

COMPETITION AND THE MERCANTILE CULTURE OF THE GOLD COAST
SLAVE TRADE IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD ECONOMY, 1620-1720

By

Angela Sutton

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Approved:

Jane G. Landers, Ph.D.

Richard J. Blackett, M.A.

Catherine A. Molineux, Ph.D.

Steven A. Wernke Ph.D.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Archives

BNA (British National Archives in Kew, England)

NA (*Nationaal Archief*, the Dutch National Archives in The Hague, Netherlands)

GStA (*Geheimen Staatsarchivs Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, the Prussian Privy Archives in Berlin, Germany)

RA (*Riksarchivet*, the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm, Sweden)

KITLV (*Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (KITLV), the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies in Leiden, Netherlands)

GAR (*Gemeentearchief Rotterdam*, the Rotterdam City Archives, Netherlands)

Citations

n. nummer

s. seite

f. folio

Those which lack n., s., or f. are from documents with unnumbered pages

Slave Trading Company Names

RAC: Royal Africa Company, English/British

WIC: Dutch West Indies Company, Netherlands

SAC: Swedish Africa Company, Sweden

DAC: Danish Africa Company, Denmark

BAC: Brandenburg Africa Company, Prussian

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This dissertation investigates the various challenges (Prussian, Danish, and Swedish) to Dutch and English monopoly in the Atlantic slave trade in the lesser studied period of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. I cross-examine the early modern English, Dutch, German, and Swedish records of company slave traders in the Gulf of Guinea in order to create a history of the cultural brokers of Atlantic-World mercantile culture. To do this, I explain how the English and Dutch enmeshed themselves in West African politics, where various peoples such as the Fetu, Efutu, and Ahanta, supported fragmentation of the trade to weaken the various power bases of Europeans in Africa while maintaining as much autonomy as possible in the face of rising empires in West Africa's interior. Refusing to honor Dutch and English insistence of monopoly on the trade, West Africans, and Eguafu encouraged small trading companies (like the Prussian, Danish, and Swedish) as well as independent merchants and pirates to enter the trade and compete with the more powerful Dutch and English, weakening their presence in Africa.¹

My research reveals abounding evidence of African contributions to new world systems. This African-led fragmentation of the trade and the mercantile culture it produced had consequences for the early modern world: it led to the opening of key trading routes for

¹ Monopoly here is a term used to describe the theoretical constructs under which empires operated. Each European empire with Atlantic aspirations decreed monopoly of trade despite the merchants already in place and flouting it. Royal empires and their companies and employees behaved as if the decreed monopolies of the crown existed in actuality, though they never fully did. This was partly because, like many European merchants, non-European trading partners of royal companies in West Africa and the Americas (also in the East Indies and the Pacific, though that ranges beyond the purview of this project) stood to lose much in enforcing the monopolies.

smugglers in Africa and the Americas. This created and reinforced overlapping economies of profit which defied mercantilism and led to the rise of free trade in the early modern world.

In examining Atlantic West Africa in the period of the English, Dutch, Prussian, and Swedish trades, this dissertation begins with the decline of the Portuguese presence in West Africa. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to trade for slaves there. From the 1440s onward, Portuguese traders, usually backed with Italian or German investors, forged commercial relations with various coastal peoples in West Africa. They used the slaves obtained first for plantation labor in Madeira and the Canary Islands, and soon brought Africans across the Atlantic to their American holdings.

Once the Spanish empire demanded African slave labor to supplement the Indigenous labor in the Americas, Portugal furnished Spanish America with African slaves. Demand for slave labor to exploit the wealth of resources in the Americas remained high, and in 1482 the Portuguese began the system of trading out of the coastal factories in Atlantic West Africa with the erection of the slave trading fortress at Elmina.

Until 1600 they held a monopoly on the trade, although interlopers were already moving in on this Portuguese West African system. This triangular trade increased inflation in Europe, and caught the attention of Europe's emerging powers. By the seventeenth century, other big powers (namely the Dutch, English, and French, then later the Prussians, Swedes, and Danes) chipped away at the Iberian monopoly on Atlantic trade. In West Africa, this meant severe competition and drastic changes for the locals who attempted to weaken the European presence in Africa while profiting from the transatlantic slave trade. This dissertation picks up where scholars of the Luso-Atlantic world leave off, examining the changes in Atlantic West Africa and to the transatlantic slave trade between the period when the Portuguese were driven out, and the

more frequently studied and cited height of the transatlantic trade in the mid eighteenth and the nineteenth century.²

This dissertation focuses on the influence West African groups had in the Atlantic slave trade by examining the ways in which they facilitated the competition in West Africa which led to slaves being bought and sold illicitly. Most of the illustrative examples come from the Gold Coast, because that is where the heaviest competition was, and where the richest documents remain. Of all of West Africa, the Gold Coast saw the most European slave trading companies. Fortresses were built near one another, and by the 1660s, there were no fifty mile stretches along the coast without some European trading presence. However, the Gold Coast was part of the area Europeans referred to as Guinea, which was part of the larger area of West Africa, so sometimes examples which are indicative and typical of West Africa or Guinea can illuminate the events and peculiarities of Gold Coast politics, and vice versa. Often what appears local has international scope and ramifications.

² Scholars tend to divide the Atlantic slave trade roughly into the four centuries it has spanned in order to work in more manageable units of time. The first unit, which roughly covers the sixteenth century, features first contact between Europeans and Africans in West Africa, and concerns mainly the Iberian slave trade. Much of the English-language scholarship is recent, such as the works by Ida Altman, David Wheat and Philippa Riberio da Silva listed in the Bibliography. The second unit, which roughly covers the seventeenth century, was the period which saw the transition from Iberian to a more competitive Atlantic system involving all of the major European powers. It is in this time period that the slave trade functioned as a free for all as the volume of trade and expansion in the Americas grew faster than laws regarding trade, and the ability to enforce them. This period is understudied in comparison to the later periods for a variety of reasons, including the perceived smaller volume of the trade, the relative scarcity of documents, and the challenging languages and paleographies in which these documents are written. The third and fourth periods, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively, are those from which the bulk of slave trade history is founded.



Figure 1.1 Map of Guinea from 1680

This map illustrates the volume and density of European slave trading company competition on the 17th century Gold Coast. Many European trading fortresses were so close together that they were in plain view of one another.

Source: "A Draught of the Coast of AFRICA from the Straights Mouth to Cape Bona Esprance," (London: 1680) from the Harvard Pusey Map Library, from *Afriterrra Maps Catalogue*, available online at <http://catalog.afriterra.org/viewMap.cmd?number=1212>, (accessed January 12, 2014).

A Note about the Archives and Sources

Chronologically, the order of these smaller slave trading companies' presence on the Gold Coast goes Swedish (1650), Danish (1663), and then Prussian (1682). The availability of the business documents of these smaller companies is less reliable. The larger Dutch and English slave trading companies kept meticulous records and were accountable to a wide variety of shareholders, which meant that they could afford scribes, and sent several copies to various locations in Europe. It also meant that they could afford centralized places, mostly in London and Amsterdam, in which to store the copies of this correspondence, as well as ledger books, accounts, contracts, and various miscellaneous documentation. The smaller companies did not operate in the same ways.

The Swedish, Danish, and Prussian companies were set up by wealthy individuals who, despite their immense merchants' wealth, did not have the means to centralize in the way the WIC and RAC did. What is left of the Swedish African Company papers are documents which have found their way to Stockholm via a wide variety of channels, both public and private. Because of this, working from the Swedish sources is more problematic. There exist many documents which were written between and among people in Europe, but relatively few documents from or to Africa. In addition to this, only one scholar has done an extensive study of the Swedish company, and as it is not available in English, it has not entered mainstream scholarship. The thrust of this work discusses the ways in which the company was a feudal company and how it fit into the Swedish Economy, and does not reveal much about the slave trade. This is largely due to the nature of the available documents.³

³ See György Nováky, *Handelskompanier och Kompanihandel: Svenska Afrikakompaniet 1649-1663, En studie i feodal handel* (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & International, 1990)

The Danish Company, which took over the poorly-defended Swedish fortresses, kept better records, and also has a larger base of native Danish and Danish-Caribbean scholars who work in this topic. The Danish Company's records are better preserved because the Danes had a larger and longer presence in the West Indies where the bulk of their slaves were sent, which allowed for many correspondences with the Danish Company to be preserved. Due to time and linguistic constraints, this dissertation depends upon secondary work by Danish scholars to fill in the Danish evidence of the ways in which Africans helped to fragment and shape the slave trade, and resist European attempts at mercantilism in Africa. This dissertation will not repeat information that can be easily found elsewhere.⁴

The analysis of Prussian Brandenburg sources, however, reveals much about the workings and consequences of Gold Coast competition. Adam Jones has published a large amount of the sources, and has translated many of them in the course of his career.⁵ Due to Germany's post WWII history, the documents concerning the Prussian slave trade have been

⁴ See Erik Gøbel, *Det danske slavehandelsforbud 1792 : studier og kilder til forhistorien, forordningen og følgerne*, (Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2008); Sandra E. Greene, "Slaves, Danes and African Coast Society: The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast by Per O. Hernaes," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 29 2 (1996): 433-435; Thorkild Hansen, *Coast of Slaves* (Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006); Arnold R. Highfield, *The Danish West Indian Slave Trade: Virgin Islands Perspectives* (St. Thomas: Virgin Islands Humanities Council, 1994); Pernille Ipsen, "Entangled Worlds: Ga-Danish Families in the Atlantic Slave Trade" (2013). Available online SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2252428>, accessed October 2013, Johan Kloster, *Tekster til udstillingen Med slaver, elfenben og guld. Slaveskibet Fredensborgs sidste rejse. Vist på det danske handels- og* (Kronborg: Søfartsmuseum på Kronborg i, 1997); Leif Svalensen, *The Slave Ship Fredensborg: And the 18th Century Danish-Norwegian Slave Trade* (Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2000); C. Ulberti, "Den Danske Slavenhandels Historie," *Historisk Tidsskrift*, Bind 2. Række, 3 (1850); Joseph Wulff, *A Danish Jew in West Africa. Biography and Letters 1836 – 1842*, trans. Selena Axelrod Winsnes. (Trondheim: 2004).

⁵ See Adam Jones, *West Africa in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: An Anonymous Dutch Manuscript* (Atlanta: African Studies Association Press, 1995); Adam Jones, *Raw, Medium, Well Done: A Critical Review of Editorial and Quasi-Editorial Work on pre-1885 European Sources for Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960-1986*, (Madison: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987); Adam Jones, *German Sources for West African History, 1599-1669*, (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1983); Adam Jones, *Africa in Leipzig: A City looks at a Continent, 1730-1950* (Leipzig: Institut fuer Afrikanistik, Universitaet Leipzig, 2000); Adam Jones, "Double Dutch? A Survey of Seventeenth-century German Sources for West African History," *History in Africa* 9 (1982): 141-153; Adam Jones, "Drink Deep, or Taste Not: Thoughts on the Use of Early European Records in the Study of African Material Culture," *History in Africa* 21 (1994): 349-370; and Adam Jones, *Brandenburg Sources for West African History, 1680-1700* (Studien zur Kulturkunde), (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1985).

moved to several different locations, and renumbered several times in the past few decades, making it difficult to cross-reference Jones' documents with those available in the Prussian Privy Archives in Berlin today.⁶ Therefore, in some places I have used Jones' translations, and at other times, I have used the German and Dutch-language documents from the archive in Berlin.

The BAC operated mainly out of three home-base forts: Fort Dorothea and Fort Gross Friedrichsburg on the Gold Coast near Cape Three Points (or Tres Puntas) in the Gulf of Guinea, and also the fort at Arguin in the Muslim island off the coast of what is now Mauritania. Surviving records from workers of these three forts paint vivid pictures of the ways in which the economic processes of enslavement necessitated and bred cross-cultural exchanges. They also offer some of the most startling and original insights into Dutch and Prussian ethnography of various West African peoples. The diversity of economic situations and environments surrounding the slave trade at these forts at this particular time (1683-1721) shaped the smaller companies' business models into ones which necessitated a closer and more educated relationship with the various West African peoples surrounding their forts. I do not suggest that the smaller companies were more educated than any other European powers about the cultures of the West Africans with whom they traded and treated; only that the emphasis the traders of these smaller companies placed in their documents on West African customs and cultures shows an intent on their behalf to profit from an intentional, nuanced, and often forced cultural exchange.

The documents of the RAC, WIC, BAC and SAK are business papers of slaving companies, but are tremendously rich in culture because business on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century was contingent on cultural understanding. While the evidentiary record is

⁶ "Geschichte und Gegenwart," Das Geheime Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, accessed May 2012, http://www.GStA.spk-berlin.de/geschichte_und_gegenwart_431.html.

fragmented and full of misinformation and silences, it is some of the most complete evidence of this time period in existence and is relatively rich.

In addition to company documents, I have made use of several published document collections and contemporary travel narratives. Reading these documents in tandem with those written by company employees has helped to enrich viewpoints and corroborate claims. Archaeological evidence further compensates for the weaknesses in the documentary source base, and I have interpreted both together where doing so brings to light new conclusions.

Terminology

Many of the terms used in this dissertation, terms such as pirate, Lorrendrayer, interloper, smuggler, privateer, and independent merchant are intertwined and overlapping. This is because these words describe people performing actions, rather than identities. The people involved in the slave trade each had layers of motivations. The majority of the time spent trading in slaves was on the Atlantic Ocean itself, and each nation's claims to sovereignty beyond its own borders often overlapped with those of others.⁷ Those persons who spent most of their lives on the Atlantic or in the port communities which focused outward rather than inward, developed their own strategies of survival and profiteering where national laws were sporadically enforced. This meant that often, people took on fluid identities in every sense of the term.

This fluidity was most visible in terms of culture: Atlantic creoles and other people of the Atlantic had more elements of culture in common with and identified more with others of this Atlantic network than with the peoples and countries from which they originated. The individuals who were not employed by a royal slave trading company, yet who worked in the

⁷ For discussion of this concept and how it worked both in theory and practice see Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

trade of slaves, were default monopoly-breakers in the eyes of these companies.⁸ This is despite this individual trade often preceding the creation of these companies. In these company records, these independent merchants who often resorted to a wide variety of tactic to obtain slaves or prey on the slave trade, were given the monikers of pirate, interloper, Lorrendrayer, privateer, and smuggler. These epithets come directly from the primary source material.

The people on whom the royal slave trading companies bestowed these labels were perhaps the most Atlantic people of all. More often than not, they entered or preyed upon the slave trade without the protection of a nation's sovereignty or navy. As discussed in chapter one, when they did have such protection, they were considered privateers. But no privateer could make a living solely on privateering, and few would have voluntarily turned down opportunities for profit on the basis of the authority of a mere letter of marque.

When such actors were not privateering, their actions were classed as piracy, or interloping, or smuggling, or Lorrendravery, depending on what they did, and to whom they did it. This group of people knew that the five most powerful emerging imperial nations (Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France, and England) laid claims of various types to most of the land in and around the Atlantic. They were also in frequent contact with one another, and aware that despite the edicts these nations laid down about their ownership of these Atlantic ports and coasts, the empires were over-extended and continually weakened through their contestations with one another. While emerging imperial forces attempted to create monopolies on trade with Africa or with their American colonies, these monopolies were monopolies in name only.

Conducting economic activity which defied the mercantilist policies of early modern European nation was not without problems, but it was more beneficial than it was risky. While not all such monopoly-breakers became wealthy, they often had more control over their lives and

⁸ See discussion on slave trade monopoly and monopoly-breaking in the historiography section of this introduction.

more freedom than they would have, for example, as indentured servants, seamen in the various European navies, or sailors onboard merchant fleets. As Marcus Rediker points out, the opening of the Atlantic World created many opportunities for poor sailors and merchants seeking economic advantages who earned the name of pirate, as well as all the other derogatory royal slave trading company terms, as they eked out a living.⁹

This dissertation also makes use of the term "Illicit inter-American economy," although this term is Eurocentric. In the eyes of Europe, any inter-American economic activity which went beyond the confines of an empire was illicit by its very existence. So Spanish-American colonies were authorized to trade with one another, but not with citizens of the colonies of other empires. Therefore, the illicit inter-American economy, as well as the black market of the Americas refers to all unlicensed economic activity that went beyond the confines of one's empire in the Americas.

Historiography

This project builds upon the discoveries and insights of a wide variety of scholars and brings together several historiographies, many of which have very little previous dialogue. This dissertation combines the historiographies of the slave trades of several nations, competition among emerging European superpowers in the Atlantic world, as well as Atlantic West African history, the archaeology of African contact with Europeans in the pre-colonial era, the colonization of the Dutch, English, Danish, and Prussian Americas, Caribbean history, Atlantic smuggling, the historiography of piracy in the Atlantic World, mercantile history, the

⁹ Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 24-25.

archaeology of illicit objects, and the conversations surrounding the formation of the early modern economy.

The History of the Anglo-Dutch Rivalry

With the Americas a hotly contested zone, West Africa with its seemingly endless supply of slave labor was next on the list of strategic areas to help determine who would gain control of the seas.¹⁰ As in the East Indies, the British and Dutch companies evolved alongside one another, each competing for global dominance, and each utterly unprepared for the situations into which natives in West Africa, and the Gold Coast in particular, would enmesh them.¹¹

Most scholarship on the Dutch slave trade on this matter is recent. L.C. Vrijman and W. S. Unger created the first works on this trade, upon which Albert van Dantzig's book elaborated.¹² These books allowed English-speaking scholars, such as Philip Curtin, to include statistics of the Dutch slave trade in their works.¹³ In the late 1960s, Dutch scholars took up the field in earnest, and since then, many important works on the subject have emerged by scholars like Johannes Postma, P.C. Emmer, Cornelis Goslinga, and Wim Klooster.¹⁴ These scholars have

¹⁰ It is important to note that the French competed with the Dutch and English for slaves in West Africa as well. The French, however, did not establish a viable company. The Compagnie des Indes Occidentales was founded in 1664, but failed to turn a profit, and in consequence the French government allowed private merchants to participate in the slave trade. By 1672, the French company was dissolved and new companies sprung up, none successful save for the Compagnie du Senegal, which captured Dutch forts in the Senegambia region in the 1670s. See Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2008).

¹¹ See Douglas Irwin, "Mercantilism as a Strategic Trade Policy: The Anglo-Dutch Rivalry for the East India Trade," *The Journal of Political Economy* 99 (1991): 1296-1314.

¹² W.S. Unger, "Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse slavenhandel, 2. De slavenhandel der Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie, 1732-1808," *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek* 28 (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1958-60) 2-148; L.C. Vrijman, *Slavenhalers en slavenhandel* (Amsterdam: Van Kampen, 1937); and Albert van Dantzig, *Het Nederlandse aandeel in de slavenhandel* (Bussum: Van Dischoeck, 1968).

¹³ Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

¹⁴ See Johannes Menne Postma. *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Johannes M. Postma and Victor Enthoven, eds. *Riches From Atlantic Commerce: Dutch*

uncovered the fundamentals of the Dutch trade and placed it into Atlantic context, and their works in turn have spurred a generation of scholars who have used these works with a reexamination of the archival material in order to piece together the histories of people in the parts of Africa and the Caribbean about which the Dutch slave traders kept records. This dissertation builds upon their earlier work by examining the records of several different European slave trading companies. I am able to show the history of the Africans who largely did not generate records of their own. In reading these documents together with African archaeology and economic context, important contributions by West Africans toward the early modern economy can be uncovered. This chapter examines the African groups which exacerbated Dutch and English rivalry on the Gold Coast, in order to understand how European-African interactions created a mercantile culture that invited free trade and attracted smaller trading companies such as those of the Prussian and Swedish.

Once Britain's attempts to break the Iberian monopolies through privateering failed, the English Crown tried to create trading monopolies of its own in order to legitimize their presence and trade in West Africa. After several unsuccessful attempts at starting exclusive royal slave trading companies, the British, using their East India Company as an example, created the Royal Africa Company in order to challenge its European competitors on the Gold Coast. As the Dutch used the formerly Portuguese Elmina for the prime base of operations from 1637 onward, the British set up Cape Coast Castle eleven kilometers to the east with its 1672 charter. This charter claimed that the RAC had the right to establish exclusive British monopoly of West African

Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); P.C. Emmer, 'De Slavenhandel van en naar Nieuw Nederland,' *Economisch en Sociaal-Historisch Jaarboek* 35 (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1972); P.C. Emmer 'The History of the Dutch Slave Trade: A Bibliographical Survey,' *Journal of Economic History* 32 (1972): 728-47; P.C. Emmer, *De Nederlandse Slavenhandel, 1500-1850* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2000); Cornelis G. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580-1680* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971); Cornelis G. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985), and Wim W. Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795*, (Leiden: Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, 1995).

trade, forbidding all British subjects to visit, frequent, trade or adventure to traffic into or from the said Regions without license from the RAC.¹⁵ This effectively rendered all previous involvement by independent British merchants in West Africa illegal in the eyes of their king. These previous merchants who traded without the company either gave up the trade in favor for legal markets, traded under the protection of different trading companies, such as the Dutch, or found ways to continue to operate their business as smugglers.

The early modern period was a time of extreme flux, and it makes sense to study people by the connections they made. While institutional histories have been written using the various documents of the different royal European slave trading companies, I use the same documents to do a cultural study. The histories of individual slave traders, Europeans, Africans, and mixed-race, are just as crucial as those of these corporations were to our understanding of the development of the early modern world and its manifold processes.

Unfortunately, not much research has been done about the Brandenburg Africa Company or the Prussians in West Africa, therefore there isn't much historiography. What is known about the BAC and their holdings in Guinea comes almost exclusively from histories of the main slave trading companies, the RAC and the WIC, who often conflicted with the BAC. Some information comes from Archaeologists who have excavated parts of forts where the BAC used to operate, and other information can be found from historical anthropologists who attempt to trace the cultural practices and languages of the peoples with whom the BAC traded back through time. These areas of scholarship together with the documentation of the BAC are the most reliable sources available for Prussian West African history.

¹⁵ "Charter of King Charles II establishing the RAC," in Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, vol 1* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute, 1930), 177-192.

History of the Swedish, Danish, and Prussian Companies

The Swedish, Danish, and Brandenburg African Companies have a similar history. The genesis of them lies with Dutch men excluded from the WIC trade, who approached smaller European monarchs with a business proposition. In the case of the Swedish Company (founded 1649), Louis de Geer, a merchant from a province locked out of the slave trade by the majority rule of WIC shareholders, approached the King of Sweden about starting a Swedish royal slave trading company to rival that of the WIC. de Geer offered to supply all of the employees (most poached from, or dismissed from the WIC) and most of the finances in exchange for the Swedish Crown's royal protection. de Geer gambled that in the early modern world, the decree from a monarch would legitimate his presence in Africa, and keep his slave ships safe from the Dutch and English companies who had orders to apprehend any "illegitimate" ship attempting to trade with West Africa.

The BAC had a similar history. Its founder, Benjamin Raule, a Dutch Huguenot, approached the Kurfurst, or Elector Friedrich of Prussia to obtain the status of a legitimate slave trading company equal to that of the WIC or any other crown-sanctioned company. He did this in 1682, shortly after the Brandenburg-Swedish war of 1674–1678 in which he took part as a privateer. The Danish Africa Company was founded in 1659 by German Hendrik Carloff (who also worked for the Swedish company, and the West Indies Company before that both in Dutch Brazil and in Africa) and two Dutchmen, Isaac Coymans and Nicolaes Pancras.

Although these smaller companies were short-lived their documents give insight into the formative years of European and West African cross-cultural exchange at such a relatively early, yet complex period of the slave trade. Chapters three and four will go into this further. By the time the Prussians broke into the market, the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English, French,

Swedish and Danish had already set up strongholds. The Prussians had to navigate not only the West African economic scene, but also the fractious European politics while they attempted to maintain their tenuous foothold on the West African Coast.

Monopoly and Mercantilism

Any discussion of the Atlantic slave trade requires a discussion of mercantilism, the economic doctrine which imperial governments used to justify self-imposed monopolies on the trade of their colonies and other overseas holdings. This doctrine dominated Western European economic policy in the early modern Atlantic world, though economic realities and created a divide between mercantilism in theory and in practice. Under this doctrine, colonies were forbidden to trade with other nations (aside from systems like Spain's *asiento*, which allowed such trade under strict supervision), and forced to pay subsidies and tariffs for goods while providing the metropolises with raw materials. Mercantilism, and the circumvention thereof, fueled European expansion and imperialism. Smuggling became a natural way for colonists as well as European merchants to amass private wealth or otherwise meeting their economic needs by undercutting empires.

The English were the most well-known for their vociferous defense of mercantile policy, likely because their insistence on monopoly provided a legal system in which the English crown could attack private British traders who attempted to hone in on the crown's wealth.¹⁶ Many of the essays and treatises on this subject at the time came out of England. The Dutch, who generally have the reputation of being champions of free trade however also embraced mercantilism through the WIC: they remained insistent upon monopoly even as they infringed

¹⁶ Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1972), 231-32.

upon that of others.¹⁷ Anglo-Dutch competition became fierce as each state attempted to secure its own economic power base through infringing on that of the other. Much of this infringing occurred in the Atlantic world, particularly in the Americas and in West Africa.¹⁸ All European imperial participants jealously guarded their monopolies in the African slave trade, and intense competition gave rise to illicit inter-American commerce.

The Royal slave trading companies such as the RAC and WIC had a difficult enough time attempting to enforce monopoly onto West Africans or peoples in the Americas without their own company employees openly flouting the monopolies of mercantilism. This fear of royal slave-trading company employees and officials working with or alongside pirates, or profiting from illicit elements of the trade is one that is frequently expressed in the documents of the WIC, RAC, and later even the Brandenburg Africa Company, which would not enter the trade until the 1660s. Officials of these trading companies expressed constant infuriation that no matter which route they chose for their ships, and no matter how secret they kept the missives, there always seemed to be an obstacle in getting slaves from West Africa to their intended destinations in the Americas.

Historian of the WIC, Michiel vanGroesen, agrees. He analyzes how officers of the WIC communicated their memories of Dutch Brazil and maintained their networks after their return to Europe. The company workers were connected to one another (and their colleagues of the East Indies Company in the Indian Ocean) for the goal of individual/mutual profit, rather than the best

¹⁷ Henk Den Heijer, "The Dutch West India Company," in *Riches From Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Shipping, 1585-1817*, edited by Johannes Postma et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 85.

¹⁸See David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

interests of the royal companies.¹⁹ Smuggling and illicit trading amongst themselves while contracted to do company business would not ever be prevented. Jaap Jacobs cites an ordinance of 1638 which “stated rather exaggeratedly that illicit cargo took up as much room in the holds of the WIC ships that hardly any room was left for legal goods.”²⁰

While proponents of the system of royal monopolies via trading companies wanted to exclude all other traders, many independent merchants argued that their competition would not harm company business, but would encourage greater numbers of slaves being exported from Africa to plantations in the Americas, which would stimulate growth and business for all slave traders.²¹ These voices were silenced in the seventeenth century, yet slowly gained credence in the eighteenth once it became clear that mercantilism could not work in practice because demand for new slaves always outstripped supply.

The royal slave trading employees who financed, tolerated, or participated in monopoly-flouting found that the systems of colonialism and mercantilism provided the perfect market in which slave trade piracy, privateering, and individual entrepreneurship flourished. Mercantilism led to paradoxical situations in the Americas where colonial societies could only grow through the benefits of piracy. It created governors and other officials who felt they had to operate against the best interests of the metropole and the royal slave trading companies in order to maintain their power base and networks in the Americas. The royal slave trading companies of the metropolises fed this contraband market by promoting privateering against ever-changing enemies, and then failing to provide jobs for these privateers once their use was outlived.

¹⁹ Michiel vanGroesen, “Officers of the West India Company, their Networks, and their Personal Memories of Dutch Brazil, in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 39-58.

²⁰ Jaap Jacobs. *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2009), 112.

²¹ Joshua Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great-Britain Considered* (London: S. Buckley, 1729).

Metropolises were then unable to stop the former career privateers from continuing their raids on ships

Methods

Language barriers have resulted in the underuse of the records of the royal slave trading companies in analyzing the intersections of culture and economy in West Africa. The nature of this project requires skills in reading the paleography of four languages from the seventeenth century. A combined analysis of the English, Dutch, German, and Swedish-language sources allow for interpretation of the contents in new ways. Analysis of how they were generated and how they came to be preserved, as well as cross-examining several different company's reports and interpretations of conflicts allows me to move toward social/cultural history of non-European contributions to the Atlantic system and the important consequences of those contributions.²²

History written about this time necessitates a solid historic context, and reading against the grain. Edna Bay's *Wives of the Leopard* provides many good examples of how to read documents for the missing African voice. She notes "students of sketching are urged to record the shape of an object, not by trying to outline it but by observing and drawing the shape of the

²² Scholars have divided the history of the Gold Coast largely by the languages of the document base. This means that there exist many books on the British slave trade, or on the Dutch West India Company trade, or even the trade of the Prussian Brandenburg Africa Company. These approaches by necessity give too much weight to each individual European group of slave traders. As there aren't many documents by Africans from this time period, reading the documents of several European slave trading companies together allows for the prominence of Africans in a way a single study based on a European nation's trade cannot. The documents of European slave traders about one another all share one commonality: Africans. The interactions between each of the Europeans and Africans give the most succinct idea of what occurred on the Gold Coast, and how Africans orchestrated this. Reading these documents together for accounts about African influence on the trade allows this dissertation to be a study of the African Atlantic world, and offers one way of circumventing the lack of documents by African actors.

space that surrounds it,²³ and this is the strategy I employ in this dissertation, as well. In reading the German, Swedish, and Dutch language documents (for all three were used in the BAC and SAK documents, as many of the BAC and SAK's workers came from the Low Countries) together with works on economy, archaeology, geography, and early European and African history, I weigh all available evidence before discarding that which doesn't fit or make sense in light of the other. To do this, I make frequent use of the Archaeological record, as this archaeology displays materiality and consumption, some of the best indicators of trade. Not only does it fill the silences in the documents, but a materials-based approach to smuggling and piracy can often prove directions of illicit trade that the writers of the documents could only hint at or surmise.

Contributions

The largest contribution of this dissertation lies in the way it connects conditions and situations in West Africa to economic activity in the Americas using a comparably wide range of primary sources. This dissertation is the first to examine the smaller European slave trading companies like the SAC and BAC alongside their larger more established competitors. Folding the smaller companies into the larger history in this way sheds more light on not only the smaller companies, but the Africans with which they treated and traded, as well as the effects of these companies' economic actions on the Atlantic World.

This dissertation also make a contribution to the historiography of the slave trade and slavery in Spanish-Atlantic world. Most evidence on the supply end of the slave trade shows that the majority of slaves illicitly bought in the Caribbean went to the Spanish colonies. The

²³ Edna Bay, *Wives of the Leopard, Gender Politics and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 28.

registered number of legitimate slave imports into various areas of the Americas drops off dramatically after the 1630s. Particularly in Spanish America, the time period between 1640 and 1780 shows less than half of the imports of the previous century, from 1525 to 1639.²⁴

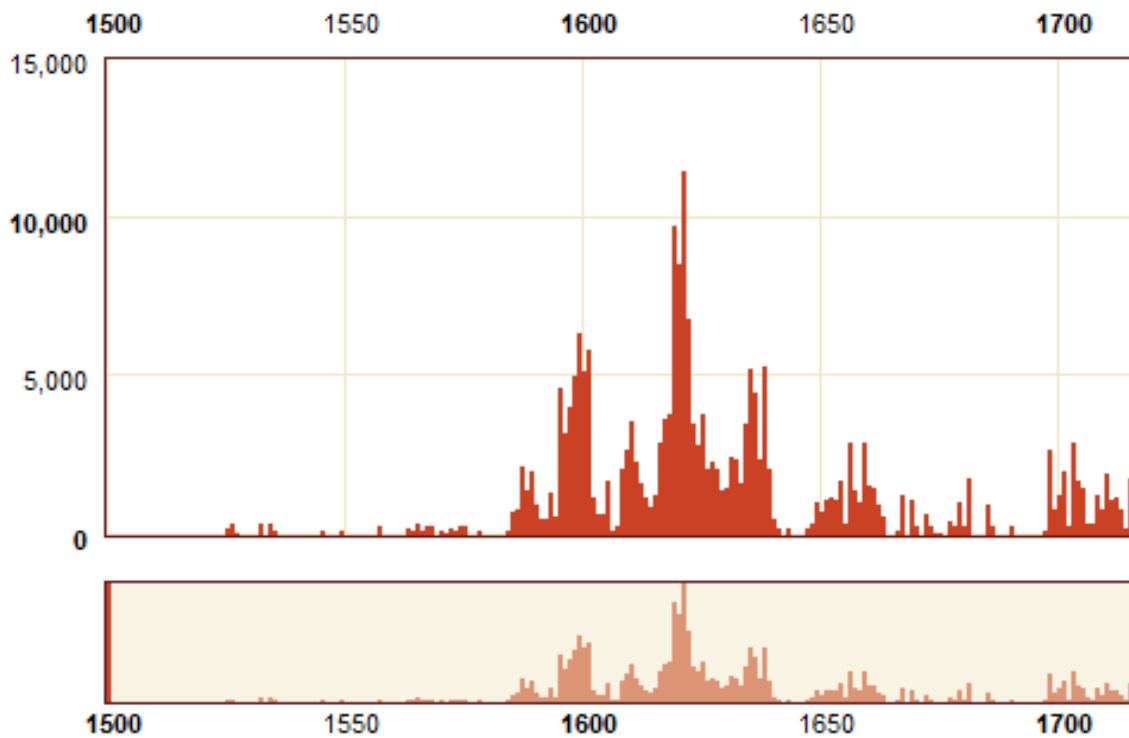


Figure 1.2 Total Number of Slaves Imported to the Spanish Americas, 1500-1720
The number of slaves imported to the Spanish Americas decreases dramatically by 1640, while the population of newly-arrived Africans there increased consistently. (Source: TSTD, available online at <http://slavevoyages.org> (accessed March 2, 2014))

²⁴ See the Slave Voyages database for these statistics, and thank you to David Wheat of Michigan State University for sharing his search results which sparked this connection between our research. David Eltis et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, accessed February 22, 2014, available online <http://www.slavevoyages.org>.

Despite this, the African populations of Spanish America increased dramatically, as did the output of Spanish American raw materials which were produced on plantations or in mines with African slave labor. Historians like David Eltis and David Wheat postulate that the populations of African-descendants are not enough to account for this decrease in imports. Instead, the decrease indicates colonial Spanish American colonists' reliance on the emerging inter-American market for their supply of slaves. The research of this dissertation confirms this theory by examining how mercantile cultures in West Africa on the supply end of the slave trade fed into a largely illicit inter-American economy, which augmented and reinforced the informal economy of the slave trade in the Americas. It argues that Company records of Gold Coast exports reveal that the Spanish Americas increasingly relied on black market slaves supplied by companies shipping through entrepôts like St. Thomas and Curaçao, or through independent merchants arranging the voyages themselves without company affiliation.

Other contributions include demonstrating one further way slavery and capitalism are connected, and also a collection of evidence for slave trade piracy, a phenomenon that was considered inconsequential at best, and absent at worst, by historians of pirates in the Atlantic world.²⁵

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, this dissertation re-integrates the contributions of West Africans to the formation of the early modern economy. Through interactions with European slave traders, the actions of Africans led to increasing numbers of slaves which were illicitly obtained in West Africa. These slaves could then not be sold legally in most American

²⁵ See Arne Bialuschewski, "Black People Under the Black Flag: Piracy and the Slave Trade on the West Coast of Africa, 1718-1723," *Slavery & Abolition* 29 (2008), 461-475; and Markus Rediker, who wrote that prizes of slaves were "out of the question" for pirates, as "they simply had no way to sell them and hence no use for them." in Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates of the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 34, 184.

colonies, and so fed into the supply of the illicit inter-American economy which facilitated the emergence of early modern capitalism.

CHAPTER I

DUTCH ENTRY TO THE ATLANTIC WORLD AND SLAVE TRADE

The first Europeans in West Africa

The Portuguese were the first Europeans in Africa. Their naval experience in the Mediterranean, and trade with the Maghreb, alongside their location on the periphery of Europe and looking out toward the Atlantic put them into the prime position for sea exploration. After expelling the North African Muslims from their country in the late 14th century during the *Reconquista*, the Portuguese expanded into the Atlantic.²⁶ They first settled on the Atlantic islands of Madeira, the Azores, Cape Verdes, São Tomé and the Canary Islands. Through this process, they learned how to establish plantations, and were able to develop their colonizing experience starting in the 1420s. They followed the model of the Genoese and Venetian merchants of Italy who had developed their vast wealth through colonial trade with islands of the Mediterranean and the land surrounding the Black Sea. Other European traders, such as the Dutch, purchased these new colonial products and invested in these Portuguese ventures, all the while learning from their mistakes and their successes.²⁷

By 1491, the Portuguese had reached the kingdom of Kongo in West Central Africa where they initiated cultural and commercial exchanges. Kongo leaders initially sold the Portuguese their criminals, exiles, and other undesirables, but by 1526, the Kongolesé king

²⁶ Malyn Newitt, *Portugal in European and World History*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2009)

²⁷ David Birmingham, *Trade and Empire in the Atlantic, 1400-1600*, (London: Routledge, 2000) 5.

Alfonso wrote a series of letters to condemn the Portuguese slavers.²⁸ In these letters to the Portuguese King, he accused the Europeans of raiding free Africans at night and illegally purchasing free people as slaves, and then branding them before their status could be verified.²⁹ He then founded a court to control the Portuguese slave trade in Kongo.

Using the contacts they had made and the experience they had gained in Kongo, the Portuguese sailed to other locations in Western Africa, and made agreements with locals to build fortresses and buy gold and slaves. The Gold Coast was named for the alluvial gold dust which washed down the rivers and streams to the sea, which was the initial draw for European traders.³⁰ They established their fortress on the Gold Coast, São Jorge da Mina, or Elmina ("the mine"), in 1482 to extract gold.³¹

When the Portuguese arrived with building materials for the fortress, they were received by King Caramansa, whose hair and beard were covered in gold beads.³² From a stylistic account by the royal chronicler Rui de Pina intended to show off Portuguese skill and legitimacy in dealings with African allies, it becomes apparent that Europeans began their presence on the Gold coast in a position of vulnerability.³³ For example, de Pina described an incident during the

²⁸ Wyatt MacGaffey, "Dialogues of the Deaf: Europeans on the Atlantic Coast of Africa," in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 249-267.

²⁹ John Thornton, "African Political Ethics and the Slave Trade," in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic*, ed. Derek R. Peterson, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 38-62.

³⁰ Michel R. Doortmont and Jinna Smit, *An Annotated Guide to the Dutch Archives Relating to Ghana and West Africa in the Nationaal Archief, 1593-1960s*. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 289.

³¹ David Birmingham, *Trade and Empire in the Atlantic, 1400-1600* (London: Routledge, 2000), 33-34.

³² Rui de Pina, "Crónica de El-Rey D. João II," ed. Albert Martins de Carvalho, trans. Malyn Newitt in "The Foundation of the Castle and City of São Jorge Da Mina, 1482" in *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*, ed Malyn Newitt (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 93

³³ A lot of this vulnerability came from European desires for Gold. Many European crowns believed in Bullionism, the idea that a nation's wealth came from the accumulation of precious metals. Europeans believed that acquiring this West African Gold would allow them to emerge as superior over their competing kingdoms in Europe. This idea

building of the fortress, where the Portuguese had demolished a stone sacred to the locals, provoking their anger and displeasure. In the account, de Pina attempted to demonstrate how Portuguese problem-solving and diplomacy got the building of Elmina back on track: he described how the locals, angered at "their hopes of salvation destroyed...took up their arms and treated the workmen so harshly that they could not resist and fled back to their boats."³⁴ According to de Pina, however, a gift of presents was said to turn the hostility of the locals into goodwill and allow the building of Elmina to continue.³⁵

It seems unlikely that gifts could ease the aggression which sprang from a very Christian and European-seeming fear of eternal damnation. As the Portuguese had been on the coast for a relatively short time, it is unlikely that they understood the ways in which the sacred and profane manifested themselves in central Gold Coast society. It is even less likely that a chronicler, who was not present, had such an understanding. He attributed a doctrine of salvation to a spiritual system that, by all other contemporary accounts of the Gold Coast, had none. In other words, Gold Coast Africans who were not Christians, and the vast majority were not at this time, did not express concepts of salvation and damnation, so this was not the issue which provoked their violence. But the fact that their violence could be stopped with gifts is telling of the material nature of the relationship between the Portuguese and locals, and of the power dynamic which would develop.

In this instance, instead of showcasing Portuguese ingenuity, this chronicle showcases the unequal foundation of interactions on the Gold Coast which would continue through to the

lured many different European powers to the Gold Coast, whose presence intensified once Gold Coast Africans offered slaves for sale as well.

³⁴ Ibid, 94

³⁵ Ibid, 95

seventeenth century: Europeans had to pay in finished products (such as manillas, cloth, jewelry, mirrors, etc.) in order to be able to gain any footholds on the Gold Coast, such as being allowed to continue building. The Africans were only violent after the Portuguese had demonstrated a significant investment in the fortress by building its foundations. It was not coincidence that this exact point was when Africans could extract the most goods from the Portuguese with threats of violence and an implication to stall or cancel the building process. Only once the Portuguese had given more gifts than were originally promised, did the locals allow them to finish building their fortification. This scene de Pina chronicled was not a show of Portuguese problem-solving, but a narrative of Africans testing the extent of their power to extract tribute from the European incomers. This would mark a powerful precedent in the interactions between Europeans and Africans on the Gold Coast.

By the sixteenth century, many West Africans had knowledge or even direct experience of European traders. Independent merchants from many seafaring nations, such as France, the Dutch Provinces, and England were already conducting independent trade with Africans along the coast. Others were sent by their crowns in an exploratory capacity, and many did both. For example, in 1562 John Hawkins raided the coast of Sierra Leone and traded his cargo of slaves for raw materials from the Spanish Americas. After this, he commanded England's first official, Queen-sanctioned slave trading expedition.³⁶ While most independent merchants at this time have little presence in the written record, the Portuguese did attack those who came too close to their Gold Coast stronghold.

³⁶ Harry Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins*, 13-17

Elmina sat right between the Fetu and Eguafu Kingdoms, which was sometimes a lucrative position for trade, while at other times it was a liability for the Portuguese.³⁷ After establishing the fort, the Portuguese built several other fortresses along the Gold Coast and in Benin, and administered these from Elmina and Kongo in the 1490s. By the 1530s, Spain introduced the São Tomé plantation system to the Caribbean. This, along with Bartolomé de las Casas' recommendation to use African slaves instead of indigenous labor in the Americas (written 1542, published 1552) were the impetus for the increase in several Portuguese slave expeditions along the continental West African coast.³⁸

Over a century later in 1637, the Portuguese focus would switch from solely gold, to a combination of gold and slave exports, with smaller amounts of other African raw materials like ivory. As Ann Brower-Stahl points out, gold lured Europeans to the Gold Coast, but the slave trade kept them there.³⁹ In the 155 years the Portuguese traded from Elmina, they benefitted from being the largest European presence on the Gold Coast. Other independent European merchants operated along the West African coast and inland along the riverbanks, but none with a trading fortress and the sustained long-term presence of the Portuguese. Once the Portuguese were firmly established in Africa, they set a monopoly in an attempt to prevent other Europeans from trading in West Africa, yet were unable to enforce it, and generally only did so when directly

³⁷ Both the Fetu and Eguafu were comprised of Fante people. The Fante, like the Ahanta, were an amalgam group which consisted of many different peoples. Included in the Fantes were the Asebu and several other smaller Gold Coast groups, as well as some European settlers and their descendents, as well as waves of immigrants and refugees, both from inland Gold Coast, as well as traders and entrepreneurs whose ancestors married into the group. See Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante*, 15

³⁸ Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies , Or, a faithful NARRATIVE OF THE Horrid and Unexampled Massacres, Butcheries, and all manner of Cruelties, that Hell and Malice could invent, committed by the Popish Spanish Party on the inhabitants of West-India, TOGETHER With the Devastations of several Kingdoms in America by Fire and Sword, for the space of Forty and Two Years, from the time of its first Discovery by them.* 1552.

³⁹ Ann Brower-Stahl, "Entangled Lives: The Archaeology of Daily Life in the Gold Coast Hinterlands, AD 1400-1900", *Archaeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Akinwumi Ogundiran et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 66

challenged near their trading posts. The Africans with which they traded had other ideas, however. Later European arrivals to the Gold Coast reported “that the natives, so much as the Portuguese in the beginning, allowed trading along the coast without the backing of a company...”⁴⁰ West Africans had always preferred a more free trade to transpire despite Portuguese, and then Dutch insistence on monopolies. This European insistence on monopolies, and the African disregard for it, set precedents for European-African relations that would guide the Atlantic slave trade once other European companies entered it on the Gold Coast.

Under the Portuguese, Elmina functioned as both a warehouse and a military castle to drive away the independent merchants who had not been licensed to trade by the Portuguese crown. The fortress contained a workers of every type, from Akan goldsmiths, to artillery officers, surgeons, barbers, chaplains, bakers, and domestic servants in addition to the Portuguese company's merchant employees. This new center of Atlantic commerce drew Africans from along the coast who worked in Elmina's employ or for the surrounding town.⁴¹

All of the gold leaving West Africa through Elmina's port attracted attention in the interior. The Songhai empire's supply of gold dwindled, and affected the economies of nations involved in the trans-Saharan trade.⁴² After 1600, the official trading companies of other European nations joined the Atlantic system in earnest. The Gold Coast would then be overrun

⁴⁰ "Daer de Naturellen soo wel haer, als de Portugeesen in het begin, op die Kust maer hebben geadmitteert, onne Koopmanschappen te driven..." in GStA, I.HA Rep. 65 N. 43, n.3

⁴¹ It is important to note here that West Africans were no strangers to migrating for economic opportunity at this time. The late fifteenth to the early eighteenth centuries in West Africa were marked with constantly shifting borders as the various peoples warred and allied with one another and the outside polities. They each also had connections to the trans-Saharan trade, and sophisticated gold mining techniques which attracted traders from the Mediterranean. As a consequence, the peoples living in and around these empires were marked with cultural, linguistic, and religious interchange, and familiar with diasporas, acculturation, and creolization. Toby Green argues that this blending of all things societal and cultural led to a widespread relationship between commercial and cultural accommodation in the area which would set the tone for the transatlantic slave trade upon European arrival. See chapter one in Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴² Ibid., 42

with European slave trading fortresses whose employees competed with one another for African favor in the trade.

Despite the conflict between Portuguese and West Africans, the first European slave traders in the sixteenth century were folded into native kinship networks and African trading routes. The cultures of Western Africa were already creolized prior to European arrival due to the expansion of several native empires, such as the Mandinka and Mali. They were already familiar with the people of Europe, as well as the movement and violence endemic to slave systems through these empires' involvements with the Sub-Saharan slave trade. The Jews and Arabs of North Africa had acted as middle men between Southern Europe and the Mediterranean world, and the peoples of West Africa. As was the case in many societies, West Africans had already been introduced to the material culture of some European peoples. This meant that the Transatlantic slave trade was not a situation of first contact. Nor was it one-sided. Nor did it contain the familiar uneven power dynamics from its inception.⁴³ The European martial dominance over slave-trading West Africa which is often tacitly implied, would not develop for centuries. In the precolonial era, West Africans often were able to manipulate situations so that the power flowed to them. They had more options than the slave trading Europeans on Africa's coast, and many examples of the trading culture detail how this unequal power relation manifested itself.

Europeans who arrived in West Africa immediately requested the right to build fortifications to defend against pirates and rival European slave traders who would raid the coast. For this they paid a tax to the local rulers. As with the first Europeans in Africa, the Portuguese, each European slave trading company which built a fort attempted to secure a monopoly as

⁴³ See the first two chapters of Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

strongly as the surrounding Africans attempted to avoid honoring this. It was the first of many patterns set by Portuguese-African interactions, which would be mirrored in Dutch-African interactions.

In the town surrounding Elmina, the center of the Gold Coast's slave trade, the archaeological record reflects a change in African sociopolitical institutions as well as the urbanization, growth of material wealth, and the alteration of behavior patterns. At the height of the slave trade, the town's distinctive political structures emerged.⁴⁴ People from all over the coast migrated to Elmina during the Portuguese and then the Dutch period. Wherever European trading forts sprung up, their populations grew as displaced Africans sought out economic opportunities.

This was but one of the reasons the formation of an Atlantic West Africa was marked by both violence and cultural exchange. Toby Green credits primary creolization in Upper Guinea and the process of state formation in medieval Portugal with formation of the early Atlantic economy.⁴⁵ The combination of violence on one hand, and flexibility on the other came to characterize the Atlantic Creole societies not only in Western Africa, but throughout the Atlantic world.⁴⁶ This set the tone for the arrival of the other European slave trading companies and independent traders. On the Gold Coast, Europeans rivaled violently with one another, but also

⁴⁴ Christopher R. de Corse, *An Archaeology of Elmina: Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast, 1400-1900*. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 28.

⁴⁵ Green, *The Rise*, 69.

⁴⁶ I am using "Atlantic Creole" similar to the way Ira Berlin uses it: to describe the mixed-race descendants of Europeans and Africans who were born in the port cities of West Africa and worked as go-betweens and interpreters in the multi-lingual environment of the Atlantic slave trade. See Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. (Cambridge, Belknap Press, 1998), 17-26.

became embroiled in African politics. This often ended in complex wars involving several different European and African peoples and concerning the terms of their overlapping treaties.⁴⁷

At the time of Portuguese settlement along the Gold Coast, the culture there was characterized by major changes and developments in organization of territory, production, and distribution. This allowed Europeans to present the slave trade as a viable and lucrative option for the more marginalized African groups, such as the Ahanta, Fetu, and Eguafu. The coastal areas began resembling the more stratified empires of expansionist states in Upper Guinea. These states functioned as corporate systems which connected the transatlantic slave trade with the other currents of trade through Africa, namely the trans-Saharan, but also the trade routes reaching to East Africa, the Middle East, and beyond.⁴⁸

Starting with the arrival of the Portuguese and transforming throughout the following centuries, the slave trade rearranged the political economy of the Gold Coast. It allowed militarized expansionist states like the Fante and Ashanti to rise to prominence, and concentrated wealth in their cities. The countryside became the residence of those dependent on the upper classes—slaves and merchants and craftsmen, miners, fishermen, and other artisans. These workers became more important as wealth became more concentrated and the expansionist states sought to appropriate their skills.⁴⁹ This put undue pressures on the smaller coastal communities in danger of being subsumed by empire, and made Europeans attractive military allies to such communities, like the Ahanta, which had fled to the coast.

⁴⁷ For more information, see Robin Law “The Komenda Wars, 1694-1700, a Revised Narrative,” in *History in Africa* 34 (2007) 133-168.

⁴⁸ See Albert Van Dantzig, “The Akanists: A West African Hansa,” in *West African Economic and Social History. Studies in Memory of Marion Johnson*, ed. D. Henige et al. (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1990), 205-216.

⁴⁹ See Ray Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982)

The language and cultural customs of such smaller groups at the peripheries of empire each had origins in another place, and mixed subgroups such as the Ahanta emerged in this time period.⁵⁰ As they were neither one ethnicity nor another, and identified culturally with one group while sharing linguistic traits with another, they were in a position to benefit more from trade with Europeans who would enter into military alliances with them in order to secure a monopoly on slave exports. In other words, the events of this particular time period created ideal conditions for an Atlantic slave trade, as smaller African groups in conflict with the larger ones sought to preserve their autonomy through trade and alliances with Europeans. This first trade with the Portuguese set precedents which would carry into the trade with subsequent European arrivals, particularly the Dutch.

The Founding of the WIC and Dutch Plans for the Gold Coast

From as early as 1528, while the Portuguese made inroads in West Africa, independent Dutch merchants were involved in the slave trade through either smuggling activities, or the Spanish *asiento* policy.⁵¹ They did this freely until 1621, when the WIC was officially formed to regulate this sporadic but full-swinging free-booting Dutch trade in the Indies. Dutch merchants were learning the slave trade from the Portuguese while the Dutch Provinces geared up to put their more official hat in the ring for Atlantic dominance.

⁵⁰ Pierluigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, translated by Allan Cameron. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 36-39

⁵¹ The *asiento* was a contract which Spain issued to European companies to furnish slaves to their American colonies. As the Spanish empire was so vast it did not have sufficient ships to meet the colonies' economic needs, so rather than neglect its colonies or allow free trade, the Spanish Crown issued *asientos* which functioned as temporary licenses to trade with the colonies for a fee. This system helped to set the groundwork for the illicit inter-American economy, as once European traders developed business relations with colonists in Spanish America, the colonists continued to purchase goods and slaves from these traders even after the *asiento* expired. See Cornelis Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, (Assen, Netherlands; Dover, N.H., U.S.A.: Van Gorcum, 1985); and Georges Scelle, "The Slave Trade in the Spanish Colonies of America: the *Asiento*," *American Journal of International Law* 4:3 (1910): 612-61.

In 1549, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V unified the Seventeen Dutch Provinces under his rule. Upon his death, rulership passed to his son, King Phillip II of Spain, who levied high taxes and persecuted the Dutch Calvinists under his Catholic Counter-Reformation. The Dutch accused him of favoring his native Spain at the expense of the Dutch provinces. In 1568, William I of Orange led a revolt against the Spanish crown and began the Eighty Years' War.⁵² In 1580, Phillip II became Phillip I of Portugal, ruling the Iberian Peninsula until 1640 in what is called the Iberian Union. The Portuguese Spice trade in the East Indies reached its height as Henry the Navigator found a maritime route to the East Indies which bypassed the Middle East.

By 1581, the provinces had declared their independence from Spanish rule and became the United Dutch Provinces, or the Dutch Republic. The war with Spain forced the Dutch republic to consolidate. It created the States General, the representatives of the various regions in control over foreign policy. Many of the Jewish refugees from the Spanish Inquisition found safe havens in Dutch port towns from where they supported the expanding Dutch economy by conducting Atlantic business with their contacts in West Africa and in the Americas.⁵³ The Dutch would use these exiles to their advantage as they chipped away at Iberian Atlantic holdings. The Dutch developed the largest merchant marine in the world and Amsterdam became the world's center of business and trade.⁵⁴

The Dutch States General formed a plan to exploit the wealth of the Atlantic through the domination of world trade. They developed the first modern stock market in 1602 by the Dutch East India Company. Through wealth from the East Indies, the Dutch navy became the largest

⁵² Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

⁵³ Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation Upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵⁴ Jonathan Israel, and Stuart B. Schwartz, *The Expansion of Tolerance: Religion in Dutch Brazil (1624-1654)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

and fastest, and set its eye on breaking the Portuguese monopoly over both the Indian Ocean trade, as well as the Atlantic slave trade.⁵⁵ The Dutch East India Company and the West India Company together declared war on Portuguese trade: they plotted to systematically attack Portuguese strongholds and fortresses in the Americas, Africa, India, and the Far East. Historians often refer to this decision as an extension of the Eighty Years' War, and Dutch assertion of independence and shipping supremacy.⁵⁶ The East India Company was relatively successful and established several spice-trading strongholds in the Indian Ocean. The war ended in 1609 with a Twelve Year's Truce to end the Eighty Years' War. Dutch Independence was officially recognized within Europe.

Toward the end of this twelve year period, in 1621, the Dutch Republic gave the WIC the Dutch Atlantic monopoly. This designated any Dutch persons trading in Africa without the blessing of this company as interlopers and allowed the WIC to take steps to destroy their ability to trade. Prior to the forming of the WIC, some Dutch merchants had traded on the Gold Coast out of Fort Nassau at Mori, just ten kilometers from Portuguese Elmina.⁵⁷ Among these independent Dutch merchants facing annihilation of their livelihoods from trade with Africa were *conversos* who based their business in the Netherlands to avoid the Inquisition.⁵⁸ They had

⁵⁵ Martijn van der Burg, "Transforming the Dutch Republic into the Kingdom of Holland: the Netherlands between Republicanism and Monarchy (1795–1815)," *European Review of History* (2010) 17 #2, 151–170.

⁵⁶ P.C. Emmer, "The First Global War: The Dutch Versus Iberia in Asia, Africa and the New World, 1590-1609," *E-Journal of Portuguese History*, (2003) 1:1, 1-14.

⁵⁷ Christopher R. de Corse, *An Archaeology of Elmina: Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast, 1400-1900*. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 23.

⁵⁸ A *converso* was a "new Christian" – a person of Jewish descent, usually with a Jewish name, whose family had only recently converted to Christianity in the previous generation or two. While the Dutch were not free of anti-Semitism, they generally took a more tolerant approach toward non-Christians, thereby attracting large Jewish populations to the port cities of the Netherlands, and later the Dutch territories in the Americas and East Indies. Indeed, Dutch Brazil was known for being the most tolerant toward Jews, and housed the first synagogue of the New World. See Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); and David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute:*

been trading in Africa nearly as long as the Portuguese, and had established trading connections and their own mercantile culture prior to the founding of the WIC. In one stroke of the pen, the Dutch rendered their livelihood illegitimate and prosecutable. This effectively criminalized all Dutch-connected operatives in West Africa who were not part of this company.

While the Portuguese and the Dutch interlopers operated from West Africa, the WIC captains functioned mainly as privateers who captured these slave ships and confiscated, then resold the human cargo within. The WIC's shareholders were not content to chip away at Iberian wealth in this way, however, and so they spent two years constructing a Grand Design with the goal of once again capturing Portugal's wealth in the Atlantic trade.⁵⁹ The plan was to seize Brazil's capital, and then the main Portuguese trading fort of Luanda on the coast of Angola. This way, the WIC would control both the Atlantic sugar trade, as well as the steady supply of slaves which the harsh conditions of Brazilian sugar plantations demanded. The Dutch were successful for a short time, and used the momentum to try to capture Luanda in West Central Africa in 1624. However, the Iberian Union was still in full swing, so by attacking Brazil, the WIC found that the navies of both Spain and Portugal responded with a fleet of 12,000.⁶⁰ The WIC lost both Brazil and any headway they made in Luanda. Unable to best this fleet, the WIC abandoned Brazil and sought out other places to strike at the Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic Empire, mainly through more intense and elaborate privateering.

Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora 1580-1700. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

⁵⁹ "Groot Desseyn"

⁶⁰ See Boris Fausto, *A Concise history of Brazil*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Dutch Privateering and the WIC

The maritime provinces of Holland (where the Dutch metropolitan city of Amsterdam is located) and Zeeland, the South-most province, were in the best geographical and economic positions to enter the Atlantic trade and injure the Portuguese and Spanish through direct attacks on their Atlantic holdings. Using wealth from previous petty privateering, the Dutch put together a plan to sack the northwest coast of Brazil along the Paraiba river. Piet Pieterzoon Heyn was a Dutch naval officer who had served as a Spanish galley-slave in his twenties, where he became fluent in Spanish, and in the geography of the Iberian empire.⁶¹ After working his way up the ranks for the East India Company (VOC), he became a vice-admiral in 1623 and became a privateer for the Dutch West India Company. He helped capture Salvador da Bahia for the WIC.⁶² From there he moved much as the English sea-dogs did, attacking and raiding Iberian settlements in the Atlantic, from Luanda in West Central Africa, to Vitoria in Brazil.⁶³

In 1628, Heyn's forces intercepted a Spanish treasure fleet and captured sixteen ships in Matanzas, Cuba, among them, a galleon carrying millions of guilders worth of encomienda-silver and other valuable American goods to Spain. Not only was the treasure enough to fund the Dutch military for nearly a year, but it was also able to compensate the WIC's shareholders and provide them with a significant cash dividend. This raised the esteem of the company in the eyes of the wealthy Dutch who would fund its future endeavors.

⁶¹ The name is sometimes also spelled "Hein" or "Heijn."

⁶² Ronald Prud'homme van Reine. *Admiral Zilvervloot: Biografie van Piet Hein* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2003).

⁶³ The "English Sea Dogs" were an elite group of Queen Elizabeth's privateers, including the infamous Sir Francis Drake and Martin Frobisher, who attacked Spanish settlements and ships in order to further England's political and economic plans for the New World. See Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), Harry Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), and James McDermott, *Martin Frobisher: Elizabethan Privateer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

Heyn's victory also changed popular perceptions of privateering and piracy in the Dutch Atlantic world. Privateering helped create ideal conditions for piracy to flourish. It made piratical activities if not politically and socially desirable, at least occasionally acceptable when done at the right time, unto the right people. It provided a veneer of desirability and respectability to piracy. It also created people with the skills of piracy, and gave them the tools to pirate.⁶⁴ This would become key once the Dutch were more established on the Gold Coast, facing the pirates which raided their fortresses and slave ships.⁶⁵

Piet Heyn's pilfering of the Spanish silver fleet also changed the perceptions of the WIC from that of a company which could occasionally be used as a source of irritation to Dutch enemies abroad, to a business in which Holland's elite had faith. After Heyn's activities, the WIC was able to martial a significant force to once again attempt to take over the Northeastern region of Brazil along the Paraíba river where all of Portugal's lucrative sugar mills were located.

The Dutch in Brazil and the Foundations of Dutch-Africa

In 1624, the WIC put together a fleet of twenty-six war ships carrying over three thousand men. Not all were Dutch, but all were on the payroll of the WIC.⁶⁶ An unknown soldier

⁶⁴ See chapter two in Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

⁶⁵ Janice Thompson makes a fascinating argument about this point. Thompson argues that state rulers chose to exploit non-state violence, such as privateering and piracy, in order to secure wealth and power. The unintended consequences of employing these tactics were that this violence generated more violence which states did not authorize, could not control, and often eventually fell victim to. This is what happened to the Dutch, who encouraged privateering in their exploration of the Atlantic world, but then could not control the privateers, who turned pirate and raided the empire for which they were originally contracted to loot and plunder. See Janice Thompson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁶⁶ The most recent research on this subject indicates that many of the soldiers the WIC sent to Northeastern Brazil were French Huguenots, though the WIC's military forces to Brazil almost certainly contained Germans and Poles

present during the preparation of the Portuguese fleet suspected that the largely Jewish population of Portuguese Northeastern Brazil was “given to illicit trading,” and held so much contempt for the ruling Iberians that they would “hand [Brazil] over [to the Dutch] with no constraint,” but the WIC did not want to leave this up to chance and sent in a force the Portuguese were unprepared to meet.⁶⁷

Paraiba, the easternmost point of Brazil was a region named such by the Tupi Indians for how difficult the terrain was to navigate. This region lacked a sizeable European population under Portuguese rule. Although the Portuguese did have some minor settlements, Stuart Schwartz calls the area geographically and climatically different enough to pose significant problems for colonizers, and as a result the region was “culturally Indian.”⁶⁸ By 1631, after the Dutch takeover, the strip of coastline contained 3,819 officials and expedition members, 576 Dutch civilians (advisors, traveling clergy, craft workers, women, and children), 2,214 ship’s officials and seamen, and 421 negroes: a total of 7,030 Dutch or Africans enslaved by the Dutch, in addition to 141 captured Iberian prisoners of the takeover.⁶⁹ While individual Dutch merchants had already begun to make their Atlantic fortunes, the Dutch West India Company's seizure of

as well. See Stuart B. Schwartz, ed. *Early Brazil: A Documentary Collection to 1700*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶⁷ Words of the unknown soldier in “Unpublished Bahian Documents, 1624-1625,” in *Dutch Brazil: Two Unpublished Portuguese Manuscripts about the Dutch Conquest (1624) and the Iberian Recovery (1625) of Salvador Da Bahia in Brazil*, trans. B.N. Teensma et al. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Index, 1999), 41.

⁶⁸ Stuart Schwartz, “Plantations and Peripheries, 1580-1750,” in *Colonial Brazil*, ed. Leslie Bethell. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 110.

⁶⁹ Hermann Watjen, *Das Hollandische Kolonialreich in Brasilien: ein Kapitel aus der Kolonialgeschichte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1921), 58.

Northeastern Brazil was the first official action the Republic had taken to assert that they were not bound by the limits of the Treaty of Tordesillas.⁷⁰

The Dutch witnessed varying levels of achievement in Brazil. The ways in which West India Company employees operated demonstrates that they did not share the WIC concern for corporate profit, and were not particularly concerned with loyalty to the company.⁷¹ Those officers working for the WIC, dazzled by the rumors of American riches, often put self-interest before company profits, and used their time in the Americas to network for private gain and fleece the company.⁷² Vincent Joachim Soler was a Calvinist pastor hired by the WIC to care for the company's French-speaking soldiers. The letters he wrote to various WIC officials in the Netherlands shed light on the religious, economic, and social realities of living in Dutch Brazil. His letters are little more than complaints, warning the company of its inevitable failure in Brazil. "Everybody thinks of himself only and little or nothing of the well-being of the Company," Soler wrote. "There is no sign of fear of God, no justice, and vices thrive. In one word, I seem to be in Sodom or still worse."⁷³ He begged the Dutch shareholders of the WIC to put an end to the disorder in the church and in the public government, warning that if such was

⁷⁰ The 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas was a document by the Pope to settle disputes between the Portuguese and Spanish regarding the newly discovered lands outside of Europe. It divided the World in two and ceded everything east of this line to Portugal, and everything West of it to Spain. As neither Spain nor Portugal nor the Catholic Church had the ability to enforce this treaty other European nations ignored.

⁷¹ It is important to note that the actions of the WIC toward its employees shows that this feeling was mutual. Often in the documents when negotiations between the WIC and natives in Africa or the Americas soured, the company sided against its own employees in order to save face with their trading partners. These employees were sometimes killed by Africans as a result. The BAC also operated in this way. See chapter three.

⁷² This would also occur in West Africa, and similar things can be found in the records of the East India Company about workers in the spice trade, as well. Dutch employees of these companies often took the blame for unforeseeable difficulties the Dutch encountered in their global trade.

⁷³ Vincent Joachim Soler, "To the Directors of the Zeeland Chamber of the West Indies Company, Middleburg, Recife, June 8, 1636" in *Seventeen Letters by Vincent Joachim Soler, Protestant Minister in the Service of the West Indies Company, Written in Recife, Brazil, Between 1636 and 1643*, trans. by B.N. Teensma et al. (Rio de Janeiro, Editora Index, 1999), 11.

not done, it would be “impossible for you to keep control over this country for one more year.”⁷⁴ He observed that the soldiers and other workers the WIC had hired to take over Brazil did not fear God, for they stole from the WIC openly. Soler accused the employees of living off of company luxury so that they and “their whores” would thrive.⁷⁵ He cited the sugar mills as evidence: of the eighty-three in his captaincy, only fifteen were producing anything at all.⁷⁶

Of those sugar mills which did produce, much of the sugar was held back by employees and sold on the black market. In another letter, Soler wrote about the widespread deceptive practice of corrupt WIC employees who put aside company sugar chests for personal profit.⁷⁷ This means that the amount of sugar that was exported from Dutch Brazil does not indicate the amount of sugar which was produced there. As the amount of sugar produced there was in fact greater than the amount which was exported legally through the appropriate WIC channels, it is possible to conclude that many more slaves were involved in its production than have been previously noted.

Once the Governor-General Johan Maurits took control of the chaotic territory of Dutch Brazil, he instated freedom of worship in order to make it more attractive to the Portuguese Brazilians and other groups who could strengthen the territory and the Dutch hold upon it.⁷⁸ Maurits made this declaration not only to attract the Catholic Iberians, but also the Jews. As many Jewish slave traders and independent Jewish merchants fled the Iberian Inquisitions in the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Do issue orders so that all your employees, from the top to the bottom be substituted. They stick together as the rings of a chain. They are all thieves, with no exception. Two months ago, sixty chests of sugar were found hidden by a Portuguese who is with the enemy.” The words of Vincent Joachim Soler, “To the Directors of the Chamber of Zeeland of the West Indies Company, Middelburg, Recife, December ?, 1637” in *Seventeen Letters*, 46.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Israel and Stuart B. Schwartz. *The Expansion of Tolerance*, 2007, 9; and Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

Spanish Americas and the still-Portuguese parts of Brazil, they searched for new places from which they could safely practice both their religion and commerce.⁷⁹ It was under the Dutch governor that Jews built the first synagogue of the Americas in the city of Recife where it stands to this day.⁸⁰ Because of their common language, culture, and status of displacement, Jews created an Atlantic community and took advantage of both legal trade in the English Atlantic and illicit avenues with relatives and associates in the Dutch world.⁸¹ Jews became a critical population in Dutch Brazil because the WIC benefitted from their trading networks within the Atlantic World, particularly in West Africa, as well as from their linguistic skills when trading with their neighbors to the south: those parts of Brazil still under Portuguese rule.⁸²

It is important to note here that this tolerance toward the Jews was a special situation and circumstance, and would not become standard procedure for the Dutch Atlantic in the late seventeenth century onwards.⁸³ Ellis Raesly found that just a few years later in Dutch North America, people were favored less by the color of their skin but by the nature of their religious faith. Raesly found instances of Protestant African slaves who were allowed to own land, while white Jews were barred from both land purchase and ownership. Similarly, as in the Spanish

⁷⁹ Frans L Schalkwijk, *The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil (1630-1654)* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1998).

⁸⁰ Reuters, "Synagogue in Brazilian town Recife considered oldest in the Americas," in *Haaretz*, Published 12.11.07, accessed April 2, 2012, available online www.Haaretz.com/news/synagogue-in-brazilian-town-recife-considered-oldest-in-the-americas-1.233058.

⁸¹ See Noah L. Gelfand, "Jews in New Netherland: An Atlantic Perspective," in William A. Starna "The Native Dutch Experience in the Mohawk Valley," in *Explorers, Fortunes & Love Letters A Window on New Netherland*, ed. Martha Dickinson Shattuck (Albany: New Netherland Institute and Mount Ida Press, 2009), 39-49.

⁸² Noah L. Gelfand, "A Caribbean Wind: An Overview of the Jewish Dispersal from Dutch Brazil," *De Halve Maen* 78 (2006), 49-56; and Jonathan Irvine Israel, *Diaspora within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World of Maritime Empires 1540-1740* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

⁸³ James H. Williams, "An Atlantic Perspective on the Jewish Struggle for Rights and Opportunities in Brazil, New Netherland, and New York," in *Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800*, ed. Paolo Bernardini et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001) 369-393.

Atlantic, many free Negroes served in the Dutch militia of New Netherland, while the same militia had “a great aversion to serve with the Jewish Portuguese.”⁸⁴

The common thread running through all of this evidence is that by the 17th century, the Dutch Atlantic World would be in a great state of flux. Each location, be it Dutch North America, Dutch Brazil, or the various locations in the Dutch Caribbean, had their own ways of complying with (or failing to comply with) the WIC’s orders with regard to religion, race, and virtually every other issue. The Dutch were, just as they would in and around their slave-trading forts in West Africa, first and foremost reactionary. They switched from tactic to tactic in their attempts at gaining the maximum amount of mercantile control possible of the Atlantic world.

It was commercial aspirations which often mandated tolerance, and not the other way around. The Dutch allowed the Iberians who submitted to Dutch rule to remain and continue with their livelihoods. Those who did not submit became prisoners of war, and their slaves became war prizes. Hermann Watjen confirmed that these Iberian’s slaves formed the backbone of Dutch Brazil’s initial slave population.⁸⁵ However, the Dutch in Brazil had big plans for sugar, one of the most valuable resources of the world at this time. In order to turn the Iberian sugar farms into large-scale plantations, the Dutch required large and reliable sources of labor. Privateering Portuguese slave ships going to central and southern Brazil no longer sufficed, and the Dutch made plans to follow the Portuguese to West Africa and take over their slave trading contacts.

⁸⁴ Ellis L. Raesly, *Portrait of New Netherland* (New York Columbia University Press, 1945), 162.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 67, 91

By 1630, the WIC had secured the Northern half of Brazil.⁸⁶ Seven years later, they won the Battle of Elmina on the Gold Coast and moved into the Portuguese fortress in order to take advantage of trade in gold and slaves. Four years later in 1641, the Dutch signed a treaty with Queen Nzinga of Ndongo who helped them get established in Luanda so that they had a more steady supply of slaves to send to their new sugar plantations in Brazil. Little by little, the Dutch claimed territories in the Atlantic World and found ways to make them profitable.⁸⁷

Although their settlement colonies failed a few decades later, the Dutch grew increasingly more interested and invested in West Africa. While they were unable to maintain significant settler populations in most of their claimed Atlantic territory, their failures at settlement translated into merchant success. Through the intelligence and experience gathered in Brazil, Suriname, and the Caribbean, as well as in West Africa, the Dutch discovered ways they could both undermine their European competitors as well as become wealthy from Atlantic riches. Through infringing upon the monopolies of European Nations while at the same time, defending their own rights to monopoly, the Dutch filled the niche of supplying neglected settler colonies of the Spanish, British, and French with slaves and any other demanded commodities. As the Americas filled with plantations, the demands for slaves became never-ceasing. The Dutch used their head start in Africa to sign as many treaties with locals as possible and build trading posts and fortifications anywhere slaves could be extracted for Atlantic trade.

⁸⁶ Benjamin N. Teensma, "Nederlands-Braziliaans Militair Inlichtingenwerk van de West-Indische Compagnie, 1629-1654," in *Geweld in de West: Een Militaire Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Atlantische Wereld, 1600-1800*, ed. Victor Enthoven et al., (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 277-311

⁸⁷ Henk Heijer, "Het 'Groot Desseyn' en de Aanval op Elmina in 1625," in *Geweld in de West: Een Militaire Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Atlantische Wereld, 1600-1800*, ed. Victor Enthoven et al., (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 217-243

Dutch WIC Trade on the Gold Coast and the Treaty of Axim

With a fleet from Northeastern Brazil, the Dutch captured the West African stronghold of Elmina from the Portuguese in 1637. Their aim was to ensure a more reliable stream of slaves with which to furnish the Brazilian sugar plantations. This year signals serious and official Dutch involvement with and commitment to the Atlantic slave trade. Despite resistance from the 1,000 Fante soldiers allied with the Portuguese, the WIC force conquered the Portuguese trading fortress.⁸⁸ For over a century, the Portuguese had traded with the locals in the town outside of the fortress and made it their base of operations for both African trade, and as a stop for Portuguese ships sailing between the East Indies and Europe. The Dutch coveted this fortress due in part to its central location and purpose, and the WIC spent the next decade smoothing over relations with locals, and establishing trade in African gold, raw materials, and slaves. They also drove out the remaining Portuguese along the Gold Coast and acquired the other trading fortresses they had built.

Capturing Elmina was crucial to Dutch success in the Atlantic World, as well as African participation within in. The Portuguese fort had dominated the Gold Coast. It was fully staffed and fortified and the soldiers there were in a good position to squash foreign attempts at maintaining strong presences elsewhere on the coast. The Dutch wanted not only the fort itself and the native trading partners who had reliably supplied the Portuguese with slaves, but, more importantly, the Dutch wanted the Portuguese gone so that they could establish other trading forts in the area without Portuguese interference. The first time the Dutch stormed Elmina they were easily defeated.

⁸⁸ Shortly after in 1641, the WIC seized Luanda in West Central Africa from the Portuguese with the assistance of disgruntled locals, led by Queen Nzinga of the Ndongo Kingdom. See Linda Heywood and John Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Making of the Americas, 1580-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

After failing at their first attempt to secure Elmina in 1625, they solicited the help of the local Fetu people whose help was instrumental in the Dutch success. In the eyes of the Fetu, the Portuguese had grown too powerful. After the Portuguese had helped the village outside of Elmina break away from the Fetu in 1514, Elmina functioned as a city-state ruled by the Portuguese governor right next to Fetu land. The Portuguese imposed taxes on the coastal town's fisheries, extended political and judicial influence over the village outside of the fort, and expected it to furnish warriors whenever Elmina was threatened.⁸⁹ For a century, Portuguese influence grew, and the Fetu likely recognized the value in curtailing the power of the Portuguese in Elmina and trading with the Dutch instead.

The WIC was a newer, less established trading partner that would be more dependent upon West Africans while they were settling into the trading relationship. When the WIC force from Brazil came canoeing up the river toward Elmina to storm the fortress in 1637, the Fetu turned on the Elmina army protecting the Portuguese and sided with the Dutch, which allowed them to secure the victory they failed to obtain on their own in 1625. From 1637 onward, both Africans and Europeans would become locked into this pattern on the Gold Coast, where Africans encouraged new European competitors to trade in order to divide the power of the most powerful Europeans at the moment.

A useful means of viewing the Dutch in West Africa is proposed by Harvey Feinberg, who shows how the Africans perceived of WIC employees as an integral part of Elmina; “another ethnic group in a multi-ethnic community.”⁹⁰ This is useful for understand Dutch-

⁸⁹ See Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595-1674*. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 65; and Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante*, 36.

⁹⁰ Harvey M. Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast During the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1989), 136.

Native relations, even if the Dutch of the WIC did not perceive of themselves in this way.⁹¹ The Elmina-Dutch relationship was complex, but in general worked more to the advantage of the locals. Instead of proclaiming any group as having the advantage, however, it is necessary to take into account the fluctuations in power, politics, and economies on the Gold Coast. The relations between and among Europeans and Africans had different outcomes for different groups of people at different times, and advantages could be lost quicker than they were gained. While during the pre-colonial phase of the slave trade, the mutual exploitation taking place in West Africa often brought some African polities great wealth and forced Europeans into more limited positions which allowed few dominant approaches to the trade, the long-term picture is one that leads to colonialism and the exploitation of entire peoples, which in a long term view was advantageous to very few Africans.

When the Dutch supplanted the Portuguese on the Gold Coast they carried on this earlier culture of violence and cultural flexibility. The treaties between several of the European slave trading companies, and several of the slave-trading peoples of the Gold Coast support this point. Often thought of as slaving contracts, these documents represented very different things for the Europeans and Africans who made their marks upon them. Most importantly, they demonstrate how much power Africans held in their dealings with Europeans, and they show how Dutch actions in the slave trade were largely influenced by the previous Portuguese presence there.

One of the earliest surviving treaties between the Dutch and a West African peoples, the Treaty of Axim, Comes from this time period and provides the baseline from which to trace the

⁹¹ In the papers of the WIC, the Dutch slave traders engaged in duplicitous activities in order to obtain slaves from the Gold Coast while remaining in good standing with the WIC. When representing themselves and their concerns to the shareholders of the company, they portrayed themselves as both literate and enlightened Europeans who were superior to the majority of natives in West Africa, as well as poor under-matched Europeans at the mercy of the hardships involved in trading under the complex and sophisticated systems created by those same natives, of whom they had little understanding and less control.

changes in Dutch-African relations on the Gold Coast from the 1640s into the eighteenth century. Signed on February 17, 1642 between the WIC and the local rulers of Axim, the treaty transferred all privileges the Portuguese had enjoyed in Axim surrounding Fort Saint Anthony to the Dutch in exchange for a monopoly on trade and mutual martial assistance in the event of war.⁹²

This last point was critical, as it was arguably the largest reason coastal West Africans entered into these treaties with European slave trading nations. As the interior empires of West Africa absorbed smaller polities, the remaining and newly emerging hybrid groups re-aligned, coastal peoples were in constant danger of being absorbed, assimilated, or eradicated. Forging military alliances with Europeans who the Africans could convince to involve themselves in local disputes was one way of preserving cultural, social, and economic autonomy.⁹³ At this time, the Europeans had less overall power over peoples in West Africa, as they were unable to penetrate the continent, yet their cannons, guns, and military technology were sometimes welcome on the Gold Coast.

The Treaty of Axim also mentions Elmina, the most prominent slave fortress on the Gold Coast. A great deal has been written about this fort and the surrounding town, which later vied with the English-owned Cape Coast Castle, just ten kilometers away, for Guinea's most cosmopolitan slave trading entrepôt until Ouidah was established in modern-day Benin.⁹⁴ The slaves who worked at Elmina, either as WIC slaves or slaves of the locals who lived in the town

⁹² NA 1.11.03 12571-38-1 1662/3

⁹³ Walter Hawthorne found similar strategies in use among the decentralized societies in the Guinea-Bissau region who changed to accommodate the disruptions that accompanied the shift toward slaving in that region. See Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations Along the Guinea Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2003).

⁹⁴ See Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving Port, 1727 – 1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

adjacent to the fort had similar degrees of freedom and rights as those they enjoyed under the Portuguese. Many slaves became craftsmen or soldiers, and if owned by locals, became part of the family of their owners, linked by kinship ties. Under the Dutch, the European population also expanded, though often local Africans were hired by the WIC to replace those lost to illness. The population of people of both European and African parentage was also significant. Some of Portuguese heritage elected to stay once the Dutch took over operations at the fort, while later others came from the union of European WIC employees and their native common-law wives.⁹⁵ This group, the *vrijburgers*, enjoyed all rights and privileges under Dutch law.⁹⁶ Because of these precedents, Africans had every reason to expect the same terms from any other contracts with Europeans.

The terms of the Axim treaty indicate that the people of Axim had already heard about the Dutch from their conquest at Elmina. Likely, they were curious as to Dutch trading conventions and work ethic as compared with the Portuguese slavers. One of the terms the kings of Axim demanded was an instatement of the “dash” system that was in use at Elmina roughly sixty-three miles (or one hundred kilometers) away.⁹⁷ Dash was a native convention of trade that relied on gifts being given along with every exchange to cement relationships as a token of esteem and honest intent.

Most interesting of all is what the treaty fails to mention: the quantity of slaves the Dutch expected the people of Axim to provide in exchange for their military alliance and material imports. The treaty is written as if the procurement of slaves were a tertiary concern for the

⁹⁵ For further discussion of this mulatto class, see George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003).

⁹⁶ de Corse, *An Archaeology of Elmina*, 33-37

⁹⁷ NA 1.11.03 12571-38-1 1662/3

Dutch, after military alliance and insistence upon monopoly, although slaves were the primary reason the WIC was keen to establish a presence on the Gold Coast.⁹⁸ The treaty mentions that the caboceers⁹⁹ were to be paid one benda of gold for each newly arriving ship from the Netherlands, the value of which would be increased or decreased depending on the volume of goods unloaded.¹⁰⁰ It mentions nothing about what those goods were to be, though the implication here is that the goods of course would only be unloaded if there were slaves or other commodities to put into the hold of the ship in their place. Aside from it being understood that the Europeans were there to trade in slaves, this type of indirect language could have served as protection to both the Dutch and the people of Axim; the enforced monopoly in the treaty ensured that slaves which came into the possession of Axim could only be sold on to the Dutch, which then made any insistence of specific numbers unnecessary. It also meant, however, that each shipment of slaves was based on negotiation and renegotiation, a common theme in the Atlantic West African slave trade.

It seems that this would have not been beneficial to the Dutch. Not writing the slaves into the treaty is indicative of the power balance between the Dutch and the people of Axim in the early seventeenth century. The documentation of the WIC indicates that the procurement of slaves and profit was first and foremost the priority of the company. With such an imperative, the creator of this treaty would have almost certainly put in provisions for the guarantee of slaves if

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ This term, believed to come from the Spanish "Cabeza," or head (for someone who is the head man in the slave trade) is found in some variation in nearly every language that was spoken on the Gold Coast and in some places beyond. In the Portuguese documents, they are referred to as Caboceros, while the Dutch and Prussians and Swedes referred to them as Caboceers in their correspondence. The English sometimes called them Capasheers/Kapasheers, and the documentation indicates that these caboceros/capasheers/caboceers also referred to themselves as such. For the sake of consistency and ease of reading, I will use the Dutch variation of this term.

¹⁰⁰ A benda, according to the Huguenot slave trader Jean Barbot, was equivalent to two ounces. See Jean Barbot, *Description of the Coaste of North and South Guinea*, 1732.

the kings of Axim had accepted this. The way the treaty was written put pressure on the Dutch to keep sending ships full of gifts, but did not put the same pressure on the people of Axim to accept these gifts and provide slaves in return. The Kings of Axim avoided locking themselves into a contract which put burdens onto their people, and instead signed a treaty which ensured that the Dutch would have to provide continuous support and appeasement in order to be able to send ships full of slaves to the Americas. The other West African treaties with the West Indies Company read in the same way.

Often these treaties closed with an assurance that all present signatories understood the treaty. Sometimes, the treaties specified that the European words on the treaty had been translated into the Africans' language¹⁰¹, while other times, the treaties concluded with "*nevensons onderstont*," loosely translated to "The following people understand [the terms of this treaty]".¹⁰² The Prussians followed this model. In their 1682 treaty with the locals of Taccorary, near present-day Takoradi, they included the line "We important persons and Caboceers of the village of Taccorary swear that the Tolk [representative of the BAC] trustworthily interpreted and translated this above contract into the negro language..."¹⁰³

It is important to question what this closing custom meant. For the Europeans, this formality was likely one further way to ensure the legitimacy of these European legal documents.

After all, when making treaties and contracts with other Europeans, translators were often

¹⁰¹ The contracts never mention the names of these languages, only that the languages were spoken by the Africans. It is possible, and I would argue probable, that at times when the Dutch referred to the language of the Africans or Negroes, particularly in the earlier 1600s, they were referring to Portuguese. Portugal's long history with the African continent makes it likely that Portuguese was the lingua franca of Atlantic West Africa. Even in the late 17th century, the Prussian documents mention that some of the Africans with whom they traded spoke Portuguese and that Portuguese interpreters were used in these cases.

¹⁰²"Contract between the WIC and Jaby and Chama," NA 12571-38-1

¹⁰³ "En sweeren wy Hoofluyden en Caboceros van't Drop Taccorary... dit boven staande Contract, naar dat het ons door den Tolk, getrouwelijk in de Negros Taal is geinterpreteert en vertaalt..." I.H.A Rep. 65 N. 43 32 s. 12

involved to ensure each party understood what was expected of them. For West Africans, however, the treaties contained concepts that were foreign or infeasible in such a location. For example, in the Treaty of Axim, the Dutch asked the Aximites to swear fealty to their ruler, making the Africans vassals of the Dutch Republic. But these terms and their strict hierarchical undertones did not translate to locals whose horizontal relations with one another were governed first and foremost by kinship ties. As this dissertation demonstrates, it was the European slavers who ended up folded into African networks and systems, and not imposing their way of doing things upon West Africa. This is but one incongruence between the language of the treaty and the actual way business was conducted in West Africa. The priorities of each party did not often translate despite the companies' efforts to enlist translators or go-betweens.

The ways in which Europeans interpreted these treaties are no secret. The language in the treaties themselves is straightforward. Instead of contracting for a certain number of slaves, or for material goods with which to exchange for them, the contracts are for deep and binding alliances between the kingdom of the Netherlands, and the native polity. As the Portuguese had referred to the native rulers (sometimes referred to as chiefs, kings, caboceers, or princes, depending on who had written the document) as knights of the kingdom of Portugal, so the Dutch had referred to them as vassals of the Netherlands.

Many of the treaties, such as the Treaty of Axim, also had the practice of pawnship written into them. Each of the Kings of Axim who had signed this treaty would leave one of their sons with the Dutch in the fort as guarantee that they would uphold their terms of the contract. This practice meant that the labor or services of a relative could be used as collateral for the payment or fulfillment of debts in situations where no previous basis of trust had been established. It differed from slavery in that it was a temporary situation with very clearly defined

rules and expectations from both sides. Pawnship was widely practiced in West Africa prior to European contact.¹⁰⁴

After this initial early period of the Atlantic slave trade, European contact would change the nature of pawnship in Atlantic West Africa into a practice referred to as panyarring. This practice differed from pawnship in several crucial ways: pawnship was always offered and/or requested, and performed after a series of careful negotiations, while panyarring was often done by force. Also, panyarred individuals could and were sold into the transatlantic slave trade, and would be difficult, if not impossible to recover.¹⁰⁵ While pawning involved the bartering of the labor of relatives, panyarring involved hostage taking. The very baseline assumption underlying the panyarring system was one which operated from a principle of distrust as the default from which to begin negotiations.

The Treaty of Axim shows that as of 1642, coastal West Africans were still practicing pawnship, and had not yet experienced panyarring. This is illustrative of how relations between Atlantic West Africans and the Portuguese were based at least partially on trust. The fact that the Kings of Axim were willing to pawn their children to the Dutch shows that they carried over these feelings about trade with Europeans to their new Dutch enterprise. In this way the Dutch were able to inherit the careful relationships the Portuguese had built up with the peoples of Elmina and Axim alongside the houses, gardens, and compounds of the fort as specified in the treaty. As in the East Indies and in Northeastern Brazil, the Dutch had taken over from the Portuguese and used Portuguese precedent when accomplishing their New World economic

¹⁰⁴ In fact, the English word comes from the word which was used by the Portuguese to describe the practice they observed among the locals upon first contact. See Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson "The Business of Slaving: Pawnship in Western Africa, c. 1600–1810," *The Journal of African History* 42 (2001): 67–89.

¹⁰⁵ It is important to note here that enslaved Africans sold into the transatlantic slave trade occasionally were able to navigate and negotiate their way back home. Randy Sparks' book, *The Two Princes of Calabar*, is about two such individuals. See Randy Sparks, *The Two Princes of Calabar: An Eighteenth Century Atlantic Odyssey* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2004).

goals. This would slowly change over the course of the 1600s as more Europeans joined the fray both in the Americas and in Atlantic West Africa. As competition for New World riches and African slaves intensified, so would Dutch policies and practices in Africa and the Americas.

This dynamic would become important when other European powers became interested in the trade and set up similar treaties and fortresses, usually only within a few kilometers of one another. Africans were an integral part of the globalizing of economic and cultural transactions.¹⁰⁶ The nature of these transactions allowed various West African powers to pit Europeans against one another in a divide-and-conquer strategy which fragmented the trade. This fragmentation would have important ramifications for the slave trade, for West Africa, and for the newly emerging global market.

Conclusion

By the time Portugal regained control over Northeastern Brazil the WIC had lost its initial reason for entering the slave trade. Most of the sugar planters in Dutch Brazil who did not stay and submit to Portuguese rule migrated elsewhere in the Caribbean region, like Barbados. In continuing and expanding the sugar-plantation process elsewhere, they ensured a never-ending demand for slaves.¹⁰⁷ In addition to this, the demand for slaves in the non-Dutch Atlantic nearly always outstripped the supply, and so the Dutch were able to find willing buyers for the slaves they obtained in West Africa. Though the failed Brazil project demonstrated that the Dutch did not have the population necessary to guarantee safe maintenance of settler colonies, it also

¹⁰⁶ A similar argument is made in David Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe: 1450-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁷ See Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press: 1972).

showed that they were the strongest at maritime trade. While they established the North American colony of New Netherland, the majority of the WIC's focus shifted to upkeep of the merchant fleet and the trading bases in West Africa and in the Caribbean where the most money could be made with the least amount of European employees and military presence.

The island of Curaçao, forty miles from the coast of Venezuela, became the next focus for the Dutch slave trade once Northeastern Brazil reverted back to Portugal. The Spanish had decimated the island through ranching and dyewood cutting, and the indigenous population dwindled. When the WIC came to capture it in 1634, it was low on Spain's list of priorities, and the Dutch were able to maintain their hold on it despite its proximity to Spain's empire. The Dutch island became the WIC's check-in point for the slave trade. Most privateered slaves were rerouted to Curaçao and then resold from there. Soon WIC vessels from West Africa were also offloading their slave cargoes there. Colonists from the Spanish mainland sailed to Curaçao to circumvent Spain's monopoly and purchase slaves from the Dutch.¹⁰⁸ The importance of this Caribbean marketplace only grew alongside American demands for slave labor, and soon West Africa became inundated with diverse aspiring European powers looking to cash in on the trade in slaves.

Other European powers did not want to be dependent upon the Dutch for their slave supply. Following the Portuguese and Dutch, other nations flocked to West Central Africa and to Guinea to establish their trading posts and to sign contracts with locals. On the Gold Coast, the English were the largest competitor for the WIC. While the Dutch WIC had built up its presence in the Gold Coast, English merchants, both independent and those working for companies attempted to make inroads into the trade. In 1650 they found their chance.

¹⁰⁸ See Linda Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

The king of Fetu and his chiefs and caboceers disliked the aggressive and entitled behavior of the WIC's commander, so they allowed both the English (as the English Guinea Company, the RAC's predecessor) and the Swedish to build a trading fortress at Cabo Corso, or Cape Coast.¹⁰⁹ This angered the WIC operatives, who claimed they had a difficult enough time extracting slaves from the Gold Coast without other Europeans encroaching on their African trading partners.

A year later, the Navigation Acts of 1651, which stated that all goods imported to England from the Americas had to be imported on English ships, were perceived by the Dutch, the traditional middle-men in these dealings, as a direct attack. That same year, the English built a fort on the Gold Coast at Kormantine (around 45 kilometers from Elmina), which caused more friction between the two powers. Shortly thereafter in 1652, the first Anglo-Dutch War between the Dutch Republic and England broke out. The biggest consequence for the Gold Coast was that the English navy and privateers seized Dutch merchant ships, including those of the WIC, which caused the Dutch to use their WIC to plan retaliation.

This rekindled the already smoldering rivalry between the English and Dutch in West Africa. Locals aligned and realigned themselves in order to satisfy personal goals, intensifying the rivalry which would influence most aspects of the slave trade. After the first Anglo-Dutch War, Atlantic Africa folded itself into the emerging global economy through participation in the English/Dutch rivalry in the second (1665-1667) and third (1672-1674) Anglo-Dutch Wars and in the four Komenda Wars (1694-1700) which followed.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 313

CHAPTER II

GOLD COAST AFRICANS, WAR, AND THE ANGLO-DUTCH RIVALRY

As more Europeans, both independent and as part of a chartered company, flocked to the Gold Coast for its purported wealth of gold and slaves, the ferocity of competition there increased. The loyalty of reliable African trading partners who were attuned to European mercantile customs and well-connected enough to manage slave traders from the interior came at a premium. These Africans and their peoples were highly aware of how desirable their trade was and of how much influence they could wield over the Europeans and the goods and martial aid both company employees and independent merchants brought for the Africans. Slave traders in Africa were unable to keep up with the demand for slaves to extract those resources from the Americas. By the 1650s, European competition for global resources had reached an all-time high. This made the Gold Coast a valuable place, and European inability to control it drove Europeans to fight one another in a series wars with multiple fronts for advantages in the trade.

The Gold Coast was a natural location for these wars to play out. From 1665 to 1700, the years of the most rapid expansion of European fortresses on the Gold Coast, this region of West Africa saw a series of wars play out partially upon its shores: the Second Anglo-Dutch War

(1665-1667), the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674), and the four Komenda Wars which raged continuously from 1694 until 1700. That means that aside from the brief and turbulent respite from these wars between the Third Anglo-Dutch War and the Komenda wars, in these thirty-five years, African and European people on the coast were nearly always either preparing for war, warring, or repairing the aftermath of war. Mercantile culture became inextricably intertwined with martial culture, and would continue to be so until the colonial period. Everywhere African and European interests intersected, African cultures grew increasingly martial to accommodate the consequences of this competition. They tasked European allies with providing them military assistance to vanquish their enemies, in the form of training, physical soldiers, the building of fortifications, and the importing of European weapons including guns and cannons.¹¹⁰

In this period of intense competition and war, prominent Gold Coast Africans exploited the rivalry between the Dutch and the English over trading rights in order to obtain wealth and power while weakening the European hold on the Gold Coast. Examining the ways in which Africans and Europeans enmeshed themselves in these conflicts allows us a deeper glimpse into the mercantile culture of the slave trade. This violent competition and the ways in which Africans exploited it created conditions ripe for other powers, such as the Prussians, Danes, and

¹¹⁰ The increasing West African preference for and reliance upon weaponry was a direct response to English and Dutch demands on West Africa. While the Dutch banned the sale of firearms in West Africa between 1610s and 1650s, local demands, increasing competition, and the interloper trade contributed to the growth in the trade of, and desire for firearms. Approximately 20,000 firearms per year were brought to the West African coast by the close of the seventeenth century. Most of these were the older and less efficient matchlock, as opposed to “Frenchlock” or flintlock guns used in Europe. These may have been preferred to the newer models, as their longevity could be extended by African blacksmiths, who created parts to repair and extend the old weapon’s lives. See James Alpern, “What Africans Got for their Slaves: A Master List of European Trade Goods,” *History in Africa* 22 (1995): 19, and DeCorse, *An Archaeology of Elmina*, 169

Swedes, as well as the non-licensed traders, freebooters, and pirates to enter the Gold Coast slave trade.

Gold Coast Polities and Trade Politics

The English were the other main contender, alongside the Dutch, for Iberian wealth in the Atlantic world in the second half of the 1600s. Though the WIC was formed before the RAC, English slave traders did operate in West Africa at the time the WIC first did, or even before.¹¹¹ Before that official chartered beginning of the English slave trade, independent merchants sailing from English ports such as Liverpool, Bristol, and London competed with the Portuguese and Dutch for the Gold Coast trade.¹¹² In 1660, the English crown granted the slave trading monopoly to the Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading with Africa. From that point forward, the independent English slave traders became interlopers onto the trade, liable for prosecution under English law, just as the independent Dutch traders in West Africa had with the formation of the WIC. Twelve years later in 1672, the English company restarted with a new name, the Royal Africa Company. The appearance of an official English company alongside the WIC set off a chain of events stemming from economic competition which transformed trade politics on the Gold Coast.

¹¹¹ The most well-known English example of this is of course the infamous John Hawkins, who in 1562 commanded England's first slave trading expedition, selling his human cargo to the Spanish Americas. Other British merchants and seamen attempted to replicate his successes prior to the forming of the official British slave trading companies, though less is known about them. See Harry Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), and Bertram Davis, *Proof of Eminence: The Life of Sir John Hawkins*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

¹¹² See Suzanne Schwartz, *Slave Captain: The Career of James Irving in the Liverpool Slave Trade* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

The role of the interior societies of the Gold Coast has been written about extensively by Africanists who explore the relationship between the coastal zone upon which the slave fortresses, castles, and factories were built, and the interior, where the power of African polities and expansionist states was most concentrated. Toby Green, Ray Kea, and Harvey Feinberg are just a handful of scholars who have illuminated the important relationship between Africans on the coast and the interior which most European slave traders at the time did not fully grasp.¹¹³ The implications of this lack of understanding are that the European primary sources are remarkably silent regarding the forces at work in African politics on the Gold Coast.

Port towns in West Africa were the main commercial settlements and Africans' direct access to European goods. This accounted for the frequent changes in their economic state, their societies, their politics and political alliances, and the drastic demographic changes associated with war and empire. The towns which sprung up around the slave fortresses were designed for transshipment, and functioned as the points of contact between coastal trade (which connected the Gold Coast to other coastal regions in West Africa, West Central Africa, as well as Europe and the Americas), and hinterland trade (which connected the Gold Coast to trans-Saharan trade routes and access to the Mediterranean and the Middle East).¹¹⁴ Archaeological evidence from the nearby slave-trading port of Ouidah in Guinea shows that the local rulers of these ports

¹¹³ Certainly well-known European explorers and slave traders like the English William Snellgrave, the Prussian Johann Peter Oettinger, and the Dutch traders Piet van de Broecke and Willem Bosman made attempts to understand these interactions in their eyewitness accounts of the slave trade listed in the bibliography, but none were entirely accurate or comprehensive in their reports and/or estimations.

¹¹⁴ There are many studies of West African port towns in the 17th and 18th centuries which shed more light on the day to day operations of and interactions between slave fortresses and the surrounding port towns. See Randi Sparks, *Where the Negroes are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port': 1727-1892*. (Akron, Ohio University Press, 2004); and Franklin Knight and Peggy Liss, *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

imposed many trade conditions upon European slave traders which demonstrated their intent to control and confine Europeans so as to allow Africans the upper hand in trade.¹¹⁵

Port towns were both the products of growing trade, as well as the reasons for further expansion of trade and merchant capital. The towns which sprung up around the slave fortresses strengthened the hinterland polities and empires that administrated them.¹¹⁶ They provided the basis for an *obirempon* ideology: the identification of aristocratic status with the accumulation of wealth derived from trade. This meant that in the Gold Coast, slavery developed as a system of social production. In West Africa, the accumulation of wealth from trading profits was a direct result of the trade in slaves with Europeans.¹¹⁷ This process naturally was mirrored elsewhere in the Atlantic triangle where the basis for economy rested on slave labor.

West Africans engaged in the slave trade made distinctions between slaves belonging to their community, and slaves designated for trans-shipment to the Americas. Only in rare cases of criminality and deviance or political treachery, or as a casualty of the hostage-taking system of panyarring did a slave or free person from these slave trading communities find themselves designated for the Atlantic trade. Community slaves belonged to locals and over time were integrated into the community and could count on their descendants' freedom. They were often domestic slaves, and participated in the community with partial rights. Slaves designated for the Atlantic trade, on the other hand, were chattel from the start. As the livelihoods of these slave

¹¹⁵ Kenneth G. Kelley, "Controlling Traders: Slave Coast Strategies at Savi and Ouidah," in *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World*, ed. Caroline A. Williams, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009) 151-172.

¹¹⁶ For an idea how these port/hinterland relations functioned in West Central Africa, see Mariana P. Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and its Hinterland*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹¹⁷ Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 56.

trading communities depended on their stock of slaves, they had more difficult lives, and were mostly treated like property from their moment of capture with no rights.

Despite the slave trade being crucial to many West African economies, the wealth of the slave trade was largely localized and remained on the coast. The larger states which encompassed slave trading communities were less reliant on slave sales in the seventeenth century.¹¹⁸ Instead, these larger polities were more interested in taxes they could collect from wealthy African slave traders and from European trading companies, and in the soldiers these coastal communities could provide for the struggles between states. Most pre-colonial states of Sub-Saharan Africa organized their governments to exploit the local power of the village communities they subsumed. Often then, the smaller coastal communities which found themselves part of polities like Akwamu, Axim and later Ashanti were used to organize the judiciary system, the tax collection, or part of the military.¹¹⁹

By the seventeenth century, Akan merchants dominated the coastal hinterland of the central region of the Gold Coast: From Fort Shama just east of Cape Three Points all the way East to Winneba. This area was crucial to both the Dutch and the English, as it contained the main Gold Coast slave trade administrative centers, Elmina and Cape Coast, from which trade to the other Gold Coast fortresses flowed. Directly to the west of this center was controlled by Eguafu, which alternated between allying itself with the Akan, and entering into competition with them. For Europeans, the most important ports of Eguafu were British and Dutch Komenda, which answered to Cape Coast and Elmina respectively. Further West still and

¹¹⁸ Michal Tymowski, *The Origins and Structures of Political Institutions in Pre-Colonial Black Africa: Dynastic Monarchy, Taxes and Tributes, War and Slavery, Kinship and Territory* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 110.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 105.

encompassing Cape Three Points in the mid seventeenth-century was the Axim Commonwealth which traded with the European companies in spaces such as Pokesu, Akwida, Butri, and Cape Apollonia. To the east of the Akan-centered ports was a region often dominated by or in allegiance to Great Accra, and this is where the Danish performed the bulk of their slave trade exchanges.¹²⁰ These larger polities were in constant states of changing alliances and competition with one another, and port cities often switched hands to accommodate these shifts in alliances. This happened too swiftly for European slave traders of the royal slave trading companies to keep track. The WIC and RAC's failure to keep abreast with these changes and sign new contracts when they came into effect would later work in the favor of the smaller companies, such as the Swedish and Prussian companies, which then inserted themselves into important points in the slave trade.

These complex and multivalent polities of the Gold Coast naturally were precarious for the European companies which built fortresses up and down the coast with insufficient awareness or regard for interior territorial issues. For example, the WIC had fortresses in Elmina, which was under Akan jurisdiction, as well as in Sekondi and Axim, places which were often allied and sometimes part of the Axim Commonwealth. This meant that each company had unwittingly and/or carelessly allied itself with more than one emerging empire. These empires could and did merge and separate from other polities, sometimes through peaceable means and other times through war. The contracts Europeans had signed with each coastal group around the fortresses extended to the empire with which that group had alliances. Often fortresses of the

¹²⁰ *Unnamed Map* [map]. 1662-3. NA 12571-38-1, and *A Draught of the Coast of AFRICA From the Streights Mouth to Cape Bona Esprance* [map]. 1680. "Harvard Pusey Map Library. Afriterrra: The Cartographic Free Library. Accessed December 3, 2013. Available online <http://catalog.afriterrra.org/viewMap.cmd?number=1212>.

European companies were attacked by their African allies due to the political demands of the interior which few seventeenth-century Europeans were able to visit or influence.¹²¹

Often this meant that the WIC retaliated against its own employees rather than anger their trading partners. The WIC cycled through employees at a steady rate, and not even the Director Generals of the Gold Coast were exempt from this. These men were the highest WIC authority in Guinea, who theoretically oversaw the Dutch business and trade of the entire Gold Coast from their seat in the Castle of Elmina.¹²² From 1624 to 1724, there were a total of thirty one Director Generals.¹²³ Although there was no official length or limits for terms served, the average term length was just over three years. Of the thirty one Director Generals, only three returned to serve again. The shortest term served was a mere two months.¹²⁴

Some of this can be attributed to living conditions, of course. Malaria was ever-present, as were a host of diseases to which Europeans had little immunity. But the main reason was because the position, while lucrative in the short term, became the scapegoat upon which the WIC could blame its poor relations with Elmina's local population. While the shareholders and heads of the Dutch Republic appointed the position, the locals living in the town surrounding Elmina effectively decided when the Director Generals had overstayed their welcome. The shareholders of the WIC understood early on that supporting unpopular Directors would be

¹²¹Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics*, 58-94; and Harvey M. Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast During the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1989) 48.

¹²² Elmina was the official seat, though occasionally the WIC found it preferable for the Director-Generals to be seated elsewhere.

¹²³ A few of these men called themselves "Governors" instead of Director General, but their duties, responsibilities, and pay were commensurate.

¹²⁴ A list of these men and the time they served can be found on Ben Cahoon's *WorldStatesmen.org*, *An Online Encyclopedia of the Leaders of Nations and Territories*. <http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Ghana.html#Dutch> accessed May 13, 2014. This website also lists the English equivalents and the time they spent serving.

detrimental to the trade. Instead, each new Director inherited the position and began his tenor by blaming all of the problems with the Dutch slave trade upon the previous Director, who most likely had fled in disgrace, had been forced to resign, or in some cases, had been killed by locals. This change of directors would placate the African townspeople around Elmina for a short time in which the WIC could expect favorable trading conditions, but as soon as the WIC saw a disruption in the trade, the company sought to replace the director and find another one who could mollify local slave traders and fill slave ships. This must have seemed like instability and weakness to the Africans who traded with the company, as they often determined the change of director, and in this way could get rid of those whom they could not easily manipulate.

Power Relations between and Among Africans and Company Slavers

As practiced in the Americas and Asia, Europeans in Africa insisted on paper contracts with natives.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, contracts between Dutch and Africans show that the Dutch did make attempts at understanding the relationships between coastal areas and inland polities. These contracts between the European slave trading companies and Gold Coast Africans are some of the best sources from this time period, as they are among the only ones which record the names and words of important Africans. In the vast majority of source material from the slave trading companies, European slave traders did not see fit to record the names of the African people with whom they conducted business. Gold Coast Africans are referred to as simply "the local" or by their title ("Caboceer," "Captain," "King," or "Chief"), their occupation ("washer-woman" or "messenger" or "translator" or "soldier"), their relationship to a European ("the Concubine," "the

factor's daughter,") or the name of the place from which they originated ("the village-negro"). This is in part because the vast majority of these Africans were not literate and so did not receive written correspondence from the European slave traders. The documents written about them were for the consumption of other Europeans. The contracts and treaties, however, were written for both Africans and Europeans and required names and signatures. If what is stated in the contracts are to be believed, the contracts were created in the presence of Africans with their input, and interpreted or translated back to the Africans into a language in which they were fluent before both Europeans and Africans signed them.¹²⁶ Therefore, these official and ritualized formal documents are often the closest historians can get toward African input in the slave trading documents.¹²⁷

In the Treaty of Greater Ahanta and Boutry in 1662, the WIC was able to find caboceers who answered to Ahanta, the polity which had jurisdiction over the area upon which the slave trading Fort Batensteyn at Boutry was located. Rochia, the Captain of Boutry co-signed this contract with Meneme Harman of Zakonde, in present-day Sekondi.¹²⁸ The treaty was also signed by several other Ahanta: Cubiessang, Aloiny, Ladiou, Ampatee, Maniboyn (or

¹²⁶ The languages used are not always specified. In one of the documents of the Brandenburg Africa Company, the contract specifically states that it was translated into "the African-language," but at other times, it is possible the language used was one more Europeans and Africans could speak: Portuguese. In the eighteenth century, this would change, as more Africans became fluent in the languages of the nearest slave trading companies.

¹²⁷ NA 1.05.01.02 122 "Contracten Met Naturellen"

¹²⁸ Rochia's military title of Captain is telling of the martial lifestyle the Ahanta had adopted in order to survive. Immediately prior to the signing of this treaty, the Ahanta had been devastated by a war with neighboring "Encassar" (possibly they meant the historical kingdom of Inkassa, a Sefwi-speaking Akan subgroup present in Western Ghana, though this is not certain). Those Ahanta with military prowess who survived conflicts rose to positions of prominence within society, hence Captain Rochia's position to negotiate a treaty with the WIC.

Maneboy), Azifon, Quazy, and Acha. This contract established Ahanta as a protectorate of the WIC, and used feudal terms such as "vassals" to describe the nature of the relationship.¹²⁹

Ahanta was in a very precarious position in the seventeenth century. Comprised of a confederacy of mostly Akan chiefdoms, including refugees from previous wars, it was most willing to trade with the Dutch in exchange for military protection to avoid annihilation or assimilation with larger states which it had narrowly avoided up until that point. The caboceers agreed to "subjugate themselves" to the Director General of the WIC "on the condition that he has to fortify and make the same [Fortress at Boutry] defendable, in order to keep us safe and free from the dangers of war."¹³⁰ Documents like these give important clues as to the power balance between Africans and Europeans.

They show that Europeans were in an impossible situation, as creating a contract or treaty with a peoples from the Gold Coast helped solidify monopoly, but at the same time, the only Africans who appeared to honor monopoly were those not in a position to seek out better deals. Playing Europeans against one another was a sign of strength and security, as well as connectedness and impunity: the Africans who did so, did so because the Europeans needed something from them, and therefore could not stop them from free trade. Adhering to European monopoly, on the other hand, was a sign of subservience and desperation, as only those peoples who prized protection over profit did so. The peoples who valued protection over profit were

¹²⁹" Opdracht van Hooghanta ende Bountry, and Contract Tusschen Generaal Jacob Ruijchaver en de Caboceros van Axem, 17 Februari 1642," in *Contracten met Naturellen*, NA 1.05.01.02.122

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* It is worth noting here that once the Dutch exerted too much control there in the late 1660s, however, and failed by African estimations to keep them safe, the Ahanta allied themselves with the newly-arrived Prussian Brandenburg Africa Company (BAC) in order to leverage the WIC. This action, and much of the allegiance-switching of Africans between the larger and smaller companies is explained in greater detail in the next chapter.

those who were on the descend, while those who shopped around tended on the whole to be ascending political powers.

European company officials understood these concepts at varying levels. When they failed to exert control over Africans, they turned to those things over which they had more control: other Europeans. Employees of the WIC and RAC targeted one another and each made the other's lives more difficult in any way they could.¹³¹ The complaints of RAC factors made it to the King's ears when the company's directors in England turned to their monarch for further help with the Dutch. In 1663, the company wrote to King Charles II to complain about the Dutch, saying that they

have endeavored to drive the English Company from the coast, have followed their ships from port to port, and have hindered them coming nigh the shore to trade; they have persuaded the negroes to destroy their servants and to take their forts, have seize their boats and goods, violently taken possession of Cape Coast, and shot at his Majesty's Royal Flag.

¹³¹ Of course, the Dutch-English rivalry in the Atlantic World is complicated by occasions of cordial relations for mutual profit, as Wim Klooster has pointed out. Dutch and English merchants collaborated in the contraband trade, and Dutch commercial aid and shipping was important to several fledging English colonies in the Americas. Primary sources of the WIC and RAC indicate that even in the trade in Guinea, Europeans from various nations at times found it more prudent to work together when the balance of power shifted too far in the direction of one competitor. As more diverse European traders established themselves on the Gold Coast (the official companies of the Prussians, Danes, and Swedes, and also independent merchants, interlopers, and pirates of every nationality), African groups such as the Ahanta pitted these foreign traders against one another in order to maintain favorable power relations. When this went too far, the polarity pushed European traders into precarious positions with little maneuvering space, and forced them to reach out to their European competition for support, though this was understood by all parties to be always temporary. See Wim Klooster, "Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Seventeenth Century: An Atlantic Partnership?" in *Shaping the Stuart World, 1603-1714: The Atlantic Connection*, ed. Allan I. Macinnes et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 261-282.

In the letter, they also thanked the King for sending his ships “to give the Company a respect in the eyes of the natives.”¹³² This thanks indicates that the English were struggling to maintain any type of upper-hand with Africans in the slave trading process. From the ways in which this letter discussed the trade, it was clear to the RAC that their success in the slave trade hinged on African cooperation and alliances, and even the King understood this complication. Problems with the WIC interfered with the RAC’s relationship with the natives, and therefore the flow in slaves.

Many of the complaints the English and Dutch made against one another were far from new: they were echoes of the complaints the Portuguese had levied against the RAC and WIC a century before. Even the English and Dutch factors in Africa were aware of this pattern. English factor, John Snow, of the RAC remarked

As to the Europeans it is certain that the perpetuall difference between the Dutch & us on points that it’s impossible to decide on whose side the right belongs since both make settlements by invitations from the natives, have been one of the great steps to the ruine of the trade.¹³³

Consequences of the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654) on the Gold Coast

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Commonwealth of England and the United Provinces of the Netherlands fought a series of wars, the Anglo-Dutch Wars and the

¹³² "The Company of Royal Adventurers to the King, 1663, " in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 164-165

¹³³ John Snow to RAC, 31 July 1705, BNA T.70/102, f.2B

Komenda Wars, over trading rights and territories. Due to the high-stakes nature of the Gold and Slave trades, the Gold Coast was a frequent location in which these wars played out. During the first Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654), the English navy attacked Dutch shipping, mainly in Europe, until the Dutch were forced to accept English monopoly on trade with all English colonies. As the Dutch empire depended upon trans-shipping illicit cargo to the colonies of other nations, including the English, the end of this war only fomented the discontent which led to the second. Another important ramification of this first war was the fate of Dutch Brazil: as the Dutch were spread too thin in the Atlantic World, they abandoned defense of Brazil to save their more strategic holdings, which gave the Portuguese their opportunity to re-conquer an area with the help of Brazilians, both free and enslaved, who either objected to the Dutch, or were sympathetic to Portuguese rule.¹³⁴

Dutch Brazil was the WIC's largest colony, and its many sugar plantations functioned as the Dutch impetus for the slave trade. The first Anglo-Dutch War was responsible for the shift in Dutch slave trade focus. Instead of supplying their settler colonies with slaves, the WIC focused mainly on finding innovative ways to circumvent other European monopolies to supply their colonies. The slaves the WIC obtained in Africa after the reconquest of Northeastern Brazil were thereafter destined for Curaçao and other locations from which they could more easily enter the inter-American economy and be trans-shipped to the American colonies of other European countries.¹³⁵ The Dutch were able to circumvent other nation's insistence on mercantilism by shipping from Dutch holdings in Africa to Dutch holdings in the Caribbean. They refused to take

¹³⁴ See Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1995), and Hebe Mattos, "Black troops and Hierarchies of Color in the Portuguese Atlantic World: The Case of Henrique Dias and his Black Regiment," *Luso-Brazilian Review* Volume 45, Number 1, 2008, 6-29.

¹³⁵ Linda Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband*, 41-56

responsibility for the citizens of other nations who came to Dutch Caribbean holdings to buy slaves illicitly.

This first war, therefore, did not end the commercial rivalry between these two emerging European forces. Instead, it magnified this rivalry. Everywhere in the world where the Dutch and English traded, hostility continued between their trading companies. There is an burgeoning historiography on the Dutch-Anglo Wars as played out in the East Indies, but the hostilities in West Africa and the Caribbean are less addressed, particularly in the English-language historiography.¹³⁶ While the end of the first war in 1654 officially ended hostilities, the Dutch injected funds from overseas ventures into a new shipbuilding program to prepare for the next inevitable conflict.

Despite a lengthy historiography, and because of historical focus on the rivalry between the Dutch and English in the making of the modern world, there is a tendency to read the power relations between Europeans and Africans in West Africa in one-sided terms of coercion and colonialism. However, this power imbalance between Africans and Europeans did not develop until the nineteenth century. Europeans built their trading posts, fortresses, and castles on African land to protect themselves from volatile local politics as well as from one another, and to store goods and slaves while waiting for ships to take them away. Permission to build and use

¹³⁶ See Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ulbe Bosman and Remco Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies: A History of Creolization and Empire, 1500-1920*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008); J. Farnell, "The Navigation Act of 1651, the First Dutch War, and the London Merchant Company," *The Economic History Review, New Series* 16 (1964): 439-454; Douglas Irwin, "Mercantilism as a Strategic Trade Policy: The Anglo-Dutch Rivalry for the East India Trade," *The Journal of Political Economy* 99 (1991): 1296-1314; Geritt Knapp, "Headhunting, Carnage and Armed Peace in Amboina, 1500-1700," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46 (2003): 165-192; and Vincent Loth, "Armed Incidents and Unpaid Bills: Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Banda Islands in the Seventeenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 29 (1995): 705-740.

them came from contracts in which Europeans recognized the land as belonging to Africans, who demanded payment (usually currency or martial power) for the privilege.¹³⁷

Robin Law argued that the political fragmentation of the local African societies allowed Europeans to acquire an exceptional strength on the Gold Coast.¹³⁸ While this became true in the eighteenth century, I argue that the pre-colonial situation on the Gold Coast did not favor Europeans, who were more fragmented than the Africans. Leaders of the Gold Coast knew that if internal African conflicts could not be avoided, then fragmenting the power of the Europeans was necessary.¹³⁹

The long-standing Dutch-Anglo rivalry was magnified in the already precarious environment of war in the second half of the seventeenth century Gold Coast. While the RAC had the most powerful naval power in the Atlantic world because of their privateering, the WIC had the biggest commercial fleet thanks to theirs. These different attributes led to a difference in tactics which ensured that neither English nor Dutch would ever have the upper hand in the Guinea trade.

Although the Dutch and English had each cemented their presence on the Gold Coast, number of competitors participating in the slave trade in the seventeenth century skyrocketed to

¹³⁷ English interlopers began selling guns to Africans in the 1640s and soon thereafter official trading companies included guns as part of their trade. Still, Africans recognized that European armies had more experience using guns and ammunition the most effectively, and so they exploited European support and manipulated European rivalries in order to get access to weaponry and other military equipment. See Robin Law, "Horses, Firearms, and Political Power in Pre-Colonial West Africa," *Past and Present* (1976) 72 (1): 112-132

¹³⁸ Robin Law, ed., *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade, Volume 1: The Operation of the Slave Trade in Africa*. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), xxxvi.

¹³⁹ These internal conflicts on the Gold Coast were complex and had a wide variety of origins, including pressure from the expanding empires in the West African interior, ethnic divides, demographic shifts and rapid turnover in rulership inherent in the business of the slave trade, inherited alliances and enemies, feuding, and disputes, etc. See works by Ray Kea, Robin Law, John Thornton, and Kwame Yeboah Daaku in the Bibliography for more information.

its highest, and fortresses were built, destroyed, and abandoned in rapid succession. Europeans warred with other Europeans, as well as with independent Africans, and the African allies of each. In addition to this, and sometimes as a consequence, Africans waged war on a regular basis as the nature of the trade reshaped local politics and created temporary power vacuums in West Africa. Building on the works of John Thornton, Paul Lovejoy, Rebecca Shumway, and Kwame Daaku, this chapter focuses on this period of unrest, rivalry, and virtually unregulated trade.¹⁴⁰ I argue that this environment paved the way for smaller companies and independent actors both enter and prey on the Atlantic slave trade at the Gold Coast.

Europeans dealt with groups of natives who banded together for a variety of reasons beyond ethnic or linguistic. Many groups, like the Ahanta, were hybrid groups which amalgamated out of necessity and as a reaction to the widespread social changes occurring in West Africa before trade with Europeans. These groups were usually held together by a strong leader, who would either appoint a trusted broker to act as the European connection, or caboceer, or do the job himself. The other coastal groups who had much influence over the Gold Coast trade, such as Komendans or Fetu were small, but had connections or alliances with more powerful states (the Ashanti and Fante, respectively) inland. This meant that disagreements between these small groups could and did spread far and involve armies of several thousands.

On the one hand, the vanquished foes could be sold into the trade, which pleased the European slavers. On the other, these wars often disrupted slave imports from the interior, which resulted in long periods of time without supply. This led European slavers to involve themselves

¹⁴⁰ See works by Kenneth Davies, David Eltis, Philipa da Silva, Henk den Heijer, Johannes Postma, Wim Klooster, Paul Lovejoy, Ulrich van der Heyden, Kwame Daaku, Edna Bay, Joseph Inikori, and David Richardson in the Bibliography for more detailed accounts of the history of West Africa's fortresses, traders, wars, and political formations in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

in local politics. Africans fought in European-instigated wars, but more often, Europeans fought African wars in order to fulfill contractual obligations and gain advantages in trade.

The Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667) and its Consequences

A comprehensive report by S. van Braken on the state of affairs in Africa and the Americas in the aftermath of the Second Anglo-Dutch War sheds much light on the Anglo-Dutch rivalry as it played out on the Gold Coast. This conflict began officially when England attempted to end Dutch domination of global maritime trade by introducing a series of anti-Dutch mercantilist policies. In addition to warring on the Gold Coast, the nations and their companies were at war in other parts of Africa, along with in the East Indies, and the Caribbean.

As with the first war and its ramifications in Northeastern Brazil, the second war in the Caribbean affected demands for slaves, which may have caused problems with the Africans on the supply end. The slave trading fortresses had limited space in which to store slaves, and the longer slaves were kept in those deplorable dungeon conditions while awaiting transport to the Americas, the more perished. Meanwhile, with insufficient and unreliable shipments of goods coming from the Netherlands, or payments coming from the Americas due to unavailability of ships, and privateering of those few which attempted triangular trade, the WIC employees on the Gold Coast had little to trade for these incoming slaves. This environment loaned itself to tense situations there perpetuated already by the hostilities between the Dutch and English.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Charles Boxer, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the 17th Century, 1652-1674* (London: National Maritime Museum, 1974)

The Van Braken account illuminates African involvement and participation in this war, and more importantly, how this participation contributed to the instability of the region and increased hostilities between the English and Dutch.¹⁴² In retaliation to English attacks on Dutch ships and holdings in the Americas, the Dutch naval officer De Ruyter sailed to the Gold Coast, plundering all of the English lodges and forts along the way. His attacks grew increasingly bold and bloody until he arrived at Elmina, recruited soldiers (700 of the European Dutch troops, and 1,000 local African soldiers) and attacked the RAC Fort Amsterdam at Cormantin, where an Eguafu, John Cabessa defended it with his trained troops.¹⁴³ The WIC then made an agreement with the nearby polity of Fante: 50,000 pieces of eight in turn for use of 10,000 of their mercenaries, which were able to take the fort in a very spectacular and bloody conquest that ended in the destruction of John Cabessa's force. Once the Dutch took the fort in 1664, the English moved to Cape Coast Castle, which became their center of administration for the trade in Guinea, and the only Fortress the English had left after this conflict. Fortunately for the English, De Ruyter "could not corrupt the negroes of Cape Coast" the way he had the Fante.¹⁴⁴

De Ruyter made away with a giant lump of gold the Africans allied with the RAC had stored there, claiming it for the Dutch. During the seventeenth century, the English obtained their

¹⁴² S. van Braken was an employee of the WIC about whom relatively little is known. He visited all of the Dutch holdings on the Gold Coast right after the Second Anglo-Dutch War in order to compile a report on the state of the WIC in the aftermath of war. The account is full of hearsay of WIC employees and witnesses of the second Anglo-Dutch War whom he questioned, alongside his own observations of the physical state of the fortresses he visited. It is written in a businesslike manner of a man compiling statements and evidence of events he himself did not witness firsthand. The strength of this source lies in its thoroughness with regard to details which would otherwise be lost to historians.

¹⁴³ The first English fortresses on the Gold Coast were built in the 1630s with Fort Cormantine on the coast in the present-day Central region of Ghana. John Cabessa is also known by his father's name, John Kabes, in the documentation, with several variations in spelling.

¹⁴⁴ "An Account of De Ruyter's Barbarities in Guinea in 1664" in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 5: 1661-1668*, ed. Noel Sainsbury (1880), 289-295.

Gold from the Gold Coast and slaves from other locations mainly in West Africa. This changed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when the RAC lost its British Monopoly, the Gold Coast grew less important for its Gold, and became known for its slave exports.¹⁴⁵

While the Treaty of Breda, signed in 1667 officially ended hostilities of the second Anglo-Dutch War, sources from the Gold Coast for the next few years after that show that an uneasy tension persisted between and among the British, Dutch, and their respective African allies. So when S. van Braken wrote about the state of affairs on the Gold Coast in 1670, conditions were still very much postwar and rife for further conflict.

By 1670 the trade at Axim had grown negligible. More important for the company was that a two to three day's journey down the river was Iguina, a countryside wealthy with gold. The company had built a lodge there, but the natives set fire to it after what van Braken described as "dignified negotiations," because of the wars occurring inland. The company resorted to bribing the natives to fortify this river. Then, "in order to have complete possession" of the other side of the river the WIC struck a deal with the surrounding natives that they would become subjects under the sovereignty of shareholders of the WIC in exchange for this labor.¹⁴⁶ The language used here is similar to that used in the contracts between the WIC and locals. In this case, it is likely the locals were under the impression that they had purchased Dutch military power, either in the form of supplies or soldiers and/or training, in exchange for this formalized relationship.

¹⁴⁵ Law, *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade*, xxxiv.

¹⁴⁶ "deftige negotie," and "...om daarvan de volcomen possessive te hebben," in Van Braken S., *Memorie Over Den Handel Der WIC 1670*, in GAR, Handel N. 83

At this time period the Dutch fortress at Tacorary was lost. As it was ruined in the war, the company left it abandoned rather than make attempts to operate from it. The Fortress at Shama had very few defenses and despite this had held up well in the English war. . The fortress at Shama had belonged to the Portuguese from 1580 until the Dutch took it in 1640. While the British had briefly taken it during the war, DeRuyter reclaimed it for the Dutch a few months later. Van Braken notes, however, that “the trade is altogether minimal, and the company has just as minimal jurisdiction.”¹⁴⁷ This suggests that it could have been local Africans and their associates whose presence protected this fortress during the Anglo-Dutch wars.

Van Braken continued to list each of the coastal locations upon which the WIC had formerly had an interest or had built a fortification or trading lodge. In Acara, the main complaint was that the coast was directly controlled by the kingdom of Acara which "maintains all nations," or entered into trade with Europeans indiscriminately. Despite this, the RAC had no presence there. This is indicative of a transformation in the WIC trading philosophy: while impressing the concept of Dutch monopoly onto Africans was a futile task, keeping other Europeans from reaching the Africans who traded with the Dutch was sometimes feasible, if a costly endeavor.

The Bight of Guinea, he regretfully informed, used to produce yearly up to 3,000 slaves for the WIC, though after the war the English and French had built lodges, and the local King, who was not mentioned by name, became subordinate to the King of Benin. This King would go

¹⁴⁷ “De negotie is alsmeede weynich, ende heft de Compagnie aldaar weynich jurisdictie.” in Ibid.

on to be subsumed by the empire of Dahomey, which controlled the massive and infamous eighteenth-century slaving port of Ouidah.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ See Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving Port, 1727-1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

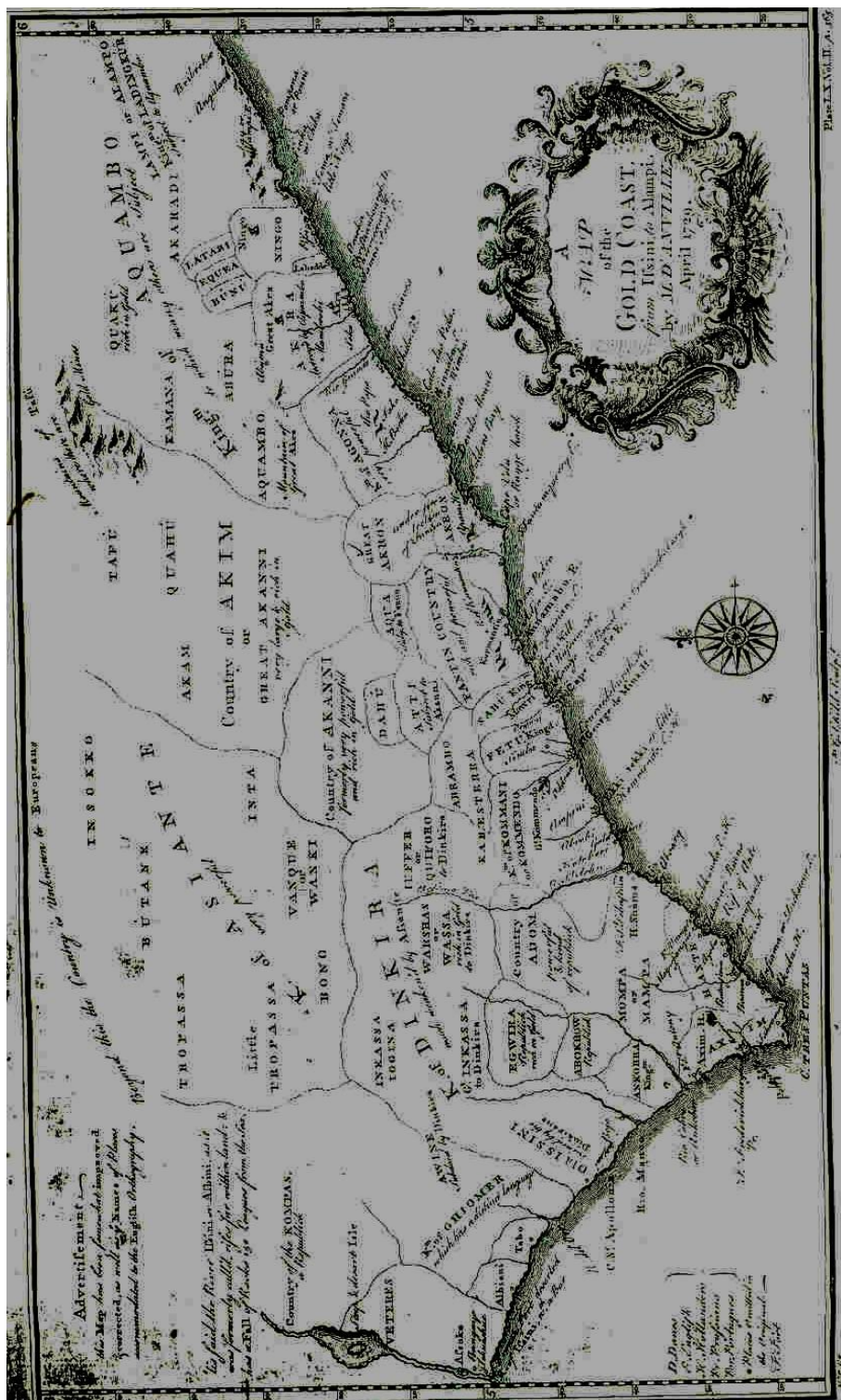


Figure 1.3 A Map of the Gold Coast: European Fortresses and African Peoples, 1729
 This map indicates the ways in which Europeans understood Gold Coast politics by 1729. It shows both the location of European trading fortresses, as well as the African peoples from whom the land beneath these fortresses was rented, and the larger expansionist polities to which these smaller groups of people belonged.
 Source: "A Map of the Gold Coast From Ifsini to Alampi " by M. D'Anville, April 1729

Komenda, the area which would become hotly contested in the Komenda Wars just twenty-seven years after the third Anglo-Dutch War, was still under control of the locals who traded with all nations. Van Braken mentioned that as of 1670, "the locals and the WIC are continually at odds," because the WIC was unable to keep other nations from trading there, and the locals freely traded with all who came.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the locals living at Komenda rented out their port to the French and the English alongside the Dutch, who had also built their trading lodges there. This, he observed, caused the natives to be "sometimes satisfied and sometimes not, so that they live at all times in rebellion."¹⁵⁰

The Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674) and the Gold Coast

The Third Anglo-Dutch War was not officially fought on the Gold Coast. Nevertheless, the competition and hostility between the WIC and RAC from the previous conflicts persisted as each company vied for African contacts and exports of gold and slaves. Both England and the Netherlands declared open season on ships of the other, making WIC and RAC ships more vulnerable to attack from privateers. In this climate, company workers were on edge and desperate to maintain exports despite the difficulty of this.

Once again, European slave traders tried everything to encourage Africans to honor European monopolies, from contractual obligations, to bribery, to outright coercion and threats. To counter the rampant trade Africans conducted with non-sanctioned traders in the vicinity of

¹⁴⁹ "leggende de swarten altyts met de Compagnie overhoop," in Van Braken S., *Memorie Over Den Handel Der WIC 1670*, in GAR Handel N. 83

¹⁵⁰ "sometijts de naturellen getemt worden ende somtijts niet, soo datse altyts in onlusten leven." in Van Braken S., *Memorie Over Den Handel Der WIC 1670*, in GAR Handel N. 83.

Elmina in 1674, the ruling Dutch council at the fort “unanimously resolved to write to the Captains of the cruising frigates to hang the very first Negro they could find on board of such a captured interloper ship from the end of the mainyard, and if they find more than one Negro, to let them draw lots for it.”¹⁵¹ Presumably WIC employees were aware of how badly such a policy would alienate the very Africans they were dependent upon for trade, but by the time this policy was resolved, the Dutch had lost so many slaves to independent traders that they could hardly imagine the trading situation getting any worse.

The numbers in WIC complaints were not an exaggeration. In a twenty-five year period (1674-1699), Rudolph Paesie found evidence of 278 independent Dutch slave ship voyages on the Gold Coast.¹⁵² Overall, Dutch independent slavers made up only a fraction of the total independent slavers operating in Guinea at this time, so the actual number of non-company slavers operating in the vicinity of territory the WIC considered theirs was significantly higher.¹⁵³ The above quote then, is indicative of the Dutch frustration with their African allies

¹⁵¹ Van Dantzig, Albert. *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast 1674-1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archives the Hague*. (Accra, Ghana: Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1978) pp. 47-48

¹⁵² For an idea of WIC losses due to Dutch independent slave traders, refer to the chart in page 50 of Rudolf Paesie's work on Lorrendrayers. In a twenty-five year period (1674-1699), he found evidence for 278 independent Dutch slave ship voyages during the WIC monopoly. Rudolf Paesie, *Lorrendrayen op Africa: De illegale goederen- en slave Handel op West-Afrika tijdens het achttiende-eeuwse handelsmonopolie van de West-Indische Compagnie, 1700-1734* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2008), 50.

¹⁵³ A closer examination of an archaeological study of Elmina seems to corroborate this presence of interlopers and illicit trade. Archaeologists found sherds of early German stoneware dating as far back as the sixteenth century. These Prussian jugs, created in various factories in the duchy of Nassau in Prussia, were not a common trade item through the WIC or RAC. As the Brandenburg African Company, had no direct trade links with Africa until after the 1650s, the ceramics must have reached West Africa through either the Portuguese, or more likely the interloper trade. Later when the Prussians did enter the trade, their grey jugs became more important for certain parts of West Africa and were associated with burials. Their ritual importance spread to other areas of Guinea, like the Ivory Coast. In the Gold Coast, Christopher deCorse found them mainly in Eguafu, the site of the Komenda Wars. The presence of these jugs is indicative of the ways in which native locals navigated their changing alliances with Europeans, and influenced trading patterns through the promotion of competition and the changing alliances among the peoples in Eguafu. As the WIC and RAC demanded exclusive rights to trade in their contracts with Africans, widespread possession of foreign trade goods could then be read as further proof that many Africans disregarded this clause of the contract for personal gain, as employees of the WIC, RAC, and BAC complained. While these

working against WIC interests, and their increasing exasperation with being at the mercy of free-dealing West African mercantile culture.

It also shows a willingness on behalf of the Dutch in West Africa, to entertain violence in Africa in a desperate attempt to gain control over the trade. Quotations like this one explain why the Dutch were so willing to enmesh themselves in local politics and wars despite knowing very little about them or the politics of the inland states which involved themselves in coastal politics. This threat also shows why Africans were willing to take the risk to trade with other partners: the Dutch had grown too bold in their attempts to enforce monopoly and Africans did not accept this. The quotation shows that the Dutch imagined themselves to have a lot more power in Africa than they did in actuality, as lethal coercion is usually a sign of both last resorts and desperation on the one hand, and delusions of grandeur, rather than any de facto power, on the other.¹⁵⁴

This climate of fear, paranoia, and competition between Europeans on the Gold Coast was enhanced through the Anglo-Dutch Wars. While a twenty-year period of relative calm followed, Europeans had set the tone for and created demand for martial violence on the Gold Coast. When the Komenda Wars broke out in 1694, employees of the WIC and RAC had enmeshed themselves in local politics so deeply, that they were unable to extricate themselves during an unpleasant and violent period of unrest. This was because these wars were fought in

Prussian jugs were sturdy and reused, the widespread use and ownership in the areas of most intense Dutch-Anglo slave trade competition should then be read as further indication of African desires to divide European power bases by encouraging the trade of interlopers and smaller, less powerful trading companies such as the BAC as a direct response to English and Dutch demands on West Africa. See DeCorse, *An Archaeology of Elmina*, 156-158.

¹⁵⁴ Benjamin Schmidt's book contains an exceptionally relevant discussion of how the Dutch imagined both themselves and "the other," and their power in the world at this time as an articulation of their new national identity in Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

the regions on which their most important trading fortresses, Dutch Elmina and English Cape Coast, were located. Trade in slaves slowed once more as the region fell into instability.

The Komenda Wars, 1694-1700

When Africans participated in European wars, it was usually with ulterior motives and for self interest. Sometimes, Europeans were able to convince their African allies to commit acts of war for which they themselves would otherwise be punished by their companies. When African troops sacked the village at Sekondi 1694, the RAC accused the Dutch of provoking the attack. This was plausible given the climate of war in Komenda, just over fifty kilometers away, at the time, though it is uncertain if that was the case. In either way, the Dutch had motive, means, and opportunity to arrange this sack of Sekondi village, as doing so destabilized the RAC's trade and enriched the WIC's allies the Twifo, who had fought with Komenda less than a year earlier.¹⁵⁵ In these fights the causes could sometimes be traced back to a European factor, and other times, all the documentation shows is accusations. In most of these wars, however, Europeans ended up at the disadvantage: either they lost money when they attempted to buy their way out of a war, or they participated in the war to their own detriment.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2011), 45.

¹⁵⁶ Often the contracts and treaties between a European slave trading company and an African polity resulted in Europeans being obligated to participate in African conflicts. Their choices were to either anger their contracted African allies by refusing to involve themselves and remain neutral (and therefore risk losing trading rights), or to participate in the war. Sometimes they were offered a third option of purchasing their way out of the war, but the costs generally were too high to sustain. See "WIC 124, D.-G. and Council, Elmina, 24 November 1693" in Albert van Dantzig, ed., *The Dutch on the Guinea Coast 1674-1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague* (Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Science, 1978), 49-50

The Komendan by the name of John Cabes began his slave trading career observing this precarious situation as he worked with the Dutch at Dutch Komenda on the coast of the present-day Central Region of Ghana.¹⁵⁷ He found it more profitable, however, to pit the old rivals of the Dutch and English against one another for personal gain, and so invited the English to build their Fort Komenda a stone's throw from that of the Dutch. As his father, John Cabessa, had died protecting the English Fort Amsterdam from a Dutch attack which started the second Anglo-Dutch War, Cabes' actions had to have been deliberate.¹⁵⁸

To gain the trust of the RAC, he claimed that he had connections to the great emerging Ashanti kingdom to the North, with whom the RAC already had agreements through some of their other trading lodges. These type of connections were not unusual, and were highly sought after. Many of the middle men of the slave trade had roots in the interior and travelled down to the coast seeking work with Europeans to ensure that slave money travelled back north again. The most well-connected men usually could command an army if necessary, and were able to ensure the most steady supply of slaves. Because of this, Europeans worked hard to court the favor of the men who could help them meet quotas and turn the biggest profit. The most well-connected middle-men were aware of their worth, and so avoided the most firm and fast alliances with Europeans, choosing instead to manipulate the situation for personal gain.

Cabes was one such individual. He played double agent between the Dutch and English, exacerbating their rivalry in order to profit from it.¹⁵⁹ He became one of the wealthiest men on

¹⁵⁷ Also often spelled Cabess and Kabes. Komenda was a small fishing village a few kilometers from Elmina located in the strategic center of the Gold Coast.

¹⁵⁸ David Henige, "John Kabes of Komenda: An Early African Entrepreneur and State Builder," *The Journal of African History* 18 (1977): 1–19.

¹⁵⁹ Davies, *The Royal African Company*, 281

the Gold coast while his double-dealing ignited the background enmity already present between these old enemies. As the result, the Eguafu Kingdom, an Akan polity which comprised the area around Elmina and Komenda in the central region of the Gold Coast, witnessed a series of four wars, the Komenda Wars, fought between 1694 and 1700. Eguafu was the center of the Dutch/Anglo rivalry with the highest density of fortresses controlled by the WIC and RAC.¹⁶⁰ Most importantly, it contained both Elmina and Cape Coast Castle, the WIC and RAC's central command and slave processing centers. Without these fortresses functioning, the Gold Coast slave trade was effectively ground to a halt.¹⁶¹

The account of Thomas Phillips, owner of the slave ship *Hannibal* sailing with the English Royal African Company from their factory near Whydah to Barbados in 1693-4 right before the outbreak of the Komenda Wars sheds light on English/African trading relations through the RAC. Phillips described the complex, and often convoluted negotiations which took place between European and African traders in order to load the ship with slaves. Phillips recounts how he was greeted by two caboceers who accompanied his men to the King's town and provided them with shelter to spend the night. Through his interpreter, Phillips and his men attempted to reinforce the RAC's monopoly, and negotiate a price.¹⁶² Yet the king and his

¹⁶⁰ See Sam Spiers, "The Eguafu Kingdom: Investigating complexity in southern Ghana," (PhD Diss. University of Syracuse, 2007).

¹⁶¹ Although some RAC and WIC fortresses continued to operate and export slaves to slave ships during the Komenda Wars, without the ability of workers at Elmina and Cape Coast Castle to catalogue them, it's impossible to know exactly how many.

¹⁶² Nothing more is said about this interpreter, which should alert the historian to the marginalization of an important cultural broker figure. Nearly all European slave traders made use of interpreters to help broker deals with locals. These interpreters were well-connected Atlantic Creoles, often mixed-race, and linguistically adroit and well educated in the various West African social mores and trading cultures. Most had cut their teeth trading with the Portuguese and made their livings seeking out this coveted position among other Europeans in Africa. Many would go on to become the interpreters of several different slave traders, and amassed great personal wealth. Some, like Jan Conny discussed in chapter 3 of this dissertation, used their positions to make significant grabs for power on the Gold Coast. For more information on how these individuals functioned at various points in history, see the extensive body of literature on historical interpreters and go-betweens, such as Simon Schaffer et al., *The Brokered World*:

caboceers were able to insist that business be done their way, in a ritualized process in open view of many different traders which Philips suspected was designed specifically to foment misunderstandings and jealousies between the various European commanders. He attributed this way of trading to leading to the detriment of the best interests of the RAC. The Africans were said to be “well-knowing how to make the best use of such opportunities.”¹⁶³ Europeans slave traders were desperate to find some way to turn the political tide in their favor.

While historically the Komenda wars have been perceived as a series of wars between the WIC and RAC over trading rights, or no more than a flare up between the third and fourth Anglo-Dutch Wars, thinking of them as a European war in Africa does not give credit to the complexity of the relationships between and among Europeans and Africans in West Africa, specifically on the Gold Coast. As John Thornton argues, it was Europeans who assisted in and were used as pawns in African wars motivated by local politics and economies.¹⁶⁴ Even when Europeans warred elsewhere, like in the Anglo-Dutch wars, the ways they fought one another on the Gold Coast led to their detriment. The rapid-fire shifting of alliances between European and African players characterizes the relationships between Europeans and Africans in pre-colonial

Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820 (Sagamore Beach: Science History Publications, 2009), Benjamin Lawrance et al. *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), Daniel Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), Bruce Mouser, *American Colony on the Rio Pongo: The War of 1812, The Slave Trade, and the Proposed Settlement of African Americans, 1810-1830* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013), and Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*. (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2005).

¹⁶³ Thomas Phillips, “Voyage of the Hannibal, 1693- 1694,” in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 401

¹⁶⁴ John Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa 1500-1800* (London: University College London, 1999).

West Africa. The wars were both symptomatic of the centuries-long lack of any one dominant power there.¹⁶⁵

The main primary sources concerning these wars are the diaries of Willem Bosman of the Dutch West India Company. While little is known about many of the RAC and WIC employees who authored the documents of the Atlantic slave trade, Bosman's details are readily available because of the fame his publications incurred. Bosman was a Dutch soldier at Elmina who arrived at the Gold Coast at the age of sixteen. He worked his way up and into a position with the WIC, but left it once he was caught buying and selling slaves independently of the company.¹⁶⁶ Upon his return to Utrecht in 1703, he wrote *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Divided Into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts: Containing a Geographical, Political and Natural History of the Kingdoms and Countries: With a Particular Account of the Rise, Progress and Present Condition of All the European Settlements Upon that Coast: and the Just Measures for Improving the Several Branches of the Guinea Trade*. His journals, written concurrently with the wars, were published three short years after the end of the last conflict.

Albert van Danzig's analysis of Bosman's main work is a useful tool in verification of Bosman's claims, and in explaining the reasons for Bosman's judgments, estimations, and descriptions.¹⁶⁷ For example, van Danzig provides a historical context for the publication of Bosman's account, arguing that Bosman wrote for profit and to capture the European

¹⁶⁵ Law, "The Komenda Wars," 133-168.

¹⁶⁶ This was an activity in which most company factors engaged. It was also an activity which was selectively punished and enforced as convenient for the company, the local Africans surrounding a fortress, and/or the person who had aspirations of replacing the factor in order to also engage in some valuable independent slave trading on the side.

¹⁶⁷ Albert van Danzig, "Willem Bosman's New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea: How Accurate Is It?" *History in Africa* 1, (1974): 101-10.

imagination regarding exotic Africa and its peoples when the competition for slaves and trade in Africa was at its height among the varying European powers. Originally written in Dutch, it was translated to English (as well as several other European languages) not long after, and scholars have used both interchangeably, though van Danzig cautioned against this, as many differences, mistranslations, and alterations are present in the English text.¹⁶⁸

According to Bosman, the war occurred because the WIC and RAC each supported different groups of rulers in the Eguafu Kingdom in order to gain the upper hand in trading privileges there over the other European company. Bosman claimed that John Cabes, who had already spent time fomenting the disputes between the WIC and RAC, began the war by attacking Dutch Komenda, possibly at the behest of the RAC, though this has not been proven. The WIC responded by paying regional forces to war with Takyi, the king in Eguafu, and his military force. This interested the surrounding states of Twifo, Akan, and Denkyria, who also had stakes in the slave trade. The Twifo of the Akan Kingdom supported the WIC, but were defeated by the Denkyria. The war ended with an uneasy set of negotiations.¹⁶⁹

The negotiations proved lacking in long-term resolutions, and less than two years later, the second Komenda War broke out. In 1696, Takyi Kuma ("Little Takyi" not to be confused with Takyi), a young prince of Eguafu, started a civil war in order to gain access to the throne. The WIC supported his attempts, and recruited the neighboring polities of Adom and Akani to their side. Meanwhile, John Cabes sided with Eguafu to defend the current king Takyi (who had a contract with the RAC), and they defeated the attempted usurper. The WIC then was forced to

¹⁶⁸ Albert van Danzig, "English Bosman and Dutch Bosman: A Comparison of Texts, parts 1-5" *History in Africa* 2 (1975); 3 (1976); 4 (1977); 5 (1978); 6 (1979).

¹⁶⁹ Robin Law, "The Komenda Wars, 1694-1700, a Revised Narrative," in *History in Africa*, volume 34, (2007): 133-168.

undergo negotiations and made peace with Eguafu in order to retain their factory at Dutch Komenda. However, as the RAC and WIC factories at Komenda were so close together, hostilities between current employees of the company did not completely cease.

Negotiating for slaves during the Komenda wars was fraught as always, with Europeans in an even more uncomfortable situation because of the damage they sustained during the Komenda wars. To offset the decline in slave exports from the Gold Coast in the late 1690s, Willem Bosman, acting in his official capacity as the WIC's Opperkoopman (head merchant) of Elmina, sailed to Whydah to try to buy slaves. His experience suggests he was not the first to try obtaining slaves there in light of the shortage caused by the Komenda Wars, as at Whydah, he was in the same precarious position of powerlessness. Just as on the Gold Coast, his men were also obliged to purchase slaves they did not want, at inflated prices they considered unfair in order to maintain good relationships with local traders.¹⁷⁰ The Dutch also complained of being “cheated” by locals. Bosman claims that WIC branded their slaves immediately not only to distinguish them from the slaves of other European companies, such as those of the RAC while waiting for ships upon which to load them, but “to prevent the Negroes exchanging them for worse; at which they have a good hand.”¹⁷¹

Unhappy with this turn of events, the WIC at Komenda sought out others who could challenge Takyi's reign and provide them with more favorable trading conditions over the

¹⁷⁰ In this case, unwanted slaves were those unlikely to survive the middle passage, or sell at a sufficient rate in the Americas due to a variety of traits deemed undesirable by those who purchased slaves. Thomas Phillips found himself in the same situation and describes the unwanted slaves as “generally the worst slaves in the trunk.” The African traders at Whydah dubbed the older, infirm, or otherwise weaker slaves as the “King's slaves” and charged more for them, and required their purchase along with the others in what I interpret as a display of power. See Thomas Phillips, “Voyage of the Hannibal, 1693- 1694,” in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 401

¹⁷¹ Willem Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts* (London: J. Knapton, 1705, first published in a Dutch edition in 1704), 364.

English at Komenda. In 1697, the WIC paid the Fante to attack Eguafu, as they had during the violence surrounding the second Anglo-Dutch War, but when the RAC caught wind of this, they paid the Fante more to keep neutral.¹⁷² Without the Fante's military aid, the WIC in Komenda was rendered powerless and by 1698, reached an uneasy agreement with the RAC for mutual trade rights and maintenance of their fortresses in Komenda.

This agreement was difficult to enforce, however, without the agreement of the neighboring Africans who had been a part of the first three wars. In November of 1699, Takyi Kuma made another grab for the throne of Eguafu, this time supported by the RAC, who presumably saw this opportunity as their chance to eliminate the Dutch competition in Komenda. This time he and his allies were successful, and Takyi Kuma became the new king of Eguafu. Under precedent, new rulers did not have to abide by the terms of contracts signed by previous rulers. The RAC was once again on shaky ground. This shows how little the Europeans could control internal conflicts. Many factors were tempted to involve themselves into local politics for personal or company gain, but were rarely able to foresee the consequences of this, nor stop the conflict they had set into motion when it no longer served their interests.

Although this proved the end of the Komenda wars, it did not secure the RAC's supremacy in trade. Takyi Kuma grew annoyed by the RAC's growing confidence and power in Komenda, and so he used contact with the WIC as attempted leverage against the RAC. King Takyi Kuma died four short years later, and Eguafu was once again ravaged by civil war. While the British were able to retain their footing in Komenda, the Dutch did as well, though both

¹⁷² During the Anglo-Dutch Wars, many groups of the Fante realized there was much profit to be made from hiring themselves out as mercenaries. Their tactic to manage Europeans was not to sign contracts and form alliances with them, but to hire themselves out to the highest-paying side, thus increasing their wealth and influence on the Gold Coast. See Shumway, *The Fante*.

companies paid significant costs without managing to accomplish much for themselves. Rebecca Shumway argues that the most enduring legacy of the Komenda Wars were for Africa: it transformed trade on the Gold Coast, and depopulated the area.¹⁷³ This allowed the emerging inland Ashanti Empire to grow stronger and extend the boundaries of its power to the coast and over the trade. This ensured a precedent for wars fought over slavery: at the end of the century onward, the Gold Coast wars would be fought on larger scales than ever before, with both European and African participants making use of mercenary troops.

This detail is vital, as it shows how European involvement in the Gold Coast encouraged the ongoing militarization of the culture there. By 1675, the men of the inland village of Agona were known most of all as mercenaries.¹⁷⁴ A RAC account describes these soldiers as making a living through plundering their neighbors and “on hire for serving others in war.”¹⁷⁵ Other towns in the inland Akwamu empire actively recruited runaways, vagabonds, and slaves from the coast into their militias for hire.¹⁷⁶

Professional soldiering was profitable both at the individual and at the state level. States and polities hired one another as allies in war, as did factors of one or another European trading

¹⁷³ Shumway, *The Fante*. Of course, this was countered by other factors. For example, Randi Sparks in *Where the Negroes are Masters* underscores the importance of the introduction of Maize to Gold Coast ports such as Annomaboe, as it reshaped social, political, and economic life throughout the region. Its cultivation fostered population growth, which enabled territorial expansion and state formation. These were brought about through military conquest which led to prisoners being fed into the slave trade in a self-replicating cycle that became the way of life on the Gold Coast. The two arguments are not necessarily incompatible, however.

¹⁷⁴ 1675 also marks a shift in the village of Agona, from being comprised of Ahanta, to being mainly Fante as the Fante grew in power and subsumed the villages of others.

¹⁷⁵ “Description of Rivers, Capes, Places and Towns in Africa,” in *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series: America and the West Indies, 1675-1676*, ed. Noel Sainsbury (London, 1893): 329.

¹⁷⁶ Among these towns were Abora, Nyanaoase and Akwamuhene. Ray A. Kea, “Administration and Trade in the Akwamu Empire, 1681-1730” in *West African Culture and Dynamics: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*, edited by B.K. Swartz et al. (New York: Mouton, 1980), 371-392.

company engage in the same practice when its commercial interests required such organized violence.¹⁷⁷ As the slave trade grew, so did the numbers of soldiers and mercenaries for hire. By the early seventeenth hundreds, Bosman estimated that each nation could mobilize roughly three to five thousand soldiers, and some armies were composed of mercenaries drawn from five or six nations to make up a force of approximately twenty five thousand. “They come with a whole torrent of men,” Bosman reflected, “as if they wanted to flood the Country.”¹⁷⁸

While no historian has been able to corroborate or deny these numbers, the visual certainly speaks to a dramatic change in West African martial culture, and is indicative of the relationships between coastal Africans and the more powerful interior polities, and of the Europeans' negligible and precarious place within these relationships.¹⁷⁹ Despite the questionable veracity of some of the European sources surrounding the Anglo-Dutch Wars and the Komenda Wars, the common thread running through close readings of each is always one of how European Competition manifested itself in a locale in which Europeans were not dominant. The Anglo-Dutch competition on the Gold Coast weakened both companies and allowed some West Africans to accumulate power and further diversify the trade there.

¹⁷⁷ Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics*, 136.

¹⁷⁸ Bosman, *New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, 243

¹⁷⁹ See Robin Law, “The Komenda Wars, 1694-1700, a Revised Narrative,” in *History in Africa*, volume 34, (2007): 133-168; and John Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa 1500-1800*. (London: University College London, 1999).

Conclusion

Scholars have used the examples of the Anglo-Dutch Wars and the Komenda Wars to show that competition between the Dutch and English both exacerbated old existing rivalries on the Gold Coast, and influenced the formation of new ones. When examined together with the archaeology in a Gold-Coast centered narrative however, they lend themselves to an alternative interpretation: that Africans fomented existing rivalries between Europeans, and contributed to the formation of new ones as much as, if not more so the Europeans of the traditional interpretation.

European insistence on monopolies were nothing more than edicts handed down from the shareholders of the companies in Europe. European slave traders on the Gold Coast knew that only in rare occasions, such as when the Ahanta-WIC agreement was signed, did Europeans have the power to be able to demand and enforce these types of edicts. And being in the position to enforce these types of edicts was not a positive thing for the WIC or RAC, because it meant that they had allied themselves with a weaker power of the Gold Coast which was in danger of being eradicated or subsumed by a larger polity.

The actions of Africans who dealt with Europeans were wide and varied. Their commonality is that Africans stood the most to gain when European powers fought one another the way the native Gold Coast powers did. In the midst of this realization, prominent Africans in advantageous positions were able to make use of the Europeans much as they would any other unwitting ally; for the fulfillment of personal goals. This complicated power structure created a situation where Africans forever sought to fragment European traders. Africans were incentivized by trade with non-RAC and non-WIC Europeans, and many polities shifted their

focus toward less powerful newcomers to the slave trade in order to manipulate the workers of these two larger companies.

CHAPTER III

EUROPEAN-AFRICAN EXCHANGE, SMALL COMPANIES, AND THE CREATION OF A COMPETITIVE MERCANTILE CULTURE

In previous chapters, I have shown how when entering the slave trades, European traders seeking footholds on the African West Coast were in a precarious position. West Africans were politically strong, disease kept Europeans weak, and the European push-factors meant that Europeans sought something from Africa, and not the other way around. Therefore, Europeans had to bend to the wills of African rulers, and ingratiate themselves with the natives through a thorough familiarization of their customs and cultures.

It was West Africans who decided with whom to trade and played European competitors against one another for the best deals in the slave trade. Historians like Paul Lovejoy and Robin Law argued that as European powers inserted themselves into African trading networks and, through their demands, gradually altered the ways in which these networks functioned, West Africans came to depend upon European goods and trade. The longer a European power was entrenched in Africa, the more power it could wield over the slave trade. The more power they wielded over the slave trade, the more alarmed locals on the Gold Coast became.

Africans' exploitation of the long-standing Anglo-Dutch rivalry of the seventeenth century led to an increase in the intensity of competition between the English and Dutch within Africa as each power grew more desperate to grow their slave-trading companies and wield more trading power over their African allies. Due to both the WIC and the RAC's misunderstandings of the sophisticated nuances of Gold Coast politics on the Atlantic as well as in the interior, the Dutch and British had signed contracts which voided the previous ones they had grown to depend upon. These Europeans had made themselves vulnerable to various interpretations of contractual obligations, and unwittingly had set the precedent for Africans flouting the monopolies the Europeans had tried so hard to enforce via contractual obligation.

The Africans and mixed-race individuals who made their living trading with Europeans on the Gold Coast learned valuable lessons from exploiting the Dutch and English rivalry for political and economic gains. When smaller fledgling trading companies, like the Brandenburg Africa Company (BAC) and the Swedish African Company (SAC) tested the West African markets, Gold Coast Africans of the Fetu, Ahanta, and Eguafu ethno-linguistic groups who had been participants in the Komenda and Anglo-Dutch Wars were eager to further fracture Dutch and British monopolies by fostering the competitive culture of trade on the Gold Coast. The Fetu, Ahanta, and Eguafu actively sought out new partnerships with the smaller companies so that they could diffuse the power of the British and Dutch.

This meant that toward the second half of the seventeenth century, lesser powers (like the Prussians, Danes, and Swedes) who had far less control over the West African economies were West Africa's preferred trading partners. These lesser powers had to be more culturally attuned to West African politics, networks, and cultures in order to hold onto trading favor. For example, the Prussians were allowed to enter the trade not by other European powers (who complained

about them and plotted to destroy their ships and forts), but by West Africans keen to divide Europe's power on their coast.

For Gold Coast natives, this was but a continuation of the strategies their forefathers had played out against the Portuguese the Dutch entered the trade some sixty years earlier in the 1620s. The local Africans had assisted the Dutch in their second attempt to dislodge the Portuguese from El Mina, the largest and most famous trading fortification and castle on the West African coast at this time.¹⁸⁰ The Africans surrounding Elmina had felt that the Portuguese were becoming abusive in the trade and were keen to go back to the position of power they had when they first encountered the Portuguese, but this time with the Dutch newcomers. This situation would play itself out again on the saturated Guinea coast once the Dutch and English rose to power, only with the encroaching Prussian and Swedish slave traders. This chapter describes this process and shows how the Prussian and Swedish traders formed close personal relationships with West Africans in order to gain more power and control, and to protect themselves from the British and Dutch.

Local interaction and Power with the Swedish African Company

The Swedish Africa Company, founded in 1650, depended on extensive knowledge of African cultures and on African sovereignty to secure its place among the larger slave trading companies on the Gold Coast. SAC founder Louis de Geer hired Hendrik Carloff, an adventurer from somewhere in the Baltic who had extensive experience with Atlantic adventuring, both in Dutch Brazil, as well as in Luanda in West Central Africa, and in various places for various

¹⁸⁰ K. Ratelband, ed., *Viif Dagregisters van het Kasteel Sao Jorga da Mina aan de Goudkust* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1953), 1xiv - 1xx.

companies on the Gold Coast.¹⁸¹ His knowledge of various Gold Coast cultures, such as the Elmina and then Fetu worked in the company's favor.¹⁸² Carloff was able to make many treaties, including his most famous one which caused an international conflict between the Swedish and English crowns.

Back in 1648, before the Swedish Company was established, Carloff obtained a commitment from the King of Fetu to lease or purchase some coastal land, possibly for a private slaving factory. After twelve years of service to the WIC, Carloff worked with the SAC and went back to the chief to sign a contract for this spot of land. The Company of Merchants Trading to Guinea, the company that would become part of the RAC shortly thereafter, were at that time in negotiations with Henniqua, the cousin of the King of Fetu, about building a British trading factory. In 1650, both Britain and Sweden had signed a contract with the Fetu to begin building their trading forts.¹⁸³

Predictably, this caused problems between the two. Two years after the signing of the contracts, Carloff and his ship *Christina* were seized by the English and taken to England. The gold, ivory, and jewelry onboard were confiscated and taken to the Tower of London.¹⁸⁴ When the SAC protested this unlawful seizure of their ship, they submitted an eyewitness account of the King of Fetu as evidence of their legitimacy and as the prime reason why they should be

¹⁸¹ The exact birthplace of Carloff is uncertain. At times, he claimed to be from Finland, and others he said he hailed from Rostock. Another time he was credited as coming from the Polish-Swedish seaside town of Pillau.

¹⁸² In the Swedish documents, the Fetu are referred to by the more modern moniker "Efutu" or sometimes just "Futu" or "Futa." For the sake of consistency, I refer to this group as the Fetu to make it easier for the reader to trace the various interactions this group has had with Europeans in the slave trade.

¹⁸³ Matthias Meyn and Thomas Beck, *Der Aufbau der Kolonialreiche: Dokumente zur Geschichte der Europaeischen Expansion*. (Muenchen: Beck NE: Schmitt, Eberhard, 1986).

¹⁸⁴ "State Papers, 1653: January" in *A Collection of State Papers of John Thurloe, volume 1: 1638-1653*, edited by Thomas Birch. (Thomas Birch: 1742), 222-242.

allowed to have their ship returned, and maintain unmolested trading rights on the Guinea Coast.¹⁸⁵ There are also two further Dutch-language letters in the Swedish archive confirming this story.¹⁸⁶

On another occasion, a letter from Briar and Junies Adrianson Vos (Vog?) to Lucas Eiutiens discusses how the Dutch West Indies Company blocked Swedish trade on the Gold Coast for two years. In addition to privateering, the West Indies Company had purchased mercenaries and caused the Swedes to be overwhelmed with negro soldiers, which resulted in a large loss to the Swedes.¹⁸⁷

The Swedish company had many large plans, most of which did not come to fruition. The Swedes had established their trade in Guinea before finding buyers of their slaves in the Americas. As a result, SAC businessmen scrambled to find buyers amid a mercantilist market. They planned to illegally sell their slaves to markets in the Spanish Americas, because the Spanish Empire in particular was over-extended, and the Spanish colonies often neglected by Spain, which had other priorities in the seventeenth century. Documents in the Swedish archives show that the intended destinations for Swedish slaves were in the Antilles, the French province of Louisiana, Cuba, the coast of Campeche and other regions of Mexico. The documents also

¹⁸⁵ "Attenstie van: Coningh van Futu a Corisangh Oppervolt Hoor. G andre syno Raaden," in RA, LA 82

¹⁸⁶ See the letter from WIC to SAC regarding the Christina in *Wolterska arvigarnas fordringar 1658-1717*, RA 44, 519. See also entry in the *Kommerskollegium* about the confiscation of the Christina, *Huvudarkivet Registratur Huvudserien 1655-1659*, RA B1a:2, 24-26.

¹⁸⁷ "Letter from Briar and Junies Adrianson Vos (Vog?) to Lucas Eiutiens, 28 September 1668," in RA 42

mention Tierra Firme, but as this term was used so often in documents of this time period, it is uncertain exactly where that refers to.¹⁸⁸ An educated guess points to Venezuela's Atlantic coast.

Carloff would later go on to establish the Danish African Company (DAC), which for all intents and purposes was a way for him to evade some of the problems he had caused under the SAC, and make more of his own contracts with locals without the influence of investors in Europe with less local knowledge. As with the Prussian Company, and with his Swedish preceding company, the DAC was in the precarious position of operating without the safety net of a large European empire, and so it was run in similar ways. As there is an extensive historiography of the Danish presence in Africa, the remainder of this chapter focuses on the documents concerning the lesser-studied Brandenburgers and their Gold Coast business partners.

Brandenburg in Africa: The Beginnings

In 1683 when the Brandenburgers began officially trading under the label of the BAC, the West African coast was already saturated with a European presence. The earliest era of the Atlantic slave trade, which began with the Portuguese had given way to an English and Dutch dominance. France, Sweden, and Denmark had also broken into the trade and the English and Dutch companies struggled to maintain their holdings. In this time, West Africa, like the East Indies and the Americas, had become a new theater for ongoing and recurring European conflicts. This environment bred an assortment of economic predation from all of the European sanctioned trading companies in addition to independent traders or interlopers, con men,

¹⁸⁸ See "Tableu de Guadelopeer Isles de Antilles", undated, and the untitled document from 1800 in RA *Handel och Sjöfart*, 9 Amerika.

smugglers, pirates, privateers, and other freebooters. As a result, coastal West Africans were familiar with Europeans of every ilk, and both their business proclivities and their products.

The West Africans living in and around the Prussian trading forts of Gross Friedrichsburg, Dorothea, Louise and the Lodge at Tacoradi (Taccarary) (all in the present day Western Region of Ghana) belonged to primarily different Akon ethno-linguistic groups. On account of the Akon's matrilineal inheritance customs, the leaderships of these groups changed frequently, which mandated repeated negotiation and re-negotiation between groups of West Africans and Europeans on the coast. Although European companies also experienced a high rate of attrition and turnaround in their company's staff, West African succession bred much confusion among the Europeans who struggled to understand and maintain good relations with each new rulership. Often, the success of a slave-trading company depended less on preparation or generous investment or economic diligence, but on simply whether or not the current European factors and West African rulers were able to forge and maintain a good personal and working relationship.

As the Portuguese were the first European powers to trade in West Africa, many of their customs set the tone for this intercultural exchange. According to Portuguese custom, the rulers of each village that participated in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade appointed go-betweens whom the Portuguese called caboceers who negotiated all of the deals and signed contracts with the European factors at the slave forts to ensure smooth running and shared profitability of the trade. The natives who had dealt with the Portuguese often insisted on some of the continuity in trade when dealing with other Europeans. For example, in some Dutch Prussian contracts, a few of the African signatories have the title "Captain" before their name, which was a tradition started by

the Portuguese.¹⁸⁹ The Prussian records indicate that often these caboceers may themselves have been the rulers of the villages in which they resided, though it is not entirely clear if this was common, an exception, or a misunderstanding on the behalf of the Prussians.

The Prussians did not have the advantage of being new to the trade as the Portuguese did, nor did they have the sheer force of numbers and economic support and power like the English and Dutch. The Africans they encountered on the Gold Coast were already cosmopolitan and creolized by the late seventeenth century and wise to European business tactics and ways to exploit and manipulate them.¹⁹⁰

In light of this the Brandenburgers sought to make their own advantages, utilizing a baffling array of business strategies, tactics, and plans in order to compensate for their late entry to the slave trade. In this environment the BAC was able to make use of existing cultures of trade to emphasize business practices which placed importance on cordial relations between Prussians and African slave traders, which stretched beyond economic necessity.

¹⁸⁹ For example, see the 1682 contract between the Director-General of the WIC, Thomas Ernsthuisen, and the Caboceers of the village of Taccarary, in which three of the signatories precede their names with "Captain": Captain Effime, Captain Orodol, and Captain Acon. There is a copy in GStA, I.HA Rep. 65 N. 43, s.12.

¹⁹⁰ When the BAC signed their contract with all eighty-three caboceers of Cape Three Points, the names of the signatories are very telling. The names are a mixture of fully native (Badu, Junja, Mfuma), and native names with European influence. Some look like they may have come from the Portuguese (Boa, Dia, Arrogo, Rockoh, and likely the Hebrew name Abraham, though it could have also come from the Dutch slave traders, as many of them were also of Jewish ancestry), the French (Bennee, Terree, Addee, Jackee), the English (Marcus, Jema) and the Dutch (Jancke, Focka). This supports the claim of the BAC workers that most of the Caboceers the BAC worked with had previously worked for other slave-trading companies. This indicates that many of the Caboceers who worked with the BAC and signed their contracts had either found dissatisfaction with the other companies, or more likely, wanted to use the BAC as leverage or one more complication which could help control the larger companies' spheres of influence on the Gold Coast.

Prussian Business Tactics and West African Culture

The best example of this business practice within the BAC lies with one of the first Prussians to set foot in Africa: Otto Friedrich von der Groeben. When the Prussians first attempted to make their presence on the West African coast known, the veteran multilingual Polish commander of a Prussian colonial expedition, Otto Friedrich von der Groeben, undertook great pains to describe the differing demeanors of locals and their varying attitudes toward trading with Europeans. From his account it is possible to see just how mistrusting coastal West Africans were of Europeans, despite the lucrative nature of their trade. For instance, the locals at Cape Mesurado, in modern-day Liberia, were wary of the Prussians. Their hesitancy to trade with a ship with a presumably unfamiliar flag unnerved Von Der Groeben, who nearly started a scuffle with his ignorance to their trading customs.

Von Der Groeben's ignorance reached beyond the realms of trading culture. He had many preconceived notions of West Africa and depended on the captain of his ship to tell apart friend from foe. When his ship's ensign died of "the land illness," Von Der Groeben wrote "I could not risk burying him on land, although I lay at anchor close to the shore, for I was afraid the Moors might (as is their custom) dig the corpse up again, stick the head on a pole, dance with it and sacrifice the corpse to the Devil."¹⁹¹ Quotes like this affirm Von Der Groeben's ignorance toward West African cultures. His saving grace was the captain of the ship who informed him of Mesuradan culture and encouraged the trade. The same day Von Der Groeben buried his ensign

¹⁹¹ Otto von Der Groeben, "Otto Friedrich von Der Groeben's Account of His Voyage To Guinea," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 30.

at sea, he "... went ashore at Mesurado with the captains, without guns, because my captain had told me the Negroes were civil people..."¹⁹²

Predictably, Von Der Groeben's mistrust of Mesuradans caused an escalation and against the better judgment of his captain, Von Der Groeben returned to the shore with weapons. "I was determined that if these people attacked us, we should engage them face to face; and I would have been quite prepared to risk fighting with my 50 men against 500."¹⁹³ Again, though Von Der Groeben does not give him credit for this, it appears that the captain smoothed out relations between the Prussians and the Africans at Mesurado, for then Von Der Groeben goes on at length about their culture. After the scuffle and the trade was arranged, Von Der Groeben spent a significant amount of time speaking with the Mesuradans in Portuguese, and asked them about their religious items and beliefs.

Those who I suspected [of stealing] had to take off their shirts. I did this not on account of the stolen handkerchief, but out of curiosity to know what they had hanging from their necks, because I had noticed song strings on them. Then I saw on their naked skin little pieces of raw hide from all kinds of wild animals, inside which were sewn many types of devil-work, such as teeth, claws, straw, snake's heads [=cowries], and various other abominable magical devices. When I asked them what purpose this rubbish served, they gave me to understand, half in Portuguese and half by gestures, that they wore these objects on account of the thunder, so that it would not harm them. This curious statement led me to ask them further in Portuguese: Who was it then who thundered above, and how did they worship him? I had them given a drink of brandy, some bread and a piece of bacon, which they at once divided with their long knives and daintily consumed. Thereupon they told me that the person who thundered above was the Great Monarch, to whose honour they then also danced.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 30.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 31.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 31-32.

This dancing opened up the way for cultural exchanges, as Von Der Groeben wanted to see how they danced for joy instead of for worship, and then afterward gave orders for a Polish dance to be played. “To this music the Blacks capered so adroitly that no dancing master could have imitated them. Indeed, they observed the cadence as properly as the best Pole...”¹⁹⁵ From there, trust seemed to have been earned, as Von Der Groeben met the Mesuradans half-way and showed his trustworthiness to them on terms with which they could identify. Previously when his ship anchored at Cape Mount, ten miles east of Mesurado, he had done the same: “They [three locals of Cape Mount] poured water over their eyes and demanded from us the oath of fidelity, which we too performed.”¹⁹⁶ These observations about the area in modern-day Liberia are telling of the ways in which Von der Groeben on behalf of the Prussians sought out African contacts for trade. He discovered that it was only when he took the initiative to engage in African practices that the locals regarded him as their equal.

Later Van Der Groeben’s ship sailed to Abeni (in the area between present-day Cote d'Ivoire and the Western Region of Ghana, close to Princes Town, where Von Der Groeben would go to establish the Prussian Fort Gross Friedrichsburg) and his captain heard from one of the locals about the deals he could strike in the next village over. The captain did not believe this man, and "Thereupon he [the Black] demanded that he be given the *fetisie*¹⁹⁷ which he

¹⁹⁵ Ibid,32.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 29.

¹⁹⁷ The Portuguese-origin word *fetisie* (or fetish) used in this way represents an aspect of West African animism. Those who believed in this aspect each had a personal fetish that could be an animal, a plant, or even inanimate objects such as a stone or mineral. This object was carried on the person at all times, and in order to swear an oath of fetish, the person would shave off a small piece of his fetish, mix it with certain ingredients believed to have special powers, and swallowed. This ritual indicated that the person in question was swearing upon the highest power that they have every intention of truthfulness and honesty in what they say. After Von Der Groeben's taking on of the

worshipped to eat, in order to prove the truth of what he had said."¹⁹⁸ Van Der Groeben, his captain, and the local then mixed the local's fetish with black tooth-powder and wine and the local swallowed it. Again, instead of demanding the Africans swear on Prussian terms of an oath, he sought to understand the ways in which locals performed their oaths. He possessed insight to realize that coercing locals into a Prussian oath ceremony would not have the desired effect.

Throughout the narrative, more about the nature of the fetish is revealed as Von Der Groeben encounters this phenomenon repeatedly on the Gold Coast. He wrote "This is the greatest oath they can swear," and once his ship made it to Akwida (in the Western Region of present-day Ghana), Von Der Groeben created a fetish of his own and offered it up for consumption to the Akwidans in order to show his serious intent at honest trade with them.¹⁹⁹ He did this in addition to drawing up a European-style written contract in order to avoid misunderstandings by incorporating both cultures' expectations about contractual obligation.²⁰⁰ This worked in his favor, as the Prussians were then allowed to set up their initial fortress, Fort Dorothea, on the outskirts of this village.

Banking on the success of this strategy, Von der Groeben sought to recreate it. Later when his ship arrived south of the Nyan River and his men erected Fort Gross Friedrichsburg, he

fetish, several traders with the BAC ensured that the ritual swallowing of the fetish became part of the contractual routine. There are several accounts from different BAC workers and factors that describe or mention this ritual as a part of the slave-trading process. For more information, see Wyatt MacGaffey, "African objects and the idea of fetish," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 25 (1994): 123–131.

¹⁹⁸ Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 38.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ This is similar to other European tactics of treating and trade with non-European powers at this time. For example, many Europeans trading with Native Americans for furs or land engaged in contracts that utilized both culture's customs. Many European settlers and traders in North America signed both paper contracts with Native American groups, and engaged in local trading customs, the most famous of which is the Dutch/Iroquois *Guswhenta* in which the settlers of New Netherland exchanged both paper contracts and the two-row wampum belt with the Six Nations Iroquois in order to assure the validity of the peace agreement in each culture. See the files of New Sweden in the 1650s in the Swedish Archives (RA 194A Kolonier Nya Sverige) for early examples.

summoned his officers and two of the Caboceers to his tent and explained his desire to assure their loyalty through an oath. "They answered that I was not to doubt them, as long as I were willing to drink *fetisie* with them [to show] that we likewise meant to be loyal to them, would never leave them and would defend them against their enemies." He consented to this and mixed up a potion of brandy and gunpowder, writing "With this [fetish] I had to begin the unpleasant toast; the two caboceers followed me and smeared the tongues of the common Blacks with the remainder, so that they too might remain loyal."²⁰¹

Van Der Groeben's account is filled with such examples, as he wrote entries about all of the villages which he and his men visited during their expedition, and made note of which places made the most favorable impression upon him in terms of trade. Van Der Groeben's accounts of various villages along the Gold Coast then are a useful tool in understanding the Prussian mindset and attitudes towards West Africans in the beginning of their trade. While Van Der Groeben expressed many private derogatory beliefs regarding African savagery and superstition in his journal, he himself engaged with these cultures on both their terms as well as his own in order to make trade allegiances. The more he did so, the more he saw the value in learning and engaging with West African customs. He learned that doing so was easier and more profitable than attempting to force trade with weapons, as his military background favored. While Von Der Groeben's analysis for and analysis of some of the customs he encountered are questionable, his descriptions of the customs themselves are detailed and provide a glimpse into the pre-colonial histories of several coastal West African societies.

²⁰¹ Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 49.

The BAC and European Rivalries in West Africa

The part of West Africa that was referred to as Guinea covered a large swath of coastline from the Senegambia and Cameroon. This region was often divided into smaller regions known for their prime exports, hence the terms Gold, Grain, Slave and Ivory Coast. The BAC often lumped their Fort on Arguin just north of the Senegambia in with this classification as well, though geographically and culturally it was closer to North Africa. The BAC's other two forts, Gross Friedrichsburg and Dorothea, and their presences on Fort Luise and at Tacoradi were located on the Gold coast (in present-day Ghana). This area was inundated with Europeans from all of the royal slave trading companies. Archaeological reports have put the number at as many as fifty European building sites in this region, though they did not operate simultaneously.²⁰² Correspondence from the RAC, WIC, and BAC indicate that workers of these forts were in constant and direct communication with one another (either via Canoes, trading ships, or hired African messengers which make sporadic appearances on their payrolls) for a variety of reasons, from trading fresh European imports like butter or brandy, to warning one another of interlopers, pirates, kidnappers, disease outbreaks, and other ill-tidings in the area.

These types of communications between factors in West Africa occurred in spite of directives sent from each slave-trading company's headquarters. During the Franco-Dutch war when Prussia changed sides and supported France instead of the Netherlands, the Prussian BAC and the Dutch WIC each ordered their employees in West Africa to behave in accordance with the new alliance, yet both the Dutch and the Prussian archives contain many letters that showed continual communication throughout their nations' hostilities. The communications weren't always pleasant, of course. European factors of different slave trading companies may have

²⁰² Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 57.

sought out one another's council and friendship out of the camaraderie which developed as the result of being some of few Europeans in a fortress in West Africa. On several occasions, the letters come with underlying recognitions of being Europeans with common languages on Africa's coast, far from home and under conditions that appear hostile when one is unused to them. Still, these factors were first and foremost in direct economic competition with one another, and this competition always came first.

West Africans quickly learned that understanding the nuances of this European coastal African competition was vital for securing not only personal safety, but the best economic deals as well. While BAC (as well as RAC and WIC) records contain accounts of Europeans fomenting strife between West Africans in order to reap the economic benefits of this, Africans on this congested Gold coast sought to keep their options open and often stimulated competition between European factors. They welcomed the BAC as yet another pawn to use against the WIC, which by the late 17th century had grown strong and come into the habit of acquiring slaves, and anything else the WIC factors desired, through force. The ways in which West Africans manipulated the European slave traders is apparent from the detailed accounts the Prussians created of the contractual process of negotiation. Indeed, this competition and the resulting contracts led to the Prussian business tradition of honoring the practice of the West African fetish oath.

The conflicts between the WIC and BAC had started, and were fueled by West Africans before the BAC began officially trading in slaves. A 1683 report signed by three Dutch employees of the WIC concerning their visit to Pokesu (where the newly-built Fort Gross Friedrichsburg was located) sheds some light on the nature of spatial contestation. These three WIC employees took with them a group of caboceers, among them a trusted ally named Chaboe

to meet with Otto Van Der Groeben and his Captain Blonq. According to the WIC employees, the Prussians were unwilling to listen to their protests that this part of the coast belonged to the Dutch, saying "...if His Honour the General wishes to protest about anything, he or the [West India] Company should address the protest to His Highness the Elector of Brandenburg." The WIC response was to seek out the caboceers of Anta, who had, to their minds, unlawfully sold the land upon which Fort Gross Friedrichsburg was built to the BAC. These Antan caboceers couldn't be found, so Chaboe "therefore said to Captain Bloncq that the Anta caboceer had no right to sell Poccozoe [Pokesu]; whereupon Blonq raised his hand, intending to strike him."²⁰³

This of course was only the beginning of a length of dispute and negotiation over this territory both the WIC and BAC considered rightfully theirs. The Prussian response to these Dutch accusations was to strengthen their ties with, and call upon the legitimacy of the West Africans. On February 12, 1684, Captain Blonk, along with Major Dilger (the head of the Garrisons at the fort) and Director Colster signed a treaty with twenty-one Caboceers from the areas surrounding Fort Gross Friedrichsburg. These three BAC employees called together these Caboceers and promised to make the fort larger and stronger and to protect their villages "provided that they all live in peace. We also said that we would arrest the first person who caused dissention and quarrelling..." They then asked whether a quarrel they were aware of had been solved. It hadn't, and so they mediated between the caboceers. It was agreed (at least according to the Brandenburgers) "that none of them shall ever raise disputes concerning the ownership of the land about which the quarrel arose; but that they shall be ready to live in peace with the others, and that the first person to cause a quarrel may be freely seized and punished by

²⁰³ "12 January 1683, Report By Officials of the Dutch West India Company on a Visit to Pokesu," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 59.

us.”²⁰⁴ This contract differed from the usual way in which the WIC generated contracts with West Africans.

A few years later, in 1690, the BAC would use the WIC’s own logic and tactics against it. Johan Nieman, the then-director of Gross Friedrichsburg wrote to inform Joel Smits, the WIC director of Elmina that the agreement concerning Takoradi couldn’t be valid because it was only ratified by one caboceer, when it was common knowledge that he did not have the power to act alone on behalf of his village²⁰⁵. From this point forward, the Dutch and Prussians would often invoke African legitimacy in order to cement their own positions in relation to one another.

Unlike the late-starting BAC, the WIC first arrived in West Africa during a time when only Iberians laid claim to parts of the coast. Neither the Portuguese nor the Spanish ever had sufficient populations or naval presence in order to enforce a coastal West African monopoly. The Dutch used their military power and considerable maritime resources in order to push the Portuguese off of West Africa and take over their forts. A few years later, the English, who had built up a significant navy due to the Elizabethan privateering of Iberian New World riches had built the Royal Africa Company and made it strong enough to stand up to the Dutch WIC. The Dutch realized that it would be more expensive to battle the English than to allow their presence, and so they settled into an uneasy truce. The RAC and WIC were at war and at peace as the Anglo-Dutch Wars dictated, but both Companies’ priority was obtaining slaves to fuel their burgeoning American demands. As the Dutch and English were evenly matched in West Africa, their documents emphasize fewer encounters with West Africans, though, as emphasized in

²⁰⁴“ 12 February 1684, Treaty with 21 Caboceers From the Neighborhood of Gross-Friedrichsburg,” in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 80.

²⁰⁵ “9 June 1690, Letter From Johan Nieman, Director-General of Gross Friedrichsburgh, to Joel Smits, Director-General of Elmina,” in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 173.

previous chapters, both companies also had close contact with the locals, and signed contracts of friendship and cooperation with those who lived closest to their forts.

The BAC, which was backed by the significantly smaller and less wealthy Prussian kingdom had a far more tenuous claim, in the eyes of other Europeans, to the slave trade. Their kingdom was ruled by the Friedrich III Brandenburg's Prince-Elector of the Holy Roman Empire who became Prince Friedrich I in Prussia²⁰⁶ only in 1701 when he upgraded himself to royalty. The BAC arrived on a saturated coast, and were politically less important in the eyes of major European companies in West Africa. The BAC required the assistance and close cooperation of West Africans if they were going to survive and trade on the coast for any amount of time. While their contract with the twenty-one caboceers surrounding Gross Friedrichsburg was condescending and paternalistic towards the West Africans, it also displays the Prussian desperation. On the one hand, they attempted to appear strong to the West Africans and tried to assert that they had the power to punish those who did not abide by the terms of the treaty, but on the other hand, their painstaking collecting of these twenty-one rulers and their insistence on keeping the peace between them all shows that the Prussians were aware of how badly they needed the West African population in order to make up for the BAC's shortcomings.

This need manifested itself in ways which upheld West Africans as equal partners in the Prussian slave trade. The Prussians asserted their rights to the land under Fort Gross Friedrichsburg and Fort Dorothea not through Dutch claims, but through those of the West Africans. In the Resolution of the council of Gross Friedrichsburg, the BAC wrote

Whereas the people of [Akwida - the area where Fort Dorothea would be built]...have today sent a caboceer to us seeking our

²⁰⁶ Friedrich I in Prussia was not allowed to call himself Friedrich I of Prussia because he was still subject to the Holy Roman Emperor.

protection [and offering] to erect a lodge for us wherever we see fit to send three or four cannon with six or seven white men, as a result of which it would be possible to protect them; and whereas they have promised us every assistance, saying that they will never accept the Dutch West India Company because it has already abandoned them once, and they have also taken fiticie [“fetish”] on this subject, so we have resolved and found it good to build a lodge at the first opportunity...²⁰⁷

What followed was a flurry of contracts with Akwidan caboceers in which both the BAC and the Akwidans list their demands and note the Akwidan’s eating of fetish to cement these deals.

The Dutch council of Elmina, the main WIC trading fort in this region, convened upon catching wind of these proclamations and contracts in order to decide how to handle the BAC. Among other alternatives, they considered bribing their native allies, the people of Adom, “with a gift to attack and slay the knaves and rascals of [Akwida].”²⁰⁸ Adam Jones notes here that it was a frequent tactic of the WIC to exploit the conflicts between the people of Ahanta and the neighboring Adom people, who lived further inland. In July of 1683, the WIC attempted to persuade the people of Adom and Komenda to attack Sekondi to drive out the RAC. While the WIC decided how to handle this, the BAC attempted to protect their newly acquired holdings they expanded their sphere of contracts and collected the signatures of the caboceers of peoples who claimed they had been wronged by the WIC and lived several miles down the coast and inland.

²⁰⁷ "19 February 1684, Resolution Of The Council Of Gross-Friedrichsburg Concerning Akwida," Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 81-82.

²⁰⁸ "22 February 1684, Minutes Of The Council Of Elmina Concerning Akwida," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 83.

West Africans in the BAC/WIC Disputes

West Africans played into European strife in various ways. Though the records of European slave trading companies are slim when it comes to the African role in European conflicts, the repeated appearance of Africans in the various skirmishes between the companies nevertheless attests to their continued, uninterrupted presence and their importance. While Europeans wrote that they were using Africans as pawns in their conflicts, the ways in which this is described warrants a second look. An analysis of the various and repeated roles Africans took on in European conflicts shows that Africans played the Europeans off against one another just as often.

Yet sometimes the West Africans suffered alongside the European companies during their inter-European battles. In a statement concerning Dutch interference with BAC trade on the Gold Coast, Charles LaPetit had confessed to the WIC's former factor at Axim, Johannes Verdijck that "in the years 1686-87...he had received orders from the Director-General at Del Mina [Elmina], Sweers, to do the Electoral Brandenburg Africa Company every conceivable injury..." including sending West Africans to occupy roads, and stopping native traders from doing business with the BAC, imprisoning those who did not.²⁰⁹

In the BAC's condemnation of the WIC's interference in Brandenburg business in Guinea, they wrote "The BAC has the right, as all independent sovereign nations, to sail to the aforementioned coast and to trade and deal with the natives of the land and also with all other

²⁰⁹"28 January 1691, Statement of Charles LePetit Concerning Dutch Interference With Brandenburg Trade on the Gold Coast," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 17.

independent nations.”²¹⁰ In this same document, the BAC claimed that as the possessions of both the WIC and BAC were acquired through various means from the Iberians that it rendered the WIC arguments about primacy and legitimacy moot. The BAC did not recognize the treaties made between West Africans and Iberians as valid for the Dutch who took over in the Iberian’s stead.

Moreover, the BAC argued that the natives enjoyed trading with the BAC, and therefore the WIC’s hindering of their business was “onwettigh” or illegitimate. They argued that the West Africans had “their own kings, their own rulerships and preserve their own laws and rights, have engaged in various different wars with one another as well as with European Nations and against the WIC itself, and continue in such wars to this day.”²¹¹ This repeated appeal to African sovereignty divides power between Europeans and Africans on the Gold Coast.

Then the BAC argued that the WIC’s treaties with West Africans were the ones which were illegitimate because they were outdated. The successors or descendants of those Africans who signed the WIC contracts were not bound by their predecessor’s contracts, but were free to sign new contracts. Therefore, the BAC’s contracts were valid and those of the WIC were not. This document contains painstaking detail that demonstrates just how much work the Prussians were willing to do in order to present themselves as legitimate and the Africans with which they traded as powerful allies. They asked the WIC to produce their contracts, and then poked legal holes into them. For example, the BAC declared the WIC’s contract from 1642 with Axim as

²¹⁰ “De selve Keur-vorstelijcke Brandenburghsche Africaenische Compagnie, oock benevens alle andere independente Natien rech heest, om te varen op de voorfz Kust, ende aldaer te handelen met de Naturellen van het Landt, en oock met alle andere independent Natien.” in GSTA PK, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 43, s.1

²¹¹ “...de selve Plaetsen, have eygene Koningen, have eygene Regieringe, ende have eygene Wetten ende Rechten houden, verscheyde oorlogen hebben gevoert, soo onder malkanderen asl tegen Europische Natien ende tegs de WIC selver, ende sulcke oorlogen noch dagelijcks continueren.” GSTA PK, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 43, s.1

invalid because it was only signed by two Caboceers, while the BAC reconnaissance shows that Axim was presently divided into the jurisdiction of five caboceers: Jumo, Abupiquen, Cabio, Bocuree, and Axim Proper. The implication here was that three of them were free to sign contracts with the BAC, and would then outweigh the two who allied with the WIC, making the BAC contract more valid in both the eyes of the Africans who had signed it, as well as the Europeans who had created this form of contractual law between the states over in Europe. Furthermore, the fortress at Axim, St. Anthony, belonged to only two locals who had rights over it, and those two had signed with the British. This meant that the British contract for Axim was not valid for all of Axim, but only for Axim proper. The British contract with the two caboceers from Axim therefore didn't extend over the hill known as Pokesu or Mamfroy, upon which the BAC had built their stronghold Gross Friedrichsburg. Their final argument is that the BAC had signed a contract with all twenty-eight men who claimed to be rulers over this hill, making their claim to that trading spot iron-clad. This document shows how the BAC was forced into taking great as great pains to be aware of the rapidly shifting geo-political situations on the coast of Guinea as they did when participating in European politics.²¹²

Also included in this archive folder were a slew of all the Dutch contracts the WIC had signed with West Africans, from 1642 to 1685. Not all of them were sent by the WIC, suggesting that the BAC had obtained copies through other means in order to do their thorough research.²¹³

This likely occurred because the Brandenburgers were incensed at the Peace treaty between

²¹² GStA I.HA Rep. 65 N. 43, s. 5

²¹³ It is not certain how the BAC obtained these contracts, though educated guesses can be made. The BAC contained several former WIC employees, and copies of confidential slave trading business documents were valuable leverage for these former employees seeking work with the BAC. It is also possible, though there is no evidence of this, that when the WIC made its contracts, its workers gave the West Africans a copy of the contract as well, who then in turn provided these to the BAC. Ruud Paesie, in *Lorrendrayering Op Afrika*, supposes that industrial espionage on behalf of financiers speculating on the European markets was at work, which is another distinct possibility.

Britain and the Netherlands signed in Breda on 31 July 1667, which they referenced. They must have perceived this as an attempt by the RAC and WIC to close out other European enterprise in Guinea and keep their respective monopolies at the expense of the other European slave trading companies.

Surprisingly, the result of these declarations by the BAC was a grudging acknowledgement of their company by the WIC. In an extract from the accord between Kurfurst Friedrich and the States General of the Netherlands, dated 23 August 1685, there is a promise from the WIC that as WIC and BAC ships often will encounter one another on the coast of Guinea, they will allow one another to pass unmolested. Both companies would maintain their current possessions and rights.²¹⁴ The BAC's close relations with the West Africans made the company's short-term success a possibility.

However, these declarations did not bring about the peace the BAC had hoped for in coastal West Africa. In 1690, Director-General at Gross Friedrichsburg, Johan Nieman wrote to WIC director Joel Smits to complain about the former WIC director Sweers "for the whole of his directorship, as far as it affected us, was nothing but an accumulation of bloody injuries." Nieman goes on to describe the first massacre at Tacoradi for which Sweers' mercenary force at Elmina was responsible. The Elminan military, comprised of both Europeans and Gold Coast natives from several different ethnolinguistic groups, almost certainly including the Fetu, Ahanta, and Eguafu, had severed the heads, hands, and genitalia of the natives of Tacoradi and had taken them to present to Sweers.

²¹⁴ "No. 4 Extracten uyt het Tractaet tusschen sijn Keurvorst! Doorluchtigheyt von Brandenburg, ende Haer Ho: Mog: de Heeren Stten Generael der Vereenigde Nederlanden op dato den 23. August 1685" in GSTA PK, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 43, s.5.

Nieman accused Sweers of being as incompetent as he was violent, and speculated that this director-general was likely the reason for free deserters (both European and African) and slaves defecting from the WIC to the BAC. Presenting the phenomenon in this light allowed the BAC to hold onto their company identity of one that was peaceful and fair and did not stoop to the dirty tactics of the WIC, while in reality, the BAC was forced into more equitable behavior due to their precarious position on the coast of Guinea as a smaller company without significant European military or naval protection should mishaps occur. The BAC, like the Danish and Swedish companies, was dependent on the protection and good will of its African allies more so than the Dutch and English ever were. Furthermore, the defection he spoke of was a common tactic among the Fetu, who had a long and colorful history both with functioning as highly-paid mercenaries, and of pitting Europeans against one another, and switching from company to company in order to further their political gains. The Brandenburg Company was merely the latest in a long line of Europeans, including the Portuguese, French, Dutch, English, and Swedish with whom the Fetu had played the bait-and-switch.²¹⁵

Privateering as a Tactic of Competition

In this same document, Nieman also complained that the WIC, by orders from Sweers, had also captured and confiscated two of the BAC's slave ships, the *Waterhondt* and the *Berlyn*, and imprisoned everyone on them under false pretenses.²¹⁶ True to their modus operandi, the

²¹⁵ Ibid

²¹⁶ These names translate to "Water-hound" and "Berlin," respectively.

WIC continued to harass the BAC while simultaneously officially acknowledging their rights to exist as a trading entity.²¹⁷

The BAC would soon discover privateering and the questionable seizure of ships was another common tactic employed by the royal companies in order to best their competing companies. BAC founder Benjamin Raule requested a statement from Joost Van Colster, the WIC employee who had defected and joined the BAC and would eventually become the Director General of Gross Friedrichsburg, concerning the WIC's attitudes towards interlopers and foreign ships. Raule did so in order to protest the WIC's seizure of the *Wappen von Brandenburg*, a BAC slave ship, on charges of conducting illicit trade.²¹⁸ Colster testified that while he served with the WIC at Dutch-controlled Elmina, private French, Portuguese, and Dutch interlopers came there and did business with the fort with the express knowledge and implied consent of the factors. The personal policies of the Directors General was to bribe and blackmail sailors into signing the documents submitted to them "be it true or false," unless they were "willing to die there [in prison] in wretchedness," which were used to prove that the factors of Elmina were unaware that the ship was illegitimate.²¹⁹ Or conversely, these papers signed via coercion were also used as evidence of a ship's illegitimacy in the event that the WIC factors decided to seize the ship and use the riches within for personal and company profit.

In addition to these troubles, both the BAC and WIC became inundated with French privateers in the late seventeenth-century. Oettinger's ship was attacked by French privateers

²¹⁷ "25 May 1690, Letter from Johan Nieman, Director-General at Gross-Friedrichsburg, to Joel Smits, Director General at Elmina," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 169-170.

²¹⁸ The name translates to "The Weapons of Brandenburg."

²¹⁹ "1/11 August 1682, Statement by Joost Van Colster On The Attitude Of The Dutch West India Company Towards Interlopers And Foreign Ships," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 22-23.

often, both in the Caribbean and in Africa. These French privateers were a considerable nuisance in the late 1600s, as a letter from the WIC to the BAC attests. In 1690, the war between France and the Netherlands was on the horizon, and French privateers began trawling the coast of West Africa, giving the BAC and WIC a common enemy, and therefore cooling the animosity between these two companies.²²⁰

West African Revolts and Scapegoats of the BAC

As the BAC had built their contracts upon the premise that the WIC was abusive and/or neglectful and West Africans free to treat with those who would treat them fairly, West African claims of cruelty or deceit on the part of the BAC factors was met with the utmost appearance of swift investigation and punitive action. The factors became scapegoats the BAC could use to prove to their Gold Coast allies their loyalty to the contractual agreements. Nearly every fiscal director of the BAC who did not die in office was eventually brought up on charges by the company of neglecting or cheating or being cruel to the company's West African allies.

These natives, mostly Ahanta, were perceived as so vital to the BAC's success and vitality that the company went through the process of removing the corrupt director-generals with much pomp to ensure that West Africans were a vital part of the process through investigations and then ceremonies when bringing in a new director. Awareness of this process and how often it was repeated in the Brandenburg-Ahanta slave trade shaped both European and local cultures on the coast.

²²⁰ "11 June 1690, Letter from Joel Smits, Director-General of Elmina, to Johan Nieman, Director-General of Gross-Friedrichsburg," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 174-175.

On the ninth of March, 1686, Director Colster and his acting successor, Daniel Reinerman were interrogated in Emden. This interrogation references letters that describe the investigations done in West Africa to collect the complaints of the locals against these two BAC officials. The officials were accused of giving the caboceers “Stinkibus”, an adulterated and watered-down liquor, instead of the high-quality French brandy they were promised. They were also accused of artificially inflating prices of trade goods and pocketing the difference, and handling poorly a possible murder of a local by a Prussian soldier and the escalating aftermath. Director Colster already had a strike against his name, for he made some local enemies when he worked with the natives at Awkida back in 1684 when the BAC signed the contract with them.²²¹ Prior to this, he was infamous in West Africa due to his previous position within the WIC.

General Brouw was the one who arranged their ignominious return to Emden, and so Colster and Reinerman had motive to implicate him in crimes against the BAC and the BAC's allies. It is pertinent to note that the ways in which they implicate him again speak to West African primacy in the trade: they accuse Brouw first and foremost of crimes against the BAC's local trading partners and contracted African allies. At the end of the interrogation, Colster and Reinerman are asked how the “negro village which had established itself below the fort” was progressing and how its inhabitants felt towards Brouw. “Reinerman says that the negro village did not grow during Brouw's term there, and the Negroes were not well disposed towards the General, because he did not know the customs of the country.”²²² It was the worst insult which could have been levied against a BAC operative. In this quote the entire business model of the Brandenburg Company can be discerned.

²²¹ Daniel Reinerman wrote “The above resolution was taken by us in the absence of Colster because he is not tolerated by the Negroes here...” in “19 February 1684, Resolution of the Council of Gross-Friedrichsburg Concerning Awkida,” in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 82.

²²² “9 March 1686, Interrogation of Joost Van Colster and Daniel Reindermann, Formerly Director And Fiscal At Gross-Friedrichsburg,” in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 154

Similarly, in the summer of 1697, Captain Wouter Watson sailed from Arguin to Gross Friedrichsburg where the Prussians were in dire straits. He wrote “the negroes of Manfro, Accada [Akwida] and Tacerama [Tacoradi] had taken up arms under the pretext that General Hoogvelt had not kept the agreement made with them but had utterly broken it...contrary to all justice and reason.” Because of this, the locals had besieged the garrison and cut off all food and water supply. Captain Watson found the Director General Hoogvelt “unwell” and the fort “in a wretched state.” The West Africans who has besieged the Fort recognized Watson and allowed him inside the fort. To help, Watson did the only thing he was able to do: he made a show of sending out his clerical staff to the caboceers and others in the village below the fort to question them about Hoogvelt’s abominable behavior. They testified against Hoogvelt, accusing him of extortion and refusing to allow their wives into the fort for protection against their enemies, the Adom people. Hoogvelt was forced to resign, and Jan Van Laer (a man whom the Caboceers found suitable) was provisionally appointed director. Captain Watson brought Hoogvelt back to Europe himself.²²³

Short-term business interests led the BAC towards a path of intense cooperation with West Africans, which required a detailed knowledge of the geopolitics of the region and the various customs present in order to forge close relationships with the locals. In the interrogations and trials of the Prussian Company’s factors, the value placed on this closeness is made obvious and from there it becomes easier to spot the cultural ramifications of this close relationship between Europeans and West Africans.

²²³ "28 July 1697, Report of Captain Wouter Watson On Events At Gross-Friedrichsburg," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 204-206.

Johan Brouw had taken over as Director-General for Colster and Reinerman and left a long list of instructions to his successor, Johan Nieman. Among this list the following two points are of note:

...3. Your Honour shall do everything conceivably possible to cultivate a harmonious understanding between our Negroes, who are now mostly at peace with the others, in order that the Company may not come to suffer any more prejudice in its trade through further misunderstanding[s] and quarrel[s] between them, as has already occurred (to our great dissatisfaction) through the absence of the caboceers Jantje Auzij, Tee and Angata.

and

13. As regards the post at Taccorarij [Takoradi] you shall leave our two Whites and the flag of the Elector there until orders concerning this matter arrive from His Serene Highness and the Honourable Brandenburg Company. If the Negroes there drive the aforementioned Whites away, as they have more than once threatened to do because we have sent no goods or extra people there, it will be necessary to tolerate this until such time as the aforementioned instructions arrive.²²⁴

In both of these instructions, it becomes clear that the BAC both wanted cordial relations with West Africans on the one hand, but also had no other choice than to closely ally with them and appease them on the other. This business strategy worked well for the company in the short-term, as their exceptionally close relationship with the locals deterred the WIC and RAC from being able to chase them off of the African continent. However, as a long-term strategy it was untenable and would lead, by my findings, to the BAC's downfall. Because the BAC were the only company to keep extensive records regarding their factor's relationships with locals, their records best demonstrate how the mercantile culture of the slave trade had the unintended

²²⁴ "2 March 1686, Instructions Issued by Johan Brouw, Director-General at Gross-Friedrichsburg, To His Successor, Johan Nieman," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 147-148.

consequence of monopoly destruction and the emergence of free trade in the early modern Atlantic.

The Prussians Conform to Pre-Colonial West African Views of Women

The ways in which the BAC employees interacted with the women of West Africa shows that the employees of this smaller company had to tread lightly around Africans in the Gold Coast, and fit themselves to the local norms, rather than enforcing their own upon Africa. The close attention Von Der Groeben paid to the role of West African women shows that their place along the Gold Coast was as varied as that of the men, and by extension, quite different from the roles of European women, who rarely came to Africa in this time period. Other factor's descriptions and mentioning of their interactions with West African women through trade and other activities confirm this. When Von der Groeben's crew left Muslim-majority West Africa and sailed further South along the West African coast toward Guinea, Von der Groeben's matter of fact mentioning of women at Cape Mesurado shows that there, unlike in Arguin, women participated in trade: there were women as well as men in the group of locals "who began trading amicably."²²⁵

Further Eastward between Cottroe and Cape Lahoe Von Der Groeben stopped again to trade. Right before they left "a Negro came on board with two of his wives, both forty years old, to judge by their appearance, and wanted to sell them for twenty bars of iron. But as they were ugly old devils, they did not suit our requirements."²²⁶ There are other mentions of women being used in this way, either for trade, or for the purposes of negotiation and the building of networks

²²⁵ Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 30.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 36.

of alliance. In Abeni, Von Der Groeben traded muskets for gold and then the local captain (the same unnamed man who introduced Von Der Groeben to the ritual of the fetish) desired an exchange of souvenirs. He offered Von Der Groeben "my wife at the service of your love."²²⁷ Von Der Groeben believed this practice of using wives in this way to cement relations among men to be common in this village.

Female children were not exempt from being utilized in this way. In Rio Sueyro de Costa, some locals "offered us cheaply two of their children, little five-year-old girls, whom the cruel parents wanted to let go for three muskets." Von der Groeben seemed appalled at this offer, though not a their captain who "bought one, because she was beautiful, for three muskets and a *cabes* [= "head" - a unit of measurement for small objects such as beads and shells] of glass beads."²²⁸

Later Von Der Groeben visited the Dutch fort at Butri, where the Dutch factor "had all the black women called into the hall; they came marching up, shouting loudly, and performed all kinds of dances, singing and capering around an orange tree." Adam Jones notes that these types of dances appear to have been a favored form of entertainment offered by European factors to their guests, as explorer Jean Barbot and Captain Willem Bosman also mention the dances and trees at Butri in their travel narratives. Von Der Groeben also mentioned that three mulatto women were among the dancers and these were "less objectionable, as they could still behave humanly enough towards us. One was the Factor's concubine."²²⁹

²²⁷ Ibid, 37.

²²⁸ Ibid

²²⁹ Ibid,44.

Before this, Von der Groeben's ship anchored at the village of Attaba, which was being reconstructed after being burned down during a war. Von der Groeben wrote that they regaled them all with brandy and "made them quite drunk- women as well as men."²³⁰ His various descriptions and accounts of women show that he seemed to accept the varying ways in which women were presented to him by the locals. When women offered up goods for trade, his men traded with them, and when they were the ones being offered for trade, his men accepted that as well. In both cases, Von Der Groeben and his men were obliged to allow local customs (both West African and European/West African) to dictate how the BAC's employees interacted with the local women. In the case of Attaba, the women were treated to brandy as the men were, at the end of a long day's work, which implied that they worked alongside the men in rebuilding their war-torn village.

In this same village, Von Der Groeben was offered the use of a woman in an attempt to cement relations between himself and the Attabans. He wrote "In the end I availed myself of both [the woman in question as well as the meal being offered], in order to satisfy the wishes of the Blacks, which were unhygienic but well-meant."²³¹ Von Der Groeben may have been unaware of the ways in which many West Africans of the pre-colonial era engaged in trade: they only wanted to trade with people who showed themselves as belonging to their kinship networks. This is why most European factors on the West African coast held African wives in addition to their European wives who waited for them at home, and the reason why their West African wives were usually relatives of the caboceers with whom they conducted daily business. Several historians, describe similar arrangements occurring between Europeans and Africans along the

²³⁰ Ibid, 45.

²³¹ Ibid.

Western coast. Factors often took a local wife, or several (as local custom dictated), in order to emphasize and strengthen ties to the local community. It seems that marrying for wealth or status or power was something both European and West African cultures had in common before contact, so both were familiar with the advantages this conferred and willingly entered into these types of matrimonial partnerships.²³²

Several days later, Von Der Groeben wrote about cementing relationships with the village of Akwida, where Fort Dorothea would be built. After the initial drinking of the fetish and signing of the contracts, the Prussian Commandant said (and Von Der Groeben mentions here that he knows not whether it was in jest, or as he suspects, in earnest) “If I am not to take your wives and daughters, give me a wife.” One of the Caboceers answers that if the Prussians are willing to marry “according to local custom” that their daughters “would always be at [their] service.” Indeed, the next day the caboceers brought the Commandant and Von Der Groeben their brides. “They were nine-year-old children, whose bare skin was painted in all kinds of colours.” They then underwent a wedding ritual, complete with dancing women. Von Der Groeben sent his bride home after the ritual. Later he contracted an illness and wrote “my illness gave me so much trouble that I forgot not only my bride but also all womenfolk *in summo gradu*, although my black angel visited me daily at my sickbed. She did this mainly to fill her hungry stomach and obtain a present.”²³³ This child-wife is never again mentioned in the narrative.

Black women of high status also caught Von Der Groeben’s attention on his voyage to Sao Tomé. The people there had plantations and slaves of their own, which produced many

²³² See Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving ‘Port’: 1727-1892* (Ohio University Press, 2004); Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2000); and Akosua Adoma Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana. From the 15th to the 19th Century* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004).

²³³ Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 51-53.

extraordinarily wealthy people. He once saw “a distinguished lady carried past my quarters: she had four male and twelve female slaves, all wearing the same livery, running behind her.” He explained that the wealthiest natives on the island seldom walked, but had themselves carried in a hammock by slaves, and had a half-dozen slaves walking behind carrying sunshades and swords, which were commonly understood as being signs of wealth. In many areas of West Africa, only mulattos of high social standing were allowed to carry swords in times of peace. Though Von Der Groeben never explained how this woman became distinguished or how she obtained so much wealth, the presence of both a wealthy, distinguished woman, as well as a dozen of her female slaves indicates that on this island, wealth was not solely determined or limited by sex.

While Von Der Groeben’s problematic and heavily-edited account is filled with prejudice and misconceptions and erroneous assumptions and hearsay, his various mentioning of the women he encountered in West Africa point to a diversity of their roles in these cultures and within the slave trade. Van Der Groeben wrote mainly with an eye toward profitability, and yet his journal is an excellent source of cultural knowledge pertaining to the roles of women in various West African societies. The one feature these varying roles have in common is that the ways in which African women expected to be treated were always determined by local custom, and never by the Europeans. Von der Groeben and his fellow BAC employees always treated local women in accordance with local customs, even at times when their own customs would have prevented this. Von der Groeben may not have always been aware of exactly what local women’s roles were, but every instance of his interaction with them was dictated by the local initiative, and not by Prussian wishes. Therefore, we can be certain that the variety of

experiences Van Der Groeben describes speak to the vast variety of positions West African women held within these coastal cultures.

Other depictions of women in the BAC records indicate similar variety in coastal West African women's experiences. The November and December 1685 and January and February 1686 accounts of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg indicate at least one woman in the employ of the factory. This unnamed woman was paid one Engel per month for washing the tableware.²³⁴ This sum was comparable to the compensation of the male local laborers who fetched wood and water, or acted as messengers between the forts.²³⁵ This could mean any number of things: it is possible one or both cultures considered washing up to be women's work, but the commensurate pay to the labor done by men denotes an equality in labor that was unusual at least among Prussians at this time, who generally paid working-class women less for work than men.²³⁶ It is possible then that local convention of the town outside of the fort dictated the washer-woman's equal pay.

Another glimpse into pre-colonial West African women's lives comes from an interrogation of the members of the crew of the *Guldene Löwe*, the ship that had delivered the BAC's soldiers and officials to Fort Gross-Friedrichsburg in 1684.²³⁷ The interrogation took place in Emden, Prussia, in order for the BAC's shareholders at home to understand how their money was being used. The interrogators ask about Caboceer Jancke, a West African ruler who

²³⁴ An Engel was equal to one-quarter of a Spanish Peso, or two Dutch Guilders.

²³⁵ "End of November, December 1685 Accounts of Gross-Friedrichsburg and End of January, February 1686 Accounts of Gross-Friedrichsburg," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 130-134.

²³⁶ Johann Peter Oettinger's *Account of his Voyage to Guinea* seems to corroborate this. He wrote "As with most uncultivated peoples, the women are regarded merely as beasts of burden, who prepare the food and do the housework," in 1692. See Jones, *Brandenburg Source*, 38.

²³⁷ This translates to the "Gilded Lion."

was taken to visit Germany. The Lieutenant, Steersman, Barbers and Captain reported that Jancke was held in high esteem because of his knowledge of Low German (Dutch). "Lieutenant Nostitz testifies further that the caboceers there have given his [Jancke's] wife 100 benden of gold as caution-money in the even he should not return."²³⁸ One hundred benden (or bendas) was worth eight hundred Pesos- a small fortune at the time. While this sum speaks to the importance of Jancke, a multilingual Atlantic Creole and cultural broker, it also is an indicator of the importance of the relationships he chose, and the importance of his wife. One could ask, why was this money given to her, and not one of Jancke's male kin? Though the record reveals nothing more about her, this payment illustrates how someone at the time deemed her important enough to be richly compensated in the event of her husband's death. BAC factors were aware of her power and potential role in either rousing local dissent against the Prussians, or quelling it should one of the local leaders go missing.

Further evidence of women's power in the surrounding areas of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg lie in the Prussian factor's taking of native wives. While Europeans in Africa at this time generally understood that African wives were business necessity, there is at least one known case of a Prussian factor whose African wife and their mixed-race children were acknowledged by the Prussians back home. In the same interrogation of the crew of the *Guldene Löwe* it is reported that Van Colster, the BAC employee sent from Emden to take charge of the commerce at Fort Gross Fredrichsburg "sent a canoe to Delmina to fetch his wife and daughter from there." The use of this language in official interrogations shows an official acknowledgement of this relationship and a child of mixed lineage by the Prussians. It was presumed self-evident that the factors sent to West Africa would form relationships of varying

²³⁸ "30 August 1684, Interrogation Of Members of the Crew Guldene Löwe," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 93.

types with the local women there, but an acknowledgement of a local woman's status as wife, and not concubine, of a European suggests Van Colster had multiple reasons for this marriage.

The various instances of women in the historical record then show us that they too were an important part of the Prussian-African business process. More than that, the large variety in their infrequent appearances in the record shows that Prussians did everything in their power to form close relationships with Africans in order to protect themselves from the advances of the larger slaving companies there. Prussians treated West African women the way African men treated them, even when it clashed with Prussian gender norms, in order to solidify their relationships with the local leadership. This had to have been on African insistence, and is another example of how Africans controlled many elements of the slave trade through fragmentation of European trading partners.

Conclusion

The ways in which the Dutch made use of African alliances to oust the Portuguese on the Gold Coast set a precedent for the ways in which all Europeans and their companies would be folded into African structures. The wars fought between the Dutch and English on the Gold Coast, such as the Anglo-Dutch wars, and the Komenda wars, set further precedents of Africans choosing to not honor the monopolies European traders asked for in their contracts. Groups like the Fetu and Ahanta reasoned that as the Dutch and English had signed agreements with both of them, so they too could sign agreements with either party. The Africans who had extensive experience trading with the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English learned valuable lessons pitting the Dutch and English against one another and sought out personal, economic, and

political gains by attracting and making themselves available for trade to the smaller companies. This made it possible for the smaller Swedish, Danish, and Prussian companies to easily find Africans willing to treat and trade with on the Gold Coast.

West Africans assisted the smaller Prussian, Danish and Swedish companies' challenging of Dutch and English monopolies because dividing the trade was the most economically and politically sound strategy for dealing with emerging European superpowers. The rulers on the Gold Coast used these smaller trading companies to break down the growing power of the WIC and RAC while enjoying the relatively weak position of the smaller companies. As the Swedes, Danes, and Prussians had less power in Europe, they stood to both lose and gain more from their investments in Africa, and were therefore willing to follow the Africans' lead in all matters cultural and mercantile, as this was their main bargaining chip.

CHAPTER IV

FREE TRADE ON THE GOLD COAST: AFRICANS, INDEPENDENT MERCHANTS, AND PIRATES

Arne Bialuschewski was the first historian to make an earnest attempt to evaluate the impact of piracy on the slave trade.²³⁹ Prior to his work, historians of both piracy and the slave trade largely ignored the other. Works analyzing piracy in this time period utilize different bodies of primary sources and focus on prominent personalities, and cultures within piracy, but include little on how piracy affected existing cultures of the slave trade, or how it reshaped political economies of Africa.²⁴⁰

While Bialuschewski accurately asserts that the history of piracy on the West coast of Africa is “a chronicle of rape and murder with the victims being the most vulnerable in the Atlantic World,” this work tells only half a story over a limited time span of a mere five years. Change over time is necessary to fully understand the complex relationship between piracy and the slave trade. Bialuschewski’s selection of, and most importantly, the omission of sources does not allow for the full support of such a conclusion. Without the sources of the main slave trading

²³⁹ Arne Bialuschewski, “Black People Under the Black Flag: Piracy and the Slave Trade on the West Coast of Africa, 1718-1723,” *Slavery & Abolition* 29 (2008): 461-475.

²⁴⁰ See Kenneth Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean: Trade and Plunder, 1530-1630* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Kris Lane, *Blood and Silver: A History of Piracy in the Caribbean and Central America* (Oxford: Signal Books, 1999); Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); and Stephen Snelders, *Het Grijnzend Doodshoofd: Nederlandse Piraten in de Gouden Eeuw*, (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2006).

companies in West Africa at the time, a complete picture of piracy in the slave trade cannot be assembled.

While Bialuschewski emphasizes the violent victimization of Africans by the pirates, I argue that piracy belongs in the narrative of competition and broken monopolies in the Atlantic slave trade. Only then is it possible to see that piracy in this region was the result of West African assertions of power, and not of powerlessness. While slaves suffered various fates at the hands of pirates, West Africans who solicited trade with pirates and other such independent traders benefitted more often from slave trade piracy than they became victims of it. I argue that piracy itself was a means by which West Africans could consolidate their power and assert it over the European slave trading companies, as was the case with the Ahantan trader Jan Conny. Furthermore, I argue that the prolific presence of pirates in West Africa aggravated the fragmentation of the trade which allowed the black market to flourish, facilitating the shift from mercantilism to capitalism in the early modern world.

To envision piracy in the slave trade as merely exploitation and victimization does not allow for broader contextualization. Much of the historiography of the slave trade focuses on the dehumanization, exploitation, and victimization of slaves in the trade.²⁴¹ This contribution should always be the starting point of any narrative where Africans take their place at the center of the slave trade, yet not its endpoint. A second strain of historiography opens the boundaries of this discussion to focus on the strength and survival of the enslaved: this history emphasizes the culture, language, religion, hope, spirit of rebelliousness, freedom and kinship ties preserved on the transatlantic voyage, and places the strength and adaptation of the enslaved at the center of

²⁴¹ For a well-crafted example see Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2008).

the narrative.²⁴² While the slave trade in any form was a traumatic and dehumanizing process, it did not bring about a “social death” as Orlando Patterson called it, but proved the strength of those who survived it and thrived while contesting their enslaved status under unimaginably harsh conditions on the Atlantic during the Middle Passage, and in the Americas.²⁴³

Using either of these approaches with regards to piracy in the slave trade, however, means that the consequences of piracy and independent merchants in the slave trade could be overlooked. A third way to conceptualize phenomena of the slave trade such as freebooting, piracy, and the breakdown of mercantilism is to examine the intricate process of trade between Europeans, Africans, and mixed-race people on the West African Coast, within the context and historiography of the connections between the slave trade and the rise of capitalism. It is in this third way that the contributions of piracy and independent trade to the history of the slave trade are their greatest.

Complaints about Piracy and Other Independent Traders

By 1687, England’s King James II was so alarmed that “...the Coast of Africa is greatly infested with Piratts Freebooters and Sea Rovers,” that he commissioned a man-of-war with “full

²⁴² See Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1998); Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2008); Eugene Genovese, ed. *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Jane Landers and Barry M. Robinson, eds. *Subjects, Slaves, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Julius Scott, *A Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution* (PhD Dissertation, Duke University, 1986); Eric Robert Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); and Alvin Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas*, (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2006).

²⁴³ See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1985).

power and absolute authority to apprehend seize and take into safe custody all such piratts freebooters and sea rovers as well of our own subjects as of other nations...” in order to protect the RAC’s monopoly on the slave trade. From the Company’s beginnings, its slavers had fended off numerous attacks both at sea and on land in attempts to preserve the assets to be found on Africa’s lucrative coasts.

The RAC was not alone in this complaint. The records of the WIC, BAC and SAK also attest to the persistent issue of piracy and plunder in the slave trade. The allure of human cargo packed alongside barrels of fragrant beeswax, ivory tusks, planks of exotic hardwoods, and chests of African gold proved to be a prize commensurate to the coveted Spanish silver galleons of the century before. Pirates exploited conflicting loyalties and insistences on monopoly to plunder at will, and many chose to make targets of slave ships or trading company forts. Dutch slave trading merchant Pieter van de Broecke described in his journal the complex and overlapping systems of price-fixing, bribery, and intricate unofficial treatises made out among Europeans on and along Africa’s West coast in order to obtain slaves and the best deals over their competitors. The competition was cutthroat and complicated, rife with fraudulent actions and threats, and many African leaders played European traders against one another in order to justify last-minute price increases.²⁴⁴ This created an environment in which piracy thrived.

Africans were largely aware of who and where the pirates were. In 1687 RAC employee William Cross was informed by locals that a pirate with twenty four guns and a crew of one hundred had taken a RAC ship, called the *St. John*. Cross wrote that this news did not seem credible, but wrote to the RAC because “some of the Blacks affirme it still.”²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ James D. La Fleur, ed. *Pieter van den Broecke’s Journal of Voyages to Cape Verde, Guinea and Angola (1605-1612)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 2000), 30-34.

²⁴⁵ “William Cross to RAC, 18 May 1687” in Law, *The English in West Africa*, 113.

Piracy was a way of life for those who engaged in it, as well as a significant part of the Atlantic World, the growth of which depended on the specific distribution of wealth that piracy accomplished. The success of the emerging powers of England, France, and the Netherlands in their challenge of the Iberian claim to the New World depended on piracy. The up-and-coming powers benefitted greatly from that which Spain and Portugal lost to pirate attacks. Robert Ritchie discovered that infant economies on the peripheries of empire were usually established through some form of piracy, and for nearly a century provided sanctuary to these pirates.²⁴⁶

Even once states stopped supporting these freebooters, certain individuals and companies continued to make decisions which resulted in their opponents and competitors suffering from the brunt of pirate attacks. The records of the WIC and BAC contain letters in which company employees complained that some area or another was haven to pirates which attacked their ships on the coast of Africa. These same employees then often tacitly supported the piracy when it was economically advantageous to do so, such as when pirates targeted competitors' ships.

In this chapter I discuss the pirates, smugglers, and other independent challengers to the various slave trade monopolies and explain how their operations were possible, where they operated, and the consequences thereof to the European slave trading companies, the West African slave trading peoples, and the enslaved Africans.

This chapter is about these unaffiliated challengers to the slave trade monopolies, and the consequences of their presence and participation in the trade. I discuss the economic activities of the various pirates and independent merchants who operated outside of royal slave trading company parameters. I explain the problems their presence and actions posed for the royal slave trading companies, the ways in which they operated, and they ways in which West African slave traders interacted with them. Their presence, and official slave trading company and African

²⁴⁶ Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989), 19.

reactions to this presence caused a further fracturing of the trade which allows for the examination of the African contributions to the monopoly-breaking economic activity. This sets up the next and final chapter, wherein I explain the main consequences which reverberated throughout the Atlantic World as a result of the trade fragmentation West Africans encouraged through trading with these pirates .

Interloping on the Slave Trade

Philipa Ribeiro da Silva has pointed out how wealthy businessmen in the Netherlands were some of the first in the world to offer insurance to independent merchants in the Guinea trade, as early as 1612. The Dutch-based merchants operated before the establishment of the WIC, and refused to suspend their economic activity in West Africa after the WIC claimed Dutch monopoly on the trade.²⁴⁷

The precarious position and lack of royal naval backing of the “interlopers” made them better targets for pirates. Several primary sources mention the plight of the interlopers. London slave trading Captain William Snelgrave reinforces that pirates targeted independent merchants.²⁴⁸ The pirates who had attacked his own non-company ship had also taken many of the Bristol ships.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Filipa Ribeiro da Silva. *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 274.

²⁴⁸ William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and The Slave Trade by Captain William Snelgrave*. (London: Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1734, 1971), 197.

²⁴⁹ “Bristol Ships” were slave ships equipped on the Avon in Bristol by members of the Society of Merchant Adventurers, a group of investors who pushed for the RAC to lose its monopoly in 1698. For more information see Suzanne Schwartz, *Slave Captain: The Career of James Irving in the Liverpool Slave Trade* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), and David Richardson, et al. *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

The employees of the royal slave trading companies were not without fear, however. RAC employees Collin Hunter, Thomas Bucknell, and George Nanter each reported communication with English interlopers who had been attacked in the Gulf of Guinea. RAC reports from interlopers in New England were also numerous, though primary sources of the WIC from the Dutch National Archives suggests that at least some of these so-called interlopers were WIC ships which disguised their flags for protection in the Americas.²⁵⁰ RAC company workers were also aware of these issues in the Caribbean, as they saw their supply of slaves fluctuate due to these attacks. A surviving extract of a letter from Edwyn Rreede in Barbados to the RAC mentions that “interlopers that set out from Barbados escaped the pirates.”²⁵¹

Still, interlopers found the trade worthwhile and persisted. Sivert Hoess, The BAC Director of St. Thomas wrote to the King of Brandenburg in 1716 that slaves had been brought into the island via an interloper ship. Hoess explained that everyone, including the Danish governor²⁵², was very interested in these slaves and profited from the interloper’s sale. The implication is that he could hardly forbid this breach of the BAC’s monopoly.²⁵³ In 1685, the BAC took over the slave trade to the Danish island of St. Thomas, and half of the island was leased to the BAC. While under BAC control, the Danes received a small percentage of every slave import and export price and helped to create one of the largest Caribbean slave auctions of the time. While the BAC tried to enforce monopolies in order to supply this slave auction, it was most profitable for both Prussian and Dutch inhabitants of the island of St. Thomas to accept any

²⁵⁰ See "Collin Hunter to RAC, 4 April 1686, Thomas Bucknell to RAC, 12 April 1686, and George Nanter to RAC, 10 May 1686," in Law, *The English in West Africa*, 15, 380.

²⁵¹ "Edwyn Rreede to RAC, 17 October 1683," in BNA T/7012 f. 2

²⁵² For more information on this phenomenon, see Hermann Kellenbenz’s work on St. Thomas, “Die Brandenburger auf St. Thomas,” *Jahrbuch for Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, 2(1965): 196-217.

²⁵³ "10 October 1716, Director Sivert Hoess of St. Thomas to the King of Brandenburg," in GSTA I. HA Rep. 65 s. 113

and all incoming slaves. Wim Klooster argues that while contraband trade was detrimental from an imperial point of view, it was often a colony's only lifeline²⁵⁴, and Nuala Zahedieh found that Dutch illicit trade enabled the first English settlers of Jamaica to accumulate the capital needed to start their plantations.²⁵⁵

Lorrendrayery and the Trading Companies

As interlopers did not have the same advantages in the trade as company ships, they often resorted to “criminal” acts in order to obtain slaves, and are most often written about as “Lorrendrayers” in the primary source material. Lorrendrayer was a name the WIC had bestowed upon all the Dutch interlopers who had resorted to “such utter untruths,”²⁵⁶ in their pursuit of the monopoly-breaking trade on the coast of Guinea. While the name “interloper” referred to all independent merchants unlicensed by the Dutch or their temporary allies to trade on parts of the West African coast the Dutch considered theirs, Lorrendrayers were considered a particular and insidious breed of interloper, as their crews consisted of mainly Dutch merchants and sailors who preyed on the Dutch West Indies Company²⁵⁷. Later the term would spread to the smaller competing companies, such as the Prussians, Danes, and Swedes, who used it to refer to those

²⁵⁴ Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998).

²⁵⁵ Nuala Zahedieh, “The wickedest city in the world. Port Royal, commercial hub of the seventeenth century Caribbean,” in Verene Shepherd (ed.), *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom. Essays in Honour of Barry W. Higman* (London: James Currey LTD, 2002), 3-20.

²⁵⁶ “sulks een positive onwaarheide”, NA 1.05.06 261, n.1

²⁵⁷ Evidence suggests they did not solely prey on WIC territory, but did favor encroaching on WIC monopoly. Ruud Paesie explains that this is because many Lorrendrayers were commissioned in the Dutch province of Zeeland by wealthy officials who were often privy to insider information of the operation of the WIC through their ties to the crown. See Ruud Paesie, *Lorrendrayen Op Africa: de Illegale Goederen-en Slavenhandel op West Afrika tijdens heet Achttiende-Eeuwse Handelsmonopolie van de West Indische Compagnie, 1700-1734*. (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2008).

merchants whom these small companies perceived as encroaching upon the trade they considered to be theirs.

The word *Lorrendrayer* has no direct English equivalent, although it includes the Dutch word *draaien*, to twist or to turn, and has connotations of deception and false pretences. While all who the WIC called interlopers illicitly traded on Dutch-occupied areas of the West African coast, those who earned the moniker of *Lorrendrayers* used every creative means of deception at their disposal to obtain slaves and goods. In letters to officials in Europe, company workers identified the most common cons they encountered in the Gulf of Guinea. *Lorrendrayers* were known to fly the Dutch flag, equip their ships to look like WIC ships, signal false distresses in order to lure company ships full of slaves and goods closer, and carry or purport to carry false Letters of Marque and *asientos*, the Spanish contract for the outsourcing of slaves.²⁵⁸

Often, like pirates of the time, *Lorrendrayer* ships carried onboard one of every conceivable nation's flags and raised whichever flag could help the *Lorrendrayers* attain their goals. This often caused inter-corporate conflict (which benefitted West African trading partners) as the royal slave trading companies undertook revenge on those whom they thought belonged to a competing company, but in reality had no affiliation. For example, in 1699, the WIC banned the ship *Berlyn* from the West African coast due to previous trouble, yet it returned to Guinea flying the BAC's royal flag. The merchants and sailors onboard had several slave contracts, the legality of which the workers of the WIC disputed. The *Lorrendrayers* demanded that the WIC forts give up their stored slaves in the name of the Prussian Elector. When the Prussians were informed of these "*sulike verkeerde mensen*" (such backwards/corrupt/wrong-way-around

²⁵⁸ GSTA I. HA Rep. 65 N. 175

people), they sought to find a solution to the Lorrendrayer problem, before it led to the WIC forcibly removing the BAC from West Africa.²⁵⁹

By the time the Prussian Brandenburg Africa Company developed an official presence in West Africa, the Lorrendrayers had become especially numerous and bold. They were aware of the Brandenburg Company's weak international presence and inability to patrol and police in Africa. In a thoroughly-researched report on the consideration of the state of BAC affairs by Resident Kuffler, Lorrendrayer tactics collected the largest number of complaints.²⁶⁰

The BAC records indicate a Lorrendrayer's use of the "verschwater quam", or the "freshwater con", where Lorrendrayers would use their flags to pose as legitimate ships of another royal slave-trading company with whom the BAC were temporarily at peace, and would claim that they were out of potable water in order to be allowed onto land without being fired upon by the fort's inhabitants. Then the fort would open its doors in order to give up the water, and the Lorrendrayers would attempt to storm the fort and snatch all resident slaves for themselves.²⁶¹ Of course, in other instances, African slave traders like the Ahantan Jan Conny and the Komendan John Kabes freely traded with the Lorrendrayers and when questioned about this, claimed they could not tell the difference between the ships of the WIC and the free traders.²⁶²

These tactics show that the Lorrendrayers were, like pirates, cosmopolitan multi-lingual maritime people who kept their fingers firmly on the pulse of the ever-shifting socio-political

²⁵⁹ "22 April 1699, Memorie van het geene der here Raaden Resident von Kuffeler wert versorkt aand der hoeg minister van zyn CBAC te representieren," in GSTA, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 175

²⁶⁰ GSTA I. HA Rep. 65 N. 175

²⁶¹ GSTA, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 175, s. 50

²⁶² Henk den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven: sheepvaart en handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674-1740* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1997), 255-262.

situation of the Atlantic World. Historian Ruud Paesie argues that many of the Lorrendrayers which preyed on the Dutch West Indies Company ships and fortresses were financed by the socio-economic elite of Zeeland, the southmost province of the Netherlands whose residents had been locked out of the WIC trade due to political differences. While the Netherlands were at war, these Zeelanders became privateers for the Dutch crown, and in times of peace resorted to illicit trade. In addition to this, the cuts from the illicit trade were so lucrative that there was a large network of merchants and regents involved in it. Their strong representation in regional governing bodies offered these regents sufficient protection from the Dutch crown.²⁶³ Their wealth allowed them to insure the interloper and Lorrendrayer ships so that it became a more attractive business for the Zeelander captains and merchants. The insurance shows how structured this non-company trade was. It was treated as a business and employees expected the full benefits thereof. They likely did not view themselves as pirates or even smugglers, but as business entities which fell out of favor with the King when he bestowed the monopoly onto the WIC. These illicit traders made many relationships with natives along the coast, in the same ways company officials and factors had, in order to ensure sailing to the Americans with a full hold of human cargo.

Unsurprisingly, these illicit traders made as much an impression on West Africans as did the employees of the royal trading companies. The BAC was informed that these freebooting Lorrendrayers had made contracts with the natives of West Africa, bypassing all of the royal companies and therefore becoming a problem for each of the official slaving companies, not just those which operated out of the forts which had been conned by the Lorrendrayers. Kuffler of the BAC asserts that these strangers trading on the coast led to acts of violence and instability of the

²⁶³ Ruud Paesie. *Lorrendrayen Op Africa*, 412.

royal trades, just as the larger WIC and RAC had previously complained that the smaller Prussian, Danish, and Swedish companies had done.²⁶⁴

Like the smaller royal companies, the independent merchants were only able to operate because the various West African rulers wanted them there. In the previous chapter letters from Afu Ree, Asdunago Fetero Accroisan Tay, and Aleno Britts from the Fetu Kingdom, and the letter from Hookanta en Boutryn, Captain Kofhia van Boutry, and Tano Meneme Harman van Saconde at Axim demonstrated the amount of power and persuasion these West African intermediaries had with the royal European slave trading company employees who depended upon them to furnish slaves and establish settlements around the fort which provided the employees with the quality of life to which they were accustomed.²⁶⁵ The way the names are written are another clue to West African's roles as intermediaries between a great variety of trading partners.

Often West African names would be Europeanized for paperwork or the payroll. In this case, van Boutry and van Saconde indicate two slave traders (from Boutry and Succondee) whose names followed Dutch convention. However, Hookanta en Boutryn follows French convention, suggesting that in the village of Boutry, Kofhia had traded with the Dutch before while Hookanta (likely a bastardization of the Dutch "Hoog Anta", or larger/greater Anta) had traded with the Dutch and French. Similarly, Britts wasn't a Fetu name, but could have indicated former or concurrent alliance with British traders; RAC or independent.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Undated (in a box with Lorrendrayer things from 1690s-1700), in GSTA I. HA Rep. 65 N. 175, s.47-55

²⁶⁵ NA 1.11.03 12571-38-1 1662/3

²⁶⁶ Stacey Sommerdyk, Post Doctoral Research Fellow at University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa presented fascinating work on African slave trader's names and naming conventions in West Central Africa at the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation in Hull, January 2012 which supports this observation.

The 1650 eyewitness account from the King of the polity of Fetu regarding the conflicts between the WIC and SAK from the Swedish National Archives tells a similar story of natives arranging events so that they had the largest choice of trading partners, which enabled not only the smaller companies, but the independent merchants, Lorrendrayers, and pirates to gain a foothold on the Gold Coast as well.²⁶⁷ Fetu was notorious for accepting money to either involve themselves or stay out of wars between the Dutch and English, and supplied mercenary troops to the highest bidder during the Anglo-Dutch Wars and the Komenda Wars. As before, the King of Fetu was content to foment discontent among Europeans in order to strengthen his own strategic hold on the Gold Coast. West Africans benefitted from the fragmentation of the trade and willfully refused to distinguish between the large trading companies of the British and Dutch, the small trading companies of Prussia, Denmark, and Sweden, and the independent merchants who operated despite the edicts of these companies.

As the West Africans welcomed them, the Lorrendrayers flourished. In a WIC *Supplication against the Lorrendrayers*, two ships from the West Indies Company on their way to Angola stopped two Lorrendrayer ships in Guinea. The Lorrendrayers were equipped in Zeeland, as most Dutch Lorrendrayers were, but were flying the flag of Holland to falsely imply that they were sailing with the royal blessing. The WIC believed that it was the intent of these ships to falsely represent themselves as WIC ships in order to offload their Zeelander goods and take on slaves meant for WIC ships to the Indies.²⁶⁸ When the officers onboard the WIC ships

²⁶⁷ RA Leufstaatkivert LA 82

²⁶⁸ The records of the Brandenburg Company indicate that many Lorrendrayers kitted out their ships to look like various company ships, and carried forged letters of introduction in order to convince the current factor of any of the factories along the Gold Coast that they were a new captain working with the same company. In this way, they could con the experienced factors into releasing their slaves. Often the ruse would not be discovered until the real company ship arrived to the factory weeks later. I have found documentary evidence that the WIC and BAC tried to address this problem by lining up captains and ships in advance and sending letters of introduction on each previous ship so the factor could anticipate who would come to collect slaves, and a time span in which they would arrive.

asked too many difficult questions, the Lorrendrayer ships fired their cannons and decimated the crews of both WIC ships. The directors of the WIC were outraged because they claimed the WIC ships, better armed and able to deal with conflict, could have easily defeated the Lorrendrayers had they known that the ship were full of *Zeerovers*, or sea-robbers. The WIC swore “to take a timely revenge against all of the Zeelander Lorrendrayers,”²⁶⁹ for not only were they perceived as using deception to break the WIC’s monopoly and cause death to WIC employees, but they were fellow Dutchmen going against the laws of their own King in the name of self-interest.²⁷⁰

The Brandenburgers also despised this element of independent merchant, because often the Africans they hired to work the slave factories could not, or rather, did not distinguish between Lorrendrayers who claimed to be legitimate, and official company ships. Most WIC and BAC records which discuss local West African responses to Lorrendrayers claim that the Africans did not know the difference between the legitimate and illegitimate ships. It is more likely that they refused to acknowledge the difference because they got paid in goods or currency either way, and it was more cost-effective for them to offload slaves onto a Lorrendrayer ship as soon as they had them, instead of keeping them imprisoned in the factories while waiting for a legitimate company ship to arrive to trade for them. Also, often Lorrendrayers paid more for

However, because so many slave ships were pirated, run aground, lost, or otherwise delayed and/or incapacitated, the letters of introduction often didn’t make it to the factors, and an informed Lorrendrayer could point out those incidents as the reason why the factor had not previously heard of them, and make away with the company’s slaves.

²⁶⁹“een wettige revengie tegens all de Zeeuwse Lorrendrajers te neemen,” in NA 1.05.06 261

²⁷⁰ Several scholars who examine the role of Jews in the Atlantic World such as Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, David Brion Davis, and Seymour Drescher point out that this notion of patriotism and Dutch loyalty the WIC tried to play on in order to put an end to Dutch-on-Dutch interloping and Lorrendrayering was a disingenuous political tool. The large majority (each historian gives different numbers, but all numbers are over 50%) of the people insuring and equipping interloping vessels which originated from Zeeland or other parts of the Netherlands with more autonomy were Jews which had only recently come to Holland to escape the persecution of the Spanish Inquisition. Their loyalties were largely to family and mercantile networks that were older, more supportive and more secure than those the Netherlands could offer. For more information on the Jewish contribution, see Peter Mark and Jose da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

these slaves than company ships did, and so both African and European traders of the royal companies could pocket the difference.

Before the West African trader Jan Conny of the slave fortress Gross Friedrichsburg was abandoned by the BAC, for example, he was already infamous for operating under a first-come first-served policy in order to take his cut as frequently as possible. As the BAC had trouble coordinating the timing of procurement and transport of slaves, and had locked themselves into a contract with Conny (the sole reason they had not been destroyed by the WIC's naval power), they were powerless to stop this practice. Instead, they tried to accommodate it when possible. The Brandenburg Company adopted smuggling slaves into non-Prussian parts of the Caribbean as an official economic tactic during the years it did not hold the Spanish *asiento*. In the years when it did, the BAC attempted to fulfill their *asiento* by dealing with Zeeland Interlopers. This backfired for the Prussians: in the Brandenburg records, officials indicated that this attempted arrangement resulted in these interlopers representing themselves as BAC employees, yet trading slaves for their own profit instead of for that of the Prussians.²⁷¹

A reproduction of a missive from the West India Company (preserved in the KITLV²⁷²) concerning the seized ship *Coning von Pruiysen*²⁷³ indicates that such interlopers continued to act upon their self-interest, and boldly used their Prussian connections to equip their ships in Vlissingen, the capital of Zeeland, for trade in slaves, ivory, and gold in Guinea. The WIC officials wrote that the interlopers of the *Coning von Pruiysen* had onboard a passport they claimed originated with the Prince Elector of Prussia. The interloper was caught by the WIC

²⁷¹ GSTA I. HA Rep. 65, N. 24

²⁷² Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, or the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies at the University of Leiden, Netherlands.

²⁷³ translation: "King of Prussia"

when it “viciously attacked” and “decimated” a WIC slaver and was brought to the Dutch slave fort Elmina, where its captain and crew were questioned. The WIC decided that the interloper appeared to be a respectable Prussian ship, when in reality it was clearly equipped with goods from Zeeland and not Prussia. This proved the intention to trade for personal and not corporate profit, which was against the edicts of the WIC.²⁷⁴

In August of 1685, the Zeeland frigate *Vrijheijt*²⁷⁵, anchored off the coast of Gross Friedrichsburg caused a big stir among the natives residing there. According to Gerrit Verbeeck, the captain of the BAC ship *Geele Leeuw*²⁷⁶ (which was also anchored off the coast of Gross Friedrichsburg), the reason why the Zeelander hostages were almost slain by the natives was that recently a pirate kidnapped some natives (under the pretext of taking hostages, or pawnship/panyarring, a common West African practice in the Atlantic slave trade discussed in the previous chapters²⁷⁷), together with their canoe and everything in it, and “until now the people have mistaken you [the Zeelander ship *Vrijheijt*] for the pirate.” The *Vrijheijt*’s six men were still being detained by the natives, but through the request of the BAC director-general, were unharmed. Verbeeck asked the Zeelanders to “appreciate that the impertinence of the Negroes demands [that you give them] a small present for the releasing of your people.”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ “het Compagnie Schip vyandyck heft geattaqueert” ... “hadde gedecimeert”, in Missive of the WIC, 22 September 1716, KITLV H 450 MF, f. 4-6

²⁷⁵ translation: “Freedom”

²⁷⁶ “Golden Lion”

²⁷⁷ See Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson, “The Business of Slaving: Pawnship in Western Africa, c. 1600-1810,” *The Journal of African History*, 42 (2001), 67-89.

²⁷⁸ “30 August 1685, Letter from Gerrit Verbeeck, Captain Of The Brandenburg Ship *Geele Leeuw*, To Hendrik Helm, Captain Of The Zeeland Frigate *Vrijheijt*, Lying Off Gross-Friedrichsburg,” in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 108.

As the Zeelanders were locked out of the royal Dutch slave trade, they could be nothing but independent agents, and Adam Jones notes that “it is possible that the Africans who panyarred members of Helm’s crew did so on instructions from the Brandenburgers, who suspected Helm of conducting trade secretly under the pretence of fetching water.”²⁷⁹ Yet Captain Verbeeck’s letter gives them the benefit of the doubt and asks only that they conform to West African custom in this matter and present them with gifts to get back their crewmembers. Either taken at face value, or with Adam Jones’ analysis, the letter points to further West African involvement with interlopers, pirates, and other European unauthorized trading presences on the West African coast.

In 1698, the BAC ship *Ceur Princesse*²⁸⁰ reported clashing with an English pirate. As the ship sailed from Whydah to Cape Lopez it was attacked by a ship with an English flag. After a four hour battle the pirate disengaged, only to show up again the next week at São Tomé. When the crew of the *Ceur Princesse* asked the governor of the island if they could hunt down this pirate, the governor forbade it and threatened to fire upon them if they circumvented his decision. They later discovered that the ship was not a pirate, but a “privateer” of King James II who had been deposed and was hiding in France.²⁸¹ The governor benefited by buying the privateer’s slave-prizes at half-price.²⁸² This account is also referenced in Barbot and in Bosman’s accounts of Guinea. At any rate, the island of São Tomé was a known pirate-haven at

²⁷⁹ Jones, *Brandenburg Sources* , 108n.

²⁸⁰ Translation: “The Princess of Kurmark”

²⁸¹ The line between “pirate” and “privateer” here, as with many other cases, is very fine and arbitrary. Privateers are clearly crews which behave in piratical ways with consent from a monarchy, but as the Catholic James II had been deposed, only those who still recognized his rulership over England would recognize his hired ship as a privateer. Those who supported the Glorious Revolution and ascension of the protestant King William of Orange to the British throne would have considered the ship a pirate.

²⁸² 7 December 1698, Report of a Clash with an English “Pirate,”” in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 211-212.

this time period. The BAC lost out on a fortune of 17,000 guilders worth of merchandise when their loaded ship, the *Charlotte Loijse* sailed from Gross Friedrichsburg and was taken by a pirate and brought to the island.²⁸³

From the documents it can be inferred that these kidnappers, interlopers, Lorrendrayers, smugglers and pirates had several pronounced effects on the coastal West Africans with whom the BAC treated and traded. In some instances, the natives were able to use these unlicensed traders to foment discord and extort a more favorable position with the BAC. In others, they were the victims of these unauthorized slavers, and were cheated, robbed, or taken to the Indies in shackles along with the slaves onboard. Van Der Groeben's observations of the natives lighting fires to warn others about ships flying unauthorized flags shows that news of the negative consequences of trading with these freebooters had spread throughout the coast. The complaints of the BAC and WIC show that the unlicensed element of the trade introduced one more complication with potentially violent outcomes for both Africans and Europeans.

Andrea Weindl's research into the BAC found that in Guinea, Prussian Company agents, much like the agents of the other slave trading companies, also traded on their own behalf instead of for the BAC.²⁸⁴ My research in these records confirms that the European agents of the BAC followed African agents' examples in trading with anyone who approached their fortresses. The Zeeland interloper's Prussian passports functioned more as another form of personal protection from jealous company ships, rather than as establishing trading rights at Prussian-controlled forts.

²⁸³ "9 August 1699, Minutes Of The Company's Board Of Directors," in Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 215.

²⁸⁴ Andrea Weindl, "The Slave Trade of Northern Germany from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," in *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, ed. David Eltis, et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 253.

Jan Conny: An African's Free Trade in Slaves at Fort Gross Friedrichsburg

The employees at one such Prussian-controlled fort, Fort Gross Friedrichsburg, rarely sold slaves to the company which created it. Set at the mouth of Cape Three Points in modern-day Princes' Town in the Western Region of Ghana, the Prussians at Fort Gross Friedrichsburg had the backing of the Fante-speaking Ahanta²⁸⁵ peoples, who had lost two out of three of their leaders (named Piegati and Suffoni) in local wars. These two leaders, along with Apani, signed the contract between Ahanta and Prussia, and their deaths had potentially voided it.²⁸⁶

The BAC was confident it had the backing of the locals, as it agreed to involve itself on their behalf in their political dispute. BAC workers boasted that they would not forsake their African trading partners as the WIC had done (for the Ahanta had previously signed a treaty with the Dutch at Fort Boutri and claimed the Dutch had not upheld their end of the bargain), and promised to be fair and adhere to the contract unlike their "enemies" at the WIC.²⁸⁷ When Otto Friederich von der Groeben and Captain Philip Pietersen Blonk²⁸⁸ arrived in the area they saw that the village was laid to waste and found Apani, the sole survivor who had signed the first contract with them before Fort Gross Friedrichsburg was built. Apani survived the war which claimed the lives of Piegati and Suffoni, and took it upon himself to explain the situation to the Prussians and enlist their assistance.

²⁸⁵ The Ahanta were a confederacy of migrants from the Akan kingdom who sought out power through contact with Europeans in the slave trade. In 1656 they signed the Dutch Treaty of Butre in order to secure their military assistance against their enemies. They then turned to the Prussians when the Dutch failed to protect them, citing breach of contract. See NA, 1.05.06 1163 and GSTA, I. HA Rep. 65, N. 43

²⁸⁶ *Tractat zwischen Seiner Churfürstlichen Durchlaucht von Brandenburg Africanischen Compagnie, und denen Cabusiers von Cabo tres Puntas*, signed on 5 January 1683, in GSTA, I HA Rep. 65 N. 43

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ The Polish-Prussian General Von der Groeben and his colleague Captain Blonk are introduced in the previous chapter as major players of the BAC.

Von der Groeben and Blonk saw an economic opportunity in the aftermath of this war and appointed a man named Ihro as the intermediary between the Ahanta and the Brandenburgers to interpret a new contract with the survivors of the war. It seems this man was very trusted, as the new contract stipulated that he alone should act in this capacity and could not be replaced through any action or will of the Ahantas. This is curious, as Ihro does not appear again in the documentation. It is possible he was not the local choice for this brokerage, and that Von der Groeben and Blonk were attempting to strengthen their own positions by rearranging the political structure of the Ahanta, though it is questionable if this succeeded.

Furthermore, the contract stipulated that the BAC's fort would be available to protect the locals against further devastation so long as they traded with no ships aside from those with the Brandenburg flag. The acting rulers Brombire, Ethi, Auffi, Among, Etong, Lessie, Casparo, Eguri, Sacing, Mana, Nache, Assassa, Eunu, in addition to Apani all made their marks on the contract to indicate they agreed to these terms.²⁸⁹

For several years after this new contract, the Fortress fades into the background of the BAC records, as it failed to generate significant income for the company. Gross Friedrichsburg was surrounded by Dutch forts (Axim, Boutry and Succondee), and the English (at Fort Dixcove) within easy walking distance, which caused much conflict. Most of the BAC ships attempting to trade there were privateered. The BAC presence there survived alone through its partnerships with the Ahanta, who thrived with the protection of the fort.

Two years later, several other native groups approached the BAC wishing their protection. This indicates that at least in the short term, the BAC honored its promises to provide martial aid to help the Ahanta defeat their enemies. A contract signed February 4, 1685 by the caboceers of the region of Anta and Taccorari (near present-day Takoradi and approximately

²⁸⁹ GSTA, I HA Rep. 65 N. 43

twenty-five miles east of Princes Town, the location of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg) indicates that these groups claimed to have been abandoned by their allies the Dutch and the English. They fled to the Prussians and promised to help build Fort Gross Friedrichsburg without monetary pay, in exchange for military protection. Prussian BAC employees Schnitter and D.G. Reinerman certified at the end of the contract that they had been approached by these groups and had therefore been able to set the favorable terms.²⁹⁰

The Ahanta-Brandenburg alliance had an important ramification – it reshaped the political map of the Western Gold Coast and its hinterlands, similar to the ways in which Robin Law attributes the formation of Dahomey due to European presence in the trade on the Slave Coast.²⁹¹ This redistribution of power allowed a ruler from the Hinterland who took on the European name of Jan Conny to emerge as a main player and unifying force in the Gold Coast slave trade.

Jan Conny gained the implicit trust of the European factors at Brandenburg, who vouched for him in letters to their Prince Elector, through warfare. When the BAC became involved in a two-fronted conflict in 1712 with the RAC at nearby Fort Dixcove and the WIC at Fort Butri, Jan Conny ended the conflict with his private army of Ashante and Wasa warriors. The detailed journal of the BAC's last years at Gross Friedrichsburg ends on Saturday, January 23, 1717 with the details of Conny's taking of prisoners from this conflict. Nicholas Dubois, the last European factor at Gross Friedrichsburg, wrote the entry and many before it detailing how heavily he depended on Conny, who oversaw much of the fort's operations. Nevertheless, later in the year

²⁹⁰ GSTA, I HA Rep. 65 N. 43

²⁹¹ See Robin Law, "Dahomey and the Slave Trade: Reflections on the Historiography of the Rise of Dahomey," *The Journal of African History*, 27(1986): 237-267; and Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

the BAC could no longer justify their presence at Gross Friedrichsburg²⁹², and they sold the fortress to the WIC.²⁹³ The Dutch copy of the contract between the BAC and the WIC concerning this transfer suggests that the WIC would inherit the friendly trading relationships the BAC enjoyed with Conny's people.²⁹⁴

Jan Conny, however, had other plans. With his army at its mightiest due to annexations of the armies defending Dixcove and Butri, he moved into the abandoned Fortress before the Dutch could do so, and ran it as his own. The records of the WIC indicate that he refused the Dutch entry on the grounds that the deal his people had made with the BAC was between the two parties alone and was non-transferable.²⁹⁵ The land upon which Fort Gross Friedrichsburg sat belonged to Conny's people, and Conny was going to make use of it.

For seven years, Jan Conny controlled Fort Gross Friedrichsburg. In that time, his army looted wrecked ships and used their cannons and other supplies to fortify the slave castle. Conny operated the fort arguably more efficiently than the BAC had managed to do, simultaneously fending off Dutch attacks of the fort while acquiring slaves from the hinterland and selling them to any ship, company or independent, with goods of interest to trade.²⁹⁶ This is confirmed by

²⁹² In 1688 the Elector-Prince Friedrich who had overseen the founding of the BAC died. He was succeeded by Frederick I in 1701 who witnessed the company's decline. By 1713, his son Frederick William I succeeded him and announced his intention of ending all Prussian overseas possessions. The BAC had devolved by this point and so it took several years to implement Frederick William I's wishes. See Jones, *Brandenburg Sources*, 10.

²⁹³ "Journal of Fort Gross Friedrichsburg," in GSTA I. Ha. Rep 65, N. 167

²⁹⁴ NA 1.05.01 1166

²⁹⁵ "Acoords en Contracten met Naturellen en Brandenburg" in NA 1.05.06 1163

²⁹⁶ Ulrich van der Heyden, *Rote Adler an Afrikas Küste : die brandenburgisch-preußische Kolonie Großfriedrichsburg in Westafrika* (Berlin: Salignow, 2001).

historian Kwame Yeboah Daaku, who notes that variations on Jan Conny's name appear in the historical record of not only the Prussian and Dutch, but the French and English as well.²⁹⁷

Even if Jan Conny was not the anticipated trading partner of the interlopers and Lorrendrayers caught by the WIC, he certainly did cater to them. They almost certainly knew of Jan Conny's trading policies.²⁹⁸ They also knew that most African traders shared his sentiment.

As discussed in the previous chapter, West Africans were keen to fragment European power as they consolidated their own. In the eyes of West Africans, these freebooters presented yet another power whom the West African caboceers could use as leverage against BAC and other European slaving companies.

This could be somewhat risky, however, for the smaller groups of African peoples along the Western Coast. Unlicensed traders engaged in any number of piratical activities to turn their profits if they felt the risk was worth it, and had no company policies which tied their hands. Von Der Groeben of the BAC encountered some West Africans in the village of Druvin who had recently witnessed such action. These natives were unwilling to talk for long, but "reported briefly that a short time before, two ships with white flags had passed along the coast and abducted all the blacks who came onboard."²⁹⁹ On another occasion, Von Der Groeben states that French ships often arrived, lured coastal natives onboard with promises of trade (as it was usual custom for West Africans to canoe up to boats passing by to inquire of trade opportunities) and then absconded with them to the Indies. Nicholas Sweerts and William Cross of the RAC

²⁹⁷ Kwame Y. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600 - 1720; a Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (London: Clarendon, 1970).

²⁹⁸ Ruud Paesie, *Lorrendrayen Op Africa: de Illegale Goederen- en Slavenhandel op West Afrika Tijdens heet Achttiende-Eeuwse Handelsmonopolie van de West Indische Compagnie, 1700-1734* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2008)

²⁹⁹ 1683-83, Otto Friedrich Von Der Groeben's Account of His Voyage to Guinea, in Jones, p.35

reported similar incidents.³⁰⁰ Von Der Groeben also reported seeing several large fires "by which the natives of the country inform one another of the presence of foreign ships."³⁰¹

While dealing with unfamiliar ships could prove dangerous for isolated and rural West Africans living on the coast, these risks ultimately paid off for West Africans with consolidated power bases like Jan Conny who could defend themselves. Freebooting entrepreneurial agents took care to avoid incurring the wrath of such a mighty political leader and warrior who was eager to trade and did not require cunning cons or bribery to hand over his slaves to anyone, even notorious pirates.

Slave Trade Piracy

Captain William Snelgrave's ship, *The Bird Galley of London*, belonged to Humphrey Morice, one of the first investors to take advantage of the British parliament's 1698 decision to open the trade to all British merchants. Each royal European slave trading company perceived of these ships as competition for slaves and resources. While the employees of the various royal companies also perceived themselves as in competition with one another, they still sometimes warned one another of nearby pirates who had been known to frequent the area.³⁰² They did not warn these independent merchants.

³⁰⁰ Thomas Bucknell to RAC, 21 June 1686 and Nicholas Sweerts to RAC, 27 May 1687, in Robin Law, *The English in West Africa, 1681-1699: The Local Correspondence of the Royal Africa Company of England, part 2*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp 23, 425

³⁰¹ 1683-83, Otto Friedrich Von Der Groeben's Account of His Voyage to Guinea, in Jones, p.35

³⁰² For example, in 1686, a WIC employee at El Mina wrote to the RAC several times informing them of a French pirate headed their way. In 1686, European politics forced Great Britain and the United Netherlands to focus on their shared enmity against the French instead of against one another in the prelude to what would become the Nine Year's War. Sometimes European slave trading company factors also informed one another of pirates if they had

Snelgrave was commanding one of Morice's independent slave ships in 1718 when it was overrun with pirates in the Sierra Leone River. Upon his return to England, he published his accounts of the slave trade for personal profit. While the accounts are wild with exaggeration, the types of exaggeration Snelgrave engaged in are self-aggrandizing.³⁰³ Arne Bialuschewski made use of Snelgrave's account in order to show the vicious amorality and racist nature of the pirates. I argue that this reading of Snelgrave is insufficiently critical: the entertaining nature of Snelgrave's account rests on the caricatures of the villains who apprehended him. Snelgrave's account would hardly have been profitable had he not followed literary conventions of the captivity narrative³⁰⁴ in order to cast himself as the victim of bloodthirsty savages without conscience or reason. Bialuschewski emphasizes the various states of victimhood which Snelgrave himself described, without offering a critical reading of these descriptions. More accurate details can only be found in the parts of the account where there aggrandizement does not serve the overall narrative and image Snelgrave attempted to create for himself. In this way, Snelgrave's account contains much evidence of the more complex role of pirates in the slave trade.

forged a personal relationship from time spent together in Guinea. See "N. Sweerts to RAC, 4 February 1686," in Law, *The English in West Africa*, 420.

³⁰³ For example, Snelgrave describes his routine interferences with barbarous activities of questionable veracity which he attributes to African customs in his attempts to portray himself as a slave trader who could exert control over the natives without seeking understanding of their customs. This is evident in the introduction of his book, where he mentions the account of how he heroically saved an infant from being sacrificed by an African Prince who is portrayed as an unfeeling savage. Snelgrave also mentions his fear of leaving his ship to set foot on the coast because of cannibalism, though I have not found anything in the primary sources of the European slave trading companies to corroborate the existence of this practice in Guinea at the time. Cannibalism is one of the most common tropes in European travel narratives, ascribed to nearly every peoples with whom Europeans of this time period interacted. William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and The Slave Trade by Captain William Snelgrave* (London: Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1734, 1971).

³⁰⁴ For a detailed analysis on the lengthy history of pirate Captivity Narratives and the ways in which they were used for economic and political gain, see my previous publication: Angela Sutton "Atlantic Orientalism: How Language in Jefferson's America Defeated the Barbary Pirates," in *Dark Matter Journal*, Vol 5, December 2009, available online at <http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2009/12/20/atlantic-orientalism-how-language-in-jefferson%E2%80%99s-america-defeated-the-barbary-pirates/>

For example, Snelgrave's account shows how pirate loyalties played out in the slave trade: While Snelgrave's ship was pirated, a bigger pirate crew arrived and terrified the existing pirates with the superior-sized crew. The pirates feared being pirated by other pirates. Yet when the ships met, Snelgrave was recognized by one of the pirates, and his situation improved on the basis that the pirate and Snelgrave had been childhood friends in England.³⁰⁵ They impressed him to join their crew, as they themselves had been impressed. Yet the pirates did not identify with England, for they were violating English laws. When asked to identify themselves, the pirates claimed to be from America without any further specificity.³⁰⁶

Snelgrave's account also provides evidence for the primacy of personal relationships over company loyalty in the trade. For example, Snelgrave makes mention of "some white gentlemen that lived there [on the shores of the Sierra Leone River] as free merchants,³⁰⁷" who had arrived at a peace with the pirates.³⁰⁸ As few RAC officials would risk outright friendship with pirates, this suggests interlopers did not only attempt to obtain slaves through company fortresses, but through the establishment of private points of trade in non-company territory. The merchants "traded on their own accounts," ever since Henry Gynn, governor of the RAC at Gambia, had died there.³⁰⁹ Accounts of the WIC and BAC show that it was a common phenomenon for ex company employees to utilize their knowledge and personal connections with local traders and rulers to trade on their own behalf after some grievance with their company. These are

³⁰⁵ Snelgrave, *A New Account*, 215.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 203.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 202.

³⁰⁸ There is a rich historiography of the evolution of the slave trade in Sierra Leone. See Bruce Mouser, "Trade, Coasters, and Conflict in the *Rio Pongo* from 1790 to 1808," *Journal of African History* 14 (1973): 45–64; and the compilation on new approaches to anthropological archaeology edited by Chris DeCorse, ed. *West Africa During the Atlantic Slave Trade: Archaeological Perspectives* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2002).

³⁰⁹ Snelgrave, *A New Account*, 224.

significant points, as they indicate the beginnings of a structured, deliberate, and organized slave trade within the so-called territory of the royal slave trading companies. The tendency to move from the “legal” to the illicit slave trade created an intersecting slave economy which was partly responsible for the destruction of mercantilism.

Once Snelgrave had been impressed into the pirate crew, they devised a plan for him and his ship: They would sail with him down the coast and prey on some French and Portuguese vessels. The pirates would keep the valuables onboard and give Snelgrave the best slaves from these ships. Snelgrave then would, instead of honoring his contract with Morice, go to the free-port Danish/Prussian island of St. Thomas and sell them there along with the vessel and divide the profits between himself and the accompanying crew.³¹⁰ This plan shows a high degree of savvy among the pirates of the slave trade: they knew the value of slaves, and the best places to sell pirated slaves where no questions as to their origins would be asked.

This was because the overwhelming majority of successful pirates who preyed on the slave trade possessed the sophistication required to understand and participate in the inner workings of the trade. Most started their careers with legitimate jobs in the business, either as coastal factory workers, independent merchants, or more commonly as sailors onboard the dreaded slave ships. Some of them were interlopers onto the trade who occasionally found it more profitable to turn to piracy to obtain slaves. The successes of the pirate attacks described in the records of the RAC, WIC, SAK, and BAC indicate familiarity with the internal workings of the trade. They also show that pirates had every intention to make the best use of slave cargo when they were able. This is confirmed by Emma Christopher, who found that most pirates

³¹⁰ Ibid. 240-241.

preying on the slave trade had been formerly involved in the trade in a more legal capacity.³¹¹

Robert Ritchie also confirms this in his study of the illicit slave trade from West Africa to Madagascar. The infamous Captain Avery (sometimes spelled Every) frequently used the island as his hide-out after stealing slaves from ships in West Africa.³¹² Many pirates specifically sought out slave cargoes.

Even those pirates who did not take African slaves as a matter of course were still a serious threat to the slave business and the companies which profited from it in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While it is true that many pirates took slave ships they knew wouldn't have any human cargo, my research into the records of four slave-trading companies indicated that many more did. The insatiable demand for slaves in the Americas meant that even colonies under strict mercantilist jurisdiction did not question slave origins. For example, the records of the BAC contain documents which indicate their knowledge of the limits of the Spanish Empire in being able to provide its colonies with goods and slaves. The BAC was supplying Spanish colonies with illicit goods before it acquired the Spanish crown's blessing via *asiento*.³¹³ Kenneth Andrews found ample evidence of the governors of Spanish colonies frequently forwarding requests for additional slaves that Spain could not fulfill, and Cornelis Goslinga also attests to the Spanish American market for illicit slaves, and the ease with which an unscrupulous trader could sell slaves of dubious origins.³¹⁴

³¹¹ See Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³¹² See Robert Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989).

³¹³ "Europeese Koopmanschappen, Dienede ten Handel met de Spangiarden en Naturellen in de Zuyd-Zee," GSTA I. HA Rep. 65 n. 49

³¹⁴ See Kenneth Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean: Trade and Plunder 1530-1630* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); and Cornelis Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680-1791* (Assen/Maastricht and Dover: Van Gorcum, 1985), 156-177.

In the BAC records, officials discuss illicit trade with Spain when the asiento was not granted. A report from the BAC headquarters in Emden in 1690 shows that the BAC had directions to trade wherever they were able. The workers of the BAC were told that the Spaniards and natives of the Spanish Empire were desperate to trade: they had too much gold and nowhere to spend it and welcomed Prussian ships to get the items needed despite their governors having strongly forbidden it. There is a long list of items the BAC could obtain from the American Spaniards with the commentary that “this illicit merchandise [from the Spanish Americas] can be bought at such good price that one could buy two or three times as much as one could purchase ordinarily in Europe.”³¹⁵ Spanish colonists eagerly bought slaves and goods that weren’t furnished directly by Spain or a Spanish contractor, whether these slaves or goods were from a competing nation, or from an independent merchant or pirate.

Snelgrave also offers proof that pirates and privateers came from the same population. When he told the pirates the latest news from England, about the war with Spain, they anticipated “an opportunity of enriching themselves in a legal way, by going a privateering, which many of them had privately done.”³¹⁶ Historiography on privateering confirms this point.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ “Deese koopmanschappen werden generaelijck soo goett koop gehoght, dat tegens de prijs, die deselve ordinaris in Europa gelt, het selve twee or driemaal so veel rendeert.” in GSTA I. HA Rep. 65 n.49, “Privilegien vergunt aan de Ceur-Brandenburgse Americanse Compagnie by syn Ceurvorstelycke Doorlughtigheyt en de Republique van Embden. Mitsgaders een Kort Beright van haare tegewoordige onderneeminge. In’t Jaer 1690.” Ibid, n. 16

³¹⁶ Snelgrave, *A New Account*, 253.

³¹⁷ See James McDermott, *Martin Frobisher: Elizabethan Privateer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Jon Latimer, *Buccaneers of the Caribbean: How Piracy Forged an Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen’s Pirate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Last of all, Snelgrave's account provides additional evidence that pirates worked closely with native locals in order to ensure success and comfort in their lifestyle. The pirates which had attacked Snelgrave's ship had a close relationship with the locals of Sierra Leone, both the independent English free traders and the native population. The pirates traded with the locals, who were talented hunters, for fresh meat, such as geese, turkeys, fowls, and ducks, to accompany the dried goods they pirated from European ships. Snelgrave also mentions that the negro women were fond of the company of pirates "for the sake of the great presents they gave them."³¹⁸ This shows that the pirates were aware of the necessity of local support to continue their livelihoods, and indicated a view toward long-term sustainability of piracy. The pirates who preyed on Snelgrave's ship had developed several long-term relationships with the peoples living along the Sierra Leone River, who were aware of the pirates' trade and supported it for their own benefit. .

While European company employees risked punishment by trading with pirates for profit, Africans had no such compunctions. They traded freely with pirates, secure in the knowledge that no European company would back out of the slave contracts due to breach because another company would step in and offer to take their place. Furthermore, Africans could encourage piracy largely without any negative consequences because pirates tended to, by and large, attack European forts and ships instead of the African canoes and settlements so as not to sour relations with the natives.

As noted before, there are cases where ships considered pirates preyed on West African natives by encouraging them to canoe to the ship for trade, and then imprisoning and enslaving them. This could not have been a regular repeat activity on behalf of these ships, because it was so unsustainable and risky even in the short term. The smaller companies like the BAC and SAK

³¹⁸ Snelgrave, *A New Account*, 257.

undertook great pains to defend the Africans with whom they traded against both other Africans as well as other Europeans in order to encourage the locals to keep up their end of the contract for slave supply. To snatch Africans with ties to these companies would at the least incur an investigation if not retaliation. Similarly, the most important intermediaries for any of the other slaving companies would be protected in this way. Certainly in the beginning of the 17th century there still existed smaller polities without alliances on the Gold Coast who could have been perceived of as easier prey, but toward the end of the century these had been subsumed into larger imperial African kingdoms with whom Europeans did not want to war. It would have been tantamount to career suicide for any company or independent merchant with plans to return to the Gold Coast to engage in this type of behavior.

Piracy was a menace to both the independent merchants and the various royal slave trading companies. In England several Royal interventions were put into place in an attempt to eradicate the problem. In 1687 King James II commissioned the ship *Mary* to “seize and destroy all such pyratts freebooters and sea rovers...”³¹⁹ and in 1700 he authorized the Court of Assistants of the Royal Africa Company to pass a resolution that pirates were to be tried directly on the West African coast if it was “to be done upon reasonable terms...” to expedite their eradication.³²⁰

He could not have known that the Atlantic World was on the cusp of the Golden Age of Piracy.³²¹ The naval power sent by Britain to exterminate the piracy which had been plaguing the

³¹⁹ "Proclamation of King James II, 1687" in BNA T70/169 f. 48

³²⁰ "Office of King James II to Court of Assistants of the RAC, 1700," in BNA T70/86 f. 97

³²¹ The Golden Age of Piracy is defined in various ways in the historiography to refer to different time periods and locations. Here I am using Markus Rediker's definition of the Post Spanish-Succession Period of 1716-1726 wherein history's most colorful and infamous pirates (such as "Black Sam" Bellamy, Stede Bonnet, Edward Teach (more commonly known as Blackbeard), Calico Jack Rackham (who sailed with the world's most infamous woman pirates, Anne Bonny and Mary Read), and "Black Bart" Roberts, among others) saw their heyday in the Atlantic

RAC since its inception succeeded only in stemming the flow of pirates for a decade before the post Spanish-Succession period in which vast swathes of unemployed sailors turned to triangular-trade piracy for their living.

Conclusion

The complaints of workers of the WIC, RAC, SAK, and BAC show that the unlicensed element of the trade introduced one more complication with potentially violent outcomes for both Africans and Europeans. But their long-term effects were far greater than that. More unlicensed Europeans on the African Coast meant more chaos and a diminishing ability of the European companies to regulate the trade in the unpaid workers who formed the backbone of the Americas. Africans were able to demand higher prices for their slaves, as there was never a shortage of willing buyers, and this allowed some Africans, like Jan Conny, to hold so much power that independent slave traders approached slave trading fortresses from which they were unauthorized to trade because often they would sail away with a cargo of slaves which, according to European mercantile policies, were designated for sale to the companies.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the amount of slaves obtained in Africa without the permission of a European slave trading power increased as more non-company freebooters conducted business and even pirated along the West African coast. Slaves obtained in this way were nearly impossible to sell through legal channels in the Americas, and so had to be smuggled in and sold on the black market instead. The next chapter outlines how this process worked in the Americas to show how West Africans shaped the mercantile culture of the slave

World. See Markus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

trade, which was characterized by the transition from a monopoly-driven market toward proto-capitalistic free trade in the course of what is known as the long seventeenth century.

CHAPTER V

WEST AFRICA'S MERCANTILE CULTURE AND THE ILLICIT INTER-AMERICAN ECONOMY

The independent traders who flourished in the free trade environment of West Africa spearheaded the illicit inter-American economy. West Africans influenced the slave trade and used it, and the Europeans who depended on it, to further internal goals. This rendered European monopolies and the system of mercantilism ineffectual in Atlantic West Africa. As many African slaves were procured while breaking some mercantilist edict or another, they had to be sold in a similar fashion. Upon obtaining these slaves, these independent merchants then had to find ways to sell their contraband slaves. The easiest and most common means of doing this involved selling them illicitly on the black market, either through connections they had made on their own, or more often through a Caribbean entrepôt.

Much of the literature on the formation of capitalism fails to incorporate pre-colonial Africa in part because the sources are not complete. As Gareth Austin points out, while observations of individual transactions in the sources do reveal much about the workings of markets and mercantile culture, they do not permit a historian to establish facts about an entire economy. Yet there are cases where evidence allows what he calls "cautious conclusions" about

the direction of change in overall output.³²² I push this conclusion further in demonstrating how a mercantile situation in Africa echoed in the Americas, with a focus on the mostly Dutch Atlantic World.

In the seventeenth century, the Dutch Atlantic World was in the early stages of creating its New World Empire through the *entrepôt* system. While the Dutch mainly relied on the exploitation of the commercial contacts of the Americas, they also controlled several settler societies, and even their commercial holdings maintained sizeable permanent or semi-permanent residents. During the Dutch takeover of Northern Brazil in the mid 1630s, the Dutch already oversaw New Netherland in North America, Berbice in South America, the Dutch Antilles (with Curaçao being the site of most frequent slave trafficking), and the Leeward Islands of St. Eustatia, St. Martin and Saba.³²³ In 1667, the Dutch added Suriname, or Dutch Guiana, to their American holdings. Nevertheless, a significant portion of WIC income came from trading slaves with the American colonies of other European nations.

Independent slave traders of all ilk met the demand of colonists in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the Americas, although their trade was considered unlawful by metropolitan authorities. Those who sold slaves obtained by means deemed illicit by the European trading nations availed themselves of three different methods. They made use of existing inter-American smuggling routes, they created new inter-American smuggling routes, or they made use of the mostly Dutch "clearing houses" or "Entrepôts" like Curaçao and St. Eustatia. These islands provided a space for people from everywhere in the Atlantic World to buy and sell slaves with

³²²Gareth Austin, "The State as Help or Hindrance to Market-Led Economic Growth: West Africa in the Era of "Legitimate Commerce," in *The Changing Worlds of Atlantic Africa: Essays in Honor of Robin Law*, ed. Toyin Falola et al. (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2009), 146.

³²³ The Dutch also attempted to colonize Tobago and the Virgin Islands during this time period with limited successes.

no questions asked, provided the Dutch received their commission on each exchange. Dutch historians Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude call the entrepôt system “the beating heart of the Dutch Economy.”³²⁴

The Dutch allowed all buyers and sellers of slaves to make use of the Dutch clearing houses. While they were particularly ideal for traders who had come by slaves through disregarding monopolies, even slaves deemed "legal" by the European royal companies were sold this way if no legitimate market could be found for them in the Americas. The supply of African slaves was never constant or consistent, and European slave traders bought who they could when they were able without consideration for the final destination or American demand. The WIC did sell some of their slaves to Dutch Brazil while the colony was active from 1630-1654, or to New Netherlands or the East Indies, yet the WIC still routinely bought more slaves in Africa than they had places to sell them in the Americas. Supply almost always outstripped demand in the Dutch Atlantic, while virtually every other European colony of the Americas had greater demand for slave labor than their metropole could supply. This is part of the reason why the Dutch seemingly went against their own protectionist policies to create these clearing-houses and entrepôts: they ensured that the Dutch would always have an American slave market for any slaves they obtained from Africa. Opening this market up to non-WIC slave traders made sense, because in this way, the Dutch at least earned a hefty commission from the slaves they knew would be sold.³²⁵

When the Dutch held the asiento, they sold to the Spanish. When they did not, they made use of the illicit inter-American market in the same way independent slave traders did, in order to

³²⁴ Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 691.

³²⁵ Ibid.

supply the colonies of their European competitors. Historians in related fields have also brushed up against this flourishing contraband trade, providing clues as to how it functioned, and the wide scope of its participants, and most importantly, how it could not have thrived without the enthusiastic cooperation of local colonists.

For example, Alvin Thompson found that in seventeenth-century Cuba, maroons established alliances with British, French, and Dutch interlopers, while Martine Julia Van Ittersum found that these interlopers had been there smuggling goods as early as the late 16th century.³²⁶ On the island of Tortuga maroons became an integral part of buccaneer society and “gave the island notoriety as the prime settlement of maritime outlaws from all nations.”³²⁷ The case of the *Swimming Lion* which Van Ittersum discusses shows that merchants from Zeeland became regular visitors to the Wild Coast of South America and at Cuba and Hispaniola much earlier than has been assumed.³²⁸ Colonists of every type in the Americas became increasingly used to obtaining goods and selling their products in a more free trade-based market despite the mercantilist edicts handed down from above. All three of these types of sales reinforced and sustained the inter-American economy, which was based largely on free trade instead of protectionism and paved the way for early modern capitalism.

³²⁶ Julia Martine Van Ittersum, “Mare Liberum in the West Indies? Hugo Grotius and the Case of the Swimming Lion, a Dutch Pirate in the Caribbean at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century,” *Itinerario* 31 (2007): 64.

³²⁷ Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the America* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2006), 113-115.

³²⁸ Julia Martine Van Ittersum, “Mare Liberum in...”, 64.

The Slave Trade, Smuggling, and Capitalism in the Early Modern Atlantic World

That the slave trade provided the cornerstone of the economies of four continents made it an exceptional phenomenon. The ways in which trade functioned de facto in both Atlantic Africa and the Americas meant that early capitalism was already in place before Europeans found a name for it, or ways to control it. The slave trade and the sale of goods produced as the result of slave labor provided an injection of capital into the economies of each participant in the Atlantic world system. This was one of the catalysts for industrialization which intensified the process of extraction, exploitation, and intense wealth for relatively few. The economic development of these four continents would forever be interrelated in interdependence.

Slavery and Capitalism are intertwined in the creation of the early modern world. While academics have picked over and criticized the Williams thesis³²⁹ at every turn since its creation in the 1940s, Hilary Beckles said it best over thirty years ago: the thesis is "Down but not out."³³⁰ My research demonstrates one more way in which slavery and the rise of capitalism were linked.

The opening of the New World caused a significant change in the flow of and conceptualization of wealth in Western Europe, the Americas, and Africa. The feudal, mercantilist, and monopolistic ideas in place prior to the seventeenth century never accurately described the economic phenomena taking place in the ensuing Triangular trade. The way Europeans imagined the economy to function was very different from the ways in which it functioned in actuality. This more globalized trade was by necessity more free than Europeans

³²⁹ Eric Williams' 1944 tract, *Capitalism and Slavery*, was the first book to expound upon Karl Marx's link between the slave trade and industrial capitalism as an integral component of the global process that promoted modern capitalism. Williams argued that slavery was the catalyst for the industrialization which was paramount in Great Britain's transition to capitalism. In doing so, Williams connected the economies of three continents and changed the way historians engaged with slave trade history. See Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Durham: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

³³⁰ Hilary Beckles, "Down but Not Out: Eric Williams 'Capitalism and Slavery' after Nearly Forty Years of Criticism," *Bulletin of Eastern Caribbean Affairs* 8 (1982), 29-36.

had imagined. They wanted to follow a colonial model of trade in which tight controls would, in theory, provide more profits to the crowns which had initially financed forays into the new world. More importantly, this model would prevent profits from flowing to the pockets of competing crowns and the growing merchant elite.³³¹

West Africans, on the other hand, were more familiar with and accepting of free trade, as evidenced by the ways in which they rejected European requests for monopoly in the slave trading contracts. From the very first contacts, sub-Saharan Africans sought to incorporate Europeans into standing African economies.³³² Africans sought the widest variety of trading partners in order to get the best contractual terms and prices for their slaves and other products. To Africans, any wealth Europeans and their Atlantic slave trade could bring to Africa was one more tool to be used as leverage for internal political and economic goals. As most West African polities of the seventeenth century lacked a centralizing body which attempted to regulate trade, the trade was from the beginning more open.

Europeans, Africans, and Americans all depended on the slave trade in various ways to attain their separate economic goals. Europeans found the slave trade was one way to enact mercantilism and to extract wealth from the American colonies. Africans participated in the Atlantic slave trade to increase personal power, maintain armies, and accumulate wealth, which, within West Africa's turbulent political climate, translated to a people's longevity. In the

³³¹ See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, "The Janus Face of Merchant Capital," in *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism*, ed. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

³³² See Wyatt MacGaffey's account of interactions between the Portuguese and the Bakongo in the 1480s. Wyatt MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa: The Bakongo of Lower Zaire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

Americas, the slave trade was a way to source affordable labor on a large-scale to increase personal profits in areas which were difficult for the metropolises to regulate.³³³

Jeremy Smith's definition of capitalism in the 17th century Atlantic World is apt. He calls it "a series of policies, institutions, and effects enacted by states motivated by involvement in the European world economy, with a number of unforeseen outcomes," and shows how mercantilism was a vital characteristic of the transition, at least in Europe, to capitalism.³³⁴ Mercantilism paved the way for capitalism by establishing the infrastructure necessary for capitalism.³³⁵ It also functioned as a strategy of inter-imperial competition as the warfare between European states moved to the Atlantic arena.³³⁶

Modern slavery was integral to the transatlantic commerce of the early modern world. Both Karl Marx and Adam Smith connected American production and trade, which was only possible due to the slave trade, to the formation of capitalism. The free labor of slavery made capitalism not only possible, but inevitable.³³⁷ By the early 1700s, slavery formed the basis of the Atlantic World's trade. This system allowed a merchant class to form which coordinated the new commercial activities. It promoted a labor system to supplant the cottage industry, which

³³³ The Spanish American colonists were already accustomed to the economic advantages conferred by the free labor from the Indian slaves. See Lynne Guitar, "Encomienda System" in *Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*. vol. 1, A-K, ed. Junius P. Rodriguez (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1997), 250–251, and Erin Stone, "Indian Harvest: The Rise of the Indigenous Slave Trade and Diaspora from Espanola to the Circum-Caribbean, 1492-1542" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2014).

³³⁴ Jeremy Smith, *Europe and the Americas: State Formation, Capitalism and Civilizations in the Atlantic Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 142, 143.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

³³⁶ For example, the Anglo-Dutch Wars, the Seven Years' War, The War of Austrian Succession, the War of Spanish Succession, the War of Jenkins' Ear, the War of 1812, the American Revolution, and several other wars of the early modern era were at least in part fought on foreign soil in order to determine European power and imperial reach. These ranged in scope from more localized conflicts to global events.

³³⁷ See Karl Marx, *Capital* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 345, and Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 489.

depended on supervision and discipline that fitted neatly into the labor demands of industrialism.³³⁸

Robin Blackburn found that the surplus from economic activities surrounding the slave trade and slavery had a strong influence on the genesis of the European industrial production which is historically credited as the beginning of Atlantic capitalism.³³⁹ His qualitative argument laid the groundwork for Gad Heuman and James Walvin's argument which emphasizes the importance of the links between African trade and early European industry which irrevocably changed the Atlantic economy. They estimated that the average rate of profit of the slave trade was ten percent which fed directly into the processes which made capitalism possible: the consumer revolution and systems of international finance and credit.³⁴⁰

Like the Gold Coast Africans, colonists in the Americas challenged restrictive monopolies and mercantilism. Alternate economic networks coexisted with mercantilism from the foundation of the Americas in order to meet colonial needs. Inefficient imperial bureaucracies and the simple fact that European empires were stretched far too thin created the environment ideal for local administrative corruption, contraband sales, and smuggling.³⁴¹ When the European metropolises remained unable to meet the demands of their colonies, an illicit inter-

³³⁸ Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997), 588.

³³⁹ See Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (New York: Verso, 1997).

³⁴⁰ Gad Heuman and James Walvin, eds. *The Slavery Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 9.

³⁴¹ For examples of this in the Spanish Atlantic, see Stanley J. Stein, "Bureaucracy and Business in the Spanish Empire, 1759-1804: Failure of a Bourbon Reform in Mexico and Peru," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 61, (1981): 2-28; and Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World: Civilization and Capitalism 15th - 18th Century, Vol. 3* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). For examples of the British Atlantic, see J. G. A. Pocock, ed., *Three Great British Revolutions, 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Jack P. Greene, "Metropolis and Colonies: Changing Patterns of Constitutional Conflict in the Early Modern British Empire 1607-1763," in *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial, Political and Constitutional History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994).

American trade flourished. Though the work on this inter-American trade is still in its infancy, scholars like Linda Rupert, Pedro Welch, and Phillipia Ribeiro da Silva have shown in various empirical frameworks that colonists engaged in free trade rather than following the outdated mercantilist dictates from Europe.³⁴² By the 1750s, levels of smuggling in the British empire had exploded, with private merchants controlling more of the overall trade than those who had permission from the crown.³⁴³

Slavery and Capitalism: The Dutch Historiography

Seymour Drescher and others have argued that the slave trade had limited effects on the industrialization of European powers like Spain, Portugal, France, and the Netherlands.³⁴⁴ Yet, a closer examination of the Dutch case shows the importance of the slave trade and slavery to capitalist development.

The total revenue of the WIC slave trade was around 1 million guilders per year, but the political, economic, and environmental difficulties the Dutch faced on the African leg of the journey, plus the expenses and losses associated with slave ship mortality and insurrection exceeded these sizeable revenues, plunging the WIC into debt. At the same time, Dutch slaveholders in the New World profited greatly and demanded more slaves from the company. While the Dutch were occasional proponents of free trade, at least when it came to their own

³⁴²See Linda M. Rupert, "Contraband trade and the Shaping of Colonial Societies in Curaçao and Tiera Firme," in *Itinerario*, Vol. XXX (2006): 35-54; Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and Pedro L. V. Welch, "Intra-American and Caribbean Destinations and Transit Points for the Slave Trade," in *The Journal of Caribbean History* 42,(2008): 46-66.

³⁴³ T. H. Bowen, "British Conceptions of Global empire 1756-83," in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 26, (1998): 1-27.

³⁴⁴ Seymour Drescher, "Capitalism and Slavery: After Fifty Years," *Slavery and Abolition* 18 (1997), 212-27.

economic practices, they reduced risks by applying a wide range of monopolistic practices where possible.³⁴⁵ In this they were not so different from the other European Atlantic powers.³⁴⁶

Immanuel Wallerstein credits the triangular trade with laying the basis of one central pillar of capitalist trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When the Dutch supplanted the Portuguese from Brazil and West Africa, they succeeded in attacking the Spanish from their new presence in the Americas. This provided a reprieve which allowed several European powers to build up their wealth and naval power and become contenders for economic control of the Atlantic. Secondly, the Dutch conquest of northeastern Brazil in 1635 and the Portuguese reconquest thirty years later caused the flight of planters to other places in the Caribbean, mainly Barbados, where sugar cultivation and therefore demand in slaves boomed. Other emerging European powers flocked to West Africa in order to recreate the economic success of the Dutch.³⁴⁷

Dutch Brazil's governor Johan Maurits and some directors of the WIC projected larger profits from the slave trade, but Dutch scholars influenced by the Williams thesis, like W. S. Unger, found that the average profit rate was far lower than the incidental profits which were cited by the WIC.³⁴⁸ Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude contested this point by arguing for an examination of the Atlantic system as a whole based on production values and trade.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ P. W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e Eeuw* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965).

³⁴⁶ William Roseberry, and Steve J. Stern, *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

³⁴⁷ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Dutch Hegemony in the 17th-Century World-Economy," in *Dutch Capitalism and World Capitalism = Capitalisme Hollands et Capitalisme Mondial*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 106-107.

³⁴⁸ W.S. Unger, "Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Slavenhandel," *Economisch Historisch Jaarboek* 26 (1956) 141.

³⁴⁹ Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Thereafter, Dutch scholars of the trade introduced models to explain the connection, and each arrived at different conclusions based on the ways they calculated the profit and its effects on economy and society.³⁵⁰ For example, when Henk den Heijer calculated the gross margin for the trade, he found that the seventeenth century Atlantic slave trade resulted in a greater profit than was previously estimated, while Pieter Emmer's methodology lead him to conclude that the impact of the slave trade was mostly cultural instead of economic.³⁵¹

As Fatah-Black and van Rossum discovered, even if the WIC did not make a net profit on a voyage, the voyage led to activities such as shipbuilding or the production of trade goods. They argued the gross margin for the entire period the Dutch were involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade is a better indicator of the profitability of the trade to the Dutch economy and found the impact "quite pronounced," and "relatively large for the standards of the early modern period." This is only in discussing the slave trade, not the slave-based Atlantic system, the impact of which must have been "considerably larger."³⁵² They conclude that the slave trade provided an economic stimulus not only for the Netherlands, but for the early modern world.³⁵³

Scholarship has only recently begun to acknowledge the power and wealth in pre-colonial West Africa and the ways in which this power and wealth was leveraged in the Atlantic World. In many accounts Africa is still reduced to having been invaded, controlled, and exploited by

³⁵⁰ See in particular, Violet Barbour, *Capitalism in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1963), and Jan Luiten van Zanden, *The Rise and Decline of Holland's Economy* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993).

³⁵¹ For more information, see Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Henk den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven. Scheepvaart en Handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674-1740*, (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1997); and Pieter C. Emmer, *De Nederlandse Slavenhandel, 1500-1850*. (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2003).

³⁵² Karwan Fatah-Black and Matthias van Rossum, "Beyond Profitability: The Dutch Transatlantic Trade and its Economic Impact," *Slavery & Abolition* (2014): 18, accessed March 3, 2014, doi: 10.1080/0144039X.2013.873591.

³⁵³ Fatah-Black and van Rossum wrote the article in order to seek out ways of adding to the debate on the Great Divergence, which seeks to explain the differences in economic development and political power relations between developed and under-developed nations which began at the end of the eighteenth century.

Europeans, but as the supplier of the slaves whose labor is directly connected with the emergence of capitalism, West Africa should take a place alongside Europe and the Americas in the history of early modern economic development.

While Eric Williams may have been mistaken about the ways in which slavery and capitalism were connected, his intuitive grasp of their connection has endured new waves of research. And these new waves suggest that the connection between slavery and capitalism weren't only true for Great Britain and most recently the Netherlands, but on an Atlantic scale: the slave trade provided the impetus for the shift from mercantilism to free-trade capitalism in the early modern world.

The Brazil-New Netherland Connection

17th century Dutch Brazil was a colony almost constantly in a state of war. Dutch soldiers and sailors working for the WIC frequently seized Portuguese vessels sailing to other regions of Brazil as prizes.³⁵⁴ The Dutch experienced great success as privateers and pirates in the early 17th century New World. The WIC privateers pragmatically redirected seized slave

³⁵⁴ Piet Heyn, the most famous of all Dutch naval heroes/privateers/pirates did the unthinkable and captured Spain's silver-fleet in 1622, allowing the WIC the means to harass their European and Indian enemies in the NewWorld on a wider scale than ever before. See the collection of documents surrounding this legendary figure from various Dutch and Spanish archives: L'Honore' Naber, and Irene Aloha Wright, eds. *Piet Heyn en de Zilvervloot: Bescheiden Uit Nederlandsche en Spaansche Archieven, Bijeenverzameld en Uitgegeven Door Naber & Wright* (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1928).

ships to the islands with the most demand.³⁵⁵ The first slaves of New Netherland, the Dutch North American colony in present-day New York and Delaware, were obtained in this way.³⁵⁶

In 1652 Spaniard Juan Gallardo Ferrara was a passenger aboard the *S. Antonio* when it was hailed and seized by WIC ship *De Raaf*.³⁵⁷ When Ferrara learned that his forty-four slaves onboard the prize ship *S. Anonio* had been sold in New Netherland, he went there and soon found one that had Ferrara's initials branded into his skin. When Ferrara demanded his slaves back, Dutch Governor Stuyvesant refused on the grounds that WIC Captain Geurt Tysen had legally privateered these slaves and according to Dutch custom sold Ferrara's slaves in New Netherland. Stuyvesant cited the cases of previous Dutch ships that had been seized by Spanish privateers in order to strengthen the authority of his refusal.³⁵⁸ At least in the eyes of the Dutch, slave ship privateering was simply part and parcel of the operations of the early modern Atlantic economy. The *Heeren XIX*, the nineteen Dutch lords who constituted the governing board of the WIC saw no conflict between this policy and their insistence on company monopolies.³⁵⁹

Despite this, the officials of the WIC were worried that the officer's spheres of influence in Brazil often included smuggling. Officers of the WIC communicated their memories of Dutch Brazil and maintained their illicit networks after their return to Europe. It is a useful model which illustrates the networks within which WIC officials were enmeshed and how far their spheres of influence stretched. WIC officers on both sides of the Atlantic operated under shared

³⁵⁵ Henk den Heijer, *De Geschiedenis van de WIC* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2002).

³⁵⁶ Gregory O'Malley found the first Africans arrived in Dutch New Amsterdam in the 1620s, likely through privateering against the Spanish and Portuguese in Gregory E. O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage: Slave Migration from the Caribbean to North America, 1619-1807" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (2009), 157.

³⁵⁷ translation: "The Raven"

³⁵⁸ See Ellis L. Raesly, *Portrait of New Netherland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945) , 161.

³⁵⁹ "Heeren XIX" Literally means "Lords 19," and refers to the nineteen board members who controlled the WIC.

assumptions and were connected to one another (and to their colleagues of the East Indies Company working in the Indian Ocean) for the goal of individual/mutual profit, rather than the best interests of the company.³⁶⁰ Jaap Jacobs cites an ordinance of 1638 which “stated rather exaggeratedly that illicit cargo took up as much room in the holds of the WIC ships that hardly any room was left for legal goods.”³⁶¹

The royal slave trading employees who financed, tolerated, or participated in slave trade piracy or the byproducts thereof found the systems of colonialism and mercantilism worked to their liking. These systems provided the ideal market in which slave trade piracy, privateering, and individual entrepreneurship flourished, thrived, and made wealthy men out of ordinary European citizens. Colonial societies could only grow through the benefits of piracy and illicit free trade. Governors and other officials had to operate against the best interests of the metropole and the royal slave trading companies in order to maintain their power base and networks in the Americas.

This insistence on monopolies that could not be sustained meant that a contraband trade flourished nearly everywhere in the Americas where it was perceived as remotely profitable, especially in the Caribbean. Linda Rupert found that the multiple networks which developed around the contraband trade between Curaçao and Tierra Firme also had broad effects on the social and cultural configurations of emerging societies, well beyond the economic and political

³⁶⁰ Michiel vanGroesen, “Officers of the West India Company, their Networks, and their Personal Memories of Dutch Brazil, in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 39-58.

³⁶¹ Jaap Jacobs. *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2009), 112.

realms, as the trade reconfigured peoples and connected them in ways they had previously not been connected.³⁶²

The Dutch-Style Entrepôt of St. Thomas

While the inter-American economy grew, the Dutch and Prussians found ways to capitalize on it. In 1657, the WIC established a post on the island of St. Thomas, but the Danish company conquered it by 1666 and launched sugar plantations. In 1685, the Danes rented half of the island to the Prussian Brandenburg Africa Company. Instead of using it to cultivate plantations, however, the BAC created an entrepôt to rival that of the Dutch in Curaçao. As on the Gold Coast in West Africa, the Prussians coveted Dutch economic innovation in the Americas and based their economic models upon those of the Dutch. The Danish and Prussian island of St. Thomas therefore became large Dutch-style slave market at this time which attracted much illicit trade.

In 1696, the French Dominican Friar Péré Labat visited St. Thomas and described the economic niche this island served in the slave trade:

...the port of St. Thomas is open to all nations. During peace, it serves as an entrepôt for commerce with the French, English, Spaniards, and Dutch, do not dare to pursue openly on their own islands; and in time of war, it is the refuge of merchant ships when pursued by privateers. On the other hand, the privateers send their prizes here to be sold, when they are not disposed to send them to a greater distance. A great many small vessels also proceed from St. Thomas to the coasts of South America, whence they bring back much riches in specie or in bars, and valuable

³⁶² Linda M. Rupert, "Contraband trade and the Shaping of Colonial Societies in Curaçao and Tiera Firme," in *Itinerario*, 30 (2006): 35-54.

merchandise. In a word, St. Thomas is a market of great consequence.³⁶³

. The records of the BAC support Labat's observations. They contain frequent mention of St. Thomas and the island's use, particularly as a place from which to conduct illicit business with the Spanish Americas. The BAC officials often discussed the latest prices they could expect from Spain's colonies, who often paid double what they were worth for goods and slaves they could not get elsewhere.³⁶⁴

The Slave Voyages Database shows an overwhelming amount of information about where slaves were purchased, and employees of both the RAC and the WIC showed their preference for slave origins that employees of the BAC did not.³⁶⁵ From various notes and brief mentions in the documents of the WIC, for example, it can be seen the Dutch noted which coastal districts provided the WIC with slaves. From the letters of factors to the WIC it can be seen that these factors along those coastal districts were at least cursorily familiar with the interior places from which their slave-trading middle-men obtained the captives to be sold to the Dutch. The Prussians of the BAC did not express these preferences.³⁶⁶ The BAC likely did not

³⁶³ Père Labat, *Nouveau Voyage aux isles Françaises de l'Amérique*, vol. ii. p. 285, as cited in John P. Knox, *A Historical Account of St. Thomas, W. I., With Its Rise and Progress in Commerce: Missions and Churches; Climate and its Adaptation to Invalids; Geological Structure; Natural History, and Botany; And Incidental Notices of St. Croix and St. Johns; Slave Insurrections in These Islands; Emancipation and Present Conditions of the Laboring Classes*. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1852) , 62.

³⁶⁴ GStA, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 49

³⁶⁵ See the search specifications for ethnicity in The Transatlantic Slave Voyages Database at www.slavevoyages.org.

³⁶⁶ The officials of the Brandenburg Africa Company seemed to have very few preferences and unlike the WIC, did not attempt to micromanage its employees in Africa or the Americas. The officials would come to regret this in 1699 when faced with severe debts. Their only excuses were that it had been “too long since we have seen the books and examined the issues,” (“...*too lange wy de boeken niet hebben gesien en de saaken net examineert.*”), forcing a re-calculation of their debt to the Danish King for their investments in St. Thomas. From GStA, I Ha Rep. 65 N. 78, s. 83

express a preference because the vast majority of slaves traded by the Prussians were for resale in the Caribbean. While the company did establish a few plantations and commercial outposts, their main slave market of St. Thomas was mainly used as a slave trade entrepôt for the inter-American trade in slaves.³⁶⁷

The freight logs of two ships which conducted regular trade with St. Thomas in the 1690s illustrate the global trade conducted by the BAC. These ships routinely brought European goods such as gunpowder, textiles, ceramics, shoes, hats, luxury goods and wines to the Brandenburg-controlled island, and in return took slave cargoes to destinations like Jamaica, Tortola, and St. Croix, where the slaves were traded for natural resources and agricultural products of the Americas, like sugar, cotton, cocoa, and ox skins. These were then shipped to Emden, the Prussian city in Lower Saxony from which the BAC operated, for the European market.³⁶⁸

The slaves transported from St. Thomas to other Caribbean destinations probably came from the BAC's Fort Gross Friedrichsburg in Cape Three Points on the Gold Coast in West Africa. This made it a double-triangle trade, likely to obfuscate origins and destinations. Slave ships from Gross Friedrichsburg delivered slaves to the BAC on St. Thomas, and then other ships coming from Europe or elsewhere in the Americas arrived with European goods to trade for slaves for resale in the Americas. In the case of St. Croix, the BAC sold slaves to representatives of the Danish Company usually with royal approval. Those the BAC sold to

³⁶⁷ Nevil A. T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992), 7-10.

³⁶⁸ Hermann Kellenbenz, "Die Brandenburger auf St. Thomas," *Jahrbuch fuer Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellshcaft Lateinamerikas* 2 (1965), 196-217, 208-214.

English-controlled Tortola and Jamaica, were considered illicit cargo, as the RAC was given the royal monopoly to supply slaves to British islands at this time.³⁶⁹

These smuggler's logs of BAC ships to British islands discuss sales in Jamaica in the 1690s. The customary smuggling patterns created under Spanish rule simply continued under English rule despite the changing legality of such trade. The logs occasionally name the Jamaican destinations as Spanish Town (sometimes written as "Espaniston" or "Spaneston"), as a destination for slaves, which shows an acute awareness of the political scene in the Caribbean on the part of these smugglers. In the 1690s, English Jamaica retained many of its Spanish institutions.³⁷⁰ As no significant Spanish trade took place there after 1630, the Spanish island dependent on either the few merchants who had the *asiento*, or illicit shipping.³⁷¹ This created a culture of colonists who created an economy from piracy where there was none, and the English takeover of the island did little to change this in actuality.

Jamaica in the seventeenth century was but one of the Caribbean locales which went through transition periods from being the colony of one imperial power, to becoming the colony of another. Robert Ritchie explains how, during this process, fledgling colonies with infant economies often sought out pirates and other freebooters to keep the island from failing. In this interim period, pirate money was welcomed so long as residents of the island or their trading partners were not targeted. Once the balance tilted, the merchants found piracy to be too high a

³⁶⁹ See the discussion of the 1660 charter the king issued to the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa in Kenneth G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), 106.

³⁷⁰ James Robertson, "Late Seventeenth-Century Spanish Town, Jamaica: Building an English City on Spanish Foundations," in *Early America Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 6 (2008): 346-390.

³⁷¹ Madeleine J. Donachie, *Household Ceramics at Port Royal, Jamaica, 1655-1692* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2003), 123

risk, and created less desirable conditions for pirates so the pirates were incentivized to move to the next fledgling colony in need of this uneasy alliance.³⁷²

Furthermore, the Port Royal earthquake of 1692 caused a great influx of merchants from the ruined city to Spanish Town eager to continue what business they could salvage in the aftermath of the loss of their most important trading port.³⁷³ In this chaos, these contraband slavers must have counted on trading there unnoticed. Their luck ran out two years later, however, as the ship logs mention a note in passing that the Governor of Spanish Town had extorted sixty-three pieces of eight from them.³⁷⁴

This type of extortion was not unusual in the seventeenth-century Caribbean, and particularly among Spanish and formerly Spanish colonies. The governors of these islands were aware that illicit trade formed the backbone of their economy, as it filled orders their European ruling countries were unable to fill.³⁷⁵ Therefore, instead of punishing the illegal traders, the governors and those working for them tended to extort reasonably-sized bribes and look the other way. Indeed, the patterns of inter-colonial exchange did not merely contain some

³⁷² Robert Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 19.

³⁷³ Nuala Zahedieh, "The Merchants of Port Royal, Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655-1692," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 43 (1986): 570-593.

³⁷⁴ Kellenbenz, "Die Brandenburger auf St. Thomas," 196-217.

³⁷⁵ It also provided some convenient capital for the company officials who felt safe from the prying eyes of their companies and made a hefty profit dealing privately, which made them officially sanctioned slave traders as well as interlopers onto that trade simultaneously. For example, this occurred at St. Thomas where the Danish Official had broken the BAC contract by selling slaves onto "Strangers" and had been negotiating for slaves with interlopers. In *Burgomaster Johannes Zeneman, Head of Maritime Isuses Rudolph Friday, the Lord's War Comissioner Abraham Jamet answer Articles from Direct Sivert Hoess which they received 27 Dec. 1714*, in GStA I. HA. Rep. 65 N. 113

irregularity in trade and disregard of official sanctions, but were characterized by them through what archaeologist Kathleen Deagan describes as a "chronic contraband trade."³⁷⁶

Curacao, Caribbean Slave Trade Piracy, and the WIC

In 1658, while the BAC were establishing St. Thomas as a free-trade slave market of the Americas, the Dutch established Curaçao to become their main transit point in the slave trade, followed by St. Eustatius in the 18th century. The intent behind the island's trade initially was to meet Dutch Atlantic demand for slaves. In fact, most American demands for slaves were better met as the island sold slaves indiscriminately and without fear of interfering with other European Crown's claims of sovereign mercantilism (while still asserting the right to their own).³⁷⁷ As profits were imagined to be unlimited, and risks comparably negligent, the inter-American slave trade in this early period was all but a free-for-all.

That is until a year later in 1659, when a slave-ship pirate called Peeckelharinck raided the marooned WIC slave ship *St. Jan* in Curaçao.³⁷⁸ The *St. Jan* had been sailing around the island's sand bars when it ran aground, and the crew was forced to abandon it and seek help. While the WIC officials in Curaçao attempted to construct a plan of salvage, the pirate Peeckelharinck took not only "the Company's best barque", but also all eighty of the living slaves onboard it.

In a letter to the WIC officials in the Netherlands, the governor of Curaçao wrote that he understood that Peeckelharinck and his crew were headed to Jamaica with the slaves, and begged

³⁷⁶ Kathleen Deagan, *Artifacts of the Spanish Colonies of Florida and the Caribbean, 1500-1800: Ceramics, Glassware and Beads*, v.1 (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1987), 19

³⁷⁷ P. W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e Eeuw* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965).

³⁷⁸ The moniker translated literally is "pickled-herring," a Dutch delicacy.

the WIC to write to Jamaica to intercept him.³⁷⁹ Like the BAC slave traders trading to Jamaica from their slave market in St. Thomas, Peeckelharinck was aware of the permissiveness of the newly English island toward pirates, and knew that he would find buyers for the pirated slaves. Trevor Burnard found that during this time most of the slaves purchased in Jamaica were resold to the Spanish Americas by private sellers, who conducted most of the slave traffic to the English West Indies prior to 1660.³⁸⁰

Underwater archaeologists also found evidence of inter-island slave smuggling. Clifford E. Smith and Clarence V. H. Maxwell found a wrecked slave ship which connects to the Bermuda slave and smuggling trade network in the larger Atlantic World trade system. Slave ship finds are relatively rare within underwater archaeology, though they can often corroborate historic evidence. In this case, Smith and Maxwell found that merchant mariners from Bermuda had participated in the free trade of Dutch St. Eustatius during the early 1700s. They conclude that Bermuda should be seen as a slave trade 'node', with its role defined in the smuggling of slaves and slave-trade goods from the Caribbean to the North American colonies.³⁸¹

Historian Victoria argues that Bermuda's secluded harbors and location made the island "ideally suited for a smugglers' haven." She found that in his correspondence with the Council

³⁷⁹ See "M. Beck of Curaçao to the WIC, 5 January 1660," "M. Beck of Curaçao to the WIC, 4 February 1660," the Journal kept aboard the ship St. Jan, begun on the 4th of March in the year 1659, the List of Slaves Who Died Aboard the Ship St. Jan from the 30th of June to the 29th of October in the year 1659, and the "Proclamation of Matthias Beck, for the capture of the pirates who seized the slaves aboard the St. Jan and other Company Property, 5 December 1659," in Charles Gehring and Jacob Schiltkamp, trans. *New Netherlands Documents vol. 17 The Curaçao Papers 1640-1665*, New Netherland Institute, accessed September 10, 2012. Available online <http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/4013/5543/9329/CuraçaoPapers.pdf>, 131- 169.

³⁸⁰ Trevor Burnard, "Who Bought Slaves in Early America? Purchases of Slaves from the Royal Africa Company in Jamaica, 1674-1708" *Slavery & Abolition*, 17 (1996): 68-92; and Larry Gragg, "'To Procure Negroes': The English Slave Trade to Barbados, 1627-60," *Slavery & Abolition*, 16 (1995): 65-84.

³⁸¹ Clifford E. Smith and Clarence V. H. Maxwell, "A Bermuda Smuggling-Slave Trade: The 'Manilla Wreck' Opens Pandora's Box," *Slavery & Abolition*, 23 (2001): 57-86.

of Trade and Plantations, Governor Hope revealed that prior to 1720 pirates were made to feel very welcome on the island, as in Jamaica, and that the former governors had gained their generous estates through deals with them. Governor Hope observed that Bermudians loved nothing more than travelling to uninhabited islands in their sloops fishing for wrecks and trading with pirates. He remarked “piracy and accesarys to piracy are crimes here just as epidemick as whoreing and drinking...”³⁸²

Despite his unusual moniker, Peeckelharinck was not an unusual pirate. His case does not indicate an extraordinary economic savvy or keen knowledge of the elusive black market. Rather, the case illustrates the circulation of knowledge in the illicit inter-American economy. Peeckelharinck did not attack and target the WIC slave ship- he merely witnessed it being attacked by another pirate who left the slaves behind, and took advantage of the situation. The fact that he was able to do so and go straight to a place where these slaves would almost certainly find buyers attests to the widespread nature of this knowledge of the smuggling economy of the Americas.

Little is given about the background of Peeckelharinck in these letters by Curaçao's governor, other than that the pirate had previous sailed with Captain Beaulieu at the Cape, “and now and then comes into New Netherland.” In the *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany*, a French privateer Captain Augustin Beaulieu of the *St. Pierre* from this time period is identified as having brought prize slaves for sale to New Netherland just three years previously in 1657.³⁸³ The implications are that Peeckelharinck had

³⁸² Virginia Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda, 1616-1782*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999) 165, 184.

³⁸³ See Council Minutes of 1657 in *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, Volume VIII (Dutch Manuscripts)*, edited by E. B. O’Callaghan (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company Printers, 1865).

learned how to identify and make away with full slave ships under a French privateer captain, and had later resorted to piracy of the WIC when he applied those skills to the taking of the slave ship *St. Jan*. This transition was common in the early modern Atlantic world. The royal slave trading companies of the metropolises fed this contraband slave market by promoting privateering, and then failing to provide jobs for these privateers once they outlived their use. Piracy was a natural transition for sailors who had experienced the wealth which resulted in the taking of a slave-ship prize.³⁸⁴ Under Captain Beaulieu, Peeckelharinck furthered his supply of contacts in New Netherland and Jamaica who would overlook the contraband origin of the slaves being brought into their territories as long as they were competitively priced.

While it was expected of pirates to flout mercantilism for self-interest, English and Dutch governors also circumvented mercantilist policies. As English governors struggled to establish and maintain viable colonies, they allowed their colonists to turn to the Dutch colonies and the Netherlands as unofficial trading partners. In general, governors in both the Caribbean and New York allowed inter-imperial trade between English colonists and foreign traders to occur throughout the seventeenth century despite imperial laws that made much of it illegal. Christian Koot argues that although imperial authorities condemned the governors who fostered illicit commerce, inter-imperial trade was actually what helped to construct the English colonies, made them viable, and helped the British Empire to grow.³⁸⁵ Research in the WIC archives indicates that it was the same story for the Dutch and their illicit trade.

³⁸⁴ Much like in the way Marcus Rediker found that piracy was a natural transition for the sailors-turned-privateers who found themselves unemployed after the War of Spanish Succession. See Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 8-9.

³⁸⁵ Christian J. Koot, "Constructing the Empire: English Governors, Imperial Policy, and Inter-imperial Trade in New York City and the Leeward Islands, 1650-1689," *Itinerario* 31 (2007): 35-60.

Another piracy case from 1659 links with Governor Mattias Beck. The pirate Jan Pietersen from Coldingen, Denmark, had enticed a Frisian WIC sailor named Jacob Pietersen van Belcom into his pirate crew. From the evidence in the WIC and BAC records, it is likely the pirate Pietersen is the same who was seen attacking company slave ships on the Guinean coast in West Africa. In this particular instance, he had styled himself as the commander of a ship called *'t Castel Ferget* with a mixed English, French, and German crew.³⁸⁶ Curaçao's Governor Beck understood this ship to be the ship that had attacked the *St. Jan* in Rocus and caused it to run aground there where it become bait for Peeckelhaarinck. Before Peeckelhaarinck ever arrived on the scene, Pietersen had absconded with 84 slaves and another WIC ship, *Den Jongen Vogelstruys*.³⁸⁷

Governor Beck accused the pirate Pietersen of committing similar acts before this under improper commission, meaning that, like many of the buccaneers at this time, this pirate had begun his life of piracy as a privateer. Beck also accused the Dutch WIC sailor von Belcom of having "served these pirates as a spy which he still tries to do."³⁸⁸

Whether or not this was the case may always be unknown. However, this fear of royal slave-trading company employees and officials working with or alongside pirates, or profiting from illicit elements of the trade is one that is frequently expressed in the documents of the WIC, RAC, and BAC. Officials of these trading companies expressed constant frustration that no matter which route they chose for their ships, and no matter how secret they kept the missives, there always seemed to be a problem in getting slaves from West Africa to their intended

³⁸⁶ Possible translation: "The Lost Castle"

³⁸⁷ Translation: "The Young Bird's nest"

³⁸⁸ "Proclamation of Matthias Beck, for the Capture of the Pirates who seized the Slaves aboard the *St. Jan* and other Company Property, 5 December 1659," in *New Netherlands Documents Volume 17*, 154

destinations in the Americas, and while the companies hemorrhaged money, their workers always seemed to profit.

The Illicit Inter-American Economy

Slaves which were obtained in ways which flouted royal monopolies could not be sold as company slaves were. Instead, these independent traders found alternate recipients for their slave cargoes. Caribbean historian Pedro Welch points out how as a result of this, an inter-island trade flourished. Very few colonies could take on illegitimately-sourced slaves, but individuals from nearly every colony could and did purchase these slaves from the few islands (e.g. Curaçao, St. Eustatia, St. Thomas, Barbados, Jamaica) which at differing times were able to buy these contraband slaves with no questions asked and functioned as clearing houses.³⁸⁹

By 1700 the purchase and sale of contraband slaves became such a problem for the WIC and its possessions in St. Eustatius that the company posted a broadside in its territories warning its workers to not purchase slaves nor goods from these individuals, and that those who did would be subject to confiscation. However, those who alerted the Commander and brought him these slaves would be rewarded.³⁹⁰ Presumably these slaves would then become property of the WIC and be shipped wherever the WIC deemed them necessary and/or most profitable. These broadsides were perfunctory at best.

³⁸⁹ Pedro L. V. Welch, "Intra-American and Caribbean Destinations and Transit Points for the Slave Trade," *The Journal of Caribbean History* 42 (2008): 49.

³⁹⁰ Notificatie een "Enterlooper met slaven" voor Verkoop Ligt "Buyten Ordre" Van de WIC De Rede Van St. Eustatius, Verbod Bij De "Enterlooper" Te Varen En Slaven Te Kopn, Op Straffe Van Konfisskatie, Beloning Vor Het Bij der Kommandeur Brengen Van Zulke Slaven, 4 May 1700," in *West Indisch Plakaatboek, St. Maarten, St. Eusatius, Saba 1648/1681-1816*, onder Redactie van J. A. Schiltkamp en J. Th. de Smidt (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1979), 272-3.

The Spanish colonists and maroons were the most eager market for illicit slaves.³⁹¹ Within the BAC records is a brochure which contains a list of all the things for which Spanish colonists and maroons wanted to trade (paper, spectacles, bells, furs, spice, tobacco, slaves, cannonballs, nails, materials for carpentry, and buttons from Nuremburg).³⁹² The BAC made it clear that they could expect ambergris, pearls, turtle-shells, saltpeter, salsa pareille³⁹³, china, cooper, indigo, cochineal, Nicaraguan wood, cocoa, wool, emeralds, sapphires, and other precious gems in exchange, in quantities “two or three times the price of things in Europe.”³⁹⁴ The report makes the case that mercantilism could not be honored because the Spaniards and maroons of the Spanish Empire were so desperate to trade and had many riches yet nowhere to spend them so that they welcomed Prussian ships to obtain the items they need despite their governors having strongly forbidden it.³⁹⁵ Henk den Heijer found that the authority of the Spanish crown was often undermined by the WIC as well. In fact, den Heijer asserts that the Dutch claimed certain islands in the Caribbean initially not to colonize, but to be in a position to

³⁹¹ I use “maroons” here because in the BAC records the word used is *Naturellen*, the same word that was used by both the WIC and BAC to refer to the locals living in West Africa. In the context of the Americas it is uncertain exactly what is meant by this term, or if the BAC made any distinction between the Indians and the Maroons of Colonial Spanish America with whom they traded. The Dutch did have a word they used to refer to aboriginal people born of the land in which they resided which they tended to reserve for native American aboriginals exclusively (*Inboorlinge*), but sometimes they used the term *Naturellen* to talk about Indians, too. Its use is more ambiguous.

³⁹² Item titled “Europeese Koopmanschappen, Dienede ten Handel met de Spangiarden en Naturellen in de Zuyd-Zee,” in *GStA, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 49*

³⁹³ I am led to believe from the context that “salsa pareille” is a Prussian misspelling of “Salsepareille” – the French name for the medicinal plant *smilax aspera*, which was made into an ointment or tincture used to cure many common ailments from rheumatism to gout and syphilis.

³⁹⁴ “...dat tegens de prijs, die deselve ordinaries in Europa gelt, het sevel twee or driemaal soo veel rendeert.” in “Europeese Koopmanschappen, Dienede ten Handel met de Spangiarden en Naturellen in de Zuyd-Zee,” in *GStA, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 49*

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

better plunder or illicitly trade with the Spanish territories in the area.³⁹⁶ This was logical for the Dutch, as these were areas on the fringes of empire with little supervision.

Of course, participating in the illicit trade did not render the WIC or BAC immune from the attention of others who preyed on the slave trade. Their own company's ships were often the target of privateers. In 1714, the governor of Prussian St. Thomas, Johannes Zeneman along with the Wartime Commissioner and the minister of Maritime Advice expressed fear to the BAC at sending out the doubloons they had amassed in the slave trade. Both French and Spanish privateers were circling the island and the route between St. Thomas and Dutch Curaçao waiting for ships to come in or out.³⁹⁷ The privateers were aware that Prussian naval power was negligible and that the BAC would be unable to pursue or reprimand the parties which preyed upon the Company's ships without the help of another imperial power. The *Calendar of British State Papers of 1700* stated that the Caribbean was infested with pirates who found the Guinea trade ships in the Caribbean "slow of sail and weary of crew" easy prey.³⁹⁸ These examples illustrate the fact that privateers and others preying on the slave ships in the Caribbean Sea would not have done so were the slaves not easy enough to resell for profit.

As with Dutch holdings in West Africa, Dutch holdings in the Americas rarely followed the WIC's protectionist policies. While the WIC tried to implement the most profitable interactions between the Dutch and the African or African-American slaves in the Americas and

³⁹⁶ Presumably he meant the ABC islands, which are widely known in the historiography to have been entrepôts which freely traded with Tierra Firme, or the coasts of Colombia, Panama, and Venezuela. See Henk Van Heijer, *De Geschiedenis van de WIC* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2002), 92.

³⁹⁷ "Borgermr. Johannes Zeneman, Her Raad det Marine Rudolph Friday, Heer Krygs Comissar Abraham Jamet answer articles from Director Sivert Hoes which they received 27 Dec 1714," in GStA, I. HA Rep. 65 N. 113, s.34-35

³⁹⁸ *Calendar of State Papers 1700*, as cited in Nivel Tattersfield, *The Forgotten Trade Comprising the Log of the Daniel and Henry of 1700 and Accounts of the Slave Trade from the Minor Ports of England, 1698-1725*, ed. John Fowles (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), 174.

the Indians surrounding the Dutch settlers and trading post, it was the people on the ground in the Americas who had the last say. Historian Luis Felipe de Alencastro explains some of the disparities between WIC edict and colonial reality within the context of the Dutch slave trade by pointing out that “the politics of business and the colonial strategies often bled into one another.”³⁹⁹ WIC employees on the ground knew that WIC edicts could be flouted and even broken as long as doing so led to profit, or preventing further loss of said profit. Like the Spanish and French, the English, Prussian, and Swedish New Worlds all followed similar patterns.

This inter-American trade was clandestine, making it difficult for historians to arrive at accurate numbers. Company decisions also affected evidence about the volume of trade. For example, to avoid incurring debts the WIC decreed in 1644 that slaves could no longer be purchased on credit. This decision must have been controversial, as most slaveholders operated on credit and purchased most of their slaves and equipment before the planting season to pay off once the crop had been harvested. When the WIC switched to the ready cash system, planters were unable to purchase slaves, and WIC employees in the Americas were forced to lower the price or risk slaves dying while negotiating with the WIC.

Merchants with ready cash speculated on the trade as a result. Many of them were Jewish merchants (many of them from the communities which had fled the Iberian Peninsula and her colonies to avoid the Inquisition) who could pay specie to buy WIC slaves for a fraction of the going price. This meant that for a few years the slaves were sold for less than they had cost to purchase in West Africa. These merchants then either resold these slaves back to Caribbean planters on credit for a profit, or resold the slaves through their trade networks in other parts of

³⁹⁹ “Wirtschaftspolitik und Koloniale Strategie gereiten durcheinander.” See Luis Felipe de Alencastro, “Johann Moritz und der Sklavenhandel,” in Gerhard Brunn, et al. *Sein Feld war die Welt: Johann Moritz von Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679) Von Siegen ueber die Niederlande und Brasilien nach Brandenburg*. (Muenster: Waxman, 2008), 124.

the Americas.⁴⁰⁰ In this case, the WIC ban was directly responsible for a shift in the trade which persisted after it was lifted because slave companies prioritized which colonies received shipments of slaves from Africa, while others were dependent on trans-shipped alternate sources.

Among the Curaçao Papers are several promissory notes between WIC officials and ship captains for inter-American shipping of goods which indicate that small quantities of slaves were held in cargoes alongside livestock and other items for shipment to other Dutch holdings in the Americas⁴⁰¹. Larry Gragg found that in the English Atlantic World thousands of West Africans were purchased by Barbadians in the 1640s and 50s, mostly from independent English slavers who intruded upon the monopoly of the RAC. While the contemporaries claimed the slaves they purchased were from the Dutch, they were covering for the English interlopers who provided them with the slaves the RAC was unable or unwilling to provide.⁴⁰² Gregory O'Malley found that slaves who reached North America in the seventeenth century tended to come from the Caribbean because the less populous territories failed to attract traders from Africa and had to rely on other colonies and illicit markets for slaves.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ See Peter Mark and Jose Da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Richard L. Kagan and Phillip D. Morgan, eds. *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); and Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁴⁰¹ *New Netherland Documents Volume XVII, Curaçao Papers 1640-1665*, edited by Charles T. Gehring and J. A. Schiltkamp. (Interlaken: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1987).

⁴⁰² Larry Gragg, "'To Procure Negroes': The English Slave Trade to Barbados, 1627-1660," *Slavery & Abolition*, 16 (1995): 65-84. See also Gragg's larger work: *Larry Gragg, Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados 1627-1660*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴⁰³ Gregory E. O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage: Slave Migration from the Caribbean to North America, 1619-1807," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 66 (2009): 125-172.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how the mercantile culture borne of African-preferred fragmentation and competition for slaves on the Gold Coast contributed to the formation and growth of the illicit inter-American economy in two key ways. The first, as demonstrated by the case of the pirate Peeckelhaarinck, was that slaves obtained through illicit means had to also be sold illicitly. Slave trading companies had clear channels through which to buy and sell slaves: their slave trading fortresses on the Gold Coast corresponded with a number of American ports which generally accepted the slave ships from that company's fortresses in West Africa. It was challenging, though not impossible for independent merchants and freebooters to break into these channels on either end as they lacked the proper documentation and presented a risk to the company officials who worked in those ports exporting or receiving slaves. The records of the official slave trading companies are naturally void of specific cases of slaves illicitly obtained in Africa and then illicitly sold in the Americas, as those who wrote them were only concerned with their end of the slave trade in either Africa or the Americas. But the records do contain many complaints about disruptions on either the supply or demand end of their slave trade.

As chapter four illustrated, company workers frequently complained of interference from independent merchants and pirates who they claimed stole either their African trading contacts, or outright pirated the slaves belonging to the company. This chapter demonstrates how the same phenomenon took place in the Americas. Slaves who either were not purchased through the companies, or sold through them, were traded on the black market which supplied vast swathes of the Americas when their metropolises did not.

The second way the mercantile culture borne of African trading preferences and competition on the Gold Coast contributed to the formation and growth of the illicit inter-American economy is demonstrated by the case of St. Thomas and the Brandenburg Africa Company's slave market there. In this case, slaves were obtained through an official slave trading company with the permission of the corresponding European metropole, but without a corresponding demand or market. These slaves nearly always ended up in the colonies of other nations.

Company officials in Africa understood that the slaves they obtained were destined for their nation's Atlantic colonies. This arrangement worked best for the RAC, which had both a significant presence in the slave trade, as well as large settler colonies with a never-ceasing demand for slave labor. The WIC, on the other hand, had limited colonies, yet a sizeable slave trade. The number of slaves they obtained always outnumbered the number of slaves their colonists wanted, and so instead of scaling back their slave trade, the Dutch found creative ways to sell these excess slaves. The WIC refused to allow their exports to hinge on the Spanish crown's mercurial granting of the *asiento*, and so developed the *entrepôt* system. This system ensured that they were adhering to the European mercantilist ideals (trading only to and from Dutch slave trading ports), yet allowed the WIC to profit from the illicit inter-American trade, as slaves brought to Dutch American colonies were usually sold to the places in the Americas with the highest demand. The BAC went one step further: while they had three official forts from which to export slaves in Africa, they had no colonies at all save for half of an island they rented from the Danes specifically for the trans-shipment of slaves to the colonies of other nations. While the BAC occasionally held the *asiento* to sell their slaves to the Spanish colonies in the Americas, their business plan depended on the black market.

Both of these means of supplying the inter-American economy resulted in an allocation of resources based on market fluctuations which enhanced the wealth of colonists in the Americas, rather than the protectionist, extraction-based mercantilist policies designed to enhance the wealth of Europe. This facilitated the development of capitalism in the early modern world.

TIMELINE

1460 Portuguese sailors arrived on the shores of Sierra Leone in West Africa, and Luso-African trade soon followed.

1482 Portuguese erected the trading fortress São Jorge da Mina (El Mina Castle) on the Gold Coast

1528 Independent Dutch Merchants began trading in West Africa

1562 England's first slave trading expedition in West Africa under John Hawkins

1621 The Dutch West India Company was founded

1626 The WIC began its trade in Angola in West-Central Africa

1628 Dutch privateer Piet Heyn intercepted a Spanish fleet in Cuba and helped fund the WIC's future forays

1629 The WIC planned to capture Portuguese Brazil and establish its own sugar plantations run with African slave labor

1630 The WIC took control of Northeastern Brazil from the Portuguese

1634 The WIC captured Curaçao from the Spanish and used the island to reroute illicit slaves to the Spanish Empire

1637 The WIC seized El Mina from the Portuguese who had been trading there for over 150 years

1642 Treaty of Axim transferred all Portuguese trading rights with Axim to the Dutch

1649 Swedish Africa Company founded and signed contract with the Efutu, putting them at odds with the English company who had also signed an agreement with Henniqa of Fetu for the same trading rights

1652 The first Anglo-Dutch War (took place mainly in European waters)

1656 Dutch WIC signed the Treaty of Butre with Ahanta to dislodge the Swedish presence on the Western Gold Coast. (This treaty would later be used to justify Dutch aggression against the BAC)

1657 Danish established a port on St. Thomas in the Caribbean

1658 Curaçao became the WIC's main Dutch transit point for slaves

1659 Danish Africa Company founded and Danes began trade on the Gold Coast

1659 Pirate Peeckelharinck began targeting slave ships in the Caribbean

1660 The English precursor to the Royal Africa Company, the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, was founded

1663 As a prelude to the Second Anglo-Dutch War, King James sent English naval ships to attack Dutch trading forts in Guinea .

1664 Robert Holmes led the sacking of WIC ships and trading forts in West Africa, including El Mina

1665 Second Anglo-Dutch War (An Atlantic-scale war of privateering between the Dutch and English. This time, the battlefronts included coastal West Africa, North America (New Netherland and Virginia Colony), and the Caribbean (Nevis, St. Eustatia, Cayenne, Martinique, St. Kitts, Antigua, Montserrat, Suriname)

1672 The English Royal Africa Company was founded

1672 Third Anglo-Dutch War (took place mainly in European waters and the East Indies, though animosity from the war did affect Anglo-Dutch relations on the Gold Coast)

1682 Prussian Brandenburg Africa Company was founded and established two slave-trading fortresses on the Gold Coast

1685 Danes leased half of St. Thomas to the Prussian BAC, who used the land to create large-scale illicit slave auctions, mostly to the Spanish Empire

1686 Slave ship piracy reaches a height in West Africa. Slave ships of all companies report pirates interfering with their trade

1687 King James II of England commissioned a man-of-war to capture pirates along the Gold Coast to protect RAC monopoly

1694 First Komenda War (RAC, Eguafu, Denkyira, Fante and Asebu against the WIC and the Twifo)

1696 Second Komenda War (Eguafu and Akrons against the WIC, Akani and Adom people)

1698 Third Komenda War (Eguafu against the RAC, Asebu, and Akani)

1699 Fourth Komenda War (WIC, Eguafu and Adom against the RAC, Takyi Kuma (prince of Eguafu), and Twifo)

1717 Ahantan trader Jan Conny gained control of Prussian fort Gross Friedrichsburg until the Dutch seized it from his army in 1724

1719 English liverpool slave trader William Snelgrave attacked by pirates in West Africa

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