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THE SLAVE TRADE AND DECENTRALIZED SOCIETIES*

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ABSTRACT: This article, based on a review of the relevant literature, argues that the analyses of Andrew Hubbell and Walter Hawthorne can be extended to a general interpretation of the impact of the slave trade on decentralized societies. First, decentralized societies usually defended themselves effectively, forcing slavers both to extend their networks further into the interior and to devise new ways of obtaining slaves. Second, agents of the slave trade were often successful in developing linkages within targeted societies that exploited tensions and hostilities within them. In the process, the prey often became predators, but predators that captured people like themselves.

KEYWORDS: Western Africa, Central Africa, slavery, slave trade, political, generational conflict, decentralized societies.

THE articles by Andrew Hubbell and Walter Hawthorne in this issue force us to reconsider the impact of the long distance slave trade on decentralized societies. Historians of Africa have generally seen the slave trade as contributing to state formation not only in West Africa, but also in Central and East Africa. I have been associated with a form of this argument which Hubbell characterizes as the 'predatory state thesis'.[1] This thesis links the formation of highly militarized states in West Africa to the increase in demand for slaves after the development of sugar plantations in the West Indies and sees slave production and the slave trade as crucial to the functioning and reproduction of such states as Oyo, Asante, Futa Jallon and Segu.[2] These interpretations have generally treated decentralized societies as reservoirs within which the more powerful military formations fished for bodies to sell into the Atlantic and Saharan trades. We argued that there was

* I would like to thank Michael Levin, Richard Roberts, Ugo Nwokeji and Chima Korieh for their comments on an earlier version of this paper. I am also grateful to Andrew Hubbell and Walter Hawthorne for sending me copies of their theses.

[1] Martin Klein, 'The impact of the Atlantic slave trade on the societies of the western Sudan', in Joseph Inikori and Stanley Engerman (eds.), *The Atlantic Slave Trade : Effects on Economies, Societies and Peoples in Africa, the Americas and Europe* (Durham, 1992), 25–48. For a text which stresses states and describes them in more positive terms, see John Fage, *A History of West Africa* (Cambridge, 1969), ch. 5.

[2] Boubacar Barry, (tr. from the French by Aya Kwa Armah) *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade : Senegambia before the Colonial Conquest*. (Cambridge, 1998); Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l'esclavage : Le ventre de fer et d'argent* (Paris, 1986), translated into English as *Anthropology of Slavery* (Chicago, 1991); Richard Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves* (Stanford, 1987) and 'Production and reproduction of warrior states: Segu Bambara and Segu Tokolor, *c.* 1712–1890)', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 11 (1980), 398–419; Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life : Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, 1990); Jean Bazin and Emmanuel Terray (eds.), *Guerres de lignages et guerres d'état en Afrique* (Paris, 1982). For a Central African variant, see Stephen Reyna, *Wars Without End* (London, 1990).

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a transfer of populations from the raided to the raiders and that this was the major source of slaves shipped abroad.[3] The biggest problem with such arguments is that they often presented the inhabitants of decentralized societies as passive victims of the process.

Hubbell's argument is an attack on the predatory state thesis and on the general bias in historical analysis toward states and empires.[4] The argument consists of two essential parts: first, that decentralized societies were effective at resisting attacks and, second, that because of this success the penetration of such societies for the production of slaves depended on indirect linkages with agents within the societies being targeted; in the long run, such linkages could be very effective. Implicit in this argument is the notion of a market that subtly inserted itself in a wide range of economic, social and political relationships. Hubbell deals with the late nineteenth century, when the market for slaves was largely internal to Africa, but he frames his argument so that it can be extended to other periods. Hawthorne, by contrast, is more cautious in what he draws from his research, but he skilfully uses both oral and European documentation to present a picture of the transformation of a single society, the Balanta, since the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. Elsewhere, he has extended his analysis to the whole of the upper Guinea coast.[5] His research reinforces Hubbell's argument. The two case studies involve different time periods, different military technologies and different environments. Hawthorne deals with a thickly forested coastal region, where raiders used canoes, spears, bows and arrows. Hubbell writes about a savanna world in which the raiders rode horses, were armed with late-model rifles and were often highly mobile horsemen. Despite these differences, the similarities in the two examples are striking enough for us to ask whether we can extend their analyses to other decentralized societies.

Such an exercise is all the more pressing because historians have tended to leave the study of decentralized societies to the anthropologists. Historical research on decentralized societies can be more difficult because of the absence of a central political focus. With few exceptions, they are not very populous, and often, as in the regions studied by Hubbell and Hawthorne, they consist of small social units that present many local variations. In most cases, there is a complete absence of written documents prior to colonization, and the limited oral traditions that exist generally develop to legitimate differences. In differentiated societies, the function of oral tradition is often to justify differences, but where social ideology is based on equality, tradition often denies differences, and as a result, often gives us little more than genealogies and migration tales.[6] Thus, a work like B. A.

[3] See for example, Manning's effort to build a computer model of the trade on the basis of such a transfer, in *Slavery and African Life*, chs. 3 and 4.

[4] His argument is more fully elaborated in Andrew Hubbell, 'Patronage and predation: a social history of colonial chieftaincies in a chiefless region – Souroudougou (Burkina Faso, 1850–1946)', (Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1997).

[5] Walter Hawthorne, 'The production of slaves where there was no state: the Guinea Bissau region, 1450–1815', *Slavery and Abolition*, 20 (1999), 97–124. See also Walter Hawthorne, 'The interior past of an acephalous society: institutional change among the Balanta of Guinea-Bissau, *c.* 1450–*c.* 1950', (Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1998).

[6] Martin A. Klein, 'Ethnic pluralism and homogeneity in the western Sudan: Saalum, Segu, Wasulu', *Mande Studies*, 1 (1999), 115–6.

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Ogot's meticulous reconstruction of Luo traditions is indispensable for students of the Luo, but offers little to non-specialists.[7] When Jan Vansina, the leading analyst of oral tradition, sought to develop a historical reconstruction of the peoples of the Congo rainforest, he had to use linguistic data to transcend the limitations of oral tradition in order to recover the deeper processes of historical change.[8]

Furthermore, whereas in some states traditions are open, public and accessible, they are more likely to be hidden in decentralized societies and only accessible through traditions of shrines and secret societies. It took Robert Baum 25 years of research, eight visits and 900 interviews before he felt he could write the history of shrines in the Diola community of Esalulu (population 15,000).[9] It is striking that the most widely-cited article on the history of stateless societies does not include any history or any discussion of how to reconstruct histories of such societies. It is instead a study of the dynamics of change in stateless societies.[10] In spite of this, there are a number of fine studies of the history of stateless societies, several of which deal with the impact of the slave trade.[11] The most intensively studied decentralized society in West Africa is the Igbo of eastern Nigeria, also by far the most populous. The Igbo have probably produced more history PhDs than any other community in Africa, a considerable number of whom have written on their motherland, but the task of reconstructing Igbo history has been a hard slog through local histories. The Igbo were intensively involved in the slave trade, both as slaves and as slavers, and the history of the Aro, who produced most of those slaves, is an important recoverable theme in their history. Igbo history, therefore, is important if we are to test the general application of the Hubbell and Hawthorne models.[12] Robert Harms has also written an excellent study of the development of a slaving network in the largely decentralized inner basin of the Congo River that offers interesting comparisons with the history of the Aro and other slave-traders.[13]

Hubbell prefers the term 'decentralized' to 'stateless' or 'acephalous' – though he uses 'stateless' in the title of his thesis. Presumably, the logic of

[7] B. A. Ogot, *A History of the Southern Luo* (Nairobi, 1967).

[8] Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest* (Madison, 1990).

[9] Robert Baum, *Shrines of the Slave Trade : Diola Religion and Society in Precolonial Senegal* (Oxford, 1999).

[10] Robin Horton, 'Stateless societies in the history of West Africa', in J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa* (2 vols.) (London, 1971), 1: 78–119.

[11] Godfrey Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu*, 1500–1900 (Nairobi, 1974); John Lamphear, *The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda* (Oxford, 1976); Gideon S. Were, *A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya* (Nairobi, 1967). It is somewhat easier to be able to combine oral work with colonial documents. See John Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango* (Oxford, 1978); and John Lamphear, *The Scattering Time: Turkana Responses to Colonial Rule* (Oxford, 1992).

[12] Elisabeth Isichei, *The History of the Igbo People* (London, 1976); A. E. Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand* (Ibadan, 1981) and *The Igbo and their Neighbours* (Ibadan, 1987); K. Onwuka Dike and Felicia Ekejiuba, *The Aro of South-eastern Nigeria*, 1650–1980 (Ibadan, 1990); J. N. Oriji, *Traditions of Igbo Origin : A Study of Pre-Colonial Population Movements in Africa* (New York, 1994); David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers* (Oxford, 1978); G. Ugo Nwokeji, 'The Biafran frontier: trade, slaves and society, *c.* 1750–1905', (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1999).

[13] Robert Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow : The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500–1891* (New Haven, 1981).

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this choice is that many such societies had chiefs and a decision-making structure. Hawthorne accepts 'stateless' and 'acephalous', though in another article, he repeatedly speaks of 'stateless and decentralized', recognizing them as different but similar categories. If there were such a thing as a stateless society, the Balanta were it: there were no ascriptive positions, sole authority being exercised by a council of elders that functioned only at village level.

I concur with Hubbell's use of the term 'decentralized' because it allows us to avoid debates about what constitutes a state. For our purpose here, such considerations are not important. Many of the societies that concern us were organized as villages or confederations of villages. Positions of authority existed, but because of the small scale of these societies, decision-making procedures involved face-to-face relations and no one had the authority to coerce others. In the fifteenth century, most of West Africa was probably organized in this manner. The history of states, which has preoccupied historians, has often involved the ability of small formations to impose themselves on others. Ade Obayemi suggests that Yoruba states evolved from 'mini-states' to 'mega-states'.[14] There was probably a similar transition among the southern Akan. Certainly, when the Portuguese looked for a site for their first fort, they were dealing with chiefs of villages or very small polities.[15]

Though many historians have regarded the evolution of the state as in some way progressive, tensions between local communities and larger states often persisted. Though the state sometimes provided protection, it also made demands for revenue and services that local people found onerous. Although a major theme in the history of the second millenium of the common era has been the extension of the authority of various states, some decentralized societies have clung tenaciously to their own institutions and their autonomy, at least until the colonial period. Hawthorne estimates that at the beginning of the colonial period, a quarter of the West African population was living in decentralized societies.[16] When we ask whether the ideas of Hubbell and Hawthorne can be useful in understanding these broader historical processes, an exploration of patterns of resistance of local communities to external authority becomes crucial.

RESISTANCE AND SELF-PROTECTION

Many areas that produced slaves are also today among the most populous areas of Africa. Much of the forest zone is inhabited by decentralized societies, including the most densely populated area in West Africa, eastern Nigeria. Hawthorne comments that Balanta areas were densely populated. There is also a belt inhabited by decentralized societies that stretches across

[14] Ade Obayemi, 'The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking peoples and their neighbours before 1600', in Ajayi and Crowder, *History of West Africa*, 1: 260–8.

[15] John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast* 1469–1682 (Athens, GA, 1979). For a short description of the Gold Coast in 1600, see K. Y. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600–1720* (Oxford, 1970). For an archeological view of the process, see D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, 'Social and demographic change in the Birim valley, southern Ghana, *c.* 1450–*c.* 1800', *Journal of African History*, 23 (1982), 63–82.

[16] Hawthorne, 'Production', 97.

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the southern savanna from Senegal to the Nigerian middle belt.[17] Though population densities vary radically within this zone, it includes some of the most populous areas in West African savanna. There were areas that were decimated, but they were probably few. Philip Curtin has cited the Tanda of eastern Senegal, who seem to have been more numerous in earlier centuries.[18] Kiyaga-Mulindwa talks of the early inhabitants of the Birim valley of Ghana, who seem to have been dispersed and absorbed into other societies as a result of wars linked to the Atlantic slave trade.[19] Destruction remained a threat, one of the worst examples taking place from 1889 to 1894, when Samori's *sofa* stripped Wasulu clean, either enslaving or driving away almost the whole population.[20] There were, however, many areas that were regularly raided and somehow survived. Robin Law tells us that Oyo regularly raided to the west, where the Mahi were more vulnerable than their eastern neighbours.[21] Segu raided into various decentralized areas like Wasulu that lay to the south of it. Further east, Masina in the nineteenth century also preyed on districts like the Samo areas. Dafina has hitherto been seen largely as a pool to be tapped. The Bwa, Minianka and Senufo were also long seen as targets for slave raiders. The Diola were mercilessly raided in the late nineteenth century and yet, somehow, the region remains populous.

The most common response of peoples threatened by regular attacks was to build walls. Thierno Mouctar Bah has demonstrated that without artillery, African armies were rarely able to take a well entrenched defensive position.[22] The best example of this was the success of the fortress at Sikasso in withstanding a fifteen-month siege by Samori in 1888–89. Lacking cannon, Samori was forced to build a siege line, which never completely stopped the movement of supplies into Sikasso. Demands made on surrounding areas to support the siege led to the revolt of Wasulu and the erosion of Samori's authority.[23] Generally, slavers lacked the will and the resources to sustain a major siege. Sikasso was unusual in the size of the town and the scale of its fortifications, but we see smaller but similar fortifications in many areas threatened by slave-raiders. Hubbell writes that Samo villages had high walls and few points of entry. Town gates were few and often so small that people had to bend over to enter. Houses had several entries so that even a successful enemy had to pursue its prey through houses and narrow alleys. In Wasulu,

[17] The idea that the Nigerian Middle Belt was depopulated by slave raiders was criticized in Michael Mason, 'Population density and ''slave-raiding'' – the case of the middle belt of Nigeria', *Journal of African History*, 10 (1969), 551–64. In a response to this article, M. B. Gleave and R. M. Prothero, 'Population density and ''slave-raiding'' – a comment', *Journal of African History*, 12 (1971), 319–27, suggested that the middle belt has low population densities only by comparison with high densities in areas to the north and south of it. Further west, societies of the southern savanna with similar population concentrations have higher densities than most of their neighbours.

[18] See Philip Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa : Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1975), 177–8.

[19] Kiyaga-Mulindwa, 'Birim valley'.

[20] Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge, 1998), 109–11.

[21] Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire* c. *1600 to* c. *1836* (Oxford, 1977), 225–7 and 306–8.

[22] Thierno Mouctar Bah, *Architecture militaire, traditionelle et poliorcétique dans le Soudan occidental* (Yaoundé, 1985). This valuable study has not received the attention it deserves because it was published in Africa.

[23] Bah, *Architecture*, 203–12; Yves Person, *Samori* (2 vols.) (Dakar, 1976).

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which lay between several slaving states, I was able to trace the remains of some of these walls. In Bulukura, today a small village of about 300 people, the wall was built of a combination of mud, pebbles and karité. Parts of it have lasted at least 120 years. It surrounded the village, contained holes that could be used by riflemen and had a diameter of about 200 meters. In the market town of Ntentu, there were two walls more than three meters high, the outer one more than a kilometer in length. The siege of Ntentu was successful, but largely because Samori was determined to break a community that defied his will.[24]

Hawthorne describes the development of large fortified villages among the Balanta of the upper Guinea coast. Balanta villages often had three or four walls built of large timbers pointed at the top. There were high towers, guard posts and around them a ditch filled with water during the rainy season.[25] Some Diola also built 'defensive palissades'.[26] Furthermore, even if invaders penetrated one of these villages, they would find labyrinthine layouts and houses with several doors. Perhaps the most startling to Europeans were the complex and elaborate villages of the Gurunsi, the entrances to which were sometimes as small as 70 cm. high.[27] One French scholar–administrator was so baffled by the virtually naked Gurunsi building such complex structures that he attributed their genius to the influence of Songhai and ancient Egypt.[28]

There were other approaches to security. Small villages often disappeared as people sought security in numbers. Most Diola villages maintained a dispersed settlement pattern in which land around villages was left uncleared, compounds were walled and homes were hidden in the forest growth. Compounds had a single door, which could be bolted, and had no windows open to the outside.[29] The Lobi also had dispersed homesteads, each of which was a small fortress.[30] The areas where such defences were rare were usually those where external threats were few, as among the Igbo. Defensive systems in West Africa were often developed over long periods of constant threat. In East and Central Africa during the nineteenth century, slavers were often very effective because they erupted suddenly in societies that had no traditions of defence.[31]

Where hills and forests were available people used them. Archeologists

[24] Klein, *Slavery*, 110.

[25] Hawthorne, 'The interior past', 180–97.

[26] Peter Mark, *A Cultural, Economic and Religious History of the Basse Casamance since 1500* (Wiesbaden, 1985), 54.

[27] Anne-Marie Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta: Conquête et colonisation* (Stuttgart, 1984), 34.

[28] Jean-Paul Baudier and Trinh T. Minh Ha, *African Spaces* (New York, 1985), 426–9. On Minianka defences, see also Danielle Jonckers, *La société Minyanka du* Mali (Paris, 1987), 17–19.

[29] Baum, *Shrines*, 121.

[30] Pierre Bonnafé, Michèle Fiéloux and Jeanne-Marie Kambou, 'Le conflit armé dans une population sans état: Les Lobi de Haute-Volta', in Bazin and Terray, *Guerres*, 73–142. See also in the same volume discussions of defence in the savanna in Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 'Le cheval et l'arc', 213–6, 223, and Eliane Pradelles de Latour, 'La paix destructrice', 251–2.

[31] For a description of an attack on a society where people took refuge in trees, see Gustav Nachtigal (tr. by Allan and Humphrey Fisher), *Sahara and Sudan* (London, 1987), III: 340–68: original publication 1889. See also Dennis Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti and the Last Years of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (Madison, 1985); Reyna, *Wars Without End*.

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often use the existence of walls and hilltop-locations as evidence of increasing warfare. Many Chamba moved to easily defensible sites in the hills, but where land was scarce, they became vulnerable when they had go down to the plains to cultivate.[32] When threatened by outsiders, the inhabitants of the Birim valley put their villages on hilltops and built earthwork fortifications.[33] Piot refers to the Kabre of northern Togo retreating into mountainous locations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when they had to face the challenge of slave-raiders from three directions.[34] Some Gurunsi also sought out easily defended hill-top locations as did many people in the Dar al-Kuti region.[35] Throughout the Nigerian Middle Belt, fortified hilly locations were common.[36] Mason and his critics, Gleave and Prothero, refer to the retreat of Middle Belt peoples into defensible hill-top locations,[37] and Dorward describes the fortress-like settlements of the Eggon.[38]

The biggest problem that such communities faced was the limited amount and quality of the land available to them. Many responded creatively. Cornevin speaks of the Kabre as 'remarkable farmers', who constructed anti-erosion barriers, built terraces and used manure.[39] Gleave and Prothero write of 'a marked tendency toward the development of intensive systems of agriculture making the most of their rock-strewn soils, often on steep slopes, to support increasingly dense populations'.[40] They terraced their hillsides, practised crop rotation, and used animal and vegetable waste to enrich their soils. The problem was that to the degree that they were successful and population grew, they had to move down from the hills. The plains were empty, but often fertile. Dorward writes that when the Eggon descended into the valleys to collect firewood, to hunt or to farm, lookouts were maintained. Drums and trumpets signalled the appearance of an enemy and warned people to retreat to the hills, where an attacking force faced a hail of stones, spears, poisoned arrows and bee-hives, often from carefully prepared positions.[41] Eventually, many had little choice but to develop settlements on the plains, which were as elsewhere, concentrated agglomerations with defensive palisades.[42]

Walls were not enough. Peoples in these areas were often very suspicious of strangers. The Nones, who lived in forested areas around Thiès, resisted incorporation into neighbouring states and had a reputation for taking pot-

[32] Richard Fardon, *Raiders and Refugees: Trends in Chamba Political Development, 1750–1950* (Washington, 1988), ch. 5. [33] Kiyaga-Mulindwa, 'Birim valley'.

[34] Charles Piot, 'Of slaves and the gift: Kabre sale of kin during the era of the slave trade', *Journal of African History*, 37 (1996), 31–50; Raymond Verdier, *Le pays Kabiyé: Cité des dieux – cité des hommes* (Paris, 1982).

[35] Personal communication, Dennis Cordell.

[36] Harold D. Gunn and F. P. Conant, *Peoples of the Middle Niger Region of Northern Nigeria* (London, 1960), 25, 58, 65, 76, 93, 117; Michael Gleave, 'The changing frontiers of settlement in the uplands of Northern Nigeria', *Nigerian Geographical Journal*, 8 (1965), 127–41.

[37] Mason, 'Middle Belt', 561; Gleave and Prothero, 'Comment', 321.

[38] David Dorward, 'The impact of colonialism on a Nigerian hill-farming society: a case of innovation among the Eggon', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 20 (1987), 201–24 [39] Robert Cornevin, *Histoire du Togo* (Paris, 1962).

[40] Gleave and Prothero, 321. See also Dorward, 'Impact', 203.

[41] Dorward, 'Impact', 203.

[42] *Ibid.*, 204. See also Gleave and Prothero, 'Comment', 321–2.

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shots at strangers. The French regularly burned their villages, but to little effect. Further south, the Diola of the Casamance killed shipwrecked sailors until they discovered that they could ransom them.[43] The Lobi and Dagara of Burkina Faso and northern Ghana also had a reputation for shooting at strangers, Juula traders as well as foreign horsemen or European soldiers.[44]

Hubbell also suggests that external threats often encouraged collaboration between villages and confederal arrangements. This was true in many areas. In Wasulu, *jamana* varied radically in size, anywhere from ten to over fifty villages. When threatened, they could come together, but they were also prone to intense internal conflict. These arrangements often broke down when villages began raiding their neighbours.[45] The Igbo also lived in village confederations that could come together when threatened. These arrangements were often linked to religious observances, shared shrines and to procedures for resolving conflict and maintaining cohesion. Such relationships were also often reinforced by marriage strategies. Within Wasulunke *jamana*, people preferred marriages with partners from allied *jamana*. The Balanta had no units larger than the village, but marriage links tied villages together and a common threat could persuade Balanta villages to act collectively. Thus, in many decentralized societies, threats could bring large groups together, but conflict could also pit village against village or ward against ward.[46]

There were also everywhere changes in social behaviour. People planted close to their villages and went out into the fields armed and in groups.[47] This was, of course, also true in state areas, particularly in borderlands that were vulnerable to attack.[48] When I first did research in Senegal in 1963, I was several times told that the one benefit peasants received from the French conquest was that they no longer had to carry guns to the fields. Others make similar observations. Baum's Diola informants told him that people carried guns to their fields, worked only in groups and rarely travelled far from their villages.[49] Until the First World War, children never left their quarters except in large groups and with adult supervision.[50] Hawthorne describes the way such defensive strategies led to radical changes in social structure. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Balanta lived in dispersed homesteads, cultivated yams and engaged in only limited trade with their neighbours. As slaving increased, the Balanta increasingly moved into large, closely packed villages. They gradually shifted cultivation from yams to rice, because the latter provided a larger yield of calories per acre, and they relocated their villages to be closer to the rice fields. The shift to rice cultivation had many ramifications. First, it required iron tools, and in their search for goods to exchange for iron, the Balanta became involved in slaving, often preying on other Balanta communities. Rice cultivation also required a high degree of

[43] Olga Linares, 'Deferring to the trade in slaves: the Jola of the Casamance. Senegal in historical perspective', *History in Africa*, 16 (1987), 113–39.

[44] Bonnafé, Fiéloux and Kambou, 'Lobi', 93.

[45] Klein, 'Ethnic pluralism', 113–9; see also Jean-Loup Amselle, *Logiques métisses* (Paris, 1990).

[46] Bonnafé, Fiéloux and Kambou, 'Lobi'.

[47] Jonckers, *Minyanka*, 121; Jean Capron, *Communautés villageoises Bwa. Mali-Haute Volta* (Paris, 1973), 86–8.

[48] De Latour, 'Paix destructrice', 251–2.

[49] Baum, *Shrines*, 120–1. See also Capron, *Bwa*, 86–8; Jonckers, *Minyanka*, 24.

[50] Baum, *Shrines*, 27.

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cooperation, which in turn led to an intensification of the age-grade system, useful for preparing rice paddies and for both offence and defence.[51] The importance of age-grade systems limited the development of slavery within Balanta society. Women and young boys could be absorbed socially, but not males beyond the age of initiation. Purchase of iron from Europeans and the production of iron tools also facilitated rice cultivation among the Diola. Mark argues that increased food production led to population growth and expansion as the Diola moved into nearby swampy areas suitable for wet rice and diets improved.[52]

Many, though not all decentralized societies also had arrangements with more centralized states. Submission and payment of tribute to a powerful neighbour was sometimes a way of coping with the military threat. For the Minyanka in the late nineteenth century, submission to rival states led to participation in slave-raiding and bitter conflict between Minyanka villages.[53] Submission sometimes led to incorporation, but often to a tenuous relation between reluctant subjects and distrusted overlords. Wasulunke villages occasionally paid tribute to Segu and perhaps to other polities. In 1882, the whole of Wasulu submitted to Samori only to reject his authority six years later when the siege of Sikasso led to demand for food and porters that the Wasulunke found onerous.[54] Similarly, in Dafina, Hubbell tells us that many Samo took military service with the Mossi of Ouahigouya, and their villages provided grain for the Mossi court.

For the great slaving states, relying only on warfare to produce slaves had its limitations. Where successful, intensive raiding of single areas may have been dysfunctional, but it also clearly became less productive because it created often successful defensive reactions. The sources of slaves were thus pushed further and further into the interior because states close to the coast armed themselves, accepted the dominion of powerful neighbours or found other ways to defend themselves. In the early eighteenth century, many of the slaves Asante sold came from southern Ghana and were produced by the wars through which it established its authority. By the end of the century, Asante was getting most of its slaves as tribute from northern Ghana and Burkina Faso.[55] Mason suggests that Igbirra obligations to Nupe were shifted from cowries to slaves.[56] Piot writes that the Kabre refused to pay tribute, but sometimes sold their own children. He suggests that this may have been part of an arrangement with the Bariba to keep them from raiding.[57] Under Agaja in the early eighteenth century, Dahomey sold only slaves taken in its own military campaigns, but increasingly its capital, Abomey, became a market for slaves coming from further north, including some of the Kabre children sold by the Bariba.[58] Segu under the Bambara and Futanke and the inner delta under regimes in both Hamdullahi and Bandiagara developed ties with political centres further south, as did successor regimes of the Futanke in Segu and Bandiagara. Clientship arrangements could involve links with specific chiefs or traders or with small

[51] Hawthorne, 'The interior past', ch. 4.
[52] Mark, 'Basse Casamance', 27–30.
[53] Jonckers, *Minyanka*, 122–9.
[54] Klein, 'Ethnic pluralism'; Yves Person, *Samori* (Dakar, 1968), II: 1047–66.
[55] Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975), 64–71.
[56] Mason, 'Middle Belt', 556.
[57] Piot, 'Kabre', 44–6.
[58] Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550–1750* (Oxford, 1991), 340–4.

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states like Barani, which used these arrangements to maintain their autonomy. The result was a web-like network of commercial and political relationships that linked various centres of military power with major market centres.

INDIRECT COMMERCIAL AND CLIENT LINKAGES

Where warfare and raiding had increasingly limited results, commercial and client linkages became effective mechanisms for extracting slaves from decentralized societies because they mobilized agents within the targeted societies. The most important agents in the process were trading groups such as the Luso-African traders on the upper Guinea coast, the Juula in Dafina, the Aro among the Igbo, the Hausa in the Nigerian Middle Belt and the Bobangi in the Congo basin. These agents cracked the resistance of decentralized societies and found collaborators for their slaving activities. Except among the Igbo, penetration by the market was not the result of any coordinated effort, but rather, of impersonal market forces that played on pre-existing tensions within most of the societies involved. Desire for goods like iron and weapons meant that selling people became attractive in societies hitherto not much interested in commerce or the sale of slaves. Key groups in every society may have seen slaving as a way to resolve their internal problems. Walter Rodney has argued that most societies on the upper Guinea coast did not have slaves and that slavery developed only as a result of the Atlantic trade.[59] While the first part of this argument cannot be fully supported, there were certainly many societies like the Diola that neither took slaves nor sold them, at least at the beginning of the Atlantic trade.

The earliest accounts of the Diola were of a people who refused to trade with others and who killed shipwrecked sailors.[60] By the seventeenth century, the Diola were interested enough in trade goods to ransom the sailors. There was also increasing conflict between Diola communities as population growth created competition for rice paddies, oil palms, fishing zones and hunting grounds. During the seventeenth century, as the Atlantic slave trade increased, the Diola were increasingly threatened by raids from their neighbours and felt the need better to protect themselves. Prisoners taken in local conflicts had been ransomed and only sold when no ransom was forthcoming. By the late eighteenth century, the Diola were not only selling slaves taken from neighbours, but also keeping some for themselves. Taking slaves became a source of status. Enslavement within societies became a criminal punishment and people began raiding neighbouring villages and kidnapping children in other quarters of the same village.[61]

Diola religious practice was traditionally organized through a network of shrines. There were shrines devoted to healing, fertility, rainfall – and by the

[59] Walter Rodney, 'African slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade', *Journal of African History*, 7 (1966), 431–43. See also John Fage, 'Slaves and society in western Africa, *c.* 1445–*c.* 1700', *Journal of African History*, 21 (1980), 289–310.

[60] Valentim Fernandes, *Description de la côte occidentale d'Afrique : Sénégal au Cap de Monte, Archipels* (Bissau, 1951), 69; Alvares d'Almada, 'Tratado Breve dos Rios de Guiné', in *Monumenta Missionaria Africana – Africa Ocidental*, Lisbon.

[61] This description of Diola history is based on Mark, *Basse Casamance*, 22–31; Baum, *Shrines*, ch. 5; Linares 'Deferring'.

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eighteenth century there were shrines for the slave trade. The new shrines were necessary to protect the slavers from both physical danger, the retribution of their neighbours and spiritual danger from the violation of basic Diola moral principles. Most shrines were open and public. In contrast, the slave trade shrines were secret and hidden within granaries. Baum asks why the community did not act to punish those who threatened its stability and concludes that major offices in Esalulu were increasingly held by those who profited from the trade.[62]

The Diola situation resembled that which Hawthorne describes for decentralized societies in adjacent areas of the upper Guinea coast. In the fifteenth century there was already in this area a series of Beafada trade routes linked to Mandinka states in the grasslands. From the early sixteenth century, Portuguese based on the Cape Verde islands moved in and either competed or cooperated with the Beafada traders.[63] Settled on the coast and inter-married with African women, these Portuguese provided outlets for slaves throughout the area. From early on, we see three processes. First, as warfare and raiding increased, populations moved into the densely settled and fortified villages noted above; the weaker were eliminated or absorbed and the more powerful lived in a constant state of war with each other. There was also an increased trade in arms – not guns, but swords, knives, spears and iron-tipped arrows. Peoples of the littoral did not remain behind their walls, but took advantage of their marshy tsetse-ridden environment and used their iron weapons to defeat invaders from Cassanga and Kaabu. Balanta and Bijago raiders similar to Hubbell's commandos attacked not only other coastal peoples, but also peoples of the hinterland like the small Beafada states.[64] Kidnapping became more common. With time, as defensive strategies became more effective, the numbers taken in slave raids probably declined.

The second process had already begun, but became more important at this point. Communities began selling their own. Judicial penalties that formerly had taken the form of beatings, payment of compensation or exile, for example, were now converted to enslavement. The slave trade became a way of getting rid of enemies and unwanted people.[65] This is a process we see almost everywhere that the slave trade became important, especially among populous communities such as the Diola and the Balanta. The third process was that decentralized societies not only sold slaves, but also absorbed many female and young captives. Hawthorne argues that the importance of age grades was so great that the Balanta would only take male children who could be absorbed into them.[66]

The other side of this process was that decentralized societies were often forced to pawn or sell their kin. Hubbell reports both the pawning and sale of offspring. Children seem to have been sold mostly during the famines, but could also be sold at other times of misfortune.[67] Charles Piot has recently argued that the Kabre of northern Togo regularly sold their offspring into

[62] Baum, *Shrines*, 110–26.
[63] Hawthorne, 'Production' looks not only at the Balanta, but the whole littoral of what is now Guinea-Bissau.
[64] Hawthorne, 'Production', 107–18.
[65] Hawthorne, 'The interior past', ch. 3.
[66] *Ibid*. 210; Mark, *Basse Casamance*, 27.
[67] Klein, *Colonial Rule*, 210–11.

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slavery.[68] Warnier argues that in the Cameroon Grassfields, which was a major source of slaves for the Bight of Biafra, most of those sold were relatives, marginal persons and those kidnapped.[69] Like Hubbell, Warnier sees generational tension as a major source of enslavement. In the societies of the Grassfields, the ascendancy of the elders and their ability to finance polygynous marriages meant that young men often could not marry until they were 25 or 30 years old. Kidnapping or arranging the disappearance and sale of a young cousin was a way a young man could finance his own marriage.[70] Among the Kabre, there was a different kind of conflict, between the mother's brother and the child's father. The Kabre were patrilineal, but the child was controlled by the mother's brother until initiation. Piot suggests that the mother's brother often sold the child before losing control of him or her.[71] Of course, children could also be pawned by families in need during droughts or after other disasters. Though pawns were not slaves, an unredeemed pawn could become a slave when moved outside the area where she could be redeemed.[72]

The more powerful slave-trading states also developed outlying clients, who depended on larger states for weapons, horses and trade goods. The larger tributaries of Asante and Oyo were conquered states with considerable military potential. Many of these client states served as the base for different commercial groups. Other clients were men within decentralized societies who were seeking to extend their authority or the leaders of what were essentially criminal gangs. In some cases, resistance to raiders led to state formation. Masina is a case where the prey in one generation became the predators in the next. The inner delta of the Niger is a vast flood plain, where the Niger splits into numerous channels and floods every year, an area ideally suited to Fulbe transhumant cycles.[73] Fulbe pastoralists began moving into the region as early as the thirteenth century.[74] In the rainy season, they would move north of the delta, and then, as the flood receded, move their herds back to the well-watered grasslands.[75] William Brown describes the Fulbe as 'loosely bound in anarchic little clans and matrilineages'.[76] Two processes began to transform the egalitarian Fulbe. First, the leaders of clan fractions, called Ardos, began to surround themselves with groups of warriors, often the sons of wives taken from neighbouring Bambara. These warriors fought on horseback in contrast to the herdsmen who fought on foot.[77] As elsewhere,

[68] Piot, 'Of slaves and the gift'.

[69] Jean-Pierre Warnier, 'Traite sans raids au Cameroun', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 29 (1989), 5–32. See also his *Échanges, développement et hiérarchies dans le Bamenda pré-colonial* (*Cameroun*), (Wiesbaden, 1985).

[70] Warnier, 'Traite', 14–22.

[71] Piot, 'Kabre', 45–6. Piot also suggests that the sale of children was a way to try to exercise some control over a process of enslavement they could not resist. Disconcerting as Piot's data is, the sale of children was openly discussed by his informants.

[72] See different case studies in Toyin Falola and Paul Lovejoy, *Pawnship in Africa : Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* (Boulder, 1994).

[73] Jean Gallais, *Le Delta Intérieur du Niger. Étude de géographie régionale* (Dakar, 1967).

[74] *Ibid*. 1: 87; Bintou Sanankoua, *Un empire peul au dix-neuvième siècle : La Diina du Maasina* (Paris, 1990), ch. 1.

[75] Gallais, *Delta Intérieur*, 1: 77–93.

[76] William Brown, 'The Caliphate of Hamdullahi, *c*. 1818–1864', (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1969), iii.

[77] Gallais, *Delta Intérieur*, 1: 92–3.

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a warrior sub-culture emerged.[78] As slave-raiding and slave use increased, the Ardos were pulled into the slave-raiding economy as clients and dependents of Bambara Segu. The Dikko, Brown writes, 'policed and taxed the Pulo regions in the interest of the Diarra; they campaigned widely with the armies of Segou. They inter-married with the Diarra, and adopted some of the trappings and social practices of the Bambara royal clan'.[79] The Ardos also increasingly became dependent on the labour of slaves. The Dikko clans thus became slave raiders, slave traders and slave users. At the same time, the pastoralists were highly vulnerable to Tuareg and Bambara attacks because of their transhumant cycles. Once again, we refer to Brown: 'They raided and exacted tribute indiscriminately among the Fulbe as well as other people – thereby stimulating other clans, including many of the scholars, to arm themselves and become partially militarized'.[80] This situation produced the jihad led by Amadu Seku, which created a highly centralized polity. Masina differed from Dafina in that the Fulbe needed a state capable of protecting transhumant patterns; Dafina did not and thus, resistance did not produce a state. One result is that in the nineteenth century, Masina and its Umarian successor in Bandiagara, was the predator in decentralized areas further south and became the base for a series of small predatory client states like Barani which developed in this area.[81] These states alternately preyed on the Bwa, Minyanka and Samo and served as a base for Juula traders who penetrated the markets of those areas.

DECENTRALIZED SOCIETIES IN THE BIGHT OF BENIN AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Some decentralized peoples, such as the Lobi,[82] lived neither in compact nor fortified villages. The LoDaaga (or Dagara) of northwest Ghana started walling their villages only toward the end of the nineteenth century.[83] The Igbo also lived in dispersed, unfortified villages, though their compounds were walled.[84] Portuguese slave traders were visiting the Bights of Benin and Biafra from the end of the fifteenth century, but Igboland became a major source of slaves only in the eighteenth century. The Portuguese and their successors from northern Europe found the states west of the Niger a better source for slaves. The Bight of Biafra provided a very small percentage of the slaves exported from Africa until about 1730. There was some raiding of the western and northern Igbo and trade down the Niger, but numbers were relatively limited from these areas and densely populated central Igboland

[78] Brown, 'Hamdullahi', 102. This was similar to the model of the Bambara *tonjon*, the Wolof *ceddo* or other slave warriors who proliferated in slave-trading societies.

[79] *Ibid.* 101.

[80] *Ibid.* 102. This image of the Ardos remains vivid in the oral traditions.

[81] Youssouf Diallo, 'Barani: Une chefferie satellite des grands États du dix-neuvième siècle', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 34 (1994), 359–84.

[82] Madeleine Père, *Les Lobi. Tradition et changement* (Laval, 1988), 151. But see also Bonnafé, Fiéloux and Kambou, 'Lobi'. [83] Personal communication, Sean Hawkins.

[84] Michael Levin tells me that some Igbo built defensive palisades, but this seems to have been the exception.

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was not tapped until later.[85] The probable reason was the difficulty of developing networks that could produce large numbers of slaves and move them to the coast. Then by 1750, the Biafran hinterland became the most important source of slaves for the Atlantic trade.[86]

What explains the dramatic change? It is clear that there was no mechanism for the draining of slaves from the hinterland until the development of merchant networks in the eighteenth century. Only the Niger was a significant export route. The most important merchant network was that of the Aro.[87] The Aro first developed in the hinterland of Calabar in the early seventeenth century and then gradually spread a network of over 150 colonies throughout Igbo and Ibibio areas. They forged blood pacts with local chiefs, who agreed to keep trade routes open in order to protect the Aro and to provide military escorts to Aro trading caravans when necessary. Allied chiefs could call on the Aro for military assistance. Like the Juula of Dafina, they were successful because they were wanted. They seem to have rarely engaged in slave-raiding themselves, but they bought slaves and encouraged others to provide them. They also provided trade goods, salt and fish from the coast and European. They were thus able to exploit tensions within Igbo society.

It is probable that most Igbo villages were not walled because kidnapping and local conflicts, not slave raids and large-scale military campaigns, were the major sources of slaves.[88] Equiano tells us that the adults generally went out to the fields in an armed group. When the adults were in the fields, children were gathered in a compound where they could be watched and often one of them was posted in a tree to look out for strangers. The eleven-year old Equiano was responsible for catching one would-be kidnapper, but he was taken by another one along with his sister.[89] The importance of kidnapping probably reflected, as among the Samo and Balanta, the existence of young men frustrated by the control of elders and anxious to acquire titles, guns, cloth and wives. Wars were important, but small-scale conflicts between village groups generally fed the supply of slaves. The presence of the Aro stimulated such conflicts and encouraged the sale of captives. Other slaves came from criminal penalties and the sale of unwanted people: deviants, dissidents and political opponents. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the Bight of Biafra provided only about 4 per cent of the slaves sent into the Atlantic trade. During the 1740s, it was shipping almost 7,800 a year, about 14 per cent of those exported. This figure rose steadily to

[85] K. Nwachukwu-Ogedenbe, 'Slavery in Nineteenth century Aboh', in Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, 1977), 133–54; Northrup, *Trade*, 43–9.

[86] Northrup, *Trade*, ch. 1–3.

[87] Dike and Ekejiuba, *The Aro*; Nwokeji, 'The Biafran frontier;' Northrup, *Trade*, ch. 5.

[88] Analysis of S. W. Koelle's freed slave informants in Sierra Leone suggests that a third of those enslaved in Igbo areas were kidnapped and a third sold by family or superiors. P. E. H. Hair, 'The enslavement of Koelle's informants', *Journal of African History*, 6 (1965), 193–203. See the analysis in Northrup, *Trade*, 65–80.

[89] Olaudah Equiano, *Equiano's Travels* (Portsmouth, 1967), 6–13. Northrup estimates that over two-fifths of the slaves sold in the nineteenth century had either been kidnapped or sold by their families. Northrup, *Trade*, 70–80.

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over 22,500 in the 1780s (over 28 per cent).[90] Dike and Ekejiuba estimate that 70 per cent of the slaves sold to Europeans in the Bight of Biafra were provided by the Aro.[91]

The Igbo are unusual in several ways. The trading network that opened them to the ravages of the trade was indigenous. The Aro traded across linguistic frontiers, but they were Igbo-speakers. They are also unusual in that the Bight of Biafra had the highest rate of export of women. In the Atlantic trade as a whole, almost twice as many men were exported as women, largely because of the desire of Africans to retain female slaves. In the Bight of Biafra, where most slaves exported were Igbo, the number of females exported was almost the same as the number of males. Nwokeji argues that there were two reasons for this: first, few slaves moved north to the Saharan trade and second, there was little development of female slavery. Women were absorbed as wives or sold.[92] In spite of this, the Igbo maintained a very high population density. This may be partly explained by imports from areas further north during the nineteenth century, but more likely, it was because small numbers were constantly being drained from a large and populous area. Finally, the development of the slave trade by the Aro was in no way defensive. Igbo did not get involved in slaving to better defend themselves against other slavers. The primary motivation was profit and the agents of the trade were Igbo-speakers. They interfaced with coastal middlemen through the Ekpe secret society, which resolved commercial conflicts and maintained order in the markets. This explains why the impact of the market developed only over a very long period.

The Aro were tied together by loose links to the Arochukwu oracle. The major unifying event of the Aro calendar was a festival held every year at Arochukwu. And yet, what marks the Aro, and in fact every other commercial diaspora that handled slaves and stimulated slaving, is that each group within the diaspora community maintained a high degree of local autonomy and their separate activities were in no way coordinated.[93] There was no Juula state; individual Juula groups were linked together within states often marked by the twin cities phenomenon: a warrior elite centred in one or more villages and a trading city, nominally subject to the warrior state, but usually much wealthier.[94] The communities of various commercial diaspora were bound together by alliances and a sense of common identity.[95] One of the best studies of such a community is Harms' history of the Bobangi of the

[90] Nwokeji, 'Biafran frontier', 56.

[91] Dike and Ekejiuba, *The Aro*, 250.

[92] Nwokeji, 'Biafran frontier', 121–8.

[93] Dike and Ekejiuba, *Aro*, ch. 3, speak of an Aro state; Nwokeji, 'Biafran frontier', 165–71. Leaders of many of the colonies attended festivals in Arochukwu, some Aro were buried there and the oracle served as a court of appeal. Linkages of the colonies to Arochukwu were clearly strong, but the autonomy of the individual community was essential to the flexibility the colonies needed. See also Northrup, *Trade*, 139–45.

[94] See, for example, Jean-Louis Boutillier, *Bouna. Royaume de la savane ivoirienne. Princes, marchands et paysans* (Paris, 1993); Edmond Bernus, 'Kong et sa région', *Études éburnéennes*, 8 (1960), 239–324.

[95] Richard Roberts, 'Linkages and multiplier effects in the ecologically specialized trade of precolonial West Africa', *Cahiers d'études africaines* 20 (1981); Claude Meillassoux (ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London, 1971).

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Congo River.[96] The Bobangi emerged out of a highly fluid fishing culture. The largest unit was the village, but like nomadic communities, the community needed a flexible social structure because it regularly split up into fishing camps. Thus, though there were chiefs, much leadership was transient. The penetration of the Congo basin by the Atlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century stimulated the development of trade and competition for control of it. Markets in river villages served as the point of contact with agricultural villages and many riverine communities shifted from fishing to trade.

The Bobangi came to dominate a large stretch of the river. There was no central authority among the Bobangi, but rather an alliance between villages and enterprises that was highly fluid, but capable of pulling Bobangi traders together to respond to a challenge. Unlike the Aro, the Bobangi seem to have at times been involved in violence themselves, but most of their slaves were procured by trade. There were no conquering armies on the Congo River, only local processes of enslavement. Slaves were procured either in the same kind of local warfare that marked Igboland or expelled from their lineages. The Bobangi had two different words for slaves. *Montange* were captured slaves, products of kidnapping, raids and warfare who had to be moved from the point of capture. *Montamba* were slaves disposed of by their own lineages. Many were people who committed offenses: adulterers, witches, thieves, trouble-makers. Others were children sold by maternal uncles, either out of a desire to punish someone or simply because of greed.[97] What Harms describes for the Congo basin is a system in which the kind of indirect linkages described by Hubbell and Hawthorne transformed the cultures of not only the fisher-traders but also of all their neighbours.

The role of fishing people on the Congo differed dramatically from their counterparts in West Africa. The Somono and Bozo fishermen of the Niger River operated within a region long dominated by states. Neither group became slave traders, although both became major players in a political economy dominated by centralized polities. Parallels to other parts of Africa may have been limited. The Balanta and Samo adapted to the threat of the slave trade over a long period of time, a period in which some people paid the price of adaptation. Elsewhere in Central Africa, historians stress the operation of states rather the informal mechanisms underlined by Hubbell and Hawthorne.[98]

CONCLUSION

The predatory state thesis is not necessarily wrong. These states did exist and their emergence was clearly linked to the development of slave plantations in the West Indies and the resultant increase both in demand and

[96] Robert Harms, *River of Wealth*.

[97] On the mechanisms for the transfer of dependents from lineage groups in Central Africa, see Pierre-Philippe Rey, 'L'esclavage lignager chez les tsangui, les punu et les kuni du Congo-Brazzaville: Sa place dans le système d'ensemble des rapports de production', in Claude Meillassoux (ed.), *L'esclavage en Afrique pré-coloniale* (Paris, 1975), 509–28 and Pierre Bonnafé, 'Les formes d'asservissement chez les Kukuyu d'Afrique centrale', in Meillassoux, *Esclavage*, 529–55.

[98] See Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death* (Madison, 1988), ch. 1–4; David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin (eds.), *History of Central Africa* (2 vols.) (London, 1983), Vol. 1.

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price. They were also clearly predatory. The slave trade was essential to the reproduction of such states because it provided warriors with the means and incentives to enslave others. Warriors received weapons and trade goods as rewards for their services to such states. However, it is necessary to modify the predatory state thesis. The assumption that Western Africa can be simply divided between predatory societies and their victims is clearly not valid. There were losers in all societies, people who found themselves enslaved in Africa or the Americas or who died in the warfare and raiding that the slave trade encouraged. However, there were few victim societies. Most societies proved quite effective at protecting themselves. If nothing else, they were able to raise the cost to the slavers. Philip Curtin has pointed out that the profits from slaving were rather limited, but the reasons were not only the cost of transport and of feeding slaves, but also the difficulties involved in enslaving, controlling and moving people.[99] Slaving and the slave trade created their own countervailing forces.

The experience of the Igbo and Bobangi differ from that of the Balanta and Samo in that there was no defensive phase. The ways of the market worked themselves out in a remorseless manner, penetrating different kinds of societies. These forces were effective not simply because of human greed, but because they either provided older men the resources to maintain their hegemony or they offered young men an escape from dependent relationships. Generational conflict was probably the most important force opening societies to the action of the market. The demand for slaves also led to the creation of institutions that provided for the elimination of unwanted persons; the forces of the slave trade both exploited inequalities and increased them dramatically.

When combined with earlier work on states and the work of scholars like Baum, Warnier, Linares, the articles by Hubbell and Hawthorne give us a fuller picture of processes of change during the period of the Atlantic slave trade. They also force us to re-examine our understanding of stateless and decentralized societies and of the history of state formation. The logic of the state was not as irresistible as the logic of the market.

[99] Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change*, ch. 4.

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