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Résumé de l'article

Pendant les décennies 1850 et 1860, beaucoup d'efforts ont été consacrés au maintien de la production du coton brut, destiné à l'exportation, dans différentes régions de l'Afrique occidentale. A partir du cas des marchands de Manchester, et à la lumière tant des documents du « Colonial Office » que des sources privées et publiques de Manchester, l'auteur étudie les causes et effets de ces efforts.

II les replace d'abord dans le contexte des vues contemporaines sur l'impérialisme européen en Afrique occidentale et, en particulier, dans celui de l'importance qui s'avère capitale, à l'époque, de rechercher des marchés et des sources nouvelles de matières premières. Il s'applique ensuite à définir la nature des rapports qui s'établissent, d'une part, entre le gouvernement et les divers groupes de pression et, d'autre part, entre la métropole et la périphérie. Enfin, il conclut que si l'étude de ce cas particulier ne jette pas toute la lumière sur le rôle qu'ont pu jouer les matières premières dans les relations qu'a entretenues la métropole avec les zones périphériques, elle n'en démontre pas moins l'importance du problème et tout l'intérêt qu'il peut susciter.

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Cotton Imperialism: Manchester Merchants and Cotton Cultivation in West Africa in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

BARRIE M. RATCLIFFE

I

This paper deals with the interest evinced by Manchester merchants in West Africa as a supplier of raw cotton in the second half of the nineteenth century and is intended to be a modest contribution to the major controversy on the significance of relationships between metropolitan and peripheral economies in general and on the economic causes and consequences of the European presence in West Africa in particular.[1] In this debate both orthodox and neo-marxist scholars have recently attached increased importance to the European quest for raw materials.

Three aspects have been stressed. The first is the long-standing if ill-founded belief among Europeans that the tropics—and especially West Africa—were capable of providing the metropoles with the tropical staples they needed.[2] This myth of tropical exuberance gave rise to numerous declarations of faith in West Africa's potential throughout the modern period: in 1849, for instance, James Macqueen assured a House of Lords Select Committee that there was "scarcely any tropical production known in the world that does not thrive to perfection in Africa."[3] It also led to a series of enthusiastic and not always realistic projects to harness the area's potential, the most influential of which, perhaps, were those of Smeathman in 1786 and Buxton in 1840.[4] It even prompted some usually desultory and invariably abortive attempts to establish plantation agriculture, attempts that began in the mid-sixteenth century.

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1. Sources and abbreviations. The archives of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce (MCC) and the annual reports of the Cotton Supply Association (CSA) are to be found in the Manchester Central Reference Library. A complete file of the rare *Cotton Supply Reporter* is at the Harvard University Library. The Foreign Office (FO) and Colonial Office (CO) boxes referred to are in the Public Record Office. The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes: AMCC (Archives of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce); ARMCC (Annual Report); PMCC (Proceedings); QMCC (Quarterly Meeting); CSR (Cotton Supply Reporter); PP (Parliamentary Papers).
2. As emphasised by Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison, Wis., 1964), I, pp. 58-87, and *passim*.
3. PP, Slave Trade, 1850, Vol. X. Macqueen, who passed as an expert on Africa, had never visited the continent.
4. Henry Smeathman, *Plan for a Settlement to be made near Sierra Leone* (London, 1786); T. Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy* (London, 1840). Both these projects served wider ends than the economic.

A second aspect has been emphasised: the importance from the nineteenth century onwards of cash crop exports that met the changing raw material needs of the metropoles. Thus, Samir Amin, stressing the dialectical relationship between development and underdevelopment, insists that West Africa constitutes a macroregion whose dominant characteristic is that it is a colonial trade economy imposed by Europeans over a long period, but above all after the advent of monopoly capitalism.[5]

But it is the third aspect—recent attempts by scholars to link the search for raw materials to forward policy-making in the second half of the nineteenth century—which is the most pertinent to the purpose of this paper. European raw material needs were early put forward as a subsidiary explanation of the Partition of Africa and of imperialism from the end of the century onwards,[6] but the search for raw materials has been given greater prominence in the last few years. A number of orthodox scholars have stressed the importance of economic myths in influencing action—myths that in West Africa markets and raw materials awaited European exploitation. Others have restated the case for treating the policy of provision as a major cause of the Partition[7] and one scholar has claimed that the objective of colonial expansion was to secure privileged access to resources in the form of agricultural land and mineral deposits.[8]

The importance of this quest for raw materials in West Africa can be tested in a number of ways. The most obvious is to use aggregate trade figures to show the metropoles' changing raw material requirements and Africa's role as a supplier. Such an approach is not entirely satisfactory: if some recent research has demonstrated that prior to the 1950s most raw materials were produced within

5. An "économie de traite" in French. See, *inter alia, L'Afrique de l'ouest bloquée: l'économie politique de la colonisation, 1880-1970* (Paris, 1971), *passim*; "Under-development and Dependence in Black Africa: Origins and Contemporary Forms", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 10 (1974), pp. 503-24. For a bibliography of recent radical writing on African development and underdevelopment, see Stephen McClelland, "Political Economy and Dependence in Africa: an Annotated Bibliography", in Rita Cruise O'Brien, ed., *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment: Dependence in Senegal* (Beverly Hills, 1979), pp. 228-74.
6. Nicolai Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy* (New York, 1973), p. 90 (written in 1915); V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 79-80 (written in 1916); Allan McPhee, *The Economic Revolution in British West Africa* (London, 1926), p. 21.
7. With regard to cotton, for example, one scholar has claimed that cotton "was the one article which lured Britain to Nigeria." A.D. Nzemeke, "The Significance of British Raw Cotton Enterprise in the Nineteenth Century for Post-Colonial Economy in Nigeria" (*sic*), *Afrika Zamani*, 10 and 11 (1979), pp. 63-82. Another has argued that Lancashire's need for cotton led Britain to occupy Egypt. Mahmoud K. Issa, "The Economic Factor behind the British Occupation of Egypt in 1882", *L'Egypte contemporaine*, 318 (1964), p. 37. These claims cannot be substantiated.
8. C.C. Wrigley, "Neo-Mercantile Policies and the New Imperialism", in Clive Dewey and A.G. Hopkins, eds., *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India* (London, 1978), pp. 20-34.

the metropoles themselves,[9] such statistics cannot take account of exceptions or reveal the importance of either myths or policies of provision. A second test is to examine the price behavior of West African commodities entering world markets. The evidence, however, is ambiguous: prices for palm oil and kernels actually fell in the last quarter of the century and if ivory and rubber prices rose the reasons for this are only partly increasing European demand. A third way to test the raw material hypothesis is to use a case study and examine the resource needs and attitudes towards West Africa's potential in one metropolitan industry. This is the approach that will be adopted here: when, why, and with what results did Manchester merchants—the most self-conscious and seemingly the most successful of British business pressure groups—seek West African cotton supplies?

Let it be said at the outset that Manchester's concern about raw material supplies did not coincide with the Partition of Africa:[10] no interest in raw cotton was evinced in the last quarter of the century because, contrary to expectations in the industry, American supply proved elastic, an elasticity evidenced in the 50 per cent fall in the price of American Middling Upland. In the 1850s and 1860s, however, Manchester was anxious to secure alternative sources of supply and local merchants, both individually and collectively, appeared to lavish considerable attention on West Africa.[11] It is the purpose of what follows to determine what, if anything, this episode reveals about the transmission of intelligence about Africa, the workings of metropolitan pressure groups, and relationships with government and local interests in an era that some believe was anti-imperialist, or at least indifferent to empire in general and West Africa in particular, and others see as one of the imperialism of free trade.[12]

II

The choice of both raw cotton and Manchester might appear to be unfortunate. On the one hand, throughout the nineteenth century, the United States continued to supply over two-thirds of the raw cotton entering world trade. West Africa, on the other hand, managed to export only insignificant quantities. Besides, Man-

9. For a recent overview, see Paul Bairoch, "Geographical Structure and Trade Balance of European Foreign Trade from 1880 to 1970", *Journal of European Economic History*, 3 (1974), pp. 557-608; *Commerce extérieur et développement économique de l'Europe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1976), pp. 62-97; "Le bilan économique du colonialisme: mythes et réalités", *Itinerario*, (1980-81), pp. 29-41.
10. For an analysis of Manchester and West Africa in the period of the Partition, see Barrie M. Ratcliffe, "Commerce and Empire: Manchester Merchants and West Africa, 1873-1895", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 7 (1979), pp. 293-320.
11. For French attempts to promote cotton in Senegal in the same period, see Roger Pasquier, "En marge de la guerre de sécession: les essais de culture du coton au Sénégal", *Annales africaines*, (1955), pp. 185-202; Claude Fohlen, *L'industrie textile au temps du Second Empire* (Paris, 1956), pp. 347-55.
12. For a general discussion of this and related controversies, see William Roger Louis, ed., *Imperialism: the Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York, 1976), introduction, pp. 2-53.

chester reputedly remained wedded to the doctrine of economic liberalism. The choice, however, can be defended.

It can be justified by the nature of the Lancashire cotton industry. The trade was singular in two ways: its importance within the British economy[13] and its dependence on overseas markets and raw material supplies, a dependence at once precocious and extreme.[14] Its dependence on imported raw cotton meant that for the first time a staple British export was dependent upon overseas sources for an essential input. Indeed, it was elasticity of raw material supplies, as shown in the secular decline in raw cotton prices, that was the single most important cause of the industry's success. The cost of raw cotton was the largest single element in production costs and cheap cotton permitted cotton goods to beat out other textiles and enabled Lancashire to conquer world markets, especially in piece-goods at the lower end of the scale where the price of the raw material was relatively most important. The bulk of this raw cotton came from the slave plantations of the United States. "Direct slavery," said Marx, "is just as much a pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton, without cotton you have no modern industry."[15] Manchester at the mid-century was afraid it would lose some or all of its American supply.

It might still be argued, however, that Manchester is a badly chosen example for a discussion of empire in Africa because its business community was still preoccupied with markets in Europe and North America rather than elsewhere and was trammelled by its commitment to free trade and *laissez-faire*, a commitment reinforced by the unprecedented expansion of the foreign trade and general prosperity of the industry after the mid-century. However, the choice can be defended when three aspects of Lancashire history of this period are reassessed. These are that Manchester believed in the benevolence of market forces, that it was concerned with the supply question only during and in the months immediately preceding the American Civil War, and that this concern was voiced only by the Cotton Supply Association, established in 1857, which directed most of its efforts to India.

13. The British cotton industry of the 1850s employed about 400,000 factory workers. Phylis Deane and W. Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1688-1959: Trends and Structures* (Cambridge, 1967 edition), p. 188; editorial, CSR, 1 February 1860.
14. Cotton manufactures were Britain's most valuable single export between 1803 and 1938; raw cotton was the most important import between 1825 and 1873 and the leading re-export from 1831 to 1873. In the great boom year of 1860, raw cotton made up 17 per cent of the value of British imports, while cotton manufactures accounted for 38.3 per cent of the value of domestic exports. D.A. Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry and the World Market, 1815-1896* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 135-6.
15. *The Poverty of Philosophy* (New York, 1963 edition). Similar quotations are to be found in *Capital* (Moscow, 1954-62), I, pp. 756-60; and in one of Marx's articles for the *New York Daily Tribune*. Marx and Engels, *On Colonialism* (New York, 1972), pp. 250-2.

As far as free trade was concerned,[16] it should be noted that, if foreign trade—and Lancashire's above all—boomed after 1850, it was not because the prognosis earlier made by free trade advocates proved correct. On the contrary, important aspects of it proved erroneous. The much-vaunted reciprocity between the British and other metropolitan economies, wherein cotton manufactures would be exchanged against wheat, never materialised. The United States supplied wheat only in the last quarter of the century, while both American and European markets were as disappointing to Lancashire after 1850 as they had been before.[17] The marked acceleration in the growth of cotton exports, then, only took place through a repatterning of trade that had not been foreseen by the advocates of free trade. The greatest increases in piece-goods exports were achieved in India, the Levant, South America, and China,[18] which were all areas that had been largely ignored by tariff reformers. Since these were markets which were vulnerable to political pressure—whereas the older ones had not been—Manchester men adapted their attitudes and policy proposals accordingly. Early in 1847 the idealistic liberal, John Bright, was returned unopposed as a Manchester MP; in March 1857 the local electorate repudiated him.

The causes and timing of worry about the supply of raw cotton also need to be reassessed. This preoccupation reputedly began in the late 1850s[19] with fears about slave revolts and civil war in the United States and a tardy humanitarian concern about the iniquity of the slave system. In fact, it began at least a decade earlier and was prompted by crop shortfalls in the United States and by a doubling of the price of raw cotton between 1848 and 1857 that ended the price decline of the previous half century.[20] It was motivated by concern that the crisis was not merely transitory, but permanent; that dependence on a supplier whose crops were vulnerable to vagaries of the weather, pests, and speculative corners was undesir-

16. The myth is understandable: the League had its origin and strength in the city; early in 1846 Disraeli coined the phrase "the Manchester School." For a reassessment of Manchester and free trade after 1846, see V.A.C. Gatrell, "The Commercial Middle Class in Manchester, c. 1820-1857", (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1971), chap. 10, pp. 367-413.
17. The share of the volume of British piece-goods exports taken by the United States and Europe fell from 68 per cent in 1820 to 42 per cent in 1840 and to 27 per cent in 1850. By 1896, it was 8 per cent. The decline in terms of value was less spectacular. Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry*, pp. 81-135.
18. By the late 1850s, India was taking an average of 23 per cent of British cotton exports by value, the Levant 15.6 per cent. Gatrell, "The Commercial Middle Class in Manchester", pp. 402-3.
19. As long ago as 1934, W.O. Henderson perceptively noted that concern began long before 1857. *The Lancashire Cotton Famine, 1861-65* (Manchester, 1969 edition) pp. 35-6. For reassessments of the so-called Cotton Famine, see E.A. Brady, "A Reconsideration of the Lancashire 'Cotton Famine'", *Agricultural History*, (1963), pp. 156-62; and D.A. Farnie, "The Cotton Famine in Great Britain", in Barrie M. Ratcliffe, ed., *Great Britain and her World, 1750-1914* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 153-79.
20. There were short crops in 1845, 1846, 1849, 1850, and 1857. During the 1850s, British cotton consumption increased 66 per cent. CSR, 1 March 1860.

able; that the protected American cotton industry would take ever-increasing quantities of the home crop; and that, in any case, the possibilities for the expansion of crops had been exhausted.[21] To many cotton capitalists, then, the growth of markets might seem to demonstrate the validity of Say's law, wherein supply created its own demand—provided the government would help open markets—but supply of the raw material posed a serious danger, a danger they would face without worrying unduly about *laissez-faire* doctrines.

A corollary of this early interest is that Manchester concern was not manifested solely through the Cotton Supply Association and its journal, the *Cotton Supply Reporter*.[22] The statistics issued by this organisation appear impressive: in the first five years of its existence, it distributed over 6,000 cwt. of seed, 642 cotton gins, 62 ploughs, and numerous other implements and brochures on cotton cultivation.[23] Yet its influence was limited by the very objectives it set itself: it was not a cotton-growing or -buying but a propaganda body, modelled along the lines of the Anti-Corn Law League. Besides, its budget was limited—it had a modest annual expenditure of £5,000—and its backing was restricted to a small number of spinners.[24] In any case, its success was limited by other factors: the first three years of its existence saw the largest crops ever produced in the United States, Mancunian efforts to find alternative supplies during the preceding ten years had largely failed, and hopes were soon placed in the success of methods other than those adopted by the Cotton Supply Association.

The Association, then, was but one facet of the search for new sources of supply. From the late 1840s onwards, raw cotton became a major concern of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and individual merchants began their own campaigns. But perhaps the most important initiative was the formation of joint-stock companies whose purpose was either the purchase or the cultivation of cotton in different parts of the Empire.[25] The Natal Cotton Growing Company had been set up as early as 1847 and it was followed in the 1850s by a flurry of Manchester-based or -funded companies such as the British Cotton Company[26]

21. *The Times*, 21 July 1860; CSR, 1 August 1860; James A. Mann, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain: its Rise, Progress and Present Extent* (London, 1860), pp. 44-59.
22. CSA, 1857-1872; CSR, August 1858-1872.
23. CSA, *Sixth Annual Report*, 1863, AMCC.
24. Its principal supporters were spinners who bore the brunt of the cost of increased raw cotton prices, enthusiasts, and local engineering firms making cleaning and packing machinery and especially variants of the new McCarthy gin.
25. Realising that more was needed than the promptings and propaganda it could offer, the CSA was a principal advocate of such companies. (Speech by John Cheetham, CSR, 15 May 1860). Indeed, members of its Executive Committee were the most active in company formation in the early 1860s. Thus there was almost perfect symmetry between the leadership of the CSA and the Board of Directors of the Manchester Cotton Company.
26. With a nominal capital of £30,000, this company began purchasing and growing cotton in Jamaica. CSR, 1 July 1860 and 15 June 1861. It merged with the Manchester Cotton Company.

and the Jamaica Cotton Company.[27] The most ambitious, however, was the Manchester Cotton Company, set up in 1861. Its promoters talked of making it a second East India Company and forecast profits of up to 30 per cent on its £1 million capitalisation.[28]

Individuals, companies, and pressure groups did not direct their attention exclusively to India, as is commonly supposed.[29] Interest in Indian cotton was long-lived,[30] but from the 1840s on Manchester placed its hopes in a variety of countries. Indeed, the focus of its optimism changed over time: in the 1850s it was West Africa and India; in the 1860s it became the Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire.[31] Throughout, Manchester believed in the Empire, in the West Indies, Australia, Africa, India. As the *Cotton Supply Reporter* put it in 1861, "The sun never sets upon the cotton soils of British territory! ...During every hour of the day the sun is shining upon vast cotton fields within our own dominions, which lie neglected, awaiting only the fostering hand of British capital and labour to teem with plentiful and permanent supplies."[32] One of these imperial cotton fields was West Africa.

That Manchester should direct some of its efforts towards West Africa was not surprising. And, as is known from twentieth-century experience, such efforts were not necessarily destined to fail. Even before the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans made a number of ill-fated attempts to produce plantation-grown cotton there. These had been made by trading companies, like the Royal African which sought to diversify its activities in the 1720s.[33] They had been made by individual

27. Established in 1859. CSR, 1 January 1863.
28. Prospectus, CSR, 1 and 18 September 1860; *The Times*, 22 September 1860; CSR, 1 February 1861. The company was intended to act as a cotton-purchasing agency in India. When it went into liquidation in 1864, about £70,000 had been subscribed by 260 investors. In its wake, similar companies were planned or established: the East India Cotton Agency, formed in 1862 with a nominal capital of £500,000 (CSR, 1 January, 1 February, and 15 November 1862); the Angola Cotton Company proposed the same year (CSR, 1 August 1862); the Cotton Plantation of Natal Company (B.J.L. Leverton, *The Natal Cotton Industry, 1845-1875. A Study in Failure* (Pretoria, 1963), pp. 28-36); and the West Africa Company, established in 1863.
29. That the only works to have been published on the supply question deal with Manchester and India has reinforced this myth. Arthur W. Silver, *Manchester Men and Indian Cotton, 1848-72* (Manchester, 1966); and Peter Harnetty, *Imperialism and Free Trade: Lancashire and India in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1972).
30. Earlier shortfalls in American cotton crops, together with Biddle's attempted corner of 1838, had led Manchester to press for greater efforts to foster Indian cotton, while in 1846-47 Bright was already campaigning for a select committee on the Indian cotton question. Silver, *Manchester Men and Indian Cotton*, pp. 22-3, 37.
31. See, for instance, speeches by John Cheetham and Edmund Ashworth to the eighth AGM of the CSA. CSR, 1 July 1865.
32. CSR, 15 January 1861.
33. Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, Wis., 1975), p. 215. The first plantations in the area had been the sugar plantations on Sao Thomé, established in the mid-sixteenth century by the Portuguese.

promoters and even by merchants on the coast.[34] But, above all, they had been made by governments[35] and by the French in particular: the French experiment in Senegal between 1817 and 1831 was the most ambitious scheme and the most striking failure.[36] Similar attempts were made from the late nineteenth century onwards: in the wake of shortfalls in the American crop at the turn of the century and then under neo-mercantilist policies during the inter-war period, first the German,[37] then the British[38] and French[39] sought to foster cotton cultivation in their West African colonies. Though these efforts met with only limited success, it has since been shown that cotton entering world trade need not come only from the plantation or technically advanced agriculture in the United States. The present century has seen major shifts in the geographical distribution of cotton cultivation and most

34. Like the Swede, Waldstrom, who tried to grow cotton at Cape Verde in the 1780s or the British merchant, Andrew Swanzy, who made two attempts to produce plantation cotton near Cape Coast Castle in the 1830s and 1850s.
35. The Danish government, for example, near its forts and in the southern fringe of the Akwapim hills in Southern Ghana. George Norregard, *Danish Settlements in West Africa, 1658-1850* (Boston, 1966 edition), pp. 172-85; Kwamina B. Dickson, *A Historical Geography of Ghana* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 74-7, 126-31, 154-6.
36. In the mid-1820s it was being claimed that forty-two plantations had been established and that three million cotton plants were about to yield their first crop. For a discussion of this experiment and the causes of its failure, see Georges Hardy, *La mise en valeur du Sénégal de 1817 à 1854* (Paris, 1921), pp. 33-251; and, for a radical critique, Boubacar Barry, *Le Royaume de Waalo: le Sénégal avant la conquête* (Paris, 1972), pp. 237-314.
37. Harry R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914* (New Haven, 1938); Michael Darkoh, "Togoland under the Germans: Thirty Years of Economic Growth, 1884-1914", *Nigerian Geographical Journal*, 11 (1968), pp. 153-68; Pierre-V. Pierrard, "A Case Study in German Economic Imperialism: the Colonial Economic Committee, 1896-1914", *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, (1968), pp. 155-67; Louis R. Harlan, "Booker T. Washington and the White Man's Burden", *American Historical Review*, 81 (1961), pp. 442-6.
38. Yves Henry, *Le coton dans l'Afrique occidentale française* (Paris, 1906); Jacques Marseille, "Les relations commerciales entre la France et son empire colonial de 1880 à 1913", *Relations internationales*, 6 (1976), pp. 145-60. For an example of a post-colonial symbiosis between cultivation on the periphery and piece-goods exports from the French metropolis, see Bonnie Campbell, "Neocolonialism, Economic Dependence and Political Change: a Case Study of Cotton and Textile Production in the Ivory Coast, 1960-1970", *Review of African Political Economy*, 2 (1975), pp. 35-53.
39. N.M. Penzer, *Cotton in British West Africa* (London, 1920); K. Dike Nworah, "The West African Operations of the British Cotton Growing Association, 1904-1914", *African Historical Studies*, 4 (1971), pp. 315-30; R.E. Dumett, "Obstacles to Government-assisted Agricultural Development in West Africa: Cotton-growing Experimentation in Ghana in the early Twentieth Century", *Agricultural History Review*, 23 (1975), pp. 156-73; Brian Vincent, "Cotton-growing in Southern Nigeria: Missionary, Imperial and Colonial Governmental Involvement Versus African Realities", (Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1976), pp. 133-57, and *passim*.

notably the rise of new exporters in the Third World. Political factors have played an important role in these shifts, as have peasant farming systems.[40]

III

Whatever the criteria adopted—declarations of faith in the area's potential; contacts established with government, missionaries, and traders; the time and energy devoted to various schemes; the forward-policy recommendations made to Whitehall—it would appear that Manchester believed in and sought to promote West African cotton in the 1850s and 1860s.

Local merchants proclaimed that the region had the potential to become a major supplier. In 1851 Thomas Bazley, the Chairman of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, declared that it had the soil and the climate and that Manchester should provide the enterprise.[41] In 1858 the Cotton Supply Association prophesied that within the year there would be a ten-fold increase in cotton exports[42] and two years later an expert on the cotton industry announced that Africa would eventually supply the world.[43] And a number of factors seemed to support Manchester's confidence. It was known that indigenous cotton grew extensively, and the samples sent back to Britain showed that the varieties ranged from short to medium staple.[44] The belief that these varieties could be improved was encouraged by previous intercontinental plant transfers, by the recent introduction of tea plantations into Assam,[45] and the success of Jumel long-staple cotton in Egypt.[46] Belief in West Africa's capacity to respond to changing metropolitan needs also seemed to be justified by the marked, if fluctuating, growth in trade with the area

40. In 1974 nearly half the cotton exported came from Third World countries. W.B. Morgan, *Agriculture in the Third World* (London, 1978), pp. 89-90, 101-2.
41. ARMCC, 10 February 1851.
42. West Africa "bids fair in a few years to rival our best sources of supply." An export of twenty thousand bales was forecast. CSA, *Second Annual Report*, 1859, AMCC; editorial, CSR, 1 November 1858.
43. Mann, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain*, p. 85.
44. India, in contrast, produced Surat cotton which was short in staple and this despite the introduction of Dharwar medium staple in the 1840s. The medium-stapled Uplands produced in the United States was the mainstay of the Lancashire industry. Europeans also knew about some of the cotton textiles produced in the Niger area. For one instance—the cloth brought back by the 1841 Niger expedition—see Marion Johnson, "Cloth on the Banks of the Niger", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 6 (1973), pp. 353-63. The expedition had also revealed the extent of cotton cultivation on the Niger. Evidence of J.F. Schön to the 1848 Select Committee. PP, Slave Trade, 1848, Vol. XXII.
45. CSR, 16 May 1859 and 1 June 1861. For a discussion of the importance of seed and plant transfers in the modern period, see Lucille H. Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion. The Role of the British Royal Botanical Gardens* (New York, 1979). This study is both more and less than its title indicates. It puts intercontinental transfers in a global framework, but is not based on research in the Kew archives.
46. This was the achievement of the previous quarter of a century. See E.R.J. Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914* (Oxford, 1968).

in the first half of the century,[47] as well as by the way in which this growth had been achieved: the trade was increasingly dominated by the exchange of low value-to-bulk vegetable oils against European and especially Manchester goods.[48]

This faith was early translated into action. In 1848[49] the Chamber of Commerce invited John Duncan to Manchester, supported his request that he be appointed British Consul to Dahomey,[50] and, when he was named Vice-Consul at Ouidah, backed his plan to cultivate cotton there and promised to buy all the cotton he could grow. The chamber continued to believe in the project after Duncan's death, met his successor, corresponded with the Consul in the Bight of Benin, and memorialised Palmerston on the need to continue the Ouidah experiment.[51] The chamber also reported enthusiastically on the quality of cotton samples from the Gold Coast, Sherbro, and Abeokuta.[52]

After 1857 the Cotton Supply Association took over from the chamber and sought to promote cotton in and around each of the four areas where Britain had a presence. It lavished greatest attention, however, on the Niger and Gold Coast. In 1860 its executive committee began a long correspondence with the Governor of the Gambia, sent him half a ton of seed, gins, and printed instructions,[53] and for the next few years entertained hopes that so-called British Combo, along with Upper Combo and Wooli, could become cotton exporters.[54] At the same time, gins

47. A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London, 1973), pp. 125-34; C.W. Newbury, "Trade and Authority in West Africa from 1850 to 1880", in L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan, eds., *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960* (Cambridge, 1969), I, pp. 76-9.
48. One example of how recent and how spectacular this had been is the groundnut trade of the Gambia: from under 1,000 tons a year in the late 1830s, exports rose to an average of 4,801 tons in the 1840s and 11,196 tons in the 1850s. PP, State of the Colonies, 1862 [2955-I], Vol. XXXVI. "That which occurred but a few years ago regarding the trade with groundnuts," wrote Robert Clarke from the Gold Coast, "will surely happen in respect to cotton." CSR, 1 November 1858. Whether this faith in Europeans' ability to affect change was justified is another matter. Certainly, the role of foreign enterprise and the importance of foreign trade as a stimulus to economic change in the area should not be exaggerated, as research is now demonstrating.
49. The chamber had been increasingly concerned with new supplies from 1847 onwards. Special meetings of the chamber, 22 July and 26 August 1847 and 24 February 1848; ARMCC, 14 February 1848; PMCC, 9 March 1848; ARMCC, 12 February 1849. For an account of the chamber's actions, see Bazley's 1857 report, ARMCC, 9 February 1857.
50. Memorial to FO, August 1848, FO 84/775.
51. PMCC, 10 January, 7 and 21 February 1848; QMCC, 14 November 1850; ARMCC, 10 February 1851; PMCC, 20 March 1851 and 15 August 1852.
52. MCC to J.R. Porter, 25 October 1850, QMCC, 25 October 1850; special meeting of the chamber, 18 September 1851; ARMCC, 9 February 1852.
53. CSA to the Governor of the Gambia, 23 May 1860, PP, State of the Colonies, 1861 [2841], Vol. XL.
54. CSR, 1 June 1860, 1 May and 1 October 1863, 1 September and 1 December 1864. In August 1864, the executive committee enthusiastically received Assistant-Surgeon Harvey's report on his mission to Medina.

and seed were sent to the Bishop and colonial administration of Sierra Leone.[55] In addition to the seeds and machinery that the association sent to the Gold Coast, a Bolton firm was persuaded to agree to accept all the cotton that local interests could send[56] and Whitehall was pressed to occupy Kpong in the Eastern Districts and to build a road from there to Prampram on the Coast.[57] In 1861-62, and in collaboration with the Manchester Cotton Company, it funded the efforts of A.C. Hutton,[58] a West Africa merchant, who proposed to grow cotton and promote its cultivation around Winnebah.[59]

The Cotton Growing Association devoted much more energy to the Niger area, Abeokuta, the most successful of West African cotton schemes, and the trading stations, established and proposed, along the river. Benjamin Campbell, Consul for the Bight of Benin, was invited to address a public meeting in the city[60] and from 1857 to 1864 a stream of memorials went from Manchester to Whitehall, all of which proposed a more vigorous government policy to promote cotton, to protect traders, to appoint consuls at Abeokuta and Rabba, and to reopen trade with the interior cut off by the renewed civil war of the 1860s and by trade rivalry.[61] Local merchants even set up a joint-stock enterprise, the West Africa Com-

55. Editorial, CSR, 1 November 1858; G.W. Nicol, colonial secretary, Sierra Leone, to CSA, 20 April 1861, *ibid.*, 15 May 1861.
56. CSR, 15 June and 15 August 1859.
57. In October 1858. G.C. Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana* (London, 1964), p. 285.
58. An uncle of J.F. Hutton, the Manchester merchant, and agent for Thomas Hutton, one of the two European firms established at Winnebah. The other was Régis frères of Marseille. The Winnebah farm absorbed over a fifth of the Cotton Company's first year's expenditure. Manchester Cotton Company, *First Annual Report of the Directors* (Manchester, 1862), AMCC.
59. Hutton took out two English agricultural workers and two bull calves and hired labourers at Cape Palmas. At Winnebah he bought a 350-acre farm and started planting. His efforts failed because of the difficulty of hiring labour, his own ignorance of cotton cultivation, and the loss, through the sinking of the ship carrying it, of the £600 worth of machinery he had ordered. Hutton sent back monthly reports to Manchester. These are reproduced in CSR, 16 September, 15 October, 1 November, and 2 December 1861, 1 March and 15 May 1862. See also CSA, *Fourth* and *Fifth Annual Reports*, AMCC.
60. CSR, 1 August 1858. At the meeting, John Cheetham, President of the CSA, declared that of the two areas of the world that showed the greatest promise—West Africa and India—the former had the advantage because it was closer to Britain, cotton was already being extensively cultivated, and the Mutiny would diminish chances of increasing Indian exports.
61. In 1857 the CSA requested the government send gins and presses up river. CSA to CO, 21 November 1857, FO 84/1034. In 1859 the association memorialised Russell on the need to accord more protection to traders, CSA, *Third Annual Report*, 1860, AMCC. In the same year it requested the government keep the navy gunboat at Lagos. In reply the Foreign Office announced it had no intention of withdrawing it. CSA to FO, 1 May, and FO to CSA, 14 May 1860, CSR, 1 June 1860 and Memorial of 27 November 1860, FO 2/34. In 1863 both the chamber and the CSA memorialised Russell on the need to appoint a consul at Rabba. PMCC, 11 March 1863, and CSR, 2 March 1863. In 1864 the government was asked to take steps to reopen communications between Lagos and Abeokuta, CSR, 1 June 1864.

pany.[62] Wisely, the company immediately decided that it would trade not only in cotton but in other commodities and it was thus able to survive the decline in Niger cotton exports in the seventies and to continue trading until it joined Goldie's United African Company at the end of the decade.[63]

IV

Manchester's concern with West African cotton raises a number of questions. How is it to be explained? Was the dynamic mercantile pressure from within Manchester or from traders on the coast? How far did these schemes reflect metropolitan needs and African realities and what role did government play?

As far as Lancashire merchants are concerned, one must be wary of accepting at face value declarations of faith by propaganda organisations and pressure groups seeking support.[64] Manchester's confidence was based neither on current or anticipated piece-goods exports to the area[65]—indeed, the possibilities of the West African market were not given prominence in local discussions—nor on knowledge and experience of conditions there among local businessmen. Concern with the supply question resulted from a belief among some opinion- and decision-makers that the problem was permanent rather than temporary. Concern with West Africa was a response to initiatives that came from outside the cotton trade and to the activities of two local merchants, neither of whom had any personal experience of Africa. The first of these was Thomas Bazley, the dominant figure in Manchester political life at the mid-century. A founder of the Anti-Corn Law League, chairman of the chamber for fourteen years, and a local Member of Parliament from 1858, Bazley was a moving force in the Cotton Supply Association as well

62. As early as November 1859, a CSR editorial advocated the formation of a company to buy cotton in the Niger, Gold Coast, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. CSR, 1 November 1859. The principal backers of the company, which was proposed at the end of 1862, were Bazley, Clegg, and Robert Barnes, three cotton spinners who were already associated with the African Aid Society. Its formation was prompted both by the success of the Abeokuta scheme and the Baikie expedition. In 1861 Baikie had suggested to the CSA that a company to trade in cotton and other items be set up. Baikie to CSA, Lukoja, 3 April 1861, CSR, 16 December 1861.

63. The Crowthers and Henry Robbin, who had been prominent in the Abeokuta cotton scheme, worked for the company. E.A. Ayandele, "The Duel between Crowther and Goldie on the Lower Niger, 1857-1885", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4 (1969), pp. 45-63; John E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria* (Oxford, 1960), p. 27.

64. Thus, even in the face of previous failures and in the adverse trading circumstances then prevailing, the Company of African Merchants could claim an 1864 petition for a subsidy to the Foreign Office that West Africa was "a promising and boundless field for the supply of cotton." FO, 97/434.

65. The African continent (excluding Egypt) took 0.59 per cent of the value of British cotton exports in 1820 and 1.73 per cent in 1850. Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry*, table 5, p. 91. British possessions in West Africa—15,500 square miles with a population of half a million British subjects in 1874—took only a small proportion of British exports to the area.

as in a number of the joint-stock cotton companies formed at this time.[66] His interest in securing new sources of raw cotton was early: already in 1840 he was testing different varieties by cultivating them in the attic of one of his spinning mills and it was he who furnished cotton seed to the 1841 Niger expedition.[67] Thereafter, he became both a cotton supply activist and a believer in West Africa's potential.[68] If Bazley's role was essentially that of a lobbyist, the role of Thomas Clegg, the other major figure, was essentially practical. He, too, was a fervent believer in the urgency of the supply problem: in 1855, and at his own expense, he went on a tour of the Mediterranean to seek out new producers.[69] He invested more heavily than anyone else in the new cotton companies.[70] But he also believed in West Africa and in the Buxton plan.[71] Clegg was Venn's Manchester collaborator in the Abeokuta cotton scheme, sent out the first saw gin in 1850, brought the first Abeokuta cotton exports to Manchester in 1853, and trained Henry Robbin, who became the chief administrator of the scheme.[72] After a dispute with the Church Missionary Society over the credit he had extended to Abeokuta, he took over full management of the enterprise and in the 1860s became managing

66. For Bazley (1797-1885), see Silver, *Manchester Men and Indian Cotton*, p. 18; J.T. Mills, *John Bright and the Quakers* (London, 1935), II, pp. 471-5.
67. CSR, 15 July 1862.
68. In 1851 he lectured to the Society of Arts on the need to find new sources. CSR, 1 February 1861. He presided over the chamber's efforts to secure new supplies in the 1850s. He lectured to the British Association on the subject: "A Glance at the Cotton Trade", *Report of the British Association*, 1861, pp. 206-8. See also "The Difficulties and Dangers of the Cotton Trade", *The Exchange*, (1863), pp. 201-12. In his paper to the British Association, to take one aspect of his activities on behalf of West Africa, he recommended that half the money spent on the anti-slavery squadron would more usefully be spent to subsidise agriculture there. *Report of the British Association*, and CSR, 16 September 1861.
69. *Report of a Journey to the East and Cultivation of Cotton* (Manchester, 1863).
70. In 1862 he had already invested over £7,000 in no fewer than eight of these companies. CSR, 15 November 1862.
71. He was a founder member of the African Aid Society and presided at its first public meeting in Manchester. *Manchester Guardian*, 9 August 1860. He backed its efforts to persuade the King of Dahomey to end his slave trade activities and declared West Africa capable of exporting 2.5 million lbs. a year if the Dahomean slave trade could be eradicated. Thomas Clegg to CSA, 13 February 1861, CSR, 1 March 1861.
72. He met Venn in 1850. William Knight, *Missionary Secretariat of Henry Venn* (London, 1880), pp. 134-7. Whether philanthropy or 5 per cent predominated in his collaboration is difficult to determine. The CMS archives contain numerous complaints by Crowther and Venn that Clegg was putting profit before service. Vincent, "Cotton-growing in Southern Nigeria", pp. 23-45. There is no indication, however, that he ever visited Africa and some evidence—from the cleaning machinery powered by horses he sent out to Abeokuta in the tse-tse belt—that his knowledge was limited. Samuel Crowther Jr. to CSA, 19 March 1861, CSR, 1 April 1861. Clegg described his role in the scheme in a letter to the CSA, dated 13 February 1861, CSR, 1 March 1861.

director of the West Africa Company.[73] Apart from the activities of Bazley and Clegg, only one scheme for West African cotton originated in Lancashire. This was a private expedition organised by John Pender, the Manchester spinner, and funded by Samuel Gurney, the Quaker banker and philanthropist, and a group of Lancashire businessmen. Two ships loaded with cotton goods, seed, and agricultural implements set out in 1850, established an experimental cotton farm at Cape Mesurada,[74] and tried to encourage cotton exports at Ouidah and Fernando Po. The enterprise failed and its promoters lost nearly £3,000.[75]

Only to a limited degree, then, did cotton schemes originate in Manchester. The role of merchants trading with or in West Africa was even more restricted. Liverpool houses neither funded the Cotton Supply Association nor participated in any of the projects.[76] European merchants on the coast, for their part, were not tempted by the prospects promised by cotton apologists. They remained wary of a trade whose profitability in the short and especially the long term was suspect.[77] Some, indeed, had already experimented plantation cotton and were unwilling to try again.[78] The only exceptions to this were the limited response of some Gold Coast

73. His involvement in the Niger led him to make a number of requests to the chamber that it press for a firmer government policy towards warring polities in Yorubaland and he even brought Commander Clover to speak to the directors. PMCC, 15 June, 6 July, and 10 September 1864.
74. Gurney, brother-in-law of Fowell Buxton, had already supported the 1841 Niger expedition and was a life-long patron of Liberia and correspondent of President Roberts.
75. Palmerston to Beecroft, 18 May 1850, FO 84/186; Beecroft to MCC, 6 December 1850, PMCC, 20 March 1851; President Roberts to Palmerston, 6 July 1850, *ibid.*, 25 October 1850; Consul Hanson to Palmerston, 11 April 1851, QMCC, 26 June 1851; *Manchester Examiner and Times*, 26 August 1856; *Manchester Guardian*, 17 February 1857.
76. Just as Liverpool refused its collaboration to the British Cotton Growing Association in the early twentieth century.
77. Samuel Crowther complained in 1853 that it was "very much to be regretted that all the merchants are again [against] the cotton trade, they will not trouble themselves with it." Cited in Robert S. Smith, *The Lagos Consulate, 1851-1861* (Berkeley, 1979), p. 77. French merchants in Senegal, to take another example, also preferred known, if fluctuating, profit to the unknown risks of raw cotton. Leland Conley Barrows, "The Merchants and General Faidherbe. Aspects of French Expansion in Senegal in the 1850s", *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 61 (1974), pp. 236-83.
78. In 1842 Matthew Forster, M.P., of the Forster and Smith firm, which had traded for many years in West Africa, ridiculed previous attempts at plantation agriculture and added that "any similar attempts on the part of future adventurers would be worse than foolish ... the only great agricultural improvements introduced on the coast within my knowledge, are in fact merely developments of branches of industry already existing among the natives. One of these is the palm oil trade of the Bight of Benin, created within the memory of man; the other the trade in groundnuts from the Gambia River." Evidence to the Select Committee on West Africa, PP, 1842 [551], Vol. XI.

merchants in the 1850s[79] and the offer by a mulatto trader on Bulama Island to grow cotton for export.[80]

The cotton schemes, and Manchester interest in them, were prompted less by merchants than by three distinct but related forces—forces, indeed, that had other ends besides the economic. The first of these—and the most ubiquitous—was the humanitarian which stressed the power of cash crops, particularly cotton, as a means of spreading Christianity and of eliminating the slave trade that was stubbornly refusing to die out on some parts of the coast. The second was the myth of West Africa's potential propagated by philanthropists and individual enthusiasts. And the third was government which collaborated on and even initiated cotton schemes.

The humanitarian role involved reviving the belief in tropical exuberance and stemmed from Buxton's influential 1840 plan to suppress the slave trade and spread Christianity. One of the four points Buxton proposed was the production of tropical staples as an antidote to the slave trade. He thus advocated the establishment of model plantations.[81] His plan had a wide impact: it encouraged renewed interest in and literature on West Africa and it helped prompt the 1841 Niger expedition, but, above all, it stimulated existing philanthropic groups to pay greater attention to model farms and to cotton and it led to the founding of new organisations which also gave priority to cotton.

The best-known and best-documented result of the Buxton plan was the efforts to promote African cash crops made by Henry Venn, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society. Though he looked at a number of other possible products, he settled on cotton, declaring in 1852 that "cotton must be to Africa its gold-

79. Andrew Swanzy, near Cape Coast Castle, and Charles and Samuel Bannerman, near Winnebah, established cotton plantations in 1850-52. They all failed because they used American seed, the pods of which were destroyed by insects. Reports from Governor S.J. Hill to CO, PP, State of the Colonies, 1852 [1539], Vol. XXXI; and 1854-55 [1919], Vol. XXXVI; ARMCC 14 February 1853; *West African Herald*, 1 March 1860, in CSR, 1 May 1860; evidence of Andrew Swanzy to the 1865 Select Committee, PP, 1865 [412], Vol. V. For some of the trading difficulties experienced by Gold Coast traders—which might explain their efforts and their collaboration with officials in agricultural societies—see Edward Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast, 1807-1874* (London, 1974), pp. 131-64.

80. David Lawrence, Jr., sought financial aid from the CSA in 1859-60. His purpose, however, seems to have been to secure funds and, above all, British protection against Portuguese at Bissao. FO to CSA, 2 February and 9 April 1859, CSR, 15 February and 15 April 1859; D.J. Lawrence to CSA, 6 May and 15 June 1860, CSR, 1 September and 2 November 1860.

81. Buxton, *The African Slave Trade*, pp. 518-22; Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, pp. 318-9, 431-2, 434-5; Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870* (London, 1972), pp. 42-61.

diggings."[82] He first tried to promote its cultivation in Sierra Leone,[83] but achieved success at Abeokuta. So successful was this that by 1859 raw cotton exports had reached some 2,500 bales,[84] and 200 gins and half a dozen presses were at work there.[85] Abeokuta impressed others: a party from an American organisation for the promotion of negro emigration visited the town late in 1859 and returned convinced as to the cotton-exporting potential of West Africa.[86] Their enthusiasm helped prompt the foundation of the African Aid Society which sought African improvement and an end to the slave trade through cotton cultivation aided by the immigration of negro experts.[87] This society directed its major efforts to wean-

82. Cited in Vincent, "Cotton-growing in Southern Nigeria", pp. 17-8; J.F. Ade Ajayi, "Henry Venn and the Policy of Development", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 1 (1959), pp. 331-42. For the wider repercussions of Buxton's and Venn's ideas, see J.B. Webster, "The Bible and the Plough", *ibid.*, 3 (1963), pp. 418-34.
83. Venn sought the cooperation of government and merchants in Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, but failed to elicit any response. Venn to the Bishop of Oxford, 12 March 1859, CSR, 1 June 1859; QMCC, 18 September 1851.
84. Clegg to Palmerston as reported in CSR, 17 February 1861.
85. The scheme is discussed most fully in Vincent, "Cotton-growing in Southern Nigeria", pp. 23-45. See also S.O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours, 1842-1872* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 57-60; C.W. Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 57-8; and Jean Herskovits Kopytoff, *A Preface to Modern Nigeria: the 'Sierra Leonians' in Yoruba, 1830-1890* (Madison, Wis., 1965), pp. 116-20. For an enthusiastic contemporary account, see Charlotte M. Tucker, *Abbeokuta: or, Sunrise Within the Tropics: an Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (London, 1854).
86. Reports by M.R. Delany and Robert Campbell, reproduced as *Search for a Place: Black Separatism and Africa, 1860* (Ann Arbor, 1971), especially pp. 116-8.
87. Established 1860, under the chairmanship of Lord Alfred Churchill, the society was wound up in 1866. Delany and Campbell, *Search for a Place*, pp. 122-9; Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford, 1962), p. 335.
88. For the society's contacts with the CSA, see letter from Churchill to CSA, 8 November 1860, CSR, 16 November 1860; letter from the African Aid Society to the King of Dahomey, n.d., *ibid.*, 1 December 1860; speech by Churchill to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, 27 December 1860, *ibid.*, 15 January 1861; deputation to Palmerston, 14 February 1861, *ibid.*, 15 February 1861; first AGM of the African Aid Society, *ibid.*, 16 June 1862; speech to W.T. Fitzgerald at Manchester, August 1862, *ibid.*, 1 September 1862. Thanks largely to the society's efforts, Commander Wilmot visited the King of Dahomey in 1862 and proposed that the king substitute cotton for the slave trade. PP, Slave Trade, 1863 [3179], Vol. LXXIII.
89. From 1861, the Basel Mission which had long experimented with plantations—chiefly for cotton—was buying cotton at Akropong. Venn to the Bishop of Oxford, 12 March 1859, CSR, 1 June 1859; evidence of Elias Schrenk to the 1865 Select Committee, PP, 1865 [412], Vol. V. Influenced by Buxton's ideas, T.B. Freeman, the energetic Wesleyan missionary, founded the Beulah plantation near Cape Coast Castle in the 1840s and in the 1850s set up an experimental farm near Accra. As Commandant for the Eastern Districts, he arranged for the poll tax there to be paid in raw cotton. PP, State of the Colonies, 1852 [1539], Vol. XXXI; and 1852-3 [1693], Vol. LXII; CSR, 15 February 1860.

ing the King of Dahomey from the slave trade by persuading him to grow cotton in its stead.[88] Various other missionary groups in the Gold Coast,[89] Sierra Leone,[90] and elsewhere[91] established model cotton farms or sought to encourage cotton export through purchases. It was, therefore, not surprising that in December 1859 the *Cotton Supply Reporter* saw collaboration with missionaries as the most promising method for achieving its ends in West Africa.[92]

There was a second influence that was brought to bear on Manchester and other bodies at this time: myths about West Africa's cotton potential were propagated not only by humanitarians, but by proposers of individual schemes. An exaggerated faith in African possibilities underlay a number of still-born schemes put forward by soldiers who had served on the coast.[93] Other schemes that were equally phantasmagorical but which promised to substitute cotton for the Dahomey slave trade that worried many contemporaries struck a responsive chord in Manchester and Whitehall. Both Brodie Cruickshank, the Gold Coast trader,[94] and John Duncan, recently returned from a much-publicised visit to Abomey,[95] suggested the creation of a British consulate and experimental cotton plantations at Ouidah. It was thus at Duncan's prompting that Manchester lent its support to his cotton scheme at Ouidah and it was he who persuaded Palmerston to appoint him vice-

90. The Countess of Huntingdon's Connection, long-established in Sierra Leone, set up a sixty-acre cotton growing mission in Bullom in April 1861. T. Clarkson Finch to CSA, 15 June 1861; CSR, 1 July 1861. The CSA contributed seeds and a cotton gin. CSA, *Fifth Annual Report*, 1863, AMCC.
91. Baptist missionaries in the Cameroons, for instance. Reverend Alexander Innes to CSA, n.d., CSR, 15 March 1860.
92. CSR, 1 December 1859.
93. Like that of J.F. Napier Hewett, who had served in the army on the coast and who came back to England to advocate cotton plantations. *European Settlements on the West Coast of Africa: with Remarks on the Slave Trade and the Supply of Cotton* (London, 1862). Captain Edulfus Swinton, a friend of Canreba Caulker of Sherbro, was promoting the cotton potential of the area in 1851, telling the Manchester chamber that there were five hundred square miles of land available around Bumpe, Caulker's capital. Special meeting of the Board of Directors, 18 September 1851, PMCC. Africanus Horton, the African nationalist, then staff assistant surgeon of the Gold Coast, advocated the setting up of cotton-buying agencies at twelve different points in West Africa. Letter to the *African Times*, reproduced in CSR, 17 August 1862.
94. Cruickshank was authorised to offer Ghezo an annual subsidy of £2,000. He wisely decided not to insist on it when the latter informed him that the slave trade revenues of the Dahomean state were in the region of £300,000 a year. Brodie Cruickshank, Report of 9 November 1848, PP, Slave Trade, 1848, [32], Vol. XXVIII; Cruickshank's evidence to the 1849 Lords Select Committee, *ibid.*, 1850 [53], Vol. IX.
95. He described his visit in *Travels in Western Africa: Comprising a Journey through the Kingdom of Dahomey* (London, 1847). There is no mention of cotton in this work. Duncan, however, had been on the Niger expedition which had had the creation of a model farm as an objective and the Marseille firm of Régis frères was already experimenting with cotton cultivation at Ouidah. Fabrice O'Driscoll, "Le rôle des négociants marseillais dans l'expansion économique et commerciale du golfe de Guinée de 1840 à 1920", (doctoral thesis, Université de Provence, Aix, 1973), pp. 58-91, 298-300.

consul there.[96] Similarly, two of the major participants in the 1854 and 1857 Niger expeditions praised the cotton potential of the river beyond the palm oil belt. In 1859 William Baikie, still at his base up river, began requesting the government to send out gins, recommending cotton farms be set up,[97] and asking Manchester to support his plans.[98] Similarly, MacGregor Laird used cotton exports as an argument in his campaign to secure continued government backing for his Niger enterprise.[99]

The third force behind the promotion of cotton exports was government itself and its role was not limited to transmitting information and projects to Manchester: it also took some of the initiatives. London's role was certainly limited—by the funds it was willing and able to expend,[100] and by its inability to provide technical assistance.[101] However, in each of Britain's four footholds, there were administrators who regretted over-dependence on a limited range of exports, the poor state of colonial finances, and the inertia of local merchants, and who believed that government should play an active role in fostering cotton exports.[102] In Sierra Leone, Governor MacDonald sent samples to London and recommended that either

96. Duncan's evidence to the 1848 Select Committee, PP, Slave Trade, 1849, Vol. XXII; Duncan to Palmerston, 20 May, 17 August, and 22 September 1848, FO 84/775. Nothing came of Duncan's efforts. Fraser to FO, 15 May 1852, FO 2/7.
97. A.O. Anjorin, "European Attempts to Develop Cotton Cultivation in West Africa, 1850-1910", *Odu*, 3 (1966), pp. 3-15; Baikie to FO, 8 August 1859, CSR, 1 November 1859. After the 1854 expedition, Baikie had praised the potential of the Niger region, and not only Yorubaland but the savannah beyond, as an exporter of primary products and as a market for manufacturers. *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwora and Binue* (London, 1856), pp. 385-97.
98. Baikie to FO, 3 April 1861, FO 97/433; Baikie to CSA, 3 April 1861, CSR, 16 December 1861; Baikie to Bazley, 26 March 1862, *ibid.*, 15 August 1862; Baikie to FO, 26 February and 25 March 1862, *ibid.*, 15 September 1862. By 1862 Baikie was expressing disappointment in the Manchester response.
99. Plan for the Extension of Commercial Intercourse with Central Africa by the River Niger, 10 March 1860, FO 2/34. He also solicited the help of pressure groups including Manchester. Glover to FO, 17 January 1861, FO 97/433; CSR, 1 February 1861. After his death, the Company of African Merchants, which wanted to carry on his Niger plan, also used the cotton argument. Company of African Merchants to Gladstone, 12 July 1864, PP 1865 [135], Vol. XXXVII.
100. Earl Grey's plan for tropical development, which involved using direct taxation as an indirect form of coercion, was applied in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and elsewhere in the early 1850s, but the tax was unsuccessful.
101. There were no British government botanical gardens in West Africa at this time and Kew, a government botanic centre from 1841, does not seem to have played a part in cotton promotion.
102. Cf. Olufemi Omosini, "Alfred Maloney and his Strategies for Economic Development in Lagos Colony and Hinterland, 1886-1891", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 7 (1975), pp. 656-72.

government or metropolitan private enterprise establish plantations.[103] In the Gambia, two strong and active governors were proponents of cotton. The one, MacDonnell, was already emphasising its possibilities in 1852.[104] The other, D'Arcy, actively encouraged it in the 1860s, distributing seeds to potential cultivators, persuading merchants to purchase and process it, and planning a model farm in so-called British Combo.[105] The explanation for the concern of both governors is two-fold: long-standing fears over the colony's increasing dependence on a single export crop—groundnuts—that found its principal market in France rather than Britain,[106] and hopes that cotton cultivation would give stability and prosperity to British Combo which they wanted to make a bulwark against the continuing Soninke-Marabout Wars.[107] The initiative in the Gold Coast came from R.D. Ross, energetic commissariat officer at Cape Coast Castle between 1856 and 1859. He decided that the area was "capable of furnishing ... an unlimited supply of cotton" and that the region beyond Ashanti was a vast untapped market for Manchester goods.[108] He also determined that plantation agriculture could not be effective, that European merchants would not provide the enterprise, and that the government therefore had to offer seed, gins, and price guarantees to African producers.[109] It was his idea to revive the flagging Cape Coast Agricultural Society, founded the previous year, and to use it to publicise cotton and to offer incentives.[110] He was aided in his endeavour by the governor, Benjamin Pine, who requested Colonial Office funds,[111] and by T.B. Freeman, the Wesleyan missionary

103. MacDonald's annual reports of 1847 and 1851. PP, State of the Colonies, 1847 [1869], Vol. XXXVII; and 1851 [1421], Vol. XXXIV. His interest was partly prompted by the poor state of the colony's finances that resulted from a decline in revenue from customs and his public works programme.
104. Annual report, 12 July 1852, PP, State of the Colonies, 1852-3 [1595], Vol. LXIII.
105. In the contacts between the CSA and the Gambia, it was D'Arcy who took the initiative. CSR, 1 June 1860.
106. The problem had been revealed in 1848 and the danger seemed the greater from the mid-1850s when exports of the old staples—hides, wax, and gold—declined. D'Arcy to CO, 24 July 1861, PP, State of the Colonies, 1862 [2955-I], Vol. XXXVI; PP, Ord Report, 1865 [170], Vol. XXXVII, appendix no. 1.
107. Charlotte A. Quinn, *Mandingo Kingdoms of the Senegambia: Traditionalism, Islam and European Expansion* (Evanston, Ill., 1972), pp. 77-87 and 134-5. They settled the area with refugees, liberated Africans, and retired soldiers from the West India Regiment.
108. Letters to the CSA, 9 June and 9 August 1858, CSR, 1 August and 1 November 1850.
109. In 1860, after his departure from the Gold Coast, he put forward an elaborate plan which involved allowing chiefs to pay the poll tax in cotton, securing a £4,000 grant to enable the Colony to build a road to Kumasi (on which camels and mules would be used), establishing a consulate at Kumasi, and surveying the Volta River. Ross to CSA, n.d., CSR, 15 February 1860.
110. The society had been set up in June 1857. Editorial, CSR, 1 November 1858; Ross to CSA, 9 August and 16 December 1858, *ibid.*, 1 November 1858 and 15 February 1859; Clarke to CSA, 12 December 1858 and 12 April 1859, *ibid.*, 15 February and 16 May 1859.
111. Andrews, his weak successor, also cooperated with the society. CSR, 15 June 1859; John M. Lindsey to CSA, 8 August 1860, *ibid.*, 15 October 1860.

who was acting as a government official. Freeman had recently returned from the Eastern Districts where he had been impressed by the extent of Krepi cotton cultivation. He therefore founded the Agricultural Society of the Eastern Districts to promote exports.[112] It was Ross and Freeman who induced the Gold Coast Legislative Council to vote a £200 subsidy[113] and who sought Manchester's counsel and material aid. In the Niger area, Benjamin Campbell, consul at Lagos between 1853 and 1859,[114] became an advocate of cotton promotion. He did so partly in response to promptings from London,[115] partly because he was impressed by the Abeokuta scheme, and partly because he was looking for new export items that would relieve Lagos of its dependence on a single export, palm oil.[116] By 1857 he had come to the conclusion that the only commodity that could be exported was cotton and he began to advocate a symbiosis between Yoruba cotton and Lancashire piece goods[117] and to coax greater efforts from Manchester.[118]

The cotton schemes that blossomed and Manchester involvement in them, then, were the result of a matrix of forces wherein strictly economic considerations were not always paramount. It is not possible, indeed, to disentangle personal, economic, and humanitarian motives in the case of either individuals—Clegg was a churchwarden and a businessman—or groups like the African Aid Society which had philanthropic and commercial support and aims.

V

There was thus a will to promote West African cotton, but was there a way? Certainly, both the funds and knowledge available were limited. In Manchester, for example, the Cotton Supply Association had only indirect means at its disposal, while the capital local merchants were willing to invest in cotton promotion is indicated by the gap between paid-up shares and nominal capital in the cotton companies. Even had funds been available, cotton promotion everywhere proved to be infinitely more difficult than the public pronouncements of enthusiasts intimated. Success could not be achieved immediately;[119] the threat of a return to nor-

112. This set up a small model farm at James Town. CSR, 1 November 1859.
113. Clarke to CSA, 24 July 1858, CSR, 1 November 1858.
114. Campbell's career is studied by Robert S. Smith, *The Lagos Consulate, 1851-1861* (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 49-110.
115. Palmerston to Campbell, 9 March 1859, FO 84/1031. Campbell was instructed to do all he could to encourage cotton exports. Campbell to Clarendon, 16 May and 2 July 1857, FO 881/619.
116. Palm oil exports declined temporarily from 1857.
117. Revising his own previous calculations, he estimated that the Yoruba cotton crop was about ten million lbs. a year. Campbell to CSA, September 1857, CSR, 1 December 1857.
118. It was his initiative which brought the invitation to address Manchester merchants. In his speech he stressed the cotton possibilities of Yorubaland, but even more of the savannah beyond. He prophesied that the Niger would become the African Mississippi. Campbell to FO, 17 August 1858, FO 2/24; CSA, *First Annual Report*, 1858.
119. As experience demonstrated and as emerged from a meeting between Manchester representatives and cotton exhibitors from thirty-five countries during the 1861 Exhibition. *The Times*, 15 August 1860; and CSR, 1 September 1860.

malcy hung over cotton schemes and the medium-staple Lancashire most needed proved hardest to grow. There were two instances at the mid-century which did seem to show that new suppliers outside the charmed circle of metropolitan enterprise could enter world markets. But the first, Egypt, did so only because it possessed a peculiar set of favourable factors.[120] And success in the second, India, was limited, its raw cotton poor in quality and short in staple and its increased supplies at this time partly the result of a diversion of exports from the China market rather than of increased cultivation.[121]

The principal means adopted in West Africa were indirect. Given the objectives of the philanthropic element in many cotton schemes, promoters determined that the key to success lay in persuasion.[122] Some continued to believe that Africa possessed reserves of labour that could be used in plantation agriculture,[123] by means of money wages or some form of constraint,[124] but previous plantation attempts had failed because they had brought in hybrid seeds from the outside and, above all, because they had failed to secure the heavy labour inputs that cotton as an annual crop required. Most attention, then, was directed towards inducing indigenous producers who already grew cotton as a perennial and as a mixed crop—as in Krepi and Yorubaland—to sell it for export or towards persuading agriculturists to introduce its cultivation.[125] The European role was the provision of incentives and model cotton farms, whose purpose would be didactic rather

120. These included labour availability—cotton was a summer crop that avoided the winter period favoured for wheat and rice (except in Upper Egypt where it competed with rice and sugar cane) and there was a marked increase in population—the use of new cotton varieties, irrigation, and government initiatives. Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy*, pp. 352-75, and *passim*.

121. Mann, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain*, pp. 62-3; Silver, *Manchester Men and Indian Cotton, passim*.

122. For a discussion of the importance of persuasion as an element of British policy at this time, see Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, p. 457 ff.

123. It had long been one of the arguments put forward by proponents of West African cash crops that the Atlantic slave trade was less rational than using African labour *in situ*. For many Manchester merchants, one of the advantages that West Africa seemed to offer was the labour that was conspicuously absent in other potential producers, such as Queensland. PMCC, 26 August 1847; CSR, 16 September 1861 and 1 August 1862.

124. Governor Winniett of the Gold Coast, for example, was in favour at this time of using forced labour on plantations. Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, pp. 454-6.

125. Thus D'Arcy hoped to induce Senegambian groundnut cultivators to produce cotton. He failed because groundnut prices were a more powerful incentive than the promises he and Gambia merchants could offer. His own version was the following: "In the light labour and quick returns of the nut farm he sees an El Dorado, at least for his moderate wants, in so genial a climate, whilst the care of the cotton field is laborious, requiring constant supervision, and may be all destroyed in one night by any wanton cow...." Annual Report to the CO, 24 July 1861. PP, State of the Colonies, 1862 [2955], Vol. XXXVI.

than profit-making, of intermediaries,[126] ginneries,[127] and a commercial infrastructure. Unfortunately, the schemes were not based on any familiarity with tropical agriculture, African farming systems in general or cotton cultivation in particular, the function of the slave trade in Dahomey,[128] or the conditions prevailing beyond or even within British possessions.

The means adopted are important, then, for what they reveal about the limited knowledge and powers Europeans possessed at the mid-century and in the context of the continuing debate on the role of indigenous-*versus*-plantation agriculture. They are less important in terms of the cotton exports they yielded. By the end of the 1850s, total exports from British West Africa had reached a mere quarter of a million pounds.[129] And the only area where any real success was achieved was the Niger. At their peak in 1869, these exports were worth nearly £77,000.[130]

126. In the Niger, there was some debate as to the feasibility and desirability of using African or European agents. The CMS obviously believed in Africans but Baikie, who had earlier accepted this, came to believe that Europeans were needed. Baikie to CSA, 16 December 1861, CSR, 3 April 1862; Baikie to FO, 25 March 1862, CSR, 15 September 1862. Campbell, too, considered that Niger expeditions had finally shown that a European presence inland was possible and recommended "young men of sound, unbroken constitution, of temperate habits" because "fast young men, with broken health and ruined constitutions ... generally become grossly dissoluted, and therefore useless, and die unpitied and unregretted." He also advocated they live in the same kind of iron house he had had built at Lagos. Campbell to CSA, 12 November 1857, CSR, 15 November 1858.
127. The efficiency of the cleaning processes was important for the cost of the raw cotton and for Lancashire machinery. Breakthroughs were made in the 1850s—the McCarthy and Dunlop gins—that speeded up the ginning of cottons of different staples.
128. For new perspectives on West African slavery and the slave trade, see Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hagendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market. Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1979), especially part I, pp. 23-235. Patrick Manning discusses Dahomey, *ibid.*, pp. 107-41.
129. In 1858, as against under 9,000 lbs. ten years previously. CSR, 15 March 1860. This represented 0.022 per cent of total British raw cotton imports as against 0.001 per cent in 1848. Figures on exports are to be taken as general indications rather than as faithful indicators of precise quantities.
130. Lagos exported nearly 500,000 lbs. in 1865, 800,000 lbs in 1867, and, at the peak in 1869, over 1,000,000 lbs. Computed from Commander Glover's Annual Reports to the CO, 14 September 1868, 5 August 1869, and 20 May 1870. PP, State of the Colonies, 1868-9 [4090-II], Vol. XLIII; 1870 [c. 149] Vol. XLIX; and 1871 [c. 415], Vol. XLVII. Thereafter, exports declined in the face of American competition. Only small amounts were exported from the other colonies. In 1864 the Gold Coast exported 82,768 lbs; the Gambia 19,936; Sierra Leone 3,696 lbs. Computed from import statistics in CSR, 1 March 1864 and 1 March 1865. After 1865 exports rapidlly declined. Thus the Gambia's cotton exports which had been worth £3,000 in 1865 had fallen to £325 in 1869. Kennedy to Granville, 29 March 1870. PP, Gambia: Proposed Cession to France, 1870 [444] Vol. L.

VI

Because of its dependence on foreign and increasingly distant markets for its sales and on foreign supplies for its major raw material, the Lancashire cotton industry was the most extraverted of metropolitan industries in the nineteenth century. It manifested interest in securing cotton from West Africa not during the Partition, but in the 1850s and 1860s. This interest is more instructive about European perception of realities than about African conditions. It was prompted by a crisis that Manchester pressure groups believed imminent and permanent. They were wrong, for the crisis was not as deep as they feared and proved to be transitory. Their belief in West Africa was not based on adequate intelligence about the area and was prompted by considerations that were only partly economic.

The episode, however, does show that the reorientation of Manchester interest towards extra-European markets in general and the Empire in particular was already occurring after 1850 rather than in the last decade of the century.[131] It demonstrates the essential continuity in local attitudes towards West Africa, Empire, and the role government was expected to play. Then, as later, they responded to the promptings of enthusiasts and the myths of African potential that were being revived.[132] Then, as later, they were willing to press for government aid, but they did not press for territorial acquisitions. There was a further element of continuity: the experience of Manchester and West African cotton schemes at the mid-century was replicated in that of the British Cotton Growing Association from 1903 onwards. Similar hopes about potential supplies, the same methods, and collaboration with government yielded equally meagre results.[133]

If the study of this minor episode thus yields no clear answers to the question of the importance of raw materials in relations between metropolis and periphery, it may nevertheless have been useful to pose it of Manchester and raw cotton, for as Claude Lévy-Strauss pointed out: "...le savant n'est pas l'homme qui fournit les vraies réponses; c'est celui qui pose les vraies questions."[134]

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131. Cf. William G. Hynes, *The Economics of Empire. Britain, Africa and the New Imperialism, 1870-95* (London, 1979), pp. 134-42.
132. Ratcliffe, "Commerce and Empire". For a discussion of the influence of a small group of enthusiasts later in the century, see Dorothy O. Helly, "'Informed' Public Opinion on Tropical Africa in Great Britain, 1860-1890", *African Affairs*, 68 (1969), pp. 195-217.
133. "Lancashire's future salvation," said J.A. Hutton, a leading member of the BCGA, "lies mainly in West Africa." Nigeria was the only successful exporter: a peak of two million lbs. was reached in 1921. Vincent, *Cotton-growing in Southern Nigeria*, appendix C, p. 236.
134. Claude Lévy-Strauss, *Le cru et le cuit* (Paris, 1964), p. ii.