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The Slave Ship *Manuelita* and the Story of a Yoruba Community, 1833-1834

Olatunji Ojo [1]

Abstract: In 1833, a Cuban slave ship, the *Manuelita*, which embarked over 500 slaves in Lagos was seized and condemned by the Anglo-Spanish slave court. After the personal details of the Africans 'liberated' from the ship had been collected by court officials some of them were transported aboard the same ship to Trinidad as indentured workers and apprentices. Drawing on materials from the African Origins Database this paper investigates who these Africans were, where they came from, and what their stories highlight about slaving operations in the Lagos hinterland and the Americas in the age of abolition.

Keywords: slave trade, Cuba, Yoruba.

O Navio Negreiro Manuelita e a Estória de Uma Comunidade Iorubá, 1833-1834

Resumo: Em 1833, um navio negreiro cubano, o *Manuelita*, que embarcou mais de 500 escravos em Lagos, foi capturado e condenado pela corte de comissão mista anglo-espanhola. Após a informação pessoal dos africanos "liberados: do navio foi coletada pelos oficiais da corte, alguns deles foram transportados no mesmo navio para Trinidad como aprendizes e trabalhadores compulsórios por tempo determinado. Baseando-se em informações do banco de dados Origens Africanas, este artigo buscar examinar quem eram esses africanos, de onde eles vieram, e o que a estória deles traz à luz sobre as operações escravistas no interior de Lagos e nas América durante o período da abolição.

Palavras-chave: tráfico de escravos, Cuba, Iorubá.

On June 17, 1833, the *Manuelita* (voyage database #1298), “a beautiful large 2-topsail” Spanish-Uruguay schooner, “drawing 17 feet water” left Havana, Cuba with a cargo of dry goods, *aguardiente*, gunpowder, and papers to buy slaves in São Tomé off the coast of Gabon. The ship’s trade permits and itinerary were unlike many others in the age of abolition. The papers stipulated permission to trade south of the equator though the intended destination was indeed to the north. On board was a 34-man crew – twenty men and fourteen boys – led by Captain Don Jose de Cano Garay, a 50-year old American from New Orleans but resident in Havana. It is unclear if he was the same J. Garay, the captain of another Spanish ship, *Segunda Tentativa* (voyage #1252), a 120-ton ship with a 36-man crew that left Havana on October 1, 1831 and returned on July 19, 1832 with 430 slaves embarked in Lagos.² If they were indeed the same person, then Garay had good knowledge of trade around Lagos. Moreover, papers found on the ship including the trade permit, muster-roll, and log-book all showed Garay as no ordinary slave captain. He was also the “Owner and Supercargo...as well as Captain and Mate” of the *Manuelita*. Did he build on his knowledge of Lagos trade in choosing to trade in his own right rather than work for another merchant? The second mate, Don Genaro de Garay, was a 48-year old native of Biscay, a suburb of San Tusce (perhaps Santursi), married, and a Catholic.³ After making a brief stop on the island of São Tome, in order to procure water and give the appearance of trading in Central Africa, Captain Garay steered the ship north to Lagos where it discharged its cargo of Euro-American goods.⁴

After embarking with 523 slaves, the *Manuelita* departed Lagos on October 30, 1833 shortly after which she was chased by an unidentified vessel most likely belonging to the British anti-slavery squadron. The *Manuelita* might have been upgraded if not a new ship. It was a fast sailing ship especially after discarding its guns perhaps to reduce weight and quicken speed. According to British officials in Havana the *Manuelita* was “the finest schooner,

² *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*. See <http://slavevoyages.org/voyage/1252/variables>

³ The National Archives, Kew (hereafter, TNA), FO84/137, “Declaration by Lt. Charles Bolton, Commander of *HMS Nimble* on December 7, 1833” in W. S. Macleay and Charles Mackenzie to Palmerston, Dec. 20, 1833; Bolton to Count Fernandina and other Members of the Mixed Commission, Havana, Dec. 11, 1833. These archival documents and others used here are reprinted in *British Parliamentary Papers, vol. LI: Accounts and Papers, 1835*, p. 74-94. Since the captain and shipmate had the same last name they might be brothers running a family business. Also, the Voyages database shows the *Manuelita* might not be new to the African market. A ship with the same name and rig bought slaves in Africa at various times between 1829 and 1832. See Voyages #768, 957, 1240 and 5000. When another Cuban ship, the *Carolina* (vid. 2440) was detained by the British navy shortly after loading 350 slaves in Lagos in Feb 1834, she had on board, as passengers to Cuba, the Third mate and seven of the sailors of a recently condemned Spanish brig, *Pantica* (vid. 2441) who came aboard at São Tomé. See TNA, FO84/137, enclosure in desp. 22, William Smith and H. W. Macaulay to Palmerston, March 26, 1834.

⁴ The slave vessel, *Carolina*, under Captain Jum Pinto used the same ruse. It was furnished with a licence, dated March 17, 1832, and by it she was authorized to buy slaves in São Tomé (also called St. Thomas). Having touched at Príncipe (Princes Island) for water and provisions, the ship headed north to Lagos. She embarked 350 slaves and left Lagos on Feb. 16, 1834 shortly after which she was captured and brought to Sierra Leone on March 13, 1834. See TNA, FO84/137, Smith and Macaulay to Palmerston, March 22 and 26, 1834.

and fastest sailing vessel engaged in the slave trade.”⁵ Yet, the voyage ended a failure. Five weeks later, on December 7, after a seven-hour pursuit, a British anti-slavery naval ship, *HMS Nimble*, under Lieutenant Charles Bolton, detained the *Manuelita* near Isle of Pines in Cuba, which Bolton described as “The great resort for vessels engaged in the illicit traffic of slaves”⁶ and brought it to Havana with 485 slaves the remaining 38 slaves having died during the *middle passage*. Two weeks later the ship was condemned by the Havana-based Anglo-Spanish Court of Mixed Commission and the slaves liberated.⁷ Perhaps more interesting is that court records show all the surviving 477 slaves (another eight slaves four of whom were identified as two men and two boys were sick and hospitalized upon arrival of the ship) listed their homeland or nation as Lucumi Ecomosho.⁸ Although Lucumi has multiple meanings in Cuba, sometimes broadly referring to West African slaves, by the nineteenth century it applied more specifically to Yoruba-speaking slaves.

Drawing on the *African Origins* database among other records this article seeks to establish who these slaves were, their homeland, the circumstances of their enslavement, and what their experiences of enslavement show about the socio-political and commercial organization and identity issues in early nineteenth century Yorubaland. Finally, the paper uses the experiences of the slaves to reengage the discourse on Yoruba (Lucumi) identity in the Americas, especially the notion of fictive kinships formed aboard slave ships and on slave plantations. Unlike cases of ‘fictive kin’ whereby people often unknown to each other became allies after sailing on the same ship or through common experience of enslavement on slave plantations, the slaves on the *Manuelita* had ties predating their enslavement (Hawthorne, 2008, Borucki, 2013). In addition to sharing common experiences of bondage including sailing in the same ship, they also came from the same town. Many must have known each other and perhaps had family ties. Such pre-slavery ties had implications for the formation of social affinities and identity formation in the Americas. Divided into two parts, part one situates the recruitment of *Manuelita* slaves within the shifting political, economic, political and commercial terrains in early nineteenth century Yorubaland. The second section discusses the condemnation of the vessel by the Havana anti-slavery court and the ‘disposal’ of liberated ‘Lucumi-Ecomosho’ in Trinidad.

⁵ TNA, FO84/137, Macleay and Mackenzie to Palmerston, Dec. 20, 1833.

⁶ TNA, FO84/137, ‘Bolton to His Majesty’s Commissary Judge, Havana, Dec. 7, 1833,’ enclosure #61 in Macleay and Mackenzie to Palmerston, Dec. 16, 1833.

⁷ TNA, FO84/137, El Conde de Fernandina, W. S. Macleay and Juan Francisco Cascales, “*Sentence in the case of the ‘Manuelita’*,” Dec. 17, 1833,” enclosure 4 in dispatch 62, Macleay to Palmerston, Dec. 20, 1833. On the Havana court, see: (Martinez-Fernandez, 1995; Martinez-Fernandez, 2009; Bethell, 1966; Nwokeji and Eltis, 2002; H. Lovejoy, 2010; H. Lovejoy, 2016).

⁸ See TNA, FO84/137, “Declaration by Bolton, Dec. 9, 1833.”

Slavery and Enslavement in Yorubaland, c. 1800–1833

The rise of the Lagos slave port in the 1790s drew Yorubaland intimately into the slave trade. It spread the frontiers of slave raiding and violence further into the interior. Warfare and slave raids and the attendant movement of populations had far-reaching consequences on the Yoruba country. Slave trading and violence were mutually reinforcing. Demand for slaves heightened interstate rivalries and warfare, fractured states, weakened civilian chiefs, boosted soldiering, and pitted military officers against their civilian counterparts. Slaving operations also led to a culture of conspicuous consumption among Yoruba freebooters, heightened ethnic and social tension, encouraged large scale enslavement, and put intense pressures on resources by displaced populations. Ecomosho, the homeland identified by the 477 recaptives taken from the *Manuelita*, was one of the communities affected by these disruptions.

Socio-political developments in the hinterland underpinned why Lagos emerged as a major trade port. The outbreak of an Islamic revolution in the Central Sudan in the late eighteenth century revived debates about slavery and slaving operations in the ‘Nigerian’ hinterland. The debate focused on the legality of slavery, who could be enslaved or not and when enslavement was justifiable. Of special interest were slaves whose captivity coincided with the increased wave of Islamic revival in Africa. The supply of these slaves did not come out of Oyo’s expansion into central Sudan but as a result of internal wars among the various Hausa states. The number of slaves, obviously in thousands, so affected the Muslim community that the sale of Muslim slaves to “Yoruba infidels” became one of the impulses for the southward extension of the Sokoto jihad (1804–1830s). Muslim leaders defined and propagated laws regulating who could be enslaved and why. They condemned the enslavement of Muslims and their sale to and service under Yoruba/Orisa and Euro-Christian slaveholders (Fisher, 1988; Lovejoy, 2000; Lofkrantz, 2011; Lofkrantz and Ojo, 2012.).

A war led by Usman dan Fodio broke out in 1804 after decades of intense social tensions in Hausaland resulting from the enslavement of freeborn Muslims, which Fodio and his followers considered illegal under Islamic law. Over the next two decades the war spread throughout the Central Sudan, producing thousands of slaves annually many of whom were sold through Yorubaland and by Yoruba merchants into the Atlantic trade (Arnett, 1922: 16; Adamu, 1979; Lovejoy, 1994). Biographies of Central Sudanese slaves collected in Brazil and Africa between 1819 and 1850 by José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, a Portuguese naturalist and politician, Menèzes de Drummond and Francis de Castelnau both French scholars and politicians, as well German linguist, Sigismund Koelle, all highlight the role of the jihad as a cause of enslavement. These narratives provide the names, age, sex, modes of enslavement, slave route from the interior to the coast, religion and in some cases path to freedom of the slaves. Bernard was a Hausa trader from Gobir kidnapped while traveling to a salt

market near the desert and moved to the coast. His route passed through Gobir, Yauri, Nupe (Rabah?), Yerabah (Old Oyo), Fugah (Ilorin), and Aianschi (Ajase Ipo) to Ijebu. Finally, he was sold to a Portuguese trader at Agaey (Ijaye, a lagoon port). The journey took five and a half months' journey with allowance to rest for only one day a week, and sometimes less (Drummond, 1826: 290-324; Castelnau, 1851: 5-48; Koelle, 1854a: 8-18).⁹

By instituting wedges between 'outsiders' or non-kin who could be enslaved and protected 'kin' or 'insiders' slavery espoused 'otherness' and identity profiling. To enslave an 'insider' was illegal. The enslaveable were people whose cultural and physiological markers such as body marks, names, faith, and ethnicity or political loyalties differed from the enslaver (Law, 2003; Lovejoy, 2000; Curto, 2003; Thornton, 2010; and Ojo, 2013). During the eighteenth century, a popular idea among the Oyo was that their Ijesa neighbors to the southeast were "strange people of bad repute...with a language somewhat difficult and liable to suspicion" emblemized group profiling.¹⁰ To this effect, they corrupted Ijesa to *ije orisa* (food for the gods) and hunted them for slaves. With no consensus on the meaning of Yoruba identity or citizenship rights and no state capable of maintaining order, the period 1790-1840 was marked by incessant violence which fed slaves into the Atlantic trade.

Not every slave imported into Yorubaland entered the Atlantic trade. Those left behind were employed as soldiers, farmers, manufacturers, physicians, and horse-keepers. Therefore, Hausa slaves awaiting shipment or sale further south were found scattered in towns along major trade routes connecting the Central Sudan to Lagos and other ports in the Bight of Benin. Hausa slaves had some unique features. Most professed Islam, a faith that gave them an ideological justification against enslavement. Such captives viewed their enslavement as unlawful, especially when held by non-Muslims. This created conflicts between Hausa slaves and their Yoruba owners. As Jennifer Lofkrantz and Paul Lovejoy note Muslim merchants in West Africa could have sold more slaves into the Atlantic market but they did not because of state restrictions to selling slaves to Europeans/Christians. Hence, most slaves in the Atlantic trade came from non-Muslim states while enslaved Muslims were either sold locally or into the Saharan trade (Lofkrantz and Lovejoy, 2015).

In 1817, one such ideological conflict in Yorubaland developed into an open revolt. An Ilorin-based party led by the army chief, Afonja, and supported by Muslim preachers staged a military coup. They attacked the capital, Old Oyo, seized control of military camps in the northern and eastern parts of the kingdom and declared Ilorin an independent state. To cause more chaos in the kingdom, the rebels vowed to welcome anyone who would fight against the capital. The plot worked. Over the next few years many slaves, including Hausa

⁹ On references to Ilorin either as "Affaga" or "the town of Afonja," see: (Lockhart and Lovejoy, 2005: 270, 303).

¹⁰ Nigeria National Archives Ibadan (hereafter, NAI), CMS (Y) 1/7/5, J. B. Wood, 'Visit to Kiriji Camp in March 1885' and Johnson, 1976 [1921], p. 21, 282.

slaves, who as cavalry men constituted the best fighting unit in Oyo, deserted, many fleeing with their horses. From Ilorin, Afonja's forces began a piecemeal conquest of Oyo kingdom and other Yoruba-speaking states. By 1830, most Oyo towns had fallen, many of its people enslaved, and the survivors taking refuge among the southern Yoruba states of Egba and Ife.¹¹ The linkage between political violence in Yorubaland and the rise of the port of Lagos is evident in Samuel Johnson's remark that, "confiscation and slavery for the slightest offence became matters of daily occurrence" (Johnson, 1921: 188).

Locating Ecomosho

The search for the homeland of Ecomosho is relatively difficult given the scarcity of materials. Nonetheless there are some clues to work with. One of the working assumptions is to tie the enslavement of this group to violence, especially warfare in Yorubaland and possibly the same region based on their names. The demographic profile of the group suggests they might have been caught during a pitched battle and hurriedly marched to the coast. Coincidentally, we know of two Yoruba wars fought on the eve of the *Manuelita's* departure from Lagos in areas associated with names similar to Ecomosho. Were these victims of both or one of these battles? In northern Yorubaland there was a series of clashes between Oyo and Ilorin forces during which the latter sacked some towns including the capital, Old Oyo, Kanla, Gbogun, Ikoyi and Akese all located to the west and northwest of modern Ilorin and Ogbomoso. After a careful analysis of the Yoruba wars, Robin Law thinks these cities fell between 1831 and 1833 (Johnson, 1921: 218-22; Law, 1970). The other was a war in the south fought around 1833 during which Oyo forces seized Ibadan and resulted in the final destruction of Owu. To date I have found only one reference to "Ekbomoso" which must have been another rendition of Ecomosho. In 1839/1840, a Paris-based French anthropologist, Marie D'Avezac Macaya, met and interviewed, Osifekunde, an Ijebu-Yoruba slave (Joaquim in Brazil) who had moved to France with his master two years earlier from Brazil. The conversation took place over a couple of months and yielded rich information on Ijebu society first visited by Europeans traders around 1500 but unexplored until after 1850 (d'Avezac-Macaya, 1845). On communication around Ijebu Osifekunde described a route from central Yorubaland to the Ijebu lagoon port of Ikorodu:

a very long day's journey (c.15 miles) brings one to Eremo [Remo], a dependency of Ijebu. Its first town is Ikbore [Igbore], then two long days' march to Oko, and two more long days to Ikrekou [Ikereku], ... in the territory of

¹¹ Church Missionary Society Archives (hereafter, CMS) CA2/1/079, Samuel Crowther to William Jowett, CMS Secretary, Fourah Bay, Feb. 22, 1937; Koelle, 1854b, p. 248-56; Johnson, 1921, p. 178-283; Atanda, 1971; Law, 1970; Law, 1977, p. 245-302; Abimbola, 1964; Babayemi, 1968 and Babayemi, 1971.

Remo. Still farther, four or five hours are enough to reach Ekbomoso, an Oyo town three days from Oukbo [Ijebu Igbo]. Three days beyond Ekbomoso is Ekboumou [Apomu?], an important market town which belongs to the brother of the king of Ijebu (d'Avezac-Macaya, 1845: 36).¹²

On the basis of similar spellings, distance, and description of “Ekbomoso” as “an Oyo town” Peter Lloyd identifies the town with Ogbomoso, half-way between Oyo and Ilorin (Lloyd, 1960 and 1967: 246-50). But this interpretation is inconsistent with other information from Osifekunde. For instance, he described “Ekbomoso” as half way between Ijebu Igbo and Apomu. D'Avesac interviewed Osifekunde several times to verify his data and rule out internal contradictions. Therefore it is reasonable to think either d'Avesac or his publisher misconstrued Osifekunde's recollections by changing 'h' to 'b', hence rendering 'Echomoshu' as Ekbomoso. It is doubtful if Osifekunde, a well-travelled trader, would confuse a town some 30 miles north of Ijebu with another located more than a hundred miles away. It also seems implausible that, as a trader, he would not have mentioned such large market towns like Ede and Iwo, both located along the Ijebu-Ogbomoso road, if his reference was to Ogbomoso. Moreover, he witnessed the beginning of the Owu wars in which Ijebu fighters were involved and probably served alongside Owu slaves during his two decades of enslavement in Brazil from about 1820 to 1837/38.

Furthermore, Lloyd also ignores Osifekunde's claim that “Ekbomoso” was only four to five hours (i.e. 10-13) miles beyond Ikereku and near River Osun. The shortest distance between Remo and Ogbomoso and Ogbomoso and Osun was about 90 and 40 miles respectively. These details put the town (Ecomoshu) near the Ijebu, Owu and Ife border. It is unclear if Lloyd's mistake came from d'Avesac's understanding of the Yoruba drainage system: “Many ... rivers water and fertilize [Ijebu]. The most important is the Ochou [Oshun], which comes from ... the Oyo country, where it is called “Ichery.” It is already a large stream at Ecomoshu and too large to be forded at “Oukbo.” It crosses Remo and empties into the lagoon at Ikorodu” (Lloyd, 1967: 246-50). Lloyd is right that the “description of the courses of major rivers is very muddled. It is the Ogun which rises in Oyo and merges into the lagoon near Ikorodu. The Osun rises beyond Oshogbo, passing twenty miles east of Ibadan to reach the lagoon near Epe” (Lloyd, 1967: 250, n. 91). However, one might blame d'Avesac for misunderstanding what Osifekunde, an Ijebu-Yoruba speaker, said in Creole Portuguese. The reference was not to a river but two -- Ogun and Osun. River Osun rises in Ekiti and runs through Osogbo, Ikire and Ijebu Igbo before joining the lagoon at Epe. On the other hand, River Ogun rises in northern Oyo and flows through Abeokuta before entering the lagoon at Ikorodu. The claim that River Osun joined the lagoon at Ikorodu was a misunderstanding of Osifekunde's testimony. Osifekunde's reference was to another stream,

¹² In reality, Igboire, Oko and Ikereku were Egba and not Remo towns. Osifekunde took these routes during trade itineraries so his estimates of time and place must have included numerous stoppages.

Osun, which joined River Ogun at Iseri village, north of Lagos and west of Ikorodu. Hence, in Awori district, Ogun is also called Iseri and Osun and the village as Iseri Osun (d'Avesac-Macaya, 1845: 9-10). Thus, we must concentrate the search for Ecomosho, the source of *Manuelita* slaves, in southern Yorubaland where he knew so well. As we will see below, Osifekunde can be supplemented by Samuel Johnson, the historian of the Yoruba who lived in and around Ibadan from 1858 until his death in 1901 and who collected oral traditions on the Yoruba wars in the 1870s through 1897 (Falola, 1993; Olabimtan, 2013).

Slavery and Political Implosion in Southern Yorubaland

In the late eighteenth century political instability in the Oyo heartland redirected trade into non-Oyo territories. One of the new routes passed through central Yorubaland linking Ilorin to Owu, Ife, Ondo and Ijebu, and through the lagoon to Lagos. Near the Owu-Ife border where the new north-south route crossed the east-west Yoruba route from Ile-Ife to Ibadan emerged the market town of Apomu where slaves including many Oyo captives were bought by Ijebu traders in exchange for cowries, foodstuff, textiles, and after 1820, firearms and tobacco. Commercial expansion, especially the slave trade led to competition for the control of Apomu by surrounding states: Ife, Owu, Ijebu, Egba, and Oyo. It also increased banditry attacks against Oyo traders. Oyo chiefs decided to stop the attack on their citizens so they sought help from Owu thereby leading to Owu attacking nearby Ife villages blamed for victimizing Oyo traders (Johnson, 1921: 188-89).

Because the troubles around Apomu and growing tension between Owu and Ife coincided with the southward push of the displaced Oyo population in search of new homes, there was a larger implosion of social conflicts in central Yorubaland. As Oyo refugees pushed into northern Egba towns and positioned themselves toward playing greater roles in the Atlantic trade, they faced the forest states of Egba and Ijebu as barriers. Around 1817, Oyo refugees and bandits joined Ijebu and Ife in another assault on Owu. After five years of fighting Owu was destroyed and its inhabitants enslaved or forced to seek refuge in neighboring Egba, Ijebu and Ife towns.¹³

During the war, Owu was supported by some Egba towns such as Ikija. Hence, the Oyo/Ife/Ijebu forces destroyed Ikija and nearby towns between 1822 and 1824. Subsequently the victors, as well as Owu refugees seeking new homes, found excuses to attack other Egba towns

¹³ CMS, CA1/O6/53, "A Brief Memoir of the late Peter Wilson member of Kissy Road Church"; Methodist Missionary Society Archives (MMS) Sierra Leone Correspondence, 'Memoir of Charles Harding,' Fiche #25, Box 280 and MMS Sierra Leone Correspondence, "Sierra Leone Odds papers," fiche #1880, #6; NAI, IbaProf 1/1/135, A. H. Dulton, "Reports on Orile-Owu Chieftaincy Dispute, Jan 10, 1938, 77, see (Mabogunje and Omer-Cooper, 1971; Law, 1973; Johnson, 1921: 189, 206-07; Akinwale, 1987). Also see traditions cited in (Warner-Lewis, 2000). I thank Richard Anderson for granting me permission to use the Missionary Missionary Papers.

often times aided by rival Egba towns supporting against their neighbors. Thus, the people of Kemta, Iporo, and Emere aided Owu refugees against Kesi around 1824 while Idomapa joined the Ife-Ijebu-Oyo alliance against its neighbor, Orun around 1827.¹⁴ A participant in the war, Chief Ogunbona of Abeokuta, remembered that “[a]fter the fall of Owu ... Ikija was the next attacked, the reason alleged being...the latter having assisted the former during the siege.” At the same time, he conceded that in 1826 remnants of Ikija people supported the invaders against Ikereku whom they blamed for instigating the destruction of their town (Irvin, 1856: 224). By 1827 most southern Egba towns had fallen. However, Edward Irving of the Church Missionary Society who toured Owu and Egba ruins in 1854/1855 noted that fighters were interested in issues beyond vengeance or retaliation. There was also an economic factor—desire for loot. He wrote “when an army has been for years in the field, without moral check, ill-fitted for peace, and for so long and inured to plunder and a lawless life, but little excuse is necessary to cover a deed of violence.”¹⁵ This was very true of the Ife/Oyo alliance. Bedeviled by personality clashes and ethnic rivalry they split into two camps. A group led by an Ife army chief, Maye Okunade, occupied Iporo, an Egba town. The other party, composed mostly of Oyo and Ijebu fighters came under Labosinde, an Ife officer with maternal ties to Oyo, settled at the nearby Ijebu town of Ipara and later Isara. From their posts, Maye and Labosinde sacked numerous Egba and Ijebu Remo towns enumerated at about 150 between 1823 and 1827. They mostly sold their captives to Ijebu traders who sold captives to European traders in Lagos.¹⁶ However, tension between Maye and Labosinde was deeper than they might have thought. Only their physical separation at Iporo and Isara and a common enemy in Egba and common pursuit of military success and profit from banditry and the slave trade guaranteed peace. The tension would resume in the future.

After completing the destruction of southern Egba and Owu towns, the allies occupied Ibadan in northern Egba, where they established a military-style administrative system led by senior army officers from Ife, Ijebu and Oyo and their Egba supporters. These were later joined by waves of Oyo refugees from northern Yorubaland. According to Ibadan tradition, Ife people were the majority in the camp, hence their leader, Maye Okunade, became the army chief and leader of this garrison town. His immediate deputy was another Ife man, Labosinde. Lakanle, a veteran Oyo officer became leader of Oyo settlers. The Oyos and Ifes settled in the middle of the town around the main market (now Oja’ba), the Ijebus in the south, while remnants of the Egba population settled in the west (Akinyele, 1980 [1911]: 26-27).

¹⁴ CMS, CA2/O85b, Henry Townsend, journal, December 23, 1847. The attack on Kesi is partly attributed to decision not to sell food to others during the war. See (Ajisafe, 1964).

¹⁵ See “The sufferings and deliverance of James Gerber, a twice-liberated African,” *Church Missionary Gleaner* 1 (1850-51): 20-23; CMS, CA2/O49, David Hinderer, journal, Dec. 15, 1854; CMS, CA2/O85a, Henry Townsend, journal, Dec. 23, 1847. See also (Irvin, 1856: 224; Mabogunje & Omer-Cooper, 1971: 63; Johnson, 1921: 224; Euler Ajayi, 1905).

¹⁶ On the fall of Egba towns, see CMS CA2/O61, Thomas King, journal, April 7, 1850; “Story of William Moore” in (Barber, 1853: 125-30) and (Curtin, 1967b: 317-333). See also Champness, journal, Sept-Dec 1863, in (Champness, 1907: 105-106) and (Irving, 1856: 65-72, 93-96, 117-20; Ajisafe, 1964).

Before long, it became clear that this was an unworkable arrangement especially for a military council whose members' ethics centered on individual achievements and freedom from traditions rather than deference to a constituted authority (Akinyele, 1980 [1911]: 27-29). Power struggles among council members, mistrust, and rapidly changing demography coupled with ethnic, religious and sharp ideological struggles led to troubles. For instance, there were those for whom Ibadan was no more than a refugee camp or temporary military encampment needing no formal administrative system. For others, Ibadan was going to be their permanent abode. The former, represented by Ife and Ijebu leaders, joined the alliance and came to Ibadan because of the profit from banditry. They had no intention of transforming Ibadan into a permanent town or giving protection to the many Oyo refugees flocking into the town daily. The refugees were viewed as potential slaves. On the other side of the debate were Oyo people whose towns had been destroyed. They wanted Ibadan and other towns similarly occupied by Oyo refugees as permanent homes and sought to defend their followers from enslavement and extortion. With no place to call home and the fear of been driven from Ibadan back into the hands of their biggest nemesis — Sokoto warriors — the need to defend Ibadan became a matter of life and death. Disagreements between these military and ethnic factions made governance difficult if not impossible. In some cases, in its early days, the Ibadan political scene resembled gangland politics; where personal and group rivalry and civil uprising were rampant, and army officers operated like mobsters. Kidnappers operated freely. Johnson writes:

violence, oppression, robbery, man-stealing were the order of the day. A special gag was invented for the mouth...to prevent any one stolen from crying out and being discovered by his friends. No one dared go out at dusk for the men-stealers were out already prowling about for their prey. ... So bad were those days ... and so callous had the people become that if a woman or a child was heard to cry out "Egba mi, won mu mi o" (O help me, I am taken) the usual answer from indoors was "Maha ba a lo" (Go with him) (Johnson, 1921: 245-46).

Within three years, the administrative arrangement caved under the pressure of ethnic and factional conflicts between a predominant Oyo population and a ruling class of Ife army officers. The immediate roots of the collapse stemmed from accusations of arrogance and ethnic bias by senior council members. Specifically, Maye was accused of favoring Ife people in legal matters. Oyo traditions describe Maye as a "bold and brave" man but "of an irritable temper, in manners rough and domineering, and never failed at all times to show his contempt for the Oyos, chiefly because they were homeless refugees." One day, two men, one Oyo and the other an Owu got into a fight over a piece of land. Maye sided with the Owu man, and in a rage, beheaded the Oyo man. An onlooker raised alarm that Maye had decreed that all Oyo men must be killed thereby forcing Oyo people to declare war on their

Ife. In the ensuing civil war Maye and his supporters were expelled from Ibadan (Johnson, 1921: 224-25, 238-39).

Unwilling to give up the fight Maye mobilized his supporters for what Oyo people presumed would be retaliation. According to Oyo traditions, he sought alliance with remnants of Owu and Egba from neighboring towns. Over the next few weeks, rumors of Maye's sightings spread quickly. Some claimed to have seen him raising an army at Abeokuta and others at nearby Egba towns like Ilugun and Idomapa, then at Ijebu, and later at Erunmu, an Owu town to the northeast of Ibadan (Johnson, 1921: 240). These traditions attest to a sense of fear and insecurity among Oyo settlers. It was no longer whether war would come but when it would begin? Who would fire the first shot? And how and when the war would end? For both sides, the rejection of the rival party created ethnic solidarity. At Ile-Ife, exiles from Ibadan whipped up anti-Oyo sentiments and demanded revenge on Oyo people. One tradition notes they were enslaved and made "hewers of wood and drawers of water...[and were] treated ... little better than...dogs" (Johnson, 1921: 230-33, 239, 525-26).

The Making of Ecomosho Slaves

After efforts to reconcile the parties failed war broke out in 1833. Oyo traditions accused Maye and his supporters of starting the war by kidnapping Oyo traders purchasing food near Ile-Ife. Such attacks, if true, constituted calculated efforts to cut off food supplies to Ibadan and to weaken the fighting spirit of its people. Maye's plan was to attack Ibadan from the south, hence he encamped at Idomapa, where he was joined by Egba fighters led by Degesin and Oginni. On the other hand, at Ibadan, Oyo settlers also called on other Oyo communities for support, hence, soldiers came from as far as Ijaye, Ede and Iwo where many Oyo refugees had settled since the 1790s. Ibadan forces lost the first round of battle partly because as Muslims, some soldiers were reluctant to fight on Friday, the Muslim holy day. The tide of war changed when an experienced Oyo soldier, Chief Kurunmi, who some years earlier had led Oyo refugees and bandits to seize the Egba town of Ijaye, urged Ibadan soldiers to ignore religious sentimentalities and fight with everything they had. In his words "[i]t is true Fridays are inauspicious, but it is only so to aggressors, not to defenders of hearth and home" (Johnson, 1921: 240).

Buoyed by support of veteran Oyo soldiers' courage and the desperation to stay alive, the Ibadan army reengaged the enemy at a battle fought near Idi Esu (now called Orita Challenge New Motor Park). The battle was hot and the rivals fought with everything they had including machetes, arrows, swords and firearms. When Ibadan forces ran out of firearms or bullets they relied on their large numbers and sheer bravery. Many times the soldiers discarded their weapons and physically tackled enemy soldiers before they could load their

weapons or take accurate shots. This fighting tactic gave the war the name *Gbanamu* (grasping fire). Johnson writes, “[r]ushing upon their assailant’s sword in hand and grasping the barrel of the gun, the Ibadans averted the fatal discharge of the weapon while using swords and cutlasses with effect.” (Akinyele, 1980; Johnson, 1921: 240). After an intense fight Maye was defeated. Many of his fighters were either killed or enslaved and others fled. With victory at *Gbanamu* Oyo forces turned against remnants of Owu and Ife forces barricaded at Erunmu, the last Owu town.¹⁷ As the besiegers could neither force the gates nor scale the walls, they were content to reducing the town through starvation. They cut off access to Owu farms and neighboring markets. Johnson describes how hunger forced Erunmu people to eat “[t]he most disgusting creatures...and even greedily devoured in order to sustain life.” Here Maye and his supporters were captured and later killed (Johnson, 1921: 240-244).

From Erunmu Oyo forces went on to sack other Ife towns like Apomu, Ipetumodu and Ikire from where Maye’s soldiers came. Since nearly every slave aboard the *Manuelita* had names common to central Yorubaland and specifically to Ife and Owu it is plausible these were victims of either the *Gbanamu* or Erunmu war. Coincidentally, Johnson collected information about a pitched battle contemporaneous to both wars. In his words, “the Ijebus now declared war against Owu, and crossing the Osun River, encamped at the farm of one Oso” (Johnson, 1921: 208). While some scholars have questioned aspects of Johnson’s chronology of the Yoruba wars, he has been celebrated for having “a superb sense of history.” J. F. Ajayi writes “the knitting together of many strands of an event into a connected history, he [Johnson] found difficult; but the story of each episode he knew how to tell very well” (Ajayi, 1963; Akinjogbin, 1966; Smith, 1969: 148-152; Law, 1970). Although Johnson placed the battle of Oko Oso during the Owu war, phonetic similarity between Ecomosho and Oko Oso would suggest it occurred a decade later and was the source of the slaves on the *Manuelita*. Moreover, the Owu and Erunmu wars were no more than separate phases of a prolonged war (c.1817-1833/34) with the same set of actors. Kurumi received much praise for his role in the war for which his admirers and praise singers composed a poem in his honor “O pa Maye, o pa Ogin, o pa Degesin, o fi oko ti Ife laya” (he killed Maye, Ogin and Degesin, and plunges his spear into the chests of Ife fighters) (Johnson, 1921: 242). The war transformed Ibadan into an Oyo-Yoruba town and a new super power in Yoruba power politics.

From Oko Oso/Ecomosho to Havana: Movers of the Manuelita Slaves

Ecomosho slaves reached the coast through the popular central Yoruba slave route. The route led from Ilorin and along the Owu/Ife/Osun border to the Ijebu lagoon port towns of Ikosi or Ikorodu and on the lagoon to Lagos. The lagoon facilitated the easy and quick movement

¹⁷ Erunmu is to the northeast of Ibadan.

of goods from the hinterland, and as the only outlet to the sea in the Yoruba region, Lagos was a trade receptacle. According to George Robertson, a British trader, Lagos became a major port “as it lies between the...branches of the Niger and [Dahomian] trade.... The inhabitants are already disposed to ... industry” (Robertson, 1819: 290–91).

The delivery of Ecomosho slaves to Lagos was the handiwork of Ijebu traders who managed the coastal zone of slave trafficking between Makun and Lagos and along trade routes linking Ijebu to Ibadan and Ife. As noted above, trade rivalry between Ijebu, Owu and Ife traders was at the root of the Owu and Egba wars in the 1820s. Subsequently, Ijebu forces joined the allies in attacking Remo towns for no other reason other than to remove the nearest trade rival and secure control of Yoruba coastal trade. Thus, with the destruction of Ife towns in 1833, Ijebu traders secured virtual monopoly of the Yoruba slave trade.¹⁸ Like the Aro traders in the Bight of Biafra, Ijebu traders were dispersed all over Yorubaland especially in major trade towns and near war camps, hence the foundation of Ijebu trade colonies at Ipara, Isara, Ibadan and Ile-Ife in the 1820s and 1830s. The system facilitated a relay trade whereby commodities crossed ethnic boundaries freely. As is evident in many slave narratives, slaves were moved in batches from the interior to Lagos, staying for short periods at various hinterland trade ports. After his enslavement at Osogun around March 1821, Ajayi, later Samuel Crowther, was taken to the captors’ camp at Iseyin, about twenty miles north of Osogun, where he became the property of an army officer who sold him for a horse. After two months he was transferred from Iseyin to Dada, then to Ijaye, a market town patronized by Oyo and Egba traders. Here, Ajayi was bought by an Oyo woman and taken towards Badagry. From Ijaye, Ajayi and her female owner made a number of stops, perhaps for trade purposes. For instance, they stopped for three months at Itoko-Egba, where Ajayi contemplated suicide. Afraid she might lose her slave cum investment the woman sold Ajayi at Ikereku-Iwere (near Ibadan) to Ijebu slave traders. Around December 1821, Ajayi was transported on a canoe from the Ijebu port of Ikosi to Lagos where he was purchased by a Portuguese trader. Ajayi and 186 other slaves were held in chains for three to four months prior to boarding the *Esperanca Feliz* for Brazil on April 7, 1822 before being intercepted at sea.¹⁹ Another Yoruba child slave, Joseph Wright, was held in Lagos for two months. Both boys (Ajayi and Wright) linked their long pre-embarkation detention in Lagos to rumors that a British anti-slavery naval ship was patrolling off the coast of Lagos. This prevented slave ships from docking in Lagos. When the slave ships finally arrived embarkation was quick with hungry slaves been forced unto the ships (Curtin, 1967b: 330–31). This pattern of boarding slaves, especially long detention in secluded posts pending the arrival of slave ships and hurried boarding without food or water was common during the clandestine slave trade when slaves were sometimes held on shore for up to nine months or

¹⁸ CMS, CA2/O49b, Hinderer, journal, Aug. 26, 1853.

¹⁹ CMS, CA2/1/O79, Crowther to Jowett, Feb. 22, 1837.

more before embarkation (Ojo, 2012; Ojo, 2015: 12). This often forced slavers to ration food thereby increasing the chances of hunger, malnutrition and death.

In other cases, however, the interval between seizure and embarkation for the Americas was short. Thomas King, a Yoruba boy, was seized at the fall of Emere-Egba in November 1825. The captors and their prisoners left Emere “about three the next morning for the captors camp at Iporo.”²⁰ The route to Iporo passed through Kesi, destroyed in 1823. About nine in the morning the party arrived at Kemta, which fell two days before Emere. At Iporo, the captives were detained for five days after which King was sold to a Muslim trader, who took him first to Ikereku-Idan (big Ikereku) and later Oko and into the hands of long distance slave traders. Less than a week later he was sold to a Spanish trader in Lagos and embarked on a ship for Cuba within a month. He also was recaptured on the sea and landed in Sierra Leone.²¹

Demography of Ecomosho Slaves

The *Manuelita* was condemned ten days after its capture and a register of the slaves aboard was compiled two weeks later. Like similar registers clerks of the Mixed Commission Court gathered personal details of the recently liberated Africans – African name, sex, estimated age, height, country of origin and description (body scars). But the court added its own facts. For instance, each of the Ecomosho slaves also received a Christian name (unclear if the baptismal ceremony took place in a church or on court premise) and unique identity numbers for the purpose of having an adequate census of slaves processed by the court. A recent study by Henry Lovejoy show that court officials used seven interpreters drawn from at least four African language groups — Lucumi, Carabali, Arara and Mina. One of the interpreters was described as Arara, Mina, Lucumi and might have spoken multiple languages (Lovejoy, 2016: 41-44). While it was not uncommon for Cuban officials to use more than one interpreter/translator when processing newly arrived slaves one reason for the engagement of seven interpreters in interviewing the *Manuelita* slaves could be to verify their identities. This might have been considered appropriate based on the ship’s itinerary and the contradictory claims by the Captain and shipmate that the ship bought slaves in Central Africa and Lagos respectively. By comparing data gathered by each translator the

²⁰ Slaves always moved at night so they could not recognize their environment. About his journey in 1821, Crowther writes: “about the first cock-crowing, which was the usual time to set out with the slaves, to prevent their being much acquainted with the way, for fear an escape should be made.” See CMS, CA2/1/O79, Crowther to Jowett, Feb. 22, 1837; (Curtin, 1967b: 329).

²¹ CMS, CA2/O61, Thomas King, journal, April 7, 1850. King might have been shipped aboard the Spanish schooner, *Iberia* (vid#2368) under Captain Andres Insua. The ship left Havana on July 16, 1825, loaded 421 slaves—230 men, 31 women, 123 boys, and 37 girls and left Lagos on Dec. 27, 1825. It was soon seized by the British navy and its cargo landed in Freetown on Jan. 22, 1826. Five slaves died in transit.

court was able to ascertain beyond doubt that these slaves were indeed bought in Lagos and that they were Yoruba removed from the same community.²²

Age/Sex Composition of Africans on the *Manuelita*

Sex/Age		Number	%
Adult	Men	343	71.9
	Women	36	7.5
Children	Boys	69	14.5
	Girls	29	6.1
Total	All Slaves	477	100

The demographic profile of the Ecomosho slaves shows some interesting patterns. Of the 477 slaves liberated by the Havana Mixed Commission Court there were 412 males (86.4%) and 65 females (13.6%) or 379 adults (79.5%) and 98 children (20.5%). The children (i.e. 0-13 years) consisted of 69 boys and 29 girls while the adults included 343 men and 36 women (the oldest woman was about 21 years). The age breakdown was more fascinating: the youngest slaves on board were three ten-year-old girls. There were eleven children estimated to be eleven years old, 27 were twelve years, 49 were thirteen years; and eighteen were fourteen years old, 49 were in their late teens; 206 in their twenties, nineteen in their thirties and only two slaves were above 40 years—one 46 and another 48. The age profile relates closely to some features of Yoruba wars. Soldiers often killed senior citizens and captured prime adults and children. At the fall of Oba, an Egba-Yoruba town in 1826 Joseph Wright remembered the captors targeted prime slaves—boys, girls and young men and women. They killed the seniors and abandoned infant children (Curtin, 1967b: 317-34).

Adult males typically formed the bulk of war prisoners because women and children usually went into hiding on the eve of battles. This would have been the case during the Owu war. The fact that there was no one under ten years and no woman above 21 years would indicate seniors and nursing mothers fled before Ecomosho fell. Moreover, the preponderance of adult males, who were the natural fighters, including the large number (64) of twelve to fourteen 14-year-old boys suggest these were people caught in war. When Osogun was invaded in 1821, thirteen years old Crowther joined a militia. His weapons, he wrote “consisted in nothing else than my bow, and five arrows in the quiver.”²³

²² On the methodology of the Mixed Commission Courts, see (Schwarz, 2010; Schwarz, 2012; Anderson et al, 2013; Lovejoy, 2010; Lovejoy, 2016).

²³ CMS, CA2/1/O79, Crowther to Jovett, Feb. 22, 1837.

Age Groups of Liberated Africans on the *Manuelita*

Age (Years)	Male	Female	Total
10-14	69	29	88
15-20	161	35	196
21-25	121	1	122
26-30	44	0	44
31-35	11	0	11
36-40	4	0	4
41-45	0	0	0
46-50	2	0	2
Total	412	65	477

Another clue about Ecomosho comes from the names of Africans liberated from the vessel. In my research I looked for patterns. How many names are generic to the Yoruba-speaking region or more associated with specific provinces? Of the 477 liberated slaves 428 (89.73%) had clearly identifiable Yoruba names. Six had Muslim names (1.3%) four of which could be found among Yoruba Muslims. As mentioned above, the 1833 war near Ogbomoso was fought between Oyo and Ilorin forces so there was an expectation of more Muslim names. With these lacking the fact again points toward south-central Yorubaland where we see more representation of pan-Yoruba names and provincial names. The African Origins database show that many Ecomosho slaves had names prefixed by words such as “Ocho” (Yoruba: Oso, i.e. the family is a worshipper of Orisa Oko or god of agriculture.), “Cu” (Yoruba: Iku, i.e. death, common with families affected by infant mortality), “Ocu” (Yoruba: Oku, i.e. popular with death or ancestral worship) and “Odu” (or Ifa--Yoruba god of divination) associated with southern Yorubaland including Ife, Ijebu and Egba. If these slaves had come from northern Yorubaland, one would not expect them to have come from the same place — town — it was too far that some population mixture would have taken place before reaching the coast. It is also not fortuitous that Ile-Ife, the acclaimed original homeland of the Yoruba is not only located in this region but a major party in the Gbanamu/Erunmu war.

There is also a correlation between *Manuelita*’s itinerary and the Gbanamu/Erunmu war. During the illegal slave trade one of the tactics used by slavers to reduce slave mortality was to arrange shorter itineraries. By the 1820s, both at Lagos and at Ouidah, an official of the Mixed Commission Court in Freetown observed that slaves were secreted “until it is ascertained, by the absence of the British cruisers on other duties, interruption cannot be offered, when in a few hours the whole cargo is embarked, the vessel is at sea, and in a

couple of days she is within protected limits.”²⁴ The trend continued until the slave trade ended. Describing slaving operations in Ouidah in the 1840s Robin Law argues that slavers hid off “the coast while their cargoes were assembled on shore, and then to embark them *en masse*, in order to minimize time in which they were subject to seizure” (Law, 2004: 157-58). While this arrangement the length of time slave ships spent at harbour in West Africa it might have increased the cost of maintaining slaves hidden away in coastal towns. Other slavers had a different strategy. They did not go to war until a slave ship was near or already in West Africa. In December 1825, for instance, Clapperton reported that, upon the arrival of a Brazilian slave ship at Badagry the people of Ijanna hurriedly planned an expedition against Tibo. He opined that the expedition would not have taken place but for the arrival of the slave ship.²⁵

Condemnation and Disposal

As shown above the voyage of the *Manuelita* began in Havana in June 1833 after which the ship embarked 523 slaves and departed Lagos on October 30, 1833 and arrived in Cuba in December. Based on this itinerary one could assume the ship reached Africa not later than August 1833 and stayed off the coast to avoid the British anti-slavery naval patrol. From oral traditions we learn that the battles of Gbanamu and Erunmu took place shortly before the corn harvest season. Based on Yoruba agricultural calendar there are only two corn seasons. The first coincides with the early rain, April to July, and the second from mid-August to November. If we accept the tradition that Erunmu people were cut off from food supplies forcing many to live on unripe corn (that is some weeks before harvest), combined with the facts that southern Yoruba slaves destined for the Atlantic trade were usually marched to the coast and sold almost immediately after their capture, and that the *Manuelita* left Lagos on October 30 we might place the fall of Ecomosho earlier in the month (Johnson, 1921: 242). In other words, the movement of Ecomosho slaves and the *Manuelita* could have been coordinated by a yet to be identified Lagosian or Spanish trader. Such coordination and short itinerary ensured captives from Ecomosho remained together and not separated prior to their shipment to the Americas

After 1807, Cuba became the second largest destination for slaves leaving from West Africa. In 1832, of the thirty-one ships which departed Cuba for Africa twenty-two returned and landed their cargoes. Only one was captured and condemned by the Havana court while another was reportedly condemned by the court in Freetown. Since the anti-slavery patrol had minimal impact on slave trafficking in the early years of abolition it was

²⁴ “Report of Sir G. Collier, Appendix D,” see (*Sixteenth Report...*, 1822: 104).

²⁵ Clapperton, journal, Dec. 18, 1825. Tibo, north of Ijanna was engulfed in war at the time. See (Law, 1977: 277).

no surprise more vessels departed for Africa in 1833. For instance, during the year (1833) out of the 38 slave ships which left Havana for the purpose of purchasing slaves in Africa twenty-seven successfully completed their voyages by delivering slaves to their owners.²⁶ Some of the vessels bought their slaves in Lagos. Between 1824 and 1834, the voyage database shows nine slave embarked slaves in Lagos for Cuba most of whom disembarked in Havana. An analysis of the ships shows the number of slaves landed in Havana was higher in the 1830s than in previous years. An estimated 789 slaves arrived in Cuba from Lagos in 1824 and no new landings until 1831 when another 284 slaves disembarked. Then the number rose dramatically in 1832 with the arrival of 616 slaves before the number jumped to 934 in 1833. Ecomosho slaves represented more than half of new slaves that year. Other slaves arrived in Cuba from Ouidah many of whom were Yoruba including those landed by the *Negrito* in November 1832.

In Cuba, liberation by the Mixed Commission Court did not translate into full freedom for “liberated” Africans. As Richard Anderson writes “the legal process through which captives on board slave ships became liberated Africans was simultaneously an act of emancipation and colonization, as freed slaves were assigned new tasks designed to fulfill the labor and defense needs of Britain’s Atlantic empire” (Anderson, 2013; Mamigonian, 2009; Coghe, 2012). In addition to freeing Africans seized aboard slave ships the Mixed Commission was also tasked with assigning newly “Liberated Africans” to employers to receive training (apprenticeship/indentureship) in other skills and more specifically as “rented” labor to cover the cost of their freedom and maintenance. In Cuba, upon payment of a fee, liberated Africans or *emancipados* were ‘farmed’ out to private entrepreneur and public firms. In Sierra Leone and Brazil, under a similar scheme, the apprentice became free after seven to fourteen years though rarely before the latter (Mamigonian, 2002: 48–134, 193–194). In Cuba, *emancipados* held by the Spanish colonialists or handed over to the latter by the Mixed Commission fared worse than slaves because they were denied access to self-redemption or redemption by third parties. Indeed, the system produced a system in which the apprenticeship contract was renewable thereby transferring an “emancipado” from one master to another (Murray, 1980: 271–97; Lovejoy, 2016: 29).

One of the challenges of the Havana court was where to settle the *emancipados*. The Spanish government did not want groups of “liberated” Africans on the streets preaching or educating those still in bondage about the British abolitionist program. So there were questions about where to settle them. Cuban authorities found an answer on the eve of the British Emancipation Act of 1833 and the potential economic disruptions to Caribbean plantations. So the British government decided that a number of African ‘liberated Africans’ in Cuba would be resettled in the British Caribbean, especially in Trinidad.

²⁶ TNA, FO84/137, See enclosures 1-3 in dispatch 65, Mcleay and Mackenzie to Palmerston, January 1, 1834.

Four weeks after the condemnation and sale of the *Manuelita*, for barely two-thirds of its original value, and supposed ‘liberation’ of Ecomosho slaves, Anglo-Spanish officials in Havana selected 161 “sound and healthy” among them (98 male and 63 female) and another 51 Africans (8 men and 43 women), brought to Cuba from Bonny by the *Joaquina* (vid. #1295) November 1833), were removal to Trinidad. These people, or ‘emigrants’ as they were later called, joined other Africans shipped on the *Negrato* from Ouidah to Cuba in the middle of a cholera epidemic and were immediately sent to Trinidad.²⁷ Together, they constituted the first wave of Africans forcibly removed to the Caribbean island as indentured workers. Five of the 212 ‘emigrants’ died in transit to Trinidad and another died within a month of landing. The government ensured a balanced sex ratio to facilitate natural growth.²⁸ The remaining 206 Africans (102 males, 104 females) landed on the *Manuelita* were “divided into 20 lots of 10 each (5 males and 5 females), keeping together those attached by relationship or friendship” and sent to work on agricultural estates. Some of the children were apprenticed to private families.²⁹

Conclusion

This exploratory essay investigates the enslavement, shipment and ‘liberation’ of a group of Yoruba-speaking slaves and their movement to Trinidad as indentured workers. During the nineteenth century Yoruba wars ethnic tension led to the destruction of a small southern Yoruba community from where over 500 people, mostly adult males, were captured, marched almost immediately to the coast, sold to Spanish slave traders and shipped to Cuba. Some differences in slaving operations during the legal (before 1807) and clandestine (after 1807) slave trade included the shortening of the embarkation process by loading slaves more quickly and using fast sailing vessels to outrun anti-slavery patrol boats. Nonetheless, these measures did not always lead to success. A number of slave ships were captured by the patrol and condemned by slave courts either in Sierra Leone or Havana. Similarly, the courts’ operations were mixed and in some cases anti-slavery was an irony. While the Africans were

²⁷ On the cholera outbreak, see TNA, FO84/137, Macleay and Mackenzie to Palmerston, Nov. 28, 1833. See also (Ramos, 1994; Zander, 2015).

²⁸ TNA, FO84/137, despatch #67, Mariano Ricafort to Captain-General, Dec 31, 1833 and Macleay and Mackenzie to Palmerston, Nov. 30 and Dec. 2, 1833; TNA, FO84/150, Macleay and Mackenzie to Palmerston, Jan. 25, 1834; and TNA, FO84/150, Ricafort to British Commissioners, Jan. 16, 1834 and G. F Hill, Lieutenant- Governor of Trinidad to the Secretary of State, Feb. 12, 1834.

²⁹ TNA, FO84/150, Lieutenant-Governor of Trinidad to Palmerston, March 9, 1834 and Macleay and Mackenzie to Palmerston, March 25, 1834. By March 1834, nearly 938 Africans had been resettled in Trinidad, mostly from Cuba to serve the British government and private employers for a minimum of six to seven years.

‘freed’ from slavery they were r “liberated” from bondage.³⁰ The courts simply transferred them from slaveholders to either private employers or state agencies for a period of seven years or more (Adderley, 2006; Asiegbu, 1969; Schuler, 1980; Warner-Lewis, 1991). The movement of Ecomosho “liberated Africans” to Trinidad forced them to undergo a second “middle passage” with all its fears and uncertainties. We may never know how these people felt about their new status or their understanding of events around them. We could only assume some might have been as miserable as when newly captured at home and shipped from Lagos. Unlike those who came from Lagos and shared the same language and other cultural ties the journey to Trinidad separated them from those left behind in Havana. It also put them on the same ship with people from the Bight of Biafra, whose language and culture they did not know. Furthermore, while the emphasis on gender parity indicated an attempt to forge families, sexual liaisons and natural increase, there was no evidence either British or Cuban officials considered marital compatibility. How many family members were separated or fathers and mothers removed from their children? Since these emigrants were shipped aboard the *Manuelita*, the slave ship which brought them from Lagos to Havana, how many of these people thought they were headed to another plantation?

³⁰ Monica Schuler differentiates between ‘recaptives’ and ‘liberated Africans’. She describes the former as “recent African arrivals...who still resided in reception depots” and who were forcibly moved to the Caribbean while liberated Africans were those settled in the villages in the Freetown peninsula and who migrated voluntarily. See (Schuler, 1980: 5).

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