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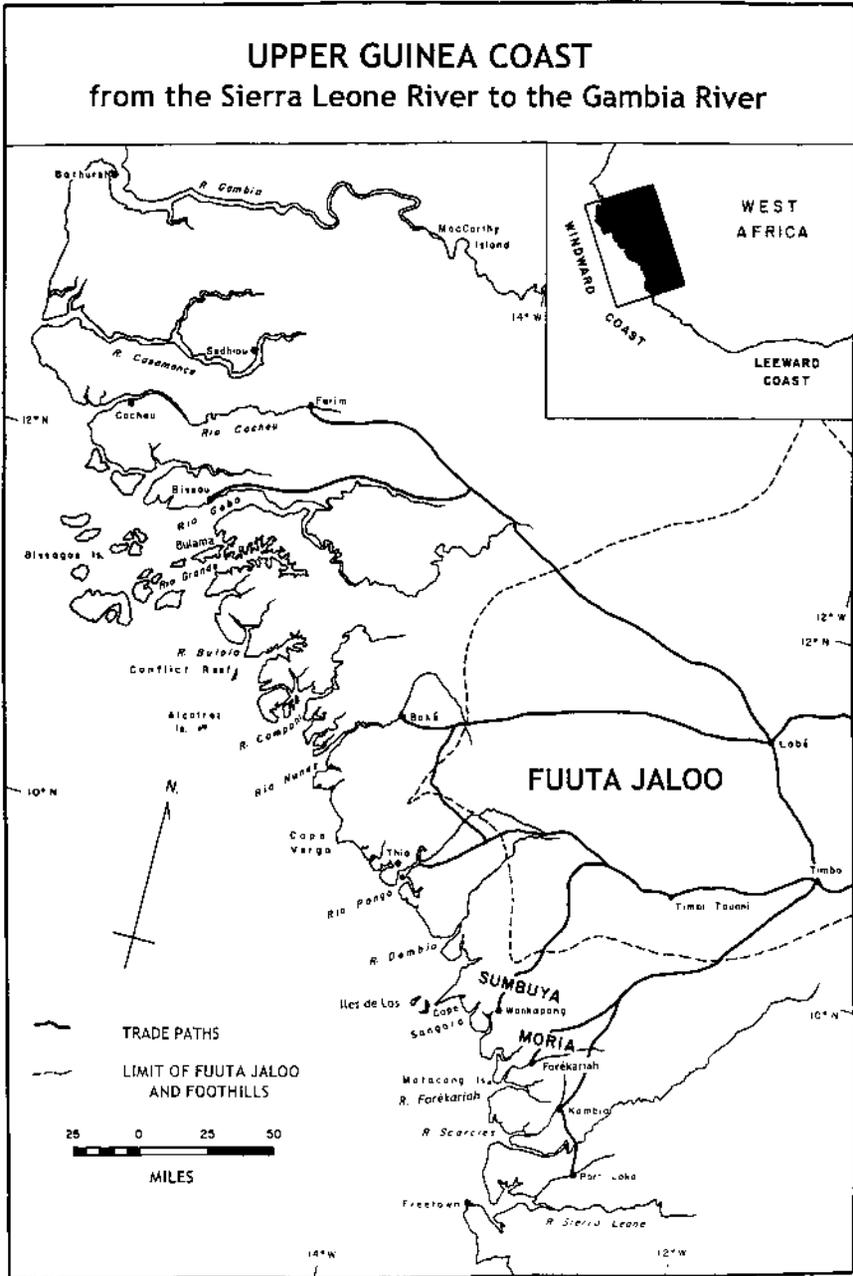
From the late eighteenth century, the British maintained a lively interest upon the Guinea-Conakry coast and in Fuuta Jaloo which fed numerous rivers that emptied on this coast. Commercial firms with headquarters in Liverpool and London had maintained numerous trading relationships here since the mid-eighteenth century, especially in the Nunez and Pongo rivers, upon Iles de Los, and upon islands located at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River. The firm of Barber & Bolland operated a trading factory at Iles de Los, for example, and its principal agent, Miles Barber, developed an elaborate network for supplying and merchandising European and American products with numerous African, European, and Euro-African merchants¹. Trades in coastally produced commodities and in slaves were paramount to the commerce of this coast.

Inevitably, however, interest was keen for the sources of more distant products that were brought coastward from interior markets. To be sure, every trader upon this coast perhaps dreamed about a commerce that would link his trade to that believed to exist on the Niger River itself and bring gold and highly sought and equally profitable goods to increase his fortune. It was this dream, encouraged by a lucrative trade in coastal goods, that drove British and other foreign fascination with the hinterland of Guinea-Conakry and with the Fula peoples who ruled in the Fuuta Jaloo highlands.

Early Phase

Between 1750 and 1790, principal centers for British activity with Guinea-Conakry were at Iles de Los, located only a few kilometers from Sangara

1. Citations are made primarily to secondary works where more particular attention is given to specific documents. For citations for Iles de Los, see MOUSER (1996); DEBBASCH (1988: 209-212).



Point, and at Bance Island in the Sierra Leone River. Lesser but significant centers were located in the Nunez, Pongo, and Scarcies rivers where several independent, or at least marginally attached, British traders operated factories. A few Atlantic-based traders maintained factories in the Quiaport, Bereira, and Forékariah rivers located south of Sangara peninsula. Newly developed indigenous states in these latter rivers, however, organized trade more directly with coasting vessels, and, in consequence, these stranger merchants increasingly found local elites to be less friendly by 1775 to foreign competition which might interfere with local control of commerce. At Iles de Los, the principal Europeans resident there were British, although an occasional French trader is mentioned in the record. Factory Town was the largest trading establishment in the islands and perhaps along this coast, and here Miles Barber provided Europeans visiting the coast with shipping supplies, a doctor, craftsmen for ship repairs and for preparing vessels for trade, numerous pilots available for hire by coasting vessels, fresh water, and a welcome respite from unhealthy conditions present in the mangrove and mosquito-plagued coast. Some vessels made the islands a regular destination, negotiated for cargoes to be collected coastally, and expected to be provisioned in a timely and regular fashion. Captains and supercargoes were seldom disappointed (Mouser 1996: 84-88). Many of the same considerations were present at Bance Island, although there is no record to indicate that Bance Island-based traders also repaired vessels to the degree available at Factory Town, and it is clear that health conditions there were far less advantageous than at Iles de Los.

These bulking centers served as magnets for ship captains in search of quickly acquired cargo and locally established merchants. Because of the islands' location and ease of access, and because they warehoused goods and provided services sought by shippers and locally-based merchants, they were especially attractive. Representing large British-based firms, commercial agents at Iles de Los could be expected to provide quality goods, services, and repairs and to honor contracts made with shippers and local-based merchants. It was common practice for shippers to advance goods in anticipation of a cargo, reach commercial agreements before any goods were received onboard, and even to place orders for forthcoming ventures upon the coast. Locally-established merchants, whether African, European, or Euro-African, used these bulking centers as wholesalers of European and American products, especially firearms and gun powder. Equally important to local commerce and indigenous traders, however, were markets in rice and other provisions sold to shippers for use during their transshipment of slaves to the New World. Local merchants also could act as middlemen between local producers of goods and providers of slaves, with the larger commercial agents located at these points receiving an increment of profits in the trade (Brooks 1970; Mouser 1978; Gamble 2002: 47-50).

If island traders were primarily interested in trade with ship captains and in supplying resident traders with goods and services, merchants living

upon the coast had slightly different objectives which drew their attention more directly to interior suppliers of products and slaves that enriched their fortunes. In the Rio Nunez, Fula expansion from Fuuta Jaloo by the late eighteenth century had already established a resident governor among the Landuma peoples who occupied the headwaters of the river where British merchants maintained factories (McGowan 1978: 40-41, 65-66; Botte 1991: 1417-1418). Caravans came from Fuuta Jaloo and from more distant markets with commodities and slaves, and bought salt produced locally and manufactured goods that merchants warehoused upon the coast. The contact between these Nunez-based merchants and traders from the Fuuta and beyond to the Niger River, therefore, was more immediate than that enjoyed by those traders based at Iles de Los, with factory managers obliged to maintain cordial relations with local landlords, caravan leaders, and a Fula governor who resided nearby. It was also common for factory-based merchants to send hawkers into the Fula-controlled interior to advertise products and prices for African and European goods, and thereby to encourage the collection of specific items that were in demand upon the coast, and to entice caravan leaders to their own factories. Some merchants sent agents as far as Labé, Timbo, and other centers, to live and report on trends present in those markets, and, of course, to link their own fortunes to those of major luminaries in interior markets (Watt 1994).

This was also true in the Rio Pongo, but perhaps to a lesser extent than in the Nunez, because Fula sovereignty in the Pongo was less defined or as evident by the end of the eighteenth century. Still, there was a Fula governor present in the Bangalan branch of the upper Pongo, and resident traders regularly negotiated with him as well as with prominent Susu/Baga landlords in that region². As in the Nunez, Pongo-based merchants were acutely aware of the importance of maintaining friendly relations with Fula caravan leaders and of the Nunez practice of sending representatives to advertise goods and prices along trade paths and at major markets in Fuuta Jaloo. At least until 1790, the Fula found it convenient in the Pongo, however, to negotiate directly with a European, John Ormond, Sr., who was commercially and regionally more significant, at least for Fula interests, than local headmen who seemed to have power bases restricted to a village or small groups of villages (Watt 1994: 47r-47v, 69r, 77r; McGowan 1978: 103-105)³.

2. Primary accounts for Pongo conditions are found in AFZELIUS (1967) and MACAULAY (Z. Macaulay's diary and journals). S. SCHWARZ (2000/2002) has edited Macaulay's journals for the June-December 1793 period. See also MOUSER (1973).
3. Charles Emmanuel Sorry's interpretation of Fula interactions in the Rio Pongo (SORRY 1973: 20-31) collapses events of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in such a way that a precise time line fails to emerge. His narrative, which is enlightening in the nature of Susu rule, emphasizes Susu and Fula players at the turn of the century, perhaps reflecting accessible oral traditions linked to Kati kingship. References from the British period before 1800 and from British records are absent from Sorry's reconstruction.

British interest in the Konkouré/Dembia River region, that area between the Pongo and Cape Sangara, was marginal at best before 1800. Here important Luso-African families had established themselves by mid-eighteenth century, had married daughters of locally important landowners, and maintained a near monopoly of commerce between the interior and the coast (Rodney 1970: 78-82; Golbéry 1802: 163-172; Mouser 1975: 429)⁴. These families, principally the Gomezes and Fernandezes, interacted with British merchants in neighboring rivers and at Iles de Los and Bance Island centers, but they also jealously guarded their commerce from external influences and especially from British presence in their rivers. Whether they maintained scouts along interior paths is unclear, but the fact that others followed that commercial practice suggests that they did the same thing.

The coast south of Cape Sangara to the Melakori River was dominated, by the last third of the eighteenth century, by developing Susu and Mandingo states (Sumbuya and Moria) that nominally recognized Fula sovereignty on issues of ruler selection, but which otherwise guarded themselves from any Fula military presence within their territories (Skinner 1988: 91-113, 1980: 52-64; Howard & Skinner 1984; Mouser 1998). These Susu and Mandingos, many of whom were Muslim or followed Muslim practices in dress and customs, maintained relationships with the interior in a different fashion than did those merchants who were non-Muslims or non-Africans. It was common practice for these African merchants and rulers to send sons to recognized schools in Labé or Timbo for a proper Muslim education, thereby seeking to establish working relationships with the forthcoming generation of Fula elites (Mouser 1998: 241). Perhaps rulers or important lineages in the Nunez and Pongo did the same thing, but that fact is not noted in official records.

Pockets of non-Muslim Susu and other ethnic groups also separated Sumbuya and Moria from Fula-occupied territories in their hinterland, and this helped to create a buffer between these overlords and their "subject" coastal Muslim states. Whether these Africans followed the practice of sending agents into the interior is unclear. The head of the powerful Dumbuya lineage in Sumbuya reported in 1794, however, that he had traveled to Fuuta Jaloo many times and had gone beyond it to markets on the Niger River⁵. The forthcoming ruler of Moria, Alimaami Amara Morani, was sent to Timbo/Labé in 1776 for a Koranic education and for political/commercial purposes and would return to lead his state, often in opposition to Fula interests that the Fula might have expected him to support (Mouser 1998: 241).

British merchants based at Bance Island in the Sierra Leone River were less advantageously situated for trade with Fuuta Jaloo or Niger River commerce than were those traders located northward along the coast (Mouser

4. For more on the Fernandez family and this section of coast, see MCLACHLAN (1999: 22-24 and notes) and GRAF (1998: 7-13 and notes).

5. MACAULAY (Z. Macaulay's 1794 Journal: entry dated 10 April 1794).

1996; McGowan 1990). Indeed, the greater percentage of goods and markets arriving at Bance Island came from immediate ethnic neighbors, the Temne and Mende. Some Niger River and Fuuta Jaloo items reached the Bance Island market, but paths between this island and the Fuuta highlands were frequently disrupted by interior ethnic and land disputes. The more frequent path for Fuuta goods came via coasting trade carried by canoes from Sumbuya and Moria or from independent European and African merchants in the Nunez, Pongo, or Konkouré rivers who were scouting bulking centers for more advantageous prices or from those who effectively were agents of Bance Island merchants (Mouser 1998: 222-226; McGowan 1990: 27; Howard & Skinner 1984; Skinner 1978: 37-40). Still, the lure of Fuuta Jaloos and interior commerce was high here as well. The dream of opening secure paths into Fuuta and beyond through Port Loko and through Limba and interior Susu and Jallonke peoples remained throughout the century.

Sierra Leone Company Interest

Two events of the late 1780s helped to transform British interest in this region, however, and brought with them significant changes. In 1787, British philanthropic interests in London negotiated an agreement with Temne and Bullom landowners at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River for a settlement for "returning" persons of African descent from British territories (Mouser 1979: 8-13; Peterson 1969: 20-27; Fyfe 1962: 15-26; Wilson 1980: 52-53; Jakobsson 1972: 46-53; Braidwood 1994: chaps 3-5). At about the same time, the principal trading agent on Factory Island, Miles Barber, decided to retire, to settle his commercial and relational accounts upon the coast, and to turn his physical property over to the firm of Richard Horrocks/Jackson (Clarkson 1927: 93). The initial British settlement of 1787-1789, later termed the "Providence of Freedom", failed from a combination of poor planning, unfortunate timing, and unforeseen circumstances. The settlement was essentially rescued, however, by the establishment of a commercial venture, the Sierra Leone Company, which assumed some of the former sponsors' objectives but added to them both a requirement to seek a profitable return for Company investors and a desire to champion a goal of ending slave commerce and expanding British commerce in its place (Fyfe 1962: 26ff; Wilson 1980: 53-56). This meant that, if profit was to be a requirement for success, a "Company" settlement at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River was perhaps not in the most advantageous place. Maybe it should have been located further north where important trade paths were already operating and trade was more lucrative. Indeed, in 1792, when Richard Horrocks at Iles de Los indicated an interest in selling his investment because of poor health, an agent of the Sierra Leone Company commenced never-completed negotiations for the islands' transfer to Company control (Clarkson 1927: 12). Clearly some Company agents, by 1792,

recognized that the Company's commercial interests upon this coast might be better served if its center were more centrally located upon the Guinea-Conakry coast, not on that of Sierra Leone⁶.

Surviving records from the Company period of Sierra Leone history (1789-1808) make it clear that the Company became concerned quickly that its so-called "Northern Rivers" and the Fuuta Jaloo/Niger River were areas where the Company's fortune would be made. Discussion of an illusive Port Loko path that would connect Freetown with the Fuuta/Niger is ever-present in surviving company-related documents. It is also clear that there was some sentiment among Fula leaders within Fuuta Jaloo that the Fula also wanted a secure and open path to Freetown, and one that would bypass troublesome relations that characterized paths through Sumbuya and Moria or through slave traders who operated out of Port Loko, or through British traders in the Rio Nunez or Rio Pongo. Certainly the Fula were powerful enough to force an alternative path to the coast, but the Fula also traded in slaves in exchange for firearms and gunpowder, a practice that the Company seemed intent upon ending. Fula leaders also wanted to maintain for themselves whatever economic advantage that might accrue through cooperation with existing lucrative slave marts in those other regions (McGowan 1978: 81-84, 105-112, 120).

By 1793, Company officials and Fula representatives had met often enough to agree that a Company representative would travel overland to Timbo and would establish some sort of formal relationship between their two groups. James Watt and Matthew Winterbottom would conduct an expedition to Timbo from factories located in the Rio Nunez, and Watt would open direct talks perhaps leading to a company factory/agent in the capital of the Fula state itself, or at least discuss future ventures between the interior (Fuuta and beyond) and the British company⁷. Coincidental to this expedition which lasted for more than four months was another Company objective—to establish a company factory in the Rio Pongo where the death of John Ormond, Sr., had led to a vacuum of leadership among rival traders (Mouser 1973: 50ff.). In 1794 Watt met with Alimaami Sadu while in Timbo, found the Fula ruler interested in hosting European settlers/traders in his territory, discussed the possibilities of factories at Timbo or at the Rio Pongo and at Port Loko, and returned with a group of Fula representatives who had been directed to resume talks with Company officials at Freetown. At least one of these representatives remained at Freetown for nearly a year, and during that time the Company established its sought Fula link

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6. It is unclear whether Captain Philip Beaver's British settlement in 1792 at Bulama, near the mouth of the Rio Grande in Guinea-Bissao, was a part of this northern perspective. It is clear, however, that Beaver was convinced that a British enclave at Bulama could easily tap into interior commerce through linkages to existing trade. For more on Bulama, see BEAVER (1968).
 7. MCGOWAN (1990: 28); MACAULAY (Z. Macaulay's 1793 Journal: entries dated 30 June, 10, 12, 27 September 1793); WATT (1994).

through a new factory planted at Freeport/Tokekerren near the capital of the Bangu/Bangura lineage and residence of the Fula governor in the Rio Pongo (*ibid.*; Watt 1994: 81v)⁸. Talks between the Fula and British continued about a possible overland path via Port Loko that would bypass Moria and Sumbuya, but opposition within the latter states to any plan to circumvent their controls of existing paths and opposition of other ethnic groups who opposed any possibility of a large number of armed Fula crossing their territories was sufficient to keep such a path from developing, without a direct enforcement with a Fula military force.

The Company's venture at Freeport in the Rio Pongo lasted from 1794 to 1802, but that enterprise failed for several reasons⁹. This was a decade of war in Europe, and delivery of British manufactured goods to West Africa and Freeport was a continuing and frustrating problem. French privateers also plagued shipping along this coast, and many Company vessels were seized by any captain who might seek advantage from the war, whether actual combatants or not. Company agents assigned at Freeport and their own policy of refusing to buy slaves did not serve Company objectives well either. Agents did hire local Africans in their business and sent hawkers into the interior to advertise prices and goods, but at least one agent at Freeport refused to provide Fula caravan leaders with customary hospitality when they reached the coast (Afzelius 1967: 103, 109, 113). Those traders within the rivers who bought slaves, ivory, and other inland commodities quickly learned that they could refuse to purchase a caravan's slaves if ivory and other products were sold first to Company agents. Although some caravans clearly had been directed to trade only with the Company in fulfillment of some agreement between Company and Fula representatives at Freetown, many caravan leaders found upon reaching the coast that it was possible and to their advantage to avoid the Company store and their agreements completely¹⁰. The conundrum for both the Fula and the British was the symbiotic relationship of commodities and slave trades and the inability of the Company to receive a majority of non-slave goods reaching the coast. This problem was never resolved, although both groups continued to seek a solution into the mid-nineteenth century.

Perhaps another mitigating factor in Freeport's commercial failure was the presence of lucrative and secure canoe trades that were developing in the same period between Sumbuya/Moria and Freetown. At the same time as the British initiative at Freeport, Dumbuya lineage interests from Sumbuya was attempting, for example, to expand its own network of canoe trade to the outskirts of the Freetown settlement, and Mori Kanu was establishing a competing network linking markets in Maligia/Melakori of Moria with

8. See also PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE (PRO), CO270/2, Council, 5 May 1794.

9. MOUSER (1973); MACAULAY (Z. Macaulay's 1797 Diary: entry dated 7 June 1797)

10. AFZELIUS (1967: 113); PRO CO270/3, 3 February 1796 and CO270/4, 26 April 1796; MOUSER (1980: 507).

the settlement as well (Mouser 1998: 222-226; Howard & Skinner 1984: 4-10, 19; Howard 1972: 92-93). Sumbuya produced large surpluses of white polished rice that was in high demand at Freetown, and all towns in the Northern Rivers transshipped cattle that had been marched to the coast. These were shipped further south by canoes and other vessels. This trade in foodstuffs, always necessary to Freetown, meant that Freetown became less and less reliant upon its Freeport connection for consumables and for hides, ivory, and other goods from the interior. Canoes also carried rice and other goods southward from the Nunez and Pongo, if prices were more advantageous at the Freetown market¹¹.

One fascinating and troublesome chapter in this early period involved the unexpected consequences of Alimaami Sadu's supposed promise to James Watt to provide British settlers with land at Timbo if they came into his territory (Sierra Leone Company 1794: 141)¹². This promise of land, and seemingly of protection, was widely published in the evangelical press in Britain and generated there an enthusiastic response within a number of religious missionary societies that believed that the Company would sponsor and welcome missionaries at Freetown and that Sadu's offer somehow had offered religious tolerance and protection within Fuuta Jaloo. A number of missionaries and supplies for anticipated farms in the Fuuta highlands arrived at Freetown, somewhat bewildering Company officials.¹³ In the 1790s, some Company officials apparently believed that the Fula were not opposed to Christian settlers in Fuuta Jaloo and that their presence there might transform the interior and lead to commerce in merchandise rather than slaves. By 1806, however, nearly all Company officials knew that Christian schools, missions, or settlers would not be welcome in Muslim Sumbuya, Moria, or Fuuta Jaloo¹⁴. The Company dilemma was to find a way to encourage development of schools at Freetown and in the Northern Rivers without endangering whatever trade the Company enjoyed in these northern markets¹⁵. Consideration of building schools in these areas was

11. BRIGHT (1979: entry dated 18 October 1802).

12. It is interesting that this same promise does not appear in Watt's *Journal*.

13. For 1795-1805 missionary ventures, see JAKOBSSON (1972: 104-118); WALKER (1845: 171-190); *Missionary Records: West Africa* (1836: 68-72); HAIR (1965: 38-40).

14. Church Missionary Society (CMS) Records, CA1/E1/46, Freetown, Corresponding Committee to P. Hartwig, 9 April 1806.

15. According to GRAY (1940: 287-290), an elaborate scheme for exploring the interior was recommended by Colonel Charles Stevenson in 1804. This plan consisted of four expeditionary groups, all of which would be comprised of military personnel and which would enter west Africa along different paths. One of these would follow the route used by Watt/Winterbottom in 1794 through the Fuuta Jaloo and would be led by Captain Philip Beaver who in 1792 had failed in his attempt to establish the British settlement upon Bulama Island. Stevenson's scheme placed its emphasis upon making commercial contacts with Niger-based merchants, opening the Niger to British commerce, and transforming commerce to legitimate goods rather than slaves. While Stevenson's proposal received an enthusiastic initial reception in London, a study of projected costs

finally abandoned in 1805/1806, but that came only after the election of Amara as Alimaami of Moria, who opposed Christian missionaries within his state, and after the expulsion of Dala Modu Dumbuya from Freetown in the same year¹⁶.

Investors and contributors who supported the ending of the slave trade and British commercial expansion upon the continent were placated, instead, by an ill-advised missionary effort in the Rio Pongo where two teachers/catechists from the Edinburgh Missionary Society were placed briefly in 1798-1800 and where schools and missions were maintained by the Church Missionary Society between 1808 and 1816/1817 (Walker 1845: 220-513; Jakobsson 1972: 131-166). Muslim influence in the Rio Pongo region was expanding, but at that time it was not yet strong enough to openly oppose Christian proponents. A rivalry between landowners and European/African/Euro-African traders encouraged the missionaries for a time, but nearly all of these considered missionary schools as advantageous to trade and to their own future only as long as teachers did not openly oppose the slave trade (Mouser 1971: 83-129).

British Colonial Interest

In 1808, two additional events helped to transform British objectives along this coast even further. By that date, the Company was experiencing serious financial difficulties, partly a result of poor administration, poor accounting practices, and corruption, but equally important was the fact that slave trading was still legal for nearly all Europeans upon the coast. Company advocates in Parliament heatedly supported a governmental assumption of Company responsibilities at the Sierra Leone settlement, and, after much debate within Parliament, a law was passed ending Company liabilities and transforming the settlement into a royal colony¹⁷. Although transfer from Company to Colony meant that many of the same people remained in important positions at Freetown, this transfer did mean that the British government would be expected to enforce its national laws and could bring its navy and regiments into the region in a more aggressive manner than when under Company control.

reduced the scheme to a single expedition—that of Mungo Park through the Gambia River in 1805. Nevertheless, planning must have involved many at Sierra Leone and along the coast who certainly would have envisioned expeditionary successes as expanding British influence and commerce along Africa's western coast.

16. See MOUSER (1998); CMS CA1/E1/89, Sierra Leone, Ludlam to Pratt, 20 December 1806.
17. JOHNSON (1957: 31-34); FYFE (1962: 105); J. P. Thompson Papers, folio DTH/1/2, Macaulay to Ludlam, 28 August 1807, Manuscript Collection, Hull University Library, Hull University, United Kingdom. For a brief summary of this period of transition, see HAIR (1967: 152-160).

British policy would also change from one that focused upon Company objectives to one that adhered to imperial government-sanctioned goals.

The second event of significance was the Parliamentary passage of a law that forbade the transportation of slaves from Africa to the New World by British subjects after 1 January 1808 (Fyfe 1962: 105-106; Johnson 1957: 38-44)¹⁸. These two events, especially the ending of the legal slave trade, temporarily brought slaving to a near halt in the Northern Rivers, with some European slave traders retiring and others changing to less hazardous commerce. Those who remained on the coast came increasingly under the watchful eyes of governmental agents at Freetown or officers of Royal Squadron vessels who were charged to enforce these new laws and protect British subjects (traders as well as missionaries) upon the coast. This increased vigilance and interference, and raids against slave traders ordered by Governor Charles Maxwell in 1814, further weakened whatever support missionaries might have enjoyed earlier and lessened a British resolve to protect missionaries in the Rio Pongo, especially when it became clear that they were needed at Freetown to help transform cargoes of slaves captured and released at the British settlement into obedient British subjects and to serve imperial objectives. By 1816, most Pongo-based missionaries were in agreement that the missions should be moved to Freetown where they could be protected from slave traders and from troublesome landlords who continued to be dissatisfied with commercial and political problems that had been caused as a consequence of their presence in the river. By 1816/1817 all missionary efforts in the Pongo had ended¹⁹.

The official ending of the slave trade in 1808, however, influenced more than just the missionaries and the slave traders. The premise that the Northern Rivers' commerce (including that between the Fuuta and the coast) could be transformed from one principally in slaves to one in commodities continued to infatuate British officials at Freetown. And, again recognizing perhaps that the mouth of the Sierra Leone River had been a poor choice for an enterprising and successful settlement, officials sought to expand the colony northward in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Beaver's ill-fated settlement upon Bulama Island in 1792-1793 was now copiously discussed in government correspondence, and considerations were given once again to restoring treaty stipulations that Beaver had obtained with local landlords on that island (Beaver 1968; Hair 1997; Brooks 1996: 148-156). A believed interest by American commercial firms in purchasing Iles de Los in 1818 led, moreover, to an formal agreement reached between British officials and Baga/Susu landlords on the islands and on the neighboring shore of Sumbuya and Kalum for formal cession of the islands to Britain. An enthusiastic governor of Sierra Leone promptly suggested renaming all

18. See also *Laws of Sierra Leone* (1808).

19. JAKOBSSON (1972: 146-149, 151-154, 160-169, 177-187); CMS CA1/E5A/91, Wilhelm to Pratt, 21 April 1817.

the islands and in renaming its colony centered at Freetown to “Sierra Leone and the Iles de Los”, perhaps anticipating an addition of Bulama Island at a later date²⁰. Clearly some at Freetown wanted a northern colonial expansion, effectively creating three centers of British commercial and political influence—Freetown, Iles de Los, and Bulama Island, all important for establishing a British sphere within the region. Some directly suggested that the slave trade and trades from rival American competitors could be quashed completely by military detachments stationed at the mouths of strategic rivers and at the Ile Tombo at the tip of Cape Sangara, where Conakry is now located²¹.

Coinciding with this Northern initiative were at least three expeditions launched into the interior highlands to bring Fula suppliers and Niger-based commerce more directly into this new envisioned sphere. In January 1814, Governor Maxwell sent then Sergeant William Tuft of the 3rd West India Regiment (Royal African Corps) on a successful mission to Timbo via Port Loko. Tuft was a “man of colour”²² and “native of this [Kukuna] Country” (O’Beirne 1979: 33). Maxwell directed Tuft to assure Fula authorities of the Colony’s continued friendship and to obtain agreement for opening “an unrestrained communication” between Timbo and Freetown via Kukuna or Port Loko²³. A year later a group of fifty-five colonial representatives (with more than 100 well-armed persons in the party and 200 animals) arrived in the Rio Nunez to repeat Watt’s experience of 1793-1794, to traverse Fuuta Jaloo to the Niger River where the expedition was directed to chart its course to where it emptied into an ocean, lake or stream, to discover the truth about Mongo Park’s fate and possibly return his physical remains, and to open the interior of west Africa to British commerce. This grand expedition of 1815-1817, led by Brevet-Major John Peddie, Captain Thomas Campbell, and Lt. Stokoe lasted for more than a year, and, although it was the largest of its kind to that date, it failed to obtain its objectives because of illnesses and deaths and because of opposition from Fula elites who were then planning a military expedition of their own and who questioned the expedition’s and British objectives at each stage. The fact that the expedition envisioned an opening of interior commerce more directly to Britain was not lost upon the Fula who could clearly see that such success would diminish their own control of commerce crossing Fuuta Jaloo and would

20. PRO CO267/47/156, MacCarthy to Bathurst, 20 July 1818, and enclosure; *Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser (RGSLA)*, 25 July 1818.

21. PRO CO267/47/156, MacCarthy to Bathurst, 20 July 1818; MCLACHLAN (1999: 29).

22. *RGSLA*, 8 September 1821; MCGOWAN (1990: 34).

23. *RGSLA*, 13 October 1821; GRAY & DOCHARD (1825: 12). According to Gray, Maxwell had used Tuft as a messenger to African rulers on several occasions. See *The African Herald*, 21 January 1809, for an earlier invitation from Timbo that an officer be sent from Freetown to meet with the Fula ruler. Later, Tuft was described as holding the rank of Lieutenant, perhaps a consequence of this request that Freetown’s representative be an “officer”.

likely strengthen traditional enemies upon their borders. British opposition to slave trading and British raids upon slave trading factories in the Rio Pongo where several Fula were killed also led to questions about British claims that it was requesting only a peaceful crossing of Fula territory. The expedition, despite its failure, however, did demonstrate a continuing and significant British investment in this region's future and declared British interest in linking Fula traders and Fula officials to those of the coast. Sergeant Tuft also accompanied the Peddie/Campbell expedition, and he twice visited Timbo via the Nunez Path in 1816, certainly making him the most experienced colonial representative at that time to visit Fuuta Jaloo²⁴.

The failure of such a large expedition was followed by a regrouping of its survivors at Freetown and a restructuring of its objectives. Lt. Stokoe assumed command during the 1817 rainy season and with a small party proceeded to Forékariah in Moria from which they would move into the interior. Stokoe expected to negotiate agreements with powerful landlords along the path to Timbo and to collectively open a new path to Freetown. Moria officials opposed such a move, however, for it might diminish their influence in this commerce. Stokoe ignored these protests and began his march inward, only to discover that he had no protector and that without that protection those along the path engaged him in endless negotiations and palavers. Stokoe, like Campbell before him, returned to the coast without reaching Timbo. Officials at Freetown now decided that any attempt to cross Fuuta Jaloo would be opposed by the Fula, and they resolved to continue the expedition to explore the Niger, but through another port. Major William Gray accepted command of the exploratory troop, and the remaining expedition sailed for the Gambia River which would then serve as its entry point into the continent (Gray & Dochard 1825: 36-43)²⁵.

These setbacks in 1814-1817 did not deter British efforts, however. While Watt had demonstrated that a path to Fuuta Jaloo through the Rio Nunez was possible, it was accepted wisdom that the failed attempts of 1814-1817 had suffered from a string of unforeseen circumstances. It was

24. The only published report of the Peddie/Campbell expedition is found in GRAY & DOCHARD (1825: chaps 3-13) which covers the successful expedition through the Gambia to Segu and Kaarta. The first two chapters, however, describe the ill-fated Nunez expedition, before Gray took charge. According to Dochard, likely author of the first part of *Travels in Western Africa*, the Nunez path was used because of a strong recommendation from Freetown officials. Adolphus Kummer, German naturalist, and a Mr. Partarrieau of Senegal joined the large expedition. Fever struck the group almost at the moment it landed in the Nunez River. DOCHARD (1825: 11-12), wrote that the Timbo ruler had specifically requested that a white officer be sent to Timbo to explain the expedition's purpose, but that Campbell believed it not "requisite" to send an officer and instead sent Tuft. The complete record of this expedition is found in PRO CO2/5, "Mission to Explore the Interior of Africa, 1815-1817", currently being edited by the author. For Tuft, see *RGSLA*, 3 February 1821.

25. For Stokoe's failed attempt via Port Loko, see *RGSLA*, 8 September 1821, 13 October 1821.

also known at Freetown that a similar road into the interior existed through the Rio Pongo. William Lawrence, a principal Euro-African trader resident at Domingia in the Rio Pongo, was married to a sister of a prominent Fula leader and had traveled frequently to Timbo along this path²⁶. Lawrence was also admired at Freetown, even to the point that his father had attempted to buy property within the settlement, and William had sent children to Freetown for education after missionaries closed their Pongo-based schools in 1817²⁷. Infrequent Fula caravans also reached Freetown itself as did Muslim teachers who established Koranic schools in the settlement's outskirts and among neighboring ethnic groups²⁸. Caravans generally brought embassies from Fula rulers whose objectives were to further talks on the potential of a new secure path through Port Loko. Their presence and discussions of mutual advantages encouraged further British attempts to reach Timbo and to further clarify conditions existing between Timbo and Freetown²⁹.

By 1820 Freetown officials were reasonably satisfied that legitimate commerce from the Guinea-Conakry coast and along paths between Timbo and the Nunez and Pongo rivers would ultimately add to British fortunes and Freetown's commercial improvement. Watt in 1794, and to a degree Campbell in 1814/1817, had proven the Nunez path to be firmly under Fula control. Gaspard Mollien, traveling overland from Senegal to Timbo in 1818, confirmed Campbell's reports that paths joining Timbo to more distant interior markets were open and flourishing³⁰. The Pongo path was also believed to be open generally to trade³¹. With Iles de Los under British rule as of 1818, and assuming that legitimate commodities would eventually replace the slave trade, British profits and share of coastal commerce would certainly increase.

In the 1820s alone, three expeditions to Timbo were launched from Freetown. To be sure, all occurred as a consequence of timely circumstances and immediate questions at Freetown that needed to be resolved or answered. But all continued to demonstrate a preeminent British interest in an evasive Freetown-Timbo connection. The remaining path, and that one which in 1820 was closed frequently by coastal warfare/intrigue/interference, led from Freetown to Timbo via Port Loko and Kukuna on the Scarcies River. When a letter arrived late in 1820 from Timbo, suggesting that the path between Timbo and Freetown via Port Loko be reformed and identified as

26. *RGSLA*, 13 October 1821, 3 August 1822.

27. PRO, CO270/4, Council, 22 July 1799; MACAULAY (Z. Macaulay's 1793/94 Diary, entry dated 2 April 1794).

28. For Muslim clerics near Freetown, see SKINNER (1978, 1988).

29. PRO, Colonial Office Series 271, contains numerous issues of the *RGSLA*. By 1820, frequent references appear in the gazette of Fula missions or inland traders in Freetown.

30. MOLLIEN (1967); *RGSLA*, 9 December 1820.

31. *RGSLA*, 30 December 1820.

being “without any intermediate agency”, Freetown officials shifted their attention to establishing a more direct link with Timbo³². In 1814 Tuft had demonstrated that one could travel directly to Timbo via Port Loko, but Stokoe had failed in his 1817 attempt. Countless Fula and more interior-based traders, teachers, and spokesmen, meanwhile, had traveled along this Port Loko path or at least succeeded in reaching Freetown without resorting to coastal canoe carriers. A “correspondent” at Freetown in December 1820, likely reflecting official opinion, suggested a simplistic two-step process for securing Freetown’s future commercial prosperity along the Scarcies/Fuuta corridor: 1) establish an open road to Timbo, and 2) connect interior paths between Timbo and Niger-based paths³³.

In January 1821, Governor MacCarthy directed Assistant Staff Surgeon Brian O’Beirne of the Royal African Corps to travel along a Tuft-similar trail into the interior and to discuss at Timbo the possibility of opening a secure new path³⁴. O’Beirne’s descriptions of ethnic differences and political realities in the Scarcies River and in Sulima/Tambuca/Fuuta regions are particularly instructive, clearly demonstrating that British officials were concerned about those peoples and states located along this projected path and were conscious of the necessity to reach some agreement with them if a secure and southern path to Timbo and beyond were ever to be established. Joining O’Beirne on his return from Timbo to Freetown was Setafa, messenger from the ruler of Segu, with a letter addressed to the governor of Sierra Leone. Setafa’s arrival at Freetown in mid-1821 injected a new immediacy and excitement into discussions about the thus-far illusive path and the possibility of establishing a more distant Niger connection³⁵. Meanwhile MacCarthy asked Assistant Staff Surgeon Peter McLachlan of the 2nd West India Regiment, Royal Africa Corps, to produce a report that would describe the peoples of the coast neighboring Iles de Los (McLachlan 1999)³⁶. Clearly MacCarthy, and his administration at Freetown, had reason to believe that the entire region was slipping more firmly into a British sphere of commerce, and he wanted as much information about peoples, leaders, and customary practices as could be obtained.

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32. *RGSLA*, 9 December 1820. In *RGSLA*, 10 February 1821, the writer suggested that the recent death of Brimah at Port Loko made a Port Loko path to Timbo more possible. MCGOWAN (1990) suggested that British interest in interior commerce was sporadic and depended much upon the personality of each governor. Fula interest in a direct connection with Freetown also depended upon interior political conditions and upon circumstances prevailing within optional routes to the coast. See also Howard (1972: 140-141).
33. *RGSLA*, 9 December 1820; SKINNER & SKINNER (n.d.: 2-4); MCGOWAN (1978: 145-146).
34. O’BEIRNE (1979: 137-280); *RGSLA*, 24 February 1821.
35. *RGSLA*, 14 April 1821, 16 June 1821, 7 July 1821, 8 September 1821, 3 August 1822, 19 August 1822; MCGOWAN (1990: 40).
36. McLachlan’s report was serialized in the *RGSLA* and was published in book form in Freetown by J. Mitton in 1821.

Discussions held between British and Fula officials at Timbo and in Freetown in 1821 apparently failed, however, to resolve continuing differences among ethnic and political interests along the proposed path's course. It was these differences late in 1821 that closed the path at Kukuna to a large Fula caravan that was led by the Alimaami's nephew, and this act forced Freetown to adopt a more realistic and systematic plan for path development³⁷. Perhaps in consequence of a perceived failure in 1821 to consider the complex nature of coastal concerns respecting paths, Governor MacCarthy sent Captain Alexander Gordon Laing, 2nd West India Regiment, inland on three occasions in 1822 to meet with principal landlords and rulers. Laing's first two ventures in January and February were to Moria near the coast to resolve lingering disagreements which surrounded the halting of the Fula caravan in 1821 and perhaps to soothe Moria's concern that Freetown and Timbo might be attempting to bypass Moria caravan terminals completely or to formalize a path that would disregard long-established trading relations (Laing 1825). From 16 April to 29 October 1822, Laing conducted an expedition to Sulima, during which time he met with numerous notables along the path and prepared the way for future commerce. Laing also was planning a fourth trip for early in 1823 that would take him to Timbo and complete the task given him in 1822. The latter was not begun, however, because of an outbreak of war on the Gold Coast that demanded Laing's attention elsewhere. By 1825, however, a direct path between the mouth of the Scarcies River and Timbo had been opened by Tikade Modu and Fatima Brima of Magbele who had gone to Timbo after Laing's expedition to Sulima (*ibid.*: 29-30; Barry 1988: 222-223)³⁸. Laing's 1822 expedition to the interior was the last fully funded by the Crown until mid-century.

Lesser recorded in the 1820s is British involvement in the 1827 expedition led by René Caillié. Caillié had sought but failed to obtain backing first from French officials at St. Louis (Caillié 1830: 140-142). According to Caillié (*ibid.*: 145-149), he then traveled to Freetown where Governor Charles Turner also rejected his proposal, partly because its success could have meant that Caillié would have reached Timbuctoo before Major Laing's expedition arrived there. A more plausible objection to Caillié's plan perhaps derived from his proposal to proceed inland through the Nunez, along a path already assumed to be open and operating smoothly, and along one that did not need to be rediscovered.

37. *RGSLA*, 13 October 1821, 3 November 1821, 23 November 1822, 22 February 1823.

38. For increased trade between Timbo and Freetown for 1824-1825, see PRO CO267/60/6, Hamilton to Bathurst, 21 April 1824, and enclosures, and CO267/65/26, Turner to Bathurst, 25 June 1825. See MCGOWAN (1978: 155-187) for extensive analysis of reasons for declining trade along the Port Loko path after Abdulkadr's death in 1825.

American Initiative

Another issue for Turner and successor governors in the late 1820s and early 1830s was a renewed initiative by American commercial and colonial interests along this section of coast. Many of Freetown's own settlers were of American descent, having come from former British colonies that had obtained independence at the end of the eighteenth century. The long European war of 1793-1815, an American Embargo, and a short-lived war between the United States and Britain in 1812 had resulted in a hiatus of American activity on the African coast (Brooks 1970: 52-65, chaps 3, 4). A trade in now-illegal slaves and in commodities revived dramatically in the latter half of the second decade of the nineteenth century. As in Britain, sentiment in the United States was strong for abolition of slavery. Some in the American South and North who opposed slavery, but who also objected to freed slaves residing in their states, wanted to return freed slaves to Africa or at least to transport them away from their states. These sentiments toward both abolition and resettlement/emigration led to increased pressures in America to re-settle free or freed persons of African descent along the African coast (Harper 1818).

Although this paper focuses more directly on British interest in the coast and interior of Guinea-Conakry, it is instructive to summarize here American activities and objectives in the 1820s and 1830s as a way to better understand British actions in the Northern Rivers. Numerous traders resident in the Nunez and Pongo rivers were Americans or of American descent, and they maintained valuable contacts with American commercial firms from the late eighteenth century. John Frazer of Bangalan branch in the Rio Pongo, for example, operated a factory from the 1790s from which he shipped commodities and slaves, some of the latter destined no doubt for a rice plantation that he owned near Charleston in the state of South Carolina (Schafer 1999). He married in the Pongo, sired a number of Euro-African children many of whom attended the short-lived missionary schools located there, and sent at least two children for finishing education in England and France. When the slave trade became illegal for American citizens in 1808, Frazer returned to Charleston and subsequently moved his plantation, as did others, from South Carolina to Spanish Florida where slave trading remained legal. He also took up Spanish citizenship to better protect him in the trade. Meanwhile, his African wife and children remained in the Rio Pongo where they operated the African base of his commercial network. Others in the Nunez and Pongo trades or with connections at Charleston did the same thing in an attempt to avoid application of laws designed to stop slaving by British and American subjects. American documents clearly demonstrate that traders in the Nunez and Pongo with strong American connections included William and Elizabeth (Frazer) Skelton, John Sergent,

John/Samuel Holeman, Paul Faber, Styles Lightburn, the Curtis family/lineage, and of course the Frazers³⁹.

There is a fleeting reference in the record of a proposal from landlords and traders in the Rio Pongo for establishing a settlement of skilled African-Americans in the Rio Pongo in 1820 (Gurley 1969: 349)⁴⁰. That proposal, however, apparently failed to reach American planners or was never acted upon. Between 1820 and 1823, conditions along the coast continued to change rapidly, and Britain became increasingly concerned that persisting American interest in the Northern Rivers might actually result in an establishment of American colonies both north and south of Sierra Leone. Such settlements might effectively surround the Freetown settlement with an American economic sphere. For Americans to move forcefully into northern markets also would place American competitors in a more advantageous position in the Nunez and Pongo paths than that formally claimed by Britain. It was perhaps partly a consequence of these American initiatives or believed initiatives that led British officials in the mid-1820s to increase its policy of negotiating directly with neighboring landlords and of signing formal treaties that recognized a British preeminence along this coast.

While British agreements with landlords and American failure to reach agreements with landlords in the Northern Rivers may have temporarily moderated British fears of American encirclement, these concerns remained and returned as a major topic of discussion at Freetown in the early 1830s. American interests in Baltimore, New York, and Boston declared an intention to establish a grander "Americo-African Nation", one that would include the Cape Verde Islands, Bulama, and Rio Pongo, and the already established American settlements on the coast south of Freetown which soon would be called Liberia (American Colonization Society 1828a: 325-336, 1828b: 7-13; Hair 1997: 186-187; Brooks 1973, 1996: 156-161). This proposal was formally presented in 1828 to the American Colonization Society, the principal agency of American settlement along the African coast. Support for such a scheme came from numerous groups. American evangelicals were fascinated by the prospect of rapid Christian expansion upon the continent. Those interested primarily in commercial advantages recognized those paths from the Rio Grande, Rio Nunez, and Rio Pongo as being significant, as certainly leading to a connection with the Fula state and trade and perhaps to direct commerce with the lucrative Niger region. Emigrationists wanted more locations upon the African coast to which they could export a growing population of freed slaves. Abolitionists saw the scheme as a way to win support from Southern contributors/sponsors for the freeing of slaves, especially if those freed were forced to leave the South for a

39. See Papers of Jesse Tyson and Sons, MS 2371, Box VII, folio *Fidelity*, Maryland Historical Society, Manuscript, Baltimore, Maryland.

40. For recent treatment of American activities in the 1820s, see MOUSER (1995, 2000).

reclaimed homeland in Africa. A sponsor from Baltimore was so enthusiastic about the plan that he commissioned an unsuccessful expedition whose purpose was to travel overland from Cape Mesurado into the interior via Timbo, perhaps envisioning an American-Fula connection similar to that long-sought by the British (Semmes 1917: 140-141).

This grand American scheme, which certainly would have challenged Britain's position on this coast had it succeeded, obtained its final and unsuccessful encouragement when a person named Abd al-Rahman Ibrahima became a willing participant in the plan. Ibrahima claimed to be the son of Alimaami Ibrahima Sori of Timbo and to have been taken prisoner during a failed Fula expedition against the Hubu (Heboh) peoples of the upper Pongo in 1778. By his own account, he had been sold to a slaver in the Gambia River and eventually had become the property of a plantation owner in the State of Mississippi for more than 40 years (Alford 1977: 9, 12-16, 21-29, 39-43, 55-62). His claims of royal lineage links in Fuuta Jalloo became widely known only in the 1830s. He consequently became the focus of intense attention among abolitionists, emigrationists, and potential African investors who saw him perhaps as being the valuable link between American objectives and Fula elites at Timbo. Even evangelicals became convinced that he had converted to Christianity and that Ibrahima would help to spread this new faith among his ethnic brothers. Freed from slavery at the formal request of President John Quincy Adams, Ibrahima and his wife returned to the African coast in 1835, unfortunately during the rainy season and with few resources sent along to support them through these difficult months. With a Fula ambassadorial expedition approaching the coast to meet him, he died before they arrived, and the American dream of a vast nation vanished with his death (*ibid.*: 175-184).

Final Phase

British interest in Guinea-Conakry continued into the 1840s, but perhaps to a lesser degree than earlier. Improved relations with Freetown's neighbors and further change in trade paths in its immediate hinterland boosted the colony's economy and lessened the relative importance of its trade with the Northern Rivers. The slave trade declined in importance to the Northern Rivers' economies, and production of commodities increased as former slave traders and landlords expanded plantations that produced groundnuts, coffee, and other goods for world markets. Slaves perhaps formerly destined for export increasingly filled labor requirements on these plantations, with some traders and landlords reportedly owning thousands of slaves. Commodities produced on these plantations enriched the British economy and the fortunes of Freetown-based merchants. British firms established a foothold at Iles de Los and in the timber and emerging groundnut and coffee

trades in the Melakori region and maintained important links with commodities trades in the Nunez, Pongo, and Konkouré/Dembia rivers and with African traders/landlords in rivers south of Cape Sangara. As long as slave trading was less an issue, Britain relaxed its former concern about European competition along this coast, while at the same time not forgetting the importance of a direct path linking Freetown with Timbo and beyond. Commodities arriving from the interior at Nunez and Pongo factories were sufficient to satisfy British demands, although British traders increasingly found themselves disadvantaged by unfavorable taxing policies respecting commodities purchased in the Nunez and Pongo. This further increased concerns that French traders from Gorée and Senegal bases were successfully competing within these markets (Mouser 1971: chaps 4,5; Véné 1837: 1163-1182; D[agorne] 1830: 112-127; Goerg 1986: 23-58). As supplies of commodities increased, British incomes from the trade increased, however, as did that accruing to Senegalese agents present in the rivers. For the time being, both could share in the rivers' bounties⁴¹.

William Cooper Thomson's 1841-1843 overland expedition from Freetown to Timbo, with plans to proceed beyond it to Segou, came twenty years after Dr. O'Beirne's expedition in 1821 and was only partly government funded, with a significant portion paid by private business interests in Sierra Leone⁴². Part of the rationale for this expedition, although not stated, may have involved an attempt to attract interior commodities directly to Freetown where unfavorable tariffs levied on goods coming to Freetown by way of the Northern Rivers would not apply. Lieutenant Governor Fergusson's letter to the Alimaami in 1841 specifically mentioned coffee, benny seeds, and cotton as commodities in high demand at Freetown⁴³. Thomson was a likely candidate to lead such an expedition. Thomson was a linguist attached to the Church Missionary Society and had gained some experience in dealings with Loko and Temne near the Freetown settlement. His expedition to Timbo was plagued by problems from the start, however. With a Port Loko road to the interior closed in 1841, Thomson began his venture through Melakori in Moria where he obtained permission to "use the road" into the interior. To grant "title" to use a road and to become

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41. Another consideration was the emergence of more stable paths along the so-called north-south corridor of commerce. These were in the immediate hinterlands of Sumbuya, Moria, Kukuna/Port Loko and the Rokel River. These paths were divided into sections, however, each governed by separate ethnic/political groups. A. HOWARD (1972: 140-160) documented the growth of these paths, many having old roots but some new and responses to developing markets at Freetown.
 42. STANLEY (1846); CMS CA1/0/214, Papers of William Cooper Thomson [currently being edited for publication by the author]; MCGOWAN (1978: 201-202); DEVENEUX (1978).
 43. CMS CA1/M9/14, Lieut. Governor Fergusson to Alimaamee Yah Yah King of Teembo, 18 December 1841. That Abubakar was Alimaami was still unknown at Freetown in late 1841.

a sponsor for a caravan was the accepted procedure along this path, for it formalized host/guest arrangements that generally were acceptable at each segment along the way. Apparently Thomson injudiciously explained to his host at Melakori, however, that his and Freetown's ultimate objective was to open a path all the way to Segou and that he intended to return via Port Loko, not through Moria. His Morian hosts understandably withdrew their permission, but Thomson began his expedition nonetheless. Effectively Thomson's expedition proceeded without a patron or host and without protections that normally would have been carried by any traveler who respected African practice along the path. Perhaps misled by his experiences at Freetown, Thomson believed that he could negotiate each road segment separately and that somehow each agreement and segment would result collectively in a complete path to Timbo. He did obtain agreements, but none of them mattered because no significant leader along the path had the power or interest to enforce their collectivity. His expedition took five months of delay and negotiations before it reached Timbo in June 1842.

Thomson and his party remained as guests of Alimaami Abubakar at his residence outside of Timbo until Thomson's death on 26 November 1843. Thomson's reports to his parent Church Missionary Society indicate that he had arrived in Fuuta Jaloo at the beginning of civil unrest and that Abubakar was unable or unwilling to commence full discussions with either Thomson or Freetown, perhaps fearing that his council of advisors might reject his recommendations and bring a crisis to the Fula state. These reports clearly demonstrate, moreover, that Thomson's presence, his topics for discussion at Timbo, and his activities while there became embroiled in the civil contest between Abubakar and his challenger and successor, Omar⁴⁴. Thomson vigorously championed Abubakar's cause. By the time

44. The most descriptive report of Thomson's activities is found in CMS CA1/0/214/23, Thomson to Warburton, 19 January 1843. While at Timbo for more than a year, Thomson had raised many issues that would have increased Fula apprehensions about his and Freetown's ultimate purpose in the interior. 1) An open road to Freetown might involve Fula guarantees, a position that was opposed by many at Timbo because the traditional Fula method of enforcement was through rapid strikes by their cavalry, a circumstance that would not be effective in the rainforests that characterized the path to Port Loko. 2) Some at Timbo and in other provincial capitals were concerned that a path between Timbo and Freetown would increase Abubakar's effective power by increasing his access to weapons useful in maintaining control of the state. 3) Some questioned how profits from the new road would be distributed within the state apparatus. 4) Thomson championed the release of a liberated African from Freetown who, somehow, had become a slave in Fuuta Jaloo for more than fifteen years; discussions over this issue lasted for the whole of Thomson's residence at Timbo and became a significant issue relating to the status of Fula slaves who might seek asylum at Freetown, should a Fula caravan reach that port. 5) Thomson repeatedly requested meetings of Fula chiefs to discuss Freetown's proposals at a time when many Fula leaders preferred to minimize potential exposure should the promised civil war between Abubakar and Omar commence. 6) Thomson's request to go beyond Timbo to Segou was one that antagonized many Fula who wanted to restrict Freetown-based traders to only the Freetown-Timbo segment

of Abubakar's removal from power in March 1843, Thomson was convinced that any discussions with Timbo authorities would be futile and that any agreements reached, even after thorough negotiations, could not be enforced (McGowan 1978: 206)⁴⁵. In November 1844, the Reverend John U. Graf, a Susu linguist and Church Missionary Society missionary at Freetown, submitted an analysis of commercial and missionary accessibility at Timbo and in Freetown's hinterland, conclusions based on his own observations and those gleaned from Thomson's letters. Graf reasoned that the Nunez path was already secure and firmly controlled by merchants friendly to British commerce. He dismissed southern paths to Timbo via Melakori, Kambia, Kukuna and Port Loko as ever being fully controllable by Britain, suggesting instead that alternative paths to Niger River commerce via the Rokel River and by-passing more troublesome towns in the Scarcies-Fuuta Corridor were then open. Indeed, interior "gold strangers" were reaching Freetown in 1844, without going through Timbo at all. More importantly, however, Graf warned about endless conversation at Timbo and suggested that his own pessimistic analysis was shared by merchants and government

of this road. 7) Some in Timbo believed that Abubakar was less interested in commerce than he was in obtaining an ally from Freetown to use against Omar. 8) Thomson was, according to his own account, conducting lively religious discussions with "learned" men in Fuuta Jaloo and was discussing the possibility of establishing an English school at Timbo; according to Thomson, Abubakar was willing to have such a school and welcomed religious instructors as well. 9) Thomson reported that he had discussed with Abubakar the possibility of his conversion to Christianity. If Thomson were only half as argumentative in his discussions as he was in his reports, many Fula would necessarily have interpreted him as a threat to the state and its religious stability and would have questioned Abubakar's continued reluctance to send Thomson back to Freetown. For more on Buxtonian ideals prevalent at the time of Thomson's expedition, see HENNELL (1979: 24-26).

45. In January 1844, Edward Jones, from Freetown and representing the Church Missionary Society, began an expedition to Timbo via the Rio Nunez, with the expressed purpose to "make every attempt to procure correct information as to the reported death of Mr. Thomson" and to retrieve his papers and his son, William or Billy, who had accompanied Thomson on his 1841-43 expedition. Warfare in the Nunez, however, blocked Jones' expedition; he returned to Freetown after learning that William, Jr., had returned to the coast by way of the Melakori path. For the Jones expedition, see CMS CA1/0/129, "Papers, Reports, Journals of Rev. E. Jones, 1841-64". While at Boké in the Rio Nunez, Jones heard rumors to the effect that on about 21 October 1843, Thomson had been summoned to meet with the new Alimaami Omar. Later in the day, upon returning to his house in Darah, Thomson became very ill and died soon thereafter. Rumors suggested that Thomson had been poisoned. For these rumors, see CMS CA1/0/129, Jones to Warburton, 16 January 1844. This account differed significantly from that in CMS CA1/M11, Warburton to the Secretaries, 2 March 1844, which indicated that Thomson died on 26 November 1843 after drinking warm milk given to him by a trusted servant. Surgeon Fergusson of the Colony indicated that, from the symptoms of his illness as described by his son who arrived afterwards in the Colony, he believed that Thomson had been poisoned.

officials in the Colony⁴⁶. Assuming that Graf's understanding of Freetown attitudes was essentially correct, these conclusions and written reports effectively poisoned future consideration for meaningful discussions between Freetown and Timbo for decades to follow. During Omar's reign period, 1843-1872, no official British representative visited the Fula capital.

Graf's expedition in 1850 to Labaya country in the upper Konkouré River, with plans to proceed from there to Sulima, was described as a "missionary tour" and involved no funds granted by the colonial administration (Graf 1998)⁴⁷. Clearly, by the mid-1840s, Freetown and its officials became more concerned about maintaining and improving its colonial bases and less in enforcing agreements designed to keep interior paths operational. As long as Fula and more distant traders or their products reached the Freetown market, whether through the Northern Rivers, overland along the occasionally-opened Timbo/Port Loko path, or via other means, Freetown and its merchant community seemed satisfied.

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Whatever preeminence that Britain may have enjoyed in Guinea-Conakry and in the Fuuta Jaloo highlands before 1850 was flittered away by events in the decade that followed. This paper has not focused on French interests or concerns, but it is clear that French officials at Gorée and Saint Louis were more interested in aggressive commercial and territorial expansion in the "Rivières du Sud" and Fuuta Jaloo than were the British, especially after Omar's assumption to power in 1843. The French also were firm supporters of those of its traders on the coast who found themselves in conflicts with local landlords or with unclear commercial agreements and graded anchorage or waterage duties imposed upon them by landlords. In contrast, the British tended to take the position that traders should not expect royal power to intervene directly to protect their individual economic interests or agreements with landlords. By the 1860s, British objectives had been replaced by a forceful French presence in the rivers. Once the French had secured the rivers and had reached agreements with local landlords, an

46. CMS CA1/M11, 415-421, "A Report on the Accessibility of the Interior of Africa from the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone to para. 9 of the Parent Com's letter dated May 17, 1844", by J. U. Graf. In this report, Graf addressed three questions: 1) Advantages that Thomson produced for Britain at Timbo? 2) Advantages of using the Rio Nunez as a path into the interior? 3) Prospects of establishing a CMS mission station at Timbo? Graf reasoned that all missionary efforts at Timbo would fail.

47. GRAF (1998). It is clear from Church Missionary Records that Graf had planned the tour to begin in 1843 or 1844 and to proceed as far as Falaba, but the Local Committee in Freetown ordered his expedition postponed, partly in consequence of the failures of the Thomson expedition. For Graf's defense of an 1844 expedition, see CMS CA1/M11, J. U. Graf to Warburton, 19 February 1844: 253-254.

open and secure British connection between Timbo and Freetown no longer was a reasonable expectation. Understandings already in place between Timbo and Freetown before 1850 quickly became irrelevant.

Professor Emeritus, Department of History, University of Wisconsin at La Crosse.

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ABSTRACT

Before the imposition of French rule over the coast of Guinea-Conakry and Fuuta Jaloo in the second half of the nineteenth century, British traders and Britain itself had considered this region to be within their spheres of influence and perhaps expected it to become British territory, if it were to be absorbed by a European power. This paper traces the activities of British investment interests from the mid-eighteenth century and methods used to maintain dominance over competing ventures. It also details official British governmental efforts to establish colonial posts along this coast and direct linkages with leaders of Fuuta Jaloo to the mid-nineteenth century. Whatever the consequences of these attempts, British officials were keenly aware of this region's importance to British commercial success in West Africa.

RÉSUMÉ

Préservation des intérêts britanniques en Guinée-Conakry et au Fouta-Djalon. — Bien avant que la France imposa son contrôle sur la Côte de Guinée-Conakry et au Fouta-Djalon dans la deuxième moitié du xix^e siècle, les commerçants britanniques et la Grande-Bretagne considéraient que cette région faisait partie de leur sphère d'influence. Aussi s'attendaient-ils à ce qu'elle devînt territoire britannique si jamais elle venait à être absorbée par une puissance européenne. Cet article décrit les activités

et les intérêts britanniques dans la région à partir du xviii^e siècle ainsi que les méthodes utilisées par les Anglais pour maintenir leur domination sur leurs rivaux. Il détaille également les efforts entrepris par le gouvernement britannique pour mettre en place des postes coloniaux le long de cette côte et établir des liens directs avec les chefs du Fouta-Djalon jusqu'au milieu du xix^e siècle. Quelles qu'aient été les conséquences de leurs efforts, les représentants britanniques étaient pleinement conscients de l'importance de cette région pour le succès commercial de leur pays en Afrique de l'Ouest.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Sierra Leone, Fuuta Jaloo/Futa Jallon, Iles de Los, American commerce, British colonialism, British commerce, exploration, Fula Empire, slave trade/*Sierra Leone, Fouta-Djalon, Iles de Los, commerce américain, colonialisme britannique, commerce britannique, exploration, empire Fula, commerce d'esclaves.*