INTRODUCTION

"The town of Lagos is certainly one of the most unhealthy spots on these malarious shores."

Sir Richard Burton, *Wanderings in West Africa*, 1863

"The inner life of Lagos is a dark and often times incomprehensible mystery."

Editorial in *The Observer of Lagos*, 6 August 1887

"Lagos is chaos theory made flesh and concrete."

Lonely Planet *Africa*, 30th Anniversary Edition, 2008

"I know there is a logic in Lagos that shouts itself to victory; it is loud And riotous with colours; it wants to be heard

And it means to be seen…"

Afem Akeh, from the poem "Bodies"

"Lagos is a state of mind."

Kunle Adeyemi, OMS Rotterdam, 2006

This work is a quest for the soul of the city. Like most quests it is doomed to be ultimately unfulfilled even if it still gives satisfaction in the questing. Some cities are cold and unforthcoming. Lagos, for all its confusion, is full of emotional warmth, often shocking or misdirected, sometimes bleakly humorous, often too tragic for tears, but always full of raw intensity. Above all, it is a city of people. It is almost impossible to set the parameters of the quest, since the subject, as vast as the city itself, could cover so much. There is therefore no point in apologising for not using up a lot of printed space on pressing infrastructural issues such as water supply or sewerage, health services or crime rates, although they

are bound to figure in places. This limitation applies even more to the issue of traffic and roads, integral parts of the city's daily drama which could fill a book, and are a fundamental part of its persona. It may be unfair, but to link any of these in one phrase with Lagos—as in "Lagos water", "Lagos sewerage", "Lagos traffic" or "Lagos roads"—is to sound oxymoronic.

Because this book is not intended to be a routine guidebook, the work includes, indeed feasts on, a variety of references to and quotations from those who in various periods have written about Lagos. These quotations range from the European visitors of the nineteenth century such as Sir Richard Burton, who presented a particularly vivid picture of Lagos in the early 1860s, to the academics, along with the politicians and public servants, both Nigerian and non-Nigerian, but above all the Nigerian writers—the novelists, the poets and the journalists. They dominate the two long central chapters on the literature and the musical and artistic culture of the city. Without them this book would have had much less substance. This "feasting" makes it more of an empirical adventure, rather than a scientific study with academic pretensions. I have tried to provide a comprehensive bibliography for further study. Readers of this impressionistic maze are also asked to excuse a measure of authorial self-indulgence, and they may find reference to some of my own writings, drawn from material published over the past fifty years. I hope these occur only where they positively illuminate both the text and the wider purpose of the book.

Telling people that you are writing a book about Lagos produces some unusual reactions, ranging from a pitying look, suggesting that you are not quite normal, to downright astonishment that you are taking on such an uphill struggle. For there are still probably few international cities with a worse image. The normally admirable Jan Morris, in her book *Cities*, published in 1963, included only Accra and Kano as West African cities worthy of her creative attention. This is disappointing as

her narrative skills might have come up with some interesting descriptive passages. However, the disparaging remarks about "Westernised Africa" that introduce her frank essay in admiration of Kano suggest that she too, despite her fine writing, would join those who put down Lagos as not worth consideration by serious "travellers". Lagos has only been dwelt on as part of a pursuit of the "other", as defined, for example, by Ryszard Kapuscinski, who has his own take on Lagos, even if most of those travellers who are often genuinely curious beings end up self-indulgently chasing after exoticism. The same dismissal of Lagos as not worth serious attention is implicit in its ruthless exclusion from *The World's Great Cities* published in 2008 by Lonely Planet, a giant glossy tome which reveals its own superficiality in preferring to embrace the relatively characterless and still unformed Abuja to Lagos. A more judicious approach came from Morley Safer, of the US CBS-TV programme *Sixty Minutes*, who once (in the early 1980s) described Lagos as "a city like no other". This was perhaps double-edged, but even Lagos aficionados would not disagree with him.

Apprehension about the place, leading to a certain rejection, is not a recent state of mind. It goes back probably five centuries to the first Portuguese explorations of the coast and was one reason why they were deterred from further investigation there for more than two centuries. The first known written account of a visit is that of the German Andreas Ulsheimer in 1603, full of interesting detail, but there are scarcely any other records until the eighteenth century, as in Barbot's *Voyage to Guinea*, which noted only the perennial problem of the "bar", the sandbank at the mouth of the network of lagoons that lay behind the long straight coast.[1] The bar was one of the main problems that exercised visitors over the next two centuries (see Chapter 2).

In the first part of the nineteenth century, although the settlement was already evolving, the climate and the ambiance of what by then had developed as a slaving centre was so insalubrious

that even by mid-century it was in some ways surprising that missionaries, and then the colonial forces, were keen to move in. By that time, however, it seemed to be a focal point and a magnet, offering challenges both for those seeking to profit from trade and for others hoping to spread God's word. This study has dwelt at probably too great a length on the period of the mid-nineteenth century when the two-stage British takeover of the city happened. This was, however, an event of profound importance when everything changed, and I felt it needed a more profound exploration.

In the course of the text the reader will find quotes, not always complimentary, from the likes of Sir Richard Burton, Giambattista Scala, Mary Kingsley, Lady Glover, E. D. Morel, Sir Frederick Lugard, Margery Perham, Elspeth Huxley and John Gunther. But Lagos was never to my knowledge the subject of an expatriate novel, although there are novels on Nigeria such as those by Joyce Cary, which were a source of irritation for budding Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe. Lagos never had a foreign writer to do for the city what Lawrence Durrell did in *The Alexandria Quartet*. Books of memoirs like *Dark Subjects* by H. L. Ward Price (1939) occasionally have passing descriptions of what Lagos was like, but it was not on the whole a place to stay or reflect. Occasional external comment has continued, however, most of it from journalists, much of it still not flattering, very little of it comprehending.

Big cities, it is true, have often in history had a hostile press, and have been a favourite subject for excoriation. For, example, London in the eighteenth century, in a period of disorderly growth, was called the "Great Wen", a source of all manner of social evils. The Industrial Revolution created many more cities in what was still an essentially agricultural world, and they had a bad reputation, sombre subjects for writers such as Dickens and Zola who nonetheless painted unforgettable pictures of London and Paris at that time.

Nigerians have been writing about Lagos since the first flowering of newspapers in the 1880s, often in the form of social comment. M. C. Echeruo in his much-appreciated book *Victorian Lagos* (1975) made a point of going through newspapers of the last twenty years of the nineteenth century: a similar exercise could be done with those of the twentieth, a subject filled out in Chapter 4. Vital commentary on some of the glories and follies of the city has continued, for example in Metro sections of daily newspapers.

There has, of course, been much more to the recent literature of Lagos than simply journalism. Great cities need their writers, although Nigerian writers of that marvellous generation that came to flower in the two decades after the Second World War often had ambivalent or even hostile feelings about the city. The background to this ambivalence was the massive rural exodus in Nigeria, which has been so recent and so accelerated that there have survived all manner of bonds between the urban sprawl and the mass of villages in the interior. But the critics often became those who in fact, in spite of themselves, sang the city's praises.

One still feels, however, that Lagos has not yet quite found among Nigeria's own writers its Charles Dickens or still less its James Joyce, or, for a more pertinently related fictional experience of a city, its Naguib Mahfouz (the novelist who has been the true bard of contemporary Cairo). A seminal piece "Imagination and the City" by the poet and social commentator Odia Ofeimun in *Lagos: A City at Work*[2] points the way to the possibilities of this line of exploration. His elegant essay "Imagination and the City" is, in fact, an essential pointer for those trying to understand the soul of Lagos, or to look for what Ofeimun calls the "citiness" of the city. The section of Chapter 4 which deals with Lagos in literature is fruitfully informed by some of his material, including his important recent anthology *Lagos of the Poets*, but in a typical rambling and adventurous Lagosian manner his subject matter extends well beyond simple interpretation of the written

word into history, society, philosophy, culture and other subject matters.

One example taken from Ofeimun's already cited "Imagination and the City" gives an idea of his unique contribution:

> …there is in Lagos a certain openness, showiness, freedom from custom, and a stress on equalitarian notions of citizenship. It has empowered the stranger to feel at home… Lagos has managed to give other ethnic groups a sense of movement to a common morality by which they could interact. Somewhat, this has helped to distinguish Lagosians from people of the same ethnic stock who are not Lagosians. Another way of saying that is that there is indeed a Lagos ethic of citizenship. More than in any other Nigerian conurbation, it has tended to be conferred more by presence than by ancestry.

1. Jean Barbot A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea; and of Ethiopia Inferior, vulgarly Angola; A New and Accurate Account of the Western Maritime Countries of Africa in Six Books Agent-General of the Royal Company of Africa and Islands of America at Paris MDCCXXIII. Vol III, p132
2. Kunle Tejuoso, ed., Lagos: a City at Work, Glendora, Lagos, 2006.

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THE STORY OF LAGOS
EVOLUTION OF A MULTI-ETHNIC GENE POOL

"If Lagos, instead of being a nest for slave-traders, were to become a port for lawful trade, it would become an outlet for the commerce of a large range of country in the interior, and instead of being a den of barbarism,would become a diffusing centre of civilisation."

Lord Palmerston, 1849

"It is at best only a half-truth to say that Lagos was bombarded in 1851 because it was a 'notorious slave depot'."

J. F. Ade Ajayi in Nigeria Magazine, 1961

"This is a mini-Nigeria. Everyone is in Lagos, every ethnic group. But we have to use the power of that migrant culture to strengthen our position."

Governor Babatunde Fashola, interview with the author, August 2008

Origins: Ogunfunminire, Olofin And The Idejo

This is the story of the piecing together of what eventually became one of the biggest and most diverse conurbations in Africa. The sources of the phenomenon that became Lagos are rooted in oral tradition, rendered more complex by the interweaving of two different traditions, from Lagos itself and from Benin City. Among the many different versions of the origins of Lagos, local historians of the city and traditional accounts have it that the original inhabitants are the descendants of Ogunfunminire, a hunter from Ile-Ife in the heart of the homeland of the Yoruba people, who having settled in Isheri, moved to rule from a fishing

village on the mainland at Ebute Metta (which means "three wharves"), one of many such villages the Yoruba-speaking Awori people found near the coast, forty miles north of what is now Lagos. He acquired the title of Olofin. The timing of this event is hard to place, but it was probably at some point in the sixteenth century.

The twelve descendants of Olofin later became known as the Idejo, the "white cap" chiefs who still hold important authority in Lagos and are still said to be custodians of the city's oral history, although their main authority came, and still comes, from ownership of land. Because the mainland was subjected to warring kingdoms, one of the Idejo, Aromire, went first to the island of Iddo and then to the comparatively greater security of what is now Lagos Island, and established a fishing camp and later a pepper farm. There are conflicting stories of the origins of this farm. The Idejo all eventually established themselves on and around what are now Lagos and Victoria Islands, and apart from still possessing substantial land titles maintain a vital role in traditional institutions.

The First Portuguese Contact

From external evidence we know that Lagos lagoon featured in early Portuguese maps of the late fifteenth century, but there was no settlement marked. In 1485 a visitor, Duarte Pacheco Pereira (quoted notably by the great scholar of the Brazilian slave trade Pierre Verger) observed that "there is no trade in this country nor anything from which one can make a profit".[1] In other words it was a low priority from European traders' point of view. According to Agiri and Barnes, "the Portuguese were sufficently interested in trade in this area to have established themselves in the Ijada quarter of Ijebu Ode"[2], but documents are silent on the subject of the island that later became Lagos. They also went further along the coast to Forcados, from where they established

their celebrated relations with Benin in the sixteenth century. On later maps of the period there also appeared agua decuramo or lago de curamo, apparently named after the fishing village on the creek of that name, a name still given to the small lagoon near Bar Beach called Kuramo Waters, fronting onto Kuramo Beach. The first European map reference to Eko (still the preferred local name for Lagos) appears to have been on the work of a number of mid-seventeenth-century Dutch cartographers who refer to "Ichoo". The present Oba (King) of Lagos, Akiolu I, told the author that the first building of the Iga Idunganran (Palace of the Pepper Quarter) was constructed by Oba Ashipa on the site of Aromire's pepper farm in the seventeenth century. The original courtyard is still physically there, even if many of the buildings are essentially Portuguese-inspired constructions from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The palace was extensively reconstructed in the late 1950s—the modern extension containing the offices of the Oba, his throne and his reception hall were opened at the time of independence in October 1960.

The Benin Imprint And "Eko"

The kingdom of Benin in its heyday, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, was one of the greatest and most developed empires that West Africa has seen. Oral tradition recounts that in the latter part of the sixteenth century, in the reign of King Orhogba (probably c.1550-78), the island and settlement of Lagos Island were occupied by Benin forces and a military camp was built there. The name Eko, traditionally ascribed to the island from the seventeenth century onwards, according to some authorities comes from the Bini word for "encampment", derived from the settlement already there. In Lagos of the Poets, Odia Ofeimun, convincingly states that it is in fact Bini for "meeting place". This could still have a military connotation.

Another version, quoted by Dele Cole, suggests it was an adaptation of oko ("farm" in Yoruba) a name given by Awori fishermen to the island. Both versions may well have historical foundation. Benin at the time was in expansionist mode and outmanoeuvring its neighbour to the west, the Yoruba state of Ijebu. The Benin empire was pushing through to the frontier of Dahomey at Allada, setting up staging posts on the way, of which Eko was one of the more significant. Not for the first time the island in the lagoon was subject to pressures from wider forces on the mainland.

The German surgeon Andreas Ulsheimer's account of his 1603 visit on a Dutch merchant ship gives an interesting and historically vital portrait of the town of Lagos although he does not use the name; it confirms the presence of a camp of Benin soldiers on the island—he describes a well-fortified military town inhabited by "none but soldiers and four military commanders, who behave in a very stately manner".

The formal bid by the Benin Kingdom to make it into an outpost came later, however, probably in the first part of the seventeenth century (there are some serious arguments over exact dating). As the story goes, one Awori warrior called Ashipa was selected to take the body of a Bini war leader, Asheri, back to Benin for burial, and so impressed the Oba of Benin that he was sent back as the first recognizable ruler (some say in 1603, though others put it a bit later, and J. B. Losi even suggests it was at the end of the seventeenth century). After him there came Ado, who further consolidated the foundations of the Obaship, although it was eventually assimilated by the descendants of Olofin, who as the "white-capped" land owning Idejo constituted a true oligarchy, and whose writ on the ground was more effective than that of the notional tributary of Benin. The ownership of land was a powerful force.

The Benin imprint led to other categories of chiefs introduced in the reign of Ado's son Gabaro (once dated as having been in

the latter part of the seventeenth century but now, it seems, put by some historians in the early eighteenth). These were the Akarigbere (the elders and principal advisers); the Abagbon, the military leaders headed by the Ashogbon, the chief of staff; and the Ogolade, chiefs versed in traditional medicine, described by the late history professor of the University of Lagos, A. B. Aderibigbe, who has written much of the history of Lagos, as "collectively responsible for the well-being of the community". In spite of these essentially Bini introductions, land remained securely in the hands of the Awori Idejo, who retain considerable powers to this day, while the other categories have become more purely ceremonial as part of the culture of the Oba's court. The rulers of Lagos in the first instance were known as "Eleko", a title officially maintained for many years; "Oba", which has become more generally accepted, is simply a word for king in both Yoruba and Bini languages. The coronation ceremonies of the Oba of Lagos still have many analogies with those of the Oba of Benin.

Akinsemoyin And The Coming Of The Portuguese

When Akinsemoyin (see Chapter 8 for profile) succeeded his brother—probably in the mid-eighteenth century—there seems to have been a major change in the nature of kingship in Lagos, although according to some accounts he may only have ruled for fifteen years. This was partly because at some point in his reign a deal was done with the Portuguese, which contributed in important ways to wealth creation in the town and helped alter the balance of power between it and the Benin monarchy. Aderibigbe says that the formerly strong ties of the royal house with Benin became gradually attenuated at this time. He writes:[3]

> True, in times of constitutional crisis appeals to the political and spiritual sanctions of the Oba of Benin continued to be invoked; but with the relative decline in the might of the

> ruler of this once powerful African kingdom, and the growing wealth and power of its vassal, the annual payment of tribute became not only intermittent but a much more intolerable duty perfunctorily carried out.

Certainly, in the second half of the eighteenth century the Portuguese presence in the city became increasingly significant. The slave trade on the west coast of Africa had previously been concentrated on other well-known centres from Gorée in the far west, via Elmina and other forts on the Gold Coast, to Ouidah, which waxed on the supply of slaves available as a consequence of the wars engaged in by the aggressive kingdom of Dahomey, at its zenith in the eighteenth century. The maritime-inclined Portuguese had been, in Hugh Thomas' expression, one of the main "managers" of the Atlantic trade from its inception, although by the eighteenth century the British had taken pride of place.[4]

The equatorial island of São Tomé in particular had for two centuries been one of the main pivots of the Portuguese trade. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there was a switch of focus to Lagos, partly because of the same question of availability of supply, but also because it had become a more notable centre of commercial activity, and in Oba Akinsemoyin there was a ruler the Portuguese felt they could do business with. Although he was of Bini lineage descended from Ado, after a century the peculiar cross-cultural nature of Lagos had begun to leave its mark. There has always, however, been a Bini quarter of Isale Eko (the area in the immediate vicinity of the Oba's palace, the Iga Idunganran). As Lagos developed as a slave port in the late eighteenth century, and then opened up to a wider range of trade and influence, the Oba's power as an independent entity became more significant. As Dele Cole says in his book Traditional and Modern Elites in 19th Century Lagos: "Foreign trade, rather than the Oba of Benin's conquest, was responsible for the transformation of

Lagos from an oligarchy to a kingdom."[5]

The varying Benin and Awori versions of Lagos history are still the subject of argument among historians. It is not, however, that one can positively state that there is a Benin version and an Awori version of early Lagos history—there are merely differences of emphasis. What is certain is that there was from early in the town's history a multi-ethnic crossroads, a melting pot or "gene pool" which attracted more and more ingredients, and that while the unique culture of traditional Lagos is the result of a synthesis of these two original components, many other elements very soon became added. Indeed, the concept of a gene pool is one of the most important defining characteristics of the city. It may sometimes seem to be a quintessentially Yoruba city in terms of its basic culture, but it has always been able to encompass a larger view, perhaps the outstanding example of the legendary inclusiveness of Yoruba culture.

It is generally accepted that it was the Portuguese who gave the city its name of Lagos, but there is hardly any evidence that it entered into current usage until the second half of the eighteenth century, and even then it was not widely used. Although (as recorded above) the traveller Sequeira had first recorded visiting the place in 1472, and Pacheco had dismissed it as being of no interest a few years later, the Portuguese had been a presence elsewhere on the West African coast for some time. This presence was maintained in Angola and São Tomé as well as Bissau and Casamance. Inspite of Portugal's loss of sovereignty to Spain from 1580 to 1640 and constant attacks on its imperial pretensions by the stronger British, French and Dutch, Portugal's outposts were maintained, perhaps because of its strong maritime vocation which found expression in an interest in trade, especially the slave trade. The Portuguese found a historic opportunity to establish themselves on the island in the lagoon in the second half of the eighteenth century after the Akinsemoyin deal.

It is not clear when the name of Lagos came into wide usage,

especially as the frequent retrospective and unhistorical use of the name by most people who write of it sometimes adds to the confusion. John Adams, who visited on two occasions between 1786 and 1800, calls it Lagos in his account, which was written in 1826.[6] In some official documents the Portuguese refer to it as Onim, which was probably another Bini name for it, although it never seems to have had wide usage.

Most likely, it had been given its name by the eighteenth century Portuguese (in the manner of other Europeans finding themselves needing to name outposts in new countries) because of the town of Lagos in southern Portugal, especially as it was a port, similarly named after neighbouring stretches of water. The word lago in Portuguese means "lake" and so Lagos means "lakes", while strictly speaking the Portuguese word for lagoon is laguna. The Portuguese found that the port, for all its inconveniences, was a new opening for the slave trade—having been excluded from the more popular slaving ports further west along the coast developed by the British, Dutch and French. The Portuguese had also established strong ties with the monarchy. Adams records that Ologun Kutere (1775-1805), who picked up and consolidated what Akinsemoyin had begun in these relations, had received lavish gifts from the Portuguese traders, finding:

> articles of trade, and costly presents in a state of dilapidation; namely, rolls of tobacco, boxes of pipes, cases of gin, ankers of brandy, pieces of cloth of Indian and European manufacture, iron bars, earthenware, a beautiful hand-organ, the bellows of which were burst; two elegant chairs of state, having rich crimson damask covers… and two expensive sofas.

The increased wealth which the trade brought to the city permitted what was now a city state to pursue a more active foreign policy, not just in asserting a hold on Badagry, which needed help against Dahomey, but also in the first rudimentary

exercises of diplomacy — the sending of missions (Ambassadors of Onim) to both the court in Lisbon and to the Governor of Bahia in Brazil. After Brazil's independence in 1822 there were attempts to establish diplomatic relations between Lagos and Salvador da Bahia on a more permanent basis.

The Early Nineteenth-Century Context: The Ending Of The Slave Trade And The Yoruba Wars

The Lagos of the late eighteenth century is described by John Adams as having a population of about 5,000 with a small international merchant community living off not just slavery but other forms of trade. Apart from the Portuguese, a mixture of peoples from different areas to the north was starting to develop, including the beginnings of a small Muslim community, partly of Hausa and more particularly Nupe origins, which is first recorded in the eighteenth century. Then early in the next century, Lagos began to feel the impact of several international developments. First among these was a consequence of the French Revolution, which in 1793 had abolished slavery in France's New World possessions and the start of a campaign against the West African slave trade.

Amidst all the self-congratulatory enthusiasm in 2007 for the bicentenary of the British abolition of the slave trade, it was barely mentioned that the French had done it fourteen years before, and between 1793 and 1797 French naval squadrons swept the west coast of Africa arresting slavers and their ships, including particularly British ones. It only lasted for a decade, before Napoleon re-imposed the slave trade, but it disrupted the west coast slave trade, removing the French slavers from the picture and giving more opportunities for the Lagos market, which also offered a safe haven.

Some scholars suggest that the Portuguese slave trade from Lagos, although beginning in the late eighteenth century, only

really took off after about 1820, so in historical terms it was a fairly short-lived experience. Paradoxically the independence of Brazil may well also have given the Portuguese/Brazilian slave trade a boost in this period (slave trading to Brazil and Cuba continued until the 1860s). Although in line with most other European countries the Portuguese officially abolished the slave trade in 1836, it carried on in clandestine form, as it was still profitable, and Lagos, to which the Portuguese had privileged access, became one of the centres of activity. It is said that the Portuguese expression "for English eyes", used in Brazil when engaged in a deception, comes from the slave traders' experience with the Royal Navy anti-slavery squadron.

At the same time, the intensification of the Yoruba wars, following the collapse of Old Oyo (capital of the old Yoruba Empire) in the wake of the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio in what later became Northern Nigeria, increased both the marketing possibilities for slaves to the south, and the sanctuary of towns. The demise of Owu and the destruction of old Egba towns in the 1820s as well as repeated attacks from Dahomey led to a rise in instability which meant that Yoruba people were increasingly offering their kinsmen for sale to the slavers.[7]

Lastly and most significantly, the abolition of the trade by the British in 1807 brought into being the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron which put more pressure on Lagos. Abolition also created a situation for the further diversification of the Lagos "gene pool" with the introduction of returned slaves, both the Saros (Sierra Leonean Creoles) and the Brazilians (called both amaro and aguda). Even before the British intervention in Lagos in 1851, a small population of both Saros and Brazilians had built up in Lagos (see page 18 below). Mabogunje says that there were 250 Saros and some 150 Brazilian families.[8] Saros from Freetown had saved money to hire a vessel in 1838 to take them along the coast, and they recognised that Lagos had been their port of embarkation.

The early influx was made easier by the fact that, from the early 1840s onwards, for a number of reasons the British patrols became more active. Oba Kosoko, however, was hostile to the immigrants when he became Oba after 1846 and there was an episode in 1850 when he had a number of Saros killed. The influx only really took off after the British took de facto control in 1851, when there was a need to repopulate since half the population had fled with Kosoko from the bombardment, and the missionaries also moved in to establish a presence.

Slavery itself was abolished by Britain between 1833 and 1838 in the West Indies and wherever British writ ran. Important pressure for yet further action by Britain came from the missionaries. It was in 1841 that Thomas Fowell Buxton published his The African Slave Trade and its Remedy in which he recommended that as well as using the naval blockade plus diplomacy to end the slave trade, the problem could be tackled at source. Inspired by the Lander brothers' Niger expedition of the 1830s, he proposed pioneer sorties in the interior to make treaties with chiefs to show them the possibilities of private capital.[9] Conceived from a missionary point of view, this idea came at the same time as a new burst of missionary activity which accompanied a push to expand and, ultimately, to colonise.

Behind The British Intervention: The Role Of Palmerston

This is where the context both of events and personalities becomes important. In the first half of the nineteenth century, especially after the peace of 1815 at the end of the Napoleonic wars, Britain enjoyed an unprecedented freedom of action in foreign policy because of its unrivalled domination of the seas. As the Victorian period began, there were increasing signs that two of the characteristics of that era were converging in pursuit of the utilitarian notion, popularised by Bentham and Adam Smith, of gaining benefit from doing good. These ideas fed the element of

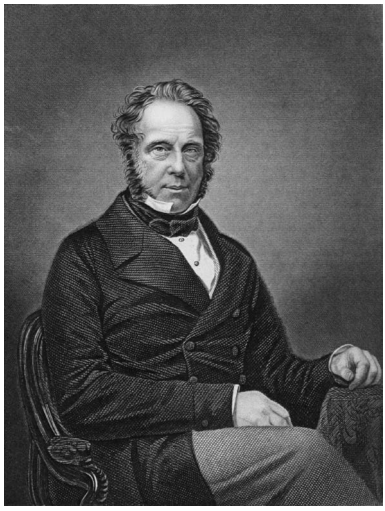
moral superiority around the anti-slavery movement, which also enveloped the pursuit of free trade, in both of which the role of the Royal Navy was paramount. The increasing demand for palm oil, for both sanitary and industrial purposes, pointed to an ideal alternative to slaves. The more vigorous prosecution of the battle against the slave trade in the 1840s also coincided with the campaign by free-traders against the Corn Laws, repealed in 1846 in a political convulsion that caused the fall of the government of Robert Peel.

The influence of personalities comes into play significantly here, for the change in Westminster and the return of the Whigs in 1846 saw the return as Foreign Secretary of Sir William Henry Temple, Lord Palmerston, who was to play a crucial determining role in the history of Lagos, and in the eventual British takeover. But who was he? Palmerston had made his mark as a robust and independent-minded Foreign Secretary throughout the 1830s, but these successes had been mainly in European and Middle Eastern politics. His tendency to act on impulse meant that he and his foreign policy never had an easy ride, and his aggressive view of foreign affairs had many critics and opponents, but he always had a measure of popular support. This was seen above all in the Don Pacifico affair of 1850 (in which a gunboat was sent to the Aegean in support of a British citizen of Gibraltarian extraction). In a famous five-hour speech in the House of Commons in which Palmerston proclaimed the right of any British citizen anywhere in the world to be protected by the strong arm of British government, using the dictum Civis Romanus sum, he managed to survive impeachment. But he had also intervened the year before in the affair of British citizens attacked in Rio Nunez (further westwards along the West African coast).

While Palmerston was in interventionist mode and enjoying populist success, the pressures to do something about Lagos were increasing. The "missionary party" based in Abeokuta (capital of the Egba Yoruba state) mounted a particularly effective lobby,

bringing the eminent churchman Samuel Ajayi Crowther (a returned slave from Oyo who came back to near to his homeland: see Chapter 8) to London. While he was there, Palmerston and Prime Minister Russell arranged for Crowther to meet Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, to argue the case for intervening in Lagos.

All the records suggest that in the takeover of Lagos it was Palmerston who was the prime mover. Although others on the ground such as John Beecroft, who had been made the first and only consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra in 1849 (perhaps with a pro-active move in mind), and Commander H.W. Bruce of the Royal Navy West Africa Squadron implemented the policy, it is clear they felt they had cover from Palmerston.



Above: Lord Palmerston:
"a crucial determining
role in the history of Lagos"

Right: Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther:
"an increasingly uneasy conflict with the
missionaries"

In response to messages from Beecroft and Bruce in February 1851 recommending the use of force to bring Lagos to heel, it was Palmerston who sent two vital dispatches.

The first dispatch authorised the signing of an abolitionist treaty with the ruler of Lagos; the second said that it should be represented to the same ruler that "the British Government is resolved to bring to an end the African Slave Trade, and has the means and power to do so." The dispatch gained in menace as it continued, insisting that Kosoko should be told that "Great Britain is a strong power both by sea and by land, that her friendship is worth having, and that her displeasure it is well to avoid". If he refused this advice and the signing of an anti-slave trade treaty he should be reminded, in language redolent of classic Palmerstonian gunboat diplomacy, that "Lagos is near to the sea, and that on that sea are the ships and cannon of England; and also to bear in mind that he does not hold his authority without a competitor, and that the chiefs of the African tribes do not always retain their authority to the end of their lives."

Palmerston always linked the ending of the slave trade indissolubly with promoting commerce, and indeed with free trade, the golden principle of the age for the British in their period of supremacy. In a minute to the Foreign Office in December 1850, he wrote that his like-minded supporters:[10]

> wishing most earnestly that civilisation may be extended in Africa, being convinced that commerce is the best pioneer for civilisation, and being satisfied that there is room enough in… Africa for the commerce of all the civilized nations of the rest of the world, would see with pleasure every advance of commerce in Africa, provided that such commerce was not was not founded on monopoly and was not conducted upon an exclusive system.

This was a plausible stating of the case, but it was ultimately the disguised language of imperial domination. Robinson and Gallagher in Africa and the Victorians explain Palmerston's policy thus: "Free trade was the necessary condition for improving Africa. To apply this policy properly, Palmerston saw the need to set up bases from which order, trade and the useful arts could radiate through Africa."[11] It may have seemed hardly necessary that these bases should be annexed, as the policy had been successfully applied without conquest by "the Palmerstonians" elsewhere (China, Turkey, Morocco); on several occasions he had proposed that the big slaving port of Whydah to the west be turned into another Lagos, under the same kind of remote control.

Armed with Palmerston's endorsement, Consul Beecroft and the Royal Navy combined to stage the deposition of Kosoko and the installation of Akitoye. The first attempt in November 1851 was bungled, in part because of a serious under-estimation of Kosoko's defences and capacity for resistance, but the second bid, which began on Boxing Day, eventually succeeded by superior fire-power and, according to Consul Beecroft, the destruction of half of Lagos. Kosoko and many of his supporters fled to Epe, so the town occupied was a partly deserted ruin (for a full account of this episode, which was effectively the beginning of the British takeover of the area that became Nigeria, see Chapter 6). It was a triumph of force of arms (and for British domestic opinion a blow against the slave trade) but it was not a victory to the long-term credit of the British, even if it changed history forever. Robert S. Smith in The Lagos Consulate 1851-1861 says judiciously: "the defence of Lagos in November and December 1851 was one of the most determined attempts by Africans to resist the conquest of their continent by the European invaders of the 19th century".[12] The Lagos Consulate was formally established in 1852, and an anti-slavery treaty signed with Akitoye.

1851-61: From The Consulate To The Treaty Of Cession

Ironically, Palmerston himself had been forced to resign in mid-December 1851 over his unwise recognition of the coup d'état of Napoleon III in Paris, so when the completion of the overthrow of Kosoko took place at the end of that month "Lord Pumice Stone" was no longer in office. When the news of the event reached London two months later, Earl Granville, who was briefly Palmerston's successor at the Foreign Office, rebuked Beecroft weakly for exceeding his instructions: "if the chief of Lagos refused to abandon the slave trade, you were to remind him of British power, but not directed to immediately begin hostilities". But the dye had been cast. As on many other occasions, the fait accompli prevailed.

Looking at Britain's sometimes stealthy, sometimes blatant, imperial adventures, it should not go unremarked that 1851, the year which ended with the exercise in gunboat diplomacy in Lagos, was also the year of the Great Exhibition, a seminal moment of Victorian self-confidence putting on display all the wonders of the Industrial Revolution and new inventions such as railways, gas lighting and sanitation (including the newly popularised water-closet, a major feature at the Great Exhibition), all there to be exported to a waiting world. The power of trade in the Victorian psyche is a more convincing historical explanation of the events of 1851, however much it was dressed up in the moral fervour of eliminating the slave trade. The respected Nigerian historian Professor Ade Ajayi has in a number of his writings some terse comments on British motives, questioning both official and unofficial British interpretations, which have proved remarkably durable in putting the event entirely in the context of suppression of the slave trade:

> The anxiety of Britain to intervene in Lagos was not just the philanthropic desire to destroy the slave trading activities of

> the Portuguese and Brazilians there, but also the economic desire to control the trade of Lagos from which they had hitherto been excluded and from where they hoped to exploit the resources of the vast country stretching to and beyond the Niger.[13]

In the cold light of history there is a certain inevitability in the way Britain progressed from the 1851 bombardment (which restored a deposed ruler by external force of arms just as surely and brutally as in the twentieth century the French deposed the infamous Emperor Bokassa and replaced him with the virtual puppet David Dacko in the Central African Republic) to the signing of the Treaty of Cession in 1861. The logic of power was remorselessly at work despite reluctance among bureaucrats in London to make new commitments. In its intervention Britain had cracked the power of Kosoko, a much more authoritative ruler (see profile in Chapter 6) than either Akitoye or his son Dosunmu (spelt Docemo at the time, an alternative spelling that endures), who succeeded on Akitoye's death in 1853; this simply meant storing up trouble unless they moved in more effectively. Robinson and Gallagher write:[14]

> With its slave trade gone, and its rulers over-awed by Palmerston's gun boats, the independence of Lagos existed on paper only; and when in 1861 it was decided to annex the port, the Foreign Office decided that the change would be slight since "the Consul has for some years been the ruler of the place". Britain had yet another possession on the west coast. The Colonial Office was disgusted—"Lagos is a deadly gift from the Foreign Office," wrote one of its advisers… All the same, on Palmerstonian principles the move was right.

The twists and turns of the intervening ten years, under a series of resident consuls, are told in great detail with an expert

marshalling of evidence in Smith's The Lagos Consulate 1851-1861. He highlights the increasing need to intervene in local politics, which meant facing reality and coming to some kind of accommodation with Kosoko and some of his powerful allies in their alternative base in Epe, especially as they were using their position there to divert the valuable palm oil trade from Ijebu away from Lagos to the two ports that came under Kosoko's control at Lekki and Palma—also still being used by him and his entourage for the export of slaves.

Moreover, the mere act of installing a consul undermined the Oba's position, and there were many policy disagreements. From his very weakness he had had to concede important stretches of land along the south side of the island to both merchants and missionaries. Ade-Ajayi tells us that by 1861 Lagos had "virtually become a protectorate". At the same time, to make sure that the bridgehead established for Britain after the intervention was not reversed, and that others did not step in—notably the French who were increasingly active in Porto Novo along the other end of the lagoon—the demands from Britain for consolidation, especially from the missionary party, began to grow.

The pro-annexation lobby was fortunate in that the British Prime Minister by this time was none other than the same Lord Palmerston who had encouraged the original "gunboat diplomacy" ten years earlier. Although this was still in the period of the title of John Hargreaves' excellent book Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, the interactions of European diplomacy were already having their effect. Palmerston was particularly concerned that Lagos, having been drawn into the British sphere of influence, should not be lost to France. This was especially true at a time when he was planning increased British investment in trade on the Niger, notably after McGregor Laird's ground-breaking expedition of 1857. The activities of the Marseille-based trader Victor Régis the Elder (Régis Aîné), was also of concern to the Palmerstonians. Régis had close links with

Kosoko, and was established in Lekki and Palma after Kosoko's exile to Epe, still apparently trading slaves as well as palm oil.

The actual pretext for compelling Oba Dosunmu (Docemo) to sign the Treaty of Cession was the threat posed to Lagos by the war in 1860 between the new power of Ibadan and Ijaye in alliance with Abeokuta and Ijebu. This conflict posed a threat to the commercial position of Lagos, and the British were concerned at the increased risk of instability. Professor Ade-Ajayi says that it was "an important factor" in Palmerston's decision. The first move was made on 20 July 1861 by the Prometheus, commanded by Norman Bedingfield, and after some skirmishing and demonstrations of power Oba Dosunmu (Docemo) and his chiefs put their marks on the Treaty of Cession on 6 August (see also "1861: the Crunch" in Chapter 6). Thus in the space of less than three weeks, the remains of the independence of Lagos had been signed away.

The town of Lagos in 1851 had already also began to attract a group of mainly European merchants (a motley international crew) eroding the Portuguese/Brazilian supremacy; they were principally involved in slaving, although as that practice became excluded they switched to the lucrative trade in palm oil produced in the Yoruba hinterland. It was also believed that the hinterland had great potential for cotton growing, for which the mills of Lancashire had permanent demand.

Just as Eric Williams, in Capitalism and Slavery, argued that the abolition from 1807 onwards only came about because the infamous trading in slaves to the Caribbean had lost its vitality as Britain was switching from a mercantilist to an industrial economy, many academics now argue that in West Africa the pressure to expand trade in other commodities, above all palm oil, whose suppliers would also provide a market for the products of new industries, brought additional incentives for pursuing the abolition of the slave trade. It had certainly been in the mind of Lord Palmerston when he sought to pursue proactive policies in

West Africa, within which Lagos was just a stepping-stone.

The term "palm oil ruffians" was applied more to the buccaneering characters who plied their trade in the Niger Delta, but the crude entrepreneurs were also known in Lagos. They were not so different from the slavers who frequented the place before 1851, and in many cases were the same people, the ones whom Sir Richard Burton, the Victorian traveller and eccentric, had seen as having in those "merry days… nothing to do but sleep or smoke, with an occasional champagne tiffin on the beach" and who had become "condemned by hard times to such grovelling work as selling palm oil".[15] The Church Missionary Society's Hinderer was glad to have the consul as a neighbour rather than a "noisy palm oil merchant".

In 1861, although the slave trade was officially no more, Burton writes of mysterious individuals who landed from his boat:[16]

> They are dark, but European or Brazilian; they speak Portuguese, travel under aliases—today Soarez, tomorrow Pieri—and they herd together. One claims to have been a lieutenant in some royal navy. They have visited England to lay in a further stock of money for the next cargo of 'casimir noir', and with a view to medical assistance. They are worn out by excessive devotions at the shrine of Venus, and they seem to live chiefly on tobacco smoke. Part of their game is to supply naval officers with champagne and excellent cigars; to ask them to dinner, and to offer equality with them, as if both were of the same trade.

The two-stage British annexation of 1851-61 was a great climacteric moment of confusion and turbulence in the history of the city. What was happening, in slow motion, was a shameless piece of colonial appropriation, even if the highest motives were claimed and believed. Akitoye had in fact been a slaver too, as

Scala and others have pointed out, but for the British it was enough that he was ready to renounce slavery in order to get his job back. The churchmen also used him for their own purposes without respecting him. Whatever one may think of the morality of the operation, it shook things up irreversibly.

The annexation also added to the complexity of the city, and not only because of the influx of the British, of whom in the early years there were never very many, as there was an unfortunate propensity among the consuls to die off, which was why the consulate building was described by Burton as "the iron coffin". Consul Benjamin Campbell (1853-58) was one of the longer stayers, but he too died on the job. The arrival of the British meant the establishment of different clearly defined quarters, with the colonials and the merchants located along the Marina, which was one of the earliest streets they constructed.

Sierra Leoneans And Brazilians: Saros And Amaros

The Sierra Leoneans or Saros (mainly people freed from slave ships and resettled in Freetown, and their descendants) particularly entered Lagos on the back of the missionaries' activities, some of which had been based in Abeokuta, capital of the Egba kingdom, which had initially been more receptive to Christianity—Lagos being seen by the missionaries as a sink of iniquity because of the slavers. Indeed, Saros were among the foremost in advocating a British takeover of Lagos. A few had already made their way there: many were among those liberated by navy patrols and taken to Freetown who then chose to make their way back to their place of origin.

The head of the Saro community, "Daddy" William Akilade Savage, was granted by Akitoye the district of Olowogbowo at the far west of the island, near to the port area, which had been virtually destroyed in the British bombardment, with its residents fleeing with Kosoko to Epe. The Oba also recognised

the Sierra Leone Association, which Glover later said "in the days of Consul Campbell ruled both the King and Lagos", although Glover himself was not so close to the Saros.

Apart from providing the missionaries with congregations as well as assistants, catechists and others like Ajayi Crowther who eventually became church leaders, the educated and literate Saros were also the mainstay of the administration. Robert Smith notes one Adeduju as the first local (i.e. non-Saro) Lagosian convert to the Church Missionary Society, but conversion was a slow process as the Yoruba pantheon had, and still has, a remarkable resilience and hold on the spiritual imagination.

The last two decades of the nineteenth century saw the Lagos Saros come into their own, as the principal adjuncts of the still not very numerous British because of their leading role in education, the church and the professions, and their aspirations to be part of the upper echelon of society. The many Johnsons and Williamses, the Coles, the Cokers and the Macaulays were having their moment in the sun, reinforced by the continued ties maintained with Freetown. During this period many of them went back to Freetown to go to Fourah Bay College for higher education, which, unbelievably, was only introduced in Lagos in the 1930s with the first medical school and Yaba College. Those who could afford it also found education in Britain, again following the example of Freetown.

The Brazilians ("Amaros" or "Agudas") were not so education-oriented, nor were they encouraged to be, but many were skilled craftsmen and artisans concentrated in the area behind the Marina, notably Odunlami, Kakawa and Bamgbose Streets, Campos Square and Igbosere Road. From very early on, this area was known as Portuguese Town, or Oke Popo. Sometimes the terms "Portuguese" and "Brazilian" were interchangeable. There were also some returnees from Cuba who gravitated to the same area, and there was a little Brazilian quarter at Queen Street, Yaba, but they were mostly concentrated on Lagos Island.

They were not like the Saro "recaptives" or "interceptees" from the Middle Passage, but they were still victims of the Portuguese trade from Lagos in the early nineteenth century, so many knew where they had come from and their African names. They had their own practices and customs, including exuberant festivals like the Caretta, practised to this day, and enjoyed culinary delights such as Frechon, a dish with fish and rice and black beans with coconut milk eaten on Good Friday. They were also at the origin of the thriving Roman Catholic community which developed in the city, whose more relaxed approach sometimes caused tensions with some of the more austere Church Missionary Society militants.

There were a surprising number of Brazilian Muslims, who had remained of the faith even when transported to Brazil. Some early returnees had been forcibly repatriated following the Muslim slave uprising in the 1830s that had been known as the "Brazilian jihad". Others converted on their return as a way of gaining greater respect in traditional society. Indeed, Islam won the adherence of the great majority of indigenous Lagosians, especially when Kosoko's people returned from Epe in the 1860s, settling around Oke Suna in Isale Eko. Islam was considered much more in tune with the local way of life than Christianity, in spite of the strong syncretist element in Brazilian Catholicism.

The Growing Gene Pool

There is still the perennial question of "who are the Lagosians?" We have already looked at the Awori-Benin duality, and the Saro-Amaro influx, but the identity question involves the Yoruba nature of Lagos, including the city's vitally important melting-pot overlay originating from different parts of Yorubaland. Most notably they were Egba, but the Ijebu factor was also always a strong element in Lagos. Even now, probably over eighty per cent of the population of Lagos remains Yoruba.

The strong nexus between the Egba and Saro communities in Lagos was partly due to the fact that important members of the Saro community had known of their Egba origin. They played an important role in the group of missionaries established in Abeokuta, where they entered in the early 1840s via Badagry because of the highly unreceptive nature of the slaving centre of Lagos. For historical reasons the Egbas had been more receptive to Christians (Burton mocks Charles Kingsley's reference in his novel Westward Ho! to "Christian Abeokuta"). The missionaries, both European and Saro, desperately wanted the British to intervene—a classic illustration of the extent to which evangelisation supported imperial expansion at this time.

The Egba enthusiasm for the British waned rapidly. Glover's sympathies for Ibadan and his shelling of the Egbas in Abeokuta in 1867 led to a movement to Lagos, and the settlement of Christianised Egbas in Ebute Metta and the founding of St. Jude's Church there. This reinforced the already strong Egba-Lagos nexus.

From the 1860s onwards the Egbas became one of the main points of resistance to British encroachment. After the development of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate from the 1890s the obstacle of Egba separatism and independence of spirit meant that the brutal conquest of Abeokuta in 1914 by Governor-General Lugard and the crushing of the subsequent rising in 1918, clinically described in Harry Gailey Jr.'s book Lugard and the Abeokuta Rising, hurt even more deeply.[17] Apart from the Egba presence in Lagos Oyo, other Yoruba states—Ibadan, Ife and Ijesha and in particular Ijebu—all had pockets of settlers in Isale Eko.

There was also an important Nupe element in cosmopolitan Lagos, which came in part because in the early nineteenth century the ancient Nupe kingdom by the Niger some hundreds of miles inland (described lovingly in Siegfried Nadel's 1961 study Black Byzantium) was caught up in both Dan Fodio's conquest and

the spill-over of the Yoruba wars. There were almost certainly Nupes among the mercenaries known as "Glover's Hausa" whom he took to Lagos with him after moving from Baikie's ill-fated 1857 Niger expedition overland to Lagos (see profile of Glover in Chapter 8). Many Nupes were slaves who had risen in their masters' households, such as the remarkable Oshodi Tapa (see profile in Chapter 8), or had bought their way out.

There is considerable evidence, however, that there were Hausas (a term often used as a generic name for people from all that part of the interior lying north of Yorubaland) present in Lagos as early as the eighteenth century, often for military or policing purposes, but also as preachers and kola nut merchants as well as herdsmen bringing their cattle, a sight that can still be seen. The Nupes, although different from the Hausas, had a very distinctive Lagos connection that still survives. Even now in Epetedo (the area of Isale Eko inhabited by those who returned with Kosoko from Epe in 1862, including Oshodi Tapa himself) there is an annual Nupe festival.

City Of Religions

Perhaps the most significant example of the true and remarkable diversity of Lagos is the peaceful coexistence of great religions. The most fundamental phenomenon is the traditional, vibrant belief in the Yoruba pantheon which goes way back into the deep history of the Yoruba people and has its own beliefs and practices such as masquerades and festivals, and the complex system of divination known as Ifa. In Lagos there remain Ifa festivals such as the one held in Ebute Metta in July, one among many. The Oba of Lagos is still a central figure in the city's traditional culture. This was witnessed in a most powerful way at the 2003 coronation of Oba

Eyo masqueraders

Akiolu I. The attachment to the traditional that lies at the heart of the city's culture is not immediately apparent to outsiders and visitors. It can be seen in the perpetuation of the Eyo ceremony held on the occasion of the death of an Oba or other prominent Lagosians, which has now, to the regret of some purists, been expunged of some of its more unusual and harsher aspects in the interests of making it a powerful tourist attraction.

One of the most important results of the British takeover of Lagos was the final arrival of Christianity. From 1840 onwards there had been a rise in the impulse to proselytise in Europe, and teams of missionaries went from Britain and Germany in particular. The early Victorian British, both of the Anglican Church Missionary Society and from the Wesleyans, took part of the growing evangelical movement. Some had been inspired by the Fowell Buxton pamphlet already mentioned and, already having footholds in Freetown and the Gold Coast as well as Calabar, targeted the notorious "slave coast" with an eye on the hardest nut to crack, Lagos.

With the establishment of the Consulate in 1852, the

missionaries were invited in, beginning with the CMS. They established the first Anglican Church, St. Paul's Breadfruit Street, which began as a bamboo shed on the site where slaves had been tied to the breadfruit trees, but acquired a contiguous site in 1859 where a church was built in 1880. Apart from Christ's Church on the Marina, it was the most significant Lagos church, although by 1890 six parish churches had been built there. The present magnificent wedding cake of Christ Church Cathedral was erected in the 1920s. The Wesleyans (Methodists) also came at the same time and built a chapel further down the Marina, putting up a church in Olowogbowo in the 1880s. At the same time an essential part of the evangelising mission was the establishment of schools, and so there was first of all the CMS Grammar School (1859) followed by the Methodist Boys School (1879), the Catholic St. Gregory's College (1886) and the Baptist Academy (1891).

There have been many critics of the high-handed and insensitive approach of the missionaries to the societies they targeted, but of the impact of their work through the promotion of literacy there can be no doubt. It bore fruit in the generation that flourished towards the end of the century, which sought to establish itself as the next social layer after the British, and proved to be an essential foundation for modernity. However, as the sense of empire grew in Britain, so also did alienation in its new African outposts. As Leo Spitzer has written of the Creoles of Sierra Leone, whose sentiments were reflected among the Saros in Lagos, "When British deeds and attitudes towards educated Africans became more negative as the century progressed, educated Creoles deviated from the starry eyed idealisation of Britain and her aims. They began to feel betrayed, scorned."[18]

The difficult subject of Saro relations with the colonial British will be treated in greater detail in Chapter 2. In the context of Christianity's expansion, it led directly to the growth of African churches. Bishop Crowther, that most dedicated of

missionaries and believer in the virtues of the British Empire, came increasingly into uneasy conflict with the CMS. Above all James "Holy" Johnson, vicar of St. Paul's Breadfruit Street for more than twenty years, attacked the increasing racial arrogance of the missionaries (see profiles of Crowther and Johnson in Chapter 6). The secessionist churches of the 1890s, whose most notable monument is Bethel Cathedral of the African Church in Broad Street, were the precursors of more remarkable independent apostolic churches of the early 1920s and 1930s such as the Church of the Lord Aladura and the Cherubim and Seraphim, still to be found among the more recent crop of evangelical churches in Lagos.

There is a remarkably strong population of Muslims in Lagos; indeed, in the early years of the twentieth century there were more Muslims than Christians, the numerical balance only tilting in favour of Christians around 1950. There was a presence from the eighteenth century due in part to the twin phenomena of war and trade, and the community that developed included many Hausas brought in by the British for their security forces. The Muslim population grew substantially in the nineteenth century, paradoxically furthered by the arrival of the British, who encouraged immigration into Lagos. The Muslim presence was actively aided by Governor Glover in the 1860s, especially, as we shall see in Chapter Six, after he facilitated the return of Kosoko from Epe.

Burton, writing in 1862, provides a picture of the relatively small Muslim population of Lagos of some 800, noting that they had achieved a political importance and that "those wearing turbans", some of whom were light-skinned, had been among the bravest and most active opponents in the military action of December 1851. He exchanged alms and kola nuts with one of their leaders, Shaykh Ali, who had wandered from Tripoli and knew Borno, Sokoto and Adamawa, and who wanted Burton to return with him.

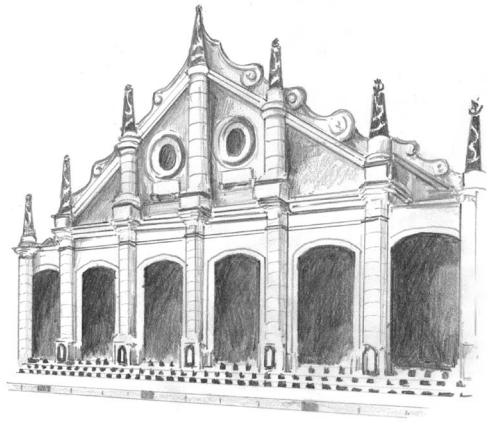
An important agent of the spread of Islam in Lagos came through the Shitta-Bey family. They were of Saro descent—Saliu Shitta, a prominent Freetown Muslim scholar who had been the Imam at Fourah Bay, had travelled to Lagos in 1844 in the company of several Sierra Leonean Muslims (the Saros were highly identified with Christianity, but Freetown had a Muslim community) and settled in Badagry, where there had already been a group of Muslim immigrants from Oyo since 1821. In 1852 they moved to Lagos (following the Mewu chieftaincy crisis in Badagry) and settled with other Saro returnees in Olowogbowo. There was already an important community of Muslims in Lagos, both Yoruba and non-Yoruba, especially Hausa and Nupe. Siyan Oyeweso in his book Prominent Yoruba Muslims notes a number of leading Saro Muslims in the 1850s, including Muhammed Savage, Amodu Carew and Abdallah Cole. More unusually there were also Brazilian Muslims, who, as noted above, had taken their religion from Nigeria to Brazil.[19]

Saliu Shitta's son Mohammed rose to prominence as a Lagos merchant (see profile in Chapter 6), and was the leading light behind the campaign to secure the building of the city's first mosque in 1894. The title Bey was added to his name by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire in the same year, and the Shitta-Bey Mosque is still one of the architectural wonders of Lagos. The building, the work of Brazilian masons, has survived and is still an astonishing example of adapted Brazilian architecture, though it is sad that the old Central Mosque, an even more splendid example of the specifically Brazilian style, was demolished in the 1950s.

Muslims, through their own involvement in trade, acquired wealth and, although they had been disadvantaged educationally vis-à-vis the Christian elite, made rapid strides to catch up, especially through the Ansar-ud-Deen movement founded in the 1920s. This sought to found Muslims schools, which also provided Western education. The reformist Ahmadiyya movement, which

came to Nigeria around 1910, also attracted many supporters despite its history of problems with other movements. Its motto "hatred for none" and its strong support for education, gave it enduring popularity, and it continues as the Anwar-ul-Islam.

Muslims soon became an increasingly important part of the elite, especially as they were well entrenched in traditional society. Most of the



The Shitta-Bey Mosque in Martins Street

Obas of Lagos have been Muslim, and Islam was always strongly rooted in Isale Eko from well before the British occupation. The Imam of Lagos, a Nupe who was an ally of Kosoko, fled with him to Epe. Yoruba families have often had a pragmatic attitude to imported religions, both Islam and Christianity, treating them almost as insurance policies for eternity which exist alongside the still significant traditional religion, even if it is said this has declined in the last thirty years. There were many Muslims among the Lebanese traders who found their way to Lagos and Kano as early as the 1880s, although there were also Maronite Christians. Since the creation of Lagos State in 1967, more Governors have been Muslim than not: both Governors Tinubu and Fashola are Muslim.

The 1850s To The 1890s: The British Become Colonial

Into this cauldron of different elements there came implacably, with the overweening authority of empire, the British. Relatively accepted at first, there were at the beginning a few colonial officials, as well as the missionaries and businessmen. These included British (notably McCoskry, who arrived in 1853, see Chapter 6) and other Europeans, such as Sandeman, Giambattista Scala (the Sardinian consul who established the first brick kilns in Lagos), Germans including G. L. Gaiser and Diedrichsen, agent for Messrs Oswald of Hamburg, the French firm already cited, Régis Aîné, and one Mme. Pittiluga, "a spinster of Austrian descent". They were established on the shoreline (which later became the Marina), between the mission establishments. Where previously the Portuguese had had the commercial edge, the period from Akinsemoyin to Kosoko had marked the slow beginning of the international dimension of cosmopolitan Lagos, which was still basically trade-focused in spite of the British annexation.

By the 1880s the context had fundamentally changed. Power conflicts in Europe and its growing industrialisation meant that attention began to return to the still largely untouched continent of Africa. The Berlin Conference of 1884-85 set the scene for the scramble for Africa to take off, although earlier manoeuvres had indicated what was likely to happen. Not for nothing did George Taubman Goldie, the adventurer of the Niger Delta, actually go to Berlin to lobby successfully for the River Niger basin to remain a British sphere, against the intrusions of the French. There was a dramatic change of mood leading to the mad end-of-century Zeitgeist of theories of racial supremacy that made possible the high noon of serious empire, whereas earlier there had been cautious reluctance to get involved and more tolerance towards African peoples.

In Lagos, when the colony was placed under the authority of Freetown in 1872, there was a kind of pause for stocktaking,

as the newly scrambled-together population of immigrants, indigenes and merchants began to find common cause in pressing the British to return authority there, writing petitions even to Lord Stanley (the Earl of Derby), the then Foreign Secretary. If the 1870s seemed inconsequential, it was in the next decade, after the seat of colonial government returned to Lagos in 1886 and a Governor was appointed, that the psychological transformation began as the authorities in London, aware of the evolution of political and commercial developments in the Niger basin, applied a new concentration of effort. At the same time there was another important change from the beginning of the decade in the development of newspapers, fragile and with small circulation, but still a critical focus for a budding public opinion.

The British presence was always very small and, until the turn of the century and the discovery of the causes of malaria transmission, Britons faced constant health problems, so there was a need to entertain and depend on close relations with the local population, both migrant and indigenous, although governors tended to keep traditional society at arm's length. The example of Glover, who according to R. J. Temple (in the foreword to Lady Glover's life of her husband) "endeared himself to the native population of Lagos", was exceptional.

Both Governors Moloney and Carter enjoyed a degree of popularity, certainly in comparison with some who came later. They oversaw material benefits, but this was also a period of consolidation. And if Carter was an expansionist who brought most of the Yoruba hinterland under British control, there were elements in Lagos that approved his actions, in the interest of freeing trade. That had been one of Glover's purposes, which had even got him into trouble, especially when it concerned his contacts with Kosoko and his allies as well as Madam Tinubu (see 'John Hawley Glover' in Chapter 8).

It was in the 1890s that the British started coming to Lagos in greater numbers. Joseph Chamberlain's organising and building

up of the Colonial Office was an important factor, but this was also the decade when the British control of the hinterland beyond Lagos became stronger and the shape of what was later to become Nigeria began to emerge, in a combination of treaty and conquest. In part it was due to the push of Goldie's new Royal Niger Company in the Delta and along the Niger, but then came Carter's annexation of Ijebu in 1892, and Lugard's move to Bussa in 1894 and his later epic sweep further north. At the same time the ruthless punitive expedition to Benin in 1897, which brutally crushed its independence, had a profound local impact both physically and psychologically. Suddenly a patchwork of arbitrary frontiers crept all over Africa, and the Niger basin was no exception. With the capitulation of Sokoto and Kano (1903) there was a great mass of territory acquired through a ruthless mix of conquest and purported treaties, giving Lagos a huge hinterland just as it was on the brink of making a great heave to be able to service it.

One major issue for successive Governors in Lagos concerned relations with those whom the British unashamedly called "the natives", and some did it better than others. The arrival of larger numbers of Colonial Office officials and the consequent displacement of often more qualified Africans, combined with the rise of racial attitudes, caused a progressive strengthening of nationalist feelings. This had been seen for some time in Christian circles, especially as already noted in circles around "Holy" Johnson at Breadfruit Street, even as the white missionaries demonstrated a parallel increase in attitudes of racial superiority.

These issues are discussed again in Chapter 3, but it is worth here citing Dele Cole, in his Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos: "With the expansion of the colonial service, and the resultant increase in whites in Lagos, the need to accept qualified black candidates into the white dominated elite social club was no longer pressing." The resulting disillusionment hit the Saros hardest, as they had been the most anxious to model

themselves on the British. The rise of the African churches was paralleled by the development of "nativism", a back-to-the-land movement, but more particularly there was a unifying of the critics of the newly unattractive British rule. In Cole's words:

> By 1910, the old social distinction of Lagos—European, Brazilian, Saro and indigene—had become politically unreal. Instead there were two political divisions in Lagos, white and black. The blacks became a united opposition from 1897-1915, obstructing government policies on principle. The Seditious Offences Ordinance, the municipal rate proposals,the water rate scheme… are merely a few examples in a long list of protests by both sections of the black elite, both traditional and modern,against governmental measures.

Those who were perceived as bringing progress, such as Governors Moloney, Carter and McGregor, earned respect and had their authority accepted by the nascent indigenous political class, while Egerton (1907-12) and above all Lugard (1912-18) had more difficulty. Lagosians judged each British Governor on his actions and those that were found wanting became objects of attack, especially once the newspapers got into their stride. The sensitive issues of land and taxation for water, in particular, came to a head under the authoritarian Egerton. These antipathies became crystallised in the Lugard years, with some dramatic political side-effects (described in the profile of Lugard in Chapter 8).

After the turbulent period under Lugard, Clifford produced a new concordat, but he remained suspicious of political agitation, as seen in the handling of the National Congress of British West Africa movement which flowered briefly in the early 1920s. That collapsed due to internal problems, and the main agenda of Lagos politics became the rows among different tendencies of Lagos Muslims (which had political undertones) and the drawn-out

affair of the deposition of the popular Eleko Oba Eshug-bayi in favour of a dissident faction of the House of Docemo/Dosunmu in 1925.[20] This was a bitter row, which went on for several years and engaged the nationalist politician Herbert Macaulay and the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which he had founded in 1923—interestingly, with strong support from one of the active Muslim groups. The "Eleko affair" was a classically complex Lagos problem in which the colonial government found itself pitted against traditional authority, but it was seen by some as a distraction from nationalism. The seven-year exile of Eleko Eshugbayi ended in his return with the authority of the Obaship re-inforced, although he did not live to benefit from it (see profile of the Eleko in Chapter 8).

The impact of the global depression after the boom of the 1920s was conspicuous and led to a new bout of political activity. The emergence of the Lagos (and then Nigerian) Youth Movement (NYM) was overtaken by the emergence of Nnamdi Azikiwe at the end of the 1930s to challenge the long supremacy of Macaulay. They eventually came together when Macaulay took on the role of elder statesman with the formation of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in 1946, just before he died.

After the political difficulties under Lugard and Clifford, the later British Governors Sir Donald Cameron (1932-37) and Sir Bernard Bourdillon (1937-43) both found ways of enjoying some kind of relatively positive rapport with the Nigerian people, especially Bourdillon. The fact of having a relaxed progressive in charge at a time of change during the Second World War meant that in the post-war turbulence Sir Arthur Richards had a harder time (see profiles of Bourdillon and Richards in Chapter 8).

The years between the wars were nonetheless a period of rapid development, though there had been major advances from the 1890s: innovations in sewerage, health, electricity (1894), the railway, the tram and above all the opening up of the port

in 1924 following the dredging and clearing of the bar through construction of the mole (groin). Following the horrendous epidemic of bubonic plague in the late 1920s a new effort at helping the city to progress was witnessed in the setting up of the Lagos Executive Development Board; this body continued the work of land reclamation which had been a continuous process almost since the arrival of the British.

The Modern Melting-Pot

Thus the city was changing and growing in the inter-war period, facilitated by the development of rail and later road transport. Lagos became the microcosm of the whole country, attracting Nigerian "strangers" and notably the Igbos, whom demographic pressure pushed out to all commercial points of colonial Nigeria; they were first brought to Lagos by the railway for which they were a particularly influential workforce. The already-mentioned Hausas were from an early date involved in commodity trading (cattle and kola nuts) but they had been encouraged to get to Lagos even before the arrival of the British because of army recruitment. There is evidence from even the nineteenth century of a Hausa presence, although the term "Hausa" often became coterminous with "soldier" and then with "Northerner", as we have seen in connection with the Nupes. There is a particular concentration of Hausas, mainly butchers, in Agege.

Almost all the other ethnic groups that have been attracted have their own communities and congeries, all with their own self-help and improvement organisations. Being the federal capital made Lagos a crucible of Nigerian-ness, but being a commercial capital made it a Mecca for all. Peter Enahoro, a celebrated newspaper columnist in the 1960s under the soubriquet of "Peter Pan", wrote in his immortal short book How to Be a Nigerian (published in 1966) that "you can never become a true Nigerian until you have passed through the grill, come to Lagos, or at the

very least, aspire to come to Lagos."

There was also a heavy non-Nigerian African dimension to the gene pool of the city of Lagos, with a growing population of other West Africans. The Saros and the Brazilians were all used to moving along the coast, but old trade routes were no respecter of colonial frontiers. And as Nigeria became more prosperous so the population swelled, especially after the oil boom of the 1970s. This was particularly true of Ghanaians, whose vast presence was highlighted at the time of the expulsion of aliens in early 1983—maybe 1.5 million left in a mass exodus, even though Ghana's own economy was at that time in crisis (one reason why they had moved out in the first place). The same migratory impulse applied to the Togolese and Dahomeyans/Béninois, often in the domestic service sector. There have also been Cameroonians who have a very special place in Nigeria's population (Anglophone British Southern Cameroons was once administered with Nigeria), deriving partly from colonial history, and, from further afield, the Congolese who have their own community concentrated on Lagos Island.

The latest addition to the Africans of Lagos are the South Africans, many of whom ironically are white Afrikaners, by a turn of the wheel of fortune of history. Post-apartheid South Africa has been able to do good business in Nigeria, from the mobile phones of MTN to the hotel chain Protea and security companies. South Africans can often be observed at the weekends at the pool at the Eko Hotel, but they tend to live in gated communities. From my own experience of living in Lagos from 2001 to 2002, I recall a certain Wayne who had been in the apartheid regime's special services in Angola, and was hating every minute of Nigeria. On the other hand there was the case of Australian-born Adrian Wood who, as CEO of MTN-Nigeria, became temporarily "Nigerianised".

Then there are the rest, who give Lagos a uniquely cosmopolitan feel—the French and other Europeans, the

Lebanese/Syrians, the Cypriots, other Arabs, the Indians and Pakistanis, the Chinese and even Japanese, Iranians and Turks. Some came in with the embassies which have now mostly gone to Abuja, but often leaving commercial consulates. Others came as entrepreneurs, occasionally going into the restaurant business such as the important group of Hong Kong Chinese, although they also expanded into other industries. Alongside the considerable presence of those from the Peoples' Republic, they constitute an important feature of contemporary Lagos.

Is there any evidence of particular groups in particular areas? This was certainly the case in the nineteenth century, in Isale Eko and Lagos Island as a whole. When it came to separateness for Europeans, for a time British administrators of a more racist type encouraged segregation, especially in the planning of Ikoyi and GRA (Government Residential Area) Ikeja and particularly in the early twentieth century. There is, however, a natural tendency to merge and mingle in Lagos that has operated against too much segregation, so that it is much less evident than the sort of townships to be found in east and southern Africa, reaching its apogee in apartheid South Africa. There is still a certain class dichotomy, or perhaps it is just a case of split perceptions, between Island and Mainland (reiterated in subsequent chapters), but on the whole the "citiness" militates against intolerance, except when a mob mentality prevails, which alas is not unknown in Lagos.

The Status Of Lagos: Crown Colony To State

The administrative status of Lagos, from its early vagaries, became settled in 1886 into that of a Crown Colony. It was divided into Lagos and Colony districts, together coterminous with what eventually became Lagos State. In the 1880s it was absorbed de facto into the developing protectorates of Yorubaland, falling effectively under three different groups of officials. In 1906 it was

formally merged into the new Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, losing its treasured separate identity but retaining its colony status. From 1914, when the two protectorates of the north and the south were merged as a federation, it housed the federal capital (despite a proposal by Lugard in 1916 to move this to Kaduna or Zungeru in the north) at the same time as placing Lagos itself under administration of the southern provinces and running it from Yaba, although technically Lagos came under the Southern Provinces, it was a reshuffling of titles. When, after the First World War, the Lagos Executive Council merged with the Nigerian Exco (created in 1914), Lagos was given a city council, which progressively became more and more elective (it was granted a mayor in 1953), and lasted even (for a short while) after the territory became a State in 1967. After 1906, until the post-Second World War constitution-making, all Nigeria was known as the "Colony and Protectorate", an oblique reference to the continued different status of Lagos.

The status of Lagos only became a major issue again in the early 1950s, when for two years after 1951 the whole area was transferred to the newly created Western Region. Then, after much discussion in which the city was treated as a political football, the 1953 Macpherson Constitution resulted in Lagos proper (but not the wider "Colony" area that included Epe, Ikorodu, Ikeja and Badagry) becoming federal territory with a Minister for Lagos Affairs—to the annoyance of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Premier of the Western Region, who had been faced with an alliance of the Northern and Eastern Regions (under the political parties dominant in each one) to keep Lagos separate. The federal territory status continued after independence, while the four other districts remained in the Western Region. Agitation for a separate state in Lagos had been mounting since the mid-1950s, and had attracted a great deal of political support until finally in 1967, when Nigeria was in the middle of a full-scale crisis of survival, Lagos State was created as part of the new

twelve-state structure enacted by General Gowon. This was the most important development in the city's post-colonial history. Although the early years of founding a State administration had its difficulties, the fact of statehood has been a major factor in its present flowering under Governors Tinubu and Fashola.

The Action Group (AG), one of the leading parties in the transition to independence under its leader Awolowo, had secured hold of Lagos from the previously dominant NCNC mentioned above (renamed the National Council of Nigerian Citizens) of Nnamdi Azikiwe (of whom more later) in its city council elections in the early 1950s, having made a powerful pitch both to the Muslim community and to the market women. It had relentlessly held political control even when the party was plunged into crisis, although ironically it had originally preferred the solution of Lagos joining the Western Region. Indeed, the excision from the West in 1953 had been supported by the Northern and Eastern parties as a way of undercutting the AG, and Chief Awolowo had been very angry at the loss. But the creation of Lagos State in 1967 had the Chief 's approval, and the first elections after state creation, held in 1979, brought a huge majority to Awolowo's new party, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), using his continued highly effective party organisation. There was a natural majority for one political tendency that has continued to this day under a succession of differently named parties (the Social Democratic Party, the Action for Democracy, the Action Congress and now the Action Congress of Nigeria).

Being the capital thwarted completely the ideas, circulating in some quarters during pre-independence years, that Lagos should actually become an independent City State. Its long years as federal capital ensured its primacy at the centre of the theatre of politics until the major move to Abuja in the early 1990s. The revival of development in Lagos in the boom years of the early twenty-first century has also led to revival of the possibility of a special status for Lagos (if not actually the dream of becoming a

City State) depending on its growing and increasingly successful financial autonomy as developed under the civilian Governors Tinubu and Fashola (see Chapter 8).

The Rise And Fall Of Politics: The Move To Abuja

From the time that nationalist politics became an important force in the 1940s, Lagos became a major theatre of national political events, both in the fifteen years before independence and in the turbulent post-independence years, even if the civil war did not affect the city directly (one episode the author experienced is recounted in Chapter 6).

It all changed, however, after 1976, when the decision was made by the short-lived Murtala Mohammed administration to move the federal capital to Abuja, a project substantially achieved by the early 1990s. Murtala's assassination was one of Lagos' most traumatic moments, and it helped convince the military that the decision to move to Abuja was the right one, although little was done in the next three years when Nigeria was effectively ruled by the duumvirate of Olusegun Obasanjo as president and Shehu Yar'Adua as his number two. The Shagari regime (1979-83), possibly because it was a more Northern-influenced administration, started making the move, but it was under the military President Babangida (1985-93) that decisive steps were taken, especially after events played a decisive role. A critical moment impelling the move to Abuja was Major Orkar's attempted coup of April 1990 against Babangida led by the Brigade of Guards from Bonny Camp, a uniquely Lagos event (see Chapter 6).

This precipitated the acceleration of the move of the capital decided fourteen years before, which had been proceeding in a leisurely, even sporadic, way. The change was a major psychological moment in Lagos history, affecting the mindset of its inhabitants and leaving many buildings as simply repositories

of former glories, in some cases shells like the now privatised Federal Secretariat, and the increasingly tacky parade ground in Tafawa Balewa Square, the racecourse in colonial times, which by independence had fallen into disuse. The new arena had a brief moment of splendour after it was built in the 1970s but after 1982 independence was never celebrated there again: it is now always at Eagle Square in Abuja. The square is now given over to small shops and offices, although the parade ground still stages many events.

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