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Hamilton, Theodore

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The Shipmates of the *Ana Maria*: Tracing Recaptives' Lives Through the Suppression of the Slave Trade

Theodore Hamilton[1]

Between 3 February and 23 March 1821, Juan de la Roche, captain of the Spanish Schooner *Ana Maria*, bought 437 people from slave traders at the port of Bonny. Under orders from merchants in Cuba, de la Roche was to sail back across the Atlantic and sell enslaved peoples at Santiago, Cuba, where the rapid growth of sugar and coffee plantations had created a massive demand for slave labor. Instead, the *Ana Maria* was captured by British ships patrolling the coast for enslavers as it left the mouth of the Bonny River.

Liberated from slavery, the *Ana Maria* recaptives still had to endure a second middle passage of their own: a forty-nine-day journey in appalling conditions to the British colony of Sierra Leone, during which eighty people died from disease, malnutrition, or suicide. The decision to resettle freed captives in Sierra Leone can be traced back to British parliamentary debates over the abolition of the slave trade. Throughout the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, proponents of slave trade abolition began to articulate a belief that Britain had a moral responsibility not just to end the slave trade but also to actively "improve" conditions in Africa through the introduction of Christianity and legitimate commerce.[2] When slave trade abolitionists praised Sierra Leone as a "province of freedom," they meant not that freed captives would experience freedom but instead that British governance would introduce them to what Britons considered the preconditions of freedom: Christianity and disciplined capitalist labor.[3] While cloaked in the humanitarian language of freedom, the colonial governance in Sierra Leone was characterized by surveillance, repression, and a determination to shape

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[1] Theo Hamilton graduated from Amherst College in 2023 with a bachelor's degree in History and Mathematics. His historical interests center on the development of narratives of nationalism, modernity, and progress in the nineteenth century.

[2] For a more detailed discussion of shifting British debates over Britain's relationship to Africa in the wake of the abolition of the slave trade, see Ralph A. Austen and Woodruff D. Smith, "Images of Africa and British Slave-Trade Abolition: The Transition to an Imperialist Ideology, 1787-1807," *African Historical Studies* 2, no. 1 (1969): pp. 69-83; Phillip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964).

[3] Suzanne Schwarz, "From Company Administration to Crown Control," in *Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in Sierra Leone,* ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and Suzanne Schwarz (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2015), p. 164.

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"civilized" subjects. In the face of this colonial government, the *Ana Maria* shipmates developed identities and institutions that offered them some protection from economic and social instability.

The Bight of Biafra Slave Trade

Before they were forced into slavery, most shipmates of the *Ana Maria* hailed from across the Bight of Biafra hinterland (located in what is today Southeastern Nigeria). Understanding the shipmates' backgrounds within the Biafra interior is important not only to explain who the shipmates of the *Ana Maria* were but also to understand how their identities were shaped and reshaped by their encounters with the slave trade and British colonialism. The recent historiography of the Bight of Biafra slave trade has included heated debates about where within the region enslaved people were most likely to be sourced and how the shipmates conceived of themselves. The topic of Igbo identity is particularly central to these debates, with scholars disagreeing over both what proportion of people sold into slavery in the Bight of Biafra were Igbo speakers and to what extent it makes sense to talk about Igbo identity within the Biafra hinterland at all.

Historians like Douglas Chambers suggest that Igbo speakers made up around seventy-five to eighty percent of the captives exported from the Bight of Biafra and that the very "diversity of ethnic groups in the hinterland of the Bight of Biafra...actually masks a greater uniformity or homogeneity in historical cultural practices (lived experiences) than one might expect."[4] These scholars argue that the region's trade networks, multilingualism, and shared cultural practices established a genuine common experience throughout the Biafra hinterland. On the other hand, scholars like David Northrup estimate that Igbo speakers accounted for closer to sixty percent of those enslaved in the Bight of Biafra[5] and have argued that trying to "pre-package" captives into large identity groups runs the risk of obscuring the diversity of local identities throughout the region and "reinforc[ing] stereotypes of African cultures as static."[6]

British colonial records contain some evidence that can help us understand the background of the *Ana Maria* shipmates. When the 401 surviving shipmates of the *Ana Maria* disembarked in Sierra Leone, their names and "countries" were recorded by British officials. Their approximate ages, sexes, heights, and brief physical descriptions were recorded as well.[7] Nonetheless, it is important to keep in

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[4] Douglas Chambers, "Rejoinder — The Significance of Igbo in the Bight of Biafra Slave-Trade: A Rejoinder to Northrup's 'Myth Igbo,'" *Slavery & Abolition* 23, no. 1 (2002): p. 108, [quote] p. 102.
[5] David Northrup, "Igbo and Myth Igbo: Culture and Ethnicity in the Atlantic World: 1600-1850," *Slavery and Abolition* 21, no. 3 (2000): p. 14.
[6] Northrup, "Igbo and Myth Igbo," p. 18.
[7] Liberated African Department. "Spanish Schooner Anna Maria: Register of 401 People," 16 May 1821, Liberated Africans, National Archives FO315-31 f23-35, Accessed April 2, https://www.liberatedafricans.org/event_details.php?EventID=152.

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mind Europeans' extremely limited knowledge of Africa when reading these records. It was not at all unusual for Europeans to label the ethnicities of the same Africans differently over time, throwing doubt on the reliability of the sources they produced.[8] For example, in one series of school registers from Sierra Leone between 1816 and 1824, the number of "nations" listed (1,066) was larger than the number of children recorded as attending the schools (967) because some children's nations were changed repeatedly.[9]

Despite the methodological challenges they pose, these registers help provide a broad understanding of where the *Ana Maria* recaptives would have spent their lives before being forced into the Atlantic slave trade. The two largest groups in the register were the 306 recaptives identified as "Heboo" (Igbo) and the sixty recorded as "Calabar." The next largest groups on the *Ana Maria* were composed of eight Hausa, four Akan, and three Moko recaptives, with no other group having more than two members.[10] One reason for confidence in these figures comes from a series of recent etymological studies performed by the *African Origins Project*, which found that about seventy–seven percent of the 10,065 names recorded among the formerly enslaved who settled in Sierra Leone from the Bight of Biafra were etymologically Igbo.[11] This suggests that the Liberated African Department's count of 306 Igbo among the 401 *Ana Maria* recaptives is likely an accurate reflection of the proportion of Igbo on the ship.

Of the other terms used to designate the captives on board the *Ana Maria*, "Calabar" and "Moko" had various shifting meanings. In the Americas, Calabar was often used as a catch-all term for enslaved peoples exported through the ports of New and Old Calabar.[12] However, in Sierra Leone, the word was used to refer to Ibibio-Efik-speaking peoples who, like the Igbo, lived in the densely populated and politically decentralized areas in the interior of present-day southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon. [13] Similarly, although Moko was a word with many shifting meanings, it was generally used in Sierra Leone to refer to people from the area of the Cameroon River to the east of both the Igbo and Ibibio.[14]Historian Femi Kolapo has also suggested that the sources of the Bight of Biafra slave trade extended further north than is often assumed. Therefore, we should expect that the

[8] Russell Lohse, "Slave-Trade Nomenclature and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Evidence from Early Eighteenth Century Costa Rica," *Slavery and Abolition* 23, no. 3 (2002): p. 74.

[9] Richard Peter Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone: Re-Building Lives and Identities in Nineteenth Century West Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 35-36.

[10] Liberated African Department. "Spanish Schooner Anna Maria: Register of 401 People."

[11] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 48.

[12] Northrup, "Igbo and Myth Igbo," pp. 9-10.

[13] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, pp. 145-146.

[14] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, pp. 147-148.

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shipmates of the *Ana Maria* also included people of Igala, Idoma, Nupe, and Tiv origin.[15] One avenue for further research using the *Ana Maria* registers would be to attempt to check that claim, either through an etymological study of the recaptives' names or attempting to identify the more obscure "countries" listed in the register with known towns or groups.

The evidence suggests that most of the *Ana Maria* shipmates came from Igbo, Ibibio, and Efik speaking regions of the Biafra hinterland. Both the Igbo and Ibibio economies centered around agriculture and handicrafts, while the Efik—most of whom lived in city-states in the Cross River delta—engaged more heavily with fishing, trading, and salt-boiling.[16] The lineage group was the primary mode of self-identification and political organization for both Igbo and Ibibio communities throughout this period. Although the Efik were more likely to identify with their cities than with lineage groups.[17] These modes of social organization demonstrate the limits of any sort of pan-Igbo or pan-Biafran sense of identity. The localized nature of identity also played a role in enabling the slave trade. While enslaving members of one's own village or lineage group was considered a severe crime throughout the Biafra hinterland and often punishable by death, a blind eye was generally turned towards those who kidnapped outsiders.[18]

Another important historiographical debate centers around the question of how the transatlantic slave trade interacted with indigenous African slavery. One school, strongly associated with the work of J.D. Fage, argues that slavery was already an important part of most West African societies before the arrival of European traders, and although the Atlantic slave trade expanded the growth of slavery within West Africa, it "was essentially only one aspect of a very wide process of economic and political development and social change" which increased the power and wealth of West African kingdoms.[19] In contrast, historians like Walter Rodney have argued that the demand for enslaved labor introduced by the Atlantic slave trade reshaped and massively expanded the role of slavery in African societies and systematically underdeveloped Africa.[20] I follow Joseph Inikori's

[15] Femi J. Kolapo, "The Igbo and Their Neighbors During the Era of the Atlantic Slave-Trade," *Slavery and Abolition* 25, no. 1 (2004): p. 129.

[16] A. E. Afigbo, "The Aro and the Trade of the Bight," in *Igbo in the Atlantic World,* ed. Toyin Falola and Raphael Chijioke Njoku (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), p. 73.

[17] Afigbo, "The Aro and the Trade of the Bight," p. 73.

[18] G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 128.

[19] J. D. Fage, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History," *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 400. See also, J. D. Fage, "African Societies and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *Past and Present* 125, no. 1 (1989): pp. 97–115.

[20] See Walter Rodney, "African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave-Trade," *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 3 (1966): pp. 1–13; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1981).

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assessment that Fage's vision of the Atlantic slave trade as beneficial to economic development is rooted in a neoclassical economic paradigm that assumes that trade must benefit all parties and regions involved. This ignores the reality that there is no necessary connection between the interests of economic decision-makers and broader societal interests.[21] Inikori suggests that historians must move past the question of whether slavery in Africa predated the Atlantic slave trade and engage in serious consideration of how the incentives introduced by the Atlantic slave trade reshaped institutions across Africa frequently in devastating ways.[22] The hardships endured by the shipmates of the *Ana Maria* demonstrate some of the warping effects of the slave trade on the Biafra hinterland.

Unique among the major sources of the slave trade, the Biafra hinterland had no major state formations in the early nineteenth century.[23] Nonetheless, well-established trade networks extended throughout the region, integrating the many settlements of the interior and the coast into patterns of exchange. The Aro, a loosely organized political confederacy centered in the Cross River region, played a central role in the creation of "a regional 'pax' under which large–scale trade flourished in a multiethnic region, and [whose] operations eased exchange and 'brought rapid impetus to economic expansion.'"[24] During the eighteenth century, Aro traders established an expansive network of diasporic settlements throughout the Biafran interior, including towns conquered by the Aro, newly founded Aro settlements, and small Aro communities invited into established non-Aro towns.[25]

Whatever their size, each diasporic Aro community retained cultural and political ties through shared lineage groups and a common devotion to the Ibiniukpabi oracle in Arochukwu.[26] Originating as a medium for local nature spirits, the Ibiniukpabi oracle spread alongside the growth of Aro influence, with diasporic Aro creating local variants throughout the Biafra interior.[27] Both lineage groups and the Ibiniukpabi oracle proved powerful tools for expansion. Individual Aro traders generally managed to avoid conflict by clearly dividing control of different markets between lineage groups so that "an Aro person from one lineage group only went into another Aro lineage group's area of influence if sponsored by somebody from the group wielding trade."[28] Meanwhile, the oracle became known for its clairvoyance and as an adjudicator of disputes. The oracle's mediation settled

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[21] Joseph E. Inikori, "Ideology versus the Tyranny of Paradigm: Historians and the Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on African Societies," *African Economic History*, no. 22 (1994): p. 48.

[22] Inikori, "Ideology versus the Tyranny of Paradigm," pp. 37-38.

[23] David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 125.

[24] Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, p. 53.

[25] Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra,* pp. 54-55.

[26] Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, pp. 54-55.

[27] Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, pp. 75-76.

[28] Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, p. 62.

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many local disputes in Igbo and Ibibioland. This increased Aro influence throughout the hinterland and created a steady source of captives through its judicial decisions.[29]

The expansion of this network of Aro settlements consolidated the existing trade of the decentralized Bight of Biafra interior "into a single marketing grid."[30] As historian Ugo Nwokeji has pointed out, the expansion of Aro trade networks from the late seventeenth until the early nineteenth century corresponds strongly with the growth of the Atlantic slave trade, which he describes as the primary incentive for this expansion. The *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* estimates that, on average, around 3,000 enslaved people were sold through Bight of Biafra ports each year throughout the second half of the seventeenth century. During the first half of the eighteenth century, an average of 4,978 people were sold into slavery in Biafran ports each year. By the second half of the eighteenth century, that figure had reached 13,114.[31]

By connecting regions deep in the Biafran interior to the slave ports of the coast, the Aro trade network created the preconditions for this mass forced exodus of human lives. Historian Stephanie Smallwood has argued that "the most powerful instrument locking captives in as commodities for Atlantic trade was the culture of the market itself."[32] Once severed from their social connections, the *Ana Maria* shipmates found themselves converted into "socially dead" people through the process of natal alienation: enforced separation "from all formal, legally enforceable ties of 'blood,' and from any attachments to groups or localities."[33] Combined with the market system, social death made escape from slavery almost impossible. Everyone in the region would have known that they could easily convert these socially dead people into commodities through the Aro network.[34]

But how were the *Ana Maria* shipmates taken captive in the first place? Some historians have used the accounts of 177 liberated Africans' lives collected by the nineteenth-century German missionary and linguist Sigismund Koelle to estimate that most captives were brought into the slave trade in the early nineteenth century through either wars or kidnappings. In Koelle's accounts, these make up for, respectively, about thirty-four and thirty percent of enslavements.[35]

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[29] Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, p. 76.

[30] David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 142.

[31] Slave Voyages. "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade—Estimates." Accessed May 18, 2021. https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates.

[32] Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 56.

[33] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 7.

[34] Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, p. 56.

[35] P.E.H. Hair, "The Enslavement of Koelle's Informants," *The Journal of African History* 6, no. 2 (1965): pp. 196-198.

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However, Nwokeji has pointed out that it is unclear whether these trends are held around the Bight of Biafra. Of Koelle's forty-one informants captured in the Bight of Biafra interior, ten were enslaved during warfare, and nine more reported being kidnapped, meaning war and kidnapping accounted for just under half of all captives. Six other informants were sold into slavery by their relatives or social superiors, four were sold because of debts, five were enslaved through judicial processes, and seven were enslaved by other means.[36] The diaries of C. G. A. Oldendorp, a missionary to the Danish West Indies during the 1760s and 1770s who also recorded information about enslaved peoples' early lives, also report in the Bight of Biafra "a lower incidence of enslavement by warfare and kidnapping and a higher incidence of enslavement by indebtedness than appear to have been the norm."[37] The *Ana Maria* shipmates would have been forced into enslavement through a variety of means, with warfare and kidnapping being the most important but far from the only methods used to enslave. This variety of methods indicates the extent to which the Atlantic slave trade's violent commodification of life penetrated many aspects of social life in the Bight of Biafra, with slavery becoming institutionalized as a punishment for both indebtedness and for a multitude of crimes.

Most of the *Ana Maria*'s shipmates were most likely sent toward the coast immediately after their capture. Still, some must have spent extended periods enslaved within the Biafran interior. In Koelle's sample, twenty-nine of 177 liberated Africans said they had spent years enslaved in Africa, while the rest seem to have entered the transatlantic slave trade shortly after enslavement.[38] Even traveling directly to the Biafran coast from the interior required a months-long overland journey, with historian Herbert Klein estimating that captives spent "a minimum six months to a year until they boarded European ships."[39] Finally, the captives arrived at the banks of the Imo River, where local Aro merchants met with traders sailing up from Bonny to negotiate their exchange for recently imported European goods.[40]

Atlantic Markets of the Slave Trade: Bonny and Santiago

Along with New Calabar and Old Calabar, Bonny was one of the three major slave trading ports in the Bight of Biafra. By the mid-eighteenth century, the scale of the slave trade at Bonny had already exceeded that of New and Old Calabar combined; just over two out of every three enslaved people sold

[36] J.N. Oriji, "The Slave Trade, Warfare and Aro Expansion in the Igbo Hinterland," *Transafrican Journal of History* 16 (1987): p. 162.
[37] Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, p. 130.
[38] P.E.H. Hair, "The Enslavement of Koelle's Informants," p. 195.
[39] Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 130.
[40] Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "'This Horrid Hole': Royal Authority, Commerce and Credit at Bonny, 1690-1840," *Journal of African History* 45, no. 3 (2004): p. 382.

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at one of these ports between 1780 and 1840 embarked at Bonny.[41] Bonny's rise was a result of several factors. European buyers' low estimation of the value of enslaved people from the Calabar ports — who one captain described as "slaves inferior to any other, very weakly and liable to great mortality" — played a part.[42] Consequently, enslaved people sold at Bonny could fetch higher prices. Bonny was on an island covered in mangrove swamps and afflicted by mosquitos and other disease-carrying insects. Upon arriving in the town, diseases would have begun to spread rapidly among the future shipmates of the *Ana Maria*, who must have already been malnourished, exhausted, and vulnerable to infection as a result of their overland journey.[43]

At Bonny, the *Ana Maria* shipmates came into direct contact with the international system of economic interests that made up the transatlantic slave trade. One of the driving forces of the slave trade during this period was Cuba, which had experienced massive economic expansion since the late eighteenth century. The declining production on Britain's Caribbean islands, the destruction of Saint-Domingue's plantation economy during the Haitian Revolution, and the Spanish government's decisions to allow free trade in enslaved people and remove or lower export taxes all contributed to the explosive growth of plantation agriculture and slavery in Cuba.[44] Between 1805 and 1820, Cuba's annual exports of coffee rose from 1.5 million to 16 million pounds,[45] while the number of Cuban sugar mills nearly doubled from 529 in 1792 to 1,000 by 1827.[46] Benefitting from comparatively low land prices, the plantation economy around Santiago in eastern Cuba experienced remarkably rapid growth, with Santiago's enslaved population increasing from 7,567 in 1800 to 24,700 by 1817.[47]

All this economic growth relied on slavery, but by the 1810s, the abolition of the slave trade by Britain, Denmark, and the United States meant that Cuba's planter elites could no longer rely on being supplied by enslavers from the countries that had sold over seventy-five percent of the captives brought to Cuba between 1790 and 1810. [48] As a result, throughout the 1810s, Spanish enslavers vastly expanded their operations to meet the Cuban demand for enslaved people. Over the whole of the decade, vessels flying the Spanish flag carried almost ninety-five percent of enslaved people sold in the

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[41] Lovejoy and Richardson, "This Horrid Hole," p. 369.

[42] James Jones, "James Jones to Lord Hawkesbury, 26 July." In *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to the America,* Vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Elizabeth Donnan (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1931), p. 590.

[43] Lovejoy and Richardson, "'This Horrid Hole,'" p. 366.

[44] Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 210.

[45] Laird Bergad, Fe Iglesias García, and María del Carmen Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market: 1790-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 32.

[46] Bergad et al., *The Cuban Slave Market*, p. 28.

[47] Bergad et al., *The Cuban Slave Market*, pp. 95-96.

[48] Klein, *The Middle Passage*, p. 215.

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colony.[49] In a dark irony, the Anglo-Spanish treaty that abolished the slave trade prompted Cuban planters, who panicked about their inability to maintain Cuban slavery in the future if the treaty was ever fully enforced, to finance a considerable surge in slaving voyages. Between 1817 and 1820, Cuba imported nearly 100,000 enslaved people, an especially remarkable figure considering that the 1817 census reported Cuba's total slave population at 199,000.[50]

Pedro and Santiago de la Cuesta y Manzanal, brothers who moved from Spain to Cuba in 1790, provide one example of the money enslavers could make in this rush. The brothers were already successful merchants when they arrived in Cuba, and Santiago had married into an established sugar-planting family by 1806. Only after they became involved in the slave trade did they join the highest echelons of the colony's elite.[51] Although their first attempts to start a slave-trading firm in 1803 failed to find investors, the crisis that the British abolition of the slave trade caused in Cuba gave the brothers a rush of backers, allowing them to establish the Cuesta Manzanal y Hermano firm in 1809. They sent three ships to Africa that same year.[52] By 1836, Santiago was the third richest man in Cuba and had been ennobled by the Spanish crown.[53]

This rush of slaving formed the context of the *Ana Maria*'s voyage. The schooner, initially constructed in Baltimore, MD, was purchased in December of 1819 by four residents of Santiago, Cuba: Antonio Vincan, Matthew Smith, and two men referred to by their surnames Wright and Shelton. Smith, Shelton, and Wright were all Americans who had moved to Santiago in the preceding years, and Shelton had spent some time as the city's American consul.[54] There is no record in the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* that any of the ship's owners were ever involved in any other voyages of enslaved people. Likewise, the ship's captain, Juan de la Roche, also has no other recorded experience with the trade.[55] Despite their inexperience, the four decided that investing in the slave trade could earn them a profit.

By December 1820, the shipowners had recruited a crew of thirty-five men and decided that the *Ana Maria* should sail directly to Bonny before returning to Santiago to unload enslaved people.

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[49] Klein, *The Middle Passage*, p. 215.
[50] Bergad et al., *The Cuban Slave Market*, p. 26.
[51] Edgardo Pérez Morales, "Tricks of the Slave Trade: Cuba and the Small-Scale Dynamics of the Spanish Transatlantic Slave Trade," *New West Indian Guide* 91, (2017): pp. 10-11.
[52] Morales, "Tricks of the Slave Trade," p. 9.
[53] Morales, "Tricks of the Slave Trade," p. 17.
[54] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Interrogations of Crew of the Anna Maria — George Gardiner, James Verde, Franciso Silva," 15 May 1821, Liberated Africans, Accessed April 5, https://www.liberatedafricans.org/Source_details.php?ObjectID=331.
[55] Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade — Database." Accessed April 6, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database.

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The ship was loaded with "liquor and cloth, arms and ammunition" to exchange for enslaved people, and the first leg of its journey seems to have passed uneventfully.[56] This list of items onboard the *Ana Maria* presents a challenge to the claims of scholars who have argued that — whatever its moral evils — the slave trade was economically beneficial for West Africa and aligns with Walter Rodney's observation that "none of the long list of European articles [exchanged for enslaved people] were of the type which entered into the productive process, but were rather items to be rapidly consumed or stowed away uselessly."[57] All the goods onboard the *Ana Maria* would have been valuable to the merchants of Bonny and other elites further inland. Still, none could be said to have any meaningful value for "economic development."

On 3 February 1821, the *Ana Maria* arrived at the Bonny River. According to the recollections of first mate George Gardiner, negotiations to buy enslaved people began immediately, with "the natives [coming] on board the schooner for the purposes of trading."[58] In many major slave trading ports, it was common practice to hold captives in barracoons for extended periods before their sale, with the average captive forced to spend three months on the coast before boarding a European ship.[59] However, for most of the eighteenth century, Bonny's slave traders used a different system, only sending canoes up the Imo River to purchase enslaved people only once European buyers were already present, meaning most captives were sold onto European vessels soon after their arrival.[60] Hugh Crow, a British captain who made several journeys to buy enslaved people at Bonny, remarked that newly arrived captives were "sold to Europeans the evening after their arrival, and taken on board the ships."[61]

After Britain abolished its slave trade in 1807 and established a squadron to patrol the West African coast for enslavers, many slave traders became more reliant on barracoons to avoid capture. One common technique was to avoid sending captives on to a buyer's ship until it was ready to leave port and there were enough captives in the barracoons to fill its cargo, at which point, "large canoes carrying as many as a hundred slaves each were quickly deployed."[62] Because this system only worked if

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[56] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Interrogations of Crew of the Anna Maria — George Gardiner, James Verde, Franciso Silva."

[57] Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 101-102. See, for an example of the opposite view, Fage, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History," p. 400.

[58] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Interrogations of Crew of the Anna Maria — George Gardiner, James Verde, Franciso Silva."

[59] Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 130.

[60] Lovejoy and Richardson, "'This Horrid Hole,'" p. 382.

[61] Hugh Crow, *Memoirs of the Late Captain Hugh Crow: Comprising a Narrative of his Life Together With Descriptive Sketches of the Western Coast of Africa, Particularly Bonny* (London: Longman, 1830), p. 228.

[62] Richard Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone: Re-Building Lives and Identities in Nineteenth Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 76.

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enough captives were kept in the barracoons at all times, enslaved Africans were forced to spend lengthy periods in disease-ridden, overcrowded barracoons without adequate provisions.[63]

Evidence suggests that the slave trade at Bonny during the 1820s still operated similarly to the way it had before British abolition. The *Dona Eugenia,* a Portuguese slave ship captured on the same day as the *Ana Maria,* had only eighty-three captives on board despite being a similar size as the *Ana Maria,* suggesting that it had been taking on enslaved Africans as they arrived rather than using rapid boarding techniques to minimize time in port.[64] This was not an isolated incident. On 15 April 1822, the British West Africa Squadron captured five slave ships at Bonny in a single day.[65] Considering that these five ships made up nearly a quarter of the twenty-one ships recorded in the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* as purchasing enslaved people at Bonny in 1822, it would have required extraordinarily fortunate timing for all five to be at port and with enslaved people on deck at the same time if the Bonny slave traders were rapidly loading ships.

Having been captured, torn from their communities and families, and forcibly moved across vast distances, the captives sold onto the *Ana Maria* were chained and forced into claustrophobic slave rooms with ceilings less than three feet high.[66] Designed to maximize the profitability of enslaving ventures, these minuscule rooms strip the captives of personhood, emphasize their commodified status, and make physical resistance nearly impossible. In addition, the diseases many captives had already contracted when they came onboard, their limited access to provisions and water, the violent treatment of captives who tried to resist, and the difficulty of cleaning slave rooms placed the captives at severe risk.

The Middle Passage

On 23 March 1821, having taken in its last captives, the *Ana Maria* prepared to return to Santiago, but after sailing only four miles north of the river, the crew saw a pair of British ships approaching.[67] Within seven hours the British ships *H.M.S Tartar* and *H.M.S Thistle* reached the *Ana Maria*, which

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[63] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 76.

[64] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Special Interrogations Put to Manuel Jose Silveira" 19 May 1821, Liberated Africans, Accessed April 6, https://www.liberatedafricans.org/Source_details.php?ObjectID=332.

[65] Phillip Curtin, *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans From the Era of the Slave Trade,* ed., (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), p. 314.

[66] Commodore George Collier, "His Majesty's Ship Tartar off Bonny," 26 March 1821, Liberated Africans, accessed April 6, https://www.liberatedafricans.org/Source_details.php?ObjectID=328.

[67] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Interrogations of Crew of the Anna Maria — George Gardiner, James Verde, Franciso Silva."

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had not yet surrendered.[68] At this point, Juan de la Roche ordered the crew of the *Ana Maria* to man the ship's guns. Most were already attempting to lower the anchor, and before they could carry out his orders, the British were onboard.[69]

There is no record of how the captives on board reacted to the *Ana Maria*'s interception, but other accounts from Africans liberated at sea describe confusion and concern. Ali Eisami, who was freed from a Portuguese slave ship in 1818, recalled that upon seeing guns loaded at sea, "we did not believe it . . . we had never seen any one make war in the midst of water."[70] Samuel Crowther — a Yoruba boy freed by the West Africa Squadron in 1822 who would later become a celebrated Anglican bishop — said that "this was another subject of sorrow for us — that there must be war also on the sea as well as on land — a thing never heard of before."[71]

With the *Ana Maria* captured, the people on board would have been freed from their chains, allowed to leave the rooms of those enslaved, and allowed to "drink water to the full" after well over a month of dehydration.[72] Nonetheless, the *Ana Maria* was still extremely crowded, and diseases continued to spread. Almost as soon as the ship was taken, George Collier, the British commodore, sent a dozen of the most seriously ill captives for examination by the surgeon of the *Tartar*.[73] That same night, the *Thistle* and *Tartar* captured the *Dona Eugenia,* a slave ship from Pernambuco also trading at Bonny with just eighty-three captives on board. The next day, Collier gave orders to move about 120 *Ana Maria* shipmates onto the *Dona Eugenia* to reduce crowding.[74]

Some liberated Africans took advantage of the confusion in the aftermath of the *Ana Maria*'s capture and tried desperately to escape. Freed from their bonds, three women jumped off the deck and into the ocean.[75] Historian Sowande' Mustakeem has explained that suicide by jumping overboard "comprised behavioral manifestations of the terror pervasive in the world of slavery at sea."[76] In the case

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[68] Commodore George Collier, "His Majesty's Ship Tartar off Bonny."

[69] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Interrogations of Crew of the Anna Maria — George Gardiner, James Verde, Franciso Silva." Gardiner says the call to man the guns did not come from the captain, while Silva insists that it did.

[70] Ali Eisami and Ajani Crowther, *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans From the Era of the Slave Trade,* ed. Phillip Curtin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), pp. 214, 311.

[71] Eisami and Crowther, *Africa Remembered*, pp. 214, 311.

[72] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 78.

[73] Commodore George Collier, "His Majesty's Ship Tartar off Bonny."

[74] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Special Interrogations Put to Manuel Jose Silveira."

[75] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Interrogations of Crew of the Anna Maria — George Gardiner, James Verde, Franciso Silva."

[76] Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016), p. 106.

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of the *Ana Maria*, these suicides were probably also informed by religious beliefs. Igbo cultures held a deeply rooted belief in transmigration, that "those who have been good on earth may [after death] . . . visit any country on earth."[77] If these women were Igbo — and about three-quarters of the captives on board the *Ana Maria* were — their actions might have been an attempt to return to their homes as well as to escape the middle passage. Suicide also reflected many African peoples' ambiguous reactions to the "liberation" provided by the British. It was unclear what liberation meant, and it was very clear that they were not going home.

Freetown, the ships' destination in Sierra Leone, was in many ways ill-suited to be the base of Britain's attempts to suppress the slave trade off the African coast. In addition to its distance from the major slave-trading ports of the Bights of Benin and Biafra, any journey to Sierra Leone from these ports had to sail against prevailing winds, a difficulty compounded by the fact that the British West Africa Squadron was mainly composed of the navy's oldest and slowest vessels.[78] As a consequence, the average voyage from the Bight of Biafra to Freetown between 1821 and 1839 took thirty-four days.[79] This was shorter than the average sixty-day transatlantic voyage from the Bight of Biafra during this period, but still a dangerously long period to be trapped in disease-ridden conditions.[80] For those on board the *Ana Maria* and *Dona Eugenia,* it would be another forty-nine days before they landed in Freetown.

The length of these journeys and the fact that the British West Africa Squadron was little better equipped than enslavers to treat gastrointestinal ailments, malarial fevers, and epidemics of dysentery meant that the destruction of life endemic to the Atlantic slave trade continued during the middle passage to Sierra Leone.[81] While Commodore George Collier's attempt to secure the recaptives' health by dividing them among four ships at least partially alleviated their claustrophobic conditions, recent research has shown that "tight packing on slave ships was not the main cause of mortality and sickness as abolitionists at the time thought,"[82] and thirty-six of the 437 liberated Africans on the *Ana Maria* died throughout the journey. High as this number was, it was still significantly lower than the average mortality rate of approximately eighteen percent[83] for journeys between the Bight of Biafra and Sierra

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[77] Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra*, p. 133.

[78] David Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade: The Case of the Bight of Biafra," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 1 (1978): p. 52.

[79] Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade," pp. 50-51.

[80] Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade — Database." Accessed May 18, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database. Calculated using slave voyages leaving the Bight of Biafra and landing in the Americas between 1815 and 1830.

[81] Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade," p. 64.

[82] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 81.

[83] Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade," p. 50.

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Leone from 1821 to 1839 or approximately fourteen percent for transatlantic journeys from the Bight of Biafra during the same period.[84]

Community, Identity, and Survival in Sierra Leone

On 11 May 1821, the small fleet pulled into the harbor at Freetown, but British policies prevented the liberated Africans from landing with the rest of the crew. As far as British and international laws were concerned, the *Ana Maria* shipmates were still enslaved and would remain so until the British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commission decided the outcome of the case.[85]

Between 1819 and 1871, Britain established nearly a dozen mixed commission courts to judge vessels seized under suspicion of slaving. Each court was headed by two commissary judges, one from each of the countries under its jurisdiction.[86] In theory, the commissary judges would work together as neutral parties to determine whether the vessel's seizure had been legal and whether it had been involved in the slave trade, but it was common practice for the British commissioner to act as prosecutor while the other commissioner took on the role of defense.[87] Out of all these courts, the British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commission was the busiest, adjudicating 241 of the 623 total cases determined between 1819 and 1845.[88]

Considering that the *Ana Maria* had been captured with enslaved people on board, there was no question of its involvement with the slave trade. Nonetheless, the court needed to go through the process of questioning witnesses, examining the vessel, and checking the ship's documentation.[89] Meanwhile, the *Ana Maria* shipmates remained on board. Within three days, conditions on the ship had become so dangerous that the governor of Sierra Leone intervened and gave the order to land the recaptives.[90] The shipmates of the *Ana Maria* must have experienced a range of feelings. Peter Leonard, a crew member on the British ship *Dryad* who observed a similar landing in 1834, recalled

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[84] Slave Voyages, "Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade — Database." Accessed May 18, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database.

[85] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 84.

[86] Leslie Bethell, "The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History* 7, no. 1 (1966), p. 79.

[87] Bethell, "The Mixed Commissions," p. 85.

[88] Bethell, "The Mixed Commissions," p. 84.

[89] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Case Abstract of the Anna Maria," 15 May 1821, Liberated Africans. Accessed April 7, https://www.liberatedafricans.org/Source_details.php?ObjectID=327.

[90] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Oath of Mr. John Hudson, Prize Master in charge of the Spanish Schooner Ana Maria respecting the landing of the slaves from the vessel," 15 May 1821, Liberated Africans, Accessed April 7, https://www.liberatedafricans.org/Source_details.php?ObjectID=349.

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"singing on board the schooner, in anticipation of the boat's return, and continuing their song all the way to shore" when the recaptives were told they could land.[91] Nonetheless, "the men and women, after they reached the yard, when the moment of gratification had passed away, looked sullen and dissatisfied, but not dejected."[92]

Hoping that the landing would finally mean the restoration of their freedom, the recaptives had every reason to be "sullen and dissatisfied" when they were instead led to the King's Yard: a walled, 150-by-103-foot space not at all dissimilar to the slaving yards where the recaptives may have spent time at Bonny or Aro trading bases.[93] The next day, colonial officials arrived in the yard to create registers of the *Ana Maria* and *Dona Eugenia* shipmates and decide on what the officials, in a tellingly offhand manner, recorded as their "disposal."[94]

On 17 May 1821, the Court of Mixed Commission officially "judged a sentence of condemnation against the Anna Maria" and emancipated the captives on board.[95] However, the ruling was also clear about the restricted meaning of emancipation. Instead of simply being freed, the recaptives had been "delivered over to the government of the colony to be employed as servants or free laborers."[96] Colonial officials maintained the complete right to "dispose" of liberated African peoples as they saw fit. One letter sent from the head of the Liberated African Department in Freetown to the village superintendents gave an impression of official attempts to restrict the movement of liberated Africans, reminding the superintendents that "whenever any stranger is known to be in a village . . . unless it appear that they have come on a visit to any of their friends . . . immediately send them to my office for the purpose of being sent back to their place of residence."[97]

Between the beginning of the British suppression of the slave trade in 1807 to the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, most of the 7,591 Africans liberated by Sierra Leone courts were settled in Freetown or small informal settlements surrounding it.[98] Throughout the Napoleonic Wars, the prize money granted for captured ships became crucial to Sierra Leone's economy. From 1807 to 1815, slave

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[91] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 86.
[92] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 86.
[93] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 87.
[94] Liberated African Department, "Register No. 12841-13197, Spanish Schooner Anna Maria," 16 May 1821, Endangered Archives Programme 443/1/17/8, Accessed April 7, https://www.liberatedafricans.org/Source_details.php?ObjectID=349.
[95] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Case Abstract of the Anna Maria."
[96] British and Spanish Court of Mixed Commissions, "Case Abstract of the Anna Maria."
[97] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 123.
[98] Slave Voyages. "People of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade." Accessed April 13, 2021, https://www.slavevoyages.org/past/database; Padraic X. Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery: The Liberated African Villages of Sierra Leone, 1815-1824," *American Historical Review* 121, no. 4 (October 2016): p. 1088.

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ship bounties brought £191,000 into the hands of sailors, soldiers, merchants, and colonial officials stationed in Sierra Leone.[99] The end of the Napoleonic Wars disrupted this system. Although prizes were still awarded, the bilateral treaties Britain signed with Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands to continue the suppression of the slave trade into peacetime, both tightened the legal requirements for seizing suspected enslavers and mandated that half of all prizes would be split with the foreign government whose flag the captured vessel had flown.[100]

The colony was caught in a bind as its economy was simultaneously pressed by the continued arrival of recaptives and the decline of the prize system.[101] The solution designed by Governor Charles MacCarthy was to push liberated Africans into new settlements further from Freetown. This settlement scheme would also now create opportunities for builders and merchants in Freetown, who benefited greatly from the £132,327 given to the Liberated African Department between 1815 and 1825 for the villages' construction and repair, as well as the large imports of rice and palm oil needed to sustain the villages.[102] More importantly, through their portrayal as civilizing bastions, these villages caught the imagination of the British Parliament, which repeatedly granted funds to support them between 1815 and 1824.[103] Parliamentary funding was granted by MPs with nearly no knowledge of Africa but deeply steeped within a political culture that prized the transformative power of labor, free trade, and Christianity and therefore depended on the ability of officials in Sierra Leone to appeal to this vision of the world. Political economies within Britain ensured that the governance of Sierra Leone would focus on shaping "civilized" subjects by controlling the lives of recaptives and attempting to instill in them the discipline of capitalist free labor.

With the trial concluded, the *Ana Maria* shipmates were incorporated into the village system, with 238 recaptives from the *Ana Maria* assigned to the village of Regent.[104] 161 *Ana Maria* shipmates were sent to Gloucester, where they were joined by most of the *Dona Eugenia*'s surviving recaptives.[105] The last two shipmates of the *Ana Maria*, Alaboo, a twenty-one-year-old Igbo man, and

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[99] Padraic X. Scanlan, "The Rewards of Their Exertions: Prize Money and British Abolitionism in Sierra Leone, 1808-1823," *Past and Present* 225, (November 2014): p. 12.
[100] Scanlan, "Prize Money and British Abolitionism," p. 118.
[101] Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery," p. 1088.
[102] Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery," p. 1099.
[103] Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery," p. 1099.
[104] Liberated African Department, "Register No. 12841-13197, Spanish Schooner Anna Maria," 16 May 1821, Endangered Archives Programme 443/1/17/8, Accessed April 7.
[105] Liberated African Department, "Register No. 12841-13243, Spanish Schooner Anna Maria and Portuguese Ship Dona Eugenia."

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Anonah, a twenty-five-year-old Igbo, were apprenticed to a Mr. Gregory in Freetown, whose profession was not recorded.[106]

Gloucester and Regent, located in the mountains about five miles east of Freetown, stand out as two of the only villages in Sierra Leone where a plurality of inhabitants came from the Bight of Biafra. Over half of the 2,645 liberated Africans recorded as sent to Regent between its foundation in 1812 and the end of the Liberated African Registers in 1848 were from the Bight of Biafra.[107] Only 211 people are recorded as having been assigned to Gloucester before the *Ana Maria*'s arrival (ninety-one of whom had arrived from the Bight of Biafra), which meant that the arrival of the *Dona Eugenia* and *Ana Maria* shipmates may have doubled the village's size.[108] Because of the number of Biafrans in Gloucester and Regent, arrival in the towns meant a moment of reunion for some *Ana Maria* shipmates. William Johnson, an Anglican missionary and superintendent of Regent, left a moving account of the *Ana Maria* shipmates' arrival:

> Many of our people recognized their friends and relatives, and there was a general cry: 'my sister!' 'My brother!' 'My countryman!' 'My countrywoman!' The poor creatures being faint — just out of the hold of a slave-vessel, and unconscious of what had befallen them — did not know whether they should laugh or cry when they beheld the countenances of those whom they had supposed long dead, but now saw clothed and clean, and perhaps with healthy children in their arms.[109]

Because the colonial authorities were either unable or unwilling to support their well-being, the social ties that the *Ana Maria* shipmates formed during their journeys and in Regent and Gloucester played a central role in supporting the recaptives' economic and social security. Within the villages, colonial officials provided liberated Africans with provisions — a daily ration of "one quart of rice, half a gill [one gill is a quarter pint] of palm oil and a quarter of a gill of salt."[110] When the *Ana Maria* shipmates

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[106] Liberated African Department, "Register No. 12841-13243, Spanish Schooner Anna Maria and Portuguese Ship Dona Eugenia."
[107] Slave Voyages, "African Origins — Database." Accessed April 12, https://www.slavevoyages.org/past/database.
[108] Slave Voyages, "African Origins — Database." Accessed April 12, https://www.slavevoyages.org/past/database.
[109] W. A. B. Johnson, *The Gospel in Africa: an Account of the Labors and Success of the Rev. W.A.B. Johnson, Missionary of the Church Missionary Society in Regent's Town, Sierra Leone, Africa*. (New York: Protestant Episcopal Society for the Promotion of Evangelical Knowledge, 1858), p. 161.
[110] House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry Into the State of Sierra Leone," 7 May 1827, Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice. Accessed April 10, pp. 27-28. http://www.slavery.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.amherst.edu/Contents/DocumentDetailsSearch.aspx?pi=1&previous=1&searchmode=true&prevpos=35949&vpath=searchresults&searchrequest=doc&documentid=35949.

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arrived in the colony, they would have been eligible for provisions as long as they were willing to participate in the public works, which often involved constructing or maintaining local schools, churches, and roads.[111] Each adult was assigned to live with an established inhabitant, preferably "of their own country or tribe," while children were sent to village schools.[112] A perpetually understaffed corps of teachers (mostly Englishmen and women) employed by the Liberated African Department managed the village schools, although much of the educational work passed into the hands of assistant teachers, who were primarily liberated Africans selected for their knowledge of English.[113] Men assigned to the villages were expected to find an unused section of land to clear and farm and to build a house of their own equipped with "doors and window shutters, nails, hinges, bolts, and locks" provided by the Liberated African Department. Women were supposed to live in their assigned families until marriage.[114]

In reality, only some of the *Ana Maria* shipmates would have followed the exact prescriptions laid out by the Liberated African Department. Many seem to have moved in permanently with the established inhabitants they were sent to live with or with other friends in their towns: British observers frequently commented on the number of recaptives who chose to live in large groups.[115] "Companies," community organizations that tended to grow out of either shipmate bonds or ethnolinguistic ties, also played a central role in recaptive life, providing mutual aid in times of sickness and famine.[116] Considering that liberated Africans generally required at least two years to clear more than a "very small" area of land for their subsistence, these social ties played an especially crucial role as a safety net for recent arrivals.[117]

Regent and Gloucester's companies were also closely tied to the complicated set of processes through which the *Ana Maria* shipmates' experience of the slave trade and colonial Sierra Leone would have led them to reimagine their African identities. Despite the lack of any strong pan-Igbo conception of identity within the Bight of Biafra, Igbo-speaking recaptives forced together by the slave trade would have found that they shared not only a language but also a common set of "artifacts,

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[111] House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," 27-28. Beginning in 1824, recaptives were only provided with provisions for twelve months after arriving in the colony.
[112] House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," pp. 27-29.
[113] House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," p. 59. Although it was official policy to employ 42 schoolteachers throughout the villages, only 10 were on the Liberated African Departments payrolls in 1827, supplemented by 4 more employed by the Church Missionary Society and an unrecorded number of assistant teachers.
[114] House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," pp. 27-29.
[115] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, pp. 127-128.
[116] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, pp. 168-175.
[117] House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," p. 29.

learned behaviors, institutions and beliefs."[118] Torn from their lineage groups and villages, many recaptives would have found that this "Igboness" provided a crucial sense of social identity, an experience that would have been shared by speakers of other well-represented language groups within Sierra Leone.[119] In the villages, these ethnolinguistic communities were a natural basis for companies and other forms of communal organization.[120]

The Igbo and Calabar companies that took shape in Sierra Leone provide a perfect example of both the creative dynamism and the deeply rooted history of this process of ethnogenesis. On the one hand, these companies provided institutional frameworks for preserving "festivals, dances, music and other customs."[121] On the other, the companies were themselves new creations without any obvious analogs in the Biafra hinterland. Additionally, the broadened identities they promoted were perfectly designed to lead recaptives to observe and absorb a wide range of cultural practices that once would have seemed foreign to them but could now be synthesized into a communal identity.[122]

Shipmates of the *Ana Maria* from smaller linguistic groups without significant numbers of "countrypeople" in Sierra Leone would have faced additional challenges. George Mackenzie, one of three speakers of the Dsekiri language in Sierra Leone, probably spoke for many such recaptives when he explained that all three had "forgotten much of their native language" after twenty–six years in the colony.[123] However, although these shipmates lacked linguistic connections, ethnolinguistic identity was not the only force that influenced the organization of the recaptives. Shipmate bonds were often forged across national and linguistic lines, and by the 1840s, there were reports of the formation of shipmate clubs and mutual aid associations including "the whole of the shipmates, without distinction of nation."[124] Regardless of whether shipmate clubs formally existed in the 1820s, the *Ana Maria* shipmates, especially those with few "national" connections, may have relied on the social ties they had made at sea for support.

While many of the *Ana Maria* shipmates would have found community through companies and communal living, some found their primary community in the towns' Christian churches. In April 1822, William Johnson reported that 378 of the 1551 people living in Regent were

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[118] Douglas Chambers, "Tracing Igbo Into the African Diaspora," in *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery*, ed. Paul Lovejoy (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 65.
[119] Chambers, "Tracing Igbo," p. 55.
[120] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 170.
[121] David Northrup, "Becoming African: Identity Formation among Liberated Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone," *Slavery and Abolition* 27, no. 1 (April 2006): p. 12.
[122] Chambers, "Tracing Igbo," p. 64.
[123] Sigismund W. Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana* (London: Church Missionary House, 1854), p. 6.
[124] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 92.

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communicants at the town's Anglican church.[125] In the village system, the roles of parish priest and superintendent were merged, meaning that Johnson and other missionaries controlled the flow of resources into the villages and their Christian life. This system often concentrated resources in the hands of church communicants, both through an all-Christian company established by Johnson in 1817,[126] and through the more informal means of people using church services as an opportunity to "come and ask me [Johnson] for clothing &c."[127]

Johnson was highly selective about allowing villagers to join the church, only baptizing those whom he believed had truly converted — often those who were most willing to adopt European practices and an intense "Protestant" work ethic. At weddings, his communicants "dressed in white gowns, black beaver hats, [and] ribbons . . . the men in blue coats, light waistcoats, frilled shirts, white neck handkerchiefs, light trowsers, white stockings, shoes, and fine hats."[128] The communicants were also expected to work for the betterment of the community of believers, and between 1818 and 1820, they built roads connecting Regent to York and Freetown.[129] The divisions between Regent's Christians and other inhabitants created clear resentments, with one group of girls affiliated with the church telling Johnson that the "other girls make too much noise, and some of them would do us bad, but they fear you."[130]

Such resentments would have been further heightened by missionary administrators' role in the punishment and control of recaptives. The colonial policy was for village superintendents to punish idle villagers by "stopping their pay (if they received any wages,) or by locking them up at night in the place used as a gaol."[131] Superintendents were also tasked with selecting overseers, most of whom would have been chosen from the "trustworthy" Christian population.[132] Despite these tensions, it would be overly simplistic to assert the existence of a strict divide between the two. One of the most common complaints in accounts from the Church Missionary Society is that it was nearly impossible to convince liberated Africans who joined the church to abandon their other companies or renounce their burial practices and other "relics of heathenism."[133] In the words of Adrian Hastings, Sierra Leone recaptives "converted themselves" on their own terms.[134] Conversion to Christianity was a

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[125] Johnson, *The Gospel in Africa*, pp. 170-171.
[126] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 172.
[127] Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery," p. 1102.
[128] Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery," p. 1104.
[129] Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery," p. 1105.
[130] Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery," p. 1104.
[131] House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," p. 28.
[132] House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," p. 28.
[133] Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 178.
[134] Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa: 1450-1950,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 451.

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process that left room for flexibility and involved incorporating African religious elements into new systems.[135] The importance of the many strategies the *Ana Maria* recaptives had developed for surviving in Sierra Leone only increased over time. In 1824, Governor Charles MacCarthy, the primary supporter of the village system, died during the First Anglo-Asante War.[136] In the aftermath of his death, colonial authorities began to adopt a policy of retrenchment in the villages. The Liberated African Department's expenses, which peaked at £41,133 in 1823, fell to just £18,201 by the end of 1825. During the same period, the amount of rice imported for provisions collapsed from 53,437 to 21,968 bushels a year.[137]

The decline of colonial support for the villages exacerbated pressures created by the inequality of land distribution in Sierra Leone. When the 1831 census was recorded, it found that approximately thirty-one percent of households in Sierra Leone's villages owned an acre of land or less.[138] For many poorer recaptives, the reduced flow of colonial resources to the villages made life untenable, and large numbers of people began moving to Freetown to find work.[139] Despite the influx of 647 recaptives to Regent between 1822 and 1826,[140] the village's population fell from 1,551 to 1,090 over the same period, with many recaptives from the *Ana Maria* likely leaving the village during these years.[141]

Some of the *Ana Maria* shipmates who remained in Regent and Gloucester must have conceived of their position similarly to one Calabar recaptive in nearby Bathurst, who explained to a missionary in 1836 that "[we] were brought to this colony to be starved to death; and that nothing was done for [us] to improve [our] condition."[142] That recaptive responded to his plight by joining Bathurst's Calabar company. The juxtaposition between colonial apathy and communal resilience in his story perfectly expresses the *Ana Maria* shipmates' lives in Sierra Leone. Although it is impossible to trace their collective lives past the 1820s, attempting to follow the *Ana Maria* recaptives from their enslavement within the Bight of Biafra through their time in Regent and Gloucester not only opens a window to their experiences, but also brings several aspects of the transatlantic slave trade into more precise focus.

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135 Northrup, "Becoming African," p. 7.
136 Scanlan, "The Colonial Rebirth of British Anti-Slavery," p. 1112.
137 House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," p. 97.
138 Stefania Galli and Klas Rönnbäck, "Land Distribution and Inequality in a Black Settler Colony: The Case of Sierra Leone, 1792-1831," *Economic History Review* 74, no. 1 (2021): p. 128.
139 House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," p. 34.
140 Slave Voyages, "African Origins — Database." Accessed May 22, https://www.slavevoyages.org/past/database.
141 House of Commons, "Report of Commissioners of Inquiry," p. 34.
142 Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone*, p. 168.

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The mixed legacy of Britain's campaign to end the slave trade comes through as a central theme. Despite the campaign's success at liberating nearly 100,000 people from slavery, as well as its contribution to eventually ending the trade altogether, many of the slave trade's markets continued as before (or, in Cuba's case, even expanded), as enslavers innovated methods to avoid the British blockade that worsened the suffering of many captives. Worse still, the British West Africa Squadron's lack of modern ships, Freetown's position as the only British court in West Africa, and British policies that continued to treat liberated Africans as property until proven otherwise contributed to recreating many of the conditions of the Middle Passage even for the people freed from the slave trade.[143]

In Sierra Leone itself, the lives of the *Ana Maria* shipmates demonstrate both how British policymakers' belief in a humanitarian mission to "civilize" Africa through hard labor and Christianity created a highly oppressive colonial regime and how shipmates were able to innovate communal strategies and identities that helped insulate them from the most severe depredations of colonial governance. Colonial administrators limited the recaptive's rights to move freely and threatened them with punishment for failing to conform to imposed labor regimens. At the same time, officials' thrift left many shipmates in perilous economic positions, especially after 1824. Nonetheless, for all the obstacles facing them, the shipmates were able to adapt a variety of responses to life in the colony, whether forming close ties with established settlers, developing communal companies that used newly broadened concepts of identity to support large groups of members, or joining churches that controlled access to many of the colony's resources.

[143] Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade," p. 64.

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