves', 'protect the British missionaries and traders' and also 'the numerous Emigrants who have lately removed from Sierra Leone to that place' ¹¹².

Avoseh has described the arrival of the Sergeant in Badagry as the arrival of British influence in Nigeria ¹¹³. But I would suggest that the affair was merely the symbolic gesture of an influence which had already begun to pervade Badagrian politics from at least the arrival of Freeman in 1842 and arguably from that of the Sierra Leonians in 1839 onwards. Ajayi has suggested that in the long run the establishment of a British 'garrison' at Badagry signified a shift in the attention of the British government, which until that point had been wholly focused on the area of the Niger Delta ¹¹⁴. But if such a shift did take place, it does not appear to have caused the Colonial Office to make an immediate re-assessment of the British position in the Bight of Benin. A low-key letter to Governor Hill, Maclean's more circumspect replacement, at the end of 1843 merely stated that no objection was made to this 'temporary' arrangement, and that Hill should at some point assess the 'expediency' of garrisoning Badagry ¹¹⁵. Ultimately it would appear that the formation of a 'British policy' on the Slave Coast during the early part of the 1840s remained very much in the hands of those individuals who were active on the coast itself, whether as Government agents, missionaries or traders.

¹¹¹ PRO CO96/2 16 September 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast.

¹¹² PRO CO96/2 16 September 1843 Maclean, Cape Coast.

¹¹³ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 33.

¹¹⁴ Ajayi, *Christian Missions*, p. 35.

¹¹⁵ The short-lived garrisoning of Badagry has been largely ignored. However, it is important to note that, despite the very temporary and extremely small-scale nature of the affair, the missionary residents, at least, viewed the town as 'British Badagry' [PRO CO96/4 16 May 1844 Hill, Cape Coast].

Badagry Under the British Flag

The early months of 1844 saw the arrival of a new Methodist missionary at Badagry when Revd Annear and his wife arrived in May of that year to replace the De Grafts¹¹⁶. According to Annear it had initially been the Society's intention for him to proceed on to Abeokuta, but by August 1844, for unexplained reasons, he had been instructed to remain on the coast ¹¹⁷.

Despite numerous bouts of ill health for both himself and his wife, the couple began their mission work at Badagry with vigour and enthusiasm ¹¹⁸. From his own early writings, Annear appears to have become popular with the ward chiefs, who were all willing to have their children educated in the school ¹¹⁹. Furthermore, with the support of two unnamed chiefs, the missionary determined to begin a boarding school¹²⁰. By July 1844 he was further encouraged by the success of this venture and his wife was also operating a girls' school ¹²¹. At the tea-party given by the Annears to celebrate their first wedding anniversary in September 1844, the mission's scholars numbered thirty eight ¹²².

From Annear's journal and letters, it would appear that the Badagry church congregations were also encouraging. Throughout 1844 he wrote of 'large' numbers gathered for Sunday worship, which continued to grow ¹²³. Annear, like both Freeman and De Graft, saw the Egba as the most promising focus for Christianity ¹²⁴. But he also expressed optimism over other sections of Badagry

¹¹⁶ WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹¹⁷ WMMSA 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹¹⁸ On a number of occasions Annear noted that he was too ill to carry out his duties [WMMSA 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry].

¹¹⁹ WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry; WMMSA 27 July 1844 Annear's Journal in 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹²⁰ WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹²¹ WMMSA 27 July 1844 Annear's Journal in 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹²² WMMSA 20 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

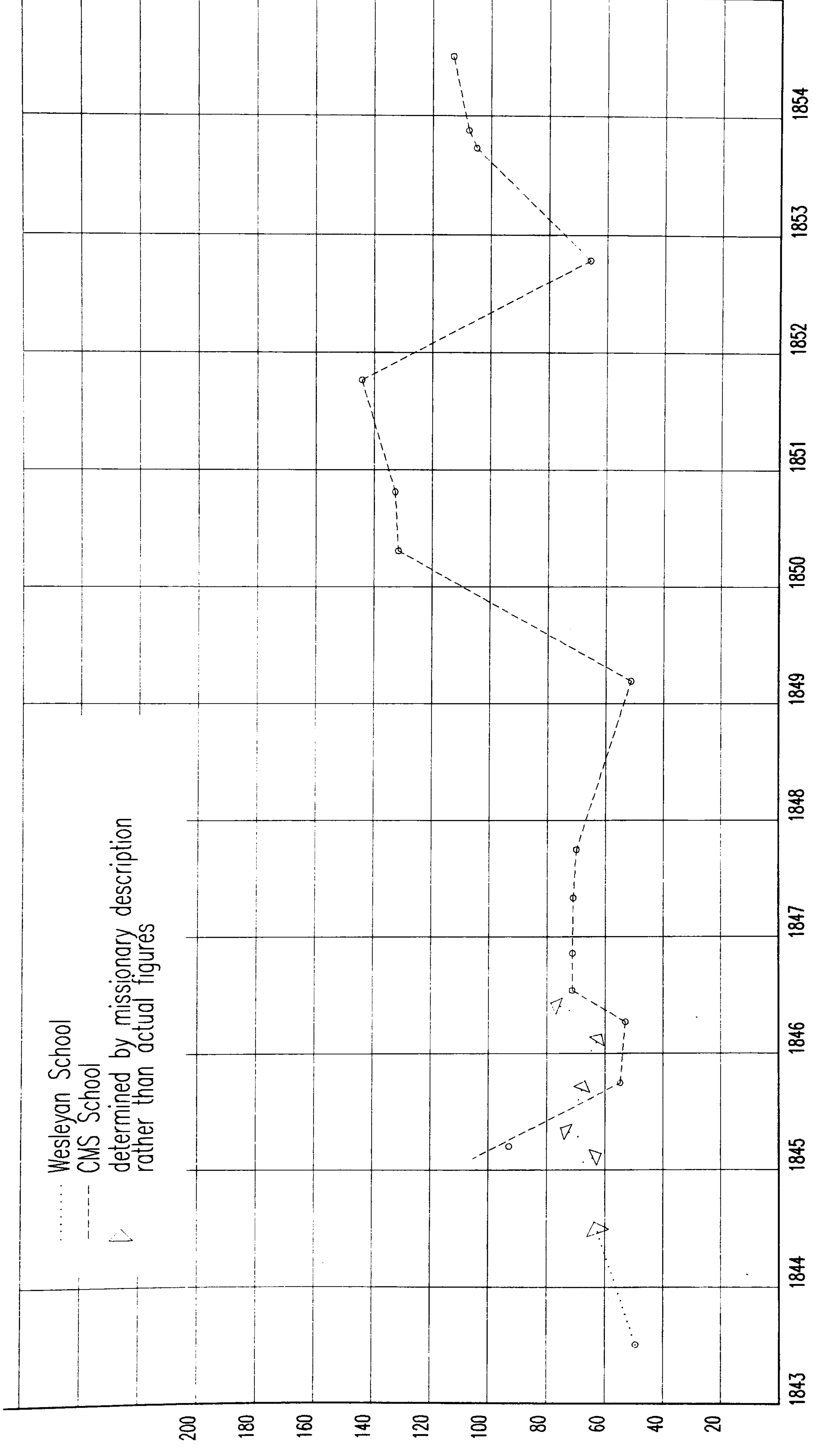
¹²³ WMMSA 30 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry; WMMSA 8 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry. See Figure 9.

¹²⁴ In August 1843 Annear wrote sentimentally how:

My heart has often been the seat of delightful emotions while beholding the athletic warrior from the Encampment with his

figure 9

SUNDAY MORNING CHURCH CONGREGATION SIZES IN BADAGRY



society attending the chapel, including Sierra Leone immigrants and labourers from Cape Coast. But it is important to note that in June 1844 Annear was also claiming that, while half the congregation was made up of visitors from the interior, the rest were Badagrians ¹²⁵. Who exactly he meant by 'Badagrians' is unclear. It would appear that he was including Sierra Leonians resident at Badagry in this category. But in August of that year he also stated that whilst two-thirds of the hundred and fifty strong congregation was made up of Sierra Leonian emigrants and labourers, as many as a third were 'heathens from the town' ¹²⁶. It is clear that a large proportion of the Badagry congregation were 'strangers'. But it would seem that there were also a number of Gun people attending the Sunday service. However, despite this cause for optimism, actual conversions were very low among all sectors of society. In August 1844 Annear recorded the baptism of an 'aged native' and his wife. But presumably this was referring to the same 'Simeon' and 'Anna' who had joined the church under De Graft. These first converts were not Gun, both being Muslim exiles from the interior ¹²⁷.

To what extent the apparent, if hesitant, progress of the Badagry mission during 1844 may have been in any way attributable to the raising of the British flag and its incorporation into Maclean's 'informal and largely illegal protectorate' is difficult to assess ¹²⁸. Ajayi has noted the energy with which Sergeant Bart appears to have acted and the establishment of the mission premises as 'the fort, the gaol and the temple'. Furthermore, Annear seems to have assumed an increasingly secular role 'if any political affair go wrong demanding the interference of British law and authority' ¹²⁹. There is little evidence, from even

destructive 'war-hatchet' over his shoulder kneeling in the presence of God with the congregation

[WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry].

¹²⁵ WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹²⁶ WMMSA 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹²⁷ WMMSA 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹²⁸ Ajayi, *Christian Missions...* p. 35.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 35-36.

Annear's writings, by which to assess how successful the resident Sergeant was in carrying out his impossibly difficult duties for suppressing the slave trade and protecting British subjects without, contrary to orders, becoming involved in 'native affairs'. Indeed, the few mentions he does receive in Annear's journal appear to involve his attendance at various social events ¹³⁰. From this lack of evidence, and the accompanying accounts of missionary activity, it would appear rather that the presence of the British flag at Badagry was used by Annear himself to take on a more political role, while the military man remained very much in the background. It was Annear, for example, who, in October 1844, after the kidnap of a girl from the mission yard, succeeded in gaining the Wawu's help in the search by threatening to leave the town and cause English ships to destroy the place ¹³¹. But Annear's increasing embroilment in the town's political affairs coincided with Badagry's descent into political intrigue against the mission.

By the latter part of 1844 Annear's initial popularity among all the chiefs had declined into suspicion and jealousy. Most notably the 'Portuguese Chiefs' were resentful of his relations with the Wawu, as both host and friend. Indeed the missionary stated that any 'agreement or compact' with one of the chiefs was met with suspicion and hostility by the others ¹³². In an attempt to avert increasing inter-ward tensions a meeting of the chiefs was called whereby all were to take a vow that they were not plotting against each other in secret. However, the occasion was used by the Posu to accuse the English chief of conspiracy against his fellows. Despite the Wawu's ritual denials and his assurances that the missionaries were the friends of all, the occasion was interrupted by the untimely arrival of one of the snakes sacred to Dangbe. Annear's dramatic and unnecessary destruction of this snake would appear not

¹³⁰ For example on the wedding anniversary of the Annears, the Sergeant joined them for tea along with the agents from Hutton's factory [WMMSA 20 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry].

¹³¹ WMMSA 30 October 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹³² WMMSA 27 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

only to have destroyed the solemnity and purpose of this important occasion, but furthermore to have alienated the Wawu, the leading adherent of Dangbe, who was 'shamed' by the action ¹³³.

The decline of Annear's popularity in Badagry after a rather promising start had several causes. It is clear that Annear both intentionally and unintentionally came into some ideological conflict with sections of the Badagry population. He himself disputed the assertion that Africa was a clean slate on which the missionaries could work. Indeed he argued that, although lacking the organisation of, for example, India, here too the missionaries must refute the teachings of the local religions ¹³⁴. There were only isolated incidents of concerted opposition from the indigenous priests of Badagry. That which did take place was more symbolic, for example the construction of an enormous idol of clay at the spot Annear chose for preaching near the market place ¹³⁵. However, whereas initially the ward chiefs had apologised for any disrespect and antagonism shown by their spiritual brethren, it was the chiefs themselves who now increasingly began to threaten the security of the Badagry mission.

The major internal threat of this period came, surprisingly, from Chief Mobi of Boeko, a chief who had been identified as an English chief and a lieutenant of the Wawu. Annear's rescue of a young boy enslaved by Mobi's men so enraged the chief that an attack on the mission yard seemed imminent. A night was spent by both parties preparing for confrontation, and it was only by the mediation of the Wawu and compromise by both parties that serious conflict was avoided ¹³⁶.

Annear clearly recognised that the division between slave-trading and anti-slave trading was illusory, and that the chiefs were only 'English' for the sake of commercial gain. He ultimately concluded that:

¹³³ WMMSA 10 October 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹³⁴ WMMSA 10 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹³⁵ WMMSA 20 October 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹³⁶ WMMSA 1 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

it seems next to impossible for any good cause to prosper, until a superior physical force be established, and the present petty chief rendered amenable to a higher bar ¹³⁷.

After a short honeymoon period then, Annear and the mission evidently became the focus of virulent hostility. On 11 September 1844 the mission premises were set on fire. Thanks to a change in the direction of the wind, the chapel itself was not damaged, but the houses of the mission canoemen and some Sierra Leonians were destroyed. Furthermore, in his account of events Annear added that, whilst the fire raged, one section of the mission employees were engaged in stopping the townspeople from breaking in and plundering the yard. The cause of the fire was found to be an incendiary device ¹³⁸.

Annear did not blame the Badagry people for the attack on the mission. Instead he concluded that the fire had been started by spies either from Porto-Novo or Lagos, who he claimed were acting in retaliation against his cordial relations with the Egba. This relationship had been enhanced by a visit of his to the besieging force around Ado in the preceding month ¹³⁹. However, to separate internal and external politics at this stage, as in most other periods, was to distort the nature of the town's situation. Even from Annear's own accounts it is evident that the operation of foreign elements within Badagry was closely linked with internal factions.

Annear had noted in August that despite the ward chiefs' continued outward friendliness, many 'palavers' had recently taken place between them and the chiefs of the surrounding country. Annear concluded that the basis of these 'palavers' was the slave trade, 'which continues to be carried on to a very great

¹³⁷ WMMSA 1 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹³⁸ WMMSA 11 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹³⁹ Annear spent three days at the encampment. During the course of this visit he promised to go to Abeokuta with his wife and also helped the army to build a scaffold from which they could keep a watch on their enemy [WMMSA 6-9 August 1844 Annear's Journal in 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry].

extent' ¹⁴⁰. However, from his own accounts it is evident that this assessment of Badagry's increasingly complex relations with her neighbours was an oversimplification. By the latter months of 1844 Annear's own writings show that Badagry was becoming increasingly sensitive to the various external influences at work in the area.

Porto-Novo's role in a small raiding party which attacked Badagry beach at the beginning of 1844 was the precursor to a serious decline in relations between the two lagoon states during that year. Porto-Novo's growing hostility was said to be as a result of suspicion and jealousy over the missionary presence in the town. According to Annear, Porto-Novo was eager for missionaries of their own, and he determined to visit that place at the earliest opportunity ¹⁴¹. However, there is no evidence that he was able to make such a visit. Indeed it would appear that relations between Badagry and Porto-Novo continued to deteriorate throughout that year. The political motivations behind such regular skirmishes were also, understandably, and perhaps convincingly, interpreted in commercial terms. The missionary noted that, although the two communities 'call themselves at war', it was really nothing more than 'trifling disturbances' for the purposes of slave-raiding and trading ¹⁴². Lagos on the other hand posed serious security questions from the east. After the open hostility of 1843 Lagos was itself plunged into internal strife by the development of a dispute over the kingship. This dispute distracted that power from continuing an aggressive foreign policy. But the arrival in Badagry during 1844 of the Lagos chief Eletu or Letidu drew the town into a closer involvement in its neighbour's affairs. Annear clearly misinterpreted Eletu's position at Lagos. He called him the 'rightful sovereign of Lagos' who had fled to Badagry as a result of his brother's attempts to 'rest the sovereignty out of his hands and usurp his authority' ¹⁴³. He was in reality one

¹⁴⁰ WMMSA 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁴¹ WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁴² WMMSA 12 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴³ WMMSA 12 October 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

of the town's most important chiefs, who was so angered and fearful at the decision by his master King Akitoye to recall Prince Kosoko, the King's nephew and sometime pretender to the Lagos throne, from Whydah, that he removed himself to Badagry. Despite Annear's inaccuracies over the motives for Eletu's flight, the establishment of a large displaced Lagos force did make Badagry a dangerous threat to Lagos. The missionary noted that the exiled minister brought with him 'great numbers of his faithful subjects', and further that 'the chiefs here regard him as a brother chief, and treat him with great respect' ¹⁴⁴. The shrewd Eletu also clearly recognised the potential role of British influence in the area and quickly proclaimed himself an anti-slave-dealing and 'English' chief. Having seen the error of his ways, Eletu appealed to Annear's commercial and moral sense by proclaiming that he would not return to Lagos, where he wished to engage in a profitable palm oil trade, until the Portuguese slavers had either been driven away or had become lawful merchants ¹⁴⁵. A few weeks later the wily chief continued to further his cause by indirectly suggesting the possibility of easy British intervention at Lagos. Indeed he reported that the 'nest of slave dealers' had been thrown into a state of unrest by recent British assaults on two slave ships in the roadstead ¹⁴⁶.

While both African and missionary elements at Badagry became increasingly involved in the slave-stealing policies of Porto-Novo and the supposed 'anti-slave dealing' party of Lagos, problems among its interior neighbours were also beginning to affect the town adversely. The optimism that Freeman had evoked about the King of Dahomey was short-lived. Early in 1844 a joint raid by Dahomey and Porto-Novo took place on Badagry beach. Canoes were burnt and Captain Faulkner, master of the *Little Grace*, and ten of his crew, who had been landing goods, were seized and taken off to Whydah ¹⁴⁷. According to the

¹⁴⁴ WMMSA 12 October 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁴⁵ WMMSA 12 October 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁴⁶ WMMSA 7 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴⁷ WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry.

Foreign Office, the raid was instigated by De Souza at Whydah and it was the Dahomean King who ordered the captives to be released ¹⁴⁸. However, according to Annear, the cause of the raid was widely held Dahomean fears that the coast was to be blockaded. In retaliation the Dahomean monarch threatened to blockade Badagry and any other place connected with the British ¹⁴⁹.

Rumours of Dahomean attacks continued to circulate throughout 1844. The most serious of these occurred in early June, when Annear himself received notification from Whydah that a war party was on its way. Reports of Dahomeans on the beach kept everyone within the town for three days. Eventually a party of men were sent across the lagoon but could find no trace of the supposed attackers. It was claimed that the forces had been forced to retreat only by the destruction of their ammunition in a heavy thunderstorm ¹⁵⁰. Stories of imminent disaster at the hands of the Dahomeans continued to alarm the town until the end of 1844 ¹⁵¹.

In the face of increasing pressure from Porto-Novo and Dahomey, Annear's reaction was to turn to his only friends, the Egba. He envisaged a military campaign against Badagry by Alake Sodeke which would once and for all bring the port under direct Egba control. Dahomey's claims to tribute, he decided, could either be bought off by the Egba or force could be used to defy it. Either way, Annear concluded that Egba intervention was the best way both of securing their position on the coast and of ending the slave trade once and for all. But he was forced to concede, even to himself, that an attempt to establish Egba authority could take place only once the prolonged siege at Ado was at an end ¹⁵².

¹⁴⁸ PRO FO84/604 19 May 1844 FO Draft, London.

¹⁴⁹ WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁵⁰ WMMSA 2 June 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁵¹ In December 1844 Reports of an invading army from Dahomey continued to circulate, although no appearance was made [WMMSA 16 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

¹⁵² WMMSA 27 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

Unravelling the relationship between the Badagry chiefs and these dangerous neighbours is a complex process. There was a professed alliance between the ward chiefs and Abeokuta, by which 'Each chief in Badagry forwards his share of help to the encampment'. But it became increasingly evident to Annear that certain chiefs were, in practice, less than supportive. Fearing the imposition of direct Egba control once the siege was completed and enjoying the profits that campaign brought through slaving, 'Aterah (Akran) and Posu' secretly plotted for a continued stalemate and it was only 'the English Chiefs....who really wish to conquer the enemy' ¹⁵³. Indeed according to Annear's sources at the end of 1844, the Akran and Posu did more than just hope for such a continuation. Whilst apparently sending their share of military help to the Egba, both chiefs were also actively involved in supplying provisions and ammunition to the Ados ¹⁵⁴. In an attempt to check their double-dealing allies, the Egba, in December 1844, used the pretext of strengthening their forces at the encampment, to bring the activities of the Badagry chiefs under control and separate the troublemakers. Chiefs Posu, 'Motang' [Bala] and Wawu were summoned to the encampment whilst, the Akran, Jengen and the new 'English Chief' Eletu were to maintain a skeleton defensive force on the coast ¹⁵⁵.

The departure of the Badagry troops at the end of that month did not bring about an end to the intrigues of the chiefs, but it did revive Egba military activity around Ado¹⁵⁶. It also raised fears, in a more exposed Badagry, of a renewed Porto-Novan assault ¹⁵⁷. Not least to entertain these fears was Annear, who at the beginning of November had been informed of the imminent departure of

¹⁵³ WMMSA 7 August 1844 Annear's Journal in 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁵⁴ WMMSA 16 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁵⁵ WMMSA 16 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁵⁶ WMMSA 10 February 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁵⁷ The troops for Ado left on the 21 December 1844 and on Christmas Eve Annear went down the lagoon himself to inspect the area where Porto-Novan troops were alleged to be amassing. Evidently no trace of them was found, but Annear did see Badagry canoes carrying soldiers to guard the waterway [WMMSA 24 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

their resident Sergeant¹⁵⁸. Without further evidence of the motives behind this Soldier's removal it is only possible to assume that Governor Hill, in whose hands Cape Coast had been left, had decided to reverse Maclean's decision. He withdrew the 'garrison'. The 'slightly hysterical' terms with which Annear greeted this news are understandable in the light of increasing tensions at Badagry. As Ajayi has concluded, it was not the British flag over Badagry which gave Sergeant Bart his influence, but his ability to signal for help to British ships¹⁵⁹. The political ramifications of such an individual were far greater than may be suggested by mere lack of numbers. But in reality it had been Annear himself who had used the threatened sanction of naval force at Badagry during the period of occupation. In his scathing indictment of Governor Hill, Annear clearly recognised the individualised nature of British authority along the coast, by which 'unaccountably fickle minded persons' were able to instigate acts from which 'Her Majesty and Her supporters at home would shrink from doing' but which were 'done with impunity by those who represent her abroad' ¹⁶⁰. But he failed ultimately to recognise the potential political power of his own position. Annear mistakenly saw the departure of Sergeant Bart in December 1844 as the abandonment of Badagry by the British. However, the following year was to see the rise of 'British influence' at Badagry to hitherto unprecedented level.

¹⁵⁸ On 6 November 1844 Annear noted that the Sergeant had informed him that he would be leaving by the next ship, as instructed by the Governor of Cape Coast. Obviously very bitter, Annear complained that the Sergeant was eager to leave and even suggested, somewhat confusedly, that the reason for the 'garrison's' withdrawal was:

because a certain individual - who in the time of need has found a home under this very roof, and whose life when in danger has been brought back and cherished by ourselves - because he would rather have Her Majesty's soldiers and Officers around him, for purposes which himself but knows; of that the power which he professes, and the importance he attaches to himself, may be known to use who are far off - if not for good, for evil.

Annear, in his anger, would appear to have combined both Governor Hill and the resident Sergeant into one, common foe [WMMSA 6 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

¹⁵⁹ Ajayi, *Christian Missions...* p. 35-36.

¹⁶⁰ WMMSA 6 November 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

Chapter Eight

The Arrival of the Church Missionary Society and King Akitoye 1845-1850

The month following the departure of Sergeant Bart saw the arrival at Badagry of a second missionary force. The young Anglican missionary Henry Townsend, under the direction of the Church Missionary Society, had undertaken a brief research mission to Abeokuta in early 1843. He had arrived at Badagry just as Freeman had returned from his fact finding tour of the interior ¹. Equally impressed by what he saw at the Egba capital, Townsend returned to Britain for ordination and then proceeded on to Sierra Leone to prepare for a mission to Abeokuta.

The main CMS party did not arrive at Badagry until January 1845. The group consisted of Revd Townsend, the noted African cleric and veteran of the Niger Expedition Revd Samuel Crowther and Revd C A Gollmer from the Basel Seminary, resident at Sierra Leone since 1841 ². There were also two Sierra Leone School Teachers Mr Marsh and Mr Phillips, Mark Willoughby an interpreter, four carpenters, three labourers and two servants along with respective wives ³. Initially intending to move directly on to Abeokuta, this large party learned on 25 January, only eight days after their arrival, of the death of Sodeke, the Egba king. Advised by the generals at the Ado encampment not to continue on to Abeokuta

¹ For further details of Townsend's life and work see G Townsend, Memoir of the Revd Henry Townsend, (London 1887). Also see Ajayi, Christian Missions..., pp. 32-33.

² For details about the life and work of Samuel Crowther see J Payne, The Black Bishop, Samuel Adjai Crowther, (London, 1900); S A Crowther, Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshada in 1854, (London 1855); S A Crowther and J C Taylor, The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger. Journals of the Niger Expeditions of 1857 and Missionary Notices, (London 1859). For details of Charles Gollmer see Gollmer, C A Gollmer...

³ Townsend's wife was Sarah Pearse of Exeter whom he had married in 1840. Crowther was married to Susan Thompson, a schoolmistress of Yoruba origin. They had been married since 1829 and had six children, two of whom came with them to Badagry. Gollmer was accompanied by his second wife, Eliza Phillips, a missionary at Kisse, whom he had married at the end of 1843. However, she died soon after arrival in April 1845. Interpreter Mark Willoughby also arrived at Badagry with his wife and three children [See W O Ajayi, 'A History of the Yoruba Mission 1843-1880', M A Thesis Bristol 1960].

until the funeral ceremonies had been concluded, the party returned to Badagry and were forced temporarily to 'turn their attention to spiritual wants of the mixed population of Badagry' ⁴. It was not until a year and a half later that Townsend and Crowther were eventually able to make their way on to Abeokuta.

The new arrivals initially lodged at the Methodist mission until, according to Avoseh, the Wawu and Mobi were able to 'locate a piece of land' for their use ⁵. The area on which they settled was 'at the extreme east of Badagry', and belonged to the English section of the town, at Boeko Ward ⁶. According to Revd Gollmer the fact that the land was already 'English' meant that the mission party were not required to pay for it. In return however, their hosts at least expected to gain the loyalty and support of their 'strangers' and guests ⁷.

The CMS party quickly set to work building a mission house, church and outhouses surrounded by a perimeter fence enclosing an area of two hundred square feet ⁸. The impressive bamboo church, measuring fifty feet by twenty five feet and with a twenty foot bell tower was opened on 9 March 1845 ⁹. However, it was the mission house, completed in early June, which attracted most attention and wonder in the town. The frame had been brought from Sierra Leone and once assembled it measured forty four feet long and twenty six broad, was raised

⁴ CMR March 1846, p. 56.

⁵ It is interesting to note that although the mission house has come to be seen as the first building at Badagry constructed on two levels, it would appear from the much earlier Lander account that King Adele's house at Badagry was similarly constructed in the 1820s [Avoseh, 'First Storey Building in Nigeria', in Falola, The Minor Works... p. 247; chapter 1, p. 42].

⁶ CMSA CA2/085/227 17 March 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

⁷ Gollmer was told that payment for the land was not required because:

This lot belong to English Town, and you are English men; besides our fathers never sold ground, therefore we cannot take payment for this.

Although initially loath to settle on the land without payment, the business was agreed before witnesses and Gollmer accepted that the only condition imposed by the owner was that 'suppose trouble comes...we go help him' [CMSA CA2/043/95 6-15 February 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

⁸ CMSA CA2/043/95 22 February 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁹ CMR March 1846, p. 56, 9 March 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

on ten pillars, painted black and white, and had windows, landing and step rails painted green. Most notable of all was the tarred and shingled roof¹⁰. Forced for the time being to concentrate their attentions at Badagry, the CMS workers took a vigorous approach to their work. Not merely preaching on Sundays in the church and under a tree near the market place, they carried the gospel right into the heart of Badagry's commercial life by preaching to the market women as they worked¹¹. Gollmer also tirelessly visited the local chiefs and dignitaries in their homes¹². They also travelled beyond Badagry itself visiting local towns such as Idale, Okeodan, Ado, Igbeji, Idoggo and Porto-Novo¹³.

Despite their impressive premises, greater resources and obvious vigour, however, the CMS mission faced similar difficulties to those of their Methodist neighbours. Their initial congregations were relatively large, attracting between about ninety to one hundred into the church, and between one hundred and forty to one hundred and thirty to their open-air meetings. However, by early 1846 the number attending Sunday service had dropped to between fifty to sixty. Although it would appear the number rose to between sixty to seventy later that year, and remained constant until the end of 1847, no advances were made and 1849 saw a slight decrease to between forty to sixty attendants¹⁴.

¹⁰ CMP Ladyday 1847.

¹¹ CMR March 1846, p. 57, 25 May 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹² CMR October 1846, p. 228, 10 & 24 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹³ CMR October 1846, pp. 229-231, 12 July, 17 & 25 November 1845 Gollmer & Townsend's Journals;

CMR October 1847, p. 225.

¹⁴ See Figure 9.

The congregations were, like those of the Methodists, largely made up of Sierra Leonian emigrants, about two-thirds according to Revd Gollmer's estimate ¹⁵. Those 'natives' that did attend were primarily made up of Egba traders, who, it was claimed 'draw nearer in' ¹⁶. The 'aloof' Gun on the other hand, according to Townsend, assured the missionaries that they would happily attend church services and 'amend their lives' in return for some kind of payment ¹⁷.

These patterns were reflected in the numbers of practising Christians in Badagry. The origin of local communicants, which at most reached eighteen, were never revealed although it is likely that they were overwhelmingly Sierra Leonian in origin. Likewise candidates for baptism, who rose in number from six at the end of 1845 to a peak of fourteen at the end of 1846, were not identified ¹⁸. However, the very small number of those who actually converted, only eight in total, were made up of equal numbers of Sierra Leonians and Yorubas ¹⁹. There were no Gun conversions.

But the missionaries' determination and tenacity continued. Gollmer at the beginning of 1846 accepted that 'This ground has been fallow for so long a time, and has consequently become so very hard, that the breaking up of it requires time and labour' ²⁰. Furthermore the mission schools gave rise to some guarded optimism. The Sunday school, attended by adults, began strongly with forty pupils eager to learn to read and write when it opened along with the church in

¹⁵ Parliamentary Papers Slave Trade Session 1847-48 No. 4 para 8043, 4 July 1848 Gollmer's evidence.

¹⁶ CMR October 1847, p. 221, December 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁷ CMR October 1846, p. 227, 7 December 1845, Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁸ In May 1846 there were nine male and nine female communicants at Badagry along with seven male and four female candidates for baptism [CMSA CA2/043/99 18 May 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry]. By December 1846 there were nine male and seven female communicants and seven male and seven female candidates for baptism [CMSA CA2/043/101 16 December 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

¹⁹ The CMS claimed only four conversions to Christianity by 1849 [CMS, The Yoruba Mission, (London 1906), p. 27].

²⁰ CMR October 1847, p. 50, June 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

early March 1845²¹. By the end of 1846 the number of those in attendance had dropped to twenty one, but this figure had risen again by the middle of 1849 to between thirty and thirty six ²². The children's school, opened initially as a day school on 10 March 1845, faced early opposition from some of the people and chiefs. Amongst these hostile chiefs was the Wawu, of the English town. His hostility in early 1845 towards the possible establishment of a new Hutton Co factory further east at Ajido had resulted in a distinct cooling of relations between himself and Revd Annear of the Methodist mission ²³. It would appear that the chief's disillusionment with his missionary friends extended to include the CMS party, for he refused to allow any of his people to send their children to the newly established school ²⁴. However, by the latter part of 1845 there were twenty three children attending regularly, three of whom were boarders, and Crowther was able to report that the school was exciting interest amongst pupils and parents alike ²⁵. Despite setbacks, such as the death of a boarding pupil, which led to the removal of a number of children, the mission school was undoubtedly a success²⁶. Pupil numbers ranged from just nineteen to a total of sixty one scholars in 1849 ²⁷. Furthermore, the attainments of those attending was a cause for missionary optimism. Townsend reported that the 'native scholars' made

²¹ CMSA CA2/043/95 9 March 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²² CMSA CA2/043/101 16 December 1846 Gollmer's Journal; CMR March 1850, p. 50, 1 July 1849 Smith's Journal, Badagry.

²³ WMMSA 19 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

²⁴ CMSA CA2/043/95 10 March 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²⁵ CMSA CA2/085/230 3 November 1845 Townsend's Journal; CMSA CA2/031/91 10 August 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry.

²⁶ CMR May 1848, p. 82, 5 May 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²⁷ See Figure 8.

considerable progress in English and the senior boarders were reading and writing 'with ease', and undertaking a study of the principles of Christianity ²⁸. On his arrival in early 1850, the catechist Thomas King stated that 'The progress made by the children in various branches of instruction is sufficient to cheer the drooping hopes of the labourers' ²⁹.

Those attending the Sunday school were overwhelmingly Sierra Leonian. Townsend noted that 'we have not yet been able to persuade any of the natives of Badagry to attend' ³⁰. However, the advantages of literacy persuaded some Badagry people, including some chiefs, to send their children to school. The Mewu, apparently had four sons there ³¹. By January 1846 they were joined by two children of the Wawu, now evidently appeased ³². More surprisingly still, in June of that year the Posu, who had initially been most hostile to the mission, brought a son to be educated ³³.

But despite the continued success of their school, the missionaries became increasingly discouraged by the spiritual progress of the Badagry mission, especially after the removal of Townsend and Crowther to Abeokuta and the establishment of a mission station there in the second half of 1846. This mission, which by 1850 had attracted two hundred candidates for baptism, provided an unfavourable contrast to Badagry ³⁴. Gollmer, left on the coast, became increasingly pessimistic or at least resigned to their lack of progress although the newly arrived missionary Isaac Smith stated in late 1848 that 'I am not without hope even of these dry bones'³⁵. By 1850, in the face of increasingly difficult local political conditions Gollmer lamented that 'Our work seems to go backward,

²⁸ CMSA CA2/085/231 24 March 1846 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

²⁹ CMR October 1851, pp. 218-219, 21 March 1851 King's Journal, Badagry.

³⁰ CMSA CA2/085/231 24 March 1846 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

³¹ Gollmer, C A Gollmer... p. 38.

³² CMSA CA2/043/1 8 January 1846 Gollmer, Badagry.

³³ CMSA CA2/043/100 3 June 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

³⁴ CMR April 1850, p. 73; CMI August 1849, pp. 93-94, Gollmer's description...

³⁵ CMSA CA2/082/12 27 July 1848 Smith's Journal, Badagry.

instead of forward' ³⁶.

The Methodist mission at Badagry from early 1845 continued with renewed vigour. This may have occurred due to rumours which reached Revd Annear in December 1844 that the Society was contemplating the complete abandonment of the station ³⁷. But it was also clearly connected with the arrival of the CMS party. Annear reported the arrival of the new mission with great pleasure on 17 January 1845 and the gratification that he felt when he was able to receive the newcomers, especially when some of the party were in a 'very delicate state of health' ³⁸. Cordial relations between the two missions continued throughout the period of their co-existence in the town. But the presence of another missionary party at Badagry certainly stimulated the Methodists on to greater efforts. Most obvious was the building of a new Methodist church. Beginning in late March 1845, shortly after the completion of the Anglican church, Annear worked hard to construct an even larger building in the style of an English country chapel ³⁹. Having completed the church itself by the end of April, Annear went on to build a thirty to forty foot tower in front of the chapel to act as both bell-house and look-out post ⁴⁰. He also attempted to revive his evangelical role and reported that in early March 1845, after preaching to the church congregation, he had led the people to the other side of the town where he had never preached before, where their singing attracted a large crowd ⁴¹.

Annear's efforts to revive the fortunes of the Methodist Church in Badagry were certainly made from a very much weakened position. Unlike their CMS counterparts, the Methodist mission was ill-supplied with both provisions and

³⁶ *CMR* October 1851, p. 219, 25 October 1850 Gollmer, Badagry.

³⁷ In December 1844 Annear had certainly heard rumours to this effect [*WMMSA* 27 December 1844 Annear, Badagry].

³⁸ *WMMSA* 10 February 1845 Annear, Badagry.

³⁹ Annear's church was to be fifty-eight foot by twenty-eight foot and rested on twenty three pillars [*WMMSA* 24-28 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

⁴⁰ *WMMSA* 26 April - 2 May 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁴¹ *WMMSA* 9 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

guidance from its Cape Coast headquarters. In early 1845 during the period of structural re-building at the mission, Annear recorded that he was forced to barter for goods and that his people were unpaid ⁴². The mission remained neglected throughout June of that year and by the beginning of July Annear was obliged to send a man on a dangerous visit to Lagos in order to procure supplies⁴³. It was only in the middle of August that a letter of encouragement arrived ⁴⁴. Annear however, bore the neglect stoically. Indeed at a suggestion by Captain Foote of HMS Albatross that they might perhaps leave the station he declared that they could not abandon their flock ⁴⁵.

But Annear's successor saw the mission more in terms of a great sacrifice. John Martin took over somewhat reluctantly in March 1846 ⁴⁶. It is clear that he was determined to do his duty, but Martin looked elsewhere for a suitable place to establish Christianity. He complained of Badagry that 'with respect to the natives generally, I cannot say much that is encouraging' ⁴⁷. After the departure of his Anglican neighbours Townsend and Crowther for Abeokuta, Martin looked to the Egba capital and regretted that the Methodists also could not make a start in the interior ⁴⁸.

But it was ultimately during Martin's tenancy that the fate of the Badagry mission once more became of interest. From those at home in England came supplies of clothes and provisions for the benefit of their West African brethren⁴⁹. But, more importantly, there also came a revival of interest from headquarters at Cape Coast. At the end of September 1847 John Thomas was sent to relieve Martin, enabling him to proceed on to Abeokuta with the view of

⁴² WMMSA 30 April & 19 May 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁴³ WMMSA 7 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

⁴⁴ WMMSA 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

⁴⁵ WMMSA 8 & 11 September 1845 Annear's Journal in 11 October 1845 Annear, Badagry.

⁴⁶ WMMSA 25 April 1845 Martin, Badagry.

⁴⁷ WMMSA 5 September 1845 Martin, Badagry.

⁴⁸ WMMSA 5 September 1845 Martin, Badagry.

⁴⁹ WMMSA 10 August 1846 Martin, Badagry.

beginning missionary operations there ⁵⁰. From then on the coastal station was to be viewed largely in terms of unfavourable comparison to Abeokuta.

But at Badagry, Annear's earlier efforts in the face of great adversity had initially reaped some rewards. In the first part of 1845 he admitted that the congregations were 'small' due to the number of emigrants who had left the town for the Ado encampment ⁵¹. However at the opening of their new building the church was full. He noted that no chiefs were present, a sign that the Wawu remained alienated, and it would appear that the main body of the congregation was made up of Fanti workers attached to both the mission itself and to the English Factory, emigrants from Sierra Leone and Egba visitors ⁵². Although less specific about the numbers attending their services than the CMS, from more general accounts it is possible to gather that their church congregations assumed a similar pattern to that of their newer colleagues, remaining largely constant throughout the 1840s, dropping slightly during 1846, but reviving again the following year. The numbers are difficult to ascertain. In 1843 a congregation of forty to fifty had been described as 'good', roughly in line with CMS numbers. In 1848 however, Freeman made an estimate of two hundred and fifty attending public worship in Badagry at both the church and the preaching house. This much larger number may perhaps indicate the total numbers attending Christian services in the town⁵³. Like their Anglican colleagues, the Methodists continued to attract only small numbers of people wishing to convert to Christianity, and again these were not from amongst the Gun population. In early 1845 Annear reported that he had four candidates for baptism. Three of these were emigrants and one a Yoruba woman who had been a Muslim, the third Muslim convert ⁵⁴. In July 1846 Annear's replacement Martin noted a further Egba man who desired admittance

⁵⁰ WMMSA 21 September 1847 Martin, Badagry.

⁵¹ WMMSA 3 March 1845 Annear's Journal in 8 March 1845 Annear, Badagry.

⁵² WMMSA 15 April & 24 & 27 May 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁵³ WMMSA 3 August 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry; WMMSA 29 March and 19 April 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁵⁴ WMMSA 26 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

into the Church, although whether this man actually converted goes unrecorded⁵⁵. According to Freeman by 1848 the Methodist Church at Badagry had twenty four full church members and twenty three members on trial, indicating a slightly larger following than the Anglican Church of the period ⁵⁶.

The Methodists also renewed their educational role. In April 1846 Martin set up a Sunday school. Less successful than its CMS predecessor the school initially attracted between twenty eight and thirty four pupils but by 1848 it was schooling only sixteen ⁵⁷. However, the children's school proved to be more successful. Again, Methodist accounts prove less specific over the number of pupils in attendance. As noted, in 1844 thirty eight pupils had been recorded, and in March 1845 Annear reported that he had twenty children under his personal care, presumably as boarders ⁵⁸. The numbers involved remained constant. Freeman noted in 1848 that the number of children attending school was thirty nine ⁵⁹. The identity of the children attending the school again followed a similar pattern to that established in the CMS mission school once it had found its feet. In April 1846 John Martin noted that several chiefs of Badagry and the neighbourhood had sent their children to their school ⁶⁰. One of these chiefs was undoubtedly Mobi of Boeko, whose daughter, Sophia, behaved better than any other little girl Revd Annear had seen before either in England or in Africa ⁶¹. Annear also noted that he had three children in his school who belonged to a man who had claims to the Posu chieftaincy ⁶². It is possible to conjecture that the somewhat surprising change of heart and enrollment of a son of the Posu himself at the CMS school early the following year may have been the result of this apparent internal dispute, and may have been an attempt to secure missionary allies. Of

⁵⁵ WMMSA 20 July 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁵⁶ WMMSA Freeman's Report 1848.

⁵⁷ WMMSA 20 July 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁵⁸ WMMSA 25 March 1845 Annear's, Badagry. See figure 8.

⁵⁹ WMMSA Freeman's Report 1848.

⁶⁰ WMMSA 25 April 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁶¹ WMMSA 13 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

⁶² WMMSA 26 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

the neighbouring chiefs who had children at the school only the King of Ajido is named in 1848 as having sent a boy to attend ⁶³.

The evidence then does not suggest that the Methodist mission suffered as a result of the Anglican arrivals. Indeed, both groups would appear to have maintained similar congregation numbers and similarly small numbers of converts. Although the CMS Sunday school was evidently more successful than that of the Methodists, the successes of the respective mission schools is more difficult to assess. Unfortunately there is no corresponding evidence from the Methodists to suggest whether they were on a par with the sixty one pupils, both day and boarding, of their neighbours in 1849. But until that period missionary accounts would seem to suggest that whilst CMS numbers were more erratic than those of their Methodist neighbours, both appear roughly comparable until at least 1848. If numbers of pupils and congregation sizes as well as actual converts are a measure of Missionary 'success', both Anglican and Methodist missions would appear to have had similar levels of very limited success in Badagry.

It is necessary, then, to attempt an assessment of whether the 'limited success' of the Badagry mission during this later period of renewed intensive missionary activity was due to similar factors to those which limited the work of the earliest arrivals. Obviously both Anglican and Methodist missions faced a number of obstacles which were not peculiar to the Badagry mission. The high rates of illness and mortality amongst the missionaries themselves and indeed examples of missionary incompetence, notably Mr Marsh's drunkenness, are obvious cases⁶⁴ as were the incidents of accidental fires in or around the mission yards which, although never wholly destroying either premises, did, for example in

⁶³ WMMSA 16 may 1848 John Thomas's Journal in 31 July 1848 Thomas, Badagry.

⁶⁴ Gollmer complained on several occasions of the drunken behaviour of catchecist William Marsh, until he was eventually dismissed in 1851 [CMSA CA2/043/111 14 May 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

August 1847, damage mission buildings, on this occasion the houses of the school boarders and watchmen of the CMS ⁶⁵.

Such incidents however, go little way to explaining why the Badagry mission, in notable contrast to that in Abeokuta, failed to attract even a small number of local converts, and indeed relied on newer immigrant or visiting groups, notably from Abeokuta as well as from Sierra Leone. In May 1848 Marsh explained that the problems facing the Badagry mission were 'idolatry', 'Mahomedanism' and the Slave Trade ⁶⁶. Ajayi has supported the strong hold of traditional religions on the people of Badagry as a reason for Christianity's failure. He states that although there was no open hostility or persecution, as for example later occurred at Abeokuta, the people were spiritually closed to these new exclusive teachings ⁶⁷. Okaro K'Ojwang has also guardedly suggested that it was opposition to the 'missionary attempt to isolate the people from their traditional culture and social beliefs' ⁶⁸. Both explanations require further examination. During the missionary period the Gun of Badagry certainly acquired a reputation for being 'much degraded by superstition and idolatory' ⁶⁹. In 1847 Gollmer noted that the peoples of surrounding areas did not have the 'numberless host of fetish all about in the streets as at Badagry' ⁷⁰. The implication was then that the religious piety of these townspeople prevented them from turning to the mission. Gollmer also went on to assert that it was the nature of religious belief amongst the 'Panteists' along the coast, in contrast to the 'more susceptible' Yoruba 'Polytheists', which prevented their coming into the Christian Church ⁷¹. Gollmer's distinction between the beliefs of coastal and interior spiritual beliefs is difficult to support. Indeed, as noted previously, many of the Gun beliefs and

⁶⁵ CMR May 1848, p. 85, 29 August 1847 Gollmer's Journal.

⁶⁶ CMSA CA2/067/11 June 1847 Marsh's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁷ Ajayi, Christian Missions... p. 34.

⁶⁸ Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics...' pp. 66-67.

⁶⁹ CMR October 1851, pp. 218-219, 12 March 1850 King's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁰ CMR October 1847, p. 225, January 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁷¹ CMR October 1847, p. 225, January 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

gods were often identical to those of the Yoruba. Furthermore an examination of the nature of Gun beliefs reveals a complex system of absorption and assimilation of a variety of imported teachings. However, despite the apparent openness of Badagry to spiritual influences, it is, paradoxically, this very aspect which provides clues as to why its people remained closed to Christianity. The exclusivity of the Church did not fit with Gun beliefs. Time and time again the missionaries were distressed to find that although their local audience might agree with what they had said, they were equally unwilling to forgo their other beliefs⁷². The ability to accept different teachings and indeed sometimes adopt aspects of those teachings, for example the annual veneration of the Whydah python 'Dangbe', whilst remaining the follower of another belief was an alien concept to the Christian teachers. Despite the attempts of the missionaries to find common ground between their teachings and the beliefs of their Gun neighbours, the Christian Church ultimately demanded total commitment to its own philosophy, and a complete rejection of the practices and beliefs it often found so abhorrent⁷³.

The reluctance of Badagry's Gun population to subscribe to a single belief or philosophy derived from the nature of both their spiritual and secular needs, but was not peculiar to Badagry. The nature of West African indigenous religions, whilst often projecting the notion of a supreme god or being, makes such a concept more accessible to human experience by the use of less abstract and easily identifiable intermediary gods, who develop a very active and interdependent relationship with the human world they inhabit⁷⁴. It was therefore possible at

⁷² For example, Smith complained that although he had some hopes of the Mewu, who had shown and interest in the activities of the missionaries, the chief would not stop making offerings to his other gods [CMSA CA2/082/16 30 September 1849 Smith's Journal, Badagry].

⁷³ The missionaries, in their efforts to attract adherents to the Christian Church and to gain a superficial understanding of the local situation, looked for parallels between Christianity and Gun beliefs. On one occasion Smith was surprised to hear that the Posu did not dispute the 'immortality of the soul' [CMR March 1850, p. 50, 11 March 1849 Smith's Journal, Badagry]. But limited understanding and a lack of religious practice and ideology suitable for 'Christianisation' led the missionaries to demand wholesale rejection of these beliefs.

⁷⁴ See chapter 4.

Badagry for elements of Christianity to be acceptable, but at the same time it was feared that an abandonment of the other gods would bring punishment. Furthermore, the nature of indigenous gods and their worship provided a wide-ranging philosophy which touched almost every aspect of life. In this way Ajayi notes that traditional spirituality was 'not so much a matter of personal beliefs as the culture of the whole community'⁷⁵. In a settlement such as Badagry this community culture was intensified as the population sought to use it as both a spiritual and political framework. In a place with so little sense of community, both politically and commercially, it was the operation of religious beliefs and practices, which developed some sort of 'culture of the whole community' on which the operation of Badagry's government, law and order and society rested.

Ajayi states that Islam was the more easily acceptable religion amongst Africans, having more in common with their traditional beliefs by not separating Church and State. Certainly Islam assumed a role in Badagry with both a spiritual and political importance. Islamic charms to protect against misfortune, disease and death were used by people who were also clearly engaged in other religious practices. The Mewu, for example, a figure noted for his spirituality in local religions, was evidently a great believer in the power of Islamic charms⁷⁶. But in relation to complete conversion, Islam faced similar difficulties to those of Christianity amongst the Gun of Badagry. Despite obvious missionary efforts by Muslims resident in the town, it was only among the Yoruba visitors to the coast that Islam was 'a fashion'⁷⁷. There were no Gun conversions to Islam and it cannot ultimately be said to have proved a major obstacle to Christianity at Badagry, except possibly amongst the Egba and Sierra Leone residents.

⁷⁵ Ajayi, *Christian Missions...* p. 4.

⁷⁶ When Townsend visited the Mewu at his Mowo home in 1845 he described the chief in his apartment surrounded by charms made from:

bones of various animals, bottles, calabashes, strings of cowries, and a few scraps of Arabic writing...They were charms to avert evil

[*CMR* March 1846, p. 54, 30 January 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry].

⁷⁷ CMSA CA2/067/11 June 1847 Marsh's Journal, Badagry.

That Christianity and also possibly Islam acted as a potential threat to the very fragile framework of Badagry society goes some way to explain the difficulties faced by the Christian missionaries, especially during a period of dangerous upheaval both inside and outside the town. But more importantly still I would suggest that Christian doctrine also demanded the immediate dismantling of Badagry's complex political and economic structure and most obviously the abandonment of the slave trade.

Badagry as An Atlantic Port in 1845

Despite the assertion of some of the Christian missionaries that the people of Badagry were at a loss as to how to make a living in any other way than trading in slaves, it is evident that by 1845 there was a growing palm oil trade in the town. Despite numerous setbacks, involving, for example, inclement weather or political intrigue, the palm oil trade along the slave coast was gaining increasing importance⁷⁸. Indeed by the latter part of the 1840s the growing number of British firms engaging in the oil trade faced intense competition from French, Hamburg, Sierra Leone and even Portuguese traders more accustomed to deal in slaves⁷⁹.

Ajayi states that, at least initially, the arrival of missionaries at Badagry did attract British traders to the area. But I would suggest that the West Coast traders required more promising commercial conditions than those offered merely by a missionary presence and that it was only after the Hutton factory at Badagry had proved itself a viable and successful operation that other traders actually settled on that part of the coast. What both the Sierra Leonian and missionary arrivals

⁷⁸ 1849 was a bad year for palm oil due to unusually heavy rains [PRO FO2/4 5 March 1850 W Hutton, London].

⁷⁹ By 1847 the Hutton Company had 8-10 factories between Cape St Paul and Lagos [PRO FO84/699 25 March 1847 W Hutton, London]. Along with Sierra Leone trading vessels such as the Wonderful, French and Hamburg ships were also operating along the coast [PRO FO2/4 5 November 1849 Forbes, off Whydah]. Even the Portuguese trader De Souza had loaded five ships in 1846 [PRO FO84/699 7 December 1846 T Hutton, Cape Coast in 25 March 1847 W Hutton, London].

did do, however, was to establish a shipping link between Badagry and other ports. As well as the ships owned by, for example, the Hutton Company itself operating along the coast, and other European ships trading independently, there were vessels such as the 'Wonderful', owned by a liberated African Captain W Johnson, which transported emigrants homeward but also engaged in oil trading⁸⁰. By 1849 a CMS Deputation to Lord Palmerston stated that seven vessels owned by Sierra Leonians were operating along the coast and that 'Emigration and trade from Sierra Leone have been carried on by Native enterprise with much spirit'⁸¹.

The increased numbers of ships engaged in legitimate commerce visiting Badagry indicates that articles for trade were certainly available. The main commodity was palm oil, and according to Governor Hill at Cape Coast in 1844, the 'large premises' belonging to the Hutton Co at Badagry was able to get a 'very good supply'⁸². By September 1846 Gollmer were able to state that there was more trade at Badagry than at any other time and that Hutton's agent had taken on one thousand two hundred puncheons of oil in the last eight months whilst Mr Johnson of the Wonderful was also increasing the number of puncheons he was shipping⁸³.

The origins of Badagry's palm oil supply are not identified, but with Lagos closed to the Egba, it would seem likely that a large proportion of Badagry's supply originated from that direction. Hutton's agents in the town, Captain Parsons, and his assistant Mr Duggan (or possibly Huggan), were joined by other commercial

⁸⁰ WMMSA 2 April 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁸¹ PRO FO84/777 Memoranda for the use of a deputation of the CMS appointed to wait upon Viscount Palmerston to solicit protection for the liberated Africans, being British Subjects who have emigrated from Sierra Leone to Badagry and Abbeokuta and for the European Missionaries who reside at those places, 1849.

⁸² WMMSA 18 April 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

⁸³ Unfortunately Gollmer does not say how much of an increase this was in Hutton's trade. He also says that Johnson had taken eighty puncheons out from Badagry in February 1846 and about one hundred by September 1846. Whether this was a monthly or six monthly total is unclear [CMR March 1847, p. 55, 4 September 1846 Gollmer, Badagry].

settlers ⁸⁴. The Bristol traders Randolph Brothers arrived in 1848 and, for the Gold Coast firm of Banner Brothers, A. Legresley evidently established premises some time between 1849 and 1850 ⁸⁵. Then in 1851 Mr Sandeman acting as agent for Forster and Smith settled in the town ⁸⁶. According to Avoseh the European merchants G B Scale or Scala, and Grote along with the African Merchants Shitta Bey and Taiwo Olowo were also active at Badagry prior to 1851, when they transferred their operations to Lagos ⁸⁷. The establishment of this number of firms and independent merchants evidently provoked serious competition between traders and in early 1850 Gollmer complained that Thomas Hutton had been at Badagry for a month trying to shut out other traders and expel the Bristol merchant Captain Vickerman. The attempt to establish a trading monopoly was contrary to the very fabric of Badagry's commercial operation and Gollmer concluded that Hutton would not succeed 'as the chiefs people wish for more traders' ⁸⁸.

The Badagry's wish for more traders however, extended to those engaged in slaving as well as 'legitimate' trade. Gaining an accurate picture of the operation of the slave trade during this period is difficult, largely due to the subjective accounts provided by missionary sources. During the earlier part of the 1840s the missionaries, in an attempt to achieve greater protection and support from the British Government, had somewhat overdramatized the position of the trade there. At the same time as Governor Hill was reporting the 'very good supply' of palm oil reaching the Hutton factory, Revd Annear was claiming at the end of 1844 that 'slavery is the sole traffic of the town' and that Hutton's palm oil

⁸⁴ According to Annear's journal for September 1844 a Mr Huggan had recently arrived at Hutton's factory [WMMSA 20 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear to London]. But in 1845 Gollmer clearly noted that they were met by Mr Parson's assistant Mr Duggan [CMSA CA2/043/95 17 January 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry]. Subsequent accounts would seem to indicate that it was in fact a Mr Duggan who worked at the Hutton factory.

⁸⁵ Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast...* p. 42.

⁸⁶ Ajayi, *Christian Missions...* p. 59. See chapter 2, p. 60.

⁸⁷ Avoseh, *The History of St Thomas's...* (revised ed.), p. 9.

⁸⁸ CMSA CA2/043/5a 1 March/May 1850 Gollmer, Badagry.

factory did not receive enough oil to pay its own expenses ⁸⁹. This very negative view of the Badagry commercial situation, so clearly in contrast to the opinion expressed by Hill, was evidently an attempt to encourage the British authorities to re-deploy a military force on that part of the coast, during the period when even the individual Sergeant was in the process of being withdrawn and missionary security fears were at a peak. In this light then, Annear presented the presence of a military force as the sole means by which the slave trade, which he claimed was so virulent at Badagry, could be put down and the anti-slave trading party protected ⁹⁰. A number of the more secular British agencies at work on the coast were also in favour of a more interventionist role. The trader William Hutton was one, and as early as 1843 he had strongly advocated the re-occupation of Whydah ⁹¹.

The subsequent withdrawal of Sergeant Bart ultimately signalled the end of immediate missionary hopes of intervention. As a result, by 1846 the missionaries had changed their tactics. Having failed to inspire action over Badagry's internal struggle between slave trader and 'legitimate' trader, the missions turned their attention to the interior and their spiritual hopes for Abeokuta. Badagry was now presented on the basis of its links with the inland state and as the only route by which the missionary societies could move towards the interior. Coates, Secretary of the CMS urged that Badagry, a town now described as 'comparatively free from the Slave Trade', required protection from its slave trading neighbours notably the King of Benin to the east and the King of

⁸⁹ WMMSA 30 October 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁰ Annear concluded that:

I am fully of the opinion, that until the British authorities, or some other superior power, concentrate sufficient strength here to enforce anti-slavery principles, and put down the traffic by main strength, it will be a very long time before it be abandoned

[WMMSA 30 October 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

⁹¹ Hutton urged that a treaty be made with the King of Dahomey and Whydah be occupied. He used the example of the occupation of the Gold Coast forts to illustrate the success of such a measure in suppressing the slave trade. Hutton's petitions came at the same time as both Revd Freeman and Governor Maclean were advocating similar ideas [PRO CO96/2 23 March 1843 W Hutton, London].

Dahomey to the west ⁹². Whether Badagry was presented as a haven of slave dealers or as the only glimmer of hope for legitimate trade along the Slave Coast, both arguments sought the goal of direct action. To achieve that goal the case was presented in the most dramatic and simplistic terms possible, as a 'great struggle' between good and evil or anti-slave trader versus slave trade. It was a conflict which threatened impending crisis and civil war. By September 1845 Townsend was describing the 'great struggle' over Badagry in terms of :

those who are interested in the slave trade, those who are interested in the English residing here, and those who begin to feel the evil of the slave trade. Those who formerly used to get all the trade in Badagry now get none, and those who formerly had nothing now get all. The old slave-trading party therefore, wish to obtain what they formerly had; and, finding that the slave trade cannot be carried on as it used to be, while white men are here, they would be glad to get us out of the way, if they knew how to do it violently would be to cause civil war ⁹³.

A more accurate picture of the commercial situation at Badagry during the latter part of the 1840s is far less dramatic, and in many ways was reflective of the slave trading pattern right along the coast. The 1840s saw a number of measures which did, to some extent, both increase the profits and ease the path of the slave trade. In 1842 for example the British Government had questioned the legality of destroying goods belonging to foreign merchants found in slave factories, thus making the actual destruction of barracoons possibly illegal (a problem which was only solved in 1848). Furthermore in 1845 the Mixed Courts for the trial of Brazilian Traders had been broken up which left no channel for the condemnation of Brazilian ships. More importantly, however, the same year saw the opening of British markets to slave-grown sugar, by the removal of differential duties, a measure which stimulated planters in Cuba and Brazil to increased production to meet the growing requirements of the British market ⁹⁴. But the Slave Trade did not remain unchecked. The Hutt Committee of 1848/49,

⁹² PRO FO84/633 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

⁹³ CMSA CA2/085/229 7 September 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁴ CMI April 1851, p. 71.

instructed by Parliament to look in to the most effective ways of ending the trade, was unable, despite the intentions of William Hutt in the Chair, to bring about an end to the expensive Anti-Slave Trade Squadron. The committee did conclude that Squadron was facing an impossible task but, due to pressure largely from missionary sources in Britain, who exerted a huge influence in parliament, notably on Palmerston at the Foreign Office, the Squadron was retained.

The most acceptable view of these boom and bust descriptions of the 1840s slave trade is somewhere between the two. With the slave trade still very much a force to be reckoned with, the emergence of other significant trade articles on the coast, merely enabled traders to diversify. Indeed the 'notorious slave dealer' Martinez, became so successful in his palm oil dealings that curbs on his activities were demanded by other European merchants operating on the coast ⁹⁵.

This pattern of successful co-existence was also reflected at Badagry. Despite the missionary assertions of a division between slave trading and anti-slave trading parties, it is evident from a closer examination that this conflict of interests was merely a political ruse. Whilst evidence would suggest that the palm oil trade at Badagry was expanding, kidnapping and slave trading clearly continued to operate ⁹⁶. Even the idealist Annear was forced to admit by the end of 1844 that the Wawu was not the enemy of the slave trade he had hoped, and also that a number of the Sierra Leonians trading at Badagry were involved, including Captain Johnson who collected both palm oil and slaves at the port ⁹⁷. The 1840s, then, were a period of potential economic reconstruction and expansion at

⁹⁵ PRO FO84/775 21 August 1849 Duncan, Whydah.

⁹⁶ Shortly after the arrival of the CMS mission, Crowther was made aware of five recent cases of Sierra Leone immigrants being kidnapped [PRO FO84/663 19 April 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London].

⁹⁷ In December 1844 Annear noted that Capt Johnson had arrived off Badagry to collect palm oil, but had also bought twelve slaves. Annear added that two or three of the principal Sierra Leone inhabitants at Badagry were involved in slave trading [WMMSA 23 December 1844 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

Badagry. Whilst evidently maintaining her position as an important point on the lagoon slave trade, the arrival in some force of a new wave of European and African traders re-established the town once more as an Atlantic port. But the very factors which had combined to create such huge potential ultimately produced a dangerous mix and pushed the town towards commercial obscurity.

Badagry 1845-1850

An interesting aspect of Badagry's history during the 1840s was the seeming lack of inter-ward strife. There was the implied division within Posuko ward over the chieftaincy which was never again alluded to and which does not appear to have had further repercussions ⁹⁸. There is also a description by Annear in 1844 of a knife fight between two wards of the town. However, this appears to have been organised very carefully, and to have followed remarkably strict guidelines, resulting in only one casualty and the public punishment of a man accused of fighting unfairly. Indeed Annear's account of the incident would seem to indicate an organised method by which disputes were settled between wards rather than a spontaneous outbreak of warfare ⁹⁹. Other than the usual number of kidnappings and attacks within the town, which appear to have been carried out on an individual basis, it would seem then that the 1840s saw surprisingly little internal conflict. That is not to say that the usual divisions were not in existence and indeed 1845 onwards saw a period of intense political diversity within the town, as loyalties split over the kingship dispute at Lagos. But, remarkably, such marked splits never erupted into an internal dispute, and indeed it would appear rather that they worked towards preserving Badagry's security during a period when external pressures threatened to tear the town apart. I would suggest that this apparent suspension or paralysis of inter-ward conflict may have been due to the overwhelming external influences which were

⁹⁸ In April 1845 Annear briefly referred to a man called 'Losoco' who he said 'ought legally to fill the chair now occupied by Possu the Dutch Chief' [WMMSA 26 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

⁹⁹ WMMSA 27 September 1844 Annear's Journal in 21 October 1844 Annear, Badagry.

brought to bear upon the town during the period and which focused Badagry's attention on the outside world.

According to Kopytoff, as the influence of anti-slaving methods grew and internal wars disrupted domestic routes, the economic situation in Badagry worsened. But as noted above, overall the 1840s were not so much a period of economic decline, as of reconstruction. Badagry's flexibility and competitiveness was equal to meeting these new challenges, and indeed continued to do so throughout that decade. However, increasing intervention from external European and African sources ultimately combined to paralyse the town's free-marketeering existence. As a result the Gun chiefs of Badagry were alienated by their 'strangers', and for the first time in their history became or at least came to be seen as a unit and as a single group or faction.

Not surprisingly, it was British influences which acted as a major polarising force within the town. The early reaction to missionary teachings tended to be indulgent. Although making virtually no headway, Christianity and its disciples were received, at least initially, with the utmost politeness and good will by the chiefs ¹⁰⁰. However, despite the overall economic performance of the town, certain chiefs were unable to function competitively due to the restrictions placed upon their 'illegal' traffic and traders. The Akran observed in 1846 that although he had been glad to welcome the English to Badagry he had been disappointed by the amount of commerce they had brought and he now wished for Portuguese traders to come ¹⁰¹.

¹⁰⁰ The diplomatic handling of the missionary visitors is illustrated by an extract from Gollmer's journal in 1845. The missionary noted, with no trace of irony, that on paying the Posu an unsolicited visit, the chief was:

beyond expectation, friendly and saluted me as usual. I at once informed him that this was the Lord's day, and that I wished, if he would allow me to speak to him and his people about God and his Word. Possu said it was good; but all his people were away: if I would come at another time, and give him notice, he would keep them together

[CMR October 1846, p. 228, 24 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

¹⁰¹ CMSA CA2/043/99 10 May 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

Initially the English section of the town fully supported the British presence. Wawu stated spiritedly that 'I am an English Chief and as such will die' ¹⁰². Such sentiments may have stimulated conflict between pro and anti English factions. However, at the same time, the 'English' sections of Badagry were becoming increasingly alienated from their British missionary strangers. As early as April 1845 Annear was lamenting that the Wawu's attempts at a monopoly in the palm oil trade were not only resulting in 'disgust' from both Gun and English residents alike, but that hostility was also being directed at those English residents by the Gun. Indeed, Annear feared that it would be the Wawu who was 'the cause of the destruction of the little English community here unless he be driven from among us very shortly' ¹⁰³. Increasing resentment ultimately spilled over into direct action aimed, largely at the 'English' residents of the town. In 1846 the Badagrians began a campaign of opposition by refusing to allow the Sierra Leonians to work at Hutton's factory. A policy of houseburning and kidnapping continued to harass the Sierra Leone residents, until in 1850 they launched a brief counter attack of their own against the Gun people ¹⁰⁴.

The polarisation of the Gun population at Badagry was compounded by events in neighbouring states. The port's sensitivity to affairs in the interior continued throughout the 1840s. Badagry continued to function under the patronage of Abeokuta, that state for example maintaining cordial relations through the existence of Egba consuls in the town but at the same time Abeokuta continued to pose a military threat to its unpredictable tributary ¹⁰⁵. According to Annear,

¹⁰² PRO FO84/663 20 August 1845 Townsend, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

¹⁰³ WMMSA 19 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰⁴ According to the CMR, Gollmer, with help from Commander Patey of HMS Flying Fish settled matters through conciliation [CMR October 1851, p. 223].

¹⁰⁵ Folayan notes that Egba consuls named 'Gbogboro', were posted to Badagry from the 1830s onwards [Folayan, 'International Politics in a Frontier Zone: Egbado 1833-63', Odu, 8 (1972), pp. 15-16]. The first contemporary reference to these representatives came from Gollmer, who in April visited 'two Abeokutan men, who reside here as a kind of private agents or spies, and who often visit us'. Despite these supposedly frequent visits however, this is the only occasion on which these men were directly mentioned [CMR March 1847, p. 49, 12 April 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

despite the military support given to the Egba at the encampment by each chief of Badagry, it was only the English chiefs who wished for an end to the stalemate siege, the other chiefs fearing that after conquering their enemies at Ado, the Egba might then turn their military attentions to Badagry itself ¹⁰⁶. By 1845 Annear himself was convinced that the dangerously balanced relationship between the two was near to breaking point and that the Egba would be obliged to take Badagry under direct control ¹⁰⁷. Furthermore, the relationship was also sensitive to outside influences. The fragility of the vital commercial link between Abeokuta and the coast was exposed when in February 1845 an attack was launched against the Egba besieging force at Ado by Dahomey. This led to a temporary abandonment of the camp and closure of the road to the interior ¹⁰⁸. Dahomean victory was however short-lived and within a couple of weeks the Dahomean army was struggling home ¹⁰⁹. After a brief respite the Egba, turned their attentions westward, sending out scouting parties to monitor the movements of the Dahomies and in the process destroying villages belonging to Porto-Novo ¹¹⁰.

Badagry faced obstruction and disruption of her routes not only from the north and north east but also directly from Dahomey itself. According to Governor Hill at Cape Coast this was a result of the influence of 'some ill minded people at

The military might that these agents represented was frequently brought to the attention of the Badagry people through reports of the Egba's military campaigns, most notably around Ado, and from occasional threats to the port itself. In June 1845 the Egba chief Sagbua, promised to send down an escort for the CMS party once Sodeke's funeral proceedings were out of the way. In the same message he added that 'As for Badagry, and Ajashe, and all the foolish people of that part, I shall quench them' [CMR March 1846, p. 61, 11 June 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

¹⁰⁶ The suspicions of the Akran and Posu were certainly not unjustified. On putting their fears to Somoye, head of the Egba camp at Ado, Annear noted that 'he laughed very knowingly but gave no definite answer' [WMMSA 7 August 1844 Annear's Journal in 23 August 1844 Annear, Badagry].

¹⁰⁷ WMMSA 19 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰⁸ CMR March 1846, pp. 58-59, February 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰⁹ According to Annear the Egba retaliated shortly after they had been expelled and were re-established in their camp by early March [WMMSA March 1845 Annear's Journal in 8 March 1845 Annear, Badagry].

¹¹⁰ In June 1845 Annear reported that two villages in the Porto-Novo area had been destroyed by Egba troops [WMMSA 20 June 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry].

Whydah' headed by De Souza ¹¹¹. Furthermore, Revd Crowther pointed out that the Dahomey's assault on the Egbas around Ado was an attempt to open the road for slaves between Dahomey and Lagos. The arrival of Dahomean troops in the area raised fears of an assault on Badagry itself, according to Mr Hutton and Mr Hanson, who arrived from Whydah, because Badagry was withholding their yearly tribute¹¹². The town spent the latter part of February 1845 in high anxiety preparing for attack¹¹³.

However, by 1 March confused reports were arriving from the interior and Dahomean attention was once more focused there as their forces at Ado were scattered and the Egba returned to the encampment with renewed determination. But a further threat from Dahomey's coastal ally Porto-Novo kept Badagry on alert¹¹⁴. According to Annear, slave-dealing individuals at both Lagos and Whydah had made a substantial present of gunpowder to the Porto-Novans to encourage them to renew their efforts against their coastal competitor¹¹⁵. Indeed a number of skirmishes were reported around the town, with parties from Porto-Novo approaching not only along the lagoon during mid-March, but also from the direction of Mowo ¹¹⁶. Badagry's forces were much divided. According to Gollmer, the threat towards Mowo had led to the despatch of reinforcements, evidently including the Akran, Banker [Bala] and Posu, leaving 'all the old men, and boys with as many soldiers as were left' to defend Badagry itself ¹¹⁷. On 16 March an attack on Mowo was launched and defeated with four Porto-Novans killed and a number of prisoners taken ¹¹⁸. A couple of days later Annear himself had a lucky escape from an approaching naval force of

¹¹¹ PRO CO96/4 6 March 1844 Hill, Cape Coast.

¹¹² WMMSA 25 February 1845 Annear's Journal in 8 March 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹¹³ WMMSA 22 February - 1 March 1845 Annear's Journal in 8 March 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹¹⁴ WMMSA 22 February - 1 March 1845 Annear's Journal in 8 March 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹¹⁵ WMMSA 18 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁶ WMMSA 18 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁷ CMSA CA2/043/95 24 February 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; WMMSA 24 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry; WMMSA 2 March 1845 Annear's Journal in 8 March 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹¹⁸ WMMSA 18 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

Porto-Novans and Isos. Heavy firing occurred from both lagoon and land. The fighting lasted two days with all sections of Badagry society, including emigrants and Fanti taking part. But, although they sent out a small naval force of only twelve canoes to meet an enemy of four hundred in eighty canoes, hundreds of guns were fired from the bank at the narrowest part of the lagoon. Ultimately, according to Annear, the Badagry's plan was well executed and the Porto-Novans feared to force their way through the well-guarded defences and retreated ¹¹⁹. The Porto-Novan forces, frustrated at Badagry, gave vent to their anger at a small village belonging to the town called 'Teum' [possibly Itohun] which lay on the lagoon. However, even there, despite its small population, the attack was repelled. Further enraged, the invading forces turned their attention once more to Badagry. But the threat was not realised. As news of Dahomean attacks on Porto-Novan villages filtered through, the alliance collapsed. Furthermore the timely arrival of Commander Leyton and HM Cruiser Cygnet just off the coast provided a further persuasive argument towards withdrawal, and the Porto-Novans crept home under cover of darkness ¹²⁰.

Thus immediate danger was averted by the temporary collapse of the alliance and the outbreak of fighting between Dahomey and Porto-Novo. But by April they were again a joint threat to Badagry. Furthermore, Annear evidently recognised that elements within Badagry itself, whom he only identified as 'some of the chiefs', were 'corresponding with them on the subject of their taking this place and driving away the English' ¹²¹.

On 27 April Annear reported a joint Porto-Novan/Dahomean attack on Opoho a village a short distance away where many people of the town went to trade. Now that now peace had been restored between the allies they were once again

¹¹⁹ WMMSA 18 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹²⁰ WMMSA 20-22 March 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹²¹ WMMSA 19 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

preparing themselves to launch an attack on Badagry. The gong-gong was sounded throughout the town and people began packing up ready to leave ¹²². Reports filtered through of enemy sightings on the beach ¹²³. On 8 May Annear called a meeting of all the Badagry chiefs to discuss what should be done, should the enemy come. The chiefs replied that they would repel them and asked Annear to help pay for their defence. He dismissed them as purely self-seeking¹²⁴. But, although missionary accounts of this period provide only an incomplete narrative of events along the lagoon it is evident that the Badagry chiefs were actually involved in negotiations and diplomatic manoeuvres to pacify the lagoon. In May 1845 a meeting between all the Gun chiefs (except the Wawu), Porto-Novo and Ado, along with observers from Abeokuta, was hosted by Lagos ¹²⁵. There is no evidence to indicate what discussions took place at this meeting, or whether any resolutions were passed, and clearly no lasting solution was reached, but it would appear that temporarily fears of attack from the west were eased. Furthermore, the meeting marked a turning point in the focus of coastal events as attention shifted from west to east, with affairs at Lagos taking on a new and urgent precedent.

Martin Lynn has argued that British sights became focused on Lagos only after John Beecroft, Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra from 1849 onwards, had failed in his mission to Dahomey in 1850. He states that Beecroft's aggressive policy towards Lagos was formulated merely as a way of shifting attention away from his failures at the Dahomean capital ¹²⁶. I would suggest however that Lynn's interpretation does not take fully into account earlier events which gave rise to an increasing role for Lagos in coastal affairs after Kosoko had seized power in 1845 and clearly focused at least missionary sights on Lagos.

¹²² WMMSA 28 April 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹²³ WMMSA 7 May 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹²⁴ WMMSA 8 May 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹²⁵ WMMSA 1 June 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹²⁶ M Lynn 'Consul and Kings: British Policy, 'the Man on the Spot', and the Seizure of Lagos, 1851' Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History (JICH), Vol x No. 2, (Jan 1982), p. 153.

Under King Akitoye, the youngest brother of King Adele, Lagos had remained somewhat in the background of coastal affairs. He professed a position of neutrality in the conflict between Porto-Novo and Dahomey against Badagry and the Egba during the early months of 1845 although in fact surreptitiously a party had been despatched to act as guides to the Dahomeans in the Egba country ¹²⁷. It would appear that Akitoye, rather than involve himself directly in coastal affairs preferred to influence events indirectly, for example through his allies at Ado.

Prince Kosoko, nephew of Adele and Akitoye was a very different prince. Having been overlooked at the death of Adele in 1837, Kosoko was once again disappointed at the death of King Oluwole in 1841 when Akitoye was crowned. But his benevolent uncle insisted that Kosoko return from Whydah, despite opposition from powerful elements within Lagos, such as Chief Eletu, who went into voluntary exile at Badagry on his return ¹²⁸. Not content, however, with his position as Prince, Kosoko quickly began scheming against his trusting uncle. Attempting to solicit the help of his neighbours, Kosoko entertained a number of the Badagry chiefs at Lagos in early June of 1845 and, according to Annear entered into an agreement with them and another powerful but unnamed chief of a neighbouring town to banish the English from the country and restore the slave traders ¹²⁹. Exactly which Badagry chiefs were present on this occasion is not stated by any source. However, from accounts of following events it would appear that the Posu was among those who attended and that the Wawu and possibly one or two others remained at home ¹³⁰. Whilst the Badagry chiefs were still feasting with Kosoko, Akitoye in turn looked to the English at Badagry as a possible source of support against his powerful opponent. Following the example of Adele and Eletu before him, Akitoye appealed to the missionaries in a way

¹²⁷ WMMSA 4 March 1845 Annear's Journal in 8 March 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹²⁸ Losi, History of Lagos, p. 34. See also chapter 7, pp. 228-229.

¹²⁹ WMMSA 18 June 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹³⁰ WMMSA 14 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

they would understand and which would be most likely to gain him the support he desired. On 7 June 1845 Annear received a letter from the King recounting his disillusionment with the slave trade and asking for help in destroying the traffic. In order to attract support the dispute over the Lagos throne had been turned into a struggle between slave-trading and anti-slave-trading parties¹³¹.

Despite Annear's belief that Akitoye had little fear of the weaker Kosoko party, tensions continued to mount and by 10 June he was writing that insurrection was now expected ¹³². Akitoye gathered his forces and recalled Eletu from Badagry. While his minister prepared himself for departure, Kosoko's Badagrian guests returned home ¹³³. According to Annear, the Wawu and one or two other chiefs sent troops towards Bissie [unidentified] to help the Eletu/Akitoye party, whilst the Posu and others expressed concern that they had chosen the weaker side. Annear concluded that, by not sending any help to Akitoye, the latter had openly affirmed their support for Kosoko. By 24 July Eletu's forces had reached Lagos and war broke out. According to Annear's account the fighting raged until the 15 August, when Eletu was captured and put to death. Gaining a clear picture of Badagry's role in the military campaign is difficult, to say the least. It would appear that troops supporting Eletu did take part in the battle, and a small number of casualties were reported. According to Annear, as many as eleven were killed ¹³⁴. But Gollmer claimed that there was only one Badagry fatality, the rest of the troops running away 'so that Badagry may be said to have taken no share in the contest' ¹³⁵. The limited military support from both Badagry and Abeokuta was not enough and, despite the rejection by Porto-Novo of Kosoko's calls for help, the usurper was finally able to seize the advantage. Indeed,

¹³¹ WMMSA 7 June 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹³² Annear noted that Akitoye was not afraid of Kosoko 'being the stronger party of the two', although he recognised him as a 'powerful enemy' [WMMSA 7 June 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry].

¹³³ WMMSA 10 June 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹³⁴ WMMSA 14 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹³⁵ CMR October 1846, p. 223 21 July 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

Gollmer identified Badagry's lack of support for the King as a decisive factor in his defeat, stating that had Badagry interfered in the conflict by blockading the lagoon to Kosoko's reinforcements, ammunition and provisions, the usurper would not have been successful ¹³⁶. As it was, Akitoye's forces were defeated, he fled and Kosoko took control.

Badagry and Kosoko

Kosoko's victory at Lagos and the expulsion of Akitoye immediately placed further pressures on Badagry. The acceptance of Adele and Eletu as political refugees had created a precedent and established the town as a recognised sanctuary for exiled Lagosians. Indeed it is interesting to note that, during the 1845 Lagos conflict, it was rumoured that, should he lose, Kosoko planned, with the help of the Posu, to take refuge at Badagry. But it was ultimately Akitoye who was expelled from the town, and within a few days reports were arriving that the exiled King was on his way to Badagry. Under the guardianship of Egba troops, a message was sent, however, not to the Wawu or any other Gun chief at Badagry, but to the Mewu at Mowo asking him to receive the king ¹³⁷. Akitoye was initially taken to Abeokuta, but at the end of September a further message was received on the coast stating that he intended to come to Badagry, from where he could gather strength to regain his throne. Annear feared for the security of the exiled monarch in the town but stated that, as he was on good terms with all the British subjects there, they would do all in their power to help him ¹³⁸. Indeed, by this stage, Annear had clearly been persuaded that the end of the slave trade rested on Akitoye's restoration and the deposition of Kosoko. He went on to suggest that support for Kosoko at Badagry among the Akran, Bala and 'several other chiefs here' arose from their poverty and their reliance on the presents sent by men such as Kosoko. Should British power be established, Annear continued,

¹³⁶ *CMR* October 1846, p. 224, 18 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹³⁷ *WMMSA* 18 August 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry.

¹³⁸ *WMMSA* 25 September 1845 Annear's Journal in 11 October 1845 Annear, Badagry.

then these men would mend their ways ¹³⁹. Apart from the missionary's continued advocacy of British intervention in the area, it is also interesting that a shift had taken place, at least in his opinion, in the position of the 'English Chiefs' at Badagry. When listing their supporters he named Akitoye and Mewu along with the King of Ajido as 'English chiefs'. No mention was made of the Wawu or any other Gun chief despite previous support for Akitoye. The CMS missionary Townsend, also saw the assumption of power at Lagos by Kosoko as a watershed in these terms. He noted that the new King would 'exercise considerable influence over the chiefs of Badagry' and that this influence would be directed towards re-establishing the slave trade in the town ¹⁴⁰. Gollmer initially believed that the divisions of the Badagry chiefs would lead to inactivity. He noted in early August that, despite meeting to discuss events at Lagos,

We did not expect that the chiefs would take any decisive measure as some of the chiefs are friends of Kosoko, whilst the others are friends of Akitoye the two contending parties ¹⁴¹

However, by the end of August he too was fearful that the connivance of the 'Popo Chiefs' at Badagry would lead to the expulsion of the English and the re-establishment of the slave trade ¹⁴². It would appear that the alienation of the Gun chiefs as a whole was, at least in missionary eyes, almost complete.

But the polarisation of the Gun chiefs was not merely the oversimplified expression of missionary fears, it was also an identifiable result of pressures exerted on the town from both Lagos and Abeokuta. Eager to sustain his advantage, Kosoko sent friendly messages to his supposed allies at Badagry to confirm their loyalty and ascertain whether they were prepared to keep their agreement with him ¹⁴³. He proposed that peace should exist between the two powers and a slave market be re-established. This was interpreted by Townsend

¹³⁹ WMMSA 25 September 1845 Annear's Journal in 11 October 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁴⁰ PRO FO84/663 20 August 1845 Townsend, Badagry in 7 January 1847 Coates, London.

¹⁴¹ CMSA CA2/043/96 12 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴² CMSA CA2/043/96 25 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴³ WMMSA 23 June and 7 July 1845 Annear's Journal in 16 August 1845 Annear, Badagry.

as a 'notice for the English people to quit'. Only the Wawu opposed the message, and continued stating his right as an 'English Chief' to receive Englishmen there¹⁴⁴. But evidently neither side of this supposed alliance had faith in the other, as rumours abounded that the new Lagos King intended to take matters into his own hands and come and destroy the place himself. Gollmer noted that, far from holding to any alliance with the chiefs, Kosoko's bitterness at the friendship of the Wawu and Akitoye, and the lack of support he got from his allies meant that, although he sent them presents and promises, he was already endeavouring to persuade the people of Porto-Novo and Ado to assist him in an assault on the town¹⁴⁵. According to Crowther, Kosoko and De Souza at Whydah were so nervous about British influence spreading from Badagry that they were determined to expel all traces of it from the coast¹⁴⁶. Furthermore, it was clear that the Badagry chiefs themselves saw the new regime at Lagos as a potential force for change within their town. Having been in league with Dahomey in their attempts to drive out the English, by May 1845 some of the chiefs were making an effort actively to encourage Kosoko in an assault on the town¹⁴⁷. Badagry was thrown once more into a state of excitement, and Annear and the missionaries, the major cause of contention, not only prayed for the arrival of a cruiser but also sent a petition 'to any of HM Naval Officers on the West Coast of Africa' calling for assistance¹⁴⁸. To make matters worse, the Dahomean threat was revived in August 1845 over non-payment of tribute and also over another 'old bone of contention', which was the failure of the Badagry chiefs to inform

¹⁴⁴ PRO FO84/663 8 May 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

¹⁴⁵ CMR October 1846, p. 224, 18 August 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴⁶ PRO FO84/663 7 January 1846 Coates, London in 8 May 1845 Crowther's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴⁷ Annear reported in May that:

We have now reason to believe it too true that some of our chiefs are now making an effort to carry out their objective of driving away the English - not by violence on their part - but by inducing the King of Lagos, and the other warring parties on his side, to make a renewed and more vigorous attack on the town, and thereby causing us to fly for safety

Annear did not give any specific evidence to support his beliefs [WMMSA 8 May 1845 Annear's Journal, Badagry].

¹⁴⁸ PRO FO84/663 Extract of a Memorial sent to a ship of war, and the Governor of Cape Coast by the British Residents of Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

the King of Dahomey that his representative in the town had died ¹⁴⁹. Although no military action was taken at this stage, by the end of 1846 the road between Abomey and Badagry was closed. However, it would appear that Thomas Hutton, by negotiation at Whydah, was able to travel the road himself, first by hammock to Godomey and then by water to Porto-Novo and on to Badagry. Whether Hutton's journey reopened the road to all, however, was not stated directly ¹⁵⁰. Porto-Novo again began to pose serious problems from the west. Towards the end of August 1845 reports began circulating in Badagry that the Porto-Novans were on their way to the town. When their canoes arrived at the beginning of September, although token hostilities ensued, Annear concluded that it was their intention merely to cut off Badagry's lagoon links from both east and west 'and be at hand in carrying out Cosoco's purposes' ¹⁵¹. Badagry made hasty preparations for war, but on the eve of conflict the timely arrival of Captain York aboard HMS Albatross, on 7 September, in response to the Missionaries call for aid, dissuaded the Porto-Novans from pursuing an all out attack ¹⁵². The situation, however, remained tense for the remainder of the year. As soon as the Albatross had departed reports again arrived that the enemy were on the beach. Yet again the arrival of a British cruiser dispersed the marauding party ¹⁵³. Whilst reports of imminent attack by a Lagos, Porto-Novo and Ado alliance plagued the town, Kosoko sustained his attempts at winning the Badagry chiefs over to his cause, sending presents and promises of trade ¹⁵⁴.

The position of the Badagry chiefs at this time was virtually impossible.

However, it was the divisions between them that seem to have sustained the

¹⁴⁹ WMMSA 11 October 1845 Annear, London.

¹⁵⁰ PRO FO84/669 7 & 20 December 1846 T Hutton, Whydah in 25 March 1847 W Hutton, London.

¹⁵¹ WMMSA 31 August 1845 Annear's Journal in 11 October 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁵² WMMSA 7 September 1845 Annear's Journal in 11 October 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁵³ On 14 September Annear reported that Badagry people proceeding up the beach had seen a hostile party approaching and retreated quickly. Annear was 'in constant expectation of seeing the smoke curling over the house and canoe on the beach'. But again the arrival of a British cruiser evidently frightened the party away [WMMSA 10 - 16 September 1845 Annear's Journal in 11 October 1845 Annear, Badagry].

¹⁵⁴ WMMSA 6 September 1845 Annear's Journal in 11 October 1845 Annear, Badagry.

town during this very difficult period and enabled them to maintain a number of very conflicting links. Badagry's divided loyalties during the Lagos civil war, if earning them scorn, certainly avoided full-scale war. Moreover, their ability to maintain links with Akitoye and the Egba alongside an admittedly difficult relationship with Kosoko is astonishing. That such divided loyalties did not force Badagry itself to collapse into warfare was, I would suggest, indicative of the extreme flexibility made possible by the independent and extremely opportunistic nature of the town's chieftaincies. Indeed, when towards the end of 1845 this difficult balance did threaten to collapse over the professed failures of the Wawu as an 'English Chief', the other Gun chiefs charged him with treachery in not doing his duty towards the missionaries. At a meeting of the chiefs the Wawu was accused of not keeping the missionaries informed of events and was instructed 'to make everything connected with our position amongst them known to us, or else they would supplant him and do it themselves' ¹⁵⁵. But the remarkable balance of Badagry loyalties was not allowed to continue. In December 1845 Akitoye made his way towards the coast and the British missionaries at Badagry began not only to espouse his cause but also to call for positive British intervention at Lagos ¹⁵⁶.

Badagry and Akitoye

By November 1845 Akitoye had made known his intention of leaving Abeokuta for Badagry. According to Gollmer, Kosoko begged and bribed his friends at Badagry not to allow it, and proposed to them that the Mewu, the friend of

¹⁵⁵ WMMSA 5 September 1845 Annear's Journal in 11 October 1845 Annear, Badagry.

¹⁵⁶ The British residents at Badagry warned that Kosoko hoped to take control of the whole area and:

should he be allowed to remain in authority, and no protection be afforded the English at this place; nothing less can be the result of his proceedings than the entire obstruction of all communications for any other than slave dealing purposes

[PRO FO84/663 Extract of a Memorial sent to a British ship...by the British residents of Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London]. Townsend also wrote of Akitoye being 'enabled' to regain his authority at Lagos [PRO FO84/663 3 November 1845 Townsend, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London].

Akitoye, should be persuaded to leave Mowo and return to Porto-Novo, so that Kosoko would occupy that village and do what he could to prevent Akitoye from passing. However, despite the concurrence of 'a few of the chiefs', Kosoko was unable to proceed as the Mewu, who was 'esteemed for his good character' and for the number of his followers, 'silenced all', and Akitoye was permitted to come ¹⁵⁷.

On 24 December the missionaries went to Mowo along with the chiefs to meet Akitoye. According to Townsend's account, the Akran and Posu offered verbal resistance to Akitoye's residence at Badagry, stating that it was not for the Mewu's or Akitoye's sake that they had come to Mowo but to meet Somoye, the Abeokutan general, who had escorted the exiled Lagos King. Indeed, Townsend recounted that the Posu denied having been consulted about Akitoye's arrival at all. The situation threatened to erupt into a serious argument between the Mewu and Posu. However, the matter was settled by Somoye, who diplomatically calmed both parties but ultimately warned the Posu against ignoring the wishes of the Egba ¹⁵⁸.

Having dispelled the immediate opposition to his residence at Badagry, Akitoye settled in the town. Exactly where was established was not specified, but it is important to note that it was at this point that the Mewu gave up his position at Mowo and transferred to Badagry proper ¹⁵⁹. It would seem likely that at this point the Mewu saw English support for his friend, Akitoye, as an opportunity to lever himself into a yet more prominent position within the town. The Mewu's success in doing just this was outlined in a description by Martin as early as March 1846, of the Mewu as 'one of the principal chiefs of the country' ¹⁶⁰. Indeed both the Mewu and Akitoye appear to have established themselves

¹⁵⁷ CMSA CA2/043/97 10 November 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁵⁸ CA2/085/230 24 December 1845 Townsend's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁵⁹ CMSA CA2/043/97 10 November 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁶⁰ WMMSA 31 March 1846 Martins' Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

successfully. Despite the initial opposition to his settlement there, it is clear that as a monarch in exile he was treated with respect and deference by all members of society, even the Posu stood in his presence 'not daring to sit in the presence of the king' ¹⁶¹.

Akitoye lost no time in securing the 'friendship and protection of the English'¹⁶². He presented himself as a force against the slave trade and actively helped the missionaries replace the roof of the Methodist mission house ¹⁶³. Moreover Akitoye began a campaign of blockade against Lagos, cutting the town off from its allies at Porto-Novo and its supplies from the west ¹⁶⁴. The Badagry missionaries were only too willing to become allied to Akitoye's cause. Disappointed time and time again by the Gun chiefs, they saw the restoration of the reformed slave trader Akitoye at Lagos as the key to ending the trade once and for all.

It would appear, however, that all sections of the Badagry population attempted to take advantage of Akitoye's arrival in their midst, notably by using it as an opportunity to hunt for slaves. On June 18, for example, Martin recounted how a number of warriors were despatched down the lagoon towards Lagos on a raid. According to Martin they returned with a quantity of booty and a number of captives 'who no doubt will be sold into slavery' ¹⁶⁵. Although it is not clear exactly whose men they were, and indeed whether in fact they were Gun, several days later a further raid under the leadership of 'Ajagbi' one of Badagry's 'principal warriors' left for Lagos ¹⁶⁶. This Ajagbi must surely be the Ajagbe described by Gollmer as one of the most respected inhabitants of the town ¹⁶⁷. The implication then was that he was certainly not merely one of Akitoye's

¹⁶¹ WMMSA 7 April 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁶² WMMSA 25 April 1845 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁶³ WMMSA 30 March 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁶⁴ WMMSA 25 April 1846 Martin's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁶⁵ WMMSA 18 June 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁶⁶ WMMSA 26 June 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁶⁷ CMR December 1848, p. 257, 10 December 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

Lagos retinue.

Lagos, however, continued to pose a threat to Badagry's security. In August 1846 a force from the east was reported to be approaching along the lagoon but was repulsed at Iworo and Ajido with the loss of twenty one men ¹⁶⁸. By the end of 1846 the general feeling was that Kosoko was about to make a full scale attack ¹⁶⁹. Furthermore, it would appear that Akitoye was rapidly becoming increasingly disillusioned with his British allies and their inability to help him regain his throne. Having become equally dubious about Akitoye's anti-slave trading sentiments, Martin reluctantly reflected that 'it seems probable that a man stealing war will be carried on for many years between both parties' ¹⁷⁰.

The campaign of regular raids did continue on well into the following year and on into 1848 and 1849. Indeed Akitoye himself appears to have been one who profited from such excursions ¹⁷¹. Despite the missionaries' continued support and their determination that the deposed King's restoration was the key to suppressing the slave trade and opening up the interior via the water route to Abeokuta, they were frustrated by the lack of action taken to secure this end. Furthermore it was not only missionary sources who saw British military intervention as the only way of securing Lagos and thus suppressing the slave trade. Trader William Hutton by 1847 had himself turned his attention to the role of Lagos. Noting that Whydah, the 'chief emporium of slaves', was too closely watched by the cruisers to allow frequent embarkation, he stressed that De Souza was using the port, along with eighteen or twenty other Brazilians and Portuguese, and virtually controlled the King there. Hutton's proposed solution was the cession to Britain of the beach between lagoon and sea from Whydah

¹⁶⁸ CMSA CA2/043/100 12 & 15 August 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁶⁹ WMMSA 25 November 1846 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁷⁰ WMMSA 25 November 1846 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁷¹ Smith for example reported that two expeditions sent out by Akitoye had returned with at least thirty nine slaves [CMSA CA2/082/12 29 June 1848 Smith's Journal, Badagry].

along to Badagry and Lagos ¹⁷².

Back in London, the Foreign, Colonial and Admiralty Offices hesitated. Memos were sent back and forth between departments. Ultimately, however, to delay a firm decision and in order to achieve a clearer picture of the coastal situation, a party under Commander Middleton was despatched to carry out a detailed survey of the lagoon ¹⁷³. Lord Grey of the Colonial Office concluded that all questions of occupation should wait until Middleton's report was complete ¹⁷⁴. Unfortunately, due to his untimely death from fever, Middleton was never able to complete his survey and the decision remained untaken ¹⁷⁵. Understandably, then, dissatisfaction and impatience with such impotent support threatened even Akitoye's goodwill and did little to dissuade those so disposed from continuing their 'illegal' business. All sections of Badagry began once again to look elsewhere for suitable commercial and political alliances.

Continued Egba preoccupation with Ado and their own internal concerns did not allow for distractions from Badagry. The road between the interior and the coast, although still officially closed, was still bringing Egba traders to the coast, but the route was a dangerous one and parties of traders faced attack notably from bands of Lagos people ¹⁷⁶. According to Gollmer, Badagry and Ado had made peace in January 1846 ¹⁷⁷. But despite the apparent ending of hostilities between these two powers, which was reinforced at the behest of the Posu throughout the first half of 1846, the missionaries were disappointed in their hopes that Abeokuta would follow suit. Indeed insecurity between the coast and the interior continued long

¹⁷² PRO FO84/710 19 July 1847 W Hutton, London.

¹⁷³ PRO CO96/12 30 November 1847 Adm to Middleton in 30 November 1847 Adm, London.

¹⁷⁴ PRO CO96/12 Grey's Memo attached to 18 August 1847 FO, London.

¹⁷⁵ On 26 January 1849 Governor Winniett reported Middleton's death [PRO CO96/15 26 January 1849 Winniett, Cape Coast].

¹⁷⁶ In June Martin noted that a revenge raid was launched on a town connected with Lagos in retaliation for the murder of three Egba traders killed on the road to Badagry [WMMSA 18 June 1846 Martin's Journal in 5 September 1846 Martin, Badagry].

¹⁷⁷ CMSA CA2/043/1 8 January 1846 Gollmer, Badagry.

after the initial CMS party had been allowed to travel on to Abeokuta in July 1846.

But Domingo Martinez, 'the rising spirit' based at Porto-Novo beach, was only too willing to become involved in affairs at Badagry ¹⁷⁸. Due to the activities of Martinez and presumably the settlement with Ado, by 1846 relations between Badagry and Porto-Novo were much improved. Despite individual incidents of occasional piracy, a peace was concluded between Badagry and Porto-Novo, probably in March 1846 ¹⁷⁹. As a result during the course of that year an 'extensive intercourse' developed between the two powers, involving the shipment of slaves and other trade goods along the lagoon ¹⁸⁰. Gollmer also stated that Martinez was actively providing the Badagry warriors with weapons and ammunition with which they could supply him with slaves ¹⁸¹. As an astute trader in all articles, Martinez was willing to go much further to secure his commercial aims. Sources at Badagry continued to report his intrigues with the King of Dahomey by which he attempted to sustain the war in the interior and therefore maintain a ready supply of slaves ¹⁸².

Martinez continued to be a source of anxiety to the missionaries for the pragmatic trading chiefs at Badagry were happy to receive any presents he sent¹⁸³. Rumours that Martinez was to visit the town itself and engage in trade abounded during 1846, but ultimately proved fruitless ¹⁸⁴. Stating that he was unable to establish a factory due to the presence of the English, Martinez offered the chiefs an incentive by setting up a factory at Ajido a few miles east in February 1847. His

¹⁷⁸ PRO FO84/710 17 March 1847 T Hutton, Cape Coast in 19 July 1847 W Hutton, London. Also see D Ross, 'The Career of Domingo Martinez in the Bight of Benin 1833-64' *IAH* 6 (1) (1965), pp. 79-90.

¹⁷⁹ Martin reported at the end of April that a peace had been concluded a few weeks previously [WMMSA 25 April 1846 Martin, Badagry].

¹⁸⁰ CMSA CA2/043/101 5 October 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁸¹ Parliamentary Papers Slave Trade Session 1847-1848 No v, First Report From the Select Committee on Slave Trade, Para 8031, 4 July 1848 Gollmer's evidence.

¹⁸² PRO FO84/710 17 March 1847 T Hutton, Cape Coast in 11 July 1847 W Hutton, London.

¹⁸³ PRO FO84/710 17 March 1847 T Hutton, Cape Coast in 11 July 1837 W Hutton, London.

¹⁸⁴ CMSA CA2/043/100 11 August 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

establishment there was all the more galling to the missionaries since they themselves had seen the town of Ajido as a significant, if small, cause for hope only a couple of years earlier ¹⁸⁵. Martinez, then, was a focus for missionary bitterness over the inactivity and inability, as they saw it, of the other British forces on the coast. This sense of frustration was made all the more acute by the trader's willingness to intervene in the Lagos dispute and it was he who offered Akitoye his first serious opportunity to retake the throne.

From the missionary point of view Lagos had become the key to ending the slave trade, and both Methodist and Anglican missionaries petitioned for Britain to take 'possession of the place' ¹⁸⁶. But no action was taken and, according to the Methodist missionary John Martin, Akitoye's despair at the lack of British military support forced him to look to Martinez, who was only too willing to take on the challenge. The trader's initial support for Akitoye was clearly a result of his hostility towards the new regime at Lagos and its supporters rather than his approval of the anti-slave trading cause. Ajayi has dated Akitoye's initial assault on Lagos to March 1846. However, there is no evidence in Martin's journal, the source cited by Ajayi, to support this very early date ¹⁸⁷. Martin, who only arrived in Badagry at the end of March 1846, does however suggest that a force went down the lagoon in early 1847 and this later date is verified by an unnamed employee of the Hutton Company working at Badagry beach ¹⁸⁸. The party of eight or ten thousand consisted of Dahomeans, who were evidently now prepared at least to suspend their quarrels with Badagry over tribute and consuls, Badagrians and neighbouring townspeople, hired at enormous expense, and was headed in person by Domingo Martinez accompanied by two of De Souza's sons.

¹⁸⁵ WMMSA 17 May 1847 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁸⁶ After the foundation of Martinez's establishment at Ajido, Martin urged the British Government to action at Lagos as he felt that this was the only way to suppress the slave trade [WMMSA 17 May 1847 Martin, Badagry]. Gollmer too feared that, now firmly entrenched further east, it would be Martinez who would help Akitoye regain his throne and thus reinforce the hold of the slave trade on the town [CMSA CA2/043/102 17 March 1847 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

¹⁸⁷ Ajayi, *Christian Missions...* p. 38.

¹⁸⁸ PRO CO96/12 8 April 1847 unnamed trader at Badagry in 3 September 1847 W Hutton, London.

Martin gave the reasons for Martinez's role as the number of slaves a successful raid would have given him, and also his desire to be 'king of slave dealers' at Lagos as De Souza was at Whydah. Martinez's aims were, however, frustrated as the assault was a complete failure ¹⁸⁹. According to the trader working at Badagry beach, after three weeks detention at Lagos and many fruitless attempts to take the town, the combined army dispersed and returned to their homes ¹⁹⁰.

Martinez's failure at Lagos did nothing to ease the tension around Badagry. According to Commander Middleton who arrived at the beginning of 1848 to attempt his survey of the lagoons, 'we found the country here even more disturbed than we had anticipated' ¹⁹¹. Dahomey's military support proved short-lived and by July 1848 it was feared that its annual slave hunting war would be directed against Badagry ¹⁹². Not only had the Mission of that year by Brodie Cruickshank, Chief Magistrate at Cape Coast, failed to persuade Dahomey to abandon the slave trade, but it might appear from the words of King Ghezo that his visitors' attempts had in fact renewed his antagonism against the powers on the coast. As the king pointed out in response to Cruickshank's assertion that legitimate trade was the route to wealth, this was indeed the case for Porto-Novo, Ajido and Badagry which had once paid tribute to Abomey, but which were now, as a result of the palm oil trade, becoming rich and setting 'my authority at defiance' ¹⁹³. Suspicion and rumour continued to plague the town throughout the remainder of the year and attack seemed imminent. But at the last moment the Dahomean army turned on the market town of Okeodan thirty miles west of Badagry ¹⁹⁴. It was rumoured on the coast, although there is no evidence to support the view and it was vehemently denied by CMS catechist Marsh, that,

¹⁸⁹ WMMSA 17 May 1847 Martin, Badagry.

¹⁹⁰ PRO CO96/12 8 April 1847 unnamed trader at Badagry in 3 September 1847 W Hutton, London.

¹⁹¹ PRO CO96/14 1 March 1848 Middleton, Badagry in 4 July 1847 ADM, London.

¹⁹² This was reported by Martin's successor at the Methodist mission, John Thomas [WMMSA 2 July 1848 Thomas' Journal in 31 July 1848 Thomas, Badagry].

¹⁹³ PRO FO84/777 4 December 1849 evidence presented by CMS Deputation to Lord Palmerston.

¹⁹⁴ WMMSA 9 January 1849 Thomas, Badagry.

having been robbed at that place, it was in fact the Revd Gollmer who had persuaded the King of Dahomey to attack Okeodan ¹⁹⁵. But, whatever the motivating force, Okeodan was completely destroyed with enormous casualties and reportedly nineteen thousand captives taken ¹⁹⁶. Not surprisingly, the Dahomean assault did little to quiet Badagry fears, and reports continued to circulate that after such a glorious victory the army would turn its attention to the coast. Indeed, by mid January 1849 hysterical rumours described the Dahomean troops as only four days away ¹⁹⁷. CMS Missionary Isaac Smith, Methodist missionary John Thomas and Mr Duggan of the Hutton Factory sent a desperate appeal for help to Captain Hasting of HMS Cyclops, asking that a reminder be sent to the King of Dahomey stressing that British subjects should not be molested ¹⁹⁸.

The position of the English residents at Badagry had reached a critical point; at the mission house they kept the gates locked and a watchman patrolling, Revd Thomas never ventured out without a stout stick, and Captain Parsons of the Hutton Company had been forced to pay money to pass along the street to his factory¹⁹⁹. It is important to note here that the increasing animosity evidently displayed towards the British as a result of the restrictions on Badagry's commercial life was not extended during this period towards Akitoye. Although the exiled king's presence in the town had closed the commercial road to Lagos, the occasional slave raiding forays against that power and the significantly

¹⁹⁵ PRO FO84/777 25 March 1849 Marsh's Journal, Badagry, presented as evidence by the 4 December 1849 CMS Deputation.

¹⁹⁶ This must have been an exaggeration of the true figure [PRO FO84/777 25 March 1849 Marsh's Journal, Badagry, presented as evidence by the 4 December 1849 CMS Deputation].

¹⁹⁷ CMSA CA2/082/14 13 January 1849 Smith's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁹⁸ PRO FO84/777 25 March 1849 Marsh's Journal, Badagry, presented as evidence by the 4 December 1849 CMS Deputation.

¹⁹⁹ The newly arrived Commander Middleton used Capt Parson's insecurity as an example of political unease in the town [PRO CO96/14 1 March 1848 Middleton, Badagry]. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that Capt Parsons was also reported to be unpopular due to a number of more personal intrigues. In January 1848, for example, Gollmer reported that trouble threatened to erupt between locals and the factory agents over the 'bad conduct of the Captain's assistant', presumably Mr Duggan, and Parson's 'native woman' [CMSA CA2/043/106 2 January 1848 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

improved relations with Porto-Novo via Martinez evidently provided a satisfactory consolation. Indeed evidence would suggest that Akitoye continued to be treated at this time with the utmost respect by his Badagry hosts ²⁰⁰. Akitoye's position within Badagry was not without its difficulties, but those reported were not of a particularly partisan nature. In early 1849 tensions threatened to erupt into violence over the decision to allow Isa, the exiled Chief of Idale, to settle at Badagry. Akitoye was violently opposed to accepting him as the Chief had betrayed him by informing Kosoko of his movements at the beginning of the year (the circumstances of which go unrecorded). This dispute would not, however, appear to have placed Akitoye and all the Gun chiefs on opposing sides. The Posu's father, it was claimed, was in some way involved in Isa's banishment 'and in this country children and children's children seek redress for their parents' wrongs, while any branch of the offending party exists'. The implication then was that both the Posu and Akitoye were opposed to the Chief of Idale. However, after careful negotiation and mediation, the expected trouble was diffused ²⁰¹.

But it was at this stage that Palmerston at the Foreign Office, a vehement opponent of the slave trade, perturbed at attempts in London, notably through the Hutt Committee, to remove even the Anti-Slave Trade Squadron, took the guarded measure of appointing British Consuls to the area. John Beecroft was appointed as Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra and John Duncan as Vice-Consul at Whydah. Their instructions were simple; they were merely to 'encourage and extend British commerce and thereby to displace the slave trade'²⁰². As Ajayi notes, no mention was made of missionaries, Badagry, Abeokuta or Lagos, but 'It was then that missionary influence, working through a pressure group in London stepped into the picture' ²⁰³. The following period

²⁰⁰ CMSA CA2/082/11 11 April 1848 Smith's Journal, Badagry.

²⁰¹ CMR March 1850, p. 55, Smith's Journal, Badagry.

²⁰² PRO FO84/775 29 May 1849 Palmerston to Duncan; 30 June 1849 Palmerston to Beecroft.

²⁰³ Ajayi, Christian Missions... p. 61.

saw British influence from London and on the coast reaching new heights. This influence was to have a disastrous effect on Badagry.

Chapter Nine

The Badagry Civil War 1851-1854

1851-1854 was a period which saw a dramatic culmination of events at Badagry. Always teetering on the brink of disaster, the early 1850s saw a drawing together of the various strands which had always threatened to push the town over the edge. Commercially Badagry was struggling to develop a successful Atlantic palm oil trade. At the same time it faced intense external pressure from its lagoonside neighbours and the hugely powerful interior powers who sought to mould affairs on the coast to their own ends. The arrival of two powerful 'refugees', the Mewu from Porto-Novo and Akitoye from Lagos, further stretched Badagry's abilities to sustain its successful foreign relations. These factors in themselves were not new. Each represented an often repeated pattern to which Badagry's flexibility had previously provided a check and somewhat haphazard safeguard. But from the early 1840s British presence had become increasingly involved in coastal affairs and ultimately demanded an end to that flexibility in both commercial and political terms. The increasing and largely unchecked involvement of British commercial, religious and, after 1849, also political agents in coastal affairs countered Badagrian pragmatism and subtlety and attempted to enforce a consistency of policy which the British could more easily understand. Under such intense pressure Badagry collapsed into civil war in June 1851.

Hitherto no comprehensive examination of the Badagry civil war has been made. Historical accounts, usually written in the context of more general studies of coastal politics, have tended to present Badagry's collapse as the inevitable fall of a dangerously insecure peripheral state, in the context of the town's total susceptibility to wider hostile forces. Newbury, for example, concludes that the conflict was the result of the dynastic quarrel between Kosoko and Akitoye, whilst Ayandele, not surprisingly, sees it as a struggle against the encroachment

of the missionary factor ¹. Their conclusions are understandable and not inaccurate, but in reality offer only individual threads within a more complicated picture and neglect wholly the internal aspects of Badagrian affairs, which ultimately proved so important in not only allowing but actually stimulating the town's dissolution into warfare. In his more detailed examination of the period, Okaro K'Ojwang makes a surprisingly brief analysis of the civil war itself. The organisation of his material, whereby he has separated political and economic aspects into separate chapters, and indeed separate sections of his analysis, fails to identify links between the various causes of the war and indeed makes a very limited attempt to do so ². Furthermore, as a result of the general tendency towards a coastal perspective, the Badagry civil war has been presented only as a passive response to coastal pressures. It has yet to be seen itself as an important motivating factor in coastal affairs. I would argue that the civil war at Badagry warrants further consideration in this light, particularly in relation to events at Lagos a few months later.

Contemporary observers of the war in Badagry, although often providing useful accounts, have also tended to interpret events oversimplistically, usually to suit their own pressing aims. For some it was the result of individual prejudice, a reflection of very personal dislikes and rivalries ³. Other, often missionary, reports, accounted for the explosion of violence in terms of virulent anti-British

¹ Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast...*, pp. 47-48; Ayandele, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours...*, p. 9-10.

² Okaro K'Ojwang briefly describes how, three months after the Dahomean assault on Abeokuta of March 1851, 'the two factions' at Badagry confronted each other. He makes no detailed analysis of the causes of the war, but suggests that:

the pre[o] - Kosoko forces sought to preserve their independence while the pre[o] - Akitoye party were bent on subjugating the former and installing the Mewu as the sole ruler

[Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagry...', p. 120].

³ In 1854 Consul Campbell concluded that it was the CMS missionary Charles Gollmer who had been largely to blame for the outbreak of violence [PRO FO84/950 1 May 1854 Campbell, Lagos]. But the identification of Gollmer as the cause of 'all the strifes and the civil war in Badagry' was largely the result of the bitterness which developed between Campbell and the CMS agents at work on the coast soon after his appointment as Consul at Lagos.

feeling ⁴. The supposed role of Dahomey, and more notably Lagos in stirring up such feeling and even launching the initial attacks on the town were presented as evidence to support the view that British intervention was required to protect British lives, commercial interests and allies. Badagry's collapse into anarchy was the ideal opportunity to present the struggle between so-called anti-slave trader and slave trader in simple terms that everyone would understand ⁵. These accounts therefore require careful consideration as sources of empirical evidence, although they undoubtedly say a lot about the development of British thought and ideas. But such accounts proved to be not only descriptive but ultimately prescriptive in defining the development of sides in the conflict. From a careful analysis of the evidence it would appear that the extent of the initial outbreak was somewhat confused and perhaps surprisingly limited. But the British view of a conflict between Gun chiefs and the Mewu/Akitoye party, and more simply a slaver versus anti-slaver group, did in fact lead to polarisation and the subsequent development of British 'policy' along these lines. In order to gain an accurate understanding of the events of the Badagry civil war it is necessary, then, to both look beyond these somewhat distorted images and also use them to make a detailed assessment of events in the wider context of coastal affairs and their town perspective. For ultimately Badagry's collapse into civil war was the result of a number of complex factors which were indeed indicative of wider coastal problems but which had taken on a typically Badagrian character.

⁴ Revd Townsend, identified the Badagry civil war as indicative of the hatred felt by the slave trading cause, led by Kosoko, towards the anti-slave trade campaign of the British [PRO FO84/892 5 August 1851 Townsend, Abeokuta in 5 January 1852 Hamilton, London].

⁵ On arriving at Badagry in August 1850, The American missionary Thomas Bowen 'was informed' that:

Gezo and Kosokkoh were concocting a plan to destroy Abbeokuta and subdue Badagry, so as to expel the English merchants and missionaries and restore the slave trade

[Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 96].

The Consular District

The appointment of Consuls to the coast of West Africa was, according to Martin Lynn, an attempt by the Foreign Office, headed by Palmerston, to urge Dahomey into an anti-slave trading treaty, and in the light of increased Anglo/French competition along the coast, to forge closer commercial links with that kingdom. Lynn, however, goes on to suggest that Palmerston's policy towards the coast was ultimately remoulded by those very agents and that to deflect attention away from the Consul's personal failures at the Dahomean capital during 1850 and 1851, despatches from the coast increasingly directed London further east towards Lagos ⁶.

It is easy to understand how Palmerston was persuaded to accept Lagos as the key to British anti-slaving and commercial aspirations. According to Lynn individual agents on the coast were enough their own masters to be ultimately the formulators of 'British policy' in west Africa, a 'policy' which culminated in the bombardment of Lagos and the deposition of its King at the end of 1851. The low priority of West Africa amongst other more pressing foreign concerns, the difficulty of communications between London and the coast, the huge geographical areas involved and also, lastly, the personalities of the Consuls themselves played key roles in giving the West African agents freedom of action. Palmerston appointed sixty year old John Beecroft as Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra. A one-time trader who had acted as British Governor at Fernando Po, Lynn points out that, with his humble background and a somewhat 'murky' career, 'Beecroft was far from the typical picture of a member of Her Majesty's Consular service...' ⁷. Appointed in a temporary capacity under Beecroft as Vice-Consul based at Whydah was the explorer John Duncan. But Duncan died shortly after taking up the post and was replaced by the abrasive

⁶ Lynn, 'Consuls and Kings...', p. 150.

⁷ Ibid, p. 152. Also see M Lynn, 'John Beecroft and West Africa 1829-54' PhD Thesis, London 1979.

Louis Fraser in December 1850 ⁸.

As instructed by London, Duncan and Beecroft embarked on a series of meetings with the Dahomean King at his capital in an attempt to negotiate an end to the slave trade. The efforts of both Vice-Consul and Consul at Abomey proved to be almost unqualified failures. However, after visiting other areas in the Bight of Benin, the Consul began to direct attention towards other concerns ⁹. His mission to Abomey in May 1850 accompanied by Commander Forbes failed to extract the hoped for treaty or any firm commitment towards British aims. As a result, in his writings on the mission, Beecroft attempted to obscure his own disappointments by questioning the influence of the Dahomean King over the coast ¹⁰. The Consul did claim, however, to have been impressed by affairs at the Egba capital, Abeokuta, despite this being a period when Christians were suffering persecution ¹¹. In this way, he continued, it was Lagos, under the control of the usurper King Kosoko and allied with Dahomey, which both posed a threat to Egba stability and promoted the trade in slaves. Beecroft therefore concluded in his London despatches, somewhat incoherently, that it was Lagos which was the key to ending the slave trade ¹². But whilst the Consul had evidently recognised Lagos as 'the focus of the slave trade in the Bight of Benin' by the end of 1850, I would suggest that it was not merely his personal failure at Abomey which hastened Government attention further east ¹³. Missionary pressures, notably from the Church Missionary Society, also played an important role in persuading Palmerston, as early as 1849, that it was Lagos which posed the

⁸ PRO FO2/4 December 1850 FO Draft, London.

⁹ Duncan's visit to Abomey with Commander Forbes in October 1849 resulted in a promise from King Gezo to consider the abandonment of the slave trade. But when Beecroft visited the Dahomean capital a few months later to press home the advantage he was severely disappointed in the response of the King.

¹⁰ Beecroft concluded that:

this great Despot, the King of Dahomey, has been awfully exaggerated
as to his wealth and power

[PRO FO84/816 Beecroft's Journal of his Mission to Abomey May 1850].

¹¹ CMR October 1851, p. 218.

¹² PRO FO84/816 Beecroft's Journal...May 1850.

¹³ PRO FO84/816 5 December 1850 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

most dangerous threat to their work. Furthermore, it was a number of their members operating at Abeokuta and Badagry who, having become deeply involved in local politics helped tip the balance between British diplomatic manoeuvring and direct action.

A CMS Deputation met with Palmerston in December 1849. Producing evidence from their coastal correspondents, notably Townsend and Gollmer, the deputation pressed for the enforced security of the Ogun River to protect Egba interests in the light of continuing insecurities at Badagry ¹⁴. That Palmerston's thinking was influenced by this meeting seems apparent from a note written a few days later questioning whether it would in fact not be possible to compel the King of Lagos to enter into a treaty of slave trade suppression, or whether 'we might expel this chief and reinstate the friendly chief who was ousted...?' ¹⁵. Supporters of the Egba cause sought to influence Palmerston's commercial as well as his spiritual sensibility. In early 1850 the CMS deputation was followed up by a deputation of the Manchester Cotton Association ¹⁶. Palmerston's despatches to Beecroft in the earliest days of 1850, also drew the Consul's attention to the 'pernicious influence which is exercised by the slave dealers at Lagos' and the presence of the deposed King 'friendly to the English' who 'now lives in exile near Badagry'. In a crossed out section of the original draft Palmerston also went as far as to suggest that if Kosoko refused to enter into an agreement he could be expelled and replaced by Akitoye ¹⁷. These sentiments were however, only conveyed to the Consul a year later, when Beecroft was himself actively pursuing

¹⁴ The deputation included the Right Hon Earl of Waldegrave, Sir Robert Harry Inglis MP, Sir Thomas Dyke Acland MP, Sir Edward M Buxton MP, Revd Henry Venn, Revd Henry Townsend, Revd C G [?] Gollmer, and Mr William Hutton. The group pressed for the security of the Ogun River, in other words, the deposition of Kosoko at the River's mouth. Supporting evidence was presented in the form of missionary accounts describing the desire of the Egba people for Christianity in the face of oppression by the slave trading powers of Dahomey and Lagos [PRO FO84/777 3 December 1849 Chichester, London].

¹⁵ PRO FO84/777 24 December 1849 Note by Palmerston attached to 3 December 1849 Chichester, London.

¹⁶ PRO FO84/816 28 February 1850 Palmerston, London.

¹⁷ PRO FO84/816 25 February 1850 Palmerston, London.

a more easterly policy ¹⁸.

I would also suggest that it was the combination of both missionary and consular concerns over affairs at Badagry, in the early months of the 1850s which hastened empty threats to be changed to direct action by Britain's spiritual and political representatives. As its only coastal point of contact with Britain, Badagry provided Abeokuta with both its missionary links and more practically its arms supplies. But the early 1850s in Badagry were a period of extreme insecurity. The town's changing commercial fortunes over the previous decade had exacerbated rivalries between indigenous groups, and the ensuing political crisis was utilised by factions eager to secure their own ends. Other groups amongst the newer arrivals, notably the Sierra Leonians, were often blamed for the declining fortunes and increasing turmoil in the town. Perceiving the situation in oversimplistic terms and their Sierra Leonian flock as innocent victims, the Christian missionaries at Badagry became increasingly embroiled in local affairs, thus ironically themselves becoming a key element in the ensuing political chaos. It was at this point that the British secular agents at work on the coast took the initiative, removing Akitoye from his increasingly dangerous place of exile to the safety of Fernando Po, and thus ultimately precipitating direct action against Lagos in December 1851.

Badagry in the Early 1850s

When Revd Gollmer returned to Badagry in the early part of 1850 from leave in England he wrote optimistically of the warmth of his welcome. He did, however,

¹⁸ Palmerston instructed Beecroft to make treaties with any of the chiefs along the coast of his district and to 'induce' Kosoko to enter into such an agreement. The following day Palmerston reminded Beecroft of the methods he might use in order to persuade the Lagos King:

you should beg him to remember that Lagos is near to the sea and that on the sea are the ships and the cannon of England, and also to bear in mind that he does not hold his authority without a competitor and that the chiefs of the African tribes do not always retain their authority to the end of their lives

[PRO FO84/858 20 & 21 February 1851 Palmerston, London].

note, evidently with some self-satisfaction, that in his absence, under the guardianship of Revd Smith, no increase had been made to the average one hundred and thirty people attending Sunday morning service and that there was 'not one fresh' candidate for baptism ¹⁹. With the return of two of its most energetic members, Townsend and Gollmer, the Yoruba Mission was renewed with increased vigour. The arrivals of March 1850 also included Gollmer's new wife, another missionary couple Mr and Mrs Eugene Van Cooten and a Mechanic, Mr Huber. Numbers were boosted later in the same month by the arrival of three Gold Coast Catechists, James Barber, James White and Thomas King ²⁰.

Although Thomas King was destined to move on to Abeokuta after only a couple of weeks at Badagry, he recorded his initial impressions of the town. Shocked by the 'superstition and idolatry' which he found there and horrified by an execution for witchcraft which took place only a few days after his arrival, King nevertheless retained his optimism. Indeed he observed that the progress of the school children was 'sufficient to cheer the drooping hopes of the labourers'²¹. Mr Van Cooten also maintained high hopes for his progress in preaching about the town and wrote of his warm reception in the palm wine sheds ²². But both Mr and Mrs Van Cooten were dead almost within the year. In June 1850 Revd Muller at Abeokuta also died and Revd Smith was sent from the coast to replace him, despite the increasing persecution of Christians at that place.

At Badagry, although no organised form of religious persecution occurred, the missionaries became increasingly disheartened. By the end of 1850 the Anglicans still retained twenty two communicants, thirteen candidates for baptism and the

¹⁹ CMSA CA2/043/107 June 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²⁰ Gollmer's third wife was Sarah Caroline Hoar. Mr Van Cooten was a Dutch surgeon who had trained for his missionary duties at Islington College [Ajayi, 'A History of the Yoruba Mission...', p. 64].

²¹ CMR October 1851, p. 219, 21 March 1850 King's Journal, Badagry.

²² CMSA CA2/086/7 28 April 1850 Van Cooten's Journal, Badagry.

numbers attending Sunday service appear to have remained constant. But the numbers attending both Sunday and Day school were falling and their boarding school was 'almost broken up' ²³. Revd Gollmer wrote dramatically of a mission in crisis and stated that the people would not listen and seemed 'at present quite enraged against us'. He feared that there were a number in Badagry who were hoping to rid the town of missionaries once and for all so that 'slave traders could come here' ²⁴.

It would indeed appear that commercial concerns had brought the missionaries into conflict with the people and more importantly with certain chiefs. Gollmer was the subject of a vitriolic verbal attack by Chief Jengen over missionary hostility towards Portuguese traders operating in the town ²⁵. The other principal chiefs evidently dismissed Jengen's words as those of a drunkard. However, more surprisingly, during the same period, Gollmer also came into conflict with Chief Mobi of Boeko Ward, a figure traditionally recognised as an 'English Chief'. The dispute arose over the position of the mission fence which Mobi argued would 'rob the fetish of his road'. Other chiefs, including the Wawu, intervened on the mission's behalf but Gollmer noted that Mobi's hostility was evidently rooted in bitterness over the lack of material advantage their establishment in his ward had brought ²⁶. By October 1850 all Gollmer's optimism and confidence had disappeared and he warned that the missionaries position was 'rather critical'. No evangelical progress was made, the boarding school was almost abandoned, the missionaries were insulted openly in the streets and Gollmer wrote that an unnamed chief spoke freely of driving them away ²⁷.

²³ CMSA CA2/043/108 24 September 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²⁴ CMSA CA2/043/108 24 September 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²⁵ CMSA CA2/043/108 24 September 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²⁶ CMSA CA2/043/109 30 September 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

²⁷ CMR October 1851, p. 210, 25 October 1850, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

The difficulties faced by the Christian missionaries at work in Badagry were evidently symptomatic of far wider tensions and the suggestion that these problems were rooted firmly in commercial concerns requires further examination. The disruption of interior trade routes and supplies caused by the Yoruba wars was noted by the American missionary Bowen during his visit to the area in the early 1850s ²⁸. Gollmer in 1851 also noted a 'scarcity of provisions' and high food prices which he concluded was the result of the lack of local agriculture and the Badagrian's obsession with trade ²⁹. However, what is interesting about Badagry in the early 1850s is that evidence would seem to suggest that the Atlantic commerce of the town was in fact continuing to operate and indeed showed signs of increasing. Despite considerable upheaval, in October 1851 Gollmer himself noted that as well as the ships of Hutton, two Sierra Leonian vessels and an American had carried 'a considerable quantity of oil away this year' and also that Domingo Martinez at Porto-Novo had apparently purchased a large quantity from Badagry ³⁰. Evidence for an increase in Badagry's palm oil exports is supported by its increased attraction for foreign traders such as Mr Sandeman for the firm Forster and Smith who settled there during the early months of 1851 ³¹. But there is no evidence to suggest a similar resurgence in slave trading at Badagry. Indeed, its almost complete omission from contemporary accounts would seem to suggest that this trade at Badagry was now firmly banished to the periphery.

The success of Badagry's 'legitimate' Atlantic trade should be seen in the context of the town as a whole. Evidence would seem to suggest that the population was growing at a rapid rate. In 1845 Gollmer had put the number of inhabitants at between five or six thousand, but estimated in 1849 that the figure was now eight

²⁸ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours...*, p. 114.

²⁹ *CMR* October 1851, pp. 225-226, 28 January 1851, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

³⁰ *CMR* October 1851, pp. 225-226, 28 January 1851, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

³¹ CMSA CA2/043/19 5 July 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

thousand ³². Revd Bowen a year later put the figure closer to ten thousand ³³. Bowen went on to describe a chaotic town swarming with 'thieves and drunkards, whose only object in life was sensual gratification' ³⁴. The American's overdramatic puritanical distaste for Badagry does, however, suggest a town stretched to breaking point.

The difficulties amongst the population of Badagry were intensified by the identification of certain groups as troublemakers or scapegoats. In August 1850 Gollmer described the Muslims in Badagry as a 'numerous and powerful party'³⁵. During the same period Van Cooten, lamenting the lack of Christian progress at Badagry, noted also that Islam was 'gaining ground' ³⁶. However, despite the obvious strength of the Islamic section of the town's community, there is unfortunately very little evidence to suggest what political role was played by this group during the period. Despite the potential political influence of the Muslim population, they received startlingly little coverage in contemporary European reports. However, a group which did receive attention in such accounts were the Sierra Leonian settlers. That this group bore the brunt of Badagrian hostility to British anti-slaving methods was attested by the indignant missionary observers. This interpretation is understandable. The Sierra Leonians, who saw themselves as British subjects, were obvious scapegoats for hostility to British restrictions. Furthermore, with their European links it was clearly this group who were in an advantageous position to pursue their own legitimate trading ends. In this way then it was the Sierra Leonians employed in the British trading factories who came under particular attack during the latter part of 1850 and 1851 ³⁷. However the commercial aspect to increasing Sierra

³² CMSA CA2/043/95 28 January 1845 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; CMI August 1849, p. 93, Gollmer's description....

³³ Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 93.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 99.

³⁵ CMSA CA2/043/108 11 August 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

³⁶ CMR October 1851, p. 220, 13 October 1850, Van Cooten, Badagry.

³⁷ CMSA CA2/043/109 5 & 6 October 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

Leonian unpopularity also suggests more complex undercurrents which meant that these new immigrants were not so much victims of circumstance but rather were an ascendant and competitive political force within the town. In missionary accounts it was the association of the Sierra Leonians with the palm oil trade which not only attracted hostility from other parties but also gave the smaller group the ability and confidence to pursue their own aims and ultimately to challenge the traditional political and commercial institutions of the town. During the 1840s, there had certainly been occasions when the Sierra Leonians had challenged the automatic authority of their hosts. One group had threatened to renounce the Wawu as their 'English Chief' over his failure to redeem a kidnapped child ³⁸. In 1850 Bowen also noted a 'strong minority of people', which he did not specifically identify, but who by implication may be the Sierra Leonians or at least the Christian element among them: this group, he noted, posed a challenge to the traditional gift-receiving practices of the town's ruling elite and as a result 'These greedy chiefs are no longer able to rob men as they did Landers' ³⁹.

The evidently increasing tensions between some Gun and Sierra Leone sections are apparent from missionary accounts, despite their tendency to present them as victims of immigrant persecution and heroic struggle. Relations reached crisis point in October 1850 when 'The Sierra Leone people rose in a body and took up arms against the Popos' in Boeko Ward. The account given by Gollmer described how a catalogue of annoyance and sometimes injury inflicted by the 'Popos' had culminated in the burning down of an immigrant's house dangerously close to the Bristol factory. According to Gollmer, the Sierra Leonians demanded redress for the offence and the two perpetrators were brought to trial at the fetish. However, on being found guilty the criminals were allowed to escape and those

³⁸ PRO FO84/663 19 April 1845 Extract from Crowther's Journal, Badagry in 7 January 1846 Coates, London.

³⁹ Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours... p. 99.

that gave chase were obstructed. Appalled by this fiasco the Sierra Leonians took up arms and the town was threatened with severe disturbances. Somewhat surprisingly Gollmer declined to take any part in the proceedings and noted that it was the Wesleyan Schoolmaster who ultimately 'took it upon himself' to call a meeting of both parties and settle the dispute ⁴⁰. A few days later Commander Patey and HMS Flying Fish arrived off Badagry offering assistance. Gollmer replied that due to the critical state of the country, a declaration should be made, similar to that made five years previously, that as British subjects living in peace, the Naval Officers would not allow any injury to befall the English residents. Accordingly a meeting of chiefs and officers took place at which the Badagrys were asked if they wished the English to leave, 'to which the chiefs reluctantly replied in the negative' ⁴¹.

It is imperative to recognise that Gollmer's distinction between 'Popos' and their Sierra Leonian opponents was ultimately misleading. Undoubtedly, as a result of their 'Britishness' this group were identified as the cause of commercial difficulty, as they themselves sought to assert their own political position. But in reality, these opposing 'sides' were more transient and illusory. As noted above, Sierra Leone and Gun traders were both engaged or sought to be engaged in slave and 'legitimate' trade. Therefore to suggest that, as a distinct group, the Sierra Leonians were a commercially and ultimately politically revolutionary force in Badagrian politics is inaccurate. There was no 'crisis of adaptation' as a new political order sought to emerge. It was merely the painful but continuous political struggle symptomatic of Badagry's efforts to maintain its economic lifelines. But what is important at this point is that the British perception was very different. Contemporary European sources crudely identified opposing groups and motives in an attempt to meet their own agendas and also merely to explain events in ways they themselves could more easily understand. As a

⁴⁰ CMSA CA2/043/109 5, 6 & 7 October 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁴¹ CMSA CA2/043/109 9, 10 & 11 October 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

result, sweeping generalisations were made and the various strands of tension within Badagry were presented in terms of slave traders versus anti-slave traders. Since the arrival of the missionaries in the early 1840s, European perceptions of Badagry had always been more than merely the colourful descriptions printed in missionary publications. They had not only been influential in shaping British policy towards the coast but also African agendas. Maclean's garrison at Badagry was the direct result of missionary perceptions, as was Akitoye's adoption and manipulation of the anti-slave trade movement. But 1850 and the arrival of Consul Beecroft, with his direct recourse to British military power, made the shaping of British perceptions and policy of critical importance.

Gollmer's journal for October 1850 went on to say that barely was the dispute between the 'Popo' and Sierra Leonians settled than another, even more dangerous confrontation, emerged between the Gun and the champion of the anti-slave trade movement, Akitoye⁴². Tensions arose between the ex-King of Lagos and his hosts over continuing trade with Lagos. According to Gollmer, during Adele's exile at Badagry in the 1820s the Lagos road was closed and nobody dared to go there. However, despite Akitoye's attempts to enforce a similar embargo a number of Badagrians persisted in going down the lagoon to trade. The Badagry chiefs made token gestures to mollify Akitoye, but to little effect. On October 15 Gollmer wrote in his journal that, in exasperation, Akitoye had seized seven Ajido men fishing on the lagoon at Badagry and refused to release them until those that had gone to Lagos had been punished. The ward chiefs refused to comply and furthermore threatened Akitoye with expulsion from the town if the captives were not released within five days. Both sides prepared for confrontation, while neighbouring chiefs were called in over the matter. A local priest, Akibode, appealed to Gollmer to intervene, but 'after mature consideration' Gollmer decided not to become involved 'since no one

⁴² CMSA CA2/043/109 15 October 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

knows who is right or wrong' ⁴³. Ultimately this particular conflict came to nothing and both sides backed down. But the issue of traders going to Lagos remained contentious throughout the remainder of 1850. Tensions reached a peak in December of that year, just prior to the expected visit of Consul Beecroft on his way to Abeokuta. Despite renewed proclamations by the chiefs that departure for Lagos was forbidden and punishable by death, Gollmer noted that large parties from Badagry and the neighbouring towns continued to go down the lagoon. On 14 December a group of Isos and Badagry people prepared to depart for Lagos openly singing songs derogatory to Akitoye. Violence threatened to erupt ⁴⁴. The following days saw a series of threats, counter-threats and individual incidents of aggression. However, yet again neither side was provoked into all-out attack and, with the Isos' departure for home, the town was again quieted although the issue remained unsettled. Throughout January 1851 the missionaries warned that 'we cannot tell when the dark threatening cloud will burst upon us' ⁴⁵.

It is evident that external affairs continued to play a crucial role. Throughout the October conflict between the Gun group and Akitoye's Lagos party, Gollmer also identified difficulties over relations with Abeokuta due to allegations of Badagrians robbing Egba traders. At the same time, Ipokia was calling on Badagry to mediate between it and Abeokuta in an attempt to avert an Egba assault on that place. Furthermore, there were yet again rumours and fears of a future Dahomean attack on the town ⁴⁶.

The reaction of the British forces to the difficult situation faced by British subjects on the coast was to attempt a vigilant watch and, as noted, remind the Badagry chiefs of their obligations as hosts. Although little more was possible, Gollmer, in

⁴³ CMSA CA2/043/109 15 October 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁴⁴ CMSA CA2/043/109 14 December 1850 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁴⁵ PRO FO84/860 3 January 1851 Gollmer, Badagry in 26 March 1851 Venn, London.

⁴⁶ PRO FO84/865 22 October 1850 Gollmer, Badagry in 3 January 1851 Hamilton, London.

a letter to Commodore Fanshawe evidently saw the role of naval 'protection' as crucial to their continued safety on the coast. Gollmer went on to urge frequent landings and the discharging of a few guns from the sea but declined an offer of arms and ammunition ⁴⁷. There is also an interesting, but singular, reference to the appointment, in December 1850, of a Vice-Consul for Badagry. In a letter to Captain Trotter from Abeokuta, Revd Townsend mentions briefly that a Mr Beresford had been appointed to this position ⁴⁸. He included no further detail on the matter and the subject is not alluded to in any other despatch from either him or any other source. That Townsend was mistaken in this statement seems apparent, and may possibly be explained by over-enthusiastic Missionary hopes or merely rumour. Furthermore, some confusion may have arisen over the imminent visit of Consul Beecroft on his way to Abeokuta.

The Arrival of Beecroft

Consul Beecroft eventually arrived at Badagry on 2 January 1851 ⁴⁹. Welcomed enthusiastically by missionaries and the Sierra Leonian population, Beecroft was immediately informed of their fears and concerns ⁵⁰. Despite reserving judgment initially, because 'there is no believing a great deal of what you hear', Beecroft had evidently already or very quickly concluded that Lagos was at the root of Badagry's difficulties ⁵¹. The development of Beecroft's thoughts during January 1851 is, unfortunately, difficult to trace as a further account was delayed until his submission of a full report to Palmerston after his return to Fernando Po in February. According to this later report, the Consul initially held a private meeting with Akitoye, at which he was impressed by the deposed King's prudence. Beecroft was persuaded at this meeting by Akitoye and Gollmer, who was also present during this private interview, that 'there is a league formed

⁴⁷ PRO FO84/865 22 October 1850 Gollmer, Badagry in 3 January 1851 Hamilton, London.

⁴⁸ PRO FO84/860 10 December 1850 Townsend, Abeokuta.

⁴⁹ PRO FO84/858 4 January 1851 Beecroft, Badagry.

⁵⁰ PRO FO84/860 3 January 1851 Gollmer, Badagry in 26 March 1851 Venn, London.

⁵¹ PRO FO84/858 4 January 1851 Beecroft, Badagry; PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

with Kosoko...the present ruler of Lagos and the 'Popos' of Badagry, against Akitoye so far advanced that his life is in danger, indeed he has offered a premium for his head ⁵². Beecroft urged Akitoye to keep his many followers under control, at least until he had returned from Abeokuta and then convened a meeting of all the Badagry chiefs. The Consul called together ten chiefs, in which number he included the eight ward chiefs, Akitoye and 'Mayo' [the Mewu] 'a staunch friend of Akitoye's'. At the meeting which took place the following day, after outlining the purpose of his mission and discussing some minor matters, Beecroft 'addressed them relative to Kosoko of Lagos tampering with some parties; relative to a person of note under their protection'. According to Beecroft's report, having impressed upon the chiefs their obligation to protect Akitoye, they in turn 'denied having any communication with Kosoko on that matter', and promised faithfully to preserve the peace until his return ⁵³. According to Gollmer's report to CMS Headquarters, however, the chiefs, or at least the Posu, acknowledged that there was a 'serious matter pending', but assured Beecroft that they did not wish to fight ⁵⁴. Any comfort Beecroft may have taken from the Posu and his fellow chiefs was dispelled on his arrival at Abeokuta a few days later. His meetings with the Egba chiefs were dominated by their fears over Lagos under Kosoko and the intrigues of that King with the Badagry people. Furthermore, Beecroft was introduced to a man, presumably an Egba, who had been at Lagos and recounted two recent meetings between visiting Badagry chiefs and Kosoko to ascertain 'the best means to attack' the town ⁵⁵. Evidently the meetings had proved inconclusive, with the conspirators raising fears over the possible use of English force against them. Beecroft, however, returned to the coast on 24 January fully convinced of the dangers posed by Lagos and that the population of Badagry were a 'faithless set of vagabonds' ⁵⁶.

⁵² PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

⁵³ PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

⁵⁴ CMSA CA2/043/15 9 February 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

⁵⁵ PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

⁵⁶ PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

While Beecroft was at Abeokuta tensions at Badagry continued to be heightened from east and west. Thomas Hutton had been at Lagos, unsuccessfully attempting to establish a factory there. Returning west via Badagry, Hutton brought with him several messengers from Lagos whose presence in the town caused consternation amongst Akitoye's followers ⁵⁷. At the same time, Gollmer was informed by Akitoye that a large party of Isos from the west were intending to break the lagoon embargo and pass down to Lagos ⁵⁸. Gollmer himself admitted to being uncertain of the object of this expedition, but the gesture was undoubtedly seen as provocative. On January 15 Gollmer fearfully noted that violence was about to erupt ⁵⁹. Ultimately it would appear that the Gun backed down, despite reports that Lagos forces were waiting a few miles away at Ajido to help them. But the town remained on red alert. Significantly it was the Gun Wawu who, continuing to act as 'English Chief', sent messages requesting both missionaries and Sierra Leonians to remain in doors should they hear gunfire. Meanwhile a number of the town's inhabitants removed their families to a place of safety ⁶⁰.

By the time Beecroft returned to Badagry later in the month the two British warships Jackal and Flying Fish were lying offshore. There is no indication as to exactly when these ships had arrived, nor indeed whether they had played a role in persuading the Badagrys to maintain an uneasy peace. Beecroft, it would appear, attempted to alleviate the situation by visiting six chiefs individually. As well as the Mewu and Akitoye, Beecroft went to meet the Akran, the Wawu, the Posu, the Jengen and also chief Isa, the ex-chief of Idale. But it was evidently in the company of the Mewu and Akitoye that he attended church ⁶¹.

⁵⁷ CMSA CA2/043/110 12 January 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁵⁸ CMSA CA2/043/110 13 January 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁵⁹ CMSA CA2/043/110 15 January 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁰ CMSA CA2/043/110 15 January 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁶¹ PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

The Consul's attempts to reconcile Badagry's factions was, however, only a partial solution. Rumours that the Iso party, evidently under the control of Porto-Novo, were still making their way down the lagoon were rife. Gollmer reported that the Porto-Novans, seeing that the road to Lagos was now open, were eager to take commercial advantage. However, fearing attack from Akitoye's people should they pass, they had hired a mercenary force for their protection. But Akitoye and the Mewu were claiming that, far from being a trading party, those from the west were going to join Kosoko's military forces in a concerted attack. Gollmer at this stage evidently still hoped to avoid confrontation within Badagry. Urging moderation, he warned that Porto-Novo could not only stop its own commerce with Badagry but also block the road to Ipokia and Ado 'by stationing some Isos at the confluence of the Ossa and the great branch leading up to Pokia and Adu' ⁶². Beecroft on the other hand was prepared for more decisive action. He instructed Akitoye that should the Isos arrive 'in hostile army' they should not be allowed to pass ⁶³.

Unfortunately, Beecroft's understanding of affairs at Badagry was woefully simplistic. Having been persuaded by the Egba and also by rumours of a plot for his own assassination, he regarded all aspects of Badagry's complex problems in terms of a power struggle between Kosoko and Akitoye. Badagry's economic problems and the deposed King's unpopularity, for example, he saw merely as a result of Akitoye's poverty and his inability to 'feed the vultures'. The Consul therefore concluded that removing the exile from the area would not only save his life but would 'ultimately put a stop to hostile intentions against Badagry by Kosoko...and the King of Porto Novo' ⁶⁴.

⁶² CMSA CA2/043/15 9 February 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

⁶³ PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

⁶⁴ PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

Having informed Akitoye privately that he should take refuge at Fernando Po, Beecroft felt that there was little more he could or should do. There was another reported meeting between the Consul and five Badagry chiefs, one of whom was the Posu. According to Beecroft's report, the chiefs, unaware of his plans to remove Akitoye, appealed to him to mediate between the approaching Porto-Novans and the exiled King. However, Beecroft, confident in his own assessment of the situation, was not persuaded by their conciliatory language. Determined that they should not deceive him as to their true 'enmity against a man that had kept them from starvation', the Consul 'rebuked them...severely' in terms which evidently prevented any further meetings. He then sent a message to the Porto-Novan King instructing him that his forces should not come to Badagry and evidently spent the remainder of his visit meeting with the Sierra Leone people and chastising them for their lapses into slave owning and trading. Akitoye himself appears to have hesitated over leaving, but was ultimately persuaded to go ⁶⁵.

On 28 January 1851 Akitoye secretly accompanied Consul Beecroft on board the waiting ship and departed for Fernando Po. According to Revd Gollmer, the departure of Akitoye caused a sensation in Badagry. 'Never has a King done so before' exclaimed some of the people', although whether they were referring to his putting to sea or apparent abandonment of his people is unspecified ⁶⁶. Gollmer also took pleasure in describing the alarm caused at Lagos. Obviously attempting to illustrate how easily an assault on Kosoko's monarchy might be made, the missionary recounted in a letter to Beecroft, that, fearing an attempt was about to be made to restore Akitoye, Kosoko and his party prepared to flee ⁶⁷.

⁶⁵ PRO FO84/858 21 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

⁶⁶ CMR October 1851, p. 224, 29 January 1851, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁷ PRO FO84/858 18 March 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

It immediately became clear, however, that Akitoye's removal had done nothing to alleviate the situation in Badagry and the imminent arrival of the Porto-Novans added increased urgency. Indeed, the removal of their leader appears to have made the already fearful Akitoye/Mewu faction in the town far more insecure and dangerous. At the request of the Badagry chiefs Gollmer called a meeting of the headmen of the Akitoye/Mewu group and appealed to them to remain calm. But the leaders, who arrived at the meeting clearly armed, would not immediately agree to let the approaching Porto-Novans pass peacefully. 30 January was spent in heated debate and recrimination. No agreement was reached except between Chiefs Posu, Motang and Mobi, who declared that, should the Porto-Novans be attacked, they in turn would fire on the aggressors⁶⁸.

The following day was spent preparing for war. Many armed villagers joined the Badagry forces and others ran away. Groups of Sierra Leonians began to seek shelter in the mission yard and an uneasy quietness fell over the town so that 'the least noise was thought to be a signal for war'. Towards evening a large party approached the mission. The gate was closed against them, but surprisingly they sent a message thanking Gollmer for all his trouble and mediation. Gollmer, thinking prudence the better part of valour, chose to salute them from within the safety of the mission yard ⁶⁹.

Beecroft's message to the King of Porto-Novo, that his troops should not approach the town, was ignored. The Consul's ring and his men were returned with the message that the King of Porto-Novo only desired to protect any goods that Kosoko may send him ⁷⁰. The Mewu, evidently extremely anxious about any dealings with Porto-Novo, continued to insist that should they approach they would be attacked. However, according to his own account, it was ultimately

⁶⁸ CMSA CA2/043/110 30 January 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁶⁹ CMSA CA2/043/110 31 January 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁰ PRO FO84/858 18 March 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

Gollmer who forced the Mewu to back down. The missionary informed the chief that should his forces attack they could no longer be considered the friends of the English. The Mewu was quieted and, within an hour of peace being declared at Badagry, the Iso forces of between two and four hundred men in one hundred canoes arrived opposite the town. Staying only long enough to exchange a few presents the Iso forces moved off along the lagoon to Lagos, where they stayed for only twenty days. Suffering from the effects of smallpox and drunkenness, they then returned home quickly and quietly ⁷¹. But in his Consular report on Badagry affairs, made admittedly from Fernando Po, Beecroft presented the peaceful settlement of the Iso problem in rather a different light. Indeed, Beecroft concluded that it was only the timely arrival of Commander Foote on board HMS Prometheus, who landed an Officer and a field piece, which averted the eruption of the town into violence ⁷². Gollmer himself, at the end of his dramatic journal account of these events and his own role in averting a violent confrontation, did admit that Mr Batten, an assistant at the Hutton Factory, had sent signals for aid to the recently arrived ship. But Gollmer concluded that when the naval officers, and presumably their field piece of which he makes no mention, arrived on shore at about the same time as the Isos appeared, the matter was already settled ⁷³.

Yet again, however, this settlement proved to be of a very temporary nature. On 5 February Gollmer called a meeting of the whole town, but only succeeded in getting the Akitoye/Mewu party to attend ⁷⁴. Over the next couple of days the arrival of messengers from Kosoko caused great tension within the town. Publicly these messengers requested the re-opening of diplomatic relations between the two states. However, Gollmer evidently suspected them of plotting secretly with the Badagry chiefs and, adopting an increasingly uncompromising

⁷¹ PRO FO84/858 18 March 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

⁷² PRO FO84/858 24 February 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

⁷³ CMSA CA2/043/110 1 February 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁴ CMSA CA2/043/110 5 February 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

stance, he dismissed their overtures of friendship ⁷⁵.

February and March 1851 also saw a number of other disparate disruptive influences acting on the town from both within and without. On 20 February the Isos returned home peacefully, causing virtually no comment at Badagry ⁷⁶. But three days later a serious fight broke out within the town between Mr Batten of the Hutton factory and another trader, Mr Randolphe from Accra. According to Gollmer, Batten, hoping to drive all other traders from the town, claimed that the beach belonged to the Hutton Company who had bought it from the King of Dahomey. Accordingly, Batten had ordered all Randolphe's oil, which he was loading aboard a Bristol ship, to be removed from the beach. The quarrel dissolved into violence and Batten, having fired on Randolphe, was attacked, disarmed and subsequently flogged by that trader and his canoemen. The dispute between Batten and Randolphe threatened to take on a more serious aspect. The Posu took Randolphe's side whilst the Wawu, the English chief, took that of Batten. Gollmer was appealed to for intervention as it was feared that more widespread violence might erupt. The missionary, however, declined involvement in a 'trade quarrel' but privately noted that Batten had 'richly deserved' his flogging ⁷⁷.

Ultimately Badagry did not erupt into violence over this quarrel between foreign traders. But it is important to note that the subsequent hostility between the Posu and the Wawu contradicts the impression of Gun solidarity and indicates the complex nature of the various tensions acting within and upon Badagry during this period. In early March a further blow was dealt when Mr Van Cooten died. Van Cooten was evidently very well respected within the Badagry community and Gollmer noted that his death very much shook the chiefs, notably Chief Bala

⁷⁵ PRO FO84/858 18 March 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

⁷⁶ CMSA CA2/043/110 20 February 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁷ CMSA CA2/043/110 25 February 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

who had regularly played host to the Dutchman ⁷⁸. The death of the more conciliatory Van Cooten provided a further distancing between the Badagry chiefs and the missionaries as represented by the forceful Revd Gollmer.

Dramatic external events also had enormous repercussions for Badagry during early March. On the first day of that month the long-expected Dahomean army was sighted near to Abeokuta. Tension between the two powers had been increasing throughout the course of 1850 as Abeokuta continued to launch a series of campaigns against pro-Dahomean towns ⁷⁹. But ultimately it was Kosoko who was blamed for persuading the Dahomeys to march on the Egba capital ⁸⁰. The attack was made on 3 March and the fighting lasted two days. The Egba however gained the upper hand and the King of Dahomey's forces were defeated ⁸¹.

The immediate post-attack period saw heightened anxieties and instability at Badagry. Even the popular Idagbe festival, held in April that year, was attended only by the Wawu and a few others ⁸². The Dahomean defeat immediately began to raise fears at the coast that the marauding army would, in desperation and anger, turn its attention to a more vulnerable enemy and march on Badagry ⁸³. Furthermore coastal rivalries were heightened by the immediate closure of the Abeokuta/Lagos road by the Egba ⁸⁴. But most dramatically, it rapidly emerged at Abeokuta, from captives taken, that a number of Badagrians, notably from the

⁷⁸ CMSA CA2/043/110 13 March 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁷⁹ At the end of 1850 Townsend had warned that the Dahomeans were being provoked by Egba assaults on their allies and feared that they 'will not stop until some reverse teaches them to be moderate' [PRO FO84/860 10 December 1850 Townsend, Abeokuta].

⁸⁰ Commander Fanshawe concluded that Kosoko had been so incensed by Akitoye's removal to Fernando Po that he had instigated the assault [PRO FO84/865 30 March 1851 Fanshawe, off River Benin in 11 June 1851 Hamilton, London].

⁸¹ Gollmer rejoiced in the devastating defeat of the Dahomean army and wrote in delighted terms of the numbers of dead and wounded [PRO FO84/865 26 March 1851 Gollmer, Badagry in 11 June 1851 Hamilton, London].

⁸² Gollmer concluded that the poor attendance was the result of disharmony in the town [CMSA CA2/043/111 24 April 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

⁸³ PRO FO84/858 26 March 1851 Townsend, Abeokuta in 11 June 1851 Hamilton, London.

⁸⁴ PRO FO84/858 19 March 1851 Townsend, Abeokuta in 11 June 1851 Hamilton, London.

Posuko Quarter, had been a part of the besieging Dahomean army. As Townsend noted, the Egba 'could not henceforth mistake the character of Posser's pretended friendship' ⁸⁵. The exposure of the Posu as an ally of Dahomey, was seized upon by the missionaries as an indication of the struggle at Badagry between good and evil. Subsequent instability and disturbance in the town was described in terms of a pro-slaving, pro-Kosoko party with the Posu as its figurehead. The identification of two 'sides' at Badagry was evidence enough that Kosoko at Lagos must go. Gollmer's tone was uncompromising. In a letter of 18 March to Consul Beecroft, the missionary lamented his failure in reconciling 'these two parties' and outlined the risk that Kosoko's continued presence at Lagos posed. Gollmer, whilst leaving the mechanics of the King's deposition to the military - 'you and HM Officers will know how to act' - did not fail to add that 'two boats would do it in an hour without much trouble' ⁸⁶.

But a closer examination of the Badagry situation, from the fuller missionary journal accounts, rather than the concise, dramatic calls for help to the Consul and the Naval Squadron, reveal a series of far more subtle tensions with no definitive 'sides'. One incident towards the end of March 1851 which threatened to erupt into violence occurred as a result of a relatively minor market dispute ⁸⁷. It is evident that this dispute, which came under Gollmer's general description of 'frequent disturbances' and threatened outbursts in his despatch to Commodore Fanshawe, owed little to the struggle between slaver and anti-slaver at Badagry. But the reaction of Consul Beecroft to the Dahomean attack was also to look to the 'slave trading party' at Lagos and at a meeting with Commodore Fanshawe he urged the expulsion of Kosoko with renewed urgency. Fanshawe declined

⁸⁵ PRO FO84/858 20 March 1851 Townsend, Abeokuta.

⁸⁶ PRO FO84/858 18 March 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

⁸⁷ According to Gollmer, 3d owed by a 'Popo' woman to a Sierra Leone woman had resulted in bad feeling over a reluctance to repay the debt. Indeed, the 'Popo' woman had 'become possessed of a fetish' and the immigrants subsequent demands were therefore viewed as an affront to the gods. As a result payment of a fine was demanded by the 'Popo' population and the situation grew increasingly tense. It would appear ultimately, however, that the matter was allowed to drop [CMSA CA2/043/111 27 March 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

direct involvement but promised the missionaries that a man of war would be anchored off Badagry ⁸⁸. A close watch was kept on that part of the coast throughout April and May 1851 ⁸⁹. But despite continued fears of Dahomean attack during the early part of June, as the fighting season drew to a close naval vigilance was relaxed ⁹⁰. This partial withdrawal may perhaps have been due to the difficulties reported by Naval ships in contacting the shore through the heavy surf ⁹¹. But this explanation flies in the face of evidence which would suggest that during the same period Badagry was engaged in surprisingly vigorous commerce. On only one day at the end of May eight trading vessels were anchored off Badagry beach. Two were English, two Sierra Leone, two from Hamburg, one from the Netherlands and one from Havana. All were engaged in taking on palm oil ⁹².

The Outbreak of Violence, June 1851

Despite the apparently healthy commercial situation and the receding Dahomean threat Badagry remained extremely unstable. On 11 June four canoes approached the town from Lagos. According to Gollmer their arrival was part of an elaborate plot devised by Kosoko to suppress all support for Akitoye. Prior to their appearance, Gollmer recounted that a campaign had been waged to 'persuade' many of Akitoye's supporters at Badagry to return peaceably to Lagos. Others, he claimed, had been kidnapped and forcibly returned. Furthermore, the previous week Kosoko had joined with the chief of Okobo to destroy Mabo, a small town close to Lagos described as 'Akitoye's only stronghold in that quarter'. According to missionary sources Badagry was rife with rumours that Kosoko would shortly

⁸⁸ PRO FO84/858 30 March 1851 Beecroft, Fernando Po.

⁸⁹ PRO FO84/865 12 May 1851 Adams, position unrecorded in 25 June 1851 Hamilton, London.

⁹⁰ By 12 June it was claimed by traders at Badagry that a British ship had not been seen for five days 'although the Commodore said he would not leave the anchorage without a vessel' [PRO FO84/860 11 October 1851 Forster and Smith, London].

⁹¹ According to Commander Adams, Commander Patey had not been able to land at Badagry in late April/early May 'in consequence of the state of the beach' [PRO FO84/865 12 May 1851 Adams, position unrecorded in 25 June 1851 Hamilton, London].

⁹² CMSA CA2/043/111 23 May 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

send a force to drive out not only the Mewu and Akitoye's remaining supporters but also the Sierra Leonians and missionaries. In his subsequent journal account Gollmer explained that the attack had been planned for 16 June but that ultimately events had moved too quickly ⁹³.

The arrival of the Lagos canoes was presented by Gollmer as evidence of Kosoko's plot, and as the beginning of his assault and Badagry's collapse into violence. That the party from Lagos were the motivating force in subsequent events should at least be examined closely. Commander Heath in his second-hand account of events at Badagry recounted that, rather than being part of a politically motivated plot, the party from Lagos were in fact the group of traders they purported to be and landed at Badagry to visit and do business there. It was these traders, claimed Heath, who, while in the market place, began to sing songs of abuse about Akitoye. This provocative behaviour in turn led Akitoye's supporters to arrest two of the culprits, at which point, the remainder of the Lagos people, supported by the 'Popoes', 'flew to arms, the fight commenced and the town was burnt to the ground' ⁹⁴. The explanation of the unruly market traders was adopted by Ajayi in his interpretation of the unplanned outbreak of civil war at Badagry. Indeed Ajayi also reasonably suggests that those from Lagos were in fact a group of women traders. There is however no evidence to positively support this assumption: all contemporary accounts referred merely to 'people' ⁹⁵.

The only eyewitness account which suggested a role for the Lagos contingent was by Gollmer who was, it must be said, eager to see Kosoko's influence everywhere. The Methodist missionary Martin, in his account from Badagry on 16 June, did not mention the Lagos party but described an outbreak of fighting on 12 June

⁹³ CMSA CA2/043/111 12 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁴ PRO FO84/866 20 June 1851 Heath, off Badagry in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

⁹⁵ Ajayi, Christian Missions... p. 70.

between Akitoye's people and the Badagrians ⁹⁶. Indeed from a close examination of the Anglican's account it is possible to see that Gollmer was merely presuming the involvement of the Lagos people. It would appear that the Lagos traders had in fact left Badagry on the same day as they arrived, 11 June. According to Gollmer's account, a group of people did go to the market place where they were abusive to Akitoye. But the missionary clearly was unsure of their origins and suggested that they may have been 'either left behind from the four canoes of yesterday or others who were here' ⁹⁷. Gollmer's identification of these people as 'Kosoko's men' was thus based merely upon his own supposition and perception of events.

Gollmer was, unfortunately, the only eyewitness to give any details about the causes of violence at Badagry. But it is possible to attempt an assessment of the situation by separating his chronological account from his personal interpretation of events. He stated that the confrontation began after insults were levelled at Akitoye in the market place. The account goes on to say that the Mewu appealed to the church to mediate as such provocation threatened to cause a disturbance. However, all attempts failed and despite appeals for calm, Akitoye's people seized and chained two of the offenders. According to Gollmer, it was Ahamara, a prominent member of Boeko Ward and one of the most successful traders at Badagry, who reacted to the arrests ⁹⁸. He immediately called his men to arms and, despite further attempts at mediation, at about 11 o'clock, he and his followers fired upon Akitoye's people near the CMS Mission and the conflict began ⁹⁹.

⁹⁶ WMMSA 16 June 1851 Martin, Badagry.

⁹⁷ CMSA CA2/043/111 12 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

⁹⁸ Ahamara was described as a 'notorious slave catcher' in Badagry [CMSA CA2/043/98 27 February 1846 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry]. In his historical account of the Badagry civil war, Losi also identifies an important role for 'Ahamora' calling him 'the leader of the army of the king of Badagry' [Losi, *History of Lagos*, p. 35].

⁹⁹ CMSA CA2/043/111 12 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

The only other account which has attempted to give a detailed description of the outbreak of war is Avoseh's historical reconstruction. His account also explains that fighting broke out in Boeko Ward. However, Avoseh recounts that it was the Mewu who provoked a fight by secretly plotting with 'Gensenu' [unidentified] to fire a harmless charge into a funeral party at Athanpoji. This group of mourners were presumably connected with the Mewu himself, despite Avoseh's description of them as strangers, for, as planned, they ran to tell that chief that the townspeople had fired on them. The Mewu then gave the order that the town should be attacked, houses were set on fire, and the battle began ¹⁰⁰.

Both Gollmer and Avoseh were evidently keen to present these events to suit their own particular objectives. Gollmer in his contemporary account, was eager to establish grounds to support a British assault on Lagos. The local historian Avoseh, while also looking towards outside influences, used the Mewu to absolve the Badagrians themselves from blame. Both accounts clearly mix fact and fiction. Furthermore, in their far from satisfactory and distorted definition of 'sides', both accounts neglect to give a detailed description of who exactly became involved in the conflict. Even from the accounts of the fighting itself, of which there are a number, it is difficult to achieve a picture of the principal figures. The Methodist missionary Martin evidently saw it as a conflict between Akitoye's supporters and the Badagry people. However, it is doubtful whether the parties involved were so simply divided. Ahamara of Boeko Ward was clearly identified by Gollmer as the leader of the Badagry forces, but what support, if any, he gained from the Badagry war chiefs is unclear ¹⁰¹. According even to Gollmer, his own attempts to mediate between the parties were supported by some of the chiefs, although he does not identify them. Furthermore, he did identify the unsuccessful attempts of the Jengen to pacify Ahamara and his party. But which chiefs, if any, actually fought alongside Ahamara is difficult to ascertain. Gollmer

¹⁰⁰ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, p. 43.

¹⁰¹ CMSA CA2/043/111 12 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

claimed that the Posu, along with 'all the Popos of the west division', were defeated and driven away by Mewu and Akitoye's men on the first day of fighting leaving only Ahamara and about on hundred 'Popos' on the field ¹⁰². Avoseh, however, suggested that the Posu played no part in the battle itself. He stated that the chief's son was in fact shot down in cold blood and the Posu himself merely fled ¹⁰³. Sandeman, the trader who had only recently arrived at Badagry, also recounted a year later that Chief Wawu of Ahoviko Ward had played no part in the fighting, but that this chief 'not wishing to join either party', went to 'Wooroo' [Iworo ?] where he intended to remain for a day or two until everything was settled ¹⁰⁴. The only figure who was positively identified as having actively supported Ahamara's cause was Mr Randolphe, the Gold Coast trader who, it was claimed, had fired on Akitoye's supporters. The account of Randolphe's involvement, came, however, from Mr Duggan, an agent at the rival Hutton Factory ¹⁰⁵.

Despite the lack of clarity over actual 'sides' in the dispute, the collapse of the town into all-out war evidently provided an opportunity for the settlement of old scores and the achievement of political aims. The destruction was wholesale. According to Gollmer's journal the town was set alight by Akitoye's followers to give them room to fight ¹⁰⁶. This caused widespread panic and many townspeople, including chief Isa, attempted to flee in dangerously overcrowded canoes. Many others took shelter in the mission yard while the town burned. By the end of the day the Posu and those from the western part of the town had been driven away leaving only Ahamara and his supporters to fight. The following day saw a resumption of the conflict, but evidently Ahamara was an early victim and the remaining forces began to retreat. As they withdrew eastward towards

¹⁰² CMR December 1852, p. 274, 12 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰³ Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ PRO FO84/893 28 January 1852 Sandeman and the Badagry Traders in 19 April 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹⁰⁵ PRO FO84/866 20 June 1851 Heath, off Badagry in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

¹⁰⁶ CMR December 1852, p. 273, 12 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

the mission yard the town was burnt and according to Gollmer, the Sierra Leonians, who had up until this time stayed out of the conflict, came under fire¹⁰⁷. But in less than two hours the retreating forces were defeated and driven from the town ¹⁰⁸. According to Gollmer, 'the greater part of the town was destroyed'. This did not include British property however, although the Bristol factory of Mr Randolphe, part of the Hutton factory and the compounds of two Sierra Leone people were damaged. The soaking of the mission roof with water and a timely change in wind direction saved both the Anglican and Methodist mission premises ¹⁰⁹.

Whether actively involved in the conflict or not, it would appear that most of the Badagry ward chiefs either withdrew or were driven from the town, and the chief Mewu, who had led Akitoye's men, assumed the leadership of the much reduced state. One account from 1853 claims that chief Wawu was driven into exile at 'Popo' a 'small village between Badagri and Lagos', although, as noted above, other accounts would suggest that the Wawu had withdrawn voluntarily to Iworo ¹¹⁰. By February 1852 chief Wawu was said to be at a place called 'Okobo' on the way to Lagos. Whether this was in fact the 'Popo' of the previous account is uncertain ¹¹¹. According to Avoseh, the Akran initially fled to Lagos, then, presumably after December 1851, moved to a place called Akran Gbaji [unidentified]¹¹². Gollmer also noted that the Jengen, despite promises to return in the immediate period after the conflict was persuaded by the Akran to remain at Ilassa [Ilase] ¹¹³. But evidently not all the ward chiefs and prominent people

¹⁰⁷ CMR December 1852, p. 274, 12 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁰⁸ PRO FO84/866 16 June 1851 Merchants at Badagry in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

¹⁰⁹ CMR December 1852, p. 274, 12 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁰ PRO FO84/920 28 October 1853 Confidential Communication: Notes respecting Wawu and Mayeu at Badagry.

¹¹¹ CMSA CA2/043/114 20 February 1852 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹² The connection between the place name and the chief's title may indicate a village which 'belonged' to that chieftancy. It would therefore, presumably, have been relatively close to Badagry [Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 23].

¹¹³ It would appear that Ilase had friendly relations with Badagry during, at least, certain parts of the period. In May 1847 the chief of that place 'Chief Alassa' was present at Badagry and had attended a church service with a number of followers [CMR May 1848, p. 81, 16 May 1847 Gollmer's

had left. There is evidence that both Honbati and Ajagbe remained in the town or returned shortly after the initial violence had ended ¹¹⁴. The King of Apa, who had taken no part in the fight had resided in Badagry on and off for at least four years and continued to settle there ¹¹⁵. Lastly it would appear that ward chief Bala, close friend of the late Van Cooten, was still in Badagry and attending church at the end of June 1851¹¹⁶.

But not only had a large proportion of the town been destroyed by fire. It would appear that along with their chiefs a large number of the inhabitants had either fled or withdrawn, causing a dramatic drop in population. According to Bowen who returned to Badagry in 1851, the inhabitants now numbered no more than one thousand ! ¹¹⁷. This incredible fall recorded in November may, however, indicate that large-scale emigration occurred during the immediate post-conflict period as a result, for example, of the much reduced commercial circumstances of the town and continuing insecurity. According to Gollmer, the price of food at Badagry, which had already risen by about 200% due to the destruction of Okeodan and Igbeji by the Dahomeans, now shot up by 500% ¹¹⁸. The unstable situation also adversely affected the Atlantic commerce not just of the town itself but of the surrounding area. The friendship of Domingo Martinez with the Mewu brought him into conflict not only with the exiled Gun, who threatened his factory at Porto-Novo beach, but also with the King of Porto-Novo himself. Hostile to the success of the Mewu, his rebellious ex-chief minister, the King froze all trade with Martinez and even threatened his life. The merchant was forced, temporarily, to seek sanctuary at Whydah, where he was able to secure the

Journal]. Evidently it was with this chief that the Jengen took refuge [CMSA CA2/043/112 15 July 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

¹¹⁴ Honbati, described as 'one of the principal men here' was living at Badagry in early 1852 [CMR June 1853, p. 122, 3 June 1852 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry]. It would appear that Ajagbe had never left the town [CMSA CA2/043/113 25 December 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry].

¹¹⁵ CMSA CA2/043/112 15 July 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁶ CMSA CA2/043/111 25 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹¹⁷ Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labours...*, p. 52.

¹¹⁸ CMSA CA2/043/111 25 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

protection of the Dahomean King through the presentation of a large gift ¹¹⁹. Within Badagry itself the unfavourable commercial conditions would appear to have provoked ill-feeling between African and European traders. According to Gollmer, Mr Sandeman, had promised to pay \$100 'footing' or 'customary presents' to the people of Badagry on first settling there. His plans were, however, interrupted shortly after by the outbreak of war. After the initial conflict had ended the people demanded the sum but were refused by Sandeman who claimed that he was not liable to pay as he had yet to do any trade. The inhabitants became increasingly antagonistic towards the foreign merchant, especially as he subsequently refused to pay the usual price of \$8 per ounce [of trade goods] and offered only \$6. The gong-gong was sounded and it was forbidden to trade with either Sandeman or Mr Batten, who had sided with him. Gollmer was asked to mediate' but this only had the effect of causing a rift between the missionary and the European traders. Ultimately Batten was removed by the Hutton Co, much to Gollmer's evident relief, and Sandeman's position in the town became increasingly untenable ¹²⁰.

The initial violence was over, but Badagry, or what remained of it, remained dangerously insecure. The British signalled for help. Commander Heath aboard HMS Niger off Porto-Novo received news of 'a revolution' at Badagry and immediately made for that place. Arriving off shore on or about the 17 June, he was immediately visited by Mr Duggan. The following day he himself went ashore and met with missionaries Gollmer and Martin and traders Sandeman and McCoskry. However, Heath refused the residents' request to land troops there, due to the dangers of disease to his own men, and merely suggested that the English residents shelter either aboard the ship or at the beach ¹²¹. The British residents refused his advice, the traders over their concern for their property and

¹¹⁹ CMSA CA2/043/112 31 August 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹²⁰ CMSA CA2/043/23 2 January 1852 Gollmer, Badagry.

¹²¹ PRO FO84/866 20 June 1851 Heath, off Badagry in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

the missionaries over their flock, and continued to press for active military intervention, stressing that Kosoko's forces were at Ajido only ten miles away and intended marching on Badagry. Heath's response was once more to suggest their removal to the beach and the provision of one thousand pistol ball cartridges and two thousand musket ball cartridges, for which he requested a receipt ¹²².

The view taken by Heath, and subsequently endorsed by the Foreign Office, was that the disturbances at Badagry were rooted in the 'dispute between native chiefs' and that 'neither party evinced any hostile feelings towards the English residents' ¹²³. However, whether the focus of resentment themselves or not, events would suggest that the concerns of the traders and missionaries were not unfounded as the remaining inhabitants came under a series of attacks.

Although the presentation of the Badagry civil war as a Kosoko-inspired conspiracy is unfounded, the assumption of power by Akitoye's ally the Mewu clearly caused concern in Lagos. On 21 June a large party of canoes approached the town from the east. According to a letter from Badagry's merchants the group was made up of 'Popos and Kosoko's people' who sought to attack the place ¹²⁴.

The assault was mistimed, however, for on that day a party of six hundred Egba troops, headed by Chief Somoye had arrived to safeguard the port ¹²⁵. Aided by these reinforcements the Mewu's men were able to repulse the Lagos raiders and themselves went on the offensive. On the following day they launched an attack on Ajido where the enemy, it was claimed, had retreated, and destroyed the town¹²⁶. The Mewu's enemies were perturbed but evidently continued to harass Badagry with a series of small scale raids. According to the British residents it was

¹²² PRO FO84/866 17 June 1851 Heath to British Residents, off Badagry in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

¹²³ PRO FO84/860 18 October 1851 Forster and Smith, London.

¹²⁴ PRO FO84/866 11 June 1851 Badagry Merchants in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

¹²⁵ CMR December 1852, pp. 274-275 21 June 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹²⁶ PRO FO84/866 11 July 1851 Badagry Merchants in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

clearly a Lagos-inspired campaign, which made several nocturnal forays to Badagry beach. One such raid resulted in the killing of two assistants from the Hutton factory, an Englishman and a Kruman who were guarding stores. The death of the English carpenter Mr Gee struck the other British residents with fear, and understandable paranoia resulted ¹²⁷. But further afield at Abeokuta the missionary Townsend also saw the incident as indicative of the distinctly anti-British nature of events at Badagry. In a letter to Commodore Bruce, Townsend concluded that violence at Badagry was the direct result of British efforts to establish 'lawful trade' and were directed 'against the English nationally' ¹²⁸.

But the naval forces along the coast were not persuaded that affairs at Badagry were anything more than a 'native dispute' and that the death of Mr Gee was anything more than a complete accident 'incident to a state of civil war' ¹²⁹. Bruce was also not convinced that Lagos had been behind the murderous party and concluded from the evidence of Commanders Heath and Jones that it was merely exiled Badagrians who had raided the beach ¹³⁰. Even so, Bruce saw fit to instruct his ships that when necessary, they should fire across the lagoon to 'prevent the advances of war canoes from Lagos' ¹³¹.

Badagry's Egba guardians were less circumspect. Townsend, in a letter from the capital on behalf of the chiefs, stated that the newly arrived forces had been sent to protect Badagry, in conjunction with the Mewu, from the attacks of the 'Lagos people' while hoping that the Badagry ward chiefs would soon return in peace¹³². Somoye, the Commander-in-Chief of Abeokuta's army was more forceful and less conciliatory. He clearly saw the war at Badagry as Kosoko's attempt to cut off all intercourse between the British and the Egba. As a result, the

¹²⁷ PRO FO84/866 11 July 1851 Badagry Merchants in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

¹²⁸ PRO FO84/867 5 August 1851 Townsend, Abeokuta in 8 January 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹²⁹ PRO FO84/866 29 July 1851 Jones, position unrecorded in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

¹³⁰ PRO FO84/866 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.

¹³¹ PRO FO84/863 3 September 1851 Bruce, Loanda in 17 October 1851 Hamilton, London.

¹³² PRO FO84/858 15 July 1851 Letter from Abeokuta to the British residents at Badagry.

chief requested British help in deposing Kosoko and sent a force to 'chastise' the King of Porto-Novo for his support of Lagos¹³³. The decisive action of the Egba received unconditional support from a number of the British residents, who lamented that 'their conduct affords so favourable a contrast to that of our own countrymen in command of the squadron'¹³⁴. Indeed it would appear that a movement at Badagry, led by Gollmer went much further than the Basorun and advocated that Britain should in fact 'take territorial possession' of Badagry, Lagos and even Abeokuta¹³⁵.

Commander Heath continued to maintain a more moderate course. Admitting that he had heard rumours of the Government's intention to 'adopt some measures against Lagos', he suggested that action should only be taken on the grounds of ending the slave trade rather than 'dishonestly pretending to care whether Kosoko or Akatoie is the rightful and legitimate king of Lagos'¹³⁶. But continued threats towards Badagry gave increasing weight to the views of Gollmer and his faction. In late July a large raiding party of between one hundred and fifty and two hundred canoes came up the lagoon from the east. Firing

¹³³ PRO FO84/866 3 July 1851 'Jobba Shoran' [= Basorun Somoye], Badagry in 31 July 1851 Bruce, Prince's Is.; PRO FO84/892 3 September 1851 'Oba Shoron' [Basorun Somoye], Badagry in 8 January 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹³⁴ Okaro K'Ojwang has identified this 'prolonged acrimony' which ensued between the British merchant community at Badagry and the British navy. However, he suggests that the matter 'does not bear directly on the issues under discussion'. By this he is evidently referring to the crux of his thesis, namely Badagrian resistance to British intervention. He then goes on to state that securing Badagry was 'the very objective for which the British and their allies had displaced the chiefs' [Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagry...', p. 12-14]. I would suggest, however, that the divisions between British factions, which became increasingly marked and bitter over this period, as demonstrated by the British residents at Badagry, were a vitally important part of any analysis of Britain's relationship with the coast during the 1850s [PRO FO84/860 13 October 1851 Forster and Smith, London]. By choosing to discount them it is too easy to reach greatly generalised and ultimately inaccurate conclusions such as Okaro K'Ojwang's sweeping statement that it was 'the British and their allies' who had overthrown the Badagry chiefs. Clearly Britons had been involved in the eruption of violence in the town. As noted, economic pressures caused by the suppression of the slave trade had forced Badagry to redevelop its economy, missionary elements had polarised factions, merchants had squabbled and Consul Beecroft had interfered with a lack of knowledge and sensitivity. But to discount the subtleties and differences between of the various strands of British interference and influence not only distorts the nature of the British presence on the coast, it also neglects the heightened tensions which were actively aroused by the increasingly bitter conflicts between these various factions so prevalent at Badagry and also at Lagos after 1851.

¹³⁵ PRO FO84/867 7 August 1851 Heath, off Badagry in 17 October 1851 Hamilton, London.

¹³⁶ PRO FO84/867 7 August 1851 Heath, off Badagry in 17 October 1851 Hamilton, London.

commenced, including shots from the premises of Mr Sandeman and the Methodist mission, and the party had retreated by mid day. Exactly who was involved in the raid is not certain. Gollmer stated that they had been sent by Kosoko in his attempt to 'get rid of the English' ¹³⁷. There is no definitive evidence to support this view, but it would seem likely that Lagos was involved. That the exiled Badagry chiefs were able to launch such a large-scale attack without aid is doubtful. According to Somoye, his attempts at mediation between the Mewu and the chiefs had led to some successes and 'some of the chiefs have accepted my terms'. Unfortunately the Egba chief did not specify which chiefs had settled their quarrels and if, having done so, they had returned to Badagry. But the Commander-in-Chief did say that the other ward chiefs 'have taken to the bush where they lie in wait and kidnap all they can', adding that lately two Egba had been caught and murdered ¹³⁸. This would suggest that the outlawed Badagry chiefs were certainly willing to oppose the new regime at Badagry. But the implication is that these bands of kidnappers were unlikely to have been in a position to launch a concerted attack of two hundred canoes.

If Lagos had not been involved in the initial outbreak of violence, it would appear then that it had become embroiled in the subsequent harassment of the town. Rumours of possible Dahomean intervention also began to circulate. In early August Gollmer wrote to Fraser at Whydah requesting any news ¹³⁹. At the same time Somoye also wrote to the Vice-Consul informing him that Kosoko had been sending presents to the Dahomean King and begging him to intercede on their behalf ¹⁴⁰. In the face of such real and rumoured opposition, Badagry remained in a state of acute tension. In September a group of canoes, reportedly those of the Akran and the Posu, passed in front of the town and headed east ¹⁴¹.

¹³⁷ PRO FO84/886 4 August 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

¹³⁸ PRO FO84/886 4 August 1851 'Oba Shoron', Badagry.

¹³⁹ PRO FO84/886 4 August 1851 Gollmer, Badagry.

¹⁴⁰ PRO FO84/886 4 August 1851 'Oba Shoron', Badagry.

¹⁴¹ CMSA CA2/043/112 11 September 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

Throughout October and early November rumours of attack were occasionally thwarted by the sporadic presence of British ships off the coast ¹⁴². But evidently during those months there were at least two unsuccessful attempts by the Posu with forty canoes to attack the Mewu. According to Gollmer such raids were merely a foretaste, however. He claimed that a concerted attack by the Lagos forces and those of the Posu, supported by the Ijebus, Igbessas, Isos and others, was planned for mid-November. However, Gollmer's account of the planned attack, 'which they made sure would bring about the desired end - the utter destruction of all living here', appeared in the Church Missionary Record over a year later, and was clearly written after the events of November 1851 had passed¹⁴³. Gollmer may indeed have suspected an imminent assault; he had been predicting as much since June. But his certainty, without supporting evidence, that such an attack was destined for the middle of November may be connected more with his attempts to justify the actions of Consul Beecroft who providentially arrived off the coast at that time and informed Kosoko of his intention to pay him a friendly visit on his return from Badagry in a day or two¹⁴⁴.

Throughout 1851 despatches and memos were passed between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty over the 'practicability' of direct intervention at the coast ¹⁴⁵. Having received news of the war at Badagry at the end of October, Whitehall authorised Beecroft to supply the people of Badagry with ammunition and muskets to defend themselves against the 'piratical attacks' of the chief of Lagos. The proviso was, however, added that the value of these supplies should not exceed two hundred pounds ¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴² CMSA CA2/043/113 25 December 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴³ CMR December 1852, p. 175. 1 December 1851, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴⁴ CMSA CA2/043/113 15 November 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; PRO FO84/858 26 November 1851 Beecroft, off Lagos.

¹⁴⁵ PRO FO84/863 27 September 1851 Palmerston, London.

¹⁴⁶ PRO FO84/858 28 October 1851 Palmerston, London.

But the Consul had not waited to receive authorisation. On 15 November Beecroft and Akitoye landed at Badagry where they were greeted with excitement. According to Gollmer's journal of the period their intention was clear. The supposed 'friendly visit' to Kosoko was prepared for by gathering troops and arms with which they could retake Lagos. Leaving the troops ready at Badagry, Beecroft and Akitoye departed eastwards on 18 November ¹⁴⁷.

According to Gollmer's later published account, the arrival of Consul Beecroft had panicked Kosoko and forced him to recall all his troops and allies from their mission against Badagry. Gollmer noted that the Posu with his forces did appear at the appointed time and launched an assault on Badagry from the lagoon, but, unsupported by his allies, was forced to withdraw ¹⁴⁸. Three weeks later, at the beginning of December the Posu again attempted to attack and 'much bloodshed ensued' ¹⁴⁹. But by this time the theatre of war had shifted to Lagos and, finding his assault again unsupported the Posu retired to 'Adu' [Ado] ¹⁵⁰.

The Reduction of Lagos

To explain events at Lagos at the end of 1851 wholly in the light of affairs at Badagry is clearly a distortion and succumbs to the missionary justification that it was Beecroft 'providentially' arriving off the coast which, above all, saved

¹⁴⁷ CMSA CA2/043/113 15-18 November 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴⁸ CMR December 1852, p. 275. 1 December 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁴⁹ PRO FO84/921 CMS Report on the Yoruba Mission.

¹⁵⁰ Tracing the movement of the Posu subsequent to his exile in Ado has been confused by the actions of a Lagos chief or possibly chiefs called Pellu and/or Possu. Matheson has noted that in 1853, after the deposition of Kosoko, when the siege of Ado was brought to an end, the Badagry Posu then went to Lagos where he traded successfully and aroused the jealousy of restored king Akitoye and Madam Tinubu. But from a careful reading of contemporary documents it would appear that it was Pellu and Agineau, two Lagos Muslims who, despite allegiances to Kosoko, had returned to, and were prospering at, Lagos [PRO FO84/920 28 July 1853 Akitoye, Lagos]. It was undoubtedly this Pellu who has been confused with the Badagry Posu. This is understandable when even Consul Campbell, when describing the two Lagos traders, called them 'Possu and Agineau' [PRO FO84/920 19 September 1853 Campbell, Lagos]. However, it is evident that the Lagos Possu/Pellu was a distinct figure from his Badagry namesake. Interestingly enough, Matheson herself refers later in her narrative to Kosoko's 'Old chief Possu' who had evidently remained at Epe after his master had returned to Lagos in later years [J D Matheson, 'Lagoon Relations in the Era of Kosoko 1845-62' PhD Thesis, Boston 1974, pp. 118-119, 125 & 105].

Badagry from complete destruction. As Smith, in his detailed analysis has pointed out intervention at Lagos 'occurred at the point of intersection of several separate causal forces' ¹⁵¹. These forces include those of a purely Lagosian nature, notably the deep political divisions within the state itself, as symbolised by the kingship dispute between Kosoko and Akitoye. Smith also highlights the wider issues at stake, notably the humanitarian desire to suppress the slave trade and the commercial concerns, as stressed by Ajayi and Gavin, that saw intervention at Lagos as the key to British commercial supremacy in the area ¹⁵². I would suggest that a close examination of affairs at Badagry provides a new perspective on events at Lagos and further illuminates and supports the view of a combination of several causal factors. The role of local events in shaping British responses, which as Smith notes, must not be minimised, should be extended beyond Lagos itself. For the Badagry situation undoubtedly played an important role in guiding Beecroft's actions. Furthermore, merely as an observation point from which to view events, Badagry was influential. It was there that many of the arguments pressing for direct intervention by British forces, from Akitoye's supporters, from the Missionaries, traders and also the Egba, were formulated. Even Okaro K'Ojwang, in his overall examination of Anglo/African relations during this period, has failed to examine Badagry's role in the development of Beecroft's policy towards Lagos ¹⁵³

Beecroft attempted to land at Lagos on December 20. However, the ten boats which accompanied him to the negotiations were understandably viewed by Kosoko with suspicion. He threatened to fire on the party and demanded that Beecroft reduce the delegation to a single vessel. A compromise was eventually

¹⁵¹ Smith, The Lagos Consulate... p. 33.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 33.

¹⁵³ Okaro K'Ojwang's examination notes the 'increasing naval involvement in African politics at the time', but jumps from the provision of ammunition at Badagry to post-restoration Lagos. His analysis merely concludes that:

after the annexation of Lagos at the end of 1851 the British started a more vigorous drive to extend their influence throughout the Bight of Benin

[Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagry...' pp. 124-125].

reached and Beecroft landed with two boats. Token gestures were made by the Consul to reach an agreement with the Lagos King. But Kosoko was more forthright. He 'would not enter into any Treaty with the English and did not wish their friendship' ¹⁵⁴.

The preliminaries satisfied, Beecroft could now embark upon the course he had intended all along. The opportunity was provided when a British flag of truce was fired upon, and the bombardment of the town began. But far from experiencing 'no great difficulty...[in] expelling the present chief', as Captain Denham of HM Naval Forces, the missionary Crowther and also Consul Beecroft had suggested, the well organised Lagos forces proved to be a dangerous adversary ¹⁵⁵. Kosoko's forces repulsed the initial invasion, killing two officers and wounding sixteen men. But a further attack beginning on 26 December blew up the royal arsenal and Kosoko fled ¹⁵⁶.

The military role of the Mewu's Badagry in the reduction of Lagos would appear to have been slight. According to Beecroft's own account of the assault Akitoye was only able to summon the support of six hundred and thirty men from the town ¹⁵⁷. This number is not inconsiderable when one considers that it was during this period that Bowen had assessed the total Badagry population to be only one thousand. But the impact of this force is dubious. There is no evidence to suggest that the forces from Badagry took any part in the actual conflict. But, always ready to take advantage of the situation, an eyewitness, Samuel Davies, a Sierra Leonian working aboard HMS Volcano did note that 'The people from Badagry arrived on the day of victory, and took away an immense spoil' ¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁴ PRO FO84/858 26 November 1851 Beecroft, off Lagos.

¹⁵⁵ PRO FO84/863 27 September 1851 Palmerston, London.

¹⁵⁶ For details of the reduction of Lagos see Smith, *The Lagos Consulate...* pp. 26-31.

¹⁵⁷ PRO FO84/886 3 January 1852 Beecroft, off Lagos.

¹⁵⁸ CMI March 1852, p. 61.

The reduction of Lagos and the reinstatement of Akitoye by British forces raised high hopes among the British on the Coast. The removal of Kosoko was seen as striking right to the heart of the Slave Trade. Furthermore, not only was Lagos situated at the opening of the lagoon to the sea, but its water links into the interior with Abeokuta and beyond presented enormous potential for the development of both commerce and Christianity. Even the Foreign Office, which initially condemned Beecroft's actions, eventually became reconciled to events. Lagos was seen as the key to Britain's moral and commercial coastal crusade. But by concentrating on generalities and neglecting more localised issues, British aspirations were bound to be disappointed.

The Mewu Period 1851-1854

On 1 January 1852 a treaty was signed at Lagos between the British Government and Akitoye, abolishing the slave trade and human sacrifice from his kingdom. But despite British support the monarchy was far from secure. Kosoko, in close exile, posed a dangerous threat and the area remained in a state of alarm and instability. However, taking advantage of the excitement and fear generated by the bombardment, Commanders Wilmot and Forbes obtained a series of twelve similar treaties along the length of the coast in the early months of 1852.

Abeokuta followed Lagos and then more surprisingly Dahomey and Porto-Novo also in January. Ijebu signed in February, followed by Badagry in March ¹⁵⁹.

Yet, despite such apparent goodwill, the conclusion of so many treaties proved to be largely cosmetic. Britain's ambitious aims to abolish the slave trade and establish favourable terms for her own commercial network were evident. The willingness of the African states was due to a combination of fear combined with commercial and diplomatic hopes that Lagos would not become dominant. But both parties lacked commitment to the process. At Dahomey, the treaty did not,

¹⁵⁹ See Appendix A.

in reality, symbolise an alliance between the two powers. Indeed the increasingly difficult relations between Vice-Consul Fraser and his hosts led to his recall from Whydah¹⁶⁰. Furthermore with Lagos at the centre of their policy, British interest in these other states was purely superficial, as demonstrated most notably at Badagry. Commodore Bruce instructed Commander Strange of HMS Archer to conclude a Treaty with the 'King and Chiefs of Badagry' ¹⁶¹. In his instructions, Bruce acknowledged the dispute between 'two chiefs' over Badagry's 'sovereign power' but stated that 'it is sufficient that we negotiate with the person who is King de facto' and declined interfering in the 'political concerns of the natives. Bruce also went on to point out the importance of informing 'the King or Chief that 'his signing the treaty will give him no claim to demand our support'. On the other hand, if the Mewu refused to sign he would be viewed as 'an encourager of the slave trade', which would leave the British forces 'anxious for a better man' ¹⁶². The regime at Badagry was placed in an unenviable position.

Having expelled Badagry's traditional ruling elite, it was the Mewu, who was 'King de facto'. The Alapa, the King of Apa, Badagry's original parent state, had removed permanently to Badagry immediately after the Mewu's victory. Subsequent to his arrival there is evidence to suggest that the Mewu acknowledged this chief as his superior. In answer to a suggestion about road improvement by Gollmer, the Mewu replied that 'I am a stranger you had better mention it to Alapa' ¹⁶³. Without further evidence it is difficult to ascertain whether this was perhaps merely an attempt to quiet the missionary on a relatively minor matter. But it could also suggest that Mewu may have used the Alapa as nominal head to legitimise his regime. It is evident however, that even if the Alapa was being used as an acceptable figurehead at Badagry, it was the

¹⁶⁰ PRO FO84/886 22 January 1852 Fraser, Whydah; PRO FO84/886 19 April 1852 Palmerston, London.

¹⁶¹ PRO FO84/893 10 April 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹⁶² PRO FO84/893 17 February 1852 Bruce, off Lagos in 10 April 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹⁶³ CMSA CA2/043/119 11 August 1851 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

Mewu who was in control.

The Mewu's Badagry faced pressure from all sides. The exiled chiefs continued to wage a war of attrition. Most notable was the Posu who with the support of Ado continued to harass the town with occasional raids ¹⁶⁴. But more serious were the difficulties posed by much greater powers. Throughout the first half of 1852 rumours of Dahomean attack kept Badagry 'in continued alarm' ¹⁶⁵. But more pressing still was the hostility of Porto-Novo which the Mewu's assumption of power had stimulated. Despite Commodore Bruce's assertions that the exile's presence had given rise to 'angry feeling' between Badagry and Porto-Novo 'for many years past', there is no evidence to suggest that whilst he remained quietly at Mowo, Porto-Novo took any direct steps towards his return ¹⁶⁶. But it would appear that the Mewu's assumption of political power at Badagry gave rise to immense antagonism. According to the Mewu himself, the King of Porto-Novo desired nothing less than his head. The King himself denied this, stating that he only required his minister's return so that 'he may have the benefit of his counsel' ¹⁶⁷. Despite Porto-Novo's moderate aim, however, it was prepared to impose a complete blockade on Badagry to achieve it. As one of Badagry's most important palm oil suppliers, Sandeman estimating that three fourths of Badagry's oil came from that source, the effect on the town's commerce were immense ¹⁶⁸. Furthermore the rapid transfer of more westerly supplies to Lagos during this period made the imposition of the eastern blockade even more serious.

The obstruction of trade which his presence caused rapidly stimulated opposition to the Mewu from within Badagry itself. The British traders in the town,

¹⁶⁴ Heath reported in February 1852 that the Posu kept Badagry 'in a state of continual excitement' [PRO FO84/893 20 February 1852 Heath, off Appi in 19 April 1852 Hamilton, London].

¹⁶⁵ CMR June 1853, p. 121, 8 March 1852 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁶⁶ PRO FO84/893 18 February 1852 Bruce, off Lagos in 19 April 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹⁶⁷ PRO FO84/893 18 February 1852 Bruce, off Lagos in 19 April 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹⁶⁸ PRO FO84/893 28 January 1852 Sandeman and Co., Badagry in 19 April 1852 Hamilton, London.

understandably concerned that their livelihood was endangered, initially appealed to the naval forces for intervention or at least mediation. Sandeman stated that any treaty signed between the Mewu and the British would be taken as a sign of British support for his leadership. Claiming that the Mewu could muster no more than one hundred troops, Sandeman warned that, having signed such a treaty, the British Government should be prepared to despatch a force to protect the town and the lagoon from any subsequent opposition to the regime ¹⁶⁹. But Bruce declined any interest in the affair whatsoever and relations continued to deteriorate. Despite stern warnings from Bruce not to become 'amateur politicians', Sandeman and Co became increasingly dissatisfied with the Mewu's leadership ¹⁷⁰. Furthermore Revd Gollmer's natural support for the Mewu/Egba alliance led to a bitter split between the English inhabitants of the town. By February 1852 Gollmer was no longer on speaking terms with traders Sandeman, McCoskry and Drake (Mr Batten's replacement at the Hutton Factory) and possibly also the Methodist missionary Martin ¹⁷¹.

Determined to maintain their distance, Commander Strange landed at Badagry on 17 March where he met with the 'chiefs and Headmen' of the town.

According to Strange's account some hesitancy was shown by the Mewu who was fearful of British intervention in favour of the Wawu and the exiled Badagry chiefs. However, having set his mind at rest, a treaty was signed on the following day by Strange and the Mewu and Alapa. According to Strange's account, he had hoped to conclude a treaty quickly, especially in the light of the instability of the town. Thanks to the exertions of Gollmer a meeting was procured that evening and the treaty was read to the assembly. The gathering then dispersed until the

¹⁶⁹ PRO FO84/893 28 January 1852 Sandeman and Co., Badagry in 19 April 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹⁷⁰ PRO FO84/893 18 February 1852 Bruce, off Lagos in 19 April 1852 Hamilton, London.

¹⁷¹ According to Gollmer, Drake replaced Batten either at the end of 1851 or the beginning of 1852 [CMSA CA2/043/23 2 January 1852 Gollmer, Badagry]. Heath certainly noted that Martin was an advocate for the Wawu's cause, although there is no evidence to suggest how this affected relations between himself and Gollmer [PRO FO84/893 20 February 1852 Heath, off Appi in 19 April 1852 Hamilton, London].

following day while the terms were considered. Strange remarked that there was a 'reluctance to proceed' due to 'an apprehension that we intended to interfere in favour of chief Wawu'. However, the naval officer was able to set their minds at rest on this point, and after 'some discussion' the following morning, the treaty was signed by Strange, the Mewu and the Alapa ¹⁷². Commercially the treaty abolished the export of slaves to foreign countries from the territories of Badagry and agreed that punishment should befall anyone who disobeyed. All slaves currently held for exportation were to be given up and the barracoons were to be destroyed. No European was permitted to reside in the area for the purposes of slave trading and any who did were to be expelled. Furthermore, Britain was to be able to trade freely with the state. The Treaty also abolished all human sacrifice on account of religious or other ceremonies, including the 'murder' of prisoners of war. Lastly an undertaking was made to protect and encourage the Christian missionaries at work in the town. Persecution of their followers was forbidden and an allocation of land was made for a Christian burial ground ¹⁷³. Having secured his treaty with the Mewu, Commander Strange attempted to preserve British neutrality by writing to the Wawu in exile at Okobo. In his letter, the naval officer assured the chief that despite the treaty, the British Government had 'no intention of interfering in the dispute between you and Mewu' and that if you act well and friendly to the white men, the English Government will be friendly with you'¹⁷⁴.

Not surprisingly the treaty did nothing to stabilise the situation at Badagry. The Porto-Novo blockade remained firmly in place and rumours of attack by both the Posu and Dahomey continued to circulate ¹⁷⁵. According to Gollmer's Journal for March, the fear of attack became so acute that he decided to withdraw temporarily

¹⁷² PRO FO84/893 14 April 1852 Strange, Sierra Leone in 8 May 1852 Stafford, London.

¹⁷³ See Appendix A.

¹⁷⁴ PRO FO84/893 18 March 1852 Strange, Badagry in 8 May 1852 Stafford, London.

¹⁷⁵ CMSA CA2/043/114 25 March 1852 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

to Lagos where he remained until late April ¹⁷⁶. It is evident however that Gollmer's sojourn at Lagos was merely a preliminary to his total abandonment of Badagry. The missionaries had become increasingly disheartened with the town. Despite his outward support for Mewu, Gollmer complained that due to the unsettled nature of the country Badagry had dwindled to a small and unimportant place with many of the inhabitants removing to Lagos ¹⁷⁷.

At the forefront of the exodus to Lagos were the European traders. Having embroiled himself so deeply in local opposition politics, Mr Sandeman found his position at Badagry under the Mewu untenable. He was one of the first to leave, although evidently he did continue to maintain some property in the town ¹⁷⁸. The other traders obviously followed his example so that by early May Thomas Hutton was unable to land on Badagry beach as the one remaining sea-going canoe was occupied ¹⁷⁹.

Migration from the already much depleted town obviously effected the strength of the mission. According to Gollmer just over sixty people were attending Anglican Sunday service and their school had twenty four pupils ¹⁸⁰. He concluded that 'God has clearly marked out our path to depart from those who so long have despised Him and His word' ¹⁸¹. Gollmer finalised his affairs at Badagry and, following the herd, departed permanently for Lagos in July, leaving the Badagry mission in the charge of ill-matched Catechists Willoughby and Wright ¹⁸². The Methodist mission, evidently equally disheartened by the 'spirit of indifference', also withdrew, leaving only a skeleton staff at their premises ¹⁸³.

¹⁷⁶ CMSA CA2/043/114 25 March 1852, Gollmer's Journal, Badagry; CMSA CA2/043/115 30 April 1852 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁷⁷ CMR June 1853, p. 124.

¹⁷⁸ PRO FO2/30 14 June 1859 Forster and Smith, London.

¹⁷⁹ CMSA CA2/043/114 25 March 1852 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁸⁰ CMSA CA2/043/118 26 February 1853 Gollmer's Journal, Badagry.

¹⁸¹ CMR June 1853, p. 124.

¹⁸² CMSA CA2/043/118 26 February 1853 Gollmer's Journal, Lagos.

¹⁸³ WMMSA 10 June 1853 J Thompson, Badagry.

Ajayi has concluded that it was at this point that Badagry passed out of the missionary story of Nigeria¹⁸⁴. I would, however, suggest that despite the establishment of Lagos as the main coastal mission station from 1852 onwards, it is important to note that Christian missions at Badagry continued to function in a limited form. Obviously, due to the much reduced circumstances of the town, the numbers were small but it is interesting that throughout 1853 the figures for those attending church services, the Sunday school and the day school continued to rise. The number of communicants was maintained at ten throughout the period and the nine candidates for baptism were joined by a tenth at the beginning of 1854¹⁸⁵. Furthermore, although Badagry may to a greater extent have passed out of the missionary story, the Badagry mission continued to play a part in the town's affairs and indeed coastal affairs as a whole¹⁸⁶.

Fraser at Lagos

Despite his withdrawal from Whydah and subsequent criticism levelled at him by the Foreign Office over his dealings with Dahomey as Vice-Consul, Louis Fraser did not settle quietly at Lagos. Indeed he rapidly became involved in the affairs of the locality, particularly those of Badagry. In a series of letters at the end of 1852 and beginning of 1853 Fraser voiced his doubts over the situation there. He complained that it was unjust that the very chiefs who had given shelter and refuge to the exiled Mewu and Akitoye had been expelled¹⁸⁷. He accused the 'Anlankpan' [Alapa] of being an impostor, the genuine king, he claimed, was at Porto-Novo¹⁸⁸. He described how, under the Mewu, Badagry had been reduced

¹⁸⁴ Ajayi, *Christian Missions...* pp. 77-78.

¹⁸⁵ CMSA CA2/043/120 25 September 1853 Gollmer's Journal, Lagos; CMSA CA2/043/121 25 December 1853 Gollmer's Journal, Lagos; CMSA CA2/043/123 25 June 1854 Gollmer's Journal, Lagos.

¹⁸⁶ Even Townsend noted that due to Badagry's position on the lagoon:

persons proceed by canoe from Badagry to Ado, Okeodan and some distance beyond, to within a convenient distance of Ketu.. It will be well to bear this in mind before giving up Badagry as a station

[CMI December 1853, p. 278].

¹⁸⁷ PRO FO84/920 27 December 1852 Fraser, Lagos.

¹⁸⁸ The establishment of one claimant to the title of Alapa at Porto-Novo would comply with a later statement by Governor Glover that after the destruction of Badagry at the end of the eighteenth century, Apa once more fell under the sway of Porto-Novo. Therefore, Glover noted, in

to a population of between four and five hundred ¹⁸⁹. Lastly, he lamented the town's decline as an Atlantic port. Now he claimed Badagry could no longer ship a single ton of oil, whereas in past years Hutton alone had shipped one thousand tons ¹⁹⁰. Fraser concluded that to settle the matter at Badagry the 'true Anlakbar' should be summoned from Porto-Novo to choose his own chiefs. The only difficulty Fraser envisaged was that it was likely that the King would choose the Posu. This, however, he added would be unacceptable to the British, that chief having 'attacked a white man's [Hutton's] factory' during the civil war. However, Fraser felt that this 'may be easily over-ruled, by our objecting to him' ¹⁹¹.

Despite Fraser's unfavourable reputation it would appear that he did find an ally in Commander Heseltine. The naval officer, having corresponded with the Vice-Consul, proceeded to visit Porto-Novo, calling at the Wawu's base of Okobo and Badagry on the way. Heseltine's account of his meeting with the Wawu is limited but he was persuaded that the rift between Porto-Novo and its recalcitrant minister was caused by the Mewu's murder of King Soji's son. From his writings it is obvious that it was not merely the accusation of murder which persuaded Heseltine that the chief was unsuitable. Apart from any advantages for Badagry which he envisaged from the chief's removal, Heseltine also assumed that such a measure would not only re-open the lagoon, but could also lead to a treaty between Porto-Novo and Abeokuta. The Posu's enforced exile at Ado, a tributary to Porto-Novo, had given the Egba an excuse to continue their siege of that place. Heseltine clearly intended that, with the Badagry chiefs restored, a settlement would be reached at Ado. With these high hopes the naval officer,

1851, King Soji of Porto-Novo continued to assert his authority and imposed his choice of Alapa on the inhabitants. This was presumably the result of a breach between himself and the other claimant to the title, over the alliance with the Mewu. Fraser's assertion then that the 'true Anlakbar' was at Porto-Novo was clearly referring to this disputed claim [PRO FO84/920 29 December 1852 Fraser, Lagos; NNAI CSO1/1 Vol II, 10 July 1863 Glover, Lagos].

¹⁸⁹ PRO FO84/920 11 January 1853 Fraser's History of Badagry.

¹⁹⁰ PRO FO84/920 3 March 1853 Fraser, Lagos.

¹⁹¹ PRO FO84/920 29 December 1852 Fraser, Lagos.

arriving at Badagry for a brief meeting on the last day of 1852, urged the Mewu to join Akitoye at Lagos. The chief, in turn, outwardly agreed to comply with British wishes, although Heseltine correctly concluded that he really had 'no intention of acting up to this' ¹⁹².

Leaving for Porto-Novo Heseltine then appears to have entered into a series of negotiations with the King to achieve his aims. Interestingly Heseltine saw one of the main obstacles to the Mewu's removal as being that having signed a Treaty with the British he was 'to a certain extent under our protection'. This was exactly the point which Commodore Bruce had vehemently denied the previous year. After a couple of days' negotiation it was agreed that should the Mewu leave Badagry the Posu would be recalled from Ado, thus bringing an end to the siege. Returning to Badagry on 3 January the Mewu readily agreed to leave Badagry should his allies the Egba agree. Evidently feeling that he had solved the lagoon problem, Heseltine departed for the Egba encampment around Ado, sending orders to the Wawu and the other Badagry chiefs to ready themselves for their return home. But Heseltine's optimism was misplaced. On arriving at the encampment the officer informed the Egba troops that, as the Posu was about to be recalled from Ado, they no longer had reason to besiege the place. Furthermore he instructed them that the Mewu was to leave Badagry. Heseltine was seemingly astonished that this information was received with hostility. The Egba chiefs informed the officer that 'losing the friendship of the English was nothing to them compared with taking Adu' and that the Mewu should remain at Badagry. If the Wawu was returned, Heseltine was warned, 'they would turn him out' ¹⁹³.

¹⁹² PRO FO84/925 Heseltine's 'Report of the Proceedings of an Expedition to Porto Novo...between 28 December 1852 and 7 January 1853' in 14 April 1853 Hamilton, London.

¹⁹³ PRO FO84/925 Heseltine's 'Report of the Proceedings of an Expedition to Porto Novo....' in 14 April 1853 Hamilton, London.

Having totally misread the situation Heseltine withdrew rapidly from the area, greatly offended. He was accompanied by the remaining European merchants from Badagry and also the Methodist missionary Martin, who feared that Heseltine's intervention might bring about an Egba attack despite the continued residence of the Mewu. Stopping on the way to Lagos at Okobo, Heseltine was received with remarkable forbearance by the Wawu, who suggested it would be safer for him to remain where he was ¹⁹⁴.

Having been frustrated in his immediate aims, Heseltine, supported by Fraser, continued the campaign by letter. Initially complaining to Abeokuta about the behaviour of their army at Ado, they also attempted to convince the Foreign Office and Commodore Bruce of their cause ¹⁹⁵. Whitehall was too distant to respond immediately but Bruce, having received the information in February, proceeded immediately to the Bight. His reaction, however, was not what Fraser and Heseltine had hoped. Chastising both for their embroilment in local affairs he emphasised that he could sanction no further involvement of a naval officer in 'native quarrels'. Furthermore, although emphasising that the Mewu had no recourse to look to the British for protection, he refuted the claim that the chief had broken his Treaty and added that the decline of trade at Badagry was due not to the Mewu's presence but rather the migration to Lagos and the tendency of the traders to make themselves 'political partisans' ¹⁹⁶. It would appear that Bruce's unequivocal tone abruptly ended the Fraser/Heseltine campaign. Shortly afterwards Fraser, who had also become the focus of King Akitoye's antagonism, was removed from Government employment ¹⁹⁷.

¹⁹⁴ PRO FO84/925 Heseltine's 'Report of the Proceedings of an Expedition to Porto Novo...' in 14 April 1853 Hamilton, London.

¹⁹⁵ PRO FO84/920 27 February 1853 Fraser, Lagos.

¹⁹⁶ PRO FO84/925 3 March 1853 Bruce, Whydah in 14 April 1853 Hamilton, London.

¹⁹⁷ PRO FO84/922 27 April 1853 Clarendon, London.

Consul Campbell

After Fraser's departure from Whydah it had been decided to discontinue the post of Vice-Consul there and establish the position at Lagos. Furthermore, it was decided that while Beecroft was to remain Consul for the Bight of Biafra, the Bight of Benin should become the jurisdiction of a second Consul based again at Lagos. This decision was made, it was claimed, not because of any inability on the part of Beecroft, but because of the changes at Lagos ¹⁹⁸. Benjamin Campbell was chosen to fill the post.

Campbell was evidently a pragmatist and a realist, qualities which were useful faced with the complex pattern of coastal politics and the often petty squabbles of Lagos life. But, often through mere force of personality, Campbell was also adept at making enemies, particularly amongst the bickering European coastal community, a factor which was to be a recurrent theme throughout his period of office. Unperturbed by criticism and opposition to his methods, Campbell, in his consular capacity, made strenuous efforts to suppress the slave trade. Smith has noted that through his genuine exertions he did actually meet with some success. After the town's bombardment by the British, slave trading had been almost eradicated from Lagos, but at times it looked like reviving and Campbell instigated expulsions and fines to keep it in check ¹⁹⁹.

But when Campbell took up his post at the beginning of 1853 Lagos remained in a state of extreme insecurity. From his base at Epe, Kosoko continued to harass the port with threats of attack and occasional disruptive raids throughout 1853²⁰⁰.

¹⁹⁸ FO2/9 19 February 1853 Clarendon, London.

¹⁹⁹ Smith, *The Lagos Consulate...* pp. 49-65.

²⁰⁰ An attack was made by Kosoko's forces in early August 1853 [PRO FO84/920 1 September 1853 Campbell, Lagos]. This assault occurred at the same time as internal commercial dissatisfaction was rising over the dominance of the trader Madam Tinubu at Lagos. Tinubu was ultimately expelled and evidently sought refuge temporarily at Badagry. On her way to the town she reportedly met with a force of two hundred and fifty Badagry people going to Lagos to help Akitoye against Kosoko's forces. They only arrived however once the fighting was over [PRO FO84/920 1 September 1853 Campbell, Lagos].

Furthermore, the death of Akitoye in September of that year placed his son, Dosunmu on the throne. The new King, easily influenced by the various factions at Lagos, failed to provide the strength of leadership which the state required. Increasingly it was the new Consul who not only sought to mediate between British subjects and their hosts, but also took on the role almost of an unofficial governor.

Although initially hostile to Kosoko, by the end of the year, perhaps due to the realisation that continued insecurity would disrupt trade, Campbell himself arranged a series of negotiations with the exiled King. The talks at the 'Palaver Islands' resulted in the Treaty of Epe being signed in January 1854²⁰¹. The agreement was designed to bring an end to hostilities between Kosoko and the Dosunmu regime, and open trade between Epe and Lagos. In return for monetary compensation from the British, Kosoko gave up his claims to the Lagos throne, but established his rights over the port of Palma. Smith has noted that the Treaty of Epe did not herald the complete conclusion of difficulties between Kosoko and Lagos. Kosoko, it emerged, was more willing than Dosunmu to open commercial links, while the exiled king himself was only temporarily satisfied. Smith concludes that Campbell's agreement was a positive step towards pacifying the lagoon, while at the same time extending British influence further east²⁰².

Campbell also sought to influence affairs to the west. Despite continued warnings of imminent Porto-Novon assaults and stories of the Mewu's slave-dealing activities from Fraser, it would appear that during his first months in office, Campbell paid little attention to the now minor port of Badagry²⁰³. However, towards the end of 1853 Campbell began to show an increasing interest in the

²⁰¹ See R Smith, 'To the Palaver Islands: War and Diplomacy on the Lagos Lagoon in 1852-54', *JHSN*, Vol V, No. 1 December 1969, pp. 3-25.

²⁰² Smith, *The Lagos Consulate...*, pp. 62-65.

²⁰³ Even as late as the beginning of October 1853, Campbell mentioned in despatches the case of twenty two runaway slaves who had been sent to Badagry for sale. However, he passed no comment on the case or the town at this time [PRO FO84/920 1 October 1853 Campbell, Lagos].

situation there. In a long despatch to Lord Clarendon at the end of October, the Consul questioned the position of the Mewu. Referring to him as a 'revolted chief from Porto-Novo', he pointed out that he 'can never be regarded by other chiefs as the legitimate chief of Badagry', a factor which, he claimed, continued to be 'an insurmountable obstacle to the pacification of that part of the country' ²⁰⁴. Campbell supported his argument with a Methodist missionary account of the Mewu's slave-dealing associations with Domingo Martinez. According to this account, the factory at Ajido, under the Mewu's protection, forwarded slaves kidnapped at Lagos to the slave-trader's factory at Porto-Novo beach. For his part, the Mewu was reportedly receiving one head of cowries for every slave passing up and twenty five strings of cowries for every roll of tobacco passing down the beach ²⁰⁵. Campbell's response to these accusations of slave dealing was to order the Mewu to destroy his own toll house at Badagry beach and the factory at Ajido²⁰⁶. But it was at this stage that Campbell became increasingly distracted not only by Kosoko but the increasingly bitter disputes amongst the European community at Lagos. Initially rooted in old rivalries from Badagry days and territorial disputes in their new Lagos home, the internal squabbling of the European residents became increasingly linked with wider political issues. Revd Gollmer, 'who entertains towards Kosoko and his adherents a hatred almost demoniacal', became increasingly opposed to Campbell's negotiations. Campbell dismissed Gollmer facetiously in despatches as a man who had 'the singular misfortune of quarrelling with every person particularly Englishmen'. But he was evidently perturbed by the influence which the missionary held over the pliable Dosunmu ²⁰⁷. The quarrel spread as far as London, where the Foreign Office remonstrated with the CMS over their missionary's obstruction of

²⁰⁴ PRO FO84/920 28 October 1853 Campbell, Lagos.

²⁰⁵ PRO FO84/920 Confidential Communication: Notes Respecting Wawu and Mayeu at Badagry in 28 October 1853 Campbell, Lagos.

²⁰⁶ PRO FO84/920 20 October 1853 Campbell, Lagos.

²⁰⁷ PRO FO84/950 1 May 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

Consular 'affairs not immediately connected with the objects of the ... Society' 208. In return the CMS supported the actions of their agent in defending British friends at Abeokuta and Badagry, and accused Campbell of being unduly influenced by the intrigues of the trader Sandeman 209.

It seems unlikely that Campbell would have been so easily swayed by the arguments of Sandeman, although his growing aversion to Gollmer may have pushed him more happily towards the opposing view. More likely it was the acknowledgment that despite the settlement with Kosoko and tinkering with the town's duty system Lagos would be unable to perform effectively as a commercial centre if the lagoon trade to the west continued to malfunction 210.

In order to settle the lagoon dispute Campbell visited both Badagry and Porto-Novo during the early part of 1854. From a later report of his activities it would appear that before meeting the Mewu, the Consul had already decided that this chief had 'grossly violated' his treaty with Britain and had thus 'incurred the severe displeasure of Her Majesty's Government' and provoked 'the complete stoppage of the trade' at Badagry. On arriving at Badagry he called a meeting of the 'principal inhabitants', informed them of his dissatisfaction with affairs and concluded unequivocally that after visiting Porto-Novo and the expelled chiefs he should 'call upon Mayu to retire'. Should the Mewu refuse to go, Campbell warned, he would call for the assistance of the Senior Officer of the Bights Division and 'compel him to remove' 211.

The reaction of Mewu's followers to this rejection of their chief, appears to have been remarkably subdued. However, Campbell's report did number Mewu's immediate supporters by this time at just one hundred and fifty. This group,

208 PRO FO84/951 25 August 1854 Clarendon, London.

209 PRO FO84/951 30 May 1854 1 August 1854 Chichester, London.

210 PRO FO84/950 1 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

211 PRO FO84/950 1 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

moreover, he presented as being made up largely of lazy, feckless, slave-owning foreigners ²¹². He did not mention, that as well as consisting of the remaining Sierra Leonian inhabitants, this group of supporters also evidently contained the well established inhabitants 'Assagbe [Ajagbe] and 'Onpati' [Honbati] ²¹³.

Having left Badagry in no doubt as to his purpose, Campbell then embarked for Porto-Novo, where he was happily struck by the favourable disposition of the King. Both men were immediately in sympathy with one another. The King reassured Campbell that, as soon as the Mewu was welcomed back to Porto-Novo, the lagoon would be re-opened to a trade of which, at present, only Domingo Martinez was reaping the benefit. Campbell's visit was concluded by a touching meeting between himself and the exiled Badagry chiefs who had been recalled from the bush 'where they were compelled to wander about seeking a livelihood'. They impressed upon Campbell their betrayal by the Mewu and their current miserable circumstances away from their homes and children of whom many 'were receiving instruction at the missionary schools, when their expulsion took place'. The Consul left Porto-Novo 'assuring them I would do all in my power to procure their restoration to Badagry' ²¹⁴.

In a much later account of these proceedings, and in answer to Foreign Office questions over his allegiances in this matter, Campbell suggested that there were three main reasons why he was so vehement in his support for Porto-Novo during this period. Firstly he suggested that it was the Egba who were the aggressors in the area and continued to threaten Porto-Novo and the other states with attack. He also suggested that it was Domingo Martinez, the notorious slave dealer, and his Dahomean patrons who derived immense benefit from the closure of the lagoon. Thus the commerce of Porto-Novo itself, valued at about a

²¹² PRO FO84/950 1 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²¹³ CMSA CA2/043/7 12 April 1854 Wright, Badagry.

²¹⁴ PRO FO84/950 1 June 1854 Campbell, Badagry.

quarter of a million pounds sterling, remained untapped due to the closure of its 'shipping port' Badagry²¹⁵. Lastly Campbell went on to praise the regime and person of the King himself, who, he noted, had not hesitated in signing an anti-slave trading treaty with Britain ²¹⁶.

Having returned to Lagos, it would appear that Campbell acquired some surprising allies. According to his account, Revds Townsend and Crowther, on a visit to Lagos, offered to try and persuade the Egba to urge the Mewu's withdrawal, or perhaps more accurately mediate in the matter ²¹⁷. Unfortunately it would appear that this peculiar alliance was short-lived. Having returned to Abeokuta, Townsend was seemingly convinced by the chiefs that the Mewu was a friend of the British, that he was prepared to live in peace with the Gun. Furthermore, the Egba would see his removal as an aggressive measure, contrary to their interests ²¹⁸. The consequent correspondence between missionary and Consul not only illustrates the dangerous, unreconcilable differences between the African states over the Badagry issue but also chronicles the increasingly bitter polarisation of the British factions involved. As the dispute became ever more personalised in its style, both parties became dangerously extreme in their language. Campbell continued to emphasise the potential use of force which would ensure the Mewu's removal, whilst Townsend, having re-visited the coast, seemingly left Badagry in such a temper that, it was claimed, he succeeded in terrifying all the towns along his route back to Abeokuta with rumours of imminent Egba attack should the Mewu be removed ²¹⁹. Campbell took great pains to point out that it had to be Townsend and Gollmer who sought to encourage these assaults ²²⁰.

²¹⁵ PRO FO84/950 1 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²¹⁶ PRO FO84/950 1 November 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²¹⁷ PRO FO84/950 1 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²¹⁸ PRO FO84/950 9 May 1854 Townsend, Abeokuta in 1 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²¹⁹ PRO FO84/950 13 May 1854 Campbell to Moses in 1 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos; PRO FO84/950 11 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²²⁰ Campbell feared that the 'plotting mischief' of Mr Gollmer could lead to another civil war [PRO FO84/950 13 May 1854 Campbell to Moses in 1 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos].

Any further commercial pressure from Porto-Novo was unnecessary ²²¹. But initially it would appear that both sides proceeded with some caution. On 1 June the Consul wrote to the Mewu informing him that he must readmit the exiled chiefs to the town. The Mewu's reply, nine days later, was that, with the advice of the Egba, he would be prepared to receive the chiefs, and, to prevent future confusion, a written agreement should be drawn up ²²². But evidently the spirit of compromise was short-lived.

Presumably suspecting that his actions would be condemned by the Foreign Office, Campbell failed to mention events at Badagry until towards the middle of August²²³. Only then did the Consul feel it appropriate to mention that on 30 June he had instructed the Wawu 'to follow me to Badagry'. The Wawu however arrived before the Consul and was evidently informed by the Mewu that should he land he would be shot. On being told of this 'extraordinary conduct', on his subsequent arrival, Campbell alone met with the Mewu. According to his account the besieged chief was uncompromising. He reiterated his threat to the Wawu and refused to negotiate. The Consul, offended and rather humiliated, was forced quit the town²²⁴.

According to Campbell's account, on returning to Wawu's encampment he urged caution, suggesting that the chief returned to his place of exile temporarily. But the Wawu refused, informing him courageously that he would rather die in sight of his home. Furthermore it would appear that having determined the

²²¹ The king of Porto-Novo did continue to press his case with the Consul through letters which, for example, raised his fears over the plotting missionaries at Abeokuta and the Mewu's remaining at Badagry after the Gun chiefs had returned [PRO FO84/950 Letter from the King of Porto-Novo in 11 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos].

²²² PRO FO84/950 10 June 1854 the Mewu, Badagry in 11 June 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²²³ Campbell did send despatches during the interim covering subjects such as the ships on the coast. But only on 10 August did he return to the subject of Badagry [PRO FO84/950 10 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos].

²²⁴ PRO FO84/950 10 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

Mewu's hostile reaction, the Wawu had sent a message to the exiled Posu who was now 'in a town a few miles above Badagry', and who subsequently sent thirty small war canoes to support his fellow chief ²²⁵.

With both sides in position, Campbell wrote to Abeokuta requesting an Egba presence so that the episode could be settled 'amicably'. After the event, the Consul declared that he had known that no such intervention would occur, but merely hoped to ensure a few days for the missionaries, their families and the Sierra Leone people to leave the area, although in actual fact very few took the opportunity to do so. The reasonable attitude taken by Campbell, according to his own account, was different to those reports by Badagry missionaries Coker and Wright. According to them, Campbell's arrival in the area on 31 June, along with various merchants and the Wawu's people, sent Badagry into fear and confusion. The Mewu, on meeting Consul Campbell, seemingly declined to agree to the Wawu's landing without the advice of the King of Lagos and the Egba. However, the Consul's refusal to instruct the Wawu to withdraw temporarily led to dispute 'till both of them got into a passion' ²²⁶. According to the missionaries, tensions were increased by reports of the Posu's fighting canoes arriving in the area, whilst the Mewu 'being a man of honour', waited for word from Abeokuta despite taunts from the surrounding forces.

His ten day deadline having passed with no signal from Abeokuta, Campbell, according to his own account, cautioned the Wawu that, on hostilities commencing, the missionary establishments and those of the merchants were not to be molested. Then he left for Lagos declaring that 'it was evident to every one, that on my leaving Badagry, hostilities would ensue' ²²⁷.

²²⁵ PRO FO84/950 10 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²²⁶ CMSA CA2/043/74 17 July 1854 Coker and Wright, Badagry.

²²⁷ PRO FO84/950 10 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

On arriving back at Lagos on 12 July Campbell received word that the Wawu and Posu had landed, attacked the town, burnt a portion of it and initially gained the upper hand. But, having driven the Mewu's forces to the outskirts, their ammunition fell short and they were compelled to retreat. The Mewu's men pursued them and apparently 'committed some slaughter on them'. Timely reinforcements from Porto-Novan controlled Iso and Ado, however, crushed the Mewu's defence and he was forced out to Ajido. Some token resistance continued to be offered by the expelled chief, but, having sent a message to Dosunmu, Campbell despatched the Consular boat to carry the Mewu and his family to exile in Lagos ²²⁸. The Church Missionary Society report of the Mewu's deposition, although similar, presented that chief's actions in a rather more heroic light. Using the account of catechist James White, the CMR reported that having 'gloriously won the day' after the attack by the Posu and the Wawu, the Mewu was forced to leave for Ajido due to the desertion of the greater part of his people. Here he was followed by his enemies. But having 'displayed his bravery by routing them in two successive battles' he was forced to withdraw to Lagos 'fearing his people would famish' ²²⁹. The Mewu's period of exile at Lagos was short-lived. He died in obscurity under a year later. Even his missionary friends could only muse that 'While we hope that he is safe in Christ, we do not venture to speak decidedly about him' ²³⁰.

²²⁸ PRO FO84/10 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

²²⁹ CMSA CA2/087/44 10 August 1854 White's Journal, Badagry.

²³⁰ CMR March 1856, p. 59.

Chapter Ten

The Aftermath Of Civil War 1854-1860

The civil war was over. No counter-attacks were made on the town and the Badagry chiefs resettled and reconstructed their respective wards. Indeed, what is remarkable is the ease with which the old regime slipped back into place. The four year break had not damaged or changed the ward structure of Badagry and surprisingly quickly the town was able to re-establish itself as a commercial centre. But this lack of change also meant that all the old anomalies remained. The competitive nature of the chieftaincies, which helped the town to adapt so successfully to market forces and sustain opposing outside pressures, ultimately maintained the total lack of political cohesion. But, as the war itself had demonstrated, this dangerous and unstable balance of authority was impossible to maintain in the face of an outside pressure which not only desired order along more conventional lines but was ultimately supported by immense military might. Through their efforts on the coast, the Christian missionaries operating at Badagry had identified a struggle between good and evil. The imposition of a two-sided dispute on a situation made up of so many different tensions not only misinterpreted events but ultimately did lead to the polarisation of various parties along slaver versus anti-slaver lines. But it was the introduction of agents with recourse to the British military machine, who similarly viewed events in such simplistic terms, which ultimately made the balance untenable. In 1851 Beecroft's intervention was the final straw, just as Campbell in 1854 precipitated the restoration of the Badagry ward chiefs. Such piecemeal consular intervention would have been less effective in a more stable situation, as demonstrated by the somewhat greater effort required to affect affairs at Lagos. But Badagry in the 1850s was unable to withstand the slightest imbalance. The unsupported Mewu regime proved equally unstable, but ultimately the restoration of the Badagry

ward chiefs left them similarly susceptible to the very forces that had returned them to power.

Okaro K'Ojwang has identified 1854 as the 'beginning of direct British control' at Badagry¹. But this is too simplified a view of coastal affairs and the nature of 'British control'. Throughout his analysis, Okaro K'Ojwang has traced the continuous development of a British policy which sought direct control over coastal West Africa and its resources. The nature of the British presence on the coast, made up as it was by so many different groups, individuals and aims, which were often in conflict with one another, makes the notion of an identifiable 'British' influence illusory at least until 1849. But I would suggest that the onset of a Consular presence in the area which was directly supported by the presence of British military power, although undoubtedly signifying a turning point in Britain's relationship with West Africa, still did not signify the beginnings of formal British control of the area. Neither did the reduction of Lagos or the restoration of the Badagry chiefs. Palmerston's 'New Policy' of intervention was rooted firmly in coastal influences and was shaped and ultimately decided by his agents on the coast. The Consular post was a very individual and personal a role. It relied almost wholly on the abilities and vision of a single man. There is no evidence to suggest that even the Consuls of the Bights of Benin and Biafra shared ideas of control. Both Beecroft and Campbell clearly sought to establish themselves as powerful and influential men on the coast, but this was a very personal desire. There is no evidence to suggest that either Beecroft or Campbell sought to extend formal British influence beyond protecting the well-being and commercial interests of their nationals. In hindsight it is evident that the ways in which they sought to do this ultimately embroiled themselves and their successors inextricably in coastal affairs. But the short-lived subsequent holders of that position were either not inclined, or

¹ Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri...', p. 132.

merely did not have the time to establish their own stamp of authority on the coast. There was nothing inevitable about the development of Britain's relationship with the area, even at Lagos after 1851 and Badagry after 1854.

Consul Campbell concluded his account of the Mewu's expulsion by pointing out the timeliness of events. He noted that Kosoko was, at this time, being pressured to leave Epe, and had apparently sent some of his wives and children to Ado and 'evidently intended to gain a footing at Badagry'. Fortunately, Campbell could state that, the role of Britain in the expulsion had negated any part that Kosoko had played ².

In fact Campbell's involvement evidently did nothing to ease tensions at Lagos, especially within the British community, and an increasingly bitter war of words between Anglican missionaries and the Consul threatened to spill over into violence. Revd Gollmer, while accusing the Consul of warmongering, tried to persuade King Dosunmu to order Campbell out of town. In return, Campbell not only accused the missionary of plotting his assassination, but suggested that Gollmer was provoking civil war by attempting to enlist the help of the powerful trader Madam Tinubu and her army of slaves in his cause. According to Campbell, it was only the arrival of a British and an American vessel off Lagos which prevented this force from acting ³. Relations between missionary groups appear also to have reached an all time low. The Methodist missionary Gardiner had retained friendly relations with the Wawu throughout the period of his exile and evidently retained high hopes of missionary progress for the period of restoration ⁴. This friendship evidently led him to harbour rather unchristian feelings towards Revd Gollmer who he accused of being 'a man whose character all along this lagoon ...is truly shocking and absolutely unenviable in any

² PRO FO84/950 10 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

³ PRO FO84/950 10 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

⁴ WMMSA 21 November 1854 the Wawu, Badagry in 8 March 1855 Gardiner, Lagos.

situation of life'. Furthermore, he identified his fellow missionary as being a 'deeply guilty party' in the outbreak of war at both Badagry and Lagos⁵. Although the squabbling of the British residents at Lagos did not culminate in violence, bitterness continued to distract attention away from far more serious issues. Even Archdeacon Graf, who accompanied Bishop Vidal on a goodwill visit to Lagos in October, noted, in unmistakable terms, that the Mewu had been expelled from Badagry 'by the friends of the slave trade, Kosoko and the King of Porto Novo'⁶.

According to Campbell, so enraged were the Anglican missionaries at Lagos that they also attempted to urge their friends at Abeokuta to launch an attack on Badagry⁷. But although initially the Egba made disapproving noises about the expulsion of their ally through their mouthpiece Townsend, they clearly did not wish to alienate the Consul and their secular British friends⁸. The Egba ultimately concluded that they had no objection to the restoration of the Badagry chiefs, provided they kept their agreements with the British Government and their friendship with themselves⁹.

Despite clear hostility from an influential section of the Lagos community and belated reservations over his actions from London, Campbell was convinced that he had re-opened the lagoon¹⁰. Furthermore, he advocated continued British involvement at Badagry to enable the restored chiefs to regulate dues, encourage

⁵ PRO FO84/950 7 August 1854 Gardiner, Lagos in December 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

⁶ CMI November 1855, p. 248.

⁷ PRO FO84/976 17 October 1855 Campbell, Lagos.

⁸ PRO FO84/976 Undated enclosures from the Egba chiefs, Abeokuta in 17 October 1855 Campbell, Lagos.

⁹ PRO FO84/976 6 September 1854 the Egba Chiefs, Abeokuta in 17 October 1855 Campbell, Lagos].

¹⁰ Campbell noted that:

Instead of the present peaceful state of things, with the lagoon, from Godomey near to Whydah to beyond Eppe, a distance of 150 miles, bearing on its waters canoes laden with Palm Oil and other productions, these same canoes would have been filled with armed men, kidnapping and fighting, feeding the slave trade and rending the situation of Lagos critical and insecure

[PRO FO84/950 21 December 1854 Campbell, Lagos].

trade and squash any slave-trading activities. To ensure that the town was run along lines he approved, Campbell recommended the appointment of a Vice-Consul for Badagry and Porto-Novo. In his despatch explaining his actions, the Consul argued that the restoration of the Badagry chiefs would automatically lead to a considerable increase in 'legitimate' commerce and communication along the lagoon from Lagos almost as far as Whydah. The appointment of a Vice-Consul, to reside principally at Porto-Novo, would promote this peace and commerce and act as a check to any slave dealers who might hope to also take advantage of the open lagoon. Indeed Campbell concluded that such a man would be in a position to divert the palm oil trade away from the factory of Domingo Martinez at Porto-Novo beach towards Badagry, and thus induce that 'notorious character....to retire to Whydah. The subsequent increase in prosperity for Badagry would undoubtedly attract a new wave of emigrants not only from Sierra Leone but also from Brazil and Cuba. Thus the Vice Consul would be further required to protect this enlarged group and represent their interests ¹¹. The man Campbell wanted for the post was William McCoskry. The trader had seven years' experience on the West Coast of Africa, notably in the employ of the Hutton Company. Furthermore, Campbell argued, his fellow Scot was known and respected by the King of Porto-Novo and the chiefs of Badagry. Indeed, he added that, 'from his mild temper, amiable and conciliatory disposition and his superior intelligence, is respected by all to whom he is known' ¹².

The Foreign Office received notification of Campbell's decision and concurred immediately with only the proviso that his appointment was made without salary ¹³. But the measure which was to have been the culmination of Campbell's pacification of the lagoon failed on all fronts. By September 1854, despite Campbell's assertions of imminent prosperity, it was clear that the

¹¹ PRO FO84/950 12 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

¹² PRO FO84/950 12 August 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

¹³ PRO FO2/11 15 December 1854 Clarendon, Lagos.

operation of the lagoon remained under constant threat as relations with Kosoko once again deteriorated¹⁴. At the same time constant fears of all-out warfare between Dahomey and Abeokuta continually threatened to disrupt the interior and threatened to spill over onto the coast¹⁵. Furthermore, any commercial benefits which may have arisen from the tense, but temporarily peaceful, area during 1854 were severely damaged by an emergent dispute between the Abeokuta and Lagos traders. By August 1855 trade between the two centres had been halted¹⁶. The situation in Lagos itself also distracted Campbell as numbers of previously expelled 'slave traders' began to, once again, take up residence in the town, apparently with the sanction of King Dosunmu and his chiefs¹⁷. Lastly, Campbell's choice of appointment to the post of Vice-Consul proved unwise. Although 'honoured', William McCoskry was unable to take up his appointment immediately being on leave in Britain, from which he did not return until the beginning of 1855¹⁸. On eventually returning to Lagos he suffered a bout of dysentery which continued to delay his installment¹⁹. By the time McCoskry was ready to take up his post at the beginning of 1856 Campbell himself was having serious misgivings about his choice. The trader had evidently abandoned his intention of leaving his commercial headquarters at Lagos to base himself at Badagry. Instead he had delegated his affairs to the care of his assistant Thomas Tickel²⁰. He himself rarely set foot in the town. Even more damaging was the information that McCoskry had actively opposed the Consul

¹⁴ PRO FO84/950 28 September 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

¹⁵ NNAI CS08/1/1 5 November 1855 Campbell to King of Dahomey, Lagos; PRO FO84/1031 7 March 1857 Campbell, Lagos; FO84/1031 1 July 1857 Campbell, Lagos.

¹⁶ PRO FO84/976 30 August 1855 Campbell, Lagos.

¹⁷ PRO FO84/950 21 December 1854 Campbell, Lagos.

¹⁸ PRO FO2/12 30 November 1854 McCoskry, London; FO2/14 11 January 1855 McCoskry, London.

¹⁹ PRO FO84/976 17 October 1855 Campbell, Lagos.

²⁰ Thomas Tickel was a trader employed by Thomas Hutton and had been established on the West Coast throughout the 1840s. In 1853/54 Tickel moved first to Lagos and then Badagry when McCoskry, his immediate superior in the company, decided to establish his own business and asked Tickel to go with him. By the late 1850s Tickel was trading for himself and by the 1860s was said to be the only reputable British merchant on the coast. His subsequent appointment as Civil Commandant at Badagry by the Colonial Government gave him a vitally important role in shaping the Western District of the newly established Lagos Colony [K Folayan, 'The Career of Thomas Tickel in the Western District of Lagos 1854-1886', *JHSN*, v/1 (1969), pp. 27-46].

in his dealings with the trader Madam Tinubu ²¹. It was at this stage that the two openly quarrelled, purportedly over the collection of duties at Lagos ²². Having conveyed his fears over McCoskry's suitability to London, it was agreed that the trader should not be confirmed in his appointment and his position as Vice-Consul was cancelled ²³. Over the following two years the rift between Campbell and McCoskry widened as the Consul dredged up further information accusing McCoskry of dishonest dealings both at Badagry, Lagos and previously on the Gold Coast ²⁴.

The McCoskry incident was symptomatic of Campbell's failure to carry out any of the simple measures he had envisaged to ensure the pacification of the lagoon. The Consul was led to advocate further levels of intervention. In 1857 a further attempt at imposing order was made by the appearance of HM Steam Vessel Drake, shortly followed by the Brune on the inland waterway ²⁵. By the beginning of 1858 Campbell was beginning to re-examine the question of occupying Whydah as a way of finally crushing the slave trade ²⁶.

Badagry under the restored chiefs

Newbury has concluded that the reinstated chiefs were corrupt and inefficient, whilst Smith agrees that their return did nothing to arrest the decline of the town ²⁷. A picture of continued hopelessness was certainly conveyed by the writings of missionary visitors to the town during the later 1850s. After the restoration both Methodists and Anglicans briefly held out hopes of a renewed mission at Badagry. The Methodist Gardiner, through his friendship with Chief

²¹ PRO FO2/17 23 June 1856 Campbell, Lagos.

²² PRO FO84/1002 14 May 1856 Campbell, Lagos.

²³ PRO FO2/17 22 August 1856 Clarendon, London.

²⁴ In 1856 McCoskry accused his assistant at Badagry, Mr Reynolds, of stealing from him. However, according to the far from impartial Consul, Reynolds was entirely innocent of the charges and it was McCoskry who had acted improperly [PRO FO84/1002 25 September 1856 Campbell, Lagos; PRO FO2/24 29 March 1858 Malmesbury, London].

²⁵ PRO FO84/1031 22 January 1857 Clarendon, London.

²⁶ PRO FO84/1061 6 February 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

²⁷ Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast...* p. 63; Smith, *The Lagos Consulate...* p. 85.

Wawu, evidently had expectations of increased interest. At the end of 1854 the Wawu wrote to Gardiner thanking him for his continued friendship and support and acknowledged the role of God in restoring him to his chieftaincy ²⁸. But any hopes that this indicated a commitment towards Christianity were unfounded. Indeed by the end of 1856 Gardiner himself was recommending that conditions at Badagry were 'adverse to evangelical operations' and suggesting the station's complete abandonment ²⁹.

The Church Missionary Society also entertained hopes of renewed interest in Christianity immediately after the restoration of the chiefs, despite the downfall of their ally the Mewu. Revd Crowther visited Badagry in June 1855 along with Buko, the son of Chief Posu who was now a mission student at Lagos. During the course of this visit Crowther was well received by 'all the influential persons at Badagry'. The efforts of Messrs Lawson and John, the CMS catechists stationed in the town from early 1855 were praised 'although their abilities are small'. Furthermore Crowther reported that the Posu 'begged me once more to see that the mission premises be put in order' ³⁰. On another visit in December of that year Crowther preached to a congregation of seventy people including the chiefs 'Possu, Wawu, Balla, and Pootu [who may have been the Akran of this period, identified by Avoseh as Poton]'. He chastised them for their carelessness but the people 'begged not to be forsaken' ³¹.

But any missionary optimism over evangelical progress was quickly dispelled. By early 1858 Crowther's replacement at the Lagos station was complaining that on a visit to Badagry he found that although the chiefs and the people made promises, things were in 'a most discouraging state...nor is there any desire to be

²⁸ WMMSA 21 November 1854 the Wawu, Badagry in 8 March 1855 Gardiner, Lagos.

²⁹ WMMSA 11 November 1856 Gardiner, Lagos.

³⁰ PRO FO84/976 28 December 1854 Campbell to the Wawu in 2 August 1855 Campbell, Lagos; CMR March 1856, p. 60.

³¹ CMR March 1856, p. 60; Avoseh, A Short History of Badagry, p. 24.

instructed in the way of everlasting salvation ³². Even the establishment of the talented and committed Samuel Pearse in 1859 failed to make any difference to the spread of Christianity in the town, although the man himself was undoubtedly held in high esteem there ³³. Christianity also evidently faced competition from a restored and rejuvenated Muslim community at Badagry. Avoseh has suggested that the restoration period saw a revival of Islam in the town. Evidently a number of Muslims who had left as a result of the civil war returned during this period. Moreover, it would also appear that at least some of the Gun chiefs, the Posu being one and later also the Jengen, allowed the Islamic community to build new mosques in their quarters ³⁴. Furthermore it is clear that the missionary's closest contacts only held their chieftaincies for a short period after restoration. By the middle of 1856 both the Wawu and the Posu were dead ³⁵. More importantly however I would suggest that the failure of Christianity despite obvious interest in the missionary presence, was the result of Badagry's diplomatic and political aims. Understandably Badagry was looking, more than ever before, for continued contact with Britain rather than Christianity, and the continued presence of the missionaries, who had often been active in local politics, was merely the most suitable way of preserving that link. The purported support for a Christian mission was clearly an attempt by the Badagry chiefs to ally themselves firmly with the spiritual aspect of what was clearly by now the dominant military power on the coast.

The Badagry chiefs sought to take advantage of the economic potential of Lagos. But after the turmoil of the preceding years the town remained dangerously weak. Bowen, commenting on the coastal situation, noted that whilst Lagos and Abeokuta were increasing in population 'Badagry hardly exists' ³⁶. As late as

³² CMR January 1859, p. 23, 12 February 1858, Revd Buhler, Lagos.

³³ CMR April 1860, p. 111; W O Ajayi, 'A History of the Yoruba Mission...', pp. 165-166.

³⁴ Avoseh, 'Islam in Badagri' in Falola, 'The Minor Works...', p. 242.

³⁵ PRO FO84/1002 29 July 1856 Campbell, Lagos.

³⁶ Bowen, Adventures and Missionary Labours, p. 124.

1858, Consul Campbell reported that despite the presence of eight ruling chiefs the population of the town was now no more than six hundred ³⁷. But despite its much reduced circumstances Badagry was continuing to operate, at least in a limited way, as an Atlantic port. In 1856 a total of twenty thousand tons of palm oil was exported from the Bight of Benin. The Porto-Novo area alone handled four thousand tons, whilst Lagos exported three thousand eight hundred and eighty four tons that year. But surprisingly, Badagry was shipping some one thousand two hundred and fifty tons of oil from the beach. The following year, Badagry maintained that figure, although it is true to say that all other Bight Ports, except Whydah had increased the amount of oil they handled ³⁸. By 1855 there were evidently a number of British merchants operating out of Badagry once more ³⁹. Furthermore, despite its obvious limitations Badagry had, in some ways, succeeded in redefining its economic role through its position on the lagoon. Most clearly it would appear that the town's connections with Lagos had been strengthened. During the latter half of the 1850s Badagry was evidently being used in the collection and sale of palm oil for embarkation at Lagos itself. As early as May 1856 Campbell was including Badagry among the 'large markets' for Lagos and, from the accounts of dispute and disagreement between Consul and trader over the collection and payment of duties between the towns, it is evident that the Badagry oil market was an important source for Lagos ⁴⁰.

The Lagos market continued to have problems throughout the latter part of the 1850s however. Kosoko and his party remained an irritation to Dosunmu's administration whilst the Ijaye Wars between Abeokuta and Ibadan interrupted

³⁷ PRO FO84/1061 20 April 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

³⁸ PRO FO84/1061 2 February 1858 Campbell, Lagos.

³⁹ In early 1859 Campbell mentioned some English traders at Badagry who had travelled to Abomey for the annual customs [PRO FO84/1088 7 February 1859 Campbell, Lagos]. But a gradual return had evidently begun well before this. In June 1856 Campbell had received petitions from the 'merchants engaged in trade at Badagry' and mentioned specifically Mr Hutton's establishment there [NNAI CSO8/1/2 14 June 1856 Campbell to the Badagry chiefs, Lagos].

⁴⁰ PRO FO84/1022 14 May 1856 Campbell, Lagos; NNAI CSO8/1/1 15 December 1855 Campbell, Lagos.

oil supplies from the interior. But Badagry's lagoon connections further to the west evidently maintained its own export trade. Indeed according to Campbell, all the palm oil shipped directly from Badagry beach came from Porto-Novo market ⁴¹. The importance of that source was illustrated during 1859 when a dispute at Porto-Novo brought the market to a standstill for two months. Campbell complained that the dispute had led to great suffering and inconvenience for the traders at Badagry ⁴².

It would seem then that despite its problems Badagry had adapted to its role as a minor Atlantic port, and was able to take advantage of its now dominant neighbours both to east and west by maintaining a position as a lagoon market. Its ability to sustain and expand this role evidently rested on the continued operation of the lagoon economy. But a further blow was dealt to coastal stability by the death of Campbell in April 1859. If nothing else Campbell's six year residence at the consulate had maintained a level of consistency. But furthermore, despite his faults, his strength of character combined with undoubtedly weak kingship at Lagos had enabled him to mould the post of Consul into one of immense influence, far beyond his official remit. After his death, the post, so dependent upon personality, was held by a succession of temporary and short-lived Consuls.

Initially Lieutenant Lodder stepped into the breach until the new Consul could travel out from England ⁴³. The naval officer was immediately faced with rumours of an imminent attack from Kosoko and embarked on negotiations with the chief at Epe ⁴⁴. His permanent replacement George Brand, who had been Vice-Consul at Loanda, arrived at Lagos in November 1859 ⁴⁵. But his attention

⁴¹ PRO FO84/1088 5 April 1859 Campbell, Lagos.

⁴² PRO FO84/1088 5 April 1859 Campbell, Lagos.

⁴³ PRO FO2/28 14 June 1859 Malmesbury, London; PRO FO2/28 15 June 1859 Malmesbury, London.

⁴⁴ PRO FO84/1088 2 November 1859 Lodder, Lagos.

⁴⁵ PRO FO2/28 30 November 1859 Brand, Lagos.

was immediately attracted west by rumours of Dahomean aggression towards Abeokuta and the disturbed state of the Yoruba country ⁴⁶. Brand evidently saw the only solution to the unstable coastal situation as a more formal British presence. As early as April 1860 he was pressing for the occupation of both Whydah and Lagos either as possessions or protectorates. This, he declared, was the only method by which the slave trade could finally be suppressed and the level of administration could be imposed which would enable legitimate commerce to expand ⁴⁷. But Brand lacked the conviction to press ahead himself and wrestled with official definitions of his 'magisterial powers' as Consul ⁴⁸. Brand's hesitancy was illustrated by his difficult relationship with Badagry.

Relations between European residents and their Badagry hosts had once again become increasingly strained. In early 1860 a fire at the premises of the Manchester merchants Messrs Novelli and Co resulted in accusations of arson ⁴⁹. Brand reminded the chiefs of their Treaty obligations and despatched a naval representative, Commander Bowden, as mediator ⁵⁰. An uneasy calm was once again restored ⁵¹. However, Brand found greater difficulty in defining his consular role when faced with further problems in May 1860. Reports from Samuel Pearse expressed concern over accusations and arrests for witchcraft in the town. Although Brand felt able to condemn the actions of the chiefs on a moral level, he was evidently unsure whether, under the terms of the 1852 Treaty which forbade 'human sacrifice', he, as Consul, had the authority to act. Ultimately he concluded that he did not, and satisfied himself with a belated letter reminding the chiefs that it was through British intervention that they had gained their present positions. He concluded his outburst with the empty threat that, although they remained unpunished for their 'various acts of ingratitude

⁴⁶ PRO FO84/1114 23 May & 21 June 1860 Russell, London.

⁴⁷ PRO FO84/1115 9 April 1860 Brand, Lagos.

⁴⁸ PRO FO84/1088 31 December 1859 Brand, Lagos.

⁴⁹ PRO FO84/1115 January 1860 Badagry Merchants in 7 February 1860 Brand, Lagos.

⁵⁰ PRO FO84/1115 Undated Brand to Badagry chiefs, Lagos in 7 February 1860 Brand, Lagos.

⁵¹ PRO FO84/1115 5 February 1860 Bowden, off Badagry in 7 February 1860 Brand, Lagos.

and willful violation of their engagements', none of these misdemeanors had been forgotten ⁵². The Consul's scorn for the Badagry chiefs was immense. It is ironic then that at his death in June 1860 he was buried in the Christian graveyard of this 'colony of thieves' ⁵³ .

Brand's frustration with Badagry and yet his unwillingness to act, contrasted starkly with the degree of intervention Campbell had been willing to make. Indeed the actions of the two exposed the remarkable degree of personal interpretation and circumstance which governed 'British' actions along the coast during the Consular period. It was the period 1861-1863 which was, however, to see the role of the 'Man on the spot' achieve even greater heights.

⁵² PRO FO84/1115 3 May 1860 Brand to Badagry chiefs, Lagos in 14 May 1860 Brand, Lagos.

⁵³ Brand's grave can still be seen in the old Christian cemetery at Badagry.

Chapter 11

The Annexation Of Badagry 1861-1863

Nineteenth century British Imperialism has been the subject of great controversy. A large number of books and articles have been written by many very eminent historians, and the ideas they have expressed have been studied by an even greater number of students such as myself. A general analysis of imperialism is beyond both my scope and my desire. Suffice it to say here that the theories developed by Gallagher and Robinson, Fieldhouse, Hargreaves, MacIntyre, Cain and Hopkins, clearly take one far beyond an examination of one particular place ¹. However, the examination of one particular area, in this case Badagry, does, I feel, raise some interesting questions and possibly has some wider implications for the subject of British activity on the West African coast in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and the concept of 'imperialism' itself. Firstly, I would suggest that the Badagry case exposes the very real dangers for the historian of using hindsight. What now appears to be an obvious sequence of related events, may imply contemporary motives, aims or knowledge which simply did not exist. Commentators on the annexation of Badagry, of which there are notably few, have usually assigned a short section to the events of late 1861-1863 after a detailed analysis of the period leading up to the cession of Lagos on 6 August 1861. They present these later events as a postscript to affairs further east, a mere tying up of loose ends along the coast which was inevitable once the British had raised their flag over Lagos. But a closer examination of the actual events of the period as a whole, from a less Lagosian perspective, demonstrates that the expansion of the Lagos colony appears inevitable only in hindsight, and

¹ J Gallagher & R Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *EHR*, Vol 6, 2nd Series, no 1 August 1953, pp. 1-15; D K Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire 1830-1914*, (Macmillan, London 1984); J D Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, (Macmillan, London 1963); W D MacIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics. A Study of British Colonial Policy in West Africa, Malaya and the South Pacific in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli*, (Macmillan, London 1967); P J Cain & A G Hopkins, *British Imperialism. Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914*, (Longman 1993).

that Badagry had a set of individual and separate causes for its cession two years later. Thus its annexation provides an important case study on the notion of 'creeping imperialism'.

What is more, this postscript ending suggests a consensus of purpose and view on the part of the 'British', that clearly did not exist, as demonstrated during the period up to 1860. The question of exactly who shaped events on the West African coast, has been examined by a number of historians. Whether policy was made in Whitehall, or by the 'man on the spot', or was the result of African's themselves provoking a reaction, or, indeed, a combination of all these factors, should be examined in the light of both overview and case study. It could be argued that such a study is too small and narrow an area from which to ascertain any pattern of motives or policy. But this, I would suggest, points to a third implication. As already suggested, theories attempting to explain the concept of imperialism take one far beyond an examination of a single place. But perhaps such an examination begins to reveal some of the dangers of more general concepts. An attempt to fit a particular theory over a number of disparate cases can result in events and circumstances being shaped by theory rather than vice versa.

I would agree with Newbury that when the eight Badagry chiefs signed the Treaty of Cession on July 7 1863 they were already, to a certain extent in a 'state of dependence'². This was the last in a series of similar treaties signed in June and early July of that year, beginning with Ado then Ipokia and Okeodan. I would not agree, however, that this situation had existed since 1861. This state of dependence had in fact only existed, in some British eyes, since mid- to late- 1862, and that even then the outcome was by no means certain but was shaped by a series of causal factors. The events leading up to the annexation of Badagry can be

² Newbury, The Western Slave Coast... p. 70.

divided broadly into two groups. The first and most obvious group was made up of those which resulted from the situation on the Bight of Benin as a whole in the 1862-63 period. To some extent these motives seem purely reactive. The French factor, for example would seem to have been crucial in shaping events, and it could be argued perhaps that the town's cession became inevitable only in 1863 when French encroachments along the coast from the Porto-Novo area became a threat to British interests. However, unlike Ado, Ipokia and Okeodan, Badagry's annexation, like that of Palma, was not purely the result of French expansion and part of a tit for tat series of annexations. Although the French factor was crucial in forcing the British ultimately to take formal possession of the town, other factors had preceded, pushing the British agents along the road to annexation even before the French had taken possession of Porto-Novo.

Badagry's cession was also, to a great extent, a reaction to events centering on Lagos. The first half of 1862 saw a growing realisation by Governor Freeman and then Acting Lieutenant Governor Glover in early 1863 that to enable Lagos to become the trading centre that had been envisaged, the colony must be extended to stabilise and open the surrounding country. Lagos alone had failed to meet their expectations and they tried to realise their hopes by expanding the territory.

The second set of causes and motives behind the annexation of Badagry, which should not be understated, arose from the local situation in the town itself. Both economic and humanitarian, they begin to show that in the early 1860s, the town of Badagry had not yet become the mere appendage to Lagos that it may now appear.

The Coastal Situation in 1861

It is without doubt convenient and understandable to view the cession of Badagry in 1863 as a foregone conclusion after the annexation of Lagos in August

1861. Hindsight presents a picture of a small state which had always been closely tied to the affairs of Lagos. During the period of the Lagos Consulate from 1851-1861, this relationship became so marked and indeed subordinate, due to the policies pursued by the British agents on the coast and Badagry's own inability to stand alone, that in reality, by 1861, Badagry was actually included in the annexation of Lagos. Dioka has seen the cession of the town as the result of a gradual but 'consistent process' of events beginning in 1852, which increasingly tied the town to the British at Lagos³. Any examination of Badagry and its history will support this view in a number of respects. Firstly there is the geographical connection. Situated only about forty miles along the coast from Lagos Island, Badagry's history was clearly linked with that of its neighbour. Furthermore, the lagoon link forced the towns into even closer political and economic communion. It would appear that it was ultimately the dominance of Lagos which destroyed Badagry's role as a major West African port once and for all, or perhaps more accurately, destroyed any chances the town had of re-emerging as such in the mid-nineteenth century. But it was also Badagry's connections along the lagoon which enabled the town to retain a function as a middleman once its direct Atlantic trade had all but ceased. However, the mere geographical proximity of Lagos is not a conclusive argument to expose Badagry's dependence in the nineteenth century. The town was equally near to Porto-Novo, a place which provided connections and ties of its own.

When examining the traditional political links between Lagos and Badagry, it is important to stress that much of the contemporary evidence arises from the British agents' view of events. This, in the face of increasing French pressure and a desire to justify their actions to their government, understandably came to present Badagry, along with Ado, Leke and Palma as traditionally belonging to the Lagos Kingdom. As Governor Freeman noted in a memorandum in June

³ L C Dioka, 'The Evolution of Nigeria's International Boundary 1861-1889' in A Adefuye, B Agiri & J Osuntokun, History of the Peoples of the Lagos State, (Ikeja, Lagos 1987), pp. 216-228.

1863, one month before official cession:

The establishment of our rule at Badagri...cannot be regarded in the light of an annexation, but merely as bringing under our legislation a port belonging to Lagos ⁴

He then explained that although originally a Dahomean settlement, Badagry had actually put itself, during the reign of Ologun Kutere of Lagos at the end of the eighteenth century, under Lagos' protection after Dahomey had threatened to destroy the town. A view which is a little different from that expressed by Freeman himself a year earlier. Then he had claimed that Badagry had been under Lagosian protection since its had establishment as a slave port, presumably meaning therefore since the first half of the eighteenth century. In Ologun Kutere's reign, he continued, this relationship had merely been formalised by the payment of a large sum to Dahomey ⁵.

This explanation of affairs could be termed selective rather than inaccurate.

Badagry did have a long history of political association with Lagos. The Lagosian prince Akinsemoyin's settlement at the Boeko Ward of the town in the mid-eighteenth century was one, whilst it was into Posuko Ward that the temporarily exiled King of Lagos, Adele, was welcomed in the first half of the next century ⁶.

In his local history of the town, Avoseh writes of a period of more formal influence, which he stresses was one of cordial relations which reached its height in the late eighteenth century whereby chiefs of Badagry went to Lagos for installation ⁷. This period of extreme goodwill between the two places was, I have suggested, more realistically a period of subservience for Badagry, after the town's destruction in 1784. But although it would appear Badagry took time to recover from this, and at least two subsequent attacks by Dahomey in the early 1790s, by the Adele period of the 1820s at least a section of the town's society were clearly

⁴ PRO FO84/1201 10 June 1863 Memorandum by Freeman, London.

⁵ PRO CO147/1 9 October 1862 Freeman, Lagos.

⁶ Avoseh, *A Short History of Badagry*, pp. 28 & 33. Also see chapters 5, p. 163 & 6, pp. 177-183.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 33.

in a position to launch raids on their eastern and western neighbours under the direction of the deposed King ⁸.

But as I have demonstrated, Porto-Novo played an equally important part in the town's affairs. Badagry was sought as a haven by political refugees from the east, such as the Mewu in the mid-nineteenth century. These political links, along with commercial cooperation and competition, led to a series of hostilities and alliances between Badagry and Porto-Novo throughout the pre-colonial period. From the port's very establishment Dahomean influence was also crucial. The interior power plagued Badagry with attacks several times during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century saw Badagry increasingly caught between the power politics of Dahomey and the Egba, based at Abeokuta. Indeed, although throughout the middle years of the nineteenth century Dahomean influence was noted at Badagry, it was the Egba influence, encouraged by the Christian missionaries working on the coast, which became increasingly prominent.

Trade on the lagoons obviously linked together the states along its length. As noted, more often than not the states worked not only together in trade, but also in competition with one another. The 1851 blockade of Lagos, for example, allowed a short resurgence of Badagry's Atlantic trade, whilst the establishment of a consul on the island soon after, combined with Badagry's lapse into civil war, reversed the effect. The consular period ultimately saw renewed vigour in the pattern of trade along the lagoon between Lagos and Badagry. But one should not ignore the equally important links to the west with Porto-Novo, both in 'legitimate' articles and slaves. McCoskry noted in 1861 that 'palm oil in considerable quantities is daily arriving at Badagry from Porto Novo' and also that slaves were sent up from both these places to Whydah ⁹. Badagry's position

⁸ See chapter 6, pp. 192-194 & 195-196.

⁹ PRO FO84/1141 27 May 1861 McCoskry, Lagos; PRO FO84/1141 30 May 1861 McCoskry, Lagos.

laid it very much open to influences from both east and west and also from the interior. I would suggest that to highlight a single external political or economic influence over Badagry's history is to misunderstand the nature of both the fluctuating relationships in existence on the West African coast and also the nature of Badagry itself, which due to the fragmented style of its internal structure was susceptible to a multitude of such forces.

One might then argue that regardless of traditional allegiances and loyalties it was the intervention of the British along the coast, from the 1840s onwards that imposed an entirely new layer of authority at Badagry; one which undermined any independence that the town had, and ultimately brought it, along with Lagos, under British control in 1861. Badagry, like many of the towns along the coast had a long tradition of trade with Europe ¹⁰. But it had been from the 1840s onwards that a 'special' relationship with Britain was formed, initially with traders such as the Hutton Company and then, soon after, with missionaries following in the footsteps of groups of Sierra Leone emigrants ¹¹. This wave of British immigration prompted the establishment of the British Sergeant and the raising of the British flag over the town for a short period in 1843-1844. But evidently this was purely a reaction to missionary security fears during the early months of their establishment in the town, rather than an early indication of a colonial interest by the British Government and the sergeant had been removed as quickly as possible, much to the dismay of the missionary residents. It was during this period however, that Badagry became the main focal point of British activity on the coast. Until its reduction in 1851, Lagos, as the centre of slave trading activity and openly hostile to the free movement of immigrants between it and Abeokuta, emerged as the coast's bogeyman. Badagry offered the only secure route for both missionaries and Sierra Leonians to penetrate the interior. But the assault on Lagos by the British and the subsequent imposition of Akitoye

¹⁰ Verger, *Trade Relations...* pp. 183-188. Also see chapter 2.

¹¹ See chapter 7.

on the throne, a king at least professing to be well disposed towards their aims, switched British attention towards the island state, it being better placed for both trading and 'civilising' the interior¹².

Although in effect deserted by both missionary and trader, by 1852/1853, it is the following years that have been used to demonstrate a gradual shift towards complete dominance by the British over Badagry. Indeed historians such as Newbury have seen the reduction of Lagos as a symptom that the seeds of colonialism were sown early on. But I would suggest that a close analysis of events on the coast between 1851 and 1861, and then also during the neglected period 1861 and 1863, provides interesting evidence on whether such an identifiable strategy was developed and if so by whom.

After the separation of consular jurisdiction between the Bights of Benin and Biafra in 1853, the new consular base at Lagos automatically emerged as the focal point in the Bight of Benin. Its reduction had raised expectations of increased security and political order and hopes for using it as a springboard from which finally to destroy the slave trade, expand legitimate trade and spread European ideas of civilisation. Such expectations and disappointment with Badagry led to a general movement of missionaries and traders alike to Lagos throughout the early 1850s. Whilst its centre had been at Fernando Po, the district had been too great to allow any but the most sporadic of contact with the consul. But the new centre at Lagos prompted a closer relationship between the Bight's African states and the British agents. Indeed a level of involvement was established which appeared to fly in the face of the official government policy of non-intervention¹³.

The question of 'colonial policy' in the mid-Victorian era has stimulated

¹² See chapter 9, pp. 333-336.

¹³ See chapter 9, pp. 346-356.

vigorous debate. Earlier interpretations of a distinct anti-expansionist policy during the period followed by a break in the 1880s have been strenuously challenged, most obviously by Gallagher and Robinson, who have stressed a 'fundamental continuity in British expansion throughout the nineteenth century'. This they claim was due to Britain's huge economic growth during the period, which resulted in the need for varying degrees of control over such regions, either of an informal or a more formal kind. They stress that the differences between these types of control 'has not been one of fundamental nature but of degree' and that it was changes in circumstances in the latter part of the period which altered the level of this control, but not the policy itself ¹⁴.

Gallagher and Robinson's views have been challenged and refined on a number of levels. Martin Lynn for example, in the context of West Africa, has questioned their definition of 'informal empire', suggesting that merely the presence and involvement of Britain on the coast during the middle of the nineteenth century was not indicative of empire, formal or otherwise ¹⁵. Furthermore, the Gallagher and Robinson notion of policy being formulated in London, has emphatically been disputed, notably again by Lynn in his analysis of the role of 'Man on the Spot', and also carefully examined by MacIntyre in his detailed analysis of the British policy making process. Most recently Cain and Hopkins in their comprehensive study of British Imperialism have sought to examine events on the periphery in the light of 'the quickening beat of impulses transmitted from the metropole' ¹⁶.

Events in the Bight of Benin in the 1850s and 1860s have been examined in detail by several of these historians, but very much from a Lagosian perspective. I

¹⁴ J Gallagher & R Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade' .

¹⁵ M Lynn 'The Imperialism of Free Trade and the Case of West Africa C.1830-1870' IJCH, 15/1 1986, pp. 22-40.

¹⁶ R Robinson & J Gallagher, A Denny, Africa and the Victorians The Official Mind of Imperialism, (Macmillan, London 1981); Lynn 'Consul and Kings...'; W D MacIntyre, 'Commander Glover and the Colony of Lagos 1861-73' IAH, iv/1 1963, pp. 57-59; W D MacIntyre, The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics; Cain & Hopkins, Innovation and Expansion..., p. 361.

suggest that there is some valuable information to be found in the period 1861-63 when the colony was expanded, which gives further clues to the nature of British intervention in the area. Such an examination reveals that intervention during this period was, to a great extent, shaped by the British agents working on the coast. Whilst British ministerial policy remained officially non-interventionist, it being either unable to curb the actions of its representatives abroad or, as suggested by MacIntyre, great loopholes were left for those representatives to act at their own discretion¹⁷. When Lagos was annexed in August 1861, the Foreign Office and, much more reluctantly, the Colonial Office had resigned themselves to it. However, at that point neither department foresaw any further acquisitions along the coast, although the possibility of occupying Whydah, the port of Dahomey, had been bandied about for years¹⁸. But if one follows the school of thought which claims that the formulation of policy was out of ministerial hands and in those of the British coastal agents, it is interesting to note that British actions were almost wholly determined by the reaction of these individuals to events, and that, for example, it was only in 1862 that the idea of extending the Lagos territory became desirable.

The consular period in the Bight of Benin seems to be characterised by a gradual increase of intervention in affairs along the coast by these British agents. In Lagos, Akitoye, once restored to the throne, proved too weak a monarch to control the diversely populated island of Lagos, as did his successor Dosunmu who took over the throne at his father's death in September 1853. In the light of almost unceasing pressure from the dethroned Kosoko, who sought to regain Lagos, the British consul in reality took over the reigns of authority before 1861. But it would also appear that the consul began to play an increasingly interventionist role further along the coast. The notable example at Badagry was

¹⁷ MacIntyre, 'Commander Glover...', p. 78.

¹⁸ For example, from the early 1840s Governor Maclean at Cape Coast had advocated this measure. See chapter 7, p. 221.

in the early 1850s in the aftermath of the civil war. As it became increasingly clear that the Mewu's assumption of power in the town disrupted trade along the lagoon with his former master at Porto-Novo, he lost the support of both British traders and Consul Campbell. Although ultimately it was not a British force which deposed Mewu, it was Campbell shuttling along the lagoon between Porto-Novo, Badagry and the camps of the deposed Chiefs, who encouraged an attack to be made and the town to be retaken by the original chiefs. The censure of the Foreign Office arrived far too late to affect events.

Badagry was not the only place to come into contact with consular zeal. Robert Smith has argued that British intervention at Epe, resulting in the Treaty of Palma in 1854 which basically gave Kosoko rights over the port of Palma, was not only a step towards pacifying the lagoon, but was also a direct step towards extending British authority further east ¹⁹. Only in hindsight could this treaty be viewed in such a light. The reasoning behind it at the time was to assuage the very real threat of repeated attacks from Kosoko on an island which the British gunboats had had difficulty enough driving him from. Only with the aid of a crystal ball could one have foreseen that eleven years later Kosoko would return to Lagos, bringing the sovereignty of Palma with him.

I have argued that the consular period did not show the gradual emergence of an identifiable policy of interventionism along the coast, but rather that it demonstrated the effect and impact of the personalities at work in the area and that the actions of these figures were almost wholly guided by events as they arose. They were reactive rather than proactive. Although both Consuls Foote and McCoskry saw the annexation of Lagos as desirable, they did not see the new colony extending much beyond the bounds of the island itself. The wider view of the new colony only emerged during 1862 under the Governorship of first

¹⁹ Smith, The Lagos Consulate... pp. 62-65.

Freeman and more significantly Glover, who, although ultimately guided by similar motives to those of Foote and McCoskry, were in turn reacting to a completely new set of circumstances exclusive to the first years of the Lagos colony.

Consul Foote, 1860-1861

At the death of Brand, Henry Foote was appointed as Consul for the Bight of Benin. On taking up the post, his approach to the job did not appear to differ markedly from that of his predecessor. Although clearly showing exasperation with the Badagry chiefs in late 1860, he evidently saw it as his duty to protect British property in the town and no more. On the outbreak of a succession dispute there during the period, Foote ordered Lieutenant Stokes of HMS Brune to mediate, but warned him that action against the town could only be justified as a check 'upon the wholesale plunder of the trading establishments' ²⁰. But by 1861, Foote, although aware of the reluctance of London to involve British men in 'native' disputes, was clearly becoming increasingly willing to pursue a more intrusive policy in order to achieve the conditions conducive to what he saw as British interests along the coast ²¹. The appointment of Thomas Tickel on 1 March 1861 as Vice-Consul for both Badagry and Porto-Novo was clearly an attempt to further the mediatory role of Britain in local affairs. Tickel with his thorough knowledge of the area and its people, was an extremely well respected figure and therefore an excellent choice for the post. But, more impulsive than his predecessors, Foote was prepared to go much further, much faster to achieve his aims, leaving little room for mediation.

Increasing tensions between Porto-Novo and Lagos, largely over trading matters, clearly rankled the Consul. Brief attempts at a peaceful settlement failed and Foote took an openly aggressive stance, culminating in two assaults and the

²⁰ PRO FO84/1141 10 January 1861 Foote to Stokes, Lagos in 8 February 1861 Foote, Lagos.

²¹ PRO FO84/1141 10 January 1861 Foote to Stokes, Lagos in 8 February 1861 Foote, Lagos.

destruction of the town in early 1861, only a month after the appointment of Tickel. Seizing the opportunity of the robbery of a British merchant by the King of Porto-Novo, Foote saw a chance to eradicate the 'slave traders' grip on the town. The eventual submission of Porto-Novo led to the signing of a treaty which went much further than that of 1852. Not only did it bring the British merchants under the authority of the Consul, it also took a step toward recognising a consular right to involvement in Porto-Novo's own affairs, stating that no wars should be entered into without first acquainting that official ²².

How events would have unfolded had Foote remained Consul is pure speculation. But on 17 May 1861 he died, bringing to an end a short period of vigorous and sometimes violent consular activity. Until a replacement could arrive, the seasoned and often controversial British trader William McCoskry took over the reigns. To suggest that the following period, which saw the annexation of Lagos, was a retrogressive period in the history of British influence would seem very strange and it might appear, from the fact that he oversaw the annexation of the island, that Acting Consul McCoskry pursued a similar policy to that of Foote. But I would argue that McCoskry once more changed the focus of British attention away from the expansionist intrusions of Foote. Attempting to consolidate the British trading position at Lagos, he did not foresee the colony extending any further than the island itself. Acting as the merchant he was, McCoskry's main priority was to strengthen trade routes, notably between the Egba capital in the interior and the coast.

Acting Consul McCoskry, 1861

The initial measures McCoskry took on gaining office were against Lagos' western neighbours. In June of 1861 he signed further treaties with Porto-Novo and Badagry as a direct response to specific economic problems. The first with

²² PRO FO84/1141 8 March 1861, Foote, Lagos.

Porto-Novo on June 17 was a reaction to his perception that the promised free trade at the port had not been realised, whilst that with Badagry (undated, although only a few days later) ultimately brought the collection of the town's customs under the control of the Consul. It is these events which Newbury and MacIntyre have pointed to as the effective absorption of Badagry into the state of Lagos, a measure which therefore brought the town under British control in 1861, which was merely formalised in 1863. But I would argue that McCoskry did not see it as an attempt to usurp the authority of the Badagry chiefs, for as he himself explained in his account to the Foreign Office it was purely a pragmatic measure to ease the process of trade at the town. Stating that although it may appear to be

too great an assumption of authority...there is no other means of holding them [the chiefs] to their engagements and obtaining any protection for our merchants²³

By the terms of the treaty, the Badagry chiefs were bound to recognise free trade in the town. In this way they were obliged to punish those found guilty of obstructing commerce, by acts such as theft or arson. Such actions were to be reported to the British Consul at Lagos. British merchants were also allowed to freely employ local labour. Most importantly however, the chiefs agreed to forgo their rights to dictate the prices of, and the duties on, trade goods. Prices were to be set by merchants themselves, whilst duties were to be collected and divided between the Consul and the chiefs²⁴.

The response of the Foreign Office to the Mercantile Treaty accepted McCoskry's interpretation, and with classic understatement referred to it as a treaty to procure 'the removal of certain restrictions to trade arising out of old native customs'²⁵. Okaro K'Ojwang has pointed out however, that the agreement

²³ PRO FO84/1141 2 July 1861 McCoskry, Lagos.

²⁴ See Appendix B.

²⁵ PRO FO84/1141 20 August 1861 Russell, London.

placed Badagry's trade 'firmly in British hands' ²⁶. Potentially this may have been the case, but it would appear from subsequent documentation that, in practice, Badagry's commercial life remained far beyond the control of the British Consul and then Governor of Lagos. In a letter to the Foreign Office on August 5 1861, the day before the Lagos Treaty of Cession, McCoskry outlined the problems which might be faced when attempting to raise revenue in the new colony. He noted that if duties were put too high the town would face great competition from its neighbours, Badagry and Palma, through which goods may be imported and exported to and from the same countries to which Lagos is a seaport' ²⁷. This clearly implies that both Badagry and Palma were commercial rivals to Lagos rather than mere appendages. The notable point about McCoskry's attitude towards these other areas was that his solution to this problem was not to destroy this competition by absorbing the territories, but was to keep the duties at Lagos as low as possible.

If the Acting Consul and later Acting Governor at Lagos did not see Badagry, even commercially, as part of the new colony, how then only two years later did it occur that Badagry was ceded to the British crown along with several other territories? Correspondence from the Colonial Office would seem to suggest that the extension of the colony further than Lagos Island itself was not considered during the 1861-62 period. Indeed the only political groups who did appear to foresee such expansion were the neighbouring African states ²⁸. The 'policy' of expansion would seem to have evolved subsequently among individuals on the coast and was shaped very much by personalities and their reaction to subsequent events. Previous analyses which have attempted to examine these circumstances have pigeon-holed each particular area with a particular motive, MacIntyre, for example states that Badagry, Palma and Leke were claimed in order to raise

²⁶ Okaro K'Ojwang, 'Society, Trade and Politics in Badagri...', p. 91.

²⁷ PRO FO84/1141 5 August 1861 McCoskry, Lagos.

²⁸ PRO FO84/1175 9 June 1862 Freeman to Russell.

further revenue. Thus shortly after the establishment of the colony these towns were included in the Lagos Customs Ordinance ²⁹. Ikorodu on the other hand was granted 'protection' in order to secure the terminus of trade from Ibadan ³⁰. But it would seem more likely that at least the Badagry situation was not the result of a single factor, but that of a number of such factors which each played their part in the annexation.

The most obvious stimulus to British expansion was increasing French activity. The background to the annexation of Lagos has been well documented, for example by Robert Smith. Suffice it to say here then that by August 1861, British agents on the coast had arrived at the view that for economic, humanitarian and security reasons, the annexation of Lagos Island was desirable, a view to which the ministers in London became increasingly resigned ³¹. But Smith, in his examination of events leading up to the annexation, argues that although Britain had numerous reasons for taking formal control of the territory, it was actually increasing rivalry with the French which in effect precipitated the action ³². This opinion is clearly supported by Foote's correspondence with the Foreign Office in early 1861 when French attentions towards Epe, although apparently carried on with the utmost goodwill on both sides, clearly tilted the balance towards establishing British authority over the island of Lagos on a more formal footing. Lagos was annexed on 6 August 1861.

²⁹ MacIntyre, 'Commander Glover...', p. 63; PRO CO147/1 9 July 1862 Freeman reporting that the Provincial Legislative Council of Lagos has passed an Ordinance for the collection of export and import duties 'at all ports within the territory of Lagos' including Leckie [Leke], Palma and Badagry. This now meant that the chiefs were granted a pension in lieu of the duties they had hitherto collected. It is interesting to note that the legality of this Ordinance was questioned by the Colonial Office in various attached memos, but was ultimately accepted.

³⁰ MacIntyre, 'Commander Glover...', p. 63.

³¹ Smith, The Lagos Consulate... pp. 120-124.

³² Ibid, p. 121.

The Lagos Colony, 1861-1863

During the 1861-63 period the factor of possible French encroachment along the coast seemingly became even more pressing as the British came to fear that their European neighbours would react to the annexation of Lagos. In July 1862 Governor Freeman wrote to Newcastle at the Colonial Office that 'France looks with jealousy on the British occupation of Lagos'³³. Meanwhile French antagonism grew after the duties were levied by the British both at Epe and Palma, two places which they argued belonged to independent chiefs, and with whom they had hoped themselves to establish a close relationship.

Indeed the French response to this increase of British jurisdiction was to take Port-Novo under its protection in late February 1863. However, from the correspondence carried to and fro between London and the coast it becomes clear that although the measure was of deep concern to the Colony's first Governor, Henry Stanhope Freeman, it certainly did not provoke hostility towards the French. Indeed both Freeman and Baron Didelot, Commander-in-Chief of the French Naval Division on the West Coast of Africa, quickly came to an amicable arrangement on the matter, agreeing that neither party should interfere in the affairs of the other and that their respective governments should be the ones to decide the bounds of their territories. It would appear that it was only after the French officially extended their territory east as far as Apa in June of that year that British concerns were greatly heightened, leading to a rapid succession of annexations by Acting Lieutenant Governor Glover in the following month, as Ado (June 27), Ipokia (June 29), Okeodan (July 4) were followed by Badagry on July 7.

To suggest that Badagry's annexation was purely a part of this tit-for-tat policy is to present far too simplistic a picture. Firstly, I would suggest that the protectorate

³³ PRO FO84/1175 3 July 1862 Freeman, Lagos.

of Porto-Novo, created four months earlier, had greater repercussions for Badagry than it may first appear; also that the action at Apa merely shaped the timing of its annexation rather than the actual event. This becomes increasingly apparent from reports of correspondence between the French authorities and Thomas Tickel which show that, having asserted their influence at Porto-Novo, the French went on to claim that Badagry was a part of their easternmost territory, a fact obviously disputed by Tickel. In Tickel's reported response to these French claims it is interesting to note that he continually stressed the fact that the British had always dealt with Badagry as an independent territory; he did not mention the claims of, for example, Freeman, during the same period, that Badagry was traditionally part of the Lagos territory, an obvious argument to use if this had indeed been the case.

Only in hindsight would it appear that the British position at Badagry was relatively secure, and that therefore annexation was merely a formality. Indeed within the town there was pressure to ally with the French at Porto-Novo, a pressure which actually culminated in disturbances in 1863. Details of these riots are markedly difficult to gather. But from Acting Lieutenant Governor Glover, who took over from Freeman when on leave, it is clear that although a peace was quickly restored by his arrival with a cruiser, at least three chiefs remained defiant telling him 'plainly...that Badagri did not belong to the English but the King of Porto-Novo'³⁴. The French factor was therefore, one major force in provoking British activity along the coast, but it was not the only one. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the annexation of Porto-Novo was not only a reaction by the French to the now unfavourable trading conditions along the coast but also occurred due to French fears that Britain was already pushing her influence further west during 1862.

³⁴ PRO CO147/4 1 August 1863 Glover to Didelot in 8 August 1863 Glover, Lagos.

MacIntyre has comprehensively analysed the role of Glover on the coast during the early 1860s ³⁵. Building on the more hesitant foundations of Freeman, Glover began to set British sights further westward once more as it became increasingly clear during the course of 1862 that Lagos alone was failing to meet the expectations that had been held in August 1861. It quickly became apparent that, alone, Lagos would not materialise as the centre of trade and civilisation that had been envisaged. This was due to a number of reasons. Firstly it had been Lagos' position on the crossroads between lagoon and sea which had initially attracted British attention to the island, yet in the post-annexation period it became increasingly obvious that, just as Lagos was in a position to dominate the lagoon via its access to the sea, the trade of Lagos was in turn dominated by that lagoon and therefore conditions right along its length. Furthermore, Lagos' trade was affected not only by conditions to the east and west, but also from the interior. 1860 had seen the collapse of the interior into warfare due to the dispute over Ijaye by Abeokuta and Ibadan. As early as April 1860 Brand had complained of their detrimental affect on Lagos' trade ³⁶. The wars continued to rage after Lagos' annexation and, as McCoskry reported in that year, not only was the island's trade suffering, but also other towns along the coast, notably Porto-Novo, Badagry, and Palma, less directly connected with Abeokuta, were doing rather well from supplying arms ³⁷.

The extent to which an individual's personal likes and dislike affected British policy on the coast at this time could be enormous. Glover's suspicion and hostility towards Abeokuta brought a complete about turn in the British approach to the interior. As the Governor shifted support to Ibadan, relations between the Egba and their 'natural port' worsened to the extent that all trade between the two places was blocked in early 1863 and a spiral of increasing

³⁵ MacIntyre, 'Commander Glover...'.
³⁶ PRO FO84/1114 9 April 1860 Brand, Lagos.
³⁷ PRO FO84/1141 4 October 1861 McCoskry, Lagos.

hostility was begun which culminated in the expulsion of all Europeans from Abeokuta in 1867, severely damaging Lagos' position as a commercial centre. Not only did Lagos' legitimate commerce fail to develop as it had been hoped but it also became increasingly clear that without wider control the slave trade would not become extinct, as Whydah merely replaced Lagos as the centre of operations. Indeed in July 1862 Freeman noted that the frequency of slave exports from the Bight had apparently increased rather than decreased over the preceding few years as the demand for slaves revived after 1857 ³⁸.

Finally there was also the factor of security at Lagos itself. Accounts of the annexation process present it almost as a non-event. However, the urgency with which McCoskry asked for the assistance of a force of men in the early days of the colony should not be ignored. Indeed in October 1861, fearing that the wavering Dosunmu was likely to turn to the anti-cession party, he stated that the only basis of their authority was the presence of HMS Prometheus in the area ³⁹. By January 1862 McCoskry was reporting that, although Lagos was now quiet, it still had far too small a show of force, and indeed he implied that, if anything, they had been rather lucky to have avoided an outbreak of violence ⁴⁰. In this way then, an extension of British authority along the coast could be seen as an attempt to stabilize the situation at Lagos by cushioning it from disturbing influences from Porto-Novo and Dahomey, as well as securing further routes into the war-torn interior. But the instability of the British position in the area shows that even by 1862, nothing could be taken for granted.

The preceding reasons for the annexation of Badagry in 1863 are clearly taken from a much wider perspective than from the town itself, and this is in many ways the correct view to take of a town that for much of its history had been

³⁸ PRO FO84/1175 1 July 1862 Freeman, Lagos.

³⁹ PRO FO84/1141 5 October 1861 McCoskry, Lagos.

⁴⁰ PRO FO84/1175 6 January 1862 McCoskry, Lagos.

shaped by influences right along the coast and from the interior. However, there are also a group of reasons, more attributable to local affairs, which made Badagry's annexation desirable.

As Robert Smith commented in relation to Lagos, the argument that internal instability was a key factor in provoking British reaction should not be minimised⁴¹. In the Badagry case, as already demonstrated, British policy had emerged both from the actions of British officials but also from the missionaries and traders who had clearly played a part in both mediating in and also causing local quarrels⁴².

Badagry's history of troubles not only frequently offended sensitive British morals, for example over the trials and executions for witchcraft, but also its continued resistance to missionary efforts, which made the town notorious. In addition, on a number of occasions local unrest threatened to, and did, spill over into violence which endangered not only British lives but also British economic interests. The civil war in the first half of the 1850s, although ultimately settled in 1854 with the restoration of the traditional chiefs, was only the most prominent in a series of internal disputes, often complicated by outside interests, which both preceded and followed it. For example, the dispute of 1860 which led to the burning of the Novelli Factory was followed by a further dispute in September of that year involving parties in Badagry, Porto-Novo and Ajido, whilst December 1860 saw a succession dispute between two rival chiefs⁴³. Although I would argue that the Mercantile Treaty of 1861 did not, in practice, place Badagry's trade 'firmly in British hands', I would suggest that it was both indicative of and a further causal factor in the instability of the Badagry ward

⁴¹ Smith, *The Lagos Consulate...*, p. 31.

⁴² See chapter 9, pp. 329-331.

⁴³ PRO FO84/1114 10 September 1860 Hand, Lagos; FO84/1141 28 December 1860 Badagry Merchants in 8 January 1861 Foote, Lagos.

chiefs. With their authority so intrinsically bound up with trade, any restrictions on their commercial performance must have led to political difficulties.

Unfortunately lack of documentary evidence from within Badagry during this period does not allow for a closer examination of this phenomenon. However, restrictions on the trade with British merchants evidently stimulated these chiefs to look elsewhere for their commercial support and there is evidence to suggest that by 1862 Badagry's slave-trading activities had begun to revive once more.

The correspondent for Badagry in the *African Times* of 23 May that year stated that 'no vessels sales now without a cargo of slaves' ⁴⁴. It would appear then that perhaps, far from being the mere appendage to the Lagos colony that it has been presented, Badagry continued to act as a thorn in the side of the territory throughout the early part of its existence.

But Badagry's commercial performance did not only possess a negative side for British consideration. As already stated, the Ijaye wars raging in the interior had severely damaged Lagos' trade and, although of course Badagry was also affected, the town also had access to more westerly routes. Although one must be careful not to exaggerate the extent and importance of Badagry's trade in the early 1860s it is interesting to note that in January 1863, Freeman was clearly putting the town's economic attractions at the forefront of his reasons for intervention there when he stated:

unless our authority is properly asserted both at Badagry and Palma I cannot prevent the greater part of the trade passing by these places to the detriment of Lagos ⁴⁵.

In this way then it would appear that a further factor encouraging British attentions towards Badagry in the 1861-63 period was the realisation that heavier duties and more control over trade at Lagos would drive trade into the hands of its neighbouring competitors. The fear of driving trade away had first been

⁴⁴ *African Times*, 23 May 1862.

⁴⁵ PRO CO147/3 6 January 1863 Freeman, Lagos.

expressed in 1861 by McCoskry, who had attempted to find a solution in low tariffs at Lagos and then regulated tariffs at Badagry. However, clearly by 1863 this approach had failed to calm fears over Lagos' vulnerable trading position and, under the direction of a more forceful administration, direct actions was taken to bring Badagry to heel.

The annexation of Badagry on 7 July 1863 was then the result of a number of factors. The town's close relationship with Lagos certainly created strong links with the newly founded colony in 1861, but this did not irrevocably set Badagry on the path towards cession itself. It was a series of further factors in the 1861-63 period which ultimately resulted in the town's annexation. The most obvious of these was the increasing competition between British and French interests on the coast which stimulated a series of territorial acquisitions. But the picture was further complicated by, most importantly, Lagos' failure to develop as the commercial centre that had been envisaged, and also by fears for British security in the area. There were also a number of reasons specific to Badagry, such as its economic potential and its internal instability which made its annexation ultimately desirable.

On a wider scale, what makes the story of Badagry's annexation interesting is the subtle course steered throughout by the British agents at work on the coast. The extent to which individuals shaped the outcome, although usually reacting to events as they occurred rather than formulating a definitive 'policy', was immense. The annexation of Badagry can then be viewed as the culmination of a series of themes and threads which have run throughout its history. Firstly it was Badagry's position within the physical environment which allowed it to become not only an important independent economic and political power but also made it so integral a part of the coastal lagoonside system. As a result, various external influences, both African and European, as states and individuals,

sought to control the port. The susceptibility of Badagry to such influences and yet its ability to accommodate them was largely the result of the fragmented and often contradictory nature of the community. The influences underlying its annexation in 1863 were similarly diverse and unpredictable.

Appendix A

Engagement between Her Majesty the Queen of England and the Chiefs of Badagry for the Abolition of the Traffic in slaves, signed at Badagry March, 18th 1852.

James Newburgh Strange, Esquire, Commander of H.M.S Archer, on the part of Her Majesty the Queen of England and the Chiefs of Badagry and of the neighbourhood, on the part of themselves and of their country, have agreed on the following articles and conditions:-

The export of slaves to foreign countries is for ever abolished in the territories of the Chiefs of Badagry, and the Chiefs of Badagry engage to make and proclaim a law prohibiting any of their subjects or any person within their jurisdiction from selling or assisting in the sale of any slave for transportation to a foreign country and the Chiefs of Badagry promise to inflict a severe punishment on any person who shall break this law.

No European or other person whatever shall be permitted to reside within the territory of the Chiefs of Badagry for the purpose of carrying on in any way the traffic in Slaves, and no houses, or stores, or buildings of any kind whatever shall be erected for the purpose of slave trade within the territories of the Chiefs of Badagry, and if any such houses, stores or buildings shall at any time be erected, and the Chiefs of Badagry shall fail or be unable to destroy them they may be destroyed by any British Officer employed for the suppression of slave trade.

If at any time it shall appear that slave trade has been carried on through or from the territory of the Chiefs of Badagry, the slave trade may be put down by Great Britain by force upon territory and British Officers may seize the boats of Badagry found anywhere carrying on the slave trade; and the Chiefs of Badagry will be subject to a severe act of displeasure on the part of the Queen of England.

The Subjects of the Queen of England may always trade freely with the people of Badagry in every article they may wish to buy and sell in all the places and ports and rivers within the territories of the Chiefs of Badagry, and throughout the whole of their dominions; and the Chiefs of Badagry pledge themselves to show no favour and give no privilege to the ships and traders of other countries which they do not show to those of England.

The slaves now held for exportation shall be delivered up to any British Officer duly authorised to receive them; for the purpose of being carried to a British Colony and there liberated; and all the implements of the slave trade, and the barracoons, or buildings exclusively used in the slave trade, shall be forthwith destroyed.

Europeans or other persons now engaged in the slave trade are to be expelled the country: the houses, stores, or buildings hitherto employed as slave factories, if not converted to lawful purposes within three months of the conclusion of this engagement, are to be destroyed.

The Chiefs of Badagry declare that no human beings shall at any time be sacrificed within their territories on account of religious or other ceremonies and that they will prevent the barbarous practice of murdering prisoners captured in war.

Complete protection shall be afforded to missionaries or ministers of the Gospel; of whatever nation or country, following their vocation of spreading the knowledge and doctrines of Christianity, and extending the benefits of civilisation, within the territory of the Chiefs of Badagry. Encouragement shall be given to such missionaries or ministers in the pursuits of industry, in building houses for their residence, and schools and chapels. They shall not be hindered or molested in their endeavours to teach the doctrines of Christianity to all persons willing and desirous to be taught no shall any subject of the Chiefs of Badagry who may embrace the Christian faith be on that account or on account of their teachings or exercise thereof, molested or troubled in any manner

whatsoever. The Chiefs of Badagry further agree to set apart a piece of land, within a convenient distance of the principal towns, to be used as a burial-ground for Christian persons; and the funerals and sepulchres of the dead shall not be disturbed in any way or upon any account.

Power is hereby expressly reserved to the Government of France to become a partner to this Treaty, if it should think fit agreeably with the provisions contained in article 5 of the Convention between Her Majesty and the King of the French for the suppression of the traffic in slaves, signed in London, May 29th 1845.

In faith of which we have hereunto set our hands and seals, at Badagry, this 18th day of March, 1852.

(signed)

J.N. Strange, Commander of H.M.S. Archer

X Mewu

X Alapa

(witnesses)

C A Gollmer, Church Missionary

J. Martin, Wesleyan Missionary

Appendix B

Whereas the legitimate trade of Badagry has hitherto been greatly obstructed by certain native regulations.

William McCoskry, Her Britannic Majesty's Acting Consul, on behalf of British subjects, others under British protection, and all legal traders, subjects of countries in amity with Great Britain and the Chiefs of Badagry, on behalf of themselves and their people.

Art. I. The people of Badagry and others, natives of the neighbouring countries, trading in or to Badagry, shall be allowed to trade freely and directly with the merchants trading at Badagry in their own establishments, and now shall, on that account, be subject to any impost more than when trading one with another.

Art. II. No native nor Chief of Badagry shall control in any way the trading transactions of any merchant by fixing the price at which any article is to be sold, but shall leave that to be settled between the buyer and the seller themselves.

Art. III. The Chiefs of Badagry shall cause their subjects to pay their just debts to traders within reasonable time, and, if not paid within the time fixed, shall cause the property of the person so owing, to be sold to liquidate the debt.

Art. IV. Any person subject to the Chiefs of Badagry that may be convicted of theft, robbery, incendiarism, or any other offence, shall be punished by the Chiefs, and they shall use proper means to bring any person accused of any offence to justice.

Art. V. Traders at Badagry shall be allowed to employ in any legal work any person they may choose, whether native of Badagry or not, and no native nor Chief of Badagry shall obstruct persons so employed, in the performance of their work.

Art. VI. In consideration of the due fulfilment of the forgoing Articles, the traders at Badagry shall pay a duty of 1¹/₂ heads of cowries on every 150 gallons of palm oil, or nut oil, and 2 strings of cowries on every pound of ivory exported from Badagry, the amounts arising from such duty shall be divided quarterly, by Her Britannic Majesty's Consul amongst the Chiefs of Badagry, according to their conduct and capabilities in furthering the interests of commerce and civilisation.

It is clearly understood that the payment of one head per 30 gallons hitherto charged by Badagry people on palm oil coming from Porto Novo, and all other such charges and imposts on produce, cease when this agreement comes in force

(signed) "THOMAS TICKEL, Acting Vice-Consul

his
"LOE x WAUR
mark

his
"AKEO x NH
mark

his
"LUI x GE
mark

his
"PHEO x WH
mark

his
"POSS x U
mark

his
MO x BE
mark

his
AGO x ITOE
mark

his
BALL x A
mark

Witnesses to signatures

" J. E. Moffat
" J. W. Johns
" J. Tickell
" H. Alexander
" W. Roberts

Appendix C

His Excellency John Hawley Glover, Lieutenant Governor, Commander in Chief, and Vice Admiral of Her Britannic Majesty's Settlement of Lagos, and Acting Consul for the Bight of Benin, on the part of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, and the Chiefs of Badagry on the part of themselves and their people have agreed as follows -

Article I. in order for the better keeping of the peace and quiet of all well disposed persons living in Badagry and for the better security of their lives and properties, as also for the purpose of setting aside all pretensions on the part of the King of Porto Novo and others to the right and royalty of the District of Badagry.

We whose names are hereunto subscribed, being Chiefs of Badagry have freely and willingly ceded to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, Her Heirs and Successors for ever, the town of Badagry and all the rights and territories and appurtenances whatsoever thereunto belonging as well as all profits and revenues, absolute dominion and sovereignty of the said town and territory of Badagry freely fully, entirely, and absolutely.

Article II. In consideration of which cession as before herein set forth I John Hawley Glover, Commander in Her Majesty's Royal Navy, Lieutenant Governor, Commander of the Settlement of Lagos aforesaid, and Acting Consul for the Bight of Benin, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain promise that the Chiefs who have hereunto set their hands, shall receive from the first day of the present month of July in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and sixty three, the further yearly sum of two hundred and forty pounds and sixteen shillings (£240.16.0) in addition to the yearly pension of two hundred and fifty nine pounds four shillings (£359.4.0) which they have hitherto received; that is to say, the sum of five hundred pounds (£500.0.0 per annum as long as they shall live or reside peaceably and quietly in Badagry or within the

territories of Her Majesty as good and loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain (that is to say) each Chief shall receive so long as he lives, the sum of sixty two pounds ten shillings (£62.10.0) per annum.

 and we further declare that our right and property in the District of Badagry has always and does extend Westward to the village Witcheree on the sea shore, the half of the town of Quameh, and the Eastern side or shore of the Quameh Creek on the lagoon.

Done at Badagry, under Great Seal of the Settlement of Lagos this Seventh Day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three.

(signed)	John H. Glover Lt. Govr.	Head Chief Akrah his X mark
		Chief Agrolo his X mark
	Chief Posso his X mark	Head Chief Wowo his X mark
	Paucu for Chief Pheortoh his X mark	Chief Bala his X mark
	Chief Mobi his X mark	Chief Jingi his X mark

witnesses

(signed) W. MCoskry
Acting Chief Magistrate

(") B. L Lefroy
Commander R. N

(") Thomas Tickel

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